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## Summary

Johnny Beerling, interviewed by Alban Webb at his home in Rudgwick, West Sussex, talks about his professional life working for the BBC.

Initially, he talks about carrying out much of his two year stint of National Service in Aden as a wireless fitter in the RAF, during which he became an unofficial manager of Aden Forces Broadcasting Association. He describes how this led to him getting a job at the BBC as a technical operator in October 1957 and later as a studio manager following training at Wood Norton.

Beerling reminisces about the Second World War and seeing dogfights in the sky and the glow of the sky after Canterbury was bombed. He talks about listening to the BBC on the radio, in particular It's That Man Again (ITMA) with Tommy Handley. He notes that as a boy he built model aircraft and was fascinated with the mechanics of radio. He explains how a love of big bands, such as the Ted Heath Orchestra, was one of the things that drew him to the BBC. He talks about his first posting at the BBC at Bush House before he moved to the BBC Home Service working on the news. He describes his work as a studio manager and how people would develop different specialisms.

Beerling explains how he became a producer in the gramophone department and how, through the attachment scheme, he went on to produce Music to Midnight. He tells an anecdote about how this led him to book Ted Heath for a show and how it was recorded.

He talks about the three radio channels, Home, Light, and Third, and the effect of television, independent television, and changing social attitudes on audience figures.

Beerling compares at length the production workflow for a radio programme such as Housewives' Choice with the ad-libbing and spontaneity of the pirate radio station Radio London that he witnessed when he visited. He explains how this visit led to him arguing that Radio 1 needed self-operation by the disc jockeys.

He explains how a visit he made with Kenny Everett to the BBC Radio 1 and 2 controller, Robin Scott, led to jingles being recorded and introduced through a company called PAMS.

Beerling notes that the Postmaster General, Tony Benn, wanted a popular music channel on the BBC and Benn's attempts to close pirate radio stations. He explains the advantages held over the BBC by the pirate radio stations – that they did not need to make copyright payments. The BBC, in contrast, had to do so, and its limited budget for royalties restricted the time that records could be played, known as 'needle time'. He talks about shared

resources between Radio 1 and Radio 2, including wavelengths due to interference from a radio station in Albania. He also talks about his tremendous excitement when producing Radio 1's first ever programme with Tony Blackburn.

Beerling discusses the role of 'pluggers' paid by the record companies and music publishers to promote records, and the effects of, and limits to, inducements.

He describes his relationship with Tony Blackburn and says that the way that the BBC has treated Blackburn recently is "disgraceful".

Beerling talks at length about the introduction of non-scripted programmes and how this led to some anxiety. He describes the working relationship between Radio 1 and Radio 2, and the lack of a set style for the two channels. He talks about radio controller David Hatch and how a clearer understanding of the role of Radio 1 was formed.

Beerling talks in detail about the development of the Radio 1 Roadshow from conception in 1973 until the final show in 1990, including behind the scenes anecdotes. He talks about the tight security at Radio 1 to control the activities of the pluggers and suggests that this would have restricted opportunities for misbehaviour. He notes that there were rumours about Jimmy Savile and tells an anecdote about how he sacked Savile.

Beerling explains at length how he was promoted to the post of controller Radio 1 and the technical aspect of the work including the introduction of RDS radio and persuading industry to manufacture RDS radios. He talks about BBC management and how well it worked. He tells an anecdote about the Board of Governors before mentioning the removal of Alasdair Milne.

He speaks about the ageing of Radio 1 listeners and his ideas for shifting DJs and the audience from Radio 1 to Radio 2. He laments that this idea was not adopted, and how this led to him leaving Radio 1.

Beerling comments on the reorganisation of Radio 1 under Matthew Bannister, who he describes as a good broadcaster and a good man. He talks about how audiences were measured and the appreciation index. He explains that as controller he wanted to employ more enthusiastic presenters who would talk more about the music. He mentions bringing in Ranking Miss P, Man Ezeke, and Pete Tong as examples of Radio 1's fairly broad range of music.

Beerling explains at length the logistical and technical challenges behind Live Aid and tells an anecdote about Paul McCartney's vocals. He concludes by remarking on his career at the BBC and his professional life since.

## Contents

# Transcript

Q: [00:00:13] This is Alban Webb on behalf of the BBC Connected Histories project, interviewing Johnny Beerling at his home in Rudgwick, just outside Horsham, West Sussex, on Monday 18 September 2017. First of all, many thanks you to you, Johnny, for allowing us to visit you in your home today. Perhaps we could dive straight in and I could start by asking you to explain how you found yourself in Aden in 1955? I imagine it was quite an eye-opening experience for an 18-year-old RAF [inaudible 00:048]

A: [00:01:48] It certainly was. I'd never travelled abroad much before then. Of course, we had to do National Service in those days, two years. And because of my dad's enthusiasm for radio I opted to be a wireless fitter and they trained. They sent me to Compton Bassett in Wiltshire where I did about six, seven months training to become a fully qualified wireless fitter, Junior Technician Beerling, 2768410. [Laughs] You never forget the number. And I got posted to Aden in the Middle East, which was pretty much of a hotspot. This was just before the time of Suez. And the air force, together with BP, ran a radio station there for the benefit of the families and the troops in Aden. And I was appointed, or offered the post, of studio technician, which I thought, well, that sounds like fun. It's better than mending radios that have fallen off the back of camels and things like that [laugh]. So I was made sort of technician and sort of semi-manager I suppose of this Aden Forces Broadcasting Association, AFBA. And there was another technician there whose job was to run the library and do the admin. And all the other staff were volunteers. And the boss explained to me that in addition to my duties of maintaining the equipment and running everything, I was expected to do the early morning broadcasting from--, we used to work from six till eight. We did a programme of morning music, which I presented. And then at eight o'clock we relayed the General Overseas Service of the BBC and then at 8:30 we closed down because the climate was so hot there that the working day was from seven till one. And then the station reopened at five o'clock in the afternoon through till ten or 11 at night. So that's how I found myself there. And whilst I was there a man called Peter West, not the famous Peter West, this man was a senior engineer. He had a marvellous job. His job was to travel the world, checking on the reception of the General Overseas Service and what sort of aerials do you have and how do you find the signal and so on. And then he said, can I take you to lunch? [Laughs] Well, of course, 18 years old, I'd never been invited to lunch by anyone. He took me to the

best hotel, The Rock Hotel in Aden and we had lunch. And I said, you know, really, I've been to Sir Roger Manwood's School in Sandwich, where everybody was expected to go into the professions. And I'd opted to be a schoolteacher. I had a place at training college to come back to. And I didn't do this because I said I really, I like this broadcasting. It's much more fun than teaching [laughs] so I would like to join the BBC. And he said, I'll put a word in for you when I get back, and I said that was very nice of him. And in those days the BBC ran a thing called the Radio Show at Earls Court where they promoted all things to do with the BBC. And I went along to this with my dad and went to the careers' desk I suppose it was, and said, look, I'm supposed to have an interview. I'm out of the air force now and I thought I was going to be joining. Ah, just a minute. We'll phone someone. And they arranged for an interview. I went along and met these people, and, do you know Ohm's law? I remembered that from my physics, B = I or something like that. And yes, you can be a technical operator. And I thought, that's marvellous. That must be working in studios, playing records and mixing sound and all that sort of thing. So I joined as a technical operator and once I was in I was pretty naïve [laughs]. I mean I was only 20 then. I found that wasn't at all the job of a technical operator. The artistic work in studios was done by studio managers. These were people who had got a degree in sociology and they were terribly arty, whereas we were engineering oiks, really. The job was to clean the plugs and make sure the noise levels in studios weren't too bad and that sort of thing. So I became eventually a studio manager. It took a lot of persuading of the management. In those days, I should explain, the BBC was very good. If you joined, you had a job for life. And all jobs were advertised internally, so it was excellent. You could apply for any job and if you were lucky enough to get it you went before a selection board and then you were chosen. So somebody had faith and about five or six of us engineers managed to become studio managers even though we didn't have the necessary degree in the arts. And we were sent to a training school at Wood Norton in Evesham where we were taught the basic things like cutting discs on 78 RPM discs. These were acetate discs because short-form recording wasn't done in tape in those days. I mean we're talking about 1957. So it was very, very interesting and I took to it like a duck to water. I learnt how to edit tape and cut tape and how to mix sound. I can remember at the end of, I think it was something like a three-month training course at Evesham, and there we all made a little documentary. I can remember the one we made was called A Radio Portrait of Fladbury, which was a small village on the outskirts of Evesham. And it was wonderful and we thoroughly enjoyed it. So that's how it all started.

Q: [00:06:10] Just winding back a little bit. You mentioned the significance of Aden and that area for the BBC Overseas Service but also for the British government. You would have--, you were there when the Suez Crisis was reaching its peak.

A: [00:06:24] Yes, it was. The Suez Canal--,

Q: [00:06:25] Er, July to December 1956. What are your memories of that particular episode from your perspective, in Aden?

A: [00:06:33] Well, because it was an active RAF station. And I mean the big thing was that it was a duty-free port prior to this. But when the Suez Canal was closed by Abdel Nasser, it meant that there was no more trade coming in, so the whole economy of the place more or less collapsed. Same time, it was an active station. I can remember all the planes flying in with the stripes on the wings and that sort of thing. I mean you were very conscious that it's a wartime situation, but it didn't really affect us 'cause we had to carry on doing the broadcasting and keeping everyone happy.

Q: [00:07:05] 'Cause it--, that's what I was wanting to ask about, really, because were people on your base engaged in the hostilities at all?

A: [00:07:14] Yes. It was RAF Khormaksar. That was the--, it was part of RAF Khormaksar. The Aden Forces Broadcasting Association, as I say, was funded by the air force and staffed by the air force.

Q: [00:07:25] And did you, er, how did you reflect the Crisis or the military manoeuvres in your broadcasts? Was it something that you ignored, and you focused on your [tone was different or inaudible 00:07:37]?

A: [00:07:37] Well, most of the broadcasters were people who were actively involved in working on the station, so if they--, if it was reflected at all, it would be in their general presentation, but I can't remember now.

Q: [00:07:49] Oh, the reason I ask is 'cause at that time the British government was using its radio stations in the region as part of their campaign against Arab nationalism.

A: [00:08:00] Right.

Q: [00:08:01] And I was just wondering if in your work in the Aden station--,

A: [00:08:05] No, it didn't really impinge on--,

Q: [00:08:05] [Inaudible] reflect that--, was reflected to it?

A: [00:08:06] No, it--, no, it wasn't. I mean it was just a little, small, low-powered station, just covering that part of the colony.

Q: [00:08:14] Yeah, yeah, okay. That must--, and when you came back--, you were there for two years, is that right?

A: [00:08:19] No, I was there--, it was the best of the time. You do your square bashing and then you do your technical training. You've probably got about another year, 14 months, to do, so I went to Aden and I had about a year in Aden. Then I came back, and I joined the BBC in, oh, September 1957, from memory. In fact I was digging around some papers and I found my original contract which is--, you can have a look at it. Here it is. This is a BBC contract from 30 October 1959, that's right, I think you had to do two years' probation, between John William Beerling, living at Laughton, and the British Broadcasting Corporation. And this agreement shall be deemed to have commenced from 01 November 1959 and shall remain in existence until the employee obtains the age of 60 years. There we are, folks.

Q: [00:09:17] Looking at it, it makes me think of a last will and testament.

A: [00:09:19] [Laughs] Yes, it's a bit like that. I bet they don't have them now. And it's called monthly permanent staff appointed after 01 October 1957. So there we are.

And the salary was--, if the salary of the employee is under £1,000 per annum or not less than three months' notice in writing, if the salary is not or exceeds £1,000 per annum, it was £885 crossed out [laughs].

Q: [00:09:48] When--, did it feel like an important moment in your life when you got that contract?

A: [00:09:51] Oh, yes, it did. I made one or two friends there for life, actually. We all joined. They gave you an induction course in which you were taken around various aspects of the BBC. I remember going to Crystal Palace and seeing the transmitter and going to Television Centre and it was, you know, a really, very, very exciting time to be in there.

Q: [00:10:13] When you came back from Aden and you were about to enter the BBC, what was the, erm, had Britain or you changed significantly in the year or so that you were away?

A: [00:10:24] Oh, a hard thing to answer. No, the only thing I can remember about that is that Aden was a duty-free port and I bought myself--, we saved up, we had 25 shillings a week, that was pay. And I bought myself an Omega Seamaster watch and I brought it back and the Customs man seized it and demanded a vast amount of duty on this. And I thought that was terrible that I'd given my life to the country for two years, to the government, and they charged me all this money [laughs]. And in fact, I lost it shortly afterwards and bought another one for my 70th birthday [laughs]. There it is.

Q: [00:11:03] 1957 is often taken as a moment which British post-war confidence is shattered by the experience of Suez, the sort of confidence that we could act on the world stage, independently, that's kind of broken. Did you have a sense of that, back in Britain?

A: [00:11:20] No, I don't think we were politically aware enough to take note of what was going on. We were too concerned with finding somewhere to live in London [laughs]. And I can remember terrible fogs at the time and smog, and I was living up

in Maida Vale at the time, sharing a flat with two or three other chaps here. I can't remember much else about it [laughs] in those days, except the fog was terrible. Yeah, it was terrible, you know, it was so thick you could hardly see. Trying to go up the Harrow Road, it was just terrible.

Q: [00:11:52] Before we get to the BBC, I was very curious to know what your earliest memories are. Do you remember the Second World War, for example?

A: [00:11:58] Yes. I can remember very clearly--,

Q: [00:12:00] Where were you then?

A: [00:12:01] I was in a little village called Westmarsh, which is sort of, you know, Sandwich. And Dad had a smallholding. He was always keen on radios and what have you. And I can remember that we didn't even have mains electricity in this village. It was so remote. And it was just in the shadow of, well, the back of Ramsgate and Margate. Manston Airfield was there and that was a major airfield in the war. And I can actually remember the planes taking off for D-Day and seeing the gliders towed away, which is pretty remarkable. I can remember seeing doodlebugs flying over, flying bombs. And I remember my family was quite religious and we used to go to church on Sundays and I remember a German flyer, German--, American Flying Fortress from the base coming in and crash landing at the back of the church and going to see the wreckage of this. So it was, erm, it was a pretty exciting time. I can remember seeing dogfights and contrails in the sky and that sort of thing. And it always seemed, with hindsight, as if it was a fantastic summer of weather and the sun was always shining and you could see these little planes and little dots and contrails flying there. And I can remember seeing Canterbury being bombed, which was about, I don't know, 15 miles away from Westmarsh. And I can remember the glow in the sky from, you know, the fires that were raging in Canterbury.

Q: [00:13:25] But you don't think of the threat that it presented at the time, 'cause you were a child?

A: [00:13:29] [Both talking at once] No, of course not. Dad was in a reserved occupation, being a farmer, but I remember he was in Dad's Army. [Laughs] He was in the Home Guard. I can remember him coming home and they had sort of pretend fireworks and bangers that went off [laughs] that they had to do to make bangs as if they had guns. And I suppose the most vivid memory was of a lone pilot, German pilot, strafing the village with machine gun bullets. And Dad had one of these bicycles that had a chain that was covered in, erm, I don't know if you would remember, but in the old days they used to have sort of like a chainguard but it was totally covered in with tin or metal. And these machine gun bullets had gone through this tin [laughs] as well as into the wall of our house. And I think he mentioned something about the pilot's parents not being married or something [laughs] and they ruined his bicycle [laughs].

Q: [00:14:29] That's quite frightening, really.

A: [00:14:31] It was, yes. But I remember there was an air raid shelter which was like a tin box with wire mesh all round it and we used to have to go into that if there was an air raid warning. We knew the bombs were coming. And I can rem--,

Q: [00:14:44] Did that happen often?

A: [00:14:46] Oh, I can't remember how often. I mean I was only four or five at the time. But I can remember, erm, listening to the radio a lot and we, you know, the whole family listened to the radio. And the big thing was ITMA. And there was a very interesting story, I mean when Tommy Handley died in 1949 I actually burst into tears. I remember this because he was like a family friend. And a very interesting story happened. I do lecturing on cruise ships now and a gentleman came up to me after I'd done one about the BBC in the old days. And he said, my uncle used to broadcast, and I have inherited a number of scripts, including this one from ITMA, which had been signed by Tommy Handley. And I looked at it and the date was something like 06 January 1949. And what the man didn't realise, and I didn't until I researched it, was that that was the last ever ITMA script, because Tommy Handley died three days later, on 09 January 1949. Isn't that an amazing coincidence?

Q: [00:15:53] Yeah. Did you tell him, once you'd found out?

A: [00:15:55] I told him, and I also have written an article about it with a--, he allowed me to photocopy it. Obviously, he wasn't going to give it to me. And I've sent it up for the BBC's pensioners' magazine 'Ariel', so it would be interesting to see--, no, not 'Ariel', 'Prospero', which is the pensioners' version of it. I don't know. I sent it off and said if you're interested, there's a story with a photograph of the script, with Tommy Handley's signature. But I can remember listening to Schools Broadcast, because years later after I'd become a studio manager, it was fascinating for me to meet and work on Schools Radio Broadcast playing the sound effects and eventually doing the sound mixing and meeting these people that I'd only heard. That was a nice thing to do.

Q: [00:16:40] What other programmes? Do you remember any other ITMAs, schools programming, anything else?

A: [00:16:44] No, not from before I joined. I mean I tended to, you know, I was always an enthusiast for big band music. And I listened to the Voice of America with a marvellous, dark brown voice man called Willis Conover, who did Jazz Hour. And then the other stations, we would listen to our--, the American Forces Network from AFN Frankfurt and AFN Munich. That was quite interesting.

Q: [00:17:09] And you had--, and that would have been broadcasting from the UK transmitter, the VoA, right?

A: [00:17:14] No, I don't know. I can't tell where a transmitter would be.

Q: [00:17:16] 'Cause I think that we, the BBC lent them one.

A: [00:17:19] Oh, did they?

Q: [00:17:20] Yeah. Crowborough or something like that.

A: [00:17:22] Was it?

Q: [00:17:23] [Both talking at once] Yeah.

A: [00:17:23] [Both talking at once] Oh, that's interesting. Yeah, I didn't know.

Q: [00:17:26] Okay. Well, so tell me a little bit, before we move on to the BBC, about life at home. Did you grow up on a farm, or…?

A: [00:17:33] Yes. Well, more of a smallholding than a farm. We produced lettuces, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, marrows, fruit, and that type of thing. And as I say, we--, it was [inaudible 00:17:47]. We seemed to have a comfortable existence. I wasn't conscious about rationing. I suppose we got eggs because we kept chickens, and people kept rabbits and killed them for meat and what have you. I can remember a strange thing that because we didn't have electricity, the battery for the radio was an accumulator which had to be recharged. And we would cycle to the village of Ash, which is about three miles away and get the accumulator charged every week and swap it for another one and then bring that one back. And I would be strapped to the back of the bicycle and Dad would cycle to Ash and get a new accumulator or a recharged accumulator.

Q: [00:18:30] Was it quite heavy?

A: [00:18:31] Oh, yeah. Well, it's like a glass box of…

Q: [00:18:36] And tell me a little bit about your schooling, education. Where did you go to school? And what did you excel at, at school?

A: [00:18:45] Well, after the end of the war we moved to Deal, or a village called Sholden, just outside Deal. And I went to the primary school there. And again, more Schools Radio. I can remember that. And then I passed the eleven-plus exam and I

went to a school called Sir Roger Manwood's, which was a mixture of semi-public school. It was a mixture of day boys and boarders. And we played rugby in one term and hockey in another term and cricket in the summer term, and that was it. And we always had to work, er, Wednesday afternoons was sports day so we had to make up the time by working on Saturday mornings as well as Monday to Friday, so it was quite intensive.

Q: [00:19:28] And do you think that your father's enthusiasm for radio, that was passed down to you?

A: [00:19:34] Oh, yes.

Q: [00:19:35] That was really important?

A: [00:19:36] I can remember even when I was like a teenager, model aircraft was one passion of mine. But the other one was radios and building amplifiers and things like that, which I did, and record players and that sort of thing. I was always fascinated by the mechanics of radio, which served me well when I joined as a--, because I'd been a technical operator and then a studio manager, I could do all the jobs within--, in the building. And it was, you know, it was no good telling somebody--, telling me that it couldn't be done because I would show them how to do it [laughs] if they tried to tell me it couldn't be done.

Q: [00:20:12] That's very good. I bet that helped. Other than radio, outside of the house, what did you enjoy doing as a boy and a young man? What got you excited or entertained you? And what occupied your time?

A: [00:20:23] Fishing. I suppose I got an enthusiasm for fishing because Dad, you know, we lived in--, on the edge of the marshes so we would go and catch perch and roach and things like that. And then model aircraft, that was another passion of mine. I used to build aircraft. Originally, they were propelled by big, thick rubber bands and then eventually Jetex came in, little Jetex engines. You could buy solid fuel for them and put it in the back and I would build models of the planes that were

flying from Manston because by then the American Air Force had a base there and they were flying Sabres and Super Sabres and Thunderbirds and things like that.

Q: [00:21:01] And if you went for a night out, where would you go?

A: [00:21:04] Me? My main interest was in big bands. I would go to the Coronation Ballroom at Ramsgate and my idol was a man called Ted Heath. He had one British big band, probably the equivalent of Count Basie or Woody Herman or someone like that. And I just thought this was absolutely magic to hear that sound, of four trumpets, four trombones playing flat out. It was--, I didn't really go to dance or meet girls. I went to hear the music because I loved it. And that was one of the things that drew me to the--, doing it in Aden and then doing it in the BBC.

Q: [00:21:36] Now, you've already spoken about how you got into the BBC. You were taken out for lunch as an 18-year-old.

A: [00:21:41] [Laughs] Yes.

Q: [00:21:43] And then you went to the, er, Earls Court--,

A: [00:21:45] Earls Court, to The Radio Show I think it was. Although [inaudible 00:21:48] The BBC Show. I can't remember the title of it.

Q: [00:21:51] Was the BBC what you expected it to be, once you'd got inside?

A: [00:21:58] I don't know that I had any expectations. My only experience of broadcasting had been the experience I'd had in Aden. I mean this was some vast organisation which covered television and radio and the World Service and what have you. When I was trained as a studio manager, I should perhaps explain, I was posted to the Bush House, which was the home of the Overseas Services, and that didn't interest me at all because you were working mostly with foreign languages that you didn't understand. I'd done French at school but not much else. And you had

to make linking announcements, you know, you would say things like [speaks in foreign language 00:22:33] London, whatever that meant. That was something like, this is London. And then you would say the frequencies and in five minutes' time it will change to a different frequency and then you would do 15 minutes or half an hour in some language that you didn't understand and then you'd go back to doing another one. So I pestered away until I could get back on to domestic services. And I started pretty soon after that to work on the BBC Home Service doing the news, where I met all the famous newsreaders, people like John Snagge and Alvar Lidell, and Wallace Greenslade, or Bill Greenslade as he was known to us, a famous announcer for the Goon Show.

Q: [00:23:16] Alvar Lidell is just such a wonderful name, anyhow, but how--, comparing DJs that were going to come to Radio 1 later, and the presenters like Alvar Lidell and Snagge, how would you characterise the differences between them?

A: [00:23:31] Oh, they were terribly formal. Andrew Timothy, I mean you would never expect to see Andrew Timothy or John Snagge or anyone without a full suit and a collar and tie. They were [laughs] casually dressed in that state. In fact, I think the whole hierarchy of the BBC was very, er, very formal, actually. I thought years later when I became a controller, in the days when I first joined the BBC, one would never see a programme controller. They were remote figures up there, somewhere in the top of the castle. We were down below the battlements.

Q: [00:24:03] And when you were a studio manager, was that--, how did--, organisationally, how did that function? Were you like a central service for the rest of the BBC?

A: [00:24:11] Yes. There was a department called Programme Operations and they had a sort of scheduler who allocated studio managers to different programmes. But then there were specialist units within that, there were--, so there would be drama studio managers, there would be popular music studio managers, there would be features studio managers, classical music balancers who were specialists in getting the best sounds out of, you know, whatever they were working on.

Q: [00:24:41] And was there much movement between those different specialist areas?

A: [00:24:45] Again, you could--, you learnt to specialise as you went on. I mean I started off in general programme operations, working on all sorts of things, like Housewives' Choice and Schools Broadcasts and the news and Radio Newsreel. That was a challenging programme, you know, because short-form foreign correspondence and reports were all cut on acetate discs, 78 RPM. And if they were longer than, say, three or four minutes, you had to overlap the last 30 seconds of one report onto the first 30 seconds of the next disc. So if you had something complicated to play then you would have to listen to both turntables and when there was a breath pause between sentences you would have to switch from one to the--, you'd get the two running in sync and then switch from one to the other. It was very strenuous. And a programme like Radio Newsreel could have perhaps ten or 12 different inserts in the course of half an hour, seven to seven-thirty. It was a roundup of the world news using reports from foreign correspondents, so it was quite a difficult thing to do from a studio management point of view. We all used to smoke in those days, [laughs] I remember sometimes two cigarettes at a time. And a complicated programme like Sports Report, which was presented by Eamonn Andrews, and a very famous man called [Angus Mackey 00:26:03] was the producer and editor. And I can remember he smoked so much one day he said, Fiona, get me another cigarette, and she said, you've already got two going, Angus [laugh]. It was that sort of thing when you were trying to line up ten reports on different matches in a minute between each one. It was really quite stressful. Children's Hour was another programme I worked on a lot. But of course within Children's Hour you were doing drama, so you could learn the techniques of doing drama, balancing and sound mixing at the same time.

Q: [00:26:38] Did you like the challenge of mixed programming schedules?

A: [00:26:40] Yes, I did. I loved it. I loved it right from the beginning. I never had any ambition to do anything more than become a studio manager and I thought this was it when I achieved it. I suppose my whole career I can look back on, although I was always enthusiastic, it wasn't like work to me. It was fun, just great fun. And eventually of course I became a producer and then eventually an executive producer and then a head of department. These things sort of happen I suppose if you're enthusiastic about what you do.

Q: [00:27:11] Well, in that case, can I ask you about what your route was to becoming a producer? Was it then in the gramophone department?

A: [00:27:20] Yes, it was. We should explain, there were--, there was a big problem within the BBC in the fact that it was the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Musicians' Union thought that it had an obligation to employ and give employment to British musicians. And for that reason, the BBC employed a vast number of house orchestras with staff musicians, the Midland Light Orchestra, the Scottish Variety Orchestra, the Northern Ireland Light Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, all of these orchestras. Plus, they recorded numerous sessions in their own studios because there was a limit imposed by the Phonographic Performance Limited on the number of records that they could play and the amount of needle time. I can't remember the actual figures, but I know in terms of copyright, it was costing something like £80 per record played. And it was much cheaper to get a band to come into the studio and record. And you would have a session for three and a half hours and in that time, you were expected to get four songs recorded, or four tunes recorded, to play in. So, you might pay £50 or £60 to the musicians, performers who turned up, and in return you got four items to play in, which was far cheaper than playing four records at £80 a time.

Q: [00:28:39] You must have enjoyed that, with your interest in, well, big bands, but large sounds.

A: [00:28:45] Oh, later, when I became a producer. I mean originally, I was a producer within the gramophone department, and we should perhaps explain that the gramophone department was run by a formidable lady called Anna Instone. And that department was responsible for all programmes which used any record, so Anna Instone herself presented a programme with her husband, Julian Herbage, putting Music Magazine on the third programme on Sunday mornings. But Housewives' Choice, for instance, was a typical product of the gramophone department. Pete Murray and David Jacobs on Saturday and Sunday nights, Midday Spin. These were all programmes on the Light Programme. And I was working on them regularly and I got to know the various producers. So consequently, you know, I was sort of singled out. Everybody knew I was enthusiastic, and it was suggested after a few years that I

should apply for a post as a producer, which I got. But in parallel with the gramophone department, there was another department called popular music department and those producers were responsible for recording the music in the BBC studios and then making programmes which combined elements of both recorded sessions plus gramophone records. So that was based at Aeolian Hall in Bond Street, opposite Sotheby's. The gramophone department was based in Western House, just across the road from Broadcasting House, now known as Wogan House, I believe. But there we are.

Q: [00:30:20] Why was the popular music department, well, when was it started and why was it started? Was it a response to something?

A: [00:30:26] Well, it was there. I can't remember when or why it started, just when I joined, there was a popular music department. That was also the home of the variety department, so they would do the Billy Cotton Band Show and Take It From Here, Round the Horne, Later, and all those sorts of things.

Q: [00:30:47] You mentioned that Anna Instone was a formidable character. Could you expand on that?

A: [00:30:51] Well, she was one of the few se--, I mean there were very few women in senior management in those days, and she was one of them. And that made her formidable. She was quite frightening, you know, but she had a presence.

Q: [00:31:04] What was she like to work for?

A: [00:31:06] She was fine. I mean I have notes from her congratulating me on the birth of my first child and, you know, in that sense she was, you know, a good boss, I guess. But quite fearsome [laughs].

Q: [00:31:21] At what point were you--, did you move into the gramophone department? [Inaudible 00:31:25], day times and--, do you remember?

A: [00:31:27] Ah, erm, well, I joined in '57 and I became a studio manager probably in '58, '59. It must have been about '62, '63 that I became a producer.

Q: [00:31:44] And also in the popular music department as well?

A: [00:31:48] Well, the BBC had a scheme called attachment schemes. You could move out of one department into another. At one stage I was going to go and work in television and I had an attachment, but Anna wouldn't release me to go. She'd kept me waiting so long that eventually when they said, oh, you can go to television now, I'd lost the enthusiasm because I was doing something else that I enjoyed in radio. And then I was attached to the popular music department and I did an evening programme called Music to Midnight from ten till 12. And there of course I was able to book Ted Heath. Well, I said to the executive producer, can I book Ted Heath? And he said, it's your budget. You book who you want for your programme. So he said, actually, you can book Ted Heath if you book Eric Winstone on opposite weeks [laughs]. Apparently, he had some friendship with Eric Winstone, I guess. And so, suddenly, you know, it was a thrill to me to have Ted Heath, a man who I'd been to see at the Coronation Ballroom in Ramsgate as a teenager, actually working for me and recording in my studio. I mean this was just the biggest, one of the biggest thrills, you know, a man could have.

Q: [00:32:56] And how would that work? Well, you got a band in, like the Ted Heath Orchestra. What was the kind of space like, and how would the session work?

A: [00:33:04] Oh, right. Well, you would have a meeting with Ted, either on the phone or in person, to go through which items you wanted recorded this week. And then he would make sure the arrangements were up to date and ready for when we got to the studio. And then we would go in the studio and rehearse each tune for balance, for the engineer to get the sound right, because you had to have a multi-mic technique. Originally Ted Heath had his own producer for all his broadcasting, when he was doing a broadcast in his own right. And then he had an engineer called [Freddie Harrison 00:33:37]. Freddie was a pioneer, because you have to go back to the days before equalisers, so there was no way of doing top lift or treble lift. But Freddie worked out the frequency of the sound and he would do things like take a cigarette packet and tape it to the microphone because that would emphasise the

bass or the treble or whatever. That was pretty remarkable. I mean he was quite deaf because he used to listen at incredible volume. The BBC had very large loudspeakers and we all suffer from hearing problems now in our old age through listening too loudly [laughs]. But it--, then--, and an interesting story, I mean I was researching recently some stories about Ted Heath for a different project. And I read that a man called Dougie Lawrence had given Ted Heath his first broadcast. Now, Dougie Lawrence when I joined was the assistant head of gramophone department. He was number two underneath Anna Instone. And a strange coincidence is that the sound engineer who was balancing Ted Heath when I recorded him, was Vernon Lawrence, Dougie's son. Isn't that remarkable? And Vernon Lawrence went on to become a very successful television producer, a very senior television producer, in commercial television.

Q: [00:34:52] When you were doing Music to Midnight and those kind of sessions, did you have to set up--, set the studio for each different band, each different sound? You say you were working without equalisers, that you had to sort of--,

A: [00:35:05] Well, you--, Ted Heath would be pre-recorded during the week and then you were--, if the programme was going out on Monday night, you would have the tapes with those things set up to play in. We were then in--, we'd advanced from great, big BTR2 tape recorders which were the size of a domestic cooker, into something more portable, the TR90 portable. I can't remember what it stood for but the TR90 was an EMI machine on wheels that you could wheel into studio. And these were used to play in tape inserts, so the tape operator who was also a studio manager would actually cut into a reel four songs that were going to be played in that evening. So, one studio manager would play the records, another one would play in the tapes, a third studio manager would mix the sound with a microphone. So, for instance, Simon Dee came to present Music to Midnight and he would--, it was rather like a sort of radio version of the Parkinson Show because the musicians would take the mickey out of Simon and there would be lots of banter between them. Maybe there would be one group playing live in the studio and then there would be other tapes. John Dunne was one of the other regular presenters. He was very, very good.

Q: [00:36:19] When you--, so this is by the sort of early '60s, '61, '62, '63. And the BBC's three radio channels had been--, were--, they had a regular, established pattern.

A: [00:36:31] The Home, Light and the Third, yes.

Q: [00:36:32] The Home, Light and the Third. But it was essentially unchanged from the early post-war days. And audiences were moving, particularly in the evening.

A: [00:36:41] Oh, yes, 'cause--,

Q: [00:36:42] It was evacuating over to television. How aware were you of this competition?

A: [00:36:47] Well, there wasn't that much--, well, television was going by then but of course just after the war, radio had the monopoly, I think. The Light Programme was hugely popular. We'd have audiences in the tens of millions because there was no television. And it was a story I wanted to tell, and funnily enough, on the very day that we're recording this, the first programme goes out tonight and it's the story of the Light Programme, which I'm annoyed 'cause I wanted to produce that [laughs]. I'd put up an idea for a sort of ten-part series and a television show and a book which I wanted to do but somebody sold them the notion of doing two one-hours. You can't do justice to the Light Programme in two one-hours. But we're digressing from there. What was the question again? [Laughs].

Q: [00:37:29] Well, it's kind of being aware of this transition, where audiences were moving from radios to television.

A: [00:37:32] Yes. Well, I think tastes were changing. One of my lectures is about the censorship and the way in which censorship and music and post-war attitudes were changing because troops were coming home, ITV was starting, and it had a much more relaxed approach than the BBC did. So, I think the social attitudes towards what it was getting from its television and radio was rather different than it had been during the wartime when the BBC had been the sort of backbone of the nation and boosting morale and all that type of thing. Music while you worked, keep the workers at it [laughs].

Q: [00:38:09] That's right, that's right. That's one of the things that dropped when, erm, I can't remember if it was Gerard, Gerry Mansell that dropped it from the, er--,

A: [00:38:16] Did they drop--,

Q: [00:38:16] Home programme.

A: [00:38:17] Well, there you are.

Q: [00:38:17] Music While You Work.

A: [00:38:19] Music While You Work was twice a day. It had to be in half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the afternoon, no minor keys, and everything had to be fairly up tempo, you know, to keep the workers at it. [Hums] I remember it well.

Q: [00:38:35] But when you--, in the BBC at the time, did you have a sense that the BBC Radio needed to sort of reinvent itself, or attract back audiences?

A: [00:38:44] Well, [sighs] I suppose I did, because I was young, and I was such a fan of the pirate radio stations. When I was doing Music to Midnight I'd lived down in the middle of Kent by then and I used to drive home listening to these amazing radio stations and thinking, this is a very different sort of radio. And I can remember there was a man called Duncan Johnson who had a dark brown voice and one day I was in a pub in Marble Arch and somebody said, oh, you've always wanted to meet Duncan Johnson and I said, yes, and there was this rather gangly, pimply youth in his mid-20s. And I'd expected to see a man with, you know, [laughs] about 40 with sort of plenty of weight on him and a dark brown voice. But Duncan was another one who joined Radio 1 in the early days. So yes, I was a huge fan of pirate radio. And in fact, I'm one of the only, well, I am the only one that ever went out from the BBC to see how it worked, because we have to explain for the benefit of your viewers that the BBC way of doing a record programme, let's take a programme like Housewives' Choice, for instance. Initially the producer would get a bunch of postcards in from

the listeners and he would go through and sort out a mixed balance of perhaps 15 or 16 records that he wanted to play in his 55 minutes of Housewives' Choice. And you would make sure you had got some light music, some female vocals, some male vocals, some songs from the show, so an even mix of music. You would then give these cards to the presenter and it might be somebody like Gilbert Harding. Major, not disc jockeys, these were just well-known personalities. And he would then take that away and handwrite laboriously a script embracing all the various requests and dedications. This would then come back into the BBC and be typed by a production secretary. In the meantime, the producer would go to the library and look up the records, the 15 records that he'd chosen, and then he would order them. Somebody else would get them out and they would eventually be delivered to your office and they would all be typed. And then on the day of transmission you would meet at 6:30 in the morning and do a full, real time rehearsal of the--, oh, the script would be typed by this time, so the presenter sat in a box, a glass box. There would be an assistant studio manager to play the records, another studio manager to mix the sound, and a producer to sit there with a stopwatch, timing them. He would then do the full, real time rehearsal. My God, it was five minutes too long. We've got to get five minutes out. Where should we make the cuts? We'll look at all the scripted links and adjust them as if though each one was in a little tau--, the producer would give instructions. There would then be a break whilst we had a continental breakfast, croissants and coffee, orange juice. And then we would go on the air at nine o'clock until 9:55 when everything stopped for a story, a hymn and a prayer. And so that would be the five-minute religious bit. And then the next programme, which was probably half an hour of live music. So that's the way the BBC produced record programmes. Very laborious, very long-winded, very labour-intensive. And I thought, I must go and see how this pirate thing worked. And eventually, through various strings being pulled, I got a trip out to this ship in the North Sea. And there I was greeted by people like John Peel and Keith Skues and Kenny Everett and what have you. And Kenny knew my background. We'd sort of met each other socially. And he knew what an enthusiast I was and couldn't wait to show me how this thing worked. And here was a desk at which a disc jockey sat, with no producer, nobody else except him and a pile of records. And he had the control of the microphones, he had things called cartridge machines, which the BBC never had until then. I'll come back to that in a minute. And he did it, virtually controlled it all. It was spontaneous, it was ad libbed. It wasn't--, it just worked. And nobody thought anything of it, you know. It was just wonderful. And of course this is the way they'd been doing it in America for years. So when we came back to think about starting Radio 1, it was clear we needed self-operation. Self-oppers, we called it. And the

only place in which you could do this within the BBC was the continuity studios where the announcer made linking announcements and might have to play a record if there was a breakdown. And so they had studios which were equipped with turntables and he could actually operate his own couple of faders. So that's why to this day, studios for disc jockeys are referred to as cons. It's short for continuities. And that's the way it is with Radio 1. Cartridge machines, by then in the Light Programme days, I was working with a producer with the same--, similar name to mine. He was Klas Burling. He was a well-known presenter and producer in Swedish radio and he and I devised a programme called European Pop Jury. And he said, you know, what we need to play extracts of these records is the cartridge machines that we've got in Sweden. They had imported them from America. So they brought a couple over and we used them. And that was the first time they had been used in the BBC. So cartridge machines were introduced. These days it's all on computers and [laughs] everything is easy. But it was really a revolution to be able to play short inserts of things and play jingles and that type of thing. totally different.

Q: [00:44:33] It's amazing. It's really instructive, the difference between BBC product--, the BBC way of doing things--,

A: [00:44:39] Yes.

Q: [00:44:40] And the pirate way. By the way, which radio--, was that Radio London that you went to visit?

A: [00:44:43] Yeah.

Q: [00:44:44] Which--, is that, out of the pirates, which did you like listening to the best?

A: [00:44:48] Radio London. It was modelled on WABC in New York, which was the Top 40 station. And that leads me on, really, to talking about the jingles, because Robin Scott by then had been appointed the controller of Radio 1 and 2. And Kenny Everett and I went to lunch with Robin Scott one day. And Kenny said, well, if you want this new Radio 1 to sound anything like the pirates, you've got to have the same jingles. We'd never had jingles on the BBC before then. I was at that time on

the Light Programme, producing a programme called Where It's At, which was a fairly fast moving, modelled on the pirates, and I had to make my own jingles up by using [laughs] big band records and cutting the first sort of four bars at the beginning and the end chord and cut it together. And I used the voice of Duncan Johnson making inane announcements or something over it. So, we made our own jingles. Light Programme, news time, and that type of thing. Anyway, that was jingles. So Kenny said, we should have the same jingles. And these were made by a company called PAMS in America, promotions and merchandising services, run by a man called Bill Meeks. Bill had worked on WABC and he had set up this company making jingles with a custom bid and then he could change the words on each jingle. So, we went to Bill Meeks and said, could you make some jingles for Radio 1? And in fact, although some of them were originally written for Radio 1, some of them were the Radio London ones and we just changed the words. So we [laughs] had the same tunes that they had, which was quite crafty. But it was always very difficult starting Radio 1 because it didn't have enough needle time.

Q: [00:46:33] Do you want to say a little bit about needle time, and the implications of that for broadcasting?

A: [00:46:38] Well, yes. The implications were that the pirate radio stations had broadcast non-stop popular music and the objection to this was that they didn't pay any copyright and they were broadcasting on frequencies to which they were not entitled. So, the difficulty was how was the BBC going to do this when it only had, I don't know, 30 or 40 hours' needle time between the four national networks. And of course, the only way it could do it was to record sessions in our own studios. And our own studios were fairly primitive at that time. I think we might have had twin-track stereo but that was about it. We didn't have multi-track. So, the notion of a pirate radio being able to play the Beatles' 'Hard Day's Night' and on the new Radio 1, the Joe Loss Orchestra with a singer signing 'A Hard Day's Night' didn't quite hack it as far as the audience were concerned. So that was always a problem, at least for the first four or five years of Radio 1, that it couldn't play unlimited records. Well, we never could, 'cause there was always a limitation, not just in the amount of needle time but on the amount we had to pay, because we didn't have enough budget.

Q: [00:47:50] Was that principally responsible for Radio 1 and Radio 2, when they launched, being a mixture of different stations and then coming back together again?

A: [00:48:01] Well, you're getting into deep water here, Alban, because, you know, I mean I look back on it now after 50 years later, it doesn't seem to me that the BBC management had much faith in having to broadcast this popular music. It wasn't really what they were all about. We had done some popular music in Housewives' Choice and programmes like Pete Murray and David Jacobs on a Saturday and Sunday night, and Midday Spin, an hour of pop records at lunchtime, but that was about it. And suddenly here we were having to provide a non-stop pop service. Because if you think back on it, when it started, we had a limited amount of needle time and we had one controller for 1 and 2, to an incredible amount of sharing of programmes on 1 and 2, as you've just mentioned. So, you know, it was impossible to establish a separate identity for Radio 1 because half its programmes were carried on Radio 2. The frequency on which we broadcast, or the wavelength, was 247 metres, which was on the same wavelength as a station in Albania. So, although it just about covered the UK, in daytime after dark, in the evening it was as bad as Radio Luxembourg because there was so much competition for it. And then there was a limit on the budget and the fact that the other three networks, Radio 3, Radio 2 and Radio 4, were on VHFM broadcasting, so they had good quality. So, if you look back at all the things, it was like fighting with both hands behind your back.

Q: [00:49:31] Why do you think the BBC launched Radio 1 and 2?

A: [00:49:35] Well, I suspect I was only a junior producer at the time but obviously there was political pressure that the government under Wedgwood Benn, I think was Postmaster General, introduced the Marine Offences Act and shut down the pirate radio and there was a huge protest from the youth of the country, who loved it. And the BBC have got to supply something, so we had--, they probably thought, we've got to do it [laughs]. We'll just do the minimum that we have to.

Q: [00:50:04] I think you're right. I think Tony Benn was Postmaster General when that started. And then it was--, was it Edward Short?

A: [00:50:11] Was it Edward Short or Christopher Chataway? I can't remember the--,

Q: [00:50:11] [Both talking at once] Ted Short. And Short I think came afterwards. I think 'cause what the difficulty for the BBC I think was that Tony Benn wanted the popular music channel on the BBC to be--, carry advertising, or sponsorship.

A: [00:50:25] Oh, did he? At the beginning?

Q: [00:50:27] Yeah. But he didn't get any further. The, er, let me just, erm, I want just to read a quote to you from Robin Scott about--,

A: [00:50:40] The white tornado?

Q: [00:50:42] [Laughs] The white tornado. Okay, tell me why the white tornado.

A: [00:50:45] Well, because he had a flock of white hair and he was always rushing around. He was terribly enthusiastic. He was a lovely man, you know. He had been--, I think he had been BBC correspondent from Paris. He had also written a hit song, Ruby Murray's 'Softly, Softly'. And so he knew something about popular music. And he was, you know, he did his best but he was fighting with incredible difficulty, I mean for all the reasons that I've just outlined.

Q: [00:51:13] Did he have his finger on the pulse of popular music culture? Or was he open to ideas?

A: [00:51:18] Well, he was open to ideas, certainly. But he tried to make it an eclectic mix, you know, different things. And he was still steeped in the BBC tradition [laughs]. It must be non-stop pop music all day, unless we do a variety of different things.

Q: [00:51:34] Well, this is what he said about the launch of Radio 1 on 13 September, So 'the service was launched on September the 30th. I can vividly remember that morning and the countdown and cueing in Tony Blackburn at the start of the service

with Johnny Beerling. The enormous excitement, the enormous build-up, the colossal press coverage. Unprecedented broadcasting in this country. Special editions of the evening news. This enormously exciting event'. Now, you were the producer in charge on that first morning, on the other side of the glass from Tony Blackburn as he presented the very first programme on Radio 1. What were you feeling at the time? Excited? Terrified? What was the atmosphere at that moment?

A: [00:52:18] Oh, tremendous excitement. You can imagine. I mean the studio was crowded because there was a film crew trying to film it, you know. If you look at the film now, you'd think Robin Scott was the only person there apart from Tony Blackburn. Incidentally, there's an interesting story about that. I, my memory is that we filmed that opening again afterwards. Tony Blackburn's memory is that he filmed it the night before [laughs]. So, I'm never sure which is the accurate one. Both of us are too old to actually remember now [laughs]. But it was, it was tremendously exciting. We'd rehearsed this and gone through it all and I mean after a week I said, look, Tony, this is nonsense, me getting up in the middle of Kent at four o'clock in the morning and driving up to sit there and produce you. You've worked in pirate radio, you know how to do it. I will listen at home and then I'll come in, then we'll have the post-mortem afterwards, because it was just ridiculous, you know, driving that distance and trying to be there every day and then produce the next programme and so on. So, it was great fun and, you know, everything Robin has said is true. There were all those editions to the papers, jingles. I mean nobody had ever heard jingles on the BBC before.

Q: [00:53:29] So it really felt like the beginning of something really exciting and different.

A: [00:53:31] Yes. Yes. I didn't think it would last 50 years [laughs] and that I'd be sitting here talking about it 50 years later. But it was, it was great. And there was a mixture of presenters, you know. There were all these hairy people like Emperor Rosko, have mercy, Mr Percy, come in and--, sure, here was the news in English, from John Dunn, reading the news at 12:30 that day. Stuart Henry from Scotland with his kaftans and, are you all right, my friends? It was great, it really was. I mean the music wasn't that good, but the atmosphere was nice.

Q: [00:54:09] It was interesting you say, you know, it wasn't worth you getting out of bed at four o'clock [laughs] in the morning and driving up, 'cause it was a different kind of producing.

A: [00:54:16] Yes.

Q: [00:54:17] With this kind of radio. So, could you say a little bit about what your role was as a producer, that was different from before?

A: [00:54:24] Well, essentially the role of the producer in the gramophone department is to make sure all the right records are there, that you and the DJ have agreed on the mix of music that you're going to do, and the style of presentation. And that you do accurate reporting, because we had to pay for every second of music that we used, so you know, it was very much the producer's responsibility to time everything exactly and make sure the programme started and finished on time and the music reporting was accurate. Every day, the other thing when I was talking to you about the production of Housewives' Choice, that the end product of all that was that that another secretary would have to type up the P as B, the Programme as Broadcast, with exact durations of every record that was played, with the credits for the music publisher and the record company, so that everybody got paid. And this all returned to PPL and BPI, the organisations responsible for paying the royalties back to the copyrighter and er…

Q: [00:55:28] And what--, and--, but with Radio 1, producing was very different. Was it light touch?

A: [00:55:35] Yes, I would say so. Pretty light. There would be pressure from pluggers, of course, to include their records. I mean this was the strange dichotomy, really, that the record companies were limiting the amount of needle time we had, and yet at the same time, they were employing pluggers to come down and try and persuade you to play their records. And there were pluggers for records and pluggers for the music publishers as well, because the publishers were earning copyright from the records sold.

Q: [00:56:07] The, erm, it reminds me, the, erm, some--, a senior, very prominent DJ from early Radio 1 had this to say about the kind of pluggers and the record industry in the early years of Radio 1 and 2, who said, no producer ever had to buy lunch in his life or a drink. And the Christmas parcels that used to come in for producers and presenters alike were enormous. And one or two people, having moved on from bottles of champagne and huge Christmas parcels, were actually offering sex. Is that a picture of attempted influence that you recognise? And what were the pressures?

A: [00:56:50] It's an exaggeration of the truth. There was a lot of pressure from pluggers. Somebody once wanted to give a video recorder to each producer and Chinnery vetoed this, so he said, okay, I'll send a note round saying, you would have had a video recorder [laughs] but Derek Chinnery stopped me giving them. There were lots of lunches for people that wanted to have them. Some people never bought a lunch. That's probably true. Others, I don't know [laughs] [inaudible 00:57:21] in the sense, erm, what can I say? I don't think there was any corruption.

Q: [00:57:26] [Both talking at once] Do you think that could out of--, did that ever get out of hand?

A: [00:57:29] No, I don't think it did.

Q: [00:57:30] Were there rules for it?

A: [00:57:31] Yes. I mean particularly after some of the scandals that emerged over Top of the Pops, if you can remember back to the story about the influences there. When I took over as controller, my rule was, never do or take anything that you'd be ashamed to read about in the papers afterwards, you know, and that was a rule that I tried to enforce, based on my experience in working there for that length of time. But there may have been one or two that overstepped the mark. I don't think there was ever any payola as such.

Q: [00:58:08] And did you have to take active measures to sort of insulate your staff from--, as a controller, from those kind of temptations? Or was it--, you left it to those--,

A: [00:58:17] No, I mean the trouble is, there were so many pluggers, if you gave everyone an appointment, you'd never get any work done, so we had to limit access to the building and so it was a strict routine that plugging day might be Thursdays. I can remember Rob Dickins, who eventually became management, director at Warner Brothers, and he still laughs at me 'cause I threw him out of my office one day when he came, and I said plugging day is Thursday, Rob, so go away, or words to that effect.

Q: [00:58:50] The, erm, oh, yeah, so I was going to ask you, Flowers in the Rain, by The Move, the first record played.

A: [00:58:56] [Laughs] I've been asked this lots of times. How did we come to it?

Q: [00:58:59] Yes, go on.

A: [00:59:00] Well, we just wanted a--,

Q: [00:59:00] [Both talking at once] Was it symbolic?

A: [00:59:01] No. We just wanted a bright, up tempo record and this was one that was coming up the charts at that time. And Tony was quite clever, you know. He knew about playlists. I mean there wasn't a playlist for the station, but you'd maybe get 60 new records coming in every week and we would try and mix a blend of popular hits, popular oldies, a few good new records, and lots of plugs for Tony Blackburn. And that was really his format. And if all the producers are doing this separately, it's a bit silly, so you may as well have a collective meeting. And as far as daytimes are concerned, you'd come up with a playlist for the station.

Q: [00:59:41] And what was it like working with Tony Blackburn?

A: [00:59:44] It was very good, actually. He and I had a very good relationship. He didn't like big bands and country music as much as I did [laughs] but he loved Tamla Motown, you see, so we compromised, and we got on very well. And we still get on well. I think the way the BBC treated him recently over the problems was disgraceful and I've said so and was prepared to go to court for Tony if he didn't get back. I'm sad that he didn't get Pick of the Pops back because he's a very good presenter and he still retains his enthusiasm and his knowledge. And like all good broadcasters, you know, with somebody like Tony Blackburn, what you get is the genuine article. I think the best broadcasters, whether we talk about Terry Wogan, Noel Edmonds, Tony Blackburn, those sorts of people, what you get off the microphone is the same as what you get in front of the microphone. The microphone will spot a phony and they are the genuine article and that genuine--, Tony loves to communicate on a one-to-one basis. And when he first started, he used to be quite shy. He didn't like other people being in the studio. He preferred to talk to the microphone as if it was another person. And that was him, you know. He loved it.

Q: [01:00:59] And that works?

A: [01:01:00] Yeah.

Q: [01:01:03] So you mentioned Terry Wogan, Pete Murray, David Jacobs were already at the BBC.

A: [01:01:09] Yes.

Q: [01:01:10] Working on the live programme before the launch of Radio 1.

A: [01:01:12] [Don Musk 01:01:12], he's [inaudible 01:01:13] a few others, yes.

Q: [01:01:15] But--, and then you get a whole, new phalanx of presenting staff or DJs brought in from the pirate stations, such as Tony Blackburn, John Peel, Emperor Rosko--,

A: [01:01:25] Keith Skues, yeah.

Q: [01:01:27] What was the mix like between those different types of presenters? Did they like each other? Did they get on?

A: [01:01:32] Yes, as far as I remember, they did. I mean they dressed very differently, of course, you know, the--, although I was doing some research for another lecture and I came across a picture of Simon Dee and there he was, wearing a shirt and tie, you know. I thought that was quite impressive. I couldn't have said what he had looked like when he worked on Radio Caroline. But no, they did get on pretty well.

Q: [01:01:54] And what was the response of sort of old hands in the BBC to this new entry into its broadcasting sort of remit?

A: [01:02:02] Well, I think people like Jimmy Young found it hard to adapt to the self-operation thing, you know. It was like having to learn to drive and keep up a commentary at the same time. And some of them took a long time to actually adapt to the physical operation of the equipment. And the other difference was of course they were nearly all ad libbing by this time. The BBC was terribly apprehensive about how are we going to let these new chappies off the pirate ships loose without a script? Brian Matthew had been the only one that had been allowed to do it because Brian had worked as a newsreader and had come from British Forces Broadcasting and therefore he had done Skiffle Club and then Saturday Club, so he was allowed to do an ad lib and didn't have to write a script. I think Pete Murray and David Jacobs didn't script either but most of the others had to do, as I described for Housewives' Choice. So they were somewhat envious I think of these new guys. But there was a fear that they might say the wrong thing. I mean Tony Blackburn once or twice did. But Derek Chinnery who was the boss, the head of Radio 1 in those days, thought that Tony would be all right because he spoke quite well and he had a public-school education and he dressed properly, so he would be okay [laughs]. We can let him loose on the Breakfast Show and not take any risks. But even Tony stepped out of line once or twice, I think. On the Miners' Strike, he was pretty vocal about it [laughs] and he got it wrong. And that was a sort of fear the BBC had, that these people would ad lib and get us into libel actions or [laughs] all sorts of terrible trouble.

Q: [01:03:37] Was that one of your key tasks as a producer, to be on hand to cut things off when they--,

A: [01:03:42] Well, it's too late once they've done it, isn't it? [Laughs] You can't [laughs] you know, you make sure they're properly briefed beforehand.

Q: [01:03:49] You've mentioned Derek Chinnery a couple of times, when he became controller of Radio 1. Could you say a few words about him?

A: [01:03:56] [Both talking at once] Yes, Derek--,

Q: [01:03:56] And what he was like to work with?

A: [01:03:58] Interesting. Derek was a terribly straight man, you know. He didn't--, he wasn't a man with a great sense of humour. I can remember one year, doing a Christmas programme [laughs] where we had written a pantomime for the disc jockeys to do and Derek took exception to it about half past 11 and gave me strict instructions how he wanted it edited and changed and then cleared off home for his Christmas lunch and never even wished us a happy Christmas, which to us was a bit unkind. No, he wasn't a man that laughed a lot and he was terribly moral and upright. I can remember him being outraged when once John Peel in the course of his programme talked about the problems of VD and said, I had VD once, it was terrible [laughs] but I got over it. Derek thought this was outrageous that he should even mention the subject on his airwaves. So a very straight man. But a nice man. Trustworthy. Totally trustworthy.

Q: [01:04:58] And on the production side of things, was there a close working relationship between these Radio 1, and Radio 2 I suppose, presenters and the production staff on the other side?

A: [01:05:07] Ah, well--,

Q: [01:05:09] How did that work?

A: [01:05:10] It's a difficult--, it didn't work properly. And there were times when there was too much overlap between the two and you couldn't distinguish which one you were listening to because there was no sort of direction. When people like Douglas Muggeridge and Charles McLelland were controller of one or two after Robin Scott had gone, nobody would come down and say what are we about, what sort of music are we broadcasting? Let's set a style for Radio 1 and a style for Radio 2. So, there would be too much crossover and there would be resentment about this. It didn't really get clarified until David Hatch took over as managing director of radio. David was the best managing director that I knew. I loved working for him. He was a great man. And he had this feeling which he expressed to me when I was controller, that the BBC is paid for by everyone, by the licence fee, and if you got to a situation where a proportion of the population could say, I never use the BBC services, we were sunk as far as the licence fee. So, for him, Radio 1 was there to get a big audience and he loved it when we did that. On the other hand, you got a sort of mindset which says, well, Radio 1's about credibility and playing the best new Britpop and that sort of thing. And that not necessarily appeals to the biggest audience. So, there was always this sort of internal problem between the geographical setup in the building, the third floor producers who were into the credibility music, and the fourth floor producers who were about mass audiences and things like the Radio 1 Roadshow. And I was sort of mistrusted [laughs] by the third floor a bit because, you know, I was the man with the ice cream jackets and the Radio 1 Roadshows and that sort of thing. And John Peel and John Walters partic--, John Walters is John Peel's producer, were particularly sort of suspicious of me, although I quite realised the value of what they were doing. And we resolved this is the end by telling--, Roger Lewis, who was my deputy for a while, came up with a saying, ratings by day and reputation by night. And I think that was probably quite true because the sort of people who would appreciate the type of music that Peel was playing and sponsoring was not the sort of music that would appeal to the housewife audience that we had during the daytime and was available during the daytime.

Q: [01:07:39] So there was room for both?

A: [01:07:40] Yeah.

Q: [01:07:41] Mmm, I agree. I listen to both.

A: [01:07:44[ Yeah.

Q: [01:07:45] [Inaudible 01:07:45], yeah. What other--, at this time, when--, so back to 1967, and '68, '69, what kind of programmes were you producing?

A: [01:07:55] Well, Where It's At carried on. I won't say too much about that 'cause it was presented by a man called Chris Denning, who's in prison, likely to be for the rest of his life. I was doing Where It's At and Tony Blackburn, so that was, you know, five mornings of Blackburn plus Saturday afternoon. That kept me busy. And then later on of course I was doing the--, I launched the Radio 1 Club. That grew out of a programme that Derek Chinnery had actually devised, called Pop In. Pop In was a programme on Tuesday lunchtime, from memory, presented by Keith Fordyce in the Paris Cinema in Lower Regent Street. And there it literally was that. The audience could pop in and they would have visiting pop artists and what have you. I changed it a bit into a Radio 1 club with the idea of membership cards which would serve as admission cards and we'd have a live band playing, partly because of the needle time and partly because if you could get a named band, you could get an audience in for that. And there would be interviews with guests. Originally, I started it in London but then realising the BBC had got centres in Manchester, Birmingham, Belfast, Bristol and so on, we decided we'd use the magic of radio and connect two sides at once and have two disc jockeys co-presenting. And again, audiences would start coming in. Because I thought always the danger for Radio 1 was it would be thought of as that station down there in London. There was no sense of ownership by the population as a whole, so I wanted to give it a local appeal. And then I broadened it out into the roadshow later, but we can talk about that more. So, then the next step really was to take it out of studio locations in the region into dancehalls and youth clubs and places like that. And it was very, very popular. it was very successful. It was a lunchtime programme. And in fact, it was a victim of its own success because so many kids played truant from school that we got complaints from headmasters [laughs] about it and we took it off after about four years.

Q: [01:10:06] Did the Radio 1 Roadshow sort of come out of that sort of experiment?

A: [01:10:11] Yeah. In 1973 we started the Roadshow. I started it and it ran for 27 years, which is not a bad run for a programme. But I had seen something vaguely similar when I took the children camping down in France. And it was either Radio Monte Carlo or Radio Luxembourg or somebody down there had a vehicle with a show. Well, in the evenings they would do it at campsites, so it was a bit like a sort of cross between Sunday Night at the London Palladium and a record show. And they recorded this, as far as I could see, and then put it out later. And I thought it would be marvellous if we could do this with Radio 1. We could promote it and take the disc jockeys around to seaside resorts where people are on holiday. And I came back with the idea and sold it to Derek Chinnery. And then the problem was, where are we going to get a vehicle? Basically, what we're talking about is a man playing records in a box on the beach [laughs] at its simplest. That's how it started out. And someone told me that--, what was the--, he was a producer called Brian Patten who had worked for Radio 4 as well as the Light Programme. He had produced Johnny Morris. And he said, there's a man down here called John Miles, who manages a group called Adge Cutler and the Wurzels. And he said, I think he's got a pantechnicon with a side that opens, that might do for what you want. So I went to see John Miles and he was a quite enterprising man. In fact, he still manages Noel Edmonds and Martin Brundle and a few other people, and Carol Vorderman, so that's not bad for an earning. John said, I like the idea. He said, I don't have the pantechnic anymore but my brother, Tony, is a car body builder. We will build you the vehicle that you want, and I gamble that it'll be a success and we'll rent it to the BBC for £100 a day, including Tony to drive it with a Range Rover. Well, of course that led to all sorts of problems internally because here was BBC equipment being carried in a non-BBC vehicle. And how do we get this thing made? But eventually they got it made. And we did the first one at Newquay in 1973 with Alan Freeman. We did a dummy run in an aircraft hangar or something down in Bristol, I remember, which went quite well, with Alan Freeman. It was a miniature version of the self-op desk. We'd get in the two turntables and two cartridge machines and a public address system so the audience could hear what was going on. And we took it to Newquay for the launch. And on the way there, Tony Miles had no experience of towing a caravan and he hadn't got the weight right and the thing developed a terrible wiggle [laughs] as he drove it down the road. But eventually he got it reloaded and he managed to get there by the time of the broadcast. Unfortunately, we were drawing mains power from a café nearby [laughs] and the engineer, Alan Harris,

hadn't got enough mains cable to reach from the--, where the caravan was parked, to the café [laughs]. So, there's the first problem as we were setting up to do the first show at teatime on the opening day. So, we went to the local South Western Electricity Board and they were all very Cornish down there and [inaudible 01:10:39], ooh aar, my dearie, you can't order no mains cable unless you got a BBC order form [laughs]. Luckily, Brian's secretary, Margaret, had some BBC headed notepaper in her handbag [laughs] and she typed up an order form and we got 50 yards of cable and we were able to launch the vehicle, and that was fine. And Alan Freeman stayed behind afterwards and signed autographs. And it was fairly successful except, you know, I'd got a very ambitious project to try and go round the whole coastline in the six weeks of the summer holidays, right round the coastline of the UK. And this meant very long journeys for the crew. By the time they'd packed--, the show finished I think five till seven, from memory. By the time Alan had done his autographs and then they'd packed the equipment up, it was ten or 11 at night before they set off. And they would get to the next venue at three or four in the morning and then have to start rigging it again for the next day. So that was the biggest drawback to it. But after that I mean it really took off. The people came because the personalities of the DJs, '73, we're talking six years in now, they were all well-known, so people came and started to ring my office and say, oh, we're going to take a week's holiday. When is Tony Blackburn on? And when is Noel Edmonds on? And whatever. So, they would take their holiday to follow this show for a week. And it was very good for bonding internally because each week there would be a crew of a secretary, a producer, a disc jockey, and a team of outside broadcast engineers, and they bonded together 'cause they all stayed in the same hotels. And the best way I can describe it is like the film of Summer Holiday that Cliff Richard did, but we were doing it for real, because we'd do the live broadcast. And one of the problems was that the first year, the series was broadcast at teatime, and in the West Country they're very fond of their scrumpy cider, so the audience would get fairly vocal and lively. And so we moved the transmission time for the second year to lunchtimes and that worked rather better. And after a couple of years of course, that first vehicle got worn out and we got a slightly better vehicle. I think the BBC decided it would invest in one properly. It was obviously a successful vehicle and they did support me enough to give me my own vehicle, which was driven by BBC drivers. But by then--, in the initial programme we had some sponsorship from BBC records and the idea was that they would chip in a bit of money towards it in return for the ability to sell BBC records out of a stable door on the side of the vehicle [laughs]. So, Alan would be broadcasting from the front while we had a sales girl they had hired in and she wasn't very good with the money and there was a fair deficit at the end of it all

[laughs]. So Tony Miles, who by then had become established as a character, Smiley Miley, said, why don't you give my brother and I a franchise whereby we pay BBC Enterprises and you give us a licence to sell T-shirts and hats and badges, and eventually magazines and all sorts of other things. And that will give you, you know, I'll run a second caravan, the goodie mobile, which was the shop selling all this stuff, and it would give us extra staff handling the thing and making it work. And so that's what we did and that really ensured that it took off in a big way. And eventually by the time we finished, 1990, we reckon something like half a million people a year were turning up to this. And again, this one became the victim of its own success because by then we had stereo, so we needed a stereo uplink van. We needed a giant video screen so that people at the back, the crowd was so big, they couldn't see what was going on. We put the video screen at the front. We had to have extra public address equipment. And, you know, by then we were also broadcasting live bands, so we had a stage on the top of the vehicle as well as one in front of it. So, it just became so big that logistically it was very hard. And I think after I had left, Matthew Bannister decided, you know, we'll abandon that and we'll do something different, which they did. But it was good. 27 years, not a bad run.

Q: [01:17:57] I remember, it was a mainstay of the summer.

A: [01:17:59] Yeah. Well, just before we leave that one, you can't believe the size of the--, enthusiasm for the disc jockeys. Noel Edmonds and Philip Schofield was one of the presenters and we had to have a police escort to get them in and out, which was, you know, the autograph queues were huge. It was pretty amazing, really. And a cinema film was made about it, Radio 1 on the Road. It was a second feature to Picnic at Hanging Rock. You could get [easy 01:18:30] money for making little shorts in those days.

Q: [01:18:34] I was going to ask about the popularity of the DJs, because it was a kind of--, it was a new cultural phenomenon in the UK--,

A: [01:18:41] [Both talking at once] It was.

Q: [01:18:42] From the late '60s onwards. And it kind of created a kind of--, a type of fan and a type of influence and power that just hadn't been there before.

A: [01:18:53] This is what I tried to explain to Dame Janet Smith on the big inquiry into the Savile affair, you know, that you--, I said you don't realise the adulation that was heaped on these disc jockeys. You know, if you looked at the careers of The Beatles and the Rolling Stones and the Animals and The Who, you would see they got the same degree of attention, yet for some reason the press never turned on them [laughs] the way they did on our disc jockeys.

Q: [01:19:18] Who do you think handled it best of all the sort of DJs you knew?

A: [01:19:23] Oh, that's an interesting question. Erm, well, Noel did it very well, because he had his own motorhome, so he would live offsite and then have a little sort of motorised scooter and turn up. You'll see that, actually, in the film, if you looked at it. They all did. Dave Lee Travis used to take a motorhome with him with his family on board. That's why I was sort of annoyed that David got tarred with all that stuff. David Hamilton handled it very well. A particular occasion I'm thinking of is when we had combined the appeal of the roadshow with a motor racing ad, a place called Mallory Park, which is a motor racing circuit in the Midlands. And at that time, the Bay City Rollers were at the peak of their pulling power and so I--, we had promoted--, we had done one Radio 1 Fun Day, so called, at Brands Hatch, which had gone very well and made quite a lot of money. I'd worked out a deal with the owner of the circuit, that we would give any sort of extra money that they made to charity. So, he said, well, we own a circuit in Mallory Park, let's do one there. So, we set it all up and we did the roadshow in the morning but unfortunately the crowds were so huge, we had 40,000 people had got in by mid-morning, that the chief constable came in [laughs]. And had the owner of the circuit and myself on the mat and said, you know, I don't--, people are so irresponsible. You don't know what you've done. You've got 40,000 people here and I can't get any more police in. And when these Roller chappies turn up, it'll be a riot. And I said, well, that's quite easy, I'll cancel their appearance. And he said, if you do that, there'll be an even bigger riot. So a compromise was we had done the first broadcast off the roadshow on the outside of the circuit. And the layout of the circuit was such there's a racetrack goes around the lake, and then in the middle of the lake there was an island, and that was where we had our sort of green room hospitality area. So, I said, what we will do, we'll use a

radio link and play the records on the roadshow but David Hamilton will actually do the broadcast from the centre of the lake, off the hospitality area. And when the helicopter comes in with the Bay City Rollers, we will land them on the island. That part worked fine except there was a race going on when the helicopter landed, 'cause I thought that would divert the fans. But it didn't. They just ran across the racetracks. So, these cars that are going round at 100 miles an hour, suddenly had to stop the race. They jumped in the water and tried every way they could to get to the island where the Rollers were. And I can remember to this day, [laughs] John Peel being amazed to see people ignoring Noddy Holder and Slade and the Three Degrees and people as they just rushed--, ignored them, to get to the Rollers. And all this was going on, Tony Blackburn was in the middle of the lake with Showaddywaddy doing water ski [laughs] demonstrations. And this really weird scene, if somebody had filmed it. But to give David Hamilton his due and to answer your question, I mean he was totally professional and kept up a commentary all the time whilst this was going on. And the interesting thing is that David lives about a mile from here now and we're neighbours [laughs] after all these years.

Q: [01:22:48] You mentioned just previously, Dame Janet's Review. And as you know, many years later, the BBC has been criticised as being a place where these sort of blur--, where there's blurred boundaries and where the limits of good behaviour were abused by some, most seriously by Jimmy Savile and others. Were you conscious at the time of an atmosphere, of a permissive culture, where this could easily happen? Was it a danger you could see?

A: [01:23:23] No, I [sighs]. It's very interesting, this, because I'm the [person 01:23:27] that got rid of Jimmy Savile. Not for the reasons of the paedophilia, because I thought his programme was boring, basically. And he was a very devious character, and we can enlarge on that in a moment, if you need it to be. But I don't think in Radio 1 there was the opportunity for that sort of misbehaviour because, I mean the building's pulled down now, but I mean the offices were probably smaller than this room in which we're speaking now. And there was very strict security because of the plugging problem and all the rest of it, so people couldn't get in there and carry on with girls or what have you. And as far as I'm aware, obviously I wasn't at every roadshow in 27 years, so, you know, there wasn't the o--, yes, it was good fun and games and people play guitars on the beach and have a barbecue and do that sort of thing. But, you know, I never saw any evidence of misbehaviour. I mean yes, there

was sort of mass adulation, but it was like young kids wanting to get autographs and be photographed, you know, and that sort of thing.

Q: [01:24:30] You talked about some of the DJs being able to handle that kind of adulation quite well. Were there others that concerned you, that they responded in a slightly more--,

A: [01:24:40] What, a sinister way? No, I wouldn't say so.

Q: [01:24:43] Or couldn't handle it?

A: [01:24:46] No. I mean there were some that were better at the sort of mass adulation type of appeal than others, but they wouldn't be the ones that would be doing the roadshow. I mean the ones that did the roadshow were the big names, mostly. I mean you wouldn't put John Peel on a roadshow, for instance, because it doesn't fit with his personality or the sort of music that he wants to play.

Q: [01:25:10] There's been a lot of talk about the rumours that circulated about Jimmy Savile, over many years. Did you come across them, or was there anything specific?

A: [01:25:17] There were rumours. There were rumours but nothing specific. I mean that's what upset poor old Derek Chinnery, you know, that he was asked by Douglas Muggeridge to go and investigate this, and unbeknown to me, I'd--, he didn't even tell me he had a meeting with Savile, with Doreen Davies, and challenged Jimmy about it, and was convinced by Jimmy's explanation. You know, and Savile--, it wasn't just Derek Chinnery that was fooled, you know, it was the Pope and Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair and all sorts of other people with whom he was friendly, you know. He was a very, very devious character. I can tell you a story about Savile, which is interesting. I had decided that he had to go, and we had a conversation. And Jimmy being the sort of person, very quick thinking, he said, well, you are running a social action campaign for jobs for young people. So, the story, when it comes out that I am leaving, we will say I am leaving to make way for a younger disc jockey, who was Nicky Campbell coming in to the BBC. And I said, yes, that'll stack up, that's fine. Let's do it that way. And as far as I knew, the only person that knew about it

was Doreen, my assistant, and Jimmy Savile. And the next day was the day my son was graduating, with his first degree at Cardiff. So I drove down to Cardiff that day, and it was only when I was coming back I switched my mobile phone on and my chief assistant, Dave Price, said, oh, thank God I've got you, he said. The press have got the story that you fired Jimmy Savile. Now, that could only have been leaked by Savile to make him look as if he was a victim of persecution. And that's the sort of devious man that he was. And I think that's awful, you know. Tough on the press officer who had to turn it round [laughs].

Q: [01:27:16] That takes us directly [laughs] in fact, to the first question of this second session, which is, so we're on 1985, you had scaled the h--, the managerial ladder.

A: [01:27:28] Yeah.

Q: [01:27:29] To become controller of Radio 1. Could you plot your course to that position, from being a producer of programmes?

A: [01:27:37] Yes. Well, I became eventually an executive producer and that was the time when I did The Beatles story, just after I'd taken that on, and I suppose I made a reasonable success of it and they sold it all round the world. I didn't get any money, but they did [laughs]. In fact, you know, somebody again came up to me on the ship a few weeks ago and said, oh, I bought your Beatles story. I said, oh, that's very nice, because it's totally illegal and pirated [laughs]. And he said, yeah, it was costing me $40 [laughs] and $18 for shipping. I said, well, be aware that what you've got is illegal [laughs]. There we are. So that was executive producer and then I was very much into promotional activities, as you will have gathered from what you've heard already. And I became a head of the department and then finally controller. And that was very exciting. Dick Francis was the managing director and that was really--, I got the first insight into things that went on at that sort of level. And that was about the time when we were proposing to convert the Langham Hotel and that whole site which we owned into the new broadcasting centre. And Dick Francis was very keen for this. He had hired Norman Foster as the architect and drawings had been done. And it was a tremendously exciting project. And then Duke Hussey overruled everyone and said that Margaret Thatcher wouldn't stand for the BBC spending that sort of money on a new broadcasting centre at the time when it was protesting

poverty and being hard-up. And so the project was lost, which was very sad. And Dick Francis was terribly upset and subsequently left and went to run the British Council. And having just been appointed, Dick Francis sent for me after work one day and said, have a drink, I'll talk to you. You started life in the BBC as an engineer and we're going to get into this new thing called RDS and I want you to take charge of it. And I said, oh, my God, why does the BBC have to be into everything? We've just started breakfast television, and now this other thing. I don't even know what it is. Oh, we'll send you on a crash course, but the Radio Data System, this will enable people to use their radios better because it will automatically tune you to the optimum signal wherever you are for a particular channel, and identify the name of the channel. So, I was sent on a crash course. And I mean he said, by the way, you're not just in charge of it for Radio 1, you're good at promotion, the BBC's been elected by the European Broadcasting Union, the EBU, to run it, to chair the whole programme-makers' meeting. So, you're in charge of it for Europe as well [laughs]. Wonderful. On top of being Radio 1 controller, which was a new job, [laughs] I had to do this as well. And again, I used what sort of skill I seemed to have for things and devised a logo. And the difficulty was that the broadcasters of Europe had decided they were going to introduce this extra layer of technology. But it's no good unless you've got receivers for it, so the difficulty was to persuade the industry to build radios. And there was a certain amount of resentment about this because the industry's attitude was, you know about broadcasting, we know about making radios. And it didn't really take off until I persuaded Ford and General Motors to line-fit radios, which is something DAB haven't learnt. It's taken them ten years to try and line-fitted DAB radios. And then it started to get away, and I went to Japan. And we at the BBC devised what we were going to call the BBC Domestic Radio, and I wanted to try and get the industry to build these. And again, they took the attitude, we know about radios, you don't, so we never got that one off the ground. But I did think at one stage we had persuaded Sony to build the first domestic RDS portable radio. And I came back from Japan all excited and showed it to David Hatch, who was thrilled. And eventually of course we did, and there was a certain amount of resentment between the European manufacturing industry, Bosch, Blauplunkt, and Philips and people like that, and the Japanese side of things. But eventually it took off and it's a worldwide standard now. Everybody has RDS and I think it will go on for a long time because there isn't the capital money available in countries like Spain, Italy, Portugal, all these countries that are struggling to reequip a whole chain of transmitters to broadcast DAB, whereas RDS on FM is just as good. In fact, technically it probably sounds better than DAB. And then in parallel with that, DAB has launched DAB+, which is more efficient in terms of frequencies. So, it's all a bit of a mess

because everybody's still broadcasting in FM, and in places like Germany and Norway and, well, not Norway. Norway's just doing DAB only. But, you know, here we are broadcasting on FM and DAB, which is quite costly to run the two in parallel. And it looks as if they'll have to go on doing it for a long time.

Q: [01:32:54] How long did it take to establish RDS as a standard?

A: [01:32:58] Well, the standard was written fairly early on. But establishing [it across local take up 01:33:01], probably about four or five years I think it took.

Q: [01:33:08] And did you enjoy that process? Because that's rather different from what you'd been doing.

A: [01:33:11] Totally different, yes.

Q: [01:33:12] Engaging with other international broadcasting--,

A: [01:33:14] Yes, what happened was that I did it for a number of years running the--, it was called the Programme Strategy Group or something like that. And we used to have meetings all over Europe and that's why I was known as the remote controller [laughs] behind my back because I was so often away on RDS business as well as trying to do--, I mean it was one of the problems in the BBC is that, yeah, everybody has to do two or three different functions. It was very different, and it was a very exciting experience. And then in the end EBU like the BBC went through a series of cutbacks and decided that they didn't want to keep the RDS forum going. [Inaudible 01:33:52] get the RDS programme-makers' group going and so we formed--, there was so much enthusiasm amongst the members, they formed an RDS forum, and I was nominated as chairman of that, and carried on as chairman until two years ago. But it's just I thought it was time for somebody younger to move in. And it's still going. I mean they're now developing RDS 2 which has a second subcarrier which will enable it to carry more data. So, I think if they can again get the broadcasters to take it up, it will make it even more competitive with DAB.

Q: [01:34:30] So you get the best signal and it will carry--,

A: [01:34:34] Yeah, it can carry more data. More broadly, I think the whole future of broadcasting is threatened to a certain extent by, you know, the Internet, because these days so many people can get their music via downloads and people are now store--, talking about hybrid radios which pick up a digital signal rather than a broadcast signal. And so, the, you know, I just fear for the whole future of broadcasting. I mean certainly they will not have the size of audiences that we had in Radio 1 at its peak in the '70s and '80s, went up to 20, 22 million a week, and nowadays it's a lot less than that because there is so much more radio. But there's also so much more entertainment available and kids are so much more technically aware.

Q: [01:35:27] When you were appointed controller in '85, what qualities were you--, do you think won you the job?

A: [01:35:35] Well, enthusiasm, I think, and the fact that I was, er, I loved it, you know. I enjoyed it so much and I think that sort of enthusiasm and enjoyment shone through. And I seemed to have a knack of being fairly popular with the staff. Well, a few exceptions [laughs] of course, inevitably if you're the boss you're going to fall out with some people. But I mean if you look back at the track record of the things that I had been responsible for, whether it was the documentaries around the Beatles story or promotional things like the roadshow or many other things that we did, I suppose that sort of counted towards my track record.

Q: [01:36:15] Were you [boarded 01:36:16] for the job?

A: [01:36:17] Yes.

Q: [01:36:18] How did that--, what was that process?

A: [01:36:20] Well, you know, I can't remember much about it now, because there were--, there were certainly members of the board of governors on there and senior BBC

executives. And I really didn't think I'd get it. There was a rival, a chap called Tim Blackmore, who had a very good track record from commercial radio, although he had been with me in the early days and I was sorry that he had left. And I personally always think that Derek Chinnery probably [laughs] favoured Tim over me, I don't know why. We were all friends, but there you are.

Q: [01:36:57] And when you got there, how did you find BBC management? Was it a collaborative or a competitive space?

A: [01:37:03] Yes. It was fantastic, you know. We--, there was a stage when there were five controllers for the five networks. Radio 5 was in existence by then. The director of resources, Duncan Thomas, the chief accountant, Frank McGahern, and a chief personnel officer, and we were really the sort of handful of people who actually ran radio. And we were very conscious of that. We all got on well socially and we felt a sense of ownership of the whole place, you know. And it just worked so well. We just got on so well. And David Hatch was the boss and he would take us away for management conferences and we'd just discuss things thoroughly and thrash it out. And there was very little dissent, you know. It was just super.

Q: [01:38:02] And did you get--, did you go to board of management meetings, or…?

A: [01:38:06] Oh, yes. A duty of all controllers is to go to the board of management board of governors' meeting. And of course, 'cause there are five radio controllers and two television ones in those days, there were seven people, so it only came about, you know, once or twice a year. You would turn up and you'd make a report about your network and what you had done. And I'd always bleat on about the lack of FM [laughs]. And really the only man that was--, I wish I could remember his name. Let's think of it for a second. I found a note when I was looking up stuff. He was the financial director of Marks and Spencer's and he was a youngish man with teenaged children. And he was much more interested in Radio 1 than any of the other governors. There was a trade union representative there who was, er, sorry, my brain's gone. I can't remember these people now.

Q: [01:39:05] [Can you pick one out 01:39:05]?

A: [01:39:07] Yeah. But, you know, you'd have thought as a union man he would have been particularly interested but he wasn't. [Laughs] I can remember one story, if I can get this right. At the end of the meeting, the chairman, Duke Hussey, would say, well, are there any other comments about anything to do with the BBC that people would like? And God, I wish I could remember the names. It was a Scottish gentleman who was--, I've told this story so many times. I can't remember. He said, Mr Chairman, he said, my wife and I are not prudes, he said, but there was this play by Dennis Potter, and there was this man on top of this woman, and she was clearly having an organism [laughs]. And the collapse of the meeting [laughs], you know. Everybody was sort of bursting with laughter and Duke sort of wrapped it up quickly [laughs] and said, I think it's time we go for lunch. Oh, dear. Who was the man?

Q: [01:40:07] You would have probably observed some blood on the carpet of the board of management and elsewhere. Say, for example, the disposal of Alasdair Milne. Do you have any memories of that?

A: [01:40:18] Oh, yes. That was terrible. Dukey--, we went--, we had--, [sighs]. I can't remember how much is apocryphal and how much is my memory [laughs] you know. The thing was that Dukey tapped the glass and said that the director general would not be joining us [laughs] for lunch because he's leaving. And that's about all I can remember of it now, yes.

Q: [01:40:48] The, erm, what sort of health was Radio 1 in when you took over the reins? It was in a dominant position.

A: [01:40:55] [Both talking at once] Yes, p--,

Q: [01:40:55] It had the largest audience in Europe. But after 20 years, what were its strengths and what were its weaknesses?

A: [01:41:00] Well, its weaknesses were that, you know, quite rightly pointed out, and one of the reasons why I left was the fact that the audience, you know, I had been there

since the beginning, and I was getting older and the audience was growing older with it, you know. It wasn't pulling in the younger people and that was one of the things that Birt was very conscious of. And I think that was quite right. What I wanted to do, and this was all coinciding with John Birt's arrival and me leaving and Liz Forgan taking over as managing director of radio, the problem was as I saw it that a lot of the disc jockeys were getting older too. You know, we had people like Bob Harris and Gary Davis and Simon Bates and, you know, their average age was all getting older. And I said to Liz, what we should do is you should let me go and run Radio 2 and take a lot of those disc jockeys with me. And then we can use the power of the BBC's marketing machine over a period of six to nine months to switch the audience away and we will sell it that Radio 2 is going to be the new popular network and Radio 1 can be then relaunched as a young, sharp network with new disc jockeys and appeal of music people under 25, which is what Birt's intention was. But Liz didn't want to do that. She thought it would disadvantage the Radio 2 audience. And I said, but the Radio 2 audience, the existing Radio 2 audience, is quite old. They can go and listen to BBC local radio, because the median age for local radio was something like 60, 65. But she didn't want to do that and so I eventually negotiated my way out. Ten years later, ten years later, Jim Moir came in and did exactly what I had outlined. And I was pleased that he did it but I wished they'd done it when I, you know, and I could have run it myself. I would like to have stayed on and done that. As it was, I left.

Q: [01:42:59] How did that process of leaving work? How did the…

A: [01:43:02] Ah. What had happened there was that--,

Q: [01:43:04] Did you feel that you were ready to move on or--,

A: [01:43:08] David Hatch and I had gone to a European Broadcasting Union meeting. They had heads of programme meetings as well as RDS meetings. And we were in Turkey at the time I remember, and he and I said, he said, look, we'll skip this afternoon's session, we'll take a boat out and have a chat. And he said, you know, you've served good time, you know, I think a lot of your capabilities and all the rest of it. But I think it's probably time you moved over for somebody else. And I said, yes, I could go along with that, and get a right deal about the pension and all the rest of it,

so it was agreed that I would go. And then of course in the interim, John Birt came in and Liz Forgan was appointed managing director. David Hatch was moved sideways, neutralised virtually, by being deputy director general, given an office of two and a desk and a driver, and that was about it, as opposed to the whole staff of radio. So, David said, well, I think you'd better forget about leaving for the moment. You should stay and help Liz Forgan sort it out. And I put this proposal to Liz about running Radio 2 and she didn't want to do that. And she offered me the post of head of publicity--, promotions, head of promotions, and I said no. I said, that will be perceived as a demotion in terms of having had the title of controller, you know. I would like to be director of promotion, for BBC Radio. That's a job I could do. And she wasn't prepared to do that, so eventually we agreed that I would go. And that was the end of it, you know. And there were various ceremonies, which were good fun [laughs]. And I left my way out. But then I sort of came back because about two years later, after I had left, I left in '93, in '95, Liz Forgan said, we want to have a big event to demonstrate the BBC's commitment to live music, Music Live '95, and we're going to run it in Birmingham, 'cause that's the heart of the UK. And Nick Kenyon was in charge of it. He was the controller of Radio 3. Sir Nick, as he now is. And Nick said, would you be prepared to produce it? And I said, well, I can't do it singlehanded, I need to take it to a company that has, you know, backup and support and infrastructure. And so, I went to Unique with it and they made me chairman of Unique special projects and I did that project for them, Music Live '95, with lots of original ideas. We had things like the BBC, the best buskers' competition. We got buskers from all over the country playing in the city. We did the top ten hymns for Radio 4. We did a number of different concerts. And then we culminated in a special event which was written by Johnny Dankworth and [John Hurl 01:46:04], for a piece of music which was broadcast live on Radios 1, 2 and 3 at the same time. So, it was all good fun. And then the BBC did what it often did, it took the idea and said, we'll do it in-house next time [laughs] so I never got it after that. That was the end of it, which was terrible.

Q: [01:46:26] Did you find it difficult to let go of the reins of Radio 1, or were you ready at that time?

A: [01:46:30] No, I was ready for it. I really was, you know. And in fact, I don't listen to Radio 1 now [laughs]. I tend to listen to Classic FM and Radio 4 [laughs] most of the time, or Radio 5 Live. I mean it still is something of an insomniac. I always had this

habit, I've always been a bad sleeper, and I take a radio with a headphone and I listen at odd times. I listen to Radio 5, I listen to LBC at night now. But in those days, I listened to Radio 1 and then I could do what--, a habit I learned from David Hatch, which is to send notes of encouragement or discouragement or criticism to people, handwritten. And people respond to that, you know. I mean people have said to me since, oh, since you left, we never get any notes from management about whether we're good or bad or indifferent, and it's not like that anymore. In the days when you were here, we always knew. Sometimes it would be something I'd heard in the middle of the night and I'd write a critical note about it or a praiseworthy note. And I think that's a nice thing to do. I think it's a good thing about management. You should have a good relationship with your staff.

Q: [01:47:37] I don't think that happens very much.

A: [01:47:39] No. It doesn't happen in today's BBC.

Q: [01:47:42] Your departure from the BBC coincided as we've mentioned with the wholesale reorganisation of Radio 1 under Matthew Bannister as controller and Liz Forgan as managing director. You've talked a little bit about what you thought should happen to Radio 1 at that point. What's your view of what they did to Radio 1, and what the consequences of that were?

A: [01:48:04] Well, I don't blame Matthew for what he did because he was appointed by John Birt. He wasn't the person I would have given the job to but in order to get--, John Birt wanted the opinion formers in the country to--, it was the time of the Charter renewal I think, or near the Charter renewal. He wanted them to understand that Radio 1 wasn't different. Birt actually said to me one day, I can't hear any difference between Radio 1 and Capital Radio in London. And I said, well, you must be deaf, you know, if you look at what we do in terms of documentaries and news coverage, social action broadcasting, live concerts and all--, and the sessions that we do, you know, it's vastly different. But he wanted it to be perceived different. And what Bannister did of course was to change everything almost overnight and put different disc jockeys in different places. And people love radio because they're people of habit. They like to tune in at a certain time every day and hear a certain type of music. And Matthew ignored all that convention and changed everything, with the

result that the audience halved, which was a huge asset for commercial radio in this country. [Laughs] For a while it was probably the best thing he could do. And certainly, he got abusive headlines from all the, you know, the popular press, Down with Bannister, and all that sort of thing. But it wasn't entirely his fault. He's a good broadcaster, he's a good man. But he didn't do much to ensure the popularity of Radio 1. It's taken a long time to pick it back up to what it is now.

Q: [01:49:34] Did they miss the point of Radio 1, in terms of trying to engage a mass audience?

A: [01:49:39] Well, I don't think John was concerned about mass--, John Birt was concerned about having a mass audience at all. He wanted to make sure that when the Charter was renewed, they still kept Radio 1 under their banner, and that it was a very different sort of station and it wasn't competing with commercial radio.

Q: [01:49:57] So he was articulating a view of Radio 1 that couldn't be done by commercial radio?

A: [01:50:01] Yes.

Q: [01:50:02] Do you think in the longer term, that has been the correct way to go?

A: [01:50:08] Hmm. Well, I'm still a great believer in the BBC and I think that most of what it does is different and unique, and I don't think there's anything wrong in having big audiences. I think Terry Wogan epitomised that. He was popular and he was different, and he wasn't on commercial radio. There was nobody of that sort of stature and status on independent radio.

Q: [01:50:32] Do you think it's the job of radio, Radio 1 in particular, to shape and challenge audience taste? Or to reflect what they want?

A: [01:50:43] No, I think it's a bit of both. I think there's an awful lot it does and has done in terms of developing new music and encouraging new music, and I think that's very worthwhile. It's a good thing to do from a young people, audience point of view. But it's also good for the economy as well, you know, [laughs] if you think of the money that's brought in from Britpop and all of that. No mean achievement.

Q: [01:51:09] And how did, as a producer and as a controller, how did you find out about your audiences? What were your sort of sources of information [inaudible 01:51:19] their size and their tastes?

A: [01:51:19] [Both talking at once] Oh, well, yes, well, the BBC has this very complicated system of audience measurement, you know, where they do it by a sample of diaries. I don't know how they do it these days 'cause I'm not in touch with it all. But they would sample a random number of representative selection of the audience each day and on the basis of that they would extrapolate the size of the audience. And then they would have a thing called the appreciation index which is how much everything is enjoyed by people that chose it.

Q: [01:51:52] And did that govern aesthetic or music tastes among producers?

A: [01:51:59] I don't know. They were always pleased when they got big audiences and big figures but [laughs] I don't think they took too much notice about the other side of it.

Q: [01:52:08] I was going to ask about presenters. There's been lots of discussion over the years, for example, in Simon Garfield's book, 'The Nation's Favourite', that there are--,

A: [01:52:21] Erm--,

Q: [01:52:22] Ah, yes, there you go. That there were a number of competing and powerful cliques within the presenting ranks in Radio 1.

A: [01:52:29] [Both talking at once] Oh, yes.

Q: [01:52:30] And some considerable tension between them at times. And so what was it like to manage these strong and diverse personalities? Did you leave them to it? Or did you have to keep the peace?

A: [01:52:37] [Both talking at once] Well, they've all got--, they've all got huge egos, Alban. Everybody thinks you should have heard his or her programme and of course it's impossible to--, channel controller listening 24 hours a day to hear everything that's going on. It is difficult managing egotistical people and you have to make them feel loved and wanted and remember their wedding anniversaries and take them out and make a fuss of them and pay them adequately. Although we didn't pay them excessively, the way they do these days. It's a difficult balancing skill to get it right. You do a lot of it by instinct, I think. There was tension between, you know, what we call the left field and the right field, in terms of the people who wanted to be about the mass audiences and the other side. What I did try to do when I took over as controller was bring in a more intelligent--, no, wrong word, intelligent, a more, er, enthusiastic brand of presenters. I'm talking about people like Nicky Campbell, Simon Mayo, Roger Scott. Well, John Peel was already there. They were people who would talk as much about the music as they did about themselves and their personality. And I think it was epitomised by Roger Scott, who I sort of poached from Capital Radio, because his sort of raison d'être was, I can't wait to share this great new piece of music I've just heard with the audience. That's what he wanted to do, that's what he lived for, and I was so sad when he died. I thought that was a great pity.

Q: [01:54:13] Did you have to--, did you deal with presenters directly themselves? Or did you mainly deal with their agents?

A: [01:54:18] Mostly you have to negotiate through their agents, in terms of, you know, the terms of the contract.

Q: [01:54:25] And are the agents more or less a stabilising or destabilising force?

A: [01:54:31] Oh. There were so many different ones, you know. It's impossible to generalise. I'd say that you answered that one.

Q: [01:54:44] Okay, okay. You had problems with some but not with others?

A: [01:54:48] Yes. [Laughs] That's true, yes.

Q: [01:54:49] [Laughs] Okay. Quickly, I wanted to ask you about different musical tastes and cultures and the diversity of Radio 1. Robin Scott always said that he wanted more than just pop music.

A: [01:55:05] Yes, he--, well, I told you it was a very eclectic mix.

Q: [01:55:06] [Both talking at once] Did you know that he--, I hear he had a particular interest in country music.

A: [01:55:09] Did he?

Q: [01:55:10] Yeah, apparently so.

A: [01:55:11] I did so [laughs].

Q: [01:55:13] But was it important to you to reflect different musical tastes on Radio 1? And the sort of heritage from which--, cultural heritage from which they came?

A: [01:55:20] Not just different tastes, but different presenters as well, I think. You know, I brought in people like Ranking Miss P to do the West Indian music, from Man Ezeke from Jamaica, you know, Pete Tong to do the dance music. Different people had different areas of expertise and we tried to reflect that across the network, so that we had a fairly broad range of music, actually. Not necessarily during daytimes, but during the weekends and evenings.

Q: [01:55:51] You've mentioned it before, but could you say something about the relationship between the BBC and the commercial music industry? You're both there promoting popular music, but for different commercial and public service purposes.

A: [01:56:05] Well, on the face of it, of course, we were daggers drawn about the needle time problem. But privately, Lord Levy, as you know, he's Michael Levy, he used to own Magnet Records, and he and I used to have private discussions where we would suggest various ways of solving the problems. And then he would go back to his side and I would go back to my side and we would try and smooth things over. And we did get some improvements in the relationship I think in the long run.

Q: [01:56:32] And what sort of problems were there?

A: [01:56:34] Well, it's mainly about needle time and the amount of needle time. And yeah, that's the biggest one of all.

Q: [01:56:41] And that was a persistent issue.

A: [01:56:42] Yes. I don't know how that's resolved these days. I don't know what they do. But they all seem to play lots of records now [laughs].

Q: [01:56:49] I think it got--, I think in the mid to late '90s there was another agreement that superseded what was there before. But it does seem insane. Okay, well, look, where are we up to, in terms of time?

A: [01:57:02] Oh, that's fine. Yeah, we've got quarter of an hour more.

Q: [01:57:05] Okay. Well, I wanted to particularly ask you about, erm, where's it gone? Oh, yeah, so you were responsible. Were you actually controller of Radio 1 by the time of Live Aid? [Inaudible 01:57:20]

A: [01:57:20] [Both talking at once] Yes, that was the first big I had to do.

Q: [01:57:22] And so could you explain what it was, how it came about, and how you managed the sort of global sound transmission?

A: [01:57:28] Yeah. It was very difficult, you know, because I suppose the main object--, well, first of all, you had to get agreement from all the bands to broadcast live, which some of them were quite touchy about. But we managed to negotiate that. And I had a team of producers working on it. The next difficulty was a BBC one, because Bob Geldof's attitude was, I want to use this to appeal for money for Ethiopia. Give us your effin' money, that was the thing, and if I can't say that, you're not going to get the broadcasting rights. So that entailed Alan Yentob and myself going to see Michael Checkland, who was deputy DG, and he had to take it to the board and there was a lot of soul searching inside the BBC as to whether we could do this, because it wasn't the sort of thing that had been done much before [laughs]. And nobody had been allowed to use the BBC's airwaves except in Children in Need, which John Drummond always said should be called Gays in Need, but [laughs] he never got his own way there [laughs]. I digress. Then the next problem was the union problem, because television and radio were like two--, almost like two separate companies for the first 20 years of my time in the BBC. And television wanted to mix their own sound but of course that was impossible with that number of bands coming on. So that was eventually resolved and finally, you know, we got it all together. But it was a huge logistical job to do. And I was very proud of the fact that we did the sound for the world. And that was the first really big thing that I was responsible for, although I wasn't the actual producer. It was all my guys who were very good. There's another good story about that, that Jeff Griffin was the main producer, and he had an ATRAC machine in one of the mixing desks, across one of the mixing desks. And he--, it was quite--, it was illegal to record it. They didn't want it recorded. They wanted it live and that was it. But of course, the big mistake happened when Paul McCartney came on to close the London end with 'Let It Be' and he came on and his microphone wasn't working for the first minute and 40 seconds. And Jeff luckily had recorded this on ATRAC and Paul McCartney came back in and laid in the missing vocal afterwards, so if you buy the DVD to this day, you'll hear it perfectly [laughs]. Not quite as it was on the day [laughs]. But it was a heart-stopping moment when that happened.

Q: [02:00:00] And it must have been a formidable technical challenge.

A: [02:00:03] Yes. We had a revolving stage and there was like one band was on live, one was coming off and one was going on, and the thing revolved all the time. And you can imagine the technical requirements of that. It was very difficult, but the boys solved it. They were good.

Q: [02:00:19] It was an amazing campaign. But do you think it's the responsibility of the BBC to promote those kind of causes?

A: [02:00:27] No, I think it reflected, you know, it's for something which didn't happen spontaneously. It happened with Geldof's enthusiasm, didn't it? But I think because it was such a big thing and it was in the field of music that we were broadcasting, it was right that we should broadcast it. And if we had to appeal to help the starving of Ethiopia, so be it, you know. That was part of the price of getting the broadcasting rights. And we did many others, but I don't think there will ever be another one as big as that.

Q: [02:00:557] And were there lessons that you had learned from the roadshow, that you could--,

A: [02:01:00] More lessons that we learnt, the year before, we had done Summer of '84, which was a concert stage by Elton John's manager, John Reid, at Wembley Stadium, with five or six different bands. And so it was almost like a dress rehearsal. We had had the experience of doing that, although on that occasion, John Reid had televised it himself and retained the rights. But we had the rights to broadcast it. And it was a good rehearsal for it.

Q: [02:01:30] I'm very interested to know about life at home and how--, 'cause your work as a producer and then controller, it must have been a really demanding experience, so [inaudible 02:04:43]

A: [02:01:43] [Laughs] [Both talking at once] Why do you think I've been married three times, for God's sake?

Q: [02:01:46] [Laughs] Okay. But that's the question. What effect did this have on your home life? How were you able to find time for family?

A: [02:01:52] [Both talking at once] Terrible. Eh?

Q: [02:01:54] And other pleasures?

A: [02:01:55] Well, probably if you asked my children [laughs] 'cause they'll say I didn't. I did try and make time for them in the s--, I mean we had some fantastic holidays and all the rest of it. But yes, it wasn't like a job to me. It was like fun. And I was living down in the middle of Kent for the first part of 25 years and I was leaving at six in the morning and getting back at eight or nine at night, if I got back at all. And of course, my first wife got very fed up with this and I can understand that. I think I'm not going to say any more [laughs].

Q: [02:02:29] Okay, fine. So, there's a sort of price to pay for that kind of professional dedication.

A: [02:02:32] [Both talking at once] Yes. Well, I think if you get married young, you know, your tastes do change and, you know, you grow apart, and you become closer to other people [laughs]. If you've read the book, you'll know what I'm talking about [laughs].

Q: [02:02:48] And after leaving the BBC, you've talked about your work on RDS, that sort of spanned sort of three decades. But you also after--, when you left the BBC you joined your former presenter, Noel Edmonds, at Unique Productions.

A: [02:03:03] Yeah, well, Unique had--, Noel had put money into Unique with Tim Blackmore and Simon Cole. He started it. And with Unique Productions it was

interesting 'cause they had this division, Unique Special Projects. I mean one of the other things that we did--, started with, was the Last Night of the Proms in the Park. And I remember we negotiated with Hyde Park to do that, and they said, don't think this is going to be happening every year. We'll let you have it once. But it tramples the undergrowth and it's terrible. And we wanted--, we tried to sell Nick on the idea of not just doing it in London but having screens in the old Radio 1 Club idea of in Glasgow, Birmingham, different places. And they wouldn't do that then. And for various reasons we lost the contract and somebody else got it and they now do it of course, exactly like that, and they've been doing it every year ever since. So that was one thing. And then the other thing I did out of interesting, erm, contractually there was some money I think, and Simon said, how would you like to earn it off by being a studio manager again? And I went to do Something Understood with Mark Tully in Delhi and it was a wonderful experience 'cause Mark's a great guy. And he didn't get on with John Birt any better than I did, and we both made speeches denouncing him, so we had that in common. And he made us very welcome in Delhi. I went on two trips to do that and it was great fun, just going back to my roots [laughs].

Q: [02:04:36] I remember listening to that, Something Understood.

A: [02:04:38] It's still going. It's still--, well, at least I think it's still going. I'm not up that early on Sunday mornings [laughs].

Q: [02:04:45] And since then, you've continued to work, have you, in sort of consulting on broadcasting?

A: [02:04:51] Well, I did that for a while and then about ten years ago I was on a ship for my 70th birthday and three of the other speakers, it was going from Cape Town to Australia, Perth, three of the other speakers were people who I had known in broadcasting. One was Bill Mark and a songwriter, one was a man called Peter Dawling, who became a newsreader and then eventually went to--, well, he was a studio manager originally with me and then he went into news reading. And then he went up the news chain and finished up in Singapore, training the Singapore broadcasters, so he lectured about news broadcasting. And the third man was a chap called David Shute from Birmingham. He'd been on the Today programme as

a presenter and a producer. And they all said to me, why don't you come and do this cruise lecturing? And I'd just written a book about Radio 1, so I had some ideas. And they introduced me to the agent, a man called Peter Rushton, a very strange, abrupt manner. Peter. Yes! What, what? The others have mentioned you. I said, well, what do you mean, it's all right? He said, well, they say you're all right, so where do you want to go first? [Laughs] And I went to the Baltic and I was a bit nervous about doing this, but anyway, I wrote lectures really on using my principles of radio with lots of illustrations and audio clips and that type of thing, and it seemed to go down well. And I've been doing it for ten years. And now I've got to the heights of doing all the Cunard ships. Mostly I do Cunard, some Saga. And my wife does it as well, so that's quite good.

Q: [02:06:31] It sounds like fun.

A: [02:06:32] Mmm, it is.

Q: [02:06:33] When you look back on your time at the BBC, and particularly Radio 1, what kind of--, what impact have you had on the shape and sound of Radio 1, do you think? What's your legacy?

A: [02:06:48] Pretty big, if you think back on the roadshows, the documentaries, Radio 1 Club, Live Aid. I mean they say if they cut the top of my head off, they would find the words BBC or the letters BBC [laughs] engraved on it. And I do think I've had a wonderful career. I've been very, very lucky. If you do a job for your life, that you enjoy doing it, it's good, and that reflects back in your achievements and I thoroughly enjoyed it and I think--, although it's Bill Cotton once said, Bill Cotton who was managing director of television, it's like a stream and you put your finger in it and you make a diversion whilst your finger's there. And you pull your finger out and you're forgotten afterwards, [laughs] so it's probably about as important as a [tonne of feathers 02:07:38].

Q: [02:07:40] And radio in particular? From the early days of listening to ITMA?

A: [02:07:44] Right through--, yeah, and I still listen to radio. I still love radio. But I fear for its future.

Q: [02:07:52] Internet and digital are getting in the way.

A: [02:07:54] Mmm, I suspect so.

Q: [02:07:56] Johnny Beerling, thank you very, very much for letting us talk to you.

A: [02:07:59] My pleasure. Thank you for asking me.

[END OF RECORDING – 02:08:10]