

Primedia's 702 is 42 years strong

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It was dark days indeed in 1980 as Channel 702: 'Your rainbow of sound' took its first breath on an AM signal in a little studio in Ga Rankuwa, Bophuthatswana. The only other independent radio station in apartheid South Africa, at this time, was Capital Radio 604.



702 station manager, Mzo Jojwana

By 1990, amidst daily racial oppression, injustice, strife, and silencing of voices, 702 was becoming a platform for South Africans of different racial, cultural, and political backgrounds, to share their views and perspectives, freely, and without fear. By 1988, 702 had moved away from its Top 40 inspired young adult music format to a talk format. This move was stewarded by some of the finest broadcasters in the land including Stan Katz, John Berks and later on, John Robbie.

Unfiltered, real-time, and real issue talk and listener engagement was paramount. The station positioned itself to be 'in touch, in tune and independent'.

702 was among the first to have top opinion leaders and news makers on air. This included political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu.

At an 80th birthday celebration for Former President Thabo Mbeki this week, the station manager of 702, Mzo Jojwana, and programme manager, Alistair Teeling-Smith, paid tribute to the great statesman. The Former President then gracefully spoke of 702 as an important source of news about South Africa under apartheid and how the station provided the 'real picture' of what was going on in the country.

The magic and majesty of 702's connectivity with its audience continues today and the station has become a highly credible voice, not only in '702 land', but across the plains of South Africa and beyond.

702 station manager, Mzo Jojwana said, "On a single day, we listen to the hopes, the despair, the dreams, and the disappointments of our callers. We are a source of information, of comfort, of support. We are a daily companion in the lives of many of our listeners, Mzo continues: "For many listeners, they cannot remember a time in their lives when they did not wake up to 702. For newer listeners, it is the unfiltered talk, the helplines and the unrivalled listener interactivity that makes 702 an essential part of their everyday".

"We walk our talk," Mzo says. "Our commitment to independent journalism and our genuine interest in and concern for our community is ever-present in our community outreach programmes which are second to none."

Through its 42-year life, 702 has attracted the best of the best. Among these are John Berks, Stan Katz, Xolani Gwala, Alex Jay, Cocky 'Twobull' Thlotlalemaje, John Qwelane, Dan Moyane, John Robbie, Noeleen Maholwane-Sangqu, Debra Patta, Redi Tlhabi, Jeremy Maggs, Jenny Crwys-Williams, Shado Twala, Jeremy Mansfield, Gareth Cliff, Kate Turkington, Tim Modise, and David O'Sullivan.

Today the station attracts the cream of the crop talk show hosts. "With the ilk of Bongani Bingwa, Clement Manyathela,

Mandy Wiener, Africa Melane, Relebogile Mabotja, John Perlman, Aubrey Masango and Bruce Whitfield as our flagship talk hosts, we provide the best of real-time talk, analysis, and engagement. On weekends, listeners are treated to best of concert of soulful musical classics, with Paul Mtirara, Kenny Maistry, Nonn Botha and Refiloe Mpakanyane. Our EWN news service is run by a devoted team to ensure top in class news 24 hours a day.”

Despite its humble beginnings, 702 was to become a trendsetter. Not only was this little independent radio station to be South Africa’s first talk radio station, but many in the industry consider it to be the forefather of community radio in the country.

“We celebrate 702 for creating a platform for fearless talk and debate in the yesteryear of the apartheid era, and in a new democratic order of today. 702 has been an essential voice in the worst of times and in the best of times. We applaud all of those who have made this station 42 years strong,” says Primedia Group CEO, Jonathan Procter. “With its kaleidoscope of authentic talk, prism of informed debate and soulful weekends, Primedia’s 702 is set to remain a vibrant and vital radio gem in Gauteng’s broadcasting panorama for many years to come.”

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