

19th November 2022

Tuning

“Stay tuned at any price to this side of paradise.”.

Ric Ocasek, *This Side of Paradise*

When I was little, I used to sneak into the darkness of our living-room in the wee-small-hours to listen to the commentary of a World Heavyweight Boxing match on the radio. In those days it was a series of contests between Floyd Patterson and Ingemar Johansson. And I just loved it!

Our radio in the 1950s and 60s was an electrically powered valve-radio, a *Bush* as I recall. And the most exciting thing about it was the tuning dial. By means of a large, Bakelite knob, you could make a pointer move across a dial to get the BBC station you wanted: “The Home Service” (now Radio 4), “The Light Programme” (Radio 2) or “The Third Programme” (Radio 3). There were no “digital pre-sets” back then. You turned the knob, followed the pointer, watched it pass through parts that offered static, feedback or squeaks, until your programme came through loud and clear.

There were other stations on the dial too, such as the exotically-named “Athlone” (wherever that was) and of course, the delight and joy of “Radio Luxemburg”, the only commercial “pop music” station – with the output of what would now be a BBC Radio 1 or a Local Radio station.

So here’s the point ... Sometimes you knew what your station of choice was, you got there, you listened, and all was well – music, news, comedy, classical stuff, and boxing too. But sometimes you “scanned the airwaves”, following the pointer across the dial. It could find static, when you didn’t expect it; a clear station from somewhere different; or a snatch of something before the signal was lost. In other words, the dial contained much more than a small boy could ever have known.

Sometimes, when we tune in to God – in prayer, meditation, silence, worship – we know the station we want, we get there and it’s as clear as a bell. Now and again, even with the best of stations, static gets in the way, or the programme isn’t to our liking. So we wait, or we move on. And every once in a while, we hit a different station, our interest is caught, and we learn something new, something we could never have expected. There are a lot more stations on our prayer-dial than we will ever know. So “stay tuned at any price”, and you never know what you might come across.

A prayer for today

My ariel is up; I’m tuning in, waiting for the signal. So, what’s coming through?

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