

Valley radio 'round world

BY TANIS GILLES
Times Reporter

Tom Lucas and Hugh Dobbie are rocking the world. With a little help from the Internet, that is.

It all started with a cutting edge idea that most radio stations thought was too risky - a retro-rock request radio show that would be broadcast simultaneously over the Internet.

It had never been done before, but Abbotsford's 85 Radio Max decided to take a chance on the two.

What resulted is the World Wide Retro-Rock Request show that airs every Sunday night and has won fans from all corners of the globe.

"They were willing to give us a chance to air the program," Dobbie said.

"Once it aired, it caught and now it's being broadcast throughout Canada from Max studios and throughout the world."

'Net surfers from Kuwait, Sweden, England, Scotland, Australia, Norway, and the United States regularly tune in.

All it takes is an Internet account and a sound card. Request a tune over the 'Net and sit back and listen.

It's drawn a good following of local listeners and individuals interested in getting involved.

"This show has just drawn talent like flies to you know what," Dobbie said.

He said it's also coaxed those intimidated by the Internet out of their shells.

"There's criticism of the Internet as being impersonal and unfriendly," Dobbie said.

"It's almost a paradox. This is using the latest and greatest in communication technology to bring people to an intimate level of communication."

Dobbie, as Huey the 'Net Boy, controls the computer while Lucas spins the tunes and hosts.

About a year-and-a-half ago, Lucas said he began to get restless with his 30-year career in radio. He wanted to find a new way of doing things. He met up with Dobbie and they hatched a plan to do a radio show on the Internet only.

That lasted for about two months before 85 Radio Max picked them up and they started broadcasting on air.

Now Lucas said seven stations throughout the country carry the show. Radio signals are sent from Abbotsford to a satellite that beams the program throughout Canada.

That same signal is sent to Dobbie's company Dowco Internet, encoded into RealAudio and spread across the web.

People separated by thousands of kilometres can connect on the show, Lucas said. One listener from Scotland e-mailed a request to his girlfriend in Quebec who had also logged on at the time.

"We're pleased with this," he said. "It's growing." The best part about the gig, Lucas said, is it's not really like a job. Its four hours of listening to some great rock and roll hits and making friends across the globe.

Tune in Sundays on 85 Radio Max from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Log on to the web site at www.retro-rock.com.