On saying 'and' correctly

David Crystal

When I first met Jack, on summer schools back in the 1960s - he introduced me
to what at the time was his favourite drink - rum and coke. When I travelled to
other parts of the world, I learned its other names. In Australia, Rumbo. In Chile,
Ron-Cola. In Finland, Rommikola. In Brazil, Cuba Libre - or Cuba, for short. In
some places the names were subversive, such as Mentirita (‘little lie’), for those
opposed to the Cuban regime.

I stuck safely to 'rum and coke', and that way learned the importance of and-
elision in bars. One day I was abroad and asked for this drink, but - being in a
noisy bar, and unsure of the barman's level of English, I was in careful-
articulation mode. I sounded the request out in full: 'a rum /ænd/ coke, please'.
The barman gave me two drinks: a glass of rum and a bottle of coke.

The full voicing of the final /d/ must have made it sound like 'and a', I reflected,
as I consumed both. Then - purely in order to test a hypothesis, you understand
- I tried again, but this time with an elided and: 'a rum 'n' coke, please'. I got the
right drink.

There is a learned article waiting to be written on the pronunciation of names for
alcoholic drinks in noisy bars. For all I know, Jack has already written one - or
shortly will, for the passing of 90 is simply another opportunity for him to add to
what has been a magnificent contribution to phonetics over the years.

Happy Birthday, Jack!

David Crystal