

Radio personality Frank Ski talks new album, environmental advocacy and a return to Atlanta radio

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Unapologetically ATL

The veteran deejay and on-air talent tells AJC he's busier than ever



Credit: Katie Parker

Veteran Atlanta radio personality Frank Ski.

In 2023, former Atlanta radio personality Frank Ski found himself in Ecuador's Galapagos Islands. The reason for the visit: he was traveling with 10 scholarship recipients from his nonprofit organization, the [Frank Ski Kids Foundation](#), which exposes youth to potential careers in science, technology, athletics, and the arts through travel.

While he and the kids watched huge birds flying through the sky, Ski felt there was something musical about the environment's natural resources.

"It was something out of a movie," he said. "I wondered what it would sound like with the water behind it and the boat."

This trip was one of several recent excursions in recent years that inspired Ski's new concept album, "Climate Change," released April 25 on Ski's recording label, Future Sights and Sounds. The ambient album's nine-song set is filled with sound effects from nature and regional chanting blended with blues, jazz, bossa nova, and electronica.



Credit: Jesse Brooks

Former Atlanta radio personality Frank Ski released his nine-song concept album, "Climate Control," on April 25, 2024 via his own imprint, Future Sights and Sounds.

"Climate Change," which took four years to make, was Ski's first original release in over a decade. The disc jockey started recording the instrumental album from his home studio in Brookhaven, while still broadcasting his morning show on Atlanta radio station V-103 during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.



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“I always wanted to do it, but I just never had the time,” Ski said. “After the show was over at 10 a.m., I was stuck in the house, so I needed to start working on the project.”

The first single from “Climate Change” is “Amazon Sunrise (Lovely Day),” a cover of soul singer Bill Withers’ 1977 hit, which was released on Earth Day (April 22). Ski said the production on the danceable rendition of the song was inspired by a walk through the Amazon rainforest, fueled by a cup of coffee, in 2018.

“The rainforest was just alive,” Ski said. “The sun was beaming through the trees, the monkeys were making noise, and the birds were loud.”

He also consulted with music industry peers like rapper Jeezy, who Ski said convinced him to do the final mixes at Atlanta’s Patchwerk Studios in order to get the immersive sound he wanted for the album.

Ski started thinking about his concept for “Climate Change” in 2007, when The Frank Ski Kids Foundation began taking youth on international trips. The humanitarian and a childhood friend took their first trip to the Galapagos Islands, at that time still their dream vacation spot.



Credit: Courtesy of Frank Ski Kids Foundation

Frank Ski photographed under water while diving during one of his foundation's annual environmental education tours.

While touring the Darwin Research Station, Ski saw a local Ecuadorian student group also visiting. He asked the research campus director if a U.S. student group had visited before and learned that the answer was no.

Ski wanted to change that. "I said 'We're going to be the first.' I went back, came up with the plan and started raising the money to do it."

Carrying his iPod wherever he visited, the former host of "Frank and Wanda in the Morning" who debuted on Atlanta radio in 1998, said he researched music and sounds relevant to every region he visited.

"We used to have to make our own soundtracks going to these remote places," Ski said. "We didn't have cell phones that held music on them, but I would search for what I thought the experience was that goes with the place. After a couple of years, I wanted to make my own."

ADVERTISING

The Frank Ski Kids Foundation is continuing its work this year, as it celebrates its 20-year anniversary. From June 17 through 26, Ski will once again take 10 contest winners on an international trip, this time to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.



Credit: Courtesy of Frank Ski Kids Foundation

Frank Ski with children attending one of his annual Frank Ski Kids Foundation educational trips.

They'll participate in scuba courses, classes led by scientists, visits to the rainforest that lead to the Reef, and daylong cultural activities with Aboriginal Australians.

It's the first time in the charity's history that the ethnically diverse participants are from places outside of Georgia.

"We had the kids write about that part of the world, what was going on with climate change, and then come up with solutions to mitigate what was happening," Ski said. "These kids were extremely smart and came up with ideas that I never thought of."



Credit: Courtesy of Frank Ski Kids Foundation

Frank Ski with participants of the Frank Ski Kids Foundation during an annual trip for environmental education.

His foundation's major fundraising event to support the all-expenses paid trips, Frank Ski's Annual Celebrity Wine Tasting and Live Auction, happens May 5 at Factory Atlanta in Chamblee and will be hosted by Jeezy. The venue's video walls will project reels and photo galleries of the kids' travels, and select winners of an essay contest will be present to share their submissions.

Ski hosted the first wine auction at his former home in Dunwoody. The intimate affair traditionally attracts entertainers, politicians, philanthropists, executives, athletes and other celebrities.

"I never wanted to do anything stuffy," he said. "I wanted to add some excitement to it, and because it was so personal a lot of my friends came to support. It was so much fun."

Raised by a single father in Miami, Ski's love of nature began in his childhood, when a family friend gifted him books about the Galapagos Islands, Charles Darwin and the Amazon rainforest.

Born Frank Rodriguez, Ski was a latchkey kid who loved reading National Geographic, and wandering through woods and canals on weekends. "I was Doctor Doolittle as a kid," he said. "I always believed I could speak to the animals, and now we're a nature family at home."

His current home in Brookhaven has three dogs, a parrot, a bearded-dragon lizard, four tortoises, four water turtles and a fish tank.

Music isn't the only new change in Ski's life. He and his wife Patrice Basanta-Henry are also expecting a baby, their second child together, in June. In addition to the couple's five-year-old daughter, the new child will be Ski's sixth in total.



Credit: Courtesy of Frank Ski Kids Foundation

Frank Ski with his wife, Dr. Patrice Basanta-Henry (L) and student winners of his annual contest to join the Frank Ski Kids Foundation's yearly environmental education trip.

Ski has also seen change in his radio career. His last on-air position in Atlanta was on Kiss 104.1 and ended in January after three years with the station.

He currently hosts "The Frank Ski Show" in afternoons on WHUR in Washington, D.C., and said he will announce his next radio job — a return to the Atlanta airwaves — later this summer, now that the Federal Trade Commission has banned noncompete agreements.

Known for producing underground classic dance songs like “Doo Doo Brown” and “Whores in This House,” Ski is also commemorating the 25th anniversary of his “Frank Ski’s Club Trax” series, and said he will release a compilation set of songs at the end of summer.

Ski’s work as a producer and songwriter has always been in demand, as he also has writing credit on the viral dance song “Wobble” by V.I.C. But interest spiked again recently after his hook on “Whores in this House” was featured on Cardi B. and Megan Thee Stallion’s chart-topping single “WAP” in 2020.

“Now everyone is coming after my music for sampling, so I’m just going to give them the ingredients,” Ski said.



Credit: Katie Parker

Frank Ski poses with a beverage and a cigar.

He's also passing the tradition along to his family. His son Harrison has a producer credit on the "Climate Change" track "Rainforest." Ski said he's impressed witnessing Harrison pursue music seriously.

“I produced by ear, and I would have other musicians play what I wanted them to play,” Ski said. “My son is more musically talented than I am, and he plays music.”

If that’s not enough, Ski said he is currently in talks with Sony Music Publishing to turn “Climate Change” into potential orchestral arrangements and scores for visual media. He says the new music is part of his evolution to constantly reinvent himself and take himself more seriously as a producer.

“This has set me off in that realm,” Ski said. “I can’t believe some of the people they’ve asked me to go see and possibly work with. It’s giving me the credit to make those calls.”

Ski is also venturing into the book publishing world. He said he’s turning “The Inspiration Vitamin,” the words of wisdom he shares at the end of his radio show, into a book which is planned for release in fall. The multi-hyphenate says writing gives him another opportunity to share his humanity, through his successes and failures, with his audience.

If nothing else, it appears that a season of positive change is on the horizon for the veteran multihyphenate.

“My situations are not uncommon,” Ski said. “I’ve gone through divorce, situations with an ill child, losing a job, filing for bankruptcy, and losing my restaurant. Writing the book is a way for people to see how they get above their circumstances and come back better than you were before.”

About the Author

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