

One of the great things about ham radio, we always tell non-hams, is that you never know who might answer when you call CQ. It might be a teacher in New York, a farmer in Russia, or a rock star in California ... such as Joe Walsh of The Eagles, also known as WB6ACU.

CQ Interviews:

Joe Walsh, WB6ACU, at one of his basement operating positions — one of nine complete stations in his California home. This one features a Johnson 500 transmitter (partially obscured) and a Hallicrafters SX-88 purchased on eBay that sparked internet rumors of "a rock star driving up radio prices." (All photos by the author)



Joe Walsh, WB6ACU

Ordinary, Average Ham (and Rock Legend)

BY DAVID E. ELLISON,* WB7AWK

Flash back to 1977: Jimmy Carter was President, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* was topping the box office, and transceivers from Kenwood and Yaesu had finally begun to cast a shadow upon aging giants Drake, Collins, and Heathkit in the world of amateur radio. Hobby computers were becoming commonplace; CMOS keyers were all the rage, and the then-tiny software company Microsoft was on the verge of earning its first million dollars in a single year.

By the summer of that year, the musical influence of guitarist Joe Walsh had helped propel the album *Hotel California*, by rock music super-band The Eagles, to the top of the Billboard charts and into the history books as one of the

most successful record albums of all time. Walsh, already a guitar legend from his own solo career and from his days fronting another influential rock band, The James Gang, replaced Eagles guitarist Bernie Leadon in 1976, in a move the band hoped would bring more of a rock edge to its sound. By the end of 1977 there was little doubt the change was for the good.

Few, however, are aware of Walsh's long-time interest in amateur radio. First licensed as a Novice in 1960 with the callsign WV2KAC, Joe now holds an Extra class ticket as WB6ACU and is active, when his busy schedule permits, on all bands from 160 to 2 meters, running all modes from AM, CW, and SSB to FM and digital. His preference is for the great old tube rigs of the past.

For the last two years rumors have circulated on the internet that "some rock star" was amassing a large collec-

tion of Collins, Hallicrafters, and other vintage tube-era rigs through the auction site eBay. A few months back I sold several pieces of old gear to the famed guitar player in Studio City, California, and decided to put the rumor together with the facts. It was through these deals, and over the course of many e-mails, that I was able to persuade Joe to consent to an interview for *CQ* magazine about his music, his collection, and his interests in amateur radio. We also spoke with a couple of Joe's ham radio friends and his "Elmer."

CQ: How did you get started in amateur radio?

Joe Walsh: In 1960 my family moved from Columbus, Ohio to Flushing, New York (Queens, New York City). I was 12. I went from a very small town in Ohio to all of a sudden being in New York City, from a big house with a yard to a

*3728 70th Ave. Ct. West, University Place, WA 98466
e-mail: <davide ellison@hotmail.com>