

KMIZ MODERNIZES TV STUDIO

By Victoria Guida
Photos by Jennifer Kettler

Five minutes before KMIZ was to air the first live television newscast in its new studio and time slot, anchor Stephanie Schaefer sat down, looked at the monitor imbedded in the desktop and asked a question no technician wants to hear.

"Why's that turning off?" Schaefer asked. "We don't have a computer."

But at 5 p.m. on the mark, Schaefer and co-anchor Ryan Tate calmly began the newscast without wire news from the AP center, and the problem was fixed soon after.

During the commercial breaks, News Director Curtis Varns ran past the newsroom and yelled, "Everyone stay on time!"

They did, and the newscast finished in 28 minutes and 30 seconds, with no apparent glitches.

The studio, located inside the station's office building on Business Loop 70 just east of Providence Road, had gone seven years without a facelift. General Manager Gene Steinberg said the set took only three weeks to install and, when asked about the cost, said it was "a substantial investment."

Twenty minutes before the Sept. 17 debut, workers were still putting the finishing touches on the set. One of them placed a glass panel over the anchor desk monitor after trimming the opening to make it fit and then wiped and polished the desktop until it shined.

The most obvious difference in the new set is the background. Viewers used to see a collage of images: the state Capitol, downtown Columbia and MU's Jesse Hall. The new image behind the anchors is a psychedelic blue and red screen.

But station executives said the biggest improvements over the last set are those viewers can't see, particularly the speckle of lighting structures attached to the ceiling.



KMIZ anchors Stephanie Schaefer and Ryan Tate deliver the 5 o'clock news for the first time from their new set.

"Most notable is the lighting's going to be a lot better," Varns said. "The lighting is more complete. It's more balanced. The old set just tended to wash people out, so it's going to give folks a better look to begin with."

The set is also equipped with several new flat-screen monitors to keep an eye on the broadcasts of rival stations or to serve as "eye candy," Steinberg said.

The new studio also has more space, especially for the weather center.

"Everybody knows how important weather is," Varns said. "Now they just have a lot more room to work, especially during severe weather." Varns said when the weather teams have to stay on-air continuously, it helps to have room to stand up, walk around and control the radar remotely to get updates.

The huge green screen now descends behind the weathercasters' desk when its time to show the weather map.

There was no critical reason to renovate the set, Steinberg said. "It was just time."

KMIZ hired Gil Jimenez, who has been working with television stations since the 1960s, to design the set, Varns said. Gil Jimenez Broadcast Design brought in the equipment, and KMIZ employees installed it.

"Gil came in and helped with hanging the lights," Varns said.

The addition of the 5 p.m. newscast is part of an overall expansion at KMIZ. The station hired three more employees during the summer.

"I'm proud to report that we are hiring and growing," Steinberg said. ↵



FROM LEFT: 1). Schaefer did the first broadcast of the 5 p.m. news in her slippers. 2). Production Assistant Hana Duckworth gives Chief Meteorologist Sharon Ray a five second warning during her ABC 17 Stormtrack 24/7 weather update. 3). Production Assistant Hana Duckworth takes directions on camera placement for the premiere of the 5 p.m. news.

RIGHT: KMIZ's set, before the renovation, had been used for seven years, and the image behind the anchors was a collage of landmarks: the state Capitol, downtown Columbia along Broadway and MU's administration building, Jesse Hall.

