

The First Transmission from Mount Coot-tha December 1978



ZZZ, St. Lucia
Tuesday 26th Dec.

Hello there. In last month's issue I expressed a reluctance to state that we would have made it to Mt Coot-tha by the time the article was read. Well it's true that we still have not received our licence, but we did receive a letter from the Broadcasting Commission (B.C.) on 12th Dec. which gave us a hill parking the major piece of paper. We did our best to get up to open the station at lunchtime, but sadly he declined the 11.00 AM slot. So it was John Woods who began Mt Coot-tha transmission at 10.21 AM at approx 4 kilowatts effective radiated power. Some calls started coming in from all over the place particularly the north & south coasts, however and even many from the south. The calls were usually to report good reception in those areas even with transmitters as weak as the one we had. It was equally pleasing that in the past two weeks subscriptions have increased from twenty to around 70 per week. We have also received a \$1,000 cheque from the Music Broadcasting Society (M.B.S.) for our faithful old homemade transmitter. Big Red is soon expected to be back at work for 4 MBS alongside our new big Sinterco transmitter on the Mt Coot-tha site, which, if your curiosity is the metal tower & hut next to channel 0's opposite channel 2's. While we were on the subject of T.V. stations thanks to channels 7, 9 & 10 for running our commercial free. Sadly other media outlets didn't offer much coverage to the changeover.

During the week leading up to 12 noon Friday the 15th, while still on 105.7 MHz we broadcast all manner of weird sounds on 10.1 MHz our new frequency including the symphonic sound of a child inside a mother's womb. It was apparently all too much for the Broadcasting Commission Dept asking why were we broadcasting the call from the Post & Telecommunications Dept asking why were we broadcasting the sounds of a child in pain and would we please stop it. Actually many of the effects we have broadcast recently have been recorded on Willy Brown's S.V.C. binocular headphones - microphones. It's quite a remarkable little beastie - looks like a normal pair of headphones but contains a microphone in each earpiece such that it records the actual acoustic response as the ear hears it. To get the full effect however you need to listen to the radio with headphones.

As this article is being written our new transmitter has been running for about two weeks & so yet to miss a beat. If it does you're in for an unfortunate surprise. Since we seriously lack the green stuff we have to make temporary repairs we will have to switch over to a smaller transmitter from Mt Coot-tha - but it will still be much better than the old St. Lucia frequency. Well history records that when the Air Force Government in the early 60's reportedly bowed to Reg Annet's pressure of establishing a third commercial T.V. network (0-10), there was a shortage of frequency space. Rather than move into the international U.H.F. T.V. Band, which was the order of the day & channels 4, 5 & 8 from the international F.M. band were utilized. 4ZZZ was originally given 102.1 as its frequency but this interfered with a channel 5 translator (i.e. a relay service) from the Darling Downs commercial T.V. station. So we were temporarily given 105.7 while D.D.Q. 10 shifted their relay frequency which you may be pleased to know, had just had a controlling interest in its shareholdings purchased by Eric Dane, the Sydney entrepreneur. Eric Dane was promoter of the Betty Blockbuster Jollies, Rocky Horror Show, the New Art Theatre in Glebe and who claims to be something of a pro-gaysiree. While on the subject of the birthday party was a bit disappointing. The night was marred by a number of mishaps late starts, banana throwing, glass throwing, lousy P.A. the usual things that can go wrong did! I'm reluctant to admit that some ZZZ subscribers are occasionally offence drunks, no matter how much root time things will be better, even so I know that many people had a pleasant time... *Joni Patton*

Transcription follows...

ZZZ, St. Lucia
Tuesday 26th December 1978

Hello there,

In last month's issue I expressed a reluctance to state that we would have made it to Mt. Cootha by the time the article was read. Well, it's true that we still have not received our licence, but we did receive a telex from the broadcasting tribunal authorizing broadcasting from the hill pending the major piece of paper.

We did our damndest to get Joh to open the station at lunchtime, but sadly he declined the honour. So, it was John Woods who began Mt. Cootha transmission at 102.1 MHz at approximately 4 kilowatts effective radiated power. Phone calls started coming in from all over the place particularly the north and south coasts, Toowoomba and even Maryborough. The calls were to report good reception in those areas, even with transistor radios, which was very pleasing.

Given the perilous financial situation it was equally pleasing that in the past two weeks subscriptions have increased from twenty to around 70 per week. We have also received a \$1,000 cheque from the Music Broadcasting Society (4MBS, the classical station) for our faithful old homemade transmitter "Big Red" soon expected to be back at work for 4MBS alongside our new big SINTRONIC transmitter on the Mt. Cootha site, which, if you are curious, is the metal tower and hut next to Channel 0 and opposite Channel 2. While we are on the subject of T.V. stations, thanks to channels 7, 9 & 0 for running our commercial free. Sadly, other media outlets didn't offer much coverage to the changeover.

During the week leading up to 12 noon Friday the 15th (December), while still on 105.7 MHz we broadcast all manner of weird sounds on 102.1 MHz our new frequency including the symbolic sound of a child inside a mother's womb. It was apparently all too much for the broadcasting authorities because we received a polite telephone call from the Post and Telecommunications Department asking why we were broadcasting the sounds of a child in "pain" and would we please stop it.

As this article is being written, our new transmitter has been running for about two weeks and as yet to miss a beat. If it does, you're in for an unfortunate surprise. Since we seriously lack the green stuff, we don't have a standby transmitter of the same power. So, if we do have to make temporary running repairs we will have to switch over to a smaller transmitter from Mt. Cootha - but it will still be much better than the old St. Lucia originated signal.

Why did we switch frequency? Well history records that when the Australian government in the early 1960s reputedly bowed to Reg Ansett's pressure to establish a third commercial T.V. network (0 -10), there was a shortage of frequency space. Rather than move into the international UHF T.V. band, expediency was the order of the day and channels 4, 5, and 5A from the international FM band were utilized. 4ZZZ was originally given 102.1 as its frequency but this interfered with a channel 5 translator (i.e. a relay service) from the Darling Downs commercial T.V. station. So, we were temporarily given 105.7 while DDQ 10 shifted their relay T.V. frequency. Which you may be pleased to know, has just had a controlling interest in its share holdings purchased by Eric Dare, the Sydney entrepreneur. Eric Dare was promoter of the Betty Blockbuster Follies, The Rocky Horror Show, the New Art Theatre in Glebe, and who claims to be something of a progressive.

While on the subject, the birthday party was a bit disappointing. The night was marred by a number of mishaps, late start, banana throwing, glass throwing, lousy P.A., the usual things that can go wrong did. I'm reluctant to admit that some ZZZ subscribers are occasionally offensive drunks, no matter, maybe next time things will be better, even so, I know many people had a pleasant time.

Jim Beatson

Published in Radio Times, January 1979.

