



A 50-year-old interview with broadcasting legend Kenny Everett gets its first national airing this coming weekend.

The revealing chat, first heard on BBC Radio Merseyside in February 1976, will form part of BBC Radio 4 Extra's listener request weekend, on Sunday March 22.

The half-hour interview, with journalist Iain Mann, then a staff reporter at the station, was originally broadcast in the series *Somebody In Particular*, subtitled *Whatever Happened to Maurice Cole?* (Kenny's real name).

In it, the "wireless wizard" talks about leaving school at 15 with no qualifications ("It wasn't really an education"), training to be a priest ("Can you imagine me converting anybody?") and working in a bakery ("scraping the gunk off sausage roll trays").

He speaks lovingly about radio, appearing on the BBC Home Service as a teenage tape enthusiast, being part of the launch team on the pirate ship Radio London in 1964 ("heaving over the side into the North Sea");

stealing news from the BBC (“until they found us out”); and being fired for taking the mickey out of the biggest religious advertiser.

You hear his thoughts about joining Radio 1 at its opening in 1967 and then getting sacked three years later after insulting the wife of a Government Minister. He talks fondly about his time on BBC Local Radio, including Radio Merseyside, where he hosted a Saturday morning show in the autumn of 1971 and was a regular on Bank Holiday weekends up to 1973 when he joined Capital Radio at the start of Independent Local Radio.

At the time of the interview Kenny was on Capital at weekends, having given up the breakfast show the previous year after collapsing through exhaustion.

The tape was unearthed by former BBC Political Correspondent Paul Rowley, author of two radio documentaries *Kenny Everett : the BBC Local Radio Years* from 2001, which was shortlisted for a Sony Radio Award in the Music Special category, and *Happy Birthday Maurice Cole* from 2009 which won silver for Original Journalism in the Frank Gillard Awards. Both have been broadcast several times on Radio 4 Extra and formed part of a special Kenny Everett week over Christmas 2024 which Paul Rowley curated to mark what would have been his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday :

“We had a great response to those broadcasts, which led to many listeners asking for more Cuddly Ken” says Paul. “Iain Mann was my News Editor at Liverpool’s commercial station Radio City in the 1980s, and I’d been given a reel-to-reel copy of his interview by a former colleague, so I digitised it. Half a century later it makes fascinating listening”.

“In my view, Kenny was our best radio practitioner, and yet he was a complex, often contradictory character. Here was a shy Catholic boy who became an outrageous performer, constantly pushing the boundaries. He was incredibly diligent, spending hours in the studio stitching together a magnificent tapestry of aural genius, full of bespoke jingles, crazy sound effects, and irreverent comedy. But for all that hard work he was always being fired”.

During the interview Kenny seemed to have turned his back on TV after what he calls “an awfully disastrous series” on London Weekend Television which he said had “torn my soul apart”, insisting “I’m a radio

chap". He said his dream would be to end his career on Radio 3 "drinking tea and slapping disc-jockeys' wrists" as "the naughty young old boy of the BBC".

And yet just two years later in 1978 he was persuaded to join Thames Television with the incentive of presenting a TV extension of his radio show, with comedy sketches and music videos. *The Kenny Everett Video Show* became an instant hit, winning awards and attracting massive audiences. It ran until 1981 when he returned to the BBC for the *Kenny Everett Television Show* and a Saturday morning programme on Radio 2. Kenny moved back to Capital in the mid-80s, helping launch the station's AM service Capital Gold in 1988. He was still working there months before his death from an AIDS-related illness on April 4, 1995, aged 50.

The interview will be broadcast on Sunday March 22 at 0730, 1230, 1830 as well as 0230 the following morning. Among other shows in the Radio 4 Extra listener request weekend are *The Milligan Papers* with Spike Milligan, *Idle Thoughts* with John Walters, and a programme celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Letter from America*, presented by Alistair Cooke.

Kenny Everett on Radio Merseyside will air on BBC Radio 4 Extra at 7.30am, 12.30pm and 6.30pm on Sunday, with an additional broadcast at 2.30am on Monday.