2014

RadioDoc review: Developing critical theory of the radio documentary and feature form

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Arts and Humanities | Law

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Introduction

The invisibility and ephemerality of the radio documentary and feature form has arguably contributed to the notable lack of scholarship on the form; certainly it has long been lamented. In the 1930s, BBC Features producer Lance Sieveking railed against the “ghastly impermanence” (Siveking, 1934, p. 15) of the radio medium, and this was echoed as late as 2005 by noted Australian radio producer Tony Barrell:

It [radio] is invisible and once it’s gone, it’s inaudible. You can’t hold up a radio program and look at a bit of it. You can’t freeze a bit of a radio program and just listen to a bit of it. You can’t stop it in time. It has to be experienced. (Barrell, in Aroney, 2005, p. 398)

But as Barrell and legions of radio makers and fans were about to discover, the miracle of podcasting would radically transform the listening landscape. Not only would it liberate producers...
and listeners from the tyranny of the radio timetable, but it would also transcend geographical boundaries and create an international community of audio storytellers, linked to their audiences (Madsen & Potts, 2010). With the advent of free sound-sharing platforms such as Soundcloud, and the ever-increasing capacity of the internet and social media to connect like-minded groups, audio storytelling has enjoyed a resurgence in recent years that has seen popular programs like *This American life* (*TAL*) and *Radiolab* expand into sold-out stage shows and a mushrooming of communal listening events from Copenhagen to Sydney (Lindgren & McHugh, 2013; McHugh, 2013). It has also created new platforms for independent producers to air their works – at collective online sites such as Radiotopia in the US, or via broadcast/digital outlets such as *Radiotonic* and *Soundproof* at the new Creative Audio Unit of the ABC’s Radio National, launched in 2014 (Lindgren, 2014). Also in 2014, the prestigious Sheffield Documentary Festival inaugurated an audio category, a significant concession that “documentary” should not automatically equate to a visual output. (The Walkleys, pre-eminent awards for excellence in Australian journalism established in 1956, still define works eligible for the Walkley documentary award as “any non-fiction *film* made for cinema, broadcast or web release” [Walkleys, 2014, emphasis added]).

But while in the digital age the visibility and accessibility of the audio documentary/feature form are clearly increasing, evaluation of the genre is scant at scholarly or professional level, in stark contrast to film and television documentary studies, whose theoretical lineage extends from Grierson (in Grierson & Hardy, 1966, p. 246) to Nichols (1991), Corner (1996) and beyond (Winston, 2014; Piotrowska, 2013). Given the paucity of critical language around the radio documentary/feature, radio scholars sometimes borrowed theory from film documentary scholars. British media theorist Tim Crook argued that Nichols’ five categories of film documentary (expository, observational, interactive, reflexive, performative) applied equally well to radio forms (Crook, 1999, pp. 207-209; Nichols, 1991, p. 33; 1995, p. 95). But practitioners of the radio documentary/feature form hungered for analysis tailored to the specific medium of sound, whose dearth Tony Barrell noted:

> Nobody does it. It amazes me that they don’t. It’s not because they work solely on intuition, well I think a lot of it is that, but it’s because they don’t seem to think it’s required. I often think to myself I would really like to know if anyone noticed the way I put something together and whether they thought it was a silly thing to do or brilliant – you know there’s no critical language, there’s no radio reviewing. (Barrell, in Aroney, 2005, p. 399)

Critiquing of the radio documentary/feature genre did in fact exist – notably via the International Features Conference (IFC) established in Berlin in 1974 and print journalism outlets as noted below – but was limited. Barrell had identified a clear gap in scholarship. In order to fill this gap and evolve a canon and critical analysis of the radio documentary/feature genre, the Open Access scholarly journal *RadioDoc Review* was founded in 2013. This article traces the background to developing rigorous peer evaluation of the radio documentary/feature genre and the contribution *RadioDoc Review* is making to the maturing of scholarship around the form, through the provision of critiques that demonstrate academic integrity and create a canon of this under-examined multidisciplinary field.

**Evaluations and competitions**

In 1949, the Prix Italia (Radio) was launched in Venice. The winner, out of 21 entries, was a French work: “Frédéric Général” by Jacques Constant, for Radiodiffusion Française. The Prix Italia has since become established as the most prestigious international award for a crafted radio work, be it documentary, drama or newer categories such as web-related work. Prizes are awarded by an international panel of eminent jurists, whose imprimatur confirms a winning program’s worth. Yet the reasons behind their choice remain largely hidden. In 2009, for instance, a

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German feature by Jens Jarisch, “Children of Sodom and Gomorrah – why young Africans flee to Europe”, won the Prix Italia for Radio Documentary – Overall Quality. The citation read:

“Sodom and Gomorrah” traces the story of young Africans who have come to a slum in Ghana, dreaming their dream of escaping the misery, and going to Europe. The author moves from one scene to another, thus exploring in a very personal approach the backstory of economic refugees who often end up on the shores of Europe. The multi-layered story is avoiding cliché and wishful thinking and is extremely well structured and edited, and the narration shifts elegantly between different perspectives. (Prix Italia Past Editions Winners 1949-2010, p. 116)

This brief offering does little to further understanding of the complex aural architecture of Jarisch’s work, which is grounded in a German feature-making tradition that goes back to the 1940s. A renowned practitioner of that tradition, Peter Leonhard Braun, would establish in 1974 what is still an important annual examination of the output and praxis of esteemed and emerging feature makers: the International Features Conference (IFC) (Braun, 2004). At this event, now held in different cities around the world, delegates “audition” extracts of invited works which have been selected by a committee of respected practitioners and broadcasters. Attendees listen communally, on powerful speaker systems, then repair in facilitated small groups to engage in robust debate and criticism of the works. Cultural preferences are often evident, and opinions can vary dramatically, but the analysis, being based on the producer’s “insider” understanding of program production methods and limitations, is often insightful. Unfortunately, it is also ephemeral. Only those present in any group at the time hear that analysis. Though group leaders will summarise the response for the producer of a critiqued work, there is no formal record and no publication of the analysis, apart from casual commentary on associated social media.

The founding in 2000 of the Third Coast International Audio Festival (TCIAF) in Chicago was an important milestone in extending appreciation of crafted audio works. First, it tapped into the substantial North American radio documentary output which had been largely ignored by the Euro-dominated IFC and Prix Italia. It also exploited the emerging capabilities of the internet to curate a vast online audio library that now has more than 1000 peer-selected works, from three-minute “short docs” to one-hour features, freely available for listening. TCIAF developed two further initiatives that would advance the understanding of the radio documentary/feature form: a biennial conference, at which practitioners could debate and deconstruct their work before a public audience and, every alternate year, a FilmLESS festival, which “screened” radio works to a live, highly engaged audience – a practice more usually associated with film works. This show of respect for the radio documentary as creative artefact led FilmLESS to be dubbed “Sundance with no pictures”, a reference to the well regarded Sundance Film Festival in Utah (Biewen, in Biewen & Dilworth, 2010, p. 4).

As social media developed, so did its ability to connect its disparate users, allowing producers, listeners and commissioners to form an international audio storytelling community. A forerunner was the organisation Transom.org, a “showcase and workshop for New Public Radio” founded by Jay Allison, a four-decade veteran of public radio (Transom.org). From 2001, Transom.org invited key radio practitioners and industry figures to interrogate their work, issue a “manifesto” and engage in debate with other radiophiles. Allison also founded the licensing/publication organisation for independent radio producers, PRX (Public Radio Exchange), which encourages peer commentary on works it hosts and highlights its own favourites. It has recently won the lucrative distribution rights for This American life. As podcasting and social media fomented new networks, other outlets created reflective podcasts and vodcasts around audio documentary practice: for example, HowSound and This is radio in the US, and In The Dark in the UK and Australia. But an evaluative forum where radio documentary/features were critiqued by informed, disinterested parties from diverse professional or scholarly perspectives under strict editorial standards was still lacking.
Radio scholars have analysed the output of key documentary/feature auteurs (for example, on Corwin, see Bannerman, 1986; Keith, 1998; Verma, 2013; on Parker, see Long, 2004; Street, 2004; on Mitchell, see Franklin, 2009; and on McNeice, see Long 2000). Others have addressed in broad terms the evolution and characteristics of the genre (Chignell, 2009; Crisell, 1986; Crook, 1999; 1997; 2012; 2014; Hendy, 2009; Lindgren & McHugh, 2013; Madsen, 2005; 2007; 2010; Street, 2012; 2014). Yet other scholars have focused on the political and cultural role of radio (Crisell, 2008; Ehrlich, 2011; Hendy, 2000; Hilmes & Loviglio, 2002; Looker, 1995; Loviglio & Hilmes, 2013), while sound studies has its own abundant literature. There has also been a long print tradition of reviewing radio programs – examples being The Listener, published weekly in the UK 1929-1991, and newspapers such as The Age (Australia), which notably retained poet Barry Hill as radio critic through the 1980-1990s, and The Daily Telegraph (UK), home to veteran radio critic Gillian Reynolds since 1975. Alan Hall, a Prix Italia award-winner in the UK, made an important aural contribution to peer analysis with his BBC work “The ballad of the radio feature” (Hall, 2008). More recently, John Biewen’s co-edited anthology Reality radio: telling true stories in sound (2010) invited significant producers from self-described audio artists to journalists to describe their approach to making diverse non-fiction audio: “All fit within the big stretchy tent that is radio documentary. By which I mean they use sound to tell true stories artfully” (Biewen, in Biewen & Dilworth, 2010, p. 5).

A further tier of evaluation is provided by the many national and international awards for crafted radio works. Some, such as the Prix Europa and Prix Marulic in Europe, Peabodys and Third Coast Audio Festival (US), Radio Academy (UK) and Walkleys (Australia) and the New York Festivals World’s Best Radio Programs (established 1951) have evolved standing among practitioners. But a rigorous international benchmarking system that provided not just a shortlist of meritorious works, but also a scrupulous rationale for their inclusion, was still lacking: hence the establishment of RadioDoc Review.

Establishment of RadioDoc Review

The idea for RadioDoc Review (RDR) emerged following an exchange of critiques between the author and John Biewen, audio director at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University in the US. Biewen had made a documentary for TAL – “Little war on the prairie” (2012), on a mass execution of 38 Native Americans in 1862. The author wrote to Biewen, pointing out sections and techniques she found strong and others that, from an Australian sound-storytelling approach, felt under-developed. To reciprocate, he critiqued her documentary collaboration about women coping with violence in Indonesian slums (ABC, 2013). The experience made both producers realise the value of an informed cross-cultural critique. Seeking to pursue this type of analysis, and to expand scholarly awareness of the versatility, resilience and interdisciplinary reach of the radio documentary/feature genre, in July 2013 the author attended The Radio Conference: A Transnational Forum, in Luton, UK, to propose what would become RadioDoc Review.

She advocated that the new journal bring together academy, practitioners and industry, for that is the real world in which the form emerges and is shaped. As Professor Tim Crook would remark in his first review for RDR, academics and practitioners are not in opposition:

More is to be gained from a convivencia; a fusion and respect for both sides …

Both traditions of analysis are informed by rational reflection and empirical analysis. Both are capable of critical insight … This is an inter-disciplinary path and much is to be gained by cherishing the privilege of mixing an aspiration to academic critical thinking and professional and creative instinct or intuition. (Crook, 2014, p. 9)

Crook was one of several key scholars who answered an email (August 9, 2013) to 431 members of the Radio Studies List in the UK, US, Australia, NZ and Europe inviting expressions of
interest in RDR. Eminent individuals were also solicited. With a 17-member international board in place by September 2013, sub-committees identified prospective universal criteria to be used as review guidelines, determined RDR policies, scope and ethical guidelines, and oversaw editorial content. The University of Wollongong’s Research Online unit helped design the journal as an Open Access model, published by BePress, with its own ISSN to permit formal academic publication credentials and visibility in databases such as Web of Science. The BePress model maintains metrics on the numbers and titles of articles downloaded and permits readers to comment directly. It also allows for associated social media sites, which would prove significant means of attracting readership.

**RadioDoc Review launch**

With the website launch in October 2013, the dual purpose of RadioDoc Review was clearly expressed:

First, it is a site for rigorous critique of the radio documentary genre, where critical theory can evolve out of expert analysis. Second, it is a forum for authoritative peer review, through which a clear set of guidelines can be created to define production and research excellence in this under-researched field.

… It will assist teaching by rendering visible the fascinating invisibility of the techniques that make radio documentaries so memorable. It will assist research by piloting and testing modes of critique that will illuminate the value of the genre and its contribution to new knowledge. It will also develop an international community of radio documentary-makers, who can keep abreast of new developments, styles, productions, and debates around the form. (RDR, 2013)

For clarity, the term “documentary” was used to include both the radio documentary and radio feature form. Length of works was set at a minimum of 20 minutes and maximum of 65, with audio of works available online. A work produced before 2000 would be reviewed in the “Historical spotlight” section of each issue, with around four other “contemporary” (post-2000) works each receiving two reviews, ideally a pairing of a scholar and a practitioner reflecting differing cultural perspectives. The Editorial Committee noted the journal’s scope: “The hope is that it will not just raise the profile of the radio documentary but also ensure it gains the place it deserves in the academic canon” (RDR, 2013).

Following nominations by the Editorial Board, a longlist of 15 programs from the US, Europe, Australia and Canada was announced. Topics ranged from the history of radio, capital punishment and palliative care to mental illness, urban and political violence, paedophilia, rape and infidelity, while themes included the erosion of a rural community, an examination of forgiveness, cross-cultural explorations and the clash of First and Third World preoccupations. A quorum of members elected the shortlist of works to be reviewed:

- “The children of Sodom and Gomorrah” (Germany/Australia)
- “Poetry, Texas” (UK)
- “The hospital always wins” (US)
- “Tim Key and Gogol’s overcoat” (UK)
- Historical spotlight: “The lonesome train” (1944), director Norman Corwin (US)

Reviewers credentialled as per RDR policies (RDR, 2013) were commissioned, and RDR Volume 1 was formally launched by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) of the University of Wollongong, Professor Judy Raper, to mark UOW’s commitment to the democratisation of knowledge, for Open Access week (April 7, 2014).
Critical analysis in RDR Issue 1

The paired reviewers in RDR Issue 1 generally showed alignment in discussing criteria such as storytelling strength, craft and artistry, and originality and innovation; but they differed on other elements, often from cultural derivations. Their collective and perspicacious observations, over 31,000 words, reveal a deep understanding of the genre, establish the “grammar” of the form and debate aesthetic and ethical considerations.

Reviewing Danish producer Pejk Malinovski’s “Poetry, Texas”, scholar/practitioners Seán Street and Kyla Brettle are generations and half a world apart, yet both independently identify similar elements of virtuosity: its use of the temporal and spatial nature of sound, the central role of the narrator’s own presence and the rich variety of voices heard. Street succinctly describes the “blend between the real and the abstract, the factual and the mythic that lies at the heart of our interaction with sound … a partnership between memory and imagination”.

Reviewing German producer Jens Jarisch’s “Children of Sodom and Gomorrah”, reversioned in English by Sharon Davis, Australian scholar Virginia Madsen and English practitioner Alan Hall identify the same critical moments in the narrative: the interrogation of the author by thugs who run a toxic waste disposal business that uses African child labour, and the author’s witnessing and recording of a boy being beaten to death for thieving. Both critics situate the work within the rich German feature-making tradition and applaud its artistry and investigative force. But Hall queries the moral justification of using the tools of fiction to manipulate our emotions around factual stories as serious as the casual beating to death of a boy. He particularly questions when Jarisch “pastes” his involuntary emotional response to one event as though it happens in response to another:

This tiny moment … is brimful of deliberate emotion. It serves no journalistic purpose. It speaks not of fact. It appropriates a genuine expression of feeling, which I suspect was possibly recorded at the moment of the street fight and murder, to heighten the documentary’s emotional intensity.

Both reviews bring considerable insight to this complex work – 8000 words of analysis, compared with the meagre 81 words of the Prix Italia citation. Jarisch found Hall’s observations around ethical practice of particular value: “He gets what I am trying to do and he challenges me” (Jarisch, 2014).

Further cultural differences in the reception of these exemplary radio works were evidenced with “The hospital always wins”, a US production about the prolonged confinement in a mental hospital of a paranoid schizophrenic, an artist who had killed his mother in a psychotic episode. Acclaimed Australian documentary maker Sharon Davis salutes producer Laura Starecheski’s longitudinal research: she spent nine years tracking inmate Issa Ibrahim’s attempts to be released. Davis identifies a contemporary American production technique, employed by TAL and others: “a strong linear narrative driven by good, clear, descriptive text with short bursts from interviewees”. But this method has drawbacks: “The fast-paced intercutting between narration and interview, the ‘call/response’ crafting technique, while extremely skilful in this work, creates a rhythm that gives less space for the listener’s reflections on what they’re hearing.”

The second reviewer, Michelle Boyd, an ethnographer and scholar of African-American studies who uses audio storytelling to explore social and cultural issues around power and justice, adds a very different perspective. Provocatively, she asks: Why has the issue of race been so thoroughly erased?

Ibrahim is black (Ibrahim, 2013), which the story does not mention, and it is impossible not to wonder how much his race affected the Creedmoor staff’s interpretation of his behavior … The brief snippets we hear of Creedmoor staff members’
diagnoses (of his “fantasies of success”, and his “desire to be extraordinary”) are disturbingly reminiscent of the complaint, common among both Jim Crow and contemporary racists, that blacks do not stay in their “place”….

The historical work, Norman Corwin’s “The lonesome train” (1944), was reviewed by an English scholar of radio documentary and drama, Tim Crook, and an American scholar of radio and folk music, David K. Dunaway. Also documentary makers, both agree on salient points of form – the work was a groundbreaking “ballad opera” or “folk cantata”, an intricate interweaving of original music and poetry with actuality, readings and dramatisation. Dunaway, whose scholarship straddles oral history, American studies and radio, focuses on the tensions between history and documentary:

For historians, story can be an impediment to actual recollection of an event; the more times the story of an event is told, the less value is its factual recollection … At times, the pressure to storify for documentarians exceeds the pressure for historical accuracy. Faced with a fact that may or may not be accurate, but which adds spice to the narrative, a documentarian will often make the imaginative leap to include what reaches the audience most directly. Craft and artistry, as well as intended audience, inflict such hard choices.

Crook’s erudite review invokes cultural references from gospel music to Hollywood cinema, from the performative delivery of early US radio news broadcasts to the power of live audience:

Is it possible to say that the near-thirty-minute sequence is a musical modernist montage of traditions as varied as George Gershwin, Woody Guthrie and Robert Johnson? … What could also be described as innovative is the contrapuntal word journey of newspaper reporter/journalistic narration tracing the train’s route across America with the dramatised action and dialogue of rumours that Lincoln is not dead at all, but alive and extant among his people ….

The final work, “Tim Key and Gogol’s overcoat”, was a UK production by a British comedian (Tim Key) and a BBC Wales producer (Steven Rajam) on an absurdist theme linked to Russian writer Nikolai Gogol’s 19th century short story, The overcoat. Both reviewers are well credentialed radio producers and commissioning editors: the Australian Michelle Rayner and the Norwegian Kari Hesthamar. Both enjoy the work’s playfulness, fusion of reality and fiction and multiple strands of storytelling. Hesthamar points to the dramaturgy, a key tenet of Norwegian feature making: “It happens to be thus, that it is always easier to remember and follow what is placed along a storytelling thread, than general reflection and discussion.” Humour is the universal connector, and to be admired for this – for as Hesthamar concludes, “to make people laugh is harder than making them cry”.

**Response to RadioDoc Review**

From the first tweet by @RDR Editor announcing the shortlist (December 9, 2013), RadioDoc Review began to accumulate influential and broad-ranging followers. This was hugely aided by the strong networks of Board members. As editor, the author handled RDR’s social media presence. Each review had to be carefully “parsed” – not reduced to a 100 to 200-word abstract, as for scholarly journals, but distilled to Twitter’s 140 characters, which with the required URL often came down to under 20 words. The author’s journalism background, with its practice of headline writing, was invoked to produce tweets such as this to promote Crook’s 6000-word essay, with hashtags included where possible to attract readers with intersecting interests:

The American equivalent of Handel’s Messiah? Tim Crook on the 1944 CBS docudrama The Lonesome Train by #normancorwin http://ro.uow.edu.au/rdr/vol1/iss1/6
This tweet provoked interdisciplinary comment, from a scholar of democracy (Professor Harvey J. Kaye of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay “favourited” it) to digital storytelling experts (such as Steve Bowbrick, Head of Internet for BBC Radio 3). Besides brevity, tweets had to adopt the particular chatty language of the medium. Waves of retweets spawned new followers of all sorts, including academics (from Professors of Acoustic Engineering to Professors of History). By May 2014, RDR had about 300 Twitter followers – not a huge number, but one that included key figures such as This American life, which has 225,000 followers but follows only 477 accounts.

The journal also attracted direct website feedback, such as this stimulating response to Jarisch’s program by Colm McNaughton, an award-winning Australian documentary maker and left-wing academic:

What is unique and compelling about “Sodom and Gomorrah” is that through a variety of subtle sound and narrative techniques, the producer is able to literally turn the world upside down, like Alice in her wonderland, so that the outsiders of the 700-year reign of European Empires, which are usually the invisible and silent black and brown laboring bodies, for the duration of the piece become the subjects of history… (McNaughton 2014)

Following Issue 1, interest was expressed by mainly European producers at the 2014 International Feature Conference in Leipzig that programs in languages other than English should be actively included. Accordingly, three eminent commissioning editors were invited on to the RDR Board: Anna Sekudewicz (Polish radio), Lesley Rosin (WestDeutscher RundFunk, Germany) and Irène Omelianenko (France Culture). A Scandinavian member is being sought. 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. In an 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.

**Future directions**

Following a second round of nominations and voting by the Board, the shortlist of works to be reviewed in *RDR 1(2)* is:

- “My share of the sky” (Norway)
- “Who killed Lolita?” (France)
- “Mighty beast” (UK)
- “The left-to die boat” (Australia)
- “A different kind of justice” (UK)
- “Will Kate survive Kate?” (Australia)
- Historical spotlight: “The long long trail” (UK, 1961)

American nominations were down partly to the change of Board personnel. Reviewers for this issue include BBC Creative Director of Radio Features and Documentaries Simon Elmes, eminent Canadian feature maker Chris Brookes and ABC Commissioning Editor Claudia Taranto. To gauge the impact of the radio documentary form in interdisciplinary fields, scholars from cultural studies and law will co-review relevant works. 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.
Besides the intrinsic value of journalism-as-research, academics are increasingly turning to audio to showcase and extend their scholarly research. In the UK, media scholar (and RDR Board member) David Hendy has co-produced a 30-part radio series “A human history of noise” as companion to his book (Hendy, 2013). Historian Joanne Bourke has produced an epic audio history of 20th century Britain for the BBC (Bourke, 2004). In Australia, historians Michelle Arrow and Al Thomson and media scholar Jock Given have turned to audio documentary to illuminate their research into media and oral history respectively (Arrow & Freyne, 2013; Given, 2012; 2014; Thomson & Rayner, 2014). Such cross-disciplinary interventions add weight to the assertion that audio documentary, when executed to high standards that can demonstrate significance and impact, can itself be considered to constitute a form of research. In Australia, Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) has already approved certain radio works as scholarly research publications: these include “Deadly dust”, an investigation of the impact of asbestos on West Australian victims by Mia Lindgren (Lindgren, 2008), and “Marrying out”, an examination of the personal impact of sectarianism on Australian mixed-faith couples and their children, by Siobhan McHugh (2009a; 2009b). Both works, which were accompanied by doctoral dissertations, met ERA requirements in demonstrating research significance and impact.

Conclusion

The audio storytelling community is growing, along with the public appetite for exemplary audio documentary/features. RadioDoc Review seeks to benchmark these works and evolve a canon and associated expert critical analysis. This will fill a gap in scholarship and bridge the traditional divide between industry and academy. It will also assist scholar-practitioners if works which meet the emerging criteria for excellence in the form can be recognised as practice-based academic research. Increasingly, the radio documentary form is attracting researchers from outside the audio narrative field. Future issues of RDR may consider new audio forms, such as site-specific geo walks, and shorter pieces, popular on platforms such as Radiotonic, Soundproof and Third Coast International Audio Festival. By bringing into being a peer-reviewed canon, it is hoped that the radio documentary/feature genre will continue to thrive and evolve, and attain recognition as a creative/journalistic practice which can meet the standards of academic practice-based research.

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Siobhan McHugh is a senior lecturer in journalism at the University of Wollongong, New South Wales, and founding editor of *RadioDoc Review*, the first scholarly journal of radio documentary studies. Her radio documentaries have won international awards and she is the inaugural recipient of the Australian & New Zealand Communication Association/Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia Anne Dunn Scholar of the Year award (2014), which recognised her critical research in the field of audio storytelling.