

## **The Voice of Peace at 40**

**With the scuttling of the radioship Peace in 1993 and the death of founder and inspirator Abie Nathan in 2008, it seemed as if the curtain had fallen for The Voice of Peace. But an enthusiastic group of former crewmembers and DJ's recreated the VoP: 'the legendary offshore station is back' and even celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. International Report spoke to Andy Cox, crewmember of yesterday's and today's VoP.**

The story seems to resemble that of colleague offshore station Radio Caroline. After the broadcasts from a ship there was silence for more than a decade and then several attempts to revive the station sprung up. In the 1990's there was an online radiostation on the website [www.voiceofpeace.com](http://www.voiceofpeace.com) owned by former DJ Richard Doran Ticho. Nowadays this website is home to the VoP Network, which supports good causes, has a partnership with the new Voice of Peace and even supplies some radioprogrammes. Since 2006 original VoP programmes can also be heard on Radius 100FM (on the old FM frequency of the radioship Peace).

But The Voice of Peace as we know it now, was started by enthusiasts and former DJ's like Doug Wood, Yaniv Dayan en Tami Tzabari, who at the end of 2009 decided to revive the station. After a long period of testing via the Israeli website [www.thevoiceofpeace.co.il](http://www.thevoiceofpeace.co.il), '1540 The Voice of Peace' commenced official programmes on 7 november 2009, with original programme names (like 'Twilight Time'), DJ's and jingles (like the classic 'From somewhere in the Mediterranean, we are The Voice of Peace', also in Hebrew, Arabic and French, on the intro of Junior Campbell's Help Your Fellow Man - and of course Bill Mitchell's deepest voice in 'Peace is the word').

### **In memory of Abie Nathan**

"When the station was originally set up we approached and received permission from Henry Eskalasi, the personal assistant to Abie Nathan and in later years, his patron," tells DJ Andy Cox via e-mail. "He and Nathan's family have given us their blessing to continue the station in the way it was intended to be: playing quality music to the public in a professional manner, with the philosophy of spreading the message of peace where possible and keeping the memory of Abie Nathan and his good work alive."

April 2010 saw a breach between the Israeli and the English team over a difference in opinion as to how the station should sound. Andy Cox: "Eventually the two groups parted and 'The Voice of Peace' run from Israel, as now heard, was born." A British VoP continued as 'all time hits' station on [www.theVoP.net](http://www.theVoP.net) with DJ's Doug Wood, Brian Matthews, Mark Stafford and Paul Douglas. Cox: "We wished them well at the time and still are in contact with many of the people involved in that group."

"The original setting up of the station was very much a bit of fun and a tribute to the original station," Andy Cox continues. "The old forum in the early days was full of entries about popping down to the engines, checking the generators, painting the boat etc. But after a while (and this is where the 'difference of opinion' came from) several of the team did not want the whole thing to be viewed by the radio world as a group of enthusiasts playing old retro music and reliving their past and memories: just a retro tribute station. They wanted the whole project to be as the original concept was: bringing quality new music and the best of the old skool music,

professionally produced and played. And allowing a platform for new DJ's (both international and local) to be heard."

### **New audiences**

So the Israeli Voice of Peace was build from scratch and soon was reinforced with DJ's from its offshore period like Andy Cox, Richard Doran Ticho, Rob Charles and John Macdonald. Veteran Mark Hanna is responsible for programming the station. And it definitely is worth listening to. "Since that early time the station has grown from just a couple of jocks who had been on the original VoP producing 'as live' shows and the rest of the time an automated system with no DJ, to what it is now: a wide variety of DJ's supplying shows from across the globe 24/7," says Cox.

'From somewhere in the Mediterranean' is no longer the shiny blue sea offshore Tel Aviv, but Tel Aviv itself - and actually many other places in the world. Servers stream the VoP signal 24 hours a day, with on top of the hour the old newsjingle with seagulls and the six pips. What follows then is not any longer the relayed newsbulletin of Kol Yisrael, Israeli state radio in Hebrew, but a few headlines from 'Feature Story News' in Washington (during the daytime programming on weekdays). After the Give peace a chance jingle regular programmes commence, often 'voicetracked' but also now and then live. There is a lot of room for requests and an extensive request-section on the brand new website.

"The make-up of the station and it's music is important, as we need to cater to those who remember the original station, but also need to tap into the new audiences that just were never around (or were too young to remember it) 'back in the day'", explains Andy Cox. "We think we have it about right but understand that in this modern age of multimedia we cannot please and cater for everyone all the time. And it is important that we don't fall into that trap. We have tried to allow new talent to be heard on the station, just like the original station did, which has been welcomed by the listeners. However, like others we are always looking out for new people to join our merry flock."

### **Worldwide, Israeli roots**

The VoP is streaming worldwide with a slogan that sums it up neatly: Remembering our past as we stream to our future, with hits from today and yesterday. But of course there is still a clear Israeli 'touch' to the whole project. Andy Cox: "We have a show on 6 out of 7 days featuring an Israeli DJ, each of whom are new to the business." (between 15 and 17 hours, Eastern Mediterranean Time). "And during the day we play an Israeli track every hour. We have not set out not to have any Arab DJ's present shows with us, it is that we have not had anyone wanting to... yet! But we would welcome them if they were professional enough." It would honor the original VoP even more, where programmes could be heard in English, Hebrew, Arabic and French. The last two are now only to be heard in jingles.

"We do not have a studio in one place to broadcast from that point. We have a mix of style of shows and a mix of playout methods. The DJ's that work with the station produce 'as live' shows for us and send them in by uploading them to our servers via FTP. The playout system is set to play the right show at the right time. We do, just like other pro stations, have some of our shows produced via automated links and where possible we encourage the DJ's to play out live. But that depends on their technical ability to link up to the network and their availability. Thankfully we have Yaniv Dayan, who is a fantastic IT bod. He works wonders with scripts, that make it

look so easy to keep the station on air. Dayan really has kept the whole thing on track.”

### **Peace is the word**

But what about the cause of peace? The late Abie Nathan decided to stop broadcasting after the Oslo Peace Agreements finally promised peace in the Middle East. As we know now, very little came of that. “It’s ironic that as the station has got better and better in its output, the situation in the Middle East has got worse,” agrees Andy Cox, adding: “meaning that the whole need for a common denominator, music, is bigger than ever! We do not side with one group over another. We like to think of ourselves as being like Switzerland, willing to support those on any ‘side’ who are caught up in violence through no fault of theirs but for the fact of where they were born.”

Clearly the spirit of Abie Nathan is still around. And he can even be heard: everyday as the sun sets, we hear Abie announcing the thirty second closedown of the VoP ‘in memory of all the victims of violence, in this region and all over our planet’. On nowadays VoP this is not followed by silence but the famous song I Wish You Peace by The Eagles is played rightaway.

“It is not as easy as it was in the past with the original VoP to spread the word of ‘peace’,” admits Andy Cox, “as we are on the internet and cannot broadcast via a popular medium like FM or be picked up without using the internet. If we were broadcasting via FM I am sure that we would be picking up listeners all the time. The format that we are using regarding program output is (as was the original) nothing the main stations in Israel are able to do. They put on lots of advertising to pay their bills - and their shareholders.”

There are more ‘VoP’s’ promoting peace, for example the American ‘VoP network’. Cox: “In 2012 we teamed up with the VoP Network which is based in America, via Richard Ticho. They have a lot of contacts and work with a lot of charities and good causes around the world and we felt that it was important that we support that team. It’s a symbiont relationship. Currently we focus and specialise on the broadcasting side of things (like the original station) whilst the Network team offers support to groups that need help. Together we work well to increase the profile of each and thus help raise funds to help good causes.

There are no contacts with the other VoP stream on the Shoutcast network, the christian <http://www.voiceofpeace.org.uk/>. “Simply because they are not VoP and not operated by any VoP members,” says Cox. “We would not turn anyone away if they approached us to offer support, as it is important that everyone works together where possible to support the concept of ‘peace’.”

### **Volunteers**

Finally, where does the money come from to continue the whole operation? There are commercials played now and then, for example for an English teaching method for Kids and also for the famous Budweiser beer. But these are exceptions. “Apart from the odd commercial that we have produced and played for various companies, we are totally reliant on listener support and donations given by some of the team.”

“All DJ’s and team members on the station give their time for free. There is no pay for anyone. Anything that the station has done is via the skills of the team members.

Recently we have overhauled the station's website. We could not afford to pay several thousand Dollars for this, so we learnt what to do and with some imagination and we produced the new website, which presents our programme schedule, details of the people who work with us, our history and ways to help support us."

Cox is confident about the station's future. "We would like to expand our listener base and raise our profile even more, but we can only do this with the support of others: people who have the same beliefs in promoting peace as we do, by broadcasting good music, and are willing to do this by giving their time voluntarily. Not just DJ's, but others who have skills in music and program management and with advertising and promotional skills. We have a good product now and a famous name to boot. We just need the break to get us back on everyone's lips and playing on everyone's radio!"

### **VoP at 40**

In 2013 The Voice of Peace will celebrate its 40th birthday. What are the plans? "Currently the station is planning to produce several 'specials' to give a history of the station and how it came about. Several of the DJ's are heading over to Israel to be there on May 19th to celebrate the first broadcasts 40 years ago on that day. The VoP Network is also producing 'specials' to commemorate the event. And I would like to ask anyone who was connected with the station in the past to contact us, so we can include your memories as well!" We can all look forward to that, and of course Freewave will cover VoP's birthday celebrations. Meanwhile:

Peace is the word. And the Voice of Peace is the station, 24 hours a day...

[www.thevoiceofpeace.co.il](http://www.thevoiceofpeace.co.il)