

THE BILL BINGHAM INTERVIEW



Bill is still in radio, acting, television, and continues to do voice-over work.

1. Radio City wasn't your first foray into radio was it?

No. My first professional work was with BBC Radio Birmingham (now Radio WM) in the early 70s - I presented weekend Breakfast; followed on Saturdays by the Ross and Henry Show. Les Ross is still a pal and now an eminent figure in the business. John Henry recommended us both to Gillian Reynolds, Radio City's founding Programme Controller, who offered us both jobs., Les decided to stay put in Birmingham.

2. What were those days leading up to the on-air date of 21st October 1974 at Radio City like?

Glorious. The best working days of my life. Gillian wanted us to bring Liverpool something very special, and I know we did because listening figures were excellent in those early months. With our insistence on high quality playlists and programmes, we fell out with one record company (and lost some revenue as a result) by speaking out against a certain teen band we announced we wouldn't play. Perhaps we were a bit grand but listeners friends told us our music was the most interesting. And Gillian had a great ear/eye for talent - two names spring to mind: Alan Bleasdale, aka Franny Scully, and Willie Russell.

3. You presented such programmes at The Great Easton Express, and you've played music by the likes of Phoebe Snow, is your musical taste eclectic?

I can't remember playing Phoebe Snow on the Great Easton Express - by the way, we all covered for each other's holidays so I probably worked every show - but I certainly played her on my own show Downtown, along with some wonderful discoveries from the American west coast like Alan Toussaint, Little Feat, Doobie Brothers, Jimmy Webb and so on. I also discovered the joys of albums by the world's top jazzers; the Crusaders, Weather Report, Stanley Clarke and dozens more - all perfect late night material. Dave Lincoln was someone else who had a good ear, too. He and I enjoyed Steely Dan very much and one or two of their tunes found their way onto the daily playlist. Liverpool has always looked over the Atlantic for good music and

we continued the tradition. Yes, my taste is eclectic.

4. We remember you in one respect as the voice of the morning and evening report jingles, and numerous commercials and promos, did the fact that you are also an actor help?

Yes. And I continue to act, and to do voiceovers for ads and tv documentaries.

5. You also became a producer at Radio City, producing programmes such as Foot in the door and the Friday night arts programme, weekend, was being a radio producer a challenging task?

Yes, of course. But no satisfaction otherwise. It meant we blazed a few trails. And I was able to meet heroes like Sir Charles Groves, then conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra, and the talented gang at the Everyman Theatre (Jonathan Pryce, Julie Walters, Bill Nighy, George Costigan, Matthew Kelly ...)

6. The time came to leave City with moves to Radio Trent, Radio 1's newsbeat, then reading the news and announcing on Radio 4 was the move to the BBC a bit of a culture shock with regards to presentation methodology?

No. Well, sometimes. But remember the BBC had begun updating themselves rapidly when ILR began to make itself felt, and Newsbeat was already a fast-paced well-resourced news service. Radio 4 required (and still requires) a more measured delivery. I can do both.

7. Your radio life had spanned 25 years were you then chomping at the bit to get back into where you had started - The theatre?

Vanity took me back to the theatre in the '80s. I was told I was a useful type and would find plenty of work. I did alright, but it's a fragile business and many actors have to stack supermarket shelves between jobs. I am very lucky - I have a fulfilling parallel career.

8. You have appeared on television in such programmes as, The upper hand, Eastenders, Between the lines, The Bill and crossroads is do you prefer the theatre or TV because of their different approaches to working methods?

I enjoy both and just like to work. Ask any actor and you'll get the same answer. You're right, techniques are quite different but the mental state is the same.

9. You have recently moved back in radio and are currently working at Saga West Midlands, is it nice to be back in front of the microphone working in digital studios?

I love it. Saga uses Selector, a popular and well-tested system in Britain with only a few quirks. Once you develop the necessary instincts about how it deals with transitions, timing and so on, it's a breeze.

Many thanks to Bill for taking the time out from a busy schedule to talk to us on The Brian Jones Radio City Tribute Website.