

The power of technology has transformed the way radio shows are presented and produced, some say for the good and others think we are just moving a bit too fast. So I decided to jump out of the rat race this week and have a chat with some one that remembers the good old days and is still keeping up with the "young ones" a man that has been on radio for over 30 years and knows what it was like in the golden days of radio. **Doug Wood** who can be heard on more stations than a heart fm link up show!

Great to have you Doug so what made you want to get into this crazy world of words and music to make your living?

Hearing Radio Caroline for the first time in March 1964 was what switched me on to radio. I loved the freedom of it all, what ever happened to that? I did the naughty pirate thing and did hospital radio, I had a show on there called "This could be your last request" My first paid gig was a dream, on offshore station, "The Voice of Peace" off the coast of Israel, still to this day my favorite radio job, again it was the freedom, living on a radio ship, everything laid on for you you bed, food and drink, no need for money just great fun.

You're a big name and have been since 2003 on Radio Caroline what's it like being on such a historical broadcasting station that inspired you in the first place?

A big name? No, that's not me, never was and certainly not now, the so called big time is over for me, I know that, my time is at an end for sure, there is just no where to go anymore, no big stations, not for my age, I'm nearly 57, I'm just the guy next door, just ask my neighbors. Caroline though is the Mother



Superior in my book, the first lady of commercial radio in the UK.

Caroline broke the BBC's monopoly in 1964, it was a dream come true to join the team back in 2003, it's radio as it should be, no one has ever told me what to say or what to play, this is how it should be. A presenter needs a little nurturing sometimes, sure, but if they're not what a programmer wants to hear, just let them go, that's how it used to be, you either fit the profile, or you don't.

I just love music and bringing it to people, I love radio, the privilege of people making you and your station a part of their day is not to be taken for granted, but to do that you must not only inform them, but also entertain them, cheer them up, a radio show needs to be an event, no one does this better than Steve Wright "The Big Show" give it a theme, make a big entrance, that's Show Biz, isn't it? My advice to commercial operators is, "put on a show" not just a jukebox.

Please explain more.

The big commercial groups have backed themselves into a corner and I don't think they know how to get out of it. I would guess some of them will go over in due course and be left scratching their heads

wondering why. There is room for national commercial radio to compete against Radio One and Two; we should have had that before the locals back in 1973, but not now at the expense of the heritage local stations we are losing. Some parts of the country have too many local stations serving the same area, why we have a local rock station in one place and a local jazz station in another never made any sense to me, with specialist music, you really only need one of each covering the whole country; but instead we are losing our local services as they become one and national, the whole thing is just crazy. It's all about profit, of course commercial radio has to make money, but it has become the bottom line at the expense of local programming, but no one will admit to that, it's taboo.

During you long career you've readily pointed out the problems but there must be some changes you have welcomed.

What do I like? Sadly not much with the big commercial stations, you hear the same songs going around and around, presenters are not allowed to be creative, I want them to entertain me, but they are not given the opportunity to be themselves. You have to be prepared to let good talented presenters take a chance, experiment a little, like Kenny Everett used to do, you couldn't switch him off in case you missed something, you didn't know what was going to happen next. The only masters of this style I know off in this day and age are Chris Moyles and Chris Evans, they are themselves, they take the risks, they get the audiences. In fairness it's Ofcom who have killed all the fun off in commercial radio because the radio groups can't afford the fines imposed on them by all the

red tape, so I'm not blaming the stations alone. The end result of all this bureaucracy is dull boring radio, a radio dial full of jukeboxes, jukeboxes with commercials, and not even local anymore. The only traditional local AM FM combos I know of are run by UTV Radio, Swansea Sound/Wave, The Pulse 1 and 2 and Signal 1 and 2, try and find me another traditional AM FM local combo that still serves the local community in England and Wales.

(I wonder if he ever wanted to run for government, he's very good!) You were on Signal 2 for nearly 27th years doing your weekly show, what was your time like there and how did all that begin?

I'm still on Signal 2 at the weekends; I was signed up well before the station came on air on September 5th 1983 it was one AM FM station in those days like they all where then. I started with Saturday Breakfast, an oldies show Saturday nights, and the top 30 on Sunday afternoons. I also did lots of swing work, script writing, tech opping, you name it. I then did a couple of years on Breakfast, then three years on Drive time, then Mid Morning on Signal Cheshire, then Breakfast on Signal Stafford, then 5 years on Breakfast on Signal Gold, which when it became Signal 2 I have done Drive Time until mid August this year when the boss popped in right after the show to tell me it was all over except I have been lucky to hold on to Saturday Breakfast. The truth is it's been a fabulous run, I can't complain, I have seen the best years in the commercial radio industry. What we are witnessing right now is the end of LR as it re-forms into new national networks and sheds local output; I have to pinch myself in disbelief at what is happening, and why.

Well I have to say, I am stuck for a funny line as I know what you are saying is true, so what advice can you give new presenters trying to break in to radio?

If you want to be a disc jockey type presenter then commercial radio, a local radio presenter then it has to be the BBC, get your training on any of the small local commercial stations or community stations, there are some really good ones out there still, but the days of the great large heritage local stations are almost over now, not many of them left sadly. If you have real talent aim high, go for Radio One or Two.

Doug it has been a great master class for us all and before I give you the hot seat world famous shameless plug I have to ask, what would you have done if you were not in radio as a career?

A radio engineer, if only I had the know-how, otherwise selling Radio, TV Satellite equipment which I have done before. I love all that stuff.

See, the air waves are in your blood, so go on show us how the master would do a great self written plug.

I'm still proud to be on Signal 2 at www.signal2.co.uk Saturdays 06-00 till 10-00 Radio Caroline Sky 01 99 or www.radiocaroline.co.uk Saturday evenings 17-00 till 20-00 Moorlands Radio www.moorlandsradio.co.uk streaming soon, if not by now. Radio North Sea International Fridays 17-00 to 18-00 <http://mi.agilityhoster.com/> 1540 The Voice of Peace International Monday to Friday 09-00 till 12-00 www.thevoiceofpeace.co.uk

Well I definitely learnt something today, I thank Doug for his teaching and if you think you can teach me a thing or three - contact editor@theradiomagazine.co.uk