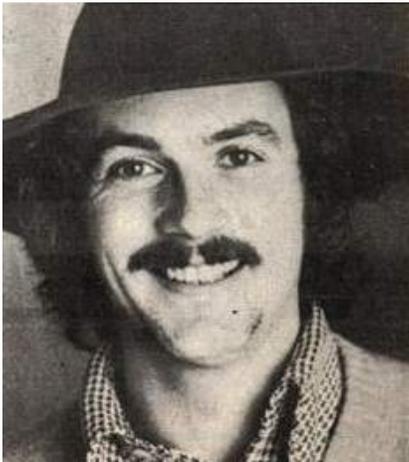


## Marc "Mais Oui" Denis: A part of Canadian radio history

by **Doug Thompson**, *Broadcast Dialogue Columnist and former Creative Director of The Team, Toronto*



**MARC "MAIS OUI" DENIS**



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The disc-jockey is the essential, emotional link between radio station and listener. Some DJs become as popular as the recording artists they play. Marc "Mais Oui" Denis is one of those DJs.

Montrealers know Marc Denis from his almost 30 years of broadcasting there; Torontonians remember him from EZRock; and if you've ever flown Air Canada, you've probably heard him hosting in-flight music programs. Denis cites Montreal DJs Dave Boxer (CFCF) and Michel Desrochers (CJMS) as his most important radio influences. *"I was fascinated by the fact that some guy was ruling the airwaves in the evening and playing all this great music."*

Fluently bilingual, Marc got his start in radio while attending the University of Ottawa. *"In my second year, I noticed an ad in the newspaper that CJRC, a French language radio station in Ottawa, needed a Parliament Hill correspondent and a weekend newsman, so I applied and got the job. I did that until I graduated. Then I switched from newsman to evening disc-jockey at another French station, CKCH in Hull. That lasted until I got an offer from Montreal."*

It was CKGM's then-Program Director Tom McLean who offered Marc the job. McLean was intrigued by Denis' demo tape. *"I had this idea to be bilingual on AM. CHOM, CKGM's sister FM station, was already doing some breaks in English, some in French, but*

*everybody there had an accent and I wanted to do my show in flawless English and French. So I put a short demo tape together as I thought it should sound and Tom hired me."*

Marc began on the all-night show at CKGM in June, 1974. A year later, he moved to evenings. It was at the Montreal AM powerhouse that Denis got his nickname: *"I was the only French-speaking DJ (on CKGM), and Steve (Shannon) was always impressed by the fact that I could switch back and forth, English to French, effortlessly. The only words he knew how to say in French were 'mais oui', so one day when he was doing his show wrap-up, he said, 'Coming up next, Marc 'Mais Oui' Denis. All the other guys started calling me that and it just stuck."*

Denis' high energy, unique, bilingual patter became a hit with listeners...and a problem for the competition. *"Once my (bilingual) show became popular, the other stations, both English and French, started copying the style. Pretty soon, 'bilingual' broadcasters were on just about every station."* Montreal's bilingual wars for listeners became a political football for the CRTC, with complaints being filed from English and French stations alike. It took several years for the Commission to render a decision. From 1980 on, English stations could no longer broadcast in French, and French stations couldn't broadcast in English. Marc's pioneering style was out. *"I no longer had the possibility to switch back and forth, so I thought I'd make a switch and left CKGM and went to CJFM."*

Denis' bilingual abilities kept him steadily employed in Montreal for years. After CJFM came jobs with French language stations CKAC and CKOI, then back to CJFM and CJAD, all the while handling a myriad of TV hosting gigs as well as acting in such movies as *'The Kid', 'The Pianist'* and *'Agnes Of God'*.

In 1997, Denis was offered a job at CJEZ-FM in Toronto. He turned it down. They came back a second time, and again turned them down. The third time, the offer was just too good, so Marc, his wife and kids made the move. The EZRock job lasted three years. These days, Marc is busy doing commercial voice-overs, infomercials, station imaging in both official languages and compiling a series of CDs featuring classic Denis airchecks and some of his favorite radio moments.

So, is Marc Denis happy with the way his career has evolved so far? The obvious answer is, *Mais Oui!*

*Marc Denis returned to Montréal to host weekends on French-language AC front runner 105.7 Rythme FM in 2002 and 2003. He has since moved on to pursue other radio, TV and film projects in the city, not the least of which is offering his bilingual voice services at [www.marcdenis.com](http://www.marcdenis.com)*

*In 2005, Marc Denis is part of the team at Montréal English-language AC leader Q 92 (CFQR 92.5) for weekend and swing duties. He is also the host and producer of "Saturday Night Oldies", the New SNO on Q 92. In 2008-2009, Marc is morning host on AM 940, Montreal's Greatest Hits.*

*Marc also runs the popular "980 CKGM Montréal Super 70s Tribute Page", a must visit for Top 40 radio fans at [www.marcdenis.com/ckgm.asp](http://www.marcdenis.com/ckgm.asp) and his "1470 CFOX Montréal Radio Archive" at [www.marcdenis.com/cfox/](http://www.marcdenis.com/cfox/). Marc can be reached at [maisoui@marcdenis.com](mailto:maisoui@marcdenis.com)*

