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THE WEEKLY UPDATE ON THE UK RADIO INDUSTRY

WELSH ANGER OVER LICENCE AWARD

The Radio Authority's award of the new license for the North Wales Coast to existing Wrexham station Wercher Sound has drawn intense criticism from one of the approved applicants.

The new license, advertised by the authority in August "to cover as much of the coast of North Wales as is technically possible", attracted three applicants - neighbouring Wercher Sound who already hold two licenses for WNW and Wercher Gold; Clwyd-based Coast Line FM; and Woking religious group United Christian Broadcasters.

Coast Line FM's director of Programming Budgets Geoff Albertson expressed incredulity at the decision to appoint Wercher Sound.

"It's frustrating and then disappointing," he said, "because the Radio Authority seems to have rejected a group of professionals who knew what they were doing, knew what was wanted, were based in the area, and were funded in the area."

Coast Line FM emerged from a group called Sound Sound who had bid for the BBC for a North Wales station

since 1976 and been involved in a license application during the aborted commercial radio experiment of 1985/6. The current bid's £400,000 capital had been raised entirely from local shareholders without other media interests.

But the authority's decision enables Wercher Sound to extend its existing service into an adjacent area in Wales, increasing its potential audience by at least 17%. Local newspaper reports imply that Wercher will relay its existing gold music station with a local breakfast show opt-out, adding some Welsh language programming and local news.

"The people of North Wales have been short changed," said Coast Line FM Director Designate Jim Brady. "We think they [the Radio Authority] have deliberately done this simply to keep a lifeline to an existing station that we know to be in serious trouble."

The most recent JCRB audience survey (Apr-Jun 92) shows Wercher Sound has lost 17% of its listening hours over the previous year, and its weekly reach has fallen to 28% from

35% four years ago. The company's 91/92 national advertising revenue reportedly fell 7% year-on-year, though this loss has been partially offset by increased local sales.

Wercher Sound's transmission area substantially overlaps the northern area of Liverpool's Radio City, leading to speculation that City owner BSEJ Media might acquire Wercher to run as a local opt-out, were it to fail financially. City's signal already reaches part of the North Wales coast, and the addition of Wercher and its newly won coastal area would create a marketable unified region.

A consolidated City/Wercher operation could compete more effectively for revenue against the eventual winner of the Radio Authority's new regional license for Northwest England, that includes Merseyside and Cheshire, and is due on-air in 1994.

Executives at Wercher Sound were unavailable for comment on plans for its new station, provisionally named Wercher Coast FM.

RADIO CONTACTS

BBC COMMERCIAL DIVISION FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES:

- SALES 1 (Network/News Dept),** Andy Perrett, Chief Assistant, Radio 1, Room 230, Epton House, London W12 1AA. Tel: 071-927-5406.
- SALES 2 (News Dept),** David Harvey Allen, Chief Producer, Radio 2, Room 411, Westway House, London W12 1AA. Tel: 071-927-4266.
- SALES 3 (Music Dept),** Adrian Thomas, Head of Radio 3 Music Dept, Room 204, 16 Langham Street, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-4435.
- LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT,** Jonathan James-Woods, Head of Light Entertainment Radio, Room 102, 16 Langham Street, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-4222.
- NEWS,** Jeremy Ross, Editor, Radio 3 Plays, Room 6057, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-5636.
- RELATIONS,** Bev. Inverett Dow, Head of Religious Broadcasting, Room 215, Telford House, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-6450.
- REGULATORY PROGRAMMES,** Caroline Willington, Head of Regulatory Programmes, Radio, Room 5080, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-6696.
- FEATURES,** Richard Bannerman, Acting Editor, Features, Room 6062, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-4052.
- ARTS & SCIENCE,** Anne Kinder, Head of Features, Arts & Education, Room 7060, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-4819.
- SCHEDULES, CHILDREN & YOUTH PROGRAMMES,** Caroline Spossel, Editor, Drama & Features, CTRP, Room 302, 1 Portland Place, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-4879.
- SPORT & OUTSIDE BROADCASTS,** Ian Hestie, Editor, Planning, Sport & Oils, Room 4094, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA. Tel: 071-927-5994.

NEW YEAR WINDFALL

The Radio Authority is to slash commercial stations' licence fees by up to 40% in a New Year windfall that saves the recession hit industry £300,000 a year. The main beneficiaries are the new national services whose financial success is helped by the continuing advertising recession.

Recently opened Classic FM benefits the most, saving nearly £400,000 per annum on a licence that will now cost £500,000. The second national channel opening next spring, Virgin Rock, will now pay £400,000, a saving of almost 50% in its first year.

The reduced rates are levied on a progressive scale that sees the metropolitan stations the greatest benefit, with the largest, Capital Radio, benefiting from a 60% saving of £43,000 on its two London licences. Fees paid by the smallest

commercial stations, such as Seelands Islands' BBC, remain unaltered.

"We can make these reductions," explained the Authority's Chief Executive Peter Baldwin, "because we have set our initial development targets and have maintained tight financial control."

The new tariffs also help to reduce the projected costs of bids for the Authority's five regional licences, the first of which was advertised last month, and for the third speech-based national station whose launch is now postponed until 1993.

The Authority's application fee for satellite radio has been slashed by 75% to £250, while these stations' annual licence fees are reduced by 12% to £1,200, both changes with immediate effect.

** Further good news for the New Year arrived in the form of Advertising Association forecasts, predicting radio to be the fastest growing advertising medium in 1993, with a 5% increase at constant prices.

The Association notes that radio advertising increased by 9% in real terms during 1992's second quarter, outstripping both television and the press.

Figures just released by the Association of Independent Radio Companies show a 5% increase in gross revenue for the half-year ended 30 September 1992 over the same period last year, though the figure is understated for inflation. AIRC's data has had to be omitted because of its refusal to reveal revenue since last October.

NEW CAPITAL POST

Capital Radio has appointed Sarah Straker to the newly created post of Director of Communications in a move to focus the London station's marketing activities. Straker comes

from the Carlton subsidiary Countrywide to co-ordinate Capital's advertising, PR and lobbying, as well as liaise with the Radio Authority.

The appointment is one of several new senior management posts created by the plc's new Managing Director Richard Syme.

ABERDEEN KICKS OFF LICENCE BIDS

The Radio Authority opened bids last Thursday (26th) for the first of fifty-four existing commercial radio licences to be re-advertised before the end of next year. Applications are invited for ten Aberdeen

licences, one AM and one FM, that have been held by Radio Clyde's subsidiary Northsound Radio since 1981. The closing date for bids is 12 January 1993 and the winners will be announced within three weeks.

Northsound presently broadcasts its staple service of hits, oldies and local information on both AM and FM channels.

RADIO DIARY

- 11/18/19 OCT FEELS ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS CONFERENCE at Justice Convention Centre, Justice House, BSL. Info: 512-322-9944
- 20 OCT BROADCASTERS closing date for applications for new FM licence serving 65,000 adults. Info: Radio Authority
- 21/22/23 OCT RADIO '92 conference in Biarritz, France. Info: MCF, 28 Whitehall Palace Gardens, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1HQ tel:071-799-1565
- 21 OCT TECHCON conference on radio technology at Ports Crest Hotel, Birmingham. Info: Radio Academy, PO Box 422, London W1A 6EJ tel: 071-323-3037
- 22 OCT 17th ANNUAL BROADCASTERS CONFERENCE BIRM at Ports Crest Hotel, Birmingham
- 24 OCT AIB STUDENT MEDIA CONFERENCE in London includes Guardian/BBC awards for student broadcasting organisations of the year and student broadcaster of the year
- 26 OCT RADIO & PRIMARY SCHOOLS seminar (provisional). Info: Voice of the Listener & Viewer, 101 Kings Drive, Greenwich, Kent DA12 5BQ tel:0474-252035
- 27/28/29 OCT PRC 000 COMLEY Arts Council conference on the arts, television and radio in the 90s at The Dome, Brighton. Info: Conference Profile, 1 Madroba Place, London SW6V 5NF tel:071-235-4936
- 27 OCT WRITING COMEDY FOR TV & RADIO courses tutored by Simon Brett, former BBC Radio producer. Oxford Circus. 9.45am-5pm. £55.55 + VAT. Info: London Radio Workshops, 100 Kings Drive, Greenwich, East SW12 5BQ tel:0474-264476
- 28 OCT RAISING FM restricted service licence starts broadcasting on FM to SouthEast London for 28 days. Info: SA Waving Rd, Welton, London SW17 3JL tel:041-682-3323
- 30 OCT ONE LOVE restricted service licence starts broadcasting on FM to NorthEast London for 28 days. Info: 441 New Cross Road, London SE14 6PA tel:081-691-6618
- 1/2/3/4 NOV JOINT CONFERENCE & NATIONAL TRADE SHOW OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS AND WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS at Vancouver, Canada
- 17 NOV HIGH WFOUR closing date for licence applications for new DAB station on 1170 AM. Info: Radio Authority
- 7 DEC INDEPENDENT RADIO ADVERTISING AWARDS at Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London tel:071-799-1565

RADIO WAVES

BOX ONE LONDON syndicates the 16 October Nelson Square Garden concert "Colonia Records Celebrates The Music Of Bob Dylan" marking the 30th anniversary of Dylan's first CBS LP. Artists include Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Slashed, O'Connor, Tom Petty and Neil Young. ***** **CRUISE FM** and **KISS FM** have their rivalry onto the basketball court for a charity challenge game at North London's Arsenal Indoor Sports Centre in aid of sickle cell anaemia research. Chadon's team includes the Herriot Crawford and Mark Anthony, 23 the evening there's a dinner hosted by Gerth Crooks with a live line-up on **GLE**. Info: 081-946-6688 ***** **BBC RADIO SHIFFIELD** offering 8-week contracts for Producers/Executives of its late and after-Saturday programmes. Info: 0143-864375 x215 ***** **RADIO 1's** new six-part documentary series "The Sacred Promoters" starts Saturday 12 October 2-3pm with Ian Mac and later editions cover Quincy Jones, Slim Jones and Dave Davies ***** **CRUISE FM** hold a gospel concert in aid of the Ethiopian

Appeal on 10 October at London's Heddon Square. Artists include The Inspirational Choir, NE Purton, Liam Z and La Christ. Info: 081-531-1554 ***** Ex-John Peel producer John Walters cites Peter Sarstedt's "Where Do You Go To My Lovely?" as one of his least favourite records in **RADIO 3's** "Rough 101" (Sunday 11 October 2.30-3pm) ***** **RADIO 1's** Simon Bates show comes live from Spain (Sunday 12 October 9-12.30pm) ***** Publishing company brief Tom is the subject of an excellent report **RADIO 3** documentary "The Nashville Dream" presented by Svetlov Jevic (Sunday 13 October 3-10pm) ***** Maria Guyon presents a new 11-part **RADIO 2** series "Joseph Trials" (Thursday 3.45-10.30pm) ***** **BBC RADIO SHIFFIELD** has a vacancy for a Programme Assistant. Info: 0623-415511 ***** First issue of the new monthly **BBC WORLD SERVICE** magazine "Worldwide" (€1.75) just launched ***** **Lee CD** compilation **BUY OF CAPITAL GAIN** is promoted by a 120,000 7" ad campaign this month on **FM**, Central, Capital and **Smooth/107** targeting 35-54 year

olds ***** **Windsor** with teacher Nick Sadkin is threatening "militant action" against the BBC's decision to remove **RADIO 4** from loopers for its new all-news service. His 3000 supporters' protest plans include ritual destruction of TV licences, an occupation of Broadcasting House and demands for the resignation of BBC Chairman Mackintosh Murray ***** The 31st Cooper awards for 1991's best BBC Radio plays were presented last week by Richard Gere, not the Capital Radio '90, but the gallian who is Actor-in-Chief of the Royal National Theatre ***** **PR** The Princess Royal is to present the 1992 David Scott Football Award at Broadcasting House on 15 Oct along with **RADIO 4's** In Touch programme ***** The Sun newspaper columnist Richard Littlejohn guest host an hour discussing his employer Rupert Murdoch is his first **BBC WORLDWIDE** show at the low 9m-noon time, this should be hoped listeners would not "tossie as of being insouciant" *****

OPINION — "THE RATING GAME"

Imagine London has a successful commercial radio station called **CRFM** with impressive offices in the city centre, its own newsroom, a woman (naturally) in charge of its programmes and a universally loathed male General Manager. In its quest to build a media empire, it takes over an ailing radio station in the West Country but constantly has to fight off a bunch of media-hungry Australians who are intent on buying up British radio.

Imagine that an entertainment industry lawyer called **De Wolf** becomes entangled in the station's business deals, and that the threatening Sales Director has aspirations to set up **CRFM's** own saleshouse to sell advertising for other stations. Imagine that.....but hold on! Didn't **CAPITAL RADIO** used to call itself **CRFM** at weekends a few years ago? And

doesn't a lot of this scenario sound suspiciously like Capital's situation around that time?

So don't be surprised that this storyline comes from the first novel **THE RATING GAME** (Scepter, £4.99) written by Capital Radio DJ Dave Cash, who was there when the station launched commercial radio in Britain nineteen years ago. There's a wealth of radio terminology in the book that shows off Cash's experience within the industry. But the characters are largely one-dimensional walking clichés who emulate predictable stereotypes - the scheming blabber, the naive nervous rube young wife breakfast DJ, the wealthy alcoholic bar-packer son of a hard-nosed female aristocrat, etc.

Cash seems obsessed with naming brands and labels of the finer things in life, which rapidly becomes a

chore when the reader has to wade through a restaurant's menu in French or a shopping expedition to Harrods. And then, having plodded through the slow setting of the book's first half, its Commissioning Editor suddenly demands more action, and you are plunged into scenes of kinky sex, drug abuse, prostitution and terrorist warfare.

Like other entertainment industries, radio's inner workings are far more intriguing and unbelieveable than this novel. So it's a pity that Capital Radio's contracts forbid their employees from writing anything more revealing about such experiences. And how lamentable is a fiction writer who mentions himself and his real-life DJ job in the novel, complaining himself on what a good job he does of smearing his competitors' audience?