

EDXC Conference 2003 in Königstein

by Anker Petersen



Group Photo

About 55 DX-ers, Broadcasters and DRM-specialists from 15 countries in Europe, North America and Asia did attend the 37th annual Conference of the European DX Council at the Dresdner Bank Kommunikations-und Trainings-Center outside the 750 year-old German city of Königstein near Frankfurt am Main. This quiet beauty of scenery was the ideal venue for a Conference which had "Dxing in the digital future" as its theme. It was very well organized by the local Rhein-Main-Radio-Club in co-operation with the other main DX-Clubs of Germany.

It was a great pleasure that no less than 16 DSWCI-members found their way to Königstein: Mariá Gösselová (Czech Rep.), Kaj Bredahl Jørgensen, Stig Hartvig Nielsen and yours truly (Denmark), Robert Kipp, Andreas Schmid, Stefan Schliephacke, Horst K. Schmidt and Markus Wiedner (Germany), Valerio G. Cavallo, Paolo Morandotti and Nader Javaheri (Italy), Toshi Ohtake (Japan), Max van Arnhem (The Netherlands), Tibor Szilagyi (Sweden) and George Brown (Scotland).

The Conference was officially opened Friday Aug 15 at 1400 by Dr. Harald Gabler (RMRC), Luigi Cobisi (EDXC Secretary General) and a representative from the Government of Hessen. Furthermore introduction by Dr. Anton Kuchelmeister (AGDX), Hans van der Remme (ADDX) and a representative from one of the sponsoring firms, Rohde & Schwarz.

2003 is the year of the inaugural broadcasts using the new Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) modulation technology and we heard high level lectures about this by Professor Dr. Ing. Wolfgang Skupin (University of Applied Sciences), Mr. Michael Knietzsch (Thales Broadcast & Multimedia GmbH) and Mr. Stephan Meltzer (Coding Tec.) covering the theory, DRM transmitters and DRM receivers.

The situation right now is that worldwide standards have been accepted and the first transmitters are broadcasting DRM now. The target is to improve AM on SW and MW, but not to replace FM and DAB. Later on we heard some of these tests on short wave from Jülich, Rampisham, Bonaire and Sackville on two DRM-receivers and the quality was impressive: Like FM and close to CD quality! But we also experienced that the signals dropped completely off, if the signal strength was too weak or there were bad propagation conditions or severe disturbances from adjacent AM broadcasts! It is either perfect reception or no reception at all. It was admitted that the protests from DX-ers on the wide spectrum noise QRM during the first DRM field tests have forced the engineers to keep the transmitter bandwidths within 10 kHz.

DRM receivers are still being developed. The first prototype, sized like a Sony ICF 2001, did cost about 1000 Euro, and the second generation, smaller than a Sangean ATS909, did cost

around 700 Euro. When massproduction starts in 2004 and 2005, the prices are expected to become lower.



DRM receiver 1st generation

Wolf Harranth (Ex ORF) then held a provocative and disillusioned causerie about the Rise and Fall of the Wireless Empire; Looking into the crystal ball: Brave New Virtual World?; and the role of the listeners: The Unimportance of Being Earnest. DRM is excellent, but comes too late. SW is not dead! Many international broadcasters have disappeared, but that leaves more free channels for DX of small stations.

Then followed the traditional Broadcasters Forum with representatives from Deutsche Welle (Waldemar Krämer), HCJB (DX-Editor Hans Werner Lange, ADDX), IBB (Arto Mujunen), AWR (Dr. Adrian M. Peterson), RVI (Frans Vossen) and ORF (Wolf Harranth). Of particular interest was that the IBB now has 60 automated monitoring systems and about 50 human monitors to check reception of the VOA, RFE/R Liberty, RFA etc.

DRM will not replace analogue listening for many years in the developing countries.

There are four huge collections of Broadcast QSL's in the world initiated by:

1. The late Arthur Cushen. It can now be seen at a public library in Invercargill, New Zealand.
2. Wolf Harranth: Research and Documentation Center for the History of Radio Communication and the Electronic Media, in Vienna, Austria.
3. Jerry Berg, Connecticut, U.S.A.
4. Adrian Peterson, Indianapolis, U.S.A. He has about 35,000 QSL's and showed us several being more than 50 years old.

Before an informal dinner party, Andreas Schmid had organized a Pennant Quiz where Stig Hartvig Nielsen became the winner with 32 out of 33 correct answers.

The first lecture Saturday morning was by Siegbert Gerhard about the complicated History of German DX Clubs. After that Toshi Ohtake gave his lecture about 50 year history of DX in Japan – which some have heard in Vejers or Kulpville. Toshi is now editor of a new DX-programme in English via AWR.

Stig Hartvig Nielsen then told us about the history and future plans of the World Music Radio – the private station from 1963 that refuses to die and which he now is in charge of. The Danish PTT has authorized the use of 15810 kHz and is expected also to permit the use of a 49 mb frequency soon. A 400 watts transmitter in the central Jutland village of Ilskov will be used initially, but two 10 kW transmitters are expected ready from Nov 2003.

24 hours of broadcasts, 7 days a week, of contemporary and world music are planned for a global, international audience. In the future it is expected that WMR will also be live stream on World Wide Web, on FM around Aarhus, on Satellite, MW and Cable to 700,000 houses.

This was followed by a talk by Christopher Laske from the Fraunhofer Institute about their development of a low cost 10 watts DRM transmitter and a low cost (65 Euro) pretuned DRM receiver for the students at Erlangen University.

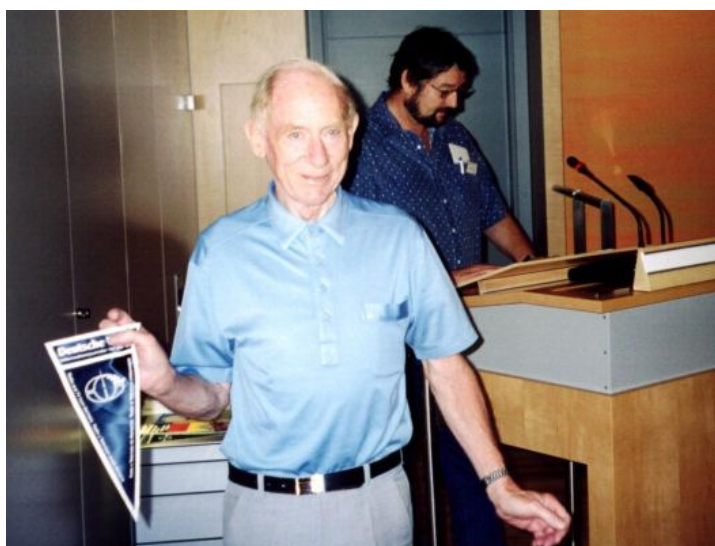
After lunch, Alois Krischke, retired engineer from Rohde & Schwarz and editor of "SW Antennas", gave a very detailed review of Transmitting and Receiving Antennas.

Udo Deutscher introduced us to a new kind of DX-ing: Scanning of the TV Video frequency spectrum and identify the TV carriers. He demonstrated the carrier noise from local TV stations. Only a dozen of DX-ers worldwide enjoy this special hobby so far.

Anker Petersen then analyzed the downgoing number of stations on the Tropical Bands from 1973 till 2003 which now is reduced to one third. The stations have disappeared mostly because of replacement by FM, low technical standard or poor economy. If the trend continues, the last stations will disappear in 2014. We plan to publish this lecture later on in SWN, and it can already now be read on www.dswci.org, click Latest news.

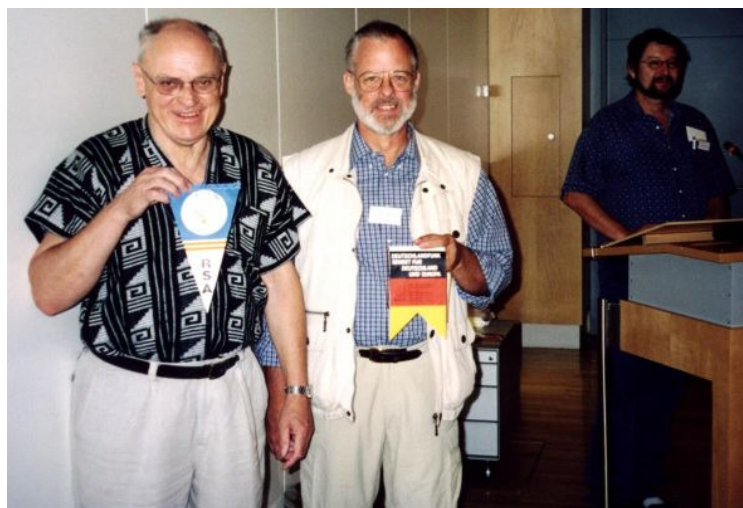
Dr. Adrian M. Peterson followed with a Wandering the World with a Radio, telling about his early experiences of DX-ing while working for AWR in Australia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Adrian is still writing articles for "Wavescan" from Indianapolis, but the DX- programme is edited in the UK by young Christopher Lewis who also attended the Conference, and broadcast worldwide.

Andrew Janitschek, Operations Manager of R Free Asia in Washington then gave an update of their broadcasts which have been increased towards North Korea. He officially inaugurated their first QSL cards. Reports to RFA, ATTN. Ms. Iwanciw, 2025 M. Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington; e-mail: iwanciwt@rfa.org



George Brown won in Andy's contest

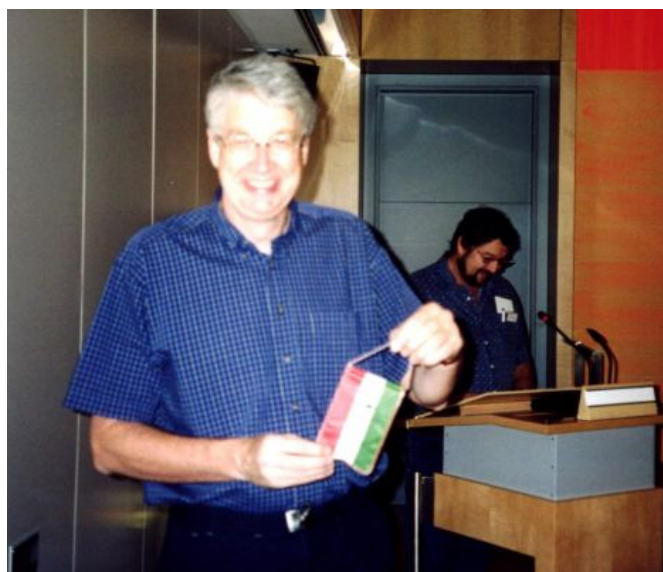
After the traditional EDXC Banquet, a Tombola was held where everyone won prizes – mostly presents about the 50 years of Deutsche Welle. The first prize – a Spacereceiver – was won by Valerio Cavallo. Three EDXC Awards for excellent DX-lifework – handmade by Mr. Alfred Becker – were given to Wolf Harranth, Waldemar Krämer and Anker Petersen – a great honour !



Anker and Robert Kipp won in Andy's contest

Sunday morning began with a Flea Market at the lobby and a video film - in German - from the inauguration of the new Radiohouse of Deutsche Welle in Bonn.

Waldemar Krämer from DW then talked about the role of listeners in frequency planning. Scientific calculations on propagation of shortwave transmissions are always theoretical predictions, and the DX-er or technical monitors may find out that the real world is different. Therefore reception reports cannot be rated highly enough for analog, but also for future DRM transmissions!



Max van Arnhem won in Andy's contest.

Former DJ "Roger Kirk" who was wellknown in the 1960'ies and 1970'ies at such pirate and later private stations as Pyrgos Broadcasting, R Northsea International, R Galaxy, R Time and R Victoria, gave a controversial talk about the "End of Private Radio ?". His message was that the Era of these stations is more or less over, but they did succeed in changing the format of even State-run broadcasters to fluent announcing with jingles and playing the kind of music, the listeners want to hear.

Wolf Harranth then gave some more information about the "Research and Documentation Center for the History of Radio Communication and the Electronic Media", in Vienna, Austria. It was formerly just called the "QSL Collection", but now it has much more than QSL's from broadcasting stations and radio amateurs. Also Club publications, logbooks, WRTH's and even recordings from radio broadcasts. More details can be read on www.qsl.at . Nowadays, its four million objects are stored in a large building where visitors can study the history of broadcasting and DX-ing. Wolf Harranth stressed that for historical

reasons it is very important that private QSL-collections and Club publications are sent to this Center when they are no longer needed. The Center is officially registered as an international organization.



Stefan Schliephacke won in Andy's contest

The final point on the agenda was the report from the Secretary General of the EDXC. Luigi Cobisi found that the hobby of DX-ing is still very much alive, but there are some problems:

1. Some Clubs may not be really organized.
2. Some Clubs are going down in membership.
3. Some Clubs have left the EDXC.

The EDXC represents 15 DX-Clubs in 17 European countries with a total of about 5,000 DX-ers. But the EDXC work is based on voluntary work and the annual budget is less than 700 Euros.

The Secretary General then mentioned the well visited EDXC Portal on the internet, his monthly newsletters by mail, e-mail, on the website and via HCJB, and now also via the Voice of the Mediterranean in Malta. These broadcasts are verified by QSL. His visits to various Clubs, like the DSWCI AGM in Vejers in May were also mentioned. The DSWCI is regarded as one of the non-British DX-Clubs in Europe which first realised that English is THE international language for DX-ers.



Luigi Cobisi and Paolo Morandotti

According to the present Statutes of the EDXC "A Dixer from any Member [Club] of the Council shall be elected Secretary General or Assistant Secretary General for a period of three years only." Luigi Cobisi and his assistant Paolo Morandotti

have been leading the EDXC since January 01, 2001, so the member clubs were invited to present candidates this autumn, and then a voting will take place.

During his period as Secretary General, Luigi Cobisi have met about 650 DX-ers and Broadcasters which has been very rewarding. It is very important for the Hobby that Conferences are organized regularly, because the personal contacts are invaluable. The next Conference will be on Malta Oct. 24-26, 2003 where the Voice of the Mediterranean is organizing a Conference about Multilingualism and International Radio – a listeners' and broadcasters' Forum, and has asked the EDXC to support it with the participation of some European DX-ers.

In Pori, Finland, last year there were four offers for future DX-Conferences: Germany (just held), Malta (to be held in October), Ireland and Turkey. Unfortunately the options for Conferences in 2004 in Ireland or Turkey have just been withdrawn for various reasons, so right now there is no EDXC Conference planned for 2004! The Secretary General urged the member clubs as soon as possible to consider organizing a Conference next year, because the new Secretary General cannot arrange it.

The EDXC is the tiniest European organization with a very small budget. Luigi Cobisi argued that in the future, we need lively members, not DX-Clubs, if the EDXC shall survive. His vision is that the EDXC shall consist of interested individuals instead of DX-Clubs as paying members. Today, it is difficult for small Clubs to participate actively in the EDXC activities, because all their energy is used for their publishing DX-bulletins with the same news in their own languages. Some of these clubs would benefit by merging.

Unfortunately these controversial points of view came just before the termination of the EDXC Conference, so the 11 member Clubs present had no chance to discuss it further.

On Monday, Aug 18, nine participants (including four DSWCI members) did visit the Deutsche Welle Receiving Station at Bockhacken northeast of Cologne where Mr. Winking and Mr. Steffen Hilbig gave an excellent briefing about their job of monitoring Deutsche Welle shortwave and TV broadcasts, and other broadcasts as agreed upon. For Shortwave they use several Rohde & Schwarz EK 070 and two NRD 545 DSP receivers connected to a variety of antennas on top of the listening bunker, including direction finding antennas having an accuracy of ½ degree, if the signal is strong enough. Programme monitoring takes place elsewhere. There is only 1-2 persons on duty here at any time.

The 2003 EDXC Conference in Germany was very technical which cannot be a surprise, but I found it very useful and another possibility to meet old and new DX-friends and Broadcasters.



Kaj won in Andy's contest