

The SWRFM Parade Floats

SWRFM had for many years in the late '90s been performing live OBs at both the Blacktown and Holroyd festivals. In 2000, the theme for the Blacktown "Streets Alive" event was "Heroes." The Board thought it might be a good promotion idea to *enter a float in the parade.*

The criteria was that it should include a hero. In this case, it would be Paul, pretending to be a Power Ranger in a suit he had manufactured several years earlier. Of course, he had to do *something* related to radio. So a wooden "tower" was built onto the back of a ute. Here, the "Metalder Ranger" would then assemble "antennas" by climbing up and down it. All the while, SWRFM would be booming from appropriately mounted speakers on the roof of the ute.



Above : SWRFM's first Parade float at Blacktown in 2000—the "Metalder Tower"

It was classic SWR at its best. *"Don't tell us not to do something, or we'll do it anyway."*

Well it looked like *something*.. sure enough. *Nobody anywhere could work out what it actually "looked" like* or for that matter what the spandex clad human was even *supposed to be "doing" on it.* However to the great satisfaction of the SWRFM Board, it did one thing: *it made people look.* As long as they *looked*.. that was enough. They had now seen that SWRFM message. They also had a good chance of being handed a program flyer by one of four other SWR volunteers, who were following the truck and handing them out!

From that point, began a long run of time when SWRFM attempted to enter a float in both the Blacktown and Merrylands street festivals. Every year, SWR would be on the lookout for new float ideas which had that illustrious "WTF" factor. It didn't matter what it was. *As long as it made people look!*

The lions share of the following 10 years' of festivals were host to Paul's gigantic ex. 2000 Olympics closing ceremony *rolling dodecahedron.* This certainly had plenty of WTF factor, even resulting in SWRFM winning several awards at the Holroyd event back in 2005. The "Dodec" as it became known, went hand in hand with it's motive power which was totally covered in PVC Spandex just like the dancers had been at the Olympics. Enough said.

Here's a potted history of the SWRFM's Parade floats;

- 2000 Blacktown—The "Metalder Tower" - Power Ranger on the back of a ute.
- 2001 Holroyd—"Dodec" with Metalder Ranger as motive power
- 2001 Blacktown—"Dodec" with Black Dodec Man as motive power
- 2002, 2003—No Entries
- 2004 Holroyd—No Entry
- 2004 Blacktown—"Dodec" with Black Dodec Man as motive power
- 2005 Holroyd—"Dodec" with Black Dodec Man as motive power
- 2005 Blacktown—No Entry
- 2006 Holroyd—SWRFM OB Van Broadcasting Live in motion—Metalder Ranger Motive Power
- 2006 Blacktown—Event cancelled due to weather (was to be O/B Van)
- 2007 Holroyd—Flaming Anvils—"It's a log way to the top" on back of truck + Ute Man
- 2007 Blacktown—Flaming Anvils—"It's a log way to the top" on back of truck + Ute Man
- 2008 Holroyd—Unpainted "Dodec" with Blue Dodec Man as motive power
- 2008 Blacktown—Completed tri colour "Dodec" with Blue Dodec Man as motive power
- 2009 Holroyd—Completed tri colour "Dodec" with Blue Dodec Man (with red garter) as motive power
- 2009 Blacktown—SWR HiComp Drag Car + Ute Man
- 2010 Holroyd—SWR HiComp Drag Car + Blue Power Ranger (*Last Holroyd Parade held*)
- 2010 Blacktown—No Entry—Event Rained Out
- 2011 Blacktown—Return of the "Metalder Tower" - Blue Power Ranger
- 2012 Blacktown—Vintage Radio Studio on Trailer pulled by Brendan Leggett's Cadillac & Dodec Man
- 2013 Blacktown—No Entry
- 2014 Blacktown—Vintage Radio Studio on Trailer pulled by Datsun 1200 & Blue Power Ranger

The Dodec started its service covered in the same plastic mirrored surface which it had featured in the 2000 Sydney Olympics closing ceremony. It had a brief run at the ill conceived "Santas' parade" for SWRFM in 2000, before undergoing reconstruction in time for the SWR parade floats in 2001. In all cases the Dodec was actually a two man device. To operate it safely on Blacktown's hilly roads, *two people were required*. Over the years, many SWRFM volunteers filled this role including Sashi, Slash, Chook and Steve.

The costume of the dancer that accompanies it was made separately to match the originals used in the 2000 Olympics closing ceremony however the silver helmet used is still an original. The Holroyd event was held at the tail end of Summer, when temperatures were still warm. It's at this one where the infamous Dodec Man "douses" became popular. This was a process of the dancer simply dumping volumes of water down the neck of the costume and having the crowd stand there wondering what the heck it was all about. The dance was invariably driven by Vanessa Amorosi's "Absolutely Everybody," being the same track featured in the 2000 Olympics Closing Ceremony.

The costume was replaced in 2008 with a navy blue version modeled on the original. In 2008 the Dodec itself was also remodeled. The deteriorating mirror finish was replaced with a tri color 2 pack painted scheme, thanks to member John Gardner. This scheme was only half ready by Holroyd '08, which meant the dodec went into this parade in its underwear—a grey undercoat—with signs pasted on the front.

Other notable SWRFM floats include the SWRFM OB van itself, which was entered into the 2006 Holroyd Parade. Instead of taking up its usual road side position amongst the stalls in the main street, the van was attached to a vehicle and entered into the parade. This came with a return to some of the technical challenges more in line with SWRFM back in the '90s!

The van *broadcast on air live for the entire event. Even as it moved in the parade!* This was done with the obvious addition of a generator in the back of the ute towing it, plus a low power out of band FM "narrowcast" from the van using a single dipole mounted on a pole mounted on the van forks. The transmission was just powerful enough to allow the signal to be received by a sensitive receiver located halfway along the parade route, at the SWRFM OB tent which itself was located in the place the van would and thus to Horsley Park. The van was "towed" by Metalder Ranger, just to complete the madness and qualify the moving mess in the "WTF" stakes.



Above and Below : "Dodec Man" 2005 @ Merrylands. The Ex 2000 Olympics mirror ball (or "Dodec" as it's known) has been one of the most popular SWRFM floats.



Above: 2006 float in the Holroyd Festival consisted of the complete outside broadcast van, broadcasting live to air as it rolled through the parade.

Both of the 2007 entries included a young local band thrashing out the AC/DC song *"It's a long way to the top of you wanna rock & roll"* from the back of a large truck, complete with the usual light and sound show. It was a collaborative idea which began with Sashi and was then expanded upon by the Board to match the feel of the famous 1972 vintage AC/DC clip filmed in Swanston St, Melbourne. It was a very successful "more conventional" street parade float, which made a lotta noise and turned a lot of heads!

Other entries included a sponsor (Hi Comp Performance Engines') Drag car and a return of the Metalder tower. The final two SWRFM floats consisted of a "vintage radio studio," constructed on the back of a trailer and towed by classic cars.

After the 2014 parade event and 14 years of mobile madness, it was decided to try a different approach to Blacktown Streets Alive by sponsoring a complete stage. This is now an annual "Public SDI" live broadcast event that SWR continues with to this very day.



Above : Blacktown and Below: Merrylands & Blacktown 2007. "The Flaming Anvils" demonstrate amply the difficulty that can be had in making it to the top in Rock 'n roll on the back of the SWRFM truck.



Below : The "final iteration" of the SWRFM Dodec rolled its way through Blacktown and Holroyd in 2008.





Above : The SWRFM / HiComp Drag Car (complete with dancing girl troupe) featured in the 2009 Blacktown and 2010 Holroyd parades.



Above and Below : A return to the "Antenna Tower" concept with the Blue and Pink Power Ranger at the 2011 Blacktown parade.



Above & Below : the "Vintage Radio Studio" float at Blacktown in 2012 pulled by Brendan's Cadillac and Blue Dodec Man.



Right and Right Below : The very last SWRFM parade entry was in the 2014 Blacktown Parade, again with the "Vintage Radio Studio" this time pulled by the blue Datto & Dodec man.

