

PLAYING RADIO BY EAR



P

eter Gustin has a powerful set of pipes. It's a voice most jocks would kill to have. And Gustin knew he had a gift, and decided to use it as a way to make a living. Radio was the obvious choice, the perfect profession. So at 18, he went to WEEI and WRKO in Boston for an internship. And he's been there for nearly 18 years; he's the creative services director for the stations, with a growing voiceover business on the side. But even as he demonstrated that he had the voice to make a living, Gustin was suffering from a disease that could have threatened his financial future.

Gustin was turned on to radio by late WBZ morning man Dave Maynard. Maynard was hosting a fundraiser about macular

degeneration and brought Pete Gustin, then age 11, into the studio. Gustin was diagnosed at 8 with a rare form of MD, and Maynard wanted him to present a young voice and face for the disease. When Gustin saw and heard Maynard working his magic in the studio, he was hooked.

Macular degeneration is ordinarily a disease of later life, but the form of MD Gustin has, known as Stargardt's disease, slowly robs those who have it of their vision from birth. You have a better chance of winning the lottery 20 times over than contracting this particular mutation of MD – only six people in the United States have the disease. And Gustin had to figure out a way to deal with losing his eyesight if he hoped to live out his dream.

*Pete Gustin in the studio; among many other projects, he's the voiceover artist for the Miami Dolphins *Finsiders* radio show.*



When he was trying to break in to the business, Pete was told he'd never make it. But rather than get discouraged, he used that adversity as motivation to keep pushing forward. He came up with his own invention to help him read commercials and make use of that powerful voice: Once he receives the copy, he blows it up to a size 55 font. Then he loads the copy into a Word document so his computer reader can read it back to him through headphones worn on one ear. As he listens, he lays down voice tracks at virtually the same instant he's hearing the words. It took a lot of practice and many do-overs before Gustin learned to develop the right inflections, but today, it's impossible to tell he's voicing commercials any differently from any other voiceover artist. Watch the video on the next page to see Pete Gustin in action.

Former WEEI PD Jason Wolfe was impressed early on with Gustin's drive to succeed. He says, "When I first met Pete, 15 years ago, I was amazed at his work ethic and desire to succeed in this business given his handicap, and I was thrilled to be able to add him to my team from the start at WEEI. He is as talented a production director as I've ever been around and has already made a huge mark on the industry."

Mark Pennington, PD of Greater Media's WRIF/Detroit, says, "Peter is a tremendous asset for the station. His range, flexibility, quick turnaround, and professionalism have made him the ideal choice to be the voice of the RIFF in Detroit."

Today, Gustin's voice is heard on hundreds of radio stations across the country. He's been the voice of *The Dan Patrick Show*, voiced a commercial seen during a Super Bowl broadcast, was heard in the trailer of the movie *Rio 2*, and is the voice of the NFL on Sports USA as well as the voice of the Miami Dolphins and Philadelphia Eagles. Yet he can barely see the words on the page from which he's asked to read. He's overcome a huge obstacle to become a tremendous success story. 📺



Gustin with Julie Harding of PrincessVisits.com

Listen to our interview with Pete Gustin [HERE](#) as he takes us through his challenges, how he succeeded, and what it means to refuse to give up on your dream.

Reach out to Pete about his incredible story at petegustin@petesbits.com.
His website is www.PeteGustin.com
Follow Pete on Facebook and Twitter.



See Pete Gustin in Action



Pete Gustin at WEEI/Boston. He serves as creative services director for the Sports powerhouse and clustermate WRKO.