

RadioDoc Review

Volume 1 | Issue 2

Article 1

November 2014

Editorial Volume 1 Issue 2

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Recommended Citation

McHugh, Siobhan, Editorial Volume 1 Issue 2, *RadioDoc Review*, 1(2), 2014. doi:[10.14453/rdr.v1i2.1](https://doi.org/10.14453/rdr.v1i2.1)

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Abstract

Welcome to the second issue of *RadioDoc Review* (RDR). The response to Issue 1 has shown that RDR fills a clear gap in knowledge; already the reviews are being used as a university teaching resource, the journal has been cited in scholarly works and most strikingly, *RadioDoc Review* has forged a bridge between the academy, industry and freelance producers, linking what Professor Tim Crook calls a 'convivencia' of scholars, practitioners and commissioning editors whose focus is high quality radio documentaries and features.

The open access nature of RDR is proving to be a vital element in its success. The journal was chosen to spearhead Open Access week at the University of Wollongong in April 2014, because of its role in helping to democratise knowledge. The selected audio works act as one tier - after all, at one level, you don't even have to be literate to 'get' audio. For those who do wish to go deeper, the insight and expert analysis provided by the reviews help us understand the complexities of the form: the grammar, aesthetics, ethical and editorial challenges that a non-fiction radio story can provoke.

EDITORIAL

by Siobhán McHugh, Founding Editor, *RadioDoc Review*
University of Wollongong, Australia

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Helped initially by the strong networks of some RDR Board members, RDR has developed a diverse community of followers, from senior radio executives to indie producers including the notoriously Twitter-selective *This American Life*, which has almost a quarter of a million followers, but follows under 500 back. Particularly pleasing is that RDR has spread beyond the confines of those who make or study radio documentaries. For example, Michelle Boyd’s observation that race had been erased from *The Hospital Always Wins* (though its protagonist was black and race seemed highly germane), Tim Crook’s evocation of Norman Corwin’s *The Lonesome Train* as an American version of Handel’s Messiah and Kari Hesthamar’s caution on satire, that it is always easier to make people cry than laugh, attracted new Twitter followers from the fields of social science, politics and cultural studies. RDR is now followed by academics in many disciplines, by celebrated and emerging audio storytellers and by miscellaneous lovers of excellent radio documentaries around the world.

WORKS REVIEWED ISSUE 2:

This issue we review (see audiography for details) six contemporary works along with the Historical Spotlight, a 1961 BBC program by Charles Chilton, [The Long Long Trail](#), that tells the stories of the First World War through the songs sung by soldiers. Reviewed by Professor Tim Crook, 'it was the result of Chilton's personal quest to learn about his father, who was killed in March 1918 at the age of 19 and whom he had never met. In 1962, Chilton adapted the programme with Joan Littlewood into the landmark stage musical *Oh What A Lovely War*, making *The Long, Long Trail* a hugely influential radio programme.' ([BBC 2014](#))

The contemporary works range from a sound poem about the lonely world of rural English cattleyards (*Mighty Beast*) to an exploration of two very different asylum seeker experiences: an Iranian couple attempting to settle into a new life in Norway (*My Share of the Sky*) and a complex exploration of how 61 people died on board a small boat as it drifted for 15 days through the most heavily monitored ocean on earth, the Mediterranean (*The Left-To Die Boat*). Personal narratives are at the heart of the other two programs: *Will Kate Survive Kate* tracks a tumultuous year in the life of a young woman with anorexia nervosa, a disease which has the highest fatality rate of any mental illness, while *A Different Kind of Justice* takes us inside a restorative justice program, where a meeting between the victim and perpetrator of a minor crime has a much bigger impact than either anticipated.

REVIEWERS:

Industry reviewers include BBC Creative Director of Radio Features Simon Elmes, Australian poet and producer Mike Ladd, award-winning American producer and NPR health reporter Laura Starecheski, ABC RN Commissioning Editor of 360 Documentaries Claudia Taranto, acclaimed independent UK producer Alan Hall and Australian journalist and author Peter Mares. Academic reviewers include American sound studies scholar Neil Verma and recently submitted PhD candidate and practitioner Helene Thomas. In keeping with RDR's commitment to mentor emerging scholarship in the field of radio documentary studies, PhD candidate Kate Montague was invited to critique *Will Kate Survive Kate*, a work that resonated with her research topic, *Personal Narratives in Radio Documentaries*. Montague's research includes protagonists'

responses to their representation in a radio documentary; field interviews with 'Kate' and her mother were facilitated by RDR to permit a nuanced understanding of the impact audio works can have on their subjects when broadcast. To gauge the impact of the radio documentary form in interdisciplinary fields, a legal scholar was invited to co-review *A Different Kind of Justice*. This will help examine what contribution the radio documentary/feature form may make besides its aesthetic and journalistic force, and whether any such contribution can be construed as scholarly research, defined by the [Australian Research Council \(2012\)](#) as

the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes.

(p. 3)

Following the first issue of RDR, interest was expressed by European producers at the [IFC](#) in Leipzig 2014 that programs in languages other than English should be actively included. Accordingly, three eminent commissioning editors were invited onto the RDR Board, to be active from 2015: Anna Sekudewicz (Polish radio), Lesley Rosin (WestDeutscher Rundfunk, Germany) and Irène Omelianenko (France Culture). With the relocation of Julie Shapiro from Chicago to Sydney to head the new Creative Audio Unit at ABC RN, US representation was reduced. Sarah Geis, who replaced Shapiro at Third Coast Audio as Managing Director, joined the RDR Board for Issue 2. Alan Hall will replace Gail Phillips as RDR Associate Editor. Phillips will continue to make a valuable contribution through copy editing articles.

IMPACT

In an independent indication of its perceived value, RDR has been selected for archiving by Pandora, a service operated from the National Library of Australia. The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia is considering preserving the canon of documentaries online, with metadata, although rights may prove difficult to negotiate in some cases. Internationally, [the audio storytelling community is growing](#), along with the public appetite for exemplary audio documentary

/features. The podcast renaissance has been whetted by the unexpected success of [SERIAL](#), a 12-part series developed by *This American Life* that revisits the murder of a high school student and features fresh interviews with many of her contemporaries, including her convicted ex-boyfriend. At [40 million reported downloads](#), SERIAL is the most downloaded podcast ever.

As *RadioDoc Review* brings into being a peer-judged canon, it is hoped that the radio documentary/feature genre will continue to thrive and evolve, and to attain recognition as a creative/journalistic practice which can meet the standards of academic practice-based research, while at the same time enthralling listeners.

Audiography RDR Issue 2:

My Share of the Sky. (Norway, NRK, Sheida Jahanbin and Rikke Houd) 2012, 41mins)

http://fallingtree.co.uk/listen/curated_my_share_of_the_sky

Will Kate Survive Kate. (Australia, ABC, Masako Fukui, 2013, 50mins)

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/360/will-kate-survive-kate3f/5110464>

A Different Kind of Justice. (UK, BBC, Russell Finch, 2013, 28mins)

<http://adifferentkindofjustice.somethinelse.com>

The Left-to-Die Boat. (Australia, ABC, Sharon Davis and Geoff Parish, 2012, 52mins)

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/360/the-left-to-die-boat-2/4210254>

Mighty Beast. (UK, BBC, Sean Borodale and Sara Davies, 2013, 21:30 mins)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01pz2rr>

The Long Long Trail. (UK, BBC, Charles Chilton, 1961, 58mins)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/galleries/p01nl5ml>