

John Burgess

Colourful identity of radio and television

John Burgess's colourful career in television and radio began in an equally colourful way...as an accomplished and talented tennis player, a professional bowler and a journalist for the N.R.M.A.

One night bowling at St Leonards Bowl in Sydney, he met John Laws. Lawsie commented on John's voice and suggested he try out for radio. They became good friends and John met many people in the industry that would eventually become his life. Johnny O'Keefe, Brian Henderson, Col Joye, Digger Revell and Jay Justin to name a few. Lawsie also helped him in the art of presentation, reading commercials and researching music.

John Burgess' career on radio kicked off when he was asked to audition for 2UW in Sydney as a relief announcer. He got the job, becoming the FIRST disc jockey to get a job in a major market with no experience whatsoever!

Eventually John got his own shift doing afternoons - 12.00p.m. to 4.00p.m. He later moved to the 7.00p.m. to 10.00p.m. shift.

2UW was a top 40 music station playing all the latest hits and it was during this time he was given the nickname "Baby John" by Ward Austin, who was the King of top 40 radio between 4 and 7 p.m. At that time, although he was by no means the youngest at the radio station...the name stuck...and has for the last 40 years!

During his time at 2UW (1965-1970) John Burgess compered many visiting Rock Stars of the time, who came to Australia, including The Rolling Stones, Roy Orbison, The Who, Manfred Mann, P.J. Proby, Herb Alpert, Peter Paul and Mary, Small Faces, Trini Lopez, Tony Bennett, The Monkeys and Tom Jones, and of course lots of Aussie stars as well, Johnny O'Keefe, The Seekers, Billy Thorpe, Normie Rowe, The Bee Gees, Ray Brown, Sherbert, The Deltones, and Johnnie Young. The list goes on.

John got his first national television show on Channel 7 in 1968 called *Turning On...at 5.30p.m.* This showcased Australian groups and music, and was a forerunner to what Molly Meldrum would later develop.



In 1970 John left *2UW* and went to *3AK*, a pop music station in Melbourne to do the breakfast show. He became number one in the ratings the following year.

Once again he was able to do television with some variety type shows including *Beach Girl Quests*, and *New Faces* with Frank Wilson on channel 9.

When *3AK* changed direction in 1974 he returned to Sydney to *2UW* to do breakfast again and more television work with channel 9. In 1976 he went back to Melbourne to take on the breakfast session on a new station *3MP*, this was the first new commercial radio license issued in Victoria in 40 years. *3MP* played soft rock music (current hits and oldies)

Once again television exposure was available on the *Ernie Sigley show* on channel 0 which is now known as channel 10. This was ground breaking stuff as they put the show up against the News on the rival channels. So...as they rest of the world was catching up with world events... Ernie was throwing pies at John! However, to everyone's surprise it rated very well.

In 1978 John got an offer from Kerry Packer to go to Perth to take over breakfast radio on *6PM*...another top 40 station. It was one of the best decisions he'd ever made. He became the number 1 breakfast announcer in Perth the following year and was undefeated in that time slot for the next ten years.

In the interim, he was lucky again to do a lot of television which gave him the advantage of an audience associating a face with a voice.

In 1984 John did pilots for channel 9 for a dating type television game show, which didn't eventuate. Shortly after, he received a call from his old friend Ernie Sigley asking if he'd be interested in taking over *Wheel Of Fortune* on channel 7. Naturally he jumped at the chance and for the next twelve years the show thrived.

In 1997, John eventually moved on... and received an offer to join channel 9 to do *CATCH PHRASE* which he accepted. The show ran from 1997 to 2004. During *Catch Phrase* John also did the breakfast program on *2CH* in Sydney, an easy listening type station.

In September 2006, John joined Melbourne's Home of Easy Listening *3MP* as host of the breakfast program.

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