

IN DUBLIN

No. 133

45p (incl. VAT)

U2
Come All
The Way Home
What's On
7-20 August



**Breaking Out
In Ballisodare
The world of
Chuck Berry
by Rocky de Valera**

Yo-Ho-Ho: Pirates of the Airwaves
Éamonn Ó Catháin watches Dublin's
other TV. John Little turns the dial
on the city's thirteen radio stations.

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No. 133

6 August 1981

Cover by Alex McLennon



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U2: A Thousand Puns
'Scarlet', a new album by Mount Temple's finest, U2, is on the way. They too are on the way, for the Slane Festival on Sunday week. Gerard Higgins spoke to the blond one, Adam Clayton,

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by Syd Bluett

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Lynn Geldof has just discovered Club Travel. 'This is how the apostles must have felt. I can't wait to spread the good word.' And she doesn't.

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Gerald Berry, the composer, has returned to live in Ireland, with a radio play, 'La Traviata', under his arm. Giuseppe Verdi it isn't, and it sounds like fun. Michael Dervan writes.



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Derek Daly was an accordion champion; now he is a star racing driver. John Stephens describes his good fortune in getting sponsorship.



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Information and frequencies and a detailed wave band, for both Medium Wave and VHF, of all thirteen Dublin pirate radios. Compiled by John Little.

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Strange Fruits
'Being fond of a touch of the vulgars myself, I have always enjoyed Ken Russell's films,' says David McKenna, 'and "Altered States" is no exception'.

8
Cherishing The Children
There is a place for those who sniff glue to go at nights; they have to leave their glue behind but it is open twenty-four hours. It is beside St Michael and John's church and Denis Geoghegan went down to pay a visit.



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Too Much, Man
Tom Mathews went to the Magnet Bar on a Wednesday night. 'My ears almost fell off. It was like pressing your head against a burglar alarm.'

15
Rolling Over Chuck Berry
In the green fields of Sligo thousands will gather this weekend to hear a whole lot of folk music, and Chuck Berry. Rocky DeValera pays his dues to the man whose dominating guitar figures, sneering vocals and lyrics brought in a new teenage lifestyle of girls, cars and good times.

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THE DUBLIN INTELLIGENCER

AND PEOPLE'S MISCELLANY

Flickering By Night Dublin's Pirate Television Station

by Éamonn Ó Catháin

I have a television set. It is quite a handsome model and it includes a remote control computer. As I like television I often spend a good deal of my time in front of the box. One Friday night in mid-June I looked at a blank but undulating screen for several hours when most television stations were in their bed and fast asleep. I was expecting to see a major feature film — possibly 'Kramer vs Kramer'. What I didn't know was that a force of Gardai armed with crow-bars were preventing me from seeing it.

They were parked outside the State Cinema in Phibsborough from where this film would have been broadcast. The button was the third on my television set and the station was Channel D, subtitled Independent Television Dublin. I had learned of plans of the instigation of this channel since early April and had been clicking the buttons on my set to no avail until the beginning of June, just before the election. Then, one Friday I tuned into a pilot test show which was broadcast every night for the following week. The reception was very poor, with the picture constantly rolling and a veritable snowstorm on the screen, but the sound was almost perfect.

The signal was weak, the reception in black and white and the frequently-repeated material irritating. One observer described the operation as 'amateur-land'.

But somebody, somewhere, had succeeded in putting a picture on my screen.

The station had a signature tune, a logo and a new name — Channel D (it had previously been announced as Channel 3). They had begun by making two test transmissions from the Camelot Hotel in Malahide fronted by 'Doctor' Don Moore, he of ARD fame, on 25 April and now announced that owing to police harassment they would cease transmission until the new government was installed the following Tuesday and that they



This is Jim Reldy; he is one of the directors of the station.

would then return to full-power broadcasting.

When the Coalition government took over the pirates began to broadcast once more until the third week of July. The Gardai did not return to prevent broadcasting and the station proceeded to show one film per night. The staff had taken confidence from the fact that some TDs are on record as saying that they would support their cause as long as 'they did not transmit obscene or pornographic material'. While I have not personally tuned in to the station every night since it began, most of the material I have



Joan Lowe, Channel D presenter, with 'Doctor' Don Moore.

seen could hardly be described as entirely savoury. Some of the films have leanings towards soft porn featuring, for example, a stripper, while others contained language which could be offensive to some. But by far the most objectionable were the films which featured gangland killers, and mafia hit-men. Murder was seen to be glorified; I remember two scenes — one where a black man seduced a black woman but as soon as they were in the bedroom, he murdered her. In another a man shot another in the kneecap and watched his agony-ridden face for ten to twenty seconds before shooting him in the face. All this with a horrific smile on the killer's face.

Broadcasts begin very suddenly, without any ceremony. The equipment consists solely of a video-cassette recorder linked to a transmitter and thence to an aerial in the roof. This means that there are no continuity announcers and no live bulletins, as normal single-camera studios are not yet available to them. The staff of Channel D originally had plans for breakfast television — the first in Europe — and while I was told that they had already made some early morning transmissions, this had not been to the format envisaged.

The schedule originally involved rising at 5.30am to research and

script the news (by reading the papers) and then to have a camera rehearsal from 6.15 to 6.30am followed by video taping until 7 am. The recording would then be edited on to cassette and then rushed by motorbike from Alto Productions — a separate company of whom Channel D is a client — where it would be broadcast from Phibsborough from 7.45 until 8.15 am. Plans have only temporarily been shelved and if the channel takes off in the way that the directors hope, then the idea will eventually become a reality. The station is at present transmitting in colour but only within a five mile radius of Phibsborough. For a further ten miles it can be seen in monochrome to people who live on the very fringe of the reception area. It is received via rabbit's ears only and if I move my aerial the signal disappears. At the time of writing the station is not broadcasting because it has received and is currently installing a very sophisticated transmitter from Holland, which will have a reception range of twenty-five to thirty miles and will be in full colour. The station is also having a more powerful aerial installed which will improve reception. It is not clear exactly when the station would come back on the air but it should be in the near future.

Pirate television, though new to

Ireland, is not altogether new to Europe. In Italy the idea reached ridiculous levels where in the northern half of the country alone hundreds of stations had spawned. The Rome area at one time had over sixty stations and one of these even managed to block out the State's national broadcasting channel. But whereas the Italians were only interested in pornography the pirates here are committed to a long-term policy of establishing independent local television in Ireland, where the station would be entirely self-supporting through revenue earned from advertising.

Hardly believing this desire to be a solely philanthropic gesture, I contacted Brian K. Dick when he was recording an interview with Victor Bewley for Channel D. Brian was one of the first presenters for the channel and he also let me see a promotional and unedited video of an interview outlining the aims of the station. I asked him questions:

Brian, can you tell me about Channel D and Channel 3?

Brian K. Dick: There has been a split something along the lines of the Provos and their legal branch, Sinn Féin. Channel 3 is now just a pressure group which lobbies for independent broadcasting but which does not transmit. Channel D on the other hand shows programmes but does not see it as piracy, rather as 'test transmissions'.

Are you getting any advertisements?

Yes, there are a lot coming in now. These will presumably be shown when the new Dutch transmitter comes into operation. Obviously it's a slow process — we can't be as public as we'd like about our schedule — and we have to build up an audience through word of mouth. Advertisements will follow on that.

I find a lot of these films that are being shown very objectionable because of the sadistic violence contained in them.

Well, actually I haven't seen any of these yet as I can't receive the channel. But the directors are anxious to succeed and presumably they are showing this sort of material to attract audiences and eventually advertising. Also funds are low and these films are probably cheap. A lot of money is being spent — on the new transmitter and aerial. The channel is going to make it. The big corporations will of course chase Channel D up for royalties but not the smaller kind of companies that make these kind of films. Royalties will of course be paid when the channel gets established. The film distributors don't like the sound of it.

What about RTE?

Well, the only complaint I know



The State Cinema in Phibsborough: all over the city screens flicker by night and insomniacs have never had it so good.

of has been that when Channel D broadcast during the day it caused interference to RTE's reception in at least one area.

At present the service is only available to those of us with rabbit's ears. What about the population who avail of the piped system?

Well, initially the directors didn't want to use the piped system as the signal could then be easily jammed. But now both Phoenix and Merlin are saying that they will give the station a channel within six to eight weeks. What they envisage doing is using the BBC2 channel when it closes down each night.

The delivery of this new and more powerful Dutch transmitter is the latest development in Channel D's history.

The immediate plans would be to get it on to the pipe. From then the reception will improve, adver-



Michael Collins sits idly by.

tisers will be attracted and the plans for breakfast television can be implemented. It's a long-term policy.

When I phoned Jim Reidy, one of the directors of the station, he assured me that they had presented a variety of films including harmless westerns, and that all their content thus far must needs be of a popular nature to attract an audience and eventually advertising. He said that they buy a number of films in one lot and had to take the bad with the good. However it is difficult to see how the directors hope to have their licence granted when this sort of material must surely alienate the goodwill of some government ministers.

He argues that there are three foreign channels available in some parts of the country. Thus the purpose of Channel D's recent transmissions was to highlight the situation of local broadcasting in Ireland. Referring to the fact that the Independent Local Radio Authority Bill, 1981, does not provide for television, Mr Reidy said that the reason given — 'an oversight' — is little more than an excuse, and he was most vociferous about the fact that for the past fifty years the state has controlled broadcasting in this country. In a recent press release he said 'It can hardly be satisfactory that people here can legally view independently operated television programmes but are forbidden by default from watching similar programmes produced by an Irish station.'

Channel D is financed by a large consortium of business interests whose main concern was to pro-

vide Dublin with local independent television at no extra cost to the viewers, since funds would be generated by advertising. Mr Reidy maintained that RTE was not unduly worried by pirate broadcasting as Channel D was infringing neither on their time nor their channels — rather, he said, they were more worried by the prospect of local radio being established. The station would not compete directly with RTE, he said, and the aim was to show that the service was a viable alternative which would broadcast news, feature films and community programmes. They had run into difficulties with the films because of the problems of negotiating copyrights abroad.

While the prospect of an additional channel is, to many, a desirable one, the prospect of losing RTE 2 and BBC 2 — if rumours are to be believed — heighten that desire considerably. The rumours are that RTE 2 is proving too costly to maintain (and the curtailing of broadcasting time would indicate that this rumour is not entirely without foundation) and also that the introduction of a new filter in Irish transmitters from next year will effectively block reception of BBC2. Jim Reidy points to the fifteen independent British channels that go to make up ITV and to the length of time for which that has been available in the north of Ireland for example — twenty-one years — to illustrate his point regarding the dearth of such an Irish service.

The future of Channel D, or its speedy demise, is in the hands of the new government.