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# How to give it: Trevor Baylis OBE

Interview by Angus Watson

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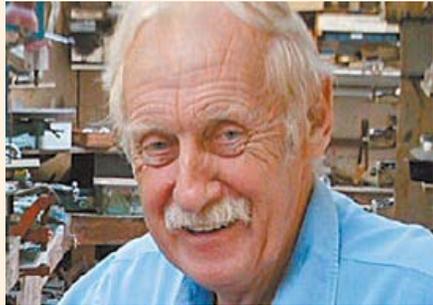
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The inventor of the wind-up radio on encouraging investors who want to develop and protect ideas



**B**efore inventing the wind-up radio, Trevor Baylis OBE, 74, had been a swimmer, stuntman and entertainer. He runs Trevor Baylis Brands, which helps inventors develop and protect ideas. He is patron of AidEx, an exhibition and conference taking place next month in Brussels, which aims to find better ways to

deliver aid worldwide ([www.aid-expo.com](http://www.aid-expo.com)).

**What is the first charity you supported?**

The Disabled Living Foundation ([dlf.org.uk](http://dlf.org.uk)). I used to be a stuntman, so disability was forever only a banana skin away. Many friends broke their necks. That's how I got involved with Orange Aids, making products for the disabled. I made a one-handed bottle opener, foot operated scissors and so on. It was so easy – I just modified everyday things a little – but it brought tears to my eyes to see someone in a wheelchair using one of my gizmos to perhaps paint for the first time. Everyone should try tying their arm to their side for an hour to see how difficult everyday tasks become when you have a disability.

**Which cause do you feel most strongly about?**

HIV/Aids in poverty stricken nations is most important, but my focus is in encouraging inventors. It's difficult to get your idea to market without being ripped off or pushed aside. We're not taught how to at school, which is a shame. Trevor Baylis Brands is a safe haven for investors.

I cover my costs, but it's not about money, it's about decency.

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## What do you get out of your giving?

I've got everything I want, and find myself worrying about petty things like the upstairs television being broken. That's terrible when you realise how bad the poorest of the poor in developing countries have it. So I want to help them. With my radio and other inventions, it's nice to think I'll be leaving behind more than a brass plaque on a bench.

## Why did you make a wind-up radio?

I was watching a programme on HIV in Africa. It was horrific. It said that the best solution would be to get information to people using radio, but electricity and batteries were rare and expensive.

I thought about an old fashioned wind-up gramophone and thought: surely you can have a clockwork radio?

I went out to the garage and within half an hour had a working prototype.

## Was the radio an immediate success?

I went to everybody to no avail. The Design Council's rejection letter is framed on my toilet wall. It was the BBC World Service that promoted it. Then it was amazing, the rich and famous people who got on board. I found myself sitting in Nelson Mandela's house, chatting away as if we were old mates.

## What's the next great life-saving invention?

One big thing is to bring women into the inventors' community. There are female inventors whose names are not known. Stephanie Kwolek invented Kevlar and Mary Anderson invented the windscreen wiper, but nobody has heard of them.

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