



REUNITED – TONY BLACKBURN AND ARNOLD

Legendary radio DJ Tony Blackburn has been reunited with his long lost dog Arnold after the animal went missing more than twenty years ago. And the happy duo will be heard for the first time in a generation this Easter on Pirate BBC Essex.

Arnold, a mongrel, was just a puppy when Blackburn took him aboard the sixties pirate radio ship Radio Caroline in 1964. “I knew British people liked pets so I thought they’d like to hear Arnold with me on my radio shows,” said Blackburn. He was right. There started a twenty-year love affair between Arnold and the great British listening public. Children grew up hearing his famous bark.

“When I jumped ship from Radio Caroline to Radio London, Arnold came too,” said the DJ. “And when Radio London was forced off the air by the Government, Arnold and I opened Radio 1.”

The dog can be heard barking within seconds on the official archive recording of Tony Blackburn’s first show which opened Radio 1 in 1967.

It was in the eighties when Blackburn moved from the BBC to commercial radio that Arnold disappeared. “My and Arnold’s jaws dropped when they told me they didn’t want him,” he said. “Arnold took off, leaving me in heaps of tears and I haven’t seen him since.”

That was till March this year when Tim Gillett, the producer of this Easter’s celebration of sixties offshore pirate radio Pirate BBC Essex, asked Tony Blackburn to present one of the shows.

“I asked him whether he would be bringing Arnold aboard the LV18 in Harwich where we’ll be broadcasting, and he told me how he had lost the poor dog,” said Tim. “So I made it my challenge to find him.”

Tim got in touch with a colleague in the world famous BBC sound archive in London and was stunned. Within an hour they came back with the good news that they had found him.

“We found him lurking behind one of the shelves of sixties archive recordings,” said archivist Mark Punter. “He was asleep, though his nose was twitching.”

Tony Blackburn and Arnold were overcome when they were reunited at the presenter’s house. “He was misty-eyed and licking me all over, just as he used to do,” said Blackburn. “I was completely in tears.”

Blackburn said Arnold looked a little bit ‘ruff’ and has put on some weight, but more butch than he used to be, and doesn’t require so much exercise. “When I was on Radio Caroline we used to go walkies round the deck together for several hours,” said Blackburn. “Now it’s a few minutes in my garden and he runs out of puff.”

Blackburn says one thing’s for sure though. Arnold has still got his bark. “As he drew up in the car outside I could hear him getting excited. Before I even saw him again, I heard that bark, and knew that’s Arnold!”

Tony Blackburn and Arnold can be heard on Saturday 11 April between 1500 and 1600 on Pirate BBC Essex on www.bbc.co.uk/essex or on 729, 765 and 1530 MW in the Essex area. A full interview with Tony Blackburn about his reunion with Arnold can be heard at bbc.co.uk/essex

Pirate BBC Essex is on air between 0600 Good Friday April 10 and 1800 on Easter Bank Holiday Monday April 13 live from the LV18 at Harwich Ha’penny Pier. Other presenters include Johnnie Walker, Emperor Rosko, Dave Cash, Norman St John, Roger Day and Mike Ahern.

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