

# RADIO MONTH

may 1979

BBC

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RADIO LONDON

Radio London —  
a sleeping giant?

John Snagge at 75

Commercial production

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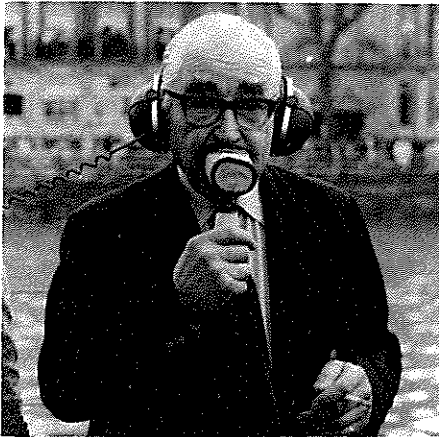
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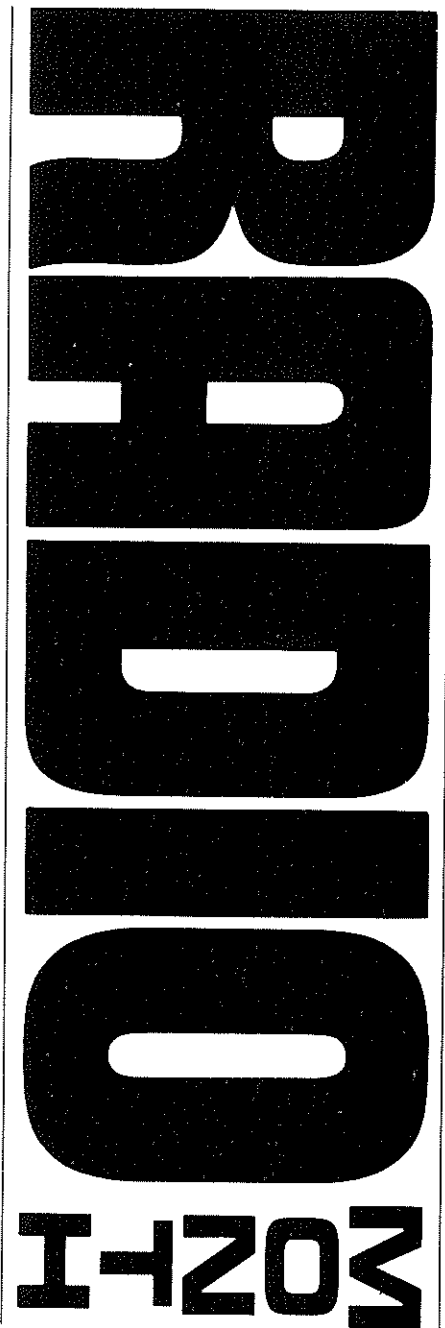
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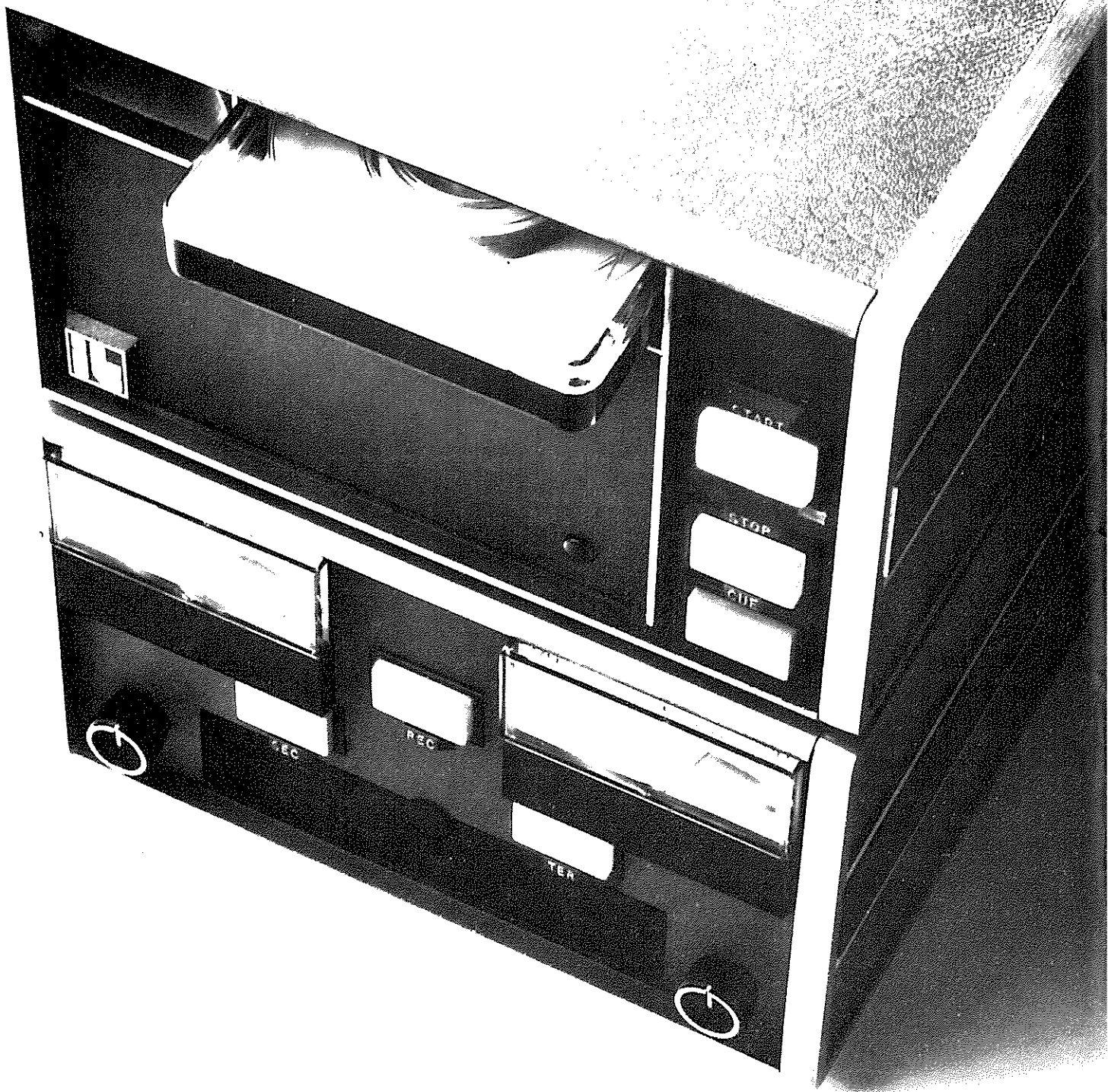
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**Best Outside Broadcast** (Sponsored by Alice (Stancoil) Ltd)

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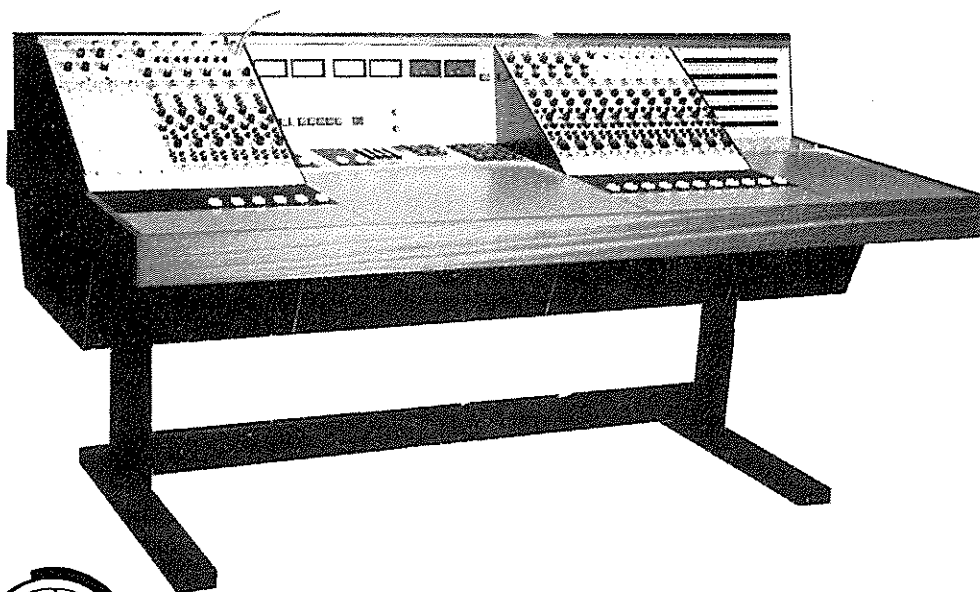
**Best Emergency Programming**  
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## Pirates force the issue in Ireland

With the recent announcement of the setting up of an independent authority to oversee the development of commercial local radio and the impending launch of RTE's second radio channel (RTE Radio 2), Ireland is now set for something of a radio boom.

Both events would seem to have been precipitated, at least in part, by the pirate radio stations which have been broadcasting illegally throughout the Republic during the last two years and whose presence has forced the Government to review broadcasting policy in a

situation almost directly analogous to that of the UK in 1967.

The pirates have been able to proliferate because of inadequacies in the existing legislation which prescribes minimal penalties (confiscation of equipment and a small fine) for unlicensed broadcasting. They have caused embarrassment to RTE by attracting a great number of young listeners (50 percent of the Irish population in under 25 years old) with their pop music programming; they have also embarrassed the Government by claiming

that RTE has a broadcasting monopoly contrary to the Irish constitution.

Last year RTE submitted a package to the Government proposing a second radio channel and a local radio service. The green light was given in the autumn for the second channel which is due to go on air on May 31. No comment was passed on the local radio proposal.

Then, in late March, Jack Lynch announced his plans for Independent Local Radio. RTE reacted with shock and corporate surprise. In all likelihood however, the announcement was not that surprising, for RTE's relationship with the Lynch Government is not entirely easy — partly, perhaps, because the Government does not have any appointees on RTE's Authority which was constituted in its present form before Lynch came to power. (May 31, the date of the Radio 2 launch is the last day of the present Authority's life).

An extra tension was added to the relationship

when an RTE broadcast "pulled the plug" on Lynch during the last two minutes of his address at his party convention, cutting off the standing ovation he received. This occurred shortly before Lynch's local radio announcement.

If not actually surprised, however, RTE is still less than happy at the prospect of ILR. Radio 2, in the words of head of information, Louis McRedmond, will have its emphasis on "lighter programming." Not continuous wallpaper pop but a substantial pop element with a certain amount of similar material transferred from the existing channel (now Radio 1) which will then have more talk and light classical music.

"In a small country where financial and frequency resources are limited, the best value for the public must be under the public service umbrella. Commercial operations will have to aim at the lowest common denominator to be viable. They will therefore concen-

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Nolan (right) welcomes to the boards of all of his EBC radio companies Matthew J Culligan, a former president of the Mutual Broadcasting Radio Network USA, NBC Radio, the Teletape Corporation and Curtis Publishing.

trate on the pop/rock market, duplicating what will now be offered by the public service, and to the obvious detriment of their community commitment."

Despite the recent announcement, however, RTE does not see its own local operation completely ruled out, says McRedmond. Fairly elaborate plans were submitted and McRedmond thinks there is still hope for a Dublin local service and one serving Shannonside, based in Limerick, in addition to the existing limited service in Cork.

On the ILR front, meanwhile, John Nolan is the man of the moment. In the last year he has lobbied the Department of Posts and Telegraphs intensely, presenting Padraig Faulkner, the Minister, with two substantial documents — A Case for ILR in Ireland (November 1978) and A Plan for ILR in Ireland (February 1979).

Amongst his proposals were an IBA similar to the one eventually announced and a possible 30 stations offering balanced as opposed to streamed programming and ranging in coverage from 60,000 to 250,000 population. Through his company, the Eire Broadcasting Corporation, Nolan has encouraged investment in up to 12 consortia. These will bid for three or four franchises in Dublin,

including the franchise for an all-news station, and for franchises in Cork, Drogheda, Dundalk, Tipperary and Limerick — the areas he considers most likely to come first. Once these areas are served, satellite stations will probably follow, he says.

Nolan suggests that there will be little programming conflict between ILR and RTE but advertising revenue will clearly have to be fought over. The present radio spend in Ireland in nine percent of the total advertising spend. ILR, says Nolan, will boost that percentage to 15, wooing national advertisers away from RTE and aiming for a 50/50 national/local split.

Competition for EBC is already apparent in the form of Eamonn Andrews, who owns a Dublin recording studio and a great proportion of Dublin's entertainment; the four major newspapers, The Irish Times, The Irish Independent, The Irish Press and The Cork Examiner who have allied themselves with the Allied Irish Investment Bank; and one or two of the more significant pirate stations (notably Alternative Radio Dublin).

The pirates will be allowed to apply but, says Nolan, "they will be judged on merit" and, as previous lawbreakers, he does not rate their chances too highly.

Meanwhile a Bill is being

circulated which should, once enacted, halt illegal transmissions with penalties on summary conviction raised to £500 or 3 months in jail and penalties on indictment raised to £10,000 and jail sentences.

The new IBA Bill is expected in the autumn with the Authority established by Christmas, advertising franchises in the new year and awarding them by next summer. By that time the pirates will probably be off the air, RTE Radio 2 will have been broadcasting for one year and ILR with its "balanced" programming will complete an Irish radio spectrum which will be almost identical to that of the UK.

Mr Slessenger says I relied on whispers about the BBC's training efforts. I would like to remind him that he gave me two of his precious hours when I was trying to find out about BBC radio training when setting up my radio journalism course. That I came away without complete information was not my fault — I tried to get it out of him!

He has offered to replace my ignorance with facts and I am grateful for the invitation, but he should not blame me for not trying.

But I am heartened by the fact that a BBC training in broadcasting skills has opened doors for their former trainees elsewhere. My trainees are already broadcasting regularly while still on the course and it is a great pity that the BBC itself will not encourage them on its programmes. They could do it, as did one of last year's course.

*Fred Hunter, London College of Printing.*

## Letter

I am grateful to Mr Slessenger for sending me a pre-publication copy of his letter (Radio Month, April) but I am afraid it is he who must, as he advises me, "check his facts."

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## Cardiff and Coventry franchises awarded

Cardiff Broadcasting and Midland Community Radio have been awarded the respective franchises for the first two new ILR stations, Cardiff and Coventry, it was announced by the IBA on Monday April 30.

Cardiff Broadcasting, of Chapter Arts Centre, Market Road, Canton, Cardiff has a two-part structure, the board being 50 percent elected members of a community trust and 50 percent shareholders. Tony Gorard, former chief executive of

HTV, is managing director designate and the chairperson is David Williams, chairman of Allied Windows.

The first community group to be awarded an ILR franchise, Cardiff Broadcasting plans "speech-oriented output with a certain amount of popular music which will be popular with our listeners." An Action Desk will be established which Williams describes as "a cross between a news desk and a community advice desk."

This will be especially

useful since less than 50 percent of the population of Cardiff have telephones, says Williams. Ultimately cubicle studios may be sited in out-stations which will increase the accessibility of the station to the public. In drawing up plans for the station, particular note was taken of Plymouth Sound's speech programming and Pennine Radio's community endeavours, says Williams.

Midland Community Radio's Geoffrey Robinson (former head of Jaguar cars and Labour MP) and Arthur Waugh (local Labour leader) have both been campaigning for a Coventry community-oriented station for some time. The group is chaired by Professor John Butterworth, vice-chancellor of the University of Warwick, who stated after the announcement that it was the company's intention to offer a substantial proportion of the shares to the public and that the station would be run by "a staff who understand the community and are sensitive to the kind of programmes which people in Coventry and Warwickshire are keen to hear." Butterworth also promises "a continuing dialogue between the station and the community with genuine and enthusiastic participation."

The IBA conducted preliminary interviews with the three Peterborough applicants on Friday, April 27 following the public meeting held the previous day. Hopeful consortia for this site are Radio Nene Limited of 33 Westgate, Peterborough; Hereward Radio Limited of 10 Church Street, Peterborough and Community Radio of 6 Back Lane, South Luffenham, Rutland.

Gloucester/Cheltenham preliminary interviews take place on May 9, again the day after the public meeting. Of the four applicant consortia one bidder wishes to remain anonymous. The remaining groups are: Radio Severn Limited of Windsor House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester; Gloucestershire Broadcasting Company Limited of Provincial House, 45 Northgate, Gloucester and Cotswold Radio A.T. Poeton (Gloucester Plating)

Limited of Eastern Avenue, Gloucester.

Applications for the Dundee/Perth twinned franchise closed on April 27 and at press time it is believed that only two bidders applied. The twinned sites of Aberdeen/Inverness and Chelmsford/Southend have yet to be advertised by the Authority.

Closing for Bournemouth is on May 25. Five consortia are known to be preparing applications, the latest to surface being Radio West Over whose leading light is Martin Tidd, 33, chairman and managing director of Robert McEnnis & Associates which has launched three local free papers in the Bugle series over the last year. Stately home-owner Lord Montagu of Beaulieu is an investor and likely to become a director — a situation which leaves Norman Beale, chairman of the rival South Wessex Independent Radio Limited somewhat perplexed as Lord Montagu is also one of *his* investors.

Both SWIRL and Radio Bournemouth Limited (RBL) have newly added directors while Airborne Independent Radio, where broadcaster David Symonds has long been the leading light, has appointed Maldwyn Thomas as chairman. Thomas is chairman of Rank Xerox International. The company has lost journalist Charles Everest for health reasons but gained musician Philip Goodhand-Tait, amongst others.

The fifth bidder, Bournemouth Independent Radio, chaired by Lord Stokes, has lost one hotelier, Jim Wilson, from its board but gained two others: Leslie Jackson, managing director of the De Vere group, and Roy Pascall.

Closing for Exeter/Torbay on May 30 is likely to reveal a minimum of three strong consortia: Bay City Radio, Riviera Radio and Admiral Brockman's Radio Haldon. Approaching 70, the Admiral, who was a close runner-up in the Plymouth ILR contest, has relinquished chairmanship to Norman Devonport of Hapstead House, Buckfastleigh.

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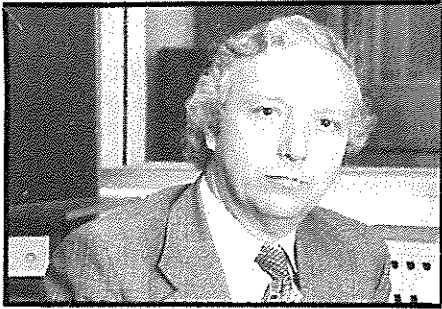


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**Awards feedback:**

## More inventiveness needed in current affairs



Robert McLeish, head of the BBC Local Radio Training Unit, draws conclusions on the state of the Current Affairs programme after judging that category for the Local Radio Awards.

**J**aded. That was the word in our minds after listening to the 17 entries submitted within the Current Affairs Category. It was meant to describe not so much the state of the judges, but the style of the programmes they were asked to listen to. All right, so current affairs programming is not everyone's cup of tea. It's not going to top the popularity stakes. But isn't this precisely the reason why broadcasters should make every possible effort to make their

subject interesting? Isn't there a real responsibility to make something relevant to the many from what is perhaps at first only significant to the few? This must be an important function of CA programming.

Several stations submitted an hour of their breakfast show. There was plenty of news and plenty of information. But what was lacking were those essential qualities of current affairs-analysis and challenge. There was too little of the type of question which really exposes an issue — no incisiveness, no cutting edge.

Interviewers still let their subjects go on at inordinate length without interrupting their flow to probe and challenge, or even to clarify; and there was too little evidence of real production effort in terms of programme shape and construction. Perhaps this stems from a lack of resources. Whereas the listener is aware of the multiplicity of effort which goes into a news bulletin, a current affairs programme too often sounds as though it's made by a team of one.

Fats Waller once said: "If you don't play soft, you can't play loud," and it was the lack of light and shade in many programmes which made them sound heavy. The material was often good but the treatment lacked imagination. After a great deal of listening it's salutary to ask, 'What images remain?' If radio is good at making pictures,

shouldn't some visual trace be left? There were a few, a piece on some old fashioned street lamps being cleared by Chester Council was neatly packaged, there were some children's voices, the odd piece of music. But overall there was too little use of actuality to bring subjects to life. Are we all too studio-bound?

One impression left by these programmes is that so much of the output seems forced into the mould of masculinity. Where are our women interviewers and presenters? Double-headed presentation gives some on-air thinking time and it's an obvious way of introducing aural variety. Mind you the standard of presentation is definitely improving.

I suppose the trouble was that much of the stuff might just as well have appeared in print. There was not much which depended on the medium of radio. There was its immediacy of course, but not the sound of people reacting to one another. Just take one example. Many programmes dealt with a subject by bringing someone into the studio to be interviewed by the programme presenter. Very seldom was the presenter allowed to be an impartial chairman with the matter actually being thrashed out by people holding opposite views.

For next year let our Current Affairs be bolder, more to the point, more challenging, more visual — and more female.

# ON AIR

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# John Snagge at 75

Roger Clark talks with the longest serving active broadcaster in the history of British broadcasting.



All photos by Roger Clark

Snagge at the boat race.



Recording the Post Office railway in a tunnel 70 feet below ground near Mount Pleasant. Behind John Snagge is the manager of the railway, Mr. S. B. Scott. Foreground is engineer Graham Clifford.

Last month, the longest-serving broadcaster in the history of British radio, John Snagge, was 75. He joined the BBC in 1924, when it was still a company, just two years after it was founded, and has broadcast regularly ever since. His career is more than twice as long as that dominating force in British television, Richard Dimbleby, or the American commentator Ed Murrow.

It was John Snagge's voice, of course, that helped to make him famous. Its majestic boom is as familiar as the chime of Big Ben.

"God gave me the voice," he says, "and the BBC taught me how to use it." Surprisingly though, he has never liked the way he sounds and quotes with approval a jibe made by announcer, Eric Dunstan, who said he had "a blue-faced military voice."

In fact, he was never a military man. He joined the BBC at the age of 20, after coming down from Oxford. During his first interview he made such a poor showing that he was rejected out of hand. A few weeks later, however, his father, who was a High Court judge, marched into the BBC and demanded that his son be employed. Reluctantly, John Snagge was taken on and immediately shunted off to Stoke-on-Trent. "I arrived," he says, "wearing a bowler hat. I don't think I've ever worn one since, except for bee-keeping."

It was at Stoke-on-Trent that the BBC had a relay station — a primitive version of today's local radio. "Its duty," says Snagge, "was to transmit almost entirely programmes from London and other stations, but we had our own Children's Hour and nightly news bulletin, a religious service once a fortnight and daily talks. The aim was to encourage local interest in wireless so that people would go out and buy a licence."

Stoke-on-Trent was very much a backwater of broadcasting. Apart from the Station Director, Joe Clarke, and three engineers, Snagge was the only other member of the staff. He was paid £5 a week, helped to run the place and broadcast himself, taking part in Children's Hour under the pseudonym of "Uncle Tom."

His first few years were difficult and it was touch-and-go whether he would remain in the BBC. J.C. Stobart, who was in charge of the BBC's Talks and Education Department, was sent to report on how the station was working and wrote: "Mr Snagge does not impress me as having the qualifications most valuable for success as a radio personality." Despite this coolness Snagge soon took over the running of the station when Joe Clarke came to London and there he remained until 1928. Then, along with the other relay stations, Stoke-on-Trent was closed down when the regional transmitters were introduced.

John Snagge's next move was to London and the headquarters of the

BBC, Savoy Hill. Here he worked as an announcer and before long was in difficulties. The Director-General, Sir John Reith, did not like his broadcasts. "You know, Snagge," he said, "it's a great pity that you announce so badly because, after all, you've got an educated voice."

Worse was to follow when Reith suddenly decided that no matter how long announcers had been doing their jobs, they would have to be tested. Snagge failed. Indeed, the result was so devastating, that shortly afterwards a senior BBC official came up to him and asked: "When are you getting along?" In other words, when was he going to resign? Snagge, deeply troubled, went off to consult his father who recommended that he kept quiet and waited to see what happened. In the event, he went in for another test and this time passed.

It was too late, however, for soon afterwards he was offered a permanent post in the Outside Broadcasts department. The transfer did not come by accident. As early as 1927 Snagge had described sporting events: "It started," he says, "in a very minor way indeed, but led on to other things later. Gerald Cock, who was the head of Outside Broadcasts, was always looking for somebody unpaid to come in and help. I was asked to go round and be what was called "a number two commentator." In most cases, such as the Derby, or grand National, I used to talk about the crowds and the scene before me and then read out the horses, owners and jockeys. I would cover the parade and then the horses would trot off to the start. When the starters flag was up, I would shut up and the main commentator would take over and describe the race. At the end I would repeat the result and hand back to the studio and that was it."

At football matches he had an extra task. In those early days, the BBC did not think it was possible for a commentator to describe a match sufficiently accurately so that listeners would know the exact position of the ball. "Each week," says Snagge, "a plan divided into eight squares was printed in Radio Times. I, as number two commentator, had to nip in rather smartly when the number one commentator was drawing breath and say "Square one, square two" and so on, so the listener could follow the plan. I also had to do the start and finish."

During the 1930's his reputation grew. He covered a whole range of major outside broadcasts — the Schneider Trophy races, the Silver Jubilee of King George V and later his funeral, the maiden voyage of the liner "Queen Mary," the coronation of King George VI and numerous

sporting events, including the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. With the coming of war, however, his career took an unexpected turn. He returned to announcing and was asked to write a report on what should happen to the announcers in war-time. Snagge suggested that they should be set up in a separate department, rather than be attached to various programmes. His idea was accepted and much to his surprise he was put in charge.

Meanwhile, he read some of the most important news bulletins and announced special events and, whenever Winston Churchill could not come to the studio to read his speeches, Snagge did the job for him: "The most difficult one I had to do was when Churchill made a speech overseas. The speech was recorded, but it was quite unintelligible. So a whole lot of secretaries were summoned and were given headphones and they all typed like mad on different sheets of paper — some single spacing, some double spacing, some treble spacing, some foolscap, some quarto — and there were gaps when they couldn't hear what the words were. I got about half-a-dozen pages before I went on the air. Then, for the rest of it, Michael Balkwill, the news editor, had pieces of paper shoved at him in the studio. He was actually kneeling at the side of my table, with a pen, and was filling in the gaps and trying to put in the full stops and commas. He then handed me the sheets which I read. There was no chance of seeing them before-hand and this went on for about fifty-five minutes."

At the height of the war Snagge threatened to resign from the corporation. The incident that provoked it occurred in a record programme presented by Christopher Stone, who broadcast birthday greetings to the King of Italy. Snagge remembers: "This brought down the wrath of the Minister of Information, who demanded somebody's head on a charger and it was decided that Basil Nicolls, who was Controller of Programmes, should suffer. It was absolutely ridiculous. The programme couldn't have been more harmless. We got to hear of this, so a group of us, including the Director of Religious Broadcasting, James Welch, Val Gielgud and Uncle Mac of Children's Hour, sat down and composed a memo. We said if the Board of Governors dismissed Nicolls it would be immediately followed by our resignations." As a result of this early example of industrial action at the BBC the matter was dropped.

**B**y the end of the war John Snagge was one of the most well-known broadcasters in Britain. He had announced the

surrender of Italy and the D-day invasion of Europe and frequently presented the news programme "War Report." Before the end of hostilities, however, he was contemplating a change and said at the time: "The ink won't be dry on the Armistice before I apply for a job in television."

Opportunities came his way. He was television commentator at Princess Elizabeth's wedding, in 1947, and was outside St. Paul's cathedral when King George VI celebrated his Silver Wedding. Later, Snagge was to read the first television news bulletin from Alexandra Palace, along with Richard Baker. But although the opportunities were there, he never made the transition in the way Richard Dimbleby did. So he carried on with an administrative job in radio and came to the microphone on State occasions and each year described the boat race.

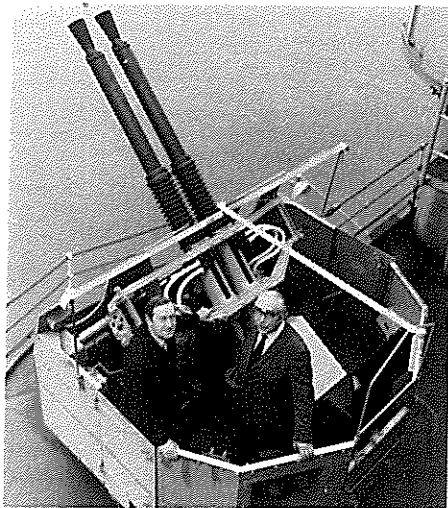
He has described most of the major State events until the present day, from the funerals of King George VI and Winston Churchill, to the Coronation and, more recently, the Queen's Silver Jubilee. He's also covered the Olympic Games three times, but has never allowed himself to become type-cast. Long before Angela Rippon bared her legs in public and appeared in a comedy sketch, Snagge took part in *The Goon Show*, *Hancock's Half-hour* and *The Billy Cotton Band Show*.

Snagge himself retired from the BBC in 1965, but has gone on broadcasting ever since. Indeed, his career has come full circle because he now presents his own weekly programme on local radio, besides his other commitments. Even in his seventies he shows a spirit of adventure. Besides broadcasting from the sort of places where you might expect to find him, such as Windsor Castle, or a museum, he recently put on a 180 lb. diving suit and sawed through a 2" plank of wood, under water, whilst simultaneously commentating.

Despite appearances to the contrary, Snagge admits that he's always been a nervous broadcaster. "You can never," he says, "broadcast without having some butterfly wandering about in your tummy. I'm always anxious. My anxiety is, am I going to make a fool of myself this time? Is this really going to be my Waterloo? Am I really going to sink without trace by saying something quite wrong? You cannot help being nervous, no matter how often you broadcast, even if you only read a news bulletin."

People sometimes ask Snagge when he's going to retire and he replies: "I've always made it perfectly clear to people, if they don't want me, for God's sake say so. They're the boss

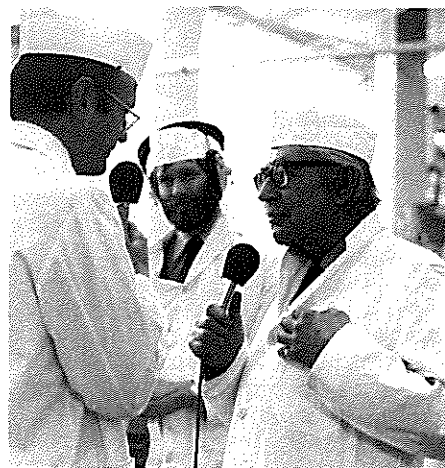
not me. When People ask how long I'm going to do the boat race now I say I'll do it for one more year *if* the BBC ask me. There's always that *if*. I've got no ambition to do more than I've been able to do. I didn't do it for glory. I did it for fun and my goodness what a lot of fun I've had."



*With Rear Admiral Higham on board HMS Belfast in the Pool of London.*



*In full diving gear, about to have helmet fixed on, at the Port of London Authority diving school.*



*Interviewing at the Peak Frean biscuit factory.*

# Rationalising car radio reception

Last year, I took a business trip to Germany, ordered a car, forgot to mention that it should be fitted with a radio, tried to change the car to one which *did* have a radio, failed, drove 300 kilometres and nearly went insane.

I would no more contemplate a radio-less car than try to fly without an aeroplane. But I found myself thinking about car radios more closely of late, as a result of a project which obliged me to spend many hours at the wheel — and I wondered what sort of shape the UK car-radio business was in. I also confess that I have a flash of irritation each time I get into my car these days — since Radio Four moved to long wave I have lost out, as my small oriental horseless carriage comes with a built-in medium wave only receiver.

According to an AA survey, carried out in 1977 and other more recent sources, something like 40% of all cars are fitted with radio — and given that a further 4% of new car purchases last year included radios, the current state of the game is probably somewhere near 42%, allowing for the demise of some cars and their accompanying radios.

BBC research shows that, approximately 14% of the population own car radios — an interesting figure, because it means overall car-radio ownership has increased slightly over the past 5 to 6 years, as the last time I looked into this matter was in 1973 or 74.

It was a very messy situation. In order to have a complete choice of UK stations available, you have to have a car radio which will receive long, medium, and VHF signals — unless, that is, you are prepared to forget Radio Four (except for a few hours per day) in which case a medium wave and VHF set will do. I warned it was going to be messy. And if you do decide that you cannot live without Radio Four in a car, it

will turn out to be a very expensive exercise indeed. Three-wave car radios are horrendously costly items, and all those I have seen are push-button jobs, which are beautiful and very convenient, but please give your bank manager plenty of warning.

While we are on the subject of warnings, let us look at the VHF situation, which is a byzantine shambles, and makes the installation of a VHF car radio hardly worth the candle. Some years ago the good old Beeb decided that its (then) experimental VHF transmissions should be horizontally polarised — which means, as you know, that the signal goes out like this. Not like that, like this. Right? Right. As the BBC was then a monopoly, it had a clear field and was finally responsible for establishing that Britain's first VHF network would be horizontally polarised. This idea had to do with the fact that radiograms were all the rage at the time (pre-transistor, and what you would now call music centres were built like cocktail cabinets — in fact those that are still around are now actually being used as cocktail cabinets) and the BBC engineers rightly decided that a vertical aerial climbing up the wall would play havoc with the flying ducks, so what more natural than to build the radiogram aerial into the set, horizontally? And then polarize the signal accordingly. Very thoughtful. Also a great shame. Because now, some years later, it has become clear that a horizontal aerial on a car is a near impossibility — car aerials are vertical, mostly, for obvious reasons.

**A**lthough, the IBA has created a compromise by putting its ILR signals out on circular or slant polarisation (in simple terms a combination of both horizontal and vertical polarity) it is still a fact that VHF

reception in cars is no more than barely acceptable in the UK. The best solution, according to the IBA's Ken Hunt down at Crawley Court, is a V-shaped thing with the point of the V centred at the front of the car roof — but watch it, because these sorts of things have a tendency to be non-retractable and have been known to tear off garage doors. With all this in mind, therefore, it is amazing that as many as 30% of car radios are capable of VHF reception.

This is not merely a pity — it is going to be an utter disaster for car radio listeners in a short time. The IBA is already committed to phasing out its medium wave signals eventually, so that ILR is going to be all VHF one day, and I have no doubt that the BBC will be doing something similar.

Here is a myth in all this, worth killing here and now. The AA survey revealed that motorists listen to the radio in their cars for eight different reasons. Traffic information comes seventh in the order of priority — way below such motives as companionship, alleviation of boredom, soothing the savage breast and so on. Motorists want to hear, in the car, what they want to hear at home, more or less, and traffic info is considered very useful, but not the main reason for tuning in.

So much for the cute whimsies of special side-band transmissions for car radios, designed to interrupt the normal signal (music, chat etc) and broadcast a lot of traffic information on the same channel. The best solution is the one adopted in France, where the local France Inter stations on vertically polarised VHF signals provide the savage French motorist (they don't come more primitive) with good music, and traffic data built right into the normal programming, presented by a delightful galaxy of sweet-voiced announcers. What an old-fashioned idea.

*John Grierson*

# The Radio Department

25 POLAND STREET · LONDON W1V 3DB 01 437 4273

# IBA avoids full frontal



Pictured at the IBA are Mr. John Whitney — managing director, Capital Radio, Mr. John Thompson — director general, IBA and Sir Brian Young — director general, IBA who was chairman for the evening.

If the first IBA Open Forum on the London ILR stations, held in Battersea last month, was intended as anything but a token gesture of public participation, it didn't manifest itself to some of the audience. A *New Society* write-up quoted a black member of the audience who walked out halfway as saying, "this is just a publicity exercise, isn't it? I thought it was going to be important." And even some members of the Authority expressed disappointment afterwards.

As the ads in the London evening press invitingly put it, "What do you

think of Capital Radio and LBC? Come and tell representatives of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, LBC, Capital Radio and the IBA's London Local Advisory Committee." And there they were: Sir Brian Young and John Thompson, Ron Onions and George Ffitch, John Whitney and Peter Black, and Felicity Lane Fox.

Many of the questions from the audience were taken up with the minutiae of programming — why aren't programmes billed in the TV Times, why doesn't LBC have more trailers, why can't they procure recordings of ITMA, and the like — and these were answered fully enough. But when it came to any contentious area, the avoidance of a full-frontal reply struck many as patronising.

For example, John Whitney was asked twice about Capital's latest profits. He first replied by giving *last year's* profits. When asked again, he said that he hadn't brought the financial report with him and he didn't want to get it wrong, so he'd send a copy to the questioner. (The figure of £3.1 million, as reported in the following week's *Financial Times*, seems easy to remember).

Another question put to him was that, since Helpline has simply a referral function and offloads inquiries onto often penurious agencies, couldn't they set up a fund to help these agencies? Whitney reiterated that he believed their best role was to act as a referral agency, but never answered the money aspect.

As *New Society* put it, "some feel that the IBA has become too closely

identified with the interests of the stations. At Battersea the IBA representatives handled difficult questions aimed at the stations." When a woman asked why the stations didn't run any access programmes (and by access she didn't mean phone-ins, she insisted), John Thompson replied that "quite a lot of access programmes, though maybe of intense fascination to the people making them, are very tedious to listeners."

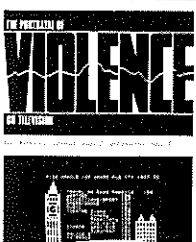
The questioner expressed outrage at the writing-off of access, since there hadn't been any in London. He'd heard a lot of boring ones, persisted Thompson. Where? demanded the questioner. We never learnt.

The Authority also interceded when a black teenager delivered an articulate condemnation of the companies' lack of programming for teenagers — "a lot of teenagers want to know how to open a bank account, and how to go to university. ILR could do this... teenagers can get pop music in discos; teenagers want our own programmes." Sir Brian Young did not exhort the companies to reply; on the contrary, he suggested that they merely listen for the last few minutes of the meeting.

Periodically, Felicity Lane Fox expressed agreement with various sentiments, encouraging listeners to contact 'my committee,' a three-way bridge between public, companies, and IBA, she suggested. But as one member of the audience declared, the existence of her committee was never mentioned on ILR, so who of the public knew about it anyway?

— Anne Karpf

# Contract award anomalies for TV and Radio



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Opposite pages of the March issue of "Independent Broadcasting" (the IBA's house magazine) reveal some interesting anomalies between the contract award procedures for television and radio.

For instance, television contracts will be advertised in December 1979, applications received in April or May 1980, and appropriate parts of contract applications published in June 1980 so that public hearings can be held in which people give their views on what would be contractors propose to do in early Autumn 1980. This gives four or five months in which to finalise an application *and* gives the public an opportunity to digest and comment on firm contract proposals.

By contrast radio contractors will only have nine weeks in which to finalise applications and the public is given no chance to see appropriate parts of contract proposals.

Experience at the Cardiff and Coventry IBA public meetings prior to the award of the local radio contract have shown what an empty procedure

this is when there are no firm contract proposals to discuss — a process that might be likened to shadow boxing with the IBA playing the none-too-difficult role of ringmaster! Why if contract proposals can be published for television (accepting that some of the financial details might need to remain confidential) can they not be published for radio as well?

Also, as experience with the community-based Cardiff Broadcasting showed, if the IBA is serious about encouraging non-profit-distributing franchise applications, nine weeks is nowhere near long enough for a community-based group to raise the necessary capital from what must be somewhat unconventional sources.

Why should not the time allowed for the finalising of applications be extended to at least the five months allowed for television applications? But perhaps there is some good reason for these anomalies in the internal workings of the IBA. It would certainly be nice to know.

Simon Partridge  
Radio Month 13

# Radio London: proud but problematic

Robert Shelton visits an underestimated department store.

**T**he shop-front entrance to BBC Radio London on Marylebone High Street looks like a boutique. When you get down to its studios, newsroom and offices, however — several steps down — you discover a full-service department store.

The 58-member staff of Radio London are proud of their wares. Yet, in solo voices, or in chorus, they'll tell you of what they've achieved, but also that they are under-appreciated, under-resourced and not being really heard widely enough. With some justification, the RL team will say that the print media simply doesn't adequately publicise the full range of talk, news, service and music that they are broadcasting.

Station manager Alan Holden told me: "We share the common problems of local radio, in a tight financial situation. If you are one of the smaller nephews of Auntie, you want more jam on the cake. We used to be hurt by those in the public who don't even know we exist, but that doesn't happen so much any more. We feel we're doing the citizens of London proud."

Others are less diplomatic, and feel that the BBC, with all its radio network and TV power, could and should promote the work of its leading local station. "I'm not the head of sports here, I am the sports department, says jocular Norman De Mesquita, stressing the "frustrations of not having the money to do what you want."

Mike Sparrow, producer and chief presenter of the sparky arts show, Look, Stop, Listen, repeatedly used the word "under-resourced" in discussing his coverage of the whole London arts scene. "There's an appalling lack of publicity." David Carter, producer of music programmes and my chief host, had a catalogue of problems at Radio London, interwoven with achievements and great expectations.

"Our overwhelming problem," Holden told me, "is a weak medium-wave transmitter at Brooklands Park, Herts, which sends a weak signal in such areas as Hammersmith and creates listening problems in many tower blocks around town." Although the VHF transmission at 94.9 MHz is infinitely clearer, it could still be a

couple of years until a new medium wave transmitter (206 metres, 1458 kHz) becomes operational.

Holden, Carter and Vin Bootle, programmes organiser, agree that they deserve more than one page of listings in the London edition of Radio Times. Yet, they concede the "realistic" problems of having 20 special editions to cover all of BBC local radio. Still and all, says Bootle: "We feel we're overlooked as a community station talking to Londoners about London."

There were some chafed feelings about the big press and promotion push at LBC for the new London File show with Hilton Fyle. "He trained here on our Black Londoners show," said Keith Yeomans, co-producer of Alex Pascal's six-hours-a-week programme. With justification, Black Londoners is one of the station's "flagships," covering in width, breadth and depth news, commentary and music of special interest to London's large Afro-Caribbean community.

**A**lthough RL is primarily a speech-based outlet, it uses its 21 hours of needletime to offer, under Carter's direction, some of the very best specialist shows, in rock, reggae, country music, jazz and soul. An example of Radio London's being ignored by the press was the great send-off Charlie Gillett got when he recently ended his long stint with the Sunday noon Honky-Tonk show. Why, I wondered, had so little attention been paid by the pop media to the show until Gillett left? Carter pointed with pride to the fact that his music presenters launched Dire Straits, Chas & Dave, Lene Lovich, Darts and Dennis Brown, to list only a few.

Carter candidly defined part of Radio London's problems: "The time has come when a few network people should appreciate what they've got here. BBC has all the facilities, but we've got to learn how to relate better to each other. Even Aidan Day of Capital was impressed with our set-up here, and told me that Radio London 'is a sleeping giant'."

The far-from-sleeping station manager, Holden, said: "The print media don't adequately cover what we're doing here." (Perhaps all the more ironic that there's a Sunday morning show, Weekly Echo, with Tom Vernon scanning the local papers,

in what's been described as a "cross between What the Papers Say and The Goon Show." Every Friday night, Black Londoners, with Simmie Bedford and others, look at the Afro-Caribbean press, while London Sounds Eastern on Sunday night, will often survey that ethnic press.)

Holden does not believe his station is overshadowed by network BBC. "Our not being in Broadcasting House was not an accident" He indicated that the station base at Hanover Square, from 1970 to 1975, and since then below BBC Publications, does provide the feeling of individual identity. He estimates that some time in each week, about a million and one-half persons listen to RL. "But," he continued, "those figures are dodgy because we can't spend the money to do the audience studies. This summer, we'll have a definitive, big piece of audience research."

"We're the cuckoo in the nest of BBC Publications, but we don't have a bad relationship with Radio Times. It's a battle that every local radio manager battles."

Holden wanted to make it perfectly clear that "I definitely do not plead poverty. But we need money, to enrich output, to pay more contributors and to publicise our output."

The new fiscal year's operating budget rose £200,000 to £800,000, but extra staff, wage increases and 10% for needletime soon cut the real value of the budget increase to virtually nil.

There have always been cynics who have doubted that purely local radio can function in a conurbation of 10 million people. But the Radio London team have dispelled the doubts. Certainly the 6.30 to 9 am Rush Hour breakfast show, with Susie Barnes and John Waite does pour out enough news, information, music and travel service to get the day started off well.

Black Londoners and Reggae Rockers were two programmes of invaluable assistance to me in a recent reggae survey, far surpassing any station in town. Robbie Vincent's noon to 2 pm Call In show, which, according to Bootle, has the biggest listenership of the day, gives that lively audience-presenter rapport that makes radio so much more of an involvement medium than the spectator sport of television.

**F**or sheer fascination in doing "the impossible," I'd also highly rate the Mike Sparrow arts show. Billed as "radio's only topical daily look at London's arts scene," Sparrow and his team keep things going at a fantastic pace — from theatres, clubs, museums, cinemas, galleries come a plethora of news and reviews. I praised Sparrow for playing a Lou Reed record just before some heavy theatre and painting analysis. He always strives for "balance" between the popular arts and "high art." "We're a bit irreverent — yes, cheeky — not putting the arts way up there on a pedestal." To this



David Carter, producer of music programmes, believes the time has come when a few network people should appreciate what they've got here.

listener, Look, Stop, Listen is like a cross between Time Out and the Evening Standard, keeping you clued into what's current and choice.

Sparrow also bemoans "the appalling lack of publicity. The BBC don't quite know what to do with a local station... but once they discover our station, listeners tend to stay with us." He (and Carter and several presenters) aren't all singing the blues. They feel they have a freedom to experiment and to be imaginative, but always with those budget problems. "I do an hour and one-half five evenings a week on one-half the budget Radio 4's Kaleidoscope has for one night," Sparrow told me.

David Carter said that Radio London's 17 full broadcasts, mostly live, from the Ideal Homes exhibition illustrated some of the problems his station had in relationship to Broadcasting House. "It's not a good guys-bad guys situation, but the Beeb expected us to supply all the equipment. I suggested the roadshow equipment from Radio 1's Outside Broadcast unit, but it was off in Leeds, or elsewhere. It was a question of either strained resources, or of the various BBC departments unwilling to work together.

"A lot of the nitty-gritty graft was left to Radio London. By the end of the show, even with national DJs there it was a RL stand. But we had to remember that this was BBC Radio, and we are just a branch. A little better planning would have made it much easier," Carter continued.

Some planning, some test projects and some decentralisation for Radio London, if and when they are realised, may make "the sleeping giant" that is Radio London awake and flex its muscles.

One project that has been under investigation for more than a year, Holden told me, is having Radio London testing a "sustaining service" that would provide a feed for certain smaller or projected BBC local stations of the future.

**B**ut Holden stressed that "no definite decisions have been made about it yet." There were questions if such a sustaining service, in Holden's phrase, might "breach the local radio ethos. It's certainly firm in my mind that it shouldn't be mandatory for local stations" to use such a sustaining service. Manning levels with the unions (ABS and NUJ) would have to be worked out. A high-level decision on such a projected sustaining service should be decided upon soon, but it still remains only a possibility.

Both Holden and Carter are candid that the possibility of a sustaining service to local BBC stations outside London would engender hostility in the other regions. It might develop into something like a fifth network, but, as everyone assured me, all of this is in the planning stage.

While this may sound like the potential for empire-building from Radio London, Holden also said "we're looking into plans of how we can get smaller in London." This would entail a

traveling caravan and a traveling transmitter to move around from community to community. Carter said such a caravan from RL would go to the Hammersmith shopping area for three days in May. "We'd take Radio London out and say to the local people: 'We're your community radio station'." More street broadcasts are being explored for the Hillingdon Fair in June, and a Lambeth weekend.

BBC Radio's managing director, Aubrey Singer, is pondering a report that recommends a London "radio circus" experiment. The report suggests that population areas of 60,000 or so might be just right. Part of the report under study on London Community Radio is the possibility of an experimental ethnic station. But, again, with caution that seems to prevail amid all the proposals, projects and studies for future growth of local BBC radio in London, all these remain still in the "study" phase.

Radio London and its spokesmen leave a strong impression of problems, but also of some glowing prospects. Keenly, officials, producers and presenters feel that their finest achievements deserve more credit than they've received. They are all too well aware that they are in a crowded conurbation with strong competition from many other stations. But there's also a dominant impression that with more help from the BBC, the print media and the planners Radio London would be not just a little boutique, but a powerful voice still not widely enough heard or appreciated.

John Grierson asks the question —

# Does Radio 4 repeat too many programmes?



Introducing the John Grierson pet hates department. Above is a *Just A Minute* panel. From the left: Clement Freud, Ian Messiter (deviser and scorer), Derek Nimmo, Nicholas Parsons (chairman) and Kenneth Williams. If you think these gentlemen are younger than they appear it is because this photograph is compliments of the BBC library circa 1969. Below are various scenes from *The Archers*. If you can pick the characters write immediately to *The Archers Fan Club*, care of John Grierson, *Radio Month*.



There is no getting away from it — the wraith of Reith still haunts British broadcasting. Among the more enduring and endearing points of dogma he bequeathed to the nation (somewhere near the top of a mountainous heap of important principles) was the idea that radio frequencies are *precious national resources*, to be guarded with ardour and vigilance.

Fair enough, as a matter of fact. Reith was ahead of his time and his day on many matters. His *precious national resource* idea stemmed directly from his realisation of the chaos to come in European radio where the biggest would grab the best, without any fear of sanction, and where the European Broadcasting Union and the International Telecommunications Union would watch the growing shambles in growing frustration while consoling themselves with ever greater feasts of paperwork and administration.

Frequencies were destined to become precious because broadcasting in Europe, after World War Two, was seen by more and more national governments as a series of national and centralised monoliths — and not as something better suited to local growth and development, American-style. Transmission power grew with the square of the number of bureaucrats involved, until some frequencies could only be used once throughout the entire continent — the signals were being pushed out at so many jillion gigawatts that you could hear the programmes with two forks stuck into a loaf of bread.

Frequencies became precious not because everyone agreed with John Reith's daddy-knows-best principle, but because demand exceeded supply by several-to-one. (In passing, it is perhaps worth mentioning that if you lay scarcity on top of Reithian paternalism, you should not be surprised to recall that it took forever for radio to go local at all in the UK — and even longer for it to go commercial.)

With half a mind thinking back to last November's BBC frequency changes (still unable to grasp, fully, the reasons for the Beeb doing it quite the way they did) and with the other half thinking ahead to the WARC in Geneva later this year, I found myself looking at one particular *precious national resource*, to see whether or not it was being treated with the

respect I am told it deserves.

In a later issue of *Radio Month* (around WARC time) there will be an analysis of the British radio spectrum, to see just who is doing what with which and to whom. For this exercise, however, I intend concentrating on Wonderful Radio 4, and indeed I propose refining that concentration down to a close inspection of the non-educational side of that service in other words, the new long-wave service.

Before I look at some figures, let it be made clear that the general problem for which Radio 4 will serve as an example is also to be found in other places — and, further more I have made no allowances for the fact that Radio 4 does carry the BBC's educational material.

I looked at a *Radio Times*, March 10 1979. At the very head of the programming schedule for each day is the information that BBC Radio 4 UK is on 200 kHz (1500 metres) and on anything from 92 to 95 MHz in the VHF band, each of them, naturally, being a *precious national resource*. Leaving aside, the fact that Radio 4 is using a Long Wave frequency plus several VHF frequencies, and simultaneously broadcasting the identical signal on all of them, at various times of the day, let me turn to the mainstream of Radio 4 output, in order to establish whether or not there is anything approaching wastage.

As a base-line, I have assumed that the station is on the air for 18 hours per day — and that this *precious national* etcetera is therefore put to sleep for six hours each day, or 42 hours per week. I made careful note, taking every possible pain to be fair and accurate, of every minute of programming which is repeated during each of the seven days of the week, and the following picture emerged: Saturday: 16.6% of the day's output had already been broadcast. Sunday: 11.9% ditto ditto ditto etc. Monday: 14.7% ditto. Tuesday: 21.4% same again. Wednesday: 13.8% as above. Thursday: 25.7% ditto. Friday: 10.9% ditto as above etc.

The average figure which emerges from the above calculation reveals the amazing fact that 16.4% of the weekly output of this national radio station consists of repeated programming. This works out at just over 20 hours per typical week.

Radio 4 is a station which, covers the country, and given its new long-wave home, actually pushes its signal out over socking great tracks of continental Europe as well. It employs a



great many people in Broadcasting House, as well as numerous technicians who tend its transmitters, including producers, presenters, editors, studio engineers and hordes of admin johnnies, all of whom produce the grand total of roughly 100 hours of material per week. This leaves a potential 68 hours if the station were broadcasting 24 hours per day (not an unreasonable thought in itself) or out of a self-imposed limit of about 122 hours per week of actual hot-transmitter time.

By comparison, London Broadcasting, which is London-only and like Radio 4 almost all speech, is on the air non-stop and although its output contains a great deal of material which is repeated, the format is quite different, and the service is aimed at an audience which tends to use the station on a dip-in basis, for fairly short bursts at a time.

Radio 4, on the other hand, is a vertically formatted radio station of the old school, where a programme schedule and a reliable watch are essential tools for the listeners. The programmes begin and end at fixed times, just like television, and all this thought to be beyond reproach for a national service supported by public money.

However, the question which does need asking, in times when radio frequencies are so precious, is this: Why does Radio 4 feel it necessary to fill much of its schedule with programmes which have been broadcast at least once in the same week? One would think there would be pressure to free every possible minute of air time for the creative talents of the staff who must be clamouring for the chance to show their talents. The other question is: What dictates the choice of programmes which are selected for repeat performances?

**A**ppreciate that the programmes which make up the bulk of Radio 4 output are expensive — anyone who has ever worked in radio drama will be happy to relieve you of the idea that it is cheap to make, and the same thing applies for the radio documentary. Once a thirty-minute piece has been made, there is a powerful desire to obtain from it the maximum possible mileage. The argument goes; "let's run it past everyone again, and even if it fails to attract any further listeners, it leaves us, the programme planners, with a pleasant warm feeling, and we can walk tall, having made our contribution to the great and worthy cause of public service broadcasting."

Of course this is far too cynical an appraisal of the situation, and I am sure that ninety per cent of the reasons for the repeats have to do with a genuine desire to give a different set of listeners the chance to hear something they might have missed.

But how does the Radio 4 controller justify, by way of example, a programme such as *Pick of the Week*? It is, by its very nature, a montage of sound from programmes already broadcast, and at least 25 per cent of the material selected by Margaret Howard comes from Radio 4 in the first place. It goes out on a Friday evening, and is then repeated the following morning at 10.30. It may well be that my personal listening habits are weird, but I find that I am, more often than not, listening to Radio 4 on Friday evening, and again on Saturday morning — and although I am devoted to Margaret Howard, and enjoy the programme, I can only manage it once.

Now consider *Any Questions* (more devotion, equal enjoyment etcetera) which is also repeated on a Saturday morning. I also listened to one programme, part of the *Hi-Fi Theatre* series, which was actually repeated twice in the same week. It ran for just under two hours, and if you build that into the percentage calculations I made, it leaves an even greater hole in the picture, as far as time for new material is concerned. I must mention my pet hate, *Just A Minute*, which is the most abysmal piece of radio ever concocted, where four intelligent people are made to talk rubbish on subjects of less than no consequence, for a minute at a time (contriving to make each minute seem like an hour). *Just A Minute* is not so much repeated as regurgitated — God knows there must be something better with which to fill thirty minutes of *precious national resource* time?

**B**y way of placing the argument in perspective, Radio 4's average daily audience (most recent available figures date from the summer of 1978, and the November night of the long waves must have decimated the ranks) is/was 400,000. In other words, less than 1 per cent of the population. There is an argument, to which I do not necessarily subscribe, that a single national station which ties up millions of pounds in capital equipment, employs hundreds of people up and down the country (and utilises several *precious nationals*) and then achieves a minuscule audience, ought to be

broken up into little pieces and turned over to Radio 3 — however, we may as well resign ourselves to the fact that Radio 4 and Radio 3 together attract the bulk of the politicians, opinion makers and commentators, and when the minds of such august personages are made up, it's no use trying to confuse them with the facts. Only four hundred thousand per day it may be, nationwide — but never mind the quantity, old boy, just feel the sheer weight of intellectual quality.

Anyway who the heck listens to radio after midnight anyway? All properly brought-up people have been tucked up by nanny at that hour. We will never change that part of the system — but I would like to suggest that something be done about this level of repeat business.

For example, if it is thought that a programme ought to receive a further airing, why not arrange that the BBC local stations carry the repeat broadcasts? I appreciate that there are only 20 local BBC stations, but they are in a position to provide coverage of a substantial percentage of the population — and with intelligent promotion, well-made Radio 4 programmes could do a lot to improve the sound of the local stations.

This thought will probably induce nervous hysterics in the managers of the local Beeb outlets — they parade their autonomy with ferocious pride — but it would open up a great deal of time on the national station — to the tune of anything up to 20 hours per week.

There is, somewhere in the Home Office, a working party which devotes itself to the problems of the expansion of local radio — and it is charged with keeping the peace between the IBA and the BBC. The allocation of medium wave and VHF frequencies is part of its charge. It is a very hard row to hoe — and the wastage of time all over the radio spectrum, with frequencies in such short supply, must make their tongues hang out.

Earlier, I said that my pet hate on Radio 4 was *Just a Minute*. I forgot *The Archers*. The sound of *The Archers* signature tune can propel me several yards through the air in two seconds flat, to get to the off-switch before I go insane. Every awful episode of this interminable pastoral *Peyton Place* is repeated. On Sunday, they repeat the entire week's output in what they call the *Omnibus Edition*. It's enough to make you weep.

**M**ake 'em laugh or give 'em an erection'. Not the maxim of Paul Raymond or Playboy, but a precept attributed to an IRN editor. Nor do I quote it pejoratively: at least he's making his news values explicit, though doubtless under public scrutiny he would translate it into a more acceptable editorial rule of thumb, like "people don't want to hear only depressing news, and what's wrong with a bit of entertainment?"

Anyway, it's a far (and more honest?) cry from the high ideals which news editors usually claim guides them, and I bore it in mind as I set out to examine the news programmes of some of the ILR stations and the IRN material fed to them. There were practical problems: I had chosen, at semi-random, six stations, whom I asked to record and send me their Friday early evening news magazine (half an hour or an hour at 5 or 6 pm) from February 23.

Three of the stations — Metro, BRMB, and Thames Valley — did, promptly. The other three — City, Swansea Sound, and Forth — didn't, though after a reminder, Forth sent a tape. (I only hope the other two are more conscientious with the public than the press.) I also recorded BBC Radio London news at 5, Radio 1's Newsbeat at 5.30, and LBC's 6 o'clock bulletin off-air, and stocked up with the two London evening papers.

And what began to emerge seemed to me far more interesting than the merely mechanical who-does-what-with-IRN inquiry I'd intended. What hit me was the similarity in treatment of stories and the consensus of assumptions, and that's what I want to explore.

IRN, a wholly owned subsidiary of LBC, provides all 19 stations with hourly three-minute bulletins of national and international news, to enable them to concentrate on local news and features. Ten times a day, there are also six-minute bulletins, intended as "substantial competition for BBC Radio 2 and Radio 4 audiences". There is also the IRN Headline Service, and a non-stop flow of teletypewriter news (a hail of paper with cryptic stories which I received) and audio material (which I didn't) which can be mixed into the stations' own bulletins, as BRMB does.

On the evening in question, IRN's leading stories were the three bombs that went off "in the sleepy West country town of Yeovil" in mid-afternoon; a train crash in Surrey; the civil servants strike; the escalation of China's fighting in Vietnam; and the government statements that council employees could expect no more money.

Everyone except Metro lead with the Yeovil bombs. Metro started with a local story. "Child-killer Mary Bell is being prepared for release from jail on parole" they screeched emotively. The children murdered by Mary Bell came

from Newcastle, and relatives were protesting.

Otherwise, except for a local angle on the civil servants strike (more on that later), the first 11 stories were national and international ones, mainly IRN. Then they moved to local news, which were largely light items — an outbreak of stink-bombs in Sunderland market, a non-story about a Greek restaurant seeking a bouzouki player — plus a good interview with the recently-appointed North-East representative of renegade Catholic Marcel Lefebvre.

Like the other stations, they gave a plethora of short items in their half-hour programme, with a low emphasis on foreign stories (only two, Vietnam and Rhodesia, which came seventh and eighth respectively). Local news was on the whole lighter.

BRMB was very similar. It lead with the IRN piece on Yeovil, followed by the Surrey crash, then a local angle on the civil servants. It was slightly different in presentation and style, but was also dominated by short, fast stories — I counted 17 discrete stories in 15 minutes. There was more foreign news — Vietnam, Rhodesia, Iran, and Spain — coming a little further upfront (stories five to eight).

**A**part from the civil servants, the local news only started at the 10th item. Then there was a whole block of it, and another pattern began to emerge: while the national and international news was mainly issue and event-oriented (though often treated in a personality way), local news was almost entirely individuals: Midlands hunt for raiders, young mother-to-be sent to jail, Stratford-on-Avon man remanded in custody for heroin, and so on. It was only the penultimate story — a walkout by porters and domestic staff at a local hospital for the mentally-handicapped — which was non-individual, and that was treated as an event not an issue.

Thames Valley (Radio 210) had a happier balance. Quite simply, they took the whole of IRN's seven o'clock six-minute bulletin neat for their national and international news. As a result, their magazine Sixty Minutes was almost entirely local.

But the most local of all was Forth. Peter Shore's message to public service workers was the first national story, and it came ninth. News of the Yeovil bombs came in during the programme and was slotted in 12th, Vietnam came next, but apart from these it was all local.

Least local of all was BBC Radio London. There was only one true London story (a West London court case), though there was some local service information appended to details of the train crash.

Newsbeat was both better and worse than the locals. It ran the standard coverage on the main stories, had a monumentally silly piece about 'what

## ILR news content the issue with than cause



The IRN newsroom where hourly three-m

the bikini girl has been doing' (the Russian defector in Australia), but featured a good interview with a correspondent in Iran with an explanation of the fighting with the Kurds.

Yet after a couple of hours of this aural onslaught, I began to ask: do these programmes explain the world? The answer was an unequivocal no. On the contrary, again and again, issues were simply obfuscated as they became reduced to events, and the rush for the latest news and short, 'hard' facts jumbled the brain and punctured the understanding.

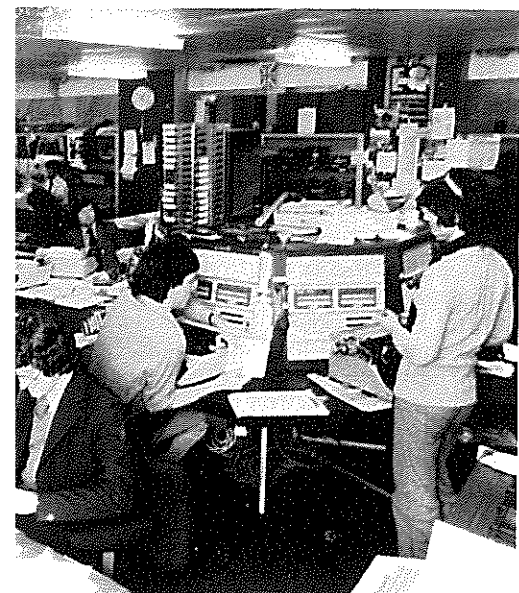
A classic example was Norman Wingrove's IRN report on Vietnam, used by several of the stations. I judge myself to be about averagely ill-informed, and I soon became dizzied by the succession of speedy words. Haiphong, China, Soviet ships, invasion, Moscow, Peking were all that was left in my mind, though I heard the report at least three times in the course of my listening, and certainly with above-average concentration.

If there is a bias against understanding in television news, equally so in radio. Events and personalities are the staples — explanation is treated as a dispensable extra. By the very shortness of reports, they discriminate against the why, in favour of the easier what. Radio journalists, at least the more honest ones, freely admit this: what they usually don't see is that the why is implicit in the what.

Most news editors either staunchly maintain that they shape their bulletins according to value-free criteria of balance — a preposterous notion to anyone who gives it a moment's

# ent — clouding effect rather

- Anne Karpf reports



ute bulletins are provided for 19 stations.

thought. Or they simply claim professionalism, seeking the 'good story' without time to formulate principles in the newsman's rush for the next deadline.

Either way, they are hostile to attempts to make explicit the ideology which informs their choices. The most celebrated attempt to 'decode' television news, the Glasgow University Media Group's *Bad News*, got a notoriously ill-tempered reception, though it is a remarkable piece of work. What is striking is just how much its conclusions obtain equally for radio.

Essentially, what it said is that news is no 'natural' reflection of the 'real world': it is culturally mediated, embodying ideological assumptions, and structuring reality for us.

**T**hey also pointed out that the idea that increases in wages cause inflation is only one of several conflicting economic views, and by no means the most unanimous, and yet "the predominant assumption behind the coverage for our period was that of a wages-led inflation".

But perhaps the most serious flaw that *Bad News* tackled was in industrial reporting. They showed how journalists tend to organise a story around a 'dominant view', so giving it an often distorting handle. Also, newsmen consistently avoid the causes of disputes, concentrating instead on the effects on consumption (because, they allege, the emphasis is always on continuous production and social order, which 'disruptive' elements interrupt). And they pieced together an

identifiable pattern of questioning in industrial disputes.

So was it with ILR's coverage of the civil servants' strike. IRN set the tone by its lead-in — "London's Heathrow Airport has been described as a 'Smugglers' Haven' today" — and its reference to 'Pinstripe Pickets'. In both these arresting labels, they found a way of reducing the dispute to an immediate visual image, in common with both London evening papers (*Getaway With It Day!* Evening News; *Duty Free Day and Smugglers' Joy* Evening Standard).

Much of the local coverage was equally jokey in timbre, and the slightly humorous angle was emphasised by a message to news editors from the duty editor, David Wilsworth: "We're covered at Dover and Heathrow but would welcome any off-beat stories about the effects of the one-day action in the regions".

The most remarkable thing about the reporting of this dispute is that not one of the five stations I followed explained its causes. According to Metro, the strikers were "protesting about pay". Hardly illuminating. BRMB did not ask them why they were striking or what they were paid, instead offering this 'question': "Some people would argue that civil servants are well-paid as it is", to which the interviewee replied that their income was found by a comparison study to be 20-30% behind everyone else. Thames Valley said they were seeking pay rises in excess of 20%. Forth, like Metro, said only that they were striking 'over pay'. Newsbeat said they had a 20% pay claim, and Radio London in passing mentioned negotiations about pay.

By the end of my listening, I had no idea what civil servants earn (no examples from the top or bottom of the scale), what or when their last pay-rise was, and none of the reporters seemed to have heard of the comparability study or sought to elicit information about it.

They were quicker off the mark when it came to 'effects'. The word 'disruption' was mentioned repeatedly like a mantra, and most stations began with information about airports — surprising, when you think of the small proportion of Britain's population who use planes. The unmanned customs desk seemed to exercise some kind of powerful, primeval hold over the ILR journalist — indulging in acute wishful thinking, perhaps?

Certainly, Paul Beard's IRN report from Dover was highly whimsical for industrial coverage, with its talk of "a day of whisky galore", its reference to 'honesty boxes', and its final allusion to passengers "a large number who have, to put it politely, to be assisted from the ships".

The stations also went for the fact that 'needy families' on social security would be left without for the weekend,

and in Sutherland were even receiving food parcels. I don't think it's too tart to observe that it makes a change for newsmen to show such concern for families on the dole.

Everywhere, the ILR stations dispatched a reporter to local picket-lines, and everywhere they asked the same thing: what are the effects of the strike, never its causes. And most, but not all, union representatives acceded to the reporters' definition of the strike.

Now I am not making any judgements about the rights and wrongs of the civil servants' action. I couldn't because, after hearing five news programmes, I still don't know what it was about. But I do indict the stations for failing to cover it adequately, and bringing their own assumptions to the dispute.

There was also a rash of 'packaging'. Thames Valley, for example, moved from the civil servants' strike to a dustmen's dispute with a 'meanwhile'; and BRMB used 'meanwhile' to shift to Peter Shore's statement about council workers pay. As *Bad News* pointed out, "the package is only a presentational device. It can as easily create spurious causal connections as it can lead to an integrated view of the world".

Early this year, we had a classic case of the meanwhiles: the packaging of strike items in the news led listeners to believe that they were all connected when, in fact, many had quite separate and distinct causes. The coverage of the civil servants dispute was nothing compared with the highly-coloured 'crisis' reporting of those earlier months.

So what conclusions have I reached after my diminutive experiment? Firstly, in the news programmes I heard, the ILR stations largely failed to cover local issues, or did so only in cursory fashion. Local stories were predominantly taken up with individuals — a necessary and fascinating part of local news, but only a part.

But perhaps the most serious criticism is that the ILR stations and IRN are replicating the news values and ideology of networked radio and TV news. They had a unique opportunity to proffer an antidote, a different way of covering news. Instead, they are simply exacerbating the flaws, as they concertina major issues into 40-second gobbets, and focus on effect rather than cause. In a half-hour news programme, they could explore fewer stories more deeply, but they have opted for more of the same.

And finally, I see a real case for consistent monitoring of radio news by a variety of groups. The academics should be doing it, yes — but so should groups of tenants, women, immigrants, trades unionists, and other habitual targets. If we had more analyses like *Bad News* for radio news, might we eventually end up with good news?

# Automation the BFBS way



Herr Mausbacher at the automatic controls in the network room, Cologne, Germany.

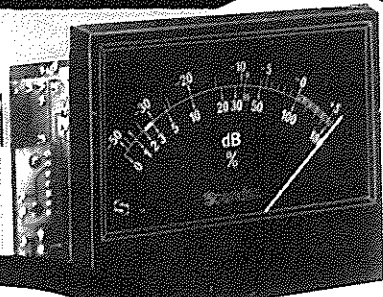
Ask most British programme directors what they think about a totally automated broadcasting system, as used by a number of stations in the United States, and they will throw up their hands in horror.

It might well work in the States, they tell you, where standards of both programming and engineering are lower, but not in the United Kingdom, where both BBC and ILR stress that a local radio station must produce a local sound as well as be flexible in format to take into account the needs of the local community.

Remembering the first days at Capital Radio when programme output was thrown into total chaos by a badly programmed computerized broadcast system, they will point out that, other than for opt-ins for news within a live programme format, the presenter must be free to play in his own commercials and features. And as British presenters tend on average to produce longer links than their Stateside counterparts, this requirement could make for problems when programming an automated broadcast system. No way, they say, can a computer handle these requirements.

Well, there now seems to be a system which can, and the organisation pointing the way ahead is the

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British Forces Broadcasting Service, which operates four major stations along with a number of small voluntary stations and camp wired systems at British forces bases around the world.

At present three stations in the network, Germany, Gibraltar and Cyprus are using a Schafer 903 automated broadcast system for part of their output.

For the answer you have to look at the way the four stations network is funded and the task it has to perform. First the money, which in the main comes from the Ministry of Defence. Over the years, whenever there has been a defence cut back, one of the first operations to feel the pinch has been BFBS.

This has meant a situation where all four stations have had to operate on low staffing levels, with full time staff on one station as low as ten, climbing to a little over twenty full time staffers on the largest station in the network, other staff being volunteers.

Were these stations only serving a group of military bases with a service of local entertainment and news from back home, every one would be happy. But the highly embarrassing fact is that the collective four station network of BFBS pull in well over thirty million listeners each day, a point that BFBS and the Ministry of Defence try to play down saying that the only role of the service is to provide a much needed link with home for the forces.

In the normal way a cash cut back for BFBS would have meant a cut back in broadcasting hours, but research showed that with 24-hour working the norm in the forces, there was a need for a full 24-hour service, and that could not happen with the present staffing levels. The only answer was to bring into operation on each station a Schafer 902 automated system, tailored to the requirements of BFBS, making full use of both staff and equipment.

Outlining the equipment used, Paul Woodford, BFBS chief engineer takes the view that far from putting anybody out of work, the system produces more work for the staff, at the same time freeing them from working unsocial hours, and giving them a chance to spend more time in producing programming at a time when it is more convenient to them — in other words the ability to produce an overnight show the previous afternoons, using studios that would otherwise not be in use.

From a technical point of view, each of the three stations using the automated system are equipped with a basic Schafer memory and control unit, programmable via a standard

typewriter keyboard which lets the operator or programmer key in all switching operations for the equipment that will operate in real time. The control's timer will adjust the system to real time each hour, which means that all programming times must be exact.

To get the programmes on air whilst in the auto mode, use is made of four tape playback machines, plus an interface that allows any studio machine to be plumbed into the control unit, along with a 32 random access cartridge rack, used to broadcast station call signs, promos and jingles.

With the aid of the system switching is also possible into a network signal, which in the case of BFBS is BBC World Service and on-air studio should there be a need to present a live programme. Interestingly the system has an over-ride circuit function, so that the computer programme can be dumped if the station has to present a special programme at short notice.

Whilst now used for 24 hour programming, in its early days this £18,000 plus system was used to switch in the station transmitters, following up with a recorded programme.

Old hands of BFBS were not at first happy with the Schafer 903, but Paul Woodford points out that it is the slave of the station and not the master. Like any other computer it must be programmed correctly, and is only as good as its programmer, so that any on-air mistakes are down to him, not the equipment.

This means that the Schafer is a hard task master for station staff, calling for exact timings with no over-runs. In fact the format for a one-hour production calls for a running time of 59 minutes 45 seconds, at which point the programme tape will fade into a pre-timed jingle or station call sign cartridge to take it up to the top of the hour and the next switching operation, which could be anything from another tape programme to a link with the BBC World Service or live studio operation.

In order to signal a switching operation, each cartridge or programme tape is coded with a 25 k/c cue tone for start, stop or insert operations. This means that before cue tones are added, each tape or cartridge must first be filtered to rid them of any unwanted signals which might misfire the system.

Yet another interesting point about the BFBS operation is that all programme tapes run at a speed of some 7½ips, and not at

the normal Stateside speed of 3½ips, used for automated programming. All transmissions be they live or recorded are in stereo.

To understand the full impact of the Schafer 903 on the station's output and staff, you have to remember that before the system came into use, the small station staff were only able to provide a limited service, often with a close down as early as 22.00. Now they can, with the same staff ration, present a full format programme output over 24 hours with a mix of both live and automated programming.

This format has to be a mix of all things to all people, with day time strip music and magazine programming and local features and news services being presented live. Interestingly the network not only uses the BBC World Service for news, but, via a teleprinter, the BBC's GNS news service, which has meant that often they have been able to hit the airwaves with a major news story before other stations in their broadcast areas.

Alongside this live local output is the 30 or so hours of recorded programming flown out from London, each week, where it is recorded at the Dean Stanly Street studios of BFBS.

As each of the four stations have different formatting and programming requirements over the 24 hours, it's down to the local station to programme its own computer. However, all stick by and large to the same format, with daytime hours given over to a Radio One type format and the early evening to a Radio Four format with a mix of tapes from London, local feature programming and opt-ins to the BBC World Service, or in the case of Germany, Radio Four or Radio Two. All of which means that the automated system is asked to do more than its American equivalent.

Would the Schafer system work for a British local station? Paul Woodford of BFBS thinks that it would, but before investing in the equipment, he suggests a station management must ask themselves what they want to use it for, and would the system help produce better programming, at a lower cost.

With the coming of a network of smaller local stations, such an automated system might be the answer to providing a 24 hour service at a low cost and with a small staff.

BFBS have shown, that used sensibly, automated broadcast systems can be an aid to broadcasters. It remains to be seen if any future British operators will take the same view.

Dennis Rookard

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## production houses

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'For the production cost alone of a TV commercial one can buy two or three weeks of radio some of the production houses making commercials for radio.

# Creative advertising

**P**roduction of radio commercials is an expanding business. Not only are station production units sharing in the local sales boom, but agencies are gradually becoming more radio-conscious and organising themselves internally to deal with the creative side of radio. As more stations come on air, more national, regional and local advertisers will enter the ILR net and more commercials will be needed.

Advertisers are coming to appreciate the cost-effectiveness of radio. For the production cost alone of a TV commercial one can buy two or three weeks of radio time throughout most of the country. Also the results of radio advertising are becoming more apparent. Chris Sandford, who owns Hobo Radio Productions, makes radio ads for films distributed by EMI and says: "I'm sure advertising on radio is responsible for a lot of people going back to the cinema".

His is one of the numerous production houses which have been set up to service stations, agencies or advertisers direct. They are all small enterprises, though sometimes with large turnovers; they sell themselves hard; the major ones are in Central London, though the provincial side is growing; and they operate so independently that there is no trade association to speak for them.

How much total business they do only the tax man can know. Stefan Sargent of Molinare estimates that a maximum of only 10 percent of time sold in his studio complex goes to production houses. But production houses can often do at least the simpler recordings without recourse to outside studios.

It is not to make simple ads that production houses exist. Stations and many agencies can do these for themselves. The true production house is there to provide the full creative service, from the initiation of the original creative concept in alliance with the client to the production of the final tape. And in some cases distribution of cartridges and advice on time-buying is tagged on in addition.

Some houses have become famous, successful and weighed down with awards; others have flopped and vanished. Often the latter are the cowboys of the business. "You just regi-



*Bruce of Quixote, suspects that agencies are being over-charged by producers who bump up bills for artists and inflate the amount of studio time they have used.*

ster a name and you've got a production company", says Duncan Bruce of Quixote, one of the larger houses. He suspects that agencies are being ripped off by producers who bump up bills for artists and inflate the amount of studio time they have used.

Most of the houses hire outside studio space. Different studios not only offer different facilities — anything from 4 to 32-track recording — but also sound different. Peter Perrin at the Radio Operators needs 24-track part of the time, but it would be risky for his firm to own such a studio when many ads need only 4-track. "We'd have to charge clients for 24 tracks", he says, "and this would be expensive, or take the loss on the extra tracks lying idle". Rather than own a studio or have a flash front office, he would prefer to hire another producer and impress clients with the quality of work done.

Ziggy Kirsten at Radio Pictures considers the idea of a 32-track studio "money plastered on the wall" and adds that he does not want to go into the music business.

Chris Fielder at the Radio Department is also wary of the economic pitfalls of owning a studio, but is now seriously considering building one.

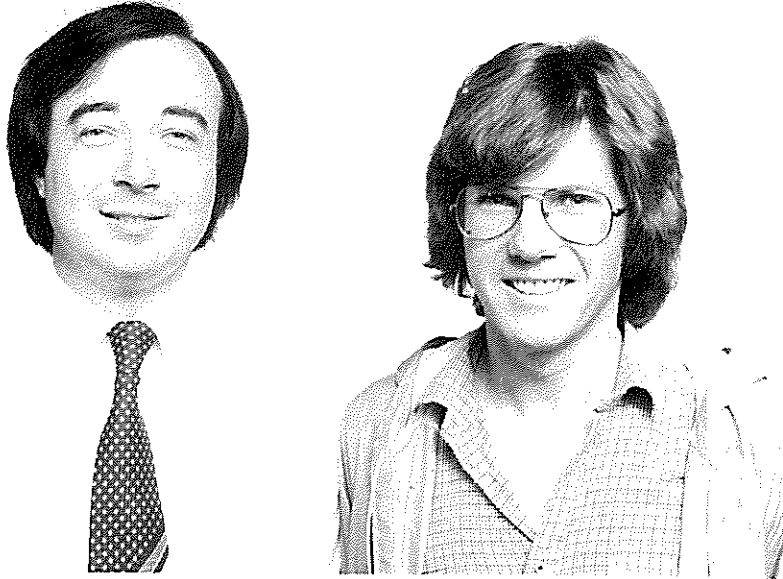
"There is a lot of short term crisis work around", he explains, "and you get into trouble taking on work and then finding everyone's full". Peter Perrin block-books time well in advance which allows him flexibility to deal with such emergencies. At Yamco Radio Productions, Jeremy Rose is scouting out a property in which to build an 8-track studio.

In contrast Quixote already has a 24-track studio in a former parish hall in St John's Wood, three Tube stops north of Soho where most of the recording studios lie. It is taking on such overheads that puts off its competitors. How does Quixote's Duncan Bruce justify this investment? "By the fact that we are trading profitably", he says. His company insists on handling the whole job with a commercial and is not in the business of hiring out studio time.

**O**f course there are many studios with no plans to be anything else which find themselves taking on part of the production house's role because clients arrive with a script and no idea how to create a tolerable commercial from it. The job falls on the engineer. Opinions differ on how easy it is to find first rate engineers in competition with

time throughout most of the country' — Terence Kelly looks at

# for radio



*Oldham and Dalton of Airlords... 'we're getting to the small to medium sized agencies who need a lot of guidance about radio.'*

films and TV advertising.

Production houses tend to keep permanent staff as few as possible. Again Quixote is the exception with as many as 15 on the pay-roll. The more usual pattern is a core of administrators and producers hiring the best available freelance writing, voicing and engineering talent, plus musicians, for each individual campaign. The Radio Operators have a staff of seven. Outside London even that few would seem to make them top-heavy.

Yamco is seeking to jump ahead of the field by bringing in the top American writers, Chuck Blore and Don Richman on exclusive contract. They have twenty years of radio craftsmanship behind them and will offer a tailor-made service to the individual advertiser or an off-the-peg service from their vast back catalogue of successfully devised concepts. Jeremy Rose of Yamco believes they will make up for some of the lack of craftsmanship in Britain. "Radio will be the poor sister", he says, "as long as the creative work is so disgusting".

When production houses knock the quality of radio advertising, it usually means they are knocking the agencies. Rose believes that agency talent is pushing to get on TV commercial

production and is not interested in radio. Chris Fielder says: "In large agencies radio is often left to the youngest writer in the place because he actually listens to Capital". From the provinces come tales of how agency men almost have to have their arms broken to allow a script to be treated creatively.

What do agencies think of such criticism? Tony Brignull, joint deputy creative director at Collett, Dickenson, Pearce, thinks it only natural that production houses should claim they can do a better job than anyone else. Production houses often come and tell him why Collett's should use them. "We've failed frankly to see what they can give us", says Brignull. "I haven't noticed that the work done by production houses is better than anyone else's."

His firm does demo tapes in-house and sends its staff production team to an outside studio for final recordings. Production houses have only rarely been used and then only when the agency is too busy to take on the job or needs special facilities.

This is the likely pattern in major agencies. Saatchi and Saatchi's own creative team makes 90 percent of its radio ads, using hired studios, and

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## production houses

hands only some 10 percent of the higher budget productions demanding extra creative work to a production house to develop into a campaign idea. It is a waste to hire outsiders to produce simple voice-overs or double up on the existing creative team.

Saatchi's head of TV production, John Staton, says the firm has no producers exclusively on radio. He regards radio commercials as fill-in work for TV people — a good way of "utilising unbusy bodies" and training assistant producers to handle budgets, costing, etc.

When comparing the London production houses with the production units in the ILR stations, one can see that they usually operate in totally different areas of the market. The stations deal with the rapid flow of bread-and-butter advertising. The production houses take on the bigger jobs when, as Peter Perrin at the Radio Operators puts it, "the stations realise something is beyond their capacity". He sees the station commercials as taking the place of the presenters who read the commercial live in their shows in the United States, something which is of course not permitted here. He even feels that station production facilities may contract because clients are getting more sophisticated and demanding better treatment.

The production houses do not really regard the much cheaper stations as undercutting them. With a £10 ad, as Chris Fielder says, you get what you pay for. And production houses are in the business of providing a full creative service not £10 ads.

Robert Dalton who, with partner Mike Oldham, set up Airlords, a London based, fully creative radio production house eight months ago, feels that there is "a role for everyone — the provincial production house, the station and the London operation". The stations do not really infringe on Dalton's territory which he sees as "plugging the gap between the stations and the Quixotes and Radio Operators. We're getting to the small to medium sized agencies who need a lot of guidance about radio". Dalton feels his company is taking a much more sympathetic approach, offering what amounts to a consultative service in the first instance, before embarking on the creative concept or whatever the client requires.

**P**eter Perrin does not think that production costs have risen any more than living costs, but Ziggy Kirsten feels it is getting much more expensive to buy quality. The production houses do not offer a cheap service but the established units are more interested in having long-

term, regular customers than in screwing every pound out of the short-term client.

Another side of the production house market — and there are many more commercial-makers not mentioned above — is the group of houses which specialise in jingle-making. Chris Sandford of Hobo is also a director of such a house, Mingles. It is one-and-a-half years old, counts Wimpys, McVities and Bourne and Hollingsworth among clients, and has a 16-track studio in Soho whose demo tapes, he says, come close to sounding like a finished product.

A ten-year-old jingle specialist, working for radio, TV and cinema, is Air-Edel, founded by Herman Edel from the US and Beatles producer George Martin. It is a three-woman outfit with some dozen writers on exclusive contract for radio commercial work, who otherwise do a variety of jobs in the pop world. Ads for Richards Shops and Cinzano Rosé have recently won it awards.

Its base is in Paddington, West London, where overheads are lower than in Soho, but it uses music studios in the centre. Paddington is fine for demos and meetings with clients. But star voices tend to grumble and charge more for having to trek the two or three long miles to W2 and use time

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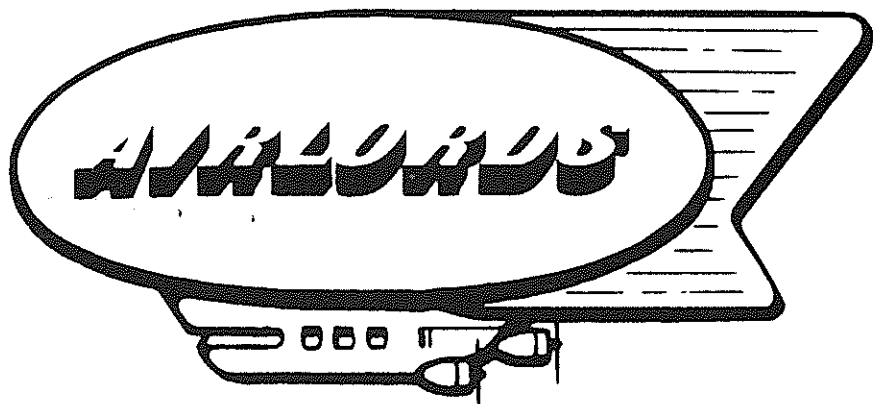
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that could be more profitably spent fitting in yet another recording in one of the closely-packed central studios.

To Air-Edel a crucial side of business is booking a studio tailor-made to each commercial. The company's Maggie Garrard stresses the different sound quality of different studios and feels engineering standards are lower than in the United States, partly because engineers are not given enough scope on the creative side. An engineer herself, she would like them to have more creative opportunities and also be better paid and not have to rely on overtime. This should encourage better quality work.

Mothers and Masters is an example of the successful producer going independent. It was founded a year ago by Kate Hawthorne who left Air-Edel with 200 jingles under her belt including production of the award-winning Brutus Jeans On song which went on to sell 2 million copies as a pop hit.

Mothers and Masters has a four-track studio in Soho and exclusively represents five leading jingle-writers — Mike D'Abo, Alan David, David Dundas, George Fenton and Eddie Howell. It has a music library and contact with numerous arrangers, musicians, singers and song-writers.

Kate Hawthorne sees her role as interpreting the needs of the ad men who know little about music to composers who know little about advertising. She has to select the jingle-writer whose music will best reflect the mood of the commercial and the character of the market, at the same time giving the agency confidence that when its people leave the recording studio they will have a tape they like.

Most of Kate Hawthorne's jobs come on a one-off basis with a commission from a client, a brief from her to a writer, lots of discussions to make sure everyone is clear what is wanted, and a demo track with piano and voice, guitar and voice or just voice alone. She has to make the agency understand what the final track with full music backing will sound like.

**J**ingle-making is not confined to Soho or London. An Edinburgh jingle house with a 16-track studio is Chorel Music which won the silver microphone for the most outstanding use of music in a jingle for Agnews liquor stores in November 1977.

Alison Service, Chorel's production director, is frustrated at the way Scotland is widely regarded as provincial and admits that the company cannot survive on the Scottish market alone, resorting to work for English and overseas agencies.

With the relatively tight budgets of most Scottish accounts, the Scottish agencies tread warily with new ideas and expenditure while the larger



*Service of Chorel is frustrated at the way Scotland is widely regarded as provincial.*

budget agencies head South, forgetting, she feels, the available talent on the doorstep. "The general attitude is short-sighted. 'Air-time gives you your money's worth so pinch pennies on production and never mind if the result is provincial and drab'."

This leaves Chorel with two alternatives, she says. Either cut corners for a cheap, sub-standard service or make full use of its multi-track facilities and local creative talent with concentration on high quality composition and production. Groundwork and quality are sadly-overlooked essentials she concludes.

Another Edinburgh-based house, though not primarily a jingle-maker, is Pan Audio which has a four-track studio and a staff of four. Three-quarters of its work is for radio, half of this being the full creative job, the rest recording work.

Its managing director, Colin Nicolson, believes it is competitive with station production units in price and quality. Stations are mainly concerned with selling air-time, he argues, as that is how they earn their basic revenue. "They sometimes throw in the production of the commercial for next to no cost. Clients can be pushed off with a product that is of less quality creatively".

Another breed of production house is the sort set up by people who have become highly experienced, sometimes also frustrated, by the sausage-machine existence of churning out commercials on an ILR station. So they quit to go solo and offer clients the individual attention and extra quality which station production units are too rushed to provide.

Phil Brice and Paul Macmahon left Beacon last November, opened the

Sound House in December in Edgbaston, Birmingham, and already claim to be "very, very successful". Mike Hurley, demoralised by 60-hour weeks at Pennine producing "highly unmemorable rubbish", quit to launch the Creative Department and make commercials while also doing voice-over work. Ken McKenzie, accountant turned studio-owner and broadcaster, became Metro's head of commercial production, but kept up his part-time recording business until it grew so big that he left to run his own Multicord studio in Sunderland.

A feeling they share — though stations might dissent — is put by Brice: "Most station sales departments subsidise the production department, some more heavily than others. Their philosophy is that their production department is a sales aid, so they're not very interested in making money out of it".

Going independent allows these producers not only to make the profits which they see going begging but also to have the creative satisfaction of producing better commercials. "A majority of agencies", says Brice, "bring a script and don't know too much about what they're going to do. They need advice, so we're involved creatively in a lot of the jobs we do".

The Sound House has worked on ads for House of Fraser, Allegro cars and Houndsditch Warehouse. It has offered both a competitive stimulus to BRMB's production unit and a complementary service to deal with clients with special needs passed across by the station. By offering the 26 local agencies for whom it has worked greater convenience and lower charges, it has probably kept in Birmingham business that might other-

# production houses

wise have gone to London. It has its own small studio and hires 16-track time outside for major efforts.

The Sound House will bring in voices from Manchester and London to prevent over-exposure of local voices. Mike Hurley agrees this is one of the faults of ILR production units. Of agencies, Hurley says: "They should *care* that their voice-over — Richard Briers or Penelope Keith — is on every other ad!"

Of much ILR commercial production he says: "It's mediocre and embarrassing and the script-writing is non-existent". Not that he is any more impressed by the "diabolical format crap" often flowing from agency copy-writers: "Husbands are always called George for some reason. George always calls his wife darling five times in 30 seconds."

He is bucked by the "incredible response" to four commercials which he wrote and produced for the Halifax Building Society to use on Capital. He admits he is a one-man-band and that slow-paying agencies don't help his cash-flow — he was owed £7,000 at the last count. He also has to contend with agency bafflement at the idea that a creative house could exist in Bradford.

**K**en McKenzie with his wife and an ex-Metro colleague uses his 4-track studio for 60 percent of the time on ILR commercials, a quarter of them full creative jobs. As in many other small outfits, audio-visual and other work supplements the fast-growing radio side.

More and more clients want a quality job, which is why there is a niche in the market for the little provincial houses that did not exist at the beginning of ILR. But McKenzie finds the majority of commercials boring because provincial agencies constantly think in terms of a straight hard sell.

Yet ironically his most irritating and least aesthetically pleasing ad — for a used car salesman — is the most successful. An out-of-tune fanfare and a bellowing sales pitch may be the last thing Metro listeners want to hear on a Sunday morning, but they indubitably shift used cars.

The larger production houses in London tend to turn up their noses at mini-houses. Certainly it must be more reassuring for the potential client to have a phone call answered by a secretary than an answering machine. But a tape of Mike Hurley saying he is recording at Piccadilly is more encouraging than the unanswered phone at AIR Services

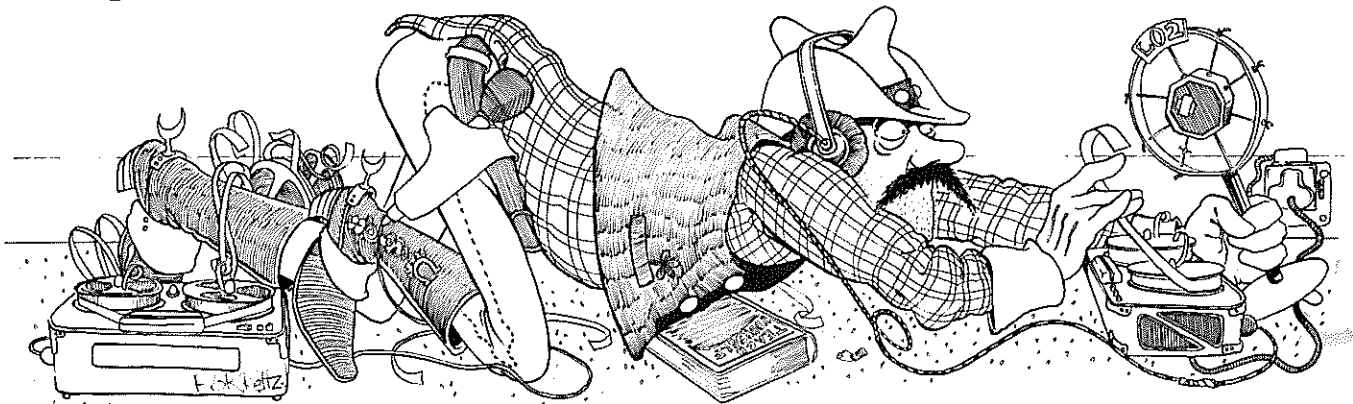
studio and the explanation from the sales bureau's main office that "the phone's upstairs and the studio's downstairs".

The London majors' viewpoint is soured by experience of cowboy houses on their home ground, encapsulated in Duncan Bruce's picture of "a two-man operation in a small garret somewhere in a seedy area of the West End with no experience in the industry or on the production side". At Quixote he says: "Our biggest problem is incompetent competition". He sees Quixote as "the Harrods of the business" as opposed to "the back-street traders".

But Chris Fielder at the Radio Department shrugs off the cowboys — "All's fair in love and war". And Peter Perrin at Radio Operators merely says: "We think we have something special to offer. Most people in this business feel exactly the same about *themselves*".

The London producers seem to know little of the provincial scene — and that means the station commercial production units as well as the small independents. Yet as the stations build up their production facilities and develop reputations for quality product, they could one day offer

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competition to the London houses. Among the big stations, Clyde for example has a 16-track music studio. And in the middle range, Beacon has now also gone 16-track at a cost of £50,000.

Beacon production manager Peter Noyes Thomas says: "It is the only purpose-built, custom-designed, 16-track commercial production facility in a station in the country. It has a 22-channel into 16-track console with eight stereo sub-groups, full universal switch routing, full Dolby, full equalisation on all channels, with noise gates, etc."

Beacon has got over the initial embarrassment of losing the two men mainly concerned in drawing up the specification, Brice and Macmahon, just as the studio was ready. Noyes Thomas was taken on and the production unit is now said to be very lucrative. Given the scale of the investment, it has to be. He and two colleagues, spanning the work area from lyric, music and copy writing to engineering and production, are rushed off their feet and the studio works about 15 hours a day. Staff may be increased to allow 18 to 20-hour working.

Output of commercials is well over the usual station average of 40 a week with orders from local advertisers, Midlands and London agencies and other ILR stations. "Wolverhampton is not the back end of the world", insists Noyes Thomas, "but right in the middle of the largest population centre in the country. We're within minutes not hours of our Midlands clients".

The sales team pushes the production side on the ground that a well made ad sells better for the client. A lot of time goes on educating clients on what can be done technically, how this benefits them, and how 45 or 60 second ads can be more creative and achieve greater impact than 30 second spots. "By spending another 50 or 60 quid", says Noyes Thomas, "they can more than double the response".

**P**iccadilly's production unit — with four awards to its credit — falls somewhere between a London-style set-up and a parochial local house. It makes 130-150 commercials a month, half for local half for national clients, with some TV and audio-visual work, commercials for other stations and Piccadilly's own promos.

Steve England, who heads the staff of three, uses outside studios for complicated efforts but sets few limits on the degree of sophistication he can offer — "and at incredibly low prices", he adds. Twelve scripts, an original jingle and a consultation for £300-400 is an extreme example. In a provincial set-up, he explains, "rules about repeat fees are laxer, the cost of living is lower and getting from place to place

is cheaper". London houses may spend a lot more time on a production, but also the creative side comes dearer "simply because it's London".

"Very economic" is how sales manager Geoff Moffatt describes charges at Radio City's production unit, which won two 1977 awards and was recently re-equipped with a four-track desk. "It is not a loss leader", he says in reply to suggestions that station units are merely glorified sales aids. "We do regard the production unit as a profit centre".

His unit has a staff copy-writer and producer supplemented by freelance composers, musicians and voices. A jingle package might cost upwards of £1,000 with air-time charges of course on top of that. He does not see regional stations as undercutting London houses and taking revenue from them but as serving a different market and thus complementing them. This echoes a point from Maggie Garrard at Air-Edel who recalls how, when the Liverpool Echo did a campaign, her company did the music and City added the local voice-overs.

At the smaller end of the scale, Pennine makes virtually all its commercials from Bradford firms and its own jingles too, multi-tracking from four-track. Says sales manager Mike Waddington; "We have a production manager, Terry Davies, who plays various instruments — guitar principally and piano — and can multi-track to make a full-band sound. He sings too." It was Davies singing on the Morrison's supermarkets commercial which won the 1978 award for the best station-produced commercial. He also does some scripts, produces and engineers.

Pennine also has a staff scriptwriter. "So we can offer virtually a full service", says Waddington. On a base of CAT tracks and other non-needle-time music the station can give local clients a service of customised jingle packages. A jingle will be used to top and tail changing copy content or different cuts of a jingle will be produced in varying styles.

He rejects the idea that 40 ads a week is a "sausage-machine" system: "Our local advertisers certainly don't feel that way about Pennine. The creative standard is a very high one, especially with the recent acquisition of a full-time scriptwriter, and at a very reasonable cost".

Yet it is a "very profitable" unit, Waddington says. Its charges are above those of some other stations, e.g. £25 for a straight voice-over and up to £400 for a jingle. But these figures are still very cheap compared to London because local advertisers' budgets are typically only a tight £5-10,000. Even so he says: "We are



*Noyes Thomas says Beacon is the only station in the UK with a purpose built, custom designed, 16-track commercial production facility.*

continually educating advertisers into spending more on advertising to get more creative".

Whether all the provincial independent houses and stations are as creative as they crack themselves up to be can be proven only by their internal accounts, their ability to win awards, their proportion of national business and, in the case of the independents, their staying-power. Certainly their self-images and public images differ radically.

They are no threat yet to the higher cost London houses. Nor are the production arms of the two main national sales bureaux. David MacKenzie, managing director of Standard Sound Productions, owned by Standard Broadcasting which part-owns BMS, has spent much of his company's short life negotiating an exclusive music library for use by ILR stations in commercials. Though his outfit can, he says, provide the complete creative package, commercial-making has taken a back seat — for the moment.

AIR Services studio is also in a state of transition with a move imminent into new twin-track premises at the company's Leicester Square headquarters. It is a two-man band backed up by the group administration with much of its work concentrated on making presentation tapes for salesmen and the servicing of a few regular clients such as IPC Business Press and Brunnings.

Production manager Mark Woodman says it runs at a small profit only, but once the change of site is completed — in the summer he expects — bigger things will be possible. It enjoys the advantage that AIR Services salesmen will collect business for it. And it will offer them the return advantage that, when a deadline is urgent, there is a studio in the building they can turn to.

With their close contacts with the market-place, the sales bureaux are well-placed to find custom for a production house and their increased presence may be a feature of the future.

## production houses

### The selling of a can



### a case history

**A**lthough Scottish and Newcastle Breweries is a household name in Scotland with its two principle brands — McEwan's Export and Younger's Tartan Special, not to mention its interests in other brands such as Harp, Kronenbourg and Newcastle Brown Ale, its presence had never been felt on radio until last Autumn.

One of the leading advertisers on STV, Scottish and Newcastle had used radio only as an occasional promotional medium, mainly for McEwan's Export. It had never used radio thematically or with any long term commitment.

Last year however a particular marketing problem became identified. A sustained radio campaign provided the solution and S&N are now planning further similar campaigns for this summer and winter. The success of the initial campaign was attributable to two things: radio being the most effective medium for reaching the target market and the creativity of the campaign on a particularly difficult subject, being of memorable (and award-winning) quality.

S&N's problem was this: Younger's Tartan Special, although for many years brand leader in the

Scottish draught beer market, was not introduced in cans until the early 70s and did not make the impression that other more entrenched canned brands, such as McEwan's Export, had already established.

S&N felt there was greater potential for Tartan cans provided that a basic discrepancy in pricing could be overcome. Tartan had previously been considered to be priced too high to the trade in relation to other canned beers and while adjustments had consequently been made in the trade price the trade had not reflected these adjustments in their retail price.

Radio advertising was therefore decided on to achieve a double objective — promoting Tartan cans to the drinker and at the same time influencing the retail price. A special price for Tartan was negotiated with retailers in return for a specific mention of their stores in the advertisements.

The problem of how to persuade the public that Tartan is as good in cans as on draught was then passed on to Tony Hertz of the Radio Operators. Hertz went to Edinburgh, talked with S&N and visited some retailers to try and get the feel of the market. He then racked his brains for some

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time before he reached what he calls the "breakthrough" point, where he realised that the commercial had to major on the cans, rather than the beer.

"The Tartan Can Can" came up as the central theme to the commercial and it soon became the answer to the question "What can give you the Tartan Special flavour?". This question and answer was then put in the setting of an appalling jingle being concocted by an equally appalling group of Glaswegian musicians, the whole series of advertisements being drawn out into the group's rehearsals in a number of unlikely settings with the jingle never actually being played and Scotland constantly being saved from the infliction of a dreadful campaign.

Hertz presented his concept to S&N in a manic session in which he read the entire script himself as the clients fell about in mirth. He then left them with the scripts on which they later "made a couple of very intelligent comments—most rare in clients."

More suggestions followed from Brian Cowie, then brand manager, during the production stage, which elicited further admiration from Hertz and finally the package was ready—a serious marketing exer-

cise, says Hertz, in which the basis had been laid for a campaign which could be continued over a considerable period of time. There was a lunatic quality about the commercials which Hertz saw as a strong break with the conventional. "It took a great deal of guts for Scottish and Newcastle to take the thing at all", he reflects.

They did however, ending up with two 60-second and three 45-second commercials, each tailored to take a voice-over naming a specific retailer and price. The campaign was run in the pre-Christmas months on Radios Forth and Clyde with a number of the largest beer retailers coming in on the scheme.

Wesley Hallam, S&N's marketing manager, says that to the delight of both his company and the retailers concerned, sales "increased significantly and we seem to have gone a long way to solving our retail pricing problem".

"The strong point to make," says Hallam, "is that we were addressing a particular market place problem. Radio could be much more specific for pricing advertising than TV within the available budget and it also seemed to be the medium most in line with the younger market which buys the cans. We now see

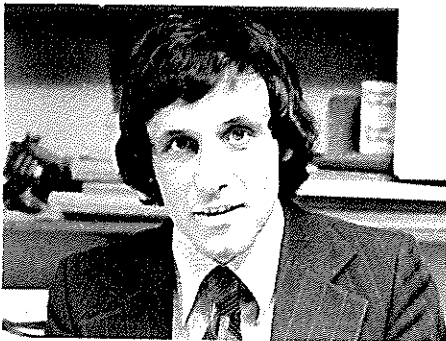
radio as a long-term answer to price promotions and strong brand advertising of Tartan cans which will effect a joint attack with our continued brand reinforcement of draught Tartan on TV."

Derek Gorman, Forth's general sales manager, received considerable feedback to the campaign from retailers "wanting to get in on it", listeners wanting to know what the Can Can was and from other manufacturers making general remarks. "Normally we never hear a cheep about campaigns we have run."

Gorman sees radio acquiring a more specific use in the future and although Scottish and Newcastle's campaign was not wholly thematic, it was certainly significant, coming from an unquestioned market leader.

The campaign also illustrates the power of imaginatively used radio. The idea of selling the product by the can rather than the beer led to a theme which was sufficiently off-beat to remain in the listener's mind for a long time and which left room for a great deal more in a similar vein. As Tony Hertz says, "I reckon we can keep this theme going for a couple of years before we ever get to actually playing the jingle".

## Victory rules in local sales



Head of sales and promotion, Tony Grundy.

RADIO Victory's surge in local sales continues well into a second year. In the twelve months to last September local sales rose 69.1 percent, contributing 45 percent of the £515,000 total turnover net of commissions. Since then the month-on-month increases have been: October 54 percent; November 65 percent; December an amazing 102 percent; January 66 percent; February about 44 percent; March only 20 percent but with April prospects rising to 45 percent or more.

From early days national sales have

been strong, perhaps because of the exceptionally high proportion (44 percent) of ABC1s in the transmission area. This makes it a useful testing ground for up-market products. But this financial year national sales are not quite keeping up with the 14 percent rise in the rate card. The national proportion is now some 40 percent of revenue.

Asked why local sales have done so well, Victory's head of sales and promotions, Tony Grundy, insists that there is no "revolutionary formula." As he puts it: "We have the confidence of the business people and that is why we do repeat business."

The situation was very different when Grundy joined Victory from Piccadilly Radio in September, 1976. A lot of potential listeners then disliked the station's sound; their feelings washed off on advertisers; and only 30 percent of sales were local.

"West Coast American-type sound didn't go down too well," says Grundy, explaining the ensuing programme changes. "The sound became far more middle-of-the-road and in keeping with the area which is quite a rich one and less likely to accept the sound of Radio 1."

A more important reason he feels why business rose is that the station started to get much more involved with local people and events. For example

the initial idea was that DJs should charge £200 per hour for outside appearances. Today the minimum charge is a more realistic £30 — and the presenters go out almost every night of the week. The station's popularity benefits, likewise the pockets of the DJs.

Much effort went into tramping from door to door among the advertisers to explain how to use radio and convince them that, if they had spent, say, £600 on one campaign and it had flopped, they should not write off radio for good.

The process of education continues with case histories and word-of-mouth recommendation persuading businesses to stay loyal.

Also going the rounds of advertiser's premises is Victory's head of commercial production, Richard Newton, to learn their needs and problems directly so that he can write really pertinent and accurate copy. The station makes 98 percent of local ads in-house.

Tony Grundy stresses that he and his sales team are constantly learning. They all went to London recently for a seminar on closing a sale. "I'm a great believer in the training of sales people in sales techniques," says Grundy who did not notice any other ILR students at the seminar. "I don't think you can learn enough."

# Air Services and the new rates

David Baxter, radio manager of Time Buying Services, analyses and gives the media buyer's view of Air Services' new rate cards.

Following the increases announced by BMS last month, and examined in the previous issue, Air Services has now published the new rate cards which are effective from April 2nd, 1979. Table 1 shows the level of the rate increases which are almost all in the range of 10%-15% and as such are more consistent and rather less than those of the BMS stations. An interesting point is that no increases have been announced by Radio Hallam or Radio Victory; the former will now be an even more viable and cost effective buy, whilst Victory can now claim to have rates which more accurately reflect their rather disappointing coverage performance.

However, for radio buyers the most significant aspect of the new Air rate cards is the re-introduction of fixing charges "in response to numerous requests" according to managing director, Gerry Zierler. The fixed day surcharge of 25% I suspect will only be levied at time of almost saturation demand. The specific half hour surcharge is one that strategic radio buyers will welcome as an aid to buying to the requirements of clients, but they will balk at having to pay 50% which suggests that although the facility is there Air do not wish to over-encourage buyers to use it. However, it is an encouraging trend.

Similarly, the opportunity to buy Hallam, Pennine and Tees jointly as Yorkshire Radio is now available again, although only to advertisers who are on no more than three other stations simultaneously. Once again, I would prefer that Air be more positive about these aids to radio buying as we are all trying to develop the industry in this country.

Despite these restrictions though, radio buyers should be

rather more happy with these adjustments than they were with BMS. It will be interesting to see if they are proved to be justified when the new research becomes available.

As we still have to consider the stations on their 1978 performance it is interesting to draw up "league tables" to see how they shape up after the rate increases. Table 2 shows the stations as at the end of March 1979 and Table 3 shows the changes that have occurred. All cost per thousand figures are given for a 30 second commercial with an audience of all adults. It is obvious that the freezing of rates has significantly benefitted Capital and Hallam, but the most dramatic change is that of Trent which has plunged from fifth to fourteenth. In fact their position is even worse as not only have they increased their rates by around 30%, but they have also reduced the prime percentage of packages which will affect the audience achieved. Other noteworthy moves are LBC's steady rise and the fact that Victory has finally got off the bottom of the league. Overall however, it is still the major stations that provide the most efficient buy for an advertiser.

Finally, mention must be made of the parameters released by Capital whereby an advertiser must buy a set number of 'A' or 'B' spots for every one of prime. Although I resent being told how to buy a schedule I am not as outraged as might be expected as it has long been proven that the most effective way to buy radio is to spread the airtime across the day. After all once you have achieved coverage of all the people who listen at prime time the only way to increase your audience is to be in different segments. Therefore, these new "guidelines" will not change the way we plan and buy radio campaigns at Time Buying, but I feel it is a great pity that Capital have to bring in restrictions in order to prove their point.

## ILR STATIONS COST EFFICIENCY COMPARISONS (30 SECS — ADULTS)

| Station        | OLD RATES |          |          |          | Station        | NEW RATES |          |          |          |
|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                | 21 x TAP  | 49 x TAP | 21 x D/T | 49 x D/T |                | 21 x TAP  | 49 x TAP | 21 x D/T | 49 x D/T |
| Capital*       | .33       | .29      | .38      | .31      | Capital*       | .33       | .29      | .38      | .31      |
| BRMB           | .31       | .31      | .39      | .35      | BRMB           | .34       | .35      | .44      | .38      |
| Piccadilly     | .33       | .34      | .40      | .38      | Hallam         | .35       | .33      | .44      | .40      |
| Hallam         | .35       | .33      | .44      | .40      | Piccadilly     | .33       | .34      | .46      | .43      |
| Trent          | .34       | .37      | .45      | .39      | LBC            | .39       | .33      | .53      | .45      |
| Clyde          | .33       | .36      | .48      | .40      | Clyde          | .36       | .39      | .53      | .45      |
| Metro          | .37       | .39      | .42      | .40      | City           | .41       | .43      | .53      | .44      |
| LBC            | .39       | .33      | .49      | .41      | Forth          | .43       | .44      | .51      | .47      |
| City           | .40       | .38      | .47      | .40      | Metro          | .43       | .46      | .53      | .48      |
| Downtown       | .37       | .37      | .52      | .43      | Downtown       | .43       | .43      | .59      | .49      |
| Forth          | .38       | .41      | .46      | .44      | Beacon         | .44       | .46      | .56      | .50      |
| Plymouth Sound | .46       | .42      | .44      | .41      | Tees           | .48       | .48      | .52      | .48      |
| Tees           | .43       | .43      | .47      | .43      | Plymouth Sound | .53       | .49      | .50      | .47      |
| Beacon         | .44       | .46      | .52      | .46      | Trent          | .46       | .49      | .59      | .52      |
| Swansea Sound  | .44       | .44      | .56      | .48      | Swansea Sound  | .51       | .51      | .65      | .55      |
| Pennine        | .48       | .49      | .51      | .46      | Pennine        | .56       | .57      | .58      | .52      |
| Orwell         | .51       | .54      | .51      | .47      | Orwell         | .57       | .60      | .56      | .52      |
| Thames Valley  | .58       | .64      | .65      | .61      | Victory        | .67       | .65      | .64      | .63      |
| Victory        | .67       | .65      | .64      | .63      | Thames Valley  | .63       | .71      | .72      | .67      |

\*Capital daytime packages are for 15 and 40 spots. Figures indicate cost per thousand. Source: RSGB.

## AIR SERVICES RATE CARD ANALYSIS

| Station        | % Increase (30 Sec Rate) |      |      |      |          |          |          |          |
|----------------|--------------------------|------|------|------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                | AAA                      | AA   | A    | B    | 49 x TAP | 21 x TAP | 49 x D/T | 21 x D/T |
| BRMB           | 15.0                     | 12.5 | 12.1 | 10.0 | 11.0     | 11.1     | 11.0     | 11.1     |
| Piccadilly     | 15.2                     | 10.1 | 15.1 | —    | —        | —        | 15.0     | 15.2     |
| Hallam         | —                        | —    | —    | —    | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| Plymouth Sound | 15.3                     | 14.3 | 14.8 | 14.3 | 16.0     | 15.7     | 15.8     | 15.2     |
| Tees           | 10.9                     | 10.9 | 11.0 | 11.1 | 11.3     | 11.1     | 11.1     | 11.2     |
| Pennine        | 10.8                     | 22.1 | 12.4 | 1.0  | 16.7     | 16.5     | 13.9     | 13.6     |
| Victory        | —                        | —    | —    | —    | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| Orwell         | 10.0                     | 10.7 | 10.9 | 10.0 | 11.1     | 10.0     | 11.1     | 10.0     |
| Thames Valley  | 15.0                     | 10.0 | 10.0 | —    | 10.0     | 10.0     | 10.0     | 10.0     |
| Beacon         | 10.3                     | 10.2 | 10.6 | 9.4  | —        | —        | 7.9      | 8.6      |



David Balfe (left) of Highland Recording Studios, hands a new jingles and ident package to Radio Forth's programme controller Tom Steele, watched by station music organiser Tom Bell. The package was produced by Balfe's company in Inverness which houses Scotland's first 24-track studio. Commented Steele: "This is the best package we have ever received and we intend to follow the set through with more over the next three years. We particularly liked being able to work miles from London with no interruptions or pressures on studio time."

## Audience expansion limits ILR growth

A recent report by the agency Davidson, Pearce, Berry and Spottiswoode states that the next nine ILR stations will only enable advertisers to reach 3½ percent more of the adult population than they can through the present 19 stations.

Prepared by the agency's media director, Peter Todd, the report suggests that ILR's commercial success has not been matched by audience expansion and that this is responsible for the limitation of ILR's full development.

Future development, continues the report, rests "not with the expansion of the network by new, and ever smaller, stations, but with the successful broadening of programme appeal. The programming on most stations is slanted far too heavily to the very young adults to offer the chance of any real expansion."

The report is considered "over-pessimistic" by Jimmy Gordon, managing director of Radio Clyde and 1978 chairman of AIRC. "It seems that the 3½ percent figure has been reached by looking at the total potential

audience for the 28 ILR stations and calculating the percentage on the basis of ILR's present share being static. This does not take into account the present audience growth which is taking place."

Of the call for broader programming, Gordon says: "We obviously need both — new stations and greater audiences for the existing ones. But the report doesn't seem to have analysed programme output against demographic profile correctly."

Air Group's Eddie Blackwell agrees that the report is "erring on the side of caution." He points out that the current ILR total universe is 35 million and that the seven already advertised new ILR stations will add three million with the last two possibly adding another million. The new stations should be seen as a significant step towards the nationwide coverage which will come, he says.

"The report seems underinformed on programming," he continues. There is a massive extension of ILR programming under way which will increase as more money comes along."

## Luxembourg's new rates backed by healthy audience projections

The principle feature of Radio Luxembourg's new rate card, effective from April 2, is a doubling of the guaranteed audience during the C segment (Monday to Sunday, midnight to closedown).

This increase in guarantee, from 60,000 to 135,000, is based on Gallup research conducted in 1978 and might be attributable to Luxembourg's introduction of disco programming, catching the disco-goer in the small hours after the clubs have closed.

The other segments of the rate card are A time (21.30 to 24.00), B time (up to 21.30) and a total audience package which offers the run of the week. The average increase to cost per thousand by the new rates is 1.5 percent with a 10 percent increase to the cost of the TAP. However it would seem that the dramatic increase in audience guarantee to the C segment and the increase in guarantee from 230,000 to 235,000 in the A segment justify these cost increases.

Under Other Special Rates, Luxembourg offers to negotiate individual contract rates for packages of over 300 spots in any one campaign in any of the three segments.

Commented Luxembourg's sales director, Tim



Bradshaw... realistic rates.

Bradshaw: "The new rate card is cleaner, simpler and easier to use. I feel it's totally realistic and I am simply aligning my rates to my audience delivery, all of which is guaranteed."

Of Luxembourg's sales achievement this year Bradshaw stated that after a tough first quarter April showed an increase of 141 percent on the previous April with the second quarter looking very healthy. Total bookings so far for 1979 already stand at over 80 percent of the revenue for 1978, he said.

## ILR revenue increase

ILR revenue for March 1979 amounted to £2,875,305, bringing the total for the first quarter of the year to £7,071,640. This compares with the figure of £5,960,008 for the first quarter of 1978.

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SOUND ADVICE AND SOUND PRODUCTION

## Small budget studio designed for ILR

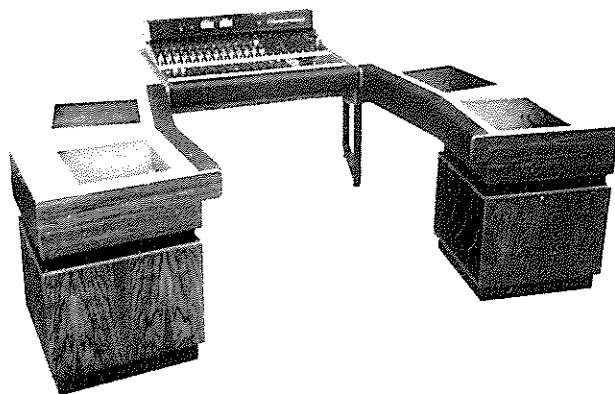
Audix has come up with a specially designed ILR studio package which, the company claims, includes everything a station will need to go on air within a small budget.

The package follows a study of the current ILR stations combined with advice from commercial radio technical consultants and results, say Audix, from the realisation that custom-built studios are not only uneconomical and time consuming but in many cases unnecessary as basic requirements differ little from station to station.

The studio package contains a wrap-around shaped console for self-op studios, equipped for mono and stereo monitoring in accordance with IBA requirements and incorporating clean-feed outputs and outside source switching facilities. The package also includes a production studio for recorded interviews and jingles, a central technical area for monitoring station output and finally, news and OB equipment.

Additional facilities, including recommended equipment from other manufacturers, can be supplied or advised upon by Audix.

This studio package is part of a complete service now being offered to commercial stations by Audix whereby Audix will undertake the setting up of the technical side of a new station. Audix offers, amongst other things, to supply full specifications and cost details for IBA approval, undertake turnkey installation and train staff in equipment



*The Audix wrap-around self-op console featuring a specially adapted MXT1000 mixer, to be displayed at the APRS June exhibition.*

usage.

It will enable potential ILR companies to prepare capital equipment budgets and plan facilities with minimum time, trouble and cost, says Audix.

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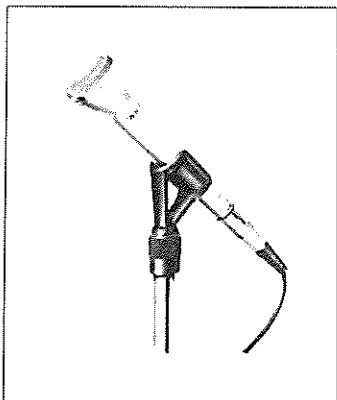
Applicants should have a good educational background with relevant experience in the field of electronics and equipment maintenance.

Salary range: £4,000 — £4,900 depending upon experience.

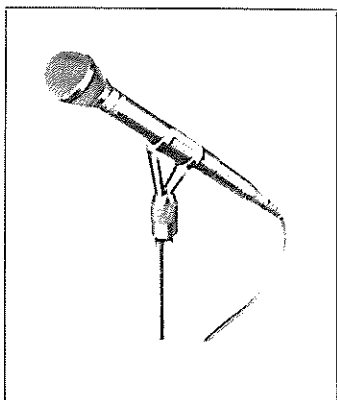
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AKG's D130 and C535EB microphones.



## New mikes for ARPS

In time for the ARPS (Association of Professional Recording Studios) exhibition in June, comes a whole host of new microphones from AKG.

They include the D222EB, said by AKG to be an updated design, evolved from the well known D202 type. Mounted in a matt black housing, and using a two way cardioid dynamic system it is still only two thirds the size of the D202.

Also on offer is the D130 microphone that features a transducer element elastically suspended in order to give a greater insensitivity to handling noise. AKG give

a recommended retail price of £45 for this unit, and say that it is ideally suited for interview work and P.A. usage.

Up-market at an rrp of £118 is the C535EB condenser microphone featuring a cardioid polar response. Developed for studio and stage work the unit has an integral pre-attenuator and filter switch, which means, say AKG, that the unit can be used in areas that as a rule need a dynamic microphone, in other words, high sound levels, and as with the lower priced D130 the capsule is elastically suspended to help minimise handling noise.

## WES equipment for broadcasting

Windsor Electronic Systems has been formed under the direction of Alice (Stancoil) managing director Ted Fletcher to design and manufacture specialist equipment for the broadcasting and recording industries.

WES's products will be marked by Alice and the company's product catalogue at present includes

an OB mixer/transmission system for sports commentary and news reporting, a low-noise dual 4-band equaliser and a compact phase correlation meter. The company is also to distribute Scully recording and logging machines.

WES is situated next door to Alice at 58/60 Grove Road, Windsor. Telephone Windsor 53779.

## Sound Workshop opens new studio

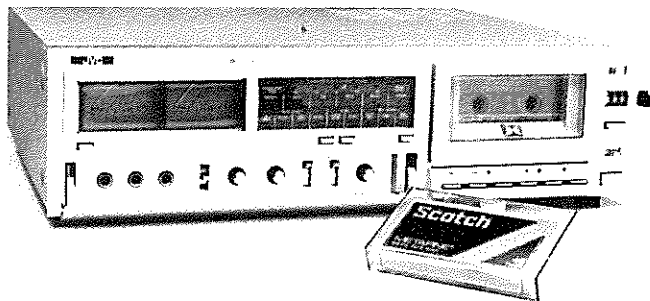
Sound Workshop, the commercial production company run by David da Costa, has opened a new production studio at 17 Brick Lane, in Mayfair.

The studio is equipped with a 12-into-4 Chilton QM1 desk, Teac and Revox 2-track recorders, a 4-track

Dokorder, Teac cassette machine and 8-track cart facilities.

The new studio, says da Costa, represents a push for the commercial production side of his business whose jingle writers currently include Kenny Lynch, Paul Curtis and da Costa himself.

## Computer tuning



The new JVC KD-A8 metal tape compatible cassette deck incorporating the computer BEST tuning system which scans tape and automatically sets the bias, equalisation and sensitivity of the tape coating before playback or recording. JVC says the system will take into account all types of tape coating and production variations in the coating of any type of cassette.



## Soundcraft 8-track

Soundcraft have recently announced a new eight-track recorder, making use of one inch tape.

Known as the SCM 381-8 its tape transport and electronics are of an entirely new design giving, according to Soundcraft, a wow and flutter reading of some 0.03%.

Interesting features of this new machine include a deck plate, made from a half inch aluminium casting along with three motors, mounted to

the underside of the deck plate to avoid the need for a dress cover, thus making routine servicing easy.

Another design point is the control panel, which whilst containing all audio and tape transport controls along with channel status readings via LEDs can also be removed from the basic recorder housing to be used as a remote flying control system with an interface via a plug-in extension cable.

Cost of this unit will be £5,250.

## Overheard . . .

### NUJ TRAINING SCHEME

Recent meetings of the National Union of Journalists group responsible for broadcasting, the Broadcasting Industry Council, have discussed training for commercial radio and television. The Council includes representatives of BBC and ITV at all levels and some suggest that local radio training for commercial radio would somehow be done by the BBC's local radio training unit.

What is definite is that a working party of two members was formed to report back to the council on proposals to institute talks with the employers body, AIRC, as well as the National Council for the Training of Journalists and other interested bodies. ILR chapels were asked to provide details of training facilities available for staff and it was suggested that in future stations would only be allowed to employ trained journalists.

As there is no NCTJ-sponsored training scheme for radio journalists this might be difficult to achieve, although some representatives pushed the idea of a Broadcasting Training Council on the lines of the NCTJ scheme for training newspaper journalists.

Although the NUJ is holding talks with the AIRC some ILR stations are declaring a training UDI with BRMB already advertising for two training graduates, and Radio City saying it wants four later in the year. Just who is going to agree what counts as training in ILR is rather difficult to find out: it has taken ITV twenty-five years to appoint someone to co-ordinate and formulate training programmes, so perhaps it will be a while before ILR comes to a decision.

## output

A round-up of the past month's stories

Dutch National Radio (TROS Radio) broadcasts 210's *Nightwatch*... Luxembourg starts total disco summer schedule... Beacon Radio announces it will quit Air Services for Radio Sales & Marketing... IBA's first London public meeting held at Battersea Town Hall... Capital launches £750 drama competition... £1000 Rothermere Award for Radio Research announced... Radio 4 outlines new summer programmes including an investigative series with Checkpoint's Roger Cook, dramatised programmes on 19th century Himalayan explorers, an anthology of prose and music and a series on European adolescents... Lintas holds lavish London presentation on ILR for major national and London advertisers with speakers Mo Drake, Alan Morgenthau, Eddie Blackwell, Tony Vickers, Tony Hawkins, Jonathan King, Maggie Norden and Michael Bukht... AIRC and ITCA announce joint advertising copy screening process... IBA reassesses primary and secondary rental rates, changing base from headcount to respective revenue potential... John Whitney sole ILR speaker at 7th World Industrial Advertising Conference in Amsterdam... BRMB and BBC Derby both broadcast police recordings of Barry Williams car chase... BBC drama department shares EBU's first ever Prix Futura for *The Clerks (R3)* by Rhys Adrian, produced by John Tydeman... Plans announced for ILR in Eire... Radio Severn, Gloucester Broadcasting, Cotswold Radio and one anonymous consortium apply for Cheltenham/Gloucester; Radio Nene, Hereward Radio and Community Radio apply for Peterborough... IBA reveals primary rentals for first seven new ILRs... Piccadilly starts *Hunters Moon*, sequel to last year's drama series *The Last Rose of Summer*... Capital's Help A London Child appeal expected to top £100,000... BBC and ILR stations bolster news teams for election coverage... AIR Services announce rates increases... Young and Rubicam heavily critical of rate increases in April media bulletin, *Time and Space*... Country Music Radio-TV seminar at Wembley concludes that British broadcasting still needs to make "massive effort" with country music... Terry Wogan named Radio Personality, Jimmy Young Show Best Radio Programme at Radio Industry Club Awards... ILR February revenue totals £2,046,404 giving first two months total of £4,196,335...

### REPEAT LOSS

It seems that radio under the IBA is the only organisation not to benefit from extra cash when work is repeated. In calling for one-quarter of daytime output to be news and information there is no restriction on the use of repeats. This way, for instance, you can hear things during the night that you might have missed during the day.

Since the IBA is keen on prospective station applicants talking to the unions, one wonders if unions like the National Union of Journa-

lists, Writer's Guild, Equity and so on have tackled them on behalf of their members who are not on station staff. Such repeat broadcasts hit them most, as they do not get a repeat fee, unlike the BBC. One freelance in Sheffield got £40 for one half-hour feature, then £240 for a Radio 4 repeat, plus nearly another £100 for excerpts on Today and Pick Of The Week. Nobody on ILR makes that kind of money, and plans to interchange programmes should include paying the going rate.

### WHOSE HISTORY

It seems the IBA is so unimpressed with the recent version of the birth of commercial television portrayed in Lord Briggs' fourth volume of his history of the BBC that it has had to commission its own, IBA, version.

Apparently Lord Briggs has found it increasingly difficult to pursue an historical, objective, path through the minefield of opinions on contemporary events held by opposing combatants, some of whom are still very much alive. Lord Briggs already has enough on his plate: vice-chancellor (designate) of the Open University, head man at Richmond College (for American students in London), not forgetting his chairmanship of the BBC's investigation into how to cope with sound archives.

But who is writing the official IBA version of broadcasting history? None other than a former senior official with time on his hands now that he is retired: B. C. (Bernard) Sendall, former right hand man to Sir Robert Fraser when he was director general of the Independent Television Authority — as it was then.

History, as Lord Briggs would remind us, depends on documents and one might wonder how many there are at the IBA. After all, even the former public relations chief, Barney Keelan, boasts of writing only two memos in his time there.

### BLAME IT ON CRAWFORD

Five at least of the recently announced BBC local stations were those recommended by the Crawford Committee as "low-power" experiments "in the more rural parts of England." These stations were to broadcast two or three hours a day and employ eight people at most. Perhaps it is this that has some attraction for the BBC, because if they

cannot afford to open the usual size of station they do at least have this way out and can blame it on Crawford.

Cambridge, Lincoln, Taunton, Truro and York were the Crawford Committee's idea of rural communities and it seems there was very little to attract the IBA to the very difficult task of getting advertising-financed local radio

running profitably in those areas.

By taking on these five the BBC can emphasize the Community aspect of the operation with apparently little reference to the community itself. After all, as Maurice Ennals' unpublished report on BBC local radio stated, there are ninety-four definitions of community — so who is to say which is best?



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The Proline 2000TC is a state of the art 6.25mm professional recorder designed for heavy duty operation.

Electronics have replaced mechanics wherever possible. All board switching is via solid state analogue switches. Together with modular construction which is used throughout the Proline 2000TC is an extremely reliable recorder which is easy to maintain.

The comprehensive specification also includes servo controlled DC spooling motors using a digital open loop servo (patent pending) to provide constant tape tension for all reel sizes. Twin servo controlled DC capstans with built in varispeed TTL logic for fast foolproof operation with the facility to programme the logic and select various editing facilities depending upon the users requirements. Velocity controlled spooling for easy editing and position location. L.E.D. tape timer providing real time readout in minutes and seconds at both fixed speeds.



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