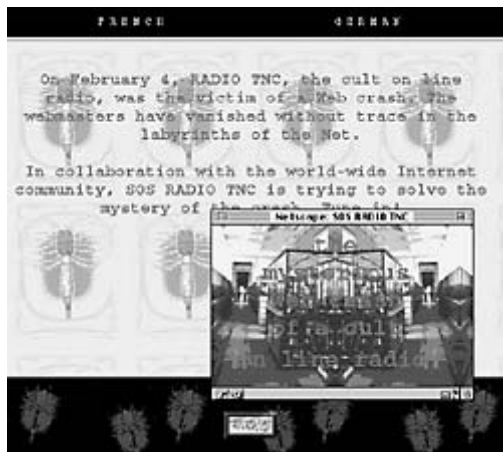


SOS Radio TNC — A Media Fiction Beusch/Cassani



Web Crash

On February 4, 1996 at approximately 4 p.m., for the first time in recorded human history, a Web site together with its Web master was catapulted out into the great virtual beyond. You probably heard about it. We were unsuspecting travelers down the information highway that day, and it was only a matter of minutes after the catastrophe that we came upon the crashed homepage of cult online RADIO TNC. Microphone membrane shreds in GIF format, dead links, mutilated jingles looping spastically ñ a truly awful sight, and one that shocked even hardened Internauts like us to the very core of our being.

SOS Online Radio

We reacted immediately. Overnight, amid the wreckage of RADIO TNC's homepage, we got SOS online radio operational. The idea was obvious: we set up an interactive, dynamic structure, we enlist the co-operation of the worldwide Internet community, we solve the Puzzle of the Web Crash. Only 16 hours after the crash, on February 5 at 8 a.m., we went online. Since then, SOS RADIO TNC has broadcast its Save Our Site signals to the Net, on multiple channels and in numerous languages, on a round-the-clock basis.

Boom

What began on February 4 as a spontaneous rescue operation has subsequently evolved into a fascinating model for the collective-innovative utilization of Net resources. In an unprecedented display of solidarity, the concerned and committed citizens of Netville have scanned to the most remote corners of the Web for traces of the crash victims, militant Net archeologists are circulating petitions and crash poets have made the missing stars of RADIO TNC into heroes of poignant cyber-serials. Museums, organizations and institutions, led by the Museum of Technology in Paris and the Ars Electronica Center, have placed their infrastructure at our disposal, radio producers and moderators from around the world (ORF, Radio France, BBC, RAI, ARD, RSR, etc.) have taken turns as guest hosts at the online microphone of SOS RADIO TNC ñ the provisional, first aid version of online radio is a thing of the past, having since developed into a booming parallel medium.

Radio the ne(x)t century

SOS RADIO TNC is a playful cross of traditional and contemporary media, their styles and forms of production, myths and legends. Formula-stripping, code-busting and remixing are the everyday stock in trade of an online radio ñ standing tall amid the pitiful wreckage of the most advanced communications technology and providing us all with a model of fin de Millennium composure. And as a conduit linking festival, symposium and network, SOS RADIO TNC is online and on the air to provide Ars Electronica festivalgoers with their recommended daily allowance of postcatastrophe mental nourishment and transradiophonic wit.

CyberMemorial

But what of the Web Crash victims? In April, we laid the cornerstone of a monument meant to commemorate those three pioneers who boldly went forth to explore the abyss of worldwide communications and, on February 4, disappeared without a trace into the labyrinth of the Net. Since then, Net users have been chiseling their inscriptions into the silicon of the world's first CyberMemorial, thereby generating a virtual and dynamic monument that is constantly evolving like collective memory itself. This CyberMemorial will be ceremonially unveiled at the Ars Electronica Festival.

Tune in!

The following Quick Reference is an easy way to get started in the complex world of SOS RADIO TNC. Tune in ñ and who knows ... maybe you'll be the one to make the decisive discovery that helps solve the Puzzle of the Web Crash.

SOS RADIO TNC - Quick Reference

Anchor - The informational packets carrying the news of the Web Crash spread like wildfire on February 4, 1996. The Internet community is shocked. Numerous sites link up with the crashpage in order to anchor at least the pathetic remains of cult online RADIO TNC and thus preserve them for posterity. Link up your homepage too!

Autopsy -At the end of February, Beusch/ Cassani commissioned a microphone expert to perform an autopsy upon the shreds of microphone membrane remaining of RADIO TNC's crashed homepage. Are these really the last earthly remains of the highly sensitive Membrane of Mike? Can a shredded membrane heal? Is a membrane one of a microphone's vital organs? You'll find the answers to these and other questions in Online Transmission. 3.

Bouaaah! - What caused the Web Crash of February 4? And, for that matter, what is a Web Crash? How far can Net Ramming go? SOS RADIO TNC has carried the discussions of these burning issues for months. Have we finally reached the point where the dividing line between man and machine has dissolved? Could this have happened to any one of us? Can peace-loving Web surfers, simply enjoying some quality computer time at discount weekend phone rates, suddenly be sucked through their modems into the worldwide communications network? Bouaaah! One clings ever more tightly to one's mouse and hopes that linkages will slowly form. You can follow the discussions in the Play section.

Coal - The Coal microphone (model: Voxia; year of production: 1925) was one of the pioneers of broadcasting in its youth at the BBC. You can find historic photographs taken by Coal himself in the Play section. In 1959, having become rather hard of hearing, Coal was accepted for membership in the microphone collection of the Museum of Technology in Paris. In August 1995, it resolves to forsake its comfortable existence as a display object and once again to expose its carboniferous granules to the whoosh and roar of the big, wide world. Together with Mike, its casemate, Coal makes quick work of their vitrine and the pair rappels to freedom down an historic transatlantic cable (see Escape). In September 1995, RadioMind unleashes Coal on RADIO TNC's listening public, thus contributing mightily to the success of cult online radio and launching an outright Coal microphone revival. On February 4, 1996, it falls victim to the Web Crash and disappears into the labyrinth of the Net. A couple of Coal granules discovered at an out-of-the-way site are the only traces that have been found to date (also see "Feedback").

Coal Microphone Revival -A Coal microphone revival of breathtaking proportions followed in the wake of its RADIO TNC premiere. Seventy years after its heyday in the 1920s, the pioneer age of the mass medium radio, the sensual whisper of the Coal microphone comes astoundingly close to the sound of online radio.

Crashpage - The crashed homepage of online RADIO TNC has become a favorite destination of day-tripping Net Trotters. What better place to ponder the joy and grief of one's own Net existence than among dead links, microphone membrane shreds in GIF format and spastically looping, mutilated jingles? A petition circulated by militant Web archeologists demands that the crashpage be accorded recognition by UNESCO's catalog of cultural treasures. You can sign the petition in the Record section!

CyberMemorial - In April, Beusch/Cassani laid the cornerstone of a virtual monument commemorating the three victims of the Web Crash. Based upon the motto "Internet without RADIO TNC is like salad without dressing," user inscriptions generate links to other sites and a couple of remembrance bits are exported to each of them. Chisel your own message into the silicon of the world's first CyberMemorial! Automated public engraving sites have been made

available for this purpose at the Ars Electronica Festival. This Cyber Memorial will be ceremonially unveiled there.

Digital Takeover - One of the first cyber-serials dealing with the RADIO TNC Web Crash was launched by user MousePatt. The hero is a radiovorous and brimstone-broadcasting monster named Digital Takeover. In the Record section, you can throttle this beast and in the Play section, you can find out what other users think about your deeds.

Escape - Mike & Coal's spectacular breakout from the Museum of Technology in Paris on August 17, 1995 was captured in the fuzzy exposures of a surveillance camera (see Play, where you'll also find the report on the escape filed by the ORF's Paris correspondent). The vitrine, together with the shards of its smashed-out pane, has subsequently become one of the chief attractions of the world's oldest Temple of Technology.

Feedback - On January 17, 1996, the two microphones Mike & Coal appear as guests on the talk show Salon Helga on FM 4 (ORF). Ten minutes before the end of the program, Coal knocks out two of the host's teeth and feeds back just as fast as its little granules allow. You'll find a tape and pictures of the horrifying attack in Online Transmission 4.

Guest Hosts - Since February, in response to the invitation extended by Beusch/ Cassani, radio producers and moderators from around the world (ORF, Radio France, BBC, ARD, RSR, RAI, etc.) have taken turns as guest hosts at the online microphone of SOS RADIO TNC. Their playlist covers the entire spectrum from straight newsradio to tribal DJ-mix to the tastiest cyber-radio cartoons -expect anything.

Hybrid - "The radio whooshes and hisses in my hybrid veins. My mother is the ether and my father is Digital Takeover. I am the radio of yesterday and the radio of tomorrow, and I dream of only one thing: as a shining pixel, to blaze my trail across the heavens brilliantly lit by millions of sparking radio waves. My name is RadioMind and radio is the only thing on my mind." You'll find the sole extant sound document remaining from RadioMind in the Play section.

Mass Escape - Contrary to initial fears, Mike & Coal's spectacular breakout from the Museum of Technology in Paris did not inspire copycat mass escape attempts in other technology museums throughout the world. Coal's cousins (Mike, a prototype, has no next of kin) continue to rest peaceably in their display cases in London, Berlin, New York, Vienna, Montreux, etc. -where they're looking forward to your visit!

Mike - The hypersensitive microphone prototype was developed in 1995 by the legendary acoustic engineer Arno Vanloon. In June 1995, it is accepted into the microphone collection of the illustrious Museum of Technology in Paris, where it rests alongside its predecessors from 100 years of radio history. But why sleep away one's life in a stuffy vitrine while, outside, radio is being reinvented? In August 1995, Mike decides to thumb his nose at a comfortable museum existence and to let his membrane vibrate in the sizzling air of the Information Age -and breaks out (see *Escape*). In September 1995, Mike is deployed by RADIO TNC's RadioMind and disappears into the labyrinth of the Net in the crash of RADIO TNC on February 4, 1996. Not, however, entirely without a trace (see *Autopsy*).

Net sky - On February 5 at 8:01 a.m., the first e-mail arrives at SOS RADIO TNC: "What is Internet without RADIO TNC? Radio Mind, if you can hear me, wherever you might be, up

there in the Net sky or blocked by some obtuse protocol: We miss you!" As a moving manifestation of the purest techno-heathenism, it adorns the homepage to this day.

On air - April 11, 1996 marked the premiere of SOS RADIO TNC's adventuresome on the air performances with a live broadcast on Kunstradio ORF. The transmission, including live video from the station's Vienna studio, was carried simultaneously via Internet (see the *Play* section).

Online Transmissions - Online transmissions (in RealAudio) updated at regular intervals provide you with an overview of the latest user inputs received at SOS RADIO TNC. Your first plunge into the swirling data pool -no problem!

Play - How did the Internet community react to the Web Crash of RADIO TNC? In the *Play* section, you can consult a wide selection of the data received at SOS RADIO TNC since February 4. If you ever get the feeling of being overwhelmed by the diversity of the material, you can, at any time, switch to one of the online transmissions and allow one of the guest hosts to act as your guide through the data pool.

RadioMind - The true identity of the founder and moderator of RADIO TNC remains a mystery to this day. Some say he emerged from the shadowy hacker milieu. There have even been whispers that this was the underground identity assumed by legendary software designer Emmanuel (Emma) Witschge. In the *Play* section, you'll find copious testimony by RADIO TNC listeners about RadioMind, as well as the only sound document left behind by the venerated online radio host (see *Hybrid*). Together with Mike & Coal, RadioMind disappeared without a trace into the labyrinth of the Net in the Web Crash of RADIO TNC on February 4, 1996.

RADIO TNC (radio.the.net.century) -Founded by RadioMind in September 1995, online RADIO TNC quickly advanced to the status of cult site. The two microphones, Mike & Coal, contributed substantially to this phenomenon. On February 4, 1996, RADIO TNC fell victim to a Web Crash that silenced it forever. The few surviving sound documents (see the *Play* section) unfortunately provide only a very vague impression of the site at which radio for the net was flat-out reinvented.

RealAudio - In order to receive SOS RADIO TNC's sound data, you need a head free of acoustic interference and a Real Audio player. The latter can be downloaded from SOS RADIO TNC's homepage.

Record - You interact with SOS RADIO TNC in this section. Here, you enter your screen shots of traces of the crash victims, dub the song for RADIO TNC or sample your own Web Crash theory. Your inputs are published in the *Play* section.

SOS RADIO TNC - Beusch/Cassani got SOS Online Radio set up on February 4 amid the wreckage of crashed cult online RADIO TNC. Its dynamic and interactive structures is meant to help enlist the co-operation of the worldwide Internet community to solve the Puzzle of the Web Crash. Since February 5, SOS RADIO TNC has broadcast its Save Our Site signals to the Net, on multiple channels and in numerous languages, on a round-the-clock basis.

Springboard - In the Web catalog of the Museum of Technology in Paris, the microfiche detailing the two microphones, Mike & Coal, have been appropriately updated since their

escape in August 1995. This is only one of the springboards installed throughout the Net from which unsuspecting Internauts are catapulted onto the homepage of SOS RADIO TNC.

Vibration - The graphical user interface screen of SOS RADIO TNC is a vibrating homage, both to Mike & Coal, the two microphones that disappeared in the Net -and to the microphone itself. Extension of the human eardrum, patient intake valve of the global infosphere, interface of the analog and digital worlds -the microphone, a mutating cross between technological fossil and ethereal insect, buzzes through the Web pages of SOS RADIO TNC.

Web Crash - On February 4, 1996 at 4:05 p.m., Beusch/Cassani discover the wreckage of cult online RADIO TNC. They realize immediately that, here, something has occurred for which the universal vocabulary does not yet possess an adequate expression. No sooner done than said, they casually come up with the term Web Crash -thereby christening the end of the epoch of unbridled Web euphoria (see *Bouaaah*).

Web Blankets —In the disaster relief tradition of the Red Cross that has been indelibly inscribed in their DNA for generations, Beusch/Cassani immediately leap into action on that fateful day, February 4, 1996. From their apartment in the Belleville quarter of Paris, they fire up the search engines, weave wool blankets for the Web, erect digital tents amid the crashpage wreckage -and get SOS online radio up and running overnight.

SOS RADIO TNC is a production of Beusch/ Cassani in co-operation with Kunstradio ORF Wien, Ars Electronica Center Linz, MusÉE National des Techniques Paris, Relais Linz, Radio France, Couleur 3 RSR, SR2 ARD, BBC, RAI and others.