

Pirate Radio Stations

Tuning In to Underground Broadcasts

Andrew R. Yoder

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Introduction

My interest in pirate radio began years ago, on my 13th birthday. While shopping at a local mall, I found a copy of *S9*, a now-defunct radio magazine. I enjoyed the clandestine and legal shortwave sections, but the pirate radio column, written by Al Muick, really intrigued me.

At that time, I didn't fully understand the concept behind pirate radio. One of my best friend's father had reconditioned an ancient Hallicrafters SX-28 receiver, and we spent hours unsuccessfully scouring the bands with the hulking rig. Between being ignorant of shortwave broadcasting schedules and being unfamiliar with the operation of older radio equipment, we accomplished little.

In November of that year, I rode along with my parents to take my sister to college in Harrisonburg, Virginia. We stopped at a mall in town to do some shopping. I managed to separate myself from the others, and after some searching, found a chain bookstore. To my surprise, this store contained a rather large electronics section.

Almost immediately, one book caught my attention: *How To Tune the Secret Shortwave Spectrum* by Harry Helms. While in that store, I read almost half of the book and copied some of its tables on a handy sheet of paper. I couldn't believe how much exciting activity was occurring across the shortwave bands! Of course I enjoyed reading about spy numbers transmissions and illegal hams, but my favorite chapter was the one on pirate radio in North America.

On the way home, I told my disinterested parents everything that I could remember about pirate radio and the other "secret" shortwave occurrences. They caught the hint and gave me the book at Christmas that year. Unfortunately for them, I liked the book almost too much; it took everything they could muster to pull me away from it. I completed the book on Christmas Day and reread it that week during my holiday vacation from high school.

With *How To Tune the Secret Shortwave Spectrum*, pirate radio became real to me. I finally understood that most pirates are merely radio hobbyists who want their own station and want to broadcast with common amateur radio equipment. Despite my original preconceptions, I learned that most pirates aren't criminals or rejects from legal broadcasters. In fact, I found that some of the stations, such as PRN and WFAT, were very professional.

I had assumed that while the interrelated hobbies of pirate listening and broadcasting interested few people, they were acknowledged throughout the country. After all, *S9* and *How To Tune the Secret Shortwave Spectrum* were nationally available. I did not realize that these two publications, which I had found with relative ease, were the only national sources of pirate information.

Throughout 1982, I looked for magazines and other publications that covered the pirate radio scene. In my desperation I even subscribed to *CQ*, an amateur radio magazine, not realizing that they would probably sell out to the *National Enquirer* before they would ever feature pirate information. That year I found *Popular Communications*, with editor Tom Kneitel and pirate columnist Al Muick, both from *S9*. I was amazed to learn that free radio was much different in 1982 than it had been during the writing of *How To Tune the Secret Shortwave Spectrum*. I didn't even recognize any of the stations in the magazine. Also, nearly all of the stations used mailing addresses rather than telephones to receive messages from their listeners.

Later I discovered the *ACE* (a pirate listening radio bulletin), which was created in 1982. Unfortunately, I had no idea that it existed until 1983. Of course, the new bulletin had a great effect on the pirate listening community. For the first time ever, a club was formed to exchange information on North American pirates on a monthly basis, and the membership was open to the general public. One negative effect of the *ACE* was that the pirate enthusiasts who were active in large shortwave clubs suddenly dropped out and joined the tiny ranks of the new club. As a result, pirate "DXers" (long-distance listeners) had the latest information every month, but those unfamiliar with the hobby had no access to it.

In 1983, I finally experienced free radio first hand. I bought a decent amateur receiver with help from my parents. Because I had no accurate pirate information and had little experience tuning a shortwave radio, listening was often quite frustrating. After writing to several of the addresses I had seen in *Popular Communications*, I found someone who directed me toward the *ACE*. I ordered a sample copy in May, memorized it almost entirely (I

can still probably list all of the stations that were logged that month), and began to hunt for those elusive pirate stations.

Diligently, I checked the 41-meter band on Friday and Saturday nights hoping to finally "catch" a pirate. My time came on a warm evening in June. I heard a station playing entire album sides of rock music on 7430 kHz; I knew it was a pirate. The male announcer only talked on the air a few times, but he repeated the identification, "Whiskey Romeo Alpha Mike." I had heard my first pirate station, WRAM. They gave a post office box in Levittown, Pennsylvania. I wrote to that address several times, but they never responded and I never heard the station again. Later, I read in the *ACE* that WRAM was raided by the FCC after the broadcast that I heard. It was my first, but their last.

That year, Darren Leno, president of the *ACE*, was asked to write for *Popular Communications*. Al Muick, the only connection between most listeners and pirates from 1979 to 1982, left the country. According to rumors, he joined some facet of the military in West Germany. No one in the hobby has heard from him since.

Personalities like these make pirate radio listening an interesting and exciting hobby. Hidden identities, disinformation, and other mysteries surround the pirate radio world. However, these characteristics are harmless. If any law breaking could truly be considered "victimless," it is that of unlicensed broadcasting.

When I went to college several years later, I left my receiver behind. This was an unfortunate mistake, because I missed hearing many interesting stations during that time. Also, the longer I was in college, the more I understood how listening to stations furthered my education. My political understanding expanded through the programs from Tangerine Radio, KPRC, the Voice of Tomorrow, the Crystal Ship, and others. I learned more about broadcasting laws during the raid of Radio Newyork International. Others, such as WKND, Radio Espiritu, the Voice of the Celt, and New Wave Radio International played a variety of music uncommon to legal radio. Still other stations including the Voice of Laryngitis, WDX, Radio North Coast International, and WHOT provided listeners with professionally produced entertainment.

Due to a lack of media attention and regular broadcasting schedules, few people across North America even realize that pirates exist. *Popular Communications* magazine and Radio Newyork International have bridged the gap from free radio to the general public, but these efforts still have not attracted more than a small, underground audience.

At this point, only a segment of the shortwave listening and amateur radio communities recognize the potential in tuning in underground radio stations. Surely those interested in the fringe areas of politics, music, technology, broadcasting, and comedy could learn a great deal. Until then, this information could lie virtually untapped.

I joined the Association of Clandestine Radio Enthusiasts after I sent for the sample copy. It contained most of the available information on pirate radio in North America, so I was satisfied with my subscription. My problem after joining the ranks of the Association of Clandestine Radio Enthusiasts was finding comprehensive information on pirate radio. I didn't know the histories of the stations that I had begun to listen to. When I heard Radio Clandestine for the first time in the summer of 1983, I knew nothing aside from what I read in a sample copy of the *ACE* and *FRENDX* (a shortwave broadcasting bulletin).

I have talked with people who were interested in pirate radio listening, but unfortunately no information was available to them, either. They wanted to become active in the hobby, but they soon lost interest because it seemed that the information was out of their reach. Shortwave receivers are often expensive and difficult to locate, pirates broadcast infrequently, and almost no guides or "how-to" books exist on pirate radio. Hence, I wrote this book to give DXers a guide for listening. There is information on identifying and learning the histories of many pirate stations. Furthermore, I hope the book enables those interested in the hobby, but not particularly active in listening, to better understand it. I hope now that more enthusiasts will enter the hobby knowing more about it.

I believe that pirate radio will finally get the attention it deserves in the 1990s. But whether the exploits of these radio hobbyists are frequently covered by the mass medias or not, I'll be by my receiver, listening to pirate stations.



1

Pirate Radio: 1925 – 1976

Every hobby or activity has an offbeat or underground component. Professional baseball has seen the bizarre (Germany Shaeffer stealing first base) as well as the illegal (the 1919 Chicago White Sox scandal, which was the first time a team had been caught fixing a game). Aviation has top-secret flight tests, not to mention the recent antics of Mathias Rust, the teen pilot who flew a private plane through the Russian air defense system. The print media has to contend with hundreds of small, sometimes mysterious, underground publishing operations. Similarly, there is an esoteric second personality of the airwaves: pirate radio.

Straggly, irregular branches such as these rarely destroy the attractiveness of hobbies' foliage. Unfortunately, the Chicago White Sox scandal did raise questions about the integrity of the sport itself, but baseball has grown since then and outlived many attacks on its character. Further, the colloquialized phrase, "Say it ain't so, Joe," lives on as an infamous reminder of those dealings from nearly 80 years ago. Thus, while the freaks and outlaws among the enthusiasts of a particular hobby might not always be welcomed, they sometimes help create a nostalgia that continues for decades after their disappearance.

In addition to creating a web of stories that will be passed through many generations, these freaks usually strengthen their particular hobby. Satirical newspapers and magazines, for instance, have given readers many laughs and sometimes provide inspiration to initiate changes that move to eliminate

the cause of the mockery. Underground activities have sometimes provided better services to the public than the establishment, with competition forcing the latter to work harder. By this means, the unlicensed offshore European pirate stations, for example, succeeded in forcing government outlets to diversify if they were to compete. In fact, governments often hired announcers from these unlicensed radio stations to provide what the people wanted.

The Pirate Definition

When a radio station hits the airwaves without a license for whatever reason, it falls into one of two categories: either *pirate* or *clandestine*. Pirates (also known as free radio stations) broadcast information and music because they want to be radio personalities or because they feel that an alternative to commercial radio needs to be presented. These stations have broadcasted to the general public on nearly every part of the radio spectrum including the longwave, AM (or medium wave), shortwave, FM, television, and even the microwave (satellite) frequency bands.

It is important to remember that pirate stations broadcast directly to the public. They are not to be confused with amateurs (ham operators) or Cbers who transmit with fake call signs or deliberately jam other stations with CW (Morse code), music, or a "swishing" VFO (an open carrier quickly moved back and forth across a frequency). These people are not broadcasting, and the transmissions are not intended for reception by the general public. Amateurs often call the (illegal) operations just listed "bootleggers." This term, therefore, should not be used to describe "pirate" or "free radio" stations. However, some people do consider either type of operation to be a "bootleg," so it is important to understand these terms.

To add to the confusion, "clandestine" (or "guerilla") stations also get thrown into the illegal transmitting melting pot. Clandestine radio stations are radical and politically motivated. They usually operate towards countries offering little political freedom and advocate (and sometimes help organize) the overthrow of these countries. Clandestines almost always support violent change in their countries. While some pirates might be politically motivated or outspoken, the matter of violence is the separating factor between them and the clandestines.

Oddly enough, while most of the world's countries have been besieged with clandestine broadcasters at one time or another, the United States and Canada have rarely been targeted. The racist, ultra-right-wing Voice of Tomorrow that has operated on 1616 kHz AM, 6240, 7410, and 15040 kHz shortwave since 1983, is one exception—a pirate that is considered to be clandestine as well. Two other stations, both from the late 1960s/early 1970s, were sometimes also considered clandestine/pirates. They were the Menomonee Warrior's Station, which operated in 1975 and supported

Indian rights during a time of civil unrest in Wisconsin; and WMMO, a 1960s AM and CB broadcaster from the Midwest that announced hate messages directed towards anyone in opposition to the station.

Few foreign clandestine broadcasts are aimed at the United States, but this country has been the location for a handful of stations advocating the overthrow of various Central American countries. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) seized two transmitters of La Voz del CID (Cuba Independente Democratica) in the summer of 1982 (Fig. 1-1) and the transmitter of La Voz de Alpha 66 early the following year in south Florida. These stations are entirely separate from the free radio movement and are closely linked with democratic and right-wing revolutionary groups. Political pirates and American clandestines are covered more thoroughly in Chapter 9.

Another type of stations that falls into a gap between definitions are the *Europrivates*. These broadcasters operate from Ireland or Italy, often with high power and regular schedules. Both countries have passed bills freeing their citizens to broadcast within government standards. Because of these regulations, unlicensed transmissions are officially ignored. With this in mind, many commercialized independent stations operate openly, daily or weekly, from Italy and Ireland. The privates, along with the extralegal offshore stations, form a group of unlicensed, but legal stations. These are by far the easiest unlicensed European stations to hear in North America. Radio Caroline, Radio Dublin International (Fig. 1-2), South Dublin Radio, Italian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Milano International, Radio Time, and



Fig. 1-1. The well-known clandestine La Voz del CID now operates several transmitter sites throughout Central America, but in 1982, they were caught broadcasting from Florida.



RADIO

260 M.W.
98.8 F.M. STEREO
& 97.5 F.M.

253
MEDIUM WAVE

24 HOURS A DAY

58 Inchicore Rd., Dublin 8. Tel: 01-758684

6910 S.W.
INTERNATIONAL

DUBLIN

Fig. 1-2. Truly a professional station, the Irish Europrivate Radio Dublin not only operates five transmitters daily but also sends stickers to its listeners.

Radio Condor International are a few of those heard in the 1980s. Europeans are covered more thoroughly in Chapter 6.

Early Broadcasting

Pirate broadcasting in the United States is usually considered a recent phenomenon because few of today's radio listeners can remember hearing any of these stations before 1966. Although most of the partially organized free radio movement has occurred since 1976, a large group of stations broadcasted before the 1940s. These were nearly always regional commercial operations with low power on medium wave. Most of these stations existed under the lazy organization of the government and were later forced out by the crackdown resulting from the Communications Act of 1934.

With the United States becoming an early testing ground for commercial and hobby broadcasting, radio listening in the 1920s and 1930s was truly an adventure. KDKA from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania might or might not have been the first American broadcaster, but it certainly was one of the earliest. It



Fig. 1-3. KDKA arose from humble, unlicensed beginnings to become a leader in United States broadcasting.

began as a hobby news operation, relaying the events of the 1920 Presidential election. The operator didn't know what to do when he ran out of things to say, so he began playing records between the news reports. The result was a community thrilled with the new broadcasting. He continued operating every evening after returning from work at Westinghouse. Soon, Westinghouse paid him to broadcast everyday and KDKA became more than just a hobby (Fig. 1-3).

Within several years, hundreds of broadcasting stations had sprung up across the country in much the same manner as KDKA. Many were started by hams (amateur radio operators) for fun and were funded by companies, while others would begin when a company would ask a ham to construct a station for them. After a few years of this type of operating, the AM broadcast band began to resemble the present-day Citizen's Band with stations signing on and off and changing frequency as often as they pleased. Also, some stations were funded by companies that aired faulty claims describing their products. At this time, nothing could be done to punish them.

Obviously, broadcasting as a whole had more than a few problems that were awaiting solutions. Even though a Federal Radio Commission had been formed to control the airwaves, it had little power and many stations deliberately disobeyed it. So in the early 1930s, the government began constructing a new agency to be built around a piece of legislation later known as the Communications Act of 1934.

Although considered to be completely out-of-date by its critics, the Communications Act of 1934 is still law. The new government agency, the Federal Communications Commission, proved to be not only durable through the years, but also to be more powerful than the defunct Federal Radio Commission. Immediately after the FCC was given authority and funding, it set about finding and destroying unlicensed broadcasters.

Early radio pirates differed greatly from those after World War II in that the former type was often commercial or public-service stations without

licenses. Few operated as pirates do today; most were low-power, daily stations that either tried to broadcast legally and were refused or were too lazy to apply for a license. When the FCC hunted these broadcasters in the early years, the operators often claimed that their use of low power kept the signal within the state. Thus, they believed that since no interstate boundaries were being crossed by the signals, no government agencies had the right to interfere with their broadcasting. This argument had worked in the past, but when these operators attempted to use it against the new FCC, they found themselves being fined and forced off the air.

When the FCC first plodded off in quest of eliminating unlicensed radio stations, it seemed to be a nearly impossible task, considering the large number of low-powered pirates and the lack of sophisticated direction-finding equipment. But since most of these stations operated in the open, frequently announcing their locations, address, or telephone number, they were easy targets. By 1937, almost no pirates remained on the air. The tightened control of the airwaves during World War II, combined with the loss of radio operators (and manpower in general) to the service, original pirate radio had evaporated by the end of the war in 1945.

Pirate radio of the 1920s and 1930s failed to receive the fame and notoriety given to stations of the present era. Today's pirates capture media attention for their underground exploits and daring challenges to the system to "uphold their guaranteed freedom of speech." The earlier stations were shunned by both media and listeners. They were thought to be outlaws or con artists because they claimed to be legal, but actually they merely lacked a license. DXers (hobbyists who competitively listen for stations) and regular radio listeners alike seemed to think that the lack of a license defrauded them somehow. In contrast, most listeners today tend to believe that pirate radio is special because the operators don't have a license. Given this turn of public opinion over the past 60 years, one can only wonder how it will change in the next 60.

The radio pirates had become virtually destroyed by the wrath of the FCC in the mid 1930s. But one station, WUMS, survived federal attacks not just for a few years, but for decades. WUMS (We're Unknown Mysterious Station) was actively operated by David Thomas from 1925 to 1948, although it continued on an infrequent basis for many more years. Thomas originally operated WUMS as an emergency broadcaster from his father's ferry on the Ohio River during flood conditions. Programming consisted of music, news and weather reports, and information on when and where the ferry would deliver emergency supplies.

WUMS's true identity and location were kept secret throughout the late 1920s to protect them from the FCC. Despite only broadcasting with several watts on 1560 and 2004 kHz, WUMS must have become widely popular because the FCC began looking into its operation. In the face of attempts to end his broadcasting hobby, Thomas always slid past FCC charges by telling

them of the thousands of dollars (and maybe lives) that had been saved because of his activities. Even though the FCC desperately wanted to finally close WUMS, these arguments always sent them away to look for another approach to the situation.

In addition to spanning many decades with his unlicensed broadcasting, Thomas stepped nearly 50 years ahead of his time by offering special DX tests and other programming directed towards the shortwave listener. These tests were coordinated with several DX clubs and listeners on the WUMS mailing list. Thomas further assisted listeners by promptly verifying all correct reception reports sent to him. However, the reports had to be 100 percent correct. All WUMS reception reports were read and considered for verifications, but the qualifications were probably the most stringent of any radio station ever. To receive a QSL (a card verifying that the listener actually heard the station), the listener had to copy the title of every musical selection aired and the different sets of letters that were keyed in CW. Then, the report had to be mailed within 24 hours of the broadcast. If any details were missed, a "cannot verify" card (Fig. 1-4) would be sent to the listener. Out of the hundreds of reports mailed to WUMS over the years, only 30 QSL cards were ever returned.

Of course, the FCC continued to hassle WUMS over the question of unlicensed broadcasting throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s. They didn't

This will acknowledge your communication of ^{Last Week}
_{Last Month}

We are glad to send you this card but sorry to say we CANNOT VERIFY your reception due to Report too vague to check with station log. Lack of specific details on material heard and insufficient information submitted. Station not on air at time reported. Material submitted was not transmitted from this station.

The Transmitters of W U M S are as follows:-

- No.1 2004 & 1560 kc's ½ - ¾ watts A-3 fixed
- No.2 100 to 3000 kc's 75 - 125 watts A1, A2, A3 variable
- No.3 1750 to 60,000 kc's 20 - 30 watts A1, A2, A3 variable
- No.4 2½ to 13 meters 14 watts A3 variable
- No.5 100 to 300 meters 75 watts Type B variable

WUMS started Broadcasting 10 P.M. EST, November 16th, 1925. The call stood for "We're Unknown Mysterious Station", as the station worked as outlaw and it's location remained a secret for several years. Located 1931 our slogan became "Worlds Oldest Known Outlaw Station". Since 1937 we use this equipment only for Ohio River Flood Broadcasting; or any special or temporary emergency work which may occur at irregular times. WE HAVE NO REGULAR SCHEDULE OF OPERATION.

Reports always welcome as we consider WUMS A REAL DX STATION and a DX catch extraordinary for the DX'ers and for this reason we are a friend to the DX'ing Fraternity

RADIO WUMS

Fig. 1-4. Few QSLs were ever mailed out by WUMS; most listeners reporting to the station merely received a "cannot verify" card.

seem to mind the emergency flood broadcasts, but the DX tests had to go. Thomas claimed that he had quit airing DX tests in 1937, but the truth was, he hadn't. Although the feds knew of this, they could never quite catch WUMS in the act of broadcasting, so they resorted to threats with the hope that Thomas would "get his day."

As it turned out, WUMS did get its day, although it wasn't for several more years. In the midst of a discrepancy with shortwave listeners over a particular procedure in 1948, his adversaries informed the FCC when the next WUMS DX test would occur. The agents waited for the broadcast to begin, and within minutes the station was closed. Later, Thomas was convicted in Federal District Court for operating an unlicensed broadcasting station, but he appealed and somehow wriggled free again. WUMS may have made it to safety, but its future operations were far less frequent.

Thomas virtually ended broadcasting in 1948, but he did occasionally return from retirement for a flood program or DX test for many more years. Thomas was entirely different from other pirates of his era, and it would not be until 1977, when the Voice of the Voyager began, that a pirate would broadcast specifically for the shortwave listener. Perhaps the greatest tribute to David Thomas is that the WUMS equipment was requested by the Ohio Historical Society and by the Smithsonian Institution. Unfortunately, some of the equipment was stolen, so the location and existence of that part of the lot is unknown.

Post World War II Piracy

World War II sealed up the fate of the pirate broadcasting scene, at least for several generations. The rest of the 1940s and 1950s for unlicensed broadcasters proved to be as active as a pumpkin in a shopping mall. Aside from the now-rare WUMS broadcast, most pirates heard were very young radio experimenters or were aspiring disc jockies of a "big time" legal radio station. Since most of these stations were low-powered and operated by youthful pirates, they were heard by few listeners. The general lack of security would catch up with them in the form of an FCC agent or a strict area ham operator. Thus, it was rare for anyone to hear one of these stations.

Tom Kneitel, editor of *Popular Communications* magazine, wrote an interesting editorial in the January 1988 issue featuring his experiences with a low-power pirate. His station, WISP, only operated several times in 1948 with 25 and 100 watts on 1165 kHz. Despite the lack of power and airtime, WISP received reception reports from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Massachusetts from his New York City location (Fig. 1-5). WISP's most widely heard broadcast on New Year's Eve, 1948, also became its last—Kneitel's father walked in during the middle of it, and Tom was too frightened to ever pirate again! Such has been the conclusion of many pirate careers.



Fig. 1-5. *WISP, one of the first “youthful pirates,” operated several times throughout 1948.*

Youthful pirates might have been the norm throughout the 1950s and mid '60s, but they certainly haven't disappeared since that time. A one-time-only 1984 shortwave station, WPRI, was heard with two announcers playing rock music and talking about a Chicago newspaper. Part of the way into the broadcast, a person who seemed to be the mother of one of them walked in on the program while the microphone was open and asked what they were doing. They said, "We're just doing some recording," and continued with the program after some giggling. WPRI announced that they were using an expensive Drake transceiver, but they were operating on a frequency different from what they claimed. It seems likely, therefore, that one of them pirated his father's equipment and was unfamiliar with using it. Since they never returned to the air, one can only wonder what the father did when he came home and found that they were playing with his transceiver!

Just as an unused field first grows thorn bushes and sumacs, youthful pirates are the first on the scene and lay the groundwork for any free radio movement that might follow. When some of these stations make contact and survive a few years, their tastes sometimes actually mature and they become capable of producing interesting and entertaining programming. In this respect, "matured" youthful pirates become less like an early field tree. They will continue maturation, but a thorn bush can never grow into an oak tree.

Although this failed to happen in the 1950s or '60s, an example of this maturation process is evident in the Voice of Venus, a shortwave pirate that operated from 1979 to 1985. The station was founded by Scott Wild as a

replacement for the Voice of the Voyager, which closed down the previous month with transmitter problems. Fifteen-year-old Wild's creation had a rather pronounced beginning, as he called dozens of members from short-wave listening bulletins across the country to announce upcoming broadcasts and tests. One month he claimed a telephone bill over \$500, at which his parents became justifiably angry about his new hobby. Programming for the Voice of Venus was equally unprofessional, consisting of rock music interspersed with talk about the transmitting equipment and listeners he had spoken with over the phone. Some listeners complained about the "aimless talk" and "kid's stuff" aired by the station.

For some unknown reason, The Voice of Venus managed to escape the clutches of the FCC, despite frequent activity and telephone calls that notified some less-than-enthusiastic listeners of future broadcast schedules. The station wisely departed from the airwaves in late 1980 to take a break and avoid authorities. But upon its reactivation in 1982, the Voice of Venus featured a revamped, tight format of new-wave and technopop music and comedy skits (Fig. 1-6). When the station finally faded away in 1984–85, Libertarian political features were in the planning. Apparently, Scott Wild began to lose time and interest in the station or he feared an FCC bust.

WBBH—the Shortwave Pirate Trigger

By the mid 1960s, few listeners realized the potential of pirate broadcasting on shortwave. Although some bootleggers were occasionally heard in the ham bands, no operators dared to be a "real" station and broadcast out-of-band or in a shortwave broadcast band. Even if a few of these operators would have been daring enough to operate in this manner, the probability of it being another "youthful pirate" would have been very great.

Imagine the response from the shortwave listening community when a new broadcaster popped up in the spring of 1966 on 4970 kHz (in the middle of the 60-meter "tropical band"). The station, WBBH, programmed classical music divided with news bulletins and a few light humor spots every evening at 7:00 p.m., while weekend operations began at 3:00 p.m. In all, the station was programmed in a low-key manner, much like a present-day "educational" broadcaster. To further confuse listeners, WBBH claimed to be legally broadcasting from the "Courtland School of Music" in New Brunswick, New Jersey and offered QSL cards to anyone who wrote to that address. In addition, both the signal and QSL quality were described as excellent.

With listeners generally "young and innocent" due to the lack of pirate radio at the time, few realized that WBBH was actually a hoax. Legal trouble for the station began, not from a listener who knew the station was a pirate, but rather from one who thought it was licensed. The confused listener called an FCC field office to inquire as to when private American broadcasters were authorized to operate on 60 meters (a frequency band allocated to

YOU HEARD US!!

A QSL from...

THE



free since 1978

To Our Good Friend Andrew Verber

Thanks for tuning into our transmission
of Nov 12 0130-0140 19 84 on 7435 kHz.

We sincerely hope you enjoyed our programming, and that you will be able to tune in again sometime. Until then, please keep in touch, and support pirates who are fighting for your right to Free Radio. We feel there should be provisions for a minimally regulated, non-commercial bc'ing service. If such a service is established, the Voice of Venus would seek to operate there. Until that day, we will continue to bring libertarian ideals and new music from subcultural depths to your attention on the Short Wave bands.

Scott Wild

po box 245
MOORHEAD, MN 56560

Fig. 1-6. The Voice of Venus might have sounded rather amateurish when it was created in 1978, but it developed into a creative alternative several years later.

“third world” nations only). FCC engineers had no knowledge of what the listener was talking about; they thought he was pulling a prank or was misinformed.

Upon tuning in 4970 kHz, they found that the listener was correct and that a WBBH actually did have a regular broadcasting service. In a short time, FCC agents began searching the New Brunswick area for the station, and to their joy, it was quickly pinpointed. Instead of finding a highly sophisticated educational broadcaster operated by the “Courtland School of Music,” the FCC found a room inside the house of an 18-year-old with a neat but simple and inexpensive equipment arrangement. Even more startling, the agents found that rather than using an expensive, professional-quality Gates BFE-50C transmitter as was claimed on the air, a Globe Scout 65A (a bottom-of-the-line ham transmitter from the late 1950s) was used instead. FCC agents finished the job by closing WBBH and issuing a few warnings, but Mr. Fisk (the operator’s air name) was never fined.

Despite the immediate closure of WBBH, many hobbyists became alarmed that anyone, let alone an 18-year-old hobbyist, could fool everyone into believing the station was legal. Surely a few professionals operating a station with a more defensive approach against the FCC would be nearly impossible to catch. It is hard to tell whether WBBH directly influenced any shortwave listeners into pirating, but several stations since that time have faked the original call sign. Even if Mr. Fisk had no direct impact in that manner, WBBH did become a legend—even in 1966.

1960s Counterculture

Traditional values fell victim to the new youth counterculture of the late 1960s. The “hippies,” the most extreme element of the counterculture, supported by many sociopolitical movements including world peace, inner peace, free love, drugs, long hair, meditation, folk rock music, and ecological improvement. Obviously, an alternative culture of this magnitude was searching for a vehicle to drive its ideas to the masses. Several of the popular underground authors of the time, including Abbie Hoffman, suggested this vehicle should be radio—more specifically, pirate radio. However, few hippies had the motivation, patience, and technical knowledge necessary to operate a radio station.

One exception was the Falling Star Network with stations WKOV (Fig. 1-7) and WFSR (Fig. 1-8) on 1610 kHz AM, and WXMN (Fig. 1-9) and WSEX on 87.9 MHz FM in the Yonkers, New York City area. These stations operated daily, commencing in 1970, with transmitting powers of 300 and 250 watts on AM and FM, respectively. As if daily operation with high power was not brazen enough, the original broadcasting schedule began at 12 noon and closed at 4 a.m. They later increased airtime to 24 hours per day, which required the services of nearly 50 part-time volunteers.



Fig. 1-7. WKOV was one of the first New York City AM pirates, operating in 1970 and 1971 (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

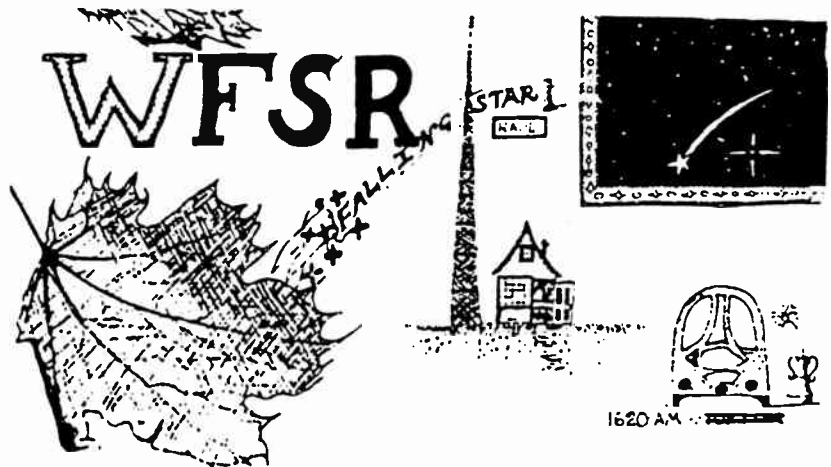


Fig. 1-8. WFSR, the sister station of WKOV, was the flagship of the Falling Star Network (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

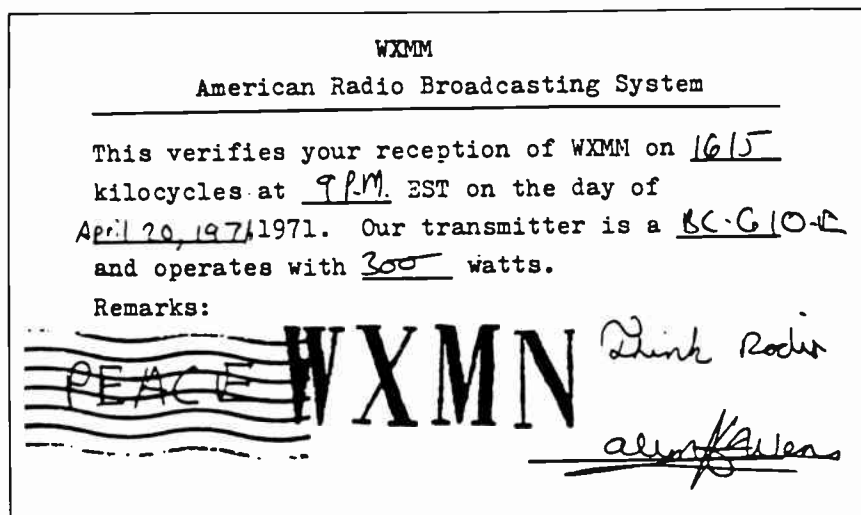


Fig. 1-9. A verification card from WXMN. Note the typographical error in the call sign at the top and Allan Weiner's signature at the bottom (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

Obviously, an operation of this magnitude required a bright station manager to keep the system under control. Fortunately, the Falling Star Network had two; J.P. Ferraro and Alan Weiner collaborated on the project by "owning" two stations (one AM, one FM) apiece. Ferraro and Weiner, 22 and 16 years old respectively, were dedicated to the belief that Yonkers deserved to have a community broadcasting service (it had no radio stations, despite a population of 300,000), and if they were forced to break laws by being the ones to do it, so be it.

Carrying these ideals as a torch, Weiner and Ferraro set out to present a community-service alternative of new folk and political music (Arlo Guthrie, Country Joe and the Fish, The Fugs, etc.) and talk about social issues. Not surprisingly, the Falling Star Stations built a large following from their regular scheduling, high power, and dedication to a popular youth culture that had yet to be addressed by establishment radio. Even so, the FCC was anxious to dowse the young operators' interest in unlicensed broadcasting.

To demonstrate their willingness to broadcast as a licensed legal station, the Falling Star Network operated entirely in the open, with the location and announcers' identities freely revealed. It seems Weiner and Ferraro must have thought their popularity in the New York area would force the FCC to issue the network a license for broadcasting. Certainly they weren't looking to get busted and fined by the government, a chance that is greatly increased by operating in such a blatant manner. Of course, the FCC responded. Strong warnings as to the stiff penalties for pirate broadcasting were delivered to the Yonkers stations several times over their initial months on the air. But after

temporarily following orders and disappearing from the radio, the stations would return to their regular schedules. The FCC merely continued to issue Weiner and Ferraro more threats and warnings.

Although the circumstances are questionable, it is possible that the FCC was intimidated by the popularity of the network with the media and the general public. It also could be that the agency was not used to being disobeyed; threats and warnings were sufficient deterrents before. Regardless, the FCC's reaction to the matter was much weaker and more relaxed than usual, at least by today's standards. The normal approach to unlicensed broadcasters over the past 10 years has been to immediately issue a Notice of Apparent Liability form along with a fine of \$750 to each apprehended first-time offender.

As amateur radio clubs in the area found that the FCC was reluctant to close the network, they began increasing the number of complaints and vocalized discontent over the situation to the local media. With dire circumstances seeming imminent in July 1971, the operators pulled the plug on the Falling Star Network. Although it was claimed the self-closure was done voluntarily, the FCC arrived several weeks later with U.S. marshalls to confiscate equipment and apprehend the former pirates. After a court case, Ferraro and Weiner were released on probation. The two pirates later teamed up again in the Yonkers area with KPRC (described in Chapter 8—KPF-941 and Radio Newyork International (described in Chapter 6).

Other widely heard but less notable late 1960s and early 70s pirates included King Kong Radio, WTIT, WSLH, WENJ, Radio Free Nashville, Voice of the Purple Pumpkin, Radio Clandestine, World Music Radio, Wild Turkey Radio, and WGHP. WGHP played rock music and political commentaries with the slogan, "With God's Help, Peace" in 1969. This station might have been connected with the 1980 pirate the Voice of Togetherness, which used the slogan "Peace, With God's Help." The "Voice of the Purple Pumpkin" name has been used by several stations since the FCC bust of the original in Baltimore, Maryland in 1971. In spite of a five-year dry spell between the Radio Clandestine from 1973 and the one that began in 1979 (and is still operating), it is rumored that both stations are the same broadcaster.

Activity dipped in 1975 with only three stations in operation, all on AM. WHBL transmitted from the New York City area with low power and mostly rock music. The Menomonee Warriors' Station operated in the upper end of the AM broadcast band with apparently high power, because a local legal station received interference from the transmissions. Most notable for the year was WHGC, a gospel music pirate that operated regularly for several months in 1975. The announcer broadcasted entirely in the open, claiming his transmitter ran a legal 100 milliwatts, which seemed highly unlikely; his signal was heard across the Mid-Atlantic states. The FCC doubted the claims also, and WHGC was later apprehended in a church in Charlottesville, Virginia using well over 100 milliwatts. 🗑️



2

Pirate Radio: 1976-1982

Pirate radio today partially resembles that of the late 1960s and early 70s, especially in the New York City area where Alan Weiner, J. P. Ferraro, and WENJ are still active. But as much as earlier stations fought for a free radio system, the explosion of pirates was not set off until 1976. Neither the Falling Star Network nor WENJ was operating in 1976, but the new flame started in the New York City area AM hotbed.

It was not until this era, in the late 1970s, that pirate radio became free radio—an actual movement. Although WUMS catered to the needs of DXers and WBBH did send QSL cards, no system of stations had yet formed to serve radio listening hobbyists. In addition, it was in this decade that the first free radio-only newsletter began, followed in several years by a monthly bulletin with sufficient quality to be accepted into ANARC (Association of North American Radio Clubs).

In years previous, pirate radio was merely a subset of the shortwave listening hobby. But with the increased activity, free radio listening and broadcasting suddenly became a hobby unto itself. Instead of merely being a medium for DXers to hear rare, erratically transmitted broadcasts, it became a new hobby entailing elements of shortwave listening, the free speech movement, hobby radio production and construction, and progressive music. In this way, free radio activity became the crossroad for a handful of other hobbies and activities.

WCPR and the Telco System

The most famous operations of 1976 (and probably the decade) actually began in December, 1975 from Brooklyn, New York. WCPR became the first widely heard pirate to run a telephone call-in format, often airing live callers from across the nation. The call-in programs added a feature never before experienced on pirate radio—the listeners' comments. Although a few stations before WCPR aired telephone calls, the operators were usually bold enough to announce their home numbers. For obvious reasons, stations that operated in this manner were rarely heard for substantial periods of time.

Although WCPR failed to operate for more than a few months, the FCC was forced to scour the city for the popular broadcaster. FCC agents found that the station was located in Brooklyn, but after that point, the search became nearly impossible amidst the maze of apartment buildings. With this close-in direction-finding work leading nowhere, the FCC contacted the local telephone company for some inquiries about the system WCPR was using to take callers. It was then found that the numbers used by the station were owned by the telephone company.

To many, WCPR's use of these numbers was confusing. Some assumed that a direct contact with the telephone company produced the services, while others believed WCPR to be comprised of "phone phreaks," and the actual lines were being tampered with. It was not until nearly one year later that the general shortwave listening public, other than telephone hobbyists and those familiar with the system, found out the truth: telco loops.

Upon requesting help from the local telephone company, the FCC found that WCPR's phone-in programs were made possible with the utilization of telco loops. These loops are actually a pair of apparently ordinary numbers reserved for use by the telephone company only for testing of lines. This system can be used by calling one of the two numbers (usually the lowest of the two) making up the pair, such as 949-9977. Listeners are then instructed to dial the upper half, in this case, 949-9979. The two calls are then automatically connected.

Looping had been used in cities for years by phone phreaks, prostitutes, drug dealers, and other hobbyists of underground activities. The attraction to using this system, besides the advantage of using numbers not associated with one's home address, is that calls are hard to trace. So when the FCC visited the telephone company, little could be done to track the station down. As an alternative plan, the FCC stayed at company's office, and every time a loop number was announced over the air by WCPR, the agents closed the circuit.

Tired of receiving busy signals each time a loop was called, WCPR resorted to merely playing music and signing off the air a bit earlier than usual. Soon after the FCC plan was set into action, a guest DJ from a nearby FM pirate persuaded the staff to announce their home phone number. WCPR

enjoyed a tranquil sign-off for that evening, but they were busted by agents from the New York field office while broadcasting less than two weeks later.

Although WCPR was a trend-setting station, little direct response was evidenced on the radio bands in the upcoming months. Over the rest of 1976 and 1977, activity dropped to its lowest point in several years, with no other stations being reported during that time. Late November 1977, however, WCPR returned to the air with a classic phone-in broadcast to formally bow out with a "proper" program. WCPR's farewell took place on a sweeter note than the FCC bust that occurred during the previous broadcast, and it whetted the operators' tastes for more.

The 1978 New Years' Eve ball fell in style in Times Square, New York, as WFAT began "regular" operations from the Brooklyn area on 1630 kHz. Also, WGOR, "Gorilla Radio," joined WFAT on the frequency with call-in programming from the Brooklyn area. Both stations were created from the remains of WCPR, with the staff breaking up into two smaller groups. Both stations existed on a friendly basis, coordinating broadcast times and providing technical assistance.

Wintertime blew out large quantities of snow and illicit airtime for the East Coast in 1978 as WGOR and WFAT jumped on the air nearly every weekend—especially if the weather conditions were dangerous. WFAT established a fetish for broadcasting during storm conditions and a fickle taste in call signs, as it was also known as WICE, WICY, WFSR, WDBX, WPLT, WPAT, WPOP, WPOT, WPLC, WJVR, WEVJ, and WIMP during the beginning of the year. While the names frequently changed, the format, announcers, and slogan ("free speech radio") remained the same.

Amidst the return of anarchy to the New York City airwaves, the pirate itch spread into the Northern Midwest. The Voice of the Voyager began regular Friday- and Saturday-night programming on 5850 kHz, below the 48-meter broadcasting band. The Voyager began as an indirect result of the New York City activity, because its operators were avid shortwave listeners and subscribed to *FRENDX* (the monthly radio bulletin published by the North American Shortwave Association). Announcers R. F. Wavelength and A. F. Gain created one of the most popular American shortwave pirate stations by combining broadcasting and loop call-in programs with shortwave listening. The results were astounding—hundreds of listeners tuned in, called, and reported the broadcasts to assorted DX bulletins (Fig. 2-1).

The Voyager aired comedy skits along with the regular features. "Bobby the Bootlegger," a spoof on pirate broadcasting and the FCC, and the "Nighttime Melodies" music program, featuring rock music (especially by The Beatles), were interspersed with casual talk and telephone calls. One caller found out that the programming went into a Hallicrafters HT-20 transmitter running 100 watts through a dipole antenna, but the pirates refused to reveal their location (QTH) other than "from the mighty north." This mystery about the location and identities of the operators added to the popularity of

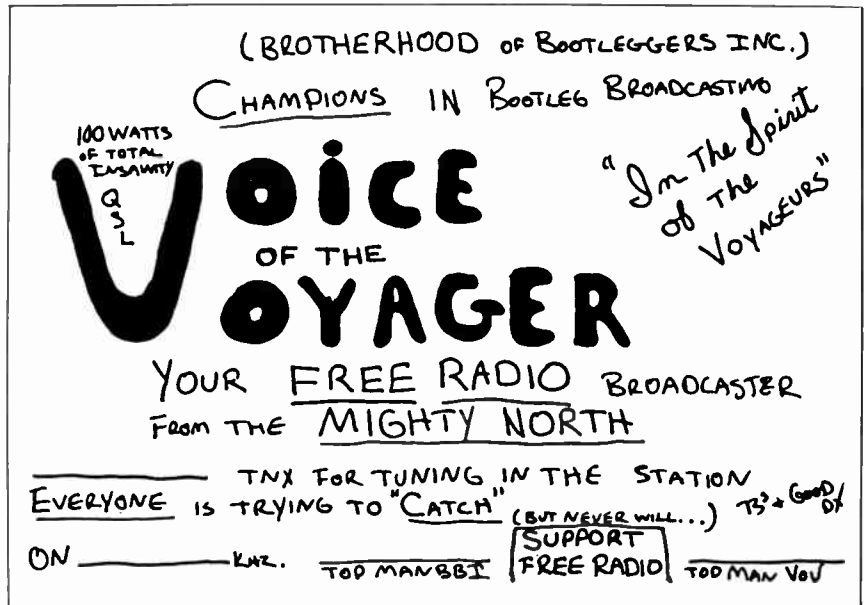


Fig. 2-1. The Voice of the Voyager sent these homemade QSL cards to listeners reporting the broadcasts in certain DX bulletins.

the Voyager; nearly everyone that listened to them speculated on their QTH. In several years, the novelty of pirate radio faded for most, but while the Voyager was in operation, listeners swarmed for information on "the new bootlegger."

In fact, one individual who regularly reported the station was bombarded with so many questions from listeners who thought he was the pirate himself, that R. F. Wavelength had to send a press release in mid 1978 that cleared that DXer from any involvement. Another mystery surrounding the Voyager concerned the arrival of many fake verification cards to those reporting the broadcast to various shortwave bulletins. The bogus QSLs featured several colors of ink, not just black, and a statement attributing the station to the University of Minnesota.

Rather than hope to be legalized in the future, the Voyager crew recognized their limits within the bureaucratic broadcasting environment and merely set out to have fun on the air. In a normal, casual moment, R. F. Wavelength noted on one QSL that 1000 had been printed up and they "hoped to give them all out before getting busted." For some reason, the operators had an almost kamakazi attitude about broadcasting; they operated with a weekly schedule on one particular frequency. The anticipated bust never occurred, but they decided to sign-off permanently anyway because the two main operators were either enlisting in the army or preparing to leave for college.

However, the pirates were not to slip casually away from the mess they had created for the authorities; two FCC agents appeared at R. F. Wavelength's door a week after the Voyager's last broadcast in the end of August. R. F. admitted to operating the Voyager and the FCC agents talked a bit about the station, then drove back to the field office, leaving only a warning behind. Although the agents seemed to be friendly and never fined the Voice of the Voyager, they threatened to revoke all FCC licenses held by its operators.

Immediately afterward, station personnel busied themselves telling the Voyager story to all and readily identifying themselves by their legal names. They also disclosed the actual location—Crystal, Minnesota—and enjoyed local and national media coverage. It was learned that the station was not really "The Voice of the Voyager," but "The Voice of the Voyageur," named after the Voyageur National Park in northern Minnesota. One early listener reported the station to a DX magazine as "Voyager," so the operators just decided to drop the national park identity.

While the Voice of the Voyager and WFAT operated, each station carried a few imitators along with it. The Voyager had WMMR (Midwest Music Radio), Jolly Roger Radio, Radio VOCAD, and the Voice of the Viking. Each of these stations was directed towards the shortwave listener, with articles from FRENEX being quite popular. The Voice of the Viking planned weekly broadcasting on 7450 kHz and called DXers across the country to notify the shortwave listening community of their initial tests. To further show their commitment to the radio hobby, they occasionally used another call sign, WSWL, which stands for shortwave listener. However, none of the stations ever matured in 1978, and only Jolly Roger Radio ever returned, becoming widely heard in 1980.

WFAT and WGOR pulled together an even more impressive collection of copies, clones, and those that had been inspired to broadcast after hearing their usual activity. Some of these stations included Pirate Radio New England (PRN), WEKG, WCBX, WPNJ, WENJ (back after an absence of several years), WELO, and WLTE, all of which operated above the AM band from the New York City area. Most of these operations were low powered (25 watts or under) and difficult to hear outside of the city area. Only Pirate Radio New England, with a professional mix of many announcers and telephone calls, and WCBX, with many reminiscent looks back to the early 1970s and reruns of old radio programs, were widely heard for more than a few months.

Amidst this activity, the telephones of shortwave listeners commenced ringing to announce the return of the Voice of the Voyager. Like WCPR, the crew felt that a "proper ending" was more befitting than the FCC bust. So on November 4, 1978, the crew returned to the air on a new frequency, 6220 kHz. For nearly an hour and a half they played rock music, took telephone

calls, and did a re-enactment of the bust performed by the "Voyager Art Players." With names and addresses of the station personnel already public knowledge, R.F. Wavelength identified the station with his own amateur radio call sign, and announcers were addressed by their real names. In another daring move, when all of the loop lines were busy, R. F. drove several miles away to a public telephone booth to continue taking calls.

Like WCPR in another respect, the crew of the Voyager just couldn't resist the airwaves and began planning a regular schedule for every Saturday night for one hour on 6220 kHz. Although WCPR split up and changed names upon returning, the Voice of the Voyager remained the same, still even announcing R. F.'s home address and ham call sign. One of the biggest events of the year for the Voyager was the Christmas/first anniversary broadcast that featured a detailed account of the station's history and the "VOV Monotones" singing such classics as "Happy Birthday" and "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

The Voyager continued regularly scheduled programming throughout January and into early February; then all fell silent. Some listeners speculated that the FCC had finally taken action against the station, but it was later announced that the Voice of the Voyager had voluntarily ceased broadcasting. While the FCC had recently threatened them again for unlicensed operation, the true culprit of the shutdown was the aging HT-20 transmitter. Not built for frequent hour-long transmissions, the final amplifier section burned out, rendering the equipment temporarily useless. This time the FCC did not appear a week later.

Just as some stations popped up, copying the Voyager while they existed, more hoped to fill the void left when they disappeared. The two most notable stations, Radio Liberation (a slogan occasionally used by the Voice of the Voyager) and The Voice of Venus wanted to broadcast like R. F. Wavelength. Radio Liberation copied Voyager's style of comedy, "wild and crazy" talk, and rock music, right down to using the same theme song ("We Will Rock You/We Are the Champions" by Queen) (Fig. 2-2). Meanwhile, the Voice of Venus merely contented itself with announcing a Minneapolis, Minnesota location and claiming to be friends of the Voice of the Voyager.

Both stations were regularly active and widely heard across North America, especially the Voice of Venus, which habitually called regular shortwave listeners before broadcasting. Radio Liberation announced that its transmitter site was in "the arid swamps of Putrid, Louisiana," but most reporters lived in Florida. Within a few months, the FCC became annoyed at Radio Liberation and closed it down in the southern tip of Florida. Meanwhile, the Voice of Venus continued broadcasting at a fast pace with its talk/music format through 1980.

Interestingly enough, although pirate radio was active across the Eastern Seaboard and had spread into the Midwest, the Far West remained virtually unaffected. While it was true that few of the eastern pirates were readily



Fig. 2-2. A pennant from Radio Liberation, a pirate that was caught in Florida in 1979.

audible in the West, the Voice of the Voyager and the Voice of Venus had strong signals that were reported across the country. The lack of activity is mysterious, considering California's reputation for alternative culture. Although the West still lags far behind the rest of the country for widely heard shortwave pirates, two stations cut an impressive profile in the 1978 scene.

The first, KDOR, operated entirely in the open on 830 kHz from Hollywood, California. The call sign represented the owner's name, Dick Dorwart, and was often announced as a part of the Dorwart Broadcasting Company. KDOR operated much like the Falling Star Network in that the location of the studios and identities of the announcers were no secret. Similarly, transmissions often lasted more than six hours several times per week, and the owner attempted to have the station licensed (but to no avail). Dorwart and a few volunteers broadcasted despite several FCC warnings and threats.

To add to this pseudo-legitimate presence on the AM dial, KDOR received promotional albums from various record companies and was listed in the local telephone book. Furthermore, Dorwart often cut promotional spots and public service announcements with celebrities. A feature story on KDOR from the Los Angeles Times quoted Dorwart as saying "I was cutting a public service spot with Ralph Bellamy during one of the FCC investigations. I didn't think they were quite ready for that." The celebrity presence on KDOR might have had an impact on the FCC's permissiveness, but the major reason lay deeper.

Dorwart suffered from osteogenesis imperfecta, known as "brittle bones" disease, an illness that prohibits normal growth and leaves bones susceptible to injury. While spending most of his 31 years in a wheelchair (his age as of 1978), he began working in radio, mostly to record special announcements. But Dorwart felt he had something to say, and he began operating KDOR as an alternative to legal Los Angeles radio to the dissatisfaction of the FCC. They were trying to dissuade him from broadcasting without confiscating equipment or levying a fine.

The "kid-gloves approach" might have appeared to be a sign of good will on the FCC's part, but it was also important for public relations work. If KDOR was ignored, other legal stations would protest the matter. But if KDOR was busted, the situation could become a media event, with negative implications being placed on the FCC. So the FCC aimed for somewhere in between; they sent threats and warnings to Dorwart whenever the broadcasts became "too regular." After three years and five closures of KDOR, the station finally quit in April 1981 with Dorwart still applying for a license, this time on UHF television.

KDOR's activity on 830 kHz might have made for an almost legal signal on AM, but it certainly didn't set the standard for all West Coast stations' formats. In fact, one of the most widely heard American shortwave pirates played music exclusively for the first three years of its existence. The station was first reported in 1975. It operated infrequently until 1978, then extensive broadcasts, sometimes lasting several hours, were aired on 6420 kHz. The pirate, usually referred to as "The Southern California pirate," played a variety of light pop music ranging from Doris Day to Barry Manilow songs with some jazz thrown in.

Several times the pirate was heard with background noises, such as turntables changing records and objects falling, which obviously meant that the station did use microphones. Mysteriously, the operator never spoke, even to identify the broadcasts. This raised many questions about what the station had to hide. Was he just shy? Did he have nothing to say? Or was his voice easily identifiable to those that might reveal him? More importantly, why would anyone waste time and money to transmit songs commonly heard on legal radio stations?

Some of the mystery ended in early 1979 when short announcements identified the station as KVHF. Other than these identification spots every 30 minutes, no new programming was aired; the same light pop music with long breaks between each song captured the 6420 kHz frequency. Although signals indicated that KVHF was located in Southern California, the station was obviously using at least several hundred watts because it was regularly heard across the entire continent including the Northeast.

These broadcasts continued throughout 1980 with the same format as had been noted in previous years, but live broadcasts were phased out in favor of prerecorded programming. The operator became less introverted after a few years and announced longer ID spots, some even promoting "The Tommy Johnson Show." In addition, the IDs and promos were inserted more frequently (about every 10 minutes), rather than every half hour. If this wasn't enough, KVHF had professional-quality yellow QSLs printed and sent to those reporting the station to club bulletins in 1980 (Fig. 2-3). In the autumn of the year, they even announced a mailing address in San Luis Obispo, California, for listeners to use to contact the station. A month after announcing the address, KVHF was busted in Santa Ana, California. With the enormous activity generated by station (usually operating several hours per week), it is curious that it did not happen sooner.



Fig. 2-3. Like the Voice of the Voyager, KVHF sent its QSL cards to listeners reporting broadcasts in particular DX bulletins (QSL courtesy of Dave Valko).

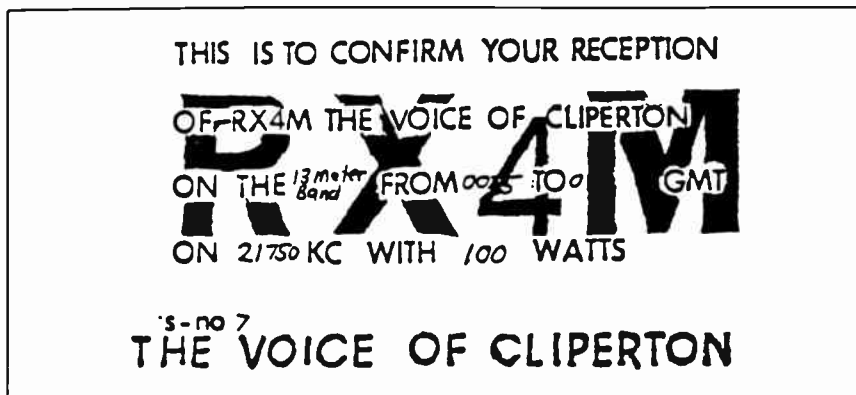


Fig. 2-4. RX4M, the Voice of Clipperton, operated daily in several meter bands before getting caught by the FCC in the state of Washington.

Another extensive operation, RX4M, became widely heard on the West Coast in the late 1970s. With transmitting equipment running at 100 watts, the station was heard nightly as far away as New Zealand and Europe on 41 and 16 meters shortwave. The station (also known as "the Voice of Clipperton") behaved much like a legal broadcaster, with a regular schedule on several different frequencies and professional-sounding announcers. These qualities made RX4M an easy catch for listeners from coast to coast (Fig. 2-4).

RX4M became one of the only broadcasters to imitate a legal shortwave operation. KDOR, The Falling Star Network, Radio Free Nashville, and others (especially small local stations) had imitated regular AM programming, but international shortwave programming is entirely different. Thus RX4M regularly featured pretelevision era radio programs such as Sherlock Holmes, Jack Benny, Amos and Andy, and Fibber McGee and Molly. Every week, some of the old-time radio shows would be replaced with DX Forum, Mailbag, Let's Talk Technical, The Good Morning Show, and The Jerry Nelson Talk Show, recorded by their own personnel.

As can be expected, the FCC became aware of RX4M's daily operations. The agents had little trouble finding and closing the station in late October 1980; it was only a matter of waiting for RX4M to sign on every evening, then tracking it down. RX4M was caught the day after it was first monitored by the FCC, but it had been regularly broadcasting on these frequencies for a year. Surely the bust of RX4M could not have been a priority matter. In a press release notifying listeners of RX4M's closure, DX Editor Mickey Anderson announced, "We feel that our termination was premature, as we were left with enough half-hour, unused, old-time radio programs to last for the next eight years." Despite an enthusiastic "We shall return!" at the end of the press release, no similar station has operated since.

Mystery Stations

Up until this point, nearly all pirates got busted in the end. It just didn't seem possible for a station to ever become active and achieve a large audience. Often the FCC caught on quickly, the station slipped up and gave out vital information, or the operators became too sure of themselves to believe they could get busted. But a few professionally styled stations began popping up in the 75-meter amateur band in 1977 that defied this norm.

Each station was believed to be connected with the others (or maybe they were all run by one organization) because all were very similar in program and technical quality. All of these pirates used apparently high power, had clean audio, played music and humor programs, spoofed shortwave radio broadcasting and listening, gave out fake locations (usually with fake addresses), used obscenities, and operated in the middle of 75 meters. Since few other pirates had high power and clean audio at that time, it seems likely that at least a couple of the stations worked together. The perplexing question is, why would anyone want to broadcast in the middle of a ham band? It is definitely the worst place on shortwave to broadcast for interference reasons and because the amateurs quickly complain to the FCC whenever a transmitter is operated illegally.

WBLO became the first and most widely heard of the stations on 75 meters with broadcasts initiating in 1977. British-accented announcer Dely McNorton played light rock with fake commercials, comedy skits, and "WBLO, Atlanta, Georgia" singing promos. WGLI, Great Lakes Radio, claimed a location "from the shores of Lake Superior" and played pop music briefly in 1979. Like WGLI, Radio Highseas International operated only in the summer of 1979. Like WBLO, the announcer had an English accent, and the program was a parody of shortwave broadcasting. Several shortwave listeners speculated in *FRENDX* on the possibility of these stations being the same. One even noted the similarities between Radio Highseas International and the 1973 pirate, Radio Clandestine, which he had read about in *Popular Electronics* magazine.

Less than six months after Radio Clandestine was mentioned in *FRENDX* by the listener—another station, possibly the original—jumped onto 75 meters with the same call sign and format. It quit after several broadcasts; WBLO returned in early 1980 after a few months of silence. Then in the summer of 1980, Radio Clandestine broke tradition with its 75-meter peer group and tried 6140 kHz (in the middle of the 48-meter international broadcasting band). WBLO countered that move by using 6022 kHz in the same frequency band, and was never heard again after that month.

All of the 75-meter (and former 75-meter) pirates went off the air for the last half of 1980 until Radio Clandestine returned near Thanksgiving. Upon its return, Radio Clandestine stunned the shortwave listening community with transmissions in the middle of every broadcasting band from 90 to 19 meters. Listeners across the country noted announcer R. F. Burns' rock music

and slick fake advertisements for such things as “Industrial Strength Baby Cleaner” and “Marijuana Helper.”

Although Radio Clandestine originally announced a “Post Office Box 100, New York, New York” address (similar to the 1973 station), it later requested mail through one of the major hobby pirate maildrops. And unlike many other “mysterious” stations, it began verifying reports in 1982. Other changes to Radio Clandestine included the addition of Boris Fignutsky, Chief Engineer, and Wanda Lust, Secretary. These characters began working themselves into the programming in 1983 (Fig. 2-5).

Radio Clandestine continued operating and is still active at this time. Considering its high power and frequent transmissions (as many as six times in one week), it is amazing that the station’s operators haven’t been busted yet. Further, they didn’t lose interest in broadcasting after several years like many pirates. Lately, some questions have been directed toward the sites of the Radio Clandestine broadcasts. In the past several years, more programs have been appearing in the 41-meter “pirate band” than in the past. Additionally, the transmissions have often been weaker than usual and sometimes of variable frequency. It is likely that these programs have been relayed from cassette by other stations. The status of the “real” Radio Clandestine remains unknown.

The Favorites of 1980 – 81: Syncom and Radio Confusion

The Voice of Syncom and Radio Confusion, two other stations that began about the same time as the second (or return of) Radio Clandestine, also received high acclaim. Radio Confusion, the “Crazy World Radio Network,” operated much like a legal shortwave broadcaster, except less frequently. The station operated for about one hour every month on frequencies around 7400 and 14000 kHz. While operations this irregular normally would have drawn a small audience, Radio Confusion maximized its following by announcing the next schedule each month in FRENEX. Fortunately for Crazy Roger and the rest of the crew at Radio Confusion, the FCC apparently never read those copies of the radio bulletin. It was a rather risky move for the station, since the FCC had commenced operations against stations in the past from information found in FRENEX.

Radio Confusion was the first American pirate to actively operate in the higher frequency ranges. Tests enabled the station to be heard with good signals across the United States and Europe. Radio Clandestine also began using high frequencies at about the same time, but their broadcasting was hardly “regular.” RX4M and Radio North Star International moved up later that year and the following year, with equally impressive results. Unfortunately, few stations since this time have ever actively used frequencies higher than the 41-meter band, even though a worldwide audience is possible otherwise with a relatively low amount of power.



RADIO CLANDESTINE

DEAR SHORTWAVE LISTENER:

Thank you very much for your recent reception report which I am pleased to verify as accurate.

We here at RADIO CLANDESTINE are always happy to hear from our listeners. I am sincerely interested in your comments and suggestions.

I am truly sorry I am unable to answer your letter personally. This is due to the tremendous amount of mail we are receiving. However, be assured that I do read ALL my mail personally.

I hereby confirm our transmission dated JULY 2 1983 at 0543 hours GMT on 7375 Kcs. For security reasons, no other information can be given.

Thank you again for your interest in our station and I hope to hear from you again soon.

PS: WE'VE BEEN AROUND
FOR A LONG TIME!

73 for now.

R. F. Burns

R. F. BURNS,

Fig. 2-5. Radio Clandestine began sending out this verification letter after picking up a maildrop in 1982.

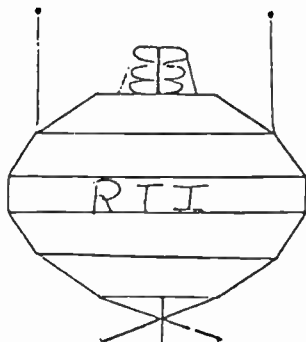
Besides interesting use of frequencies and pre-announced broadcasts, Radio Confusion's programming, high-quality QSLs, and contests augmented their popularity. The program varied little from the traditional pirate fare of fake commercials, mailbag shows, news, comedy skits, and rock music. The production quality of Radio Confusion was much better than the average pirate, yet it still rated below that of a professional station. Thus its popularity came not so much from the production style, but from the content and service it provided listeners. Unlike many pirates, Radio Confusion adhered to its schedules and tried to serve the needs of its listeners. When Radio Confusion announced in a shortwave bulletin that they would be broadcasting on a certain date, they always did so.

At the beginning of 1981, Radio Confusion was plagued during a broadcast by loud humming and muddy audio of their failing transmitter. After the broadcast, Crazy Roger announced that they would return in a few months with a new transmitter. True to their word once again, Radio Confusion returned to 14625 kHz and made one last broadcast that was heard as far away as South Africa, Denmark, and West Germany. The Crazy World Radio Network closed down stylishly, announcing that they felt it was time to either stop or be busted.

The other class act, the Voice of Syncom, began broadcasting to serve the shortwave listener in February 1980. During the early broadcasts, DX features and tips were the most notable program segments. Syncom often announced tests from other pirates, closures of some pirates and clandestines, and details about rare shortwave stations that were then audible in North America. Later on in 1980, the programming was expanded with many comedy skits, a variety of music (including classical, jazz, and rock), telephone calls, and relays from other pirates. Some of the stations from the United States that were relayed included WJAM, Radio Telstar (Fig. 2-6), Radio Free San Francisco, and the Voice of Venus. Radio Impact, Capital Radio, Radio Quadro, and European Music Radio from Europe were also relayed.

Just as Radio Clandestine and Radio Confusion made creative frequency changes to improve their stations, Syncom used a few techniques that have rarely ever been matched. The first, using parallel transmitters, is a common practice of legal shortwave stations, but it had never been done by pirates before Syncom. They tried it once on their return to the air in March 1981. The station operated with parallel programming on five different frequencies in the 41- and 48-meter bands. Some of the frequencies lagged behind others by as much as a minute, so it seems that some of the programs were belatedly related by other stations. Another technique, shortwave stereo, was achieved by transmitting the left channel of a program on one frequency and the right on another. If the listener owned two receivers, the programs could then be heard in stereo.

RADIO TELSTAR SHORT - WAVE



DATE: March 5, 1980

Dear OM, Bill Martin

Sincere thanks for your reception report of March 2, 1980 regarding our transmission on 6225 KHz, from 03-52 until 04-00, G.T. It is hereby confirmed with thanks!

It may interest you to know that on March 2, 1980, we were operating with 100 watts output power in AM/FM/SSB mode.

Of course you know that your reception reports, as well as your comments and criticisms, are always welcome to; Radio Telstar, o/o Free Radio Campaign-USA, RD#2 Box 542, Wesoosville, PA 16106.

Thanking you again for your report, I remain,

Yours in Free Radio,

*Danny King**
Danny King
DJ/Host/Chief Engineer
Radio Telstar

Fig. 2-6. Radio Telstar was one of the North American pirates commonly relayed by the Voice of Syncom (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

The professionally printed QSL sheets and miniposters added to the popularity Syncom had attained from the DX programs and transmitting tests. Even with a large following, the station had a few enemies. Chuck Felcher's (the main operator) outspoken remarks about his critics (described in more detail in Chapter 8) created some animosity. Although the critics had originally made a false assumption about the station, Felcher's comments made

them angrier still. Syncom claimed that the FCC became interested in the station during this period. Therefore it broadcasted less frequently until it finally ceased operating in autumn 1982.

The Rest of the Movement

Most of the stations covered so far in this chapter have been popular and/or experimental. They tried many creative approaches to pirate radio, and an actual "free radio movement" was built from the resulting tests. The stations mentioned up until this point have been the leaders, but many other pirates followed in the movement with varying degrees of popularity.

One of the more notable but less creative stations was WDAB, which operated for several months at the end of 1979. The announcers worked at a professional station in Florida, so WDAB had a slick FM sound. Main announcer Big Ron pulled the station off shortwave in early 1980 after he received a notice from the FCC informing him that the station's operations were illegal (Fig. 2-7). WDAB failed to realize that a notice of this sort meant the FCC could not find the station and was forced into trying scare tactics.

Another station from 1980 received a more final notice from the FCC. Jolly Roger Radio had operated for close to a decade in the Bloomington, Indiana area on the FM band. Even during that time, the station had received national publicity from the threats the FCC was making to its operators. From the time Jolly Roger Radio first began broadcasting on shortwave on Halloween, the operation was a sort of suicide radio mission. The station operated for at least 10 hours straight each time they checked in on 6210 kHz (Fig. 2-8).

Many pirates have operated very frequently and subsequently were closed by the FCC, but most of these stations were incompetent with technical and programming matters. Strangely enough, Jolly Roger Radio programming was professional, with call-ins, Irish folk music, and interesting promos. Evidently, the operators hoped that the activity and media attention would force the FCC to hand them a license. The plan didn't work as they had hoped, and the FCC forced Jolly Roger Radio from the air one night after they broadcasted for over 30 straight hours.

Some of the stations that took part in the movement in 1980–81 included WONS, WARG, Radio Harmonica, Radio Joy, Radio VPR, WRAM, Radio Indiana, Moonshine Radio, Pioneer Radio, Green River Radio, Voice of the Pyramids, WOOF, WPOT, Radio Music International, Radio North Star International, Voice of Michigan, Radio Free New Jersey, WOIS, Radio Xenon, and Radio Kansas. Most of these stations were "boring" to the average listener, according to *FRENDX*, but every one of these had at least one interesting characteristic.

WONS and WARG always promised to send QSL cards but never did. Radio Harmonica picked a ridiculous name. Radio Joy played classical

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

FIELD OPERATIONS BUREAU

December 12, 1979

CERTIFIED MAIL 1-12835
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

ADDRESS REPLY TO
Suite 601, ADP Building
1211 N. Westshore Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33607

WDAB Radio
% The Free Radio Campaign
RFD 2, Box 542
Wescosville, PA 18106

RE: Case No. TP-80-17MC/80-W-76

STATION MANAGER:


This office has received a report concerning the unlicensed operation of radio transmitting apparatus by you.

Under the Communications Act and the Commission's Rules and Regulations, radio transmitting apparatus, other than certain low power devices operated in accordance with Part 15 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations, may be operated only upon issuance by this Commission of a station license covering such apparatus.

Unlicensed operation may subject the operator to serious penalties provided for in the Communications Act, including for the first offense a maximum fine of \$10,000 or one year imprisonment, or both, and for subsequent offenses a fine of \$10,000 or two years imprisonment, or both. Because unlicensed operation creates a definite danger of interference to important radio communications services and may subject the operator to the penalties provided for in the Communications Act, the importance of complying strictly with the legal requirements mentioned above is emphasized. Unlicensed operation of this radio station should be discontinued immediately.

You are hereby requested to submit a written reply to this office at the above address, within 10 days, concerning the unlicensed operation and discrepancies as set forth above.

Sincerely yours,


Ralph M. Barlow
Engineer in Charge

FREE RADIO CAMPAIGN - USA
R.D. #2, BOX 542
WESCOSVILLE, PA. 18106

Fig. 2-7. A copy of the original notice from the FCC that scared WDAB off the air (courtesy of the ACE).



Fig. 2-8. Jolly Roger Radio only operated for one week on shortwave in 1980 but became well known for its marathon broadcasts (sometimes over 30 straight hours).

music. It wasn't until after dozens of hours of broadcasting that everyone could positively ID Radio VPR (instead of "VCR" or "VTR") (Fig. 2-9). WRAM played album sides, then disappeared, returned, and got busted in 1983. Radio Indiana always signed off with "Auf Wiedersehen, goodbye" (Fig. 2-10). Moonshine Radio, Pioneer Radio, and Green River Radio (The Alderaan Broadcasting Company) featured more interesting press releases than programs. The Voice of the Pyramids played heavy metal music and relayed the Voice of the Voyager. WOOF took its name from P. D. Q. Bach. WPOT was a smoother version of WARG. Radio Music International's press release announcing their decision to quit broadcasting was longer than the time they spent on the air. Radio North Star International sounded like

Radio VPR • QSL

TO: Bill Martin

WE ARE PLEASED TO VERIFY YOUR RECEPTION REPORT.

DATE: 9/7/80

TIME: 0204 GMT

FREQ: 7410 kHz

WE OPERATED WITH AN OUTPUT OF BETWEEN 25 AND 100 WATTS.

THANKS FOR WRITING. HAPPY DX'ING FROM RADIO VPR, PIRATE BROADCAST STATION.

SIGNED:

M. VPR

Fig. 2-9. All questions concerning the actual name of Radio VPR were finally put to rest with their QSL card, sent to listeners several years after the station disappeared (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

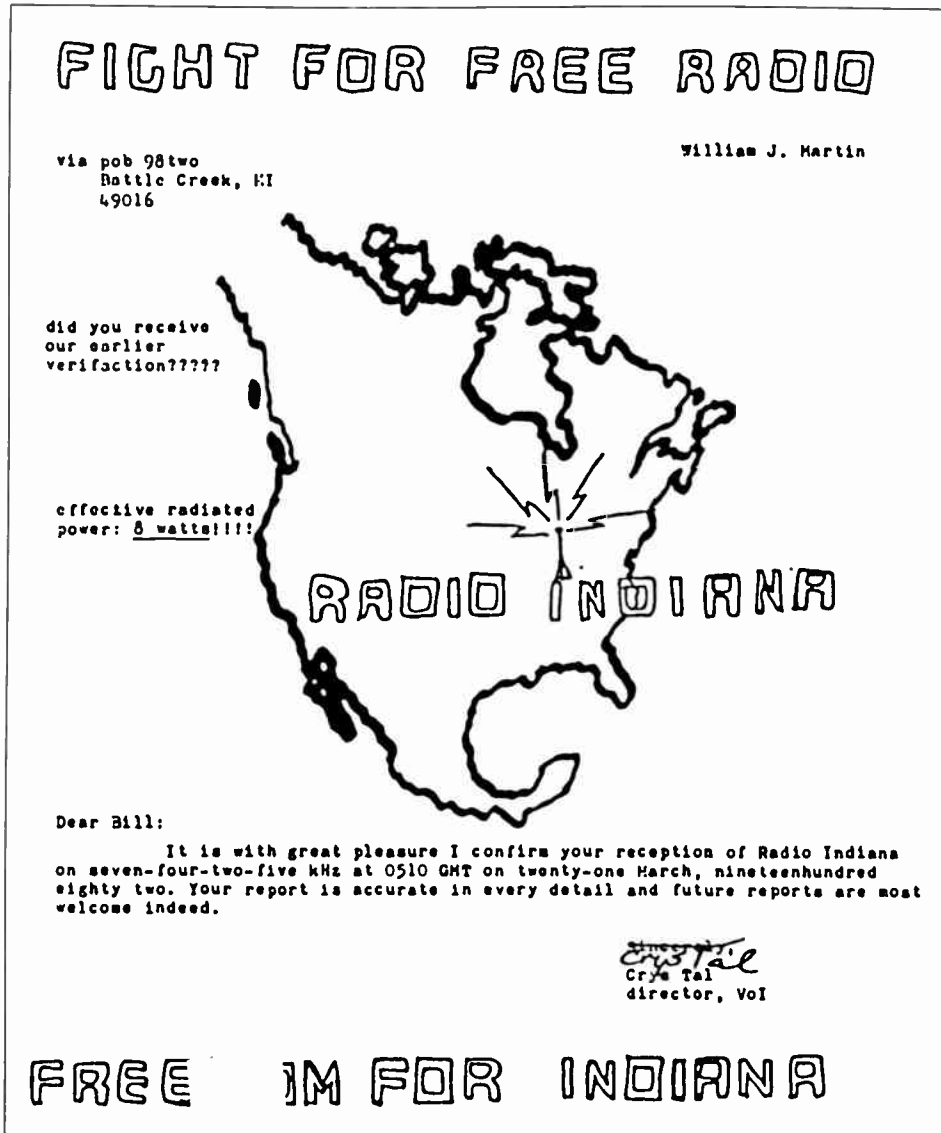


Fig. 2-10. Radio Indiana was one of the most frequently heard pirates in the early 1980s and broadcasted in four different meter bands (SQL courtesy of the ACE).

KVHF, used 13787 kHz, and was busted in 1983. The Voice of Michigan played continuous "Star Trek" episodes on 3580 kHz. Radio Free New Jersey relayed Yankee baseball games (as if no one would be able to hear the game otherwise). WOIS played new-wave music. Radio Xenon was heard in Europe. And Radio Kansas used an upper sideband (USB) transmitter.

An Actual Movement in 1982

The year 1982 became an even more exciting year for pirate radio than 1980 or 1981. Those years had been the first that a nationally organized free radio effort was made. Then the first issue of the *ACE* (a monthly publication of the Association of Clandestine Radio Enthusiasts) was mailed out in April. The *ACE* revolutioned free radio with an entire newsletter dedicated to the movement. For the first time ever, a large amount of up-to-date pirate information was available to the DXer on a regular basis (*FRENDX*, the most complete source of information on pirates before the *ACE*, missed a lot of activity, had no articles about pirate stations, and included many members opposed to free radio).

One of the most notable new stations for 1982 was actually a returning pirate. The Voice of the Voyager signed back on in January, this time on 6840 kHz. Their reception by the listening community was much different from the first time they were on. The station was no longer a novelty and several pirates were more professional, so the Voyageer lost much of the enchantment it had held for listeners. In fact, some listeners thought that it was just another fraud, calling it "very unprofessional." After just a few months, the Voyager was closed down by the FCC again. This time the operators were fined a sum of \$3,000 and warned that another offense would bring them a year in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

Other than the closure of the Voice of the Voyager (which was trivial compared to its prior success), the most notable new station of 1982 was KQSB, one of the most professional and well-liked hobby pirates of the decade. Phrank Phurter and Uncle Ralph stuck with the common pirate format of comedy skits, fake commercials, and rock music. But the professional production and quality writing quickly projected KQSB above the ranks.

One important change caused by the *ACE* could be seen in the manner that KQSB operated. With the increase in information about pirates, listeners knew the best times and frequencies to check the airwaves. Often a DXer could catch a station within a few minutes of sign-on. KQSB normally kept its programs down to 20 minutes or less to avoid the FCC. Many radio hobbyists heard the station despite the short programs, something that could not have been possible a few years earlier.

Another interesting station, Radio Free San Francisco, only operated in 1982. Known as "the voice of the heterosexual revolution," Radio Free San Francisco offered a more caustic style of humor than most pirates (Fig. 2-11). In addition to playing lots of rock music, they also made political jokes and featured editorials on shortwave radio. ZRRZ (its self-assigned call letters) was active at different points in the year, but it completely disappeared in the autumn.

New York City also reactivated with the appearance of WART and KW Radio, both widely heard above the AM band. WART often experienced

technical difficulties with its reconditioned amateur transmitter, so listening to it often required patience. However, the station did feature loop call-in programs and regular tips about other pirates (Fig. 2-12). KW Radio operated only at the end of 1982 with loop call-in shows, but with a comic influence.



Fig. 2-11. Radio Free San Francisco's QSL plagiarized the sleeve art from the Dead Kennedy's (a punk rock group) song "California Uber Alles" (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

CONFIRMING YOUR RECEPTION OF .

1616
1620
1625 KMZ.
1632
1636

WE'RE STRANGE

Pirate!
MIDNIGHTS

WARTRADIO AM

1620 kilohertz
FREQUENCY

AM 1500 WART 1650 ON 1620 kilohertz

YOU RECEIVED OUR SIGNAL ON 1/1 AT UCT.
MODE: A.M.; AUDIO Processed, Filtered, clipped.
TRANSMITTER: VACUUM TUBE SURPLUS >>> 2.8 KILOWATTS OUTPUT UNMODULATED.
ANTENNA: 3 PHASED DIPOLES ZEPPELS, 27 FEET HIGH. PHASES COME OUT OF THE RAIN.
RETARDED PHASE H FIELD GROUNDWAVE.
LOCATION: EASTERN SEABOARD, U.S.A.

OUR ENGR: R.F. MYSTIC, a.k.a. "SPALLCASE"
STAFF: DJ.: CRYSTAL GOBLIN (Shattered....) 73, BE HAPPY and
AND: MGR: D.G. ROTOLARTAN, a.k.a. "OZONOLPILOT" GOOD OX...
DAD CYTOMEGLAVIRUS BEST GROUP

PLACE ON GAFTU
AND GOODWILL
TO ALL PEOPLE ..
EVEN THE F.C.C. !

THANKS FOR LISTENING "WART" D.J.

CRYSTAL GOBLIN

Fig. 2-12. Pirate radio was brought back to the New York City area, in part from the efforts of WART in 1982 (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

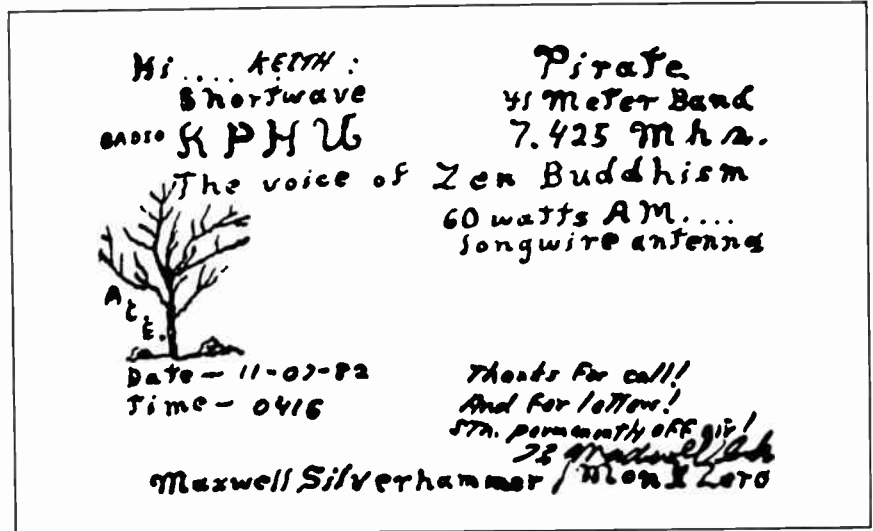


Fig. 2-13. Only operating around Halloween 1982, KPHU sent out a few homemade QSL cards to listeners (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

Announcers Johnny Jo and Barbara Baintree often closely imitated celebrities while answering calls. Their low-key, and occasionally derogatory humor, was popular among many who heard it during the short time it operated.

Other less-notable 1982 stations included WHUFOW/WHFOWCRS, Radio Free Radio, KCFR, Radio Toronto, ZKPR, KPHU, and the Voice of the Purple Pumpkin. These stations were, on the whole, more interesting than those from the end of 1980–81 but still less notable than many from 1982. Nevertheless, each one had at least one characteristic worthy of mentioning. WHUFOW/WHFOWCRS changed its name to avoid confusing listeners. Radio Free Radio played new-wave music and comedy skits that most listeners found unintelligible from the USB signal. KCFR almost never QSLed. Radio Toronto liked the MacKenzie Brothers. ZKPR hated elitest DXers. KPHU had a shortwave call-in show (Fig. 2-13). And the Voice of the Purple Pumpkin was a spoof of the original station by that name. 📻



3

Pirates Since 1983

Listener and FCC activity and new trends in pirate broadcasting have varied in intensity since 1983. The years from 1983 through 1985 rolled on with activity greatly increasing on shortwave and decreasing on AM. Some trends included a regular use of the 7355 – 7450 kHz (41 meter) range, while frequencies in the 6200 – 6300 kHz (48 meter) range died out. The practical location for pirates has been 41 meters because signals are received better over long distances and amateur transmitters take no modification to operate in this range. The 48-meter band is avoided because it contains several legal ship-to-shore outlets that could cause serious legal problems if occupied.

Pirate festivals which originated in July 1982, became an important segment of the free radio hobby. This is when several stations get together and broadcast back-to-back on the same frequency. Some weekends could produce over a dozen broadcasts from various stations. Each station would air its program and then sign off, allowing the next station to sign on. This has been one of the most popular tactics tested by pirates, because the DXer can spend several hours listening to different stations. The last true pirate fest occurred in 1986, but with activity on the rise again, more should be forthcoming.

Another trend of recent years is that pirates are becoming more knowledgeable about their hobby, and programming is now more professional than it had been in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Pirates from the late 1970s were often young shortwave listeners or hams that merely played rock

music and made simple announcements. Usually one or two stations per year offered professional programming and that was often uncreative. But some of these broadcasters from the 1970s have stayed with the hobby long enough to learn improved recording and programming techniques.

Extensive praise and criticism of program quality in the *ACE* has also led to more professional and creative shows. "Veried Response," a QSL and editorial column, offers a yearly popularity contest for choosing the most and least regarded stations. The resulting competition and suggestions also enable operators to understand what pirate listeners want to hear. To help stations achieve their programming goals, information on recording techniques and where to find rare and/or alternative records, audio equipment, and transmitting equipment are also included in "Veried Response."

Pirates, on the whole, continued to grow in sophistication with both programming and technical operations throughout the 1980s. The most notable broadcasters in 1983 included KPRC, KQSB (see Fig. 3-1), and Radio Clandestine, which all operated more professionally than many legal American stations. Radio USA, Radio Amity, and WRAM also operated extensively over the course of the year, but with rather amateurish programming. FCC raids finally ended these pirates' delusions of an uninhibited free radio service by fining WRAM and Radio North Star International in the summer of that year.

The year of 1983 proved to be a crossroad for many other stations. Well-known pirates such as Pirate Radio New England, Voice of the Pyramids, WOIS, and WART gradually disappeared during the year. However, a fresh crop of pirates led by the Voice of Democracy, the Voice of Laryngitis, the Voice of Tomorrow, WDX, Radio Paradise International, and Radio Free Insanity arrived in the second half of the year to replace those that had fallen from the hobby. Radio Morania, Radio Angeline, and WBST—interesting but rarely heard stations—also began in 1983.

Radio Morania was a particularly interesting broadcaster. Beginning in 1983, the station operated frequently throughout 1984 and 1985, transmitting the same program each time. A spoof of shortwave propaganda stations, Radio Morania featured chocolate mining, the 6000 pound spaghetti harvest, and the Moranian Hit Parade with the number one song in the country, "I Fell In Love With a Green Turtle Fly."

While the pompous, 1950s-style programming was humorous, the lack of a mailing address antagonized some listeners. It was not that the operators did not "try" to announce the address. Every time the address was about to be given, various types of interference was intentionally introduced to destroy the details. The mystery of Radio Morania was solved several years later when a hobbyist wrote in to a popular radio magazine that his tapes were being rebroadcasted over shortwave. He had produced the tapes in the late 1960s for fun and later sold the recordings to the public in 1972. Over a

KQSB



QSL #111.

K Q S B INTERNATIONAL
BOX 4948
ARCATA, CALIFORNIA 95521
USA

To: Andrew Yoder, Salisbury PA

Dear Andrew: Thanks for the report; nice to hear from you. We have a number of transmitters (see info sheet, enclosed), but we've never owned a "Valiant II". Sorry for the cruddy audio on this broadcast; the problem has been corrected, but don't expect to hear us again for a while, due to the unfortunate demise of Radio Free Insanity on 4/9 UTC.

We verify your reception!



<i>Freq</i>	7415 khz, 41 meter band
<i>Date</i>	March 19, 1984
<i>Time</i>	0113-0143 UTC
<i>Power</i>	90 watts
<i>Antenna</i>	multiband array
<i>Signed</i>	<i>Freddie Hunter</i>

FIGHT FOR FREE RADIO

Fig. 3-1. KQSB played brief comedy programs on a regular basis from 1982 to 1985.

decade later, some owners of these cassette tapes began relaying them all over the shortwave bands.

Pirate activity in 1983 dropped temporarily in September and October, directly after the bust of Radio North Star International. The mortality of the free radio movement was rediscovered; it could be stopped not just by a bust, but even by the possibility that the FCC's surveillance activities were on the upswing. Oddly enough, the bust of WRAM in June caused no repercussions throughout the radio community. Evidently, the shortwave community thought that WRAM's careless operations (announcing home address, making frequent broadcasts, and transmitting over extended periods of time) were their downfall and other stations felt this bust would have no impact on them.

Again, pirating gained momentum into 1984, the most active year ever for North America on shortwave and AM. Much of the year's activity was caused by KQRP, possibly the most active shortwave pirate in North American history. The Midwestern station began extensive operations early in January on or near many international shortwave broadcast bands. KQRP's varied frequency usage encouraged other operators to follow suit. Within a few months, 6200 to 6300 kHz regained its former popularity, and 15050 kHz became a new active pirate location. KQRP closed operations in September 1984 due to security problems.

Other stations, however, built up 1984 as a monumental pirate year. Radio Clandestine offered more broadcasts than any other since it began broadcasting. The Voice of Laryngitis became the most popular hobby pirate ever for its legendary comedy productions, while the Voice of Communism, Radio North Coast International, and Radio Sine Wave also offered intelligent, humorous parodies. The Crystal Ship, KPRC, Tangerine Radio, and the Voice of Tomorrow all pushed various political views. Samurai Radio, WDX, and WMTV all presented programming centered around telephone conversations. And what would the hobby be without those simply-music-and-announcement stations? Zeppelin Radio Worldwide, WKUE, New Wave Radio International, KLS, and KOLD were a few of the more widely heard pirates with less creative format styles.

Activity continued at the same high level into 1985, and some stations even seemed to think that they were "uncatchable." Since no pirates had been caught since mid 1983, operators became reckless with their broadcasting schedules. KROK, Secret Mountain Laboratory, Union City Radio, WKUE, Radio Woodland International, the Voice of Laryngitis, KNBS, and Zeppelin Radio Worldwide all averaged at least two broadcasts per month. However, KRZY, the obvious replacement of KQRP, overshadowed them all, amassing a total of 36 broadcasts in January and February 1985. Other operators certainly must have felt that with KRZY booming out every other day, plus the activities of additional pirates, the FCC would not have the time or resources to catch everyone.

Theories on KRZY, the FCC, and the rest of the free radio scene were, for the most part, true. KRZY's overactivity drew the FCC's attention away from the others. It was busted in early March, and the free radio scene continued at nearly the same rate. This might have been because neither the FCC nor the pirate hobbyists announced KRZY's demise. Anyone who might have realized that the station was raided was probably expecting the organization to be caught soon anyway because of the high activity.

After several months of heavy broadcasting by free radio stations, the FCC cracked down. KKMO, a new pirate with a virtually all-music format, was caught in late August. FCC agents nailed another new station, KBBR, in early September. Initial direction-finding showed KBBR in the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas, the same area where KRZY was caught earlier in the year. A close-in check proved that both stations were operated from the same household. Rather than try to immediately eliminate KBBR and possibly lose evidence, the agents procured a search warrant. Several days later, with the search warrant and a federal marshal, the FCC closed KBBR.

As in 1983, free radio experienced serious repercussions from the FCC attacks in 1985. According to listeners across the country, only four broadcasts from as many stations were audible in October. But just as pirates appeared to be dying out, many old favorites reappeared around Thanksgiving and Christmas, including Free Radio 1615, WDX, KROK, Radio Clandestine, the Voice of Communism, the Voice of Laryngitis, WKUE, WMTV, WPBR, Radio North Coast International, Radio Angeline, and Zeppelin Radio Worldwide with extensive holiday programming.

These operations, however, merely became a "swan song" for the pirate activity of the past few years. Subsequent months showed a gradual slump, with fewer pirates appearing less frequently. The next downward shove came from the FCC in the form of a press release announcing the demise of KRZY/KBBR (Fig. 3-2). Included in the letter was a list of 16 cities where "unlicensed 'pirate' radio operations have been identified near." Radio magazines and newspapers across the country published the list, which effectively scared many pirates off the air.

The last and most deadly blow into pirate radio came from the pirates themselves and their listeners. A reverse KQRP/KRZY cycle kicked in after the busts. Since fewer pirates were operating, fewer listeners tuned in. Likewise, since fewer listeners were tuning in, fewer pirates operated.

Although this effect dominated 1986, two stations, WHOT and CFTN/TNFM/KQRO, bought new equipment that enabled them to be heard over great distances.

WHOT had operated from the Brooklyn, New York area on FM throughout most of the 1980s. All station personnel had had experience with some of the older New York City area pirates, so the programming was very professional with many telephone call-ins. TNFM/CFTN also began as an FM pirate

**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
FIELD OPERATIONS BUREAU**

ADDRESS REPLY TO:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Federal Communications Commission monitoring network is continuing to investigate and fine illegal radio operators on a number of frequencies. Through long distance direction finding, unlicensed "pirate" radio operations have been identified near the following cities:

Richmond, VA	Louisville, KY
Charlottesville, VA	Waterbury, CT
Staunton, VA	Newark, DE
Youngstown, OH	Grand Rapids, MI
Miami, FL	Lansing, MI
Orlando, FL	San Francisco, CA
Minneapolis, MN	Arkansas City, KS
Washington, D. C.	Fort Smith, AR

The operation of unlicensed radio stations is in direct violation of FCC Rules and Regulations. Their operation may endanger life and property by causing harmful interference to licensed radio operations.

One such pirate station identified as "KRZY" in Arkansas was located and inspected on March 9, 1985. As a result of the inspection, a \$1000.00 Notice of Apparent Liability was issued for unlicensed and out-of-band operation. The same operator soon returned to the air and on August 19, 1985 under the direction of Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Snider of Fort Smith, Arkansas, U.S. Marshals accompanied by an agent from the FCC district office in Dallas, served a warrant and seized transmitting equipment used by the radio operator. The search and seizure resulted from a close-in DF to his residence on August 16, 1985 at which time the station was identified as "KBRR" and was operating on 7440 kHz. If convicted of operating an unlicensed radio station, the operator faces a maximum penalty of one year imprisonment, a fine up to \$10,000.00 and possible forfeiture of their radio equipment to the U.S. Government.

Fig. 3-2. Copies of the infamous "16 cities list" were sent from the FCC and published in various hobby magazines and newsletters in 1985. The list led to a serious decline in pirate activity in 1986 and 1987.

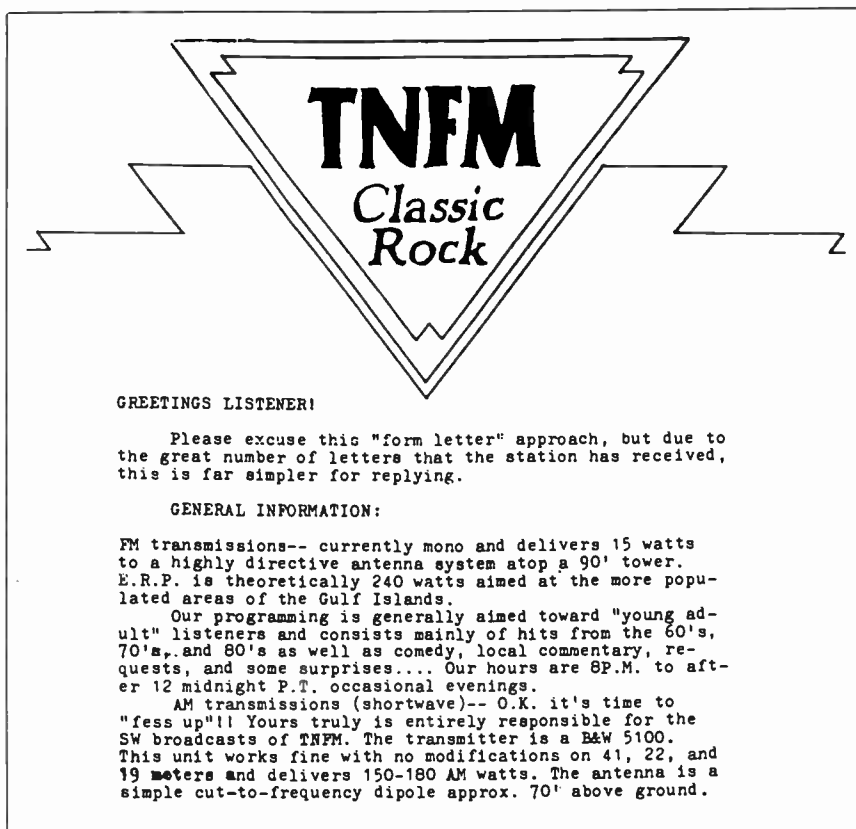


Fig. 3-3. A local Canadian FM pirate, TNFM (aka KQRO and CFTN) sent this information sheet to its listeners. Note that the operator admitted responsibility for the shortwave relays (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

in the early 1980s from Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada (Fig. 3-3). The operator later created KQRO with the acquisition of a shortwave transmitter. After several years of infrequent broadcasting as KQRO, personnel decided to combine the two stations and broadcast with FM and shortwave in parallel. The combination rivaled RX4M and KQRP/KRZY/KBBR in terms of frequent broadcasting.

Transmissions from WHOT and TNFM/CFTN encouraged listeners and pirates, mending some of the devastation caused by the FCC busts a year earlier, but still the free radio scene limped behind what it had been. Just when listeners were hoping the pirates would return, the situation worsened. The FCC helped locate TNFM/CFTN and contacted Canadian authorities. The station then received a letter from the Canadian Department of Communications notifying them of the illegal operations. The CDC also asked the owner

of the station to destroy his equipment! Although he never destroyed his own equipment, TNFM/CFTN was pulled from the air at the end of 1986.

To make matters worse, WHOT disappeared from above the AM band as 1987 was beginning. Unlike many stations that are caught, lose interest, or experience equipment failure, WHOT left AM because of poor listener response. It could also have been that the widely heard transmissions made WHOT too much of a high-profile operation. Regardless, the station left AM; it can still be heard in the New York City area on 91.9 MHz FM stereo.

At this point, North American pirate radio virtually froze over. During several months in 1986, only one or two different stations were reported by listeners. These figures appear especially depleted in comparison to high points in December 1984 and April 1985, when 25 different pirates were heard each month. Most of the notable activity for 1987 resulted from the transmissions of Radio Newyork International, a pirate ship broadcasting from international waters nearly 13 miles from the coast of Long Island, New York.

Other than Radio Newyork International, the North American pirate scene was operated by mainly a skeleton crew of older stations including the Voice of Tomorrow, Radio North Coast International, Zeppelin Radio Worldwide, Radio Angeline, and KNBS. Although all of these pirates made little more than cameo appearances, a few new stations began in the second half of the year. The Voice of Free Long Island, WCPR, and a return of WENJ with much higher power, fueled a new movement from the New York City area.

The new stations breathed some life back into free radio. Unfortunately, so many DXers had stopped listening for pirates that few other stations wanted to waste the time broadcasting. More stations slowly began returning to the airwaves, nevertheless. Just as activity was picking up in mid 1988, the Association of Clandestine Radio Enthusiasts faced major staff problems and publication of the *ACE* was delayed for over three months. The lack of information again discouraged listeners and pirates alike. But the *ACE* returned with a new name (*Free Air*), a new format, and a renewed enthusiasm for the hobby in September 1988. The hobby is growing again, and at present, station activity is once again equal to that of 1986.

Free radio might not be at the same level as it was in 1984 or 1985; for all anyone knows, it might never reach that point again. But pirates have shown great tenacity to its existence, so it is probably safe to assume that they will continue operations. The presently increasing number of stations and listeners suggests that free radio in North America is nearly back to the same point on the cycle as it was in 1983. If this is the case, 1990 or 1991 pirate activity could reach or even surpass that of 1984 and 1985. Future listening for the pirate DXer is likely to be highly rewarding.

Rather than a continued description of stations that operated after 1982 in the same manner as the first and second chapters were formatted, a bio-

graphical listing is more helpful at this point. Many of the stations that have been active since 1983 still play a major role in free radio. There is a need for a listing that provides easy reference in case a station reactivates or a history of a presently broadcasting operation. The following listing is arranged by station name, in alphabetical order (according to the name's main catch word). Essential details have been included, but some information and details about stations that were only heard once or twice to be excluded.

Radio Alchemy: Although this station was only heard on New Year's Eve 1983 (1984 UTC), its two-hour program was audible across the North-eastern quarter of the United States above the AM band. Telephone calls and a recording of Radio Hauraki, a former offshore broadcaster located off the coast of New Zealand, were among the featured programming from this station.

Radio Amity: Operated on a regular basis with heavy metal music and telephone calls during the first half of 1983. The announcer was virtually lost in his own programming, playing music from a local legal station through his shortwave transmitter (and accidentally allowing the IDs on the air), using faulty loop phone numbers, and often being at a loss for words. In nearly every broadcast he announced that the station went on the air that evening because he "was bored."

Radio Angeline: Has regularly operated over the holidays since Independence Day 1983, using the same two 30- and 60-minute programs. Announcer Jo Jo Katew plays fake advertisements, an interlude signal of "Send In the Clowns" on a music box, and a closing of a dramatic reading for his lost love, Angeline. This one has been a long-time mystery/comedy favorite of shortwave listeners.

Radio Bag: Another odd holiday pirate using the Washington, D.C. maildrop. This program was only heard several times in 1983 and 1984 with a falsetto-pitched announcer and novelty songs.

Radio Blotto: "Station of the topographic maps." This one played many parody advertisements and novelty songs during its several broadcasts in 1984. The announcer, like the one in Radio Bag, used a falsetto voice with similar programming, so it is very possible that these are the same station.

Voice of Bob: Not so much of a pirate, this one's programming is taken from several underground college radio shows and is replayed. The ideas for the Voice of Bob originated 15 years ago in Dallas, Texas when some high school students created "the Church of the Sub-Genius," a parody

of money-craving religious broadcasters. Bob Dobbs, a nerdy, 1950s greaser with a pipe and thick glasses, is the "saviour" for this pseudo-religion. The most widely heard legal outlets for the Church of the Sub-Genius are in Berkeley, California; Dallas, Texas; and Cleveland, Ohio. The Voice of Bob shortwave outlet has been occasionally active since 1984 with strangely professional programming.

Bootlegger Radio: Operated by the Kaiser and the Czar several times in 1985 with rock music and light-hearted remarks.

Canadian Club Radio: (see CCAT)

CCAT: "Canadian Club Radio." One of the few overtly Canadian operations. Canadian and British technopop music was featured on the live programs with announcers Toolkit Al and Ron in 1985 and 1986. Both men operated the station recklessly, with audio feedback and talk audible even over the musical selections.

CFTN: aka **TNFM** and **KQRO**. This low-powered FM pirate transmitted from the tiny Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, in Canada. Upon acquiring a shortwave transmitter, the operator renamed the station **KQRO**. Finally, the two stations merged; the FM and shortwave transmitters operated in parallel with telephone calls and Canadian rock music. After the operator broadcasted with both transmitters several times per week over the course of four months, the Canadian Department of Communications sent a letter, telling him to close the station down. CFTN/TNFM complied and has not been heard from since.

Radio Clandestine: "An alternative to hum-drum radio." This station was one of the greatest North American pirates ever. The first station to use the name operated in 1973, and although the one active today claims responsibility for the early broadcasts, no one has enough reliable information to verify this claim.

Radio Clandestine is highly spoken of because the programs and transmissions are of professional quality, broadcasts are frequent, and it has consistently operated since 1980 (making it the longest-lived shortwave pirate since WUMS). Programming on Radio Clandestine had been 1970s hard rock music and comedy skits for eight years. R. F. Burns hosted the hour-long programs with a pompous radio voice and an inept crew, with guest appearances by Wanda Lust, Boris Fignutsky, and Drool the Cabin Boy. Operating infrequently since 1984, Radio Clandestine has added an anti-nuclear war message to the usual music and comedy. Radio Clandestine has been very active lately (Autumn 1988), sometimes airing another show from a different transmitter immediately

after the first program is over. This pirate could have a future as interesting as its past.

Voice of Communism: aka the **Voice of Democracy** and the **Voice of the United States**. This station has been a favorite for its parodies of legal shortwave operations. When broadcasting as the Voice of Democracy, the announcers (one male, one female) imitate the Voice of America. This apparently became boring to them, so they changed the name to the Voice of Communism.

As the Voice of Communism, the station imitates Radio Moscow with heavy-handed parody sketches. The two announcers, known as Gilbert and Marion, often feature fake listener letters, commentaries, and descriptions as to why the Soviet Union is better than the United States. When the station is active, it usually broadcasts several times over the course of a week or two. Then it might be another six months to a year before it is heard on shortwave again.

Crooked Man: Another strange broadcaster, the Crooked Man's programming consisted of music and deranged babbling that might have been recorded through a telephone line. The station was reported several times in 1985 and 1986 with a male announcer raving about psychoanalyzing God and claiming to have been born from an immaculate conception. Many listeners assumed he was faking mental illness, since the station members did have the technical ability to return a year later on 41 meters using excellent audio.

The Crystal Ship: The Poet, The Unknown Soldier, and The Radical were often heard from 1982 to 1985 with socialist commentaries and telephone calls; often the station suffered technical difficulties. Throughout 1982 and parts of the next year, The Crystal Ship (TCS) experienced transmitter and loop telephone difficulties, causing disjointed and sometimes unintelligible programming. However, after the first half of 1983, the station cleaned up its audio and stopped taking phone calls. The result was a much cleaner signal.

Radio Dead Man: Station was heard several times from 1985 through 1987 on shortwave with new-wave music and cut-up pieces of audio. The audio bits were comprised of parts of commercials, people talking, and sounds (such as the NBC "chimes") used to convey a message.

Voice of Democracy: (see the **Voice of Communism**).

Radio Espiritu: One of a few theme stations. It was heard several times in March 1984 on shortwave with Gregorian chants. The only diversion

from nonstop chants was an occasional break where a man would repeat the ID three times.

Radio Free America: aka **WFRA**. Not to be confused with the offshore station of the same name, this hobby pirate only operated on several Sunday mornings (EDT) in the summer of 1985 on 7342 kHz with music and fake commercials from National Lampoon records.

Radio Free Insanity (Fig. 3-4): Announcer, the Electric Buddha, played nearly nonstop 1960s rock music on shortwave at times throughout the first three months of 1984. Just as he was beginning to branch out into more creative programming, the operation was closed by FCC agents in the Indianapolis, Indiana area. During the rest of 1984, three other bootleggers tried the "Radio Free Insanity" slogan.



Fig. 3-4. *Radio Free Insanity operated frequently for a short time in 1984. The FCC later caught the station in April 1984.*

Voice of Free Long Island: Station is widely heard and active with phone calls, pop music, and conservative political commentaries dealing especially with United States foreign policies. Since 1987, VFLI has been active using either the AM or LSB modes on 41 meters.

Free Radio 1616: (Station name varies depending on what AM frequency it is operating on, although 1615 and 1616 kHz are the most common selections.) This mysterious broadcaster has operated since 1980 from the

New York City area only near or on holidays. Programming consists of jazz music and comedy spots.

Radio Free Wave: "The king of the pirates." Their parodies, including "SWL Indigestion," were considered humorous by most listeners, but this station aired essentially the same recording at various times between 1981 and 1983.

Voice of FUBAR: Broadcast was probably just a cassette program relayed by another station. The same program of rock music and promo spots was heard three times in less than a week on shortwave and 1630 kHz AM during July 1986. Incidentally, FUBAR originally stood for the Federation of Unlicensed Broadcasters on AM Radio, of which WDX and WART were a part. However, it is unknown whether this pirate has connections to either station.

GAN: (see **Global American Network**)

Radio Ganymede: "Voice of the Ganymedean Empire." Claiming to broadcast from Ganymede, one of the moons of Jupiter, Radio Ganymede played a wide variety of music (barbershop, pop, South American folk, etc.) on 48 and 41 meters in 1984. The deep-voiced announcer often attempted to hype Ganymede as a vacation spot for the earth's residents, but no one ever went. Maybe with new technology? (See Fig. 3-5.)

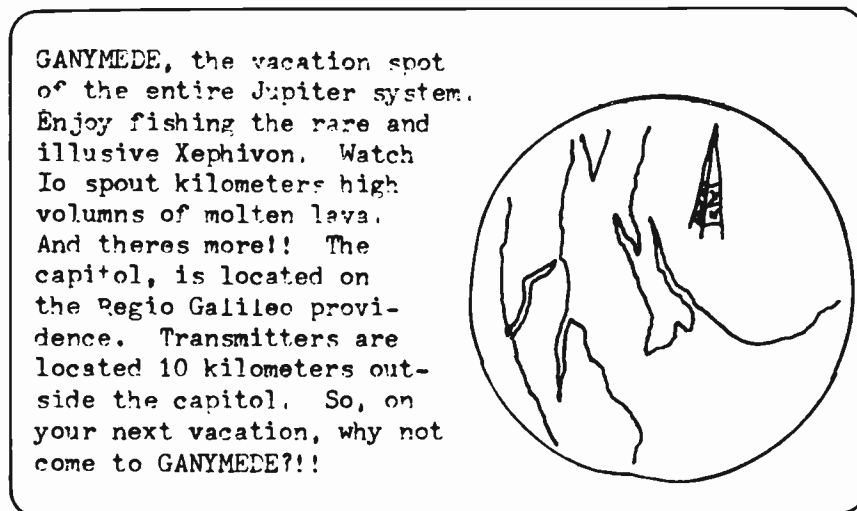


Fig. 3-5. Radio Ganymede's QSLs say they are glad to know their broadcasts are heard so well even though their transmitter is located millions of kilometers from Earth.

Radio Garbanzo: Fearless Fred's station was first heard in late spring 1988 with little music and large amounts of comedy segments. Radio Garbanzo has not been on the air for a long time, but if it continues to transmit new shows, it might rival the Voice of Laryngitis and Radio North Cost International for quality of fast-paced, home-produced comedy programming.

Global American Network: (aka **GAN** and **WGAN**). Although it has operated only several times during holidays, GAN's listeners have often commented that the station is the most professional pirate on the air. In an unusual break from comedy, music, or esoteric satirical programming, GAN remains serious, usually playing features about offshore European broadcasters. Unfortunately, GAN has only been reported on shortwave during holidays several years ago.

Radio Highlander: As might be expected, this was a theme station built around Scottish highlander music. Only popping up two or three times on 41 meters in 1983 and 1984, the announcer faked a Scottish accent and claimed to be broadcasting "for free Scotsmen everywhere."

Humpty Dumpty Broadcasting Corporation: The programming of this 1985 shortwave pirate failed to live up to its interesting name. HDBC operated especially as a vehicle for pirate DXers to get more QSL cards, regularly running spin-off stations, such as Reggae Radio. Unfortunately, the spin-off pseudo-stations provided little interest aside from sending out QSL cards.

Radio Idiot: Another mostly-music pirate, Radio Idiot featured blocks of rock songs by the same artist during their two-week long career in September 1984. The announcer thanked KMA, WIMP, and KQRP over the air, so operation might have been linked with any of these stations.

KBBR: Abraham the Alien broadcasted music frequently on various meter bands for a short time in the late summer of 1985. Upon an FCC raid in September, authorities noted that Abraham was previously known as Dr. X and Captain Crazy (see KQRP and KRZY).

KBIR: A call sign used by two apparently unrelated stations in 1983 and 1984. The first was heard several times in 1983 on 3240 kHz with easy-listening music and an announced frequency of 1620 kHz.

The second, "Buccaneer International Radio," was heard from coast to coast during one broadcast on 41 meters in the summer of 1984. Mostly novelty music and comedy skits were featured on the second KBIR.

KBFA: "Broadcasters of Free America." Although this one has operated at least several times per year since 1984, few shortwave listeners have ever heard it because of its oddball frequency, 8000 kHz. KBFA must be the longest-running station to ask for reports through *Popular Communications* magazine and never get a real maildrop.

KFAT: "The fat one." In 1983 and 1984, KFAT offered country and western music with fake commercials from the Southern California area on 1560 kHz and 41 meters shortwave. Later, KFAT was probably always relayed by Secret Mountain Laboratory on shortwave. The station has not been heard since 1986, but because Secret Mountain Laboratory is still active, KFAT might return again in the future.

KKMO: "The music machine for the Midwest." As the slogan suggests, KKMO programmed rock music with occasional identifications. After broadcasting actively for several weeks on 7420 kHz, KKMO was caught by the FCC in the late summer of 1985.

KLS (Fig. 3-6): "Key Largo Shortwave." Claiming to have been a long-time FM pirate, KLS operated regularly throughout much of 1984 and 1985 with hard rock music. The transmitter's audio was terrible, so few listeners clearly heard the announcements.

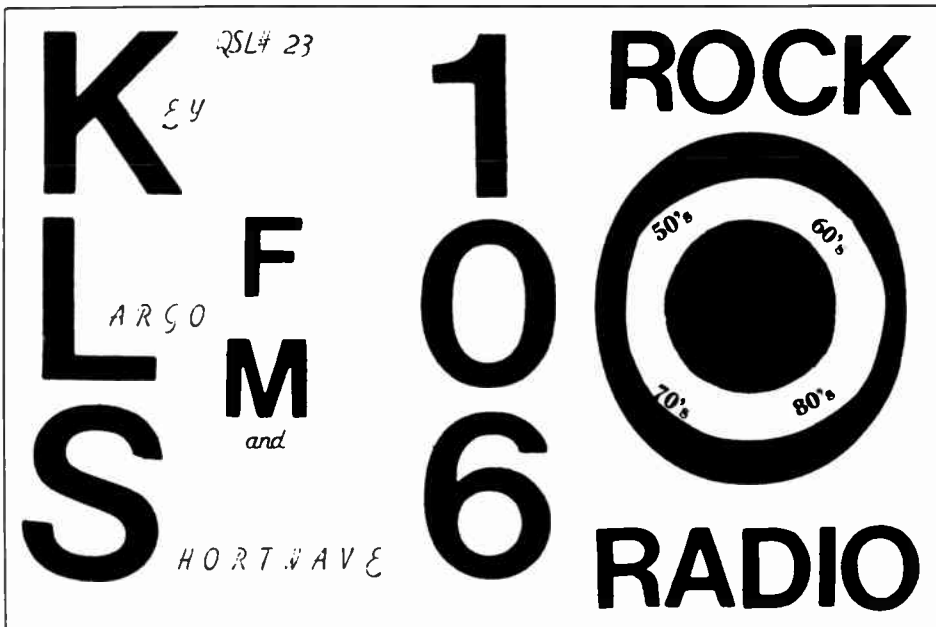


Fig. 3-6. KLS operated regularly throughout 1984 and 1985, but few people clearly heard the programming due to transmitter problems.

KMA: "The rock of the pirates." Dr. Why? played rock music, fake commercials, read listener letters, and editorialized on various shortwave subjects. The station closed after a year of sporadic broadcasting because Dr. Why? claimed he had to sell his transmitter to pay the electric bill.

KNBS: "Cannibis free radio" and "the station with your mind in mind." Phil Muzik and guests play a variety of rock music and fake commercials mixed with liberal political and social commentaries about the use of marijuana. KNBS actively supports the decriminalization of marijuana. The station has regularly operated since early 1985.

KOLD: "OLDies radio." Of course, the music of choice on KOLD is the oldies format (mostly popular 1950s songs). KOLD has popped up with occasional broadcasts on shortwave and 1620 kHz AM during the holiday season since 1984.

KPRC: "Pirate Radio Central." From 1982 to 1984, Pirate Joe and guests from other New York City stations operated a high-powered professional pirate on 1616 kHz. The controversial mix of liberal ideologies (against war, nuclear weapons, the draft, United States foreign policy, etc.), telephone calls, and 1960s pop music were heard as far away from their Northern Atlantic seaboard location as Kansas and Oklahoma. The May 18, 1985 issue of *Billboard* noted that FCC agents in Belfast, Maine found that KPRC signals were "coming" from a building that housed the antenna of WOZW, a legal AM station owned by Allan Weiner. Although Weiner denied the charges, the FCC revoked his licenses (see Radio Newyork International and KPF-941).

KQRO: (See CFTN)

KQRP: "Outlaws of broadcasting." Dr. X operated this widely heard pirate on various frequencies in the 60-, 48-, 41-, 31-, 25-, and 19-meter bands during the first nine months of 1984. An interesting variety of music, listener letters, and ole-time radio programs were featured. After operating for four straight hours on shortwave one night in late September, KQRP called it quits, but they said they would return under a different name (see **KRZY** and **KBBR**).

KQSB: Between 1982 and 1985, Uncle Ralph and Phrank Phurter operated one of America's most professional hobby pirates; a sort of hobby version of Radio Clandestine. Broadcasts appeared in many different shortwave meter bands for about 15 or 20 minutes of tight, homemade comedy skits and a few songs. This mutation of pirate programming has since become one of the most popular formats and is representative of

North American shortwave broadcasting. Unfortunately, KQSB was rarely active after July 1984 and has since disappeared.

KROK: "The ROck of the pirates" and "the worst of the pirates." KROK started in late 1984 with an oldies music format identical to KOLD. The Fox and Leroy, main announcers, began to loosen up the programming after being named one of the worst pirates in the 1985 pirate popularity poll conducted in the *ACE*. Thus, they began using the second slogan. KROK has rarely been active on AM or shortwave since late 1985.

KRZY: "Crazy Radio." Captain Crazy, Joe Cool, and Blackie the Dog operated the most active pirate from October 1984 until they were busted in March 1985. KRZY did benefit the free radio scene with its active broadcasting, low-power tests, and mailbag programs. But the station was rated the second worst North American pirate (behind the Voice of Tomorrow) in the *ACE*'s 1985 pirate popularity poll (see **KQRP** and **KBBR**).

KTGR: "Galactic Radio." Only heard several times in Summer 1983 and March 1984 with hard rock music and features on silverboxing (an electronic method of manipulating the telephone company for free calls). Due to weekday broadcasts, KTGR was heard by few listeners except for one program aired in the St. Patrick's Day 1984 pirate fest.

Voice of Laryngitis (Fig. 3-7): "The best damn radio station you'll ever hear." The Huxley family art players operated this pirate, named the best station in the *ACE* popularity poll in 1986. Begun in 1983, the Voice of Laryngitis quickly set new standards for comedy pirate productions. Instead of just offering fake commercials, the Voice of Laryngitis produced professional skits, some of which lasted over 10 minutes long. The station has continued to broadcast several times per year on shortwave, although no new programming has been produced since 1986.

Radio Lymph Node International: Its host, the Lizard, plays pop music and sometimes makes rather strange comments. A few shortwave broadcasts have been made since the station's first airing in 1985.

Radio Mauser Worldwide: Taking a small step away from other music-oriented pirates, Radio Mauser Worldwide featured mainly album sides from the "space" and "acid" groups, Yes and the Grateful Dead. Identifying the station's name often confused listeners. In fact, it was not until near the end of their broadcasting career six months later that the station was positively identified.

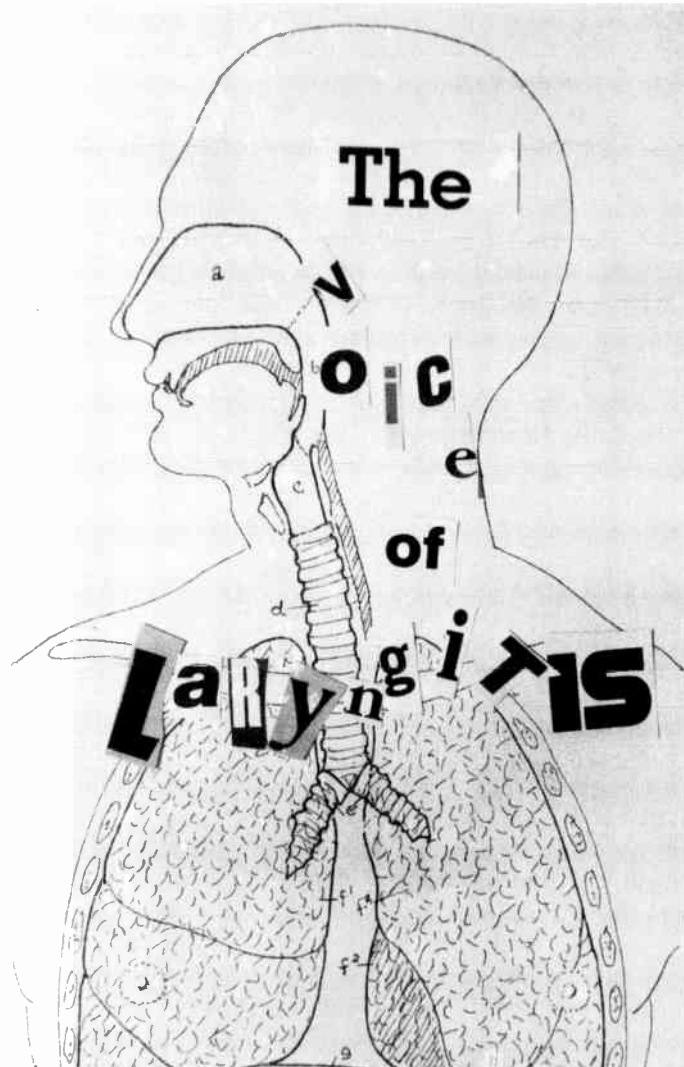


Fig. 3-7. *The lucky listener may still have a chance to hear the Voice of Laryngitis, often considered the most creative and professional pirate to operate from North America.*

Medieval Radio: A pirate with a heavy metal music format, Medieval Radio continued with its middle ages atmosphere by using lots of King Arthur-style jargon and playing ancient battle sound effects in the background of all announcements. The station was only heard at several points in 1984 and 1985.

Radio Morania: What was originally one of the most mysterious was actually found to be a cassette parody sold in 1972 through an electronics magazine. Radio Morania spoofed international shortwave broadcasters from totalitarian governments so it fit the format of many North American pirates. Although the program was heard occasionally from 1982, it has not been relayed since the mystery was uncovered in 1985.

Munchkin Radio: Only heard several times in 1983 and 1984, Munchkin Radio featured very short (8- to 15-minute programs of comedy music and fake commercials. The Wizard spoke only to identify the station with heavy reverb on his voice. This station was quite similar in programming and broadcasting style to Radio Free Wave.

New Wave Radio International: Occasionally in 1983 and 1984, NWRI broadcasted marathon sessions of new-wave music on shortwave from the West Coast. Originally tightly formatted, the station began to loosen up with jokes and talk from several announcers.

Radio North Coast International: "Voice of the Great Lakes." Heir to the thrones of KQSB and the Voice of Laryngitis, RNCI was voted the best pirate in the ACE popularity poll for 1988. Captain Willy has operated one of the most professional music/fake commercial/short comedy stations in North America. The station frequently claims to operate "from the U.S.S. Sphincter in the polluted Great Lakes." Although RNCI has been infrequently heard for several years, they usually show up on holidays above the AM, 80, 41, and 25 meter bands.

Radio North Star International: "King of the shortwave jungle." Using an odd frequency, 13760 kHz, Radio North Star International operated frequently during the afternoon hours in 1982 and 1983. The station played lots of music and aired simple IDs from a professional-sounding announcer until caught by the FCC in August 1983.

Radio Nova International: Presumably this was a cassette-only, relayed pirate because its several programs were widely reported in June 1985, but not since. Radio Nova International was probably operated by pirate listeners because it was relayed in Europe before it found American air-time (few nonpirate DXers have the addresses of European pirates that are willing to relay programs) and the station printed a variety of professional-quality QSL cards and pennants.

Radio Paradise International: Low-key, but dependable throughout 1983, Radio Paradise International played rock music interspersed with light talk and shortwave listening programs. Despite operating several times

per month, the station was reported by few listeners because of its poor use of frequencies—first 6225 kHz, then 6900 kHz, and finally 7300 kHz (after the sign-off of Radio Tirana Albania).

Pirate Radio New England (PRN): From 1979 to 1983, AM listeners across the Northeast were treated to professional-quality call-in programs from PRN. Although the FCC spent thousands of dollars trying to locate “PRN mountain” in 1979, the station was never even tracked to the proper state.

Voice of the Rainbow: “A spectrum of music on shortwave.” Since 1985, the Voice of the Rainbow has operated once or twice per year on shortwave or AM. Announcer Roy G. Biv has aired comedy and music programs that are apparently well produced. However, few listeners have ever heard the station to provide adequate information.

Rebel Music Radio: A 1983 AM holiday pirate from the New York City area. With similar political sentiments as KPRC, Rebel Music Radio played antimilitary music and commentaries.

Radio Newyork International (RNI): “The wet one.” Five days of a transmitting adventure from off the coast of Long Island, New York gave Allan Weiner, J. P. Ferraro, and the rest of the crew publicity, media exposure, and a court case. The offshore broadcaster was scheduled to return to the air in the spring of 1988 but still has not broadcasted at this writing (see KPRC).

Samurai Radio: “The voice of oriental America.” Samurai Radio was a popular music, comedy, and phone-call shortwave pirate that operated between 1978 and 1985. The station only transmitted once per year until 1984, when Samurai was widely heard on a regular basis. Although it has been inactive for some time, owner and operator Eddie Currents plans to return again.

Secret Mountain Laboratory: Active and widely heard on shortwave since 1984, SML plays a variety of music and relays several pirates, including KFAT and the Voice of Bob. Unlike most music-oriented stations, Secret Mountain Laboratory produces high-quality interesting programs of bluegrass, Cajun, and other types of folk music with a few fake commercials thrown in. Although Secret Mountain Laboratory appeared to have faded away by 1987, it returned with new programming in 1988.

Radio Sine Wave: “Mathematical radio.” Dr. Calculator broadcasted as the national station from the mythical land of Microchip City “where TRS-

80s, VIC-20s, Apples, TI-99s, etc. live as brothers." The pirate operated frequently in 1984 and the first few months of 1985, until the station reported that Dr. Calculator was killed in a coup d'état. While Radio Sine Wave was active, it featured blues and older rock music with fake commercials, skits, and news segments.

Sons of Ireland: An Irish music-only clone of Radio Highlander, Sons of Ireland was heard several times in Spring 1984 on shortwave.

Radio Sound Wave: Announcer RZ frequently broadcasted current pop music, listener comments, and "Verbal Assault" (a brief syndicated underground commentary on a variety of subjects). The station was active from Summer 1984 to Summer 1985 on 7425 kHz USB.

Tangerine Radio: "The voice of revolutionary anarchy in North America." As suggested by the slogan, Tangerine Radio is very political, following anarchist philosophies. Production quality is high, and usually Raunchy Rick plays a variety of music and editorializes on a different subject during each program (i.e. "Work Stinks" and "Adventures in Anarchy"). Active for about a year over 1984 and 1985, Tangerine Radio disappeared but could return according to Raunchy Rick's press releases.

Voice of Tomorrow: Considered a clandestine and not a pirate by most shortwave listeners, the Voice of Tomorrow takes a heavy Klu Klux Klan and Nazi slant with many professionally produced programs mainly about white supremacy. Very unpopular among shortwave listeners, the Voice of Tomorrow's signals on 1616, 6240, 7410, and 15050 kHz have been rumored in several shortwave bulletins to be located in Lynchburg, Virginia. Its transmissions have been widely reported across North America on an active basis since the summer of 1983.

Union City Radio (Fig. 3-8): Disc jockey Mark Taylor played rock music and comedy skits throughout the first eight months of 1985. From signal strength, Union City Radio was probably located in the Western United States or Canada. The station closed down in August, claiming that the operators would be out of the country for a few years while traveling around the world.

Radio USA: "No one rocks the world better than we do." Operated almost every Saturday night throughout the first half of 1983 on 41 meters with rock music, comedy songs, and terrible audio. Mr. Blue Sky returned to the air several times in 1985 with more creative programming, but he has not been heard since. Radio USA still might return according to press releases sent to various shortwave clubs.

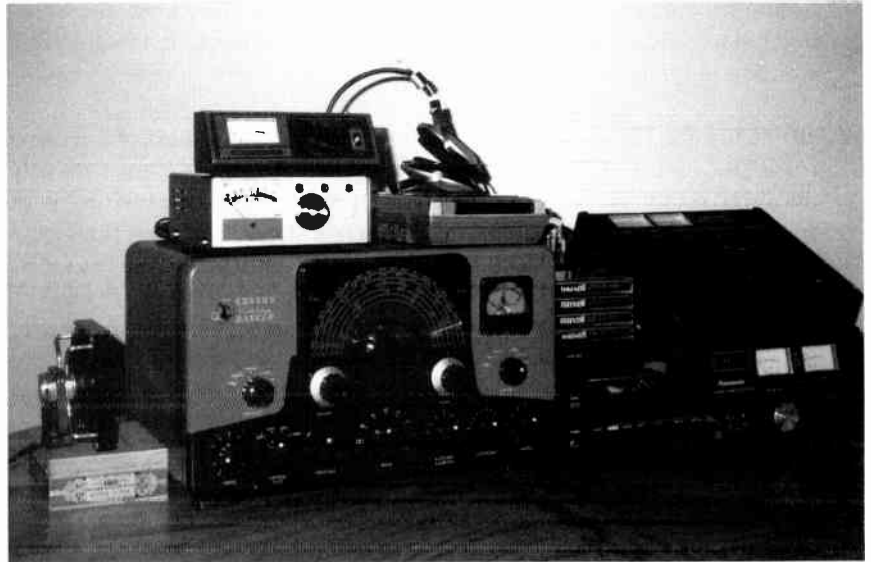


Fig. 3-8. The transmitting and audio equipment from Union City Radio. Note the Johnson Viking Ranger amateur transmitter at left (photo courtesy of Dave Valko).

Voice of Venus: Station was started by 15-year-old Scott Wild to help replace the Voice of the Voyager in 1979. Rather amateurish for several years, the Voice of Venus returned in 1982 with a tight format of new-wave and technopop music and comedy skits. Widely heard across the country until 1985, Scott Wild either lost time and interest in the station or feared an FCC raid.

WBBH: Heard several times on 4860 kHz in June 1984 with classical music, this second generation WBBH obviously was a copy of the 1966 station. The second WBBH even copied the original by claiming to broadcast from "the Courtland School of Music in Rutgers, New Jersey."

WBRI: "Power radio." Like many Pirates, WBRI uses the classic rock music and comedy format, but their version is a bit weirder and faster paced than usual. This might be another cassette-relayed pirate since the high-quality programs have only been heard several times in 1985 and 1987. Unlike most pirates using the Washington, D.C. maildrop, WBRI will respond to letters and reception reports directly.

WBST: "The BeaST." Well known throughout the pirate listening community, WBST only broadcasts on Friday the 13th and on Halloween. Johnny Wretch and Mr. Nasty stick with the ghoulish theme by playing music based on the same subjects, horror movie segments, and adver-

tisements. Although the announced frequency was 666 kHz, the transmitters are always set in the 41 meter band. Beginning in 1983, WBST was active for several years, but it has not been heard in recent years.

WCPR: "Christian Pirate Radio." While unrelated to the station of the same name from the 1970s, this pirate also operates from the New York City area above the AM band. WCPR began broadcasting in late 1987 with some music but mostly obscure Christian talk shows recorded from legal stations. Like its cohort, WENJ, it is mainly active in the winter months.

WCPU: "Silicon valley radio." Even more computer oriented than Radio Sine Wave, WCPU operated several times in 1985 with all songs and announcements generated on a computer. Obviously, this one was more interesting to read about than to listen to.

WDX (Fig. 3-9): "The best in the world." Pirate Mike and Pirate Jack have operated this New York City area AM station infrequently since 1983 with a professional phone-in and music program. WDX is one of the most professional pirates on the air and could build a large audience, but the operators only broadcast around holidays (usually Thanksgiving and Christmas). This station has not been heard in nearly two years, but in light of their schedule, they very well might return again.

WENJ: "New Jersey's best pirate." Although Jack Beane has taken several short breaks from operating this pirate, WENJ has been active above the AM dial in the New Jersey area since 1967. For years, the 1960s music and call-in pirate was only heard in a limited range on the central East Coast. However, WENJ has bounced in on radios from Ontario to Florida since Jack built a 150-watt RF amplifier in the summer of 1987. Jack Beane should continue to be widely heard across the East Coast in the future.

WGAT: "Rebel radio network." Dr. Klystron has only been heard several times since early 1986 on shortwave with a variety of 1960s music. The station appears to be in the southern United States because Dr. Klystron speaks with an accent from that region.

WGUT: This is another professional call-in AM station from the New York City area. Gus Guts and Huey Hughes operated several times in 1982 and 1983 with loop calls from across the Mid Atlantic states. Because of format and style, WGUT was probably connected in some way with WFAT.

WDX

PIRATE RADIO 1620 KHz

QSL CONFIRMING RECEPTION OF WDX RADIO 1620 KHz AM ON 1/2/84 FROM 04:14 TO 05:00 GMT BY Andrew Yoder

THE STAFF AND MANAGEMENT OF WDX THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT OF PIRATE RADIO EVERYWHERE. WDX WELCOMES COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING OUR TECHNICAL QUALITY AND PROGRAMMING, AS WELL AS QUESTIONS OF MEMBERSHIP AND OPERATIONS OF THE FUBAR NETWORK. WE ALSO WELCOME REQUESTS FOR CIRCUITS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

73's Pirates Mike Christian & Jack Slater

"THE BEST IN THE WORLD"

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WDX OPERATES
a homemade oscillator and transmitter into an assorted array of antennas.

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PIRATE RADIO
HIGH FIDELITY
1620 KHz
THE TALL TOWER PIRATE
WDX IS OWNED AND OPERATED BY THE TINY ISLAND BROADCASTING GROUP, INC.

Fig. 3-9. WDX often impressed its listeners across eastern North American with professional phone-call broadcasts on holidays.

WHMR: "Heavy Metal Radio." This call sign and slogan was used by two different stations in 1984 and 1985 on shortwave. The first was operated by a novice ham in September 1984. Although he claimed to try to avoid the FCC, he announced his home telephone number for musical requests.

The second WHMR was also centered around heavy metal music. Like the one from 1984, it operated for only one month (February 1985). However, this station featured a much different and more professional-sounding announcer.

WHOT: "The HOT one." This was a very active station with professional call-ins and 1960s music programs from the New York City area. Pete Sayek, Jim Nasium, and Hank Hayes operated WHOT on FM stereo in the early 1980s, but the station added an outlet above the AM band throughout 1986 and early 1987. Veterans of many pirate operations in the New York City area, Jim Nasium and Hank Hayes took some time off from WHOT in 1987 to broadcast on Radio Newyork International. The WHOT FM outlet is still active in New York City.

WILD: "The WILD one on shortwave." Little is known about this pirate, which was only heard once or twice every year from 1983 to 1986. WILD usually played synthesized music with simple announcements.

WIMP (Fig. 3-10): "Nerd radio for the Midwest" and "Kids playing radio." WIMP averaged one broadcast per month for one year in 1984 and 1985 with rock music, listener letters, commentaries, and comedy segments. Truly a hobby-oriented station, WIMP often editorialized on the various issues of pirate radio until it gradually disappeared in spring 1985.

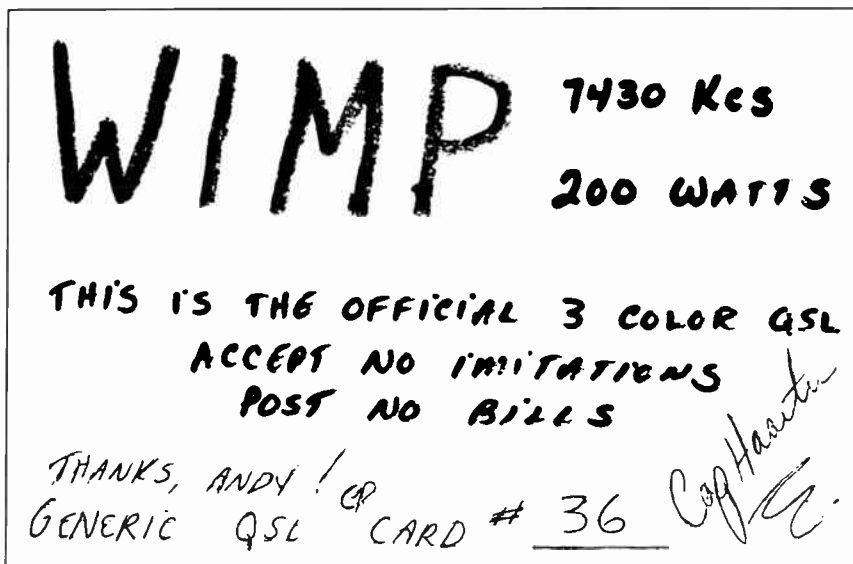


Fig. 3-10. Cap Hasitor from WIMP directed his programming of reading listener letters, commentaries, and comedy segments toward the pirate listener. The station gradually disappeared by the spring of 1985.

WKUE: "The greatest hits of all time." Professional audio and technical quality stand out in this mostly 1960s music pirate hosted by Mr. Koffee or Laughing Bill. WKUE has been widely reported since their commencement of activity on shortwave in October 1985. The station is still active with its cloned programming of 1960s "hit radio."

WMTV: "South Florida's best rock." Another clone of legal radio, WMTV played standard hard rock music similar to FM rock outlets in most cities. The station also claimed to operate above the AM band, on FM, and on television channel three. According to the station personnel, all of the outlets except shortwave normally relayed MTV. WMTV was very active throughout 1984 and 1985.

WOIS: This was a new-wave music pirate that operated from 1982 to 1983 on shortwave. Tom A. Hawk often offered a loop telephone number for calls and sometimes read listener letters. In fact, during one of the last WOIS broadcasts, a list of every listener that had ever written to the station was read.

WPBR: "Pig Boy Radio." The Messenger and the Soldier were heard at times in 1984 and 1986 with dry parody talk programs. An interlude signal of "Old McDonald" played on a guitar separated programs such as "Farm Report," "Pig Boy Career Corner," and "Marxism For Beginners."

WRAM: "RAM radio." Noted for its poor audio, frequent broadcasts, and desire to play entire album sides, WRAM was busted in Levittown, Pennsylvania in June 1983. It seems likely that this and an earlier WRAM from 1981 that also operated on shortwave were the same station.

WSWL: "Purple pumpkin radio." The latest in the long string of pirates using the "purple pumpkin radio" slogan first used by a Baltimore, Maryland pirate in 1970. WSWL has operated infrequently with fake ads and rock or comedy music above the AM band since 1984.

WYMN: "Women's radio" and "testosterone-free radio." As the slogan suggests, WYMN is a completely female-run pirate station. Pirate Cindy and Pirate Jenny produce slick programs consisting of country and western music with fake commercials for shortwave. WYMN has been active at times since December 1984.

Radio Woodland International: "The voice of nature." In a change of pace from the usual styles of North American free radio, Radio Woodland International featured idealistic nature-oriented programming. Jack-in-the-Wood often "walked" through various national parks, describing them and playing music with consistent themes. The station was one of many to operate frequently at the end of 1984 and through the first six months of 1985.

Zeppelin Radio Worldwide: This was another station that began operating near the end of 1984 and continued throughout 1985. Unlike most of the stations, ZRW has continued broadcasting infrequently on shortwave and above AM throughout 1988. Ze Count originally played a variety of rock music but has since expanded programming to include many home-produced fake commercials. Lately, Zeppelin Radio Worldwide has operated only on holidays. 📻



4

Inside Pirate Radio

Pirate operators risk a fine as great as \$10,000 and a maximum of one year in prison, so what is the attraction for such a dangerous hobby? Some might find it a thrill to broadcast for that very reason; others offer more idealistic answers. "We believe that the airwaves belong to the people," says Jack Beane, owner and main operator of WENJ, "and we should have the right to transmit our own shows."

Of course, federal laws contradict this opinion and encourage radio enthusiasts to apply for a station license in an area with open broadcasting markets. Since applications, lawyers, insurance, licenses, and equipment can easily run even a small station into millions of dollars, few individuals ever have the opportunity to own one. When this is the case, the government authorities believe that every radio broadcasting enthusiast should track down a job within the industry to satisfy their interest in the hobby. Through this reasons, in the FCC suggests that pirate radio operators are merely frustrated disc jockeys who, too unprofessional or unreliable to hold a job within the industry, instead turn to unlicensed broadcasting to "break it big."

WENJ is a pirate broadcaster (Fig. 4-1), not because its operators failed to succeed in the industry, but because of the lack of individual creativity there. "I like doing my own shows," says Beane. "It's not like being a professional DJ, where they pick out all of the records for you." To illustrate these opinions, he continued by telling of a close friend who was employed as an announcer at a local station. Once, in a burst of enthusiasm, he aired several

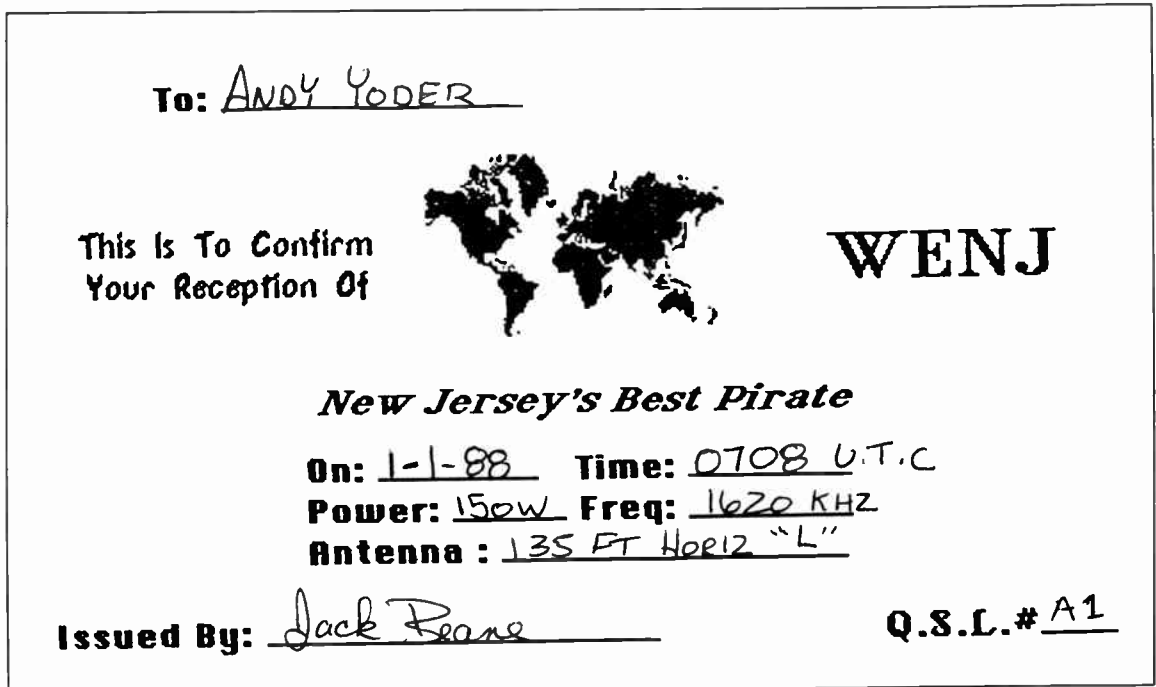


Fig. 4-1. WENJ operates without a license because of a lack of individual freedom within the broadcasting industry.

songs not on the playlist for that hour. Immediately, the program director called him into his office. It just so happened that the station technician heard the songs and told on him. The program director notified the announcer that if he played nonplaylist songs again, he would be fired.

Although WENJ, when not taking phone calls, plays a tight format of 1960s pop music (not uncommon to that of commercial "oldies" stations), they still find the formats too restrictive (Fig. 4-2). "I just want to go on the air and have a good time," says Beane. "It's our hobby." Like the other New York City area pirate AM stations, he believes the point is not in the message of the broadcast, but just that by the First Amendment, anyone who wants to be on the air, should.

If anyone knows about trying to broadcast without a license over the years, it should be Beane, who started WENJ in 1967. His longevity has proven that not only is the station dedicated to pirate radio, but that they also take very effective measures to avoid the FCC. For many years, WENJ operated as a community pirate, beginning with 5 watts, then stepping up to 25 watts, and finally jumping up to the present 150 watts in 1987. Although WENJ has been featured in several New Jersey newspaper articles, on the whole, the station has avoided the often deadly spotlight of the mass media.



Fig. 4-2. A view of the entire transmitter and part of the record library at WENJ.

By using low-powered transmitters, WENJ keeps its audience small, but then the FCC has never focused their resources on WENJ as they had on WCPR and WFAT in the last half of the 1970s.

Nationwide obscurity has certainly been a beneficial factor to Jack Beane, but his other security precautions help as well. At times, WENJ has operated nearly every day on frequencies slightly above the AM and FM bands. But whenever publicity becomes too strong and the heat presses in from the FCC, the station will disappear for as long as several years. Unlike other stations who either stay on the air until getting caught or lose interest, WENJ has always returned each time, gaining equipment, knowledge, and patience with pirate broadcasting.

Another factor that contributes to the longevity of WENJ is the secrecy of the station's operators. Secrecy is often the downfall of local pirates; once a few people in the community know the identities behind a particular station, then everyone, including the authorities, do as well. Even though WENJ has operated as a community station for over 20 years, almost no one other than staff members Jack Beane and Bobby Dee have ever visited their secret

broadcasting studios. Fortunate listeners occasionally receive photos or even videotapes of the studio, but still, friends and other pirates are banned from visiting it.

Much of the station's secrecy habit was due to the lack of a national pirate press or even the recognition of pirating as a hobby for over a decade. Until Beane heard and talked with WFAT from New York City in the late 1970s, he never realized that other pirates existed on a large scale. The technique of dialing loop telephone numbers was passed on to WENJ by WFAT and used frequently until the numbers were all gradually closed by the mid 1980s. With the loop, WENJ was finally able to make contact with its audience.

Some of WENJ's most interesting contacts with listeners and radio enthusiasts have occurred rather unexpectedly. One day in the summer of 1987, while pirate radio was still slumping, Beane sat tuning through the Citizen's Band. After passing over several uninteresting conversations, he found a hobbyist from the New York City area telling of how impossible it had been to hear any pirate stations. Beane told him to listen to 1620 kHz and he would find a pirate. To the listener's surprise, a carrier and then music popped up on the frequency, and he logged his first pirate, WENJ.

He and the radio listener stayed in contact after that conversation, but at first, Beane contended that a "friend" of his actually operated WENJ. Finally, after being assured the listener was both safe and striving to operate a free radio station of his own, Beane admitted that he actually ran the pirate. By that time, the new 150-watt transmitter was nearly completed, so the two set out to construct equipment for the new station. Both transmitters were completed by the summer's end in 1987, and a new era in pirate radio was born across the Eastern seaboard.

Beane's new friend experienced many trials and difficulties, but he eventually got his station on the air. Mr. Magoo built and rebuilt his homebrewed 35-watt transmitter before getting it to work properly (Fig. 4-3). In the autumn, listeners across the East began reporting his signals on 1620 kHz. Before the final stage of the transmitter was completed, it only ran low power; station personnel used the call sign WMNJ. When the final amplifier stage was completed, the name was changed to WCTR, "Christian Truth Ratio." The first two DXers (including this author) reported the station "WCPR," however. So Mr. Magoo finally settled on that name and added the slogan, "the Voice of Christian Truth and Freedom." (Fig. 4-4)

As could be expected from the WCPR slogans, its format and motive for operation differs greatly from the average telephone talk and pop music stations from the New York City area. "We just try to awaken the world to the truth that this world is sick," says Mr. Magoo. "This world is going to hell." Not a message normally associated with someone named after a cartoon character!



Fig. 4-3. WCPR uses this homemade 35-watt transmitter and other audio equipment (the unnamed housecat apparently does not hold a position within the station).

Motivating Magoo to broadcast without a license is a love for radio and intense Christian beliefs. Taking an alternative view to the popular mass media preachers and programs, WCPR "is totally opposed to organized religion" and believes in "a personal relationship with God based on salvation through Jesus Christ." Magoo's personal philosophies are reflected in the WCPR programming, which thus far has primarily consisted of several syndicated Christian talk shows that receive little attention from legal stations.

At this writing, WCPR has not prerecorded any in-house programming or even worked with live shows, although that is their goal. "I haven't done much good with this station so far; just a lot of playing around, seeing how things work, and finding out what I'm doing," says Magoo. He also plans to add programs dealing with health food, alternative medicine, and free radio in the future, in addition to the standard Christian messages. But at this point,

QSL

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." John 8:36

WCPR



THE VOICE OF TRUTH AND FREEDOM



This confirms your reception of WCPR
Date April 2-3, 1988 UTC Time 2300-0015+ UTC
Freq. 1620 kHz Power 35 Watts
Ant. kwave (120ft) longwire Mode AM
Thanks for your report.

DJ "Mr. Magoo"

73a from the New York City area!

Fig. 4-4. The new WCPR from the New York City area takes an unusual approach to free radio and fills its QSL cards with Bible verses.

the station has neither the equipment nor the technical knowledge to do so. "We don't even have a good microphone or a mixer," laments Magoo. "I can't even talk over music."

Since the Bible instructs Christians to obey the laws of the country, some critics might attack the station for rebelling against the government. Magoo claims legality, not under the laws of this nation, but through a larger organization; the United Nations. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, says "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Although the philosophies behind WENJ and WCPR clash radically, both operators overcome the friction with a dose of humor. "We don't like each other's programming very much," says Magoo. He cannot understand the purpose of merely playing music and Jack Beane refers to WCPR's programming as "talk show garbage." Both operators verbally attack each other, yet both laugh when attacked. At other times, Beane taunts on a variety of subjects while Magoo preaches and threatens to win him over to Christianity.

Equipment and Operations

Slightly modified amateur radio equipment from the 1950s or 1960s is the common choice when pirates find it necessary to buy a transmitter. Buying new parts is expensive unless the hobbyist already has a large supply. Many small problems can occur, and a great amount of time is necessary to build equipment themselves.

Although building equipment is often more trouble than it is worth, the hobbyists find a fortunate problem when buying used equipment. AM-only transmitters are obsolete for ham operators, so used ones are inexpensive. The problem is that AM-only equipment is no longer manufactured. Amplitude modulation offers a clear signal for listeners, but it is less efficient and occupies a larger bandwidth (crowding the other stations). Single-sideband (SSB) modulation is a must for any ham who desires to make contact with more than a few other AMers because of the compatibility of the two modes. An SSB station received on an AM radio sounds garbled, and an AM station received on an SSB radio is intelligible but distorted and tougher to tune in. Fortunately, most companies now produce their transceivers with both SSB and AM modes, but even the least expensive of this type of equipment costs at least \$600.

AM was the standard modulation in use by hams up until the 1960s and 1970s, so transmitters produced before those decades were not equipped for the SSB mode. Therefore, since anyone wanting to talk to more than a few

hams or be successful in DX contests must have access to SSB; the AM equipment is virtually useless to most. Today, classic transmitters such as the Heathkit DX-60, Johnson Viking Ranger, and the Hallicrafters HT-37 are commonly available for between \$50 and \$100. Other higher-powered models like the Johnson Viking Valiant, Johnson Invader, and Heathkit DX-100 are easily available for less than \$175. Prices for this equipment are extremely reasonable, considering that transmitters capable of covering the United States can be found for less than \$50.

Of course, the less expensive AM transmitters are bound to be less complicated, lower powered, and sometimes of lesser quality. Also, since the transmitters were intended for two-way communications only, not broadcasting, the frequency response in the audio section is often clipped. If this is the case, only the midrange will remain, leaving the audio rather muffled. However, AM hams and pirates interested in high fidelity have circulated simple plans to modify these transmitters to attain near broadcast-quality audio. Many pirates use unmodified equipment (with audio ranging from poor to good), but Union City Radio, Radio Clandestine, Secret Mountain Laboratory, and many others have beefed up their audio to sound cleaner than some legal shortwave broadcasters.

As for the audio equipment in a station, most pirates use their personal stereos and add other pieces, if necessary. Those lacking stereo equipment usually add a few inexpensive pieces, for example portable stereos instead of cassette decks, a mixer, and a microphone. While a variety of stereo pieces and microphones will inexpensively provide a quality performance, the Radio Shack audio mixer line has been the most economical and necessary addition to free radio stations. Nearly every North American pirate owns at least one Radio Shack mixer to blend their audio sources. Many stations have found that used or inexpensive audio pieces, if skillfully used, can produce programming that makes personnel from legal stations listen with envy.

WCPR and WENJ represent both extremes in equipping a studio. WCPR takes the next-to-nothing approach, using only one double cassette deck, a receiver, and a Mr. Microphone for programs. Often legal radio shows are recorded from the receiver, played back over the air on cassette, and identified with the Mr. Microphone. Instead of hooking the Mr. Microphone directly into the transmitter, Mr. Magoo uses it wireless and runs it through an FM radio. Output from the radio is then pumped to the transmitter. "It sounds bad," says Jack Beane. "Whenever the Mr. Microphone drifts off frequency, the legal FM stations fade in over his announcements."

WENJ, on the other hand, has stocked up a studio comparable to small FM stations. Music sources include two turntables, two stereo reel-to-reel tape decks, a cassette deck, and a cart machine (Fig. 4-5). To transfer and process the audio into the transmitter, WENJ uses an eight-channel mixer and a compressor/limiter. Although most of this equipment is familiar to the general public, cart machines and compressor/limiters are not frequently



Fig. 4-5. *The audio portion of WENJ—two reel-to-reel tape decks, an equalizer, a compressor/limiter, two turntables, and a mixer.*

used outside legal radio station studios. Cart machines play endless-loop tape cartridges that usually contain promo spots, commercials, or sound effects. Compressor/limiters compress the audio to strengthen weak sounds and limit the volume to a preset level.

Both WCPR and WENJ received their equipment from a variety of sources. The stations frequently picked up their transmitting and testing equipment and parts at ham fests in the summer. All of WCPR's audio supplies were bought for personal reasons before Mr. Magoo became interested in pirate radio. Most of Jack Beane's audio equipment, on the other hand, was bought exclusively for filling a pirate studio. One expensive piece, the cart machine, was given to them free of charge from a local legal station that was updating their older equipment.

Other pirates across the country usually own studios ranging between that of WCPR and WENJ. The various essentials are found by operators anywhere; in junk piles, electronic and stereo stores, radio stations, and classified ads. Some borrow from friends or neighbors. With the accessibility of all

sorts of equipment in North America, most pirates can pull the resources together to build a decent studio.

Communications

New York City piracy boomed in 1976, but only after the operators of the original WCPR discovered loop telephone numbers. This put pirates in direct contact with their listeners for the first time ever on a regular basis. Of course, the immediate gratification of participating in conversations with listeners combined with the added creativity of programming from outside sources made pirating more enjoyable than ever. For nearly a decade, pirates on all frequency bands took calls through the security of the loop lines. The telephone companies became aware of the activities, and gradually all loops were closed by the mid 1980s. Because of this loss of immediate communications, shortwave and especially AM pirates have suffered.

Telephone call-in pirates in the future might be taking action that will be even more difficult to enforce. Cooperation between WENJ and the new WCPR has discovered the possibilities of using private business answering machines for private broadcasting. This may have a few drawbacks, but it also has a few advantages over the old loop lines. The main drawback is that listeners can only leave messages to the station and not speak directly to the station personnel. The days of heated phone discussions are over.

However, the advantages are encouraging. Using answering machines saves listeners money in telephone charges, provides a quality connection, and guarantees more QSL cards. If the station uses a machine with a toll-free number, then the listener can make free calls. Unlike loop lines, which often only passed audio one-way or were plagued with other assorted problems, this system provides quality connections for listeners to leave messages. Finally, the answering machine numbers are owned by small companies and individuals, not by the telephone company itself, so the security is greater. Since the pirates are less susceptible to tracing when using these lines, more callers can contact the station as often as they want.

Pirating answering machines is illegal because it involves tampering with the property of others. It is not advisable, however, it is not illegal for a listener to call one of the pirated machines.

Actually, the only equipment required to tamper with answering machine systems is a touch-tone telephone. Pirates, when hunting answering machines, first find a business number with one on it. They they figure out the codes for it, so the messages can be played back over the phone. In some cases, the initial message prerecorded by the owner is taped through the telephone and a new one is substituted. After all calls have been recorded, when the broadcast is over, then they are erased and the old initial message is recorded back on to the answering machine through the telephone. When the company checks their back calls on Monday following weekend broadcasts, everything will appear completely normal again.

Considering the number of answering machines operating across the country, it appears likely that stations will continue to use them with little fear of getting caught. Although WCPR and WENJ are known to have been the only pirates to take calls in this manner to date, it seems likely that the practice could become widespread. The low risk factor combined with the increase in personal communications could make "answering machine talk" the new wave of the future for free radio.

WCPR and WENJ have had a cooperation in broadcasting unlike the many secretive and sometimes paranoid pirates that fill the bands. The two stations also coordinate broadcasting schedules like some other pirates that have operated in recent years, but few operators ever do more than that. For the most part, large numbers of pirates do not appear in the same area of the country. Nearly all pirates know at least a few other operators personally, but because of the distances involved, few conversations ever make it past the subject of radio. Mr. Magoo and Jack Beane take it one step further and live as friends.

The two stations featured in this chapter are merely examples of what motivates pirate operators and a few of the experiences they face while starting a station. In most respects, both stations are rather average, but they excel in determination and enthusiasm for the hobby. Surely dozens of other stations that receive a greater emotional response (either positive or negative) for their broadcasts could have been featured, but the goal was not to express the views of the exceptional, just the average.

Additionally, WENJ and WCPR represent different styles and opinions in nearly every facet of their particular stations. The stations differ in their formats, organization, motivations for operations, and future goals. Yet the operators work together despite their differences.

Operations for the two stations should become a bit different in the near future. While both are preparing to return to the air for the winter months, programming and transmitting quality is scheduled to improve. WCPR hopes to finally add self-produced programming on shortwave and AM frequencies. WENJ has begun pretaping shows, and hopes to build another RF amplifier, this time boosting output power to 500 watts. It is anyone's guess as to what will happen in future years to these stations, but one thing is probable—both will continue working on maintaining free radio.

Many past pirates have experienced the same problems and joys as WCPR and WENJ. Likewise, many more will have these same experiences in the future, long after both stations disappear. Since free radio stations do not normally last longer than a few years and are in a constant state of chance, the DXer is advised to keep up with developments—after all, any broadcast could be the last for a pirate station. 📻



5

Europirates

Up until this point, I have concentrated completely on free radio activities from the United States. However, these activities also occur regularly across Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. Europe contains far more unlicensed radio stations than any other area, including North America.

Europe set the trend of pirate radio as offshore stations began sailing into International Waters in the late 1950s. Unlike North America, a continent filled with commercial broadcasters, Europe in its entirety was filled with government-controlled stations. These government stations offered little for the youth. Whenever music programs were aired, they usually consisted of classical or other music considered too "stodgy" to the average teenager. With this programming and advertising void, businessmen, musicians, and radio enthusiasts all sought the possibilities of commercial broadcasting. Unfortunately, a land-based commercial pirate station would quickly be closed down if it operated on a regular basis. At this point, a revolutionary new idea was desperately needed to break the governments' monopoly of the airwaves.

That new idea came to life in summer of 1958 when Radio Mercur (Fig. 5-1) began regular broadcasts on the FM band from a ship off of the Denmark coast. A Danish businessman foresaw the commercial possibilities of a broadcasting station. Undaunted by government regulations against broadcasting, he found a loophole and had a small fishing vessel, the *Cheeta Mercur*, which was fitted with a transmitter and antenna. This ship was then

The story of Radio Mercur

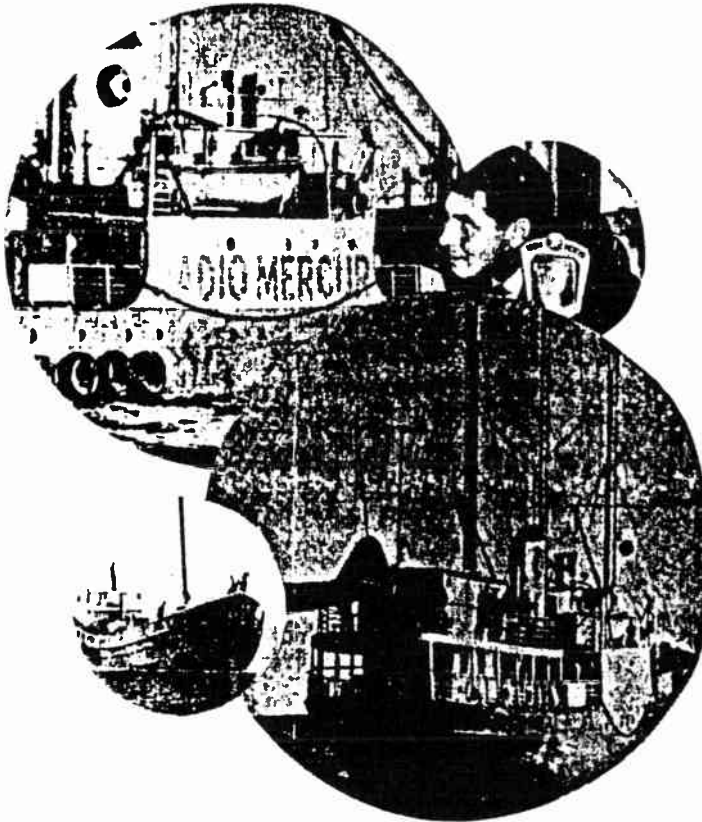


Fig. 5-1. After 25 years with no one broadcasting from international waters, Radio Mercur began operating from off the coast of Denmark in 1958.

sailed into International Waters, where it was anchored and broadcasting began. Within several days, the *Cheeta Mercer's* mast broke and it had to be sailed back into port for repairs. After repairs, the ship returned to its original site and began regular programming.

In 1961, Radio Mercur expanded to two broadcasting ships, the newest weighing 450 tons and equipped with an 8-kilowatt FM transmitter. Although the Danish authorities could not touch a ship broadcasting in International Waters, they did pass a law making it illegal for a resident of Denmark to work on, assist, or advertise on an offshore radio station in 1962.

This move instantly eliminated all Danish free radio. But Radio Mercur lived on—in the hearts of others inspired by the activities, and in Danish government radio. After legislation ended the station, a new government radio network was created following Mercur's format, and many of the old announcers were hired to assist the network.

Just as the pirate activities were coming to a close in Denmark, a "golden era" of offshore broadcasting was beginning in England. The most famous English or worldwide offshore station began in the spring of 1964 as Radio Atlanta. This station operated from a 53-year-old German schooner formerly used by the Swedish pirate, Radio Nord. The ship was renamed *Mi Amigo* and continued broadcasting for two months until it merged with Radio Caroline and accepted that station's name (Fig. 5-2). Caroline became the premier rock station in England because it was one of the first broadcasters to play the "new sounds" in rock music: The Beatles, The Who, and The Rolling Stones.



Fig. 5-2. Radio Caroline made pirate radio popular throughout Europe by featuring the new sounds of The Beatles, The Who, The Kinks, and others (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

The new British rock explosion helped Radio Caroline to reap pirate fame and plunder, but it could not save the station from the government. After nearly a dozen offshore pirates followed Radio Caroline into International Waters off the coast of the United Kingdom, government officials were unnerved. The British Broadcasting Corporation had obviously lost its monopoly throughout the country, much to the dismay of its leaders. This prompted them to start claims that the offshore stations caused interference to the legitimate broadcasters and emergency outlets, along with other propaganda.

After seeing that the rhetoric had not kept listeners from tuning in, they took the matter one step further. In 1967, the British government introduced the Marine Broadcasting Offences Act. The act was similar to those passed throughout Scandinavia in 1962 in that any citizen of the United Kingdom who aided an offshore broadcaster could face stiff fines or imprisonment. Although British offshore broadcasting was virtually destroyed after 1967, Radio Caroline continued with foreign announcers and advertisers.

Strangely enough, Caroline lived through the end of the 1960s and trudged across the entire 1970s as well. Unlike its colleagues from International Waters (Fig. 5-3), Radio Caroline never quit at the sight of bad weather, low revenues, or government intervention. Even the BBC'S diversification into pop music on Radio One, Radio Two, and Radio Three on AM and FM had no effect on Caroline's status. But 16 years of broadcasting from the *Mi Amigo* ended in March 1980 when the ship sank during bad weather in the Thames Estuary.



Fig. 5-3. Belgian Radio Delmare operated from International Waters for a short time in the late 1970s. Today, the station operates regularly on shortwave from the continent.

Just when it was expected that Radio Caroline would finally be gone forever, the owners announced that the station would return with a larger ship, the *Imagine*, with 50-kilowatt transmitters. This was said to be made possible by a large backing of American dollars and advertising help from Wolfman Jack. Although it took longer than originally planned, Caroline returned in late summer 1983 with pop music interspersed with commercials from mostly American advertisers. This activity has continued for the past five years and, in fact, is continuing to grow; Caroline has a new shortwave transmitter on 6215 kHz. This transmitter must be running at least several hundred watts, since Caroline can be tuned in nightly with fair signals across the eastern half of North America (at this writing). If readers want a chance to hear this classic pirate, they should tune in soon; the shortwave transmitter might not be permanent.

One recent offshore station, Lasar 558 (later known as "Lasar 576" and "Lasar Hot Hits") has taken the same route as many of Radio Caroline's colleagues. Started as an American alternative to European radio in a commercially viable area, Lasar began broadcasting from the *MV Communicator* on May 24, 1984, on 558 kHz. Immediately after hitting the airwaves, Lasar 558 became the most popular station in the British Isles, amassing an estimated 6.6 million listeners. One English free radio magazine even suggested that Lasar was "the most popular offshore radio station since the 1960s."

Lasar's popularity was attained through its use of American disc jockeys with a nonstop popular music format. With Europeans craving American-style radio for decades, it is no wonder that an essentially American radio station transplanted in the North Sea would become successful. In fact, the announcers even became celebrities. Many listeners took the time to send letters with comments and music requests to their favorite air personalities.

Sheer success with listeners is no guarantee of a lasting radio operation, however. Lasar's problems stemmed from technical difficulties and off-the-air staff tension. Towards the end of 1985, Lasar's broadcasting vessel *The Communicator* broke away from its moorings. The ship was unable to backtrack, had lost all power, and was simply floating in the North Sea. After narrowly missing a ferry, news services reported that the crew panicked and called the British authorities for help. Soon a government vessel arrived and towed *The Communicator* to port in the United Kingdom. With Lasar Radio in port, the government used anti-offshore broadcasting laws to hold the ship there. For each day off the air, the Lasar investors lost money, and to further complicate matters, the old 558 frequency was taken over by Radio Caroline.

After over a year of absence from the airwaves, Lasar returned to a new frequency, 576 kHz, in December 1986 with strong signals reported across the British Isles. However, the station went through various funding changes and before long, was in need of money. Apparently, the investors felt that pumping more funding into the Lasar project would be unprofitable. Once

again, the station fell silent. Since then Lasar has not returned, and another comeback seems unlikely at this point.

European governments are universally opposed to the concept of pirate radio, especially in the form of offshore stations. Even with this pressure, Radio Caroline has continued improving its signals and technical quality. If more financial backers are willing to duel with the European governments, some future offshore stations might begin operating. Local and international European radio has rarely, if ever, been tagged "creative," so the potential for new formats is a real opportunity for those with the money to experiment.

Land-Based Stations

Once the majority of offshore broadcasters had passed away with the advent of antipirate laws in the late 1960s and early 1970s, radio hobbyists began constructing land-based operations. The new pirates were usually radio and electronics experimenters who built their own transmitting equipment from spare and surplus parts and contacted aspiring announcers to record programs for the station. Other stations featured a crew of announcers and technical engineers working together to produce popular programming and long-lasting operations.

These land-based pirates were essentially a small-scale migration from the ocean. Most of the new broadcasters followed the offshore example by imitating United States top-40 radio. But unlike the offshore stations, the land pirates operated only a few hours per week to avoid detection by the DTI (the equivalent of the FCC in many European countries). Operating in short-wave bands was thought to be less dangerous with the DTI, and less power was needed to cover a wide area, so AM and FM broadcasters were rare.

Original commercial offshore pirates became the base that the European free radio movement grew from. North American pirates, on the other hand, grew from a series of hoaxes, shortwave listening, and alternative cultures. Also, most American pirates exist for the entertainment and enjoyment of the operators, with a minor effort directed toward community service. Instead of European free radio being filled with creative but erratic and sometimes irresponsible stations (as is the case in North America), most operate with a regular schedule and attempt to please both their listeners and their governments.

One of the reasons for this desire to please is that the most popular pirate radio personalities from the 1950s and 1960s were commonly offered jobs with legal government stations. This is still true today to a much lesser extent, yet many entire stations hope to be legalized. Due to the recent legalization of some independent stations in England, other pirates hope that with a regular schedule and a professional sound, they will eventually be licensed, too.

Dreams of legalization might slightly increase European pirate activity, but they also assist the DTI in keeping the situation controlled. Scheduled broadcasts and professional, nonoffensive programming pose no threat to the government. If the majority of pirates are neutral, then the bulk of the

effort can be focused on those that are not. Usually the DTI begins searching for professional stations after they have existed for a lengthy period of time or become too popular. But the governments have neither the time nor the resources to close down every unlicensed broadcaster in their respective countries.

To avoid possible attacks from the government, European pirates place a much greater emphasis on alternating transmitting locations and other avoidance techniques than the North Americans. The most commonly used European technique is to take a transmitter, car battery, power inverter, cassette player, and antenna into a forest. Once the equipment is arranged and connected, the transmitter is turned on. The staff member then leaves and returns only when the program has ended. This method has proven the safest, but it has failed to become popular in North America.

Another more complicated version of this technique is sometimes used by shortwave stations but has become especially useful to regular broadcasters on AM or FM. The system is the same as the others, except that the programming and transmitter are connected via radio link. Usually the programming is transmitted from a studio with a low-powered UHF, VHF, or even infrared radio link. This signal is then received at the site of the broadcasting transmitter and fed through the system. With this method, even if government agents do find the main transmitter, they will still have to track the radio link back to the studio. If the main transmitter has been removed by the authorities, the pirates can turn off their radio link so the signal cannot be traced. Should the DTI enthusiastically track a station, this method can become expensive, but for many stations, the security is worth it.

One seldom-used technique of avoiding capture in the United Kingdom has been to broadcast infrequently from the tiny islands located near the coast. Guernsey Island and the Channel Islands have been the homes of several pirates. With no branches of the DTI on these islands, they are relatively safe for broadcasting. Island broadcasting in the United Kingdom has been used mostly to attract country-hunting DXers rather than for security. One of the main attractions of shortwave radio for DXers is to listen for every radio country (radio countries are recognized by both political and physical boundaries). Thus, when a pirate begins broadcasting from a previously silent landmass, DXers across the globe grind the dials for hours to log the station.

Recent Activity

Europe is still filled with hundreds of active pirates on AM, FM, and shortwave. Strong government threats successfully deter enthusiasts from broadcasting in the eastern European communist nations, but pirating has been thriving elsewhere. The British Isles, West Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium are saturated with activity, but even the less active countries such as

Finland contain dozens of low-powered community pirates. Fortunately, despite the fact that most of these stations operate for the community on AM or FM, many pirates are widely heard across the continent on shortwave. In fact, some listeners have logged more than 20 different stations on one Sunday.

Sunday morning and, to a lesser extent, Saturday afternoon broadcasting is most common throughout Europe on frequencies in the 48- and 41-meter bands. This schedule is popular because most working-class DXers have Saturday and Sunday off from work and can easily listen then. Also, the 48- and 41-meter bands are widely receivable during the morning hours. For some reason, the nighttime hours are rarely ever used by shortwave pirates (AM pirates often broadcast at night), even though the receiving conditions are better and people are usually less busy with other activities and can listen.

Some of the recent popular and widely heard free radio stations include Radio Apollo International (Fig. 5-4), Atlanta Radio, Britain Radio International, WLR, Radio Stella, Radio East Coast Commercial (Fig. 5-5), Radio Gemini, Radio Orion, Radio Pamela, and Wonderful Free Radio London (WFRL) from the United Kingdom. Pirate Freaks Broadcasting Service (PFBS), Free Radio Service (FRS) Holland, Radio Titanic, Radio Pelikaan, Radio Delta, Radio 101, and Sudwest Radio are active and widely heard stations from the European continent. All these stations operate between 6200 and 6305 kHz or between 7325 and 7500 kHz with regular schedules.



Fig. 5-4. One of the most popular hobby pirates throughout Europe, Radio Apollo International primarily airs free radio news and interviews.

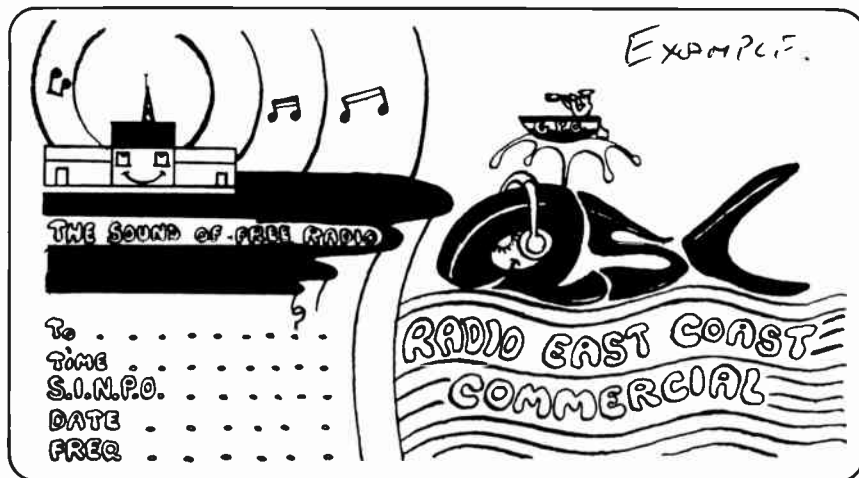


Fig. 5-5. Radio East Coast Commercial from the United Kingdom has entertained listeners for the past decade.

The Italy Effect

Obviously the free radio movement created many problems and politically difficult situations for the different governments in Europe. Feeling that they had lost control of the situation, the Italian Supreme Court ruled that the people of the country owned the airwaves and had the right to broadcast as they wanted with some government overseeing. Pirate control by the government has been limited to forcing stations into the international broadcast bands. In spite of this slight limitation, Italy has become a true haven for pirates.

While the Italian legislation gave pirate stations the freedom to broadcast safely, the broadcasters were still neither licensed nor legal. They were simply no longer illegal or in danger of prosecution. For this reason, unlicensed Italian broadcasters are usually called "privates," rather than pirates in reference to their private ownership (and not government ownership). Because of this difference in legal status, Italian privates are occasionally separated from the pirate community, but most radio clubs consider them part of the whole.

The most widely heard Italian shortwave privates, Radio Milano International (Fig. 5-6), Radio Time (Fig. 5-7), and the Italian Broadcasting Corporation (Fig. 5-8) operated much like large American commercial stations. Each station had large, expensive studios, powerful transmitters on AM and FM (as well as shortwave), a staff of professionals, and commercial airtime for sale. All three stations have been heard in North America in the 1980s, but none are presently active. Radio Milano International was active on 7295 kHz less than two years ago, but the antenna fell in a storm. RMI's owner announced that the station would return to shortwave, but so far nothing has been heard.



30 JUNE 1986
 Mr. ANDREW YODER
 Date 20 JUNE 1986
 Freq. 7295 kHz
 Time 0409-0425 GMT

Radio Milano INTERNATIONAL

thanks you for your reception report, which we are pleased to verify.



THE PROGRAM YOU HAVE TUNED WAS PRODUCED BY
 R.MILANO INTERNAT
 Radio Earth International, Inc
 TRANSMITTED BY R.M.I.
 TRANSMITTING SITE :
 MILANO
 ZINASCO
 MONTE VECCHIA
 MONTE PENICE



Nome: Patrizia Zani
 Eta: 25 anni
 Luogo di nascita: Milano
 Stato civile: sempre meno nubile
 Capelli: ribelli (sono tremendi)
 Occhi: verdi
 Altezza: 1,70



Nome: Caterino Escole Ernesto Borra detto Rino
 Eta: la stessa di Leonardo
 Luogo di nascita: Pavia
 Stato civile: scapolo
 Capelli: neri
 Occhi: marroni
 Altezza: 1,70



Nome: Luigi D'Ambrosio per l'anagrafe in arte Gigio Riccardi
 Eta: 21 anni
 Luogo di nascita: Imperia il 28-9-1959
 Stato civile: signorino
 Capelli: corvini ricci, dicono paghetta per le pentol
 Occhi: neri
 Altezza: 1,75 senza capelli (con quelli arriva a 1,8)
 Particolarità: che l'aggia di
 Carattere: gran carattere il ragazzo

FM 101 Stereo



Radio Milano INTERNATIONAL

Via Locatelli 6
 20124 Milan

PROGRAM SCHEDULE IS 24 HOURS EVERYDAY, POWER ON MEDIUM AND SHORT WAVE IS 5 kW.
 THANKS YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION YOUR REPORTS ARE ALWAYS APPRECIATED AND WILL BE ALL VERIFIED IF THEY WILL BE FOUND CORRECTS.

GOOD LISTENING FROM THE QSL-MANAGER

83/5
 DARIO MONFERINI
 A RADIO MILANO INTERNATIONAL

Fig. 5-6. Italian private Radio Milano International has not yet returned to the airwaves after losing their antenna in a storm.

Fig. 5-7. Europrivate Radio Time from Firenze, Italy has not been heard on shortwave for several years (QSL courtesy of the ACE).



**ITALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION
MILANO**

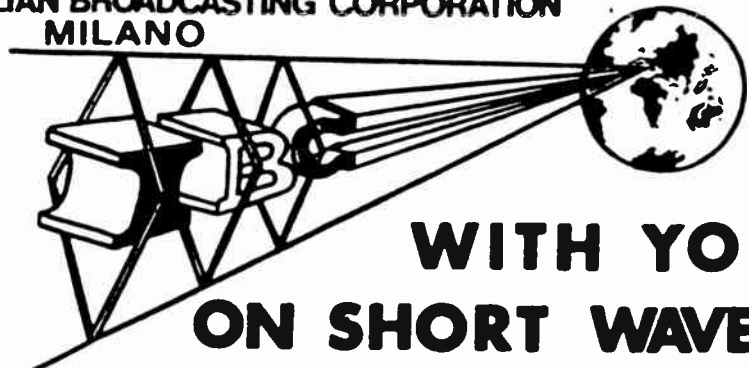


Fig. 5-8. The Italian Broadcasting Corporation was heard by listeners in Eastern North America several different times in the early 1980s.

Like most commercial privates, Radio Milano International programmed a "nonstop music" format of light pop and disco music. From the creative prospective, their one saving grace was that RMI regularly featured relays of hobby pirates from around the world. A few of the pirates relayed by Radio Milano International included Radio Victoria, Radio Joystick, Radio 49 International, KBBR (from the United States), Radio Limit International, and Radio Waves International. Since their 5,000-watt transmitter was the most powerful of the unlicensed Europeans, many hobbyists are anxiously awaiting the return of RMI.

Uncontrollable pirate situations plagued countries other than Italy. In the face of a situation similar to Italy's, Irish legislators passed bills like those passed in Italy. In 1978, the Irish officials allowed pirate stations to register as radio broadcasting companies with full legal status. While the registered stations were still not licensed as such, the government no longer had the authority to make raids on them. As a result, hundreds of commercial and

hobby stations frequently operate on shortwave, AM, FM, and even television bands.

Radio Dublin is one of the founding Irish pirates (now a private) and is possibly the oldest and most widely heard unlicensed broadcaster in the world. Created in 1966 as an alternative to Radio Caroline, Radio Dublin began with a meager 10 watts or less on AM frequencies. For 11 years, the station only used low power on weekend afternoons. But after extensive testing in December 1977, Radio Dublin switched to a 24-hour-per-day music format—the first Irish pirate to attempt such operations. The hobby-style programming was then traded in for a more cost-effective commercialized format. Additionally, all broadcasts were moved to a single studio instead of multiple transmitter sites which had changed each week.

Frequent DPT (Irish equivalent to the FCC) raids caused slight monetary damage to the station, but outdated legislation regarding pirate radio allowed Radio Dublin to continue. In fact, only one successful prosecution of the station was recorded, which resulted in a small fine. This antagonizing situation with Radio Dublin was the vehicle that eventually drove the government to allow pirates to register as private broadcasters in 1978. Finally achieving a semilegal status, Radio Dublin moved to a new location, bought new studio and transmitting equipment, and opened one new outlet on both the AM and FM bands.

Always a leader in the Irish pirate and private radio scene, the 1978 legislation allowed Radio Dublin to explore the possibilities of an international audience via shortwave radio. But instead of merely broadcasting on shortwave as many Irish pirates had done in the past, Radio Dublin had the opportunity to become the nation's voice since Ireland has no authorized shortwave broadcast stations. This dream was fulfilled in 1980 when the station began operations on 6315 kHz with 300 watts, 24 hours per day. Transmissions on this frequency caused interference with a British government station, so Radio Dublin eventually moved to 6910 kHz and boosted the output power to 900 watts.

With the increased power, Radio Dublin has become a relatively easy catch for listeners across the Eastern Seaboard of North America and is audible throughout many parts of the world. Radio Dublin realizes the service it provides and quickly promotes and manipulates the situation. They actively promote tourism in Ireland by playing advertisements, sending information guides, and offering contests. Radio Dublin also heavily promotes within Ireland by sponsoring contests to raise money for hospitals and community centers, donating decorated floats, and providing free music for charity events. Whether motives are innocent or not, the station must at least know that these charitable activities will offer protection against future government actions. Legislation expected in 1985 would have established a commercial radio network throughout Ireland, forcing the private stations off the air.

Rumors spread that some privates would become part of the network. Obviously a responsible community-oriented broadcaster would be given the first opportunity for licensed operations. The government legislation never was passed and the privates have not been closed, but these possibilities still remain.

Another colorful front-runner of the Irish privates with a hobby twist is Westside Radio International (Fig. 5-9). Founded in the early 1970s by announcer Prince Terry, Westside Radio has operated for several hours every Sunday morning on shortwave. Listeners across Europe have been treated to a consistent helping of oldies and heavy metal music (a rare format in Europe) and relays from other free radio stations around the world. WRI was silenced for a year, beginning in mid 1976, but since its return, it has not relinquished its 6280 kHz frequency.

WESTSIDE RADIO INTERNATIONAL

49 M.B. **SHORT WAVE**

SAMPLE **Q.S.L.**


TO _____

DATE _____

TIME _____

FREQUENCY 6280 KHZ

TX POWER 90 Watts



THANK YOU FOR YOUR REPORT 73s

Fig. 5-9. Heavy metal and classic rock music has been heard weekly for the past decade via Westside Radio International from Ireland.

Inside a European Pirate

Unfortunately, there is not enough space to cover all of the interesting European stations in as detailed a manner as the North Americans in Chapter 3. With the hundreds (maybe thousands) of different stations that have operated from Europe in the past 15 years, full coverage of each broadcaster would be impossible. (Furthermore, extensive biographies would be extremely boring because most station histories are similar on many points.)

Several books exist that describe pirate broadcasting in Europe, although none up to this point have ever been devoted to the activities on this continent.

Radio 101, a West German pirate that broadcasts from several countries throughout Europe, is not as popular as Radio Apollo International or the Pirate Freaks Broadcasting Service because it offers fairly typical pop music programming. The station operates with several different services. These services make it a Europrivate, community FM station, and a pirate all at once.

This odd conglomeration began in 1980 when two FM stations, Freies Radio Pfalzdorf and Radio 04 commenced weekend operations from West Germany and Austria, respectively. After a raid by the Austrian Radio and Telegraph Agency, Radio 04 became Radio 101 Kitzbuhel. Austrian authorities attempted to raid the station again but failed. After that incident, Radio 101 Kitzbuhel and Freies Radio Pfalzdorf merged, forming a new Radio 101.

The new Radio 101 moved to the Aachen, West Germany area at the Dutch and Belgian border. These broadcasts occurred on a regular schedule on certain weekends from a car that was driven around the borders of the countries. This inconvenient situation was dropped when a Dutch man offered the hobbyists the use of his 110-foot outlook tower inside the Belgian border for broadcasting.

Up until that point, Radio 101 had operated in stereo. But Belgian law allows noncommercial mono FM broadcasting, so the station changed the equipment accordingly and beamed the signal deep into West German territory. The addition of a power amplifier in early 1984 so alarmed German authorities that Radio 101 received a warning despite its location in Belgium. To avoid legal problems with the owner of the tower, Radio 101 was voluntarily closed down from there.

This small setback was easily overridden by the determined staff of Radio 101. Within a year after the self-closure of the station in Belgium, a new stereo outlet was opened at the Dutch border. Later in 1985, another Radio 101 station was opened along the Dutch border. Coordinated broadcasts from the two stations allowed their programming to be heard in parts of northwestern Germany 24 hours per day in FM stereo. However, the commercials from local businesses and the number of listeners agitated West German authorities, who in turn pressured the Dutch government to close the broadcaster. The Dutch eventually closed the stations twice, but the raids have failed to permanently dismantle either outlet.

As if they had not already operated from a variety of countries, Radio 101 opened a 125-watt shortwave transmitter in Ireland. This Radio 101 International station operated every Sunday morning for several hours with a nonstop music format similar to that of the FM outlets. Since the Radio 101 staff and studios are located in and around West Germany, a high-tech system is necessary to maintain even a Sunday-only pirate broadcaster. The

shortwave station is completely automated with a microprocessor-controlled cassette changer and timers to start the transmitter before each broadcast and turn it off afterwards. The station manager flies to Ireland once or twice per year to replace cassettes and repair equipment that might have been damaged since his last visit.

This system might be an ingenious way to bypass the broadcasting laws of your own country and operate legally, but it also has a few chronic drawbacks. Automation is professional, but fewer hobbyists enjoy listening to an impersonal broadcast consisting almost entirely of music. Just using prerecorded programming would not even be as boring, but these cassettes are six months to one year old. Because of the delay between program recording and actual broadcasting, timely information and comments cannot be included.

Additionally, the Radio 101 stations play a constant format of top-40 and disco music, a common style for pirates in Europe. Top-40 is the most popular format for North American legal stations, although disco died a decade ago in the United States. Automated radio is thriving in some radio markets in North America. But despite the low costs of operating automated stations, many have been driven from the air because listeners quickly tire of the impersonal approach. Ironically, automation and top-40 music are the common alternative in Europe, but free radio in North America is a reaction against those very things.

Pirate Pranks

Not all pirates in Europe follow the status quo as closely as the privates or the top-40 stations. In fact, a few European pirates have created ingenious satirical broadcasts that have stunned authorities and listeners alike. The hoaxes are especially effective in Europe where pirate broadcasting is, on the whole, much more honest than that of North America. Thus, European listeners are more apt to believe the claims of a pirate.

One of the most interesting pirate operations anywhere only operated for 35 minutes on FM in 1976. Just over half an hour on FM might seem rather dull, but the programs were aired by several BBC Radio One network transmitters throughout the south and southwest of England! The prank made newspaper headlines across the country and later forced the BBC to employ new systems of remote program transmission to replace the manipulated system.

The story behind this scam is very interesting. Unlike in North America, where FM radio service is provided by a large number of independent commercial and educational stations, the United Kingdom and some other European countries operate with several country-wide networks. In order for the network system to operate, all stations must be receiving the same programming simultaneously. Although most of the stations received the programming direct via land lines, several sites tuned to another BBC radio frequency

and fed the audio into their transmitter. The method was severely outdated, but it provided sufficient service until the government replaced it with a landline.

Several BBC transmitters in southern England and the Channel Islands were fed from a station in Wrotham, Kent. In order for a takeover of BBC Radio One transmitters in southern England to succeed, a high-quality signal had to be inserted over the same frequency of the Wrotham station. The pirate equipment had to be exactly on frequency (otherwise it would be rejected by the BBC off-air receivers) and near enough to the BBC Rowridge, Isle of Wight transmitter that the Wrotham signal would be overpowered.

So the pirates constructed a stable, 30-watt stereo FM transmitter, connected it to a cassette player, and hid it in a hedgerow less than a mile away from the Rowridge station. At exactly 11:00 p.m. (local time) as announcer John Peel was about to open a pop music program, his initial words were suddenly drowned out in a hail of machine gun fire. Appropriately, "Substitute" by The Who became the first musical selection following the gunfire. Afterwards, a bizarre program of records banned by the BBC and fake announcements continued until government engineers regained control at 11:35. Among the announcements was a brief talk from Idris Amiri, "the new chairman of the BBC" and a public service message service from the "Metrication Board," warning that anyone who continued using nonmetric units might find their "houses mysteriously demolished by bulldozers during the night."

Unprepared for such a situation and unable to locate the illegal transmitter, BBC engineers were forced to return with programming fed through regular telephone lines. As a result, the BBC audio was distorted, bassy, and in mono, in contrast to the high-fidelity stereo signals inserted by the pirate. Just before the regular sign-off of the BBC at 12:07 AM, the presentation announcer merely apologized to "listeners in southern England who may have been listening to the wrong program." Nothing more was said about the situation, but security measures were immediately taken to ensure that the BBC transmitters could never again be overtaken.

The BBC network was presumably safe after the installation of the security systems, but the pirate group wanted to try it again. Although the transmitters were protected with a security system that made it virtually impossible for anyone to hijack the equipment while it was in operation, the hobbyists found that the system was turned off every evening with the transmitters as the broadcasts ended. The transmitters were then turned on every morning at 6:00 a.m. with a 19 kHz signal. The pirates chose August 14, 1977, the 10th anniversary of the Marine Offences Act that closed virtually all offshore broadcasting in England, as the day to over take the Rowridge transmitter again.

After the sign-off of BBC Radio Two and Three on August 14, the 19 kHz stereo pilot tone was transmitted, returning the carrier to the frequency. With

the transmitters back in operation, it was then possible for the station to be pirated in much the same manner as had occurred the year before. Since this broadcast took place after midnight, no BBC workers were monitoring the frequencies.

This time, instead of claiming to be the BBC, the pirates called themselves K-SAT, a new legal operation that was to offer commercial programming nightly via the government transmitters. Programming featured pop music, frequent jingles, and commercials—similar in format to private stations such as Radio Dublin or Radio Milano International. The hoax was more believable than the previous one, since no overtly humorous segments were aired and the station diligently attempted to copy a private broadcaster. Some actual commercials were aired, although others were odd fakes produced by the hobbyists.

The post-midnight broadcast was planned out of necessity, and although fewer people tuned in, this program lasted for three hours on Radio Two and three and a half hours on Radio Three. After recognizing that their transmitters were being pirated, a station engineer rushed to the Rowridge site. The next morning, BBC officials had little more to say about the situation than they did the last time their transmitters were pirated; this time they noted that the broadcast was “probably only heard by a few sheep.” Despite this light-hearted answer, the BBC revised the network again and their transmitters have not been heard to be taken over since.

While BBC transmitters are no longer pirated, radio hoaxes still occur. The more recent broadcasts are usually easily identified as unlicensed. Most hoaxes in Europe operate on holidays for a number of hours, imitating private or offshore stations. Radio Galaxie, Radio Bouvet, and the Global American Network are virtually the only North American pirates to operate in this manner. Many North Americans do make false claims, but few of these attempt to produce programs similar to the imitated stations.

The most recent European hoax operated once again from England over the 1988 Easter holiday weekend. Radio Fax began broadcasting on Good Friday (which also happened to be April Fool’s Day that year), splitting a 20-hour-per-day schedule between 6220 kHz shortwave and 1611 kHz AM. Rather than claiming legality or an offshore locality, Radio Fax announced that it was a pirate commencing daily operations on shortwave and AM. The operators also vocalized their desire to work with the authorities and become a licensed part of the independent network.

It is not uncommon for pirates to boast that the government is about to hand a license out to their particular station. But Radio Fax aired a more “legitimate” style of programming with segments dedicated to tips for choosing compact disc players and stereo amplifiers, an up-to-date look at the British free radio scene, and relays of “Media Network” from Radio Nederland. These broadcasts did fool many listeners into believing that Radio Fax was

beginning an extensive daily shortwave service from England. But after Easter Sunday, those that thought the station was a fake were proven correct, and Radio Fax was never heard from again.

Tuning in the Europirates

Most European pirates operate with low power, and even the larger stations do not expect an audience off the continent. In fact, Europeans generally use transmitters with about 20 watts of output on shortwave, compared to an average output power of 100 to 150 watts for a North American pirate. Therefore, hearing a 25-watt station from the Netherlands is a great DXing feat. However, long-distance, low-power transmissions are receivable only with good conditions. For example, weekend Music Radio (Scotland), ARTO International (Netherlands), Radio Nolan International (Netherlands), and European Music Radio (England) are some of the stations that were reported by many in the Eastern United States and Canada during the high point of the sunspot cycle of the early 1980s. While the conditions have worsened since that time, some pirates have even been heard in the bottom of the sunspot activity over the past few years. Some of these pirates include Radio Nemesis (England), Radio Freedom International (Scotland), and Spectrum World Broadcasting (England).

European pirates can be heard in North America if the listener is patient and informed (Table 5-1). Most listeners only hunt for "Euros" if a station is announcing a test to North America. But the best way to DX is to diligently check the bands every Sunday morning between 0600 and sunrise over the winter months. It is also handy to be informed by subscribing to a good shortwave bulletin such as Free Air (published by the ACE) or *FRENDX*, which commonly lists DX tests to North America on special times, dates, and frequencies.

An Outlook

Unlicensed radio activity should certainly continue at a high rate throughout the next five years in Europe. The desire for commercial radio networks throughout these countries is still great. Until they are created, hundreds of pirates will continue their operations. Networks would require several years to create and put into service, and few governments are willing to completely relinquish their control of the radio bands.

Ireland has expressed the desire to construct an independent network and close down the remaining privates. The major privates would probably be absorbed into the independent network. This absorption would be the final step of evolution of the typical government-controlled radio station to a North American-style privately owned station situation. The masses would have an opportunity to participate in the licensed radio system at last. If a North American-styled system is created, Irish pirates would also become

Table 5-1. Active European Free Radio Stations

Freq. (kHz)	Station	Freq. (kHz)	Station
6205	Radio Fax	6293	Canzoni Radio
6231	Radio Rainbow	6297	WABC
	International	6300	WFRL
6231	WLR	6304	Britain Radio
6235	Sudwest Radio		International
6275	Radio Delta	6310	Radio East Coast
6275	Radio Pamela		Commercial
6280	Westside Radio	6315	Radio Blond
6285	Weekend Music		Pirate
	Radio	6630	Radio Orion
6285	Radio Waves	6815	Radio East Coast
	International		Commercial
		7296	Radio 101
		7440	Radio Waves
			International

more like their counterparts from across the ocean. Neither Ireland nor Italy has passed legislation on the matter, but it seems like the action could occur in one or both of the countries within several years.

The pirate radio situation is "out of control" in the United Kingdom, where dozens of stations are active. Nearly 15 daily FM pirates broadcast from London alone; some of these operate 24 hours per day. Clearly, the DTI is not controlling the airwaves. One development that relieves the pressure from the pirates is the opening of more independent stations by the government throughout the country. An initial independent system has already been created, cutting into the pirates' funding, listeners, and potential personnel. Another wave of new legal stations, while loosening the grip of government-controlled radio, could break down the pirate scene in England.

Some free radio stations could become licensed in Europe. Even if they are not, the pirates will continue operating without licenses to feed the desires of the radio-starved public. Since few governments are likely to make major reforms within the next few years, pirate activity should remain at a high level in Europe. 📻



6

Offshore Pirates

Pirate ships are the most mythical, fairy tale-like aspects of the free radio hobby. The nostalgia of actual pirate raiding ships from the early years of the New World blends in with the radio hobbyists of today. Radio pirates are sometimes thought to be a modern verison of the ship-sailing thieves, with transmitters and audio equipment substituted for swords and cannons, commercials for the treasure chest, and the FCC for the National Navy.

Many announcers on unlicensed stations frequently exploit this connection in their programming. WDX's main announcers were Pirate Jack and Pirate Mike. A favorite KPRC segment was "Yo Ho Ho and a Bottle of Rum" played on a cart. Radio North Coast International claims to pirate from the "good ship *Sphincter*" in the Great Lakes. Radio Clandestine often runs promos with pirates announcing their address, and dozens of stations have printed skull and crossbones across their QSL cards.

Even with this hype, offshore broadcasters are usually associated with Europe, but they have existed around the United States. In fact, the first international waters radio pirate operated from off the coast of California in the early 1930s. Although this first offshore pirate set a trend for broadcasting Europe, it never caught on in North America. Just two others have operated since the 1930s, and both of these only lasted for several days.

Offshore broadcasting has never thrived or survived in North America because most organizations that have had the money to buy and equip an ocean-going ship would rather buy a legal radio station. The hazards of

broadcasting from a vessel, plus the problem of finding a staff willing to spend entire weeks away from their families quickly sober the would-be offshore pirate. When Radio Caroline lost their ship the *Mi Amigo* in the North Sea in 1980, only a large backing based on incoming commercial revenues brought the station back. This just is not feasible in the United States or Canada. Only in several particular situations have international waters stations been successful.

RKXR—First Offshore Pirate

RKXR is still one of the only stations in the United States or the world to have actually pirated the airwaves. While many pirates since that time have absorbed the symbols of piracy, RKXR was a true pirate in every sense of the word. The station operated from the S. S. *City of Panama* and although both the station and the ship were licensed in Panama, neither followed the stipulations contained in the legal contracts. The *City of Panama* was intended as a floating showboat to display the glories of tourism in Panama to the Californians. But instead, the owners of the ship left as it was before the new registry: a floating speakeasy and casino.

Likewise, RKXR was a sham. The station was licensed on 815 kHz with 500 to 1000 watts under the RKXR call sign with experimental, noncommercial programming. Instead, it pumped out a beefy 5,000 watts of popular music and commercials. RKXR actually tricked the Panamanian government into believing that the station would be used to promote tourism and industry within the country. RKXR wanted to turn a fast buck.

Even before pirating the airwaves, though, RKXR fell into legal troubles. Worries that the station would destroy the signals from other broadcasters across the United States plagued businessmen and the U. S. government alike. A demand was cabled to the Panamanian government from the State Department to cancel the registration of the *City of Panama* and the license of RKXR. The Panamanian consul to the United States became angry at the demand and claimed that the U. S. government had no right to interfere with vessels in international waters. In closing, the consul also noted that the operators would operate under the rules of the Federal Radio Commission.

Shortly after these incidents in May 1933, the station began their operations from off the southern California coast. The owners supported the popular music format with funds raised from commercial spots sold to advertisers in southern California. An office was opened in Los Angeles to receive advertising inquiries. In an article commemorating the 50th anniversary of RKXR in the August 1983 issue of *Popular Communications*, author Tom Kneitel noted that it was reported that some companies had signed up for as much as \$1,500 per month in advertising.

Companies obviously flocked to advertise on RKXR because of its high power for that time and clear channel frequency; they also worked with the station because there were so few other legal broadcasters in the West Coast

area. High power and clear channel frequency might have been beneficial to RKXR, but the other stations and radio listeners were angry. RKXR's signal from 815 kHz wiped out powerhouse stations on 810 kHz and 820 kHz throughout the West. And the pirate ship was heard as far away as the East Coast, Hawaii, and northeast Canada with fair signals.

The affected stations and their listeners mailed complaints to the Federal Radio Commission, which was already swamped in the situation. After realizing that the FRC had given up on the offshore pirate, some stations wrote directly to RKXR, requesting that the operation move from 815 kHz. They were horrified and angered when RKXR replied that it would change frequency for a payment amounting to thousands of dollars.

This mafia-style "frequency protection racket" upset the State Department once again. They cabled the Panamanian government and requested that RKXR have its broadcasting and sailing licenses revoked immediately in June of 1933. Panama either realized that the United States was serious or that their floating public relations tool was only a floating speakeasy and extortion instrument. Within a few days, the *City of Panama* officially lost its registry, and RKXR lost its license. The station continued broadcasting from off the California coast, however.

Somehow the United States, Panama, and some government officials on either side were confused about the station, its illegality, and the fact that it no longer was licensed. RKXR remained as if nothing had happened for several weeks; the two countries were discussing the steps required to dismantle the station. Finally, after several weeks of confusion, the State Department received the information needed to remove RKXR, and in August 1933, the *City of Panama* was towed into a Los Angeles harbor. Neither the ship nor the station owners were associated with radio again after this point.

RKXR never truly set any trends for broadcasting. It is true that RKXR was the first offshore pirate, but it was not until 1958 that another station, Radio Mercur, began broadcasting from international waters. Since Radio Mercur operated from the other side of the earth 25 years later, it seems unlikely that RKXR directly influenced the Dutch pirate. Whether or not RKXR directly influenced other pirates is unimportant; the station did try new creative methods of broadcasting that were not used for many years after.

Fortunately, no pirates have ever tried to extort money from other stations since 1933. While RKXR operated, the U.S. government worried that if nothing was done, a fleet of pirate ships would sail near the Atlantic and Pacific Coast, jamming legal stations. If the government remained defenseless against these pirates, the entire radio spectrum could have been held at will by criminals and scam artists. Some suggest that the radio spectrum was controlled by criminals and scam artists anyway, but the government's reaction in this instance is understandable; the measures they took against RKXR had a great impact on future broadcasting laws. In fact, international radio laws were written later that decade to prevent such actions.

Radio Free America

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, when offshore broadcasting became a popular and commercially viable trend, the North American coasts remained silent. After RKXR was silenced, international broadcasting laws effectively dampened the plans of hopefuls in the United States who wanted to imitate them. Besides, in the 1960, the FM band was beginning to open up across North America. Some low-power and college radio stations were already experimenting with alternative new-music formats in a much less commercial style than the European pirates.

Thus, politically the broadcasting situation here was not especially ripe for offshore activity as it was in Europe; but nonetheless, an unexpected operation anchored off of Cape May, New Jersey began sending signals in 1973. Active pirates are generally in their teens or twenties and in the early 1970s were characterized by liberal politics. But in a bout of historic irony, Radio Free America was operated by a paunchy 68-year-old right-wing radio preacher.

In a huge departure from other pirates, Reverend Carl McIntire operated the station not as an instrument of progressive free radio or for self-satisfaction but to return his operation to its former state, when he owned a legal station. WXUR broadcasted under McIntire's ownership from 1965 to 1970. Problems cropped up when the FCC revoked the station's license under the Fairness Doctrine, which requires all broadcasters to allow those with opposing viewpoints to be expressed. The closest, a telephone call-in show, was moderated by an announcer who was accused of cutting off and insulting listeners who did not share his views. So the FCC pulled the plug.

Although he caused controversies throughout his lifetime, times were not always so troublesome for McIntire. In 1936, the United Presbyterian church publically denounced his actions before the general assembly because the board felt that he was too conservative. He left the United Presbyterians to form his own Bible Presbyterian denomination and preached to the 1,200 members of his Collingswood, New Jersey church from inside a tent until a new building could be constructed. Within several years, he helped establish the American Council of Churches and the International Council of Christian Churches. McIntire served as president of the latter, leading over 200 fundamentalist denominations from 73 countries around the world.

While amassing large numbers of followers, McIntire also built a huge empire of organizations and properties. Among his enterprises were a college, a hotel, a convention center, three apartment buildings, and 280 acres of undeveloped land in Cape Kennedy and Cape Canaveral, Florida. He owned a college in Philadelphia; in Cape May, New Jersey, he possessed the four largest hotels. The Christian Beacon, a religious weekly newspaper with circulation of 145,000 in 1973 was also owned by McIntire. Certainly, his enterprises greatly surpassed the resources of the average pirate station.

Controversies surrounding McIntire and his beliefs stemmed not from his conservative social or religious practices but rather from his political rhetoric. Although he told the *Washington Post* in 1973 that "the body of man belongs to God, not to the state," his preaching featured a collage of politics and Christianity that were either praised or despised by listeners. Most controversial of all was McIntire's devotion to the destruction of any policy that even slightly resembled socialism or communism.

His antileft sentiments might have won McIntire popularity throughout the conservative 1940s and 1950s, but the social revolution in the 1960s began to strip his power away. Despite the sometimes violent protests of Vietnam demonstrators, McIntire opposed the negotiated peace in that country. In fact, during 1970 he led several groups through Washington, D.C., protesting the expected withdrawal from Vietnam. Later that year, McIntire even flew to Saigon and Paris to convince Nguyen Cao Ky, Vice President of South Vietnam, to speak at the pro-war rally. Ky declined the invitation.

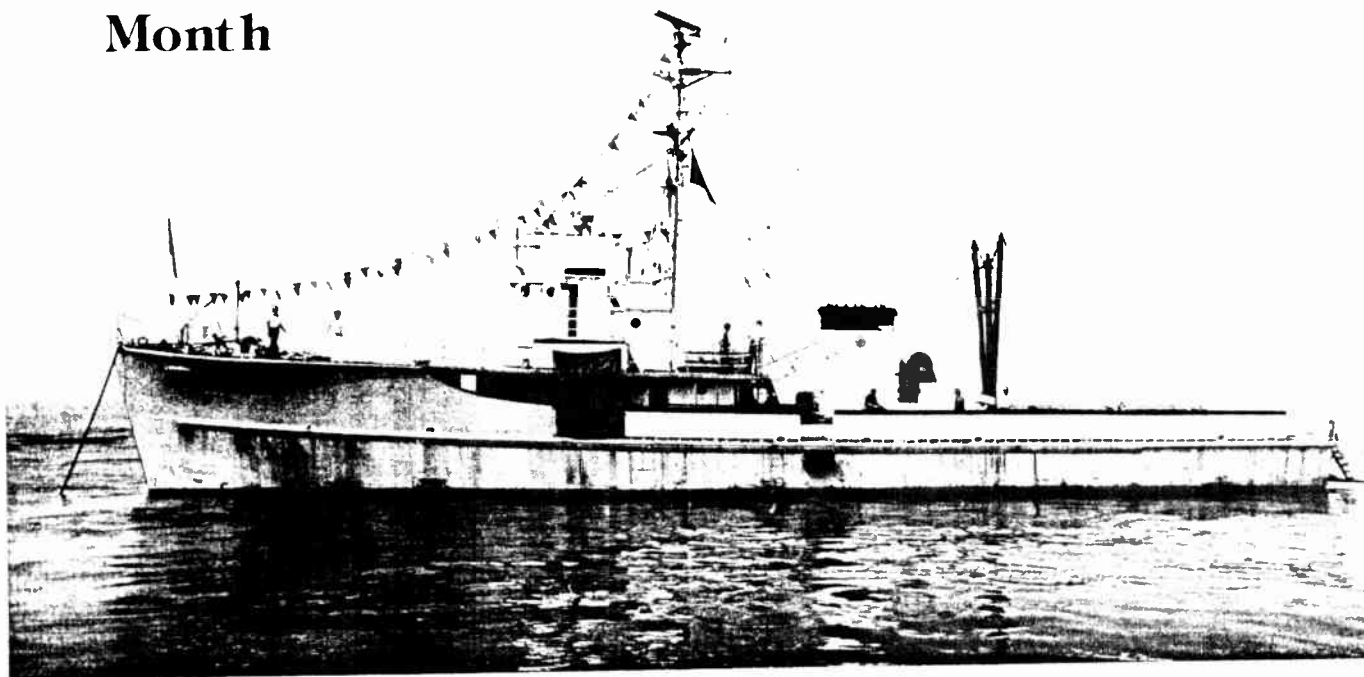
But WXUR was only the flagship for the 610 stations that carried McIntire's "20th Century Reformation Hour" program. Many of these other legal stations feared a confrontation with the FCC because of the programming and subsequently dropped it to protect their own licenses. This caused McIntire to lose money. Funding for the broadcasting empire came from listeners who (by McIntire's estimate) donated \$100,000 per year, so the FCC's license denial came as a severe blow to the organization.

Still the monetary problems plagued McIntire's communications kingdom. His Faith Theological Seminary was mortgaged in 1965 for \$425,000 to pay for WXUR. By 1973, the seminary had found the payments so difficult to cover that his newspaper, *The Christian Beacon*, urged readers to make the Seminary a beneficiary in their wills. With his empire suddenly crashing down around him, McIntire was forced to take drastic measures to prevent a total collapse.

His drastic measures, of course, meant entering the little-heard-of world of pirate radio, still a barely recognized, heard, or organized territory in 1973. And McIntire's revenge did cast the eyes of the public in his direction for a brief time. In September, the *Columbus*, a rusty World War II minesweeper, was anchored off the coast of Cape May, New Jersey in international waters. On board was a 10,000-watt AM transmitter, a crew for navigational and broadcasting purposes, and a cache of rifles to protect against potential raiders of the station.

As revolutionary as Radio Free America appeared just before firing up the transmitter, no violence erupted, despite the FCC threats to close the station and McIntire's threats to use his rifles. No boisterous incidents were caused by McIntire's presence in international waters, but Radio Free America did pound 10,000 watts of conservative religious and political programming across the Eastern Seaboard for a short time. The already interference-prone

Pirate of the Month



Radio Free America

Radio Free America, the good ship "Columbus," symbolizes the current struggle for the free exercise of religion, free speech, and a free press in the United States of America. The ship, carrying a 10,000-watt radio transmitter, is stationed in international waters off the coast of the USA near Cape May, N. J. A historic "Manifesto of Freedom" was read on deck during its dedication, Labor Day, September 3, 1973. The ship is being supplied from the Christian Admiral, Cape May Bible Conference and Freedom Center. Christians are asked to pray for this Gospel ship that it may be used for Revival '76 and to deliver the radio and television stations of the nation from government repression and control. The ship has the backing of the 20th Century Reformation Hour, 756 Haddon Ave., Collingswood, N. J., and all gifts for its support may be marked Radio Free America. It may be heard on the AM band at 1160 kc.

Fig. 6-1. Radio Free America only spent 10 hours on the air and then retired because the ship's deck overheated (courtesy of the ACE).

frequency of 1160 kHz in the middle of the AM band confined the signal to the east coast of North America, but it was widely heard nonetheless (Fig. 6-1).

Broadcasting was hampered during the first day of operations on September 19, 1973 when the powerful, heat-emitting transmitter caught the deck of the aging minesweeper on fire. Output power from the transmitter was then lowered considerably until Radio Free America could barely be heard outside of New Jersey. After 10 hours of broadcasting, the station closed down for the evening and never returned to the air. The excursion evidently discouraged McIntire, whose empire crumbled within a few years. The *Columbus* was sold soon after the incident.

Federal agents were prepared to get a court order that would force McIntire off the air. McIntire, in turn, pledged to stay on the air and defend his right to broadcast with rifles or lawyers. But Radio Free America's own equipment and vessel saw to it that the offshore broadcasts subsided. The conflict never came, and whether or not offshore broadcasting is technically legal under the United States' laws was never determined by the Supreme Court at that time. No FCC action was taken against McIntire, but it would have been interesting if Radio Free America would have remained on the air for a few more days.

Radio Newyork International

Continuing its policy (that it is illegal to broadcast from off the coast of the United States without a license), the FCC effectively discouraged everyone considering this type of operation for years after the demise of Radio Free America. The federal agents said they would close down any station's attempts, fine and possibly prosecute the operators, and confiscate the equipment. No one had the nerve to see if the FCC was bluffing. Besides, court costs alone in a case such as this would rapidly diminish the funds of anyone but a large company.

In the mid 1980s, a group of loyal radio enthusiasts decided that the FCC was bluffing. Even if the government was not, the enthusiasts felt it was their right to have freedom of speech. Anything less than the ownership of a radio station was considered by the enthusiasts an infringement of rights because it was their desire to operate one and furthermore all had experience on legal broadcasters.

Radio Newyork International (RNI) was created as a reaction against what was considered to be the stagnant state of rock and roll in New York City. A group of 20 radio enthusiasts owned it. Despite working for a legal license for 16 years, none of the group could pull the 10 to 20 million dollars required for a station in this market. So the group found a loophole in the system: only stations based in the United States territory are required to be under the control of the FCC (Fig. 6-2).




Fig. 6-2. A group of radio hobbyists made Radio Newyork International only the third North American offshore pirate (logo courtesy of the ACE).

With this in mind, the broadcast enthusiasts bought a 160-foot Japanese fishing vessel (rechristened *Sarah*); bought and modified FM, AM, short-wave, and longwave transmitters; and registered the *Sarah* under the Honduran flag. After one and a half years of fitting the ship with broadcasting equipment, they took it to sea and anchored four and a half miles off the coast of Long Island, New York in international waters. On July 23, 1987, RNI began broadcasting rock music, comedy, and social programs to listeners as far away as Oregon and Europe.

The operators planned to begin commercial broadcasting on August 1; they decided the format would not be playlisted to keep from becoming "stale." Also, 10 percent of all advertising proceeds were to be donated to social programs that help the homeless in New York City. Despite receiving hundreds of favorable letters from listeners, the station did not please the FCC (Fig. 6-3).

On July 27, the FCC visited *Sarah* and warned the crew of the "illegal nature" of the broadcasts. The next day, the Coast Guard and FCC raided the station. They hauled Allan Weiner (owner), Ivan Rothstein (station manager), and R. J. Smith (a reporter from the *Village Voice* newspaper) away in handcuffs. Then the Coast Guard and FCC tore cabinets of equipment out from the control boards and dumped them in the center of the floor. Weiner and Rothstein were later charged with conspiracy to impede the Federal Communications Commission (a felony) and operating a broadcast station off the shore of the United States (a misdemeanor). Each faced a maximum prison term of five years and \$250,000 in fines from the felony charges.

LEGAL DEFENSE AND
REPAIR FUND BENEFIT FOR



THE RADIO PIRATES
(RADIO NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL)

STARRING KONK
THE RAUNCH HANDS
JOE HENRY • IVAN JULIAN
SECRET SERVICE
THE DEANS OF DISCIPLINE
HOSTED BY THE
SPYCATS

PLUS SHARKEY'S MACHINE,
SEA MONSTER,
THE ASTORIANS, CRYIN' OUT LOUD, IDLE RICH,
THE KOLLMORGENS, EARLY WARNING
AND MANY, MANY MORE
SPECIAL SURPRISE GUESTS!

CBGB'S (BLEECKER AND ROWERY) OCTOBER 27

Fig. 6-3. A handbill for a concert featuring many alternative music groups that benefitted RNI (courtesy of the ACE).

However, on August 28, 1987, federal authorities dropped all charges against RNI, Weiner, and Rothstein, as long as they promised to never broadcast illegally again. Andrew J. Maloney, the U. S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, said in the *New York Times* that “no further governmental purpose would be served by pursuing criminal charges. By shutting down the illegal station, the FCC achieved what it set out to accomplish.”

If the story had ended quietly, maybe little controversy would have arisen on the subject. But immediately following the court case, Rothstein and Weiner vowed to return to the airwaves. In fact, the pirates have described in depth the manner in which they will return to the air by means of an interview on WNBC radio in New York City and an article written by Weiner in the April 1988 issue of *Popular Communications*.

The FCC and other government officials remain firm on their position. "If they are dumb enough to resume broadcasting," said Assistant U. S. Attorney Matthew Fishbein to the *Washington Post*, "then we would prosecute—not only for future violations, but for past violations. We have clearly established that what they have done is clearly against the law. If they resume broadcasting at this point, we have given them every opportunity and will prosecute."

Rothstein and Weiner claim that their equipment was vandalized. Bill Martin, lawyer and publisher of the *ACE* at that time, called the FCC's media representative on August 28, 1987, the date the charges were dropped against the operators. Martin described his call in the September 1987 *ACE* bulletin. "When I asked about allegations that the FCC engineers had damaged equipment and cut cables at RNI, the FCC representative advised me that the station did not continue its unlicensed broadcasts." If these statements regarding the legality of vandalism and intentional destruction of another's property in the name of free airwaves are correct, the government may have exceeded its authority to regulate radio.

In the original raid of RNI, R. J. Smith, a reporter for the *Village Voice*, was also arrested. Martin Gottlieb, editor of the *Village Voice* said that Smith was handcuffed and prevented from producing his press credentials. Smith was held for seven hours; the FCC confiscated his camera and other personal belongings. Apparently, the Coast Guard would not listen to Smith's claims. Regardless, it was not an impressive initial presentation of FCC policies on offshore broadcasting to the press. The *Village Voice* said Smith has not filed suite against the government, but Weiner and Rothstein may. They were considering filing a \$1 million lawsuit against the FCC for false arrest and civil rights violations.

It is possible that FCC officials took their personal revenge out on RNI's crew for past experiences. Nearly every member (maybe all) of the crew has had broadcasting experience on illegal land-based radio stations in the past from New York City. The earliest broadcasts came from Weiner and Ferraro's affiliated stations WKOV, WXMN, WFSR, and WSEX in 1971. Other illegal stations with probably connections to RNI include KPRC, KPF-941, WGOR, WGUT, WHOT, Stereo Nine, KSUN, and others that transmitted on AM, shortwave, and/or FM.

It is clear that the staff intends to put RNI back on the air at all costs. In fact, the station is presently anchored off the coast of Long Island, New York and waiting to be allowed on the air at this writing. The radio enthusiasts' desire to return to broadcasting, combined with the FCC's harsh threats to anyone that dares to attempt offshore broadcasting, forms a volatile situation. Even if RNI does not return to the air, some radio "freaks" with a dream of broadcasting will surely test the governmental rulings on the matter again—especially since no charges could be pinned on Weiner or Rothstein in the RNI incident.

Table 6-1. America's Only Three Offshore Broadcasters

Freq. (kHz)	Station	Time on Air	Location
815	RKXR	May-August 1933	California Coast
1160	Radio Free America	Sept. 19, 1973	New Jersey Coast
1620, 6240	RNI	July 23-28, 1987	Long Island, New York

"When push came to shove and the day in court came," said J. P. Ferraro, "they dropped the charges because they couldn't make them stick. The government had no jurisdiction, even though they said they did." This statement is more realistic than the FCC claims. The officials said that they dropped the charges because Weiner and Rothstein promised never to broadcast illegally again—even after they vowed to return immediately after the charges were dropped. The FCC had no reason to drop the charges, unless the commission itself was wrong and a court battle would reveal the embarrassing procedures that had been used to force RNI off the air.

Future of Offshore Broadcasting

Offshore broadcasting in the United States rests solely on Radio Newyork International. Since the ship is back in place (three and a half miles off the coast of Long Island in international waters), it is ready to challenge the authority of the FCC once again. This time, however, Randi Steele claims that the station will go through the necessary channels to clear up the legal problems. If the courts fail to give RNI the authority to broadcast, Steele said that the *Sarah* is prepared to stay anchored off of Long Island into 1989, if necessary.

If Radio Newyork International is granted the right to broadcast from off the coast of New York, then a few other stations might begin operating as well. Entirely new opportunities for pirates to broadcast from international waters, whether on the *Sarah* or other ships, could develop. Also, some of the land-based free radio stations that now operate would have the opportunity to broadcast in a legal situation. But if RNI cannot legally get on the air, it could be North America's last offshore broadcaster (Table 6-1). 🗿



7

Holiday Pirates

While the conventional customs of Americans on New Year's Eve are dancing and drinking to the past year or watching has-been celebrities on television, one of the best places to be is in front of a shortwave receiver. It might seem silly or introverted to listen to the radio, but checking the dial on different holidays can often yield a heaping return. Even if that fails to elicit interest, most stations produce their most professional and creative programming during these times. In fact, some of the most popular and esoteric stations only broadcast during holidays.

Originally, pirates chose holiday broadcasting with the concept that most of the FCC field officers would be on vacation and thus would not have the manpower to close stations during these periods. In addition, the operators felt that their audience would increase proportionally considering the number of people with more idle time. Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and later Independence Day became the choice holidays.

As more listeners started stations and the audience shifted from the general public to other radio hobbyists, pirates began to see the potential in making special broadcasts during other holidays. Rather than operating with the hope that the local FCC agents would be on vacation, stations began airing shorter, more esoteric programming to fit in with the atmosphere of the particular holiday. Thus, instead of creating a station on the operators' principals, some built the stations around the holidays.

While picking the best holidays to listen for pirates is easier than picking a winning lottery number, the results are still unpredictable. When attempt-

ing to predict the amount of pirate activity over the holidays, some variables must be considered:

- Recent pirate activity—the more active the scene is, the more stations are likely to broadcast during the average holiday.
- FCC activity—when the FCC is active, fewer stations are active.
- Weekend holidays—holidays are more active when they take place on a weekend (except Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve).
- Operator enthusiasm—does this station want to broadcast on this holiday?

While other variables can be estimated to a reasonable proximity, the last one is impossible to narrow down. The fact is there are dozens of reasons why someone might want to broadcast without the privilege of a license. Because many of these reasons occur spontaneously, it is no wonder that success in pirate radio listening is erratic. Still, the only sure way to hear almost everything receivable in a locality is to listen to the radio 24 hours per day.

One of the greatest examples of the sort of fluctuation in activity that occurs over the holidays is St. Patrick’s Day. In 1984, a year when St. Patrick’s Day occurred on a weekend, a band of pirates worked together scheduling broadcasts. As a result, 10 different stations made over 19 broadcasts in six different meter bands to treat listeners across the world to one of the most active pirate days in history (Table 7-1). Yet over the past two years, no pirates have operated on St. Patrick’s Day.

Table 7-1. American Pirates That Operated St. Patrick’s Day Weekend, 1984

Freq. (kHz)	Station	Freq. (kHz)	Station
1616	KPRC	7415	Radio Free
6275	KPRC		Insanity
6275	Radio Free	7432	Radio Free
	Insanity		Insanity
7400	Radio Flying	9675	Radio
	Dutchman		Clandestine
7414	KTGR	11695	Radio
7414	Voice of Laryngitis		Clandestine
7415	KQRP	15050	KQRP
7415	KQSB	15050	KQSB
7415	Radio Bag	15050	Voice of
7415	Radio Flying		Laryngitis
	Dutchman	15060	The Crystal Ship
		15061	Radio Free
			Insanity

A method that can track down a few broadcasts is to merely look at the program content of active stations and decide whether or not they would be more inclined to operate during a certain holiday. For instance, Rebel Music Radio, a left-wing AM station and the Voice of Communism, a parody of Radio Moscow, have both operated on May Day. This is a rarely celebrated holiday in the United States, but it is very important in communist and socialist nations. Likewise, parody and mystery stations are more likely to broadcast during April Fool's Day, Halloween, and to a lesser extent, Friday the 13th. This system is by no means foolproof. Often stations do not comply with how one might expect them to operate. However, it does provide a rough framework of what might "pop-up" over the course of the evening.

In Europe, some of the most active days are legal holidays, known there as "bank holidays." Even though few of these dates are ever used by North Americans, surely they will become more popular. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday and Labor Day are ripe for politically driven stations. Memorial Day and Columbus Day have yet to be used on an active basis. It is only a matter of time before the right station is established and recognizes the potential in operation during these days. Although it might be several years before any of these holidays are frequently used, an occasional check across the dial during these times could prove to be fruitful.

Listening over the holidays could be a fruitless adventure if the listener does not know when the holiday is. As stupid as this statement might sound, it has caused many listeners to miss out on the festivities. Because most stations are operated by radio enthusiasts, they follow universal coordinated time (UTC). This means that broadcasting on Independence Day begins at 0000 UTC, which is July 3rd EST (2000 EST or 1900 EDT). Remember that if a listener in the eastern U. S. tuned in to a West Coast station at 3:00 a.m., it would be midnight there and vice versa.

Origins of Holiday Broadcasting

Although a few instances of holiday broadcasting probably appeared earlier, this concept became popularized by New York City AM stations from the mid to late 1970s. The "party and phone call" format used by WCPR, WFAT (Fig. 7-1), and WGOR seemed to fit in well with the New Year's atmosphere, and besides, the operators assumed that the FCC field officers would be on vacation.

In addition to these original concepts of New Year's Eve broadcasting, WFAT and WGOR also originated the safety precaution of extensively broadcasting during snowstorms. Snowstorm broadcasting worked; while the FCC could find the location of the station to within five miles with expensive direction-finding equipment at their monitoring stations, their mobile units could not possibly maneuver in the snow-clogged city streets. In a city the size of New York, it made no difference whether the FCC knew where the station was located within five miles.



Fig. 7-1. WFAT, a New York City area AM pirate from the late 1970s, helped originate the “party and phone call” format that has been extensively used on holidays by many stations.

Unfortunately for the free radio listener, very few stations broadcast during snowstorms or other hazardous weather conditions. WFAT and WGOR were two of the only broadcasters to show any interest in the idea. This is unfortunate because not only could the listener have benefitted from the broadcasts, but more stations that merely “have fun on the air” could have provided beneficial snowstorm or natural disaster information to their area of the country.

Even after the demise of WCPR, WGOR, and WFAT, other New York organizations followed suit with broadcasts closely patterned after the originals. WENJ returned to the air on New Year’s Eve 1978 and 1979 after several years of absence. One of the most professional AM pirates, Pirate Radio New England (PRN), activated in 1979 and lasted five years with several holiday broadcasts.

With the capture of WFAT by the FCC in April 1979, the gradual demise of WGOR and the rabid searches for PRN throughout 1980 (which reduced their activity), the New York scene puttered to a near halt for several years. Only a few one-time or relatively inactive holiday stations including WBUM, Radio Douche, Free Radio 1616, and WGUT (Fig. 7-2) operated during this time.

By late 1982, WART and KW Radio began broadcasting with what apparently was very high power, because each was logged with strong signals as far away as Michigan. WART aired a variety of music ranging from Frank Zappa to Gregorian chants with some telephone calls and tips on shortwave and AM pirates thrown in. Johnny Jo and Barbara Baintree hopped the boards at KW Radio, programming some telephone calls but

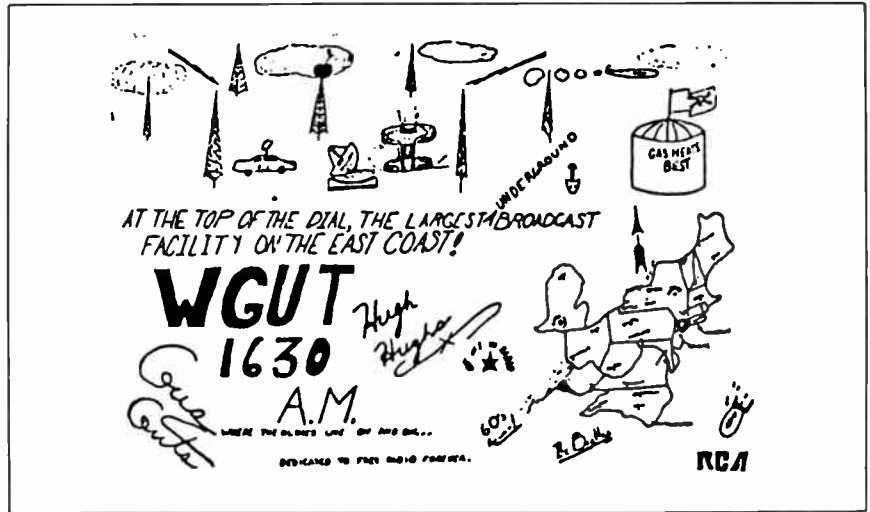


Fig. 7-2. New Year's Eve was the big day for WGUT, a NYC area pirate that made its only broadcast on the last day of 1982 (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

especially skits featuring excellent mimicks of Richard Nixon and other celebrities. WART and KW Radio strayed further from the AM pirate stereotype to offer extensive Halloween programming, one of the more popular holidays for broadcasting today. Both stations had disappeared by early 1983 amidst rumors that the FCC finally caught up with their lengthy, frequent broadcasts.

Rebel Music Radio and KPRC went on to smash the NYC area stereotype by airing left-wing rhetoric, political music, and phone calls. Similarities between the two stations halted with their political slants. Rebel Music Radio was only active on Christmas, New Year's Eve, and May Day. In contrast, KPRC further distanced itself from older operations by avoiding holiday broadcasts, even though it was one of the most widely heard pirates ever.

With the disappearance of KPRC in the autumn of 1984, New York City pirate activity reached its lowest level since 1975. However, WHOT (Fig. 7-3), a veteran FM broadcaster from Brooklyn brought back a sound reminiscent of 1978. Most of the staff had worked on several other unlicensed stations in the Brooklyn area. In fact, it sounded much like WFAT and WGOR. Like those operations, it featured phone-in programs, professional-quality identification carts, and it capped off its activities with a New Year's Eve celebration (Table 7-2). Unlike the previous New York stations that followed this format, WHOT's career did not end with an explosive confrontation with the FCC. It merely faded away from AM broadcasting in early 1987.

After the bust of Radio Newyork International in July 1987, it seemed as though New York pirate radio would disappear for at least five years because many of the area's stations pooled the money and resources to build and

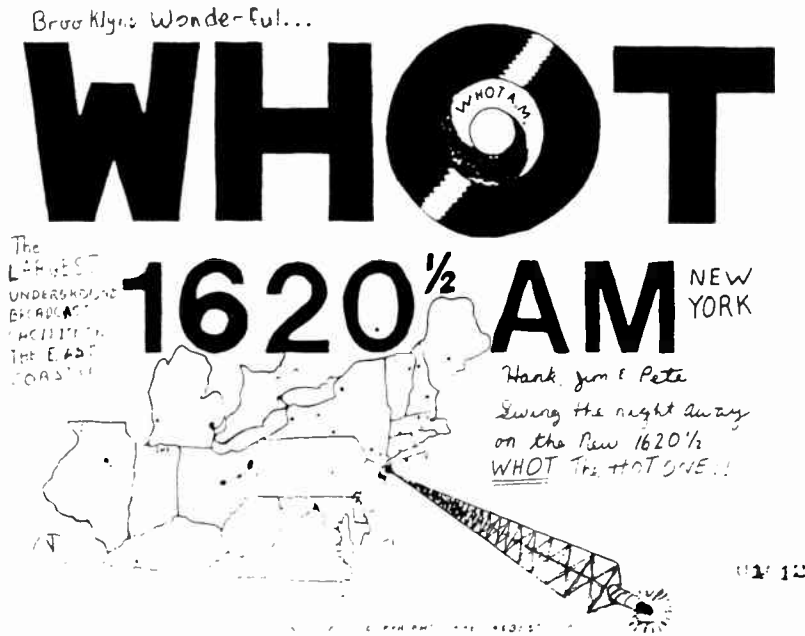


Fig. 7-3. WHOT's AM transmitter brought the station attention across the Northeast in 1986 and early 1987 (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

Table 7-2. Active New Year's Eve Stations Since 1984

1988	1620 WENJ	1985	1620 WWW
	7415 WGAT		1620 Radio Angeline
	7415 Zeppelin Radio		6245 Radio Angeline
	7440 Zeppelin Radio		7400 KROK
1987	1616 Free Radio 1616		7430 WMTV
	1620 Zeppelin Radio		7433 Voice of the Rainbow
	1620 WDX	1984	1616 Rebel Music Radio
	1629 WHOT		1620 WDX
	1630 KOLD		1631 Radio Alchemy
	7423 Zeppelin Radio		6225 Radio Alchemy
	7438 Radio Dead Man		7400 KNRD
1986	7395 UA Express		7420 Voice of Communism
	7417 WAKA		7430 Radio Free Insanity
	7433 WGAT		7430 Das Glockenspiel
			11600 Radio Clandestine
			15050 Voice of Communism

operate RNI. By attempting to form a union of broadcasters with a legal status, they were effectively lassoed in by the FCC in one throw.

Despite the bleakness of the situation for free radio listeners, two unexpected stations became widely heard across the eastern United States in late 1987 and are still active at this writing. WENJ and the new WCPR particularly enjoy broadcasting over the holidays. In their first six months since activating in 1987, both stations operated over Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, and April Fool's Day. Both stations work out a schedule, usually broadcasting on the same day, with the first one taking early evening hours and the latter taking over immediately afterwards until as late as 4 a.m. The Secret Mountain Laboratory has also been known to transmit on Thanksgiving (Fig. 7-4), and Table 7-3 shows active Christmas holiday pirates since 1983.

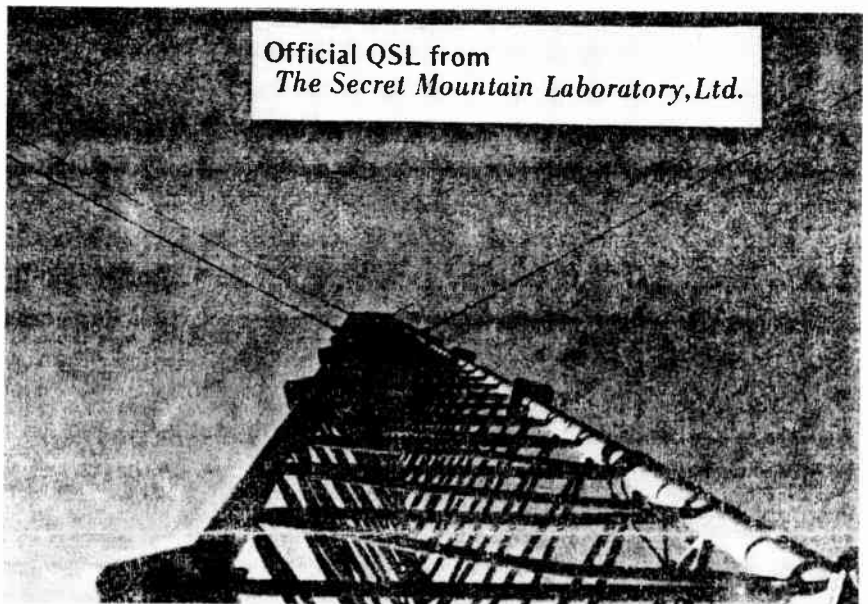


Fig. 7-4. Some stations, such as Secret Mountain Laboratory, have made Thanksgiving one of the popular broadcasting holidays.

With the consolidation of many AM radio hobbyists into RNI, it is doubtful that personalities from the past will return to the air for the holidays as in previous years. If RNI does find a loophole in offshore broadcasting laws, it will operate daily, removing the novelty involved in operating and listening to pirates over the holidays. Not only would operating become an everyday job to the announcers, but the station would also become an everyday occurrence for the radio listener. If they do get caught again, it will be some time before the individuals can raise the funds to pay off their debts and divide into their separate stations again.

Table 7-3. Active Christmas/Christmas Eve Stations Since 1983

1987	1984
1615 WCPR	1615 Free Radio 1615
1620 WENJ	6240 KRZY
	7425 WMTV
1986	7425 Radio Sound Wave
7490 Voice of Communism	7426 Zeppelin Radio
	7426 Radio Sine Wave
1985	7426 GAN
7375 Radio Angeline	7429 Voice of Laryngitis
7375 Radio Clandestine	7440 KRZY
7375 Voice of Communism	
7435 KROK	1983
7436 Zeppelin Radio	1616 Rebel Music Radio
7440 WPBR	3465 Radio Bag
7450 WMTV	6230 Voice of Pyramids
	6272 KQSB
	6900 Radio Paradise
	7420 Radio USA
	7433 KQSB
	14470 Radio USA

The future of East Coast holiday AM broadcasting seems to lie with WENJ, WCPR, Radio Angeline, and Free Radio 1616—stations that have operated in the past without attempting to establish a regular service. Even though the welcome possibility of an everyday offshore station outweighs past attempts at broadcasting from the New York area, those specifically looking for AM operations over the holidays will miss out.

Shortwave Holiday Pirates

Radio Clandestine has been the most active shortwave station over the holidays since 1983, followed by KQRP. R. F. Burns' pirate is probably the greatest holiday pirate ever, if not just since 1983. In addition to the large number of broadcasts aired, Radio Clandestine has been in steady operation for nearly a decade. Their strong, clean signals, high-quality productions, humorous 60-minute programs, and erratic use of shortwave broadcast band frequencies have made them a shortwave legend. Unfortunately, they have rarely broadcast since their peaking activity in 1984.

KQRP (Fig. 7-5) only operated during the first nine months of 1984 but was heard by hundreds of listeners on dozens of meter frequencies on shortwave. Dr. X, the main operator, interspersed simple announcements with hard rock or country music and old radio programs. After broadcasting seven hours of Green Hornet and "War of the Worlds" radio shows on September 19, 1984, the station voluntarily called it quits. However, the operator returned to the air the next month as "KRZY" with the format and the desire



Fig. 7-5. Although KQRP only operated during the first nine months of 1984, it made more holiday broadcasts than any other pirate since 1983 except Radio Clandestine.

to broadcast frequently carried over from KQRP. KRZY was later caught and fined by the FCC in early 1985. In the summer of 1985, the operator persisted with a new station, KBBR, and subsequently was caught and fined again in September 1985. KQRP/KRZY/KBBR was not especially attracted to holidays; it is just that they broadcasted so often that only a deliberate action on their part could have kept them away from those particular days.

Another station that has been especially active over the holidays is the Voice of Communism (formerly known as the Voice of Democracy and the Voice of the United States). With its high-quality mimicking of Radio Moscow, the Voice of Communism is one of the most professional parody stations on the air. Announcers Miriam and Gilbert present humorous, heavy-handed propaganda programs laced with listener telephone calls featuring "why the USSR is better than the United States." Rather than broadcast regularly, this station usually airs a group of programs over the course of a week, once or twice per year, often Christmas week. The decline of recent activity from the Voice of Communism could be due, in part, to the closure of most telephone loop numbers, combined with the heightened FCC interest in closing stations.

Of course, other stations broadcast over the holidays, but Radio Clandestine, KQRP/KRZY/KBBR (Fit. 7-6), and the Voice of Communism have made the highest number of broadcasts on these days since 1983. Interestingly enough, the chances of hearing any of these three "holiday kings" over

RADIO STATION

OFFICIAL QSL



ROCKING
SHORTWAVE!



KRZY



TO ANDREW YODER
YOU HEARD US ON DEC 3 TIME 0300-0356 FREQUENCY 7430 KHZ
YEAR 1984

LISTEN FOR KRZY ON ALL THE
SW BANDS!

SIGNATURE
OF

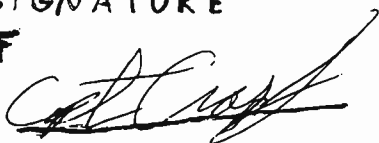


Fig. 7-6. Although KQRP changed its name to KRZY for security purposes, the operator continued extensive broadcasting (especially on holidays) until getting caught in 1985.

future holidays is rather slim. Of course, the number of broadcasts made by KQRP/KRZY/KBBR eventually forced it off the air. Radio Clandestine did make a strong comeback in the summer of 1988, but they have not been active during holidays thus far. The Voice of Communism has mysteriously faded away.

At this writing, it seems that RNCI, WENJ, WCPR and Zeppelin Radio Worldwide are the regular pirates that are most likely to broadcast on upcoming holidays. Holidays seem to most impressively draw one-time

broadcasters. Instead of wooing lots of stations that are active during the year, holidays seem to attract programs that will never be heard again. For instance, what ever happened to Radio Highlander, Radio Alchemy, KNRD, Sons of Ireland, and the dozens of others?

Holiday-Only Stations

While some stations broadcast more frequently over holidays, others operate *only* during these times. Many of these stations merely transmit programming comprised of music and simple announcements. However, others successfully convey a creative message that often corresponds in some way with the holiday. Radio Angeline, Munchkin Radio, Global American Network (GAN), and WBST are a few that stand out among holiday-only broadcasters.

Radio Angeline has operated regularly over the holidays since Independence Day 1983, using the same 30- and 60-minute programs each time (Table 7-4). Announcer Jo Jo Katew plays fake advertisements, rock music, an interlude signal of "Send in the Clowns" played on a music box, and ends with a dramatic reading for his lost love, Angeline. Although the station has operated rather frequently over the major holidays since 1983, it is still a tough catch for most listeners in the East because it frequently operates between 0600 and 0900 UTC.

Munchkin Radio first operated on Halloween 1982 and made several more appearances over the holidays in 1983. Programs from Munchkin Radio lasted anywhere from 8 to 20 minutes and consisted entirely of comedy songs and fake commercials interspersed with brief, heavily reverbed announcements. The Wizard, an announcer, was one of few holiday-only station personnel to ever mail out QSL cards to listeners who reported the station in *The ACE*. Unfortunately, it has been gone for some time.

Although pirates are usually easily separable from legal shortwave broadcasters, Global American Network (GAN) has been one of a handful of

Table 7-4. Active Independence Day Stations Since 1984

1988	1984
none	7373 Radio Clandestine
	7376 Radio Clandestine
1987	7376 Samurai Radio
7413 WBRI	7412 Secret Mountain Laboratory
	7415 KQRP
1986	7425 Voice of Bob
1628 WHOT	7427 KQSB
7437 TNFM/CFTN	7441 KLS
	15052 KQRP
1985	
7355 Radio Morania	
7435 KNBA	

stations to be mistaken for "regular" SWBC. GAN easily surpassed their hobbyist counterparts with the use of singing IDs, apparently high power, clean signals, and professionally produced features on different European offshore commercial stations. Unfortunately, this station has appeared very irregularly (usually less than once per year) and has not shown up in nearly two years.

WBST is another distinctly holiday station, relegating itself to operations on Halloween (Table 7-5) or Friday the 13th. The BeaST continues its horror spoof with announcers John Wretch and Mr. Nasty who feature appropriately seasonal music ("Riders on the Storm," "Devil Woman," "Problem Child," etc.) and audio from movies ("The Exorcist," "Night Caller," "Daughters of Satan," etc.). The station also offered fake technical and geographical information, claiming to broadcast on 666 kHz with 13 kilowatts from Gallows Road in Salem, Massachusetts. Like most of the other holiday pirates, it has not been active for some time.

One hotspot for pirate activity over the holidays has been between 3865 and 3890 kHz in the middle of the 75-meter amateur band. The last remaining AM hams in the country also operate in this area, and at least some of them tend to have slight interests in broadcasting. These stations almost never identify and usually play entire record albums, Christmas music, or relays from legal stations. This activity is left over from a once spry broadcasting scene on 75 meters that included Radio Clandestine, WBLO, Radio Highseas International, and WGLI before each moved or disappeared (probably because of complaints by amateurs) by 1980. Despite these actions, this frequency has continued to be used every year over the Christmas/New Year's season for at least a decade.

Table 7-5. Active Halloween Stations Since 1983

1987	1985
1620 Radio Angeline	7425 Secret Mountain Laboratory
3440 RNCI	7425 WMTV
3440 Radio Angeline	7425 Black Box Radio
7415 Voice of Laryngitis	
7420 WINN	1984
1986	7412 WBST
7375 RNCI	7425 Voice of Venus
7411 Secret Mountain Laboratory	7425 WIMP
7412 Voice of Bob	7427 Secret Mountain Laboratory
7415 PMR	7433 WMTV
7420 WAHE	
7475 GAN	1983
	7415 Voice of Democracy
	7415 WBST
	7430 WBST
	12040 Jolly Roger Radio

Surely as long as there are pirate radio stations, they will flock around holidays. The only way operators would leave holidays would be if the FCC would begin coordinating large-scale pirate hunts over these days. That could end pirate holiday broadcasting for a while, but it would be a waste of time and money for the FCC. If the FCC could force pirates off the air on holidays, they would merely broadcast other times. This would only spread the stations out more, causing them to be even more elusive.

So far, the FCC seems to agree that holiday hunting is more trouble than it is worth, and they virtually allow pirates to "do their thing" over the holidays as long as the broadcasts do not get "out of hand." This attitude has not hurt pirate broadcasting in the least, of course. The arising awareness among listeners and other operators that holidays are the most active times of the year should cause an increase in activity. 🏴‍☠️



8

Political Pirates

Western society generally visualizes politics as a method or manner by which national governments are operated. While this definition is correct, it is not complete. Politics are an important aspect of everyday life—from the largest government to a tea-and-krumpet group consisting of a few members. Any time several individuals convene as a group and make decisions together, they are engaging in political communications.

Furthermore, every time a radio enthusiast breaks the law by broadcasting without a license, he/she is making a political statement. Even if the pirate station considers its actions to be no more than a fun pastime, the operator has still chosen to break the laws of the country. If the standards were this light, though, then every pirate could be considered political by nature and would be included in this chapter. So rather than mentioning everyone that has ever operated a transmitter in an illegal manner, only those that have caused controversy relating to shortwave subjects are included.

Politics are motivating aspects of shortwave and are featured on most every shortwave broadcaster. From Moscow to Washington, D.C. and Lima to Addis Ababa, billions of dollars every year are funneled into broadcasting political rhetoric to convince the masses of listeners to support certain causes. Many countries operate expensive local and international radio stations and use them to maintain control despite the unrest in their countries (widespread hunger, unemployment, crime, pollution, etc.). Therefore, broadcasting is obviously an important and powerful tool of these governments.

Broadcasting is also a tool for those not directly involved in government: civilians, military officers and troops, and leaders waiting to alter or overthrow the establishment. One of the first signs of power within a revolutionary outfit is ownership of a broadcasting station. It takes a dedicated staff to produce programming and keep the equipment in operation, a powerful or sneaky enough outfit to not get caught by government troops, and the money to finance it. Only large revolutionary groups can do it all, and few ever fail to operate radio stations as soon as the resources are available.

Many shortwave listeners enjoy tuning in to clandestine radio stations due to the unpredictability of their operations and the first-hand information that is sometimes revealed days later by the news media in the United States. But all too often, clandestines are little more than outlets for shallow, emotion-based programming. Complaints against the status quo are reduced to name calling and occasional fake news reports concerning the recent victories by revolutionary troops are common. The government radio stations retaliate by occasionally faking news reports to suggest superior power. Resulting from the propaganda war is confusion and a rather boring attempt at credibility.

Shortwave pirates in the United States, on the other hand, rebelled against the established programming by avoiding all politics. Most just stuck with playing music, reading listeners' letters, and taking telephone calls. Some stations such as Westside Radio, from politically volatile Ireland, have public policies against the mention of any politics on the air. Radio Clandestine, RNCI, Radio Sine Wave, Radio Free Wave, the Voice of Communism and many others from North America have parodied international broadcasters but take no particular political stance. The most popular programming is that which ridicules political communications without taking sides or delving into the issues.

But in the past few years, a small departure from this towards political programming has been occurring. The Voice of Tomorrow is now considered by many a clandestine, while KNBS, Tangerine Radio, KPRC, Voice of Free Long Island, and a few others have become active political stations. Unlike Europe, where most pirates are mainly emulators of commercial broadcasting in the United States, North American stations have been moving towards alternative programming, and picking up a few political radicals along the way.

Before the North American pirates began showing their political colors, shortwave listeners often complained that the stations lacked intelligence and were nothing more than clones of the legal FM rock stations that exist throughout the country. Now, the most common complaint is that American pirates are too political and have lost the carefree nature that made them fun. With the specialization and addition of the counterculture into free radio, more political stations will surely appear, although it is safe to assume that at least as many nonpolitical pirates will crop up as well.

Right-Wing Pirates

Conservative pirates have not been numerous because popular politics in the country have only recently swung over from the left. During the 1960s, liberal radical and revolutionary groups owned radio stations. In the early 1980s, the liberal groups faded, to be replaced by increasingly powerful right-wingers.

The new American radically conservative organizations pull their ideological views from the largely "traditional" views of racism and xenophobia from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the National Socialist Worker's Party (Nazi). The KKK has grown in size and the sects of Nazism, the National Aryan League, and a loose federation of skinhead punks have received wide media coverage for attempting to create a homeland in the Northwest and for scattered acts of violence.

When a new station, Radio Vanguard International, briefly appeared in the summer of 1983 with a professional format of pop music, few listeners showed more than a light interest in the broadcaster. Then again, it was barely heard by anyone and the loggings of the station that did appear in the hobby media were inconspicuous. But "the soliders poured out of the Trojan horse" the next month when listeners across the country received photo postcards announcing the initial broadcasts from the Voice of Tomorrow, formerly Radio Vanguard International. The card listed a test schedule of six broadcasts that would be transmitted on 6240 kHz and 7410 kHz during a weekend in mid June.

To the surprise of radio listeners, the Voice of Tomorrow did arrive on the preannounced frequencies at the proper times. Until this time, very few of the pirates that had scheduled broadcasts in hobby publications ever showed up. The Voice of Revolutionary Vinco, Radio Fluffernut, Radio North East Michigan, CHHH, Radio Ohio International, and Radio Prophylactic International were just a handful of stations that had never met their published operating schedules. On the other hand, few pirates were ever creative enough to send a professionally printed postcard to potential listeners around the country. WUMS was one of the only stations to try this method before the Voice of Tomorrow.

DXers found that the production values of the programming were as professional as the printed "camfer and silvaplana" photo card schedules they received in the mail. But this was only a small consolation for the hateful blend of racist commentaries and nazi music. The hobby radio press universally denounced the station for the programs. Some bulletins and reporters refused to print loggings of the Voice of Tomorrow, especially after it announced that it would only remain on the air if it was actively supported with listeners' letters.

Hot debates followed in the hobby press about reporting the Voice of Tomorrow. Was it ethical to report a station in hobby bulletins? Many claimed that giving the operators publicity would only satisfy their need for

attention and if DXers stopped logging the station, it would cease broadcasting. On the other side were the "free-flow-ers" who believed that all opinions and information should be voiced; anything less would be censorship and an infringement on human rights. Besides, they argued, ignoring the station would not make it go away because the operator appeared to be in it for more than just notoriety. Perhaps the best argument for reporting the station came from Robert Horvitz, ANARC Executive Secretary, who said "ignoring such people doesn't make them go away and quoting them doesn't necessarily help them" in the November 1983 ACE. The Voice of Tomorrow is still frequently reported in bulletins and magazines, and thus far, no one has stood up in support of the station's ideals.

Despite the high-power signals, frequent broadcasts, and limited number of frequencies used (1616, 6240, 7410, and 15050 kHz), the Voice of Tomorrow has never been caught by the FCC and is still plugging away. It is interesting to note that while some docile operations including Radio North Star International, KKMO, KRZY, and others were busted, this one has continued for over five years at this writing.

The pirate will probably operate for at least several more years, although the authorities may be closing in soon. Several clubs printed the FCC's direction-finding results showing that the transmitter is located in the Lynchburg/Roanoke area of Virginia. Rumors have also circulated that the Voice of Tomorrow is run by the National Socialist White People's Party of Virginia or the Order, although these claims are unsubstantiated and could merely be based on programming content.

Voice of Tomorrow has a prominent and easily identifiable signal. Of the four frequencies used with their transmitters, only 7410 kHz is commonly chosen by other pirates. Additionally, their transmitter power is great enough for the station to be heard across the Eastern half of North America with very strong signals. They claim to be running 2,000 watts, which could be true. The equipment has been modified for high fidelity audio response and sounds as clear and crisp as a legal broadcaster.

Their programming is also conspicuous. A howling wolf is repeated several times as an interlude signal and "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," the pre-World War II Nazi youth song, is the theme. In the past, main announcer Phillip Carey read commentaries against ethnic groups with light pop and rock songs separating the segments. Some programs were merely the same commentaries with different songs inserted in the spaces. But over the past two years, some programming has appeared to originate from outside sources. So far this year, the Voice of Tomorrow has aired a critique and biography of American poet Ezra Pound and an interview with a spokesman for CIFTRA, a white separatist group in Spain, among other things.

Programming from outside sources and the frequent changes in maildrop locations suggest that at least a small organization is operating the Voice of Tomorrow. It could even be that Phillip Carey merely has access to

Nazi magazines or newsletters and sends for cassettes of information that can be edited down to suitable program segments. Maildrops for the Voice of Tomorrow have been located in Bristol, Virginia; Ferndale, Michigan; and Clackamas, Oregon. One ACE member reported that the Oregon address is owned by *The Patriot Review*, a conservative interest tabloid, so there might be some truth to the rumors about the station's organizational ties.

Right-wing pirates like the Voice of Tomorrow have been rare, but several have existed throughout the world. England experienced Radio Enoch in the late 1970s, a mouthpiece for People Against Marxism (PAM), a populist right-wing group. Two announcers presented the programs, which contained news, commentaries, features, letters, and music. The organization denounced immigration into England, supported the policies of South Africa, and argued for a strong defense to guard against the "communist threat." As in the case in the Voice of Tomorrow, the pirate hobbyists unanimously denounced the operations of Radio Enoch. In fact, the English pirates in opposition to Radio Enoch began jamming its signal.

The station's programming might have been tolerated by the other pirates if it were not for the obnoxious attitudes of the announcers. For example, when Radio Enoch was initially jammed, the announcers responded by saying that the jamming was done by "pathetic souls with flea-powered transmitters." The jamming did, in fact, destroy the major portion of the signal, rendering it virtually indistinguishable to the listener. Radio Enoch eventually faded out with the beginning of the 1980s. Maybe the operators saw that their radio voice was accomplishing little when it was audible and jamming made it accomplish even less.

Not all political pirates are as serious and hate-oriented as the Voice of Tomorrow or Radio Enoch. In fact, few are. Most are merely radio hobbyists "with a socio-political conscience." One odd exception to this rule is the Voice of Free Long Island (Fig. 8-1), an average shortwave hobby pirate who expresses his conservative Republican political views in hopes that they will protect his station from an FCC raid. The main operator, The General, believes that since his views correspond with those of the Reagan Administration, the FCC will not waste its time chasing a colleague.

Commentaries from The General on the Voice of Free Long Island consist of strengthening the United States military presence in various strategic locations around the world. Specific topics often discussed include support of groups such as Contras in Nicaragua, UNITA rebels in Angola, Jews in the Soviet Union, FCC deregulation, and other current events. Unlike other pirates he considers to be too liberal and radical, The General tries to offer political views that "are normal and not crazy. They are what most people believe in." Additionally, he says that the FCC is not a menace, "They're just a bunch of guys doing their job and I can understand that." Not a common point of view from a pirate.

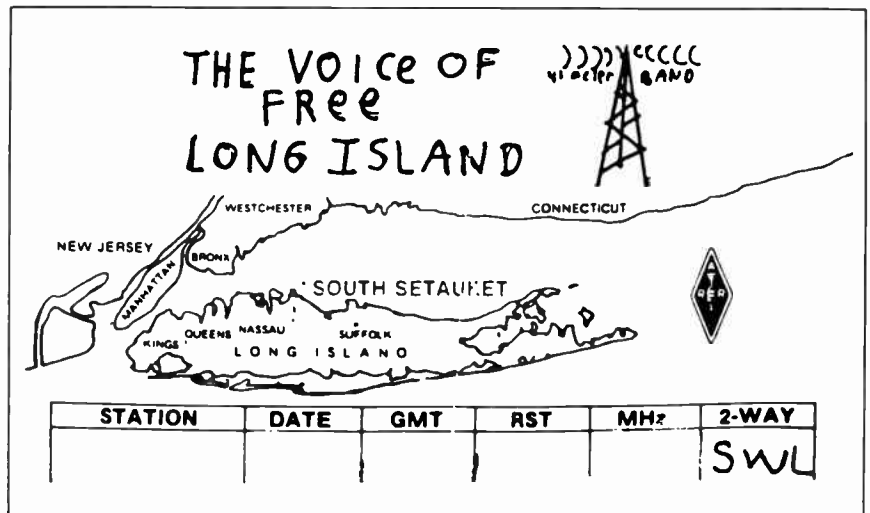


Fig. 8-1. The Republican Voice of Free Long Island hopes its political beliefs, which follow the current Presidential line, will protect the station.

Active since the summer of 1987, the Voice of Free Long Island occasionally broadcasts on weekend evenings in the 41-meter-band shortwave. The best frequencies to check are 7415 and 7465 kHz. Its 100 watts of output power have enabled it to be heard across most of North America.

From studies taken of free radio operators and from their written opinions in shortwave bulletins, a high percentage apparently support the small libertarian political party. Although very conservative, the libertarian party leans neither towards fascism nor racism. The ideological difference between libertarian thought and strong conservative republicanism is that the former believes in a weak central government with little interference into local and private affairs, while the latter group normally follows the opposite.

The center of the ideology of libertarianism is the absolute freedom of the individual to do as he/she pleases without government interference. These certainly are politics "made" for someone who broadcasts without a license. Strange as it may seem, no pirates who express their attitude on paper reflect it in their programming, other than the fact that they are willfully breaking the law. The Voice of Venus is the only station to ever announce its upcoming libertarian programming, but unfortunately the broadcaster faded away before ever airing it. Will there ever be a libertarian pirate? Maybe, but since most pirates express this ideology by merely broadcasting illegally and taking their individual "right" to air whatever they please, who knows?

Left-Wing Pirates

While huge numbers of liberal, socialist, or communist pirates have not taken over the hobby, some have existed. Creation of these stations has partially resulted from the fact that the U. S. has had conservative republican control of the government through most of the 1980s. Furthermore, many liberals do still exist, and the left-wing dedication to outspokenness is still strong. Although the mass media has been more liberal than the government throughout the 1980s, those leaning towards socialism feel they have few voices and are in the minority. So they turn to pirating; thus, left-wing pirates are numerous.

Of course, the Falling Star Network, the Voice of the Purple Pumpkin, WGHP, and a few other late 1960s pirates pioneered the political revolution of free radio. As was mentioned before, most pirates before the 1960s were either young radio hobbyists with a flair for the technical or young broadcasting hopefuls. The socio-political revolution changed this by replacing the hobbyists with young people searching for an outlet to present their opinions and music. Anti-establishment attitudes from the hippie culture gave listeners an interesting break from music and technically oriented pirates.

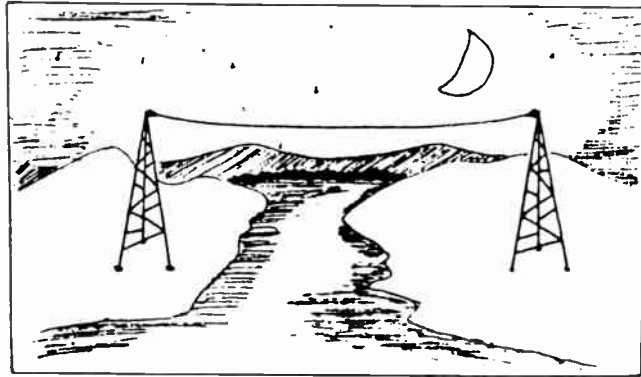
But with the passing of the 1970s, the popular liberal ideology also faded away. No truly political stations operated after the pirate explosion of 1976 and throughout the rest of the decade. Finally in 1982, after six years of partying (Voice of the Voyager, Radio Liberation), music (KVHF), telephone calls (WCPR, WGOR, WFAT), DX programming (Voice of Syncom), and comedy (Radio Clandestine, Radio Confusion), left-wing radio returned in the form of two stations, one on shortwave and the other on AM.

First on the air in early 1982 was KPRC (not to be confused with the legal Texas broadcaster), a phone-in AM pirate that pumped strong signals out across the Eastern half of North America (Fig. 8-2). Unlike most pirates, KPRC's (Pirate Radio Central) style, technical quality, and programming on 1616 kHz never varied from its first evening on the air.

Main announcer Pirate Joe single-handedly led an unusually tight, but relaxed format of 1960s music, commentaries, and telephone calls. Commentaries on KPRC ranged across almost every topic covered by the United States Democratic party, but the favorites were war and nuclear weapons (in opposition to both). Seeing that the main topic appearing on KPRC was politics, a number of listeners dubbed it a clandestine. Pirate Joe was less violent and serious than someone like Phillip Carey, so KPRC could never truly be considered "clandestine" in nature. In fact, callers often changed the station's topics to discussions about pirate radio, and sometimes listeners would announce pirate tips.

KPRC was easily identifiable with its massive signal on 1616 kHz, professional audio and production, and liberal politics. Throughout its two-and-a-half-year career, which ended late in 1984, "Yo Ho Ho and a Bottle of Rum" was frequently used as an interlude signal and "Good Night, Irene," a

Pirate Radio Central



KPRC

1616

Fig. 8-2. KPRC was widely heard on AM, FM, and shortwave throughout the early 1980s with a mostly antinuclear war format.

popular 1940's song, ended every broadcast. The easy identification and political programming might have made for interesting listening, but it also created a target for others to tamper with. While KPRC was rarely jammed, several times stations transmitted comments about the programming over the station's signal.

Originally, Pirate Joe had announced for another New York City station, KSUN, on FM in the early 1980s until KPRC was created in 1982. At this point, the KSUN transmitter apparently was used for KPRC on 91.5 MHz as well. Later on in 1983, the group opened a transmitter on 6275 kHz shortwave that was heard across the entire country. KPRC always "stacked" these transmitters in parallel, making a predictable arrangement and schedule.

The 91.5 MHz transmitter was used at least once per week. Sometimes, usually once or twice per month, the AM transmitter was thrown into action. From the time that the shortwave equipment was first used, it was always run in parallel with the other two transmitters. But the shortwave transmitter was never in operation without the AM, and likewise, the AM never ran unless the FM was on.

The FCC searched desperately for KPRC as they would for any operation heard across the country (and especially New York City) on AM, FM, and shortwave for as long as 8 to 10 hours per transmission. It is unknown where the other transmissions emanated from, but the Belfast, Maine, FCC field office tracked the broadcasts on 1616 kHz to a location in northern Maine, not New York City. Surprisingly, these broadcasts were then traced to a building housing the antenna of WOZW, a legal FM station, according to

Billboard Magazine. But the pieces began to fit together when it was found that the owner of WOZI/WOZW from Presque Isle was Allan Weiner.

Weiner operated the Falling Star Network along the J. P. Ferraro in the early 1970s (see Chapter 1) and ran into many difficulties when attempting to work with the FCC in the past. After years of work in the radio industry, Weiner eventually pulled himself through the established system and bought the two legal stations in Maine. When the FCC traced KPRC's signal to the WOZW transmitting building, they claimed that Weiner refused the agents entrance to inspect the facilities. Although the FCC charged that Weiner had broken the law by broadcasting KPRC, he claimed to have no knowledge of the incident. Regardless, all broadcasting from KPRC ended at this point.

In the autumn of 1984, several months after the silencing of KPRC, Weiner and Ferraro teamed up again on the KPF-941 project (Fig. 8-3). KPF-941 was the callsign of a legal remote licensed to WOZI/WOZW on 1622 kHz. So a 100-watt transmitter and a vertical antenna were installed in Yonkers, New York, the former location of the Falling Star Network.

Experimental broadcasting from KPF-941 began in late 1984 with mostly 1960s album rock music hosted informally by one of the staff members. KPF-941 never became a political voice; however, its similarities to KPRC make it a sort of ending to the story. The 100 watts of output power from a Western Electric broadcast transmitter covered the New York City area and the rest of the Northeast faintly, but it certainly was not comparable to the powerhouse KPRC was in terms of range.

Although KPF-941 claimed to be legally operating as a production tool for WOZI/WOZW in Maine, the FCC was critical of the transmissions. Instead of just offering a remote for WOZI/WOZW, KPF-941 played music

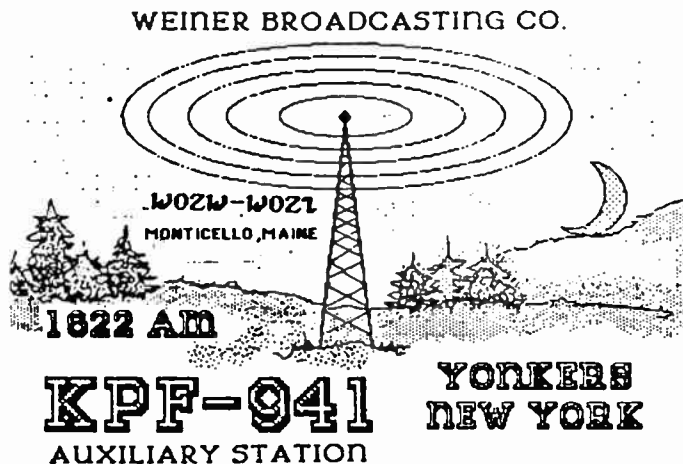


Fig. 8-3. Weiner's next station, KPF-941, operated only for several weeks before being removed from the air by the FCC.

and appeared to be broadcasting to the general public, especially since a telephone number was given for listeners to call. By the end of November, after broadcasting for several weeks on 1622 kHz, the station received a telegram notifying the operators of a discrepancy between the station's transmissions and the broadcasting laws of the United States (Fig. 8-4). The next day, KPF-941 was closed by the FCC.

27 February 1985

KPF-941
P.O.Box 327
Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y.
10706

Andrew Yoder

Dear Andrew;

This is to confirm your reception of KPF-941 on 11 November 1984. The station's power output is 100 watts into a 12 meter vertical ~~mal~~ pole. Yes, i do have the whole Kink's album, and i'm glad you enjoy the "format" of the station.

We have had some trouble with the FCC in as much as they considered us to be "broadcasting directly to the general public", prohibited in sec 74.431 of the rules, (or so they say, but no one has ever shown us, nor have we been able to find ourselves any such references in that section). However, we will be back on the air as a production tool producing programming for WOZI/WOZW Presque Isle Me. on or about 4 March 1985.

If you were looking for a pirate, i'm sorry i don't fit the bill, but that's life.

Peace,

J-P Ferraro

P.S. Please excuse my rotten typing.

Fig. 8-4. A QSL letter from J. P. Ferraro for KPF-941.

Weiner and Ferraro still claimed that KPF-941 existed within the rules by which it was licensed, but the FCC felt differently. Because of the legal conflicts caused by the operators, the FCC took action against Weiner and reviewed his capabilities for owning radio stations. They found him unqualified and revoked all of his broadcasting licenses. Since he lacked the funding to take the decision to court, he was forced to sell the radio stations at a 25 percent loss to a minority group in exchange for the renewal of his licenses. Still searching for a loophole to bring their style of radio to the New York City area, Weiner, Ferraro, and a group of radio enthusiasts and pirates pooled their funds and created Radio Newyork International two years later (see Chapter 6).

Also beginning in 1982 was The Crystal Ship (Fig. 8-5), a widely heard but less notable left-wing shortwave hobby pirate that operated only on 41 meters. Throughout its broadcasts in 1982 and 1983, little of the political programming was audible. Besides having a limited frequency range on the audio, the transmitter also popped, squealed, and coughed out fits of frequency modulation (FM) while operating in the amplitude (AM) mode.

After causing interference to other stations and accomplishing little itself, the Allied Knightkit T-150 transmitter was torn apart and repaired. The staff found that whoever built the kit 20 years earlier "made between 12 and 20 very big mistakes in wiring and quite a few parts needed replacement." An RF feedback problem was also solved with a new audio board and rewiring.

With the audio and modulation problems finally corrected, listeners could finally understand what the Crystal Ship had to say. Much of their ide-

The Crystal Ship

QSL

Shortwave

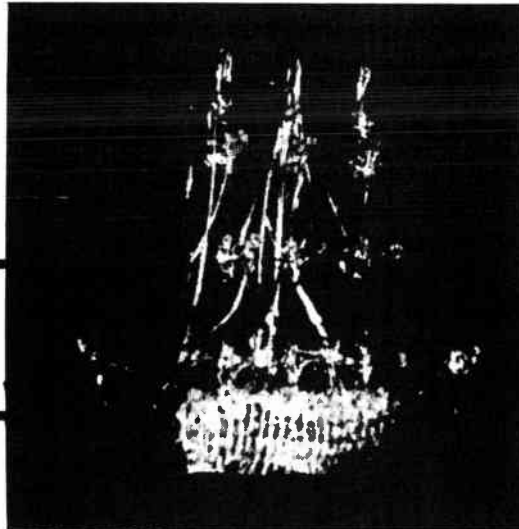


Fig. 8-5. *Featuring hard rock political music, The Crystal Ship took a youthful approach to socialism.*

ology, slogans, and the station name were derived from the 1960s rock music group The Doors. From a sign-on featuring segments of Doors' songs including "we want the world and we want it now" and a poem that pieced a smattering of Doors' and the operators ideals, the overall philosophies were often music-related. Even pirate ideals were condensed in a theme song, "We Want the Airwaves" by The Ramones.

When the Crystal Ship was not playing music or music-related segments, announcers The Poet and The Radical discussed a variety of current events on the air. Usually the two denounced the United States' foreign policy in Central America and other nations around the world, but topics including censorship in the music industry, FCC limitations on broadcasting, the draft, and the Reagan Administration were also aired. Although The Crystal Ship took a liberal Democratic stand by endorsing Jesse Jackson for President in 1984, programming was often described by both listeners and station personnel as socialist in nature.

Just as The Crystal Ship finally began to offer coherent, well-organized programming through a properly functioning transmitter, it suddenly disappeared after becoming a bit less active by August 1984. It is odd that a station as active as The Crystal Ship, which had overcome many problems (technical and otherwise), would disappear without a trace.

Another political music station that suddenly disappeared was Rebel Music Radio, a 1983 holiday pirate from the New York City area. Like KPRC, the main focus of programming from Rebel Music Radio was on the issues of nuclear weapons and war. Songs such as "Masters of War," "You're in the Army Now," and "The Draft Registers" rounded out their "golden protest weekends." The station opened on 1616 kHz like KPRC, but with a much weaker signal that was barely audible farther than 100 miles outside of the city. Rebel Music Radio was first heard on May Day 1983; it returned on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve but has not been heard from since.

Nonviolent political radicalism reached a peak in 1984 when Tangerine Radio began broadcasting on shortwave. Raunchy Rick, announcer and owner, faithfully preached a steady strain of anarchist values and beliefs with practical applications to everyday life (Fig. 8-6). Unlike the common definition of anarchy—a temporary chaos or lack of control—Tangerine Radio was among those who believed in anarchy as a political system. The nonviolent anarchists believe in the destruction of all established forms of institution and management with a peaceful new society based on individualism arising from the remains.

Anarchism today receives its worst stigma from the violent segment of the original political movement of over 70 years ago. During that time, anarchism was divided between the violent and nonviolent sects. The violent half was the most extreme left-wing political group of the time, committing many murders of government leaders including President McKinley in the early 1900s. This violent sect eventually became absorbed in the communist

IMAGINE THERE'S NO COUNTRIES
IT ISN'T HARD TO DO ~
NOTHING TO KILL OR DIE FOR
AND NO RELIGION, TOO ~
IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE
LIVING LIFE IN PEACE ~

IMAGINE NO POSSESSIONS
I WONDER IF YOU CAN ~
NO NEED FOR GREED OR HUNGER
A BROTHERHOOD OF MAN ~
IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE
SHARING ALL THE WORLD ~

YOU MAY SAY I'M A DREAMER
BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.
I HOPE SOMEDAY YOU'LL JOIN US
AND THE WORLD WILL
LIVE AS ONE.


-LENNON

QSL

to ANDREW YODER
GMTdate OCT 7 '84
time 0305-0422
freq 7421
power 75 W USB/20 W AM
antenna V-BEAM
() from our xmtr
() relayed

Thanks for your
report.

x Hauncky Rich



TANGERINE RADIO

Fig. 8-6. Tangerine Radio strongly supports the politics of anarchy, a system that would eliminate all governments and public institutions.

party, and today the only organized portion of anarchy left is run by the non-violents. However, hardcore punk music is often synonymous with anarchy and sometimes supports violent overthrow of the establishment.

Just because today's anarchist movement largely condemns violent actions, it cannot be considered nonaggressive or restricted to the laws of any country. Since anarchists do not consider themselves to be living under the laws of any country, "Robin Hood-style" robberies and like actions are encouraged. In every program, Tangerine Radio featured segments suggesting ways the common anarchist can destroy the establishment such as tampering with time cards to receive extra money at work, methods of wreaking havoc on your nation's food supply, how to start your own pirate radio station, etc. Although no widespread destruction of property was noted across the shortwave listening community following the Tangerine Radio broadcasts, they might have drawn the attention of the CIA or FBI as well as the FCC if they had been more frequent.

Tangerine Radio programming, like most other political pirates, is well organized and well produced. Every program features a different theme that is carried with music, commentaries, and sometimes fake commercials. Anti-work and antipolice programs have been aired thus far, along with their prospective of the Vietnam War, a Tangerine Radio telethon, and "Adventures

in Anarchy." Although commentary-oriented programming is sometimes a bit dry, Raunchy Rick has proven his production talent with high-quality comedy shows aired on an irregular basis.

One deficiency that has proven itself especially harmful to the popularity of Tangerine Radio is their Hallicrafters HT-32 transmitter. Whether broadcasting with 100 watts on USB or 25 watts with AM on 41 meters, the audio has always been a bit raspy and unclear. The few programs that have been heard since the spring of 1985 used clear AM modulation, so they were probably relayed by another station. Although it does not appear that the Tangerine Radio transmitter has been in use for several years, station personnel are still in contact with the hobby press and could easily return again in the future.

The last addition to the left-wing radio club, KNBS (Fig. 8-7), began broadcasting in early 1985 as a primarily one-issue shortwave station. Rather than taking an entire platform of issues to attack like other political pirates, KNBS satisfies itself by only dealing with one: the decriminalization of marijuana. KNBS, a sort of phonogram for cannabis, is hosted by Phil Muzik, who formats his programming in a fashion similar to Tangerine Radio. In fact, Raunchy Rick has even appeared several times as a guest host on KNBS.

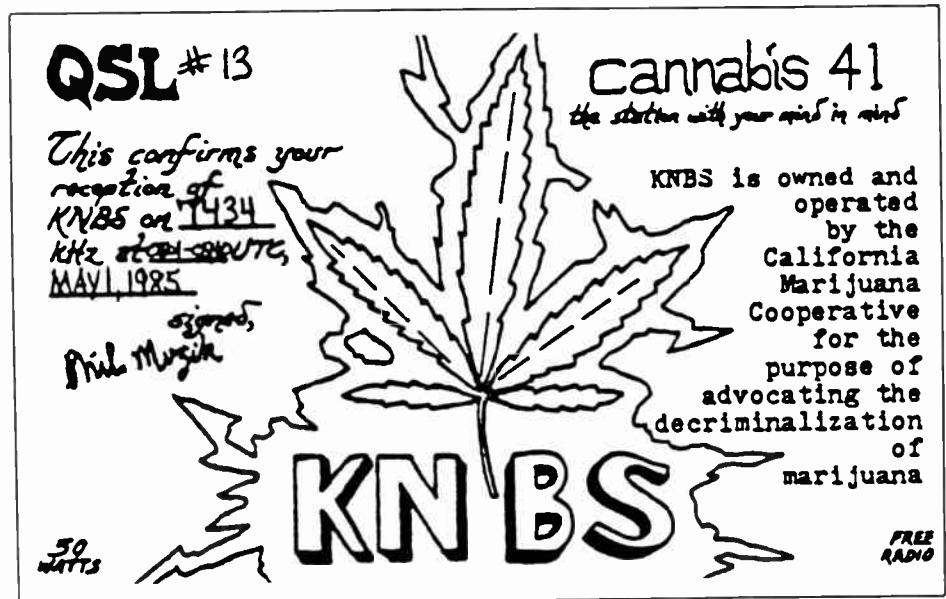


Fig. 8-7. KNBS is entirely dedicated to the decriminalization of marijuana (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

During the broadcasts, Phil Muzik editorializes between songs that support his statements. Occasionally, a few fake commercials, dealing with either marijuana or other liberal issues, are also thrown in. Like Tangerine Radio, KNBS programs are very well organized and produced. So far, nearly every facet of marijuana has been covered to this point by KNBS—from its history, uses, reasons for being banned by the United States government, actions being taken by those who support the decriminalization of it, etc. These editorials occur regularly throughout the program and last several minutes.

KNBS has been regularly heard since 1985 with consistent programming. Considering that their signal often varies greatly as to quality and location in the country where it is audible, it is likely that at least a few of the programs are relayed by other pirates. Although it is virtually impossible to track where the signals are coming from, this does mean that KNBS is audible with good strength anywhere in the United States, KNBS regularly stays in contact with the ACE, so the station is likely to continue for at least several more years.

The Politics of Pirating

While shortwave and pirate radio listening might not appear to be an especially political topic, its range is so broad that the different clubs often establish guidelines to keep their organization controlled. What measures are taken against those who cheat on loggings? What land masses of the world are considered countries? Are pirates considered radio broadcasting stations or merely individuals who illegally operate transmitting equipment? All of these questions and many more are answered in one way or another by AM and shortwave clubs.

In creating club policies, a political situation and potential controversies arise. During the late 1970s, one of the hotly debated questions concerning shortwave radio clubs dealt with whether or not pirates were actually stations. Those listeners who wanted pirate loggings banned from their newsletters claimed that the signals were produced merely by individuals committing illegal actions with improperly operated transmitters. On the other side, some DXers thought that since the transmissions were obviously broadcasts, the pirates must be considered broadcast stations. The subject might seem rather unimportant today, but many DXers at that time were not willing to see several pages of their newsletter "wasted" on pirates, and the free radio listeners clawed back to save their only sources of up-to-date information.

Needless to say, the listeners that enjoyed pirate radio considered them broadcasting stations, while those who disliked pirates did not. Some of those opposed to free radio scorned the music or professional programming at that time and the rest felt that no one operating without a license deserved attention. Regardless, the conflicts no longer exist; with the formation of *The*

ACE, most pro-pirate listeners have exited the international shortwave broadcast listening clubs. Today the situation is no longer an issue, but just before the creation of *The ACE*, it culminated in a nearly violent duel between the Voice of Syncom and one or more shortwave listeners.

For example, the station deemed Syncom was attacked on the basis that it had been relaying European pirates in order to fool listeners into believing that it was a regular broadcast from those stations. The complainer listed the telephone number of the FCC Monitoring Watch Officer and encouraged everyone to call when they heard Syncom and any other station "imitating a European pirate." Unfortunately, he was unaware that Syncom offered one of the best DX services of any pirate at that time or ever (Fig. 8-8). DJ Chuck Felcher often announced rare DX catches and upcoming pirate broadcasts, along with comedy skits and relays from stations across the world that always featured frequent "Syncom relay" IDs. After the magazine containing the complaints was sent out, Chuck Felcher furiously protested the false accusations in a later issue, seemingly unaware that the listener had later sent in an apology for the mistake. However, the havoc had already been wreaked, and Syncom rarely operated after that point. The listener, once an active reporter of pirates, never reported them to that shortwave bulletin again.



Fig. 8-8. One of the best sources of DX information in 1980 was the Voice of Syncom, which eventually left the air because of a controversy with a shortwave listener (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

In several similar situations, broadcasting hoaxes have fooled and sometimes angered shortwave listeners. Today, pirate noaxes are a popular standard, but many DXers of the past were not accustomed to discerning between real and fake broadcasters. Two particularly controversial spoofs of the 1970s were Radio Bouvet and Radio Galaxie, created to fool the shortwave listener. While the spoofs were often light hearted, some pirates used their activities to attack particular individuals whom they felt had wronged them in one way or another.

One of the first American hoaxes was Radio Galaxie—XEJRM, which claimed to be a newly authorized station in Reynosa, Mexico. Programming featured tourist-oriented talks about Mexido and readings from *FRENDX* concerning pirates. The latter certainly destroyed any credibility the station might have had. Radio Galaxie promised to continue broadcasting weekly on 6940 kHz, but it was only heard in July of 1979.

Another pirate of a less humorous nature from this era was WKKK/WKGB, which broadcasted music and talk while its operators were in an out-spoken, drunken state. One of the announcers claimed to be a particular columnist from the Ontario DX Association while telling racist jokes. This angered many radio listeners, especially the columnist named. By means of a letter sent to various DX clubs, he publicly disassociated himself with WKKK/WKGB, saying that he knew who was behind the broadcasts and he "never thought they could stoop so low." The station later toned down its style and continued for several months into late 1981 as WRNR.

Radio Bouvet claimed to be an Irish Europrivate in late 1981. Announcer Peter Jones and Morris Fitzpatrick played 1960s and 1970s rock music with promotions for its "local" AM and FM services. On New Year's Eve, Radio Bouvet featured a countdown to 1982. This was made more believable with "a live report from the Trinity College Theatre in Central Dublin," complete with crowd sounds. However, the station was obviously located in North America because some of the European terms were incorrect and the transmissions were too strong to be coming from Europe. In fact, one listener in Toronto, Canada reported that he could still hear Radio Bouvet even after he turned the volume control on his receiver to "zero."

Once again, the same columnist from the Ontario DX Association was targeted in backing a station, this time Radio Bouvet. In a letter to *FRENDX*, he said, "This appears to be the latest in a long series of harassments and smear tactics carried on by a small group of former members of the Ontario DX Association who were expelled for having submitted phony loggings under a fictitious name." It is questionable whether he meant that the "small group of former members" operated Radio Bouvet or that they simply reported the columnist's address to radio clubs for correspondence to the station. Fortunately for the columnist, this was apparently the last major slur against him.

Pirates in 1982 filled the air with stations responding to the criticism from some DXers that they were only "kids playing radio." Two pirates, ZKPR (Kids Playing Radio) and the Children's Radio Network, left little doubt as to how they stood on the issue. CRN used very young announcers and babies crying to make fun of the critics, while ZKPR attacked the opposition with commentaries. Another station that operated several times in 1982 and 1983 was Radio Free C. M. Stanbury, a campaign against a particular well-known shortwave listener and magazine columnist.

Still other stations have reacted against pirates and the free radio listening community. During some shows, Dr. Why? from KMA (Fig. 8-9) frequently editorialized on how listening to QRP was a boring waste of time. The complaints never caused an uproar because few listeners disputed the editorials, KQRP did not hear KMA, and whoever heard the KMA shows were probably just as bored with hearing put-downs of KQRP as they would have been if they were listening to that station. Radio Sine Wave (Fig. 8-10) once parodied the Voice of Tomorrow by airing confusing racist commentaries and the songs "I Wouldn't Want To Be Like You," "You Sound Like You're Sick," and "The KKK Took My Baby Away." Later in the broadcast, it was announced that the program was coming from Radio Sine Wave, but some less careful listeners actually logged it as the Voice of Tomorrow.

Political pirates and clandestines will exist in and for North America for as long as radio exists. Unlike the general pirate scene, which could disappear because it lives on publicity and enthusiasm for listening to unlicensed

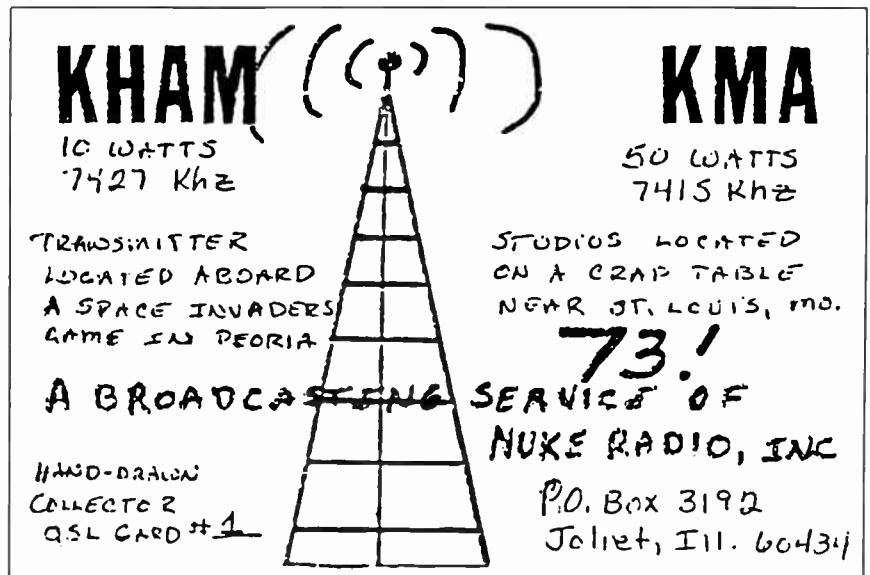


Fig. 8-9. Dr. Why? from KMA frequently editorialized on the state of free radio (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

RADIO SINE WAVE

Mathematical Radio

ANDREW YODER
has admitted to hearing
Radio Sine Wave on 10/30/84 from
Q127 to 0155 UTC.

Your Equation for Mathematical Listening

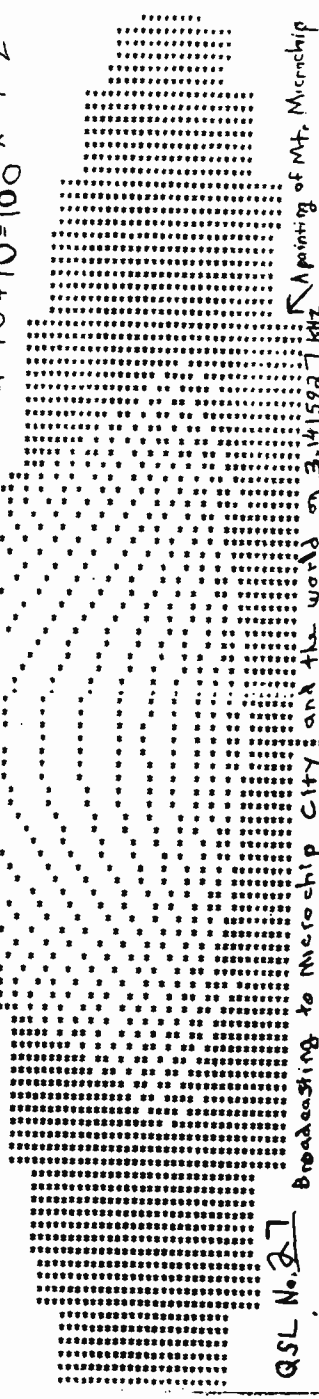
$$e = mc^2 + \pi$$

$$x = y$$



$$\int_0^4 e^{x^2} dx = 100$$
$$x = y = z$$

In Calculaton



QSL No. 27

Broadcasting to Microchip City and the world on 3.1415927 MHz

Thanks for your report. I don't mind answering, we're not connected with WIMP or KMA we are the shortwave service of the Microchip City Broadcasting System, Microchip City is a tiny republic where TRS-80's, VIC-20's, Apples, TI-99's, etc, live as brothers. Good luck with QSL'ing the pirates. Anyone who hates VOT can't be a pirate. JRC.

Fig. 8-10. The parody broadcast of Voice of Tomorrow by Radio Sine Wave fooled a few shortwave listeners.

radio, political pirates are often removed from the hobby and act for the enthusiasm for their ideals. For as long as radical political groups exist within this country, there will be those who decide that their particular group must have a radio voice. Because radical ideals have been followed since the creation of man, it is safe to say that political pirates and clandestines will stay around for as long as there are radios.

Spoofs and stations carrying the politics of free radio are another matter. Since no free radio politics can possibly exist without a free radio scene, then the stronger the hobby is, the more politics that will exist. Spoofing feeds from both the pirate radio and shortwave listening hobbies. Whenever many DXers are tirelessly striving to hear more and rarer broadcasters, some prankster will also be there transmitting fake programs.

I have even heard rumors (unsubstantiated) that in the 1960s or 1970s, someone even spoofed the nearly sacred Tristan de Cunha station, ZOE. Few people have ever heard of Tristan and even fewer have heard Tristan Radio. The station squeezes out a measly 40 watts on 3290 kHz from its island location in the south Atlantic Ocean. Because of the frequency, the power, and the ocean-bound location, ZOE has rarely even been heard outside of its island. To DXers, Tristan is the ultimate catch because it has never been heard in North America. To spoof Tristan on 3290 kHz would be very dangerous; not only would the FCC try to catch the pirate for unlicensed broadcasting, but a few crazed vigilante DXers might even help them. ☠



9

Pirate Utilities

After DXing pirates for a period of time, some listeners become disenchanted. Finding stations becomes too easy; programs are too “commercial” sounding. These listeners want to hear something more covert, more uncommon. Pirate utilities, a tiny subset of free radio, could be just the niche for the hard-to-please DXer.

A legal utility is anything that is not a broadcast or amateur station. A large number of stations fit into the category including maritime, aeronautical, military, and point-to-point stations. An important aspect of utilities is that they are not intended for public reception. The communications on utilities are always meant for military, commercial, governmental, or private listeners. For the privacy of the communications, listeners are not legally allowed to report the content of licensed utility communications. In fact, it is illegal even to listen to utilities in some countries. Because of the private nature of utilities, some DXers are attracted to this facet of the hobby.

Pirate utilities are, as the name suggests, nonpublic communications from pirate stations. These include two-way communications, feeders, jammers, and transmitter tests. Few stations give regular (or even irregular) identification, and because a large body of the transmissions involve times, frequencies, and dates of future broadcasts, the stations rarely verify such reports. This adds to the devious atmosphere and hidden mystique.

The need for utility communications by pirates increases with the activity and sophistication in the hobby. As pirate fests began in 1982, it also

became more necessary to have quick and timely information. Also, when activity increases, radio communications can become a mighty tool against the FCC.

One problem that arises for the listener with these transmissions is differentiating between pirate utilities and common bootleggers. Pirate utilities are transmissions by free radio operators that deal with the hobby. No transmissions by spys, drug dealers, or bootlegging hams fit into this category. Pirate utilities are easy to define, but the tough part comes while DXing. If two people are talking together about secretive activities, how does one know if either of them are pirates? Communications cannot be identified as "pirate" unless they are positively recognized as such or maybe if they contain information about unlicensed broadcasting.

Two-Way Communications

Two-way or point-to-point utilities are the toughest to identify as "pirate." If an unlicensed station talks with another about broadcasting in an amateur band, it might not be easy to distinguish from hams. Worse yet, if the communications are coded to sound like normal ham talks, identifying them as pirates is nearly impossible.

Pirate two-way utilities can also melt into a grey area between several different categories of radio communications. For example, a pirate might also be a legal amateur. Questions can be raised if this operator speaks about his pirate stations while transmitting as a ham. Is the transmission then a pirate utility or a legal amateur signal containing information about an entirely separate activity? Normally, the latter is true. Unless the operation itself is illegal, the transmissions cannot truly be considered a "pirate utility."

Certainly, amateur activities constructed around pirate radio broadcasting are interesting and notable, but they are not illegal and are not "pirate" by nature. Any station, whether licensed or not, that discusses topics based on pirate radio and operates on frequencies outside of amateur bands is a pirate utility. Likewise, a pirate without an amateur license that talks in with other hams or unlicensed stations within a ham band is also a pirate utility. This is obviously a confusing subject! But simply stated, a two-way communications pirate utility must be centered around unlicensed broadcasting in content and must be operating illegally.

It is impossible to measure the number of amateur transmissions made by operators who broadcast illegally. With thousands of contacts made daily on the ham bands, no one can monitor the content of each transmission. Therefore, pirate-oriented transmissions on the amateur bands are rarely ever heard by any outside listeners. It does seem logical that these transmissions in the ham bands do occur, but they have never been mentioned in any hobby pirate bulletins. For all anyone knows, they might not even exist.

While it is unknown whether pirates communicate within the amateur bands, they do transmit in the free radio bands. Many pirates have made contact with others over the past few years including WMTV (Fig. 9-1), the Voice of the Nighthawk, WROD, and one of the many incarnations of the Voice of the Purple Pumpkin. But none of these stations ever made more than a few brief contacts on 41 meters.

A few of the European free radio operators are heard almost every Sunday morning making contacts on 41 or 48 meters. While North American transmissions are short and rather mysterious, Europeans make no effort to conceal the fact that they are unlicensed broadcasters. Normally, the pirates identify the conversations with their broadcasting call signs and slogans. Most talk consists of equipment descriptions and informalities relating to pirate radio.

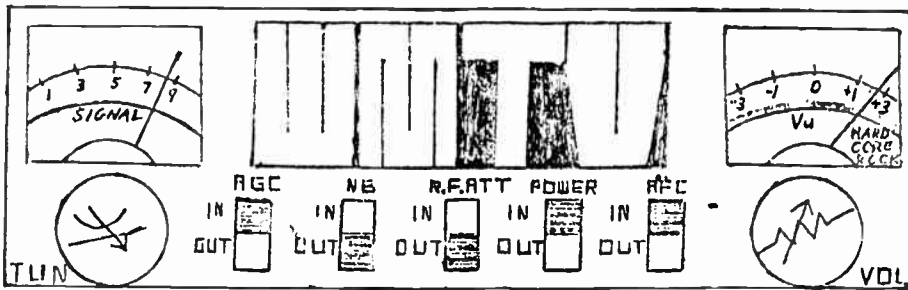
European-styled, regular, two-way communications finally occurred in 1984 when Radio North Coast International, KROK, Zeppelin Radio Worldwide, and Radio Sound Wave all attempted to reach each other via radio. The four stations commonly contacted any in the group after making a broadcast. In an early two-way talk in 1984, several of the stations gave out their maildrop addresses, so more personal communications could be passed. From then on, they all apparently knew the locations and identities of the other operators.

Most of the communications existed either to access the signal quality at various locations around the country or to set up pirate fest schedules. After the sign-off of one of the stations, another would often transmit a signal report of the broadcaster at that location. From this, it is reasonable to assume that operators of the four stations were probably regular free radio listeners.

Radio North Coast International, KROK, and Zeppelin Radio Worldwide (Fig. 9-2) are still active, but only around holidays. These stations, like all of the others still active from before 1985, have experienced a dramatic reduction in the number of broadcasts after the busts of KBBR and KKMO, and the release of the infamous FCC "16 cities list." Radio Sound Wave shut down before the increase in FCC activity in 1985. It contributed infrequently to the group chats.

Other two-day pirate utilities might identify themselves by their station names or call signs, but this group identified one another by the operators' names. The most common names in this network include: Captain Willy from Radio North Coast International, The Fox from KROK, and Ze Count from Zeppelin Radio Worldwide.

Operators from many other free radio stations became annoyed at the controversial actions of the "network." It always used frequencies in the 41-meter "pirate" band during the nighttime hours. If the communications would have taken place before 1983, a problem would not have existed. However, the 41-meter band has become overcrowded since 1984 with international broadcasters and legal utilities. Radio Moscow, WRNO, Kol






SOUTH FLORIDA'S BEST ROCK

WMTV Rocks the World
on SHORTWAVE

WMTV FM STEREO 96.3
 WMTV AM 1610 KHZ
 WMTV CH 3 TV
 WMTV SW 7.4-7.45

QSL NO. 87



W M T V
 FREE RADIO'S BEST ROCK

TO: Andrew Yoder

WMTV IS PROUD TO CONFIRM OUR BROADCAST
 OF THANKS TO YOU = 742002
WEAR B ON 7450 KHZ AT _____
 UTC WHEN YOU HEARD US ROCKIN THE FREE
 WORLD!

WMTV'S POWER WAS AT KS WATTS
 INTO A $\frac{1}{4}$ WAVE VERTICAL.
 INVERTED UEE

Fig. 9-1. WMTV from Florida occasionally attempted to make contact with other stations at the conclusion of its own broadcasts.



Fig. 9-2. One of the few stations to ever participate in European style two-way communications was Zeppelin Radio Worldwide, which has been active since 1984.

Israel, La Voz Del CID, WHRI, the Voice of Greece, and other high-powered international broadcasters now destroy many previously clear frequencies. By 1985, few clear frequencies existed. When the "network" was in operation then, the communications sometimes occupied the only clear frequencies in the 41-meter band. Thus, other stations became frustrated when they could not operate because these stations sometimes spent hours discussing equipment and reception quality of signals in their particular areas.

One can only guess why the "network" operated on 41 meters. Probably the simplest assumption is that it was the easiest. That is where those stations normally transmitted, the antennas were already cut for those frequencies, and the equipment was already tuned for that meter band, so it would take more effort to move to another frequency.

But conversing on 41 meters (7350 to 7450 kHz) is much more than inconsiderate; it is dangerous. The FCC monitors this frequency range for pirates more than any area. To converse on such a high-visibility area is like driving on the wrong side of the road. Long-distance charges are expensive, but such rates are much more acceptable than a possible \$1,000 fine from the FCC. Also, the telephone rates could be avoided and the risk of being caught lessened if they only communicated in a different frequency range (especially in or near an amateur band). But the "network" has not been heard since some complaints about their activities were published in the *ACE*, so they might have taken the advice.

Odd as it might seem, some pirates have transmitted two-way traffic for the benefit of the listening public. One of the best examples of this activity occurred after a Radio Clandestine broadcast in August 1988. For years, Radio Clandestine never disclosed any information on the operation—whether technical or personal—to the public. Listeners only knew that the station claimed to broadcast from International Waters and must have been using several hundred watts of power because of the signal reports noted

across the country. Other than the on-the-air personalities of R. F. Burns, Wanda Lust, Boris Fignutsky, and Drool the Cabin Boy, nothing was known of the operators.

But the first small insight to Radio Clandestine came in summer 1988, when R. F. Burns hosted several antinuclear shows, a large step out of character. After the first transmitter carrying Radio Clandestine programming signed off during one of these broadcasts, a second, much weaker transmission from the station signed on. Several weeks later, Radio Clandestine tried another two-transmitter broadcast, but this time the second program disappeared in the middle of a song after about 10 minutes. Several minutes later, the first transmitter returned for less than a minute with a Radio Clandestine promo touting "a historic stereo broadcast." Afterwards, the operators of the two transmitters returned with a series of disjointed messages. Although some of the messages, such as "this is a network termination of all broadcasts, revert to prior frequency" sounded real, others like "yank my doodle, it's a dandy" obviously were not. After continuing with these phrases for close to 10 minutes, the operator of the first transmitter said he was going to the store "to pick up a six pack of beer, some Oreos, and an October 1972 issue of Penthouse."

It is likely that the transmissions were only a parody of spy codes and the entire mystery surrounding pirate radio operations. Because of the silly content of the phrases, it is doubtful that they alone had any real meaning. However, it is possible that Radio Clandestine was using the transmissions to dispel rumors about their operations. Everyone, it seems, enjoys speculating about Radio Clandestine. Listeners have often rumored that the station is located in Canada, that it no longer exists and the tapes are only old tapes aired by relays, or that the programs are aired by many different stations.

Although the rumors of possible Canadian locations are not disproven by the two-way communications and new programs, it does appear that Radio Clandestine still exists and uses at least two transmitter sites. More importantly, one of the operators had a voice very similar to that of R. F. Burns, so that could disprove the old tape-relay speculation. These deductions might not seem important, but if it is true, Radio Clandestine could continue broadcasting for many more years. If the programs were merely being relayed by a few other stations, as was assumed by some, Radio Clandestine would virtually be dead. These latest developments prove that the station and the free radio movement still have plenty of blood pumping through their veins.

Other stations have used two-way pirate utilities for entirely different reasons. Radio Amity from 1983 used another operator to find working loop telephone numbers and give technical guidance. Whenever problems arose that were apparently beyond the operator's knowledge, he would call for help or one of his friends would give him advice over the radio. These communications occurred during several of Radio Amity's early broadcasts; the

programming was disorganized and unprofessional. Several of the messages included "Hey Amity, your audio is breaking up," and "Radio Amity is looking for a loop."

Two-way pirate utilities are likely to exist for as long as free radio is around. But future activities will probably be more secretive to avoid difficulties with the government and other pirates. Other frequency ranges, such as the Citizen's Band, have been widely used in the past and should continue to be active.

Transmitter Tests

Transmitter tests are commonly heard and generally worthless to listeners. Some stations test their equipment with actual programming; this is considered a normal broadcast. When a station tests with voice-only programming or with a loop-tape interlude signal, it is then a pirate utility.

Testing a transmitter with vocals is common and boring. Sometimes an announcer will turn on the equipment and give a numerical countdown on the shortwave bands. If the listener is lucky, the transmission will also be identified with a callsign or slogan of some sort. Some of the voice-only tests from recent years includes transmissions made by the Voice of the Night-hawk, United World Radio, WENJ, WROD, Radio Sound Wave (Fig. 9-3), and WFIX.

Voice-only tests are virtually of no value to both the listeners and the operators, of course. Sure, tuning in a new station is nice. But when the announcer only repeats his call sign phonetically eight times, each time noting that this is a test, the transmissions become more annoying than interesting. Likewise, if the operator is checking the equipment, a dummy load will

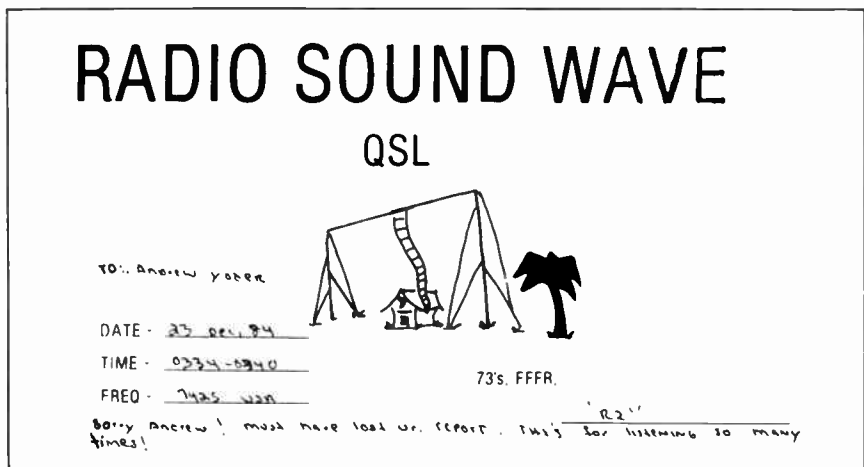


Fig. 9-3. Radio Sound Wave is one of many stations that commonly tested their transmitter with voice-only messages.

work much more reliably. And if antennas are being tested for a particular outside listener, surely the operator could play music or a brief segment of regular programming instead.

Unidentified music-only programs often turn out to be transmitter tests, but not pirate utilities. Since songs are being played (automatically illegal in ham or commercial two-way communications), the transmissions are deemed broadcasts. If the transmissions are broadcasts intended for the public, then they cannot be pirate utilities. Unidentified broadcasts appear almost as frequently as the standard pirate programs. Their dull programming and lack of identification annoy most DXers; some refuse to report them to radio bulletins.

An entirely different sort of transmitter test that is also a pirate utility is a station that airs a loop tape of their interlude signal. Most interlude signals are several tones or notes played on an instrument and repeated. Interlude signal transmissions differ from unidentified music-only stations; although a tone is different from voice or morse code, it is not really "music" per se.

In order to figure out what station is making the interlude signal transmission, a knowledge of the different signals is necessary. Many stations use interlude signals before and during their programming. Over the past several years, only a few of these transmissions have been reported. Listeners heard the Voice of Democracy's (now known as the Voice of Communism) 12-note version of the "Star Spangled Banner" for at least 15 minutes on one evening during the early days of the station. WBST, the legendary Halloween pirate, sometimes airs a loop tape of horror-movie-style organ music with continuous laughter in the evenings before a broadcast. The novelty song, "They're Coming to Take Me Away" is also used by WBST on occasion. KROK (Fig. 9-4) has used their five-note interlude from the "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" theme song to test the equipment.

Unlike voice-only tests, which are rarely made by active broadcasters, interlude signal transmissions usually foretell regular programming from that

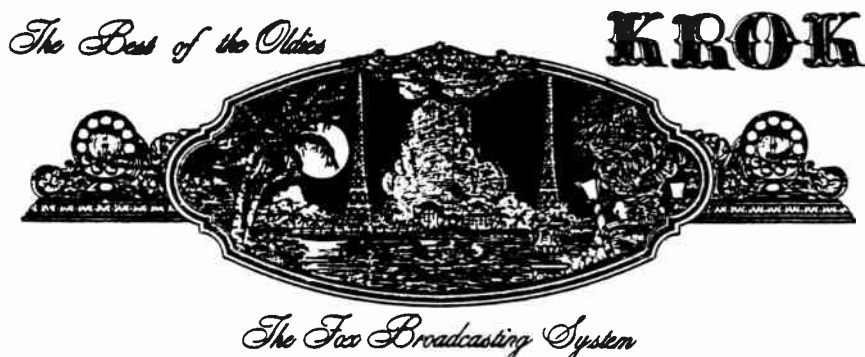


Fig. 9-4. The 5-note interlude from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" is sometimes heard when the KROK transmitter is being tested for an upcoming broadcast.

station later in the evening. In addition to being interesting, a pirate interlude signal on shortwave is a good sign that pirates will be broadcasting soon.

Relays

If two-way or transmitter test pirate utilities are not confusing enough, the labels for relays become even more nebulous. Technically, relays are not pirate utilities. But for the sake of categorization, they are thrown in because there is no other place they can fit in. A chapter dedicated to this virtually useless division of pirate radio is unnecessary, therefore.

Relays, in reference to pirate utilities, occur when a pirate rebroadcasts live or pre-recorded programming from a legal station. These fall under the category of pirate utilities because although they are broadcasts, the transmissions contain no sort of identification from the actual operators. Most of all, it is unclear why anyone would want to rebroadcast a legal station. In doing this, the operator risks a large fine to transmit something that probably can already be heard within the range of his signal. In addition, the operator gets no satisfaction from producing the programming.

Free radio programs relayed by another station are not pirate utilities because they are intended for reception by the public (Fig. 9-5). It is doubtful

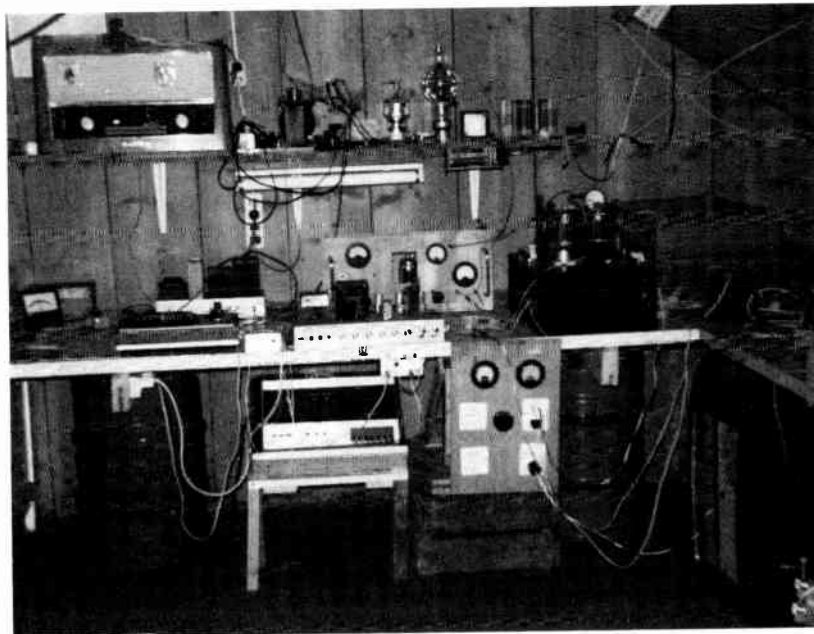


Fig. 9-5. Dutch pirate Radio Jan Rap operated in the 1970s from this barn. When it was active, the station relayed many pirates from around the world (photo courtesy of Dave Valko).

that anyone would want to tune in legal relays for more than a few minutes. A listener has no real way of knowing if a pirate program is actually coming from the legal station's transmitters or someone else's. Regardless, this categorization involves activities of miniscule importance. Most relays of legal stations are prerecorded, possibly to partially hide the location of the unlicensed transmitter. Cassettes of legal stations from other parts of the country might be aired so listeners believe the pirate is from a different location. Again, this makes little sense, because the clear-channel AM broadcasters (commonly relayed) are audible across whichever half of the country the station is located in. These assumptions seem to be the most reasonable on the subject because few people (including radio hobbyists) make random copies of programming from clear-channel AM stations.

Some of the stations relayed over the past several years include AFCN, CFMI, CHNO, KVOO, WTOP, WPGC, WWDC, WAAF, WLW, WLS, and WPFM. Most relays last anywhere from several minutes to several hours and are heard in the usual places that pirates are found across the radio spectrum. The stations appear especially during weekend nights like normal pirate broadcasts, as well.

An interesting diversion from the usual relays of legal broadcasters occurred in December of 1981 when a Connecticut FM station was heard across the Northeast above the AM dial. The station, WPLR from New Haven, was relayed live, with the pirates rebroadcasting what they were currently receiving on their radio. When a phone number for rock music requests was announced, a group of Pennsylvania DXers called in to inform the station of the expanded coverage area. After the call, the WPLR disc jockey announced over the air that some listeners in Pennsylvania were "listening to the station on 1620 kHz." Suddenly, the relay ended and went directly into programming and identifications from Pirate Radio New England (Fig. 9-6). For some reason, the professional-quality talk show station also had a fetish for relaying Connecticut FM rock stations.

KABF, 88.3 MHz from Little Rock, Arkansas, is another station that was relayed with interesting results. Stepping outside the usual boundaries for pirate utility relays, it gave listeners an alternative to the usual commercial radio fare. The station offered non-commercial programming with a "progressive" format of jazz, blues, soul, new wave, and bluegrass music.

Progressive music was first heard on shortwave in the Autumn of 1984 and continued several times per month through the first few months of 1985. Unlike the many previous relays of legal stations, most DXers enjoyed the programming. Although free radio claims to present an alternative to commercial broadcasters, progressive music is rarely played. So in a rare twist, the alternative to underground radio was programming from a legal station. What made the situation even more enjoyable was that the KABF employees enthusiastically welcomed the listeners tuning in on shortwave.

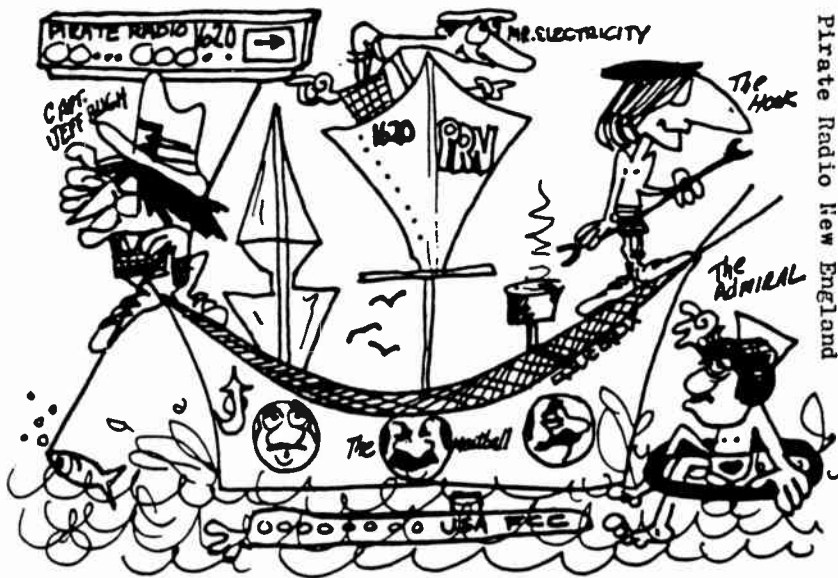


Fig. 9-6. The famous AM station Pirate Radio New England also had a strange fetish for relaying various Connecticut legal FM stations (QSL courtesy of the ACE).

During every shortwave relay, several listeners called the station and talked with the friendly KABF personnel. Ironically, some DXers thought that KABF would even make a great pirate station. One disc jockey announced the KABF address and told shortwave listeners that they would receive QSL cards in return for correct reports of the station. No listeners ever reported receiving KABF shortwave verification cards, so either no one wrote to the station or the station failed to keep the promise.

Because of the location, the KABF relays were probably made by the operator of KQRP/KRZY/KBBR; also that operator seemed to enjoy relaying other pirates and changing his own station name. Although his different station call signs were not associated, some other pirates were reported with programming very similar to KQRP/KRZY/KBBR. Some new or rarely heard stations were also heard on common KQRP/KRZY/KBBR frequencies with the same reception characteristics across the country.

An almost similar situation occurred several years earlier in Canada on shortwave. For the last few months of 1982 and the beginning of 1983, the pirate relayed Canadian local stations such as CHEZ and CHNO on the 90-, 60-, and 41-meter bands. Signal strength and the stations relayed suggested that the transmitter was located somewhere in the Sudbury, Ontario area. DXers dubbed it the "Sudbury pirate." Despite its active, random selection of broadcasting times, no other information was known about the operator(s).

Another relay oddity was known to listeners as “the Mystery Aircheck Station” during 1986 and 1987. The station played tapes of legal, clear-channel AM broadcasters such as KDKA, WABC, WLS, and WWJ near 1620 kHz. Obviously, this lack of diverse programming was interesting to few. Worse yet, the lack of identification, poor modulation, and reckless transmitting (some broadcasts from other pirates were destroyed by signals from the Mystery Aircheck Station) antagonized many listeners.

KCF-653, an AM pirate that was heard several times in the spring of 1986, operated with amateurishly produced programming and poor audio. Even though the call sign appeared to be like KPF-941, the station was a fake attempting to manage the Yonkers, New York operation. Because the modulation and program quality of KCF-653 matched that of the Mystery Aircheck Station, the two are probably run by the same operators. Fortunately, this interference-prone operator has not broadcasted for close to a year at this writing.

Jammers

Pirate utilities, relays, and two-way conversations are rarely interesting, but usually not harmful. Another type of pirate utility, jamming transmissions, often destroys the broadcasts of other stations. The purpose of jammers is to wipe out particular pirate signals and discourage the operators from future broadcasting.

Jammers best represent themselves in the international broadcasting scene where political groups and governments flaunt their ideologies. Because of the anarchy that could result on the airwaves from a proliferation of jamming stations, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) passed laws against such activities. But large-scale jammers do exist, sponsored by governments or rival political factions to silence opposite ideologies. To make listeners tune away from the broadcast station, the jammer transmits an obnoxious tone, music, or varying carrier over the frequency. When the ITU pressures a country about their jamming practices, the jammers might then type morse code over the station to make it look like deviant ham operators causing the interference, but this rarely happens.

Since jammers are usually used by governments worried about the country's future stability, money and time are dumped into the operations. A staff to constantly monitor the opposition's broadcasts is required, plus workers are needed to maintain and operate the transmitters and antennas. According to many shortwave experts, jamming transmitters are usually governmental high-powered broadcast or utility equipment used to cause interference when fulfilling their official duties. So by using a broadcast or utility transmitter and its staff to destroy other stations' signals, a government can save on equipment and costs.

Just as pirates are often scaled-down versions of local or international legal stations, pirate jammers only lightly commit themselves to operating.

The high power of international shortwave broadcasters makes them virtually impossible for the average person to jam, and no one would really have a reason to wipe out a small private station. Therefore, when individuals in this continent jam a station, it is usually another pirate that is affected.

Oddly enough, pirates are usually jammed by other radio hobbyists who operate like licensed amateurs. The most common type of jamming in North America is morse code or talking over the frequency. Jammer operators randomly attack any unlicensed broadcast, probably with the motive that they are stopping an illegal activity. Transmissions such as "oh look, another illegal broadcaster" are common. Evidently, these operators fail to realize that they are committing the same crime as the "illegal broadcasters."

Only a few interesting jammers have existed. One, the Pirate Blaster, operated once against KPRC, the well-known left-wing talk show station from the Northeast. Like most jammers, the Pirate Blaster probably doubled as a ham station, since it operated in LSB only (not intelligible with a common AM receiver). The jammer attempted to answer questions raised by KPRC's telephone listeners with a sarcastic tone. Even with a fake Oriental accent, simplistic jokes, and his use of LSB on the AM band, the Pirate Blaster was as inept as most other jammers. His main goal appeared to be obtaining some attention, because he never attempted to completely destroy the KPRC signal.

In Europe, one notable case concerning jamming occurred throughout the lifespan of Radio Enoch. The station, named after Enoch Powell, aired fascist political material: anti-communist, pro-South African, and xenophobic. In fact, it operated much like an English version of America's Voice of Tomorrow, except with less of a nazi emphasis. British free radio stations banded together and jammed Radio Enoch with tones and music every Sunday morning that it appeared on 41 meters in 1979 and 1980.

The North American variety of random "amateur jamming" of pirates will continue infrequently for as long as the vigilante approach is taken to patrolling the airwaves. If the Voice of Tomorrow broadcasts more often than it is presently, it might be jammed by a coordinated effort from other American pirates. The station has long provoked angry letters and comments from shortwave listeners of all sorts. A higher level of visibility could make it a target for jammers. Unless more violently radical pirates begin broadcasting, North America will probably never experience a rash of coordinated pirate jammers.

Feeders and Remotes

This last division—feeders and remotes—almost completely fits the definition of pirate utilities.

Feeders are one or more stages of transmitters and receivers linked together to provide greater safety for the operators during a broadcast. The

system operates on the reasonable assumption that two transmitters are tougher to locate than one. With the most common style of feeding, a small AM or FM transmitter is purchased and installed at the studio. Then the main transmitter is taken to a separate location within the range of the low-powered transmitter (feeder). When the broadcast commences, the station member leaves the site of the main transmitter and returns only when it is over and he is sure that FCC agents are not waiting for him.

One variation on this theme requires less overall maintenance but demands a much more secure location for the main transmitter. The largest difference is that a receiver at the second site is connected with a relay to the on/off switch of the main transmitter. When a signal appears on the feeder frequency, it trips the relay and turns on the transmitter. After the program ends and the feeder is turned off, the relay closes, turning off the main transmitter.

Systems like this would obviously put the FCC at a severe disadvantage if frequently used. However, the operation of this variation of feeders requires a secure location with electric power. The equipment would need protection from not only the weather, but also vandals. If the transmitting equipment is left at a site for a day or less, it can be operated with batteries or from outside stores that have external electric outlets. But when used for several weeks or more, the equipment must be hidden in a vacant shack or building with electric power: a rare combination.

For obvious reasons of impracticality, the variation of feeding is rarely used in the United States or Canada. According to rumors and the technical quality of some stations, it is likely that a few pirates do use feeders, but the percentage of those is small. Feeding techniques are frequently used in Great Britain, especially in London, where ethnic pirates broadcast on AM or FM 24 hours per day. There it is a necessity to use feeders; the main studios would surely get raided. The New York City local pirates probably also use a system of feeders, considering their lengthy regular broadcasts.

A *remote*, in legal terms, is whenever a station broadcasts away from the main studio. Most remotes are used for public service material: covering sporting events, political debates, fund raisers at malls, etc. The stations use either special telephone lines or UHF transmitters to relay the signal back to the studios. Remotes are important to legal stations because they expand the flexibility of the programming, making it more interesting and community-service oriented (a must for getting FCC licenses renewed).

Pirates, on the other hand, have usually only used remotes to relay telephone calls back to the studio from a pay phone, but this does not often occur. A few of the community-oriented AM or FM pirates considered covering sporting events or political rallies in the past, but little has ever come from those plans. While phone calls are sometimes taken via pay phone, they are seldom relayed back to the studio and aired. Relaying calls from pay phones can be dangerous because the feeder transmitter must be connected

directly to the telephone. In a crowded area, the authorities would certainly become suspicious if the telephone was wired to a box or if wires led from the booth to a car.

Most of the pirates using remotes operated local-range AM or FM stations, but one notable exception was WRAM. WRAM broadcasted to an audience across eastern North America on shortwave during 1980 and 1983. Before an FCC raid ended the station's career in June 1983, calls were taken at a telephone booth and relayed back to the studio via Citizen's Band radio.

Most of these communications are sent from transmitters powered with less than a few watts, they can occur in virtually any part of the radio spectrum, and they are used very infrequently by North American pirates. Random searching for pirate feeders or remotes would rarely bring results. To best hear these transmissions, it is wise to first forget about ever hearing them. Realistically, few DXers ever hear any remotes or feeders even if they listen all the time.

The most effective method of listening for pirate utility remotes and feeders, however, (after relinquishing the hope of ever hearing any) is to actively listen for pirates. If local pirates exist, either on AM, FM, or shortwave, listening to their programming could tell you if they are having segments fed from other sources. Remotes and feeders should not be too tough to identify as such because the programming is similar to what is being aired.

In conclusion, remotes and feeders are important to the pirate DXer, not just because of their rarity, but because of the interesting behind-the-scenes view of free radio they can provide. Likewise, two-way pirate utilities also enable the pirate listener to briefly glance at the personalities and preparations involved in organizing an unlicensed broadcast. It is exciting to hear rare transmissions, but that excitement cannot compare to the fun of hearing a pirate not "officially" on the air.

The other pirate utilities (jammers, music-only stations, tests, and relays of legal stations) are almost never of value to the shortwave listener. Signals from these stations do little more than fill frequencies in the already crowded radio bands. In fact, most types of pirate utilities are barely even worth mentioning, except that they are sometimes odd or interesting. However, it is probably more interesting to read about such activities than to actually listen to them. 📻



10

Verifying Pirates

For the most part, pursuing pirates over the airwaves is an aesthetic hobby. Unless the listener records every broadcast he/she hears, there is no positive way for others to know that those claims are true. Many hobbyists enjoy swapping recordings of stations, and even this can get confusing. With these points in mind, early legal stations began offering verification cards (QSL cards) or letters in the 1920s.

To the listeners in the 1920s and 1930s, radio was a hobby to be participated in rather than entertainment. Most AM stations eagerly gave out verifications and the Ecco company even printed special stamps for nearly every station so listeners could collect stamps from every one they heard. This trend gradually gave way to a less personal commercialized radio that has dominated the post-war era. Today, few people have ever seen a verification card, let alone considered attempting to obtain one.

Verification cards are an integral portion of the free radio hobby to the average listener. While the card does serve the purpose of verifying reception reports, it also provides a personal memento for remembering the station. Often, QSLs, especially ones offered by pirate stations, provide a tangible, personal reflection of their broadcasts and individual personalities (Fig. 10-1).

When you write to a station, make the report at least as valuable to the operator as a QSL would be to you. Although this might be difficult when writing to stations such as the Voice of America, the BBC, or Radio Moscow,

WEVIL

11 meter
Piracy

TIME: 1200-1226

FREQ: 27135

DATE:

June 21, 1986

THANK
FOR DE
REPORT

TO:
ANDREW
~~YOUR~~
QSL #1

"WE'RE COMIN'
TO GET YOU"

signed,
Die
Keefer



Fig. 10-1. A distinguishable QSL card from WEVIL.

it is fairly easy to do with free radio stations. All it takes is a little time, honesty, and consideration to dish out a first-class report. To ensure a quality report, remember to ask yourself what kind of report you would like to receive if you were the operator of that particular station.

Most of all, the report should be a help to the station by means of the information it contains. This is not breaking the law and collaborating with their broadcasting activities; it is simply presenting information in a friendly, personal, and factual manner.

All too often, listeners believe that every station must verify every correct report. However, this is unlicensed radio operated by individuals with all of the costs coming from their own pockets. They have already provided the enjoyment of performing and adding another station to the DXers list. However, if the station promises to verify all correct reports and does not, that would damage their reputation. Nevertheless, they do not have to do anything.

Listeners who demand QSLs are inconsiderate. Trying to force a station to send a QSL would most likely immediately hit the garbage can at most stations. Fortunately, such rude people usually get the message after being turned down for verifications repeatedly, so they quit listening and try a different hobby or they realize what they are doing wrong and correct their ways.

Demanding QSLs is as tactless as making up fake reports for stations. Some people take information from radio bulletins and send it to stations that they have not actually heard with the hope of getting a QSL. Fortunately, these reports are easy to spot (especially if the station also receives the newsletter the information was taken from), and they are usually ignored.

Although friendly and honest reporting should always be a goal for the sake of the station, it also is productive for the listener. Rumors spread quickly about people with unkind or dishonest reporting styles. Eventually such people will become virtually blacklisted by both the stations and other listeners. In a hobby ruled by the honor system, everything is based on reputation.

Keeping a Logbook

The only way to write an accurate, helpful report is to copy the details of a program chronologically in a logbook. Detailed reports necessitate recording the exact time each part of the programming starts, determining accurately the frequency used, the date, and a description of how well the signal was being received at the listener's location on the date of the broadcast.

A detailed, readable logbook is just as important as the amount of attention given to the actual DXing. Regardless of how well a broadcast might have been received, it will be difficult to write a convincing report if the details are not on paper. Although this aspect of listening takes on a sort of

secretarial guise, it requires little effort to jot down a few details. In fact, if the listening hobby really is entertaining to the individual, he/she should enjoy keeping a permanent history of the activity heard.

Often the logbook becomes a large resource, more than an impersonal "piece of history." It will become a tool that can be used many times to aid in listening and reporting. For example, maybe you heard a station last year with a telephone call-in format and accurately logged it. The next year, if you heard the station again but the call-in number was inaudible, you could find it in the logbook. Likewise, maybe only an announcer's name or a slogan was notable from a broadcast. If you had logged the station before, the latest broadcast could be tentatively identified from this information.

There is really no "best" way to keep a logbook. Each different book is a reflection of the person's individuality. Some listeners buy logbooks, some photocopy typewritten pages and make a logbook, while others merely use wire or ring-bound notebooks. Each type of book has its advantages and disadvantages. With professionally printed logs, the entries should be the neatest. Custom-made photocopies can accommodate any particular style or method of entering, but a blank notebook remains the cheapest and most flexible.

Regardless of which logbook style is used, it should be kept orderly. Don't hurriedly scratch the details down on an old piece of paper and make a mental note to recopy them at a later date; tomorrow stretches into next week and then next month. When you finally do return to recopy the loggings, you might not be able to read or decipher them, and they become useless.

Logbooks are most important for recording information about stations that you might want to contact in the future. If you have no intention of sending a report to a particular station, there is no hypothetical reason to be bound to a logbook. But with the erratic nature of pirate broadcasters, it is more crucial to write extensively about the infrequent operators than regular international broadcasters. An example is listening to the European private stations. With Radio Dublin International (on 6910 kHz) and Radio Caroline (on 6210 kHz) audible nearly every evening in the United States, there is no need to take a detailed log of these stations every time they are heard. Furthermore, in a community with a local AM or FM pirate, it is not necessary to log them carefully during every broadcast if they go on the air frequently.

With frequently heard stations such as some of the European privates or community service broadcasters, it is a good idea to make a short log entry. The time, station, frequency, reception quality, and a few other details should be listed. These logs could be helpful with other DXing pirates; strong signals from Radio Dublin or Radio Caroline indicate that conditions are improving to allow reception of low-powered Europirates. Also, frequent logs of local pirates could determine a pattern in the way they operate.

You might want to keep all of this information in the same logbook or keep several to organize the material to personal specifications. Some listeners keep a simple logbook with all the stations they have heard and take detailed accounts of broadcasts only when they want to send for a QSL. Others just keep one logbook. I maintain a detailed logbook (Fig. 10-2) for all radio listening and a simple one just for pirates. Once again, there is no best method; use whichever style is the most comfortable.

If you have been keeping an organized logbook, writing a report to a station should require little more than merely copying the information onto another sheet of paper. In fact, I have received QSL cards by photocopying a page from my logbook and then writing a letter about the broadcast on the back. This is not a preferred method of writing stations, but if time is a factor, it is better than not sending a report at all. However, if this method is occasionally used, it is a must to have written legibly in the logbook. Just because you can read your own handwriting does not mean that the operator of a pirate can.

<p>510-333 fair, decent sig some QRM</p>	<p>0306-0308 you see us at 'air'!! another look at Life - The Dentist - Steve Martin 0308-0311+ Telephone Co. ad Some shows as 8/29</p>
<p>November 19, 1988</p>	
<p>WROX 7415kHz LSB 510-555 great sig!</p>	<p>2352-2356 "Drug Store Man Song" 2356 WROX, 95 Rox, Pop'Com' add. hah! 2356-2400 60's Song 2400 Ann, ID, fake address 0000 - 0003 YL Song - lotsa "doobie-doobies" 0003 ¥ Same 18's, "if you like what you're neering write to Pop'Com's Pirates Den Column"</p>
<p>November 20, 1988</p>	
<p>3880 kHz Jammed w/dead carrier → No IDs</p>	<p>0419-0432* Yes "90125" Album ¥ 0433-0447 Sting "Fortress 'Round Your Heart" "Set me Free" 0447-0513+ Yes "Leave it" Asia "Sole Survivor" Creat White "Rock Me" Dance Music Van Halen - "Jump"</p>
<p>November 21, 1988</p>	
<p>WRFT RADIO FREE 7415kHz TEXAS 510:322 Good sig + audio bad that fades in for a while</p>	<p>0602-0604 Beatles "Hero Takes A Fall" 0604-0609 M. D. Catsh "Lion King of all things" 0609-0610 OM. H. WRST? Radio - mention album 0610-0614 Pop/rock tune - maybe Genesis? 0614 ID, ment Amboy Dukes, Fleetwood Mac, etc OM w/Texas accent 0614-0618 "Long & Winding Road" Beatles 0618-0621 Pop/rock mix 0625 fade out 0625-0629 jingles of some sort "I Can See For Miles" The Who</p>

Fig. 10-2. A view of my personal logbook.

Writing Reports

The first item to include in the report is the station name. This should be one of the simplest details to log, but many reports are sent to the wrong station or to the proper operator with an incorrect version of the name. The Voice of Syncom, named after a communications satellite, was listed as "Sin Com," "Symcom," "Synton," "Symton," and "Syncon" during its early short-wave broadcasts in the spring of 1980 despite the fact that they frequently identified and spelled out their name over the air. With static, fading, and interference from other stations, a proper identification can be tough, especially if the announcer mumbles or only delivers the call sign once or twice during the broadcast.

Likewise, announcers' names can be a problem to clearly identify. Often, listeners attempt to be more personal or show how much they know about the station by addressing the letter to one of the announcers. But do not do this if you are unsure of their names. It is not usually a serious problem, but incorrect identities can only make the DXer and his/her listening ability appear foolish,

Next, list the exact frequency of the transmission heard. If the receiver has an analog frequency readout, report it to the nearest kilohertz or five kilohertz. Since few pirates ever use multitransmitter broadcasts and parallel transmissions or even care if their programs are exactly on frequency, a close estimate should suffice if a digital receiver is not handy.

Just as the roots of a tree grip the ground and hold it upright in the soil, program details and their corresponding times comprise the basis of a reception report. The details should be arranged so that each piece of programming is identified or described, including the time of its start and end. For example, if the song "Seond Chance" by the Lead was played from 0346 to 0348 UTC, list the time then, the song title, and artist. Song titles and exact quotes from the announcers are the most verifiable details, so pay special attention to these items. Many listeners try to escape with reporting generalities such as "talk" or "music." It is important to be more exact than this.

Time can be especially perplexing to the novice pirate listener. Common questions include: Is the time to be listed in the time zone of the listener or the zone where the transmitter is believed to be located? If the time should be listed in UTC, what if the operator is unfamiliar with this method? Usually just reporting in UTC is fine, but if the station's familiarity with the hobby is uncertain, list the time in both UTC and in local time. This should clarify any misunderstandings that the operator might have had from just one listed set of times.

Likewise, when the date is reported, use the same time zone that was implemented for reporting the times of the program segments. If only UTC is being used, just report the date in UTC; do not mix different time codes together without labeling the sets appropriately. If the reporting times are

mixed without proper clarification, the operator might be confused and discard the report.

One particularly relevant section of the report to the station operator is how the signal sounded at the DXers location. Since generally a small number of listeners frequently tune in free radio stations and different transmitter powers, locations, and antennas produce varied results, most operators would be delighted with a handful of reports with detailed descriptions of the reception in each location. Therefore, this section of the report requires careful attention. Although it will not make a great impact on receiving a QSL card, it does give the operator much-needed information.

Station personnel want their signals to be widely audible but as a listener, do not write that their station was coming in fine if it really was not. Sometimes listeners are inclined to believe that a great signal report will guarantee a QSL. This short-circuit logic usually fails and an operator might even become suspicious of a report with much better signals than usual for that particular part of the country. Also, the false information could confuse future technical operations for the station.

Unfortunately, an effective description of the reception of a broadcast could fill a page with type. To solve this problem, radio enthusiasts created a numerical rating system for the separate qualities of a transmission. While the system, known as "SINPO codes," should not fulfill the entire request for information on reception, it certainly does simplify the process. In addition to the SINPO code, a popular code for reporting broadcasts to radio bulletins is the "SIO code," a shorter, less complete version. Since this code is less complete, it is less helpful to the stations and less advisable for use when writing reception reports.

SINPO is an acronym for "strength, interference, noise, propagation fading, and overall merit." Each characteristic is rated on a scale from one to five. A SINPO of 55555 is perfect, with a distinct possibility that the broadcast can even be heard on a toaster; a 00000 SINPO is the type of reception possible when the electricity is off or when the radio needs serious repair. As might be expected, pirate broadcasts commonly range in reception quality (at least at my present location) from 11111 to 55555, with most landing somewhere near 33333.

This is not to say that the numbers should be or always are all the same in a SINPO code, in fact they rarely are. A particular broadcast with a certain time and frequency is much like a fingerprint, with no two being exactly alike. So a strong station with an equally strong RTTY (teletype) transmission on the same frequency could produce a SINPO of 51552, while a weak station on a clear day could pull a SINPO of 15552, for example. The numbers are the means by which the listener establishes how well the broadcast was heard in his area.

Strength and interference are not the only variables to greatly affect the overall merit. Listening to a station on a low frequency, such as 90 meters in

the summer months before sunset, usually presents an unbearable amount of static (noise). Likewise, tuning in a pirate on or below 41 meters near mid-day is often barely copyable due to the heavy fading (propagation).

After the SINPO is reported, describe how the broadcast was received. The operator might not fully know the SINPO code, so a description can help identify exactly what is meant by the numbers (usually listeners vary slightly with their standards). A simple statement that might follow a reported SINPO of 32333 might be "The signal, noise, and propagation were all fair, although there was some interference from a station on an adjacent frequency (list the station name and frequency, if known). You might consider moving to a clearer frequency (suggest one) to avoid this interference." Of course, use whatever reception description is appropriate; your QSL average could drop if this exact description was used for every report.

Then list the brand and type of receiver used for DXing the station, mentioning if it is a general coverage (0 to 30 MHz) communications receiver. Also, if an external antenna is being used, describe the type and height above ground. Other things that might be included here are the listener's exact location using longitude and latitude lines, the height above sea level, or the weather for the area during the reception of the broadcast. Whenever I am low in details and/or have the time to write a longer report, I include information about the weather. I'm not sure whether anyone could use the weather details, but if nothing else, maybe it was interesting to them.

Next, try to mention something about the format, audio, etc. of the station later in the report. When writing the operators, remember to praise their station in some way, and if appropriate, provide polite constructive criticism. Sarcastic comments might anger the operator, so if you want to help the station, do not take this approach. Even if the station has little to praise, try to compliment something. Then suggest ways they could improve their signals and/or programming. Since most operators are eager to find ways to better satisfy their listeners, polite advice is usually well received. Several stations have greatly improved their audio, transmitter stability, or programming because of listener response. See Fig. 10-3 for a sample report.

Maildrops

Nearly every hobby pirate in the United States and Europe uses maildrops to handle their mail. The station announces the maildrop's address, and the maildrop forwards letters to the operators. The stations' replies are then either immediately mailed out or they are sent back to the maildrop to be postmarked by that post office. With this method, it is impossible to trace the location of a station through the mail. Also, it is completely legal for the listener, maildrop, and station to communicate with this method.

Dear Sirs,

Hello, I am very pleased to report reception of your station, WRFT about a weekend ago. If the following report is correct, I would greatly appreciate a QSL in return. Now onto the report...

WRFT "Radio Free Texas" 0602-0604 Female pop/rock song, maybe "Hero Takes a Fall" by The Bangles (?)
 7415 kHz
 11/21/1988 UTC 0604-0609 song by Supertramp, ment. "Lion, king of all.."
 0602-0633+ UTC 0609-0610 Male announcer, ID as "WRFT, Radio..."
 SLNPO:32322 0610-0614 A pop/rock song, possibly by Genesis (?)
 0614 Announcer talked about the musical program and mentioned Amboy Dukes, Fleetwood Mac, and some other artists coming up. DJ had a fairly deep voice and a Southwestern (Texas?) accent.
 0614-0618 "Long and Winding Road" by The Beatles
 0618-0621 pop/rock music, unknown
 0621-0624—fade out
 0624 sounded like jingles of some sort
 0624-0629 "I Can See For Miles" by The Who
 0629-0631—fade out
 0631-0633 "Journey To The Center Of The Mind" by The Amboy Dukes
 0633 announcement
 0633+ Program continued, but I didn't. I went to bed.

When the propagation was working for me, WRFT came in rather nicely. But it sometimes it didn't. When that was the case, the signal occasionally disappeared completely (i.e. 0629-0631). The audio was pretty clean and seemed to have a decent frequency response.

My only equipment for listening to the broadcast was a Yaesu FRG-7 communications receiver and a 30' piece of hook-up wire strung out the window and across two garage roofs. On the evening of this reception, it was cold, overcast, and rainy—about 38 degrees F.

I like the fact that you broadcast so late at night. The 41 meter band is TERRIBLE, but clears out around 0600. You might consider changing to a different meter band to improve reception. For example, 3400-3500, 6800-7000, and 14900-15100 kHz ranges have been used very successfully in the past. Those ranges still do have many clear frequencies in them. Three other commonly open frequency areas in 41 meters are around 7445, 7475, and 7490 kHz.

How much power and what type of transmitter are you using to get out so nicely? It's not too bad to cover most of the United States on a frequency covered with interference.

A little about myself: I'm presently 21 years old and a senior Writing and Broadcasting double major at [REDACTED]. I've been DXing pirates since 1983. In that time I've heard 55 different stations and have verified about 33 of those. I've only recently gotten very active in pirate radio listening again. College really set me back in my listening from 1985-summer 1988. But this time I brought my receiver along & I've heard 9 or 10 new stations this year as a result. My other hobbies include writing, playing some sports (basketball, tennis, skateboarding, etc.), camping, woodworking, listening to a wide variety of music, attempting to play guitar, etc.

I guess that's about it. Thank you very much for your time. I hope to hear from you in the near future.

73fr,

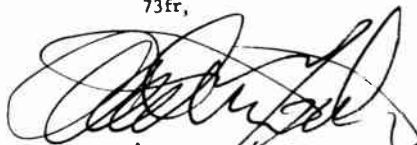

 ANDREW YODER
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Fig. 10-3. A report that I sent to WRFT, Radio Free Texas.

Unfortunately, maildrop security does have its costs. Although the postage for a single letter is not a great deal of money, pirates request their listeners send three unused first-class stamps with all reports that ask for a reply. Some might call pirates "cheap" for not paying everyone's postage, but this practice could end up costing some stations hundreds of dollars per year. These extra stamps are used to cover the postage needed for delivery between the listener, maildrop, and station. Pirates in Europe ask for two International Reply Coupons (IRCs) which are available for a small fee at most post offices. (However, I have encountered workers in many small post offices that did not even know that IRCs were. If problems occur while searching for IRCs, go to a larger post office for help.)

Sometimes maildrops are blamed for negligence by listeners when they do not receive QSL cards. One rule to keep in mind is that maildrops are not affiliated with stations past the point of forwarding their letters. If a QSL has not arrived, then it is the station's fault or perhaps the listener has not waited long enough for it. On the average, a reply to a reception report arrives within a month or two, although some have taken a year or longer. Regardless, do not blame the maildrops for QSL problems. Chances are that they have had nothing to do with anything that could have happened to a long-lost QSL.

Inside a Maildrop

P. O. Box 5074, Hilo, Hawaii 96720 was one of the most recognizable addresses in free radio and even the shortwave hobby as a whole. Thousands of letters have flooded to the box since it was opened in 1983, but the new maildrop address that is open for use by everyone at this time is *P. O. Box 452, Wellsville, NY 14895*.

Many other maildrop boxes have operated since forwarding became popular in the late 1970s, but most of these were intended solely for one or two stations. Thus, when the stations were closed down or faded away, so did the maildrops. In the early 1980s, several "powerhouse" maildrops opened to handle mail for many different stations. One was located in Arcata, California (this maildrop later moved to Hilo, Hawaii), two closed, and one from Washington, D.C. only handles mail for some of the more mysterious broadcasters (Table 10-1).

Although the Washington, D.C. box is usually advertised as open to the public for use, few stations ever use it. This is rather odd, considering that only two boxes are open and one is flooding over with stations. Stranger still is the percentage of holiday and mystery pirates using the box that do not reply to any correspondence. The legendary holiday stations WBST and Radio Angeline are two of the main users that fit into this category. The

Table 10-1. Active Mailing Addresses for North American Pirates

P. O. Box 452, Wellsville, NY 14895
 KFAT, KROK, Radio Garbanzo, RNCL, Radio USA, Tangerine Radio, Voice of Bob, Voice of FUBAR, Voice of Rainbow, WCPR, WENJ, WKUE, WQTU, WYMN, Zeppelin Radio Worldwide

P. O. Box 40554, Washington, D.C. 20016
 PRN, Radio Angeline, Radio Lymph Node International, WBRI, WBST

TAGAR, Room 258 Union Bldg., Stonybrook, NY 11794
 Voice of Free Long Island, United World Radio

P.O. Box 314, Clackamas, OR 97015
 Voice of Tomorrow

P.O. Box 010073, Staten Island, NY 10301-003
 RNI

Washington, D.C. box might be open, but it only draws a small number of unusual, rather introverted (or paranoid) pirates.

Considering that only one or two maildrops openly receive new stations and dozens of pirates presently use them, it might appear that operating a box is dangerous. However, John Arthur, proprietor of the Wellsville maildrop, says this notion is entirely fictional. Contrary to popular opinion, running a maildrop for pirates is neither illegal nor dangerous. In fact, he has never had a direct encounter with the FCC.

Even without the legal disputes, many shortwave hobbyists feel that because the maildrops are "siding" with the unlicensed broadcasters by handling their mail, they are unethical. But the major maildrops claim to side more with DXers rather than with the pirates. "Because I'm a DXer, I like to know what is on the air," says Arthur. "And if it's there, I'd like to send a report to get a QSL. It is one way to not only get QLSs for myself, but to help others, too."

QSL Returns

Some stations actually encourage listeners to send in reports of multiple receptions by offering many varieties of verifications. The Voice of Laryngitis, Radio Woodland International, Union City Radio, and Radio USA (Fig. 10-4) all have made extended efforts in this direction. Although the latter three all produced photocopied QSLs, the Voice of Laryngitis used a variety of often humorous black and white photographs (Fig. 10-5). These QSLs quickly became popular; many listeners immediately sent more reports in after hearing new broadcasts. The verification photos, along with the quality of the programming, has made the Voice of Laryngitis one of the all-time favorite American pirates.



Fig. 10-4. Although it has rarely been heard since 1983, Radio USA is often visible in the hobby press for merchandise such as this sticker.

Unfortunately, none of those four broadcasters are presently active, and it is unknown whether any will ever return. The Voice of Laryngitis returned on Halloween 1987 after a year and a half hiatus. Radio Woodland International, Union City Radio, and Radio USA disappeared during the summer of 1985. Radio Woodland International announced that its retirement was caused by the bursts of several other stations during that year and poor atmospheric conditions. On the other hand, Union City Radio announced that they "are on an around-the-world trip," while Radio USA merely complained of transmitter problems.

Many listeners enjoy writing several times to stations, but it is important to try to make the report timely. Old reports are of less value than those of recent reception to the station because antennas and transmitters are often changed or reconstructed. Thus, a report of a transmission from a now-defunct transmitter or antenna will not give the operators any new information or new ideas on improving the station. Also, if the report is late, the



Fig. 10-5. *One of the many varieties of photograph QSL cards sent from the Voice of Laryngitis.*

operators might suspect that the reception details could have been copied from radio newsletters or someone else's logbook. Because of these reasons, the chance of receiving a QSL lessens. However, if you want more QSLs from a station and/or would like to get in touch with the operators again, using old reports, is fine, especially if they were friendly in the past.

Few stations offer many types of verifications, but some do have professionally printed cards. Contrary to the excellent production of their European counterparts, American stations usually send out homemade or photocopied QSLs. The Voice of Syncom and Radio Confusion were the first to offer high-quality cards, still considered some of the best in North America. Radio Confusion went so far as to have "radio men do it with frequency" bumper stickers printed. Both of these stations disappeared years ago, but KROK, Radio North Coast International (Fig. 10-6), and Zeppelin Radio Worldwide verify correct reports with professional cards. KNBS and Tangerine Radio verify with clean, homemade designs on professionally printed cards.

On the other hand, the Voice of Communism, WBST, and Radio Angeline have long-standing traditions of not issuing verifications, even though

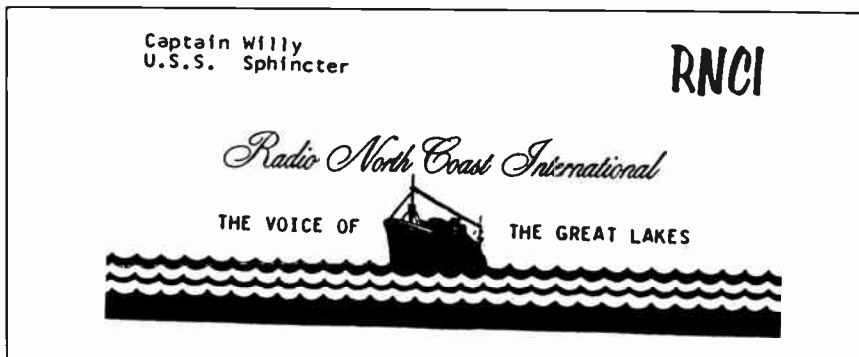


Fig. 10-6. A business card that is sometimes mailed along with QSL cards from Radio North Coast International.

they all have mailing addresses. The Voice of the Phoenix, a station heard just several times on shortwave, announced that it would only verify reports from listeners in *The ACE* that live outside of the United States. Another antagonizing station, the Voice of the Epileptic Catfish, gave out one fake address in "Ankara, Czechoslovakia" and another using pieces from two real maildrop addresses. Although these stations are almost certainly run by radio enthusiasts playing jokes on their peers, it can become upsetting to realize that they will never reply to reports.

One strange reversal of this technique was used by UNID, a station that popped up on shortwave several times toward the end of 1984 and beginning of 1985. Main announcer John Anon aired some comedy skits including a fake newscast and later said that no QSLs would be issued, while laughing. Unexpectedly, everyone who reported UNID in the *ACE* began receiving QSLs for the broadcasts—5 months later. It just goes to show that pirate rhetoric cannot be trusted; even when it looks as if they are trying to be nasty, they might be arranging for a big surprise.

Reporting broadcasts and receiving verifications from any station, especially a pirate, is a lot of fun. With free radio as a whole being the most unpredictable outlet on AM, FM, or shortwave, their verifying processes range from friendly to reclusive. Verifications from pirates offer a personal and humorous look at radio that exists nowhere else. With just a little time and effort, a listener can manage a detailed logbook, write quality reception reports, and have excellent results receiving QSL cards. Best of all, with a large QSL collection, relatives and neighbors might stop asking what he "does in that little room so late at night." 🐼



11

Equipment and Information Sources

Carpenters can accomplish little construction without their tools; likewise, to listen to pirates and whole-heartedly involve yourself in DXing, it is important to have the necessary tools. It should be common sense, but a surprising number of shortwave listeners expect to hear as many pirates as veteran DXers even though their equipment cannot compare to those of the experts.

To hear the maximum number of pirates (or any radio stations), it is very important to have no less than an average-quality general coverage shortwave receiver, an antenna, at least one course of up-to-date pirate information, pirate DXing friends, and a great deal of dedication. It is acceptable to skimp on any of these categories, but doing so will greatly affect the number of stations you hear and the amount of enjoyment you get from the hobby.

Receivers and Antennas

Dozens, maybe even hundreds of books have been written about picking out suitable receivers and building better antennas. Since even entire books can never seem to completely cover either of these subjects, I couldn't possibly do more than lightly discuss them. I am much less qualified to discuss the technical aspects of radio than I am the pirate listening hobby. I know what has worked well for me, but I have had little experience testing the numerous varieties of expensive receivers and antennas.

Even so, most listeners have their own favorites. DXing is a personal hobby and each listener has his own taste in receivers. Many receivers completely outclass others, but the bottom line depends on what features the critic enjoys the most. For example, a nostalgic might want a huge tube receiver because it is an old model. Likewise, someone easily impressed by new technology might select a small, light model or one with lots of gadgets: filters, memories, and flashing lights. You certainly want sharp selectivity, but program-oriented listeners look for clear audio (features that are sometimes compromised for one or the other).

Buying a receiver can be an expensive task, so as a novice you should prepare yourself before picking one out. There is no excuse for a hastily chosen receiver. Reviews of receivers are publicized in magazines, books, and radio stations every year. Even if these sources are not readily available, adequate receiver information can be obtained from other shortwave listeners or maybe even radio equipment dealers. The sales pitches from equipment dealers need to be sorted out, but after talking to a few dealers, you should be able to find a receiver that meets your needs.

While searching through the reviews, recommendations, and sales pitches, several categories must be considered: selectivity, image rejection, size, workmanship, audio, availability, ease of operation, and price. Each area should be carefully considered with respect to the maximum utility for your needs. Sensitivity, selectivity, and image rejection all are aspects of performance and are especially important to the "hardcore" DXer. Audio is most important to the program listener, and the other areas are of interest to all potential receiver buyers.

Sensitivity is the threshold at which a radio signal is audible on a receiver. An example of poor sensitivity is an old car radio that will not pick up any stations outside of the immediate vicinity.

Selectivity is the capability of a receiver to tune in separate stations on nearby frequencies. On a receiver with poor selectivity, a weak station near a stronger one would be obliterated; on a good receiver, both would be audible separately.

Image rejection systems produce a radio spectrum with signals occupying the frequencies that they are transmitted on. A radio without quality image rejection, however, allows duplicates of the actual signals to appear on many other frequencies.

Receivers vary in size from 100-pound military surplus heavyweights to portables that fit easily into a pocket. Concerning the size of a receiver, you should think about how often you might be taking it on trips or moving it to other locations. Small portables are new technologically, but often manufacturers compromise performance and cost compared to the large receivers.

Workmanship is the quality and construction of the material used in the receiver; will it withstand years of use? Most receivers are constructed well,

but the new microprocessor-controlled digital models are fragile compared to the large mechanical equipment of the past.

Audio differences in receivers could cause an otherwise pleasant-sounding broadcast to be "bassy" or "tinny." Few receivers actually have poor audio, so this category is usually of importance only to those that listen to shortwave for specific programs.

Availability refers to the cost and abundance of parts in case the receiver breaks down. Finding tubes for an older, used radio can be a lengthy and expensive process. Some high-performance receivers made before 1965 are rather inexpensive, but replacing parts if trouble arises is not always easy. When looking at equipment of this nature, it is best to ask the owner or dealer about limited warranties, find local shops where it could be fixed if necessary, and inquire where replacement tubes can be bought.

Ease of operation applies more to novice listeners than to DXers. Few receivers on the market are so difficult to use that a brief experiment won't help demonstrate the way to operate them correctly. However, if the novice has had problems using a stereo system, obtaining detailed information about operating a particular receiver might be wise. On the other hand, technical enthusiasts sometimes like their receivers more complicated than necessary with more buttons, knobs, and readouts to play with.

The most important consideration for the average DXer or program listener is the price. Few shortwave hobbyists of any type have the resources to dish out several thousands of dollars for a professional-quality Racal receiver. Therefore, you have to determine which options comprise the best receiver you can afford. This is where the controversy enters the scene. What is the best affordable receiver? Each buyer must decide for himself.

Antennas for shortwave listening are much less controversial. Although a well-made antenna works better than a random wire, the differences are not as noticeable when receiving. However, hams often argue about and experiment with various types of antennas for transmitting. So unless you are a "DX maniac," a simple longwire or dipole should be adequate.

Simple longwires or dipoles are inexpensive, costing as little as \$4 for wire and insulators. Antennas bought from companies usually run at least \$70 and perform no better than a homemade antenna. Because of the sizeable cost considerations, company-made receiving antennas are recommended by most experts only if the listener lives in an apartment building or some other area without sufficient land on which to build antennas. Even so, many books about antenna construction include plans for the listener with limited space.

Finding antenna plans that suit your needs is not an exasperating task. Antenna plans are often included in shortwave/ham books and magazines at local bookstores and libraries. Both books and plans can be obtained from radio supply companies and mail order companies. After finding these plans, just build one that best fits your ideal for cost, size, and ease of production.

Low-budget listening posts can provide reliable service, but the old "you get what you pay for" axiom applies to those who are not careful buyers. My listening set-up only consists of a Yaesu FRG-7 receiver and a 40-foot piece of hook-up wire strung out the window, and yet I have heard approximately 150 pirate broadcasts over the past few years. The FRG-7 receiver was made in the late 1970s as an inexpensive table model. Today, this receiver can commonly be found in good condition for as low as \$150. Other decent-quality portables are breaking through on the used market for reasonable prices as well, but buyers should be wary of radios that are cheap in all characteristics.

Media Guides

A subscription to a regularly published radio bulletin is necessary for the listener to keep abreast of the pirate scene. Ever-changing addresses, frequencies, and patterns of operation are often confusing even to those with up-to-date information. Someone without a subscription to regular newsletters containing pirate information will be lost and generally ineffective in listening and verifying free radio stations.

Several types of regular radio guides containing a variety of monitoring information are widely available for the pirate listener. Monthly magazines such as *Popular Communications* and *Monitoring Times* offer a professional approach and stories about a variety of communications topics. Monthly and weekly radio bulletins or newsletters contain few articles; they generally contain news and loggings about radio listening. The last type is the pirate-only newsletter, published monthly or fortnightly with some articles, but they mostly contain raw information and loggings.

Monthly magazines greatly supplement other sources of information with after-the-fact articles, equipment reviews, and construction tips. However, a communications magazine alone does not provide the necessary up-to-date information that is useful to the pirate listener. The articles and columns in these magazines are usually at least five or six months old; in that time, a pirate could get busted, change frequencies, become extensively active, etc. Also, magazine information is not usually as accurate as that of the newsletters, because pirate articles are often written by professional writers and not free radio listeners.

Regular newsletters such as those published by the North American Shortwave Association, Ontario DX Association, American Shortwave Listeners' Association, Fine Tuning, and several others provide excellent shortwave radio information. The information covered in these newsletters is often very recent and detailed. Rather than the clean, glossy pages of the radio magazines, however, the newsletters are usually comprised of photocopied or offset printed pages. Few articles are included, the loggings are often difficult for beginners to understand, and the type is often reduced to

half its original size—possibly a problem for the visually impaired. However, the information covered in these newsletters is often very recent and detailed.

Full-coverage shortwave bulletins are great information sources for the pirate listener who also listens to regular broadcasts. Unfortunately, some listening clubs are prejudiced against pirates and censor all news concerning them. Few clubs set these guidelines; most stand neutral and report the activity with a moderate enthusiasm. Information on the various North American radio clubs is available from their umbrella organization the Association of North American Radio Clubs (ANARC). All ANARC-member clubs are trustworthy, but you should make sure that the one you pick best suits your needs and regularly carries pirate information (Fig. 11-1). The mailing address for the Association of North American Radio Clubs is:

ANARC
1634 15th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

Fig. 11-1. A flier announcing a convention sponsored by ANARC, the Association of North American Radio Clubs.



THE ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICAN RADIO CLUBS

ANARCON '86

JULY 18-20, 1986
CONVENTION FOR RADIO
MONITORING ENTHUSIASTS



- EQUIPMENT EXHIBITS
- AUCTION
- BROADCAST STATION EXHIBITS
- SEMINARS
- FILMS
- BANQUET

For Further Information Write:
ANARCON '86
RADIO CANADA INTERNATIONAL
P.O. BOX 6000
MONTREAL, CANADA
H3C 3A8

Pirate-only newsletters and bulletins focus on the hobby and thus provide the best information on the free radio scene. The only pirate newsletter of this genre in North America today is the *ACE* published by the Association of Clandestine Radio Enthusiasts. The format of this newsletter has recently changed, but it continues to provide excellent coverage of pirate radio (Fig. 11-2).

In addition to printing loggings from pirate listeners, *Free Air* contains many other columns, articles, and news clippings. European pirate news, a technical information column, the latest clandestine radio events, covert communications, an opinion column, a biyearly comprehensive guide to station addresses, and other features are included regularly. This publication is really the best bulletin for the active pirate DXer.

European pirate newsletters are helpful for hunting stations from that continent. A number of free radio newsletters exist throughout Europe; all vary widely in experience, style, quality, and printing procedure (Table 11-1). The country the newsletter is published in presents another slant on the provided information. For example, *PIN* and *Radio Telex* are both printed in West Germany, but the newsletters vary greatly. *PIN* is printed in German and runs many features in addition to straight pirate news and loggings.

Table 11-1. Reputable Pirate Radio Newsletters

<i>ACE</i> P.O. Box 11201 Shawnee Mission, KS 66207-0201 USA	<i>Activity</i> 3 Greenway Harold Park Romford, Essex RM3 0HH UK
<i>Now Radio</i> P.O. Box 45 Kettering NN16 0NW UK	<i>Anoraks UK</i> Box 539 Blackpool, FY1 4RE UK
<i>Monitor</i> 31 Avondale Road Benfleet, Essex SS7 1EH UK	<i>TX</i> BCM Box 225 London WC1N 3XX UK
<i>PIN</i> P.O. Box 220342 D-5600 Wuppertal West Germany	<i>DPM-Newsletter</i> Box 1130 4154 Tonisvorst 1 West Germany
<i>Radio Telex</i> Duempfer Strasse 6 D-4100 Duisburg 12 West Germany	<i>FRS Goes DX</i> Postbus 41 7700 AA Dedemsvaart Holland

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF "THE ASSOCIATION OF CLANDESTINE RADIO ENTHUSIASTS"

FREE * AIR

OCTOBER 1988

THIBODEAUX PUBLISHING

Memory Lane - The First Year of ACE

by Keith J. Thibodeaux

Six and a half years ago, a new shortwave publication appeared. Named "the MONTHLY A.C.E.", it represented the Association of Clandestine Enthusiasts, which was founded in 1982 by Darren Leno. At that time Darren was dissatisfied with the existing pirate club, the now defunct, Free Radio Campaign (FRC). Since the ACE and its publication have changed so much since that time, it seems an appropriate time to look back and take a trip back to that first year of ACE.

The first ACE bulletin, whose cover is reprinted here, contained nine pirate loggings (Big Boom Radio, WOOF, WOIS, Radio Free Wave, No. Star, WPOT, V. of the Pyramids, V. of the Voyager, and BBI Network), and two clandestine loggings (Quince de Septiembre and Vinceremos) spanning a three month period (12/27/81 - 03/07/82), which were credited to Lani Pettit. There was an interview with Radio Confusion International. Also included were letters from John Moritz, Jr. and Armand Di Filippo, neither of which are currently members. Both letters stated dissatisfaction with the typical U.S. pirate "rock-n-roll and not much else" format. The bulletin was 8 pages in the book format with full size type. All eight pages

would fit on just over a page with our current typesetting techniques.

Newsletter no. 2 marked the appearance of Podney Six, who incidentally has been incognito since I resumed publishing. We hope to hear from him soon. It would be a shame to lose his input. Seventeen pirates were logged that month, including Rádio Clandestine (sound familiar?).

a shortwave column for six plus years is a feat to be admired by all.

Again, not much changed in issue no. 6. However issue no. 7 debuted the Spies-Numbers column by Lani Pettit and a feature article by John Arthur, whose Veried Response column was to debut in issue no. 8 (Note - VR is expected to appear regularly again, starting with November 88 issue) and the ACE would be in a format that would remain constant for several years. Issue no. 9 was my first issue as a member of ACE, which I had joined after replying to a classified ad in a ham magazine. My first feature article, a review of the Yaesu FRG-7700, appeared one month later.

Also printed that first year was the Media Scan column by Tim Corcoran and several excellent articles by Vince Pinto (neither of whom are currently members). Trivia Question 1 - In what month and year were the asterisks (*) first used between the letters ACE, eg, A*C*E?. Trivia Question 2 - In what month and year was "radio" inserted between the words "clandestine" and "enthusiasts" in the association name.

This concludes our review of the first year of ACE. The hard part of writing this article was seeing the names of so many people who sent in loggings and with whom I have corresponded directly, who are no longer active or even members in the ACE. Seems hard to believe that Kirk Baxter, John Arthur and I have been writing for the ACE for six years. I can't speak for them, but I don't regret a minute of time devoted to the shortwave hobby or to the ACE. Long live the ACE! ...KJT.

Note - In future issues, when free space is available, we will reprint some of the better articles that appeared in past issues.

Not much changed with issue no. 3 and issue no. 4, but issue no. 5 announced a new loggings editor, Kirk Baxter. I guess that makes Mr. Baxter our senior veteran editor. Doing

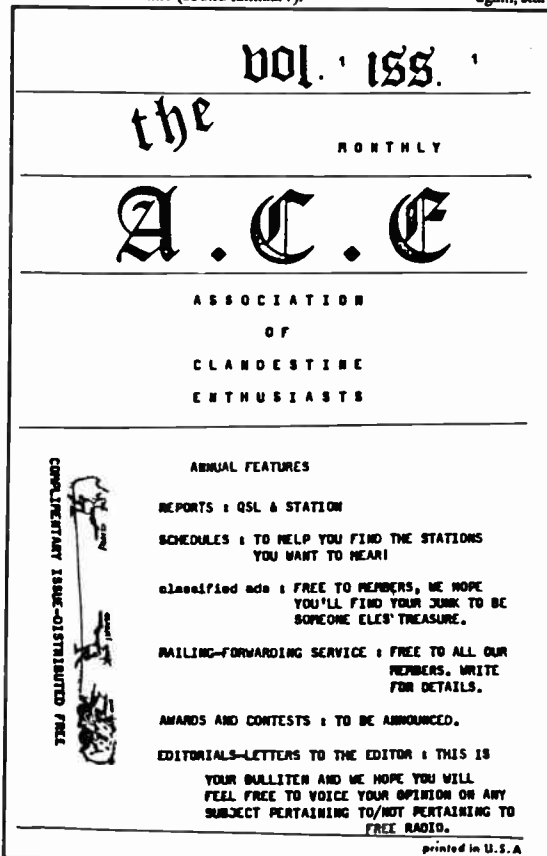


Fig. 11-2. Free Air (formerly published by the ACE) has been the monthly survival kit for North American pirate radio listeners since 1982.

Radio Telex, on the other hand, publishes small, photocopied bulletins containing mostly pirate loggings, fortnightly in English. Both of these newsletters focus on free radio in Central Europe. Other newsletters from different parts of Europe focus on the British Isles, Scandinavia, or Italy. The DXer interested in a European pirate newsletter should write for sample copies from various organizations. Then decide if it suits your needs and best covers the section of Europe you are most interested in.

Not all pirate information sources are newsletters published by listening clubs. Two of the best sources of pirate information can be accessed via telephone lines. The DX Newslines is a voice-recording message system that allows DXers to leave messages and tips concerning all types of radio and callers can listen to those messages left by others. Access to the system requires a subscription fee. The other telephone service, provided by ANARC, operates as a computer bulletin board, exactly like the DX Newslines except that a personal computer must be used to access and add to the information recorded there. ANARC's bulletin board contains many free radio tips because this particular system was formerly operated by the ACE. It has recently expanded to cover all established radio clubs.

Some technical bulletins can also add helpful tips to the fringe aspects of the hobby, although they are not recommended as a sole source of pirate radio information (Table 11-2). A few of these newsletters include 2600 (discuss illegal manipulation of telephone services, also called "phone phreaking"), *AM Press Exchange* (equipment and information for AM-modulated hams), and the *Experimental Broadcasters' Newsletter* (pirate and low-power legal experimental broadcasting). Other pirate hobby-related monthlies do exist (Fig. 11-3), but the ones listed in this section are among the most popular with listeners.

Table 11-2. Addresses for Newsletters

<p><i>AM Press/Exchange</i> Route 1, Box 281 Woodlawn, TN 37191</p>
<p><i>EPB</i> Panaxis Productions P.O. Box 130 Paradise, CA 95967-0130</p>
<p><i>2600 Enterprises</i> Box 752 Middle Island, NY 11953-0752</p>

TAP, formerly YIPL, is the newsletter for the exchange of anti-system technical information. Considerable information on the rip off of Pa Bell, Con Ed and other utilities is explored in each issue. Technology of the articles runs from very basic to complex (involving advanced integrated circuits). You will also find unique information on lockpicking, getting your moneys worth from vending machines, how some people are hooking up free cable TV, how the phoney Birth Certificate ID scheme is run, TWX, Phone Phreaking, TWX Phreaking, Computer Phreaking, Free Postage, Free Xerox, free electricity, free gas, and more. The reader, YOU, is the source of all the info. You submit research, letters, articles and get back much more. We have easy beginner courses in electronics (cheap). All information is available free for people who can't afford it (busted, unemployed etc.). We are able to do this ONLY because of contributions by others (YOU). More TAP readers means more information so subscribe, get back issues, get your friends TAPped in too.



TAP
Room 603
147 W. 42 St.
New York 10036

**Technological
Assistance
Program**



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Fig. 11-3. The defunct phone phreaking newsletter TAP sometimes featured articles on pirate radio.

DX Friends

Don't overlook in any hobby, radio listening or otherwise, the friends and associations you can make. Free radio listening, while fascinating in itself, cannot be sustained for lengthy periods of time under solitary conditions. Many pirate DXers that were involved in the hobby for varying lengths of time dropped out because of the lack of friends interested in shortwave.

It is really not even important to meet other listeners in person (although doing so is fun). Some of my best friends in the hobby over the past few years have been people I never met. We write a lot of letters and talk on the telephone, but the distance between us is too great for us to meet each other. I do hope to see at least some of my free radio listening friends in the future, but they will continue to be my friends whether I meet them or not.

Friends in the hobby can improve your DXing considerably, depending on how many stations each listener hears and how well everyone communicates. For example, an article appeared in *FRENDX* a number of years ago entitled "What Communal DX?" that detailed one listener's personal experiences with his friends. The author of the article lived within an hour (driving time) of 10 other shortwave broadcast DXers. The group often staged overnight DX sessions where everyone brought their receivers to a particular house and hunted stations all night. The result of the DX sessions was a greatly increased number of stations and countries heard for each listener.

More importantly, the author of that article enjoyed conversing about a wide variety of subjects and listening to shortwave radio with his friends. Although the group mainly concerned themselves with legal shortwave broadcasting, the same rules apply to pirate radio listening because the latter is a subset of the former.

Friends improve each other's listening results and longevity in the hobby. Not everyone has the time to hunt stations on shortwave during every hour of the day. So listeners often call others when a pirate is broadcasting. An often used procedure for notifying other listeners of free radio activity is the "pirate alert." In order to save time and money, whenever a DXer logs a pirate, he/she calls his/her other hobbyist friends and hangs up the phone after it rings once. The notified listener must then find the station, but that usually is not too difficult, since most pirates normally use only a few frequency ranges. This method of notification might not give any details about the broadcast, but it does save on long-distance charges.

Often, pirate listening enthusiasts jump into the hobby as teenage renegade shortwave listeners. Legal shortwave DXing is not as exciting as the thrill of hearing someone, who might also be a teen, breaking the broadcasting codes of this country. Being friends with other listeners counteracts low points in pirate activity and personal enthusiasm that might encourage a hobbyist to drop away from free radio listening.

Conclusion

True enjoyment from free radio listening requires a decent receiver, up-to-date information, and friends within the hobby. Unlike collectors of antique automobiles, rare records, coins, and other expensive items, the pirate radio listener is not motivated by monetary gain. Since the hobby is generally greed-free and based on the aesthetic value of listening to rare and interesting unlicensed broadcasters, it is driven by the flow of information and enthusiasm surrounding it. This is quite a bit different from most hobbies, considering that the equipment and nominal objects involved do not make or break a good DXer.

Thus, the contacts made within the hobby and information received from other sources are of great importance. Information breeds enthusiasm, which in turn breeds a desire for hobbyists to begin broadcasting and pirates to operate more often. This increased activity breeds more information. This is not to say that by actively listening for pirates, you will cause others to broadcast illegally, however. This book is intended to aid the DXer and radio hobbyist in receiving signals and verification cards from unlicensed broadcasters. Nothing more is intended; all methods of pirating and biographical details from the various stations were added to help the radio hobbyist to better understand different broadcasting methods and odd occurrences. The reader is not encouraged in any way to operate radio transmitting equipment against the rules of the Federal Communications Commission.

However, unlicensed broadcasters do exist and cannot be ignored. This book is dedicated to those that will (or do) enjoy listening to pirate radio. Happy listening! 🎧

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