

Thameside

INFORMATION

If you listen to Thameside Radio you may be interested to know some background information about the station. If so, these sheets should answer some of the Hows? and Whys? and Whos?

THE HISTORY

(Or: 'Is Fact Stranger Than Fiction?')

The idea of starting a radio station to broadcast music on a Sunday evening was first thought of in early 1977. There were two of the present staff at that time, Bob Edwards and Tony Lloyd. They were both involved with a South East London station called London Music Radio. This station closed in mid 1977, and left its members free to start new ventures, one of which was to be Thameside. It was now that the hard work had to start. The transmitters had to be built, studios finished, and aerials constructed, and all on a budget that wouldn't last an IBA or BBC station even a single day.

While this work was in progress decisions had to be made regarding the programming. The first choice to make was the station name. To the outsider this may seem a simple task, but it is always a difficult choice to decide on a relevant name that is easy to say on the air and is not already in use. The obvious names such as Capital, City, London, etc. were already used by other stations, and eventually the name chosen, as you already know, was Thameside Radio. It was felt that this well reflected the area of transmission. The time of the transmission had to be decided. It was realised that there was no music on the radio after 7pm on Sundays, and so this time was chosen for the programmes to start. This meant that listeners could listen to the 'Top Twenty Show' on Radio 1/2 VHF, and then at 7pm could turn the dial slightly to tune to Thameside's frequency. The music format was chosen after speaking to many people in the intended listenership age range, i.e. about 14-30 years. It was found that while 'Top Twenty' singles, such as played on Radio 1, were obviously popular, there was also a great interest in album music. With this in mind, it was decided that the musical content of the programmes would consist of a mixture of popular album tracks and quality singles, together with the occasional oldie.

By now it was November, the studio was finished, the transmitters had been built and tested, and aerials had been constructed. The area of transmission was to be North West London, and various suitable sites were found. Everything was now ready to go on the air, and the first test transmission was scheduled for November 27th from 7-8pm. At 6.30 the Thameside crew assembled beneath the recently erected aerial, set up the transmitter and the rest of the equipment needed for a transmission, and waited for 7pm to come. At the top of the hour, the red switch on the transmitter was switched to 'on', and Thameside Radio was at last on the air. For the next hour music was played with taped announcements asking people to write with reception reports to the mailing address. The following week another test transmission was made at the same time.

It soon became clear from the reports that people were sending in, that not only was a good signal being received in the primary reception area, i.e. North West London, but that also many people in other parts of London were able to listen. The following Sunday, 11th December, at 7pm regular programmes commenced with the 'Bob Edwards Programme' and the now familiar words: 'Do you ever have difficulty finding a radio station playing music? Oh Yeah! Then here's a tip. Tune to Thameside Radio on 90.2 MHz VHF'.

Thameside Radio is now a regular feature of the VHF band on a Sunday, and, it is hoped, will continue for a long time to come.

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DJ PROFILES

BOB EDWARDS (Written and exaggerated by Bob Edwards)

Bouncing Bob is Thameside's main DJ. His tongue in cheek attitude and friendliness towards his listeners has made him popular with both the staff and listeners alike. He has been in radio for many years despite the fact that he is still in his teens (only just - Ed). Bob started on one of Britain's most successful clandestine stations. Here he was working alongside many professional DJ's, some of whom, since the station closed down, have moved on to the new commercial stations (leaving poor old Bob behind - Ed). He always says that the experience he gained on this station was the greatest influence on his future work in radio.

Bob has been involved with many other stations, including reading the news on Radio Jackie, and latterly presenting programmes on the popular station - London Music Radio. It was after this station closed that Bob, not liking to keep out of radio for long, helped initiate Thameside.

Bob's greatest interest is in the station's listeners; he judges the success of the programme by the listeners' response to the broadcast. He also insists on replying to listeners' letters personally. He has certain strong views on programming too. He believes that listeners should be given what they want, for example, many listeners complain that DJ's talk over the records too much, so Bob doesn't. Perhaps it's because of Bob's great care over his programmes that has built him into the popular DJ that he is today.

TONY LLOYD (Written and distorted by Tony Lloyd)

Tony is Thameside's dynamic news reader, and does programmes, in his own inimitable style, when persuaded to. His natural wit, exuberant personality, coupled with his undeniable charm has made him an immediate hit with Thameside's listeners. Tony believes that Thameside should continually mould its format to a shape dictated by its listeners, and he spends many hours talking with listeners and introducing their ideas into the programming. He started on the same station as Bob Edwards, but became mainly interested in the background and production work involved in running a radio station. He first discovered his news reading ability when a colleague, who works at Radio Trent, felt that he was unable to read the news, and Tony had to stand in for him.

His high professionalism is a standard by which others judge themselves, the quality of programmes (or lack of - Ed) on Thameside, both technical and contentwise, is mainly due to his enthusiasm and experience. I think that Tony's greatest quality is his flexibility. At the drop of a hat he can change from news reader, to engineer, to DJ, without batting an eyelid.

DEBBIE

Darling debonair Debbie is a newcomer to the exciting world of working with a radio station, although she has been a keen listener for some time now. She is an ideal telephone girl. Apart from being highly efficient, she has a cheerful and friendly attitude towards her callers, and brings out the best in people. Her youth and effervescent personality has injected new enthusiasm and ideas into the station.

Debbie managed to join the station by conning Bob Edwards that she was a fan of his, but her ambitions however are above being just the telephone girl, she wants to be a DJ and is after Bob's job ('No chance' - Bob Edwards).

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THE STUDIO

Thameside's programmes come from our own custom built radio studio which is based on a 12 channel slider control mixer. All the circuitry is solid state, of course, and is built in modular form.

- RECORD DECKS:** There are three Garrard record decks which have been converted to give an instant start controlled by switches on the main panel.
- JINGLE MACHINES:** There are two instant start jingle machines. A jingle is played as follows. The cassette containing the required jingle is taken from the rack and inserted into one of the machines. It takes about three seconds for the jingle to automatically cue up, and an amber light comes on telling the DJ that the jingle is ready to play, he simply presses a button on the main panel, the amber light changes to green, and the jingle starts immediately. A few seconds after the jingle has finished, a red light comes on, and the cassette can be removed, ready to be used the next time.
- TAPE MACHINES:** The studio has four reel-to-reel machines, used mainly for production work. The machine used most is an Akai 4000DS.
- MICROPHONES:** The DJ uses a Lafayette mike on a multi position boom. For the news and interviews there is a Shure 588SB at a separate desk.

Some of the other things in the studio are tones for lining up equipment, feeds of Radios 1/2,3,4, London, Capital and LBC on pushbuttons, and Dolby equipment.

The record library consists of hundreds of singles and albums contained on shelves in the studio behind the DJ. Up to now, the records have been stored in chronological order, but at the moment the library is being converted to computerised storage (isn't everything). The name and details of each record is punched onto its own computer card, and the computer can print out detailed indexes.

TRANSMITTERS

Thameside owns several identical FM transmitters all built to the same high technical standard. They have a completely solid state design with 8 transistors and 9 intergrated circuits assembled on three specially designed printed circuit boards. The output power is about 50 Watts which is fed into aerials employing slant polarization. This type of aerial means that you should get equally good reception whether you listen at home or in the car.

The transmitters have provision for two values of pre-emphasis, 25 and 50 micro-seconds. It is this first value that is normally used because Thameside broadcasts in Dolby (at present the only station in Britain to do so). This means that if you own a Dolby unit with a switch for decoding FM transmissions, then you will be able to enjoy Thameside's programmes with less interference from noise. The system of Dolby broadcasting used by Thameside's engineers is compatible, which means that the quality of sound received by the majority of listeners, who do not have equipment to decode the broadcasts, is not affected. You should remember that Dolby circuits found in cassette and tape recorders are not usually suitable for decoding FM Dolby broadcasts, though there are ways of making them suitable (details from Thameside on request).

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RECEPTION

Thameside has to broadcast with relatively low power, and so the strength of the signal you receive is low compared to the BBC and IBA. This means that, for some listeners, the otherwise superb quality of the programmes might have a fairly high level of background noise. But all is not lost.....

If you listen on a portable radio you must fully extend the aerial and swivel it round, and up and down, until the best signal is obtained. If the programmes are still noisy, try moving the radio around the room because sometimes a movement of only a couple of feet can make an amazing difference. Also reception is normally better higher up, so it is best to use your radio in an upstairs room. Some portable radios have a socket for connecting an external aerial, and if all else has failed, then, short of buying a better radio, an aerial in the loft or on the roof will help.

If you listen on a tuner, i.e. part of a hi-fi system, then the chances are that you will already be getting good reception, since the majority of these tuners are very sensitive. However, if this is not the case then, as with portable radios, you can try altering the position of the aerial, but of course this is difficult if your aerial is on the roof. If this fails, then you will have to buy a better aerial or tuner, a very expensive solution, or put up with the bad reception.

Radio reception is a vast subject and it has only been possible to cover a few points in such a short space. If after reading these notes you are still having any trouble with reception, then do write to us with your specific problem (please enclose a S.A.E.) and we'll do our best to answer it.

LISTEN TO:

THAMESIDE RADIO

MUSIC EACH SUNDAY

90.2 VHF

7PM

By now you should know a bit more about Thameside Radio. Remember that, along with the music, the most important thing to everyone at Thameside is audience participation. We have phone-in competitions, requests, and phone up a listener on air in each programme, so why don't YOU take part next week. WE are also keen to know what you think of the programmes and the station in general, so why not drop us a line. We do take notice.

Finally, all of us at Thameside Radio hope you have enjoyed reading these sheets, and that you will continue to listen and enjoy our programmes.

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THAMESIDE RADIO, No.1 GROSVENOR PARADE, LONDON W.5.