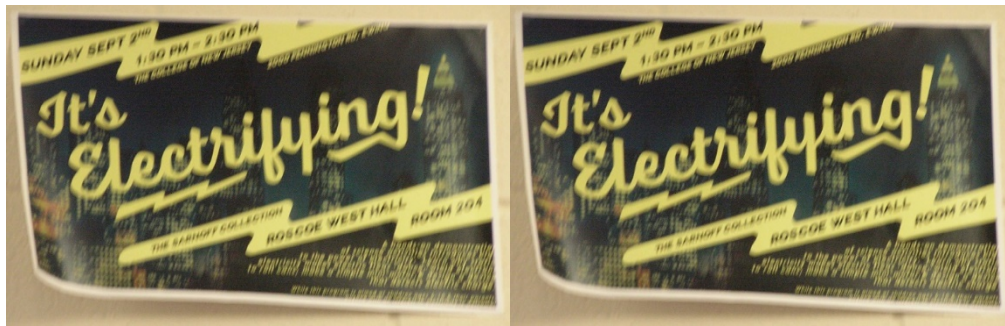


GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
 E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
 WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
 THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION



THE IONOSPHERE ISSUE
 MARCH 12, 2021

THE SET-UP

Hello fine listeners, and welcome once again to the mythical confines of the GRTR Studio where we broadcast information and inspiration about radio, music, nostalgia, personality, books, and beyond. Terry Gross continues to be our inspiration. Listen to her “Fresh Air” radio show, live or podcast; check your NPR listings for a station where you can tune in.

Our Studio crew is ready from our homes along the Catoctin Range. Bert and Beverly are watching the sweep of the clock towards network feed; Fred has coaxed the creaking old sound board past its squawks and hums, and he’s piping in the soaring and swanky opening chords to “Rhapsody in Blue,” from a remastered Gershwin CD of an original 1924 recording. Beverly signals network feed as Fred fades the music.

ON THE AIR

Hello everyone and thanks so much for tuning in! It's been a few cold nights here lately, with clear and windy days. Hot coffee and radio, just the ticket! I've emptied the Courier Pouch; it's been sanitized but we still call it Dusty. And I'm sorting through the letters and stories. My brother in Nova Scotia sent me a link for a CBC TV news clip, about a home-spun radio studio. Then there's a nice note from Club stalwart Jim Cox in Kentucky, who has tuned into our ZOOM evenings. We'll look at music and the way musicians are branching out. Two songwriters made their names in rock, and they are rather famous for it. And yet they continue to look at jazz and ballad influences and their love of the big bands from years ago. Bryan Ferry and Elvis Costello are the stars; and we're happy to add Marian McPartland and her "Piano Jazz" radio program. In 2003 her guest for conversation and song was Elvis Costello.

RADIO IN CANADA

Bob Cooke of rural Nova Scotia is a radio hobbyist extraordinaire. He has three studios in his house, all outfitted with vintage equipment. It was a treat to watch a CBC-TV interview with him where he took us room-to-room, all the while talking about the "yesteryear" theme of his still-functioning configurations, including amplifiers, reel-to-reel tape decks, microphones, turntables, and cartridges. He tells us that all the transferring and editing that was needed years ago, "...could now be done with your phone..." He was active in broadcast radio as early as the 1970s, including driving around Halifax doing traffic reports. He was a record librarian. Now his Studio B is a museum where the shelves are lined with his vast collection of LPs, alphabetized; and he showed us just how quickly he could find a record and cue it up. My Canadian brother sent me the CBC link. The clip was immensely popular, and another link got me onto a website where radio-minded folks were commenting about the brand-names of equipment they recognized.

JIM COX SENDS A KIND TRIBUTE TO THE CLUB

Here is the email that Jack French shared with us:

Jim Cox is a prominent OTR author and historian, and a member of our MWOTRC. He lives in Louisville and is also a member of the OTR club in that area. That club is small and fairly informal; its signature sounds like a station's call letters: KRA. After attending our Zoom meeting Friday night, Jim emailed this message for our Club:

The Metro Washington group sure covers a lot of territory in its get-togethers. I had only an inkling of how organized you all are. Unlike my local group, you folks have officers, programs, speakers, topics, libraries, newsletters, dues, special observances...and Women! The Kentuckiana Radio Addicts (KRA) is a far cry from your polished performances. We're merely a bunch of old laid-back guys."



MUSIC BRIDGE AND COMMERCIAL

Beverly is signaling for the network station break.

Fred is piping in a song from another remastered originals recording, this one is from “It’s De Lovely: The Authentic Cole Porter Collection”: “Night and Day”, Leo Reisman and his Orchestra, November 1932, Fred Astaire, vocal.



GOOD NEWS FOR THE DAYTON DRAGONS

The Dragons are still with the parent club Cincinnati Reds, at High-A Level.

They will play 120 games, home-and-away, some in several upper Midwest cities. Their ballpark is a nice one, with that close-in community feeling, and the Dragons will host high school games, much to everyone’s delight.

Here’s the High School Showcase, just announced.



DAYTON, OH – Back for 2021, the Dayton Dragons and Day Air Ballpark will host 34 high school baseball games, as 68 area high schools will move a regular season game from their home field to the downtown Dayton ballpark. The Dragons High School Baseball Showcase is in its 16th year of giving high schools the opportunity to play at a world-class facility.

Fred fades the Big Band sound.



MUSICIANS ARE ALWAYS LEARNING

In England in the 1970s, the musicians Brian Ferry and Elvis Costello were bashing away in the world of rock, brilliantly, we might add. Costello and his band The Attractions were more punk (if we may typify), and Ferry's band Roxy Music was more glamorous. The two songwriters were also honing their skills towards other styles: Costello writing jazz-tinged ballads, and Ferry looking at the sounds of the swing band. And they both found inspiration in the songs of the early 20th century. The liner notes for Ferry's 2018 album "Bitter-Sweet," declares that the beauty of music "...lies in bittersweet remembrance rather than youthful rejection." Thus he has written homages to style: ragtime, blues, and jazz; films, and the music of Kurt Weill and Duke Ellington. It's overlaid with "...the clean lines of Art Deco. The past really does pile up!"

These pursuits have always depended on radio. Brian Ferry assembled an orchestra and found a following. He may have had in mind the ballroom traditions of the remotes, such as Cedar Grove, or the Avalon. Elvis Costello brought his introspective ballads to the New York studio of Marian McPartland's "Piano Jazz" program in 2003. One ballad that he sang with her piano accompaniment was "They Didn't Believe Me" written by Jerome Kern in 1914. In conversation Costello told McPartland that he sought out clubs and piano bars for encouragement in music. He told her that during his early years when he was peddling his songs (with no luck) he went to a club where Chet Baker was playing. He introduced himself, and happily, Baker played on various of Costello's albums in the next few years. Another studio choice of Costello's, to fit his preference for the darker side of life-in-song, was "Gloomy Sunday," covered by Billie Holiday in the 1930s. He and McPartland surely sighed deeply as they let the final chords fade away.

By nature Costello has a high and raspy voice with a signature vibrato whether singing rock or a jazz song. McPartland told him that he sings very much like a jazz singer. He replied that his parents surrounded him in music of their own lives. His father sang in a well-known swing band and his mother owned a record shop. His abiding efforts have been to write rock songs, but he makes complex lyrics and ballads a thing of his own. A ballad from early in his career is called "Almost Blue." A ballad from his 2018 album "Look Now" is called "Isabel in Tears." An early rock album is called "My Aim Is True." Costello keeps working at it, and we are rewarded.

Note: My CD of the Elvis Costello episode of "Piano Jazz" is in the Jazz Alliance catalog, in the Concord Music Group. <http://www.concordrecords.com>

TOM STOPPARD IN THE NEWS

The March 1, 2021 issue of *The New Yorker* includes a nice retrospective of Tom Stoppard, his life and career, by way of a book review: "O Lucky Man: Tom Stoppard's charmed and haunted life," by Anthony Lane, p.57 ff.

Our own look at Tom Stoppard and his work was in the *Gather 'Round the Radio*,” issue of July 16, 2019, “The Sound Patterns Issue.”

Here are some notes from a 6-minute interview with Stoppard on BBC Radio, before the broadcast of his radio play “Artist Descending a Staircase.”

- I like to achieve a situation where the audience is doing a good bit of the work, rather than having their food cut up on the plate...
- There is a playful aspect, a mind game, you can have marvelous fun with recording a ping-pong game...
- I was having my own kind of fun by having one character be blind, only hearing what the radio audience hears.
- I've gotten used to how clever theater people are...
- *On looking forward to the evening's BBC broadcast of his radio play.* “A CD was delivered to me just today, but I think I'll wait to tune in to hear the play as it was intended, over the wireless.”

MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

Fred is piping in a ballad from the Rough Trade label jazz CD “Medium Cool”: Frank Loesser and Jimmy McHugh’s song: “Let’s Get Lost”.

Signing off, everyone; thanks for tuning in! Keep those cards and letters coming! Soup and sandwiches this afternoon? We’ll manage!

Thanks ever,

Mark Anderson

Frederick MD