

Tune In and Turn On

Since January, Cambridge has been tuning in to its own radio station - Cambridge All Music Radio - which broadcasts on 95.3 VHF to almost every part of the city. For the last four weeks, however, the station has been off the air, while new equipment is installed. Grapevine took this opportunity to have a chat with Kevin Chaucer and Dr. Dread, two of the stations disc jockeys.

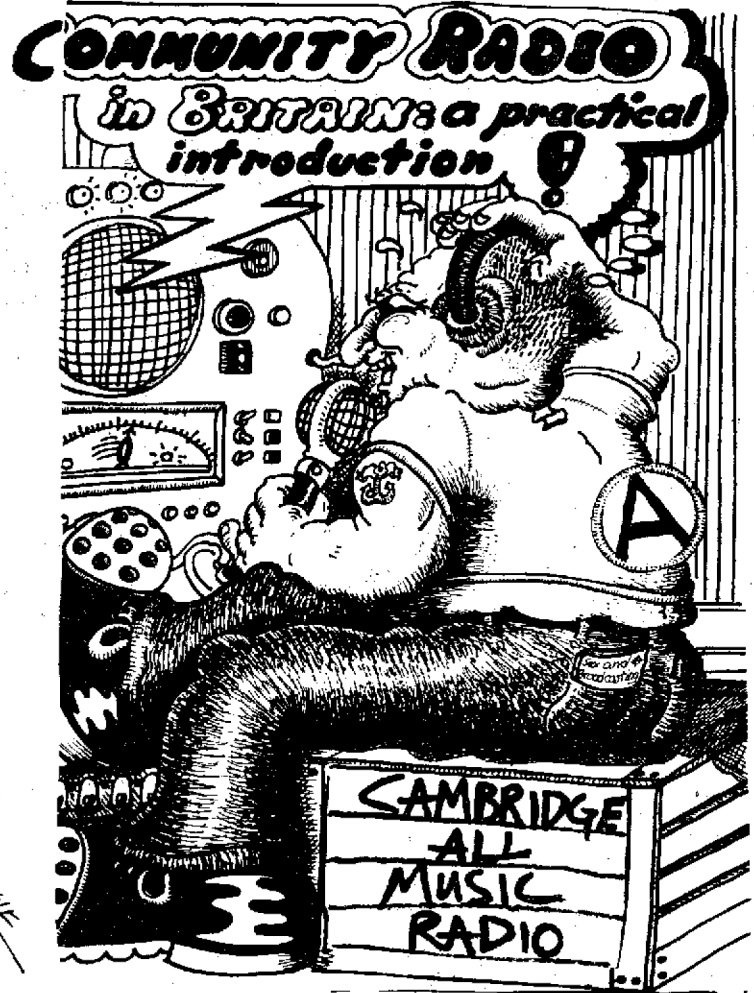
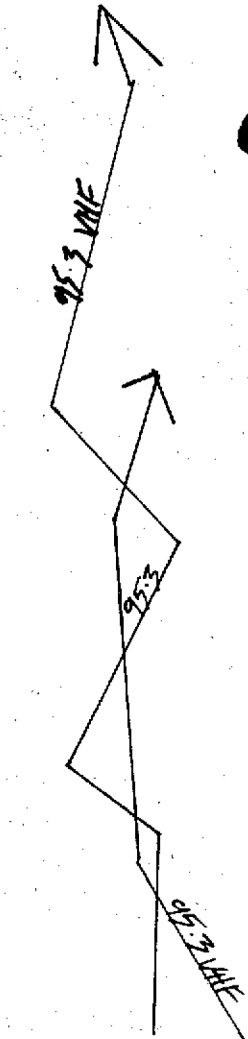
CamRadio, as the station sometimes calls itself, is unlicensed, and therefore technically illegal, although the 8 people who run the radio prefer to play down the illegality, emphasising instead the community nature of the station. Kevin Chaucer argues that CamRadio provides an "alternative to the BBC service, which is virtually non-existent as far as Cambridge is concerned."

Certainly the station provides local news and information, but it also serves as a unique outlet for local rock groups. So far, programmes have featured Hondo, The Sinix, Tranzista, The Zeds, Device, Hopo, and Ersatz. "When we come back on the air we want to give even more coverage to local groups, so we hope they'll send tapes of their music to us", notes Dr. Dread, adding: "we'd also like to interview members of some groups, and if any groups make 'live' recordings of their gigs we'll give those air-play as well."

"We would also like help from local bands at a benefit gig if we get busted."

Being a "pirate" station causes some problems for members, and means that all the programmes have to be pre-recorded. It also restricts the transmission period to a couple of hours on Sunday nights, roughly between 9pm. and 11pm.

A couple of weeks ago two blacked out detector vans from Cambridge Post Office nearly caught them in the middle of a broadcast, in spite of elaborate precautions. Nevertheless, station members don't hold a grudge "They're quite nice guys, just doing a job, and being pushed around by people higher up than they are", notes Kevin.



Other problems include having to transmit from a different site every week, and avoiding anything which is "too political". Avoiding party politics is another aspect of self-preservation: "it would only provoke more charges if we get caught".

All the stations decisions are made collectively, and necessary tasks are dealt with by rotation, so that everyone is involved in making the programmes and transmitting, and also gets the chance to be a D.J.

"We would really like to get more people to join us when we get back on the air, so if anyone wants to, could they write to us at our address," asked Dr. Dread.

"If there are more people we might extend the service," agreed Kevin, "but we also want more requests, dedications, and interviews, not only with the members of bands, but with people from other organisations as well."

"And letters. We get several letters each week, but we would like more," he added.

By the time Grapevine goes to press the station should be back on the air, and its "theme" tune - Wipe Out, by the Surfaris (remember that?) will be introducing music of all kinds to Cambridge's nite time listeners. Why not tune in and turn on, or better still, drop them a line, at its mailing address: 48 King Street, Cambridge.

