

Тapescript

Clockwork radio (Interview with Trevor Baylis)

(I=Interviewer TB=Trevor Baylis)

I: Trevor, let me, er, start by asking you what gave you the idea for the clockwork radio?

TB: Well, I am sitting where I am now looking at that television over there, and I was, actually, um, watching a programme about the spread of AIDS in Africa, and they said the only way they could stop this dreadful disease cutting its way through Africa was the power of information and education. But there was a problem. Most of Africa doesn't have electricity. The only form of electricity available to them was in the form of batteries, which were horrendously expensive. And so I said to myself, hang on, hang on. Now, this is where dreams play an important part in everybody's life. You got to explain what dream is all about. Um, the beautiful thing about a dream is that you can do anything you like in your dreams, right? Now why I am saying this to you is because I could see myself somewhere in the jungle, right? And I can see myself with a pith helmet, a monocle, a gin and tonic in my left hand and one of those fly swatting things, listening to some raunchy number by Dame Nellie Melba on my wind-up gramophone, mmm? And then I am thinking to myself, blimey, if you can get all that noise by dragging a rusty nail around a piece of old Bakelite using a spring, surely there is enough power that spring to drive a small dynamo which in turn will drive my radio, and so I was stirred enough to get off my backside and go to my, my shed, my studio, which sounds so much nicer, my graveyard of a thousand domestic appliances, and actually find enough parts to actually start doing those first primitive experiments...

I: And, um, how long did it take you to design a prototype?

TB: Well, from the actual, from the concept to, er, having the first in-a-box model out there it would have taken me two to three months, I guess, so, yes, it took me about two or three months.

I: So you got, you got the prototype, um, how easy was it from that point on? How easy was it to find a backer and set up production?

TB: Well, first things first. I did know that there are these thieves about that will steal your idea. Because I had a whole range of products for the disabled that were stolen from me at an earlier time. So I did know about patents and how important they were. So I found a lady called Jackie Needle, a patent attorney, and I said to

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her “Jackie, I want to write up a patent, can you help me?” So we did a search and couldn’t find any clockwork radios of the kind that I have done, and she filed for a patent to me, for me, and therefore then I had a starting date, as it were. Now I knew that nobody pays you for a good idea, but they could pay you for that piece of paper, so then I went round every British company I could think of with a confidentiality agreement, and they all talked down to me. “Oh yes, I think we’re, I think that we’re working on something like this? Aren’t we Johnny?” You know all that old sausage. Um, I mean it was so humiliating...and in the end, quite frankly, after about three or four years of this, I though, I have had enough of this. Why do I need this? I was fifty-six or something when this happened. So I was given a chance through the BBC World Service to meet up with the guys from the BBC Tomorrow’s World programme, and they said, “Come on, we’ll do the story.”

I: So the whole thing got off the ground. How long was it then before the production of them started?

TB: Well, the important thing was funding. Um, the Tomorrow’s World programme was seen by a fellow in South Africa, a chap from a company called Liberty Life. He came to my house here, and we sat out there, and he said, “Look, um, we can help you make this happen, provided we can share in its success.” I said of course, and so we formed a company called Baygen, Baylis Generators, and he wrote a cheque for three-quarters of a million pounds whilst I was in this room.

I: And how many radios are produced each month?

TB: Well, I’m sure they might tell me differently, but I’m sure they must be doing 200,000 a month.

I: And in what ways has the clockwork radio changed your life?

TB: Well, not, not significantly. I mean, my lifestyle hasn’t changed. The house hasn’t, has remained more or less the same, but I do get involved with lots more television and radio. I like people, so I’m doing fundamentally what I like doing anyway, communicating.

I: And finally what advice would you give to someone who had a good idea?

TB: Don’t go down the pub and tell everyone about it. That’s the first thing, right? Get on to the Patent Office. Get their literature, and read all about it, right? Nobody pays you for a good idea, but they might pay you for a piece of paper which says you own that idea. But remember, somebody might already own that idea, so you must do a search first. There’s no excuse afterwards.