



Radio stations born out of isolation



Broadcasting to the nation: Pat Leacock

By Pat Leacock, East Finchley musician and DJ

Radio station *hot97uk* has been created by me, with entrepreneur DJ Rikky and my brother DJ Leedos, to bring people together through our absolute passion for music and unwavering love of community spirit.

A month ago, we decided to pool our vast knowledge and expertise in entertainment to create the station to focus on what our potential listeners wanted and to do our bit to support others. This was at the same time as the worldwide lockdown started so meeting in person was not going to happen. After hundreds of WhatsApp calls and watching countless YouTube videos, *hot97uk* was created.

We play 80s and 90s pop, funk, soul and disco favourites, R'n'B and reggae music. Our regular listeners from all over the world are the most fantastic, enthusiastic, energetic people. The dedications they send us to read out for friends, families and loved ones help to continue the community spirit we so wanted to spread from the start.

Pat's 'Cheering Up The Nation' radio show is on every Saturday from 8pm to 10pm. Find it at: hot97uk.radio12345.com, and email hot97uk@gmail.com. The station's website is: hot97uk.com



Mez Raja in his radio studio.

Defiant message from the Phoenix

By David Gritten

Signage over the entrance to the Phoenix Cinema usually tells passers-by what films are currently playing. But the much-loved movie house has been forced to close since the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, and its sign now features a defiant warning: "Dear virus: You will NOT kill cinemas."

The message is signed 'MUBI', the name of a film distribution and streaming company, which has launched a campaign to save independent and small cinemas from permanent closure.

The same message can be seen at other London cinemas, including the Rio in Dalston, the Genesis in Bethnal Green and Catford Mews just off the South Circular.

In conjunction with the British Film Institute, Mubi started the ball rolling with a £10,000 donation to the campaign, which aims to raise £100,000 to keep threatened picture houses in business.

Efe Cakarel, Mubi's founder and CEO, says: "We have



Defiant message from Phoenix as it waits for right time to re-open

been working closely with UK festivals and cinemas for years and have been deeply saddened seeing the impact of the closures. We want to support them in any way we can during this incredibly difficult

time, because we can't imagine a world without them."

You can help the Phoenix pull through by becoming a member and making a donation on the cinema's website at www.phoenixcinema.co.uk

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By Ruth Anders

Lockdown has uncovered many hidden talents among our friends and neighbours. Take Mez Raja, a lawyer by profession and now a DJ with his own radio station.

Huntingdon Road, N2, already had an active WhatsApp group but Mez, a resident for nine years, has brought everyone even closer together with the launch of Huntingdon Road Radio.

From a tiny studio on the top floor of his house, Mez runs regular programmes featuring music requests and interviews with residents. He also acts as engineer and producer for his children, who present programmes for their friends.

It all began with two socially-distanced karaoke sessions at the beginning of lockdown but, fearing disturbance to neighbouring roads, Mez decided to launch something less intrusive, and Huntingdon Road Radio was born.

Mez sends start times via the WhatsApp group. With the skill and easy manner of a pro, interviews have included chats about the virtual Chelsea Flower Show and the future of

the Phoenix Cinema. Musical requests have featured a variety of artists from Vera Lynn and The Beatles to George Michael and The Kinks.

Mez, whose wife is a paediatric consultant at the Royal Free Hospital, works for the Financial Conduct Authority. Free time is in short supply. Citing the local sewing group making laundry bags for scrubs and caterers providing food to frontline workers, Mez says: "The overriding impression I have of this difficult period is people's generosity...and the sense of public services at last being really highly valued." He added: "East Finchley is such a great community. There are big waves of people doing nice things for each other."

When Mez was younger he used to play in bands; fortunately, he kept a lot of his equipment. If his success continues, demand for his services won't stop with the end of lockdown.

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