

Radio Pirates @ 50

By Mike Trippitt

Mike Trippitt is a freelance writer living in St Ives. His blog is at www.miketrippitt.com and you can follow him on Facebook.

The 50th Anniversary

The scourge of piracy has been with us since man began to trade. There is nothing good about a pirate. Yet occasionally, we romanticize pirates. We empathise with likeable rogues. Is there is a bit of Captain Jack Sparrow in us all?

Never was this more evident then in 1967. Britain was in the midst of a cultural revolution. It was the Swinging Sixties and the Summer of Love.

Britain rocked to the sound of popular music broadcast from offshore pirate radio ships, or from stations in disused seaforts. Radio Caroline and Radio London ruled the waves.

But the golden age of pirate radio came to an end on 14th August 1967, fifty years ago, when the hugely unpopular Marine etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 outlawed the stations. All but one closed. Radio Caroline continued to broadcast with defiant spirit.

Bill Hensby, station manager of, and driving force behind, our local community radio station HCRfm, remembers the pirates' heyday well. He says that when he first tuned to Radio London, "it was the best thing I have ever heard. The pirate radio era has had a major influence on my love of popular music and my interest in broadcasting."

Bill says: "Community Radio in the UK is absolutely indebted to the pirates because they were the pioneers of commercial radio, and radio freedom in the UK outside the BBC's monopoly."

Next time we listen to our community radio station, a commercial station or to BBC radio, let us raise a glass to the pirates of the airwaves who half a century ago, laid the foundations for the wonderful world of radio that we have today.



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