

PRESS PACK

'Mark Forrest' BBC All-Local Radio Evening Programme Launches 7 January 2013

Weekdays - 7-10 pm

Find it on any BBC local radio station frequency

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MarkForrestShow

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OVERVIEW

'Mark Forrest'
BBC LOCAL RADIO
Weekdays from Monday 7 January 2013
7-10 pm

Mark Forrest will present this brand new programme for weekday evenings, bringing together a range of voices from across BBC local radio into one conversation.

Broadcast from the studios at BBC Radio Leeds, the show will showcase the very best of local radio. Expect a mix of great story telling, focusing on people and places, as well as debates on the issues that really matter to local communities, wherever they are.

The programme will broadcast on all BBC local radio stations across England and the Channel Islands. Individual stations will revert to local programming for breaking news and sports coverage when appropriate.

Presenter: Mark Forrest

Executive Producer: Husain Husaini (Wire Free Productions)

Publicity: Jo Waters, BBC North Press Office, 07949 770 409

Press Release

BBC all-local radio show - 'Mark Forrest' - to launch in January

The BBC's brand new all-local radio evening programme - 'Mark Forrest' - launches on 7 January 2013, weekdays, 7-10 pm. The show will go out on all 39 local radio stations in England and the Channel Islands.

Named after its presenter and produced by independent production company, Wire Free Productions, the show will broadcast from BBC Radio Leeds. It is the first time BBC local radio has syndicated one conversation across all its stations.

David Holdsworth, Controller, BBC English Regions, said "We're very excited by the potential of this programme which will bring together a wide range of voices from across BBC local radio. Expect a mix of great story telling, focussing on people and places, and debates on the issues that really matter to local communities, wherever they are."

In Mark Forrest, the programme has a presenter who understands local radio and the importance of focussing on the issues that strike a chord with listeners. His broadcasting CV includes fronting first 'Drive' (2002-2010) then 'Breakfast' (2010-2012) on Classic FM. On BBC Radio York he already presents the new Sunday gardening phone-in show (9am-noon).

Says Mark, "This is a tremendous opportunity. Not only is this a brand new show that will be syndicated across all BBC local radio stations but it has simply never been done before. I'm hosting a programme that will take the very best stories from around the country and discuss them with a national audience. That is a

challenge but a very exciting one."

Mark has written a blog about preparing for the launch of the new show. Read it here http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc from 2 January 2013.

ENDS

BBC Press Office: Jo Waters; 0161 335 8220 or jo.waters@bbc.co.uk

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MarkForrestShow

Twitter: @MarkForrestShow

Notes for Editors:

- 'Mark Forrest' launches across BBC local radio stations on 7 January 2013, 7-10pm on weekdays.
- The programme will broadcast on all 39 BBC local radio stations across England and the Channel Islands. Individual stations will revert to local programming for breaking news and sports coverage when appropriate.
- Wire Free Productions is a new production company chaired by the broadcaster and former senior BBC executive Matthew Bannister. Former BBC Asian Network Head of Programmes, Husain Husaini, is Chief Executive.

QUOTES

Mark has written a blog about preparing for the launch of the new show. Read it here http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc from 2 January 2013.

Mark Forrest Presenter:

On being presenter of the new show. "This is a tremendous opportunity. Not only is this a brand new show that will be syndicated across all 39 BBC Local Radio stations in England and the Channel Islands, but it has simply never been done before. I'm hosting a programme that will take the very best stories from around the country and present them to a national audience. That is a challenge but a very exciting one — I can't wait to get started."

On what excites him about the show. "It's an opportunity to discover stories that have been broadcast locally (on BBC Local Radio) and share them with a much wider audience. We tested this theory recently when Husain (Husaini) and Matthew (Bannister) did a paper pilot as part of their pitch for the show. On the day they chose (5 Sept 2012) BBC Radio Devon had run a piece on a North Devon council vote as to whether or not to allow 'Verity', a 20m statue of a pregnant woman by Damien Hurst to be placed on the seafront in Ilfracombe.

It became a national story a month later but on this day BBC Radio Devon was the only station on it. It is a fascinating story - and clearly strongly rooted in the Devon region - but the concept of public art and the public's reactions to it, well that's a much bigger conversation. And is the kind of issue that we'd like to feature on the show because it would excite opinion and debate in many areas. Examples of other topics we might use are hospital closures or litter - basically anything which might be sparked off by a local controversy or debate - but have resonance on a much wider scale."

On how the show will pick the stories it features. "We can't replicate everything from local radio - nor should we try. We will have two main criteria. Firstly, whether the story has potential to be a national talking point and form a connection with the listener. Secondly, will it spark a debate or cause an emotive reaction. The whole point is to strike a chord with many people across many communities - no matter where they are.

On what will make the show distinctive. "This is not about replicating what is already being done elsewhere – far from it. This show will be magazine in format. The story or issue that opens the show will be the one with the most 'talkability'. It could be funny or controversial, uplifting or sad – but it will always be interesting and engaging. We're not a breaking or rolling news programme. If something enormous happens, we will go to the network. If something local, such as a collision on the M62 or sports commentaries – we will go to local programming. There won't be a stream of studio guests. That would make us generic and too similar to other stations. The regular guests will be our listeners and the people who call in. They will make the show what it is."

On preparing for the launch of the show. "It's tough. Networking one show across 39 BBC local radio stations has never been done before. We've put in some long hours – sometimes working through the night. Two of the network pilots have been at 2 am. We've had technical training, content training...I thought I knew local radio pretty well but we've been searching through the output with a fine toothcomb to see the types of stories that could work for our format – I'm really optimistic that we will have some belting stories as a result!"

On the technology: There is a special button that local radio editors can press to send us a cue if there is a story that might interest us. This delivers it straight into our inbox so we can review it. It's important that we ensure a good regional spread across the patch. So there's some low-tech stuff in there as well - we will have a big colour coded map and charts that will tell us exactly how many (and what) stories we have featured from any one patch."

On returning home to Yorkshire. "It's brilliant to be in Leeds again. Leeds has changed so much since my youth but the essence is the same. It feels like it did when I was 13, walking through the Headrow and on Briggate. I'm so excited to be back – I wouldn't live anywhere else now."

BIOGRAPHIES

Mark Forrest, Presenter

Mark is an experienced talk and music presenter in networked and local programmes for both commercial and BBC radio stations. His broadcasting CV includes fronting first 'Drive' (2002-2010) then 'Breakfast' (2010-2012) on Classic FM. In addition, he has worked on Virgin Radio, Heart London, BBC 5 live and, most recently, as host of BBC Radio York's Breakfast Show, as well as freelance stints on national commercial stations Smooth Radio and London's Magic 105.4

Mark is originally from Beverley in East Yorkshire. He lived there until he was 13 years old, when his parents moved to Wetherby in West Yorkshire. He went to school in Leeds then to the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne to study Pure and Applied Maths, before moving to London for 17 years. He currently lives in Swaledale in the Yorkshire Dales.

More about Mark:

- It's Mark Forrest, not Forest.
- His first professional performance was aged 11, with the choir of Beverley Grammar School and the Royal Liverpool Phil/Huddersfield Choral Society in Hull City Hall (1976). The piece was Benjamin Britten's War Requiem.
- While at St Michael's College, Leeds, he played the organ at St Anne's Cathedral for an entire sung mass. (He was 17)
- He has attained Grade 8 in Piano
- His first radio show was for Harrogate Hospital Radio when he was 17. A
 friend was in hospital with a football injury and didn't like the music (songs
 from the 30s and 40s). Mark asked if he could play music for younger

- people and ended up with his own show. He thinks he might have played West End Girls (Pet Shop Boys) as his first track...
- His first professional job was for Radio Tees (now TFM) when he was 19, followed by Metro Radio when he was 21. For the latter, he was hired as a student to cover weekend overnights. Jeremy Vine was hired at the same time to cover weekday overnights...They've still never met.
- He's an outdoors type.
- Proof of the outdoors type tag: In 1992, Mark completed a 7,500 mile charity cycle ride from the northern to the southern tip of Europe (For geography enthusiasts that is: North Cape of Norway to Tarifa in Spain.) He visited 14 different countries while doing a radio show on Metro Radio every day. The show was recorded on a Walkman. It took four months that's the trip not the show.
 - In 2004, he ran the London Marathon in 2:52:19.
 - He was reigning Southern Region Fell Running Champion for two years (2007-8). There are not that many fells in the South of England...
 - He's also won a couple of Mountain Marathons and competed in the Wensleydale Triathlon. He completed the latter despite getting a puncture. He says, "Never again."
- He still found time to work for all three national commercial radio stations (Virgin (now Absolute – 7 years), Talk Radio (now TalkSport – a few months!) and Classic FM – 9.5 years)
- He has spent 15 years on the movie 'junket' circuit in London. His experience was as follows: Johnny Depp was the most charming, Emma Thompson the most intellectual, Matt Damon the most intense, Helen Mirren the most glamorous, Cameron Diaz the most flirtatious ("She laughed at all my jokes!"), Russell Crowe the most intimidating ("It was right after one of his infamous outbursts and I hated the film...") (For movie)

enthusiasts, the film was *The Good Year*) and Bruce Willis the most difficult ("I literally had four minutes to interview him and there was a woman standing over me with a stop watch. He also took two minutes to answer the first question...")

- Mark opened his London garden to the public for two years under the National Garden Scheme. He will continue to do the Sunday gardening programme on BBC Radio York.
- He keeps goats, sheep and chickens in the Yorkshire Dales. Currently all three goats are pregnant and expecting twins at Easter.
- He's still a keen runner

Matthew Bannister, Chair, Wire Free Productions

Matthew Bannisteris a broadcaster and former senior BBC executive. He started his career at BBC Radio Nottingham, where he presented the Breakfast Show. He launched, edited and presented Capital Radio's 'The Way It Is' and was a presenter and reporter at BBC Radio 1 'Newsbeat' before becoming Managing Editor of BBC Radio London, which he re-launched as GLR. As Controller of BBC Radio 1 in the 1990s, he re-positioned the network at the leading edge of new music, attracting a younger audience. He went on to be Director of BBC Radio, Chief Executive of BBC Production and Director of BBC Marketing and Communications, before returning to his first love - radio presenting. He has presented his own daily talk show on BBC Radio 5 live and deputised for many other presenters on 5 live as well as for Jeremy Vine on BBC Radio 2. Matthew currently presents 'Last Word' on BBC Radio 4 and 'Outlook' on the BBC World Service.

Husain Husaini, Chief Executive, Wire Free Productions:

HusainHusaini has been a senior editorial leader at the BBC for the last eight years. Most recently he was Head of News, then Head of Programmes at

the BBC Asian Network. Before joining Asian Network, he was an Editor at BBC Radio 5 live, in charge of programmes including the Victoria Derbyshire, Matthew Bannister and Fi Glover shows, as well as 'Up All Night' and 'The Midday News'. He was in charge of 5 live's output as the July 7 bombers struck in 2005; led the team in New York that made the station's Sony Gold winning Breakfast programme after the September 11 attacks in 2001 and was Output Editor of the 'Today' programme at the start of the 2003 war against Iraq. Husain began his career at BBC GMR and Piccadilly Radio in Manchester.

Wire Free Productions:

Wire Free Productions is a new production company chaired by the broadcaster and former senior BBC executive Matthew Bannister. Former BBC Asian Network Head of Programmes, Husain Husaini, is Chief Executive. The pair first worked together when Husain edited Matthew's late night talk show on BBC Radio 5 live.

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