

Radio Ruth takes your ears for a weekly walk.

Pirate radio still rules the waves

Despite government raids to seize the equipment of free radio stations, the real treasure, or booty if you will, remains in each DJ's unique and personal voice.

BY SUNNY BLECKINGER

PHOTOS BY STEPHAN RAAIJMAKERS

Last week, the government admitted that they had charged too much for radio air space. A little money was handed back to the fat and happy corporations that had bought it, but the astronomical prices for a licence to use air still remain far out of reach for indie radio makers. However, it wasn't always like this.

For a time, anyone with access to relatively cheap broadcasting equipment could get their voices on the air, so long as they didn't disrupt someone else's signal. Then, in February of 2003, the Dutch National Frequency Radio Policy came into effect, whereby the government sold all available radio airspace to the highest corporate bidder, and sent teams of officers to seize equipment and hand out hefty fines to anyone broadcasting on free airspace.

Thus, they threatened the very existence of underground stations, and ensured that radio, for the present generation, would be comprised of schlock, worthless dead weight on the lighter-than-air radio waves that were once considered valuable podia for voices with reason.

Or so they thought...

In Drenthe, many of the farmers who used to play traditional Dutch and German music on their local radio stations continue to do so, and they don't seem to give a damn about what the bureaucrats think. If their equipment gets raided, the villagers all put together a little money, get new equipment, and start again the next day.

But here in A'dam, where many of the government raids were focused, only one free station remains continuously on the air, Radio Patapoe.

The government has yet to pinpoint their exact location—though any kid on the street could direct you to them. And with funds for raiding all out, they're probably safe for a while.

Amsterdam Weekly talks to a few of the many pirate radio DJs here, to try and get a feel for their voices.

Ruth Dreier, the interstitial connection

If you happen to be a member of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, or someone on the cutting edge of new, experimental music, then the name Ruth Dreier will probably resonate in your ears like the rich tones of her gravelly voice. However, reader surveys tell us that many of you don't fit into either of these categories, so a little background is in order.

Twenty years ago, Dreier was heading up the classical music department at WNYC-FM, the flagship station for public radio in New York. She had a huge staff, an endless list of music programmes, a good salary (for public radio, that is) and lots of listeners. She remembers this time fondly and refers to it as 'overground radio'. But she was also involved in the more underground scenes, producing radio series for groups like Kronos Quartet and Bang On a Can, musicians known for innovation in performance and repertoire.

In 1990, she was invited by Radio Netherlands to host and develop *LIVE*, a weekly broadcast of Concertgebouw concerts, through which she became known to millions of US listeners as the voice of Dutch musical life. Then, in 1997, after she became ful-