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NEWS

David Marsden Still Believes In The Spirit Of Radio

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By: [ChartAttack.com Staff](#)

The '80s were a time of change in media. While from the beginning of rock 'n' roll there was an opportunity for quality music to be heard through mass media, radio started to become the captive of big business in ownership and content as top 40 radio slowly took over FM. In the '80s, Ontario's Golden Horseshoe area was lucky to have CFNY 102.1 to provide an alternative to the increasingly mainstream FM radio. With its rogue, free-form programming, at-times deranged on-air personalities and catchy slogan, "The Spirit Of Radio," CFNY provided many a suburban teenage freak with a lifeline to alternative culture.



David Marsden

David Marsden was the program director at CFNY from 1978 to 1988, a time when the battle between art and business came to a head. After spending time on CHUM-FM, Marsden resigned when the station moved further away from its former free-form roots into a new, more rigid, format.

"During that down period between CHUM and CFNY it became apparent to me that there's an awful lot of music that was not being played anywhere, but particularly at that time in radio," remembers Marsden. "So I found this little station out in Brampton, ON who hired me as an announcer to do a show where I could play all of this music that wasn't being played."

Unfortunately, this idyllic situation didn't last long as the owners of the station became embroiled in financial problems that led to the station being put into bankruptcy protection and into the hands of lawyers.



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"We had no money from week to week. Those of us who were part of this thing didn't know if we would get paid. If anything broke at the radio station we kind of scotch-taped it back together again so it would last for another week because there was literally no one in charge," Marsden says. "I started the on-air save the spirit of radio campaign, the first time the expression 'Spirit Of Radio' had been used. Everybody at the station found something that they could do to help the cause. The listeners came to the station in incredible numbers and we literally had hundreds of thousands of names on petitions. Thousands and thousands of letters being sent to the CRTC in Ottawa. With the impact that that campaign had, people started to take notice. Until then they thought it was just a bunch of kids broadcasting out in a middle of a field of corn."

The station was saved by the passion of its employees and rabid audience and soon it was sold to new owners who moved the station into new and improved digs, established new budgets to procure new equipment and improve its legendary spotty signal. By the early '80s CNFY, the little station in Brampton was broadcasting across the GTA from the top of the CN Tower.

For those wanting to hear David Marsden's musical magic, The Mars Bar — as he was affectionately known almost a quarter century ago — is back on the air for another tiny station in the suburbs of Toronto, this time on 94.9 The Rock broadcasting from Oshawa, ON. His show is on Thursdays and Fridays from 7 p.m. to midnight. For those who can't pick up the station, it's streaming on the Internet at www.therock.fm.

—Chris Burland

To read more about tonight's Spirit Of Radio reunion party in Toronto and for the rest of Chris Burland's interview with David Marsden, click [here](#).



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