

That's Show Business For You

Brian Roberts

There is a well known saying that everyone deserves their own five minutes of fame. For some, it comes naturally. Others, it is thrust upon them. In the past I have been interviewed by the media in the UK and here in Malta and believe me it can be a tricky business.

You need to be accurate in your answers and know your subject "like the back of your hand" otherwise it can turn into a nightmare and be very embarrassing.

In May 2011 I received a telephone call from a researcher with the BBC in London. He was in the process of researching content for a BBC Radio 2 programme called "World Class Brass". Basically it was to illustrate the influence of British Brass Band music across what was the British Empire including India, Africa and the West Indies and guess what – MALTA.



Putting on his best condescending BBC voice he said he was looking for someone who was British, played in a British Military Band, lives in Malta, plays with a Maltese Band and has an expert knowledge of the Maltese Band scene.

Okay I admit to the first four but an expert on

the Maltese Bands – never! However I did tell him that I had played with the Imperial Band for over 15 years and on occasions with other bands in Malta and Gozo, so I did have experience but could not be classed as an expert. "That will do" he said and the interview was arranged. That gave me three days to turn my limited knowledge about Maltese Bands into content fit to be transmitted worldwide by the BBC.



I knew I was treading on very dangerous ground. I was confident I could talk about music, the make up and content of the marches and even an outsider's view of the feasts but I knew that the "P" word (Politics) and the "R" word (Religion) would come up in the interview. Now I have always stayed clear of discussing those subjects. I believe those who pay your pensions and those who look after your soul when it is time to stop drawing your pension, should be left well alone. I for one need all the help I can get.

So the researcher came to our house and set up his recording equipment in our dining room. The interview started well but I was concerned for two reasons. First he only looked about ten years of age. Mind you, when you get to my age, everyone

younger looks about ten years of age. The second concern was he didn't look very well. He was pale and his eyes looked like he had been a passenger on a local bus, the driver of which was late for his dinner! All was revealed when he told me that he had just left from a fireworks factory in Rabat where the sight of explosive material lying everywhere had scared the living daylights out of him. Who said we British were made out of strong stuff! Kath kept the kettle boiling and after a few cups of coffee he appeared to be at his ease.

We talked for over an hour about my experiences and music here in Malta and the "P" and "R" words were never mentioned. I thought I had got away with it. Then came the bombshell question:

"WHAT PART DOES RELIGION AND POLITICS PLAY IN THE LIFE OF BAND CLUBS?"

Of course I knew the answer but I felt like I had been stabbed in the neck. My heart pounded, my throat went dry and suddenly I was lost for words but I couldn't walk away or dodge the question so I took the cowards way out and agreed to answer "off

the record". I think I said it in pure panic because there is no such thing as "off the record" but I knew it was too late. He hadn't switched off the tape.

Well, the programme was transmitted on the 29th January this year and much to my surprise and relief he had taken some of my advice and interviewed representatives from other band clubs who were more than happy to talk about the "P" and "R" words. I was also pleased that the Imperial Band Club and Mellieħa were mentioned at least three times and two of our Surmast Tony Borg's marches were played to a worldwide audience. Certainly from the reaction I received the programme was a great success. It was good publicity for Malta in general and the Imperial Band Club and Mellieħa in particular, so everybody was happy.

For me, my five minutes of fame were reduced to 15 seconds and guess what - the only comments by me on the programme were, yes you have guessed it - **THOSE OFF THE RECORD.**

WELL THAT'S SHOW BUSINESS!!

I wish you all a very happy festa for 2012

Philip Attard (Hawker)

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