

ASSAULT DJ BACK ON THE AIRWAVES

'Hairy Cornflake' Travis in line for radio slot return

EXCLUSIVE

BY PATRICK HILL & ALEX BELFIELD

SHAMED Dave Lee Travis tells for the first time today how he is preparing for a shock radio comeback - nearly four years after being found guilty of a sex offence.

The former BBC Radio 1 star was convicted of indecent assault in 2014 as part of the Operation Yewtree celebrity sex probe.

DLT - known as the Hairy Cornflake for his distinctive shaggy locks and beard - groped a TV researcher in 1995.

He has not worked since his arrest more than five years ago, which followed the Jimmy Savile abuse scandal.

But he will return to the airwaves again in March fronting a two-hour weekend show on new digital station United DJs Radio.

He is set to broadcast again with a host of other big names of the airwaves, including Mike Read, Emperor Rosko and Tony Prince.

DESPAIR

In the only interview he has given since his conviction, the disgraced star has told how he was left in despair after losing his job, his personal fortune and the £1.1million home he shared with his wife Marianne.

The former Top of the Pops presenter, now 72 and living in reduced circumstances in a cottage, said he owed his life to the strength of his wife of 47 years.

He said: "The strength of her is 20 times stronger than the strength that I've had. I couldn't have had any more support than I did, it was brilliant."

Travis - real name David Patrick Griffin - was convicted at London's Southwark Crown of groping a researcher on The Mrs Merton Show, which starred Caroline Aherne. He was given a three-month jail sentence suspended for two years.

It was his second trial, following an earlier hearing at which he was acquitted of a string of other charges.

He was left "really disappointed" after losing an appeal, ending any chance of him regaining his good reputation. The



1970s STAR
DLT at height of his career



TV SHAME

Travis and Mrs Merton's Caroline

star, who has always denied the offence of which he was found guilty, said: "There's no question that I've found out who my friends are."

"It was a great support to have people calling and offering their services and asking if there's anything they can do."

DLT revealed he also had so much support from complete strangers that he changed his mind about drastically altering his appearance to look like bald '70s telly cop Kojak.

He said: "Strangers in the street, even

now years later, still they walk up to me in the street and say, 'Are you well mate? I'm so sorry about all this'."

"I've probably thought of having a Kojak and painting my face green. But then I thought, 'Nah, I've had this hair for a long time, I'm going to keep it'."

DLT has spent his time off-air being with Marianne and practising his hobby of photography, despite battling crippling back pain for which he needs to take a daily cocktail of pills.

He said: "I've been doing different things. But I haven't been saying to myself, 'Oh my God, I must get back on air or I'll die'. I do have pretty negative and strong feelings about things people

have done that have been totally wrong. The unfortunate thing is that nowadays someone only has to say something and that's enough to stop a person's career."

Travis added: "I had a great broadcasting career and now it's come to this point where I'm about to dip my toe back in the water again."

"Recently I've been in my home studio again and just felt the music again - it was really great. That's what I love."

"There are various discussions going on as to what day I broadcast, but I'm leaning towards Sunday."

"I don't see it as a new horizon - I see it as a different horizon."

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EXPENSE Callers are stung

Anger at £10 web charge to ring free call centres

BY STEPHEN HAYWARD AND DOMINIK LEMANSKI

CUSTOMERS are charged as much as £10 to get through to helplines they could ring for free.

They are stung by using 09 numbers which appear in adverts on Google listings that contain contact details of high street shops and breakdown services.

Callers are redirected to genuine call centres - but billed £6 for connecting via a premium rate number.

They also face charges applied by phone companies ranging from 1p to £3.60 per minute. It means a one-minute chat can cost almost £10 and a 10-minute call hits £42.

Yet most people could make the call by freephone or standard rate number.

Watchdogs blasted firms which cash in with 09 web ads. David Hickson, of the Fair Telecoms Campaign, called on regulators to take "vigorous and exhaustive action to rid us of these sites".

The Phone-paid Services Authority fined two firms £645,000 and £850,000 last year. A spokesman said: "09 and 087 numbers are usually operated by third parties and billed at premium rates."

Fears for 50 on ferry lost in the Pacific

A FERRY carrying 50 people has been missing for more than a week in the middle of the Pacific.

The 60ft wooden catamaran was expected to reach South Tarawa, the capital of Kiribati, from Nonouti Island, 150 miles away, in two days.

A military Orion plane was sent from New Zealand to assist a Fijian team in the search of an area the size of Britain.

The Republic of Kiribati is home to about 108,000 people and comprises 33 islands, scattered over an area of 1.3million square miles around the equator.

The MV Butiraoi was reported missing on Friday after leaving on January 18.



SO STRONG

With supportive wife Marianne



TUNING UP

Emperor Rosko is in new venture



OLD MATES

DJs Mike Read and Tony Prince