ALWAYS CLOSE TO THE AUDIENCE
Complementary to this brochure a video documentary with unique archival footage and first-hand testimonials from recently interviewed personalities can be watched via the following QR-Code.

THE HISTORY OF RTL GROUP

ALWAYS CLOSE TO THE AUDIENCE
WHAT AUDIENCES WANT

From TV, to radio, to the internet – every day, millions of people all over the world tune in to RTL Group’s programmes. Throughout its history, the leading European entertainment network set new standards, defied boundaries and kept viewers and listeners inspired and interested. This brochure – through its expressive pictures and entertaining, surprising and yet informative stories – shows how and why.
Luxembourg in 1924: an attic, two brothers armed with a single radio transmitter, but a pioneering spirit… our story, the story of RTL Group, was about to begin. Nobody, not even the Anen brothers when they first started experimenting, could have imagined that their modest enterprise would not only become one of the most renowned radio stations of its time, but later develop into one of Europe’s leading entertainment groups.

Today, RTL Group is Europe’s largest commercial free-to-air broadcaster, with over 50 TV channels and nearly 30 radio stations, while its worldwide production arm – FremantleMedia – produces some of the world’s best known TV brands.

Over the years, the Group has undergone many transformations through mergers, strategic partnerships and acquisitions. But during this journey from radio to TV to a convergent digital media world, one constant has remained: the innovation and pioneering spirit transmitted by the Anen brothers. A legacy that is, and will always be, in our DNA.

The Group’s rich history is illustrated throughout this brochure. From the early days to the Luxembourgish, German, French and English language services of Radio Luxembourg and their influence that crossed borders, and even the Iron Curtain. From our humble beginnings in television, to the launch of our flagship TV channels and subsequent expansion across Europe and beyond. A photo spread honours the creative minds who were the driving forces behind this success, those who have written the story of RTL Group, and those who will continue to do so in the years to come.

We have indeed travelled far. Our European TV channels and radio stations are number one or number two in their markets. Our shows – talent and game shows, fiction series, feature films, news bulletins and magazines – reach over 100 million viewers across Europe daily, while our radio stations reach around 45 million listeners daily. With our rapidly growing on-demand services and Multi-Channel Networks on Youtube, we have become the leading European media company in online video. None of this would have been possible without our feeling for what audiences want and our taste for refreshingly different programming. These strengths enable us to stay close to our audience, even today.

We’d like to invite you to discover the history of RTL Group – a Group we are very proud to be part of. Happy reading!

Guillaume de Posch
Co-Chief Executive Officers of RTL Group

Anke Schäferkordt
CONTENTS

THE BEGINNINGS
8 Early adopters – the Anen brothers’ signal to the world

RADIO
14 Radio Luxembourg from 1933 to 1945
16 The evolution of RTL Radio in France
20 “Two-O-Eight” – the rock ‘n’ roll radio revolution
24 How Radio Luxembourg changed the German media landscape
28 Behind the Iron Curtain – the sound of freedom

TELEVISION
32 The company’s humble beginnings in television
36 RTL Plus in Germany – a tale of success
40 RTL Group’s expansion across Europe… and beyond
84 UFA – a historic star partner

PICTURED HISTORY
46 90 years of news, entertainment, stars and information
LION AWARDS

74 The lions and the stars – the story of a glamorous show event
80 The Lion Awards trophy: a work of art for artists

HALL OF FAME

86 Audience favourites who left their stamp on the company’s success story
98 RTL Group’s Got Talent – legendary executives who shaped the company

TIMELINE

108 Overview: RTL Group’s history from 1924 to 2014

ODDS & ENDS

114 Bands, songs, movies, Formula 1 cars and other stories illustrating how exceptional RTL was and remains
Luxembourgers were full of curiosity about the new radio station operated by the Anen brothers from 28, rue Beaumont (pictured here in the background: their shop for radios and photographic material).
THE ANEN BROTHERS’ SIGNAL TO THE WORLD
Radio broadcasting is defined as the transmission of sounds over radio waves for public use. This new medium emerged following successful initial experiments with radio telecommunications by Guglielmo Marconi in 1894, and the first – primarily military – use of wireless telegraphy during the First World War. Transmitting stations started springing up in 1920 in the United States and 1921 in Europe, broadcasting regular programmes.
The first such stations were often born out of the radio industry’s desire to create a large market for its products. As noted later by Émile Girardeau, a pioneer of radio broadcasting in Europe who founded Société Française Radio-Électrique (SFR) in 1910: “Consumers will only want to buy a receiver if it receives something they want to hear. In order to sell, you have to start making programmes.”

The same thought must have occurred to François Anen, a young salesman employed by Philips, who together with his brothers Marcel and Aloyse sold wireless telephony stations at 28, rue Beaumont in Luxembourg City. A member of Amis de la TSF (Friends of Wireless Telephony) and a passionate devotee of radio transmission, he and his brother Marcel installed their own wireless telephony transmitter in the attic of their house on rue Beaumont in 1923, with a power output of 50 watts (W) and a wavelength of 220m. According to François Anen and the huge amount of mail he received from amateur radio operators from across the continent, theirs was one of the best amateur transmitting stations in Europe. Anen even managed to become the first European amateur radio broadcaster to communicate by wireless telephony with the United States. No longer content with talking to fellow enthusiasts, the young radio pioneer began broadcasting spoken-word and musical programmes in 1924. The adventure of radio had begun!

Although listeners in Luxembourg could already enjoy programmes from nearby France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, nothing beat locally produced, easy-to-receive programming. Sales of receiver sets, some of them built by the Anen brothers themselves, rose accordingly. The Anens’ modest medium-wave transmitter – now named Radio Luxembourg and with its power boosted to 150W in 1926 – broadcast plays, live military concerts from the city centre’s Place d’Armes, and music...
Radio operators set their sights on Luxembourg

Performed by its own orchestra in the attic of rue Beaumont. The presenters, who included August Donnen and Léon Moulin, spoke mainly Luxembourgish but also French, German and English. The first advertisements also made their appearance.

In 1928, the transmitter's power was increased to 250W and programme details were published regularly in the specialised press. Over time, Luxembourg's modestly-sized station began to make a name for itself on the radio scene, which was on the brink of massive change. With virtually no laws governing radio broadcasting, Luxembourg was an isolated haven of peace compared with its neighbours, whose governments were making vigorous efforts to assert control over a rapidly expanding market dominated by private companies. The latter feared for their survival as the spectre of state monopoly loomed. This was particularly true in France, where a number of groups took proactive steps to escape the seemingly unavoidable prospect of government control. Inevitably, some set their sights on the tranquil Grand Duchy, located in the very heart of Europe, with a view to installing their stations there.

The first to make such a move were the heads of private station Radio Toulouse, who offered the Anen brothers’ company – Association Radio Luxembourg – their old 3kW transmitter, albeit with ulterior motives. This was an offer the Anens could not refuse – a golden opportunity to expand Radio Luxembourg still further. For Jacques Trémoulet, the founder and head of Radio Toulouse, the move was no doubt all about winning the trust of the Anens, then capitalising on their legitimacy to gain a foothold in Luxembourg by supplanting the small-scale Association Radio Luxembourg. Sure enough, the Trémoulet Group, with François Anen on board, began building a large transmitter station on the Kohlenberg, near Gasperich, in 1929.

This scheme was thwarted when the Luxembourg authorities finally passed a law making radio broadcasting subject to a concession contract. In 1930, another French group, headed by investors from Radio Paris (including Émile Girardeau) and with the tacit backing of the French government, was given permission to build a large-scale transmitter in Luxembourg. Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR, Luxembourg Broadcasting Company) would soon go on to launch the long wave-station Radio Luxembourg, in which a certain François Anen was also to be involved.
As early as 1926, the Anen brothers advertised the station and their own radio orchestra in the *Luxemburger Illustrierte*. 
Created in 1931, the Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR) had big ambitions: broadcasting a unique radio programme reaching millions of listeners. CLR’s managers expected to launch their commercial station in the summer of 1932. The technical equipment was ready on time, with the most powerful transmitter in Europe installed in Junglinster. Conclusive tests had been run, and short experimental programmes were aired in late 1932. But there was still a major problem to solve: obtaining a suitable wavelength. Supported by the Luxembourg authorities, CLR sought permission from the International Broadcasting Union (UIR) to use a wavelength that, combined with the power of the transmitter, would serve its ambitions of offering an international programme line-up capable of reaching a wider audience and ensuring the viability
of the commercial station. UIR argued that the small size of the Grand Duchy did not justify the use of a wavelength that could interfere with other stations. In fact, some countries – notably Britain – feared that commercial programmes from Luxembourg would undermine their domestic monopoly on broadcasting. Tired of waiting, CLR managers simply chose a wavelength and launched their first regular broadcasts on 15 March 1933 as ‘Radio Luxembourg Expérimental’.

Rapid expansion

The CLR managers’ perseverance paid off, as the station won the acclaim of a quickly growing and appreciative audience. On 3 December 1933, English-language broadcasts were added to the French, German and Luxembourgish. At the Avenue Monterey and Villa Louvigny studios, presenters such as Léon Moulin, Eva Siewert, Stephen Williams and Evelyn Wybrands addressed enthusiastic audiences who were unperturbed by the advertisements that financed the station despite criticism by the press at the time. While most of the new station’s audience was European, Radio Luxembourg’s reach extended as far afield as New York, Chicago, Mombasa, Cape Town and even New Zealand.

Radio Luxembourg’s recipe for success was straightforward: cater to the public’s expectations and tastes. A loyal audience was built up through an entertaining programme mix of talk, light recorded music and – from 15 July 1933 – concert music played by the station’s own symphony orchestra. Business reporting and sports broadcasts from events such as the Tour de France also enhanced the variety of the programming. This winning formula managed to eventually establish Radio Luxembourg as the most important radio station in Europe, reaching millions of faithful listeners, especially in France and Britain. Advertising sales grew strongly over the years, until... the political situation in Europe put an end to the station’s growth.

The war disruption

On the eve of war, the Luxembourg Government, concerned about maintaining the country’s neutrality, asked CLR to stop broadcasting – a decision the company’s management had already considered. Regular programmes ceased on 2 September 1939, and broadcasting was limited to official government communiques and music. Less than three weeks later, on 21 September, operations were closed down. When the Wehrmacht invaded the Grand Duchy on 10 May 1940, Radio Luxembourg’s installations were among their first targets. Four weeks later, German troops restarted the station, using it for their communication until October 1940, when the transmitter was incorporated into the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft and used for Nazi propaganda, including the broadcasts of the infamous Lord Haw-Haw – real name was William Joyce – an Irish-American fascist who urged the British to surrender.

In September 1944 American troops liberated the Grand Duchy. After an agreement between the Luxembourgish Government in exile and the United States, the station, which had been damaged by the German army, was made available to the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces). The PWD was an Anglo-American organisation that used radio broadcasting to undermine German soldiers’ morale. As the magazine Life put it, in March 1945, Radio Luxembourg “uses jokes as propaganda” against Nazis. The Office of War Information began to use the station in July, handing over the installations to the CLR on 11 November. The return to the Villa Louvigny was bitterly disappointing for rehired staff, as most equipment had been destroyed and the premises plundered by the Nazis.

This did not deter them though, and the next day broadcasting began again, with the famous words: “Bonjour le Monde, ici Radio Luxembourg.” – Radio Luxembourg was back, and ready to reclaim the world’s airwaves.
Achieving cult status in France: Philippe Bouvard (left) and Les Grosses Têtes, with Jacques Martin (right).

Big politics pays a visit: Jacques Chirac in the programme Le Grand Jury.

From Radio Luxembourg to RTL Radio in France.
THE FRENCH CONNECTION

The long-wave station which broadcast between 1933 and 1939, may have produced multilingual programming aimed at an international audience, but France and French-speaking listeners were of particular importance to Radio Luxembourg's management. This is hardly surprising given the earlier links with Radio Paris and the fact that the majority of CLR's shareholders were French, including Agence Havas and its subsidiary Information & Publicité (now IP), which supplied the station with political news and advertising. Radio Luxembourg soon established a secretariat in rue de Ponthieu in Paris, while in 1934 the Foniric studio, which produced a number of programmes for the Luxembourg-based station, moved into what is believed to be a former brothel at 22, rue Bayard, in the 8th arrondissement. In 1936 the French administrative headquarters of Radio Luxembourg and the advertising sales house Information & Publicité joined them.

THE GOLDEN AGE

The station’s sponsored programmes – in particular the variety shows hosted by Jean Nohain – enjoyed increasing popularity in France. This success continued after the war, when Radio Luxembourg became France’s most popular radio station. In fact, the 1950s were a golden age for Radio Luxembourg despite being a ‘peripheral’ station. The term peripheral was used after 1945 to describe radio stations with studios in Paris but transmitters just outside the country’s borders (in Luxembourg, the Saarland, Monaco and Andorra), thus sidestepping the French state broadcasting monopoly. Two names synonymous with the station’s French heyday were Louis Merlin and Zappy Max.

Merlin, Head of Information et Publicité and production company Programmes de France, returned from a trip to the United States brimming with new ideas. He went on to create and adapt a raft of memorable shows for Radio Luxembourg, including long-running hits Reine d’un jour, Arrêtez la musique and Quitte ou Double.

He was a big circus fan as well as a broadcasting wizard, also launching a brand new concept called the ‘Radio Circus’. This involved recording a number of popular radio programmes in front of a live audience in a huge circus tent, interspersed with variety shows. The circus travelled the length and breadth of France and Belgium, with the Association des Amis de Radio Luxembourg, established
in 1947, preparing the ground a few days before the Radio Circus arrived in town. The format transformed listeners into viewers and allowed them to participate interactively in game shows. Despite the reservations of Jacques Lacour-Gayet, who found the “blend of manure with the dignity of Radio Luxembourg rather misplaced”, the Radio Circus and its spin-off format the ‘Radio Théâtre’ became extremely popular and enabled the station to get closer to its listeners.

The Radio Circus ringmaster was Zappy Max, a multitalented host who also presented Crochet, a drama series called Ça va Bouillir and the game show Quitte ou Double. The stand-out moment on Quitte ou Double came undoubtedly during a Radio Circus event in late 1952 when Abbé Pierre, then still relatively unknown, answered the first eight questions correctly and won enough money to buy a new truck for the Emmaus charity he had set up in 1949 to help the poorest in society. Abbé Pierre took to Radio Luxembourg’s airwaves again on 1 February 1954 to make a winter appeal on behalf of the freezing homeless, triggering an unprecedented surge of generosity.

In short, Radio Luxembourg was hugely popular, with 16 million listeners in France and Belgium by the year 1954. Its sponsored programmes, together with popular drama series such as La Famille Duraton, made their huge popularity seem unassailable. The station’s management looked to the future with confidence – even a degree of complacency. Little did they know what lay ahead...

**THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN’**

From 1955 onwards, a major new rival began to chip away slowly at Radio Luxembourg’s market share. Europe N°1 (now Europe 1) was also a ‘peripheral’ station, transmitting from the Saarland in Germany, that under the influence of Louis Merlin, who had left ‘his’ Radio Luxembourg in late 1953, featured more modern programming, an edgier tone and professional, charismatic hosts. The greater part of Radio Luxembourg’s air time was still given over to sponsored shows with content determined by advertisers and production companies. The station had to make do with transmitting whatever it was given. When Europe N°1’s news bulletins began to attract a growing audience, Michel Moine and Jean-Pierre Farkas responded by expanding Radio Luxembourg’s news activities, so that by 1964 it had 62 journalists on its books. Despite this, the station was still falling by failing to move with the times.

It was not until 1966 that things began to change. A coup ripped through rue Bayard, led by CLT’s new Managing Director Jean Prouvost. He appointed Jean Farran as Head of Radio Luxembourg and brought a new team in. The programme schedule began to stir at last. Gone were the ageing drama series so popular in the post-war years. Stalwarts from the glory days of Radio Luxembourg – including Zappy Max – were put out to grass. A wind of change blew through Radio Luxembourg, bringing with it a rebranding to RTL in 1966.

**HOME OF MUSICIANS AND POLITICIANS**

The station, which was still referred to as ‘peripheral’ in relation to France itself, gradually climbed back up the ratings ladder to become France’s number one general-interest station over the next decades. The recipe for this success was its subtle blend of entertainment and news. News played a pivotal role at rue Bayard, as was illustrated by its widespread coverage of the student demonstrations in May 1968, when RTL reporters plunged into the thick of the action. France was gripped by its reporting, so much so that the government nicknamed RTL and Europe N°1 ‘barricades radio’.

RTL began to court a younger audience and tailor its new programmes accordingly. Perhaps the greatest embodiment of this trend was a flamboyant American DJ lured to Radio Luxembourg from the pirate station Radio Caroline in autumn 1966. Emperor Rosko – known to the French public as Président Rosko – turned the art of radio presenting on its head, spinning discs with dexterity, screaming into the microphone and playing jingles that younger listeners loved – all using a fully automated studio. A complete makeover of the station’s rue Bayard interior and the unveiling of its iconic metal facade, designed by Victor Vasarely, in 1972, were further signs of the station’s new youthful, modern feel. Its big studio was opened the same year, allowing
listeners to see radio shows and presenters in the flesh – just as in the days of the Radio Circus – and to take part in live programmes themselves.

The grand opening was attended by all the big names in French music, including Charles Aznavour, Jacques Dutronc, Georges Brassens, Sacha Distel, Mireille Mathieu, France Gall, Eddy Mitchell, Claude François and Dalida. All of these stars were familiar faces at RTL, thanks largely to station insiders such as Roger Kreicher and Monique Le Marcis, whose excellent working relationships with the artists made them feel at home. Johnny Hallyday was no exception: in 2006, in an anniversary book for RTL Radio, he stressed the strong bond between himself and RTL during his career.

New shows emerged as audience numbers grew: Les routiers sont sympa with Max Meynier, Les problèmes humains with Ménie Grégoire, La case trésor with Fabrice, RTL, c’est vous and Jeu de la valise with Michel Drucker, the Hit Parade with André Torrent, and, of course, Philippe Bouvard’s iconic Les Grosses Têtes, which launched in 1976 and continues to delight its listeners to this day.

While entertainment in the form of quizzes, game shows and music is one mainstay of RTL’s success, the station’s other great asset is its news and political programming. Jacques Rigaud, who was appointed as RTL’s Managing Director in 1979, launched a high-profile political show called Le Grand Jury in partnership with French newspaper Le Monde, in a bid to beef up the cultural dimension of its mainstream programming. This weekly flagship programme is still going strong (in partnership with news channel LCI since 1996 and Le Figaro newspaper since 2005). Its simple but effective format sees a well-known individual, usually a politician, talk to a group of journalists on a topical issue. All the big names in French politics have appeared on the show.

France’s number one radio station
— always with you

Philippe Labro was appointed as RTL’s Director of Programmes in 1985. He believed “you shouldn’t change a winning team. But you need to adapt it while it is winning – otherwise it won’t go on winning.” This was the task he set himself throughout his fifteen years at the helm, aiming to establish RTL as France’s number one radio station. He raised the station’s profile without compromising its core principles of diversity of programming (which he called ‘multi-thematic’) and closeness to listeners. RTL never aimed or claimed to be anything other than a popular station, so there could be no question of it turning its back on entertainment, despite an increase in news output from two hours a day in 1985 to six in 2000. As well as consolidating RTL’s leadership position and establishing the station as a brand (even though he saw RTL as a service rather than a product), Philippe Labro also succeeded in preparing the station for new challenges with the launch of the RTL.fr website in 1997.

Since Labro’s departure, constant modernisation continued. In 2012, Christopher Baldelli, Chairman of the Management Board of RTL Group’s French radio stations since 2009, reiterated the shared ambition that drives RTL, to accompany listeners in their daily lives, their joys and their emotions; to provide them with information, entertainment and enjoyment, and to help them understand the world around them. This is what continues to make RTL a truly popular institution.
For a whole generation of Europeans, the number 208 still holds a particular magic.

"TWO-O-EIGHT"

THE ROCK ‘N’ ROLL RADIO REVOLUTION

>> People who were teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s have golden memories of hiding under the covers late at night, a small transistor radio clamped to their ears, as they listened excitedly to the exotic new sounds of pop and rock – both from across the Atlantic and closer to home – for the first time.

In the UK, young people looking for radio entertainment or music had previously had to make do with the three BBC stations – the state broadcasting monopoly – a diet of drama, news, current affairs, light entertainment and classical music. For youngsters of the 1950s and 1960s, the BBC was strictly
for the parents. Radio Luxembourg, on the other hand, on its legendary wavelength ‘the fabulous Two-O-Eight’, or ‘the great Two-O-Eight’, was their Route 66, their Heartbreak Hotel, their Blueberry Hill, their Ticket to Ride – and their lives would never be the same again.

Those memories may be from long ago, but for those caught up in the excitement, they will never fade. At a time when youngsters were hungry for something to take them away from the drabness of those grey, post-war days, Radio Luxembourg’s English service was a sudden shining light. Before the Second World War there were already over four million people listening to Radio Luxembourg in the UK alone – and after the war, that audience simply grew and grew. From 1951 onwards, when it first began transmitting on 208 medium wave, Radio Luxembourg flooded the UK and the rest of Northern Europe with youthful voices and vibrant new music.

Before the advent of pirate radio and commercial stations, Radio Luxembourg was the only place youngsters could tap into the excitement of the new-fangled rock ‘n’ roll. The station would soon become synonymous with new music and youthful freedom, a rallying cry for an entire generation. Word spread fast, as more and more teenagers discovered the joys of listening to the electrifying musical sounds and the voices of legends in the making.

And it wasn’t just playing the latest pop, rock and blues records coming from the United States, it was inspiring the next generation of musicians, too. In 1956, a young Keith Richards was living in Southern England, one of millions of kids enthralled by what they could hear on Radio Luxembourg. In his autobiography, Life, he writes: “I think the first record I bought was Little Richard’s Long Tall Sally. Fantastic record, even to this day. Good records just get better with age. But the one that really turned me on, like an explosion one night, listening to Radio Luxembourg on my little radio when I was supposed to be in bed and asleep, was Heartbreak Hotel. That was the stunner. I’d never heard it before, or anything like it. I’d never heard of Elvis before. It was almost as if I’d been waiting for it to happen. When I woke up the next day I was a different guy. Suddenly I was getting overwhelmed: Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Little Richard, Fats.

Radio Luxembourg was notoriously difficult to keep on station. I had a little aerial and walked round the room, holding the radio up to my ear and twisting the aerial. Trying to keep it down because I’d wake Mum and Dad up. If I could get the signal right, I could take the radio under the blankets on the bed and keep the aerial outside and twist it there. I’m supposed to be asleep; I’m supposed to be going to school in the morning.”

Richards kept a notebook where he obsessively wrote down the name of every song and every artist he liked, and soon had his first guitar. He never looked back, and he wasn’t alone. The hip music Radio Luxembourg played also had a profound influence on other future stars, such as John Lennon and Ray Davies. And, in time, their own bands – The Rolling Stones, The Beatles and The Kinks – would also be first heard on Radio Luxembourg, helping launch them on the road to international stardom.
During this time, the growth in listeners was remarkable, as word of mouth propelled Radio Luxembourg to an ever-larger audience. As Benny Brown, one of the famous DJs of Luxembourg 208, who still works at RTL Radio Lëtzebuerg today, recalls that by broadcasting rock ‘n’ roll music, Radio Luxembourg had found its niche: “It was a massive hole in the market. The station was thought to appeal to young audiences. And that was through rock ‘n’ roll music. We played rock ‘n’ roll all night long, and we played everything. We were the first to play Elvis and The Beatles. That made us popular in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia.”

Richard Nichols’ book *Radio Luxembourg – The Station of the Stars* recounts how, in 1955, when it came to playing records, Radio Luxembourg was more important than the BBC: “Several records banned by the BBC on religious grounds became hits simply because they were played on Luxembourg 208 – they were not heard anywhere else. This amply demonstrated the power of Radio Luxembourg and at the same time the BBC’s continuing inability or refusal to come to grips with its younger audience, and supply what was required rather than what was deemed to be suitable.”

By 1967 Radio Luxembourg and other stations, such as the pirate Radio Caroline, had forced the BBC to completely overhaul their entire radio output. They had finally woken up to the fact that pop music, rock ‘n’ roll and youth culture were not a passing fad, and were here to stay. The first voice heard on BBC Radio 1 was that of Tony Blackburn, one of the many famous disc jockeys who had cut their teeth on Radio Luxembourg’s English service. Often, at the ‘Station of the Stars’, as Radio Luxembourg was known, the stars were the DJs themselves, either as resident DJs living in the Grand Duchy and presenting programmes from the famous Villa Louvigny, or as presenters who recorded shows in London then shipped them to Luxembourg by plane.

Listeners got to know and love DJs such as Keith Fordyce, who introduced *Power Play* in 1957, a feature playing a newly released single over a whole week, and Australian Barry Alldis, who presented shows like *Smash Hits* and the *Top Twenty* and was the first Radio Luxembourg DJ to go on the road with live shows. He travelled as far afield as Scandinavia, where he became extremely popular.

Other DJs enthralling the expanding audience included Muriel Young who presented the show *Friday Spectacular* from 1961, the irrepressible Don Wardell, who presented 23 programmes every week, including *Late Night Luxembourg* from 1963 and the *Top Twenty Show* from 1966. Later came Paul Burnett, who joined Radio Luxembourg in 1967 as a resident live DJ, presenting the Saturday *Top 20 Show* until 1974 when he joined BBC Radio 1, and Tony Prince who played Elvis Presley songs continuously for several hours after news of the singer’s tragic death in 1977.

Many other DJs went on to become household names in the UK, including a young Canadian named David ‘Kid’ Jensen, who joined 208 in November 1968 at just 18, with his late-night music show *Jensen’s Dimensions* becoming a tremendous success. His future Radio 1 colleague, Peter Powell also spent five years spinning discs on Radio Luxembourg from 1972 to 1977.

The impact of the ‘Station of the Stars’ was felt all over Europe. Swedish filmmaker Magnus
Johansson, who made his own short film about the legacy of Radio Luxembourg’s English language output says: “In Sweden there was only the public-service station called Swedish Radio which did not play music like Elvis Presley. The only way to listen to it was to tune in to Radio Luxembourg. People used to go on dates, sit in cars and listen to the radio. In the end, Swedish Radio had no other choice but to start broadcasting the kind of music youngsters wanted to hear. I believe stations like Radio Luxembourg made it impossible for the state to dictate what was ‘right and wrong’. And at the same time, they gave a voice to a new generation that no one had taken seriously before. Both of my parents used to listen to Radio Luxembourg because it was the only opportunity to listen to new music at that time.”

Radio Luxembourg captured the imagination of English-speaking youngsters everywhere, even making its way across the Iron Curtain (read *Behind the Iron Curtain – the sound of freedom*, pages 28 to 31). Benny Brown recalls: “Thanks to our huge transmitters, the broadcast in English language and the simulcast on medium wave and short wave, we received letters from everywhere in the world. For example, I remember that the harbour police in Durban, South Africa, sent us mail.” And in the 1960s, Radio Luxembourg’s DJs practically commanded rock-star status. David ‘Kid’ Jensen said that on a visit to Poland almost 40 years later, he met a man who recognised him by his voice alone. The stranger expressed his gratitude, saying “for us you were the sound of freedom”.

Radio Luxembourg’s English language service, was always far more than just a radio station. From its long-wave beginnings in 1933 to its final shutdown in the year 1992, Radio Luxembourg was not only the biggest commercial radio station in Europe, influencing generations of listeners, it was the expression of liberty for a whole generation.

For more information on the station’s history visit radioluxembourg.co.uk

**“WE PLAYED ROCK ‘N’ ROLL ALL NIGHT LONG, AND WE PLAYED EVERYTHING,”**

Benny Brown, Radio Luxembourg DJ

On the evening of Sunday 24 July 1955, the programme line-up for Radio Luxembourg on medium wave 208 included the Alka-Seltzer Show and, at 23:00, the ever-popular Top Twenty
How a radio station changed the German media landscape

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
DEAR LISTENERS!
YOU WILL NOW HEAR A PILOT PROGRAMME BY RADIO LUXEMBOURG, IN GERMAN.”

Pierre Nilles, presenter

On 15 July 1957, Radio Luxemburg’s Pierre Nilles made his first announcement, in German, on 1439 kHz. “Starting today,” he said, “we will broadcast a light music programme every day from 2pm to 4pm. Please write in if you happen to hear us.” At the time, no-one in post-war Germany suspected just how much this first commercial station would change the media landscape.

From 1945, after the controlled media of the Nazi era, the public broadcasting system in the Federal Republic had guaranteed politically independent programming. Thus it was neutral and democratic by law, but it was also boring, stuffy and spoon-fed by the supervisory bodies.

Younger listeners had no say and no suitable programmes, so it’s no surprise the fresh sounds of Radio Luxemburg struck a chord. Suddenly the radio offered new, young and unfamiliar sounds, and the younger generation had a voice. No wonder Radio Luxemburg gained millions of fans in next to no time: by 1971, 16.5 million listeners a week tuned in to what the then Programme Director, Helmut Stoldt, described as: “the Bild among radio broadcasters”, referring to Germany’s major tabloid.

At once, you could hear international stars over the airwaves, and the horizon seemed limitless. Post-war Europe had so many sounds for Germans to discover – French chansons, British rock, Italian canzoni… a colourful, multi-talented world that was largely ignored by the German broadcasters, who continued to play schmaltzy pop and recordings by local dance orchestras.

The Radio Luxemburg concept was simple but consistent. It relied on musical variety, popular songs and, especially, on people. Presenters such as the songwriting, singing, hit parade inventor Camillo Felgen, as well as Helga Guitton and Jochen Pützenbacher, gave the programmes an identifiable personality. “Our presenters sit invisibly at people’s kitchen tables and in their cars,” Stoldt told Der Spiegel in 1971, explaining the broadcaster’s tremendous success. “There were people at the mike who would soon become stars themselves, disc jockeys people trusted – presenters who were always good for a surprise.”

The advertising industry was thrilled. No-one else offered such a wide-ranging advertising medium for the consumer-packed Ruhr region at the heart of Radio Luxemburg’s broadcasting area. The local public broadcaster WDR was completely ad free at the time. In 1958 Der Spiegel wrote: “The main
thrust of the commercial radio attack is the broadcasting area of Westdeutscher and Norddeutscher Rundfunk.” Both radio stations declined any kind of advertising, citing the ‘educational mandate of broadcasting’. “We want to fill this vacuum,” acknowledged Claude Fischer, Radio Luxemburg Programme Director at the time.

The ‘four fun frequencies’ on which Radio Luxemburg broadcast its programming included the high-reach medium wave 1440 kHz, short wave 6090 kHz – which was also very popular in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) behind the Iron Curtain – and the FM channels 6 and 33 in the Trier area.

The mix of music, lively presenters, games, hit parades and advertising shaped the ‘daytime companion programmes’ that emerged in the seventies. Jochen Pützenbacher recalled: “Radio Luxemburg simply invented the game show for radio. Since we didn’t have the manpower or a network of reporters for a midday news magazine show, we relied on entertainment instead.” His colleague, Helga Guitton, known for her amorous voice, added: “Our on-air personalities were natural. That was the important thing. Because we were authentic… we sparked something in the listeners.”

Everyone behind the mike at Radio Luxemburg had a nickname. The station’s first presenter, Pierre Nilles, was dubbed ‘Peter Perleberg’, Camillo...
Felgen’s real name was Camille Jean Nicolas Felgen, Waldemar Müller became ‘Ferdy’ and even the legendary ‘Frank’ Elstner – under whose direction Radio Luxemburg became the most successful German-language radio programme – was really called Timm Maria Franz Elstner.

The team’s ‘first lady’ was station secretary Elisabeth Merkels. Soon she was spending four hours a day in the studio ‘spreading warmth to the listeners’, as she called her concept.

Radio Luxemburg started as a kind of housewives’ choice station with popular tunes by Bing Crosby, Lys Assia and Freddy Quinn.

On Easter Sunday 1958, Camillo Felgen presented the first German-language hit parade. In autumn 1962, he introduced the first international night programme, and in 1963 the first programme for motorists. The medium-wave transmitter had by then increased its output and reach. From 1962, broadcasts were available in better sound quality on FM channel 33 (97.0 MHz) in Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and North Rhine-Westphalia.

In 1963 Jörg Ebner, the so called ‘Hitprofessor’, launched a small revolution by playing The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. The station played the kind of music that expressed the joie de vivre of the younger generation: music that could only otherwise be heard by picking up the armed forces’ stations AFN and BFBS, or the pirate stations Radio Caroline or Radio Veronica, floating in the North Sea – certainly not on the public stations.

In the mid-sixties – a time when parts of the population still considered music by The Beatles, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, The Doors and The Rolling Stones to be the work of the devil or just amplified noise – the public broadcasters tried to strengthen the German Schlager. While some opponents of rock and pop music protested vociferously against the “primitive performances of mass-produced merchandise,” and denounced stations that played that kind of music as “pimps of the gramophone capitalists,” the DJs in Luxembourg blithely continued playing whatever was in the international charts. In 1966, the magazine Hör Zu surveyed young listeners and noted, “the students, apprentices, workers and nurses listened to foreign broadcasts – mostly Radio Luxemburg, BFBS and AFN”.

Frank Elstner joined Radio Luxemburg as an announcer in 1964 and worked his way up to Programme Director by 1972. His new ideas were welcomed at the station: “It was quite possible for us to have an idea at 10am and to change the programme line-up by midday,” he said. “I believe the success of that time was because we just wanted to entertain. Nothing more. We received millions of postcards. There were days when we had 5,000 people visit us at Villa Louvigny.”

Given the mass exodus of young listeners, the public broadcasters had no choice but to open their frequencies to new sounds. Their newly formed ‘Servicewellen’ public radio stations adapted their programmes to those of the ‘commercials’.

The public stations finally caught up at the start of the 1970s, broadcasting ‘daily companion programmes’, introducing games and fun content, and changing their presentation style – and the relationship between station and listeners. Finally they listened to their customers and tailored programmes to their interests – helping them satisfy advertisers’ demand for ratings.

“BECAUSE WE WERE AUTHENTIC . . . WE SPARKED SOMETHING IN THE PEOPLE.”

Helga Guitton, one of the voices of Radio Luxemburg
Radio Luxemburg – renamed RTL by Frank Elstner – countered this development with infotainment. Frank scoured the country for journalists and lured them with attractive fees. The station’s content became more substantial, and it began to broadcast more serious information. “The Radio Luxemburg music machine had to become an informative, journalistic medium,” Jochen Pützenbacher recalls. “The broadcasts were given real content – the news had higher news value.”

Once again Radio Luxemburg had become a pioneer. “At RTL, socially relevant, emotive issues were given top priority. The ARD stations usually focused on political issues,” said Jochen Pützenbacher. As “a nationwide station with a technical handicap”, RTL selected subjects of national interest, edited them in a catchy way and presented them through anchors with strong personalities. “Infotainment conveys information in a fun way,” said Pützenbacher. “It’s more effective than dry academic programming. The anchor builds a relationship of trust with listeners.”

The German media landscape had changed radically under the influence of the bold, mass-audience, cross-generational Radio Luxemburg station. With the advent of commercial providers in the Federal Republic in 1985, the radio market exploded. In 2007, Jochen Pützenbacher recalled: “We were the ice cream man in the desert. At the time there were 12 radio stations in Germany – today there are 270. Our medium-wave frequencies had become less important because FM stations sprang up everywhere like mushrooms.” Today RTL’s German-language broadcast can be heard via cable, satellite, internet and regional FM frequencies.
Behind the Iron Curtain

The role of Radio Luxembourg during the communist era was the subject of an exhibition at the Luxembourg Embassy in Warsaw in 2012.
It’s hard to imagine a time when half of Europe was cut off from popular culture, and music-loving teenagers were starved of rock and pop. But that’s exactly how life was for youngsters growing up behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.

>> The excitement of hearing the chatter of distant DJs and the exhilarating new musical sounds coming from the UK and America was even more keenly felt in the East, where the communists kept tight control. During this time, Radio Luxembourg ‘the fabulous Two-O-Eight’ filled the airwaves with energetic rock and pop music. While other stations such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America were jammed by the communist authorities, Radio Luxembourg’s signal survived. Its mix of DJ chat, jingles and music may have been apolitical, causing no obvious threat, but its youthful exuberance did encourage an air of change. It was the sound of freedom.
In Poland, for example, Radio Luxembourg played an important role in the youth culture of those living under communism. Conrad Bruch, Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was struck by this when he began working in Warsaw, the Polish capital: “Radio Luxembourg was incredibly popular with young people in Poland during the late 1960s and the early 1970s. It was a real social phenomenon. Radio Luxembourg became an opening to the free world a bridge towards the alternative youth cultures of the West,” Bruch recalls.

Some people believe Radio Luxembourg really did have a galvanizing effect on the youth of the Eastern bloc countries. The Polish Professor Elżbieta Barbara Zybert, says: “Radio Luxembourg, played a major role in pre-transition Poland. For many, it constituted a window to the outside world where we could become acquainted with the Western music scene. There was nowhere else they could listen to popular Western performers, and the Top Twenty programme gave us an illusion that we knew what was going on in the world.”

It’s true that Radio Luxembourg gave many people access to music that was completely different from anything available on Polish radio at the time, as anthropologist Anna Malewska-Szalęga explains: “It captivated listeners through the uniqueness of music and the freedom of the programme presenting, which was unprecedented on Polish radio of the 1960s and 1970s. Radio Luxembourg really was a kind of cultural shock – something never forgotten. Young people discovered a more entertaining type of radio broadcast, something catering to openness and the thirst for knowledge.”

Maria Szabłowska, now a music journalist, recalls: “Writing down these songs was an integral part of listening. We had notebooks and everybody noted the charts, and the titles of the songs and performers. Initially our entire knowledge of music came from Radio Luxembourg, and it was through listening to the station that I learned English. We competed with one another for who was better at writing down the lyrics, and we became experts.”

In May 2009, the Polish TV channels TVP Polonia and TVP 1 broadcast a documentary paying tribute to the legendary Radio Luxembourg 208, explaining what it meant to young Polish people at that time: “Sundays at 23:00 – that was what we would wait for all week, and afterwards we would discuss it before maths and Russian,” says
Andrzej Sródka, who was a teenager at the time. "There was a kind of 'Luxomania'. Almost all of Poland's youth listened to Radio Luxembourg 208."

DJ Benny Brown still receives mail from listeners of Radio Luxembourg: "It's not as many as it used to be," he says. "We used to receive a lot of mail from the former Eastern bloc. From Poland, from Eastern Germany – we even received mail from Volkspolizei officers of the GDR. That was astonishing – they could have gone to jail for writing to us."

In 1961, East Germany's SED party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) published a brochure entitled Heiße Musik und Kalter Krieg (Hot Music And Cold War) to admonish East Germans and warn against the dangers of popular foreign radio stations, Radio Luxembourg chief among them.

They were portrayed as capitalist propaganda tools run by Nato with the secret aim of perverting communist youth. Radio Luxembourg was described as a "source of profit and poison".

Other Eastern countries being ‘infected’ by the sounds of Radio Luxembourg included Czechoslovakia and even the USSR. In his documentary film and book How The Beatles Rocked The Kremlin, Leslie Woodhead revealed the extraordinary untold story of how The Beatles’ music contributed to the fall of communism in the East. Late night broadcasts on Radio Luxembourg were taped and its Western music scratched onto medical X-rays which were then sold illicitly, spreading the ‘good word’ among the Soviet youth.

So did Radio Luxembourg’s vibrant mix of fun DJs and electrifying rock ’n’ roll from the likes of Elvis, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones really help bring down the Berlin Wall? We’ll never know. One thing we do know, is that Radio Luxembourg gave all those young music-lovers behind the Iron Curtain hope, excitement and dreams of a new life that, unknown to them at the time, would arrive soon enough.
From Télé Luxembourg to RTL 9

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

>> Only one chair, a table with a microphone, and a single camera – that was Télé Luxembourg’s first ‘studio’. Located in Luxembourg’s Dudelange broadcasting centre and inaugurated by the Grand Duchess Charlotte in January 1955, these were the humble beginnings of one of Europe’s first commercial television channels. Along with Telesaar, Télé Monte Carlo and ITV, all launching within a few months of each other, Télé Luxembourg’s first regular programmes started on 14 May that year. This initial lack of resources was due to the channel’s hasty creation following years of indecision.

Investing in this relatively young medium was something of a gamble for the Board at CLR. They initially believed “radio makes money, television will lose it” – and they were right for almost two decades. This wait-and-see approach irritated Louis Merlin, Head of Information & Publicité and

The first studio at Villa Louvigny still looked like a living room
Jean Stock went on tour with *Train des Jouets*, to the cheers of Télé Luxembourg fans.

**CAME TV...**
Chairman of Programmes de France, who supplied programming to Radio Luxembourg.

He had made several trips to the United States and was a big believer in television. His irritation eventually turned to anger and, having been instrumental in Radio Luxembourg’s success, he left the company in 1953 to embark on a new project – setting up a rival radio station, Europe N°1 (now Europe 1), in Germany’s Saarland, where he planned to produce not only radio but also French-language television. Faced with the prospect of a new transmitter on its doorstep broadcasting on its own patch, CLR countered the threat by joining the television race. The Saarland French-language TV project was eventually abandoned, but nothing could hold CLR back now, and as a clear statement of its new focus, it changed its name to CLT on 1 July 1954.

Starting virtually from scratch, the company built a transmitter in record time, on high ground at Dudelange, close to the French border. The CLT team then began to put together a pool of talent, including names such as Jacques Navadic, Robert Diligent and Thérèse Leduc from Télé-Lille. Many of the technical staff moved over from radio and had to learn the world of television. Resources may have been limited in those early days, but those involved were free to indulge their creativity to the full. Their challenge was to devise programmes that would appeal to the public, and set the channel apart from the small number of public service broadcasters.

From the outset, the new channel stayed close to its audience, broadcasting in French to viewers living within a 150 kilometer radius of Luxembourg, including Lorraine in France and part of Wallonia in Belgium. Télé Luxembourg set up fully equipped TV studios in the tower of Villa Louvigny in 1956, and supplemented original programming with cartoons and series from the US. With a growing and loyal viewer base, Télé Luxembourg became a familiar fixture in people’s homes – it was a popular hit, but had yet to become a financial success.

**FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH**

With shows such as École Buissonnière and Les Champions de Télé Luxembourg, starring Claude Robert, and Ram-Dames and Au Bonheur des Dames, starring Thérèse Leduc, or the first Luxembourgish-language television programme Hei Elei Kuck Elei, broadcast in 1969, Télé Luxembourg made an indelible impression on a whole generation of viewers during the station’s first two decades on air. Many more were to follow over the next two decades too, inspired in no small part by Jean Stock, who gave programming a modern twist while remaining true to producing homegrown content.

Having begun his career as a journalist in Luxembourg in 1967, Jean Stock brought to life a range of memorable new concepts with his boundless creativity. He made the flagship show La Bonne Franquette, which ran from 1977 to 1981 – producing the programme live on air, using a specially designed mixing desk. Other off-the-wall ideas of his included broadcasting live from an airplane during flight, and from a moving train. He also introduced other technical innovations such as a live computer-based game show, Léo contre tous, and the first computer-based phone-in, allowing live communication with the audience. This audience involvement was experienced to the full in Le Train des Jouets, yet another brilliant format involving a train criss-crossing...
Luxembourg, Belgium and Eastern France, stopping at various stations to collect toys for underprivileged children. At each stop, a concert was performed, and presenters from RTL Télévision (as the channel became known in 1982) were cheered by enormous crowds. This live show spawned successors *Le Train Blanc* and *Le Train des Étoiles*, that all encouraged a connection between RTL and its audience.

The popularity of presenters Jean-Luc Bertrand, Michèle Etzel, Marylène Bergmann, Georges Lang and others grew steadily throughout the 1980s, and shows such as *Citron Grenadine* became cult viewing on the self-proclaimed ‘family’ channel.

**THE END OF AN ERA**

This close-knit television family, built up over the years, gradually broke up as CLT expanded. The launch in 1987 of RTL-TVI in Belgium and M6 in France meant the stars dispersed – leaving the historic Luxembourg-based channel a little starved of talent. Despite attempts to reinvent itself throughout the 1990s, RTL 9 (as it had been called since 1995) found it hard to make its mark with the audience, especially in Lorraine in North-eastern France. The feeling was it lacked the family ethos that characterised the original, groundbreaking channel. Now making a loss, a majority shareholding of RTL 9 was sold to AB Groupe in 1998, and the last regional programmes stopped broadcasting on 30 June 2010 – it was the end of an era.

In 1991, however, the historic channel did give rise to RTL Hei Elei (which was renamed RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg in 2001). Broadcasting in Luxembourgish, the channel is now a leading player in the Grand Duchy’s television landscape.
RTL PLUS

A TALE OF SUCCESS

How popular shows, creativity, improvisation and clever programming turned a ‘filmed radio’ channel into the undisputed market leader for young viewers in Germany.
While Germany’s public radio stations gradually came to terms with commercial competition from abroad, television stuck resolutely to its established formats. True to the old principle of state broadcasting, television was one-way communication – TV has something to say, the audience merely has to watch and listen. Viewers were never asked what they wanted, and had limited choice, as unlike radio, the technology to reach large parts of Germany with TV channels from abroad simply didn’t exist. This situation remained so even after the launch of Germany’s second TV channel ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen), in 1963.

As the call for commercial television channels grew louder, Social Democrat Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, wanting to protect Germans against “the harmful effects of over-stimulation”, warned in 1979: “We should not stumble into dangers that are more acute and dangerous than nuclear energy.”

But the pressure finally took its toll, and the Federal Republic’s new ‘dual broadcasting system’ became a reality on 1 January 1984, when PKS, which would later become Sat 1, launched its pilot cable project, followed a few hours later by RTL Plus. Jointly founded in 1983, by the Bertelsmann subsidiary UFA and CLT, RTL Plus began life with presenter Rainer Holbe hosting the “birth” of the new channel in a hospital delivery room.

This TV adventure began with a small budget, lots of humour and plenty of improvisation, in the auspicious surroundings of a former bus garage outside Luxembourg City. If viewers listened carefully, they could even hear rain falling on the studio roof.

Although new to TV – some were radio hosts in front of a camera – the Luxembourghish programme makers were able to call upon decades of experience of creating popular programme concepts.

"REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT, BUT SOMETIMES SHOCKINGLY DIFFERENT"
Helmut Thoma,
CEO of RTL Plus from 1984 to 1998
As the critics seethed, Thoma got what he wanted – attention. RTL’s broadcasting reach expanded as more and more viewers had a peep to see ‘what terrible things’ RTL was bringing to the screen. On 23 September 1987, RTL were trailblazers once again, launching Germany’s first breakfast TV show with Guten Morgen Deutschland. Then the channel attracted more than a million viewers for the first time with the film Wer stirbt schon gerne unter Palmen, despite less than ten per cent of German households being able to receive RTL Plus at the time. It was two more years before half of German households were able to receive the channel.

People liked what they saw – even if they were reluctant to admit it in the early years. Ratings rose and RTL began to introduce more and better movies, attractive sports broadcasts such as Formula 1, and finally, from 1990 – as Frank Elstner had done earlier on radio – an information offensive. This included Stern TV, and provided a refreshing change to the official state news and political programmes of the public broadcasters. The pioneering spirit remained and programmes continued to reflect ‘just the usual craziness’ they’d had from the beginning. In 1991 RTL finally became a fully-fledged 24-hour channel.

Showing that it considered itself no longer just a simple addition to RTL radio, the channel abandoned the Plus suffix in 1992. Rebranded as RTL Television, the channel triggered Germany’s comedy boom with RTL Samstag Nacht; Hans Meisler caused uproar with his afternoon talk show;

As the critics seethed, Thoma got what he wanted – attention. RTL’s broadcasting reach expanded as more and more viewers had a peep to see ‘what terrible things’ RTL was bringing to the screen. On 23 September 1987, RTL were trailblazers once again, launching Germany’s first breakfast TV show with Guten Morgen Deutschland. Then the channel attracted more than a million viewers for the first time with the film Wer stirbt schon gerne unter Palmen, despite less than ten per cent of German households being able to receive RTL Plus at the time. It was two more years before half of German households were able to receive the channel.

People liked what they saw – even if they were reluctant to admit it in the early years. Ratings rose and RTL began to introduce more and better movies, attractive sports broadcasts such as Formula 1, and finally, from 1990 – as Frank Elstner had done earlier on radio – an information offensive. This included Stern TV, and provided a refreshing change to the official state news and political programmes of the public broadcasters. The pioneering spirit remained and programmes continued to reflect ‘just the usual craziness’ they’d had from the beginning. In 1991 RTL finally became a fully-fledged 24-hour channel.

Showing that it considered itself no longer just a simple addition to RTL radio, the channel abandoned the Plus suffix in 1992. Rebranded as RTL Television, the channel triggered Germany’s comedy boom with RTL Samstag Nacht; Hans Meisler caused uproar with his afternoon talk show;

As the critics seethed, Thoma got what he wanted – attention. RTL’s broadcasting reach expanded as more and more viewers had a peep to see ‘what terrible things’ RTL was bringing to the screen. On 23 September 1987, RTL were trailblazers once again, launching Germany’s first breakfast TV show with Guten Morgen Deutschland. Then the channel attracted more than a million viewers for the first time with the film Wer stirbt schon gerne unter Palmen, despite less than ten per cent of German households being able to receive RTL Plus at the time. It was two more years before half of German households were able to receive the channel.

People liked what they saw – even if they were reluctant to admit it in the early years. Ratings rose and RTL began to introduce more and better movies, attractive sports broadcasts such as Formula 1, and finally, from 1990 – as Frank Elstner had done earlier on radio – an information offensive. This included Stern TV, and provided a refreshing change to the official state news and political programmes of the public broadcasters. The pioneering spirit remained and programmes continued to reflect ‘just the usual craziness’ they’d had from the beginning. In 1991 RTL finally became a fully-fledged 24-hour channel.

Showing that it considered itself no longer just a simple addition to RTL radio, the channel abandoned the Plus suffix in 1992. Rebranded as RTL Television, the channel triggered Germany’s comedy boom with RTL Samstag Nacht; Hans Meisler caused uproar with his afternoon talk show;
The original presenter duo of *I’m a Celebrity – Get Me Out Of Here!*; Dirk Bach (to 2012) and Sonja Zietlow (still on)

Erika Berger tutored German audiences in matters of erotica

**MARKET LEADER FOR 21 CONSECUTIVE YEARS**

Germany’s first daily soap *Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten* (*Good Times, Bad Times*) appeared – it’s still running today – and through TV exposure on RTL, sportsmen like Michael Schumacher and Henry Maske became popular national heroes.

And it wasn’t just the individual programmes, series and programme elements that pushed RTL forward – by 1993, the channel had an audience share of 21.2 per cent in the key commercial target group of viewers aged 14 to 49. The practice of stripping – showing the same TV shows or series at the same time every day – meant watching the shows became habit, while RTL also invented audience flow for German TV, so viewers stayed with the channel from one programme to the next.

The idea was simple – once people tuned into RTL, they wouldn’t want to leave for the rest of the evening. Through clever programming and attractive trailers, by flowing programmes into one another, and by satisfying the needs of the whole family, viewers are significantly less inclined to change channels.

At the same time RTL created event television that was talked about all over Germany, through both original formats and programming from abroad. *Wer wird Millionär?* (*Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*) with Günther Jauch is still largely in line with what was once referred to as ‘educational TV’. On *Deutschland sucht den Superstar* (*Idols*) viewers follow how thousands try to rise to stardom, while the audience of *Ich bin ein Star – Holt mich hier raus!* (*I’m a Celebrity – Get Me Out Of Herel*) enjoys the combination of creepy thrills and amusement as the presenters poke fun at the contestants while they sit above the camp. RTL’s hit shows were repeatedly talk-of-the-nation events.

Debate about programme quality became secondary to outstanding audience ratings. In 1992, RTL became market leader for the first time. RTL Television is undisputedly the most-watched TV channel in the highly competitive commercial target group – and has been for 21 consecutive years.

Not only has RTL grown, the channel has also been joined by a series of other ‘family members’. The N-TV news channel, Vox, RTL II, Super RTL, and RTL Nitro have all found their audience and niches in the German programming landscape – a landscape that has changed immeasurably thanks to that original bold little broadcaster from Luxembourg.
RTL Group is the leading pan-European entertainment network, and Europe’s largest commercial free-TV broadcaster, with interests in over 50 television channels and nearly 30 radio stations. The Luxembourg-based company is currently number one or two in eight European countries. It is estimated that the TV channels reach more than 100 million viewers across Europe every day, while the radio stations reach around 45 million listeners daily. Now the company is even expanding its broadcasting business into Asia.
Travel back 30 years and the broadcasting map of Europe painted a very different picture. Back then, commercial television was still banned in most European countries, but not in Luxembourg. There, CLT had been running the French-speaking channel Télé Luxembourg – later to become RTL Télévision – since 1955, transcending borders by broadcasting to Eastern France and Southern Belgium. To expand further, CLT launched a TV channel in German on 2 January 1984, in partnership with UFA, a Bertelsmann company. This delivered commercial television to Germany for the first time, in the shape of the TV channel RTL Plus, though still broadcasting from Luxembourg. (The story of RTL Plus is told in more detail on pages 36 to 39.) But it may be worth noting here the channel’s slogan at launch: “RTL Plus – das erfrischend andere Programm”, or ‘the refreshingly different programme’. Those four simple words herald the story of what was to come across much of Western Europe.

The people at Bertelsmann saw the potential for commercial TV. “We realised the launch of commercial television meant that a portion of the advertising pie would permanently migrate to TV,” says Siegfried Luther, the CFO of Bertelsmann from 1990 to 2005. “We wanted to make sure we were part of that, it was a strategic decision.” This decision proved to be spot on, and soon the devotion of CLT to commercial broadcasting began to transcend borders.

The Early Days of European Expansion

Broadcasting to Western Germany was merely the beginning of the expansion. In the year 1987, the Group launched the general-interest commercial channel M6 in France, initially owning a 25 per cent stake. “In retrospect, I think the strategy was unique in Europe,” says Jean Stock, former Director of all TV activities for CLT from 1989 to 1994. “No other group did it this way, and no other group chose to be so close to the audience. There were people who said ‘that works in Germany, so it might work in France’.”

Also in 1987, the Group launched RTL-TVI, Belgium’s first commercial channel, broadcast via cable – the TVI standing for Independent Television. It quickly became the French-speaking market leader in Belgium. “The big difference compared to public TV is that we positioned ourselves as ‘the other guys,” says Jean-Charles De Keyser, CEO of RTL-TVI from 1994 to 2002. “Hence the famous campaign ‘L’Autre Vérité’, the other truth. We were close to the viewers, and covering more topics of
direct concern to them.” In 1989, the Group added the first Dutch language channel to its stable, with the launch of RTL Véronique in The Netherlands, even though commercial channels were still officially prohibited there. Renamed RTL 4 in the year 1990, the channel gradually succeeded in competition with the public broadcasters. “At first, we were only a small group of people without much money, and we had to produce an enormous amount of programming,” says Irene Moors, who has been a presenter since the very beginning. “The programmes weren’t top quality, and Dutch viewers were not used to having their programmes interrupted with advertising. The public broadcasters looked down on us, and didn’t take us seriously at all.”

In spite of this, CLT’s channels, programmes and the faces of their presenters became increasingly popular across Europe, and the channels began to translate growing ratings into hard cash. What’s more, the qualities and strategies that had paved those first tentative steps – audience understanding and intimacy, being different to the public broadcasters, and transferring skills and ideas from one market to the next – were the very same ideals that built the foundations for the growth that was to come. That, and a growing slice of the advertising pie.

Creating Families of Channels

Present on TV screens in five countries, CLT grew in the early 1990s by building networks of TV channels and radio stations that were complementary to the flagship channel, and to each other – in both the programmes they showed, and the audience they attracted for advertisers. This led to the strategy of creating families of channels. And, by treating them as a family, this careful positioning achieved both mass and targeted appeal.

Good examples of this approach included RTL II – launched in Germany in 1993, and aimed at a younger audience – RTL 5 in the Netherlands, and children’s channels Club RTL in Belgium and Super RTL in Germany in 1995 – a joint venture with Disney. It was the same for radio businesses – RTL 2 and Fun Radio in France complemented the leading station, RTL Radio, as well as Bel RTL and Radio Contact in Belgium. This development of

Super RTL keeps 6- to 13-year-olds in Germany entertained with its Toggo children’s programming, and the Toggo Tour (pictured here) gives kids a chance to meet their favourite TV characters
families didn’t affect the company’s efforts to conquer new territories. In 1997, it launched Channel 5 in the UK, RTL 7 in Poland and RTL Klub in Hungary.

**COUNTERING FRAGMENTATION**

Geographic growth and creating families of complementary channels were helped by the development of digital TV, multi-channel satellite, cable and DTT platforms.

Since 2002, RTL Group has acquired or launched 28 channels in Europe, either by conquering new markets, such as Croatia in 2004 with RTL Televizija, or by giving viewers even more where strong flagship channels were already established. This was the case when W9 launched in France in 2005, RTL 8 in the Netherlands in 2007, and RTL Nitro in Germany in 2012. RTL Group has been able to grow its audience share despite fragmentation in the varied markets. Creating families of channels is clearly the best response to the increasing audience fragmentation of a digital, multi-channel world. You could say, RTL Group believes: “Fragment yourself before someone else does”.

It’s clear that simply developing families of channels is not enough. Great TV and radio engages its local audience with appealing content – therefore RTL Group has invested in strong local programming, and in this way carries on differentiating its channels in the market and positioning itself uniquely with audiences and advertisers. News is also important to various audiences, so the Group continued to invest in news and current affairs programmes as part of its drive to generate higher ratings, strengthen channel brands and increase audience loyalty.

This leaves RTL Group in a strong position – at either number one or two in all the key continental European markets, with the strongest channel and programme brands. On top of this, other activities make RTL Group highly diverse, with a content arm that includes FremantleMedia – one of the largest international creators and producers of programme brands in the world. It is also increasing its digital presence and creating new online brands, in order to reach many more viewers – an essential part of a successful future.

The company recently moved into to Asia, with the launch of Big RTL Thrill, in India, in cooperation with Reliance Broadcast Network, and has teamed up with CBS Studios International to start pay-TV channels in the fast-growing South East Asian markets.

**TOGETHER WITH CBS**

**RTL GROUP IS NOW EXPANDING INTO SOUTH EAST ASIA**
1997 was a milestone in the company’s history, when Bertelsmann (shareholder of UFA) and Audiofina (shareholder of CLT) merged their TV, radio and production businesses to create Europe’s leading commercial TV, radio and production company, CLT-UFA. This new company combined the strengths of CLT – a leader in pan-European broadcasting, and creator of the RTL brand – with the historic UFA (see pages 84 to 85), a major player in broadcasting, production and rights.

With more and more TV channels up and running, all broadcasting companies needed more quality entertainment and factual content to satisfy the growing audience, so CLT-UFA looked for a strong European producer to team up with. This led to an even more significant corporate move – the merger of CLT-UFA and London-based content production company Pearson Television, in 2000 – to create Europe’s leading integrated broadcaster and content provider: RTL Group. This merger considerably reinforced the Group’s position in the content business.
Streetwise: French journalist and TV icon Michel Drucker, photographed in 1974 working for the radio broadcaster RTL.
90 YEARS OF NEWS, ENTERTAINMENT, STARS AND INFORMATION

In 1924, a small private radio station in Luxembourg began broadcasting. Today it has become an international radio and TV group that informs and entertains hundreds of millions of people every day.
At the Radio Luxembourg studios, London, UK, 1953
Would the Beatles have become so famous without Radio Luxembourg? Their live performances on 208’s Friday Spectacular paved the way for their international career.
Joe le taxi was the first hit by Vanessa Paradis, aged just 14. M6 produced the music video in 1987, and star presenter Nagui introduced the singer, live
Lionel Richie
In 1986 Jean-Luc Bertrand’s popular music programme Fréquence JLB devoted an entire special to the American guest, who had just released one of his greatest hits, Dancing on the ceiling.
Horst
(real name Horst Tempel) was an all-rounder, responsible for sport, Die Funkkantine, the Fröhlicher Wecker, and Mensch ärgere Dich nicht.

Brigitte
Her real name was Tamara Brigitta Kiefer and she was a dental assistant. She joined the broadcaster in 1966 through Frank Elstner: “Our parents were friends.”

Jörg
Born Jürgen Ebner, the DJ and technology enthusiast presented from 1963 and was known as the ‘Hitprofessor’. The ‘King of disc jockeys’, chief spokesman and director of Radio Luxembourg, sparkled with ideas and invented one programme after another. He had already recorded radio plays for children as a nine-year-old.
Rolf

For years, the former amateur boxer managed to bring exuberance and high spirits to his job as everyone’s “cheerful alarm clock” at six in the morning, with the assistance of his stuffed animal monkey ‘Quietschi’

Monika

enchantment Heintje as well as many, many male listeners. Her specialty: the search for missing pets

Edy

with the two gold teeth was in fact the real first name of Edy Hildebrandt, a trained pastry chef and carnival clown, who became the chief jester of the ‘cheerful airwaves’

Haidy

originally came from Chemnitz, and opened her ‘Lost & Found’ office for lost loves, men for life, and donations for sick children at Radio Luxembourg
Hugo Egon Balder and Hella von Sinnen

Two who made the leap from radio to television: Hugo Egon Balder, and garish Hella von Sinnen with her big mouth and bizarre costumes in the RTL Plus game show *Alles nichts oder?!* which aired from 1988 to 1992.
The initiative has raised exactly €133,868,776 since its debut in 1989.
At the time, Jean-Charles De Keyser, Managing Director of the Belgian channel RTL-TVI
(pictured left, with microphone) started the Télévie telethon together with Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens. RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg has been on board since 2002.
JE T’AIME
Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin
Cigarette and mike in one hand – Serge Gainsbourg was the ultimate in cool, here with Jane Birkin during the radio programme Non Stop, which was recorded on the Seine in April 1969 in RTL’s floating radio station
PLAY IT AGAIN, WOODY!

Woody Allen

In conversation with a true great of the film world: The Belgian journalist and playwright Pascal Vrebos met Woody Allen in New York for RTL-TVI. After the interview, Vrebos presented him with his book *L’homme caramel*, in which Allen plays a key role.
When the Berlin Wall fell, Georges Lang was a presenter of the RTL Télévision music programme Chewing Rock. Lang seized the historic opportunity and promptly improvised a special on the East German music scene. Georges Lang has moderated his programme Les Nocturnes on RTL Radio (France) for over 40 years now.
In September 1969, a few days after his 81st birthday, the French chanson singer Maurice Chevalier was a guest on Philippe Bouvard’s show Non Stop. A few years prior to this, he immortalised himself on the broadcaster’s ‘guest wall’
Charles Trenet

The French singer became a pioneer of commercial radio quite by accident — after he let himself be persuaded at the age of 20 to sing the first radio commercials for 50 francs.

Emperor Rosko

In 1966, Radio Luxembourg took a huge step forward. It lured the American DJ Emperor Rosko — known to the French public as Président Rosko — from the pirate station Radio Caroline to its own studios. The younger audience adored his style: spinning discs with dexterity and screaming into the microphone.

“LE PLUS BEAU, CELUI QU’IL VOUS FAUT, QUI MARCHE SUR L’EAU, LE PRÉSIDENT ROSKO.”

(“The handsomest, the one you need, who walks on water, Emperor Rosko.”)
Kelly Clarkson is the most successful winner of a TV singing competition ever, anywhere in the world. On 4 September 2002, she was voted the first American Idol by the show’s audience.
24 MILLION ALBUMS,
39 MILLION SINGLES
The presenter of the German edition of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* has hosted well over 1,000 episodes of the quiz show since 3 September 1999 with his casual style, genuine curiosity, and charm. On average, each candidate won approximately €36,000.
"ON EST TOUS CITRON, TOUS CITRON GRENADE
LES FILLES, LES GARÇONS,
LES VOISINS LES VOISINES LÂCHEZ DONC NOUS
LES BASKETS, ON EST À LA FÊTE."

("We're all lemon, all lemon grenadine, the girls, the boys, so neighbours leave us alone, we're partying") From the chanson Citron Grenadine by Marylène Bergmann and Jean-Luc Bertrand

At the beginning of the eighties, RTL Télévision's youngest viewers blocked Wednesday afternoons for Citron Grenadine, presented by Michèle Etzel, Jean-Luc Bertrand, Marylène Bergmann and Georges Lang
“SALLY, SALLY...
PRIDE OF OUR ALLEY
YOU’RE MORE
THAN THE WHOLE WORLD
TOO-OO ME...”

Lyrics of Sally, sung by Gracie Fields
Group portrait with a lady:
During Freddie Grisewood's (on right) live interview with the legendary singer Sally (actress Gracie Fields) on Radio Luxembourg, admirers gathered around the star.
RTL reporter Patrick Pesnot reported live from the Paris student protests in May 1968, from the roof of a transmission car. The French public radio networks were on strike, and TV was not independent from the government. RTL was one of the few remaining ways French people could obtain independent information. It was nicknamed ‘barricades radio’.
On the fringes of an RTL radio discussion, moderated by Jean Ferniot (centre), the later French Presidents François Mitterrand and Valery Giscard D’Estaing (right) engage in a debate.
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

An existentialist pays a visit: in March 1969, Sartre spoke on RTL
An early highlight of the RTL information offensive: In September 1993, news anchor Peter Kloeppe met and interviewed PLO leader Yasser Arafat about the peace talks between the PLO and Israel.

Peter Kloeppe

“THE DIFFICULT DECISION WE REACHED TOGETHER WAS ONE THAT REQUIRED GREAT COURAGE.”

Yasser Arafat on the agreement with Yitzhak Rabin
Michael Jackson was as happy as a little boy when RTL Plus Programme Director Marc Conrad – escorted by 12 of Jackson’s bodyguards – presented the Golden Lion to him before his concert at the stadium in Cologne-Müngersdorf in 1992. “For a moment, I got the feeling I was going to see the US President,” said Marc Conrad
Upon receiving the trophy that celebrated his career, "he hugged the lion to him and said, ‘I love him, I love him’," said Marc Conrad.
Radio Luxemburg presenter and Schlager (German pop music) singer Camillo Felgen is credited with having invented the Lion Awards (see pages 80 to 81). A native of Luxembourg, he began his career in 1946 as a news presenter on Radio Luxembourg. In 1958, he was appointed as the first Programming Director of the new German-language radio station ‘Radio Luxemburg’, where he presented the RTL Hitparade from 1958 to 1963.

The Lion trophy was commissioned by Claude Fischer, then Director of the German Programming department. The Radio Luxembourg Lions were first presented on 17 March 1959 at a press conference in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Their first public presentation took place on 30 April in Essen’s Grugahalle.

Originally, Gold, Silver and Bronze Lions were presented to the most successful stars of the Radio Luxembourg Hitparade, as determined by listeners and a jury of experts. Important factors here included sales figures, as well as ranking and frequency of appearance in the Hitparade. Lions were presented twice a year until the early 1980s, when they were awarded only once a year.

From 1959 to 1995, the Lions mainly went to German Schlager and international pop music artists. In the early 1990s awards for ‘Oldies’, ‘Cover Versions’, ‘Latest Hits’ and for achievements in TV and politics were added.

In the 36 years between 1959 and 1995, the Lion Awards developed into a glamorous media event with grand ceremonies, and simultaneously became one of the world’s most successful radio extravaganzas. When RTL let the Lions out, 10,000 fans were on hand at the Grugahalle in Essen (and later at Dortmud’s Westfalenhalle) or at the German Schlager Festival in Wiesbaden’s Rhein-Main-Halle.

Frank Elstner recalls: “The Lion events sold out in 24 hours. We could have staged the event three or four times in a row. It was the event in the ‘Ruhrpott’ and for teens at the time it was the definitive music event.”

As well as Frank Elstner, Helga Guittton and Jochen Pützenbacher were also long-time presenters of the Lion Awards. In 1982, Elstner himself
received an honorary Lion, and in 1993 he presented the coveted trophy to Pützenbacher. The 59th and final RTL Lion Awards presentation was held in 1995, presented by Jochen Bendel and Hans Meiser.

In 1998, the Lion Awards merged with the Telestar TV award administered by public broadcaster WDR. This merger resulted in the Deutscher Fernsehpreis – German TV Award – which was introduced by the CEOs and Directors of RTL Television, Sat.1, ARD and ZDF in 1999. The founders were Gerhard Zeiler, Fred Kogel, Fritz Pleitgen and Dieter Stolte.

The Radio-Journal.de reminds viewers that international stars weren’t always popular at the Lion Awards: in 1969, Dusty Springfield performed to boos and whistles from the audience, which demanded “Va-len-te” – the popular singer Caterina Valente. David Cassidy suffered a similar fate in 1973, with the audience insisting on “Hei-no”, a German Schlager star, instead. In 1981 the audience refused to let the runner-up, Roland Kaiser, exit the stage as they frenetically celebrated him with chants and sparklers. Minutes later, the Golden Lion winner – English band Visage – received a mere spattering of polite applause.

Between 1959 and 1994 59 gala events took place and 227 Lion Awards were presented.
“IT WAS THE TIME AFTER THE WAR AND PEOPLE WANTED HARMLESS ENTERTAINMENT. WE GAVE IT TO THEM AND REALLY MEANT IT.”

Cornelia Froboess

Lion love

German audience favourites Peter Kraus (left), Fred Bertelmann, and 15-year-old Cornelia Froboess were awarded the coveted trophy at the first Lion gala at Essen’s Grugahalle in 1959
A WORK OF ART FOR ARTISTS

Created by a true artist: ‘The Lion’ by Auguste Trémont is a trophy for international stars. Including the base, the statue weighs 2.5 kilograms and is 26 centimetres high.
For decades it was one of the most coveted trophies in the German entertainment industry. Whether in its gold, silver, bronze or ivory-toned version, the 26-centimetre-high Radio Luxemburg Lion was awarded to greats of the Schlager (German pop music) scene as well as international stars including Petula Clark, Abba and Michael Jackson. But what’s the story behind the winged lion? Where did this chimera – this hybrid being – come from and who was responsible for its creation? We trace its history.

**IN THE BEGINNING**

**WAS A COAT OF ARMS**

Since the 13th century, the proud red lion, correlating to the Limburg lions, has been an emblem of Luxembourg. In the early 1950s, when the management of Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR) were searching for a suitable logo for their international company, they were inspired by this heraldic motif. The coat of arms bore the image of a pair of stylised wings and the motto “Alas Leoni dedit” (it gave wings to the lions). This was intended to show that, thanks to radio, Luxembourg could be carried through the ether to the wider world. Even today this logo adorns the facade of Villa Louvigny, the longstanding former headquarters of CLR (since 1954, the company has been called CLT). And on the first floor of this impressive building in the middle of the City Park is a remarkable green carpet displaying the logo.

Legend has it that Camillo Felgen, the well-known Schlager singer and a presenter on the fledgling Radio Luxemburg, was climbing the stairs one day a few months after its launch in July, 1957 carrying a stack of records, and tripped on the last step. All the records landed on the lion carpet. The idea of the Lion Awards is said to have been born at this moment – an idea that was quickly turned into reality. But who should be entrusted with the creation of a suitable trophy? One name sprang to mind: Auguste Trémont.

Auguste Trémont was born on 30 December 1892 in Luxembourg (where he also died on 23 October 1980). In 1909 Trémont went to Paris to study art at the École des Arts Décoratifs. He returned to his home country during the First World War, but afterwards returned to Paris and continued his studies at the École des Beaux-Arts.

**AN ARTIST WHO LOVED ANIMALS**

A visit to the menagerie in the Jardin des Plantes (Botanical Garden) in Paris made a lasting impression on Trémont. From then on, he devoted his artistic work as a painter and sculptor primarily, though not exclusively, to the animal kingdom. Trémont was a versatile artist who shaped the cityscape of his hometown Luxembourg with numerous works of art, such as the friezes on the cathedral, but mainly with the two imposing bronze lions that have flanked the stairs of City Hall since 1932. A stylised lion’s head inspired by these bronze statues now forms the logo of Luxembourg City.

**THE SCULPTOR GAVE THE LION WINGS**

For Trémont himself, who was one of the most important animal sculptors of his generation, the big cat became a trademark. So it was no wonder that Trémont was approached to design a lion trophy. The artist was also a close friend of Léon Schaus, a long-time government commissioner at CLR/CLT, and Mathias Felten, the longstanding Managing Director of CLR/CLT.

Trémont set to work in his studio in Rue de la Source, Paris. Unlike in the corporate logo, the wings were directly attached to the roaring lion. In 1958, the very first cast of the winged lion promptly won over the CLT managers.

Between 1959 and 1995, numerous stars received the coveted Lion trophy, which was actually far more than just an award: it was a work of art for artists.
Radio Luxembourg dispatched a whole fleet of vehicles to monitor the traffic on Germany’s roads during the peak travel season, so the station could deliver up-to-the-minute traffic reports.
When CLT merged with German company UFA in 1997, it found a partner with a highly eventful history. Together, they would go on to help form RTL Group in 2000.

The origins of UFA (Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft Berlin) date back to 1917, with Europe in the final throes of the First World War. Between the wars, UFA played a pivotal role in establishing the reputation of German film by nurturing cinematic gems now considered integral to the heritage of world cinema.

**BETWEEN THE WARS, UFA DIRECTORS PRODUCED A SERIES OF FILM CLASSICS AND CINEMATIC ICONS**

Three directors produced a number of silent masterpieces for UFA: Ernst Lubitsch with *Madame Dubarry, One Arabian Night* (Sumurun) and *The Oyster Princess* (Die Austernprinzessin); Fritz Lang with *Dr Mabuse, Metropolis* and *Die Nibelungen*; and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau with *The Last Laugh* (Der letzte Mann), *Tartuffe* (Tartüff) and *Faust*. Other classics followed in the early 1930s, including *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* and the most famous sound film of the era – Josef von Sternberg’s *The Blue Angel* (Der Blaue Engel), starring Marlene Dietrich.

The very first film UFA produced was called *Towards The Light* (Dem Licht entgegen), but sadly, with the rise of Nazism, the company was to enter a truly dark period. On the orders of Joseph Goebbels, UFA became a state consortium pressed into producing Nazi propaganda – although its role was to distract the masses, not excite them. Weakened by
the loss of many talented Jewish employees, the war years saw UFA produce films such as *Münchhausen* and *Under The Bridges* (Unter den Brücken).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Allies dismantled UFA – even the use of its name was prohibited. However, two-thirds of the company’s facilities were now in the Soviet Bloc, where, in the year 1946, a new company, Deutsche Filmaktiengesellschaft (DEFA), emerged from the debris. They mainly produced films reflecting the communist regime’s ideology. In the West, after 11 years of wrangling and fruitless discussions, the remains of UFA were finally sold to a banking consortium led by Deutsche Bank, in 1956.

However, German cinema was in deep crisis, facing stiff competition from foreign productions and from television, and by 1962 the company was forced to bow to the inevitable – bankruptcy proceedings. A portion of UFA’s shares, including film and cinema rights, was bought by Bertelsmann. Then, with the production of cinema films making a loss and without any releases since 1961, this part of the business was scrapped and replaced with TV movie production. The rights to the company’s film catalogue were sold to the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, which works to conserve and restore much of Germany’s cinematic history.

This marked the start of an extremely productive period, including TV movies such as *Der Boxer* (1979) and *Die schöne Wilhelmine* (1983). There was even a successful return to the big screen with the Didi Hallervorden comedies of the early 1980s. In 1984, following some reorganisation at Bertelsmann, a holding company called UFA Film- und Fernseh-GmbH was established in Hamburg, CLT also teamed up with UFA to start a new channel, RTL Plus. Based in Berlin, the new incarnation of UFA remained independent from the channels and began working its way to the top of Germany’s TV production industry. It joined forces with Australian corporation Grundy, and embarked on producing hugely successful daily soaps and game shows. For example, daily soap *Gute Zeiten, Schlechte Zeiten* – launched on RTL Television in 1992 – has become the most popular series in the history of German television, and is still going strong. Other longstanding hits include *Unter uns* and *Verbotene Liebe* which is shown on public service broadcaster ARD.

1997 saw the merger of Luxembourg audiovisual group CLT with UFA. This was soon followed by the merging of CLT-UFA and Pearson TV, to create RTL Group in 2000. At this point all production activities were brought together under the FremantleMedia umbrella, while UFA Film & TV Produktion (Berlin) remained in charge of the six German production companies.

Today, UFA is Germany’s biggest TV producer, with numerous awards to its name. Its three arms, UFA Fiction, UFA Show & Factual and UFA Serial Drama, continue to enthral and entertain millions of viewers every day.
“Talent consists of spouting the same old nonsense as everyone else, just more elegantly,” wrote the presenter of France’s most listened-to radio programme, Les Grosses Têtes, in one of his many books, Douze mois et moi.
A trained baritone, Camille Felgen had worked for RTL since 1946 — and sang the signature jingle for Radio Luxembourg in France. In 1958 he joined the German-language Radio Luxembourg team as chief presenter and proceeded to put his own stamp on the station. As ‘Camillo’, he invented the Hitparade and the Golden Lion, wrote German lyrics for the Beatles I Want To Hold Your Hand and earned third place for Luxembourg at the Grand Prix d’Eurovision.
Founded in 1933, the CLR orchestra was originally meant to play upscale entertainment music to fill the programme. But the young conductor Henri Pensis had bigger ambitions, bringing international soloists on board and playing the music of contemporary composers. As a result, the hardworking Orchestre Symphonique de Radio Luxembourg quickly gained an excellent reputation.

Henri Pensis

From 1956 to 1964, and 1975 to 1982, Barry was the most popular voice of ‘208, Your Station of the Stars’. He was responsible for many tired youngsters across Europe on Monday morning, thanks to the English Top Twenty he presented every Sunday night – always playing the number one title first.
Irene Moors

Irene Lucia Moors was planning to become a medical secretary when the opportunity to work in TV came knocking in 1989. She has been on television ever since, hosting or co-hosting several award-winning shows on RTL 4. In 1995, she topped the Dutch charts for six consecutive weeks with the single *No Limit* by Irene Moors & De Smurfen. Her handprints can be found on a tile of the RTL Nederland Media Park building in Hilversum.
Helga Guilton

“It’s incredible what people have written to me about over the years. Problems, joyful events and of course there were some nice letters from men, too... One was so persistent that he would pin a rose under the windshield wiper of my car wherever it was parked in Luxembourg. Unfortunately, my ‘knight of the rose’ never revealed his identity”
Peter Kloeppel
The most important day in the professional life of RTL news anchor Peter Kloeppel was also the worst. During the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Kloeppel moderated live for eight long hours, despite returning from Bangkok at 6am that morning. He won the Adolf Grimme Prize for his performance on that day.

“‘I AM JUST CURIOUS AND INTERESTED IN WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD.’”
Peter Kloeppel

Stephen Williams
One of the driving forces behind the launch of Radio Luxembourg’s ad-funded English-language programme in 1933 was Stephen Williams (shown here on an antenna mast). Commercial programmes were banned in England at the time.
“Radio is the most wonderful medium of them all.”

Frank Elstner

RTL Radio Luxemburg achieved its greatest reach under Programme Director Frank Elstner. Elstner fairly bubbled over with ideas. As chief presenter, he hosted more than 10,000 programmes and recruited other presenters for the station, including Désirée Nosbusch, Tommi Ohrner and Thomas Gottschalk.

Radio Luxemburg is iconic. Was your team back then really so different?
FRANK ELSTNER: We really were a close-knit community. We had little money and little support. That sort of thing creates close bonds. We worked as a team.

How did you inspire the audience?
FRANK ELSTNER: We were good at improvising and talked on air the same way we talked off air. That helped us build good relationships with our listeners.

Do presenters have to be perfect?
FRANK ELSTNER: Of course not. I used to deliberately fumble my words on Radio Luxemburg so people would know it wasn’t a machine sitting in front of the microphone, but a real person. For example, I became a presenter myself even though I have a glass eye. Today I’d probably fail every job interview.

What was Radio Luxemburg’s importance to the pop music scene?
FRANK ELSTNER: We were very important for the music industry back then. They used to beg our disc jockeys: ‘Play my record! Play my record!’ Having a Radio Luxemburg disc jockey at the opening of a discotheque was a must for the owners.

You have spent many years in television since then. How important is radio for you?
FRANK ELSTNER: Radio is the most wonderful medium of them all. Anything that involves the imagination broadcasts better emotionally over the radio than on television. Radio is also the fastest medium and can reach people anywhere. It doesn’t hog attention like television, and is important for drivers.

Why did you later rename the Radio Luxemburg brand ‘RTL’?
FRANK ELSTNER: I thought the shareholders would take us more seriously if we had the same name as the French radio station. I regret that now. If I had any say today, I’d immediately reintroduce the name Radio Luxemburg.

Are you still in contact with your radio colleagues from years gone by?
FRANK ELSTNER: I keep in good contact with my friends – the ones I had a good rapport with from the beginning. With Helga for example, and Jochen, and Rainer.

Frank Elstner
joined Radio Luxemburg as a presenter in 1964, when he was just 21. To make sure he didn’t oversleep when he was presenting the early morning programme, he occasionally stayed in the office of Programme Director Helmut Stoldt – who he succeeded in 1972 – where the cleaning lady would wake him in the morning.
Frank Elstner had ‘Hitparade’ voting cards distributed at 70,000 Sparkasse bank branches to strengthen listeners’ ties to RTL.
Singer/writer/actor Zappy Max (born Max Doucet) with his wide-open eyes, moustache and large-chequered jacket was the central character on Radio Luxembourg’s legendary quiz Quitte ou double, which broadcast live from the ‘Radio Circus’ touring France and Belgium.
Marylène Bergmann

In 1987, while producing a photo feature for Ciné-Télé-Revue magazine in Hollywood, former Miss Lorraine Marylène Bergmann was offered a role in the hit US soap Santa Barbara by its producer Bridget Dobson. Reluctant to take a leap into the unknown so far from her native Lorraine, she decided to turn down the offer and return to Luxembourg.

Jean Octave

In 1969, the magazine show Hei Elei Kuck Elei (roughly “Look over here”) became the first TV programme to be broadcast in Luxembourgish – it is named after a quote from the libretto for the operetta D’Humm Séis. Editor of the mix of news, variety and sports: the journalist Jean Octave.

“FOR ME, MARYLÈNE HAS ALWAYS EMBODIED KINDNESS, BEAUTY, HARD WORK AND COURAGE.”

Robert Diligent

Paul Leuck was from Lorraine and a Luxembourger by ‘choice’ – which only made him more determined to push for the creation of a Luxembourgish programme as long ago as 1944. The dedicated European worked as a news anchor and commentator, and interviewed Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Paul Leuck
Robert Diligent was a true RTL veteran. His first programmes for Télé Luxembourg were still produced in the building of the Dudelange transmitters. Diligent and Jacques Navadic together originated the casual, laid-back style that quickly set RTL apart from the straitlaced competition, such as RTF

Jacques Navadic

Jacques Navadic was still working at Télé-Lille when four alleged Philips engineers paid a visit. Navadic received the annoying guests in a cool and business-like manner, not realising that they were, in fact, the management of Radio Luxembourg who wished to gain a personal impression of him. The result: Navadic was recruited, and later became Director of Information and Programme Director at Télé Luxembourg

Bob Stewart

Ex-Beatles drummer Pete Best encouraged him to try his hand as a DJ. Bob Stewart came to 208 from the pirate radio station Radio Caroline. He is famous for his broad Texas accent – but in fact the country music fan is a born-and-bred Englishman

“WE SINCERELY HOPE YOU’VE ENJOYED THE MUSIC YOU’VE HEARD... AND A GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD MORNING, WHEREVER YOU MAY BE.”
Georges Lang

“I longed to be in music. I said to my best friend: ‘One day I will do radio’. I said to the radio, to the DJs I was listening to: ‘One day I will do this, for longer than you.’... Now well on the way to setting a new record for the longest-running programme still with its original presenter, Georges has kept his loyal listeners glued to RTL Radio since 1973 with the late-night music show Les Nocturnes.

“There is no set theme for Les Nocturnes — it’s an atmosphere, a state of mind.”
Gaston Thorn (1)
This former Luxembourgish Prime Minister helped develop the Group into the leading TV and radio organisation in Europe. He was Chairman and CEO of CLT (1987 to 1997) and after the merger of CLT and UFA, became Chairman of the Board until 2004.

Gerhard Zeiler (2)
Gerhard Zeiler was CEO of RTL Group from 2003 to 2012. A driving force in making RTL Group what it is today, under his helm the company’s EBITA grew from €400 million to €1.1 billion and its profit margin doubled to 20 per cent. Also, every broadcasting family increased their audience shares, countering fragmentation, while FremantleMedia developed into the most successful, globally operating non-American content company.

Gust Graas (3)
Luxembourger Gust Graas joined CLR in 1952 as Secretary General, before running Télé Luxembourg. As CEO of CLT (1975 to 1988), he gave the company a European dimension. He also played a key role in the launch of RTL Plus in 1984.

Helmut Thoma (4)
Austrian Helmut Thoma started as Programme Director at Radio Luxembourg in 1982, before becoming Director of RTL Plus in 1984, and later its CEO (1986 to 1988). His excellent feeling for what audiences wanted rocketed RTL Plus’s audience shares and turned the TV channel into the most popular in Europe.

Philippe Labro (5)
After joining RTL Radio (France) as a journalist in 1979, Philippe Labro became Director of Programming (1985 to 2000) and Deputy CEO of the radio station in 1996. Known for being a bubble-burster with innovative ideas, he established the historic station and thus RTL as a brand in the 1980s and 1990s.

Jean-Charles De Keyser (6)
Starting as a trainee, and then Brussels correspondent at RTL Radio (France), he was instrumental in establishing RTL-TVI. He later became its Managing Director (1985) and CEO (1994 to 2002). He was also much involved in the European expansion of RTL Group, especially in the Netherlands, Hungary and Croatia. He launched the Télévie telethon in 1989.

Jacques Lacour-Gayet (7)
In 1932, businessman and free-market advocate Jacques Lacour-Gayet was appointed CEO of CLR, a post he held until 1953. Among other achievements, he oversaw the success of Radio Luxembourg following a shaky start.

Jean Stock (8)
Upon joining RTL and Télé Luxembourg, Jean Stock launched a raft of new shows, modernising the channel. He also helped to set up M6, serving as its Deputy Managing Director for programming and news (1987 to 1989) and was involved in the launch of RTL 4 in the Netherlands (1989).

Mathias Félten (9)
Mathias Félten joined CLR in 1931 and managed the technical operations of Radio Luxembourg. He became Managing Director in 1956, helping launch Télé Luxembourg and pioneering radio shows in German in 1957.

Nicolas de Tavernost (10)
Nicolas de Tavernost was Deputy Managing Director of M6 (1987) and Managing Director (1990) before serving as CEO and Chairman of Groupe M6 Management Board from 2000. Creating M6 from scratch, he shaped it into one of the most diversified and profitable all-round media companies in Europe.

Votes for your favourite executive are open.
Willy Knupp

“I GOT THE CHANCE TO BUILD UP SOMETHING NEW AT RTL WITH FORMULA 1.”

Michael Schumacher

At the 1997 Grand Prix of Spain, in Barcelona, Kai Ebel interviewed Michael Schumacher. Alongside boxing (with Henry Maske) Formula 1 with Schumacher was the key to RTL’s rise as a sports-savvy TV channel in Germany
Willy Knupp was already on board in the 1960s when it came to motorsports at RTL. The amateur racer (shown here with Jochen Pützenbacher, right, in Monte Carlo) turned racing into an important element of the programme on RTL Plus, and brought Formula 1 to the channel.
“WHAT YOU THINK YOU SEE OF THE MOON IS THAT IT SHINES, BUT IT JUST USES THE SUN. THAT’S THE WAY IT IS WITH FRAZIER. HE IS THE MOON, MUHAMMAD ALI THE SUN”

Muhammad Ali
Muhammad Ali

Never Before would a Goal have been so good for a Match.

Marcel Reiff
Girondins de Bordeaux

The football players of Girondins de Bordeaux, which is majority owned by Groupe M6, present to 25,000 supporters in Bordeaux their three trophies won in 2009 (The French League Cup, the Ligue 1 Championship Trophy and the Champions Trophy)
Wladimir Klitschko

Having hit the boards shortly before, Wladimir Klitschko went on to knock out his opponent Eddie Chambers – five seconds before the end of the 12th round in Düsseldorf in 2010. ‘Dr Steelhammer’ thus delivered his 48th knockout win and defended his title of Heavyweight World Champion. RTL Television broadcast the bout.
“THEY ARE GREAT, THEY ARE STRONG, THEY ARE TOUGH.”

Boxing promoter Dan Goossen about the Klitschkos
1924
- François and Marcel Anen install a radiotelephone transmitter in the attic of their house, 28, rue Beaumont in Luxembourg, in autumn 1923 and begin their first experiments
- In April 1924, the Anen brothers take the step from amateur radio to broadcasting, with a regular programme from Luxembourg, that mainly plays music records.

1926
- The station broadcasts records, live concerts and sports results on Saturdays. The first presenters speak mainly Luxembourgish, but also German, French and English.
- In France, the Bokanowski decree aims to strengthen the state’s broadcasting monopoly.

1928
- François Anen accepts Radio Toulouse’s outgoing 3kW transmitter to use in Luxembourg.
- Blue Star Radio, a French-Luxembourgish study syndicate is created, with the aim of installing a powerful radio station in Luxembourg.
1929
- Two companies pursue the same goal: The Société Luxembourgeoise d’Études Radiophoniques (SLER), led by the French Compagnie des Compteurs, and the Compagnie Nationale de Radiodiffusion Luxembourgoise (CNRL), led by Jacques Trémoulet, Head of Radio Toulouse
- The CNRL – in which the Anen station has been integrated – builds a transmitter in Cessange (Kohlenberg) and begins broadcasting under the name Radio Luxembourg
- The first Luxembourgish law regulating radio broadcasting is published

1930
- In January, the CNRL is ordered by the Luxembourgish authorities to stop broadcasting
- The SLER obtains the exclusive licence for radio broadcasting from the Luxembourg Government. They sign a 25-year concession agreement

1931
- Members of the SLER found the Compagnie Luxembourgoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR). Main shareholders are CSF, Agence Havas (both already associated with Radio Paris), I&P, Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, Compagnie des Compteurs, and the Banque Industrielle Belge. The headquarters are at 53, avenue Monterey in Luxembourg. François Anen joins the technical service (studios) of the new company
- The construction of the transmitter site in Junglinster begins

1932
- Part of the Villa Louvigny – built on a 17th century fort in the heart of Luxembourg – is rented as headquarters for all radio activities except transmission
- Jacques Lacour-Gayet is appointed as CEO (administrateur délégué) of the CLR

1933
- An orchestra that will become the famous Orchestre Symphonique de Radio Luxembourg is founded under the direction of Henri Pensis
- After an experimental programme, Radio Luxembourg makes its first regular long wave broadcast on 15 March in French and German, from the Villa Louvigny’s studios, using the most modern and powerful (200kW) transmitter in Europe
- English programmes begin on 3 December

1934
- Radio Luxembourg broadcasts live from the Tour de France for the first time

1936
- A French administrative headquarter of Radio Luxembourg is set up, at 22 rue Bayard in Paris

1937
- Following the ongoing success of Radio Luxembourg, CLR buys the Villa Louvigny and extends the premises

1939
- On the eve of war, the Luxembourg Government, concerned about maintaining Luxembourg’s neutrality, asks CLR to stop broadcasting
- On 21 September, operations are closed down
1940
- On the day of the Nazi invasion, Radio Luxembourg installations are among the first objectives of the Wehrmacht in the Grand Duchy. Four weeks later, German troops restart the station, using it for their communication until October 1940, when the transmitter is incorporated into the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft and used for Nazi propaganda.

1941
- Radio Luxembourg begins broadcasting again on 12 November 1945, with the famous words: “Bonjour le Monde, ici Radio Luxembourg.”

1945
- The Office of War Information begins to use the station in July, handing over the installations to the CLR on 11 November. The return is a bitter disappointment for rehired staff, as most equipment has been destroyed and the Villa Louvigny plundered by the Nazis.
- Radio Luxembourg begins broadcasting again on 12 November 1945, with the famous words: “Bonjour le Monde, ici Radio Luxembourg.”

1947

1950
- A studio is installed at 38 Hertford Street in London.

1951
- Inauguration of CLR’s new medium wave transmitter in Junglinster.
- Radio Luxembourg transfers its English programme to medium wave 208. ‘Two-O-Eight’ becomes a new reference for young Britons. Part of the broadcasting on medium wave also contains programmes in Dutch and Luxembourgish.

1953
- The ‘new’ Villa Louvigny is established with the winged lion and the motto ‘Alas Leoni dedit’ (‘It gave wings to the lion’) decorating the front of the building.
- Robert Tabouis is appointed as CEO (administrateur délégué/vice-président délégué) of the CLR.

1954
- On 1 July, CLR becomes CLT (Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télédiffusion) and begins construction of a TV transmitter and studio in Dudelange.

1955
1956
- The 350kW medium wave transmitter – relocated from Junglinster to Marnach to provide a better reception in England and Scandinavia – goes into service
- The first TV transmission from the Villa Louvigny is broadcast

1957
- A German radio programme is reintroduced on medium wave 208, and soon becomes a phenomenal success.
- Télé Luxembourg is now entirely broadcast from the Villa Louvigny

1959
- The radio programme in Luxembourgish is extended, and transferred from medium wave to short wave 92.5. Today’s RTL Radio Lëtzebuerg is born

1960
- After Radio Luxembourg broadcast a live interview with the Algerian leader, Ferhat Abbas, the cable connecting Paris to Luxembourg is cut for two hours by the French Minister of Information

1963
- Jean Le Duc is appointed CEO (vice-président délégué) of CLT

1965
- The French State plans to acquire part of the capital of CLT through the government-owned SOFIRAD (Société financière de radiodiffusion). After opposition from the Luxembourgish Government, the plan is abandoned

1966
- Jean Prouvost is appointed CEO (administrateur délégué) of CLT
- Radio Luxembourg in France is rebranded RTL

1969
- A new TV programme in Luxembourgish is born. A two-hour mixed programming show – Hei Elei Kuck Elei – that broadcasts every Sunday, is the predecessor of today’s RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg

1972
- Powerful long wave transmitters go into service in Beidweiler with the transmitters in Junglinster used as back up
- Télé Luxembourg makes its first colour broadcast

1975
- RTL Productions – a Luxembourg-based production company – is created. This is the predecessor of today’s BCE (Broadcasting Center Europe), RTL Group’s technical services provider
- Gust Graas is appointed CEO of CLT

1981
- A Belgian military jet crashes into the TV antenna in Dudelange, killing three people
- RTL Télé Luxembourg is allowed to enter the Belgian cable network

1982
- RTL Télé Luxembourg is renamed RTL Télévision
1984
- The commercial TV channel RTL Plus is launched in partnership with UFA, a Bertelsmann company. On 2 January, RTL Plus begins broadcasting a German programme from Luxembourg

1987
- The launch of TV channels M6 in France and RTL-TVI in Belgium
- Gaston Thorn is appointed CEO of CLT

1989
- Dutch language channel RTL Véronique (renamed RTL 4 in 1990) is launched in the Netherlands

1991
- The new building at Luxembourg-Kirchberg opens as the Group’s administrative and radio headquarters. TV activities remain in the Villa Louvigny
- The English-language service of Radio Luxembourg stops broadcasting on medium wave
- After acquiring a stake in Radio Contact in 1990, CLT launches the radio stations Bel RTL in Belgium and 104.6 RTL in Germany

1992
- Michel Delloye and Jacques Rigaud are appointed Managing Directors of CLT

1993
- The TV channel Vox is launched in Germany
- TV channels RTL II in Germany and RTL 5 in the Netherlands are launched. The company acquires a stake in French music radio station, Fun Radio
- Gaston Thorn retires as CEO. Michel Delloye and Jacques Rigaud act as Co-CEOs

1995
- Club RTL in Belgium and Super RTL in Germany, a joint venture with Disney, are launched
- The launch of Dutch-language radio and TV station, Veronica, based in Hilversum, become Yorin and Yorin FM in 2001
- Launch of RTL 2 (previously M40) a French music radio station

1996
- Following an agreement between CLT and the Luxembourgish government, the Orchestre Symphonique de RTL becomes the official state orchestra, and is renamed Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg
- The opening ceremony for a second building in Kirchberg – the new TV centre – takes place. The Villa Louvigny is sold
- Téva, a digital thematic channel, is launched in France
- TPS, a new digital pay-TV offering, is launched in France. CLT holds 20 per cent of TPS (which is sold to Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux and M6 in 1998)

1997
- Bertelsmann, shareholder of UFA, and Audiofin, shareholder of CLT, merge their TV, radio and production businesses to create CLT-UFA – Europe’s leading commercial TV, radio and production company
- TV channels RTL Klub and Channel 5 are launched, in Hungary and the UK respectively. Channel 5 becomes Five in 2002
- The company purchases advertising sales house Havas Intermédiation, a French company with subsidiaries across Europe, mostly operating under the IP (“Information & Publicité”) name
- Rémy Sautter and Rolf Schmidt-Holtz are appointed as Co-CEOs of CLT-UFA

THE NEW BUILDING AT KIRCHBERG OPENS AS THE GROUP’S HEADQUARTERS

1984
- The commercial TV channel RTL Plus is launched in partnership with UFA, a Bertelsmann company. On 2 January, RTL Plus begins broadcasting a German programme from Luxembourg
1998
• The EU Commission rejects the planned pay-TV merger of Premiere and DF1 (Kirch Group), a deal designed to develop pay-TV in Germany through a restructured Premiere. In 1999, CLT-UFA sells its 45 per cent stake in Premiere to Kirch Group, and focuses on free-to-air TV.

1999
• Groupe M6 becomes the main shareholder of French football club FC Girondins de Bordeaux.

2000
• CLT-UFA increases its stakes in Vox and Channel 5.
• The merger of CLT-UFA and Pearson Television – a London-based content production company – creates Europe’s leading integrated broadcaster and content provider: RTL Group. Pearson Group’s stakes in Antena 3 – a Spanish TV channel – and in Channel 5 are brought into RTL Group as part of the merger.
• Didier Bellens is appointed CEO of CLT-UFA, before becoming CEO of RTL Group.

2001
• Following a share swap GBL exchanges its 30 per cent stake in RTL Group for a 25 per cent stake in Bertelsmann AG – Bertelsmann becomes majority shareholder of RTL Group.
• In December, Bertelsmann acquires Pearson’s 22 per cent stake in RTL Group.
• Pearson Television is rebranded FremantleMedia.

2002
• RTL Group acquires German news channel N-TV, plus various holdings in German radio stations from Holtzbrinck.

2003
• Gerhard Zeiler is appointed CEO of RTL Group.

2004
• The Belgian family of RTL channels expands, with the launch of Plug TV (renamed Plug RTL in 2008).
• M6 acquires Paris Première, a pay-TV channel based in Paris.
• RTL Group launches the Croatian TV channel RTL Televizija.

2005
• Groupe M6 launches the free digital terrestrial channel, W9.

2010
• UK broadcaster Five is sold to the Northern & Shell company, owned by British publisher Richard Desmond.

2012
• In cooperation with Reliance Broadcast Network, RTL Group launches its first channel outside of Europe: Big RTL Thrill starts broadcasting in India on 5 November.
• Anke Schäferkordt and Guillaume de Posch are appointed as Co-CEOs.

2013
• Bertelsmann reduces its shareholding in RTL Group via a public offering. Following the transaction, RTL Group’s shares are now listed on the regulated market (Prime Standard) of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. Together with an increased free float, this additional listing gives potential investors more opportunities to trade RTL Group shares. Bertelsmann will continue to hold a qualified majority stake in RTL Group.
• RTL Group and CBS Studios International partner to launch two pay-TV channels in South East Asia.

2014
• RTL Group celebrates the 90th anniversary of the launch of the Anen brothers’ Radio Luxembourg.
Some radios such as the Grundig Prima-Boy had a special pre-set button that allowed listeners to tune straight in to Radio Luxembourg programmes. It was a real selling point!

The Key to Radio Luxembourg

The famous band leader James Last composed the Radio Luxembourg signature melody as a tenth anniversary gift to the popular German-speaking radio station, back in 1967; and Happy Luxembourg is still in everyone’s ears today...

International bands performing under the station’s name

A number of bands have chosen Radio Luxembourg as their stage name. Race Horses, a Welsh group from Aberystwyth, formed in 2005 as Radio Luxembourg before changing their name in 2009. The majority of their music was in Welsh.

A Danish rock ‘n’ roll group also performs under the name Radio Luxembourg, while Croatia has a band called Radio Luksemburg.
1960 saw the cinema release of Erik Ode’s feature-length movie Schlager-Raketen (literally ‘Hit Rockets’) starring legendary Radio Luxembourg presenter Camillo Felgen alongside such vocal luminaries as Jacqueline Boyer, Peter Kraus, Sarah Vaughan and Cornelia Froboess, not to mention Nat King Cole and Duke Ellington. The film tells the story of a radio programme called Festival der Herzen which reunites long-lost couples against a backdrop of popular music. Filmblätter magazine called it a “sparkling firework of musical entertainment”.

**Schlager-Raketen:** a 1960 West German movie about Radio Luxemburg

Until a week before its launch in 1987, TV channel M6 was still being referred to as RTL 6. The name was changed to M6 (M for Métropole and 6 for the sixth channel) following the intervention of the National Commission for Communication and Liberties (CNCL), which didn’t want the French channel flaunting its links with peripheral radio station RTL. (Some claim the abbreviation RTL 6 was not favoured by a certain Nicolas de Tavernost...)

**WHY M6 WAS NOT CALLED RTL 6**

**Leila Lombardi** drove number 208

Leila Lombardi was one of the few women to race in Formula 1, competing in 17 Grands Prix between 1974 and 1976. To this day, she remains the only female driver ever to score points. She caused a sensation when she took to the track in 1974 driving a white Brabham bearing the unusual number 208 – the wavelength of Radio Luxembourg, one of her team sponsors.

Radio Luxembourg was present at the Paris International Exposition in 1937 and Expo 58 in Brussels.

Radio Luxembourg’s very own musical: Battle of the Giants — The Rock ‘N’ Pop Years

The musical, based on Battle of the Giants, one of the most listened-to radio programmes on Radio Luxembourg, launched in 2011. It pays tribute to the radio show on stage with a cast of young singers, actors, dancers and musicians. Using on-screen motion graphics, and historical news stories, jingles and guest voice-overs from legendary Radio Luxembourg presenters, Battle of the Giants – The Rock ‘N’ Pop Years was put on at the Shaw Theatre in London on 2 November 2011 before touring theatres around the UK in 2012.

Radio Luxembourg helped get the Stones rolling...

In his autobiography, Life, Keith Richards describes how listening to Radio Luxembourg under his sheets changed his life. Read more on page 21 ('Two-O-Eight’ – the Rock ‘N’ Roll Radio Revolution)
What do the great artists Jean Dunand, Jean Cocteau, Max Ernst and Victor Vasarely have in common?

All four have created works for or about Radio Luxembourg or RTL. A painting by Jean Dunand was recently discovered hidden behind another panel during renovation work at Villa Louvigny in Luxembourg City. The work dates from the 1930s. Jean Cocteau worked with Radio Luxembourg in the late 1930s. A drawing by Cocteau, paying homage to the station, was published in the Radio Luxembourg Almanac for 1954. Surrealist Max Ernst made a collage inspired by RTL, and Victor Vasarely designed the iconic rue Bayard facade in Paris which was unveiled in 1972.

Radio summer in Sweden

Radio Luxembourg, a short Swedish film made in 2010, is set in the 1950s. It tells the story of a city teenager who spends her summer holidays at her cousin’s house in a sleepy village deep in the countryside. Listening to Radio Luxembourg and its exhilarating music offers her an escape from the monotony of her surroundings and the oppressive conservatism embodied by the village priest. The blast of modernity unleashed by Radio Luxembourg’s ‘sound of freedom’ and the movies shown at the local cinema set off a chain reaction that brings an end to the rural tranquility.

Van Morrison sings about his childhood memories with Radio Luxembourg

The Van Morrison album Enlightenment released in 1990 contains the song In The Days Before Rock ‘n’ Roll co-written by the Northern Irish singer-songwriter and the Irish poet Paul Durcan. The song is a tribute to Radio Luxembourg and the singers who influenced the young people. In his next album, Hymns To The Silence, released one year later, the song On Hyndford Street also refers to Morrison’s childhood memories listening to Radio Luxembourg.

A disco remembers the voice of freedom in Warsaw

A disco and concert venue in Warsaw is named Punkt & Radio Luxembourg after the famous radio station that was seen as the voice of freedom during the communist years.