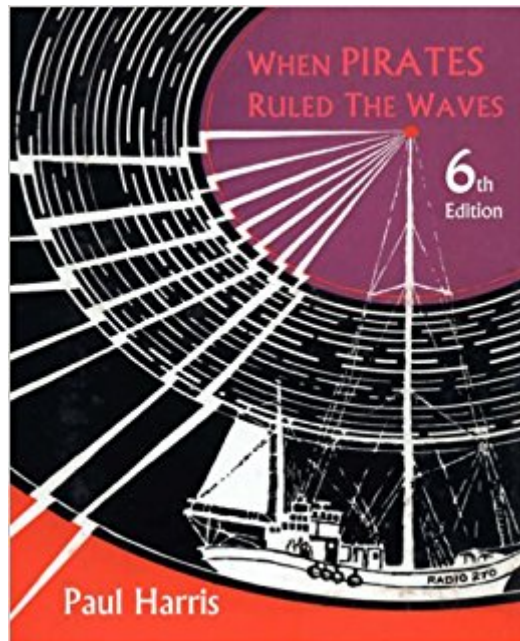




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# When Pirates Ruled The Waves



## Synopsis

Intrigues, threats, boarding parties, smuggling, shipwreck, danger and adventure on the high seas - they all form part of the remarkable story of the pop radio pirates. During the 1960s and '70s, they broadcast their programmes from storm-lashed radio ships anchored off the coasts of Europe. As the popularity of the stations grew - first in Denmark and Sweden and, later, in Britain, Holland and Belgium - and they multiplied in number, competition among them reached cut-throat level. The story is told of how the dramatic events around the Radio City fort in London's Thames Estuary resulted in the shooting to death of its owner; of the rivalry between Holland's Radio Veronica and the psychedelically-painted Radio North Sea International which culminated in the night bombing of the North Sea ship; how Radio Caroline, Capital Radio and Radio Veronica broke free from their stormy anchorages and were driven aground; how Radio North Sea International became the centre of an espionage scandal involving the security services of several NATO countries, and played its part in influencing the 1970 British General Election. Blackmail and armed boarding parties were the order of the day as rival gangs of pirates literally fought to take over each other's radio ships and to carve up lucrative advertising markets. Successively, the governments of Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Britain and The Netherlands legislated against the pirate broadcasters. On the positive side, the activities of the pop radio pirates led to innovations and improvements in the established government monopoly radio services. Pirate disc jockeys, crewmen and radio engineers were pursued by police throughout Western Europe and many prosecuted for daring to provide their diet of relentless pop music from a wallowing, rusty radio ship bearing a huge aerial mast. They were, perhaps, the last real romantic outlaws in a world which has little time for those who seek to operate outwith the reach of the all-embracing tentacles of government. This edition - incorporating much of the text of Paul Harris's first work, *When Pirates Ruled the Waves*, a bestseller on publication in 1968, which subsequently ran to four editions - has a new preface by the author. It is illustrated throughout with over 100 photographs of the radio ships and the personalities associated with them. Paul Harris has worked variously, since his days in pirate radio in the late '60s and early '70s, as a writer (more than forty books), publisher, international printing consultant and journalist. He covered the wars in Yugoslavia 1991-5 for press, radio and TV and, for ten years, worked as an analyst on global insurgency and terrorism for Janes Intelligence Review. His work took him to Sri Lanka, where he was also Colombo correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*, and to such exotic hotspots as Nepal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalayah, Aceh, East Timor, Uganda, Eritrea, Sudan, Nagorno Karabakh, The Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic and to China, where he worked on *The Shanghai Daily* newspaper. He is now endeavouring to live a quiet life in a small, remote country

marked by hot weather and a lack of insurrection or drama. He works as a lecturer on cruise ships in Asia and Europe. His most recent book is *Delightfully Imperfect: A Year in Sri Lanka at the Galle Face Hotel*, also published by Kennedy & Boyd.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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As someone who grew up listening to pirate radio in England back in the 1960s, I am fascinated with anything to do with the subject because those stations had such a dramatic impact on my early teens. For Americans, it is hard to imagine a life in which you were not really exposed to any 'pop' music records - thanks to the monopoly of the BBC and the influence of the British Musicians Union that strictly limited the broadcast of recorded music. And then... turn on your radio one day and there it is: disc jockeys playing records hour after hour! Teenage bliss! There are a number of books available through , including Tom Lodge's excellent memoir of life on a pirate station, "The Ship That Rocked The World." Paul Harris' book, "When Pirates Ruled The Waves," is intended to be a more objective look at the entire pirate radio phenomenon from its inception to its demise. As such, it includes a great deal of information about various British government debates on what to do about a motley bunch of broadcasters who were (from the government's point of view) illegal, but were

listened to and vehemently supported by millions of potential voters. Some of those passages in the book may seem pedantic to readers looking for all the fun associated with the pop pirates, but they are worth reading to understand how the offshore stations managed to continue so long without government interference and how they were finally put out of business. Some sections seem to have been cobbled together from previous publications or magazine articles and tighter editing would have helped the flow of the narrative, but it is apparent that a great deal of research went into the preparation of this book. "When Pirates Ruled The Waves" contains a large number of high quality photographs (rather than just photocopies of old newspaper cuttings that are found in some other books) and many of the photos are ones that were not published elsewhere. Also, there is a lot of information about the shooting death involving the owners of Radio City that was the catalyst that started the British government attempting to curtail the activities of the pirates. But that was their dilemma: on one hand police would say they had no jurisdiction to enforce laws on offshore forts and ships because they were not in territorial waters. Meanwhile, the government was trying to claim that at certain times - such as seasonal low tides - the shore line extended enough to consider them within the three mile limit. For those deeply interested in the phenomenon that was offshore radio in the 1960s and the influence it had on the rise of Britpop bands from the Beatles and Rolling Stones to the Kinks and more, this book is a 'must have.' But there is plenty to interest the more casual reader who would like to get a feel for what it all meant and how it went on to change the way the BBC broadcast music thereafter. By the way, although the author and I have the same last name, we are in no way related!

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