VOICES OF THE ETHER

Interview questions

Pirates, direction-finding vans and police: the fight for free radio in Amsterdam

Thank you for wanting to share your story. These questions help you prepare for our conversation. You don't need to answer them all. Pick what fits you and skip anything you'd rather not talk about.

The book gives every side a voice: the DJs, the listeners, the technicians, and the police and officials who went looking for the transmitters. That's why I ask everyone the same core questions, plus a few that fit your role.

A few tips

- **Think of moments.** One night, one door, one broadcast often says more than an opinion.
- **Doubt, fear and humour belong here.** That's where readers recognise themselves, whichever side you were on.
- **Then and now.** What did you know at the time, and what do you know now? That gap is often the most moving part.
- **"I don't remember" is a good answer.** What is still unclear is part of the story too.

1. How it started, and what it was about

The beginning

1. How did you first come into contact with pirate radio, or with Radio Octaaf?
2. How old were you then, and what did your life look like: work, home, family?
3. If you close your eyes and think of that time, what do you hear first?

What was the conflict about?

4. In your own words: what was the conflict about? Who wanted what?
5. What did you understand of it at the time? And how do you see it now?
6. Why do you think the government took it so seriously, up to a raid on dozens of addresses in one night?
7. Why do you think so many people were willing to take the risk, as makers, listeners or supporters?
8. For you, was it about music, freedom, money, the law or friendship? Or something else?
9. Did your view of "the other side" change over the years? When, and what changed it?

What is still unclear?

10. What do you still not understand about what happened?

11. Is there a question you have never been able to ask anyone? Who would you ask, and what?
12. Is there something you heard back then that you were never sure was true?
13. If you could read one file or report from that time, which would it be, and why?

2. The people

14. Who were the people around you then? Who do you remember most clearly, and why?
15. What do you know about the people on the other side: the police, the RCD, the PTT, the tax office? Did you know any of them by name or by face?
16. Was there ever a moment when you met someone from the other side as a person: at a match, in a bar, on the street?
17. Who do you think paid the highest price, and who got off lightly?
18. Whose story do you think has never been told? Who should I speak to?
19. Is there anyone you lost touch with that you would like to see again?
20. Do you have photos, recordings, letters or newspaper cuttings? Who is on them?

3. Questions per role

Pick the part that fits your role. The questions are about you as a person: your job as you saw it, your doubts, your home life and one concrete moment.

Police

- What was your assignment on the night of the raid? How much did you know beforehand, and when were you told?
- Describe one address you went into. What did you see, hear, smell?
- Were there children or pets in the house? How did that feel, and how did you handle it?
- What did you think of the people you arrested? Did that change later?
- Did you or your colleagues ever listen to the stations? Did you have a favourite DJ or programme?
- The police played indoor football against the DJs. Do you remember that? What was it like to chase someone by day and play against them at night?
- What did you tell your own family when you came home that morning?

RCD (Radio Monitoring Service)

- How did you end up at the RCD? What did a normal working week look like?
- How did you track a transmitter? Describe one search, from first signal to the door.
- Did you see your work as technical, legal or something else? Did it ever feel like a game of cat and mouse?
- What did you think of the technical skill of the pirates?
- Were you ever recognised, or did people react to you when they knew what you did?
- Was there a case you still think about?

PTT

- What was the PTT's role, as you saw it from the inside?
- What harm did unlicensed transmitters actually do, in your experience? Can you give an example?
- Was there discussion inside the PTT about whether this approach was right?
- How did you feel when the law changed and local radio became legal?

DJs and station crew

- How did you get on air for the first time? What did that first broadcast feel like?
- What did the station give you that you could not find anywhere else?
- Did you think about the risk? What did you tell your family, your employer?
- Where were you on 23 November 1987? What happened to you, step by step?
- What did you lose, and what did you keep?
- What would you say now to the officer who came to your door?

Family: partners, children, parents, brothers and sisters

- What did you know about the radio at home? Was it a secret, a pride, a burden?
- What do you remember of the night of the raid, or the days after?
- How did it change things at home: money, mood, friendships?
- What did you tell neighbours, school, work?
- Was it ever talked about later in the family? Or was it silent?
- What do you understand now that you did not understand as a child or partner?

Tax inspector

- How did a pirate radio case land on your desk? Was it unusual?
- How did you calculate an assessment for an illegal station? What were you looking for?
- Did you meet the people involved? What was that like?
- Did you think the assessments were fair, or a way to stop the stations?
- Did you ever think about what the assessment meant for a family at home?

For everyone, whatever your role

- What part of your role were you proud of, and what part did you find hard?
- Was there a moment you doubted what you were doing?
- Was there a moment you laughed about the situation?
- What do you wish the other side had understood about you?
- If a reader should remember one thing about you, what is it?

4. An object or image from that time

These questions are about one concrete thing that could go into the book, an exhibition or a video.

21. If you had to choose one object that stands for that period, what would it be? Why that one?
22. Do you still have it? Could I photograph it, or film you holding it?
23. Which image comes to mind first: a room, a face, a car, a sound, a smell?
24. Which song or jingle takes you straight back? What were you doing when you heard it?
25. If you could put one thing about this time in a time capsule for your grandchildren, what would it be?

5. Taking part and consent

Besides the book, I want to let people tell their story in their own voice. I'd like to ask whether you'd want to be part of that, in any form. Saying no is completely fine.

Telling your story in person

26. Would you be open to telling your story at a small coffee gathering, for people who are interested?
27. Would you prefer to tell it alone, or together with someone else from that time? With whom?

Video and documentary

28. Would you like to share your story in a recorded video, in your own words and your own way?
29. Would you be interested in being part of a documentary?
30. Where would you feel most at ease being filmed: at home, at a place from that time, or somewhere neutral?

The book launch

31. At the book launch, a 20-minute loop will play with sound from the archive and video of people telling their story. May a fragment of your story be part of it?
32. Is there a recording, jingle or photo of yours that you would like to see in that loop?

Consent and naming

33. May I use your full name, your first name only, or should you stay anonymous (for example, “a police officer”)?
34. May I use your photos and recordings? Who holds the rights to them?
35. Would you like to read your passage before the book goes to print?
36. Is there anything you tell me that should stay off the record?

I only use your details and your story for this book project, and I don't share them without your permission. I'll confirm what we agree about your name and material by email.

Questions, or rather set up a conversation straight away? Email sabrina@coenradi.com · coenradi.com