Radio Redux: The Persistence Of Soundwork In The Post-Network Era

By

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RADIO REDUX: THE PERSISTENCE OF SOUNDWORK IN THE POST-NETWORK ERA

Eleanor Patterson
Under the supervision of Professor Emerita Michele Hilmes
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The production of scripted creative radio – drama, comedy, and variety – in the United States is usually associated with the classic radio network era, approximately 1927 – 1962. Most historical narratives maintain that creative radio virtually disappeared in the early 1960s when television emerged to dominate broadcast entertainment, suggesting a natural and seamless transition from radio to television that erased radio as a creative form. This dissertation intervenes in the standard historical narrative by unearthing the buried history of creative radio's survival in U.S. from the 1960s to the present both as material commodity and as a thriving cultural practice.

Applying a material culture framework to creative radio's history, supported by original interviews, previously unexplored archival materials, and industry research, I argue that radio's cultural role did not end as the last live transmissions faded, but that creative radio survived in material forms that circulated through communities of radio bootleggers and collectors, as well as through the industrial aftermarkets of syndication and repackaging as recorded commodities. From the *Theater 5* and *CBS Mystery Theater* in the 1960s and '70s, through numerous "old time radio" shows around the country, to repackaged "radio classics," creative radio survived and thrived through the 1980s and 90s. Furthermore, creative radio's continued though marginal circulation played a crucial role in soundwork's revival in the digital era. As I demonstrate, this can be seen clearly in key programs of the current era like *A Prairie Home Companion*, *This American Life* and *Serial*. This dissertation contributes to media history, cultural studies, and sound studies by examining how the industrial practices and cultural understandings of what radio was and could be persisted in the U.S. media landscape from television's heyday to the post-network radio era.

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All research and scholarship is collaborative and builds on the foundations established by those who have forged ahead of us. As Sir Isaac Newton once said, “If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” A cliché quote, perhaps, but never more apt than now, as I complete this dissertation. I remain humbled and honored to have worked with so many giants in media and cultural studies as I finished this project.

I have been extremely fortunate to work with Michele Hilmes as an advisor for the last five years at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I first came to my Ph.D program with the intention of writing a dissertation on race, gender and comedy television, and worked for a year under the wonderful guidance of Mary Beltrán. This topic is still an important area of study, however, as I completed my graduate course work, which including the field observation of a classic radio show, I became interested in understanding how and why it was that people still listened to “old-time radio.” This curiosity was perhaps further heightened because I was also enrolled in one of Michele Hilmes' media historiography seminars, and fell in love with the topic of broadcast history. I did not come to this project well versed in the language of radio studies, and Michele has been a patient, yet tireless, mentor these last five years, providing endless support, feedback and proofreading on this research. I truly look up to Michele as someone who has profoundly shaped our field through her contributions to media studies over the last twenty five years, and am still perpetually flabbergasted and thankful that I had the opportunity to work with her.

Of course, I feel like that about most of my committee. Jonathan Gray played a large role in my decision to come to Madison, and has been a hugely influential mentor

throughout my six years as a doctoral student. Jonathan is a somewhat superhuman figure, who manages to accomplish insane levels of publishing while also teaching, doing service work, having a family and then managing to still respond to your midnight emails within five minutes, and maybe even meet you for coffee at 9 am if you need advice. On top of all this, Jonathan possess a kindness of spirit and fairness that is usually implied within the field of media and culture studies but not often reflected in the actual personalities of those of us who do this research. Beyond this, Jonathan's insight and responses to my research has pushed me to be a better scholar, and I hope to continue to learn from him after I leave Madison.

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My family have been a source of unending encouragement and love throughout my graduate school career. My parents Lorne and Andrew instilled within me a love of learning from a very young age, they taught me to persevere through adversity while staying committed to social justice. I could not have asked for more caring and empathetic parents. Towards the end of my graduate program, my father suffered from a severe cardiac arrest incident in 2014 that has left him with prolonged consciousness disorder. We have always been close, and I wish he could see me finish my degree and going out into the world as a professor, but I am comforted by the fact that he always supported my academic goals and hope he would be proud of everything that I have accomplished, but moreover, of everything that I still want to accomplish. My mother Lorne has been a source of advice, love and unfailing certainty that I would succeed in academia. I hope she is right, and I feel lucky to have a mother who willingly travels from Los Angeles to the Midwest several times a year, through humidity, rain and snow. I am also very close to my grandmother, Joyce Patterson, and am thankful that she has always encouraged me to pursue an academic career.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank the people with whom I cohabitate. I am grateful to my partner, John Seitz, for his love and support throughout my graduate school adventures. It is not easy to be in a relationship with an academic, especially when you have a child, as we do. I began my masters program eight years ago, and it has been a bumpy and complicated ride for us since then. We have not always gotten along. But even in the depths of the deepest trails and tribulations, you have never failed to support me in my career and have always showed up to co-parent our beautiful daughter, Madeleine. You are a good man, and I appreciate all the times you have let me bounce ideas off of you, been understanding when I have to stay out late grading, writing and researching, and watched Maddie when I go to conferences and job interviews. This dissertation would never have been possible if I had not had such a considerate and helpful partner. To my daughter Mads: you were six months old when I began graduate school, and have never known a life when your mother did not have to teach and do research. Over the last eight years you have consistently impressed me with your creativity, strength and intelligence. I am so glad I experienced graduate school as a mother; you helped me to see life beyond isolating walls of the ivory tower and made my journey to this Ph.D. richer and more entertaining than it ever would have been without you. I dedicate this dissertation to you, and shall endeavor to be deserving of the wide-eyed, eager smile you greet me with every time we meet.

Introduction:

The Cultural Afterlife of Creative Soundwork

The afterlife is a concept that invokes spiritual notions of resurrection after death, or transformation in the hereafter as souls enter a new realm after their physical bodies have ceased to be conscious. Applying the idea of an afterlife to media, Walter Benjamin saw the work of interpreters translating literary works into different languages as a process that imbued books and essays with an "eternal afterlife in succeeding generations," allowing them to survive far beyond their original instantiation.[1] This dialectical process of death and eternal renewal aptly encompasses the complex and continual presence of creative soundwork in the United States over the last sixty years. In this project, I use creative radio or soundwork as a sort of catchall term to refer to scripted audio drama, comedy, mystery, western, horror and variety programs. My research specifically intervenes within cultural histories of broadcasting to unearth the buried histories of soundwork's continual circulation in U.S. through both new radio productions and as a material object. I will first discuss the significance of studying radio as a material object, and then explore how this research also contributes to broadcast history by looking at the production of creative radio after 1962. Following that, I will outline my methodology and then briefly provide an overview of this dissertation's chapters.

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[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in Marcus Bullock & Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Volume 1: 1913-1926*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1996), 255.

Understanding radio as a material object

The first critical intervention this dissertation makes within studies of broadcast history is to redefine radio as a material object that continues to circulate through culture long after its initial use and value to the producers that made it. In doing so, I build upon material culture theory from the fields of art history and anthropology. Arjun Appadurai notes the complexity of material culture, arguing that commodities are entrenched and defined by their social, cultural, and economic contexts.[2] These factors are fluid and ever changing, and thus, as objects, like radio programs, travel through different cultural "regimes of value," and at some points may enter and exit the commodity sphere. In this sense, we might think of radio programs as mutable objects that have cultural lives, applying to radio Appadurai's concept of the temporal contingency of an object's meaning: "the commodity is not one kind of thing rather than another, but one phase in the life of some things."[3] Igor Kopytoff similarly argues that objects have biographies that change through cultural processes that alter objects' use and meaning.[4] My project adapts this perspective to trace out the social life of classic radio, by which I mean radio from the network era between 1927 – 1962. Fans and enthusiasts who collect, listen to and research this period often refer to radio from this time period as "old-time radio" (OTR). As I discuss in chapter one, this term was first coined by Charles Michelson when he began marketing classic radio as “old-time radio” for second run syndication in the early 1960s. Thus, when discussing fans or the objects they collect in this project, I sometimes refer to classic radio as “old-time radio” if it best fits the context of my writing. However, this term in its self is not neutral: “old-time radio” as a descriptor of classic radio connotes a pastness that does not fully account for the ways in which these programs continue to circulate and possess value in the present. One goal of this dissertation is to redefine radio programming as not only texts with meaning inscribed and made sense of within the content of a program, but as a commodity object, disarticulated from its original mechanisms of promotion, distribution and exhibition and placed into others.

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[2] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction," in Arjun Appadurai (Ed.), *The Social Life Of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 3 - 64.

[3] Ibid, 17.

[4] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Arjun Appadurai (Ed.), *The Social Life Of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 64-91.

I am interested what we can learn about the way that radio recordings come to be cultural objects, and the forms of experience they produce throughout their temporal trajectory. For classic radio programs have indeed had a vital and active cultural afterlife as physical recordings, purchased and collected within a radio bootleg culture that I discuss in chapters two and three, often revalued within secondary and tertiary industrial after-markets. As Scott Lash and Celia Lury note, however, objects do not exist “ideally in a steady state or condition, but as a set of relations that is, as always, coming into existence.”[5] And it is my intention to trace under which conditions, and within what cultural practices, old recordings of radio are made sense of as physical objects within different socio-historical contexts.

The anthropologist Daniel Miller notes, “…in material culture we are concerned at least as much with how things make people as the other way around.”[6] It has long been a theoretical practice within critical media studies to examine the ways in which audiences make sense of themselves through their interpretation and use of textual meanings. In this dissertation, I extend this practice with a material culture framework to consider how radio fans make sense of themselves through the ways in which they collect radio as an object, and the different auxiliary practices that have come to be associated with radio collecting, as well as the experiences fans have engaging with radio as a material object during different phrases of radio's biography as a physical thing through both industrial and audience communities.

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[5] Scott Lash and Celia Lury, Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things, (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007), 18.

[6] Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, (Malden MA: Polity Press, 2010), 42.

Attention to the history of radio's materiality and circulation has long been overlooked because producers, audiences and scholars have conceptualized radio as an ephemeral medium. Indeed, many radio historians have referred to the ephemeral and impermanent nature of radio. For instance, Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff explain "The early pioneers of radio as an art form lamented the 'ghastly impermanence' of their medium."[7] Michele Hilmes explains that radio's fleeting materiality was the result of technological hindrances, noting that due to the mandate for live broadcasting during the 1920s and the "bulkiness and fragility of disc recorders in the 1930s and early 40s, combined with the discs very short playing time,"[8] most radio disappeared into the air after it was broadcast, and all that remained for preservation were program scripts, memos, and reviews in the popular press. This is why a large wealth of written materials about radio exists in academic archives, while radio sound archives are often characterized by loss or absence.[9] Josie Dolan argues that the absence of radio recordings has positioned radio archives through a discourse of scarcity that characterizes them as "the transient and ephemeral 'other' of more durable manifestations of mass media." [10] Defining radio's materiality as intrinsically ephemeral, lacking or absent suggests that it is a media object that ceases to circulate through culture after its initial broadcast.

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[7] Paddy Scannell & David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume 1 - 1922-1939, Serving the Nation*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991) xiii.

[8] Michele Hilmes, "The New Materiality of Radio: Sounds on Screens," Jason Loviglio and Michele Hilmes (Eds.), *Radio's New Wave*, (New York: Routledge, 2013) 45.

Yet, within the communities of radio fans and producers I interviewed and studied for this project, radio's material fragility is well known. There are many stories of local radio stations throwing transcription discs in the rubbish or about the broadcast networks abandoning stacks of recorded radio in warehouses. One former broadcaster told me he encountered a group of young radio producers throwing old transcription discs into a dumpster from high-level window like Frisbees, taking pleasure in the destruction they witness as they watched the lacquered discs descend in the air and break upon impact with the street or the trash bin that was their target. Stories like this remind us that radio is not a medium valued for its materiality, longevity or repetition, and this was especially true within the broadcast industries during the classic network radio era.

Classic radio shows were valued within the broadcast industries for their ability to fill a scheduling time slot and sell sponsors' products; each episode was meant be new and distinct, as an operating belief within the industry was that audiences did not enjoy hearing episodes a second time. This practice was encouraged by the FCC's rules that required stations to announce the use of prerecorded material in a time when liveness was valued.[11] Transcription services and syndication companies grew in the late 1930s as the rules governing the use of prerecorded material relaxed in the United States; however, it was still the dominant logic within the broadcast industries that audiences did not enjoy hearing repeated performances of a show until television producers discovered the high ratings reruns received in the late 1950s.[12]

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[9] Josie Dolan, "The voice that cannot be heard: Radio/broadcasting and 'the archive,'" *The Radio Journal International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media,* 1, no.1 (2003): 63-72.

[10] Ibid, 68.

Today repetition is a dominant strategy within the entertainment broadcasting industries, and the profits from second-run syndication rights and aftermarkets within streaming video services and DVD sales are points of negotiation for above-the-line talent before a television even begins production. And because broadcasters did not adopt these practices until well after the "golden age of radio," not much has been written about the cultural afterlife of classic network radio recordings. Indeed, within media studies in general, both historical and contemporary scholarship is almost fully focused on the initial moment of a program's production and distribution as the primary moment of cultural significance, industrial profit and audience engagement. Such a focus delimits our understanding of media and its role in culture by creating a regime of research that only focuses on the initial production and response cycle of a broadcast, without considering how the moment of broadcast distribution is both the end point and beginning of a much more nuanced process of media consumption and production. This is doubly true for radio. And this dissertation intervenes within broadcast histories to consider how programming continues to circulate through our culture amid endless cycles of re-production, re-distribution, re-formatting and reinvestment. In doing so, I build on the few media scholars who have studied the materiality of film and television as physical objects collected by fans and packaged by media companies.

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[11] Derek Kompare, *Rerun Nation: How Repeats Invented American Television*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[12] Ibid.

Will Straw's work on vinyl collectors provides insight into the ways that media objects become consumer goods, longed after, collected and also disposed of when no longer wanted. Straw notes that the practice of collecting music records is more about the taste performed by the collector at the moment of consumption than the production of commercial music.[13] For Straw, the practice of evaluation that goes into record collectors' acquisitions remakes the home as a domestic archive.[14] Straw also outlines the symbolic masculinity performed through and associated with record collecting, including the competitive need for collectors to establish their knowledge of popular music culture amongst each other.[15] Straw's research on record collectors also considers their love of the new, or neophilia as he terms it, which usually causes an initial industrial overproduction of popular music albums.[16] The outcome of this overproduction, as Straw argues, is a temporal contingency for the desire and appreciation of a record, as market structures and industrial and cultural forces redefine some records as dated or obsolete, at which point they often become part of an informal economy of waste, perpetuating as physical objects long after their value as economic commodities has declined. Straw outlines this as the life cycle of music commodities, wherein records signify their level of social desire depending on their ability to be resold in the secondary markets.[17] My work on the circulation of radio recordings builds on Straw's conceptualization of vinyl record collecting as archival work that historicizes media, as well as his outline of the record album's material life cycle moving from different social spheres.[18]

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[13] Will Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections: Gender and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture, " ed. Sheila Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, (New York, Routledge, 1997), 3 – 16.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Will Straw, "Music as Commodity & Material Culture," *Repercussions* 7-8 (2002).
[17] Ibid.

Kim Bjarkman has similarly looked at media collectors, focusing specifically on how television fans have used VHS tapes and technology to create self-recorded TV collections. Detailing how television viewers take pride in creating collections of programs themselves through home recording technologies, Bjarkman demonstrates the affective relationship collectors of broadcast media have with home made recordings. [19]She notes that video collectors often come to prefer the bootlegged copies they make on video tape and would rather keep their own VHS version in their collection even after production companies began to release the same television shows on DVDs, which arguably were of a higher quality. Bjarkman's scholarship on video collectors and provides a useful framework for reconsidering the role of home recording technologies within communities of broadcast fans who collect and bootleg programs off broadcast signals.

Other scholars have looked at the industrial dimensions of media's materiality as a commercial commodity. Frederick Wasser's history of home video's rise and evolving integration into the Hollywood film industry reveals how media industries have adapted to a new formats and technologies.[20] Wasser traces how film studios initially saw the widespread adaptation of VHS technology as a threat, and how the video rental industry thus arose in spite of the film studios' hostility towards home video, resulting in the domination of the home video rental by new independent companies.[21] This structure changed as the major studios came to recognize the profitability of home video aftermarkets, and through larger conglomeration acquired video production, distribution and rental companies.[22] Furthermore, Wasser demonstrates how the recognition of the VHS aftermarket impacted film production as studio executives focused more and more on green-lighting projects they could project having longer success in the global video aftermarket.[23] Wasser's attention to the history of media aftermarkets provides a useful model to consider the different and uneven industrial forces that shaped the widespread adaption and commercialization of home recording technologies.

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[18] This research also builds on other studies of sound collecting and audiophilia, such as John Davis "Going analog: Vinylphiles and the consumption of the "obsolete" vinyl record," Charles Acland, ed., *Residual Media,* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 222 – 236; Keir Keightley, "Low television, high fidelity: Taste and the gendering of home entertainment technologies," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47 no. 2 (2003): 236 – 259; Timothy D. Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[19] Kim Bjarkman, "To Have and to Hold: The Video Collector's Relationship with an Ethereal Medium," *Television and New Media*, 5, no. 3 (2004): 217 − 246.

Building on Wasser's history of the relationship between film studios and home video, Derek Kompare applies an industrial focus to the adaption of DVD technology by television producers. Kompare conceptualizes the production of television DVDs as the publication of flow, arguing that television has traditionally been distributed via the flow of broadcast programming.[24] For Kompare, DVDs change this traditional distribution model by selling television directly to consumers as a physical concrete object in a way that "expand[s] the role of the viewer beyond their ostensible duty as hypothetical eyeballs" that broadcasters sold to advertisers.[25] The sale of broadcast programming as material commodity marketed for aftermarkets had been previously unfeasible, according to Kompare, because the sheer number of episodes produced for successful television series were ill suited to the technological limitations of VHS tape storage space.[26] Some television series commercialized short compilations of "best-of" VHS tapes. Yet, as Kompare argues,

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[20] Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Derek Kompare, *Rerun Nation: How Repeats Invented American Television*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

> with much higher resolution sound and image than VHS tape, random access capability, a smaller size, and, most significantly, a larger storage capacity, the DVD has rejuvenated the home video industry, and has finally enabled television to achieve what film had by the mid-1980s: a viable direct-to-consumer market for its programming.[27]

Kompare's work elucidates the interplay between broadcasting industrial strategies and technological affordances, while also illustrating how selling television as a physical object disrupts traditional broadcast distribution models. I build on this work in media studies on collectors and industrial aftermarkets to demonstrate that radio has circulated as a physical commodity through fan communities and aftermarkets long before film and television.

Understanding creative radio as a residual industrial practice

This project is twofold in that it considers the afterlife of creative radio both as a physical object and as an aesthetic practice. As I discuss in chapter one, creative scripted radio became redefined as antiquated and claims flourished that "radio died" in the early 1960s as television became the dominant entertainment medium. Certainly it is true that the level of creative radio greatly declined, but one goal of my research in this dissertation is to demonstrate that creative radio never fully disappeared from radio production. The idea that creative radio died after TV, or became a vast wasteland of talk radio and music formats, perpetuates today. This is evident when critics suggest Ira Glass invented a "new" form of creative radio storytelling in the 1990s. In their book on radio and storytelling, John Biewen and Alexa Dilworth suggest *This American Life* (*TAL*) ushered in a new era of creative storytelling to inspire the production of later programs like *Radiolab* or *Wiretap*. Glass' innovation is understood to be ground breaking because "radio itself is often seen as obsolete except as a broadcast jukebox."[28] Critics of the late 1990s and early 2000s heralded *TAL*'s approach to storytelling as innovative, refreshing and new.[29] This distinction is perhaps best epitomized by David Mamet's *Time Magazine* article lauding Ira Glass as the best radio host in the country in 2001 and crediting him with "reinventing radio."[30] Today there is a similar discourse that surrounds podcasting and the production of creative storytelling through digital soundwork. Critics like Kevin Roose of New York Magazine argue that the emergence of *Serial*, *99% Invisible*, *Welcome to Nightvale* and other fiction and non-fiction programs has ushered in a sonic storytelling renaissance.[31]

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[25] Ibid., 203.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 200.

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[28] John Biewen and Alexa Dilworth, *Reality Radio: Telling True Stories in Sound*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), 3.

[29] Marshall Sella, "The glow at the end of the dial; Ira Glass is, um (pause, delete) . . . listening: the perfectly edited world of his American life," *The New York Times Magazine,* April 11, 1999, 68.

[30] David Mamet, "Ira Glass," *Time Magazine*, July 9, 2001, 74.

[31] Kevin Roose, "What's behind the great podcast renaissance?" *New York Magazine*, October 30, 2014, http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/10/whats-behind-the-great-podcast-renaissance.html

Yet, pronouncements that radio storytelling through sound has been revived from the dead is a reoccurring phenomenon in the history of creative radio after television. On September 25, 1973, *The New York Times* critic John J. O'Connor announced that a new trend had appeared in radio, the "revival of radio drama."[32] Shortly after, in January 1974, the television and radio industry trade magazine *Broadcasting* published a feature story on the revival of radio drama, titled "Radio Drama: Renaissance or brief sojourn in nostalgia?"[33] These discussions of radio drama's revival were precipitated by announcements from both the Mutual Broadcasting Network and CBS Radio in the fall of 1973 that they would be broadcasting newly produced dramatic programs for affiliates in 1974, alongside several other new syndicated drama programs. These new productions of dramatic radio were often broadcast together with reruns of golden age radio drama on local stations.[34]

Despite myths of creative radio's death and revival, I demonstrate in chapters one and five that creative radio never died, but rather has been continually produced and aesthetically remade and reconfigured within several cycles of new post-network radio production cultures. This work builds on other media scholars who have studied the radio industries. Scannell and Cardiff's history of the British Broadcasting Company during the interwar years in the United Kingdom demonstrates how producers negotiated the use of radio as a new medium within public service's industrial structures.[35] In detailing the specific practices radio producers used, debated, played with and modified, as well as the role cultural factors had in shaping the content of radio programming, Scannell and Cardiff provide a template for doing cultural histories of radio production.

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[32] John J. O'Connor, "Radio: C.B.S. on Drama Bandwagon," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1973, 86.

[33] "Radio Drama: Renaissance or brief sojourn in nostalgia?" *Broadcasting,* January 14, 1974, 20.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Scannell & Cardiff, op. cit.

Hilmes' history of U.S. network radio from 1922 to 1952 examines the cultural, industrial and social elements that forged early broadcasting programs.[36] Her work demonstrates how cultural ideologies shaped radio production and thus the representations heard over the airwaves. Moreover, Hilmes gets at the way radio was conceived of by producers as a site of national consciousness, and how radio became a place where race, ethnicity and gender became reconfigured and contested through a mass medium. [37] Cynthia Meyers' history of advertising and the "golden age of radio" focuses specifically on the role of advertising agencies in the radio industries from the 1920s through to the 1950s.[38] Meyers demonstrates how advertising agencies operated as defacto production studios, developing and producing radio programming.[39] Advertising agency personnel never received on-air credit for their work, and therefore, have often been imagined as the merely the source of funding for radio productions. Meyer's work challenges this perspective, repositioning ad agencies as central contributors to the structure and content of classic radio programming in the United States.[40]

Neil Verma's research on radio aesthetics details how American radio producers used sound techniques to appeal to the imagined interiority of listeners' minds from the

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[36] Michele Hilmes, *Radio voices: American broadcasting, 1922-1952*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[37] Ibid.
[38] Cynthia B. Meyers, A Word from Our Sponsor: Admen, Advertising, and the Golden Age of Radio, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

1930s to the 1950s.[41] Looking at the production history of high quality dramas, thrillers and crime shows, Verma details how producers structured the sonic elements of their shows to create spatial dimensions, emotionality and temporal progression, adapting to new technologies as well as new understandings of the audience and historical contexts.[42] This work is significant, as it is the first history of radio aesthetics so meticulously researched within media and cultural studies. Alexander Russo similarly offers a new and unique perspective in his work on radio histories during the network era outside of the broadcast networks. [43] Russo highlights the role of regional networks, radio syndicators and spot broadcasting in defining what broadcasting was during the first half of the twentieth century. This work contradicts mythic constructs of the network era as a time of unified radio address, complicating and exposing radio history as a multiplicity of production and reception contexts.

I build on this scholarship on radio history, approaching the radio industries as incoherent and complex, involving multiple factors that shape production, including ideology, technology, economic, geographic, social and scale. The main problem with the corpus of critical radio industry histories is that no attention has been paid to creative radio beyond the "golden age" of network radio. The few studies on the radio industries after television focus almost exclusively on format, talk and news radio. My work attempts to rectify this gap in scholarship, at least somewhat, by demonstrating how the aesthetic practice of producing creative and scripted radio has persisted on the margins of the media industry. I am not arguing that creative radio remained the dominant form of broadcasting that it once was in the 1930s through to the 1950s. Rather, I build on scholars of residual media in this project to account for the ways in which, though the creative radio they discuss is no longer the dominant form of entertainment, we can understand its continued existence and relevance to contemporary radio by drawing on theories of media use and value as a process taking place through social formations.

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[41] Neil Verma, *Theater of the Mind Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama,* 13, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[42] Ibid.
[43] Alexander Russo, *Points on the Dial: Golden Age Radio Beyond the Networks*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

The rhetoric of technological transformation that often accompanies new media usually attempts to convey technological change as an inherent evolution that leaves old media in the past, "ignor[ing] the way the dynamics of culture bump along unevenly, dragging the familiar into novel contexts,"[44] as Acland writes. Instead of conceptualizing media technologies and forms progressing along a linear evolutionary path, Raymond Williams first introduced the idea that media engagement is a historically contingent process, wherein media are emergent, dominant, and then residual at different points in their life cycle.[45] Building on Williams, Acland argues that residuality accounts for the "half life of media forms," stating that "The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present."[46] We can thus apply residuality as a frame to the practice of making creative radio, a practice established in the past and no longer dominant, but still actively a constituent part of the contemporary media landscape.

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[44] Charles Acland, "Introduction," Charles Acland, ed., *Residual Media,* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xix.

[45] Raymond Williams, "Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory," eds. Douglas M. *Kellner* and Meenakshi Gigi *Durham*, *Media and cultural studies: Keyworks*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 130 -143.

[46] Acland, op cit., xxi.

Additionally, we can also apply residuality as a framework to think about the processes that have shaped creative radio's social life as an object formed in the past but present today within multiple technological, audience and industrial environments. Creative radio's industrial and material residuality highlights how new media do not replace old media but rather coexist as residual media. Radio's residuality alongside, within and through newer technologies is an example of what Michelle Henning describes calls the hybridization of media technologies. [47] Henning argues that examining the hybridity of media technologies works to denaturalize narratives of linear technological progress. There is, as Lisa Gitelman notes, a tendency to "essentialize media…[and] to cede to them a history that is more powerfully theirs than ours"[48] wherein each technology leads to another on a linear path of progress.

Henning and Gitelman remind us that technology is always formed through social, economic, political, and material conditions, and becomes embedded within ongoing cultural negotiations. My dissertation continues the work of disrupting linear narratives of technological progress by considering how creative radio as an object and aesthetic practice continues to be an active element of our contemporary media culture, coexisting alongside media forms that preceded it, such as photography, film, and analog sound recordings, as well as technologies that emerged after radio, such as television, personal computing and mobile media. Creative radio perpetuates not as a dominant media form, but as a residual form "bumping along" on our cultural margins. In the next section of this introduction, I will provide an overview of the research practices I used to write a history of creative radio's production, distribution and circulation in the United States over the last fifty years.

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[47] Michelle Henning, "New Lamps for Old: Photography, obsolescence and social change" in ed. Charles Acland, *Residual Media,* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 48 − 65.

[48] Lisa Gitelman, Always *Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*, (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006) 2.

Methodology

This project is one of cultural historiography, building on the approach taken by other historians to account for the ways in which "media are unique and complicated historical subjects. Their histories must be social and cultural, not the stories of how one technology leads to another, or of isolated geniuses working their magic on the world."[49] I take a post-structuralist methodological perspective in my work of obtaining and building knowledge, acknowledging that there is no "one" history of broadcasting in the United States, but multiple histories. Indeed, that epistemological outline is at the very core of this project, as it is my intention to bring to media history an account of aspects of radio's cultural significance that have long been overlooked – and to be overlooked in history is to cease to exist on an explicit, acknowledged level, even while persisting outside mainstream perceptions.

Accessing the past trajectory of creative radio as a material object and as an aesthetic practice is a complex task, and I do not fool myself that this work is comprehensive. This is a research topic I stumbled upon doing fieldwork at Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) in 2011for a qualitative methods course, before this the prospect of studying creative radio's production and circulation never would have occurred to me. At the time, I was assigned to observe a media production center over the course of a semester, and because I was interested in the role broadcasting played in promoting an understanding of the past, I chose to observe WPR personality Norman Gilliland and his team as they put together a weekly compilation program of classic radio titled *Old Time Radio Drama*. As I watched them edit together the show in preproduction and field fan phone calls during live episodes, I began to consider how this particular form of radio had come to be continually popular. The research questions that began to guide my initial foray into the subject of creative radio's circulation and production have continued to guide this project as it has come to fruition:

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[49] Ibid., 7.

- What industrial practices have shaped creative radio's continued circulation in U.S. culture?
- What technologies have been made or utilized to produce, circulate and reformat creative radio?
- Where and how have audiences participated in the circulation of creative radio and in what ways?
- How has the work involved in making new productions of creative radio in the U. S. been influence and reconfigured by cultural hierarchies within the media industry?
- How have producers in the digital era drawn on and reframed classic radio?
- In what ways has digital soundwork drawn on and adapted the protocols and aesthetics of creative radio?

Getting at sources to analyze and interpret in order to answer these questions has not always been easy. Many potential sources, such as the corporate files of second-run syndicators who marketed classic radio as "old-time radio" in the 1960s simply do not exist. Due to corporate upheaval, closure or lack of cooperation granting me access to company files, I have had to rely on historical archives of trade journals, business news services and public corporate reports, as well as oral interviews with people who either worked in a company I was studying or had inside knowledge of a company I was studying in order to stitch together traces of creative radio's industrial after-markets and the continued production of creative radio in the era of convergence. In many instances, I have used my own search for commercial releases of creative radio in thrift shops and record stores for research leads. I am not the first historian of broadcasting to use creative methods to trace out the past. Erik Barnouw mainly drew on the trade press and oral histories through his contacts in the industry to write the seminal *The History of Broadcasting in the United States*, and ended up creating his own archive of broadcasting material that is now at Columbia University. [50] Media historian Pamela Wilson describes the practice of tracking down history through flea markets and interviews "staking out the wild evidence," a necessary practice media historians must do to counteract what Wilson calls the "scarcity of media texts." [51]

Studying the role of audiences in the circulation, re-production, re-distribution and reformatting of creative radio from the classic era has been somewhat easier, given the hard work within this community of radio fans to preserve the history of their hobby and to continually respond and engage with me as an interloper. I am forever indebted to the Old Time Radio Researchers (OTRR) group for their online archive of old-time radio fanzines, newsletters and publications; see my bibliography for a full list of the collections I used from their archives. The OTRR is a group of radio collectors and enthusiasts who use online venues to coordinate the search for classic radio missing from popular circulation, as well as to digitize and historicize collections of classic radio recordings, radio scripts and a variety of publications from the radio network era. In addition to posting thousands of radio show programs to the Internet Archive, this group has scanned and posted over a thousand publications ranging from the late 1960s to today. Their labor making these resources available proved invaluable for studying the ways in which fans participated in circulating physical recordings of radio, as well as providing insight in to the ways that classic radio came to be made sense of by listeners later in its cultural biography.

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[50] Michele Hilmes, "Nailing Mercury: The Problem of Media Industry Historiography," eds. Alisa Perrin & Jennifer Holt, *Media Industries: History, Theory & Method*, (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 21 – 31.

[51] Pamela Wilson, "Staking the wild evidence: Capturing media history through elusive and ephemeral archives," in *Convergence media history*, Janet Staiger & Sabine Hake (Eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2009), 182 – 191.

I also mined the Usenet archives that Google has bought and stores in their Google Groups forum; citation information for this collection is also in my bibliography. This is perhaps an unorthodox archive to use in researching radio history. Indeed, perhaps that is the point, as scholars of computer mediated communication and audiences have long used sources like Usenet to observe how people engage with each other and with media online, [52] and as far as I am aware, I am the first radio historian to use Usenet to trace out a history of radio fandom and engagement through the internet. My research has only scratched the surface of radio listeners' engagement with Usenet, AOL or other internet platforms, and it is my hope that this dissertation inspires others to explore what new media scholars can teach us about histories of radio fan communities.

I am especially grateful to the members of the old-time radio enthusiast community more generally, who possessed a variety of perspectives and insights that they shared with me, from radio collectors, to self-trained historians, to broadcasters of old-time radio programs. Joe Webb, Larry Gassman, John Gassman, Laura Leff, Craig Wichman, Martin Grams, Jim Cox, Walden Hughes and Sue Hamilton all took the time to let me interview them.[53] Our interviews were crucial to the history of radio collecting that comprises much of this project and I am forever grateful for their candidness, generosity and kindness of spirit. I was also able to interview the sound designer who worked on the science fiction podcast *The Message*, Brendan Baker, who is also a co-producer of *Love & Radio*. Baker spent an hour of his time speaking with me, and this provided valuable insider information on *The Message*'s production process and the use of digital tools producing creative soundwork.

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[52] See, for instance, Nancy Baym's work on soap opera fans and Usenet communities in *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, Fandom, and Online Community*, (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Chapter Overview

Chapter one provides a historical context for this project by outlining the cultural practices that redefined radio as "old," and "antiquated," and then by considering how this understanding changed the production of creative radio. I discuss the ways in which network executives, syndicators, and nostalgia companies contributed to an understanding of creative radio as passé in the 1960s, then outline how this historical moment ushered in a post-network radio era in which creative radio continued to be produced as a niche programming strategy. During the period of radio's definition as an "old" medium, radio fans came together to form a community of bootleggers who collected, traded, and used technologies to improve recordings of classic radio; chapter two traces the historical and cultural formation of this community as well as outlining the role of technological equipment and expertise within the circuits of exchange amid a community that considers itself tied together through collection and fandom for that they call "old-time radio" or OTR for short. Chapter three continues to focus on the history of the OTR fan community, by examining how radio enthusiasts and collectors adopted personal computers and applied digital technologies within their everyday engagement with classic radio recordings.

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[53] These are all prominent figures in the old-time radio fan community. Joe Webb has been a collector of classic radio since the 1970s, and published the fanzines *Airwaves* and *Collectors Corner*, and continues to be actively involved in the hobby today, including his work as a member of the Old Time Radio Researcher's Group. Brothers John & Larry Gassman are longtime members of SPERDVAC, the Los Angeles based Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy founded in 1975. They have also hosted several old-time radio (OTR) compilation shows beginning in the late 1970s through to today. Laura Leff, Craig Wichman, Martin Grams and Jim Cox are also long time members of the OTR community, they are self-trained historians as well, and have done extension research to publish meticulously detailed radio histories. Leff's work has always specifically focused on Jack Benny, which is not surprising, as she is the founder and president of the International Jack Benny Fan Club. Walden Hughes is another long time radio collector and enthusiast, and hosts weekly radio shows on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings on Yesterday USA, a website that hosts a 24/7 live stream of OTR programs. Lastly, Sue Hamilton is an OTR enthusiast and former employee of Adventures in Cassettes; her interviews were extremely insightful for my work on chapter four about the third industrial cycle of classic radio as a commercial commodity.

Chapters four and five are concerned with the industrial afterlife of creative radio. In chapter four, I outline how several radio collectors used their holdings to start legitimate commercial businesses selling radio programs as packaged commodities in retail outlets, mail order catalogs and eventually online. Chapter five considers how contemporary creative radio productions, like *Prairie Home Companion* and *This American Life*, represent a second wave of post-network creative radio productions. These programs are historically significant because they drew on and played with the aesthetics of classic radio, leveraged the creative storytelling of their radio programs in order to extend them into larger media franchises.

This history of creative radio after the 1960s is by no means complete, and at times the subjects I cover in each chapter overlap with each other. The chapters of this dissertation are both chronologically and thematically organized around nodes of circulation and production that I see as distinct, albeit sometimes interrelated. And often I step back and forth in time to analyze specific historical processes that have perpetuated creative radio's production and circulation after 1962. Very little has been written about creative radio, either as a material object or as a production practice since the advent of television. This work is thus engaged in tracing out the cultural history of creative radio recordings and productions in the United States over the last fifty years, and my hope is that this work sparks more inquiry into the complex histories of radio that have been so long neglected.

Chapter 1

The Cultural Work of Making Radio Old and the Beginning of a Post-Network Radio Era

Classic films like *The General*, *Gone With The Wind* or *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* continue to circulate through our culture via cable channels like Turner Classic Movies, physical objects like VHS, DVD and Blue Ray, and even through the content libraries of streaming services like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon. And while these films may well be old, they are not collectively referred to as "old-time films;" indeed, though filmmaking has existed for well over one hundred years, it is not culturally designated as an "old" or outdated vehicle for narrative storytelling. One could say the same for television, as contemporary critics seem to be lauding our current moment as a "golden age of television," and although this is a phenomenon which Elena Levine and Michael Newman critique as ahistorical and even anti-television,[54] the high cultural capital associated with shows discursively constructed as quality television, such as *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Homeland*, demonstrates that television persists as a viable and even critically acclaimed medium for narrative storytelling almost sixty years after its widespread adoption as a technology in the U.S.

The same cannot be said for radio. Many popular historical narratives maintain that creative radio, by which I mean scripted drama, comedy, soap operas and variety programs, disappeared from network broadcasts in the early 1960s once television had been adopted as a primary source for broadcast entertainment. A prevalent 'golden age' discourse within both academia and radio fan communities usually positions creative radio produced between 1930 - 1960 as the pinnacle of innovative radio production in the United States, naturalizing a narrative that television "killed" radio. This rhetoric is evident when scholars like Neil Verma suggest that radio drama had reached "a point of exhaustion" in the 1950s,[55] or when "old-time radio" fans like John Dunning or Jon D. Swartz and Robert C. Reinehr begin their guides to collecting classic radio by eulogizing the "death" of radio in the 1960s.[56] Within this discourse there is an assumption that creative radio was a coherent format, heading along some sort of inevitable path towards its own demise. These linear histories suggest a natural and seamless transition from radio entertainment to television entertainment within American culture. Yet, there is nothing natural about the "death" of radio as a primary entertainment medium in the United States. Indeed, we can easily challenge the notion that radio entertainment naturally gave way to television entertainment by considering the continued prevalence of scripted radio programming on the BBC's Radio 4 today, or even look at the popularity of creative radio in countries like Afghanistan, where the radio drama *New Home, New Life* has been broadcast for the last 20 years.[57]

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[54] Elana Levine & Micheal Z. Newman, *Legitimating Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status*, (Routledge, New York, 2012).

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[55] Neil Verma, *Theater of the Mind Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama*. (Chicago, IL, 2012), 13.

[56] See John Dunning, "Foreword," *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio 1925-1976* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1976), vii-xi; and Jon D. Swartz & Robert C. Reinehr, "Introduction," *Handbook of Old-Time Radio: A Comprehensive Guide to Golden Age Radio Listening and Collecting* (1993, Metuchen, NJ), ix – xv.

[57] British Broadcasting Company, "Afghan radio show *New Home, New Life* celebrates independence," *BBC Online,* July, 2012,

This chapter first demonstrates the economic and cultural forces that reconfigured radio storytelling and the production of creative radio as outdated, outmoded and "old." I discuss how Charles Michelson Inc. first coined the term "old-time radio" as a marketing gimmick to sell radio reruns through his syndication firm. I then map out how network executives also rhetorically perpetuated creative radio's association with the past, a sentiment that I argue was further encouraged by the companies who created nostalgic merchandise; by fans who began airing their own OTR shows; and even by the networks production of broadcast retrospective programs that celebrated radio's past, while also implicitly defining scripted radio as a product of a bygone era. These practices worked in tandem with broadcast executives strategies to shift advertising money to television, and ushered in what I define in this chapter as a post-network era of radio. I then conclude this chapter by examining the first cycle of creative radio programs produced within a post-network environment, using three primary case studies: ABC Radio's *Theater 5* (1964-5), National Public Radio's (NPR) *Earplay* (1971 – 81), and *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* (1974 – 81). My analysis brings forth productions that have not been discussed in many radio histories, demonstrating that creative radio did indeed continue to be produced in the United States after television. As I make clear, producers of these programs had to navigate a post-network radio production culture that now conceived of radio as "old," conceived of listeners as "distracted," and conceived of formatting as the dominate radio production model. Before I discuss this industrial environment, I will explain how radio came to be culturally understood as "old."

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where_we_work/asia/afghanistan/afghanistan_aepo_independence_july_2012.html

Television's acceptance by both sponsors and audiences in the United States was neither predetermined nor smooth.[58] Rather, the industry's acceptance of television was complex and variegated, "as many advertising men fought to sell sponsors on the benefits of radio" well into the 1950s, 60s and beyond.[59] Hilmes reminds us that economic and cultural processes privileged television over radio.[60] She contradicts the myths that advertisers inherently preferred TV, writing

> it was not advertiser abandonment of radio that motivated the rapid removal of network assets from the old medium to the new; rather, networks made a deliberate policy decision to concentrate development in the new technology, where sales potential was vast and regulatory conditions favorable, at the expense of radio.[61]

Hilmes reconceptualizes this period through discourses of power, noting "the developing television networks made it a high priority in the early 1950s to induce audiences to forget about radio in favor of the new and more profitable medium."[62] Thus, the decline of radio drama production within the mainstream broadcast media industry can be attributed more to the network's decisions to invest fewer resources in creative radio along with their campaigns to entice audiences to buy television sets and use their leisure time watching TV, rather than any complete technological evolution.

U.S. network executives played a key role in redefining radio as an obsolete medium. Television advertising was comparatively more expensive than radio advertising rates, and thus broadcast networks worked hard to discursively position radio as a declining medium in order to induce sponsors to switch their campaigns to the new medium.[63] This rhetorical strategy is perhaps most evident in quotes from network executives like NBC president Niles Trammell, who said in 1949 that "Within three years the broadcast of sound or ear radio over giant networks will be wiped out."[64]

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[58] Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American broadcasting 1922-1952*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Jennifer Wang, "The Case Of The Radio Active House Wife: Relocating Radio In The Age Of Television," in: Michele Hilmes and Jason Liviglio (Eds.), *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 343-366.

[59] Wang, op. cit. 345.

[60] Hilmes, op. cit. *Radio Voices,* 271.

[61] Ibid. 271.

[62] Ibid. xv.

Commercial Cobwebs: The Creation of the "Old-time Radio" Market

The syndication of classic radio in the 1960s has never been written about, even by broadcast scholars, like Russo or Kompare, whose work has focused on radio syndication and repetition during the network era. [65] Classic radio syndication played an integral role in redefining creative radio as old. Indeed, the term "old-time radio" originated as a marketing strategy employed by Charles Michelson Inc. (CMI) While radio broadcasters used recordings in the 1930s, 40s and 50s to broadcast programming, the dominant logic within the broadcast industries was that programs were appreciated for their uniqueness and singularity.[66] Recordings were not made for repetitive broadcast, but for either for copyright registration, for distribution via syndication, or in order to accommodate the performers' production schedules. It was only after television broadcasters realized that reruns received high ratings in the 1950s that radio syndicators like Michelson began to adopt a similar strategy to market classic radio as "old time radio" and sell it to local markets.

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[63] Wang, "The Case Of The Radio Active House Wife."

[64] Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*, (New York: Times Books, 1999), 220.

[65] Russo, op. cit.;Kompare, op. cit.

[66] Ibid.

When the broadcasting trade magazine *Sponsor* announced the revival of old time radio drama in December 1963, this proclamation was mainly the result of the popularity of classic radio syndication with local stations. According to *Sponsor*, radio drama seemed to be "reviving on its own" through spot programming sales to local radio stations around the country.[67] Of course radio does not simply appear on the air, and the syndication of radio dramas was very much influenced by the pre-existing electronic transcription sector of the radio industry. One of the driving forces in the sales of classic radio drama to local stations was CMI, a company whose business in electronic transcription and media exportation was initially separated into two companies: Michelson & Sternberg, Inc., which sold U.S. radio programming outside of the U.S. to stations in Australia and elsewhere; and CMI, which focused on selling sound effects records as well as producing and distributing syndicated radio programming locally and regionally throughout the United States. By 1961, company president Charles Michelson had combined both sides of his business – national distribution and international distribution – into one company that distributed television and radio programs as well as EMI mood music.[68]

CMI began advertising sales of *The Shadow* reruns to local radio stations as "old-time radio" across the United States in October 1962.[69] Before the end of the month, old episodes of *The Shadow* were syndicated on WGN, Chicago, WQSR, Syracuse, WJAR, Providence, and WISN, Milwaukee.[70] CMI would later buy the rights to syndicate *The Green Hornet*, *The Lone Ranger*, and other old radio programs; however, *The Shadow* served as their flagship program throughout CMI promotional events and advertising between 1962 – 1964 because they had been the program's primary initial distributor for the majority of the country from 1938 – 1954 and already owned the copyright. [71] In 1938, *The Shadow* was produced by Street and Smith and sponsored by Blue Coal, but was only distributed in a partial network deal with the Mutual Broadcasting Company for the New England area. In 1938, Michelson and Sternberg bought 26 weeks of records for Australia, and CMI contracted with Street and Smith for the rights to air *The Shadow* outside of the Blue Coal territory. CMI would go on to sell electronic transcriptions of *The Shadow* to local and regional stations across the U.S. with sponsorship by local, regional, and even national companies.[72] And though CMI also produced and distributed other syndicated radio productions like *The Sealed Book* and *Famous Jury Trials* via electronic transcription, none were as popular as *The Shadow*, and the company aligned their name with *The Shadow* in almost all of their advertising as program producers in trade periodicals like *The Radio Annual and Television Yearbook, Sponsor,* and *Broadcasting.*

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[67] "Sponsor-Scope," *Sponsor*, December 9, 1963, 14.
[68] "Program Producers," *The Radio Annual and Television Yearbook*, 1961, 851.
[69] "Radio Stations," *Sponsor*, September 10, 1962, 64.
[70] "Radio Stations," *Sponsor*, October 22, 1962, 68.

Prior to re-distributing *The Shadow* and other old radio serials in the mid 1960s, CMI had established itself as a syndicator of radio programming operating outside the radio networks for twenty-four years. In 1952, four years after the advent of television, *Sponsor* magazine announced that transcribed radio programming – radio produced and syndicated to regional networks and local stations via vinyl discs – "is now the chief developer of new big-time radio shows and other attractions designed to keep station programming on a high professional level - and afford advertisers a low-cost means of programming."[73] While the Frederic W. Ziv Company was considered the industry leader in the radio transcription business, smaller transcription producers and distributors like Charles Michelson Inc. made money after the introduction of television by focusing on smaller markets. In 1952, 450 - 500 stations carried programs transcribed by CMI and the sponsors were mainly local, although they included national companies like Wrigley's, General Motors, General Foods, and regional companies like Jackson Brewing Company.[74] In 1952, transcribers like Ziv and Michelson stated in *Sponsor* magazine that they believed the radio industry was in the midst of a transcription boom influenced by decline of radio network programming and the network affiliates' need to fill programming schedules and remain competitive.[75] Thus, CMI built on its experience selling low-cost spot programming to local stations when it embarked on its sale of radio reruns in the 1960s.

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[71] "Crime Pays," *Sponsor*, January 1947, 162 - 166, 188.

[72] Ibid.

CMI actively syndicated both old and new radio transcriptions through the 1950s, and it is inaccurate to say that the company's radio business was inactive when *Sponsor* announced five years later that the company was "reactivating its dormant radio program division" to re-release *The Shadow* in 1962.[76] However, CMI was able to generate a great deal of hype by framing their redistribution of *The Shadow* as a rerelease and capitalize on listeners' (and stations') nostalgic desire for old-time radio drama. The syndication of *The Shadow* became a tremendous success, and was sold to over 100 markets by August 1964. The initial hype was so tremendous that, for instance, when MacDonald's originally sponsored *The Shadow* on WISN, Milwaukee in 1962, it was initially purchased for only 13 weeks. Yet, before the program even went on the air, MacDonald's renewed *The Shadow* for 52 weeks. [77] During the 13-week pioneering run, the station received "over 150 letters and at least three times that number of phone calls," after which WISN quickly bought reruns of *The Green Hornet* from CMI to expand its Sunday-evening radio drama programming.[78]

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[73] "Transcriptions," *Sponsor*, July 14, 1952, 76 - 79.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "Radio Stations," *Sponsor*, September 10, 1962, 64.

After adding *The Green Hornet* to their content library in December 1962*,* and CMI had bought the rights, to *The Lone Ranger*, *Dangerous Assignment*, *The Hidden Truth*, and other radio mystery and drama series in 1963. [79] Now that they had multiple classic radio shows, CMI used their previously successful strategy to sell syndicated as programming blocks during the radio network era. [80] They promoted the purchase of these syndicated programs to local stations as a themed radio drama block for broadcast on Sunday evenings, based on previous success programming *The Shadow* and other mysteries on Mutual on Sunday nights. This strategy was familiar and resonated with local radio stations and sponsors. For instance, the Life Insurance Company of Pennsylvania bought CMI's block programming in 1964 to air on WCAU Sunday evenings in Philadelphia in an effort to target audiences stuck in traffic. [81]

The claim that "old-time radio" is more imaginative than television has continued to be a cultural sentiment echoed by fans and radio producers to this day, and this comparison emerged when Michelson first began syndicating classic radio in the early 1960s. John P. Shanley of *The New York Times* announced in August 1963, “It is too early to say that a trend to revive popular radio programs is developing, but with the present undistinguished state of radio - and television, too - some of the old standbys might be an improvement over what is available.”[82] Shanley charged that television squelched imagination where radio drama stimulated the mind,

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[77] "Syndication: Radio Dramas Gaining Local Strength," *Sponsor*, December 9, 1963, 54 - 55

[78] "Sponsor-Scope," *Sponsor*, December 9, 1963, 14.

[79] "Radio Stations," *Sponsor*, December 24, 1962, 61; "Syndication: Radio Dramas Gaining Local Strength," *Sponsor*, December 9, 1963, 54 – 55; John P. Shanley, "Comeback for *The Shadow*," *The New York Times*, August 18, 1963, 113.

[80] "Transcriptions," Sponsor, July 14, 1952, 76 – 79.; "TV Personalities," *The Radio Annual*, 1953, 985.

[81] "Old Radio Drama Bought For Philadelphia Market, " *Sponsor*, July, 1964, 50.

> The deliberate creaking of that old door that was a radio signature for the *Inner Sanctum* series, for example, was a singular effect that TV could never achieve in just that way... If Eliot Ness had been the hero of a radio series, he would have been an unseen figure of unlimited courage, strength and integrity. As he is played by Robert Stack in the TV series, he is more fallible because he can be seen and it is rather obvious that he has limitations as an actor as well as a peace offer...[radio drama] was generally much more satisfying and stimulating...[on radio] the panic bell didn't ring nearly so often, and when it did it had a much less strident sound than it does in TV... the diet of programs that we've been getting in recent years has been different, but certainly it has not been much of an improvement. That's why *The Shadow* is making a comeback.[83]

For Shanley, then, radio drama reruns are preferable to both contemporary radio and television programming, and his 1963 heralding of *The Shadow*’s rebroadcasts as superior to television because of the imagination it engenders marks a shift in the taste status of these radio serials over time to high quality programming because of their difference from television’s visualality. *The New York Times* critic Stephen D. Klaidman reiterated this romanticism of radio drama’s imaginative qualities in the following year, 1964, when WJRZ Newark reran some of Arch Oboler’s horror programs, “Once again, with the aid of wood-wind chords and omniscient announcers, thousands of Americans are picking their imaginations clean of cobwebs. They are imaginations that have been atrophied and lulled into passivity by television."[84] The "vast wasteland" attitude towards television as a bad object worked to legitimate radio reruns with both critics and listeners. A 1973 article in *The New York Times* covering local station WRVR's rebroadcasting of *Gangbusters, The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger*, *The Green Hornet*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and *Sherlock* (syndicated by CMI) reported that "surprisingly, a great many enthusiastic letters have come in from young people who say they are bored to tears by TV and are delighted to listen to shows that, in the words of one teen-age girl from Bayside, 'use our imagination.'"[85]

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[82] Shanley, op. cit.

[83] Ibid.

The imaginative qualities associated with creative radio also troubled some radio executives steeped in the industry logic that radio had become a secondary medium for distracted listening. Paul Gumbinner, radio-TV director of Lawrence C. Gumbinner Advertising, was unsure if old radio would be successful, since it might "require a terrific readjustment for audiences…people would have to learn how to listen all over again. They have a dimension for listeners that TV can't have: the girls are more beautiful and the fights are bloodier."[86] The perception that the radio listeners of the 1960s would be unaccustomed to attentive listening or overwhelmed by the imaginative dimension of creative radio also led broadcasters to debate the merits of block programming "old-time radio." As mentioned earlier, Michelson consistently encouraged block programming of his mystery programs on Sunday nights.[87] However, radio executives were not in agreement that block programming was the way to go with re-distributing old radio serials. Some executives felt one-off revivals of popular old network fare compiled as a radio special would be more successful at attracting larger audiences.[88]

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[84] Stephen D. Klaidman,"Commercial Cobwebs Old Radio Thrillers Are Turning Up Again - On Radio And the Nostalgic Serials Are Paying Sweet Returns," *The New York Times*, August 16, 1964, X13.
[85] Robert Berkvist, "The Lone Ranger Lives!" *The New York Times*, April 15, 1973, 147.
[86] "Syndication: Radio Dramas Gaining Local Strength," *Sponsor*, December 9, 1963, 55.
[87] Ibid., 55.

Nevertheless, CMI's syndication of classic radio was incredibly successful and Michelson came to be known within the broadcasting industry as the "maven" of old-time radio shows.[89] By 1974, Michelson's company owned the rights to 26 different classic radio dramas, sold market-to-market, in 385 markets.[90] In 1986, Charles Michelson Inc. formed a new satellite service that offered radio stations a one-hour weekly block of *The Best of Sherlock Holmes* and *Gangbusters*, two of the half-hour classic radio dramas that the company owned. The service was called *The Mind's Eye*, and it was quite popular with local stations, as 200 stations subscribed to carry Michelson's satellite programming even before it was available.[91] CMI's success syndicating old-time radio demonstrates the development of a second industrial market for classic radio, outside of its original intended use as a one-time broadcast within the flow of network programming. Moreover, this period in the history of old-time radio's formation as a concrete material object also marks its circulation within a new mode of exchanged between business partners somewhat on the margins of the broadcast corporations: Michelson, a small scale syndicator, and local radio stations. Classic radio's syndication as old-time radio within its secondary industrial market transformed it into a nostalgic object signifying the past.

Radio nostalgia was further invoked by a set of network-produced retrospective programs of old radio broadcasts. Building on CMI's model, in 1964, 65, and 66 the J.

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[88] Ibid.
[89] "Ups and downs in radio drama," *Broadcasting*, June 24, 1974.
[90] Ibid.
[91] "Riding Gain: On Radio," *Broadcasting,* July 21, 1986, 58-59.

Walter Thompson Company approached NBC to make annual 90-minute radio compilation shows sponsored by Chase and Sanborn Coffee and hosted by Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy. These shows included short clips from popular NBC programs like *Burns and Allen*, *Al Jolson*, *Lum and Abner*, *Rudy Vallee*, and others.[92] Jim Jordan, who played Fibber McGee on *Fibber McGee and Molly* similarly produced a retrospective program with radio fan Chuck Schaden that was sponsored by Chrysler Air Temp and broadcast on local stations across the country in 1974.[93] The premise of the program had Schaden visit Fibber McGee, played here again by Jordan, and use McGee's Super-Heterodyne radio to listen to clips of old radio programs and reminisce about the shows and the radio celebrities they heard. This program was syndicated as eight hour-long programs and sold to local stations, before it was repackaged as a vinyl compilation titled *Chrysler Air Temp Presents Good Radio* to be used as a free gift for prospective customers by Chrysler Air Temp dealers. [94] Production of shows that saluted a "golden age of radio" both cultivated a nostalgic appreciation for network radio and simultaneously marked it as a bygone era.

Nostalgia for old-time radio flourished in the late 1960s and '70s as CMI's roster of local stations syndicating their OTR programming increased. As I discuss in chapter two, at this time a new generation of listeners came to be exposed to classic radio and began collecting recordings, some even using their library of radio to produce weekly radio shows. OTR collector Chuck Schaden began broadcasting his own classic radio program using his collection of radio recordings in Chicago in 1970, while another prominent OTR fan, John Dunning, began producing his long running weekly broadcast program compiled of classic radio in 1972 on KFML in Denver. Also, as I outline in chapter four, the late 1960s saw the beginning of what I designate as classic radio's third industrial cycle, and the rise of record labels formed to sell radio as a physical commodity at music shops, grocery stores, truck stops and via direct marketing mail-order catalogs. This increase in production, distribution and circulation of classic radio precipitated a wider radio nostalgia market. The Remember When Nostalgia Book Club formed in 1968, offering a broad range of monthly books through subscription focusing on popular culture from the twenties, thirties and forties.[95] Cracker Barrel's newly formed chain of southern restaurants and "old-timey" general stores opened in 1969, and by 1974 were selling transistor radios made to look like old radios for $9.95, advertised as:

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[92] Leonard Sloane, "Advertising: On Wave Lengths of Nostalgia," *The New York Times*, September 7, 1966, 61.

[93] "News Summary and Index: The Major Events of the Day International ..." *The New York Times*, May 6, 1974, 37.

[94] The use of this record as a Chrysler Air Temp promotional tool is detailed in the description of one of an Amazon sale of a used *Chrysler Air Temp Presents Good Radio* at http://www.amazon.com/Chrysler-Airtemp-Presents-Good-Radio/dp/B005ETJ0LW; the sale of second hand collection of the *Fibber McGee and the Good Old Days of Radio* cassettes is described at http://www.nostalgiadigest.com/compactdiscstapes.html

> [the] perfect reproduction of nostalgic old time radio our folks used to have. Do you remember sitting around the old table radio listening to all those great programs? Now you can capture some of that nostalgia with this replica transistorized portable Old Time Radio. YES! All the charm and delightful times can be yours with this enchanting radio.[96]

And the cruise line Sitmar featured an "old-time radio" themed cruise in 1976, featuring network era radio stars Phil Harris and Edgar Bergan & Charlie McCarthy as performers.[97]

In his discussion of the film *Goodbye Lenin*, Timothy Barney notes "nostalgia can function as a way to keep individual balance in the midst of political events that can be incoherent."[98] Considering this, it is implicitly political that broadcast radio from the early to mid twentieth century came to be an object of nostalgic longing during the 1960s and '70s, when the United States was experiencing a host of tumultuous and socially transformative events, including the civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. Capitalizing on the retro appeal of popular culture from the past, we can see how classic radio's redefinition as "old-time radio" reinscribed it with emotionality that activated engagements with the past through programs that were now framed as nostalgia for a quaint or simpler time in American history.

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[95] "Remember When Nostalgia Club Ad," *New York Magazine*, September 23, 1968, 1.

[96] "Display Ad 98: The Cracker Barrel Old Time Radio," *The New York Times,* November 16, 1974, 18.

[97] Display Ad 200: Sitmar Nostalgia Cruises, *The New York Times,* March 7, 1976, D7.

As creative radio came to be associated with the past, industrial practices, cultural understandings, and audience responses surrounding creative radio changed. U.S. radio entered a post-network era, which I outline in the next section. Creative radio continued to be produced in America after the ascent of television, despite popular mythology that "video killed the radio star," and I draw out the history of three radio programs from this era, *Theater 5*, *Earplay*, and *CBS Mystery Theater* to consider how creative radio production adapted to the challenges posed by its new cultural classification as "old."

Defining post-network radio

"Post-network television" is a term that has come to describe the proliferation of channels, segmentation of television audiences, increased diversity of television programming, and convergence of television with new media like video games and web

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[98] Timothy Barney, "When We Was Red: *Good Bye Lenin!* and Nostalgia for the 'Everyday GDR,'" *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009) 136.

platforms. By contrast, histories of radio have used a different set of terms to describe the era during which the diversification of broadcasting, the segmentation of radio audiences, and the extensive acceptance of the new medium television occurred. Verma describes the 1950s as the "late radio age,"[99] while Eric Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt note that "radio's history to date in the United States… can be roughly divided into the network era and the format era, each characterized by its own forms of organization and programming."[100] To bracket off radio eras in these way is problematic. For instance, to say that there is a 'late radio age' suggests radio has some technologically predetermined endpoint. To separate radio eras into 'network' and 'format' is inaccurate, because it does not account for the way in which traditional U.S. radio networks like CBS, ABC, NBC, or Mutual persisted after the popularization of format radio, nor does it account for the eclectic programming on community and college radio stations, as well as the establishment of newer radio networks, such as National Public Radio, Public Radio International, ESPN Sports, and others.

To encapsulate the diversity of programming after the dominance of network radio while still accounting for its presence, radio scholars must coopt the term post-network from television studies. The reluctance to describe radio after television as "post-network radio" might be due to a critical gap in the cultural history of U.S. radio after 1960, in contrast to the amount of work on post-network television.[101] Niche

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[99] Verma, op. cit.

[100] Eric Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt, "Radio Redefines itself, 1947 – 1962." In Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio (eds.), *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 367 – 388.

[101] A great deal of work on post-network television has been done by media studies scholars, for example, see Amanda D. Lotz's work, including *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), *Redesigning Women:*

programming practices associated with post-network television were, in fact, common practice in radio production from 1950s and onward. [102] It is evident that the diversification of broadcasting options and advertisers' desire to target specific niche audiences defined by demographics had totally shifted the industrial logics of the radio industry by1968, when ABC Radio became the first radio network to segment its programing into four different services to appeal to different audiences: Contemporary, Entertainment, Information and FM. [103] The Mutual Broadcasting System created the first national radio network that specifically targeted African Americans in 1972, the Mutual Black Network.[104] And in 1974, CBS established the CBS Radio Drama Network as a second differentiated service for its affiliates to distribute the nightly anthology *CBS Mystery Theater*. For these reasons, I use the term post-network radio to describe the historical time period discussed in this essay, as radio was the first broadcast medium whose industry and reception underwent massive transformation after the introduction of new domestic technology; also, it was the first broadcast medium to exploit the potential of audience segmentation and narrowcasting.

Television After the Network Era, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), or *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 2014); several edited anthologies, including the work of Lynn Spiegel and Jan Olsson, (eds.), *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2004); Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones and Ethan Thompson (eds.), *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay, *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era*, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[102] Ron Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

[103] "Quiet but Far-Reaching Changes Reshaping Radio: Washington Kicking Up..." *The New York Times,* 9 September 1980, C11.

[104] "Mutual Black Network Ad: Soul Music is Not Enough," *Broadcasting,* 1 May 1972, 37.

To pinpoint a precise beginning of the post-network radio era is complicated. There have been many moments in U.S. media history when radio has converged with other technologies (like the phonograph) and with other media, such as film, as scholars like Hilmes have detailed.[105] Additionally, as Russo has noted in his study of radio outside of national broadcast networks in the 1930s-50s, radio production and distribution have always been complex, diverse, and in flux.[106] If there is an equivalent post-network era for radio, it predates the post-network television era by approximately thirty-five years, beginning post-WWII with the widespread adoption of television broadcasting alongside the growth of the music industry and sales of high-fidelity phonograph records.

RCA had revealed its television technology at the 1939 World Fair, and a few stations existed in larger cities prior to 1946; however, it was the production of inexpensive television receivers after WWII encouraged networks to pursue television more aggressively.[107] Major network radio broadcasters began to diversify their production between radio and television and invested more heavily in television production by adapting many of their high-rated radio programs, like *The Goldbergs*, *The Jack Benny Show* and others, into television programs. These television shows were then often "broadcast simultaneously over both media, or 'simulcast,' often with decreasing regard for their intelligibility to radio listeners."[108]

While network executives encouraged advertisers to use their money on

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[105] For more on the relationship between Hollywood filmmakers, and the adaptation of films into radio plays on programs like *Lux Radio Theater*, see Michele Hilmes book *Hollywood and broadcasting*: *From radio to cable* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

[106] Russo op. cit.

[107] David L. Morton Jr., *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology*, (Baltimore, MD 2004).

[108] Hilmes, *Radio Voices,* 272.

television, format programming became increasingly popular in radio production. This was the result of the localization of radio stations that accompanied the decrease in network radio programming, as well as investment in FM development that, in turn, increased the capacity for radio channels. Radio station formatting was also shaped by the increased influence of the music industries and rise of the disc jockey figure in radio production.[109] Beginning in the late 1940s, independent stations began the forceful and pervasive practice of targeting audiences in narrow demographics using music genres like Country and Western, Rhythm and Blues, Top 40, Classical and more.[110] Radio stations' decision to focus programming on one format was a strategy for mitigating risk, as Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt state, "Radio programmers who could isolate smaller, less heterogeneous audience segments or listening contexts would reduce the uncertainty of their programming decisions and attract advertisers seeking specific groups of consumers."[111]'. The practice of branding radio stations with a specific music genre extended to formatting stations as all-news or all-talk. These practices marked a post-network shift in radio's institutional practices and logics that considered radio audiences as more fragmented, and the industry began to understand audience engagement with radio differently, as "individualized listening based on specialized taste."[112]

Radio programming decisions were often determined by new industrial conceptions of how audiences listened to the radio. As Russo has demonstrated, radio producers first began to worry about distracted, individualized listening with the invention of the car radio and the prominence of multi radio homes in the early 1930s.[113] The invention of the transistor radio in 1947, and the increasing attempts to market to youth during the post-war baby boom further encouraged an industrial conception of radio as a secondary medium. Producers now mainly conceived of radio as a service that provided the background to listeners in the car, on the beach or at other locations outside of the home where they were engaged in corresponding activities.

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[109] For more on the rise of disc jockeys, music format radio, and localization of radio targeted towards niche audiences, specifically local African American audiences, see Elena Razlogova's book *The Listener's Voice*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

[110] Christopher Sterling & John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, 3rd Edition. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2001).

[111] Rothenbuhler & McCourt, op. cit.

[112] Russo, op. cit. 183.

During this period of transition, the structure and contour of network radio production in the United States remained uncertain and mutable. Network programming blocks of daytime soap operas and prime-time dramas, serials, and variety programs decreased substantially through the 1950s, and the last long-running creative programs from the network era, *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* and *Suspense*, were cancelled in 1962 by CBS. While these may have been the last remnants of network-era scripted radio programs, U.S. radio networks continued to produce creative radio. This creative radio was different from its predecessors and was shaped by the logics of post-network radio. New productions attempted to respond to new conceptions of audience listening habits, to distinguish themselves from entertainment radio's association with the past, and to target niche audiences. And, unlike radio drama, comedy, and variety of the past, post-network creative radio was understood in contrast to television.

Post-network listening and the 'Theater of the Mind'

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[113] Ibid.

In his book *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama,* Verma studies the aesthetics of radio drama from the depression to the Cold War. Defining radio drama as a ‘broadcast that has a scene in which a character performs action,’ Verma demonstrates how both producers and listeners understood radio drama as a “theater of the mind.” Examining the customs and conventions of radio drama in the US from the 1930s to the 1950s, Verma considers the aesthetic styles producers used to build audio compositions that would position the listener within aural landscapes, align listeners with character perspectives, convey the passing of time, character movement and relationships, action, and more, solely through the use of sonic elements. Conceptualizing radio drama, or even all creative radio, as a “theater of the mind” assumes that audiences internalize the sounds they hear by creating imaginative pictures in their minds as they listen to the programs.

Whether or not audiences actually respond to creative radio in this way is uncertain. The belief that radio audiences conjure original visual images in their minds when hearing radio drama places their listening experience in a vacuum, free from visual media’s intertextual references or the paratextual influence of the popular press. For instance, when NPR reproduced the 1977 film *Star Wars* as a scripted radio drama in 1980, critics announced that this time “These intergalactic battles aren't taking place on a theater screen but in the minds of listeners.” [114] Yet, it is difficult to believe listeners did not carry the images of Mark Hamil, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher or their memories of *Star War*’s visual effects with them to their experience listening to the NPR radio production, especially considering the widespread popularity of the original film.

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[114] Robert Lindsey, “Will 'Star Wars' Lure Younger Listeners to Radio?” *The New York Times*, 8 March 1981, D34.

Furthermore, it is impossible to generalize that *all* radio audiences respond to storylines through imaginative visualization.

Whether or not audiences actually react to creative radio by producing a visual image in their own mind, creative scripted radio is a genre that possesses the cultural distinction of being understood as a theater of the mind, a trait summoned by even the title of most of the post-1962 dramatic productions. For instance, the titles of ABC's *Theater 5*, NPR's *Earplay*, and CBS Radio's *CBS Mystery Theater* all explicitly reference theater and plays. Designating creative radio as a 'theater of the mind' reinscribes radio as a visual medium, and this visuality was often conveyed as more imaginative than visual mediums like television because the listener participates in its construction. Take, for instance, the public statements by the producers of ABC Radio's 1964-5 program *Theater 5*, who often promoted the show by emphasizing the imaginative aspects of scripted radio. A spokesman described the program's imaginative qualities by saying "the listener is his own set designer, make-up artist, casting director. The girls are prettier, the action wilder than anything on a stage or a screen. Radio drama accomplishes that with sound and the listener's imagination. There is nothing else like it."[115] In this sense, creative radio is valued by the same visual criteria as television, yet is reconfigured as a medium that actively engages the listener in the co-production of a story. This quote also strangely invokes radio's visuality in gendered terms that are similar to the quote from adman Paul Gumbinner who feared that radio's visuality would overwhelm listeners.

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[115] "Drama: ABC Radio". *Broadcasting*, 28 September 1964, 64.

The imaginative qualities associated with radio drama troubled radio executives in the post-network era. The conception of a family gathered around a radio set and transfixed by the imaginative elements they heard had driven the commercial radio industry of the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Producers of the 1960s were fully steeped in the industry logic that radio had become a secondary medium that engendered distracted listening. The perception that post-network radio listeners would be unaccustomed to attentive listening or overwhelmed by the imaginative dimension of creative radio led most network executives to see radio drama, comedy or soap operas as a financial risk.[116]

We are innovating with radio, not reviving a ghost

In addition to the belief that post-network radio audiences would be unaccustomed to actively making sense of a long-form radio play, producers had to combat the association between creative radio and the past. The widespread success of CMI OTR syndication is meant that the creative radio most listeners heard in the 1960s and '70s was framed as 'old,' and indeed, also literally had keynote sounds that conveyed age, such as earlier modes of radio acting, as well as the hiss and pop of some recordings physical degradation over time. These elements worked alongside earlier network campaigns that portrayed television as the future of broadcast entertainment,[117] and the prominence of format programming, to create the sense amongst radio industry workers that scripted radio was passé.

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[116] For example, radio executives at NBC and ABC Radio discuss CBS's decision to produce CBS Mystery Theater as a big risk in "Programing: Nightly radio dramas coming to CBS Radio," *Broadcasting*, 24 September 1973, 60.

[117] Wang, "The Case Of The Radio Active House Wife."

It is for this reason that radio producers developing the first cycle of creative radio programs in 1963 and after attempted to frame their work as a departure from radio's past. At this time, ABC, NBC and CBS all had scripted radio programs in production. 1963 is only one year after CBS Radio had cancelled the last two remaining long-running network-era serial programs *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* and *Suspense*. Networks were now reluctant to fund new creative radio programs in the wake of post-network industrial shifts, even through the success of syndicated rebroadcasts and one-off new productions demonstrated audience interest. For instance, NBC Radio produced and broadcast *Experiment in Drama* in 1963 as a one-off test to gauge listener interest, resulting in positive feedback from approximately 3,600 audience members who wrote into the network. [118] That same year, CBS Radio reported developing an untitled dramatic program that never materialized on the airwaves. Before it was cancelled, CBS producers told *Sponsor* magazine during the early stages of development that this program was cutting edge because, "We don't want to resume radio drama at the point where it left off."[119] While NBC and CBS failed to actually broadcast any scripted serial radio productions in 1963, ABC Radio's Special Program Features division produced *Theater 5*, which ran for a year from June 1964 until July 1965.

ABC's *Theater 5* is an exemplary case study to consider how the production of radio drama changed in the post-network era. The anthology program sounded grittier than previous radio programs, as characters and storylines evaded sentimentality and many episodes centered on contemporary social issues like nuclear war, juvenile gangs, suicide, and over-population, often ending episodes with problems unresolved. Shows drew mainly from mystery, science fiction or horror genres, and the program was made by a small, streamlined production staff of 16 radio workers who were divided into two production units operating simultaneously on different programs within the series.[120] Recorded in stereo, the show also had a crisp, clear sound that sharply contrasted the tinny, constricted frequencies of monophonic radio shows from the network era. Each show began with a very short intro, a cold open of dialogue and sound effects to build suspense and intrigue, followed by a short upbeat brass rock intro. A male voice briefly announced the program name and episode title before listeners were returned to the opening scene. *Theater 5* boasted several notable actors over its 260 episode run, including a young Alan Alda in the episode "The Banana Ball." *Theater 5* was offered to ABC Radio affiliates for program sponsorship by local clients, with five episodes a week airing Monday through Friday.

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[118] "The Ground-Swell Behind Radio Drama's Revival May Become a Real Wave After the New Year," *Sponsor*, 9 December 1963, 14.

[119] Ibid.

Producers repeatedly framed the production as trend setting and distinct from "old-time radio." When ABC first announced it was producing a new drama in 1963 under the working title *The Mind's Eye*, producer Frank Maguire stressed that the planned series "will not represent a return to old-time radio drama."[121] In an interview with *Broadcast* magazine, Maguire asserted that ABC was using creative ideas, top production values, and modern storylines for *The Mind's Eye*, saying "we are stepping way out in front in programming procedure."[122] This was echoed by ABC Radio President Robert Pauley, who told affiliates in 1963 that in giving consideration to the project, developed over a two-year period, ABC discarded any notion of reviving 'old-time radio' because programs, ideas and habits in radio had changed. Pauley made this clear with the proclamation that "Old radio drama didn't fit today's pace."[123] In this sense, *Theater 5*'s producers framed their dramatic anthology as experimental, creative, and distinct from classic radio drama. The program's development was influenced by post-network understandings of audience attention. In addition to changing the name of the program from *The Mind's Eye* to the shorter, snappier title *Theater 5*, ABC Radio cut the originally planned 50-minute format down to 25 minutes because "it was the judgment of the network programmers that today's radio audience has listening habits which would not sustain the longer format."[124] As ABC Radio began airing *Theater Five*, Pauley attempted to reinforce the idea that this show was edgy, stating, "while our competition has been trying to revive drama via 1940 radio techniques and programs, ABC is taking a progressive step to introduce 1964 radio and techniques. We are innovating with radio, not reviving a ghost."[125]

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[120] "Radio Drama to Return on ABC," *Broadcasting*, 12 August, 1963, 64.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

While stylistic choices and promotional interviews worked to discursively distinguish *Theater 5* from past radio drama, *Theater 5* was promoted to affiliates as a return to network-era advertising practices. *Theater 5'*s 1965 full-page ad in *Broadcasting* magazine titled 'The 1⁄2 Hour Commercial Returns to Radio,' features a picture of a transistor radio, with a speech balloon, "And now, *Theatre 5*, thirty minutes of radio drama brought to you by…"[126] This is followed by copy reading "At one time, sponsors and radio shows identified one another. The association was so close that a half hour radio show amounted to a half hour commercial. That was good for the sponsor and good for radio."[127] The nostalgic references to the benefits of single-sponsorship on radio was followed by the promise of *Theater 5*'s contemporaneity and newness as "twenty-five minutes of fast-moving adult drama…specifically designed to give radio stations a completely new format to offer important clients. There's only one new radio drama like *Theatre 5*. And if you have it, no one else can get it."[128] *Theater 5* was thus simultaneously old and new, a hybrid of network and post-network creative radio production practices as it marketed by its producers as an original and inventive product, and yet, also a return to network-era sponsorship practices. *Theater 5* was cancelled in July 1965. The network never explained this publicly, nor published data on *Theater 5*'s popularity. After this, the only creative radio programs broadcast in the U.S. were local productions, first-run syndication programs distributed by independent radio producers, or OTR reruns. Original productions of creative radio did not return to U.S. network radio until NPR began distributing the program *Earplay* to member stations across the country in 1971.

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[123] "Drama starts on ABC Radio," *Broadcasting*, 13 July 1964, 64.
[124] "ABC Radio sets June for return of drama," *Broadcasting*, 6 April 1964, 134.
[125] Ibid.
[126] "The 1⁄2 Hour Commercial Returns to Radio," *Broadcasting,* 8 February 1965, 6.

Earplay and non-commercial creative radio

Earplay was the product of National Public Radio's decentralized programming structure, eclectic format of news, music, and cultural shows, and non-commercial production environment. Indeed, the risk commercial radio network producers associated with the production of radio drama perhaps encouraged the production of *Earplay*, as its producers understood their work on the program as a public service that provided listeners with content unavailable anywhere else in the United States. This was evident when Karl Schmidt proposed *Earplay* to NPR's board by arguing that "radio ought to be something other than music and news."[129] *Earplay* began as a short dramatic program produced at public radio station WHA in Madison, Wisconsin, and was broadcast on approximately 170 NPR member stations in the United States from 1971 until 1981.

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

Much like *Theater 5*'s producers, *Earplay*'s producer Karl Schmidt subscribed to post-network radio beliefs about audience attention and originally pitched *Earplay* as a 10 – 15 minute program with strong plotlines to keep listeners engaged.[130] Beginning in its second year, *Earplay* expanded into an hour-long, weekly format. In a move also similar to *Theater 5*, Earplay's producers attempted to distance the show from network-era radio, and Karl Schmidt told *The New York Times, "*Rather than attempting to resurrect 'old-time radio,' *Earplay* is an experiment unique in the history of American broadcasting: an effort to bring legitimate theater to the radio."[131] And indeed, *Earplay* was often framed through a discourse of cultural uplift that is commonly associated with public broadcasting.

Earplay's main contribution to NPR's public service mission was the development of an experimental space on radio for young up-and-coming playwrights to practice crafting work written for the ear. Schmidt highlighted his intention for *Earplay*

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[129] "*Earplay* scripts go legit," *Variety*, 19 September 1979, 73.

[130] Paul Keith Jackson, Jr., *Investigation into Earplay: The National Public Radio Drama Production Unit 1971 – 1981, Towards an Aural Aesthetic in the Drama,* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1983).

[131] Karl Schmidt, "Theater Mailbag: Drama On Radio," *The New York Times*, 9 July 1978, 8 & 24.

"to establish an economical testing ground for playwrights and plays" in the funding application he submitted to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting,[132] and later told *The New York Times* that "The development of a new generation of radio writers has been a primary goal of *Earplay."*[133] This intention was certainly realized, and list of contributing playwrights included many high-status names such as Edward Albee, David Mamet, Archibald MacLeish, and Tom Stoppard. Furthermore, several of the plays commissioned by *Earplay* were so successful that they were later adapted into stage plays, films or television.[134]

Earplay was able to commission plays written for the radio by young, talented and prestigious playwrights of the 1970s by establishing transnational relationships to fund episodes as co-productions. In 1972 *Earplay* became part of the International Commissioning Group of European Radio Drama Producers (ICGERDP).[135] This group was formed by members of the European Broadcasting Union, and included representation from Britain, Ireland, Switzerland, West Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.[136] Membership in ICGERDP allowed *Earplay*'s producers at

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[132] Jackson, Jr., *Investigation in to Earplay,* 29.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Reviews of the plays featured on *Earplay* and some of their subsequent adaptations on the stage are covered by *The New York Times* in articles that focus on the playwright and his or her vision and process of writing the play, for examples see "MacLeish Writes Radio Verse Drama"; C. Gerald Fraser, "New Albee Play Assists in Rebirth of Radio Drama," *The New York Times*, 2 February 1976; Richard Gottlieb, "The 'Engine' That Drives Playwright David Mamet," *The New York Times*, 15 January 1978, D1; Robert Berkvist, "Playwright Arthur Kopit Tells How 'Wings' Took Flight: Arthur Kopit Talks About 'Wings'," *The New York Times*, 25 June 1978, D1; Judy Klemesrud, "She Had Her Own 'Getting Out' to Do: Playwright Marsha Norman," *The New York Times,* 27 May 1979, D4.
[135] John J. O'Connor, "Broadcasting View Radio's Recent Signs of Vigor," *The New York Times,* 6 May 1979, 115.
[136] Jackson, Jr., *Investigation into Earplay*.

WHA to easily collaborate and co-produce radio drama with the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) and other European partners. Several *Earplay* scripts were purchased and translated by a West German radio production company, and several Canadian and British radio producers travelled to Madison, WI to collaborate on *Earplay* productions.[137] Acquiring additional funding to entice famous playwrights to work on *Earplay* was one of the benefits afforded by participation in ICGERDP. [138] For example, Tom Stoppard's radio play "Artist Descending Staircase" was commissioned as a co-production with joint funding from the BBC and *Earplay*. Alone, *Earplay* was only able to pay $2,000 for one script, but Stoppard received $20,000 for "Artist," and the episode was broadcast both on the BBC and NPR. [139] These joint efforts between NPR, the BBC and other European broadcasters allowed for higher production values on *Earplay*.

Earplay's producers drew upon their relationship with European producers to further differentiate the show from 'old-time radio' that was still popular in syndication on U.S. radio. Karl Schmidt stated in an interview with *The New York Times* in 1975 that it was not the organization's intention to "bring back the good old days of radio but rather to keep alive in the United States an art form that continues to thrive in Europe and Canada."[140] In the same interview, Schmidt told *The New York Times* that he had set out to produce *Earplay* "in the image of the European radio drama tradition, even in its heyday, U.S. radio had never offered a very creative mode,"[141] and then later told *The New York Times* critic David Milofsky in 1976 that

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid, 54.

[139] Ibid.

[140] "MacLeish Writes Radio Verse Drama," *The New York Times*, Jan 30, 1975, 49.

> What we want to do is entirely new to American radio. We're not looking back to the thirties and forties for inspiration, but to Europe. In Europe, all the best writers work for radio. The BBC introduces 50 – 75 new playwrights a year. That's where Tom Stoppard came from. The first Beckett was done there. Pinter has always worked in radio. Now we want to find scripts that speak to the American condition, but that reach the artistic level of the best European productions.[142]

The non-commercial production culture of public radio and the funding afforded by transnational co-production arrangements allowed *Earplay* to pursue artistic and experimental radio productions totally different from anything else being broadcast on U.S. radio in the early 1970s.

And, indeed, radio critics responded to *Earplay* by praising its artistic merit, and contrasting its creativity with what they saw as the banality of format radio and television. *The New York Times* critic C. Gerald Fraser reviewed *Earplay*'s production of an Edward Albee play, stating,

> Television in America virtually wiped out serous radio drama, abandoning the air to all-news stations, the top 40, and helicopter traffic reports. However, in hopes of proving that American radio can again provide sterling dramatic productions, Edward Albee, the playwright, has written and directed an 80-minute drama called "Listening"[143].

This perception of *Earplay* as innovative was encouraged by its producer's public statements. When promoting "Listening," John Tydeman, a BBC radio producer collaborating on the production, compared U.S. radio drama to that made in Britain, saying “radio as an art form doesn’t exist here.” [144] Actress Irene Worth, who appeared in “Listening,” was even more biting in her condemnation of American popular culture, and told *the New York Times* that “there was an ‘urgent need’ for radio drama in America to offset ‘the banality of television…People can’t live in an intellectual vacuum.”’[145] *The New York Times* critic John J. O’Connor pronounced that :”Obviously a class act, *Earplay* is special and invaluable radio” and considered this value to be the use of sound to encourage listener imagination. O’Connor praised *Earplay* for its aurality, saying “The ability of radio to suggest so much with so little remains startling. With the listener creating his own mental images, little more than the simplest of sounds is required to trigger the imagination.”[146] *Earplay* was recognized for its experimental and artistic use of sound to produce high-quality radio drama when the program won a Peabody award for its sixth season in 1977. The show was considered by producers at NPR as a model of radio drama’s potential while also demonstrating the benefits of transnational co-production to increase funding opportunities. [147]

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[141] Ibid.

[142] David Milofsky, "Radio Plays Stage a Comeback," *The New York Times,* March 14, 1976, D25.

[143] C. Gerald Fraser, "New Albee Play Assists in Rebirth of Radio Drama," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1976.

NPR’s funding structure and internal pushes within the organization to centralize publicly produced radio drama contributed to its cancellation in 1981. This shift began when, in 1978, *Earplay* stopped receiving funding directly from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The CPB and the NEA continued to earmark funds for *Earplay*, but these were now processed centrally through NPR in Washington, D.C., and the program then had to contend with

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[144] Ibid, 36.

[145] Ibid, 36.

[146] O’Connor, “Broadcasting View Radio's Recent Signs of Vigor,” 115.

[147] Jackson, Jr., *Investigation into Earplay*.

"national bureaucratic shifts and political trends."[148] NPR held a conference on "Drama for Public Radio" in April 1978, where participants considered whether radio drama should be pursued on public radio, and, "Should decentralized production in drama for public radio be encouraged?"[149] One key outcome from NPR's conference on "Drama for Public Radio" was a desire to consolidate production planning, funding, the hiring of quality producers, promotion and distribution of radio drama through NPR's headquarters in Washington D.C., as well as the desirability to increase funding for radio drama by following *Earplay*'s example of entering into co-productions with foreign radio networks like the BBC.

The desire to centralize NPR's production of radio drama was also influenced by NPR's development of a satellite system, as it was the first radio network to receive the FCC's approval for and to implement an operational satellite system in the U.S.[150] NPR incorporated *Earplay* into its larger ":Drama on Public Radio" proposal to the NEA in 1979. But *Earplay*'s funding was completely cut when this funding proposal was denied.[151] NPR would make several other prominent forays into radio drama production, famously producing two 13-episode adaptations of both *Star Wars* and *The Emperor Strikes Back* in 1981 and 1983, both of which were BBC co-productions.[152] None of NPR's creative radio programs were as long lasting or as widely reviewed as *Earplay*. The ten-year period during which *Earplay* was broadcast, 1971-81, has been referred to as the period of creative radio revival, due to increasing interest by commercial radio in producing serialized scripted radio programs. The most successful of these is considered to be *CBS Mystery Theater*.

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[148] Ibid, 167.
[149] Ibid, 172.
[150] "Special Report: Radio 1979: Revving up for the 1980's," *Broadcasting*, 10 September 1979, 36-42; Jackson, Jr., *Investigation into Earplay*, 175.
[151] Jackson, Jr., *Investigation into Earplay*.
[152] Robert Lindsey, "Will 'Star Wars' Lure Younger Listeners to Radio?" *The New York Times,* 8 March 1981, D34.

Commercial networks and narrowcasting

On September 25, 1973, *The New York Times* critic John J. O'Connor announced that a new trend had appeared in radio, the "revival of radio drama."[153] Shortly after, in January 1974, the television and radio industry trade magazine *Broadcasting* published a feature story on the revival of radio drama, titled "Radio Drama: Renaissance or brief sojourn in nostalgia?"[154] These discussions of radio drama's revival were precipitated by announcements from both the Mutual Broadcasting System (MBS) and CBS Radio in the fall of 1973 that they would be broadcasting newly produced dramatic programs for affiliates in 1974, alongside the production of several other new syndicated drama programs. These new productions of creative radio were often broadcast together with OTR reruns. However, their development was shaped by post-network radio practices of segmenting audiences by demographics.

Between 1973-74, five new creative radio programs were being broadcast in the United States. MBS was distributing Hollywood Radio Theater's *Zero Hour*, the Mutual Black Network was distributing the African American soap opera *Sounds of the City*, Twenty First Century Communications, publisher of *National Lampoon* magazine, was syndicating *National Lampoon's Comedy Hour* (*NLCH*) to 104 local radio stations around the country, and CBS Radio had created the CBS Radio Drama Network as a differentiated service to distribute its new program *CBS Mystery Theater* (*CBSMT*) to affiliates and independent stations.[155] *Sounds of the City* was produced by the African American advertising agency Uniworld, sponsored by Quaker Oats, and distributed by the Mutual Black Network as a very specific attempt to target a niche audience of African American housewives.[156] *Zero Hour*, *NLCH*, and *CBSMT* were similarly developed to target the audience of young radio listeners[157] who were already invested in the underground radio youth subculture,[158] and purchased spoken word comedy LPs by young edgy performers like Steve Martin and the Firesign Theatre.[159] *The New York Times* critic John J. O'Connor saw the *NLCH* comedy program as the fulfillment of creative radio's potential to push content boundaries he felt television was too timid to broach, describing the program as

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[153] John J. O'Connor, "Radio: C.B.S. on Drama Bandwagon," *The New York Times*, 25 September 1973, 86.

[154] "Radio Drama: Renaissance or brief sojourn in nostalgia?" *Broadcasting,* 14 January 1974, 20.

> Offering 60 minutes chock full of mirth, merriment and racial slurs, the programs use a scatter-shot type of satire, some of it juvenile, portions of it cheerfully subversive, much of it wildly funny. Sometimes it misses, but more frequently it provides radio with that 'real alternative.'[160]

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[155] Ibid.

[156] "Sounds of the City 1st Black Soap Opera," *The Virgin Islands Daily News*, 21 August 1974, 22; Barbara Campbell, "Sounds Of City, Black Soap Opera, to Cut the Jive," *The New York Times*, 8 April 1974; "Radio Soaper for Blacks," *Boca Raton News*, 28 August 1974, 5B; Derek T. Dingle, *Black Enterprise Titans of the B.E. 100s: Black CEOs Who Redefined and Conquered American Business*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1999).

[157] Les Brown, "Radio Drama Makes Comeback In Wake of Popular CBS Show: A Shift in Format Target Age Group," *The New York Times*, 2 May 1974, 95.

[158] Michael Keith, *Voices in the Purple Haze*, (Westpoint, CT: Praeger, 1997).

[159] Jacob Smith, *Spoken Word: Postwar American Phonograph Cultures* (University of California, 2011).

[160] John J. O'Connor, "It Isn't Only the Door That Creaks, The Content Does, Too," *The New York Times*, 20 January 1974, 117.

However, by 1975, *CBSMT* was the only program out of all of these productions that had not been cancelled.

CBSMT was broadcast seven nights a week beginning on January 6, 1974,[161] and owes its endurance to several factors. While all of the other creative radio programs mentioned above where produced by independent production companies and then distributed by networks, CBS Radio invested in the program directly, producing it in-house at Studio G on the 6th floor of the CBS Radio Annex on East 52nd Street. [162] CBS also placed a great deal of financial support behind *CBSMT* and used the program to launch the CBS Radio Drama Network, CBS' first venture into program segmentation for niche audiences. CBS Radio's heavy promotion of *CBSMT* prompted NBC Radio's Vice President and General Manager at the time, Russ Tornabene, to say "All the publicity and promotion you're seeing about this resurgence of radio drama has been mainly generated by CBS itself…CBS is spending a lot of money to put this thing over because they know they're taking a very big risk."[163] However, in addition to the promotional support of CBS Radio, *Mystery Theater* succeeded because of the experience of its producer Himan Brown.

CBS emphasized Himan Brown's role as *CBSMT*'s producer and director in most of the show's promotional material and popular press coverage. Himan Brown had a reputation in the radio industry as a producer from his work during the network radio era.[164] Brown had created and produced the *Inner Sanctum Mystery* series, which ran on NBC radio from 1941 to 1951, and became very much associated with the quality horror genre. Brown is said to have invented the eerie creaking door keynote sound that introduced each new episode of *Inner Sanctum*, and he recycled this sonic element as the opening sound of *CBSMT*. *CBSMT*'s use of the creaking door opener, its generic similarities to *Inner Sanctum*, as well as Himan Brown's association with the classic radio era led *New York Times* commentator John J. O'Connor to write that "Brown is not starting where television content currently ends. He is going back to where radio left off. Rather than extending the potential of radio drama, he is merely reviving the content of the thirties and the forties."[165] However, his experience and reputation assured CBS Radio and the program's sponsors of his ability, and his popular persona as a well-known radio auteur mitigated CBS' risk investing in creative radio.

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[161] "Programing: Nightly radio dramas coming to CBS Radio," *Broadcasting*, 24 September 1973, 60.
[162] Tony Roberts, "A Day in the Life of 'The Radio Mystery Theater': 'Radio Mystery Theater,'" *The New York Times*, 18 June 1978, D31.
[163] "Radio Drama: Renaissance or brief sojourn in nostalgia?" *Broadcasting*, 22.

CBSMT found a loyal listenership despite O'Connor and other's pronouncements that the program was out-of-date.[166] And advertiser's willingness to invest in *CBSMT* was perhaps propelled by Himan Brown's reputation and high audience ratings, which led to the full booking of the series' first year of advertising spots after four months on the air.[167] In its third season, *CBSMT* boasted a monthly cumulative audience of 14 million listeners, [168] and although this had dropped to eight million by 1979, [169] *CBSMT*'s high ratings demonstrated that U.S. listeners were still very much interested in radio drama. Well known actors like Agnes Moorhead, John Forsythe, Fred Gwynne, Morgan Fairchild, John Lithgow, and Tony Roberts regularly appeared on episodes, and the show was hosted by theater, film and television star E.G. Marshall.

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[164] "Programing: Nightly radio dramas coming to CBS Radio," *Broadcasting*.
[165] Ibid.
[166] When *CBSMT* was first broadcast along with *Zero Hour*, *National Lampoon's Comedy Hour*, and *Sounds of the City*, *Time Magazine* critic Stefan Kanfer considered the resurgence of radio drama as evidence of radio's giant step backwards, this piece is cited in "Radio Drama: Renaissance or brief sojourn in nostalgia?" *Broadcasting.*
[167] Brown, "Radio Drama Makes Comeback In Wake of Popular CBS Show."
[168] "Another door opens in radio's theater of the mind," Broadcasting, 21 February 1977, 56 – 57.

CBS Mystery Theater was an anthology series that aired self-contained stories for affiliates who subscribed to the CBS Radio Drama Network seven nights a week. During its eight-year run from 1974 – 1982, 1399 episodes were produced. The aesthetic style had some similarities to *Inner Sanctum* and other classic thrillers, while storylines reflected the political and cultural context of the mid 1970s and early 1980s by referencing South American juntas, growing distrust in the government, and Cold War anxieties about nuclear war. Himan Brown produced the show on a small budget, fully taking advantage of radio drama's economy of scale. Actors were paid scale, regardless of experience or star power, and they frequently played double or triple parts in an episode.[170] Episodes were rehearsed, recorded and produced over approximately two and a half hours, and this short time commitment, along with the aural nature of a medium that did not require costume, hair or lightening preparation, encouraged local New York actors like Julie Harris or Tony Roberts to participate in a *CBSMT* episode even while engaged in other stage, film or television projects.

Once it was evident that this was not a short-lived fluke, CBS Radio decided to capitalize on its success and add additional creative radio programs to the CBS Radio Drama Network. CBS Radio president Samuel Cooke Digges told *Broadcasting*

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[169] Edwin McDowell, "Sears Is Innovating With Radio: Drama Utilized In Ad Strategy," 8 May 1979, *The New York Times*, D5.

[170] Tony Roberts, "A Day in the Life of 'The Radio Mystery Theater': 'Radio Mystery Theater,'" *The New York Times*, 18 June 1978, D31.

magazine in 1978 that "With the success of the *CBS Mystery Theater,* which will celebrate its fifth anniversary in January, we have learned that there is a large and enthusiastic audience for radio drama."[171] The *General Mills Radio Adventure Theatre,* sponsored by General Mills and produced by its ad agency, Dancer, Fitzgerald, Sample was broadcast from 1977-8. The series was conceived as a fantasy program airing Saturday and Sunday evenings aimed at a niche youth demographic of children 7 – 14 years old.[172] Himan Brown had pitched the show to General Mills and also acted as producer of the series, and Tom Bosley, the actor known at the time for playing the father on *Happy Days,* was hired as the program's host.[173] General Mills pulled out as a sponsor after 52 episodes, and the series went into reruns for affiliates as *The CBS Radio Adventure Theater* for the 52 remaining episodes of the year. The *Sears Radio Theater* was added to the CBS Radio Drama Network in 1979, produced by radio drama veterans Elliot Lewis and Fletcher Markle in Hollywood. *Sears Radio Theater*'s format was a Monday through Friday evening program. It boasted new scripts from well-known writers like Norman Corwin and Arch Oboler and featured famous actors like Andy Griffiths, Vincent Price, Cicely Tyson and Richard Widmark as episode hosts. [174] Sears produced this program in an attempt to target a quality audience of "those adults who are not glued to the television screen night and day."[175] And CBS Radio attempted to frame *Sears Radio Theater* as a high quality show by promoting it as an inventive and pioneering program, with advertising copy like, "This is the time for an innovative company to take advantage of radio's new vitality. And Sears is the company."[176] CBS did not renew the program for a second season, and its was relocated to the Mutual Broadcasting System who picked it up in 1980. Sears remained the single sponsor at Mutual, which mainly ran repeats, followed by a short spurt of new productions, before cancelling the program in 1981.[177] A year later, CBS dropped *CBS Mystery Theater*,[178] although *CBSMT* would return to the air when radio syndicator Dick Brescia Associates bought the rights to syndicate rebroadcast of the show on a market-by-market basis in 1988.[179]

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[171] "Another big drama for CBS Radio," Broadcasting, 2 October 1978, 53.
[172] "Another door opens in radio's theater of the mind," *Broadcasting*, 21 February 1977, 56 – 57.
[173] Ibid.
[174] "Veterans of Radio Create New Series," *The New York Times,* 4 December 1978, C20.
[175] Ibid.

Conclusion

1963 and 1982 marks the first cycle of creative radio programs made within the post-network era in the United States. The production of network radio dramas like *Theater 5*, *Earplay*, and *CBS Mystery Theater* demonstrate that creative radio did not die in the United States after the advent of television, yet their production had to be negotiated amid the new post-network radio industry logics that favored narrowcasting, conceived of audiences as distracted listeners, and associated creative radio with the outdated practices and technologies of the radio network era. This first cycle of production disappeared from U.S. network radio after the cancellation of *Earplay* by NPR in 1981 and *CBSMT* by CBS Radio in 1982. However, creative radio continued to be broadcast in the United

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[176] "CBS Radio Network Ad," *Broadcasting*, 5 February 1979, 8.

[177] John Dunning, *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[178] "American Public Radio Extending Its Network," *The New York Times*, 10 August 1983.

[179] Radio syndication firm launched by former CBS executive, *Broadcasting*, 4 April 1988, 113.

States via the syndication of "old-time radio" programs, as well as the original production of one-off productions or short mini-series, such as the NPR series of radio specials that included a recreation of the 1938 *Mercury Theater of the Air*'s "The War of Worlds" play in 1988 starring Jason Robards in the role Orson Welles originally played, with a supporting cast that included Terry Gross and Hector Elizondo. And, while creative radio has never retained its position as the dominant entertainment genre in the United States, it continues to be produced as a residual art form, as I discuss in chapter five with an analysis of a second cycle of creative programs like *Prairie Home Companion* and *This American Life* that drew on the stylistic aesthetics of creative radio to tell aural stories to their listeners. And in this way, their presence and popularity is a sonic reminder of creative radio's legacy and continued presence on the fringes of U.S. radio culture

For some radio enthusiasts, the sparse offerings of scripted radio in the post-network era were not enough. The syndication of classic radio in the post-network era exposed a new generation of audiophiles to what was now being called "old-time radio," and they came together to share and exchange recordings of radio. The rise of hi-fi audio culture and home recording technologies during the 1950s as an affective attachment to radio entertainment was heightened by its neglect and disavowal by the broadcast industries led to the historical formation of a large and active community of radio collectors. These collectors searched out and obtained physical transcription discs of their favorite radio shows from local radio stations and radio producers. The lack of available commercial recordings of radio encouraged radio fans to reformat recordings from transcription discs to reel-to-reel tape and exchange them with each other. Many radio fans developed techniques to counter the fragility of analog sound recordings and attempt to duplication high quality copies of classic radio programs.

The development and practices of a radio bootleg culture sheds light on another important history within the cultural afterlife of classic radio. In the next chapter, I trace the origins and practices of this community of radio bootleggers from the 1950s through to the early 1980s. This is the first academic account of the OTR fan community, and by shedding light on how classic radio become a site for engagement with radio history, technology and interpersonal connection. Chapter two expands our understanding of how radio as a material object has been circulated through audience communities as bootleg commodity outside official media industry channels.

Chapter 2

The Historical Formation of a Bootleg Radio Collecting Culture

In 1971, radio fan Sal Trapani published an open plea in the old-time radio fanzines *Epilogue* and *Hello Again* to organize and support a convention for "golden radio buffs."[180] *Epilogue*'s editor George Jennings added a note under Trapani's piece writing, "we are reaching a stage of development in the collecting of old radio where there should (sic) be enough interested parties to support the convention theme."[181] Indeed, by the early 1970s fandom surrounding the collection and trading of classic network era radio had exploded. Local OTR fan clubs existed in many major cities, including Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Denver, Buffalo, and San Francisco. Several prominent fanzines and newsletters produced for OTR collectors were being published and distributed. And in October 1971 the first radio fan convention was held in New Haven, Connecticut. Initially titled the Society of American Vintage-Radio Enthusiasts Convention, this would later transition to be called the Friends of Old Time Radio Convention in 1976, and it would be held in the tri-state area annually until 2011. This community of radio enthusiasts and collectors played a key role in the preservation and availability of radio recordings from the network era for generations of scholars and listeners.

This chapter investigates the history of the US radio fan community that circulated residual radio from the classic network era via the collection and trading of bootleg radio recordings in the post-network radio era. I examine the historical formation of this audience community during the post-war electronics boom and hi-fidelity movement. I then map out the common practices distinct to collecting and trading bootleg radio, considering the productive nature of finding, collecting, classifying, recording and (re)making meaning out of classic radio programs. I then conclude by considering the significance of capturing radio programs on tape and exchanging them within a community. For, when radio enters into the system of a collection culture, I argue that radio transcends the ordinary, everyday flow of a broadcast medium and enters the realm of the exceptional as a concrete object longed for, desired, and collected by fans.

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[180] Sal Trapani, "Convention?" *Epilogue*, Spring 1971, 13.
[181] Ibid.

This chapter focuses primarily on a connected, social community of radio fans in the United States in the 1970s. As I shall make clear, collecting radio begins much earlier; however, the community grew exponentially in the 1970s in the wake of connectivity via fanzines, fan broadcasts, and conventions, and laid the foundation for many of the fan practices that continue to be prevalent today amid a digital culture of old-time radio enthusiasts. Our current audio environment is distinguished by creative story-telling podcasts like *Serial*, *Comedy Bang Bang*, *The Truth* and others, which enjoy loyal and deeply engaged niche audiences. The affective relationship between audiences and creative radio is not a new phenomenon, and we cannot truly understand the fandom that surrounds creative audio without considering the history of fan communities' relationship with radio entertainment.

As Barbra Klinger has noted, fans' intense, affective relationship to media texts is often, at least partially, attributed to their ability to acquire the object of their fandom and repetitively consume it.[182] And, usually, in turn, fans contribute in circulating the original media text(s) as well as derivative fan texts, such as fan art and fan vids, amid a larger participatory fan community. In chapter one, I discussed the syndication of network era creative radio programs via radio distributors who dubbed transcription discs on to reel-to-reel tapes and sold them to local markets on a spot basis. Thus, while radio, especially that of the classic network era, may be widely thought of as an ephemeral medium, at least some of it, especially the more popular productions, were recorded for a producer's archive for copyright purposes, on transcription discs and later on tape. For the most part, these recorded programs were not commercially released, and only a few were being rebroadcast in syndication during the 1960s, 70s, 80s and beyond. In an attempt to capture and re-listen to creative radio at self-selected times, a subculture of radio fans began collecting and trading bootlegged recordings of classic radio as early as the 1930s; this practice became more common as home recording equipment became available for consumers.

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[182] Barbara Klinger, "Becoming cult: *The Big Lebowski*, replay culture and male fans," *Screen*, 51, no. 1 (2010): 1 – 20.

The research in this chapter draws on the OTRR's fanzine publication archives, a searchable online repository of old-time radio fanzines, ranging from 1970 to the present.[183] This archive composes collections of over twenty different publications, including several that are still published today; however, this chapter is primarily concerned with the formation of the fan culture and the emergence of a community that came to understand themselves as "old-time radio" fans between1970 – 1982, and thus focuses on the fanzines published during that time period. Many of the practices developed by OTR fans between 1970 and 1982 were foundational and continue to shape the fandom today, as I explore in my next chapter, which is focused on the adaptation of OTR fan practices within digital culture.

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[183] See my bibliography for a full list of the digitized OTR fanzine archives I analyzed for this research.

Relying on fanzines has both methodological strengths and weaknesses. As traces of a fan community, these publications allow insight into how radio fans performed their identity, how they addressed each other as fellow radio fans, and the main practices fans valued. The historical archive of OTR fanzines also provides access to some of the discussions and debates fans had over the meaning and uses they found through classic network radio. Fanzines do not paint a comprehensive picture of this fan community in its entirety, especially as I limited my research to those fanzines that were nationally distributed and had larger circulations, such as *Epilogue*, *Radio Dial*, *Hello Again*, *Airwaves*, and *Collector's Corner*. The work in this chapter is based on reading over 250 fanzine issues from these publications. Thus, while my depiction of the formation, productivity, and cultural significance of the old-time radio fan community is certainly not complete, it does shed light on one of the oldest existing bootleg fan communities in the United States that formed around broadcast programming.

Radio collecting, home recording and the development of a bootleg radio culture

Collecting and sharing bootleg recordings of radio shows is intricately intertwined with the history of home recording technology's development in the United States. American hobbyists began the widespread collection of radio recordings after the introduction of reel-to-reel magnetic tape home recording equipment in the late 1940s by companies like Ampex and 3M. However, the idea of home audio recording equipment existed prior to this as a highly desirable goal by those involved in sound recording technology industries. Jonathan Sterne has noted that recordable wax cylinders and gramophone technology were originally marketed to home consumers as a way to record loved ones' voices for posterity beyond death.[184] The first commercially released home recorder is considered to be the Edison Home Phonograph, released by Thomas Edison's National Phonograph Company in 1893, which allowed users to both record and play back wax cylinders.[185] The first home disc recorder in the United States was sold by Pathé in 1922, and allowed users to record 90 seconds on each side of a 7-inch aluminum disc.[186] In addition to the short duration of recorded sound, these discs would wear out after only a few uses. The use of home recording equipment to capture radio broadcasts began in the 1930 when machines were designed and sold that could accept signal inputs from sources other than a microphone. Companies like RCA Victor began selling radio-phonograph consoles for home use in the early 1930s; for instance, RCA's 1931 Model R 57 home recording system allowed users to record radio broadcasts off-air onto soft, plastic pre-grooved discs.[187] The increase of instantaneous recording equipment within the professional sound recording community through the 1930s led to an increased interest in amateur home recording, as companies like RCA, Remco and Universal Microphone began to sell high-end radio-phonograph consoles for home use in the late 1930s.[188]

The introduction of quality home recording equipment into the consumer marketplace occurred as radio ascended to become the dominant medium for entertainment, news, and public discourse in the United States. *Variety* first reported on the growth of radio collecting as a hobby on November 30, 1938.[189] Due to the expense and difficulty of obtaining broadcasts recorded on transcription discs, radio collection at the time was mainly limited to a small circle of radio executives, producers and performers. Beyond industry insiders, several underground radio bootleggers existed who sold records of radio programs to a few select customers, as *Variety* reported in 1938:

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[184] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[185] Morton, op. cit.
[186] George A. Blacker, "A History of Home Recording," *Audio*, April 1975, 29 - 34.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Morton, op. cit.

> [T]he platters are exceptionally high priced and difficult for the uninitiated to obtain. Reason is [sic] that the selling of such recordings is contrary to copyright law and might be liable to heavy penalty. In general, therefore, only small fly-by-night outfits are engaged in the business and they operate very much on the sneak. Only a limited number of persons well known to such operators can obtain the transcriptions, even at the steep prices.[190]

Bootleggers would obtain transcription discs and produce copies, selling them at the high price of $10 apiece for each transcription of 15-minute broadcasts. The most sought-after recordings in November 1938 were reported to be *The Mercury Theater of the Air*'s "War of the Worlds" episode, King Edward VIII's abdication, the Hindenburg Zeppelin explosion, sports broadcasts, and music recordings, such as NBC's Toscanini series.[191] Radio collecting may have begun prior to 1938, but it is evident that at this time obtaining recordings was prohibitively expensive and access to original transcription discs or copies was restricted to a small social network of hobbyists.

The introduction of reel-to-reel tape recording technology in the late 1940s enabled the growth of the radio collection hobby. This is because fans would use reel-to-reel tape to record radio programs off the air (air checks) or to reformat transcription discs onto reel-to-reel tape, and then duplicate recordings to trade and exchange with each other. Thus, the circulation of recorded radio programs within the OTR fan community has primarily been the circulation of bootlegged recordings never commercially released. Typically, bootlegging has been associated with recorded music and the circulation of live concerts or studio outtakes never officially released for the public.[192] Because bootlegged recordings produced by amateurs violate copyright laws, bootlegging is usually a small-scale activity; the people who buy recordings of bootlegged music are understood as "extremely committed fans who use bootlegs as a way of maintaining an ongoing, meaningful relationship with their favored artists or bands."[193] This definition of bootleg culture can certainly be applied to the collection and circulation of classic radio recordings. There are various modes and hierarchies within the OTR fan community; however, the prominent high-volume traders spend an incalculable amount of time and money on recording equipment, research, tracking down unavailable recordings, and connecting with other collectors and traders. This labor and expense evinces their investment in the OTR community. The practices of trading bootlegged radio differ from those of music fandom and bootleg. The OTR fan community developed within the post-network era, and their practices and interactions were specific to the act of recording, duplicating, and trading broadcast programs.

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[189] Variety, "Radio Collector's Items," November 30, 1938, 35.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

The fan communities participating in radio bootlegging have primarily been focused on creative radio programs rather than news or actuality, including scripted drama, comedy, horror, romance and western shows. Some small pockets of fans have simultaneously or exclusively focused on collecting recordings of big band remotes or news, while other heavy collectors have been devoted to any recordings of vintage radio regardless of genre. For instance, in an 1978 OTR fanzine article, radio fan Frank Gilmore confessed his penchant for any rare recording, and reminisced about once trading for a 1959 Armed Forces Radio Service recording of stock market prices, "…that one was a real loser, but I didn't have it so I got it."[194] Recordings of stock price reports are an outlier in the OTR community. Most radio collectors have focused on scripted entertainment radio, and the practice of collecting these programs has been shaped by the seriality of popular creative radio programs. Many of the most popular programs in the OTR community, like *The Jack Benny Show*, *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*, *Suspense*, or *I Love A Mystery* ran for many years and produced hundreds of episodes. The quality thriller program *Suspense*, for instance, ran from 1942 to 1962 on the CBS radio network, during which approximately 942 hour-long episodes were produced. The sheer volume associated with collecting this magnitude of radio broadcasts made collecting full seasons prohibitive until the introduction of reel-to-reel magnetic tape and recording equipment into the consumer market for home use.

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[192] Lee Marshall, "The Effects of Piracy Upon the Music Industry: a Case Study of Bootlegging," Media Culture and Society," 26, no. 2 (2004): 163 – 181.
[193] Ibid.

Magnetic tape recording equipment was introduced into the consumer marketplace for use in home audio recording in 1946. This is significant, as the time period was defined by several intersecting factors, including the broadcast networks' diversification into television programming as well as the high fidelity movement and the post-war boom in marketing and selling consumer electronics. As I argue in my first chapter, this is really the first wave of post-network broadcasting, and was a time when creative radio programming was discursively framed as outdated by the broadcast networks in their efforts to lure advertisers to the new medium of television. However, radio did continue to be produced, and American radio broadcasters began using taped recordings for their broadcasts in 1946.[195] Recording engineers in radio and music production formed the initial community of high-fidelity hobbyists, who were driven by scientific ideologies of truth in sound recording, and thus believed that recordings of radio and music should be as close as possible to the sound of the "original" performance. With access to the latest professional-grade technologies, these sound engineers sought to widen the frequency range of sound recordings, while also eliminating distortion and background noise.[196] These efforts led to the formation of a culture of audiophiles who published how-to articles on improving recording technologies' sound fidelity and building equipment at home in technical magazines like *Radio-Television News*, *FM*, *Audio Engineering*, and *Electronics*. The consumer marketplace was flooded in 1949 "…with relatively low-cost, open-reel recorders offered by a host of mostly forgotten manufacturers such as Pentron, Webster-Chicago, Revere, Ferrograph, and others."[197] For the most part, however, the high-fidelity community of the late 1940s and 1950s remained a specialized hobby comprised of technological enthusiasts who were usually professionally connected to sound recording.[198]

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[194] Frank Gilmore, "Advice to the new…and not so new… collector," *Collector's Corner*, December 1978, 8-9.

Hi-fi culture developed amid radio and music enthusiasts at the same period that radio programming began to shift in response to post-network industrial changes. Within the hi-fi community, small factions of technological enthusiasts began to assemble sound systems containing transistor radios, loudspeakers, and tape recording decks to capture different genres of creative radio programs. Post-network radio industrial shifts actually provided some radio collectors the opportunity to obtain copies of original transcription discs as both broadcast networks and local stations gave away or threw away original recordings of old broadcasts.

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[195] Morton, op. cit.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid. 134.
[198] Ibid.

The radio industry's lack of interest in distributing radio recordings did not hinder the circulation of programs via bootlegged copies among radio fans for playback at home or in social gatherings. In fact, the underground nature of obtaining bootleg radio recordings fueled some collectors who enjoyed the challenge of hunting for rare programs. Most classic radio programs were owned by their sponsors, whose primary goal was selling products, not distributing media, and thus these companies were largely uninterested in selling recordings of a radio show after it aired. The radio industry's ostensible abandonment of creative radio in the post-network era led many radio collectors to make sense of their work collecting, recording and trading classic radio as historical preservation. And the scarce availability of radio recordings led hobbyists to form clubs and enthusiast groups to exchange and trade bootleg recordings with each other. The use of reel-to-reel magnetic tape had become commonplace and mainstream by the early 1960s. At this time, network radio companies had all but ceased broadcasting original creative radio productions. Radio syndicators like CMI were reviving the broadcast of classic network programs like *The Shadow* and *The Green Hornet*, and the community of OTR fans expanded and began to organize informal networks outside of mainstream commercial culture to collect, trade, discuss and exult classic creative radio. Local and national groups formed, several fans began publishing fanzines and organizing conferences, while others used their collections to broadcast their own "old-time radio" shows in their local communities.

Connectivity and community through "old-time radio"

With the ascent of competing entertainment technologies, fans felt a more pressing motivation to persevere in collecting what they considered to be an art form increasingly neglected and overlooked by the broadcasting industry. One of the first social clubs to coalesce around collecting and trading radio recordings was the Radio Historic Society of America (RHSA), forming on August 26th, 1956, as a group of 50 OTR fans in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois joined together to trade tapes with each other.[199] The group began publishing the quarterly newsletter *Radio Dial* in 1967, and it ran until the group dismantled in 1976 in the wake of health programs faced by the club's director and newsletter editor and publisher, Charles Ingersoll.[200] RHSA members received "official" certificates that conferred upon them membership in a society "Dedicated to the Preservation and Restoration of Old Time Radio Programs and Personalities."[201] RHSA's *Radio Dial* is generally considered to be the first newsletter that connected radio fans across geographical distance as a forum tailored specifically for those invested in the hobby of collecting radio recordings.

Radio Dial was mainly printed as a service to members to connect with each other so they could trade programs and expand their radio library. The fact that radio recordings, for the most part, were never commercially released made the hobby of collecting classic radio a collaborative endeavor that necessitated connecting with other fans to trade or buy bootlegged recordings to complete any personal collection. *Radio*

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[199] Charles Ingersoll, "The Last Page," *Radio Dial* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 26.
[200] Jay Hickerson, "A Personal Message," *Hello Again* 5, no. 5 (May 1974): 1. "Publications and Clubs," *Hello Again* 7, no. 6 (June 1976): 1.
[201] See Figure 2.1 in Appendix 2.

Dial also came to function as space for radio fans to come together and establish a community. The publication was a collaboratively authored, with editor Charles Ingersoll soliciting reader submissions in each publication. Thus, the newsletter always included articles submitted and written by fans that relayed the history of a specific program, radio event, or obituary of a radio personality, as well as contributor articles that recounted memories of listening to classic radio shows when they were originally aired. *Radio Dial* also featured a column aptly titled "Creepers Corner" that published the names of disreputable individual traders, dealers and companies reported by RHSA members as not delivering radio recordings they had ordered. Interspersed throughout each edition were short reader letters thanking Ingersoll for the service RHSA provided in connecting radio fans, announcements of new RHSA members, and short requests from collectors searching for specific programs. One such request from the spring 1970 issue of *Radio Dial* exemplifies this early form of crowdsourcing, "WANTED: More copies of the 'Life With Luigi' radio show. I have 'Beach Party' and 'The Singer.' If you have more write: Cortlandt Parent, Jr. RFD#1, Crompond Road, Peakskill, N.Y. 10566." RHSA connected members like Cortlandt Parent with other radio fans across the United States, as well as with a few members in Canada, and the occasional expatriate as far away as Mexico or Zambia.

Between 1966 and 1976, at least ten widely dispersed OTR fanzines, newsletters or magazines were founded and began circulating in the United States. [202] Regional enthusiast groups and collectors' clubs formed in New York City, Buffalo, Dallas, Chicago, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Englewood, Colorado and elsewhere. Conventions were organized in various parts of the country, including the annual Friends of Old Time Radio Convention held in Connecticut, New York or New Jersey; the Old Time Radio Nostalgia Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio; and the Los Angeles-based group Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy Convention (SPERDVAC), all of which continued for at least twenty years, and the latter of which continues to be held today. Via fanzines and conferences, old-time radio fans began to form a social network of radio collectors that found ways to overcome geographical distance to make meaningful connections with each other. One of the more unconventional methods radio fans used to communicate was amateur radio.

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[202] See Figure 2.2 in Appendix 2 for an overview of the major fanzines during this period.

The ORCAT (Old-time Radio Collectors and Traders) group began in the early 1970s, when two OTR fans that were also ham radio enthusiasts began using ham radio to discuss old-time radio. They appealed to other collectors who were looking for an opportunity to meet and learn about other collections in real time, without waiting to attend a convention or for the people to answer a fanzine ad by mail. In 1973, seven Orcats (as they came to call themselves[203]) across seven different states were meeting Sunday mornings at 9 am Eastern Standard Time over ham radio on the 7.24 MHz frequency. [204] By 1980, they were meeting on Sunday mornings and Thursday nights, and there were 19 participants across nine states and Canada, not including those listeners who may have been tuning into the meetings without participating. This community over the airwaves allowed collectors to hear about the discovery of uncirculated programs in other parts of the country, discuss and troubleshoot technical issues like duplicate recording, double speeding, tape quality, and more issues related to the hobby. The Orcats also organized a round robin buying group, in which members would buy a recording from an OTR dealer, one not held in anyone's collection, make a copy for themselves and then send it around to group participants to duplicate for themselves. With 19 participants, this would result in the addition of 19 new programs to a collection for the cost of one and some blank tape. ORCAT was not the only group to organize group buying; RHSA offered members a round robin trading group, as did the fanzine *Collectors Corner*, while other collectors formed lending libraries and buying groups within their local community or OTR club.

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[203] Ken Piletic, "What is an ORCAT?" *Collector's Corner*, April 1980, 18 – 21.
[204] "OTRCAT," *Hello Again* 4, no. 4 (April 1973): 6.

Connectivity and community within the old-time radio community was structured and shaped by trading sound recordings and by the specific conditions of collecting classic, network-era radio recordings. Fans' primary routes for collecting radio included taping programs off the air from rebroadcasts; finding or buying transcription discs at local radio stations, second hand shops, and other secondary markets; or buying recordings from old-time radio dealers. In this way, collecting was influenced by the logics of the broadcast industry in the United States, which was uninterested in commercially releasing relics from the past. Beyond discovery, those who desired to acquire and classify recordings of classic radio programs for their collections had to contend with the seriality of creative radio, the fragility of recorded sound, and the technology of hi-fidelity equipment required to participate in a community where the collection of new programs was primarily dependent on duplicating and trading material from one's own library. The goal of a "good" collection within the OTR community varied dependent on individual taste and preference, audition abilities and the desire for a specific level of sound quality. Many collectors sought to own the complete run of a series, or multiple series, and this required episode guides to both seek out recordings, as well as to classify, organize, and catalogue one's own collection.

Certainly, OTR fans were very productive in the extensive number of fanzines that were published, often at home using a mimeograph machine. Beyond this, as Belk notes, even the act of collecting is an act of production, because as they actively and selectively acquire objects for their collection, "Collectors create, combine, classify, and curate the objects they acquire in such a way that a new product, that collection, emerges. In the process, they also produce meanings."[205] I conclude this chapter by considering the work that OTR fans did during the 1970s to make sense and produce new meanings for old time radio. Before I do this, I will chart out how radio fans were productive through the labor and the work of collecting and seeking out radio recordings. Radio fans were also productive in creating a historical record through the production of episode guides, while also being productive in their work creating new methods for cleaning up and improving sound quality through a do-it-yourself approach to constructing sound systems, augmenting sound recording practices, selecting blank tape, and other techniques that essentially produced new artifacts of sound.

The work of collecting radio

This section will explore where radio recordings came from and the work radio fans did to introduce classic radio recordings into circuits of trade and collection. The need to seek out and uncover old recordings of radio for the purpose of reformatting vinyl electronic transcription discs onto reel-to-reel tape and then circulating these bootleg copies among a community of radio collectors is one element that distinguished OTR fandom from other prominent fandoms centered on a media text during the mid-Twentieth century. Many OTR collectors, of course, never sought out transcription disks, and built their radio collections by purchasing taped recordings from one of the many unofficial, unlicensed dealers that appeared in the 1960s and '70s. These dealers were usually radio fans themselves who had amassed a large collection, and were attempting to capitalize on their investments by duplicating radio tapes on-demand for other fans. Dealers mainly advertised in OTR fanzines, as well as through nostalgia book clubs, classic movie nostalgia clubs, and more general audio culture publications. These ads usually appealed to fans by touting their own identity as OTR fans, and their attention to sound quality, a lamented uncertainty when trading with other fans.

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[205] Richard Belk, *Collecting in a consumer society*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 55.

For instance, a 1974 ad for the dealer Remember Radio published at the back of the fanzine *Hello Again* exemplifies this practice of appealing to the desire for fidelity and the presentation, on behalf of dealers, of being fans that participated in the OTR community. The dealer, Don Maris, formatted Remember Radio's ad as a letter to other collectors, explaining in detail how he first entered the hobby after reading an article about OTR collectors in the *Dallas Times Herald* in 1966. He then explained how he was initially invested in practicing law, but then found he loved OTR collecting and trading so much, he would rather make less money and focus on building his hobby into a business, going on to affirm his membership in the OTR fan community by writing "I get a kick out of sharing my love for these old programs with others. I am 38, and my fondest memories are listening to *Jack Armstrong*, *Tom Mix*, *Superman*, *The Aldrich Family*, etc.

etc."[206] He then goes on to explain Remember Radio's dedication to high quality sound, the ability for customers to select from several tape brands, while also offering buyers a free sample recording of *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Gangbusters* when they send off for a catalogue. In this advertisement, then, we can see that the line between dealing and trading is thin, since dealers were also radio collectors and fans; however, the extra expense of paying for recordings allowed consumers to hold their source accountable for a higher sound quality.

Many prominent fans and fanzine publishers were also selling bootlegged recordings from their own collection. For instance, when the fanzine *Airwaves* was founded in 1976, co-editors Jerry Chapman and Joe Webb both sold recordings of programs in their collection, and they advertised their companies, Airwaves and Old Radio Warehouse respectively, in their fanzine. Webb left *Airwaves* to collaborate on the OTR fanzine *Collector's Corner* with Bob Burnham in 1978, another young radio enthusiast who sold classic radio shows under the name BRC OTR Distributors. In addition, other fan-run companies operating in the 1970s included Golden Age Radio, Yesterday's Radio on Tape, Mar-Bren, Remember Radio, and more.

Like Remember Radio, these companies appealed to fans' desire for sound quality. For instance, an ad for BRC Distributors promised customers that all tapes are recorded on state-of-the-art equipment and off of re-mastered and re-equalized master tapes. The ad also adds that tapes are never recorded at high speed and are spot-checked during the recording process.[207] These selling points implicitly refer to a common malady affecting OTR recordings duplicated among traders on recordings three or four generations or more away from the original recording, with each duplication possibly adding a layer of hiss unless an equalizer was used as a filter between the master tape player and the recording deck.[208] As I discuss later in this chapter, OTR fans as a community were, and still are, preoccupied with sound quality. It was common practice for radio fans to be introduced to the hobby via a rebroadcast program, book club, or word of mouth, buy recordings from dealers to initially create their collection, and then purchase recording equipment and blank tape and begin trading with other collectors to expand their library.

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[206] Don Maris, Remember Radio Ad, *Hello Again* 5, no. 9 (May 1974): 5.
[207] "BRC Distributors Ad," *Collector's Corner*, (Summer 1982):16.

The question remains as to where these recordings originated, and how they re-entered popular culture as material sound recording collectors could hold in their hands and play at home. How did these shows go from being broadcast over the air during the classic network era, roughly 1927 – 1962, to becoming physical recordings collectors could amass and listen to on their own schedule? As mentioned earlier, radio collecting began as a hobby almost at the same moment as radio broadcasts began airing, as radio producers would sometimes take recordings home for their personal collection, and veteran radio producers would became a source for newer collectors in the 1960s and 70s to obtain recordings. As I also mentioned, some recordings entered circulation among radio collectors as programs recorded off the air, and this continued when classic radio programs were rebroadcast through second run syndication in the 1960s, ‘70s and later. In 1977, radio collector Jerry Chapman noted that several *Amos ‘n’ Andy* recordings circulating at the time were the result of home recording on 1930s rudimentary 7-inch disc cutters. [209] Most of the material that was being collected and traded as radio collecting began to expand as a hobby derived from air checks and from Armed Forces Radio Services (AFRS) recordings of shows that were sent abroad during WWII.[210]

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[208] Bob Burnham, “Collector’s Comments from Bob Burnham,” *Collector’s Corner,* (Summer 1982): 14-16.

Some of the recordings that circulated among collectors were the result of hunting for and discovering radio recordings that had been transcribed by the original producer or network. Because rare recordings were valued above those more commonly available, and also because bootlegging violated copyright, some collectors would remain anonymous and only duplicate newly discovered programs for a few friends. The infamous OTR collector J. David Goldin came to have a reputation in the community for obtaining networks' electronic transcriptions (ETs) directly from the networks in New York, and he was rumored to have illegally obtained ETs raiding the network archives,[211] although Goldin has denied this.[212] Goldin's actual participation in the OTR fan culture seems minimal, as he is never pictured in conference photos or listed in letters or announcements published in fan publications. He was primarily focused on his mainstream business, Radio Yesteryear, which sold compilations of classic radio via commercially packaged vinyl records. Goldin's source for material is at least questionable in light of the fact that the prolific radio writer Arch Oboler sued Goldin's Radio Yesteryear for $2 million dollars in 1980 for copyright violations.[213]

Serious radio collectors actively sought out original transcription disks, and did the work of reformatting them onto tape and circulating them among collectors. Some would publish their discovery but vaguely refer to their source in order to either retain access to the material for themselves, or to protect their source from copyright violation suits. For instance, Richard Hayes guardedly announced that he had obtained seventy-three rare uncirculated 16" electronic transcriptions "from a fellow in Hollywood" for $195 dollars.[214] Other fans would revel in their discoveries, and perform their labor hunting down old radio recordings by writing articles in fanzines. For instance, in 1978, Orcats members (the ham radio group mentioned earlier) Ken Piletic and Bill Jaker wrote the fanzine essay "The Saga of the Great Find" about unearthing 130 "lost" ET discs at a social welfare office housed in Fairmont, West Virginia, in what was once local radio station WMMN. Jaker had told Piletic during an ORCAT ham radio meeting about some old radio equipment at a local welfare office where he lived in West Virginia, and Piletic decided to drive from where he lived in Illinois to gather some materials for a sound recording studio he was building in his house. The two friends had never met in person before, only over-the-air; however, while exploring the welfare office, one of the staffers mentioned off-handedly that old discs had been left behind by the radio station that used to be housed in the welfare offices. "Piletic took all of the discs home to use his equipment to transfer the material from 16" electronic transcription disk to tape, and then Jaker agreed to duplicate the tapes for their collecting group. Yet, the chance of radio collectors stumbling across uncirculated radio recordings was small, and most collectors who actively pursued uncirculated recordings obtained them from local stations, radio actors, or other radio production workers who sold them on the black market.[215]

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[209] Jerry Chapman, "Collecting Marches On," *Airwaves*, (January 1977): 11

[210] Ibid. 11.

[211] Jerry Chapman, "Letters to the Editor," *Airwaves*, (April 1977): 9.

[212] J. David Goldin, "Where Do Old Radio Shows Come From?" Retrieved April 22, 2015 from http://www.radiogoldindex.com/frame1.html

[213] Joe Webb, "Oboler sues Radio Yesteryear," *Collector's Corner*, (Fall 1980):14.

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[214] Richard Hayes, "DISCover," *Epilogue* 4, (n.d.): 27 – 29.
[215] Chapman, "Letters to the Editor," *Airwaves*, (1977): 1.

Through the work of air checking programs, acquiring and reformatting transcription disks, and dealing and trading with other collectors, old-time radio fans created a shadow economy outside of the mainstream media industry. In fact, by defying the contemporary market logics of the post-network radio environment of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, radio fans' work acquiring and circulated recordings of classic network era programs worked in opposition and defiance of a broadcasting industry that no longer valued the art of creative radio. The broadcast companies, were, in fact, rumored to be throwing away recordings of classic radio to clear space in the 1970s although they also actively donated to several archives, including the Wisconsin Historical Society.[216] In the process of creating radio collections, OTR fans literally created a new value system for these residual artifacts in their post-broadcasting afterlife. Radio programs produced during the network era were initially valued for their ability to draw and keep an audience tuned into their program to hear radio sponsors' product advertisement, as well as to keep listeners tuned into the ongoing flow of station programming. In the OTR collection culture of the post-network era, these radio programs became valued for their scarcity as a physical sound recording commodity.

As a reflection of this, the OTR economy was mainly a bootleg economy centered on trade between collectors, and high value was placed on rare recordings. This is most evident in discussions of trading. For instance, when the collector Richard Hayes, mentioned above, advertised his accumulation of seventy-three 16-inch transcription discs containing uncirculated recordings of popular programs like *The Fred Allen Show*, he listed his specific trading conditions, stating "Since I had to buy these, I'd like to trade them on a 2 for 1 basis (unless you have similar material of excellent quality which I would be interested in). That is, for every hour I tape for you, you would tape two for me. Or you might send three blank reels of new tape (Mylar or Polyester other than Concert) for every tape I send you."[217] These sorts of stipulations were common among collectors, although it was more common for collectors to publish rare programs they were seeking rather than rare programs they were willing to trade. This sentiment that acquiring rare programs gave one the upper hand was repeatedly reflected in "how-to" guides and articles advising newcomers to the hobby on how to begin their collection.[218]

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[216] Goldin, op. cit. "Where Do Old Radio Shows Come From?"

Collector's work unearthing, air checking, and compiling radio recordings also resulted in the development of an unofficial archive of radio programs. Hilmes has noted that the critical neglect of radio's artistic legacy by the broadcast networks, U.S. governmental archives and institutions of memory and culture, as well as by academics, created an environment in which current practitioners and audiences are not aware of U.S. radio history.

> Most of the historical evidence of radio's first seven decades of innovation either disappeared into the ether at its moment of broadcast, or remains locked away behind obsolete and decaying technologies, languishing in little-consulted collections in scattered locations, largely isolated and in many cases uncatalogued and inaccessible[219]

Considering this, and the absolute dearth of any official radio archive in the United States, radio fans' collaborative work collecting radio created an unofficial archive that made broadcast recordings available to the general public. Today, radio fans upload their collections to websites like The Internet Archive, and have donated their collections to official archives, where students, scholars and others have access to radio programs produced in the classic network era. Considering the complete disinterest of the original producers and networks in preserving these recordings, scholars and newer OTR fans are certainly indebted to work radio collectors did in the mid and late twentieth century literally making radio recordings concrete objects that were then re-circulated in popular culture for the first time as published radio artifacts. The broadcast networks' and radio industries' disinterest in classic radio also posed another challenge for fans unique to collecting radio, which was the lack of any complete published episode guide to assist them in acquiring full series and organizing their collections.

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[217] Hayes, op. cit. "DISCover."

[218] Jerry Chapman, "Editorial," *Airwaves,* (February 1978): 2 – 4; Gilmore, op. cit. "Advice to the new…and not so new…collector," *Collector's Corner*, December 1978, 8-9.

[219] Michele Hilmes, "The lost critical history of radio," *Australian Journal Review*, 36, no. (2014): 11 – 22.

Producing radio history and structuring radio collection practices through "logs"

U.S. radio producers at the networks and at independent electronic transcription companies did not publish official episode guides for the series they broadcast. Instead, they announced episodes on a weekly basis in radio sections of the newspaper or other publications, as the programs aired. Radio collectors in the 1970s could have organized their personal catalogues by radio network or producer, star, or genre, but they instead focused on classifying collections by series name. This produced a culture of collecting radio fixated on completeness, specifically the completeness of a radio series. This preference was reproduced as new comers to the hobby were initiated to the pursuit of collecting old-time radio through a variety of "how-to" guides that were published in the 1970s.

Episode guides came to be called "logs" in the OTR community, an abbreviated slang for "program logs." Different from personal catalogs listing one's collection, or dealer catalogs listing program recordings available for sale, program logs provided collectors with in-depth episode guides that listed episode titles, broadcast dates, and other information, such as sponsor, network, main characters, and notable guest stars. Possessing a somewhat comprehensive list of a radio series' episodes over the duration of a program's run came to be considered a crucial tool by radio collectors due to the extensive program run of many popular shows, as well as the networks' policies prohibiting the broadcast of pre-recorded programs. This meant that programs were performed live twice a night, once for the East Coast and later for the West Coast, and when a popular script was repeated on a show, a new performance was produced. For instance, *Suspense*'s "Sorry, Wrong Number" was produced seven times over the course of the thriller anthology's 20-year run on CBS, and more than 125 scripts over all were reused on *Suspense* during this time period as well. Shows might also have episodes with similar titles, narratives, or even the same exact script and title. Radio writer and director Anthony Ellis reused his script for "The Cave," a show he originally directed for the program *Escape* in 1950, when he worked on *Suspense* in 1955 and again when he worked on the radio show *Romance* in 1956. These practices were products of the radio industry's economy, seriality, and perceived ephemerality. It was, of course, less expensive to pay the smaller residual to a writer for reusing a script than to commission a new one, and the intense work involved in rehearsing and making a new show every week made it conducive for producers to go back to reuse scripts. However, because radio was conceived of and programmed as an ongoing content flow, repeat performances were perceived as the only way listeners could re-listen to popular episodes.

These conditions, of course, created hazards for radio collectors in the post-network era who were usually piecing together their collection in small batches of recordings as they acquired them. Serious collectors desired all versions of an episode, conceptualizing them as new productions in their own right and taking pleasure in noting the minimal alterations made between versions. And so, radio collectors took it upon themselves to create program logs, or "logs" as they came to be known, as guides directing their acquisition.

OTR fans of the 1960s, 70s and 80s had to research information by hand to compile logs. This process included spending hours "searching though newspapers, radio magazines, books on radio history and encyclopedias and listening for clues in the broadcasts themselves. [220]" Many logs were also developed by collectors through deep listening sessions to unlabeled programs, and attempting to figure out the name and date of a program's episode, as well as the cast and other information, through the sonic elements in the recording. These methods meant that many logs circulating in the 1970s had misinformation or were incomplete. In general, the attempts to avoid mistakes by having as much contextual or metadata about each episode of a program meant that log drafts were (and still are) long. Fans who had invested time and money to research a log often sold their completed logs through fanzine ads. For instance, Charles Stumpf advertised his combined 125-page program log of *Ma Perkins*, *Little Orphan Annie*, and

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[220] Jay Hickerson, "Logs," *Hello Again*, 9 (3), March 1978, 2.

Heigh Ho Silver for $5 plus shipping and handling in 1972.[221] The amount of work and research involved in drafted and revising a log's episode guide led to collaboration between collectors on logs. For instance, Jay Hickerson, OTR collector and editor of the prolific fanzine *Hello Again,* wrote a log for *Suspense* that he revised collaboratively with four fellow radio fans. Fans' desire for access to logs also led many fanzines to publish them at the back of each issue, in on-going batches of short segments.

And Hickerson's *Suspense* log was published in small batches several pages long in the back of the fanzines *Airwaves* and *Collector's Corner*. This log was then also adopted and revised by members of the Los Angeles-based Society for the Preservation of Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy (SPERDVAC), whose members added to the log and the issued it as a complete *Suspense* program log for SPERDVAC members.[222]

These examples demonstrate the collaborative nature of collecting radio, beyond obtaining the actual recordings. Unlike commercially released media, like music albums, or comic books, there existed no printed catalogues to function as a guide for the sheer mass of radio programming produced during the network era. Fans' investment researching radio history, usually in their free time, not only created a roadmap for the radio fan to organize their collection and seek out missing episodes, but also functioned to create a radio archive, for all intents and purposes, in the absence of a more official centralized archive devoted to classic radio. As more shows came out and circulated through radio fans collections, collectors would either do research themselves or buy logs to strategically guide their trading.

Researching sound recordings presented unique difficulties for old-time radio fans, such as lack of announced credits on many, which made identification of writers and actors particularly difficult – not to mention erasure of production company/ad agency from explicit acknowledgement within the content of the program. Logs became a tool fans created to tame and control the chaos of unlabeled recorded radio recordings that circulated unevenly and usually severed from the sequence of their initial series run. The emergence of logs underscores the intentionality of radio collecting, reminding us of OTR fans' strategic work collecting recordings, strategies that were no doubt shaped by a program's initial popularity and success. Prime-time network fare from the classic radio era is still the most collected and valued entertainment within the OTR culture; is it any coincidence that programs like *Yours Truly*, *Johnny Dollar* or *Suspense* were both obtainable and desired by fans, while soap operas, children's programming and minority productions have not been as extensively collected? Long after the radio industries stopped caring about scripted radio programs, the work they did during the initial run of these series continued to shape the old-time radio bootleg culture that formed to preserve, collect and exalt entertainment radio. Logs were one site where taste cultures implicitly shaped the canon of radio programs sought after within the OTR culture. However, this was not a top-down fan community. OTR fans relied on the informal networks that emerged via conferences, clubs and fanzines to collaboratively create, exchange and buy program logs from one another, and differences in program tastes and collection practices co-existed within this community. One particular issue that emerged as a divisive issue in the 1970s the disagreement about "how" and "how much" to collect, which became a point of contention within the OTR community explicitly articulated with sound quality.

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[221] Jay Hickerson, "More Pubs," *Hello Again*, 3(7) July 1972, 2.
[222] Jay Hickerson, "Logs," *Hello Again*, 9 (3), March 1978, 2.

Repairing radio: Overcoming the fragility of captured sound through duplication techniques

In December 1977, the OTR fanzine *Hello Again* published an announcement from Bruce Ruggles that he was leaving the hobby and would stop trading in three months. Ruggles had been collecting since 1955, and gave the following as his reasons for leaving the community: "loss in quality in trading due to bulk traders, double speeding, cross-patching, [and] cassettes.[223]" Joe Webb reported a similar story in *Collector's Corner* in 1978, "Rex Miller has given up OTR…He got out of OTR because he was disappointed in the sound quality he received from other traders. He said to me 'Joe, how do you tell somebody their sound is bad without offending them?'" [224] Publicly announcing one's departure from the OTR community was an extreme way to discipline the unstandardized duplication practices fans used to trade programs with each other; however, it gets at the centrality of sound quality within this fandom.

OTR fanzines from the 1970s paint a picture of a community preoccupied with sound recording equipment and materials. Articles abound on topics related to tape quality, recording systems, improving sound quality, proper techniques for packing and sending tape in the mail, cleaning tape, saving money on equipment, avoiding cross-talk, etc. The general tenor of these articles ranges from helpful to resentful. Certainly, it would be misleading to extrapolate the activity presented in fan publications as representative of all radio collectors who traded classic network programs. Taken holistically, these discussions highlight the productivity of OTR fans in duplicating sound, specifically radio from early to mid Twentieth century. Older recordings of classic radio, especially from the twenties and thirties, were notoriously fragile, especially those that had deteriorated due to lack of preservation care. The practice of dubbing analog-to-analog copies within the OTR trading economy also led to the prevalence of generation loss as recordings were made further and further out from an initial recording dubbed from a master disc. OTR fans developed specific practices to combat the degradation and fragility of analog radio recordings that, in their goal to improve and enhance a recordings sound quality, were essentially an effort to repair radio. These processes included experimenting with home made equipment and techniques, discretion selecting tape, and double speeding during the duplication process.

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[223] Bruce Ruggles, "From Bruce Ruggles," *Hello Again,* 8(12), December, 1977.
[224] Joe Webb, "Letters from the Editor," *Collector's Corner*, December, 1978.

A significant number of old-time radio collectors were hi-fi enthusiasts, and they brought their audiophilic do-it-yourself approach to building sound systems to their work duplicating recordings for their own library, as well as those traded with other radio collectors. For instance, these amateur audio technicians constructed equalizing equipment to re-master old radio recordings to in order to reduce distorted noise. The fanzine *Airwaves* published a piece by one of its editors, Jerry Chapman, on equalizers arguing that "For voice and especially spotty quality old radio recordings, a change of EQ [equalizer] can mean the difference between an A and B rating." Chapman described himself as a technophile, who "slaved to acquire a top-sounding collection" and admitted that he got into the hobby because he liked the act of recording tape, "I bought signal processing equipment, JVC 5 band equalizer, Phase Linear Autocorrelator, SAE parametric equalizer, and the 'improving' bit of collecting both interested me, and made my collection more worth while in my eyes.[225]" Chapman represents a subset of the OTR community whose pleasure collecting radio was explicitly tied to the technological work he did to repair radio, and this was evident in the way that he addressed readers of *Airwaves*. He regularly reviewed new tape deck equipment, and advocated for the use of equalizers to reduce tape noise accumulated through generations of duplication, especially when that noise had become louder than the original signal.[226] In the January 1977 issue of *Airwaves*, Chapman published a diagram and guide for building a high frequency filter at home to reduce noise through duplication.

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[225] Jerry Chapman, "Editorial," *Airwaves*, June 1977, 2.

Chapman was not the only fan to publish do-it-yourself guides for other radio collectors to build or modify their sound system in order to eliminate hiss and other high frequency noise. In 1974, Ray Stanich advertised an article outlining the schematics of his own custom designed notch filter to the readers of *Hello Again*.[227] The use of sophisticated technical jargon that accompanied these pieces assumed that a significant portion of the OTR fan community would not only be familiar with high frequency filters and other hi-fi technological terms, but would also understand the techniques described to build one, and desired the benefits they provided. This is because it was generally assumed that participants in the OTR community should care about the sound quality of their collection. This assumption is evident in the fact that almost all personal collection catalogs used to trade and exchange recordings with other collectors included abbreviations to denote a recordings sound quality, some variation on Ex –Excellent, VG – Very Good, G=Good, F=Fair, P=Poor.[228]

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[226] Equalizers, *Airwaves,* August 1977, 8.
[227] Ray Stanich, “Ray Stanich,” *Hello Again*, 5(1), January, 1974.
[228] Jerry Chapman, “Standards of Old Radio Trading,” *Airwaves*, November 1976.

This obsession with attaining high quality radio duplications extended to the selection and use of magnetic tape. OTR fans deliberated over the quality of different magnetic tape brands, buying used tape, tape slicing and editing, and more. This is because magnetic tape was at the center of radio collecting until the introduction of compact disc recorders for home use in the late 1990s. The hi-fidelity association with reel-to-reel magnetic tape led to its prominent use by OTR collectors and traders. The introduction of the cassette cartridge and recorder into the domestic marketplace by Philips in 1962 eliminated the need to change reels and thread tape, and several OTR collectors, especially the younger participants, began to trade radio programs on cassette.[229] Professional recording studios continued to use reel-to-reel tape after cassettes became popular, as the technical capabilities of high-end consumer reel-to-reel recorders were considered to be much closer in quality to professional recording studios.[230] There also existed a perception that reels were more versatile and suited to the needs of OTR collectors, because you could augment the length of the reel to fit the number of radio programs you recorded. And, by the mid-1970s, fans could obtain better quality reel-to-reel tape by buying it in bulk new or used. In1978, OTR collector Frank Gilmore advised "heavy" traders like himself to contact radio stations to buy used high-grade mastering tape, erase it, and re-use it for their own collections.[231] Another other reason reel-to-reel tape remained popular was the fact that many collectors had invested a tremendous amount of money in their sound systems, and preferred to continue using a sound medium (reel-to-reel) that fit their systems. Thus, many radio fans continued to use reel-to-reel tape for their collections well into the 1980s and 90s and many still do today.

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[229] Marvin Camras, "State of the audiotape art," *IEEE Spectrum*, October 1977, 28 – 35.
[230] Marvin Camras, "State of the audiotape art," *IEEE Spectrum*, October 1977, 28 – 35.
[231] Frank Gilmore, "A Goldmine in Tape,"*Collector's Corner*, September 1978, 10 – 11.

Fanzines often published editorials on tape quality, and at the core of these discussions were the dueling considerations of sound quality and financial constraints. The autumn 1971 issue of *Radio Dial* published a note from one of its subscribers, Thomas A. Rockey, noting that he would no longer accept trades on a gray brand of tape that was sold under the names Concert, Shamrock, and Emerald. He cautioned other readers, "This tape does contain splices. In fact, sometimes you will even find a black oxide tape spliced to a brown oxide tape. Quite naturally, a difference in output level will be noticed. More so if the splice happens to come in the middle of a program. This tape is NOT permanently lubricated, and I have worn out Ampex heads to prove it.[232]" Rockey then recommended two dealers of used Scotch tape that provided what he believed to be a higher quality tape brand at a bargain price. Mel Schlank contributed an eight-page article on tape quality, in which he referred to Concert brand tape as "the scum of the industry. I have it on a good source, that any tape bearing the Concert name is tape rejected by other manufacturers as not being of suitable quality to bear their name.[233]" He went on to recommend several other tape brands, based on their range of products, availability, running time length, and his experience listening to their playback quality. Concert retained a poor reputation in the OTR community.[234] Other fans, such as George

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[232] *Radio Dial*, Autumn 1971.
[233] Mel Schlank, "Tape Tips," *Hello Again*, 3(7), July 1972, 10.
[234] In the results of an audience survey on tape brand preference, Jay Hickerson notes that the Shamrock and Concert brands were widely rejected, see Jay Hickerson, "Special Topic," *Hello Again*, 7(1), January 1976.

Jennings, the editor of the OTR fanzine *Epilogue*, defended his continued use of Concert in economic terms, writing

> I have personally come up against almost every problem mentioned … when dealing with Concert…however, I still continue to use Concert, and probably will do so for some time to come. The reason is simple: I dub in such quantities that a more expensive tape would put me out of action, and really, Concert has ruined very few of my recordings. With a fair degree of diligence, it's quite easy to weed out the relatively small number of bad spools one comes across.[235]

High volume OTR traders and collectors probably invested between $200 - $1000 or more on equipment alone, [236] and the additional cost of tape led them to seek out inexpensive options.

This sentiment again is reflected in an three-page overview of the different discarded tape sold by Shamrock that Gary Kramer wrote for the fanzine *Collector's Corner* in 1979 titled "Shamrock Tape: A Good Buy (If you know what to look for).[237]" Here, Kramer discusses how the high-end tape company Ampex sells its rejected tape to Shamrock. Kramer gave other fans an in-depth description of the ten different tape qualities Shamrock sold at the time, while also providing details on the products he recommended using and those he did not. These tape reviews and editorials in fan publications functioned as a participatory space where fans could pool their collaborative knowledge in order to overcome some of the pitfalls of collecting and trading sound recordings in a bootleg radio culture.

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[235] George Jennings, editorial, *Epilogue*, March 1971, 28.

[236] An anonymous comment on raising the subscription cost of Radio Dial noted that most collectors spent between $200- $1000 or more, see the summer 1974 issue of *Radio Dial*.

[237] Gary Kramer, "Shamrock Tape: A Good Buy (If you know what to look for)," *Collector's Corner*, April 1979, 13 – 16.

In addition to discussing tape quality, OTR collectors also debated whether double-speed duplication, the process of duping at twice the normal playback speed, could improve the fidelity of recordings. Jack Miller gets at the specificity of recording old radio programs and the divisions that existed between collectors in his 1972 article "Doublespeed and Fidelity." Miller was specifically responding to opinions in the fan community that doublespeeding would improve the frequency range. He argued that while doublespeeding could raise the frequency range in a radio recording from 4,000 – 20,000 cycles to 8,000 - 20,000 cycles, "the range of these old shows never approached 20,000… for the most part the material that we are concerned with in our hobby is between 100 and 8,000 cycles at best, doublespeeding brings it up to 200 and 16,000 cycles….There will always be disagreement, some will never doublespeed, some always doublespeed/doubletrack. If the person you are trading with is satisfied and know you dub (dupe), that is important.[238]" For Miller, doublespeeding is therefore an irrelevant practice. For others, doublespeeding was a practice that resulted in fidelity loss, as Ray Stanich argued that most home recording equipment did not possess the frequency range to duplicate programs at doublespeed without loss of frequency range, especially for shows that had a musical act. With "proper equipment you can duplicate at doublespeed (or even higher multiples) with a minimum of loss, but never an improvement.[239]" Thomas A. Rockey cautioned doublespeeders that they needed to use a machine with an 110KC Bias because machines with a 67KC produced tapes with an excessive whistling sound.[240] Others, like Pete Hollis argued that double speeding, in general, was not a good policy, but would be used to fix tinny recordings with problems in the high register.[241]

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[238] Jack Miller, "Double Speed And Fidelity," *Hello Again*, 3(7), July 1972.
[239] Ray Stanich, ","*Hello Again*, 10(5), May 1979.

Fans' discussions of recording equipment and techniques points to the amount of effort and labor radio collectors put into their hobby. This community of fans has not been productive in the same sense that other fan communities produce new textual objects like fan fiction or fan videos. In the absence of mainstream commercial distribution of classic radio programs, the act of bootlegging radio became, in and of itself, an act of textual productivity unique to radio, a work or textual production in which fans seriously invested time and money. Consider how Ken Piletic, a participant in the OTR ham radio group as well as a frequent attendant at fan conventions and contributor to fanzines of the 1970s admitted to owning 20 reel-to-reel tape decks he cleaned and maintained solely for his OTR hobby.[242] This represents the kind of considerable monetary investment, as well as time and labor, many OTR fans invested into collecting and circulating class radio programs. And when radio fans duplicated recordings they transformed them, essentially creating and producing a new recording– especially given the transformative work done to alter and improve the sound quality of the original, often deteriorated mono-stereo source through the use of hi-fi equipment and techniques, as well as "changing" them by placing them within a fan-built structure of knowledge and new system of accessibility.

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[240] Thomas A. Rockey, "One Last Word To Recordists," *Radio Dial,* Autumn, 1971.
[241] Pete Hollis, "The Tape Deck," *Hello Again*, 10(10), October 1979.
[242] Ken Piletic, "Buying Used Equipment," *Collector's Corner*, March 1978, 8 - 11.

The labor that many OTR fans invested in repairing the sound quality of the radio programs they obtained, and duplicating these programs for themselves and others, also highlights how the circulation of classic radio programs during the post-network era occurred in spite of and in opposition to the market interests of the radio producers who initially made them. As Fiske notes, "Collecting is also important in fan culture but it tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive: the emphasis is not so much upon acquiring a few good (and thus expensive) objects as upon accumulating as many as possible. The individual objects are therefore often cheap, devalued by the official culture, and mass-produced.[243]" Within the old-time radio bootleg culture, the fact that they collected recordings of radio devalued and ignored by mainstream culture of the 1960s and 70s created a sense of fellowship and community among many collectors, whose relationship with each other transcended radio collecting.

Interpersonal relationships though old-time radio

Participating in a subculture outside the market logic and tastes of mainstream America led members of the OTR community to establish interpersonal relationships with each other. Clubs, fanzines and conferences organized around collecting radio came to be a spring board for connections among fans, and this connection is evident in the deeply personal and informal style of writing OTR fanzines. The first fanzine, *Radio Dial*, pioneered an informal and personal style that became a mainstay of many OTR fanzines. Editor Charles Ingersoll would often add notes about his personal life on *Radio Dial*'s first pages, like one that recounted his camping trip with his mother to celebrate her 72nd birthday that appeared in the 1970 summer issue. In the spring issue of 1973, Ingersoll published a short story about his trip to San Francisco for vacation, detailing how he met several West Coast RHSA members in person, a few of whom had him over to dinner and introduced him to local old radio shows as they listened together. [244] Ingersoll would also regularly include personal notes about readers, announcing when RHSA member Dick DeFore moved home to Superior, WI from California to work at what was then Superior State University, addressing the DeFore family, Ingersoll wrote "Welcome home Dick, June, Patty and Tommy!"[245] This informal style of directly addressing RHSA members led one reader to say that they looked forward to each issue of Radio Dial as "a letter from friends."[246]

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[243] John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," 30–49 in Lisa Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 44.

As the OTR fan community expanded and numerous fanzines and newsletters popped up, editors would often include personal notes about their lives, including divorces, unemployment, children's graduations, engagements, marriages, and the deaths of fellow OTR fans. Sometimes these personal disclosures were connected to the fandom, as Jay Hickerson told *Hello Again* readers in November 1973, "I apologize to those people getting *Hello Again* later than usual. I recently, after 15 years of marriage, got a divorce and it sometimes takes a little longer for me to get the news in the mail since now I don't get the help from my children. I now have close to 400 subscribers and putting out *Hello Again* helps the transition of being alone.[247]" Here, Hickerson explains how his personal life is affecting is contributions to the community, but also how his participation in the OTR community is helping him to overcome the transition to being a single father.

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[244] Charles Ingersoll, "San Francisco," *Radio Dial*, Spring, 1973.
[245] Charles Ingersoll, "Member returns to Wisconsin," *Radio Dial*, Autumn 1970.
[246] Bob, "Help! Help!," *Radio Dial*, Summer, 1974.
[247] Jay Hickerson, "A Personal Message," *Hello Again*, 4(11), November 1973, 1.

Hickerson regularly discussed his children in the pages of *Hello Again*, telling readers how his son Jeff received an Eagle Scout award in 1976,[248] and how his children Robin and Craig enjoyed attending the Friends of Old Time Radio Convention and "getting autographs from everyone[249]." When his son Jeff died, Hickerson shared the news with his readers: "On June 2nd, my oldest son, Jeffrey, died at the age of 22. He developed a heart disease in November and it steadily got worse. After several months of pain, he is now at peace." [250] For Hickerson, his membership in the OTR community was not only a source of connection with others, but a source of support through difficulties of his everyday life that he openly reflected upon in the fanzine he published, reflecting in 1978, "8 years have now passed and I know my life is richer, both because of the radio programs themselves and because of the many friends with whom I correspond. I hope I am able to continue trading for many years to come.[251]"

The development of interpersonal relationships between OTR fans in the 1970s is also evident in the memorials for fans that passed away. Fanzines *Hello Again* and *Radio Dial* featured tributes in their June 1974 issues when old-time radio collector Ed Peck passed away on May 29, 1974 at the age of 32, from diabetes. These tributes, of course, particularly touted Peck's participation in the hobby, proclaiming, "Ed was a very popular and well-liked collector. He received much mail and enjoyed his collecting, taping and correspondence with many friends… He had over 2,000 shows and especially liked science fiction…He knew? more about postal regulations than any trader I know. He constantly kept me informed of changes and tips for collectors…Ed will be very much missed by his many friends in this hobby."[252] Similarly, when Allen Rockford died on March 29, 1979, fanzines *Hello Again* and *Collector's Corner* published pieces commemorating Rockford's influence on the hobby as a producer of the OTR rebroadcast show *Sounds of Yesterday* and fanzine Nostalgia Radio News, as well as his activity as a radio collector who regularly attended the Friends of Old Time Radio convention. [253] These examples are indicative of the larger pattern of connectivity through radio, demonstrating how members of a community established to trade radio came to function, inadvertently, as a support group. This community of radio fans networked through fanzines, conventions and clubs also came to give radio new meaning in its residual circulation in the post-network era of radio.

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[248] Jay Hickerson, "A Personal Note," *Hello Again*, 7(7), July 1976, 1.
[249] Jay Hickerson, "Late Mail," *Hello Again*, 10(11), November 1979.
[250] Jay Hickerson, "A Personal Note," *Hello Again*, 13 (3), March 1982.
[251] "Recollections at 8 Years," *Hello Again*, 9 (1), January, 1978, 1.

Why we collect old-time radio: Diverse modes of fandom and fan pleasures

Radio fans of the 1970s actively collaborated to discuss why they collected classic radio recordings, and these discussions reveal the multiplicities of OTR fans' engagement with the objects they collected. Examining the affective relationships between OTR fans and the radio recordings they collected highlights the range of listening pleasures and uses fans experienced through bootlegged classic radio. These listening experiences demonstrate some of the ways that radio changed as it was captured on a storage medium like reel-to-reel and cassette tapes that allowed fans to form personalized connections and control the programs they collected. As the OTR community grew exponentially during the late 1960s and 70s, fans reflected on why they collected old radio and tried to make sense of their hobby. And, as fans engaged in making sense of their hobby through ‘zines, it is apparent that this community did not interpret old radio in a coherent or unified manner.

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[252] Jay Hickerson, "A Special Tribute," *Hello Again*, 5(6), June 1974.

[253] Jay Hickerson, "A Personal Note," *Hello Again* 10(4), April 1979, 1; Joe Webb & Bob Burnham, "Dedication of Issue," *Collector's Corner*, April 1979, 2.

In considering fan engagement with bootlegged recordings of classic radio in the 1970s, it is important to consider how fans made sense of old radio in relation to other media technologies like television and film. Some fans made sense of their fandom and their identity as OTR fans in terms oppositional to the contemporary television of the 1970s. This is evident in an opinion piece by collector Harold Callahan, in which he argues that the warmth and personal connection of radio’s intimate address is the central attraction for old radio collectors, and not nostalgia nor the imaginative qualities associated with classic entertainment radio. Callahan acknowledges that these other explanations for OTR fandom have merit as factors that engage collectors; however, as he wrote,

> The conclusion which I have reached is that the attraction of old radio lies in the greater personalism and warmth of this form of entertainment and communication. We live in an age of growing impersonality and coldness. This social development is reflected in our vehicles of entertainment. Our motion pictures are spectacles of violence and/or sex and/or filthy language which provides us with no warmth of identification or involvement. Our television programs for the most part are similarly cold and impersonal. Radio on the other hand was a much more personal kind of communication. The radio personalities were actually talking to the listener. With TV it is as if someone had cut a hole in the wall and we are peeking in on the lives of others. At the end of the half hour or hour someone covers up the hole and we are turned away. With radio we didn’t peek, we visited. And we were treated as guests; welcomed, spoken to, and warmly bid goodbye with an invitation to return. We were treated as people rather than simply an audience. … That is what I think is most lacking today and the most attractive thing that people find in the vintage radio shows we collect.[254]

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[254] Harold Callahan, “From Harold Callahan,” *Hello Again,* September 1974, 5(9), 3.

Callahan not only makes sense of his engagement with classic radio in contrast to other media, namely film and television, but also in opposition to his impression and engagement with 1970s TV programming as media texts he finds to be cold and indifferent.

Contrasting old radio with new TV to emphasize classic radio's personalization and value is a sentiment that was echoed by other OTR fans. For instance, David Reznick wrote a piece extolling radio auteurs of the classic network era in *Collector's Corner* in 1978, in which he similarly dismisses the nostalgic function of OTR to argue that that appeal of old radio lies in its opposition to current television, and through this comparison, its personalization and creativity:

> Given the paucity of imagination and invention evident in prime time TV programming, it's not surprising that the philosophy behind it is merely a calcified relic of the network radio philosophy; after all, the radio moguls and the inheritors of TV were the same men. Yet it is maddening to see how TV executives have systematically isolated all the worst features of radio and applied them to the developing medium while completely missing the essence of what made OTR the enduring pleasure that it was. For we OTR collectors are not deceived, we are not merely curators of nostalgia museums – program for program, radio had more entertainment value than television. Why? Certainly not because of the men in charge, but in spite of them. But although radio locked itself into the most stringent forms and procedures, there was always it seemed, room for individual voices, eccentric loners who wouldn't stand a chance on TV, where the stakes are too high for experiments or on-the-job training. Radio was never entirely a tool of the merchants; and so, when we listen to the tapes in our collections, we can occasionally hear the beat of a different drummer. We can discern individual personalities behind some of the best-remembered material. [255]

Reznick is more bitingly condemning of the commercial imperatives he observes at play in network broadcasting than Callahan, and also seems more aware of the fact that the television networks were built on the foundations of the radio industry. However,

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[255] David Reznick, "Radio Authors," *Collector's Corner*, December 1978.

Reznick similarly condemns the television of the 1970s to legitimate his interest and participation in the OTR community.

We cannot take Callahan or Reznick's comments at face value and suppose that 1970s network TV was more or less personal or creative than network radio from the 1930s, 40s, 50s or early. It is evident from Callahan and Reznick's reflections on their in old-time radio fandom that it was important to them identify and define participation in this hobby through discourses of taste that juxtaposed old radio with new television in order to define old radio as superior. At play in these comparison is, of course, the fact that television was understood to be radio's successor for broadcasting entertainment programming within the post-network radio era, both within the broadcasting industry and among the general popular discourse of the 1960s and 70s. Thus, in framing their OTR fandom as an opposition to TV, fans like this worked within the larger OTR fan culture to legitimate a hobby that was ignored by the broadcasting industry and may have been perceived as being out of sync with the market logics of the time. Indeed, positioning classic radio as more creative, more personal, more warm than the contemporary television of the time emphasized the uniqueness of the bootlegged radio programs OTR fans collected as a form of entertainment only available via trading and collecting within the OTR fan culture.

It is clear that several fans felt the need to perform and understand their activity and identity as collectors of old-time radio by lauding the higher distinctive quality of creative radio from the classic network radio era. This also seems to be in tandem with a desire to disavow the nostalgic elements of OTR fandom, and some fans even pronounced a clear disdain for nostalgia. For instance, Joe Webb argues that as an OTR collector born after the programs he collects aired, nostalgia is not only impossible, but is a force that would immobilize the hobby and the goals of those who enjoy collecting in large quantities. In 1978, he wrote,

> Many publications I have read in this hobby and others will have an article whose only purpose is to lament that radio is gone, it will never come back, and what we have today is so bad, and aren't kids terrible nowadays? Is this a waste of printer's ink? It is not that nostalgia is bad. At times it does feel very good to reminisce about the old days (if you had 'old days'). But as one becomes more and more engrossed in the collecting mainstream, the nostalgia starts to wear off and the hobby becomes what it truly is: a living, dynamic experience where spending time on nostalgia can be wasting time recalling a very lifeless past rather than concentrating on the very living now. Nostalgia takes a back seat to completing collections, finding elusive 'good sound,' and the building of solid trading relationships. [256]

Clearly Webb found different meanings through old radio than Callahan and Reznick, as he defined his own fan engagement through the act of collecting large quantities of radio programs, and values completeness and "good sound." Yet it is evident that Webb similarly resented OTR's articulation with nostalgia and sees it as an impediment to his own enjoyment of OTR collecting. These comments are not representative of the OTR fan community, however, the publication and circulation of these comments demonstrate the work of some factions of the OTR community to control the meanings associated with this fandom, and perhaps be seen as an attempt to distance the fan culture's meanings from the sentimentality associated with nostalgia.

Competing interpretive uses for bootlegged radio recordings are evident in the fragmented subcommunity of fans who collected for the thrill of accumulation. These fans foregrounded the technological work of duplication and improving sound, amassing large quantities of recordings and building relationships with other traders and sellers. In his article "The Thrill of OTR Collecting," Joe Webb defines the "thrill" of collecting as more pleasurable than actual listening, "What I have found most interesting in collecting is not primarily the programs but what I call the 'Thrill of trading.' I have gotten considerably pleasure in arranging trades, developing relationships, completing trades, exchanging ideas, making more trades." In a similar vein, Jerry Chapman wrote enthusiastically about his interest in the technology of sound reproduction,

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[256] Joe Webb, "Collector's Comments from Joe Webb," *Collector's Corner*, July 1978, 3.

> The reason I started collecting was that I liked tape recording, and collecting, and I thought I would enjoy building a collection to sell from ...Up until two years I didn't put listening to the programs high on my list why I was collecting…Liking the programs has increased my interest, but if I had to put one parameter of collecting in the #1 spot it would be still, signal processing…I collect quality, and it is quite independent, and always has been, of enjoying the program.[257]

The emphasis on building a large collection through the use of hi-fidelity recording equipment as the primarily pleasure associated with old-time radio fandom was reproduced by other fans active during the 1970s. The OTR collector Bob Burnham described the sense of accomplishment he felt looking at the physical manifestation of his hobby, writing in 1978

> I think one of the reasons I collect is a common one among many collectors. You can look at your tapes and say 'Wow, I've got ten billion reels in this room, and nobody else for thousands of miles can make the same claim.' You're proud of your collection. Maybe you don't have the largest collection; maybe you have a really small collection- less than 100 reels, perhaps. But you can stand back and look at all those tapes, and really think you have something great.[258]

For fans like this, listening to the actual recordings of classic radio programs became subordinate to working with and collecting the physical material that stored these radio programs. Bob Burnham epitomized this relationship with old-time radio with the comment “The trading ‘game’ is one of the most enjoyable parts of the hobby. After a person collects a few years, listening often becomes secondary in terms of acquiring new shows.[259]” OTR fans like this made sense of their identity as high-volume traders, in which old-time radio becomes an object that is made sense of through possession and absence, acquisition and discovery, as well as remorse for programs that remain unobtainable.

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[257] Jerry Chapman, "Editorial," *Airwaves*, June 1977, 2**.**

[258] Bob Burnham, "Why do we collect old radio?" *Collector's Corner,* June 1978, 4.

Amid these fanzine articles that made sense of OTR’s meaning as an object to collect through high-volume trading was an attempt to classify and position some modes of fandom as more serious than others. The distinction that some fans made between “serious” collectors and casual collectors is evident in a fanzine piece by OTR collector Terry Salomonson written in 1979,

> Collecting radio programs is perhaps one of the most enjoyable of things people ordinarily collect. Some of us, however, attach mild importance to the degree of seriousness that we go about it. We collect just for the sheer pleasure of listening to the broadcasts. While there is nothing wrong with this form of collecting, others of us, myself included, are very serious about preserving the programs as completely and correctly as possible. [260]

He then goes on to extol the size of his collection, claiming his wife considers herself to be a “tape widow.” While there may be “nothing wrong” with collecting radio for listening pleasure, it is clear Salomonson does not see this engagement with radio as legitimate or as “serious” as his own mode of participation in the OTR community. Not all OTR fans took their work as seriously as Salomonson; however, it is clear that several fans attempted to create standard practices that privileged high-volume trading.

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[259] Ben Burnham, “Comments from our readers, Editorial response,” *Collector’s Corner*, March, 1979, 26 – 28.

[260] Terry Salomonson, “The Log: An essential tool for the collector,” *Collector’s Corner* May 1979, 4.

The high-volume audiophile trader was a contested figure in the 1970's OTR community and other fans criticized this mode of fandom. Frank Gilmore's essay "Advice to the new…and not so new…collector" exemplifies the discursive attempts to standardize high-volume trading and collecting practices within the OTR community through fan published articles and books.[261] Gilmore's article emphasizes that collectors should practice discernment when deciding which classic radio programs to acquire, advocating that collectors focus on rare, uncirculated or minimally available recordings to gain the upper hand in trading relationships and get the "most mileage" out of a recording. Instead of focusing on programs you personally enjoy, Gilmore told collectors "Be selective, be original and you will soon have a trading stock!" This article was met with resistance by other fans, as evinced by the response from collector Victoria Wentworth in the same fanzine, *Collector's Corner,* two months later:

> ….I collect because I really enjoy the stories. I came in at the end of radio, but I still got the chance to hear some good shows. I hope I never get tired of listening to them, I hope I never want to be a collector just for the sake of collecting. It's so great to hear and recognize certain voices, and to use your imagination. I never want to be blasé about my collecting, no matter how much I accumulate.[262]

Collector Paul G. Wesolowski similarly questioned Gilmore's motivations.

> Nowhere did he talk about acquiring tapes because you liked the stars (such as my case), nor did he mention collecting series and/or episodes because they appeal to you. His one and only criteria seemed to me to be collecting anything rare that you can sell and/or trade to collectors. Never mind if the show is lousy…they may not listen to the shows, but they just want to have a copy of something nobody else has.[263]

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[261] Frank Gilmore, "Advice to the new…and not so new…collector," *Collector's Corner*, December 1978, 8 - 9.

[262] Victoria Wentworth, "Comments from our readers," *Collector's Corner* Feb 1979, 6.

[263] Paul G. Wesolowski, "Comments from our readers," *Collector's Corner*, March 1979, 26 – 28.

These responses make clear struggles and incoherence within the OTR community to define and make sense of what it meant to be a fan of old-time radio, and here it is evident that one key tension arose between those who found pleasure and meaning through listening to the programs themselves and those fans who gained meaning from the thrill of collecting and acquiring recordings, often in large quantities, to the extent that listening to all the programs in their collection would be unfeasible. These fans, for which listening had become "secondary" in their engagement with OTR, often had upwards of 10,000 programs.

It is not clear when this desire to perform fandom through amassing large quantities of classic radio recordings became a prominent mode of OTR fan engagement. These tensions are evident within the community as early as 1974, when the OTR collector Bruce Ruggles wrote a series of "Ruggles Rumblings" for the fanzine *Hello Again*. Ruggles regularly used these columns as an opportunity to air his complaints about other OTR collectors, and to campaign against high-volume trading. For instance, he wrote

> Personally I do not have a large collection (1800 shows), but I am selective and fussy about quality. And since I have a number of beefs, let me get them off my chest now and elaborate on them in the future 1. There are not enough faithful, helpful and dedicated collectors around….4. Too few collectors are worried about quality; very few demand it. Most settle for quantity…collect 20,000 shows in poor or lousy sound and think they have something better than those with much fewer in near-perfect sound….[264]

You may remember that Ruggles is a figure from the 1970s OTR community who came up earlier in my discussion of the labor fans put into duplicating recordings to possess high quality sound, as he was one fan who publicly announced he was leaving the hobby due to traders who did not listen and were not careful in their trading practices as he thought himself to be. His series of "Ramblings" in 1974 listed all of his pet peeves with other traders, and they seem most clearly targeted at claiming that high-volume traders were a threat to the integrity of the OTR community. Other fans responded to Ruggles' antagonistic attitude toward "bulk" traders with letters to *Hello Again* that pronounced that there is "room for everyone in the hobby[265]" and that they resented and were concerned with the "signs of bitterness and callousness creeping in (to the hobby).[266]"

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[264] Bruce Ruggles, "Ruggles Ramblings," *Hello Again*, 5(5), May 1974.

It would be easy to consider these debates and discussions within the OTR fan community during the 1970s as evidence that radio collectors possessed a range of engagement and meaning making through old radio. It is undeniable that as the community of radio collectors grew from a small subculture that collected radio recordings mainly via word of mouth in the 1940s, 50s and 60s to become a larger community of fans that understood themselves as collecting "old-time radio," these OTR fans established new modes of connection via fanzines, conferences, and official OTR clubs. As the fan community grew, it became more incoherent and the affective relationship between fan and radio recording became more and more varied. The attempts to establish internal hierarchies regarding more and less "serious" modes of fandom was also very much a product of this fandom's structure as a trade-based bootleg hobby. Unlike those who collect stamps, records, or coins, collectors and fans of old-time *had* to rely on each other to find and obtain the recordings they desired. Whether they made sense of their identity and participation via listening pleasure, accumulation, both or in other ways that did not surface in the fanzines of the 1970s, collecting OTR recordings was mainly structured around buying or trading programs with other fans, sometimes strangers across the country. Thus, the interdependence of a bootleg culture created an environment in which fans came to perform and make visible their recording practices and pleasures in order to attempt to augment and shape the practices of those they traded with, while also making sense of their engagement within the hobby.

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[265] Jim Blythe, "From Jim Blythe," *Hello Again*, 5(10), October 1974.
[266] Frank Gilmore, "From Rev. Frank Gilmore," *Hello Again,* 5(8), August 1974.

Debating classic radio's meaning in the post-network radio era

At the same time that fans discussed why they participated in the OTR community and what their fandom meant, they also debated the cultural significance and meanings of these classic programs within in the social context of 1970s' American politics. To listen to programs like *Easy Aces*, *Vic and Sade*, *The Lone Ranger* or *Amos 'n' Andy* took on new meaning during a post-civil rights and women's liberation social environment. This is, perhaps one reason, that some fans of the 1970s felt the need to distinguish their engagement with classic radio from nostalgia: they did not want to be perceived to be longing for a time and place associated with racial and gender inequalities. Indeed, listening to and collecting network-era radio in the 1970s dislodged these radio programs both from their initial conditions of production as well as their original context of reception. And, while scholars like Michele Hilmes have noted that programs like *Amos 'n' Andy* were always problematic in their representations of racial difference via minstrelsy, [267] it is evident that OTR fans of the 1970s felt that their deliberations of OTR's racist or sexist attributes was historically situated in a new post-civil rights and post-women's liberation movement context. Yet, many fans did not find any conflict in their pleasure listening to problematic representations of racial difference, and aggressively defended the depictions of non-whiteness in *The Lone Ranger*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Charlie Chan* and other classic radio shows.

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[267] Hilmes, op. cit. *Radio Voices*.

Many OTR fans were actively involved in the rebroadcast of classic radio shows on local stations in their area. As I mentioned in chapter one, John Dunning and Chuck Schaden hosted long running shows at local stations during which they curated a broadcast of classic radio programs from their personal collections. Even more fans listened to these local rebroadcasts, and used them as opportunities to expand their own collections via taping off the air, what fans call air checks. And the tensions over the meaning of these radio shows would surface when the advisability of rebroadcasting certain programs over the air was questioned. For instance, in 1972, the American Indian Movement successfully lobbied local Minneapolis station KQRS to discontinue rebroadcasts of *The Lone Ranger*, arguing that its representation of the character Tonto was racist and insensitive to Native Americans. And in November 1972, *Hello Again* reprinted an editorial from OTR fan Kevin Hancer that had originally been printed in the Minneapolis Tribune at the behest of *Hello Again* reader Ron Sharon.[268]

Hancer drew upon his transmedia knowledge of *The Lone Ranger* culled from comics, novel, movies, and radio programs to defend Tonto's characterization. He also appealed to George Trendle's authorial intent and argued that the AIM misunderstood the racial dynamics of the show. "The American Indian is far too sensitive about this," wrote Hancer, and he continued,

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[268] Kevin Hancer, "Lone Ranger Not a Racist," *Hello Again* 3, no. 11 (November 1972): 5.

> As a matter of fact it attacked a character who was a great exponent of racial equality. Indians were shabbily treated more often than not, especially in children's literature. The notable exception was *The Lone Ranger*. I have read over a dozen *Lone Ranger* novels, over 1,100 *Lone Ranger* comic books and all the *Lone Ranger* pulp magazines. I have seen most of *The Lone Ranger* movies and listened to over 50 shows. In all of these one fact bears out: the Lone Ranger was no racist…… The character of Tonto, according to the creator of the series, George Trendle, was created despite the fact that all other Western radio heroes had white sidekicks, because he wanted to show that great men - truly great men - have no racial prejudice… AIM, through ignorance and oversensitivity, has caused this harmless old show to go off the air, merely succeeding in ending the fun for those who enjoyed this nostalgic old radio program.[269]

This defense of *The Lone Ranger* works to justify finding pleasure in a program protested by the ethnic community represented within it by both arguing against accusations of racism, and by discounting the desire for increased participation in self-representation by the AIM as evidence of unjustified "sensitivity." The attempt to reinscribe problematic racial representations as equitable and emblematic of progressive representations of minorities is also evident in the defenses OTR fans of the 1970s put forth for the show *Amos 'n' Andy*.

David Reznick came to be a figure known in the OTR community of the 1970s and early '80s for his criticism of what he saw as racism in the classic radio programs circulating within the OTR community. Reznick first criticized representation in OTR in the June 1978 issue of *Collector's Corner* with a short, half-page column lauding *Lum 'n' Abner* as a hidden and ignored gem within the OTR canon.[270] Reznick contrasts the talent and artistry he sees in *Lum 'n' Abner* with other shows to implicitly encourage other OTR fans to listen to the show, perhaps in replacement for programs Reznick argued were now socially problematic.[271] While he discusses several other shows, his main target is *Amos 'n' Andy*, and Reznick suggests that *Amos 'n' Andy* may have been more excusable during its historical context, but even that was, in his mind, questionable. He wrote

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[269] Ibid. 5.

[270] David Reznick,"Lum & Abner: An Appreciation," *Collector's Corner* , (June 1978): 6 – 7.

> …history has caught up with *A & A* [*Amos 'n' Andy*]. No matter what pleasure we derive from our associative memories, the inescapable fact is that the program is rooted in social injustice and ugliness. The nature of the show is such that Gosden and Correll, no matter what their intentions might have been, couldn't help but appear condescending and superior. *A& A* appeals to our baser natures. I suspect we've always known that, but in the more innocent thirties and forties, we were allowed to plead ignorance, an attitude we'd be hard pressed to sustain today.[272]

Reznick's use of the first person plural "we" attempts to represent himself as a spokesperson for the OTR community in this piece, however, this position was far from unanimous. One fan named Steve Lewis wrote a letter to *Collector's Corner* attempting to defend his own ambivalent enjoyment of *Amos 'n' Andy*. Lewis wrote

> While I understand the point Dave was trying to make, I'm not pleased when people try to build up the shows, books, movies, whatever, they're making a case for by attacking ones of more popular appeal. In this case, *Amos 'n' Andy*. I agree that times have passed them by, but the shows are (sic) funny to listen to today and I'm not convinced of any truly malicious intent. Whites in black face are undoubtedly carryovers from old minstrel shows, with long, long traditions — which doesn't mean that it was ever a Good Thing. But I listen to *Amos 'n' Andy* and picture them and them and the Kingfish as some dumb saps with some pretty funny adventures, and can laugh at them ... I'd say that was the audience interaction they were looking for.[273]

Lewis defends *Amos 'n' Andy* by arguing the show was not intentionally or overtly racist, a sentiment that would similarly be invoked by other *Amos 'n' Andy* defenders.

Below this letter is a response from Joe Webb, one of the editors of *Collector's Corner*. Joe is equally ambivalent about the show, and connects *Amos 'n' Andy* to what he sees as stereotypical representations enacted by members of the African American community in the TV of the time, writing

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[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid. 7.

[273] Steve Lewis, "Letters to the Editor," *Collector's Corner*, (July 1978): 9.

> I do agree that *Amos 'n' And*y are funny today, but I still feel uneasy listening to them. Perhaps it's because I wasn't around for the original run. One question: Was Redd Foxx's series Sanford and Son really much different from *Amos 'n' Andy*? If you block out the fact that *A&A* were really white men acting, the difference is small, if there is any.[274]

It is telling that one of this fanzine's editors weighs in on the debate and acknowledges his own uneasy pleasure with *Amos 'n' And*y's comedy. This is indicative of the ways in which a show's original reception shaped later residual fandom around a show. *Amos 'n' And*y's extreme popularity in the 1930s and '40s no doubt ensured its position in the cultural lexicon and memory for generations to come. Thus, many OTR collectors, even those who acknowledged its racially problematic premise and execution also considered it historically significant and appreciated for what they believe was a comic talent that made it initially popular. Listening to *Amos 'n' Andy* in the in the wake of the civil rights movement's accomplishments during the progressive climate of popular culture in the 1970s meant that many fans of *Amos 'n' Andy* might have listened to the show with the same uneasiness as Joe Webb. Not all OTR fans felt this way, and this became evident in future debates sparked by Reznick's vocal critiques of *Amos 'n' Andy.*

Several *Amos 'n' Andy* films were shown at the Friends of Old Time Radio Convention held October 1980 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. This precipitated a heated debate between several OTR fans, including David Reznick and Gene Bradford of the Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo, New York. At the conference, Reznick verbally repeated his objections to Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll's minstrel performance of

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[274] Joe Webb, "Letters to the Editor," *Collector's Corner*, (July 1978): 10.

African Americans in *Amos 'n' Andy* and argued that they were part of OTR's larger racial problem. During these conversations at the convention, Reznick announced his intention to outline his argument for the fanzine *Collector's Corner*. In expectation of this, Gene Bradford preemptively published a piece defending representations of racial difference in his club's fanzine, *Illustrated Press*. And indeed, Bradford's piece "Racism in Old Time Radio" came out in the *Illustrated Press* in December, 1980, several months before Reznick published a piece titled "OTR and Racism" in *Collectors Corner* in Summer 1981 issue. While Bradford published his defense of the racial representations in prominent OTR programs, I will first discuss Reznick points and the tone of his criticism as it is represented in "OTR and Racism" that Bradford preemptively responds to, an argument Reznick reportedly made at the October FOTR Conference in 1980.

David Reznick's "OTR and Racism" piece in the Summer 1981 issue of *Collector's Corner* repeated and expanded his condemnation of *Amos 'n' Andy* that I discussed above, from the June 1978 issue of *Collector's Corner*. To this he added extensive critiques of *The Jack Benny Show* or *Duffy's Tavern, Charlie Chan, Life with Luigi,* and others Reznick felt narrowly and problematically represented non-white ethnicities and races. He was also more pointedly criticized fans of these shows, especially those who were not self-reflexive about their enjoyment of what he described as OTR's racism, writing "I'd have to question the intelligence or sincerity of anyone who claims they can't see the harm done by *A&A*."[275] Reznick then challenges his fellow OTR fans to push themselves to be critical of the pleasure they find in the hobby, saying "during a time when, it seems to me, we are entering a frightening new era of reaction and intolerance, it seems valuable to examine these records of the past with an eye how they might help us cope with the future.[276]" This piece was received with more contentious responses then Reznick's first discussion of racism in his 1978 *Lum 'n' Abner* piece. The Summer 1981 article was the main article promoted on that issue's cover of *Collector's Corner*, which this time had an entire piece of cover art depicting the different characters from OTR shows that Reznick was analyzing, such as Charlie Chan, Rochester, Amos, Andy and the Kingfish.

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[275] David Reznick, "Racism and OTR," *Collector's Corner*, (Summer 1981): 4 – 5.

Gene Bradford defended *Amos 'n' Andy*'s characterization of African American identity by defining racism in overt terms as the explicit depiction of one race as superior to another. He contrasts this with what he describes as the representation of different hereditary and cultural traits of an ethnic group, which he argues is the mode of representation present in *Amos 'n' Andy* and other classic radio programs. He wrote, "I openly defy anyone to show in any way that this program [*Amos 'n' Andy*] even attempted to assume the superiority of any race or to assume the right of one race to dominate another." [277] He then appealed to other OTR fans to interpret Amos 'n' Andy as a product of its historical context,

> It has always been my observation that racism in itself is a very missed and misunderstood subject; taking its general use in today's society as a political ploy. The purveyors of social discourse always take license with the work 'racism' to condemn anything that might be considered traditional in another time.[278]

Bradford then distinguishes between discrimination and racism, personalizing discrimination as an individual decision that springs from an inherent part of human nature to disagree with one another. Bradford explained away racism in other programs, like *The Jack Benny Show* or *Duffy's Tavern*, by arguing these representations were "the foolish antics of these characters [that] never attempted to show inferiority of any race of the superiority of another. This was purely 'ethnic humor' and nothing else."[279] Bradford concludes, saying

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[276] Reznick, op. cit. "Racism and OTR,"
[277] Gene Bradford, "Racism in Old Time Radio," *The Illustrated Press*, December 1980, 6.
[278] Ibid. 6.

> The integrity of Old Time Radio is above reproach. We cannot judge yesterday's radio by today's standards or virtue or justice…. My examination of the many shows broadcast on Network Radio of the Golden Era fails to find any show that focused on race as an issue itself or assumed any superiority or dominance for any race or creed. I, therefore, find Old Time Radio not guilty of the charges of racism.[280]

Bradford's argument is contradictory, as he pronounces OTR "not guilty" of racism while simultaneously arguing that these programs cannot be understood through the identity politics of the 1970s, but rather, must be made sense of within the context of their time period. Of course, if these programs were really not problematic, there would be no need to contextualize their representations within a time period understood to be more prejudice and discriminatory. Bradford was not the only radio fan to defend OTR against Reznick's charges of racism. In fact, while his dramatic language might seem like an aggressive attempt to protect his enjoyment of classic radio programs whose representations came under scrutiny in the 1970s OTR community, Bradford's tone pales in comparison to that of OTR collector George Wagner.

One year after Reznick's "Racism and OTR" was published in *Collector's Corner*, the fanzine published a response by OTR collector George Wagner. Wagner's reply was notably longer than Reznick's two-page article, and was vehemently self-righteous. He began by writing

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[279] Ibid. 6.

[280] Ibid. 6.

> It has taken me nearly a year since reading Dave Reznick's 'Racism and OTR' to calm down enough to reply to it. It is not my intention to defend classic radio against any of the charges made by Mr. Reznick. Rather, I am going to champion OTR. Oh Lord, am I ever going to champion it! Radio programming of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, probably more than any other media, worked almost ceaselessly to eliminate racism from the American social conscience. Millions of Americans who had never known human beings of another race, or even of another religion, came to both appreciate and respect them through radio. People who had never met either a Jew or a Black fell in love with Jack Benny and Rochester. We will never know how many potential 'American' Nazis were drawn back into the human race because of the magic of *The Goldbergs*. [281]

Wagner goes onto extend this argument to *Amos 'n' Andy*, arguing the show did more than other radio program to bring African American representation into mainstream American culture. He then responds to Reznick's statement questioning the intelligence of anyone who failed to see the harm done by *Amos 'n' Andy*, writing defensively

> Well, golly gee, Mr. Reznick, by your standards I must be both helplessly mentally retarded and shamelessly dishonest, for I can only see the tremendous good done by Amos n Andy. What Mr. Reznick saw as harm I see as exquisite beauty and I treasure it as I treasure little else in this usually imperfect world.[282]

Wagner's defense of OTR programs from accusations eventually comes to a point where he employs the reactionary rhetoric of reverse-racism, arguing

> Mr. Reznick opened a very ugly can of worms, that of reverse racism. There is a widely-held convention today - a view, largely limited to Whites, (sic) which I find fraught with danger for a free society - that states that while Blacks are free to play White roles, Whites are never permitted to play Black ones…To rule, as Mr. Reznick seems to, that Whites cannot play Black or Chinese roles, is as offensive to me as ruling that James Earl Jones can no longer play Macbeth…

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[281] George Wagner, "Racism and OTR: A Reply," *Collector's Corner*, Summer 1982, 4–7.

[282] Ibid. 4.

> Such reasoning would also rob the theater of Sir Laurence Olivier's version of Othello.[283]

The essay concludes by agreeing with Reznick that American society was "entering a frightening new era of reaction and intolerance," however to Wagner, this era is induced by the absence of programs like *Amos 'n' Andy*. [284]

While Wagner is either clearly evading or unaware of the material differences between minstrel performances and the cultural appropriation that undergirded them and mainstream roles like Macbeth, his response is significant for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the passionate affective relationship some fans had with the programs they collected and listened to, programs that at this time were almost 60 years old. Second, it is not so easy to dismiss Wagner as simply an uncritical dupe in his fandom for *Amos 'n' Andy* or *Charlie Chan*, as his response demonstrates the polysemic nature of classic radio, even in its residual circulation during the 1970s and early '80s. Eric Lott argues that, while white appropriation of blackness in blackface performance works to other African Americans from mainstream white culture, he also acknowledges the ambivalent nature of cultural appropriation. Blackface, Lott argues, was also a signal of desire to inhabit and "try on" black bodies and culture.[285] With this in mind, looking at the debates surrounding how radio listeners made sense of race and representation in classic network programs during the post-network radio era demonstrates the complicated relationship between OTR fans and the shows they collected.

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[283] Ibid. 7.

[284] Ibid. 7.

[285] Eric Lott, "Racial Cross-Dressing and the Construction of American Whiteness," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1999), 242 – 255.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that these debates occurred, at least publicly, between white males. Is it not significant that the OTR community itself was a very white space? There are traces of participation from other cultures, most evidently Jewish radio fans.[286] Mainly, however, the OTR community formed as a very white and implicitly masculine culture, as it intersected with traditionally masculine hi-fidelity and audiophile collection cultures. Certainly there were women who participated in the OTR fandom. This is clear in Judy Helton's 1974 ad in *Hello Again*,

> "Due to a death in the family I will have to postpone putting out tapes for a short while. I am still looking for Arch Oboler material. Also still looking for woman collectors. Contact me you girls out there. I trade shows and would be interested in buying radios, magazines, etc. On this, my first anniversary in this hobby I would like to pay special attention to some of the people who got me going: D Dodge, R Stanich, L Lawson, R Eidemiller, Jo Anne Vergin, and others.[287]

Here, Helton not only demonstrates an attempt to bring female collectors together, but also acknowledges the role of both male and female collectors in helping her get started in the hobby. Despite the presence of Judy Helton, Jo Anne Vergin, and other prominent female collectors of the 1970s, such as SPERDVAC's Pat McGee and others, the OTR community was heavily dominated by men.

In spite of this, the OTR fandom came to be a place that worked, at times, to bring women's role in U.S. radio history to the forefront of the hobby. For instance, George Jennings published a fannish interview with Agnes Moorehead in his fanzine *Epilogue* that was rife with praise for the actress and her work in many classic radio shows.[288] Charles Stumpf contributed a biography of the radio producer, actress, and writer Ethel Park Richardson, detailing her career from 1927 into the 1940s, and stating clearly his intention to raise awareness of her work. Stumpf wrote

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[286] Jay Hickerson often wished his Jewish readers holiday greetings at Passover and Chanukah, and the Friends of Old Time Radio Convention was usually carefully planned not to overlap with Rosh Hashanah.

[287] Judy Helton, "A Note from Judy Helton," *Hello Again* 5, no. 2 (February 1974): 5.

> For some reason I have never found any of her shows mentioned in any of the books dealing with old time radio and I have never found recordings of her works listed in any catalogs. Her contributions to the radio medium were many and her name deserves an honored spot on the long list of those radio immortals. All hail the name Ethel Park Richardson. Anyone with any knowledge of any of her works or recordings, please get in touch with me…[289]

Here, then we can see male participants working to highlight the role of some women in the production of classic network radio. And, even more curious, is the essay by Gene Bradford on the representation of women in classic radio entertainment. Bradford wrote "Sexism In Old Time Radio," as a follow-up to his essay "Racism in Old Time Radio," which I discussed earlier. In the latter article in, Bradford was completely unwilling to acknowledge the possibility of racism in any old-time radio programs. Yet his follow up piece, "Sexism In Old Time Radio," took an almost 360 degree turn in reflecting on the way many prominent female characters in classic radio were characterized by weakness, emotionalism, and a need to be saved or rescued by a hero, a representation he perceived to present in many soap operas and prime-time radio programs. Bradford wrote, "My only conclusion to all this is that Old Time Radio exploited women on every level of the social spectrum."[290] It is significant to note, however, that this analysis is not followed by any condemnation of collecting, listening to or enjoying these programs that Bradford is designates as sexist. Yet, it is significant to see traces of the ways in which some members of the male-dominated OTR community considered and discussed the role of women in radio. This demonstrates another nexus of meaning that fans used to make sense of their engagement with classic radio.

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[288] George Jennings, "Interview with Agnes Moorehead," *Epilogue,* 4, 1974, 16.

[289] Charles Stumpf, "Ethel Park Richardson," *Hello Again*, 6(5) 1975, 3-4.

[290] Gene Bradford, "Sexism In Old Time Radio," *The Illustrated Press*, January 1981, 8 – 9.

These comments debating and discussing race and gender within the old-time radio fan culture are not representative of all OTR fans during this time. However, they are examples of how OTR fans created new meanings and modes of interpreting these programs during the time that they became designated as “old-time radio.” While discussions of race and gender occurred during the initial run of many of these programs, the sense making involved during the 1970s and later is different. Interpreting classic radio as it circulated among collectors in the 1970s and ‘80s is different because, whether arguing that *Amos ‘n’ Andy* were racist or not, whether *Ozzie and Harriet* or *The Shadow* were sexist or not, whether highlighting female participation in the fandom and in radio history, fans made sense of these programs as historical artifacts, usually in contrast or comparison to contemporary broadcast entertainment. Fans’ desire to critique or defend OTR programs was most surely shaped by the political movements of the 1950s,’60s and’70s. And in this sense, OTR fans became temporal travelers, looking at the radio programs they collected historically from their standpoint in the 1970s. These struggles and debates about classic radio’s meanings continued to be taken up as the old-time radio fan community thrived and began to use new media platforms and tools to connect with each other, organize their collections, and share classic radio recordings during the 1980s, 90s and 2000s.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the contours of radio fans as they connected with each other to form an old-time radio culture. Radio fans that created or joined local OTR clubs, subscribed to fanzines, and attended conferences formed a larger community that transcended geographical distance and generational membership. OTR fans' labor finding, reformatting and remastering bootlegged recordings of classic network era radio preserved these programs and made them accessible to anyone who stumbled upon this fan community and wanted to participate. Moreover, the practices of bootlegging radio within the old-time radio fan community demonstrated a shift in the broader understanding of radio by audiences as an ephemeral medium, as fans came to appreciate and manipulate these radio recordings as concrete objects that they sought after, collected, and even sometimes listened to. OTR fans not only participated in the continued circulation of network era radio, but also redefined its cultural meanings as "old time radio," and considered the social significance of classic radio in the 1970s and beyond.

The next chapter continues to explore how the community of OTR fans circulated both radio recordings and meanings they found in them within digital culture. I argue that many of the communal practices established by OTR fans in the post-network era of the 1950s, 60s and 70s continue to pervade and define the practices of the contemporary OTR fan community. I first demonstrate that radio collectors initially used personal computers as digital tools to manage how they organized their collector acquisitions and trades with other collectors. I then use fanzine and Usenet archives to demonstrate how OTR fans made sense of the internet's usefulness to their hobby, and transposed many of the practices of debate, discussion, collection crowdsourcing and attempts to standardize fan behavior within new digital platforms. Following my outline of some of the ways the general OTR community used personal computers and the internet, I specifically analyze how fans digitally reformatted analog recordings of classic radio. I choose to focus on the OTR Collection at the Internet Archive, because this site has become the primary source where millions of downloads and streams of OTR programming occur. I argue that the work of OTR fan collaborative groups like the Old Time Radio Researchers to digitize and post complete re-mastered series using the Internet Archive's open structure exemplifies a participatory form of media archiving.

Chapter 3

Radio Fans and Collectors in the Age of the Personal Computer

As you might have gleaned reading chapter 2, the group of American radio enthusiasts that came together to form the OTR fan community in the 1960s and ‘70s had many members who were technologically savvy. Certainly not all radio fans were interested in or able to invest in the technological equipment and practices I detailed in chapter 2, and I do not want to suggest that the representations of fandom in the ‘zines and publications of the 1970s and ‘80s are representative of the entire fandom. Yet it is evident that many radio collectors trained themselves in basic electronic and audio engineering in order to manipulate the audio technologies in the 1970s to not only duplicate classic radio recordings, but also to improve the sound quality of these recordings. And several members of the old-time radio fan community were early adopters of the personal computer when they became commercially successful and available to consumers in the late 1970s. As I demonstrate in this chapter, fans initially used computer technology either for word processing, to type and edit program logs or fanzines, or for building databases with database software, to organize their collection and its catalog as well as manage their exchanges and dealings with other collectors.

Beginning in the 1990s, fans would build on the protocols I discussed in the previous chapters, using platforms like Usenet, AOL, IRC, Yahoo Groups and later Facebook to connect virtually and discuss classic radio; share essays, articles, and tips; crowdsource wanted episodes; advertise program logs and share other materials related to their fandom. During the 1990s some collectors and enthusiasts began to use digital technology to edit and attempt to improve the sound quality of their recordings, while other used personal websites to post digital files of classic radio shows. Today, the most prominent site hosting digital radio artifacts that have been re-formatted, re-produced and re-distributed by fans is the Internet Archive, and so I spend a good deal of the chapter examining the Internet Archive as a site of participatory digital archiving. Before I do this I will outline the history of the old-time radio fan communities' engagement with the personal computer long before it became useful as a tool to share digital files of radio recordings.

Making Sense of the Computer as a Tool for Organization and Connection

As I note above, radio collectors initially made sense of the personal computer as a tool to increase their efficiency managing their collection and the other paratextual elements they produced for their hobby such as program logs, collection catalogs, mailing labels, short essays on radio history and more. One of the earliest published discussions of using computers to manage old-time radio collections occurred in 1977 when Jerry Chapman, one of the editors in the fanzine *Airwaves*, solicited readers to work with him to compile a comprehensive list of all radio shows currently in circulation using IBM punch cards, noting that he already had produced 5,000 IBM punch cards himself at the time, but needed more help in such a herculean task.[291] It is unclear whether this list ever materialized via this particular attempt. While Chapman had been working alone to create a log of all the available shows by himself in in the late 1970s, unbeknownst to him a professor and radio enthusiast at Memphis State University named Dr. Marvin Bensman had already accomplished something similar.

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[291] Jerry Chapman, "Notes," *Airwaves*, (April 1977): 2.

In 1975, Bensman released a compiled a 332 page report he put together with a graduate student named Daniel Walker that detailed sources and titles of classic radio titled *Sources of Broadcast Programming*. Bensman and Walker compiled their report to encourage teaching and research focused on broadcast history.[292] This report was disseminated to educators across the country via the government funded and run Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC),[293] a repository for education media reports which began making its database of educational media available online in 1971.[294] The first 18 pages of Bensman and Walker's report provide a discography of radio recordings available commercially on phonograph, followed by a list of organizations and individual collectors who trade, sell or possess radio recordings, along with contact information and occasional tips or information about getting in touch with the listed source. The following 314 pages of the report outlined and then presented a computer catalog code for IBM computer cards to create a database that could create an alphabetical catalog of available radio shows. In theory, then, researchers and educators could use this material to create their own computerized catalog, browse for shows relevant to their work, and then use the contact information at the front of the report to seek out a physical recording from either a record company or collector. It is uncertain how this material was implemented by ERIC's users; however, Bensman's efforts as an academic and member of the OTR fan community led him to create a library of radio recordings at Memphis State University which he would duplicate and send out to other academics, teachers, and researchers.[295]

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[292] Marvin Bensman & Dennis Walker, *Sources of Broadcast Audio Programming*, (ERIC Database, 1975).
[293] Ibid.
[294] Institute of Education Sciences, "50 Years of Eric, 1964 – 2014, " *Eric*, http://eric.ed.gov/?faq

Other fans began using personal computers to organize their radio collections, and wrote about it in OTR fanzines and books in order to share this practice with other collectors. Collector Bob Burnham established himself within the OTR fan community as an expert in the technological aspects of collecting radio, in part by publishing two anthologies of technological guidelines in the 1980s, one in 1984 and a second in 1986. These guides were composed of short essays on listening to and collecting radio by a variety of collectors, and most of the pieces are focused on working with reel-to-reel tape and analog sound systems, with chapter titles such as "The Cassette vs. Reel Decision," "Learning to Record Old Radio Properly," or "Maintaining & Caring for Your Tape Decks."[296] Publications like this make it evident that some members of the OTR collecting community were invested in both performing their technological expertise as well as attempting to acclimate new collectors to what they considered to be best practices in an attempt to standardize their hobby, which in truth encompassed members with a wide range of technological competence.

Nestled amid the essays on how to properly manipulate tape and tape decks to improve the sound quality of recording radio shows in Bob Burnham's 1986 technical guide are three essays that encourage radio collectors to use a personal computer to organize their collection. In “Streamlining Your Collection,” Burnham writes about the need to type up and print high quality catalogs listing of one’s collection, writing:

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[295] George Jennings, "Notes," *Epilogue*, (March 1971): 3 & 14.

[296] Bob Burnham, ed., *Listening Guide to Classic Radio: Technical Guide Volume 2*, (Redford, MI: BRC Publications, 1986).

> Preparing a catalog or a listing of your collection is part of getting organized and getting your act together. If you plan on doing much trading or if you plan to sell programs, a catalog is an essential tool…The quality of your catalog projects your image. If you don’t have a good typewriter or printer, you will be turning out a sub-standard catalog. The top of the line typewriter is the IBM Selectric III… with computer printers, I have seen a variety of qualities… [low grade printers] won’t be as good as a printer or typewriter with a film type ribbon.[297]

For Burnham, here, the computer is most useful as a word processing tool for collectors to print high quality collection catalogs to mail out for dealing or trading, and the quality of the printed product functions as an extension of the collector’s reputation and image within the community.

The next chapter in this technical guide for radio collectors is titled “Old Time Collecting & the Computer,” by Tom Monroe. Burnham introduces Monroe’s piece by saying that he is among “the growing number of collectors who have harnessed the power of the home computer to simplify the organizing and cataloging of their collections.” [298] Monroe begins his essay with a similar utopian description of the computer, “Tired of three copies of the same program…want to get away from hand posting on file cards…want to have a nice looking swap catalog that’s easily updatable??? We offer you THE COMPUTER.”[299] He goes on to discuss how top-of-the-line computers can be $6,000, before telling readers “For under $600, however, you can get a personal computer, disk drive, monitor and printer which will do similar things to the more expensive computers. My experience is with a Commodore 64 home computer, but others have done similar things on other computer systems."[300] Here, we can see how this technical guide comes to function as a consumer forum in which collectors like Monroe share their lived experiences researching and selecting computer hardware, as well as software, as Monroe further explains in this essay that he reads Computer Magazine, and after reading an article comparing various word processors, bought the program Word Pro 3/plus 64. Monroe ends by outlining how the computer's ability to store program logs and collection catalog files makes the inevitable material updates that accompany the hobby of collecting radio "less of a chore, and you'll enjoy the many hours it saves you, and the many more hours you can spend simply enjoying listening to your collection!"[301] This sentiments demonstrate how early adaptors of the personal computer within the OTR community engaged in debates about incorporating computer technology into their hobby, and used them in ways that took previous practices of typing or writing materials by hand to organized and exchange radio with one another and began to revise them in a way that integrating computing into previous community practices.

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[297] Bob Burnham, “Chapter 7: Streamlining Your Collection,” in: (ed.) *Listening Guide to Classic Radio: Technical Guide Volume 2*, (Redford, MI: BRC Publications, 1986), 37.

[298] Ibid, 40.

[299] Tom Monroe, “Old Time Radio Collecting & The Computer,” in: ed.) *Listening Guide to Classic Radio: Technical Guide Volume 2*, (Redford, MI: BRC Publications, 1986), 40.

The last chapter to discuss computers in Bob Burnham's 1986 technical guide was titled "Collecting Old Time Radio & Using The Computer," by the prominent OTR collector Terry Salomonson, whose fanzine essays I referenced in the previous chapter. Salomonson continues to write about OTR and trade and deal recordings from his collection today through the website audio-classics.com. In 1986, he wrote about using his IBM-PC to manage his collection not only to put together his catalogs, but also to print content labels for the material objects of his collection, his reels and cassettes of radio programming. Salomonson also lauds the ease with which he uses his computer to write letters for correspondence with other radio collectors, as well as authoring essays for magazines and anthologies like the one publishing this essay. Following this, Salmonson specifically details the terminology and step-by-step process needed to create a computerized database of records, with each digital record representing one program episode. He ends his essay recommending different database software, like PC File III, the system specifications needed to run this software, and the contact information for a software dealer who will give OTR collectors a good deal on this software. This is not representative of all radio collector's in the 1980s, however, it does provide one specific snap shot of the ways in which everyday people used computers to circulate classic radio before digital technologies became a mode of exchanging radio programs themselves.

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[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.

Indeed, the next stage of the old-time radio fan community's engagement with computers involved connecting and discussing radio through networked online groups, beginning with the creation by broadcaster William Pfeiffer of a Usenet news group dedicated to radio entertainment, history and engineering in April, 1992. [302] This charter was for a group called rec.radio.broadcasting was not singularly focused on classic radio; however, OTR fans used this Usenet news group to actively discuss old-time radio for over twenty years, with the first reference to old-time radio appearing on May 22, 1992, when a user named Will Martin posted a request for information about broadcasts of old time radio, saying:

I listen to WBBM's oldtime radio now and then; they are on at midnight

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[302] William Pfeiffer "rec.radio.broadcasting Charter Documentation," Online, ftp://ftp.isc.org/pub/usenet/news.announce.newgroups/rec/rec.radio.broadcasting

> Central Time during the week, and on weekends sometime are on at 8 PM (other times are preempted by sports). Here in St. Louis, they are usually listenable on an SRII or a variety of other radios. I'd like to see a list of other sources to try to pick up during the evening or night hours. [303]

The most recent discussion thread related to old-time radio in the rec.radio.broadcasting Usenet group was posted December 16, 2014, and was an automated Google News post linking to an article about a pirate radio station broadcasting old-time mystery shows in Chicago. Prior to this, the last thread not an automated Google News update was on August 14, 2012 and was a set of twelve posts authored by three participants discussing a range of topics, such as their favorite online sites to listen to streams of OTR broadcast shows, their favorite classic detective radio programs, and the difference in sound quality between compact discs and mp3s.[304]

These topics are somewhat typical of Usenet discussions. Users posted 272 discussion threads during the twenty year time period radio fans and collectors used rec.radio.broadcasting to discuss old time radio,[305] and scanning through these, discussions mainly focus on one of several topics: crowdsourcing the group for episode sources, names of actors or other production information for a specific show history or scripts; discussions on copyright; discussions about favorite or “best” OTR shows; discussions about specific radio personalities from the network era; requests for information on OTR radio programs in specific cities; posts of general FAQs about the

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[303] Will Martin [wmartin@stl-06sima.army.mil], “Classic Radio Shows” in rec.radio.broadcasting, May 19, 1992.

[304] “The Golden Age of Radio: An Unscientific Poll,” in rec.radio.broadcasting, August 2 to August 14, 2012.

[305] Search done through the Google Groups archive of Usenet newsgroups at https://groups.google.com/forum for discussions including either “old-time radio” or “OTR” on June 18, 2016.

OTR hobby; sharing news (such as the death of a radio actor) or new resources for OTR fans; personal stories about how a user first found OTR; personal stories or inquiries about other members of the radio fan community; links to articles by self-trained historians, who are themselves usually members of the OTR community; or information on how to join the OTR newsletter listserv.

Because the rec.radio.broadcasting group was not solely focused on old-time radio, some of the Usenet members decided to create an OTR focused listserv named Airwaves Radio Journal and then later the Old Time Radio Digest moderated and maintained by a collector named Lou Genco in 1994 as a site to share and discuss specific old-time radio topics, such as :

> Lists of AM radio stations broadcasting OTR; Lists and critiques of OTR tape vendors; Contents of personal libraries / collections; Offers to privately exchange recordings; Critiques of individual or serialized programs; Discussions about radio dramas / mysteries / adventures; hints on re-recording and preserving audio quality.[306]

This OTR listserv no longer exists today, and it is unclear when it ceased being produced, however, OTR enthusiast Charlie Summer began a competing listserv in 1999 titled Old Radio Mailing list initially using the address oldradio-request@lofcom.com, [307] and today Summers' list has now taken on the title Old Time Radio Digest using the address old.time.radio-request@oldradio.net.

In addition to connecting via Usenet and listserv, as more and more radio collectors and fans went online, they came together in AOL chat rooms, Inter Relay Chat live chat sessions, and through personal websites they created to share their collection

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[306] Lou Genco [lgenco@crl.com], "Airwaves Radio Journal," in rec.radio.broadcasting, November 28, 1994.

[307] Jay Hickerson, "The Internet," *Hello Again* 30, no. 4 (July/August 1999): 2.

materials, tips and thoughts about the hobby. Several collectors began using their personal websites to advertise their collection in order to deal radio recordings to other OTR fans. Jay Hickerson began including regular segments on the computer and the internet in his fanzine *Hello Again* in 1993. The first such announcement read:

> Computer networks are now being used by collectors. All you need is a computer, modem and some communications software such as Telix, Pro-Comm, Crosstalk or Windows Terminal. Bob Burnham is involved with Gateway Online. Send him a SASE for information at Box 2645, Livonia, MI 48151. Bob mentions that InterNet, a national computer network, is being used by collectors. You can gain access to InterNet through local BBS (Bulletin Board System) services and some of the larger ones like America Online…[308]

This post demonstrates that Hickerson did not believe most of his readers were already online, and Hickerson himself did not go online until 1995.[309] It is also telling that obtaining information about using the "InterNet" was being shared by sending off a SASE to Bob Burnham (the very same figure who edited the technological guide I discussed early), a practice long used in these fanzines as a mode of collaboratively sharing expertise with one another. After Hickerson went online in 1995, he began to include a roster of OTR fans' email address in his bi-month issues of *Hello Again*, a list that became so cumbersome that within a year, in October 1996, Hickerson only listed members not previous on the email roster, offering those new to *Hello Again* a full email roster of OTR fans who had written in to share their email address with the group to anyone who sent him a SASE. *Hello Again* also became a place where subscribers wrote in to share their personal OTR websites with other fans. [310]

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[308] Jay Hickerson, "Computer Networks," *Hello Again* 24, no. 2 (March/April 1993): 1.
[309] Jay Hickerson, "The Internet," *Hello Again* 26, no. 4 (July/August 1995): 3.
[310] Jay Hickerson, "Websites," *Hello Again* 32, no. 5 (September/October 2001): 3.

OTR fans use of Usenet, AOL and other chat rooms has dissipated in the age of Facebook; indeed, many large OTR –themed Facebook groups boast over a thousand members who actively participate in discussions every day. There is one online group whose monthly-synchronized online chats continue to thrive, and that is the International Jack Benny Fan Club (IJBFC). The IJBFC s a significant example in the world of old-time radio fandom on the internet as a group that has an interconnected online presence via a Facebook group, its website and via monthly newsletters and live chats. As I note in the next chapter, commercial retailers of radio recordings tell me that *The Jack Benny Show* has consistently been the best selling recording in the old-time radio market.[311] It is thus perhaps not surprising that an old-time radio community should form together around Jack Benny specifically. IJBFC has origins in the analog world, as it was formed by Laura Lee (now Laura Leff), the President of the International Jack Benny Fan Club in 1980, when she was 10 years old. Membership in the club began to really grow when Leff discovered Jay Hickerson's *Hello Again* fanzine, and advertised her fan club there. Prior to this, membership mainly occurred through word of mouth, but the club grew to 100 members by 1987 after three years of exposure in *Hello Again*, and was 200 in 1991.[312] IJBFC membership exploded exponentially when Leff took the club online in 2000; in 2008 there were 3,100, and today there are over 4,000 members. Membership has tapered a bit in the last few years, and Leff reports that she now receives a only few new member requests a week, as opposed to the several per day she received when she first created the IJBFC website, yet this is still more than the club received prior to going online.[313]

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[311] Sue Hamilton, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, January 5, 2016; Walden Hughes, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 7, 2016.

[312] Laura Leff, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, February 19, 2016.

Most members are not participants in the monthly chats, as this tends to attract deeper fans ready to discuss the intricacies of specific episode. These chats are distinct from the conversations that take place in the IJBFC Facebook page, which is more centered on creating community around Jack Benny fandom writ large, and participants can check in and out at will. Conversely, live chats demand attention and knowledge of *The Jack Benny Show*, and provide group members with instant gratification and the opportunity to participate in multiple overlapping conversations with each other, and often these chats consist of the same returning participants each month, who come to know each other and discuss interpersonal subjects alongside a discussion of a radio episode. During the 1980s, '90s, and early 2000s, the IJBFC also functioned as a source of tape trading where members could send in blank cassettes (and later compact discs) and receive back program recordings. While the opportunity for this type of exchange still exists through the IJBFC, the demand has decreased in the wake of digital file sharing.[314]

The Development of the Digital Radio Artifact

It was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s when fans began to reformat the analog radio recordings in their collection and post them on websites for other fans to listen to. Several members of the community characterize this moment in the history of the OTR community as one in which the sound quality of digital radio recordings was unpredictable. Collectors played with file compression, which was perceived to decrease the sound quality, and long-time radio collector Joe Webb characterized the guiding logic behind this impulse as the "let me see how small can you make this file so I can fit 500 shows on one CD" principle. [315] Another long-time collector and self-trained radio historian, Craig Wichman, told me that the quality of some of these files could be so unbearable it seemed as though you were "listening through a horse blanket.[316]" Wichman explained that digital recordings would sound this way when the person reformatted recordings and edited out high frequencies in order to smooth over sound quality damage to the analog copy they worked with.[317] The growth of digital sound editing programs has increased the ease of improving recordings' sound quality in more nuanced manners, and some collectors report spending four hours or more using editing software to improve a recording's sound.[318]

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[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid.

The classic radio's materiality is reconfigured through its digital reformatting and duplication, engendering new uses and relationships with radio recordings that is a result of the digital radio artifact's mutable and mobile characteristics. My conception of the digital radio artifact builds upon Jeremy Morris' definition of the digital music commodity, which Morris defines as "a particular combination of data and sound that exists as an entity in and of itself for sale or acquisition in online outlets via computers or other digital devices."[319] Morris notes that the data on music CDs are also digital, but argues that the digital music commodity is historically different in its primary reliance on computers and mobile devices for distribution and consumption. He uses the term "digital music commodity" to distinguish the music file as a digital object at a historical moment in which music's materiality is different from analog forms from digital forms of music that are still packaged and consumed in very physical forms, such as the compact disc which is contained in jewel cases with printed covers and linear notes. Morris argues that this form is more physical than digital computer files, like mp3s.[320] Even though digital files possess a materiality within the hardware used to produce, store, and share them, Morris distinguishes digital music commodities as "a specific assemblage of technologies and cultural practices,"[321] that are thus distinct from prior music commodities, digital or analog. I am building on this definition to consider the objects OTR collectors reformat and share online as digital radio artifacts because they are similarly both an object and a historical moment. Digital radio artifacts are similar to Morris' digital music commodities, in that they are transformed from their analog and digital precedents, such as the vinyl records, cassette tapes, magnetic tape reels, or compact discs which been used to store and distribute radio programs in the past.

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[315] Joseph Webb,"Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, December 24, 2015.
[316] Craig Wichman,"Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Phone, January 8, 2016.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Jeremy Morris, "The person behind the music we adore: Artists, profiles, and the circulation of music," *Wi: Journal of Mobile Culture*, 7, no. 1 (2013):

Digital radio artifacts are also distinct from podcasts and streaming radio stations that have generally characterized online radio programming, or the current digital technology used in the traditional broadcasting of radio through the airwaves. I use the term digital radio artifact to emphasize its discrete form as an object not tied to a podcast RSS feed or the ongoing flow of a streaming radio station. I use the term artifact rather

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http://wi.mobilities.ca/the-person-behind-the-music-we-adore-artists-profiles-and-the-circulation-of-music/

[320] Ibid.

[321] Ibid. 4.

than commodity to distinguish the free exchange of reformatted digital radio recordings between collectors, through OTR fans' personal websites or in open online archives, because in these contexts classic radio programs are not being primarily defined by their commercial value. Digital radio artifacts are significant in their mutability. Where radio collectors used to have to invest in and build analog sound systems to clean up or "denoise" any of the distortions (i.e. cracks, hiss, etc.) that might be a by-product of degradation of on the analog recordings in their collection, today they can much more easily and effectively use software like Izotope, a sound restoration program, to clean up the audio tracks of radio recordings transferred to digital files.

Reformatting classic radio into digital files and posting them online began to be a common practice in within the OTR community in the late 1990s.[322] Some collectors host recordings on their personal websites, while specific sub-groups within the hobby, like the Old Time Radio Researchers (OTRR), have joined together to collaboratively compile digital sets of classic radio programs and post them to the Internet Archive, along with historical information about the radio files they share. OTRR members consist of collectors, most of whom have been in the OTR fan community since the 1960s, who extend their engagement in the hobby to continue to search for radio episodes or programs that are "lost" or "missing" from circulation. Like the OTR group SPERDVAC, OTRR is a community of radio collectors whose goal is to both preserve and encourage younger generations' engagement with classic radio, and members in both groups join together to pool the contents of their collections to make a larger collection available.

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[322] Erik Smith, "Web Battle Is Latest Episode in Old-Time Radio Serials," *The Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 2001, http://articles.latimes.com/2001/feb/16/entertainment/ca-26001

While SPERDVAC restricts access to their library through membership in the society and uses top-of-the-line equipment to digitize and distribute radio recordings to members via compacts discs, the OTRR uses Yahoo groups and Dropbox to compile digital sets and write up historical program information, and make their collections freely available in what has become the most used online source to listen to and obtain digital radio files online, the Internet Archive.

Radio Collectors, the Internet Archive and Participatory Archivists

The Internet Archive was founded in 1996 as a site that saved and preserved websites through its open access Wayback Machine. Not really a machine, the Wayback Machine is actually a searchable online database of archived websites collected by the web crawler Alexa and stored on The Internet Archive's servers in Richmond, CA. Yet, because the Wayback Machine gives users the opportunity to see websites as they looked in the past, it does seem to function ostensibly like a time machine, offering us a way back to a bygone cybernetic past. Today, the Wayback Machine has archived over 426 billion web pages,[323] freezing the ephemeral and ever-changing contents of the World Wide Web as digital heritage for future generations to access. Since its inception, The Internet Archive has expanded its preservation project to provide permanent storage and public access to digitized collections of films, books, magazines, television programs, video games, computer software, and audio recordings of live music concerts, radio programs, and more. With the somewhat grandiose mission to provide "universal access to all knowledge," The Internet Archive's goal to digitize and store media artifacts from around the world and make them available through the Internet has made this website a central node in the constellation of classic radio's online presence.

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[323] This count was listed on September, 8, 2014 at the Wayback Machine's website at https://archive.org/web/

In this section, I analyze The Internet Archive's collection of old radio as a key site to consider the hybridization of technological forms, as well as theories of online platforms, digital objects, and the residual circulation of media through culture. Using the OTR collector's group Old Time Radio Researchers' contributions to The Internet Archive's audio collection, I also consider how users interact and reconfigure the meanings of an open digital media archive. Within this open online archive, broadcast radio from the classic network era is transformed and re-circulated as digital artifacts that are historicized by the contextual images and descriptions that often accompany a page of radio program files, through their presence within a platform that refers to itself as an "archive."

The Internet Archive differs from traditional physical archives in that is freely open to anyone with web access, encourages users to contribute their own material to the archive via uploading software, and in that its contents are *only* readily available to users via a web-based interface. The openness of The Internet Archive is significant because it reconfigures media archiving as the product of crowd sourcing and anonymous contributions. This is particularly relevant to the audio collection, which is unique in that it is the only Internet Archive collection fully comprised of user contributions. The contents of the audio archive are thus the collective result of work done for free by dispersed users in a networked digital environment. The Internet Archive's platform structure ostensibly creates what Henry Jenkins calls a space of "participatory culture," characterized by the collaborative practice of knowledge production.[324] Internet Archive users are both creators and audience members for the digital radio artifacts within the OTR collection, highlighting the active role of consumers in interpreting and circulating media.

The Internet Archive's participatory nature is apparent at the top of Audio Archive's web page, which welcomes visitors to the sound collections hosted at The Internet Archive. The first centered main text panel at the top of the audio archive's homepage informs visitors that they can either "Download or listen to free music and audio" or "Contribute Your Audio." This solicitation to contribute "your" audio addresses visitors intimately, and encourages us to see ourselves as participants in The Internet Archive's acquisition of audio. Here, the openness of the archive means The Internet Archive's audio website has become merely the networked infrastructure that facilitates users' ability to upload audio files through the archive's automated reformatting process. The reformatting process occurs when audio files are uploaded to a "Drag and Drop" audio uploader. The option to upload files using a simple drag-and-drop interface simplifies a technologically sophisticated reformatting process. Once files are "dropped," they are converted into several different formats through a deriver program that occurs on the backend of the archive's digital infrastructure. For each digital sound file uploaded, The Internet Archive's deriver program will create between one to eight audio file derivatives in different formats, compatible with 22 different sound file formats. Participation in the aggregation of audio files for The Internet Archive is thus available to anyone with a computer and Internet access.

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[324] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

And the Internet Archive’s collection of old time radio has resonated with listeners and has become the most frequently downloaded radio collection.[325] This statement in itself points to the shift in archiving practices afforded or encouraged by an open digital media archive. Traditional archives have prioritized preservation over access and emphasized restricted access and expert stewardship; this is often transferred to traditional archives’ digitized collections, where work on the backend reformatting audio into digital files and hanging them on a website is done by trained sound preservationists, and access may or may not be restricted by institutional digital security measures (i.e. SSL and encryption, or Firewalls). Or, access may be restricted by the very real material restrictions many official archives face such as lack of funding and personnel to complete projects to digitize large analog sound libraries. For example, the Library of Congress has stringent standards and practices for the digital reformatting of audio-visual materials. While it has several web sites dedicated to providing access to sound collections that have been digitized, such as its National Jukebox web site or Berliner Recordings web site, these sites function as small, curated samples of the library’s vast sound collection, and the fees for scholars (or anyone for that matter) requesting digitized copies of artifacts that have not been reformatted are prohibitively high.[326] In contrast, the openness of The Internet Archive is significant in the way it alters who may or may not participate in the acquisition of artifacts for a media archive, and who has access to the archive’s materials. Rather than accessing media objects appraised and curated by professional archivists, at The Internet Archive's OTR collection media users provide the content and commentary, and other users will leave comments and reviews, sometimes alerting the creator of a collection that a file is mislabeled, or of poor audio quality.

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[325] The OTR archive has a weekly download average of 941,694, which is 32 times the amount of the second most downloaded category, Afropop Worldwide.

[326] In addition to costs related to shipping and stock materials used, the Library of Congress charges $126/hour to digitize analog sound objects. http://www.loc.gov/rr/record/audiodup.html#TR1

The materiality of digital sound recordings at the Internet Archive is different from other digital media, such as the text that forms the basis of an online community like Wikipedia, where users may literally create and edit encyclopedic entries. Like Wikipedia, The Internet Archive is iterative, but not in the same sense, as the iterative nature of sound recordings within an archive, even a digital one, are quite different from text-only content. Text entries are one paratext surrounding the radio programs uploaded within the digital infrastructure of the Internet Archive, and they are changeable in a fluid and ongoing way. However, as a sound archive, The Internet Archive's collection of radio programs is iterative in a different sense, since the contents of its collections are updated, added to, and expanded as users upload digital media files, like radio recordings.

While the collections available at The Internet Archive OTR collection are the holistic result of the combined efforts of a dispersed network of contributors, these efforts are not always coordinated together and collections vary in completeness and availability of contextual information. Some collections hold only one sound file, some are organized around specific themes, like the "Orson Welles On the Air" collection, whose content is made up of the actor's work across several radio programs, including *The Shadow*, *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, and *The Lives of Harry Lyme*. The digital infrastructure of The Internet Archive has minimal oversight of redundancies, and only the creator of a collection may request that it be taken down. This has created an environment ripe with redundancy, as, for instance, the search for a popular classic radio program, like *The Jack*

Benny Show, will usually result in ten or more pages of results which contain links to collections of one episode, or several hundred episodes and these may overlap by containing some of the same episodes, that may vary in sound quality.

Because the Internet Archive OTR collection's appraisal structure is primarily based on format, there is also the possibility of multiplicity where several copies of the same broadcast might be available within rival collections. These are not necessarily redundant, given the social lives of many old radio recordings and their past cycles in syndication on local radio programs and online podcasts or streaming radio programs. These incarnations may have added commentary and introduction by radio hosts or edits to comply with FCC guidelines that prohibit cigarette commercials and racial slurs. And thus, you might have several variations of the same episode that carry with them traces of reuse and repurposing in production contexts outside the classic network era in United States commercial radio. The diversity of content and the continuous process of archiving old radio programs at the Internet Archive points to one way that the materiality of radio within an open participatory digital media archive is different from that of traditional archives. The multiplicity and variety of radio files is significant because it troubles the idea of one, singular narrative of cultural circulation in the history of a radio program. Indeed, duplication allows for the presence of multiple historical narratives for the same radio program. The flexibility to copy and upload these old radio programs, and possibly duplicate partial or entire collections, is the product of their materiality as discrete digital files, as well as the Internet Archive’s open access contributor policy.

The fact that OTR collectors and fans have embraced the digital materiality of The Internet Archive challenges some previous understandings of sound recordings, collectors, and analog fetishism. For instance, Rothenbuhler and Durham Peters argue that there is "something about phonography that invites collection,[327]" and they attribute the supposed fidelity of analog recordings to their alleged superiority in conveying both collective and personal memory. However, the mutability and mobility of the digital radio artifact suggest quite the opposite: that it is a format that invites collectors and hobbyists to spend their time reformatting analog recordings into digital files and uploading them to The Internet Archive. The presence of redundancy, mislabeled artifacts, and incomplete collections has led amateur radio preservation groups like the OTRR to discursively attempt to authenticate and legitimate the radio collections they curate. This is done through OTRR's production of extensive information about each program's history and OTRR's creation of self-generated certificates of completeness.

The attempt to create hierarchies between collections (and thus users) that are either more or less historically legitimate is evident in the format of the collections OTRR contributes to The Internet Archive. The top of each page begins with an overview of each radio program's production history, genre, and style. They are meticulously detailed and written with a sense of historicism. These often include intricate details that chronicle a program's production run and foreground the "official" institutional history, focusing on the above-the-line radio workers, the network a program aired on, and possibly information on sponsorship, genre, and style. There are also often nostalgic elements that exult and attempt to convey these collections' historical significance. Consider the last paragraph in the overview that accompanies the OTRR's *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* collection. After detailing the program's production and cancellation by the CBS, the entry also notes that *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* was one of the final dramatic radio programs to air on network radio:

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[327] Eric W. Rothenbuhler & John Durham Peters, "Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory," *Musical Quarterly,* 81, no. 2 (1997): 243.

> And so, an era passed. *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* was the last continuing detective series of the Golden Age of Radio….the final episode, "The Tip-Off Matter," was aired on September 30, 1962.[328]

This passage is simultaneously nostalgic and fatalistic, mourning the loss of not just this "last continuing detective series," but also an era, "the Golden Age of Radio." Entries like this, that participate in a "golden age" discourse, situate *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* and other classic radio recordings as a way to look back and experience an era conveyed as a utopian period of radio production. Thus, in addition to adding historical credibility, the paratextual information provided by the OTRR can frame these radio collections as memory projects that seemingly give listeners access to the past. A section titled "OTRR Certification Information" follows the historical overview of the Old Time Radio Researcher's contribution. This certification status denotes whether the OTRR group has reviewed the sound files and can guarantee that this is a complete version of the series or not. This type of notation is significant because it is entirely self-imposed by the user, and there is no archival staff that verifies whether a collection is complete.

OTRR's historical copy and certifications act as paratexts, what Gray calls the materials that surround and shape the audience's entrance to a text,[329] that in this context work to create a sence of difference between collections that appear to be "more" official, credible, or historical. And The Internet Archive's lack of content oversight means that these more "official" looking collections coexist next to less organized collections. There are 2,313 what might be called sub-collections within the OTR portion of The Internet Archive's audio holdings, and only 284 of these have been authored by the OTRR. And while the OTRR group is not the only contributor to add historical overviews or some sort of "certification" to their collection, many collections exist with little to no summary. Some have not even been re-titled from the title automatically generated by the file's name. For instance the collection named "Suspense 01," has a one-sentence summary: "Very well done Mystery series." In contrast, this demonstrates the lengths OTRR goes to organizing and historicizing their contributions to The Internet Archive.

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[328] Old Time Radio Researchers, "*Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*," Internet Archive Collection, https://archive.org/details/OTRR_Certified_Yours_Truly_Johnny_Dollar

[329] Jonathan Gray, *Show Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

OTRR's work to add credibility and an aura of historicity to their collections demonstrates the tendency within sound collection subcultures to "police themselves" by exhibiting expertise and labor. [330] In this case, OTRR uses detailed accounts of classic radio network histories and the accumulation of complete programs' episodes to display the group's knowledge and efforts preserving radio history. This demonstrates that, despite the participatory elements of The Internet Archive's design, this digital space is still shaped by external hierarchies of knowledge production that attempt to discipline cultural memory. Listeners apparently respond to these endeavors because OTRR has authored five out of the top ten most downloaded collections of old time radio in The Internet Archive's audio section.

It is significant that participants like those involved in the Old Time Radio Researchers group identify themselves not only as fans, but make sense of their contributions to The Internet Archive as preservationists. This is evident in the group's mission statement, which highlights their goals to restore, share and preserve radio heritage.[331] The members of the OTRR are not professional sound archivists at the Library of Congress, but their work researching, acquiring, and curating classic radio within the openness of the Internet Archive's Audio collection makes them participatory archivists.

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[330] Will Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections: Gender and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture," in Sheila Whiteley (ed.), *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, (New York: Routledge, 1997).

The Internet Archive's OTR Collection as a Forum for Temporal Sonic Witnessing

The Internet Archive's collections are designed with a comments section, and thus, this website has also become an online communal site for listeners to discuss the programs they access, stream and download. The establishment of The Internet Archive's Old Time Radio collection has provided a communal space for amateur radio preservationists, radio collectors and fans to connect and listen to digital radio artifacts. It is unclear and impossible to know how many listeners consciously make sense of their engagement with The Internet Archive's Old Time Radio collection as a connection with the past. Many listeners stream or download the radio programs without participating in the discussion forums. However, it is evident within these forums that some users make sense of the programs they listen to as a way to know the past through recorded sound, and I use the term temporal sonic witnessing to convey this practice of making sense of history through radio.

This is not to say that radio programs actually transport listeners across space and time. Since the late twentieth century, sound recordings have often been considered as transparent preservations of the past, despite the fact that these sounds were usually specifically contrived for the technology used to record them.[332] Instead of presenting listeners with unbiased representations of the past, sound recordings present "a fragmented consciousness of time."[333] Sound recordings' bias as a representation of the past is perhaps doubly true for commercial radio, because these programs were filtered through the imperatives of the U.S. broadcasting networks. In this next section, I examine responses in the Internet Archive that demonstrate the different ways listeners make sense of classic radio recordings as a way to connect with the past.

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[331] Old Time Radio Researchers, "Mission Statement," website, http://www.otrr.org/pg01b_ms.htm

Many Internet Archive users leave comments that simply thank the curator for compiling a collection, or state their enjoyment or distaste for a radio series. However, some users reflect on their encounter with classic radio through a nostalgic yearning for a time they have never actually experienced. The user Eklectic1 wrote in the *Dragnet* radio collection, [334]

> Very well done dramatic episodes, tight writing.... They are great, and a real eye-opener! We've become so cynical, it's refreshing (and amazing) to think that just a few years before I was born, people had ideals of a much higher kind. People weren't better, mind you; they just had much higher expectations of how to behave. We were much more socially connected, and in the fragmented society of Los Angeles in the early 50s, you can see the fraying edges of what was to come. Listen, learn, and enjoy. A true cold lemonade to the thirsty, time-traveling mind.

Here, Eklectic1 consciously makes sense of his or her radio listening through the Internet Archive as 'time traveling' to an era never experienced first hand. Eklectic1 furthermore compares the world represented in *Dragnet* to the present through a nostalgic discourse of moral decline, loss of social connections and community, a disintegration of moral values and proper behavior. The user ohsnapiam56 makes a similar statement in his or her comment in the *Dragnet* forum

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[332] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[333] Ibid, 310.
[334] Comments about *Dragnet* were observed at the Internet Archive Audio Collections of *Dragnet*, available at https://archive.org/details/OTRR_Certified_Dragnet (consulted September, 2014).

> I love these episodes. Not only are they high-class entertainment, but they are a window to the past...people were more trusting, more polite. Men wore hats and took them off when talking to a woman; woman wore dresses and heels; people dressed up to go to the movies, etc. The drudgery of police work then was amazing...no computers, no cell phones (I have an old phone from this time period and my niece and nephew asked me how to use it recently)....all leg work. Listening to these stories is way better than the junk they have on TV now.

These interpretations demonstrate one way these radio programs come to function residually as "windows to the past."

Other posters, like Rayme, not only use these radio programs to make comparative social evaluations, but also express a desire to go back to this time period, literally wishing they had lived in the mid-Twentieth century, "It was a better time, simpler, more innocent and I wish a lot that I grew up back then in the 40s and 50s. Nowadays no one has the morals or honesty of back then." For users like these, old radio represents 1940s and 50s America as a utopian society, where men and women seemed to know their place, and how to 'behave' appropriately. This nostalgic longing for a utopian 'innocent' America and its imagined fixed and easy-to-navigate social categories implicitly suggests that the civil rights movement, feminism, gay activism and other social movements that have disrupted traditional social categories have seemingly 'fragmented' traditional values and corrupted our cultural innocence.

Old radio collections at the Internet Archive can function as sites that invite listeners to rework and remake their own historical consciousness, and this is not always a reactionary nostalgic response that critiques the destabilized identity categories of our postmodern culture. For instance, in the *World Adventurer Club,*[335] the listener gl1200phil reads these texts as evidence of an ethnocentric and sexist society, writing:

> This does have some entertainment value. However, the arrogance, bigotry, sexist attitudes and assumed western civilization superiority, seems to be the "brightest shining light", which [in my honest opinion] tarnishes some of the stories. Superstitious, ignorant natives and unflappable white male heroes are rampant themes woven through all these stories. As a citizen of the US, I find that the "four magic words", which seem to convince the natives to surrender part of the time is quite embarrassing. With their backs against the wall, our "heroes" never forget to try the magic words, "I am an American!" These shows are rather fun, but they say a lot about the mindset in the post-Victorian era, which reduces some of these stories to trite fluff

Another listener name Poe 1809 responded to this post and defended the *World Adventurer Club* and other older radio programs by claiming that they are a product of their time period, and cannot be understood in today's politically correct environment,

> The review directly below me makes the mistake of attempting to judge a show from a previous era through the lens of today's PC world, and it seems to hurt his ability to enjoy this program, and most likely every other media created prior to 1995. My advice would be to simply relax. The world is an often messy place, and not everything is going to mesh with the fantasy world certain people expect the entirety of human existence to conform to.

In this instance, then, these two listeners draw on the sounds they hear at the Internet Archive to make sense of both the past and the present. These residual radio programs thus facilitate collective memory, ideas beyond individual histories about who 'we' as Americans were as a society in the mid-Twentieth century, which gl1200phil describes as a sexist and racist post-Victorian culture. These responses also demonstrate how temporal sonic witnessing of the past through radio encourages a comparative evaluation of what we are like now. For users like Poe 1809, listening to residual radio programs transports him or her to a time not beholden to political correctness, and Poe 1809's assertion that we live in a politically correct "fantasy world" suggests that he or she does not really think discriminatory practices or social inequalities have changed, so much as the expectations for public behavior have changed. Listeners' defense of old radio's racist or sexist representations reveals listeners' ambivalent engagement with U.S. history. To say that these programs ought to be interpreted with an appreciation for historical context implies that radio from the classic network era portrays this era as a socially backwards time when hegemonic gendered and racialized hierarchies were a part of American's everyday life. This is a contradictory defense, because it essentially argues that given the context, these representations were not actually racist or sexist. But the need to defend a program highlights listener's own reflexive understanding that these representations are problematic.

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[335] Comments about *World Adventure Club* were observed at the Internet Archive Audio Collections of *World Adventure Club*, available at https://archive.org/details/OTRR_World_Adventurer_Club_Singles (consulted September, 2014).

Ambivalent and polysemic understandings of U.S. history through radio are most evident in contentious discussions about race, identity, and the past in the Internet Archive's collections of the radio program *Amos 'n' Andy*. *Amos 'n' Andy* was a show about African Americans in Chicago, created, written and voiced by white actors Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll. As Michele Hilmes has discussed, Gosden and Correll explicitly employed a sonic blackface, and characterized their program with minstrel characters inherently different from whites and incapable of assimilating into mainstream American culture.[336] While employing black caricatures depicted through laziness, simple-mindedness, and incompetence, *Amos 'n' Andy* storylines avoided explicit representations of racial discrimination.[337] These elements othered blackness while simultaneously avoiding any real engagement with segregation and racialized social barriers.[338]

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[336] Hilmes, "Radio Voices,"

Some users of the Internet Archive seem aware of *Amos 'n' Andy's* racist legacy as they defend it.[339] For instance, the use AcworthAL acknowledges the possibility that white actors performing African American characters might be considered offensive in the present, but defend *Amos 'n' Andy* on the basis that it must be understood as a product of its time, and appreciated for its comical substance:

> I know it's a bit taboo to like *Amos 'n' Andy* (because its depiction of black men played by white men) but for per laughs, timing, character development etc. it was one of the best radio comedies of the Golden Age. I think people loved the characters and related. The great part of radio was anyone doing a character voice well was a hit, it didn't matter [whom or] what they looked like. Red Skelton, Fanny Brice and Marion Jordon all voiced young children. What folks don't realize is that character voices (Like on *Life with Luigi*) were so extreme so people could identify easily with them. Maybe a few became 'stereotypical' characters, but don't miss out on *Amos 'n' Andy* for political reasons.

This response both acknowledges *Amos 'n' Andy* use of minstrelsy and its racist connotation while simultaneously disavowing it by equating *Amos 'n' Andy*'s appropriation and representation of otherness to other classic radio network vocal performances. For this user, *Amos 'n' Andy* is only offensive if taken out of context from the widespread prevalence of "character" voices used across radio programs of this time. Here, then, the aural medium of *Amos 'n' Andy* radio show enables listeners to depoliticize the show's minstrel performances because we do not see the main characters wearing blackface. Jennifer Stoever argues that "Aural signifiers of race are thoroughly enmeshed with the visuality of race; they never really lose their ultimate referent to different types of bodies."[340] Radio's aurality gives listeners the ability to minimize the political implications of power, voice, and cultural appropriation inherent in *Amos 'n' Andy* sonic blackface by encouraging a colorblind appreciation for the actor's vocal performance.

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[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.
[339] This comments were observed at the two Internet Archive Audio Collections of *Amos 'n' Andy* recordings, available at https://archive.org/details/amosandy1 and https://archive.org/details/AmosAndy286Epspg2Of2 (consulted September, 2014).

This position is echoed by poster foilbean's post "Just Clean Fun…." In which he or she defends *Amos 'n' Andy* against modern political correctness and chides listeners who take representations of difference too seriously. Foilbean wrote:

> I love all the old comedies. At work I often listen to either Burns/Allen, Jack Benny, Easy Aces, Fibber and Molly, and of course Amos n Andy. To me, funny is funny and in this day with all the PC crap, I find it interesting that I can get a good laugh from a script that contains nothing sleezy or cheap humor...no swearing, no F-bombs, no sexual innuendos. So, I'll trade this non-PC stuff to today's supposedly funny crap that relies on what I call, 'easy humor.' This is good stuff. Just enjoy it and learn to laugh at ourselves...lighten up folks and enjoy

Foilbean here draws on *Amos 'n' Andy* to make sense of our contemporary culture as too politically correct, and again, the past is understood as a sanitized innocent utopia where media was created through the superior moral code of classic radio broadcasters

The Internet Archive's collection of classic radio has created a space for deliberation and debate over the historical meanings of *Amos 'n' Andy*. Other users push back, such as the poster Shadows_Girl who posted a comment titled "This should be removed." Here, he or she argues that

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[340] Jennifer Stoever, "Splicing the Sonic Color Line: Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar Nueva York," *Social Text*, (Spring 2010): 65.

> Amos and Andy (both of whom were voiced by white men) is, perhaps, the single most racist of all old time radio shows. Its use of false stereotypes created by white people in order to reassure themselves of their own superiority should have condemned all recordings of this show to a furnace long ago.

This listener demonstrates a response to *Amos 'n' Andy* that sees this program as an example of historical racism, and laments the fact that these shows haven't been destroyed. This response is significant because it demonstrates the competing interpretations of *Amos 'n' Andy*'s historical significance. Other competing interpretations of *Amos 'n' Andy* struggle to reconcile contemporary enjoyment of the show. This is evident in olddj1's post labeled **"**Offensive then, appalling now" which states,

> The fact that these disgusting programs weren't melted down for ashtrays years ago is a real shame. Unsurprising that white people would try to claim these shows are harmless humor, not the most despicable stereotypes ever broadcast. There are plenty of archived programs with these attitudes, but no others that went on for decades playing racist drivel for laughs. As I joined my African American friends and marched for civil rights in the 60's, it never occurred to me these programs would have a following 50 years later. They are truly hurtful. We keep tapes of Hitler too but not for laughs. No stars for this.

Like Shadows_Girl, this response expresses a temporal disjuncture for current *Amos 'n' Andy* fandom. This incredulity for contemporary fandom is explicitly tied to post civil rights race relations. Professing the belief that it should be unthinkable to listen to these programs after the civil rights movements reveals a discursive attempt to distance our current culture from the racism of the past. For olddj1**,** *Amos 'n' Andy's* "despicable stereotypes" and "racist drivel" demonstrate the extreme racism of the mid-Twentieth century, however, in the wake of the civil rights movement, the preservation and enjoyment of these programs is unimaginable, the assumption being that the social movements of the last forty years has made our culture more egalitarian and racially tolerant.

Comments that critically point out *Amos ‘n’ Andy*’s racist legacy are not as common as those that attempt to sanitize the program’s racist legacy. Most listeners who have posted comments share the sentiments of users like AcworthAL or foilbean, proclaiming that *Amos ‘n’ Andy* is not racist because the show never overtly discriminated towards the African American characters. However, responses that insist *Amos ‘n’ Andy* is not racist are also often accompanied by comments that urge listeners to make sense of these recordings as a product of their time, and not judge them with our contemporary politically correct standards. These ambivalent responses are contradictory, and at once both deny and acknowledge *Amos ‘n’ Andy*’s racialized meanings. The presence of posters who contend that *Amos ‘n’ Andy* is a racist program also implicitly makes sense of the show as a product of its time; however, the inequalities of the past they see in *Amos ‘n’ Andy* also seem to encourage a temporal distancing from contemporary racial discrimination. This is evident especially by posters’ disbelief that people could possibly enjoy *Amos ‘n’ Andy* in a post-civil rights society.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the ways in which classic radio recordings continue to circulate through digital spaces as residual artifacts. It is evident that many of the practices that came to define the OTR fan community in the 1970s and ‘80s were adapted when radio collectors and enthusiasts began to use digital technology. As I have demonstrated, old-time radio fans and collectors initially used their personal computers to first organize and maintain their collections. When OTR fans began to widely adapt internet technology, members of the community used various online platforms to connect and discuss the shows they like and the hobby they participated in

Over the last decade OTR collectors have used digital technologies to reformat analog recordings of classic radio and circulate them through online spaces. The Internet Archive has come to be the most popular site where OTR fans upload, download and stream classic radio. This has led to the formation of a user-driven collection of classic radio, wherein the preservation of radio is open to the participation of any amateur radio enthusiast. The development of a participatory online archive is permitted by the free labor OTR collectors do, like the work done by the members of the OTRR who digitally reformat analog radio recordings, research and write up their histories, and upload these materials to the Internet Archive. The circulation of analog sound recordings through a digital platform like the Internet Archive challenges pervious understandings of radio's ephemeral materiality. And, indeed, exposes the technological hybridity of an online archive like the Internet Archive whose contents are, in fact, the combined result of both old and new media.

The presence of groups like the OTRR illustrate how the participatory affordances of the Internet Archive's Audio Collection are discursively disciplined by the internal factions amid participants. Members of the OTRR struggle to legitimate their collections by designating them as more complete and historically credible amongst competing radio collections within the Internet Archive's audio collection. This tells us that while the Internet Archive may be designed as a open and participatory platform, OTR fans and collectors continue to struggle to define standard practices within the OTR community as it continues to develop and change through online community. Indeed, not all radio fans are collectors, and not all members of the old-time radio community believe that radio recordings should be freely distributed online. During my interviews with members of the old-time radio community, several told me that they would rather buy their radio recordings from reputable sources, because they know they can trust the sound quality on recordings produced by the commercial companies who sell classic radio. Furthermore, these radio fans evinced a moral obligation to support companies that invest in the equipment and overhead necessary to run a legitimate classic radio record label.

The next chapter of this dissertation thus examines the historical formation of companies who came to sell radio recordings as physical commodities, and some of the tensions that arose between collectors and commercial vendors. Chronologically, the next chapter has some overlap with the time periods I have been discussing in these last two chapters devoted to the historical development of a community of radio fans. These two communities interact; as I note in the next chapter, the major commercial companies that formed to sell classic radio were all founded by radio fans. Unlike some of the distribution practices used by companies selling cassettes or compacts of classic radio, like Radio Spirits (which I discuss in my next chapter), the Internet Archive OTR collection is a circulatory exchange that is not defined by monetary exchange. This is not to say that the radio digital artifact is wholly divorced from commercialism; for example, many of the programs found on The Internet Archive were produced in the single sponsorship commercial production environment of classical radio networks, and that commercial production is evident explicitly in sponsorship plugs, and implicitly in the format, style and content of the program.

It is not my intention to say that the Internet Archive exists in a vacuum outside of capitalism, but rather, its participation in the circulation of radio is different from the practices of residual radio's initial commercial production culture because the Internet Archive's structure allows for a media archive that is unfixed, and continually changing as it is updated by participants' addition or removal of radio artifacts. In contrast, to this culture, my next chapter discusses the development of a market to sell physical recordings of radio to consumers. I specifically trace the history of companies Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits who developed a market for commercial radio commodities beginning in the late 1960s. By 1998, this market was valued as several million dollars a year, and these three companies were acquired by the conglomerate MediaBay in order to use their content libraries in a digital marketplace. This history of the commodification of radio recordings grows out of the OTR fan cultures I have been discussing, but is distinct in that collectors did the legal work to form their own commercial companies. The establishment of aftermarket corporations selling radio on vinyl, cassette and later compact discs marks what I term the third industrial cycle for these radio programs, and merits analysis to consider how the factors that led to the commodification of radio programs introduced new circuits of exchange into the social afterlife of classic radio.

Chapter 4:

Classic Radio's Third Industrial Cycle As A Material Commodity

This chapter traces how classic radio came to be a material object circulating through formalized commercial sites of exchange. As I noted in chapter one, classic radio shows began to cycle through industrial aftermarkets when radio syndicators like Charles Michelson purchased the copyright to a slew of programs in the early 1960s and began packaging these programs in blocks as "old-time radio" for local radio stations. Michelson Inc.'s syndication was a key moment in culturally constructing classic radio as "old," while also demonstrating one way in which radio syndicators learned from the television industry that audiences enjoyed reruns and consuming media repetitively. If we dislodge our idea of production as that which only takes place at the origin of a recording, it is evident that classic radio programs were re-distributed, re- branded and even re-produced, during their second life-cycle as "old-time radio" syndication in the 1960s. For instance, Michelson became notorious within fan communities for chopping up recordings and tacking on a standardized intro to *The Shadow* before he sent tapes out to stations that purchased his "old-time radio" programming blocks.

Within this second industrial afterlife in syndication as "old-time radio," classic radio was not a physical commodity being sold commercially to the public. Syndicated radio is still very much embedded in the traditional broadcast modes of exchange, wherein programming is exchanged for money from broadcasters whose business is to obtain ratings, or what Meehan calls the commodity audience.[341] I consider this to be classic radio's second industrial cycle because it is based on ownership of program copyright being purchased by smaller companies like Michelson Inc., who operated outside of the networks or production companies that had been at the center of broadcasting in the post-network radio era. In this chapter, I will outline the historical formation of what I see as a third industrial afterlife in the story of classic radio's circulation through our culture: the formation of the commercial classic radio commodity market. Classic radio programs like *The Jack Benny Program* or *Ozzie and Harriet*, like most radio produced during the classic radio network era, were initially intended as vehicles to sell other consumer goods like Jell-O, Lucky Strike cigarettes, or 1847 Roger's Brothers' silverware sets. This chapter examines the circuits of exchange that led radio produced during that earlier regime to become a valued commodity in and of itself, and how that shift affected existing industrial and consumer practices. Beginning in the late 1960s, several companies began to sell recordings of classic radio programs to the public via record shops and bookstores, a market which, as I demonstrate in this essay, steadily grew in the 1970s and '80s, to a point in the mid 1990s when companies selling cassettes and compact disc sets of classic radio were makings several million dollars a year. Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits are the three companies that came to be the most prolific in the commercial old-time radio recording market over the last half of the twentieth century to the early twenty first century, and this chapter primarily focuses on their histories.

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[341] Eileen Meehan, "Why We Don't Count: The Commodity Audience," in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp, (Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 1990), 117 – 137.

Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits have the shared commonality of growing out of the fan cultures that I have traced in the last few chapters. Their founders first engaged with classic radio as OTR fans and collectors. Yet, the companies they founded are distinct from private dealers in the fan community who sell recordings to other fans. Certainly, commercial exchange exists within the OTR fan community when dealers advertise their collection in fanzines or nostalgia magazines or even today on personal websites, and offer listeners recordings duplicated and shipped on demand. And, in fact, J. David Goldin first began selling radio recordings under the name Radio Yesteryear in this fashion, as did Carl Amari, the founder of Radio Spirits. Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits are distinct from fan collectors who sold recordings because they formally and legally established themselves as commercial corporations. While some fans professionalized the way that they would produce recordings on demand for other listeners, even buying recording studio level equipment, such dealers operated out of their homes and primarily dealt radio recordings to other collectors or enthusiasts as a hobby, working another job for their main source of income. Within radio's third industrial cycle, the formation of legitimate businesses was not only distinct from radio collector/dealers because their owners had gone through the formal channels of establishing legal businesses, but also because they developed direct retail strategies to mail out catalogs, while also forming business partnerships with grocery stores, book stores and other retail outlets where they sold radio recordings to a mainstream audience.

OTR radio dealers usually sent out ordered recordings in the original packaging that blank reel-to-reel tape, cassettes or CDRs are sold in, with labels either printed at home or written on with pen. Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits all sold their compilations in standardized packaging designed to catch the consumer's attention. Indeed, we might even think of the packaging used by these commercial companies as acting as the first point of engagement for retail consumers, redefining and making sense of radio as a material to be held, bought and taken home for playback in a car or home stereo system. Most packaging relied on images of the radio personalities performing in the shows compiled in a recording's set, or images of old radios, iconic symbols that harken back to the initial broadcast of classic radio during the first half of the twentieth century despite being visually incoherent with the actual mode of transmission between recording and listener.

Lastly these commercial companies differed from the shadow economies of the radio bootlegging community in that they either bought copyrights from the original copyright owner or paid licensing fees. For instance, participants I interviewed involved in Metacom's Adventures in Cassettes, as well as Radio Spirits, told me that the *The Jack Benny Show* was perpetually the most popular program they sold, and that licensing fees were paid to the estate of Jack Benny based on projected sales.[342] Radio Spirits was paying the Benny estate $40,000 a year in licensing fees at the height of their sales success in the late 1990s.[343]

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[342] Sue Hamilton, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, January 5, 2016; Walden Hughes, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 7, 2016.
[343] Ibid.

This chapter explores how the aftermarket of radio commodities, existing on the margins of mainstream media industries, established new market logics related to sale of radio as physical commodity. I explore how the formation of companies devoted to selling radio as a commodity created different industrial infrastructures devoted to new sites of exchange, such as bookstores, truck stops and digital market places, while creating new industrial practices associated with radio such as re-mastering, marketing and packaging radio as a material object.

Radio has not been traditionally understood as a physical commodity sold directly to consumers, and this is because producers of classic radio, usually advertising companies, were not invested in selling radio programs directly to consumers in secondary markets on any significant scale. For the most part, the few attempts to sell radio recordings commercially were done by commercial third parties outside the broadcast industries, usually as either edited compilations or as one-off recordings of a single popular program, such as the 1938 *Mercury Theater on the Air's* "War of the World" episode. For decades after it was broadcast, "War of the Worlds" has been reformatted and sold commercially over time as a vinyl album, cassette, compact disc, and mp3. One of the earliest examples of the sale of radio as what Kompare (2005) calls a physical, concrete published artifact, distinct from traditional distribution of radio as broadcasting flow, was the Columbia album *I Can Hear It Now*. This compilation, sold as either a set of two LPs or 5 twelve inch 78 rpm records, featured recordings of Edward R. Murrow's radio coverage of world events between 1933 through to 1945, interwoven with historical speeches and Murrow's narration.

One of the earliest companies to capitalize on the nostalgia for classic network radio was Columbia, which released a special vinyl compilation called *Old Time Radio* in 1965.[344] It featured several clips from network radio dramas, including *The Whistler*, *Our Miss Brooks*, and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*. Although some of those dramas had been off the air for only three years, Columbia still packaged it as "old time" radio drama. The Longines Symphonette Society, a subsidiary of the Longines-Wittnauer Watch Company, that produced a classical radio program, began distributing a compilation of clips from classic radio drama entitled *Golden Memories of Radio,* hosted by Jack Benny, in 1968.[345] By 1970, *Golden Memories of Radio* had sold more than 100,000 copies of the six-disc compilation, and several other record companies formed to sell classic radio to consumers mainly through mail-order catalogs, as well as book clubs and, if they were a larger operation, through record stores.[346] By 1979, a handful of record labels were reissuing recordings of classic radio; however, as *The New York Times* reporter Paul Kresh noted, they "vary widely in price structure, longevity and scrupulosity.[347]" For example, Murray Hill Records, which was a subsidiary of a publishing company that sold remaindered books, obtained episodes of *The Shadow* by recording air checks from broadcasts of Michelson Inc.'s syndicated programming. This practice of essentially selling bootleg copies of *The Shadow* was unmasked because their vinyl discs began with an intro that Michelson had standardized for all of his programming, inserted at the beginning of each episode.[348]

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[344] Thomas Lask, "Spirit and Style of Greatness," *The New York Times,* Jan 10, 1965, X25.

[345] "Display Ad 325: Jack Benny Presents the treasure of Golden Memories of Radio," *The New York Times*, Jan 28, 1968, BR31.

[346] Leonard Sloane, "Nostalgia for Extinct Pop Culture Creates Industry," *The New York Times,* March 22, 1970, 171.

[347] Paul Kresh, "From the 'Golden Age' of Radio: Voices of Radio," *The New York Times,* September 16, 1979, D26.

Many of the record labels that began selling network-era radio via mail-order catalogs and advertisements in the 1970s had questionable reputations. *The New York Times* reported in 1979 that some companies selling golden age radio records "are pirateers who vanish from one location only to turn up again elsewhere under another name." Furthermore, the article noted that several companies were involved in lawsuits over copyright infringement at the time.[349] The shifting value of radio as a physical commodity is perhaps best demonstrated by Michelson Inc.'s attention to licensed reproductions of programs for which they owned the copyright. Initially, Michelson and other copyright owners did not seem concerned with the circulation or sale of physical recordings of their radio shows. For instance, Charles Michelson attended the 1972 Society of American Vintage Radio Enthusiast (SAVE) convention [350] in New Britain, Connecticut to speak to collectors about classic radio and copyright. At the time, Michelson Inc. owned the copyright to a library of popular classic radio shows including *The Shadow*, *The Green Hornet*, *The Lone Ranger* and others, but the companies' profits were derived solely from selling syndication rights to local radio stations. And thus, Michelson told the radio fans at SAVE, he did not mind what they did as far as collecting and duplicating went, but condemned any who would broadcast his programs over the air in their own old-time radio shows without appropriate licensing.[351] However, by 1980 it was evident that a viable niche market for selling recordings of radio reruns had grown and Michelson Inc. began licensing their radio programs to some of commercial companies who were selling OTR cassettes and vinyl albums. Michelson publicly threatened collectors profiting from the sale of programs for which he owned the copyright in the prominent fanzine *Hello Again.* Calling this practice "unfair competition, stealing or piracy," Michelson argued, "If I or other people who invest money to pay fees to actors, writers, directors, etc. have the right to produce and market certain radio shows, what right does anyone else have to market and retain the total revenue derived from these shows?" [352] Michelson began actively suing companies selling recordings of radio shows whose copyright he owned in 1978 under a "restraint to trade accusation," which used Michelson's ownership and licensing of classic radio copyrights as grounds to prevent competitors selling recordings of radio he legally controlled. [353] No doubt his shifting perspective on what it meant to violate his copyright was influenced by the growth of the market for classic radio recordings.

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[348] Joseph Webb, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, December 24, 2015.
[349] Kresh, "From the 'Golden Age' of Radio."
[350] Convention organizers would later change the name of this to the Friends of Old Time Radio convention, as discussed in chapter two.
[351] Jay Hickerson, "You and the Law," *Hello Again, 3*(11) November, 1972, 3.

Two companies would emerge from the melee of legitimate and questionable companies in the business of selling commercially packaged radio recordings in the 1970s, and would remain successful in the old time radio market for two decades: Metacom and Radio Yesteryear. Both Metacom and Radio Yesteryear netted several million dollars a year selling classic radio in 1980,[354] and would continue to be lucrative even as a third major company called Radio Spirits was founded and began to grow during the 1980s. The media conglomerate MediaBay bought all three in 1998, and Radio

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[352] Charles Michelson, November, 1980, "You and the Law," *Hello Again*, *11*(6) 2.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Joe Webb, (Fall 1980), "Oboler sues Radio Yesteryear," *Collector's Corner*, 14.

Spirits is the only company to survive MediaBay's 2006 bankruptcy. The history of these three companies demonstrates the different ways that classic radio was reconfigured as a niche, commercially marketed object within the shifting practices of media ownership during the 1980s through to the 2000s.

Adventures in Direct Marketing & Retail: Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and the Creation of the Commercial Radio Commodity

Radio Yesteryear, Metacom, and Radio Spirits are similar in that they were all founded by old-time radio enthusiasts and collectors. Radio Yesteryear was owned by J. David Goldin, a radio collector and former CBS radio engineer who reportedly obtained some of the master transcriptions in his collection from CBS' dumpsters. Radio Yesteryear is usually credited as the first commercial record label devoted to selling commercial reissues of classic radio on vinyl.[355] With a personal collection of over 100,000 radio programs on master transcription discs, Goldin first used the name Radio Yesteryear in 1962 for his own old-time radio broadcast show, later founding his business Radio Yesteryear in 1965 as a company that compiled classic radio programs for release by other record labels. However, Goldin incorporated Radio Yesteryear in 1967, founded his own record label Radiola Records in 1970, and began producing and selling vinyl copies of the radio programs he owned himself.[356]

Radio Yesteryear mainly sold recordings directly to customers through a mail order catalog, although Goldin had a limited distribution deal with some record shops and books stores. Each album's track list consisting of between one to six episodes of a program, depending on the series' episode length. For instance, Radiola's 1971 release of a compilation of *The Fred Allen Show* consisted of six episodes, while its 1974 release of *The Mercury Theater on the Air*'s "The Immortal Sherlock Holmes" contained just the one-hour radio episode split as 30 minute installments on sides A and B of the album. This practice demonstrates the limited capacity of vinyl as a storage technology for selling radio programs, and how the commodification and packaging of classic radio through physical playback mediums remade sense of such programs as stand alone performance texts, rather than as one chapter of an ongoing episodic or anthology program.[357]

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[355] J. David Goldin, *Radio Yesteryear Presents: The Golden Age of Radio*, (Sandy Hook, CT: Yesteryear Press, 1998).

[356] Ibid.

Goldin won a 1980 Grammy Award, which, demonstrated recognition within the industry of the labor involved in remastering old radio recordings. Radio Yesteryear's remastered rerelease of the *Suspense* episode "Donovan's Brain" on vinyl was packaged in a sleeve with a large color photo of a brain. Copy on the front cover presented the episode title; just below, in the same large font, listeners were alerted that this record was "Starring Orson Welles." The cover also contains a passage in smaller font that reads "The complete radio horror drama, exactly as heard on the CBS net (sic) radio *Suspense* May 18th and 25th in 1944." The fact that it won the Grammy for "Best Spoken Word, Documentary or Drama Recording" that year is significant because the thirty-six year gap between the program's inception and the award shows that it was the release of the commercial commodity being celebrated, not the original program itself. This, of course, is one example that demonstrates the renewed meaning and investment that surrounded radio as a concrete, discrete published commodity.

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[357] See Discogs, "Fred Allen – Down in Allen's Alley," *Discogs Database and Marketplace*, https://www.discogs.com/Fred-Allen-Down-In-Allens-Alley/release/5114542; Discogs, "The Mercury Theater on the Air - The Immortal Sherlock Holmes," *Discogs Database and Marketplace*, https://www.discogs.com/Mercury-Theatre-On-The-Airstarring-Orson-Welles-The-Immortal-Sherlock-Holmes/release/2373632

Radio Yesteryear continued to sell recordings of radio on-demand on vinyl and then cassette via mail order catalogues through the 1980s and into the 1990s. In 1987 Goldin incorporated a new business, Premier Electronic Laboratories (PEL),[358] and began to collect and sell VHS recordings of classic films and television shows under the name Video Yesteryear. PEL was created as the parent company for both. Radio Yesteryear had only begun to experiment with compact discs as a format in the mid-to-late 1990s when MediaBay bought PEL from Goldin in 1998. Many in the old-time radio community look at Goldin as someone who made a legitimate business for himself out of his radio collection.[359] By contrast, Metacom used its initial foray into selling classic radio to build a corporation that would become much larger than Radio Yesteryear, going beyond direct marketing to include a wide range of innovative marketing strategies that expanded the reach old-time radio.

Metacom contrasts with Radio Yesteryear in several ways, one of the more noteworthy ones being that it did not originate as an OTR company, and the other being that Metacom began its sale of radio recordings using cassette as a primary format from the beginning. Cassette tapes were not yet the dominant mode of exchange in the OTR community in 1970, and in fact, were an emerging storage technology in general.

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[358] *Premier Electronic Laboratories, Inc. Company Summary*, 2016, Retrieved from Experian.

[359] Joseph Webb, “Personal Interview,” Eleanor Patterson, Email, December 24, 2015; Larry Gassman, “Personal Interview,” Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 8, 2016; Walden Hughes, “Personal Interview,” Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 7, 2016;

Metacom began in Minneapolis in 1970 as a company specializing in custom-length blank tapes, tutorials and training in audio recording marketed towards corporations and educational institutions. [360] When founders James McCann and Philip Levin launched Metacom, they saw themselves on the cutting edge of technological formats, and never intended their company to focus on selling recorded materials; instead, they focused on blank tape sales to businesses. McCann was a radio collector and suggested they offer recordings of old time radio as a premium to client companies that bought 100 units or more of their blank cassettes.[361] This strategy led to a deluge of requests for classic radio recordings and Metacom shifting the company's operations to include retailing old-time radio cassettes.

Metacom began selling recordings of classic radio in 1974 with a two-hour compilation of programs that included "*The Lone Ranger*'s first episode, The Tunney-Dempsey Long Count fight, *Jack Armstrong*'s theme song, excerpts from *Lights Out*, *Suspense*, and Orson Welles' classic broadcast *The War of the Worlds*."[362] This compilation consisted of four cassette tapes packaged in a plastic storage case, priced at \$19.95.[363] McCann was a member of the Radio Historical Society of America (RHSA), which I discussed in chapter two as one of the oldest OTR clubs in the country. He posted an ad in RHSA's newsletter *Radio Dial* in 1974 offering the Old Time Radio Collection to RHSA members at a discount, \$7.95, with further discounts on additional products that could be obtained through Metacom's OTR catalog. By this time it offered an array of 150 additional programs available for $8.50 per cassette.

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[360] Frank Dicostanza, "Metacom Inc.'s marketing anything but conventional." *Billboard,* January 6, 1996, 43.

[361] Ibid.

[362] James McCann, "Metacom Old Time Radio Ad," *Radio Dial*, Winter, 1974, 3 – 4.

[363] Ibid.

Metacom's catalog would grow to offer 500 program choices by 1996, when it was considered to be the biggest retailer of old time radio in the country.[364] As Metacom grew as a company, the owners expanded their content. In 1985, they had six product lines, including self-hypnosis and subliminal persuasion tapes, language courses, children's read-along book cassettes, sets of sing-along tapes with color-along storybooks, alongside their compilation tapes of classic radio, labeled Radio Reruns.[365] In addition to direct marketing through a mail order catalog, Metacom sold its Radio Reruns line in bookstores, utilizing the small size of their cassette products to create in-store exhibits to encourage impulse purchases. In 1985 Metacom began marketing their "Cassette Carousel" to bookstores, which was a spinning cassette rack with four sides displaying ten or more distinct tape products on each side.[366] In addition to these spinning carousels, Metacom also used point-of-purchase displays in supermarkets, convenience stores and truck stops, the latter an attempt to appeal to truck drivers looking for audio entertainment while driving long distances. [367] Metacom was also the first and only company to use a grocery loyalty program in conjunction with supermarkets to sell old-time radio, whereby customers would get a coupon for a Radio Rerun cassette if they purchased a certain amount of groceries at participating supermarkets across the country.[368]

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[364] Dicostanza, op. cit., 43.
[365] "Audiocassttes: A buyer's guide," *Publisher's Weekly*, 80 - 88, 1985,
[366] See Figure 4.1 for an illustration from "Audiocassettes: A buyer's guide," *Publisher's Weekly*, 80 - 88, 1985,
[367] Dicostanza, op. cit.

Metacom's owners expanded their investments in the early 1990s by launching two additional enterprises: an audiobook company called Rezound International in 1992, and a compact disc manufacturing facility called Zomax in 1993, both located near Metacom headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota. [369] These two companies were distinct from Metacom in that they were owned solely by Philip Levin, who would buy out his partner James McCann from the parent company in 1996.[370] During Levin's corporate expansion in the early 1990s, Metacom separated Radio Reruns from the general catalog of recorded audio in 1992 and created a separate subdivision retitled Adventures in Cassettes, which was solely focused on selling Metacom's classic radio content library. Prior to this, the Radio Rerun line was sold in a catalog with Metacom's other offerings, which in the early 1990s had shifted to include music compilations as well as self-help recordings related to health and wellness. Operating under the perception that there was little crossover between the target demographics for these products, marketing director Sue Hamilton separated the catalogs and focused in on treating Adventures in Cassettes as a discrete niche market.[371]

Adventures in Cassettes continued distributing classic radio compilations through bookstores, supermarkets and convenience stores, as well as experimenting with a rental program that was popular with truck drivers and other who had to drive long distances for work.[372] The main marketing tool was the mail-order catalog, which was updated several times annually to remove compilations that did not sell, to add new programming that had been acquired by purchasing program masters from collectors or former radio producers, and to add new seasonal or themed compilations. These consisted of sets compiled by generic categories such as westerns, mysteries, or comedies, as well as by special occasion like a Christmas-themed set or a special commemorative Burns & Allen set put together in honor of George Burn's 100th birthday.[373] In this sense, like Radio Yesteryear, Metacom curated and organized the ways in which listeners engaged with old-time radio programming, giving them on-demand access to a concrete object and placing programs and episodes within a new context, connected by theme or genre or star text, rather than by the programming schedule of a broadcast radio station. Given that Radio Yesteryear released so few program episodes on either vinyl or cassette, and did so through mail-order catalog only, Metacom was a much more prolific force in redefining old-time radio as a physical object commoditized through cassette tape sets and the cultural meanings such a redefinition produced. For example, by commemorating George Burns or celebrating Christmas, these tape sets reasserted the importance of these specific figures or events within American culture. In curating classic radio through cassette tapes, Metacom and other old-time radio companies also generated a certain understanding of cultural change, by implicitly contrasting radio from the past with contemporary film, television, radio and other media, thus encouraging listeners to see classic radio as representative of previous cultural and social conditions through commercial radio entertainment. And lastly, by marketing classic scripted radio as a niche cassette tape product, retailers implicitly asserted the value and importance of broadcasting from the network era, a meaning most evident in the production of old-time radio gift sets.

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[368] Sue Hamilton, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, January 5, 2016.
[369] Dicostanza, op cit.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Sue Hamilton, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, January 5, 2016.

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[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid.

Metacom was also the first old-time radio company to begin packaging compilations as multiple series in decorative packaging marketed as a gift. This included selling sets of cassettes organized around a theme, such as “Mystery Superstars” or “Great Radio Blockbusters,” stacked in a plastic case designed to look like a classic radio receiver of the early twentieth century and marketed as the Metacom Collector’s Series.[374] The sets consisted of six cassettes, each tape holding an hour of programming. Metacom also sold larger cassette compilations, such as its 40-cassette “The Golden Years of Radio”, sold in a vinyl cassette book with a glossy photo of a vintage radio on the front, and an overview of the radio performers and the classic network era of radio on the back cover. The copy on the back of “The Golden Years of Radio” album tells prospective buyers,

> Whether old enough to remember Radio’s Golden Years or young enough to be hearing of them for the first time, this 40 cassette Collector’s Edition will fascinate the whole family. This is *the* gift (sic) for the nostalgia buff in your life, or a great addition to your own entertainment library.

It is clear that the design and packaging of classic radio through the imagery of old radio sets and nostalgic language, presented as a specialized gift, remade and revalued classic radio as a nostalgic commodity meant to be exchanged as a token of affection and esteem. The decorative nature of Metacom’s gift sets reinscribed radio not only as a permanent physical commodity, meant to be collected, but also intended to be appreciated as an artifact that could be displayed as a signifier of taste and distinction.

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[374] See Figure 4.2, a photo of Metacom’s “Great Radio Blockbusters” package.

Appadurai notes that gifts are more than just commodities; “the gift contains both the quality of the giver and of the receiver”[375] and thus acts as a reflection of what the giver and receiver perceive in each other. Functioning as a representation of identity though the remaking of radio as a gift object, we can see how the historical processes that re-commodify classic radio in aftermarkets redefine the relationship that listeners have with radio. Now, recordings of radio are not only re-organized as part of a collection curated and compiled by a commercial company, prearranged by either genre, time period, or other element, they are also imbued with the sentimentality of a personalized gift. Recommoditizing radio as a gift sets is a strategy that would later be employed by Radio Spirits and MediaBay, building upon Metacom’s model, albeit altering it by often contracting out to OTR collectors for source material and linear notes.

Like Radio Yesteryear and Metacom, the third company in this trio of third cycle commodifiers, Radio Spirits, was established by an old-time radio collector and enthusiast. Carl Amari first got into classic radio during the 1970s boom in OTR fandom, having first heard old-time radio through rebroadcasts when he was 12 years old. Shortly thereafter, as a young teenager, he began trading tapes with other fans.[376] Amari has noted the anomalous nature of being a teenage old-time radio fan in the 1970s, saying “My mother thought I was nuts, because I would be up at a quarter to six to tape old-time radio shows.[377]” During his nascent entry into the old-time radio community, Amari worked at the Chicago memorabilia shop Metro Golden Memories, owned by one of the central figures in the old-time radio community, Chuck Schaden.[378] Schaden was (and still is) well known in the OTR community as a heavy collector who from 1970 to 2009 produced a classic radio rebroadcast program on local Chicago radio titled *Those Were The Days.* OTR radio shows flourished on AM frequencies during the 1980s, after the FM band became the primary outlet for commercial stations, and Schaden's OTR program was one of the first fan created shows that emerged to fill the schedules of AM broadcasters. His show consisted of a four-hour block of classic radio programs from his personal collection, interspersed with call-in discussions with interviews with radio producers from the network era, as well as advertisements for his business, Metro Golden Memories. Amari read up as much as he could about classic radio while working for Schaden at Metro Golden Memories; in 1980 at the age of 17 he moved on to form his own business selling radio recordings from his collection, calling his company Radio Spirits.[379]

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[375] Arjun Appadurai, “The Thing Itself” *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 15 – 21.
[376] Joseph Rosenbloom, “Now hear this,” *Inc*, October 21, 1997*,* 51 – 52.
[377] Paul Sullivan, “A Mere Child in the Business Helps Preserve the Heyday of Radio,” *The Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1986.

Initially, Amari saw his Radio Spirits as a short-term project to raise money for college. In a move that emulated Schaden's use of *Those Were The Days* to advertise Metro Golden Memories, Amari started a weekly radio show titled *When Radio Was,* playing classic network radio from his collection to publicize his company to OTR fans.[380] *When Radio Was* first broadcast on WTAQ AM 1300 in La Grange, Illinois, sponsored by a local pizza shop. When they pulled out, Amari thought he would have to cancel his show; however, a producer at WJKL in Glendale Heights offered to pick up

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[378] Ibid.

[379] Radio Spirits, "Radio Spirits Company Profile," *The Internet Archive*, https://web.archive.org/web/19990225164906/http://radiospirits.com/Company%20Profile/company_profile.htm, February 25, 1999.

[380] Rosenbloom, "Now hear this."

When Radio Was and Carl Amari relocated his old-time radio show there in 1982.[381] Amari found using his radio program to publicize Radio Spirits did indeed bring in customers. By 1986 he was syndicating *When Radio Was* via satellite to 25 stations around the country as a free service to further publicize Radio Spirits.[382] By 1988, Amari had signed a contact with airline carriers to produce a version of *When Radio Was* for in-flight entertainment, and this brought it to the attention of a former CBS Radio executive, Dick Brescia, who happened to hear the show while travelling on Eastern Airlines.[383]

Brescia had been one of the key supporters of *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, and had just left CBS and started his own radio syndication company in 1988 titled Dick Brescia Associates (DBA). At the time, DBA's syndicated programming offerings consisted of reruns of *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, retitled just *Mystery Theater*, and a homespun program called *End of the Road* which was hosted by humorist and author Tom Bodett and produced very much in the style of *A Prairie Home Companion*.[384] Brescia was also producing a package of six weekly vignettes, 60 -90 seconds long, that would vary focus between sports, entertainment, and finance as a service to subscribers looking for short news segments to insert into their schedule. Brescia left CBS and formed DBA during the widespread adaptation of satellite technology within the radio industries during the 1980s, and all of DBA's syndicated programming was transmitted to client radio stations around the country via satellite.

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[381] Sullivan, "A Mere Child in the Business."

[382] Ibid.

[383] Walden Hughes & Larry Gassman, "Carl Amari Interview," *Yesteryear USA*, September 11, 2015.

[384] "Special Report: Radio's syndication proliferation," *Broadcasting,* 115(*4*), Jul 25, 1988, 58.

Brescia offered Amari national syndication of *When Radio Was* through DBA, on the condition that Amari step down as host and allow Brescia to replace him with a recognizable personality. Brescia told Amari that his show needed a celebrity, and so he got Art Fleming, the original host of the television show *Jeopardy*, to be the weekly host on *When Radio Was*. When Fleming died, Brescia brought in Stan Freiberg, a comedian and radio star of the 1950s. However, Amari continued to produce a separate version of *When Radio Was* each week for his local station in Schaumberg, Illinois, and he continued on as a producer for the national version of the show, writing the scripts for Fleming and later Freiberg. DBA began syndicating *When Radio Was* in 1990 to 104 stations in the United States, with Art Fleming as the host, who introduced listeners to weekly compilation of programs that Radio Spirits had licensed, including *The Shadow* and *Fibber McGee*, purchased by Amari from CMI. *When Radio Was* proved to be extremely successful, and by 1996 five one-hour episodes were produced and distributed each week, with an episode going out to subscribing stations Monday through Friday. In July, 1997, Radio Spirits launched two more syndicated radio programs that aired on Saturdays. *Radio Movie Classics* was hosted by movie critic Jeffrey Lyons and featured episodes from classic radio programs like *The Lux Radio Theatre*, which adapted popular films for radio during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The second new show was *Radio Super Heroes,* which featured old-time radio's most popular Saturday morning kid's programs, like *Super Man*, and was hosted by well-known voice-over artist Kris Erik Stevens. DBA distributed all of these programs to stations free of charge, because the funding came from national sponsors like Johnson & Johnson, Sears, Radio Shack, Volkswagen, Miracle Grow, Ensure and Visa.[385]

Radio Spirits' relationship with Dick Brescia Associates catapulted the classic radio purveyor into national awareness. Not only did *When Radio Was* promote Radio Spirit's catalog of radio recordings, but Brescia also connected Carl Amari with Walter Cronkite to produce a compilation set. Cronkite personally selected 60 programs from the classic radio network era, reportedly insisting that the classic radio minstrel show *Amos 'n' Andy* would not be included amongst them; this presents another demonstration of the way that radio's representation of the past through box sets is shaped the by the discretion and perspective of those who, for all intents and purposes, act as curators.[386] This box set was packaged under the title *The 60 Greatest Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century selected by Walter Cronkite* and was released in 1999, retailing for $59.98 in cassette format and $69.98 as a set of compact discs. This quickly become Radio Spirits' most successful classic radio set, selling over 50,000 copies.[387] In an attempt to replicate this success, Radio Spirits produced a second compilation with Walter Cronkite in 2001, this time having the broadcaster select 60 radio programs that later transitioned to television.

Radio Spirits' use of a well-known icon of classic American radio to sell recordings was not a new model. As I mentioned out the outset of this chapter, the

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[385] Radio Spirits, "Radio Spirits Company Profile," *The Internet Archive*, https://web.archive.org/web/19990225164906/http://radiospirits.com/Company%20Profile/company_profile.htm, February 25, 1999.
[385] Rosenbloom, op. cit.
[386] Walden Hughes, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 7, 2016.
[387] Ibid; "MediaBay's Radio Spirits Teams Again with Walter Cronkite on New 'Greatest Old-Time Radio Shows' Compilation," *PR Newswire*, Apr 24, 2001, http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/mediabays-radio-spirits-teams-again-with-walter-cronkite-on-new-greatest-old-time-radio-shows-compilation-82473817.html

Longines Symphonette Society had perhaps launched the old-time radio nostalgia market when it produced a set of vinyl recordings of classic network radio in 1968 hosted by Jack Benny, called *Golden Memories of Radio*. However, since *Golden Memories of Radio* was produced and recorded for storage on six LP vinyl records, ,it could not contain full episodes. Rather, Jack Benny introduced listeners to short snippets from classic radio shows, including short segments from comedy, adventure, soap opera, as well as variety, famous news announcements, sporting events and even commercials. The entire set contained approximately five hours of programming. Looking at *The 60 Greatest Old Time Radio Shows of the 20th Century selected by Walter Cronkite*, the format is slightly different, as Cronkite does not narrate the entire series, but rather, produced a 64-page booklet and short audio foreword introducing and explaining his selection of classic radio entertainment. However, the most significant difference is that here 20 cassettes provide 30 hours of programming in a set that is almost the same size and weight as Longines Syphonette Society's 5 hour *Golden Memories of Radio*. This drastic expansion in possible size and scope of commercial classic radio recordings demonstrates the significance of cassette technology to the commercial classic radio after markets.

Like Metacom, Radio Spirits sold its recordings both through direct retail via mail-order catalog and in bookstores around the country by the mid 1990s, and consistently put together compilations organized by program, genre or personality. Radio Spirits copied Metacom's use of vinyl storage books to market larger compilations as higher end gifts, priced at $39.98 or more, such as the Walter Cronkite compilation. One practice that distinguished Radio Spirits from its competitors Metacom and Radio

Yesteryear was Radio Spirit's crowdsourcing of labor from the OTR fandom in the production of its commercial compilations.

Radio Spirits regularly drew on fans' knowledge of a program's history, as well as their content libraries and audio engineering skills. Radio Spirits used master transcription discs to produce digital masters for their cassette and compact disc sets in order to avoid the generational loss that can accompany repeated use of the analog transcription discs. Sets produced by Radio Spirits in the 1990s have copy on the front cover guaranteeing the sound quality of the programs as "Digitally Restored & Remastered," and this verbiage is still present on all of the companies' physical box sets today. In order to create digital masters, and to then do any audio engineering necessary to improve the sound quality of the programs, Radio Spirits routinely reached out to old-time radio fans known to have master analog transcription discs. Because Radio Spirit's CEO Carl Amari was a collector himself, he was connected to other OTR collectors and would hire them as program suppliers to create Radio Spirits digital masters. This practice is evident in the credits for the ten-hour "Old-Time Radio Legends of Comedy" compilation of twenty different classic radio comedies that Radio Spirits released in 2001 in both compact disc and cassette format. The credits list Jerry Haendiges and Marty Halperin as the program suppliers for this compilation; both are well-known OTR collectors and members of SPERDVAC (the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy – see previous chapters for more discussion of this organization). Jerry Haendiges still operates his own company, Jerry Haendiges Productions, which specializes in restoring and remastering analog recordings of classic radio and reformatting them as digital files,[388] and when Amari ran Radio Spirits he regularly outsourced custom audio engineering projects to Haendiges.[389]

In addition to crowdsourcing members of the old-time radio fan community for program masters, Radio Spirits has a practice of hiring radio fans to author the historical booklets that accompany each box set. For instance, Radio Spirits credited Anthony Tollin as the author of the historical booklet that accompanied the "Old-Time Radio Legends of Comedy" box set, and Elizabeth McLeod as the author of the historical notes that accompany the box set of the science fiction program X-Minus One, titled "X-Minus One: Countdown." Both Tollin and McLeod are self-trained historians who have focused on doing deep research as a result of their enthusiasm for old-time radio and participate, to varying degrees, within the OTR fan community. Lastly, Radio Spirits has drew on fan labor and accumulated knowledge to produce box sets by reaching out to fans to identity the voices in programs for which the company did not have historical information.[390]

Radio Spirits' engagement with fans and use of fan labor and resources to produce compilations of old-time radio led to conflict when the company was sold to conglomerate MediaBay, which began sending out cease and desist orders to fans who had posted audio files of classic radio programming on their websites without payment. MediaBay bought Radio Spirits in 1998, as well as Metacom's Adventures in Cassettes line and David Goldin's company Radio Yesteryear. MediaBay decided to consolidate all of their sales of OTR materials under the name Radio Spirits, and hired both David Goldin and Carl Amari to stay on for a few years as to oversee the merger of their companies with MediaBay.[391] Radio Spirits was an attractive company in 1998; it was selling classic radio compilations in 4,000 stores, including Costco, Sam's Club and Barnes &Noble, in addition to the business the company was doing via direct retail. Radio Spirits had just bought the syndication company Charles Michelson Inc. in 1997, thus obtaining the classic radio program masters and licenses that Michelson Inc. owned, while Radio Spirits' radio show *When Radio Was* was also thriving with 3 million listeners a week.[392] And while the details of Amari's sale of Radio Spirits have not been disclosed, it is rumored MediaBay paid him $14 million dollars for his company,[393] after which he oversaw closure of Radio Spirits' original location in Schaumberg, IL and transfer of its offices to MediaBay's headquarters in Cedar Knolls, NJ.

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[388] Jerry Haendiges "Jerry Haendiges Production Services," http://www.otrsite.com/services/;

[389] Walden Hughes, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 7, 2016.

[390] Ibid.

Amid the consolidation and reorganization of the three major commercial companies selling classic radio, Amari came to be the corporate face of MediaBay's anti-pirating tactics aimed at members of the OTR fan community. As head of Media Bay's Radio Group, Amari began an aggressive campaign to shut down classic radio bootlegging in 1999, claiming that Radio Spirits owned the copyright for most of the popular programs and threatening litigation against fans dealing OTR tapes and compact discs, as well as web site operators.[394]

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[391] Business Editors/High Tech Writers, "Audio Book Club, Inc. Announces Acquisition of Radio Spirits, Radio Yesteryear, Video Yesteryear and Adventures in Cassettes," *Business Wire*, December 15, 1998, 1.

[392] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. Announces Strategy to Leverage Classic Radio Content on Internet Business & Technology Editors," *Business Wire*, February 1,1999, 1.

[393] Walden Hughes, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, January 7, 2016.

[394] Erik Smith, "Web Battle Is Latest Episode in Old-Time Radio Serials," *The Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 2001, http://articles.latimes.com/2001/feb/16/entertainment/ca-26001

Under MediaBay's ownership, Radio Spirits came to have an anti-radio fan reputation. Beginning in 1999, Radio Spirits sent cease-and-desist letters to radio fans like Pete Kenney, telling him to shut down the website where he posted files of classic radio programs like *The Shadow* and *Gunsmoke*.[395] Suddenly, it seemed that the tensions surrounding digital peer-to-peer file sharing and the music industry had spread to old time radio fan communities. This tension between fans and Radio Spirits is a significant period in the history of classic radio's circulation through commercial aftermarkets as new industrial practices began to redefine these recordings' value as digital commodities.

Prior to the emergence of the World Wide Web, radio bootleggers and companies selling commercial collections co-existed without much legal animosity. This is because, as I have demonstrated in previous chapters, radio collectors who duplicated programs to trade or sell operated within a small, insular subculture of classic radio enthusiasts. Within this subculture, transactions occurred between two parties privately. Conversely, the open searchability of fans' old-time radio websites changed this dynamic as any websites featuring classic radio recordings were now freely available to anyone with a web browser. And this use of the web occurred at the same time that the media conglomerate MediaBay consolidated the three main retail companies selling classic radio recordings: Radio Yesteryear, Adventures in Cassettes and Radio Spirits. The new company began to envision their conglomerated library of classic radio, as well as their market of classic radio customers, as an integral component of their online business strategy.

Fans and collectors were outraged by the legal action taken against digital radio file sharing, and felt betrayed because of their earlier cooperation with Radio Spirits. More generally, they felt betrayed because of their belief that their work finding, preserving and circulating classic radio recordings had saved these programs during a span of decades when no commercial companies showed any interest in classic radio programming or history. [396] Amari defended Radio Spirits and his attempts to curtail OTR bootlegging in 2001 by appealing to copyright law, as most radio programs from the network era are copyright protected as unpublished scripts until 2050. "I know it makes me look like the bad guy," Amari said, "But if it's protected by copyright, you're not supposed to sell it. If you went on a web site and sold episodes of *MASH*, you'd get a cease-and-desist order. Why should it be any different with old-time radio, just because it's a little older?"[397] And, while Radio Spirits has historically paid radio creators and their heirs licensing fees,[398] this appeal to legal statute and active threats to take radio bootleggers to court marked a complete reversal of Radio Spirits' previous relationship with OTR fans. This shift in policy, tracking down and threatening classic radio fans who were exchanging and posting radio recordings within informal collectors' networks, was an outcome of MediaBay's acquisition of Radio Spirits, and it was very much tied to MediaBay's marketing strategy to monetize their newly acquired classic radio content library as digital content.

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[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid; Laura Leff, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, February 19, 2016.

The Rise and Fall (Or Perpetual Failure) of MediaBay's Audio Empire

MediaBay was originally founded as the Audio Book Club in 1993.[399] The Audio Book Club (ABC) operated using the club-subscription model pioneered by Columbia House, offering members the option to purchase between one to four audiobooks for a penny each, a deal they would receive by signing a contract agreeing to purchase the same number of audiobooks from the Audio Book Club at full price. Members who purchased beyond their contractual minimum amount earned bonus points that could be traded in for free audiobooks.[400] Each month ABC would send members a catalog containing a review of a "Featured Selection," which would automatically be sent to members (along with an invoice for payment) unless they responded within in ten days of receiving the monthly catalog by sending back an order form marked "*Send No Selection.*[401]" To avoid overstocking, the Audio Book Club would license audiobook recordings from publishers and duplicate them in-house as needed.[402]

The Audio Book Club initially relied on direct mail marketing; however, the company soon built a website in 1995 in the hopes that the ability to search ABC's database of 68,000 audio books and listen to short wav file samples would entice more members to sign up.[403] While creating a website contributed to an increase in membership, the Audio Book Club perpetually ran at a deficit.[404] In 1997, the Audio Book Club attempted to raise money through an initial public offering (IPO) of its stock shares, issuing two million shares priced at $10 on the American Stock Exchange.[405] ABC went public in October 1997, and by November 23 of that year their stock price was already down 30%, demonstrating a lack of interest by investors. Over the next ten years, the Audio Book Club would attempt to use Internet marketing alongside the acquisition of spoken word entertainment content libraries to reinvent their company and become profitable.

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[399] Jim Milliot, "Audio Book Club Hopes to Raise $15 in IPO," *Publishers Weekly*, October 6, 1997, 14.

[400] Audio Book Club, "About the Club," https://web.archive.org/web/19961029134501/http://www.audiobookclub.com/v1/home1.html, *The Internet Archive*, October 29, 1996.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Matt Kopka, "Audio Market Gets a Book Club," *Publishers Weekly*, February 7, 1994, 241 (6), 39.

[403] Milliot, op. cit.

The Audio Book Club signed advertising agreements with Mapquest, America Online (AOL) and Netscape in in 1998.[406] Much like Metacom's sale of OTR at truck stops, ABC understood the appeal of audio entertainment to long-term drivers and created a jump page ad for "Road Trip Picks of the Week" as part of their agreement with Mapquest.[407] And while AOL simply promoted the Audio Book Club to its members through its homepage, Netscape included a preloaded bookmark to ABC's homepage in its browser software, in addition to banner advertising on the Netscape Netcenter home page and Net Search page on Netscape's Web Netcenter portal site.[408] These deals were followed by the creation of a website for online customers only called BooksAloud.com, separate from the ABC website, that allowed club members to manage their membership. BooksAloud.com customers could participate in chat rooms, receive email alerts, and read online reviews and editorial content only available to them. The Audio Book Club's CEO at the time, Norton Herrick, stated, "The launch of BooksAloud.com reflects the ongoing strategy of the Company to continue to focus its growth on expanding its membership and sales base utilizing the web. We will continue to seek to take advantage of various opportunities that may come before us which will allow the Company to further penetrate the rapidly growing market for audiobooks."[409] The company's next move to leverage audio content on the Internet? The acquisition of the three main retailers of old time radio in the United States.

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[404] Ibid.

[405] Ibid.

[406] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club Signs Exclusive Agreement With MapQuest," Business Wire, February 13, 1998, 1; Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. and America Online, Inc. Announce Alliance," *Business Wire*, February 23, 1998, 1; Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. Signs Exclusive Agreement With Netscape," Business Wire, June 18, 1998, 1.

[407] Business Editors, op. cit. "Audio Book Club Signs Exclusive Agreement With MapQuest."

[408] Business Editors, op. cit.,"Audio Book Club, Inc. Signs Exclusive Agreement With Netscape."

Purchasing old radio to grow the new media operations of an aspiring conglomerate may seem counter intuitive. However, it is evident that the Audio Book Club's intention in buying a library of classic radio was to leverage old-time radio as a digital commodity. ABC announced their purchase of Premier Electronics' Video Yesteryear and Radio Yesteryear, Metacom's Adventures in Cassettes and Radio Spirits in December 1998, explaining that

> These acquisitions are highly strategic in that they enable us to take the next, and very important step in our Internet growth strategy. We believe we are successfully building a brand as a leading marketer of audio content over the Internet. These acquisitions should enable us to leverage our expertise and knowledge of the Internet and Internet marketing and promote our websites to sell the audio and video content we have acquired.[410]

ABC also noted that they saw the addition of these companies' database of over 300,000 audio entertainment customers and the syndicated old-time radio programs produced by Radio Spirits, *When Radio Was*, *Radio Movie Classics* and *Radio Super Heroes*, as important new sources of advertising for their marketing initiatives, believing that listeners who enjoyed scripted and creative storytelling of classic network radio like *The Shadow* or *The Jack Benny Show* were a market "perfectly matched" to audio club memberships.[411]

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[409] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club Announces BooksAloud.com Web Site," *Business Wire* , June 24, 1998, 1.

[410] Business Editors/High Tech Writers, op. cit. "Audio Book Club, Inc. Announces Acquisition of Radio Spirits, Radio Yesteryear, Video Yesteryear and Adventures in Cassettes."

The purchase of classic radio companies meant that the operations of the Audio Book Club were now diversified between managing a mail-order audiobook club, selling tape and compact disc sets of classic radio through direct marketing and retail outlets, and the production and distribution of a classic radio broadcast. ABC changed their name to MediaBay over the course of the next year, and this reflected their shift away from only selling books towards being understood as an Internet e-commerce company. The process of becoming MediaBay actually happened in two steps, as ABC first unveiled their new central website and then a few months later announced that they had changed their name.

ABC technically first unveiled their new website mediabay.com as "an affiliate of Audio Book Club, Inc.," that would operate as the company's media portal to their new network of websites, including www.audiobookclub.com, www.audiobook.com, www.radiospirits.com, www.videoyesteryear.com, and www.downloadbay.com. The latter was MediaBay's catchall site for customers to download purchased content.[412] Prior to this, there were audio book downloads at www.audiobookclub.com; however, they were large and unwieldy, and usually broken into three to ten parts. During the period of corporate restructuring that reconfigured ABC as one of MediaBay's multiple business arms in 1999, the company attempted to expand beyond spoken word entertainment.

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[411] Business Editors/High Tech Writers, op. cit. "Audio Book Club, Inc. Announces Acquisition of Radio Spirits, Radio Yesteryear, Video Yesteryear and Adventures in Cassettes."

[412] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. Subsidiary Teams With Walter Cronkite to Offer Greatest Old Time Radio Programs of the 20th Century," *Business Wire*, July 28,1999, 1.

We can see how the Audio Book Club's corporate leadership began to imagine their company as a more expansive multimedia company by looking at how mediabay.com was first launched in conjunction with a live webcast of Woodstock 1999. ABC paid for the rights to be the exclusive online site to webcast Woodstock 1999's three-day concert, and they used the event to generate a database of 430,000 email addresses by requiring users to register before accessing the webcast. [413] This would be the company's only foray into rock music and live webcasting; however, their corporate restructuring during this time marks an attempt to be understood as a digital media company, a re-branding project next marked by their legal name change to MediaBay in October 1999. ABC's desire to be seen as an internet-focused business was evident when CEO Norton Herrick explained the company's name change by saying that "Since founding Audio Book Club six years ago, the Company has evolved and grown significantly. The change in our corporate name reflects the growing importance of our MediaBay.com portal.[414]" Renaming also rebranded the company and allowed it to distance itself from the financial volatility associated with ABC and its lack of success going public in the stock market in 1997.

1999 was a year of transitions for ABC. In addition to purchasing J. David Goldin's Premier Electronic Laboratories, Metacom's Adventures in Cassettes, both

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[413] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. MediaBay.com Site Hosts Over 430,000 Visitors During Three Day Woodstock 99 Webcast," *Business Wire*, August 2, 1999,

[414] "Audio Book Club Changes Name to MediaBay, Inc.," *PR Newswire*, October 20, 1999,1.

Radio Spirits retail and broadcasting divisions, and transitioning to a new name, ABC also bought Columbia and Doubleday's audiobook divisions. [415] These latter acquisitions gave MediaBay a combined audiobook club membership and customer database of approximately 2 million names, and yet,3 throughout its existence, MediaBay's biggest segment was always their audiobook club.[416]

Carl Amari would stay on with the company as the director of its radio group from 1999 until 2002, when he left to begin his own production company that syndicated a weekly radio version of *The Twilight Zone*, an audio recreation of the original television series starring Rod Sterling.[417] Amari had signed a non-compete clause with MediaBay agreeing that he would not participate in the old-time radio business for five years after leaving the company. MediaBay sued Amari in 2002, claiming his production of *The Twilight Zone* demonstrated a breach of his non-compete agreement. Amari claimed in court that the production of a new radio drama was outside the scope of his contract with MediaBay; the court agreed and the case was dismissed. [418]

Amari's departure marked the last involvement that a member of the classic radio fan community would have with Radio Spirits while it was owned by MediaBay. In June 2002 Radio Spirits' operations were reorganized to be directly supervised by MediaBay's new CEO, Hakan Lindskog, and MediaBay hired personnel with backgrounds in marketing and publishing to oversee marketing, sales and product development.[419] All audio engineering work involved in recording and distributing *When Radio Was*, *Radio Movie Classics* and *Radio Super Heroes*, as well as digitizing and remastering Radio Spirits' vast content library, was now being done in MediaBay's centralized internet and technology department. [420]

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[415] "Bidnow.Com, Inc. Announces Private Placement Agreement with Strategic Investors Audio Book Club, Inc. and Soros Fund Management LLC Affiliate." *PR Newswire*, April 27, 1999, 1.

[416] "Financial Woes Mount at MediaBay," *Publishers Weekly*, 2004, 251 (17): 8.

[417] Walden Hughes & Larry Gassman, "Carl Amari Interview," *Yesteryear USA*, September 11, 2015.

[418] Amari v. Radio Spirits, Inc., 219 F. Supp. 2d 942 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17193 (N.D. Ill. 2002)

Between 1999 and MediaBay's collapse in 2006, the company consistently integrated classic radio into its digital commerce strategies. Between May and October 1999, MediaBay overhauled their newly acquired Radio Spirits website to give it a streamlined, professionally designed appearance with a new logo.[421] Now, visitors to the site could sample or purchase classic radio files for pickup at MediaBay's downloadbay.com, or stream the daily episode of *When Radio Was* with the use of a Real Audio player. At this time, the majority of Radio Spirits' recordings were only available as physical recordings, and while the previous site had an option that allowed visitors to order a printed catalog, the redesigned site now had an online catalog online that allowed customers to shop online using a credit card. [422] MediaBay also produced a section of the Radio Spirits page marked by a tab labeled "Fun and Games," which hosted a photo library, radio trivia, and contests. This new website also had a place for users to sign up for daily emails, and provided a schedule for the 300 radio stations broadcasting Radio

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[419] "MediaBay's Radio Spirits Announces New Management Team," *PR Newswire*, June 20, 2002, 1.

[420] Ibid.

[421] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. Announces Strategy to Leverage Classic Radio Content on Internet Business & Technology Editors," *Business Wire*, February 1,1999, 1.; see differences between May 2nd and October 13th at "Radio Spirits," *The Internet Archive*, October 13, 1999 https://web.archive.org/web/19991013034827/http://radiospirits.com/

[422] Business Editors, "Audio Book Club, Inc. Announces Strategy to Leverage Classic Radio Content."

Spirits old-time radio programs.[423] For the most part, however, Radio Spirits' digital platform was still very much an avenue taking people to physical, material objects, be it to the materiality of a box set of cassettes or compact discs available for mail order, or to the physical knobs of their stereo sets and car radios, tuned to the dial of a station broadcasting one of their radio shows over the air.

MediaBay expanded their broadcast distribution efforts to form a separate subsidiary in June 2001 in an attempt to brand their old-time radio programming as a separate line of products. This new division was named Radio Classics, Inc., and it focused on sending content across multiple distribution platforms, including traditional radio, cable television, satellite television, satellite radio and the internet, through a new website called radioclassics.com. Thus, MediaBay could now promote their programming to advertisers as an opportunity to find exposure through five different platforms, all of which were technological platforms using digital technologies to transmit old network radio into homes and cars.[424] This strategy was further expanded when MediaBay signed a deal with XM satellite radio in July 2002 to create the Radio Classics channel dedicated to programming 24 hours a day of old-time radio.[425]

At the same time, the Radio Spirits arm of MediaBay continued to employ the compilation formula that had made the Walter Cronkite set successful. In 2000, it produced and released a set put together with singer Andy Williams, titled and marketed as *The 60 Greatest Old-Time Radio Christmas Shows Selected by Andy Williams,*[426] followed shortly that same year by the compilation set *The 60 Greatest Science Fiction Shows Selected By Ray Bradbury*.[427] This model seemed to be laid aside for several years, but Radio Spirits picked up the "best of" series again in 2004, producing a baseball-themed set with Yogi Berra that showcased programs containing either skits about radio or appearances by baseball's legends like Ted Williams, Babe Ruth, Dizzy Dean, Jackie Robinson, Joe DiMaggio and Casey Stengel. And then again in 2004 Radio Spirits released a comedy collection selected by Jackie Mason, which, along with *The Yogi Berra Collection of Old Time Radio Baseball Classics* was marketed as a Father's Day gift, a fact that perhaps implicitly reveals how Radio Spirits probably imagined old-time radio as a genre mainly appealing to older men.[428]

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[423] Ibid.

[424] "MediaBay to Distribute Proprietary Radio Programming Via Multiple Platforms," *PR Newswire*, January 16, 2001, 1.

[425] "XM Dedicates Channel to Classic Radio Giant MediaBay." *PR Newswire*, July 24, 2002, 1.

These efforts were joined by Radio Spirits' continual sale of physical radio program compilation sets, which by 2002 were being sold in 7,000 retail stores around the United States, including Costco, Target, Sam's Club, Barnes &Noble, Borders, Amazon.com, Cracker Barrel Old Country and Wal-Mart. [429] Radio Spirits continued to understand their production of radio programming for terrestrial, cable and satellite television as a promotional tactic, evidenced by a statement from Amari while he was still president of MediaBay's Radio Spirits subsidiary in 2002,

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[426] MediaBay, Inc. and Andy Williams Announce Greatest Old-Time Radio Christmas Shows Compilation," *PR Newswire*, September 28, 2000, 1.

[427] MediaBay, Inc. Teams With Ray Bradbury to Release 'The Greatest Science-Fiction Programs of Radio," *PR Newswire*, November 15, 2000, 1.

[428] "Mediabay Announces Yogi Berra Collection of Old Time Radio Baseball Classics," *PR Newswire*, January 22, 2004, 1; "MediaBay Announces Jackie Mason Collection of Radio Comedy Classics," *PR Newswire*, 2004. Feb 05, 1.

[429] "MediaBay's Classic Radio Products Now Available at Nation's Leading Retailer," *PR Newswire*, December 5, 2002, 1.

> One of the major reasons for our growth and success has been promoting our products on our nationally syndicated classic radio shows. These broadcasts have been responsible for a large portion of the growth in our mail order business and have been a key element in our success at retail stores. The potential for tens of millions of additional listeners to be exposed to our programs and the advertisements we will place in those programs for Radio Spirits product sales should result in millions of additional sales dollars to Radio Spirits and MediaBay.

It is clear that Radio Spirits' initial broadcasts of radio programming as a tactic to sell radio recordings in the early 1980s remained a defining mainstay of its sales strategy. And it is evident that during the first few years of business under MediaBay, Radio Spirits mainly used their website as a entryway for customers to order physical copies, a strategy evident when the company openly described their website as "acquisition channel" similar to direct marketing campaigns (like mail-order catalogs) in a 2002 press release.[430]

Radio Spirits continued to send cease and desist letters to fans posting free radio programs online. They sued the producers of a peer-to-peer file sharing site called Audiogalaxy in 2002, claiming copyright infringement and unfair competition because users were freely sharing radio recordings for which MediaBay's owned the rights.[431] Michael Herrick, CEO of MediaBay in 2002, urged radio fans to pay for MediaBay's online subscription service, telling reporters that it "offers a legitimate alternative to Audiogalaxy by enabling the secure download of thousands of classic radio shows, which can then be legally transferred from the PC to mobile playback or digital audio devices."[432] And, while MediaBay did offer digital radio programs for download on their online marketing site, they begin to seriously invest in an online-only streaming service in 2003.

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[430] "MediaBay's Internet Success Based on 'Old-Fashioned' Direct Marketing," *PR Newswire*, June 11, 2002, 1.
[431] "MediaBay, Inc. Files Complaint Against Audiogalaxy," *PR Newswire*, August 13, 2002 , 1.
[432] Ibid., 1.

Radio Spirits unveiled their Radio Classics subscription center in August 2003, which offered listeners two plan options to stream old-time radio programs from their digitized library. For $4.95 a month subscribers could stream unlimited radio programs from the Radio Classics website while logged into their account, while $19.95 allowed customers unlimited streaming plus the ability to download twenty hours of radio content for playback on a computer, transfer to a portable device or to burn to a compact disc.[433] Radio Spirits' online streaming of classic radio behind a pay-wall changed the company's infrastructure, in that it had to expand its bandwidth, platform software and shift its marketing to encourage subscriber memberships. MediaBay took digital repackaging of classic radio another step further when it began to license classic radio ringtones to mobile phone providers like Alltel and Nextel in 2005. The ringtone market grew steadily in the early 2000s, netting $68 million retail in the U.S. in 2003 and increasing to about $600 million in 2006.[434] Financial forecasts predicted ringtones would save the music industry. MediaBay pursued a piece of this market by offering clips from classic shows from their content library such as *The Jack Benny Show*, *Dimension X*, *Duffy's Tavern*, *The Great Gildersleeve*, *Gunsmoke*, *The Inner Sanctum*, *Lights Out*, *Superman The Bob Hope Show*, *The Shadow*, *Sorry Wrong Number* and *Richard Diamond*. Editing keynotes from these programs, such as the opening theme song or a signature line, and reformatting them as digital ringtones, embedded classic radio within a new platform, the digital cell phone ringtone market, where short 20 - 30 second program clips circulated as novelties for consumers to personalize their cell phones with distinct texts divorced from their original context, although still functioning as a sonic symbol of a specific classic radio program.[435] This service ended when MediaBay went bankrupt in 2006.

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[433] "Subscription Center," *Radio Classics*, August 2, 2003, Internet Archive, https://web.archive.org/web/20030802102623/http://www.radioclassics.com/sub/default.asp?source=rshome; "MediaBay Expands Audio and Downloadable Internet Strategy," *PR Newswire*, Nov 12, 2003, 1.

[434] Breeanna Hare, "Whatever Happened to the Ringtone?" *CNN Online*, May 6, 2013, http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/09/tech/mobile/ringtones-phones-decline/

MediaBay continually suffered from financial woes; however, it continually attempted to stave off bankruptcy through a variety of tactics. The company announced the appointment of media convergence experts from companies like Microsoft, ICM and Time Warner to their board of directors to help grow their company's digital capabilities and strategies.[436] Additionally, MediaBay launched a new website, soundsgood.com, as a digital market place to purchased and download audiobooks, radio shows and ringtones, while keeping their Radio Classics streaming service as its own distinct website. In 2006, MediaBay signed a deal to distribute their classic radio programming on a channel through the much hyped iRadio subscription service for computers and cell phones developed by Motorola, but this failed to actually launch.[437] These efforts could not stave off MediaBay's financial instability.

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[435] "MediaBay Teams with Mobile Streams to License Classic Radio Ringtones to Network of Mobile Phone Users using Alltel and Nextel," *PR Newswire*, October 24, 2005, 1.

[436] "MediaBay Appoints Top Digital Media and Technology Executives from Microsoft/IBM, Time Warner Cable and Kagan World Media to Board of Directors," *PR Newswire*, June 7, 2005, 1.

[437] "Motorola iRadio(R): New Additions Speak Volumes; More than Music: MediaBay's Audio Books and Classic Radio Episodes and AccuWeather.Com's Up-to-Date Weather for Over 100 US Cities." *PR Newswire*, April 05, 2006, 1; "Motorola's iRadio Delayed," Billboard, February 28, 2007, http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/1326422/motorolas-iradio-delayed

Announcements predicting MediaBay's downfall began in 2004, and the company saw four new CEOs between 2003 and 2005. [438] *Publisher's Weekly* reported that MediaBay anticipated filing for bankruptcy unless it received new financing or could be sold to another conglomerate in September 2006. [439] In September 2007, MediaBay liquidated all of its assets in a sale through investment brokerage firm SSG Capital Advisors. The online audiobook company Audio Editions acquired exclusive license for all of MediaBay's Audio Book Club assets, including its brand, website and customer list,[440] while MediaBay's radio assets were sold to a group titled Old Time Radio Employees, or OTRE, headed by former MediaBay employee Mark Tepper. Tepper helms the company as it continues to do business under the name Radio Spirits, officially re-organized as a limited liability corporation in 2012.[441] Today Radio Spirits has approximately 6 staff at its offices in Wallingford, CT, and generates revenue by selling physical compilations of classic radio via cassette, and by continuing to offer subscriptions to its Radio Vault streaming and download service. Radio Spirits reported an annual revenue of $800,000 in 2015. [442] The newly restructured Radio Spirits corporation changed its policy towards fans in 2007, and stopped sending web hosts posting digital files cease-and-desist letters; this strategy has done some work to repair its relationship with radio collectors and fans.[443] This adjustment recognizes the value of goodwill within the core community of radio fans who are, perhaps, the most engaged prospective customers Radio Spirits can appeal to. It is also undeniable that the prevalence of free OTR streaming sites, such as the Internet Archive pages I discussed in chapter three, have contributed to a huge decline in the classic radio commodity market from the multi-million dollar industry it was in the late 1990s. However, the fact that Radio Spirits continues to make a profit demonstrates that radio's circulation as a physical commodity continues, whether that physicality exists as the material properties of a compact disc or the material properties of a digital file in 1s and 0s on a hard drive.

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[438] "Jeffrey Dittus Named CEO of Media Bay Inc." February 02, 2004. *PR Newswire*, 1.

[439] Staff, "MediaBay Outlook Bleak," *Publisher's Weekly*, Sep 01, 2006, http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20060904/2075-news-briefs.html

[440] "Audio Editions Acquires Audio Book Club Assets, Becomes World's Largest Audiobook Catalog Retailer." 2007.*Business Wire*, Oct 30.

[441] SSG Capital Advisors, LLC, "SSG Client Transactions MediaBay, Inc." http://www.ssgca.com/content/mediabay-inc; Martin Grams, "Personal Interview," Email, January 12, 2016.

[442] *Radio Spirits Company Summary*, 2016, Retrieved from OneSource.

Conclusion

This chapter traces a pivotal moment in which classic network radio became reconfigured as a physical commodity that engendered new business practices and became invested with new commercial and cultural values as it was being sold in aftermarkets. In this chapter, I have looked at the histories of Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits, before and after their acquisition by MediaBay, tracing out the specific circuits of exchange that once again, in a third major shift, redefined radio as a physical commodity. This history demonstrates a profound shift in how radio came to be encountered in everyday life. As a package sold in bookstores and then later through online portals, the original model of transaction that surrounded these radio programs during their initial production and distribution cycle was profoundly altered. Companies selling radio directly to consumers were not using radio as an exchange currency as these programs were originally used by the ad companies who produced them to exchange with broadcasters in order secure the audience commodity for clients like General Mills or the British American Tobacco Company. The packaged sets sold by Radio Spirits are also distinct from the recordings of radio traded and reproduced within fan communities who often traded with each other for other programs or at cost, without a desire to make a profit. Within commercial companies, classic radio recordings in themselves became valued as commodities.

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[443] Joseph Webb, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Email, December 24, 2015.

The term "aftermarket" suggests the commercial sale of goods that have outlived their original purpose. Classic radio programs will always bear the markings of their original production and distribution through the flow of commercial radio broadcasting in the sounds, sponsorship spots, references and other sonic elements within the recordings. However, the formation of a third industrial cycle following these programs' initial industrial use as broadcasting flow and later as content sold in second-run syndication, demonstrates how the history of OTR radio recordings as commodities subverts the primacy of the first cycle production cycle in the cultural life of radio within industrial circuits of exchange. Like the thrift shop or reclaimed lumber yard, the practices of Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits in selling radio recordings as objects that were re-mastered, duplicated and packaged for retail, transformed classic radio into a commercially viable commodity long after this content had been discarded by the mainstream media industries.

In the last three chapters, I have outlined how classic radio recordings circulated as material objects through fan communities of radio enthusiasts and collectors, through the broadcast marketing of radio syndicators and, in this chapter, via radio retailers both physically and in the new digital marketplace. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I consider how the narrative traditions established in the classic network era influenced a second cycle of post-network radio productions. I examine how important contemporary programs like *A Prairie Home Companion* and *This American Life* played with aesthetics learned from classic radio in a post-modern manner, while also leveraging their creative innovations as the center of larger media franchises.

Chapter 5

Franchising Creative Radio: *A Prairie Home Companion, This American Life* and the Second Cycle of Post-Network Radio Production Within Public Radio

The last three chapters have focused on how creative radio from the classic network era has circulated as a material object through fan communities, digital spaces, and been recycled by smaller companies on the margins of the media industries. In the last chapter, I specifically argue that the formation of companies focused on selling classic radio as a physical, and later digital, commodity marked the third industrial cycle for these old recordings. Their first run during the network era marked classic radio's first industrial cycle; second-run syndication by companies like Charles Michelson marked a second industrial cycle; and the remastering, packaging and retailing of classic radio as a commodity by Radio Yesteryear, Metacom, Radio Spirits and later MediaBay marked a third industrial cycle for recordings of classic radio. These cycles have referred to the different industrial valuations and uses for the same recordings.

In this chapter, I want to return to the topic of new creative radio productions that I first broached in chapter one, and apply a similar cyclical framework to the production cycles of the post-network era. As I discussed in chapter one, the production of *Theater 5* by ABC Radio from 1964 -65, as well as the production of *Earplay* by NPR from 1971 – 81, and CBS Radio's production of *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* are all examples of what I see as a first cycle of creative radio productions in the post-network era. And in chapter one, I demonstrated how radio producers in this first cycle of post-network creative radio struggled to distinguish themselves from scripted radio's association with an antiquated past and adjusted to new industrial understandings of a distracted audience and the nichification of radio through formatting. This last chapter of my dissertation acts almost as a bookend to the first, picking up where my initial detailing of post-network creative radio production left off.

In this chapter, I trace out how, after CBS cancelled *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* in 1981, local public radio stations like Minnesota Public Radio or Chicago Public Radio were the only production sites willing to invest in the production of creative radio programs like *A Prairie Home Companion* (*APHC*) and later *This American Life* (*TAL*). I demonstrate how NPR declined to pick up APHC for national distribution, and how, following this, Minnesota Public Radio joined with other local public radio stations who felt NPR's focus on news restricted their access to national distribution in order to form an alternative public radio network America Public Radio. This forever changed the structure and distribution of public radio, and APR, which would later splinter into Public Radio International and American Public Media. APR harnessed the affordances of satellite technology to self-distribute cultural entertainment media to public radio stations in the U.S., Europe and Australia, and *APHC* would become the most listened to public radio program, a distinction it holds today. As I explain in this chapter, *APHC* and *TAL* were both able to leverage their blend of classic radio's storytelling form with their own distinct postmodern reflexive aesthetic style to build an economically-hybrid public radio franchises that have transcended radio and extend across television, film, and digital platforms.

APHC and *TAL* have come to be models for creative soundwork in the age of convergence, pioneering industrial strategies for self-distribution and additional revenue via live tours, merchandise, and adaptation to television and film. Additionally, we can look to *APHC* as the pioneer of self-reflexivity and postmodern aesthetics in contemporary creative soundwork that references and plays with the creative radio styles honed by audio workers during the classic radio network era.

This chapter considers the continued circulation of classic radio by examining the production and aesthetic style of creative soundwork during an era of increased media convergence. By this, I mean to distinguish the second wave of creative radio I discuss in this chapter from the first wave I discuss in my first chapter because *APHC* and then later *TAL* have both been made during a period of heightened media convergence. This is a historical moment in which, as Henry Jenkins has noted, media production, distribution and reception have come to be defined by technological, cultural, economic, social and global convergence.[444] It is impossible to separate *APHC*'s ascent as the most listened to public radio show [445] from the rise of audience fragmentation, cable television, and narrowcasting that came to dominate broadcasting during the 1980s. *APHC*'s pastoral, cracker barrel style and target audience of white, educated, affluent public radio listeners demonstrates one of the many ways in which contemporary creative soundwork has become an attractive object for transmedia adaptation. It has become attractive because creative soundwork has become a niche market that promises a built-in audience, and because creative soundwork possesses almost boundless possibilities for textual expansion.

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[444] Henry Jenkins, "Convergence? I Diverge," *MIT Technology Review*, June 1, 2001, 92.

[445] Today, APHC has 4 million listeners and is broadcast over 700 public radio stations in the United States, Canada, Australia and the UK, see http://prairiehome.org/about/

Like *Theater 5* or *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, *A Prairie Home Companion* and *This American Life* continue classic radio traditions of creative radio entertainment. However, this second cycle of post-network era creative radio both drew on the style of classic network radio while also being influenced by postmodern aesthetics, public broadcasting policies, neoliberal political discourses, digital technologies, and shifts in radio's industrial structures. Unlike their predecessors of the early post-network radio age, like *Theater 5* or *CBS Mystery Theater*, creative audio producers of the convergence era did not feel the need to distance themselves from the styles of classic radio. In fact, these radio programs embrace the aesthetics and style of classic radio entertainment with a postmodern playfulness. Playful engagement with classic creative radio became a mainstay of *A Prairie Home Companion*'s two-hour weekly show, making this production from Minnesota Public Radio a model for creative soundwork in a digital age of media convergence and storytelling.

Homespun Companionship: The ascent of a creative radio franchise through narrowcasting the postmodern parody of yesteryear

A Prairie Home Companion (*APHC*) began in 1969 as a morning drive-time music program hosted by Garrison Keillor on Minnesota Public Radio. In 1974, the program shifted to its current variety-show format when Keillor began hosting the show as a live broadcast in St. Paul, MN. Since then, *A Prairie Home Companion*'s variety format has been composed of comedy sketches such as "Guy Noir, Private Eye," acoustic-based music from artists ranging from Willie Nelson to Old Crow Medicine Show, fake commercials for made-up sponsors like Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery Store, and Keillor's signature monologue, “The News from Lake Wobegon.” Garrison Keillor’s inspiration for this variety show format came from a visit to Nashville to write a piece about the Grand Ole Opry for *The New Yorker*, as well as from his childhood in rural Minnesota, which he draws upon to construct his fictional hometown of Lake Wobegon.

Keillor’s dual production of stories about Lake Wobegon through literary essays and books as well as through episodes of *A Prairie Home Companion* has been a mainstay of his career. Keillor’s literary aspirations have heightened *APHC*’s cultural capital in numerous ways, even shaping his very name, as Keillor was in fact born Gary Edward Keillor but changed his name to Garrison to sound more literary.[446] In 1987, Keillor was vocal about his motivation for canceling *A Prairie Home Companion* to pursue writing full time. Yet, Keillor revived his variety show format for radio in 1989 out of the New York public radio station WNYC under a new name, *The American Radio Company of the Air*, acknowledging later that leaving *A Prairie Home Companion* was “the dumbest thing I ever did in my life.” [447] Given this sentiment, it is not surprising that Keillor returned to Minneapolis Public Radio in 1993 to produce his radio show once again using the *Prairie Home Companion* title. Since this time, *Prairie Home Companion* has been continually produced as a live two-hour show broadcast on Saturday evenings in the Fitzgerald Theater in downtown St. Paul, Minnesota, except for evenings when the show is on tour, in which case episodes are broadcasts live on location. Garrison Keillor’s role hosting *APHC* ended in 2016, as he retired after the last broadcast of the 2015 -16 on

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[446] Kevin Klose, “The Keillor Instinct For The Truer-Than-True; The Creator Of 'A Prairie Home Companion' & His Very Real Town Of Lake Wobegon,” *The Washington Post*, September 15, 1985, K1.

[447] The Montreal Gazette, “Keillor: ending show a mistake,” *The Montreal Gazette*, May 3, 1993, B4.

July 2, 2016, which occurred at the Hollywood Bowl in front of a live audience of 18,000 people as the last show on *APHC*'s the 2016 live tour.[448] MPR is reluctant to cancel APHC because it continues to be a steady source of funding and high ratings and so the program will continue after Keillor's department when Chris Thile, an artist in the band Nickel Creek, takes over as the host of APHC's in the fall of 2016.[449]

Tickets for the first live broadcast of *A Prairie Home Companion* at Macalester College in 1974 sold for one dollar and only a dozen people showed up.[450] Today, the show has more than four million listeners on 700 public radio stations in the United States,[451] in addition to listeners tuning to stations where *APHC* is distributed in Canada, Australia and Great Britain. American Public Media, *A Prairie Home Companion*'s parent company, also distributes live webcasts of the weekly show as both an audio and video stream on their website while the show airs on its local Minnesota Public Radio station. Full *APHC* episodes are not reformatted into OPML files for podcasting due to copyright issues with the songs that are performed live on each episode, yet the "News from Lake Wobegon" segment of each show is edited as a stand-alone sound file and made available for weekly podcast subscribers.[452] Beyond its large and loyal listenership, *A Prairie Home Companion* was recognized for its significant contribution to our national sound heritage in 2004 when the Library of Congress inducted *A Prairie Home*

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[448] Euan Kerr, "And that's the news from Lake Wobegon: Keillor closes four decades of 'Prairie Home,'" Minnesota Public Radio News, July 2, 2016, https://www.mprnews.org/story/2016/07/02/keillor-final-prairie-home

[449] Ibid.

[450] Amy Carlson Gustafson, "Prairie Home Companion' Returns To Macalester For 40th Anniversary Celebration," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 30, 2014.

[451] Mandy Zajac, "Hear 'Prairie Home Companion' Live Thursday," *East Valley Tribune*, February 1, 2012.

[452] American Public Media, "About A Prairie Home Companion," http://prairiehome.org/about/

Companion's initial 1974 broadcast into their National Recording Registry digital preservation collection.[453]

Prairie Home Companion has become more than just a popular public radio program; it has become a property adapted across multiple media whose producers frequently collaborate with commercial media makers. The collision of commercial and public media production cultures within *A Prairie Home Companion*'s transmedia adaptations and extensions make it an economically hybrid public radio franchise. In this sense, *APCH* has set a model for other creative soundwork productions through its creation of additional revenue streams through textual extensions, a business model that has been adopted by *This American Life* and others.

The self-distribution we see currently made available to sound workers through podcasting was, in fact, a model pioneered first by *A Prairie Home Companion* in the early 1980s. *APHC* was able to achieve transnational success by implementing a homespun approach to distribution made possible by public radio's policies that mandated a decentralized model of program scheduling, while also taking advantage of the emergence of satellite technology. Prior to satellite technology, public radio stations had two options to distribute their programs to other radio stations: record programs on reel-to reel tape and send them out weekly, or be picked up by National Public Radio and sent out to stations via NPR's telephone line network.[454] When Minnesota Public Radio first approached NPR about distributing *APHC*, NPR's producers said they could see transmitting it as a live musical broadcast from St. Paul on their *Folk Festival USA* program once or twice a year. Thus, *A Prairie Home Companion* was first broadcast nationally as the "Prairie Home Companion All Star Review," Saturday, March 10, 1979 on NPR's *Folk Festival USA*.[455] NPR declined to pick up *APHC* as a weekly program, and following this, Minnesota Public Radio began self-distributing to 220 public radio stations in February 1980,[456] by negotiating the use of the public radio satellite network NPR had just completed building.[457] The Cargill Corporation underwrote this first year of distribution and *APHC* was made available for free to public radio stations via the public radio satellite network operated and controlled by NPR.

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[453] Gustafson, op. cit.

[454] Stephen Salyer, "Monopoly to marketplace—competition comes to public radio," *Media Studies Journal*, 7 no.3 (1993): 176 – 183.

In April 1980, Dr. Wallace Smith, general manager of public radio station KUSC in Los Angeles, optimistically described the opportunities afforded to public radio stations by satellite technology:

> With the satellite is a significantly improved sound quality; you'll also be hearing more programs from around the country. For instance, we're just about committed to air *Prairie Home Companion* from Minnesota public radio. And, as a transmitting station we'll be sending programs such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic across the country.[458]

The rhetoric that satellite technology would improve the sound quality while also democratizing the ability to participate in public radio seems to be a continuation of the rhetoric that saw radio as a democratizing force when national networks first began broadcasting in the late 1920s.[459] Understanding digital satellite technology in this way also makes it a discursive precursor to the utopian understandings of podcasting as a democratizing force for the production and distribution of radio programs.[460] Smith's comment above about satellite technology's promise to bring more variety to local public radio stations from around the country gets at the larger question of who has the right to participate in and define what a national public radio service might be in the United States.

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[455] Rees, "Prairie Home Companion All Star Review," *Variety,* March 14, 1979, 80.
[456] "Notes From Broadcast Markets in the U.S. and Abroad," *Variety*, February 13, 1980, 195.
[457] "Revving up for the 1980s" *Broadcasting*, September 10, 1979, 36 – 42.
[458] Brown, James, " KUSC: David or Goliath?: Radio," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13 1980, L79.
[459] Hilmes, *Radio Voices*, op.cit.

The debate over participation in public radio programming and distribution came to a head in 1982, when NPR decided not to include KUSC's Los Angeles Philharmonic concerts and to discontinue MPR's use of their satellite to distribute *Prairie Home Companion* after the Cargill funding ended.[461] At this time, NPR shifted its programming focus almost exclusively to news and public affairs, and told *A Prairie Home Companion*'s producers that the show's appeal was regional and limited. Minnesota Public Radio then joined with four other major public radio stations, KUSC Los Angeles, WNYC New York, KQED San Francisco, and WGUC Cincinnati, to form the non-profit company American Public Radio (APR) in 1982 in direct response to the perception that National Public Radio did not provide an alternative space for non-commercial arts and cultural radio programming. Forming American Public Radio as a collaboration between multiple stations allowed them to combine resources in order to streamline marketing, coproduction, scheduling, distribution and national fundraising for participating stations.[462] David Kling, APR's first acting chairman, stated in March 1982, "the organization will emphasize development of specific program concepts and new services that have not previously been a part of the national programming agenda." [463] Paying and coordinating with NPR for use of the Public Radio Satellite System,[464] American Public Radio began distributing approximately twenty public radio programs in 1982, as well as their 24-hour classical music service Classicsat.[465] In April 1983, NPR was on the verge of bankruptcy, while in contrast APR was experiencing tremendous success, mainly due to the popularity of *A Prairie Home Companion*, and the company had expanded to distribute over sixty different radio programs to over 230 public radio stations around the country.[466] This marked an important shift in the operations of public radio in the US that would open the door for further restructuring.

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[460] Jonathan Sterne, Jeremy Morris, Michael Brendan Baker & Ariana Moscote Freire, "The Politics of Podcasting," *The Fibreculture Journal*, 13 (2008).
[461] Morrie Gelman, "Radio-Television: New Public Radio Assn. Formed To Counter NPR Drop In Arts; Schism In Public Broadcasting?" Variety, March 3, 1982, *306* (5), 40.
[462] Ibid.

Indeed, *A Prairie Home Companion* had become a public radio institution by 1983. Minnesota Public Radio's *Wireless* merchandise catalogue began selling record numbers of Lake Wobegon tee-shirts as well as posters for *APHC*'s fictional sponsor Powdermilk Biscuits in 1982 and in 1983; *A Prairie Home Companion* was generating more public radio pledges from listeners across the country than any other public radio program.[467] By 1985, *A Prairie Home Companion* had an estimated 2 million listeners every week. Garrison Keillor capitalized on *APCH*'s success by publishing *Lake Wobegon Days,* his first novel to be set in his fictional hometown of Lake Wobegon. *Lake Wobegon Days* spent over forty-four weeks on *The New York Times* "Best Seller List" in 1985-6, and Keillor has gone on to extend his work on *A Prairie Home*

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[463] "Programing: New public radio group formed to distribute shows," *Broadcasting*, March 15, 1982, 170.
[464] Elaine Lembo, "Wobegon Wish Book," *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1983, C7.
[465] "The Media: Public radio's Capital City roundup," *Broadcasting*, April 26, 1982, 66 - 67.
[466] "Trend breaker," *Broadcasting*, April 25, 1983, 104.
[467] Lembo, op. cit.

Companion with sixteen books and one play, *Radio Man*, in addition to the short stories and essays that Keillor has published in newspapers and magazines around the world.

A Prairie Home Companion was also the first public radio program to be distributed to other countries via a long term, ongoing contract. *APHC* began transmission to the Canadian Broadcasting Company in 1981,[468] and by the mid-1980s it was being broadcast as *Garrison Keillor's Radio Show* on both BBC Radio 4 [469] and the Australian national public radio service ABC.[470] Keillor has attributed *A Prairie Home Companion*'s transnational success to the universalism of Lake Wobegon's mythical stories:

> The values of the Midwest are bedrock values and, when I've done the show over in the UK, I have found that Lake Wobegon translated very, very well because the stories had nothing to do with the America that I read about in newspapers. Nothing to do with politics, nothing to do with American mythology and certainly nothing to do with pop culture. It really has to do with the daily business of living and about the tangled relations with family. Family is just unspeakably complicated and always has been. Children are terribly complicated. There is no suffering available to people quite like what you can get from your own children. So it is really very basic storytelling.[471]

The argument that Lake Wobegon is actually detached from other discursive constructs of American mythology or from popular culture is highly debatable. Keillor's attempt to describe his radio show as universal speaks to its success in translating across countries and across mediums.

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[468] "Radio-Television: Minn. Public Radio, CBC Swap Shows For Satelliting, " October 28, 1981, *Variety*, 46.
[469] Paul Donovan, "Wobegon woe, Radio waves," *The London Times*, September 21, 2014, 77.
[470] John Skow, "Let's Hear It For Lake Wobegon," *Time Magazine*, November 4, 1985,
[471] Sue Javes, "Safe And Warm: Radio," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, 2007, 5.

Prairie Home Companion has developed into a transmedia public radio franchise during the forty years that it has been produced, distributed and broadcast. In making this argument, I build on Johnson's definition of media franchising as a process

> constituted by the shared exchange of content resources across multiple industrial sites and contexts of production operating in collaborative but contested ways through networked relation to one another (frequently across boundaries of media platform, production community, and geography.) [472]

Certainly, Keillor's published books demonstrate the extension of *A Prairie Home Companion*'s textual content, namely the extension of Lake Wobegon's fictional geography, culture and history from radio to print, from public radio's production culture to commercial publishing's production culture. Franchising would also apply to the production of merchandise, such as tee shirts, posters, tote bags, and compilation albums, which has all been done in collaboration with media workers at what is now American Public Media.[473]

Yet, *A Prairie Home Companion* collaborations extend beyond books and merchandise because this public radio show has converged across multiple media and production cultures. In June 1986 The Disney Channel began promoting their July 4th special "Lake Wobegon Comes to Disney." A Disney Channel press conference was held with Garrison Keillor in Minneapolis on June 10, [474] and ads were placed in publications across the country highlighting the upcoming “Lake Wobegon Comes to Disney” program in an attempt to encourage readers to subscribe to Disney’s premium cable channel.[475] Under a picture of Garrison Keillor, copy read “The author of the best-seller, ‘Lake Wobegon Days,’ Garrison Keillor, America’s favorite storyteller comes to the Disney Channel.” Underneath this at the bottom of the ad, a tagline reads, “And you thought The Disney Channel was just for kids.” The special aired at 10 pm on July 4, 1986 and was a two-hour filmed episode of the Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) program *A Prairie Home Companion* (*PHC*). While this may have been the first time public radio and cable television’s production cultures converged and collaborated, it was certainly not the last, as I discuss later in this chapter, Showtime attempted to capitalize on This American Life’s niche audience with a TV series from 2007 – 2009.

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[472] Derek Johnson, *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries*, (New York University Press: New York, 2013), 7.

[473] American Public Radio would change the name of its distribution subsidiary to Public Radio International (PRI) in 1994. In 2004, Minnesota Public Radio founded American Public Media to begin distributing its own programs, including *A Prairie Home Companion*. See Steve Behrens, "What comes of big ideas: After taking many to air, Salyer will leave PRI," *Current*, June 13, 2005, http://current.org/files/archive-site/radio/radio0511salyer.shtml

APHC was also filmed live in 1986 for television broadcast on WNYC/ Channel 31 and on WNET/Channel 13 in New York, and host/producer Garrison Keillor remarked at the time that televising *A Prairie Home Companion* was something “we'd been thinking about for a long time.”[476] MPR signed another contract in 1987 to have the Disney Channel film and air edited versions of the last 17 episodes of *A Prairie Home Companion*’s 1987 season, leading up to what was thought to be the last *APHC* episode before it went off the air for good. As mentioned before, Keillor would revive *A Prairie Home Companion*’s format in 1989 as the *American Radio Company*, (*ARC*) produced by

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[474] David Bianculli, “Far From Lake Wobegon,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* June 10, 1986, retrieved from http://articles.philly.com/1986-06-10/entertainment/26045202_1_ulla-skaerved-lake-wobegon-keillor
[475] “Soak Up the Disney Channel This Summer,” *Reading Eagle*, July 13, 1986, D6.
[476] Alex Ward, “Looking In On Lake Wobegone,” *The New York Time*s, April 20, 1986, 27.

WNYC in New York from 1989 – 1992, and, during the *ARC* period, PBS aired a three-part special consisting of live *American Radio Company* footage under the title *Garrison Keillor's Home* in 1991.[477]

A Prairie Home Companion has also been translated into film as well as live cinema simulcast events. Garrison Keillor originally had a deal with Disney to produce a film based on the characters of Lake Wobegon, and when that fell through, he approached director Robert Altman about producing the film. Altman instead asked Keillor to write a script that centered on representing a behind-the-scenes look at *A Prairie Home Companion*'s production.[478] The 2006 film *Prairie Home Companion* starred actors Woody Harrelson, Tommy Lee Jones, Lindsay Lohan, Kevin Kline, Meryl Streep and Lily Tomlin alongside Garrison Keillor, as he portrayed himself in the film's fictional portrayal of *APHC*'s production. The film sparked a heated bidding war for distribution rights after an initial screening in New York, and the independent film distributor Picturehouse beat out Fox Searchlight and Focus Features to win them.[479] Picturehouse's CEO Bob Berney insisted the film use the title *Prairie Home Companion* instead of the working title *The Last Show* to, as Berney said, "capitalize on the name recognition of the 31-year-old radio program."[480] The film adaptation of *APHC* involved collaboration with film media workers hitherto uninvolved with the radio series using techniques specific to film production. And, yet, the film version attempted to harness a sense of authenticity and connection to the radio show, filming on location in The Fitzgerald Theater in downtown St. Paul, MN, where *A Prairie Home Companion*'s radio show is usually produced and broadcast from live on Saturday nights. Picturehouse also held the film's premiere at The Fitzgerald Theater. A comment from Bob Berney about holding the premiere in Saint Paul exemplifies efforts to smooth over the complex collaborations between public radio producers and commercial filmmakers, as he said, "It was really a statement to do that, to make sure people knew it was Garrison's film. It made people own the movie there. It was theirs. It was home grown."[481] It is questionable whether having Lindsay Lohan perform songs in film sets built in the Fitzgerald Theater's basement is necessarily "home grown" or authentic to *A Prairie Home Companion*'s radio program. The desire evinced by Berney to maintain the filmic adaptation of *Prairie Home Companion*'s titular and geographical relationship to *APHC*'s cultural legacy demonstrates the symbolic value of *A Prairie Home Companion* as a branded franchise that transcends radio. And while no other feature films have been made adapting *A Prairie Home Companion* material, satellites beamed live broadcasts of the show to movie theaters via satellite for one-off simulcast events twice in 2010.[482] Furthermore, APHC has been able to bring in a steady flow of revenue through annual live tours across the United States.

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[477] James Barron, "Cinema Verite Radio Comes To The Home Screen," *The New York Times*, November 29, 1991, C34.

[478] Kristin Hohenadel, "Lake Wobegon's Folksy Dreamer; How Robert Altman And Garrison Keillor Brought A Legendary Radio Show To Film," *The Independent*, October 14, 2006, D20.

[479] Ian Mohr, " 'Prairie' Finds Companion," *Daily Variety*, October 31, 2005, 1.

[480] Colin Covert, "'Prairie' film already getting rave reviews; A screening led to heavy bidding for the distribution rights. The movie is slated for release in summer 2006," *Star Tribune*, November 1, 2005, 5B.

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[481] S. T. Van Airsdale, "Squint and It Looks Like Hollywood," *The New York Times*, October 1, 2006, 14.

[482] American Public Media, "A Prairie Home Companion Live in HD!" http://prairiehome.publicradio.org/features/live-in-hd/020410/; American Public Media, "A Prairie Home Companion Live in HD! Again!" http://prairiehome.publicradio.org/features/live-in-hd/

In this sense, *A Prairie Home Companion* has exploited the ways in which creative radio lends itself to textual expansion and transmedia convergence. *A Prairie Home Companion*'s emphasis on combining live acoustic music with comic skits and storytelling made it a rare experience on terrestrial radio, especially as it only began to be nationally distributed in 1980. APHC's national distribution occurred just as *Earplay*, *CBS Radio Mystery Theater* and other programs made during the first cycle of post-network creative radio were being cancelled. By 1983, *A Prairie Home Companion* was the only creative radio program being broadcast weekly on a national network, and by 1985 was considered to be the most successful live variety show in radio broadcasting history since television was introduced.[483] *Prairie Home Companion* has set a precedent for the ways in which creative radio can achieve success in an era of convergence, demonstrating how a radio format that has been deemed "dead" repeatedly can thrive through the innovative use of emerging technologies for distribution and the additional revenue, publicity, and creative options afforded by coordinating collaborations with television producers, filmmakers, book publishers and even cruises. Indeed, *APHC* cast members have collaborated with naturalists and lecturers to entertain voyagers on official "A Prairie Home Companion" themed cruises annually since 2005, the most recent being in March 2015. [484]

A Prairie Home Companion has successfully leveraged its distinct style of creative radio into a transnational franchise, disproving National Public Radio's assertion that *APHC* was too regional to appeal to a national audience. Considering *A Prairie Home Companion*'s partnerships with cable through Disney Channel and indie film distributor Picturehouse, *APHC* is not a mainstream mass appeal franchise. Rather, *A Prairie Home Companion* has exploited the fragmentation of media audiences and strategically narrowcast to a small, loyal and engaged public radio audience imagined to be literate, affluent, educated and older. *APHC* demonstrates the successful nichification of creative soundwork during an era of media convergence. As Curtin has said of niche television, the goal of narrowcasting is to situate "edgy" programming within a small audience who will follow it with intensity.[485] Edge is usually attributed to programming content targeted to a small audience while intentionally alienating other audiences not sought after by a program's producers. That fact that *A Prairie Home Companion*'s loyal audience will follow the show across platforms demonstrates the edgy potential of creative soundwork in an era of convergence and audience fragmentation. *APHC*'s narrow appeal relies upon way its style draws upon classic network radio aesthetics and imbues them with postmodern reflexive parody, and I outline *APHC*'s distinct artistic qualities in the next section.

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[483] Kevin Klose, "The Keillor Instinct For The Truer-Than-True; The Creator Of 'A Prairie Home Companion' & His Very Real Town Of Lake Wobegon," *The Washington Post*, September 15, 1985, K1.

[484] American Public Media, "A Prairie Home Companion Cruises," http://prairiehome.org/features/cruise/

A Prairie Home Companion draws on the conventions and codes of classic entertainment radio most through the performance of skits and stories. This is evident in the show's use of a live foley artist to provide sound effects for the interstitial sketches like "Guy Noir, Private Eye," and false sponsorship announcements for companies like Powdermilk Biscuits. Radio voice actor Tom Keith served *as A Prairie Home*

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[485] Michael Curtin, "On Edge: Culture Industries in the Neo-Network Era," in *Making and Selling Culture,* eds. Richard Ohmann, Gage Averill, Michael Curtin, David Shumway, & Elizabeth Traube, (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 181 – 202.

Companion's sound effects master from the show's inception in the 1970s until his death in 2011, and was known for his ability to create improvisational soundscapes based on Garrison Keillor's script notes. In each show, Tom Keith would use his voice in conjunction with an array of props to evoke and build sonic landscapes for listeners. For instance, Keith would often use his voice to create the sounds of animals like chickens, horses, and pigs, or use objects like a foam plate to conjure the sound of an avalanche.[486] After Keith's death, Fred Newman was brought on board as *APHC*'s resident sound artist, where, like Keith before him, Newman performs a range of sounds using both his mouth and props. From dolphins to geese to the sound of a car turning whilst experiencing engine malfunctions, Newman creates audio scenes in the same way that classic radio dramas produced sound effects that evoked a sense of realism and textured dimension for audiences, as well as to showcase Prairie Home Companion's ridiculous sound effects. However, the radio plays performed on *APHC* play with the conventions of classic radio.

Garrison Keillor's deadpan vocal style and self-reflective parodies of classic radio programs presents listeners with both a celebration and a postmodern deconstruction of classic entertainment radio. For example, consider the reoccurring segment "Guy Noir, Private Eye," which has been a regular sketch on *A Prairie Home Companion* since 1994. As the title might suggest, "Guy Noir, Private Eye" parodies the radio noir style of detective serials that were popular on network radio during the 1940s, 50s and early 60s, such as *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, *Philip Marlowe*, and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*. Garrison Keillor plays the titular detective Guy Noir in each segment, delivering his lines with an impassive seriousness that echoes the traditional hardboiled speech that characterized classic radio detective programs. Postmodern playfulness is inserted through the narrative elements of "Guy Noir, Private Eye," as the storylines focus on silly assignments, like tracking down a missing poodle, and the sketches often include humorous references to current political events and local settings when *APHC* is performed on tour, as well as tongue twisters, alliteration and other absurd word play.

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[486] Daniel E. Slotnik, "Tom Keith, 64, Creator Of Radio Soundscapes," *The New York Times*, November 2, 2011.

The "Guy Noir, Private Eye" segment from January 26, 2013 typifies how *A Prairie Home Companion* utilizes the conventions of classic radio detective programs while deconstructing them through parody. This episode was broadcast live from a live stage production in Madison, WI, and the skit contains local references that lampoon Madison's liberal reputation. Guy Noir, played by Keillor, narrates the sketch through first person descriptions just as Sam Spade or Johnny Dollar did in classic radio programs. He begins by saying:

> It was January, and I was in Madison, Wisconsin, looking for a yoga studio on State Street called Chakra Cheese and a missing woman from Minnesota named Maggie Baraboo.

This is followed by a description from an unnamed character, presumably the man who has hired Noir to find Maggie Baraboo:

> Her dream was social work, Mr. Noir. She wanted to help people. She got a job working up north with people in cabins who go berserk. But then she got addicted to yoga and she took up with a guru in Madison. She's fallen in love with the town and become a puppet in his hands and even gotten a Wisconsin drivers license.

The episode continues as a musical bridge transitions listeners back to Guy Noir's first person voiceover. As Noir walks through Madison looking for Maggie, sound effects are highlighted in bold to demonstrate their use:

> I walked down State Street and it was cold so the street musicians weren't out except for one guy playing bagpipes (the sounds of bagpipes playing the University of Wisconsin's fight song "On Wisconsin" begin in the background) and a protest group by the capitol— (a crowd of people shout**:** No! No! None of it! No! We don't like it and you've got to go!) the beautiful women wore puffy coats so you couldn't tell if they were women or not. And then I smelled incense and I heard chanting (the sounds of a sitar being played arise for a moment) and I walked into a shop called Cosmos of Cheese (the sound of door opening, bells jingle, and then the sound of a door closing is heard) and smelled herbal tea and there were several badgers (sounds of small animals moving) running around.....and a man in flowing white robes leading a yoga session.

This segment employs sound effects and audio positioning to create a sonic scene, much the same way that scripted radio dramas of the classic network era did.

Nonetheless, this is not the same creative radio that aired in the 1950s because this skit's hyperbolic incongruences make "Guy Noir" a self-reflexive parody. The unwavering seriousness with which this scene is relayed through Garrison Keillor's baritone voice does not fit with the silliness of looking for a woman in a cheese-themed yoga shop with badgers running around loose in it. "Guy Noir, Private Eye" functions as a postmodern sound play that pastiches the sounds and style of classic creative radio, while also reflecting and deconstructing the generic conventions of the hardboiled detective radio drama by exaggerating them deliberately to farcical proportions. The same can be said about other reoccurring *APCH* segments. "The Lives of the Cowboys" similarly combines sound effects and audio positioning techniques to parody classic network radio westerns like *Gunsmoke*, *The Six Shooter* or *Hopalong Cassidy*.

A Prairie Home Companion also references and plays with classic radio conventions by crafting interstitial sponsorship messages from made-up organizations. The advertisement copy for these messages pay homage to the single-sponsorship model of most classic network-era radio productions. However, they also parody and mock this style of commercial radio, reminding viewers that they are listening to non-commercial public radio programming. *APHC*'s Beebop-A-Ree-Bop Rhubarb Pie messages typically involve tedious tales of humiliation that are narrated by Garrison Keillor and performed with music and sound effects, finishing as Keillor interjects, "Wouldn't this be a great time for a piece of rhubarb pie? Nothing gets the taste of humiliation out of your mouth like Beebop-A-Ree-Bop Rhubarb Pie, sweetening the sour taste of failure throughout the generations." Powdermilk Biscuits may be *A Prairie Home Companion*'s most well known fictitious sponsor, as Powdermilk Biscuits segments have been a presence on the radio show since the 1970s, and Powdermilk Biscuits merchandise featuring a made-up company logo on tee shirts and posters continue to be sold to raise money for American Public Media. Powdermilk Biscuit sponsorship announcements vary from show to show, however Garrison Keillor usually recites something like this:

> *Heavens they are tasty, and expeditious. They give shy people the strength they need to get up and do what needs to be done. Made from whole wheat raised by Norwegian bachelor farmers, so you know they are not only good for you, they're pure, mostly. Get them in the bright blue box with a picture of a biscuit on the front, or ready-made in the brown bag with the dark stains that indicate freshness.*[487]

Often these announcements are followed by a jingle, and the house band will begin playing upbeat, bluegrass music while Keillor sings:

> Has your family tried 'em? Powdermilk!
> Has your family tried 'em? Powdermilk!
> If your family's tried 'em then you know you've satisfied 'em
> They're a real hot item, Powdermilk!

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[487] Judith Yaross Lee, *Garrison Keillor: A Voice of America,* (University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, MS, 1991) 85.

A Prairie Home Companion's fictional sponsorship advertisements, like these, are performed using the conventions of classic radio's single-sponsorship announcements, but like *APHC*'s comic sketches, are satires of classic radio sponsorship. Like satirical sponsorship skits in programs like *The Jack Benny Show*, these sponsorship announcements do not only playfully mock classic radio's advertising style, they also evince *A Prairie Home Companion*'s midwestern sensibility. Rhubarb, shyness and Norwegian bachelor farmers symbolically evoke rural Minnesota.

A Prairie Home Companion is woven through with textual elements that construct a Midwestern regionalism, perhaps first through the title of the show, which connotes an informal, down-home feeling. And the centerpiece of *APHC*'s midwesterness is Keillor's weekly monologue "News from Lake Wobegon." Garrison Keillor's fictional hometown of Lake Wobegon has come to be a cultural touchstone for folksy, humorous midwestern common-sense morality. The use of the portmanteau Wobegon in itself conjures up a small-town backwoods simplicity reinforced by the signature sentence that begins each "News from Lake Wobegon" segment, when we hear Keillor say "It's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegon, my hometown…" The "news" from Lake Wobegon is mainly comprised of narratives following the eccentric characters that populate the rural town with a population of 942, described regularly by Keillor as "the town that time forgot and decades cannot improve." Keillor's stories about the mythic Lake Wobegon represents rural Midwestern life with tales of ice fishing, gardening, childhood hijinks, small town family rivalries, and regionally specific religious and ethnic references, such as the local tensions between German Catholics and Norwegian Lutherans, or allusions to Native

American Ojibwe tribal culture. Keillor's vocal storytelling on *APHC* about Lake Wobegon portrays Minnesota while also tenderly mocking midwestern culture.

Garrison Keillor's gentle yet dry midwestern humor has led critics to compare him to Mark Twain and E.B. White.[488] The comparison makes sense given the ways in which Keillor's stories in the "News from Lake Wobegon" often begin with mundane everyday events that listeners' can relate to, and often lead to larger lessons about life that comprise a colloquial homespun wisdom. Keillor's vocal style throughout *APHC* has a distinct warm, baritone timbre, qualities that become even more emphasized by the still and quiet sonic backdrop achieved during his "News from Lake Wobegon" monologues. In these segments he speaks in first person singular in a soothing tone that invites listeners to establish an aural intimacy with him. The "News from Lake Wobegon" ends with the refrain "Well, that's the news from Lake Wobegon, where the women are strong, the men are good looking, and all the children are above average." The straightforward delivery of this trademark slogan each week is emblematic of Keillor's deadpan humor and clever wordplay. The "News from Lake Wobegon" is also significant in that it presents a form of creative radio focused on the quirky stories of everyday life, an approach to storytelling subject matter that has been adopted by the radio show *This American Life*, and later by podcasts like *StartUp*, *Serial* and *Mystery Show*.

In 1985 Garrison Keillor told a reporter "I'll be curious about the people of Lake Wobegon longer than the radio audience will be." Given this statement, it is unlikely that Keillor foresaw the longevity of *A Prairie Home Companion* within a convergent radio environment defined by media conglomeration, shrinking support for public radio, and competition for audiences with television, cable, videogames, and computer screens. After forty-one years hosting *A Prairie Home Companion*, it was announced in 2015 that Garrison Keillor would step down from the show, and that musician Chris Thile would become *APHC*'s weekly host in fall 2016.[489] And, while *APHC*'s format and style may change as it continues to be produced in the future, this program has pioneered a niche business model within public radio while employing a postmodern reflexive aesthetic style that has been replicated by other creative soundwork programs, one of the more successful being *This American Life*.

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[488] Paul Donovan, "Wobegon woe, Radio waves," *The London Times*, September 21, 2014, 77.

A Quirky Launchpad: *This American Life*, public radio franchising and the development of a storytelling laboratory

The popular public radio show *This American Life* (*TAL*) began collaborating with Warner Brothers in 2003 to adapt a nine-minute segment from its January 6, 2001 episode into the film *Unaccompanied Minors*.[490] At that time in 2003, *TAL* had four other film projects in development, and *TAL*'s executive producer and host Ira Glass told public media trade journal *Current*, "The films use *This American Life*'s material only as a launching pad, we don't expect that they're going to stay true to what we're doing.[491]" This statement seems appropriate in its characterization of *This American Life* as a launchpad given the ways in which *TAL* has followed the business model pioneered by *APCH* to create a transmedia franchise centered on a creative public radio program. However, *TAL* has gone beyond merely being a public radio franchise that launches *TAL* content onto other media. Over the last twenty years, *This American Life* has also launched the careers of an entire subset of digital sound workers who honed their skills producing *TAL* before moving on to make their own podcasts (or even podcasting networks). Today there are a host of new narrative-driven podcasts that are made by former *TAL* producers that employ the aesthetic sonic styles heard on *This American Life*. In this sense, *This American Life* has functioned as a sonic laboratory of sorts, creating a stylistic form that is now replicated across public and commercial soundwork. In this portion of this chapter, I discuss how *This American Life*, much like *A Prairie Home Companion* before it, draws on both the creative aesthetics of classic radio storytelling while also imbuing its soundwork with a postmodern reflexivity to present aural stories about everyday life. Following this, I then discuss how *This American Life* has become an economically-hybrid public radio franchise that has led to the expansion of a mini-industry of narrative-driven podcasts, specifically focusing on the *TAL* podcast spinoff *Serial*.

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[489] Clarence Fanto, "Garrison Keillor sees transition out of 'A Prairie Home Companion,'" *Berkshire Eagle,* June 26, 2015, http://www.berkshireeagle.com/local/ci_28387988/garrison-keillor-sees-transition-out-prairie-home-companion

[490] Dana Harris & Cathy Dunkley, "Warner Goes To 'Minors,'" *Daily Variety*, December 8, 2003, 9.

[491] Mike Janssen, "Hollywood finds kernels for movies in *This American Life*," *Current*, September 22, 2003, http://www.current.org/wp-content/themes/current/archive-site/radio/radio0317tal.html

This American Life's original title was *Your Radio Playhouse* when it began production in 1995, before quickly changing to its current name.[492] This title hints at *TAL*'s original conception as a show that would reference radio plays from the network era in a somewhat pastiche manner by structuring the program around narrative-driven vignettes referred on the program as "Acts." *This American Life* weaves together informal conversation, first-person monologues, actuality recordings, music and more to construct fictional and real life stories, varying each week by theme and contributor(s). Most episodes are composed of three to five factual stories that detail the everyday life of the people being portrayed, connected by a topical theme. Episode 467 “Americans in China” is emblematic of this format: the episode is split into two acts that tell two distinct stories about what it is like to be an American expatriate living in China. Some episodes focus on one specific story that is then divided into several acts, such as Episode 206 “Somewhere in the Arabian Sea,” which features seven acts focused on life aboard the naval aircraft carrier the USS John C. Stennis.

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[492] Sella op. cit.

Not all *TAL* episodes endeavor to present listeners with real life stories. *This American Life* frequently presents fictional stories read by authors like Aimee Bender, Michael Chabon, and David Sedaris. Additionally, scripted scenes are sometimes acted out and recorded for *TAL* episodes. Consider, for example, how BJ Novak’s fictional short story “Julie and the Warlord” was turned into a radio drama performed by Alison Brie and Tunde Adebimpe as “Act Two” of *This American Life* episode 518 “Except for That One Thing.” In “Act Two” of the *This American Life* episode 470 “Show Me The Way,” Jonathan Goldstein, David Rakoff and Julie Snyder perform a fictionalized correspondence between well-known literary characters Dr. Seuss and Gregor Samsa of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. And on June 20, 2014, Episode 528 “The Radio Drama Episode,” featured the performance of four different theatrical plays staged for radio with sound effects and a live orchestra, released as both a two-hour web video and edited as that week’s one-hour radio episode of *This American Life*.

Like *APHC*, both the fictional and non-fictional elements of *TAL* tend to focus on the extraordinary elements of commonplace, everyday life. The fictionalized segment "Julie and the Warlord" is about the seemingly mundane experience of speed dating made extraordinary by the fact that character Julie ends up at a table with an African warlord. The non-fictional episode "Somewhere in the Arabian Sea" follows the seemingly routine activities of sailors on a naval ship as they stock vending machines, play video games or work out, ordinary stories made extraordinary by the quirky narratives that are constructed for listeners through interviews.

Critic Michael Hirschorn defines the aesthetics of quirk as "mannered ingenuousness, an embrace of small moments, narrative randomness, situationally amusing but not hilarious character juxtapositions."[493] According to Hirschorn, quirkiness revels in the small, usually ignored oddities of life, and attempts to endear characters to audiences through the charm of subtle, ostensibly genuine emotions. Hirschorn argues that *TAL*'s "gentle" style of engaged and aware radio storytelling is quintessentially quirky and labels host Ira Glass "the avatar of contemporary quirk."[494] Glass describes *TAL*'s style himself by saying the show is intentionally idiosyncratic, that it is meant to be "anecdotal, funny and emotionally present,"[495] and that he and his staff "document these real moments that surprise me and that amuse me, and that just gesture at some bigger truth."[496] *TAL* producers argue that they seek out stories that evoke universal identification but are character-driven and surprising, and Loviglio has noted that *This American Life*'s character-driven narratives are formed through ironic juxtaposition and a lighthearted, informal conversational style.[497]

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[493] Michael Hirschorn, "Quirked Around," *The Atlantic*, September 2007, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/09/quirked-around/306119/

[494] Ibid.

[495] Jacqueline Conciatore, **"**If you love this show, you *really* love it," *Current*, June 2, 1997, http://current.org/files/archive-site/rad/rad710t.html

[496] Ira Glass, "Public Talk At Macalester College Transcription," *Current*, May 25 1998, http://www.current.org/1998/05/mo-better-radio/

TAL's quirky aesthetic is derived from the way the show fuses together dramatic storytelling and postmodern reflexivity punctuated by Ira Glass' idiosyncratic vocal timbre. Glass's voice has a sort of high pitched humble quality, and resounds in stark contrast to the authoritative, masculine voice one might associate with traditionally masculine radio voices like that of Robert Segel or Kai Ryssdal on *Marketplace*. His delivery appears unpretentious in its seemingly unpolished, nasal qualities, and *TAL'*s quirky style is compounded by Glass's skill at making the scripts he and his team write sound spontaneous and impromptu. Let us take, for example, the introduction to the January 22, 2012 Episode 455: "Continental Break-up." The theme of this episode is the European Debt Crisis, and it was guest hosted by Alex Blumberg. The intro and opening exchange in this episode demonstrates *This American Life'*s postmodern reflexivity.

Like most *This American Life* episodes, "Continental Break-up" begins with cold open delivered by Ira Glass. Glass directly addresses the audience, as he begins speaking quickly, and focuses on the topic right away by saying "I think at this point even the most casual news consumer has run across a lot of stories like this—" This informal beginning jumps right in, in a stream of consciousness manner that acoustically gives listeners the feeling that we enter the show already in the middle of a conversation, already participating as co-constructors of the story world we are about to enter with Ira Glass.

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[497] Jason Loviglio, "Public Radio, This American Life, and the Neoliberal Turn," in *A Moment of Danger: Critical Studies in the History of U.S. Communication Since World War II*, eds. Janice Peck and Inger Stole (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2011), 283 – 306.

Next, *TAL* edits in sound bites from recent news stories and we hear the serious, strong voice of a male news reporters saying “The focus of the European debt crisis moves today--,” before he is interrupted by successive other sound bites related to the economic situation in Europe. The use of traditional news clips works to create an ironic juxtaposition between more serious journalistic coverage of the debt crises and *This American Life*’s aesthetic style of quirky storytelling.

An informal conversation between Ira Glass and Alex Blumberg follows, as Glass turns this *TAL* episode over to Blumberg. At the time Blumberg was one of *This American Life*’s producers, and the host of *Planet Money*, a collaboration between NPR and *TAL*. Ira Glass performs an ironic apathy in the segment that introduces the debt crisis topic to audiences. This is evident when he introduces Blumberg as an economic expert, and flippantly says, "So Alex, I think I speak for all Americans when I ask you this question and that is, do I have to care about this?" As Blumberg begins to give a long, drawn out answer, but Glass interrupts with a tongue-in-cheek, swift, demanding exclamation of “Yes or no!?” In this instance, Glass becomes a surrogate for the audience. We must assume that as the show's executive producer, Glass would be in the planning meetings and has participated in crafting a show on the European debt crisis. So then, Glass’ seemingly fatuous remarks asking why we should care anticipates audience reservations about listening to a *TAL* episode that investigates global economics. Glass continues to be surrogate for his audience as he participates in an informal, friendly conversation with Blumberg, working to further draw the audience into the conversation.

The conversation between Blumberg and Glass continues, and includes several informal moments that convey spontaneity and reflexivity. Up to this moment, there has been no formal introduction to the program. As this cold open transitions to an introduction to the show, and Glass tells us he is going to leave and let Blumberg take over as host, announcing, "From WBEZ Chicago, it's *This American Life,* distributed by Public Radio International. Alex, I'm just going to hand they show over to you." This is followed by what sounds like an impromptu moment of confusion:

> Alex Blumberg: All right and I say like, from WBEZ Chicago, that thing?
> Ira Glass: *No*, *I* just said that. So you don't have to say that.
> Alex Blumberg: So I don't have to say that?
> Ira Glass: So you can just proceed. *Have* you heard this show before?
> Alex Blumberg: No you didn't say, today's program.
> Ira Glass: All right, I'll say-- you can say today's program.

This confused exchange is peppered with light, friendly laughter, and the spoken words are not said in precise succession, as Blumberg and Glass' voices stumble over each other. This unpolished exchange could have easily been edited out in post-production, especially since the trained ear will notice that besides laughter, all signifiers of the body (breathing, etc.) have been smoothed out through dialogue editing. This apparently unscripted moment is, however, kept intact, and accomplishes the task of conveying an artificial natural improvisational style that reflects on the conventions of radio storytelling by drawing attention to its constructedness.

Considering that "Continental Breakup" is an episode that engages with current events, I want to pause for a moment and consider the how the content produced by *This American Life* stylistically represents a postmodern incarnation of creative radio entertainment. *This American Life* regularly represents current events, such as the global economy, personal true-life stories, like those of sailors on a naval aircraft carrier, and scripted drama, like the segment "Julie and the Warlord." Because *This American Life* is an episodic radio show, the program's subject matter can vary week-to-week between the real and the fictional. *TAL*'s in-depth production of episodes that are fully devoted to issues like disability benefit payments or gang violence at a high school in the south side of Chicago has given the program an aura of journalistic integrity. And the ways that producers embed themselves in local communities to tell a story is done in a way that ostensibly mimics traditional journalism. Indeed, Ira Glass often refers to himself and other producers as journalists and reporters.[498] However, even when presenting current events or real life stories, *This American Life* episodes are heavily produced and are made using narrative devices of storytelling we associate with fictional soundwork. This is evident when Glass explains the ways in which he and his team "structure the stories" produced for *This American Life* in a standardized manner, beginning with an anecdote, then presenting a sequence of events to build suspense, followed by "the part of the story where I make some really big statement like there's something about the kindness of strangers.[499]" Moreover, when *This American Life* represents reality, it is shaped and refracted through their production process and adherence to a narrative-driven storytelling arc.

Ira Glass's work process organizing interview tape into a story structure demonstrates the intense amount of work that goes into transforming *This American Life*'s raw audio recordings into crafted radio stories. His process is a multi-step method that begins by initially jotting down his favorite moments after he finishes an interview, as Glass explains

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[498] This is especially true when Ira Glass speaks at public events, for example, see the his speech at the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism's 2012 Commencement Ceremony, http://www.journalism.cuny.edu/2012/12/ira-glass-gives-the-keynote-speech-at-commencement-2012/

[499] This explanation of Ira Glass' description of *This American Life*'s story structure is taken from a transcript of his appearance at Macalester College in 1998, see Glass, "Public Talk At Macalester College Transcription," op.cit. This is also a point Glass reiterates as he performs the same lecture (almost verbatim) when he is on tour speaking at other locations, as I witnessed during his February 16, 2012 "Reinventing Radio" performance in Madison, WI.

> For an hour-long interview usually it's just four or five moments, but if out I'm reporting all day, I'll spend over an hour at night typing out every favorite thing that happened… Often this short list of favorite things will provide the backbone to the structure to my story. [500]

Glass then has the recordings transcribed, these transcriptions are called tape logs, which he then prints out and proceeds to mark up every quote he might use to form the story he wants to tell, labeling alphabetically and marking quotes that are "especially promising" with an asterisk, and quotes integral to the story with two asterisks.[501] Glass acknowledges that this is a practice of manipulating interviews into narratives, saying

> The point of this is that it gets all this inchoate material—the sound you've gathered—into a form where you can see it all on one page. You see all your options. It's in a form where your brain can start to organize it. Also, writing the list sort of inserts all the quotes into quick-access RAM memory in your head in a helpful way. I find that the important first step to writing anything or editing anything (half of my day each day is editing) is just getting the possible building blocks of the story into your head so you can start thinking about how to manipulate it and cut it and move it.[502]

For Ira Glass and the producers of *This American Life*, the sounds they record do not have to be used in the actual temporal order of an interview. *This American Life*'s stories are not naturally occurring, though they may sound natural, but manufactured through the production process of the show.

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[500] Ira Glass, "I'm Ira Glass, Host of This American Life, And This is How I Work," *Life Hacker,* July 23, 2014, http://lifehacker.com/im-ira-glass-host-of-this-american-life-and-this-is-h-1609562031

[501] Ibid.

[502] Ibid.

The malleability of recorded material within *This American Life*'s production culture is perhaps most evident when Ira Glass discusses the criteria he uses to select the tape that will be used for a story.

> You organize the beats of your plot around the most compelling moments you have on tape. Next I stare at my one-page list and think about what would be a fun or compelling beginning…Usually there are two or three decent options for the beginning of the story and one or two obvious possibilities for how to end it. Then I think about what really are my very favorite moments and what doesn't need to be in the story. And then I sketch a structure based on my letter code: okay, F is the opening beat, then do C and D and then jump to M and N and end on G. And then I write. Usually my list will include a few extra beats that I'm not sure if pacing will permit. When I get to that spot in the writing, I'll know whether to include them or cut them. This technique lets you go from many hours of interview tape to a concise, workable structure very quickly. [503]

Not only does this process transform hours of tape into a "workable structure," this process of relentlessly winnowing, selecting, and organizing tape transforms what would otherwise be a straightforward interview into a narrative story. The fact that *This American Life*'s episodes are comprehensively manufactured stories is further emphasized by postproduction process at *This American Life*.

Each story is heavily edited in the writers' room, much the same way that a writers' room might edit a scripted radio play. Starlee Kine, a former producer at *This American Life*, describes the intense and painstaking the process of writing a script for *TAL*:

> Usually what happens is you work with the [other] writers. You get the scripts into shape, you get the tapes into shape, or you do your own story and you get it into shape. Then Ira comes along and he tweaks the scripts. There's a lot of brainstorming sessions where you sit around and give ideas to each other to see where the scripts will go…Ira's a great line editor, sometimes, he'll just stare at a

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[503] Ibid. See Figure 5.1 for an example of a *This American Life* tape log that has been through this development process for the *TAL* "Episode 529: The Human Spectacle."

> script for hours and just try to get every word perfect. I find that's rare when you do stories: To have someone give that much attention to detail.[504]

The careful effort poured into drafting scripts demonstrates how the informal quirky style we hear on *TAL* is in fact constructed through story selection, script writing, hours of sifting through recording material, and intense editing and post-production work.

Even the "real" voices of actual people featured on episodes about factual events are produced and manipulated. Before the production process even begins, participants' speech is coached, because, while *This American Life's* conversation style may sound naturalistic, it is the product of a coached pre-production process. Glass noted the amount of time he and his staff have to spend drilling participants to speak in the naturalistic conversational tone associated with their show at a talk he did at Macalester College in 1998

> We spend a lot of time working with people who've never been on the radio before. And sadly for me and my little radio staff, not all of them read as well as David Sedaris… Here, for example, is the first take of a story. A real good writer had never done a piece for us before. Here he is in the studio:
>
> [Glass plays a tape and we hear a writer speaking in a sing-songy rhythm]
>
> Glass: Hear that kind of sing-song. That's the way a lot of people read when we send them into the studio, and we try to get them to talk and just like you really talk. So this is after an hour of working with him:
>
> [Tape: the writer sounds less sing-songy]
>
> Glass: Okay. Still not so great, but better. Then we inserted pauses. An image will stay with you a little longer if we put in more of a pause. When we were using regular old tape, you'd put in a pause about this long for a second. [measures a few inches with his hand]. But now we do all this digitally. So what you do is you record the sound into a computer and then you can move pauses around and stuff. Here it is after three hours of editing his voice tracks, five hours adding sound and music and all the quotes.

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[504] Claire Donato, "It's a Hard Knock (This American) Life: An Interview with Starlee Kine," *The New Yinzer*, Spring 2008, http://www.newyinzer.com/archive/spring08/6.html

[Tape: writer with music, sound effects]

Glass: Doesn't he sound better? [505]

Glass' lecture reveals how *This American Life*'s material is never really spontaneous or unscripted. Ira Glass also admits to using wireless Letrosonic lavaliere microphones to provoke more naturalistic and unconscious recordings from interview subjects, saying, "Most radio people don't use these (wireless lavalieres) but they're like a crazy magic trick. The interviewees forget they're wearing the mics, or get tired of remembering, and you get incredible stuff you wouldn't get if you were standing there sticking a foot-long mic a few inches from their face." [506] Selecting equipment intended to shape the style and content of recordings so that they sound more intimate and extemporaneous demonstrates how *This American Life* has established a production culture that is skilled in producing creative radio stories that possess a quirky naturalism to them. Yet, there is very little about *This American Life* that is actually natural. Every aspect of *This American Life* is meticulously constructed to produce the narrative stories we hear, and in this sense, they are just as crafted to be radio stories as *A Prairie Home Companions'* "Guy Noir, Private Eye" sketches or "News From Lake Wobegon" segments are scripted and performed to tell radio stories.

For the most part, *This American Life*'s stories do not regularly employ a foley artist or draw upon a library of sound effects in order to position their audience within the story world of an episode. In this sense, the show is distinct from *A Prairie Home Companion* or classic radio era creative soundwork. However, actuality sound and music come to provide the same function aesthetically within episodes of *This American Life* to conjure place, emotion and create vivid soundscapes. Actuality sound refers to recordings made on location, for instance, in episode 206 “Somewhere in the Arabian Sea,” all seven acts about naval life feature recordings made on location on the USS John C. Stennis aircraft carrier. Thus, except for the voice of Ira Glass narrating the episode, the other voices we hear contain the sonic markers of space and activity, woven together with music to punctuate the scene that is being created. Scenes from this episode are illustrative of the way *This American Life*’s producers use actuality recordings and music to construct the sonic dimensions and textures of a story. Ira Glass begins the episode with his usual cold open, and then the episode moves to a conversation between Alex Blumberg and a sailor named Prevon Scott. Before Blumberg or Scott speak, the sound of a drum beating in military fashion works as an indexical reference to military culture. The drum fades into the background as Scott begins talking, telling Blumberg what she does on the ship: fill vending machines. As she talks, we can hear the reverb of an open space, people walking and talking in the background, and the movement of snacks via the crunching sound of the polypropylene film that wraps the candy bars, potato chips and the other snacks that Scott is discussing. This anchors the scene in the specific activities that are going on, symbolically creating the soundscape of a common area with vending machines.

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[505] Glass, "Public Talk At Macalester College Transcription," op. cit.
[506] Glass, "I'm Ira Glass," op. cit.

Then, Glass steps in to continue setting up the episode by telling us about the USS Stennis, and the rhythmic sound of military music returns, layered under his vocal tracks. Then the music continues under vocal tracks in the actuality recording as the scene returns to Prevon Scott telling Alex Blumberg about the most popular vending machine snacks on the ship. In addition to the background sounds and the crinkle of the snack packaging, you can hear markers of identity in the voices talking. For instance, as Prevon Scott tells us about her life on the USS Stennis, the pacing, inflection, and timbre of her voice conveys youthfulness, femininity, and an African American cultural vernacular. The combination of actuality recordings and music is deftly used here to build an aural scene that positions listeners within the military climate of a naval aircraft vessel.

TAL's signature blend of music, actuality sound, quirky naturalistic speech has made it one of the most popular creative storytelling programs of the post-network radio era. However, it was not artistic or literary merit in and of itself that brought this show to listeners around the U.S., and later Canada, the UK and Australia. *TAL* has thrived within the industrial structures of U.S. public radio through innovative fundraising and distribution strategies. Stations first began seeking out *TAL* distribution deals after hearing about the show's inventive use of quirky aesthetics for public radio pledge drives.[507] For one pledge drive, Ira Glass offered to pick one name from a hat of pledge drive contributors every five minutes and deliver the pizzas himself to everyone selected at the end of the hour. [508] Another pledge drive involved using sound effects to stage a Medieval Times-inspired jousting match between newscasters from *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*.

In one of his most famous pledge drive segments, Ira Glass did a man-on-the-street bit in front of Starbucks inducing guilt in his interviewees by asking public radio listeners why they had not pledged money. One guy admits that he has not contributed and begins to nervously apologize, breaking out in a sweat, and calling himself slime.

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[507] Nathan Rabin, "Interview: Ira Glass," *The A.V. Club*, November 5, 2003, http://www.avclub.com/articles/ira-glass,13841/

[508] Ibid.

Glass kept recording, allowing the man to continue rambling on apologetically. After this recording, Glass interjected, stating that he has interviewed a lot of bad people over the years, “You know? People who've exploited their own employees. Gang members. Murderers! I've interviewed actual murderers. And I have to say, I have never interviewed anybody who has gotten as nervous as *this man*, when approached by a public radio employee.” [509] Local public radio managers played these Starbucks’ spots on repeat during pledge drives, and these member stations reported unexpected increases in pledge contributions netted during *This American Life* episodes.[510] *This American Life*’s reputation for successful pledge drive spots was a key factor that motivated 111 public radio stations to pick it up within its first year of its production. Following *TAL*’s widespread adoption by member stations, NPR and PRI had a bidding war for *This American Life*’s distribution rights in 1997 that concluded with PRI securing TAL’s distribution rights for the next seventeen years.[511]

American Public Radio had changed its name to Public Radio International (PRI) in 1994 to reflect an expanded emphasis on importing and exporting radio with partners outside of the United States.[512] Thus, when PRI picked up the distribution rights for *This American Life* it was also distributing *A Prairie Home Companion*, and acquired *TAL* to further the company’s arts and culture programming brand. *A Prairie Home Companion* left the industrial structure of Minnesota Public Radio and established its own non-profit stand-alone production company Prairie Home Productions in 2003.[513] At the same time, Minnesota Public Radio split off from PRI in 2004 to form its own distribution company American Public Media. After becoming its own production company *APHC* still coordinated its production and broadcast with MPR and its distribution through APM. [514] *TAL* has followed *APHC*'s business model, leaving PRI in 2014 to self-distribute its radio show through the public radio exchange PRX.[515] And, in 2015, Ira Glass cited *APHC* as an example when he announced *TAL* was leaving the institutional structure of its original production studio[516] and parent station WBEZ Chicago and becoming an independent public benefit corporation.[517]

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[509] Conciatore, op. cit.

[510] Ibid.

[511] Ibid.

[512] Steve Behrens, “APR's new name and emphasis: Public Radio International,” *Current*, December 13, 1993, http://current.org/files/archive-site/international/world323.shtml

This announcement was written by Ira Glass and WBEZ manager Goli Sheikholeslami and posted to *This American Life*'s online blog. Glass and Sheikholeslami note the production relationship that has existed over the last twenty years between WBEZ and *This American Life*, but explain that the show is now too complex and too big to have WBEZ manage and approve "all of our contracts, projects, payroll and expenses." [518] The complexity and growth of *This American Life* is attributed in this blog to the films, television series, podcasts and live events it has launched, acknowledging that *This*

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[513] "Prairie Home Productions, LLC," Manta, http://www.manta.com/c/mmlrn06/prairie-home-productions

[514] Ibid.

[515] Cara Buckley, "*This American Life* Gamble," *The New York Times*, July 6, 2014, AR1.

[516] This American Life moved its production facilities to New York City in 2006 to easily collaborate with Showtime on their television series, see Nina Metz, "Ira Glass And WBEZ Chicago Venture Into The Movie Biz," The Chicago Tribune, August 31, 2012, http://Articles.Chicagotribune.Com/2012-08-31/Entertainment/Ct-Mov-0831-Chicago-Closeup-20120831-22_1_Ira-Glass-Radio-Show-Glass-And-Wbez

[517] Ira Glass and Goli Sheikholeslami, "Changes at This American Life," July 9, 2015, http://www.thisamericanlife.org/blog/2015/07/changes-at-this-american-life

[518] Ibid.

American Life's departure from Chicago Public Media's institutional structure is directly related to the show's formation as a public radio franchise.

This American Life has been extending its radio aesthetics to other platforms since at least 2002 through collaborations with the film and television industries. *TAL* has had "first-look" deals with Warner Brothers and DreamWorks,[519] produced two seasons of a television show for Showtime[520] and currently has several other deals in development, including Errol Morris's current production *Freezing People Is Easy*, which is based on the 2008 *TAL* episode "You're as Cold as Ice." [521] As mentioned earlier, the 2006 film *Unaccompanied Minors* was the product of *This American Life*'s licensing agreement with Warner Brothers, and Ira Glass is listed as an executive producer on the film's credits. The 2012 film *Sleepwalk With Me* is notable as the first feature film produced under the *This American Life* banner and funded directly by Chicago Public Radio, which invested $225,000 into the film's $1M production budget.[522] *Sleepwalk With Me*'s production and distribution was intricately intertwined with *TAL*'s public radio program. It was adapted from a monologue that comedian Mike Birbiglia originally performed on *TAL* in 2008, and the film was also co-written and executive produced by Ira Glass.[523] And Brian Bedol, one of *Sleepwalk With Me*'s producers, noted in an interview that using

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[519] Dana Harris, "Warner Radios In 'Life,'" *Daily Variety*, August 15, 2002, 1.

[520] Josef Adalian, "Showtime's Royal Plan," *Daily Variety*, April 13, 2007, 1.

[521] Tatiana Siegel, "Helmer ices cryonic pic," *Daily Variety,* April 17, 2009, 1.

[522] Metz, "Ira Glass And WBEZ Chicago Venture Into The Movie Biz,"

[523] Mike Birbiglia performs the monologue that is adapted and expanded into *Sleepwalk With Me* in *TAL*'s episode "361: Fear of Sleep", on 8 August 2008.

TAL's built-in radio audience was a central strategy in the promotion of *Sleepwalk With Me*.[524]

This American Life has frequently leveraged its radio and podcast audience to promote its textual extensions and transmedia collaborations like *Sleepwalk With Me*. This is evident when Ira Glass began *TAL*'s July 22 and 27, 2012 episodes with a bumper promoting *Sleepwalk With Me* and asking listeners to call, tweet, or email their local cinemas to get *Sleepwalk With Me* exhibited in their towns. Audience outreach to *TAL* listeners was effective, and increased the number of theaters in which IFC had initially booked *Sleepwalk With Me* film from 35 to 125.[525] *TAL* also used public radio listener-appeal strategies to promote *TAL*'s live simulcast cinema events in 2008, 2009, and 2012, where they beamed a live videoed version of their show to movie theaters across the country.[526] This demonstrates *TAL*'s strategic use of its radio show as a textual center for a larger multiplatform *TAL* brand that extends across film, live simulcasts, television, and merchandise. Pledge-drive-like appeals to *TAL*'s loyal public radio audience work to discursively blend the economic hybridity of *This American Life*'s collaborations with commercial media cultures while taking advantage of the radio program's large fan base to advertise *TAL*'s transmedia extensions.

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[524] Brent Lang, "Don't See This Film!; Quirky Promos Rely On Social Media," *The Gazette (Montreal)*, September 29, 2012, E11.

[525] At the beginning of the broadcast and podcast of July 20, 2012 episode, "443: Amusement Park", and the July 27, 2012 episode "470: Show Me the Way", Ira Glass urges listeners to see *Sleepwalk With Me* in theatres; if it is not playing in a cinema near them, he tells them to request that local theatres exhibit the film.

[526] Eric Deggans, "Independent Thinking," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 1, 2008, 1E; *The Montreal Gazette*, "American Life Hits Big Screen; Hi-Def Simulcast Of NPR Hit Will Be Shown On Sunday," *The Montreal Gazette*, April 29, 2009, D9; Marsha Lederman, "Seeing Blind? That's When Radio Gets Visual," *The Globe And Mail (Canada),* May 10, 2012, R4.

On November 6, 2014, the satiric news source *The Onion* poked fun at the fact that ALL the producers on *TAL* seem to possess a distinct casual vocal style similar to *TAL*'s host with the fake news story "Ira Glass Exhausted From Doing Every Single Voice On *This American Life*."[527] Beyond Ira Glass' distinct conversational style, *This American Life* producers and contributors speak in a similar casual and naturalistic tone. Loviglio argues the informal style of radio speech pioneered by *TAL* has come to dominate the public radio landscape.[528] *This American Life*'s casual speech pattern is being called the "warm coffee" sound of public radio[529] and several critics of public radio's whiteness have argued that non-white producers have to code switch their vocal style to achieve this "warm coffee" sound. The podcast *Pop Culture Happy Hour* (*PCHH*) discussed the dominant "public radio voice" that is seemingly derivative of *TAL* on the show's April 3, 2015 episode. *PCHH*'s host Linda Holmes commented "At what point is this public radio and at one point is this just people who have worked for Ira? The tentacles of Ira Glass are lengthy and powerful and wrapped around many many of the ships of public radio."[530]

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[527] "Ira Glass Exhausted From Doing Every Single Voice On *This American Life*," *The Onion*, November 6, 2014, http://www.theonion.com/article/ira-glass-exhausted-from-doing-every-single-voice--37383

[528] Loviglio, op. cit.

[529] Chenjerai Kumanyika, "The Whiteness Of "Public Radio Voice," *Buzzfeed*, January 27, 2015, http://www.buzzfeed.com/chenjeraikumanyika/the-whiteness-of-public-radio-voice#.sarD0YBGB; Kenya Downs, "Is There A #PubRadioVoice That Sounds Like America?" *Code Switch: Frontiers of Race, Culture and Ethnicity*, January 30, 2015, http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/01/30/382612791/is-there-a-pubradiovoice-that-sounds-like-america

[530] *Pop Culture Happy Hour*, "*Kimmy Schmidt* And Derivative Culture," April 3, 2015, http://www.npr.org/sections/monkeysee/2015/04/03/393784006/pop-culture-happy-hour-kimmy-schmidt-and-derivative-culture

Indeed, producers who once worked on *This American Life* make several of today's successful creative radio programs and podcasts. Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder transitioned off of *This American Life*'s radio show to create and produce *TAL*'s first spinoff podcast *Serial*. Jonathan Goldstein began his radio career at *This American Life* before going on to start his own radio program *Wiretap* for the Canadian Broadcasting Company. Alix Spigel similarly got her start as one of the founding producers of *This American Life* in 1995 and now co-hosts NPR's podcast-only creative storytelling program *Invisibilia*. Alex Blumberg worked as a producer on *This American Life* for 15 years before leaving to start his own podcasting network Gimlet media.[531] Gimlet currently producers three podcast series, *Replay All*, *StartUp*, which Blumberg hosts, and *Mystery Show*, which is produced and hosted by *TAL* veteran Starlee Kine, who began her radio career as an intern at *This American Life* in the late 1990s after graduating from New York University.[532] Several more of Gimlet Media's employees previously worked at *This American Life*, including Lisa Pollak, Chris Neary, Eric Mennel and Phia Bennin,[533] and all of Gimlet Media's employees come from public radio.[534] Gimlet Media's public radio roots are significant because they demonstrate how radio producers are bringing production techniques honed in the public radio culture to exploit podcasting's form and commercial opportunities, making new creative audio that still harkens back to *This American Life*'s aesthetic style.

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[531] Eilene Zimmerman, "Documenting the Journey From Public Radio to Start-Up Owner," The New York Times, December 9, 2014 http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/09/documenting-the-journey-from-public-radio-to-start-up-owner/?smid=pl-share&_r=1

[532] Donato, op. cit.

[533] Gimlet Media, "About," *Gimlet Media*, https://gimletmedia.com/about/

[534] Zimmerman, "Documenting the Journey From Public Radio to Start-Up Owner,"

Indeed, *This American Life* has functioned as a stylistic and technological laboratory since its foundation in 1995, nurturing a new generation of narrative-focused soundwork, both commercial and publicly funded, that seeks to exploit the niche market associated with podcast's burgeoning mini-industry. I conclude this chapter analyzing the development and success of *Serial* to tease out how podcasting's technological, industrial, and formal elements have changed the production and circulation of creative soundwork in the digital era.

Serial and a third cycle of creative radio through digital soundwork?

Serial's 12-episode season in 2014 became a cultural lightening rod for creative story-focused podcasting. *Serial* concluded its first season in December 2014, and by that time it had broken iTunes' record as the most downloaded podcast in U.S. history.[535] *Serial* has gone on to circulate the world, becoming a mainstay in iTunes' top ten charts in the UK, Canada, Australia, Germany and South Africa.[536] Veteran *TAL* producer Sarah Koenig is *Serial*'s host, and she produces the show along with *This American Life* producer Julie Snyder and *TAL* contributor Dana Chivvis. The series consists of Sarah Koenig guiding listeners through an investigation of a single true crime story over the course of a 12-episode podcast-only season, telling listeners the story through interviews, reenactments, courtroom recordings as well as first person narration by Koenig.

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[535] Stuart Dredge, "*Serial* podcast breaks iTunes records as it passes 5m downloads and streams," *The Guardian*, November 18, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/nov/18/serial-podcast-itunes-apple-downloads-streams

[536] Ibid.

By July 2015, *Serial* had been downloaded over 90 million times,[537] and its popularity led to pronouncements that podcasting has been revitalized and is in a golden era. Critics like New York Magazine's Kevin Roose wrote "sometime around 2009 or 2010, the podcast scene seemed to wither," and argues that new narrative storytelling podcasts like *Serial* have reinvigorated a podcasting culture that is now mobile and easily accessible.[538] Podcasting's heightened visibility with producers, advertisers, and audiences is being called the "*Serial*-effect" within the industry,[539] and the show has been discursively understood as the reason that "podcasting is coming of age, stepping out of its secluded niche of millennials' iTunes folders and AV Club reviews into the broad light of the mainstream."[540] Yet, the idea that *Serial* suddenly revitalized podcasting, a medium that has been influx since its emergence in 2004, is extremely presentist.

To consider *Serial*' "podcasting's first breakout hit,"[541] disregards the history of milestones that have historically formalized podcasting's legitimacy with software developers, advertisers, and audiences.[542] Apple's establishment of the mobile app marketplace the App Store in 2008 was followed in suit by Google's Google Play app marketplace later that same year, and these developments led to the prolific adoption of podcatching apps like Downcast. Prior to this, it had been possible to listen to podcasts remotely through mp3 devices like the iPod and Microsoft Zune. The ability to listen to podcasts on smartphones via podcatcher apps increased podcasting's cultural standing; since listeners no longer have to sync their devices through their computer to make their podcasts portable, they can manage, organize and listen to podcasts with mobility on their smartphones, liberating podcasting from the limiting space of the desktop/workspace. It is thus no surprise that several pivotal moments in podcasting's content development occurred in 2009 and led to proclamations that podcasting had finally ascended as a legitimate "broadcast" medium.

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[537] Matt Shedd, "Interview with *Serial* Co-Creators Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder," *Peabody Awards Stories that Matter Series*, July 17, 2015, http://www.peabodyawards.com/stories/story/interview-with-serial-co-creators-sarah-koenig-and-julie-snyder

[538] Kevin Roose, "What's Behind the Great Podcast Renaissance?" *New York Magazine*, October 30, 2014, http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/10/whats-behind-the-great-podcast-renaissance.html

[539] Michael O'Connell, "The *Serial* Effect: Programmers Ramping Up on Podcasts," *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 13, 2015, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/serial-effect-programmers-ramping-up-786688

[540] Shedd, op. cit.

[541] David Carr, "Breakout Podcast Sets Stage for More," *The New York Times*, November 24, 2014, B1.

[542] It also is a distinction perhaps dampened by the fact that Serial's second season has not attracted nearly as many listeners as its first.

2009 marked the year that comedian Marc Maron began producing his weekly podcast *WTF with Marc Maron*, while comedians Scott Aukerman Adam Carolla both founded podcast networks in 2009. Adam Carolla's podcast debuted to almost instant success in 2009, and when *Fast Company* reporter Ellen McGirt profiled *The Adam Carolla Show* (*ACS*) later that year, she described its efficacy targeting an engaged audience willing to spend money on books, tee-shirts, tickets for live events, and other products derived from *ACS*'s podcast. McGirt pondered whether Carolla's successful podcast and his development of the podcast network Ace Broadcasting Company demonstrated that "podcasting is truly ready for its close-up."[543] Aukerman, a stand-up comedian known for his work on the HBO comedy *Mr. Show* and for his live improvisational stage shows in Los Angeles founded the Earwolf podcast network in

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[543] Ellen McGirt, "How Adam Carolla Became a Podcast Superstar," *Fast Company*, April 1, 2010, http://www.fastcompany.com/1579342/how-adam-carolla-became-podcast-superstar

2009 to produce and distribute improv comedy podcasts, including the podcast Aukerman hosts, *Comedy Bang Bang*. 2012 was heralded as a milestone year for podcasts when IFC signed deals to develop television shows based on *Comedy Bang Bang* and *WTF With Marc Maron*.[544] In this sense, podcasting became understood as a mainstream medium in 2012 because it was seen as a significance force that could propel comedians' careers onto television.

Several other events have led to further pronouncements that podcasting has finally achieved mainstream recognition. Earwolf merged with the podcast advertising company Midroll Media in 2014, vertically integrating Earwolf's production of comedy podcasts with Midroll's services brokering advertising deals for podcasts,[545] and leading some to call Midroll a podcasting empire.[546] Midroll is now the largest podcasting sponsorship network, because in addition to their in-house production of 35 different podcasts, Midroll also represents over 240 podcasts to their advertising clients, including *WTF with Marc Maron*, Neil deGrasse Tyson's popular podcast *Star Talk Radio*, Gimlet's *StartUp*, and others.[547] In July, 2015, Midroll Media was acquired by Scripps, the more than 100-year-old media company known for its portfolio of TV and radio stations,[548] prompting *This American Life*'s operations manager Seth Lind to say this acquisition proved that podcasting is "finally worth something."[549] On June 21, 2015, President Barack Obama made his first appearance on a podcast-only program on *WTF With Marc Maron*. Within a week of its release the Obama episode of *WTF* had 1.75 million downloads, prompting, once again, the popular refrain that podcasting had been accepted as a meaningful format.[550] All of this is to say that podcasting has perpetually been made and remade sense of as a legitimate medium in popular discourse over the last ten years. And thus, *Serial*'s success is only one of many significant moments in the history of podcasting. Yet, *Serial* is a significant case study because it reveals the transformable relationships between creative soundwork and podcasting, as an industry and as an artistic form.

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[544] Kyle Ryan, "*Comedy Bang Bang*'s Scott Aukerman talks about turning his podcast into a strange, funny TV show," The Onion's A.V. Club, June 7, 2012, http://www.avclub.com/article/icomedy-bang-bangis-scott-aukerman-talks-about-tur-79968

[545] Paul Riismandel, "Introducing Midroll Media," Blog Post, *Midroll Media*, June 3, 2014, Http://Www.Midroll.Com/Announcing-Midroll-Media/#More-2538

[546] Jenelle Riley, "Comedy Bang-Bang's Scott Aukerman: From Screwing Around To A Podcast Empire," *Variety*, May 5, 2015.

[547] Jen Thorpe, "Scripps Acquires Midroll Media," July 23, 2015, *Podcaster News*, http://podcasternews.com/2015/07/23/scripps-acquires-midroll-media/

In its early use, podcasting's potential for DIY distribution gave the practice of podcasting a utopian force that democratized access to media production and distribution. And it is true that a wide range of content is available to users via podcast subscription, "especially when one moves beyond Top 10 lists and sorts through the vast and sometimes weird range of material available in the podcasting universe."[551] However, the types of programming most popular and thus on the top ten lists of podcast distributors, like Apple's iTunes, stem either from traditional radio programs that reformat their content as a podcast subscription or from celebrities, like Adam Carolla, who gained their fame and reputation through legacy media, like print, radio, film and television. This reminds us that traditional media, institutional support and funding, and promotion matter when it comes to producing podcasts. Podcasting's relationship with other media, especially the practice of reformatting broadcast radio into podcasts, demonstrates that "podcasting is not, strictly speaking, a new medium or a new format. Rather, it is a group of connected technologies, practices and institutions…"[552] Podcasting specifically represents the convergence of traditional radio production practices with new production opportunities afforded by podcasting's' asynchronous self-service distribution via digital platforms and that visually curate podcasts. Podcasting also embeds soundwork within practices afforded by desktop and mobile podcatching software that allow producers to add photos, notes, and URL links to their podcasts, and also allow listeners to interact with and circulate podcasts within their social networks. Additionally, podcasting's popularity has spurred new marketing logics and approaches to advertising that have led to the development of podcast advertising firms like Midroll Media, named after the online jargon for commercials that appear during online videos and podcasts, mid-roll commercials being understood as more valuable than pre-roll or post-roll ads because audiences have to sit through them to continue watching or listening to a program.

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[548] Natalie Jarvey, "E.W. Scripps Acquires Podcast Network Midroll Media," *The Hollywood Reporter*, July 22, 2015, http://www.Hollywoodreporter.Com/News/Ew-Scripps-Acquires-Podcast-Network-810326

[549] *CastParty* simulcast, July 28, 2015.

[550] Jacob Threadgill, " Post-'Serial,' podcasts enter 'golden age'" *Clarion Ledger*, July 25, 2015, http://www.clarionledger.com/story/life/2015/07/25/post-serial-podcasts-enter-golden-age/30646529/

[551] Sterne et al, "The Politics of Podcasting," op. cit.

The fact that *Serial* is a spin-off of *This American Life*, and also a commercial podcast that employs native advertising, highlights its position as a site of convergence between public radio and commercial podcasting, between old and new media, and between serialized storytelling and *This American Life*'s traditionally episodic structure. As this chapter has demonstrated, prior to podcasting, the most successful post-network creative soundwork in the United States has been produced and distributed within the public radio industries' production cultures. Public radio programs that employ creative storytelling, like *This American Life*, continue to dominate lists of the most downloaded podcasts by reformatting their radio episodes into podcasts. *Serial*'s distinction as the most downloaded podcast of all time [553] is, in part, due to its industrial position as a product of *This American Life*'s transmedia franchise, as well as its reconfiguration of *This American Life*'s narrative style within podcasting's formal affordances and mobility, not to mention its combination of public and commercial funding strategies.

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[552] Ibid.

Serial's relationship with *This American Life* certainly contributed to the program's success because *TAL* used its radio program and web presence to promote *Serial*. *This American Life* aired *Serial*'s first episode as a backdoor pilot on its radio show during the first week of October, and visitors to the *This American Life* website during October were presented with a pop-up window containing a personal message from Ira Glass promoting *Serial*.[554] Ira Glass, who is officially credited as *Serial*'s Editorial Advisor in the credits of the show, has personally promoted *Serial* on further episodes of *This American Life*'s radio show and through his Twitter account. Glass also appeared on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon on October 14, 2014, where he discussed *Serial* with Jimmy Fallon and showed a funny instructional video about how to listen to podcasts. Additionally, a maelstrom of *Serial* reviews and interviews with Ira Glass, Julie Snyder and Sarah Koenig about their new podcast *Serial* appeared in newspapers, magazines and blogs just as the show debuted.[555] These pieces all begin by discussing *This American Life* before considering *Serial*, and mention how *Serial*'s producers have worked on *This American Life* for a significant about of time. This publicity demonstrates how *TAL*'s marketing of *Serial* discursively worked to link the two shows together, while the reviews of *Serial* in major publications like *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or *The Guardian* demonstrates how *This American Life*'s cultural cache increased press attention to its franchise.

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[553] As of July, 2015, see Shedd, op. cit.

[554] See Figure 5.2 for a screen shot of the pop-up ad promoting *Serial* on *This American Life*'s website.

Serial resonated with listeners due to its familiar use of *This American Life*'s narrative aesthetics, which were reconfigured by podcasting's formal distinctions. Like *TAL*'s radio show, *Serial*'s podcasts are sonic productions and the show employs several of *This American Life*'s stylistic conventions. The first season of *Serial* focuses on the 1999 murder of a teenager named Hae Min Lee in Baltimore. The main thrust of the series is how the host Sarah Koenig reviews this case to examine the possible innocence of Lee's ex-boyfriend Adnan Syed, who was convicted of the murder in 2000. In her role as host, Sarah Koenig speaks with the same quirky, naturalistic conversational style as Ira Glass, often speaking reflexively about her own blind spots and biases as she works out elements of the original investigation and performs her own inquiry into the state's case

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[555] Julie Lurie, "*This American Life* Channels *True Detective* in a New Podcast," *Mother Jones*, September 19, 2014, http://www.motherjones.com/media/2014/09/ira-glass-sarah-koenig-julie-snyder-serial-podcast-this-american-life; Lilah Raptopoulos, "This American Life's first spinoff podcast: 'I don't know where it will end," The Guardian, October 10, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/oct/10/serial-this-american-life-sarah-koening; Sarah Larson, *"Serial*: The Podcast We've Been Waiting For," *The New Yorker*, October 9, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/culture/sarah-larson/serial-podcast-weve-waiting; Ellen Gamerman, "Serial podcast catches fire," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 13, 2014, http://www.wsj.com/articles/serial-podcast-catches-fire-1415921853

against Syed. Like *This American Life*, there are no foley artists in the studio creating sound effects that conjure the scenes Koenig describes; however, every episode features actuality recordings. These are either from recordings of Adnan's trials, from Koenig's fieldwork reenacting elements of the case, prison phone calls with Syed, or from interviews with witnesses, criminal experts, and other figures that she encounters in her investigation. As they do on *This American Life*, these actuality recordings work in lieu of manufactured sound effects to create diegetic soundscapes for listeners. Additionally, *Serial* uses music to transition between segments and as the new scene begins, music is layered underneath, to invoke a scene's emotion quality. *Serial*'s storytelling possesses the same pacing, tone and conversational style as *This American Life*, yet, it differs in that the show tells one story serialized over 12 episodes, hence the name *Serial*.

Serial's seriality is one of its main differences from *This American Life*. *TAL* has had two-part series before, such as the 2013 Peabody-winning episodes about Harper High School on the South Side of Chicago; however, *TAL* has primarily stuck to its structure of "Acts," telling between two to seven different stories in each episode. Furthermore, because *TAL* is a radio show, it is produced to be a weekly hour-long program, broadcasting approximately 20 – 30 new episodes each year, and airing reruns on weeks that do not feature new episodes. Yet because podcasting is a form that allows for unstructured program lengths, *Serial*'s producer's have the flexibility to tailor episode lengths to the material they want to present for each episode, and they do, as, for instance in *Serial*'s first season, episode one was fifty- minutes long while episode three was only twenty seven minutes long.

Moreover, being able to self-distribute *Serial* as a digital podcast without the commitment and pressure to produce weekly programs has also allowed *Serial*'s producer's to follow the shortened season production model that cable television channels like HBO and Showtime pioneered for serialized TV shows. Podcasting thus is a format that allows *Serial*'s producers to focus on the more intense production work involved in crafting a long-form story that is 12-episodes long. The choice by *TAL*'s senior producers to make a serialized spinoff of their show is not merely happenstance, as *Serial*'s use of premium television's short season and serialized narrative model is historically situated within an industrial transition towards more serialized storytelling content overall within broadcast programming. The rise of digital television platforms like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon have led to the dominance of industrial strategies that see serialized TV programs as a tool to keep viewers engaged and connected, and paying online pay wall fees. Netflix Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos notes that this is a significant factor in Netflix's decision to develop serial programs, saying

> We've really come to appreciate the value serialized shows provide. So many people watch them and love them. Our data supports the trend, and that's why you see such an explicit investment in television on Netflix. We've been able to grow the audience for serialized content by recognizing their behavior and securing more and more highly serialized, well-produced, one- hour dramas. [556]

Serialization is not the only production mode guiding contemporary TV production, nor is it a new one. Indeed, radio soap operas were broadcasting complex serialized stories for decades, many of which were adapted to television by the broadcast networks. And serialized programs like *Dallas*, *Twin Peaks* and many more have been produced over broadcasting's long history in the United States.

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[556] Michael Curtin, Jennifer Holt, and Kevin Sanson, "Ted Sarandos, Chief Content Officer, Netflix," in Distribution Revolution: Conversations about the Digital Future of Film and Television, eds. Michael Curtin, Jennifer Holt, and Kevin Sanson, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 132 – 145.

However, the success of cable programs like *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad* and now online productions like *Orange is the New Black* have rearticulated serialization as a narrowcasting strategy to attract small, engaged viewers in the midst of audience fragmentation. *Serial*'s conscious use of television's short-season, heavily serialized content model is most evident when Ira Glass compares *Serial* to HBO and Netflix serialized dramas, saying in an interview with *Mother Jone*'s

> We want to give you the same experience you get from a great HBO or Netflix series, where you get caught up with the characters and the thing unfolds week after week, but with a true story, and no pictures. Like *House of Cards*, but you can enjoy it while you're driving.[557]

This quote demonstrates how creative radio has perhaps come full circle in its production history. As Michele Hilmes has noted, the television industries were established using the institutional foundations of radio, and many of television's early scripted entertainment programs were direct adaptations of radio programs, like *The Goldbergs*, *The Jack Benny Show*, and others.[558] Now, we have come to a point where creative radio is adopting television's production models as heavy hitters like *This American Life*, an institution in public radio that has been carrying the banner of creative soundwork in the midst of its absence from commercial radio, venture into podcast-only spinoffs and draw on television's niche serial production model. Ira Glass' quote in *Mother Jone*s also points to podcasting's edge in the current media environment as a mobile sound medium. While podcasting is a practice that is over ten years old, podcasting technologies and platforms have shifted over the last ten years, and the renewed attention to podcasting is attributed to the rise in mobile podcatcher app use.

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[557] Lurie, "*This American Life* Channels *True Detective* in a New Podcast."

[558] Michele Hilmes, *Radio voices: American broadcasting, 1922-1952*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

TAL and *Serial* thus conceive and construct their audience as mobile listeners who access their shows through mobile podcatcher software applications. *Serial*'s production manager Emily Condon notes how podcasting's heightened mobility has led to an increase in listeners, saying, "We're seeing more people getting in the game of podcasting as people become more and more used to consuming media in transit, while they're cooking, in various parts of their lives, it's caught on."[559] Podcatcher apps have come to function as people-catchers within the sound industries' logics, as they are made sense of as accurate marketing tools that producers can use to target specific demographics, report exact download figures to sponsors, and, to quote one podcast industry insider, make "your marketing dollars way more efficient."[560] Podcatcher apps' increase in mobile podcasting listening has colluded with sound's cultural position as a secondary medium understood as a form of entertainment that is not only mobile but compatible with driving, cooking, and other activities. As Condon suggests in the quote above, producers are making sense of podcasting's mobility as an affordance that encourages listeners to consume podcasts throughout all activities during their daily lives. This logic complements podcasting's position as a sound medium that is has been traditionally understood within the industry as radio has been, as a form that connects more intimately with audiences through the use of voice-only direct address, and this logic has increased podcaster's leverage with advertisers. [561] Thus, podcasting's understanding as intimate mobile form whose use is easy to accurately calculate has led to an increased ability to monetize podcasting through advertising.

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[559] Roose, op. cit.

[560] Dan Adams, "After *Serial*, sponsors pour money into podcasts," The Boston Globe, February 13, 2015, https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2015/02/13/after-serial-sponsors-pour-money-into-podcasts/OKAzhUWtqCHQbl3IuEIiBN/story.html#

Serial's embrace of advertising is another element that has contributed to its success, while also differentiating it from *TAL*. Unlike *This American Life*, *Serial* is not a public radio program; it is a commercially funded podcast, and in fact, *Serial*'s native ads for the company MailChimp have been so successful, the ad campaign has come to be understood as "one of the biggest marketing coups of the year, with a cultural resonance eclipsing many Super Bowl ads." [562] While *Serial* functions industrially as a commercial podcast with native advertising, *Serial* has also employed public radio funding strategies. *Serial*'s first season was funded, in part, by *TAL*'s former parent company Chicago Public Media (CPM), and CPM will continue to receive a percentage of *Serial*'s profits even as *This American Life* goes forward with their new structure as an independent company.[563] *Serial* also used pledge-drive style appeals when host Sarah Koenig asked listeners to contribute to the show in order to make a second season possible at the beginning of season one's ninth episode, "To Be Suspected," which was digitally released on November 20, 2014. In this segment, Koenig candidly told listeners, "Do you want a season two of 'Serial'? If so, I'm going to ask you for money." And making the audience complicit in the survival of a program is a tactic that public radio fundraising campaigns have long used to induce donations. Sarah Koenig's direct appeal to listeners was effective, as she reported at the head of the following episode, "Episode 10: The best defense is a good defense," "Today, we have good news: between the money you donated and sponsorship, we'll be able to make a second season." *Serial*'s use of commercial and public radio funding strategies is one of the ways that this podcast represents an economic convergence of production cultures, while also representing the cultural and technology convergence of radio, television, and mobile software apps.

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[561] See Martin Shingler and Cindy Wieringa, *On Air: Methods and Meanings of Radio*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998); Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio And The American Imagination*, (New York: Time Books, 1999).

[562] Adam Epstein, "How MailChimp's irresistible 'Serial' ad became the year's biggest marketing win," November 18, 2014, *Quartz*, http://qz.com/298094/how-mailchimps-irresistible-serial-ad-became-the-years-biggest-marketing-win/

[563] Marah Eakin, "Ira Glass now has full, dictatorial control of *This American Life*," *The A.V. Club*, July 10, 2015, http://www.avclub.com/article/ira-glass-now-has-full-dictatorial-control-america-222078

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how the producers of *APHC* pioneered self-distribution practices using satellite radio technology to build what would become one of the most successful creative radio franchises in the post-network radio era. *Serial*'s producers have effectively built on the industrial strategies established by *A Prairie Home Companion* and *This American Life*. *Serial*'s exploitation of podcasting's self-distribution model seems a logical extension of the second cycle of post-network creative radio that has been defined by programs like *APHC* and *TAL* and the way their producers utilized emerging technologies to forge alternative distribution opportunities in the wake of the radio industry's disinterest in producing creative storytelling programs. Furthermore, *Serial* is aesthetically evocative of the post-modern self-reflexive styles of creative storytelling modeled by *A Prairie Home Companion* and *This American Life*. Yet, podcasting also presents a new site for even more access to the production and distribution of what Hilmes' terms soundwork.[564] For this reason, *Serial* seems very much to be a bridge between a second and third cycle of post-network creative radio, as it is part of *This American Life*'s radio franchise, but is also part of a larger trend within podcasting that uses sound to tell creative stories. Indeed, podcasting as a form and as an industrial force is propelling the continued circulation and production of creative soundwork into the middle of the twenty first century. It would be ahistorical to argue that *Serial* is the first popular podcast focused on creative storytelling, or that *Serial* has single-handedly brought podcasting into the mainstream consciousness.

Nevertheless, *Serial* is significant within the history of post-network creative radio for popularizing long form narrative storytelling through a serialized podcast. At the height of *Serial*'s first season workplaces, friends, bars and other communities were organizing listening parties on Thursdays, the day new *Serial* episodes were released.[565] The practice of organizing and participating in communal *Serial* listening events indicates the difference of a serialized narrative and its effectiveness in compelling audiences to engage with the show as members of larger social networks. *Serial*'s success is a testament to both the creative and industrial strategies behind its production. The fact that *Serial* has been downloaded over 90 million times, and was the first podcast to win a Peabody, demonstrates that audiences find its style of immersive, serialized storytelling captivating, and its success has brought greater attention to other long-form narrative driven podcasts like *StartUp* and *Welcome to Nightvale*. *Serial*'s success also demonstrates the economic viability of serializing creative storytelling as an industrial strategy that produces loyal and engaged podcast listeners that can be commoditized and sold to advertisers.

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[564] Hilmes, "New Materiality of Radio," op. cit.

[565] See Jon Campbell, "*Serial* Listening Parties Are Now A Thing," *The Village Voice*, December 18, 2014, http://www.villagevoice.com/news/serial-listening-parties-are-now-a-thing-6714579; see also Bhakthi Puvanenthiran, "Serial podcast revives the lost art of listening parties," Sydney Morning Herald, December 19, 2014, http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/serial-podcast-revives-the-lost-art-of-listening-parties-20141219-12at3s.html#ixzz3iAomQ259

Serial is thus also significant because it draws upon the aesthetic tradition of creative public radio to make commercial soundwork. The use of formal conventions of storytelling that have come to be associated with public radio to make commercial podcasts creates a new hybrid of soundwork that mixes together public and private media. Whereas *TAL*'s collaborations with commercial media have made the public radio franchise's production culture economically-hybrid, the use of public radio aesthetics in the production of commercial podcasts creates an explicit production culture hybrid between public radio and commercial podcasting, as *Serial* and other storytelling podcasts build on both the aesthetics and business models pioneered by *APHC* and *TAL*. My conclusion specifically focuses on the science fiction podcast *The Message*, a short eight-episode series that is produced as branded content for GE by the Panoply podcast network. Promoted under as "GE Theater," *The Message* demonstrates one way podcast producers are incorporating the single sponsor model of the classic network era into the production culture of digital soundwork. Yet, even as creative radio enters a third cycle through podcasting, we should bear in mind that *TAL* and *APHC* remain the most widely-heard creative radio programs today, drawing in millions of listeners through their terrestrial broadcasts each week. This stands as a reminder that new technology, like podcasting, does not replace older technologies, rather, they persist together in an ever-changing soundscape of radiogenic mediums, formats and sounds.

Conclusion

Podcasting, Creative Sound in the Digital Era and the Future of Radio Histories

Over the last year Apple's iTunes Store has promoted a genre of creative soundwork within its podcast section initially categorized in 2015 as "Modern Radio Drama" and renamed "Modern Audio Drama" by June 2016.[566] The subtle renaming of iTunes' scripted drama category demonstrates a desire, at least within Apple's iTunes Store marketing division, to throw off the mantle of oldness the term radio connotes and distinguish dramatic podcasting as "modern audio." Among the programs promoted under iTunes "Modern Audio Drama" is *The Message*, a short scripted science fiction 8-episode mini-series produced in fall 2015. New episodes were released every Sunday from October 4th through November 22nd, and *The Message*'s final episode reached #1 on iTunes' podcast chart for that week, with over 1.2 million listeners.[567] *The Message* is significant to understanding how podcast industries are negotiating creative practices and monetization in ways that both depart from and draw on radio.

The Message is produced and distributed by Panoply, one of the cluster of podcasting networks including, Gimlet, Ace Broadcasting, and The Nerdist that have been formed over the last decade. These podcast networks focus explicitly on making digitally native audio content designed as podcasts and only available through website streams or via RSS subscriptions managed by a podcatching application like iTunes

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[566] Apple, "Podcasts," *iTunes Store*, December 2, 2015; Apple, "Podcasts," *iTunes Store*, June 29, 2016.

[567] Jeff Beers, "How General Electric Created The Hit Science-Fiction Podcast "The Message," November 25, 2015, *Fast Company*, http://www.fastcocreate.com/3053982/behind-the-brand/how-general-electric-created-the-hit-science-fiction-podcast-the-message

Podcasts, Downcast or Doggcatcher. Panoply specifically is the podcasting arm of the online magazine *Slate*, which originated as part of Microsoft's MSN content and was bought by The Washington Post in 2004. *Slate* began experimenting with podcasts in 2005, launching its first successful weekly podcast *Slate Political Gabfest* in 2006. Between 2006 and 2014, *Slate* annually added a few programs made in-house to its podcaster roster, such as *Cultural Gabfest*, *Double X Gabfest*, or *Serial Spoiler Special*. In response to the "Serial effect" podcasting boom I mentioned in chapter five, Slate reconfigured and expanded their podcasting productions and named this new network Panoply.

Panoply was officially created in February 2015, and by August, the network not only distributed 15 podcasts produced in-house, but also 20 podcasts from "media partners," like *Inc*., *The New York Times Magazine*, *Real Simple*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Sports Illustrated*. Panoply is not involved in making these podcasts, so what does it offer its "partners?" According to Panoply's Chief Revenue Officer Mike Turck, "Part of what Panoply offers its partners is top-rate advertising."[568] And Panoply is well positioned to broker ad deals for its media partners, as it has longstanding relationships through *Slate* with big name brands like GE, Acura and Prudential. *The Message* is significant in Panoply's short history because it was the network's first scripted production, as well as Panoply's first foray into branded content. The concept for *The Message* actually originated in GE's in-house media agency that focuses on new media, nicknamed The Grid, which includes members of GE's advertising agency BBDO.[569] The Grid developed the idea of a branded podcast that was originally pitched as a science fiction "*Serial* with Aliens," and partnered with Panoply to produce the podcast.[570]

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[568] Press Release, "11 Shows From Sports Illustrated Join Panoply Podcasting Network" August 17, 2015, http://www.slate.com/articles/briefing/slate_press_releases/2015/12/sports_illustrated_podcasts_join_panoply_network.html

GE and Panoply are very transparent within trade journals about the fact that the concept for *The Message* originated at GE and that GE and BBDO personnel contributed to and participated in the writing process.[571] GE Creative Director Andy Goldberg told *Fast Company*, "We worked closely with The Grid on how we'd go about creating a podcast, and BBDO really led the charge on what the storyline could be. That's where they engaged Panoply as experts in the space in terms of production and how to build out a podcast." [572] Panoply acted as a third-party contractor in many ways during the production of *The Message*. Sound recording was not done at the Panoply studios in New York, but at a big music studio named Avatar whose larger studios were better suited to the production of a scripted audio drama with multiple actors moving around.[573] Panoply hired and paid all the staff involved in the production. This included auditioning cast, many of whom have backgrounds in the New York theater, film and television community. The well-known theater playwright Mac Rogers was hired to work with The

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[569] David Sims, "The Radio-Age Genius of The Message," *The Atlantic*, November 21, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/11/the-message-podcast/417051/

[570] Ibid.

[571] Laura Hazard Owen, "How did the GE-branded podcast The Message hit No. 1 on iTunes? In part, by sounding nothing like an ad," November 30, 2015, *NiemanLab*, http://www.niemanlab.org/2015/11/how-did-the-ge-branded-podcast-the-message-hit-no-1-on-itunes-in-part-by-sounding-nothing-like-an-ad/

[572] Jeff Beers, "How General Electric Created The Hit Science-Fiction Podcast "The Message," November 25, 2015, *Fast Company*, http://www.fastcocreate.com/3053982/behind-the-brand/how-general-electric-created-the-hit-science-fiction-podcast-the-message

[573] Brendan Baker, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, March 18, 2016.

Grid and Panoply in crafting *The Message*'s script, and sound designer Brendan Baker, of the producers of Radiotopia's podcast *Love and Radio*, was hired to create the series' soundscapes.

Playwright Mac Rogers says that *The Message*'s premise was explained to him as "an eight-part science-fiction serial that would play out like the podcast version of a found-footage thriller, or Orson Welles' legendary "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast, never breaking from the podcast format."[574] Listening to *The Message*, it is easy to note the aesthetic influence of *Serial* and the canonical "War of the Worlds" episode of *The Mercury Theater on the Air*. *The Message* has a "show-within a show" format, following a fake popular-science podcast called *Cyphercast*, in which a host named Nicky Tomlinson documents the work of a group of cryptographers investigating mysterious alien transmissions. The program jumps into an episode *Cyphercast* without any exposition, with character Nicky playing a Sarah Koenig-like host who addresses her podcast audience as if we are regular weekly *Cyphercast* listeners. As Nicky and the cryptographers investigate the sound recording of an alien transmission, the recording begins to kill those exposed to it. Nicky distributes a podcast that contains the recording before its deadly effects are known, and suddenly outbreaks of the deadly symptoms begin to occur. Thousands of listeners (within the story world's diegesis) fall victim to the same disease plaguing the scientists trying to decode the alien broadcast, suggesting that *The Message* is very much an internet-based piece of entertainment that taps into broader fears of a connected world. And in this sense, *The Message* seemingly updates the realism of "War of the Worlds" realism using *Serial*'s host-centered serialized podcast format as an organizing aesthetic.

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[574] Mac Rogers, "Writing Sci-Fi for the Stage—and the Ears," November 2, 2015, *Slate* http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2015/11/the_message_author_mac_rogers_on_the_podcast_and_his_plays_the_honeycomb.html

Even though the creative team producing *The Message* was working within the constraints of GE and BBDO's predetermined serialized story concept, narratives of the production process demonstrate the artistic and inventive work that went into making the show. In a *Slate* blog post, Rogers describes how he wrote specifically for a sound medium, saying:

> With *The Message*, I quickly realized that the alien menace had to be a sound. Badly written radio drama is absolutely rife with people shrieking "Dear God, it's 10 feet tall and ringed with tentacles!" because listeners can't see the ring of tentacles. But I recalled the marvelous *Doctor Who* audio play *Scherzo*, in which the doctor and his companion are stalked on a zero-visibility planet by a creature made of sound. This stroke of genius by author Robert Shearman ensured that the doctor and the listeners would have the exact same experiences of the monster. In an early meeting for *The Message*, I learned that our sponsor, GE, was one of several companies doing pioneering work in sound-based medical treatments. My mind immediately jumped to: *If a sound can cure a person, maybe it can also make them sick?* And just like that I knew I had my monster. [575]

This quote deftly demonstrates how the script for *The Message* was influenced by Roger's intertextual knowledge of science fiction and the conventions of creative soundwork, as well as GE's role as the show's sponsor.

Roger also described *The Message*'s production process as one that depended on collaboration with sound designer Brendan Baker to create the show's soundscape and effects, as evident in the process designing what the alien transmission sounded like,

> Writing the first draft of *The Message*, I had to have the characters describe what the alien transmission sounds like, even though I hadn't yet heard the actual sound we'd be using in the podcast. So I guessed, having Jeanette and Tamara describe it as a choral, contrapuntal melody sung by multiple extraterrestrial voices. Brendan Baker, a sound designer on *The Message*, had a better idea. The sound he created worked on more of a call-and-response model, and he sent me some

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[575] Ibid.

> detailed thoughts explaining why. I loved it, turned his ideas into new dialogue, and instantly "Episode 3" became cleverer than it ever could have been if mine was the only brain behind it. [576]

It is likely that *The Message*'s production process was more collaborative than this statement gets at, as it is my understanding Mac Roger's scripts were a starting point for a story that was, in part, crafted more tightly in post-production. Brendan Baker, *The Message*'s sound designer, told me that the program's dialogue was shortened or rearranged in post-production to make the story more engaging for an audio-only audience.[577] Baker also experimented with reverberation and layering background ambiences to create realism, perspective and what he describes as a sonic visuality to create a sense of place and space for listeners.[578] To do this, Baker borrows sound design practices from radio, film, music composition and psychoacoustics to mix worlds of sound so that listeners can almost "see" the story being told.[579]

The Message is thus a tightly crafted example of creative soundwork that evokes the production practices Verma describes radio dramatists of the 1930s and '40s employing to create a sense of space in classic radio plays like Archibald MacLeish's "Fall of the City."[580] In many ways, *The Message* exemplifies how practices from the classic network era are being transposed to the new (or somewhat new) form of podcasting, while also very much being a product of contemporary digital culture. For instance, podcasting is perceived to be difficult to spread through online spaces because episodes are traditionally 40 - 50 minutes long. Nate DiMeo, producer of the podcast *The*

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[576] Ibid.
[577] Brendan Baker, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, March 18, 2016.
[578] Brendan Baker, "Personal Interview," Eleanor Patterson, Telephone, March 18, 2016.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Verma, op. cit.

Memory Palace, aptly characterized this belief when he said, "Audio never goes viral. If you posted the most incredible story—literally, the most incredible story that has ever been told since people have had the ability to tell stories, it will never, ever get as many hits as a video of a cat with a moustache."[581] All the episodes of *The Message* are between 9 – 22 minutes long, and thus, we can see how this show's producers intentionally crafted this program to make it more easily consumable and spreadable.

The Message is also very much a product of contemporary digital culture because it is produced through digital hardware and software, and promoted and distributed as a digital commodity by Panoply within podcasting marketplaces and podcatching apps. Yet, *The Message*'s context as branded content funded by GE and involving the advertising agency BBDO is highly reminiscent of classic radio's single sponsorship production model. Indeed, GE's long-term advertising firm BBDO has historically been associated with branded content. Writing about the network era of radio, Cynthia Meyer documents BBDO's legacy producing radio, noting that "BBDO approached radio as an ideal medium for building a corporate image, overseeing programs for large advertisers concerned not with product sales but with improving consumers' views of them as good corporate citizens."[582]

Listening to *The Message*, there is no mention of General Electronic, no advertising staff has a credit, and while there is minor product placement, it is subtle. In the last few episodes, a doctor creates a way to heal people dying from exposure to the alien transmission through sonar technology, which is a current GE product. Yet, when I first listened to *The Message*, I did not realize that this was the product placement; I had to search online to see how GE technology was featured in the podcast.

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[581] Stan Alcorn, "Is this Thing On?" *Digg*, January 15, 2015, http://digg.com/originals/why-audio-never-goes-viral

[582] Meyers, op. cit, 9.

The only clue that alerts listeners to the fact that GE is involved in *The Message*'s is the presence of the subtitle GE Podcast Theater on some of the promotional material and subscription sites. This subtitle is an intended to be a reference to GE's legacy funding radio and television during the era of single-sponsorship, and this historical connection is reinforced within promotion for *The Message*. For instance, Andy Goldberg told Reuters "The idea for the series stemmed from the company's historic GE Theater television series, which was hosted by Ronald Reagan, then an actor, in the 1950s."[583] Goldberg makes similar statements in several interviews, implicitly referencing GE Radio Theater and the classic single sponsorship model of radio advertising, saying in an interview with Ad Exchanger, "Podcasting is a bit of a nod to the past, to the old radio shows. Radio shows used to engross people in real, deep narratives and we felt like there was something interesting we could do here considering how podcasts have exploded."[584] These efforts to connect *The Message* to GE Radio Theater works to naturalize GE's production of branded podcasting by referring to the company's legacy producing radio during the classic network era.

In this sense, *The Message* demonstrates the afterlife not only of creative radio into the digital era but also the afterlife of classic funding models in the podcasting industries. *The Message* is one of many new podcasts such as *The Truth*, *Welcome to*

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[583] Jessica Toonkel, "General Electric producing science fiction podcast series," *Reuters*, October 2, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ge-podcasts-idUSKCN0RW1CD20151002

[584] Allison Schiff, "GE's Foray Into Podcasting Is About Engagement, Not Monetization," *Ad Exchanger,* October 2, 2015, http://adexchanger.com/advertiser/ges-foray-into-podcasting-is-about-engagement-not-monetization/

Nightvale, *Limetown,* or *The Thrilling Adventure Hour* that draw on the aesthetic conventions of classic creative radio. These podcasts' production of scripted audio storytelling via dialogue, effects, music and silence harken back to the style of scripted radio broadcast in the mid-twentieth century during the height of the network radio era. However, it is my hope that my research with this dissertation reframes the new wave of creative soundwork in the digital as part of a longer continuous practice of making entertainment audio after television.

Breaking the Silence, Listening to Radio History

Classic or "old-time" radio is a topic occasionally referenced to by other media scholars. For instance Will Straw references it in passing in an essay about the Internet as a container that recontextualizes old media, saying "Just as the Internet has renewed the economic value of innumerable cultural artifacts from the past (from high school yearbooks sold on eBay through the Old-Time Radio programs available on Web sites), so it has hastened their convergence on the realm of the visible."[585] Kompare notes in his work on repetition in radio, again in passing, that while radio transcriptions were not initially created for second-run syndication, their existence fueled "the nostalgia for (and marketing of) 'old-time radio' (aka 'OTR') in the 1960s."[586] These two sentences comprised the only scholarly consideration of classic radio's continued circulation as OTR, demonstrating that this topic has never been investigated in the in-depth manner that I have examined it for this project.

In this dissertation, I have contributed to broadcast history analyzing the residual circulation of creative radio as an aesthetic practice and a material object. In chapter one, I demonstrated how network executives, ad salesman, rerun syndicators and nostalgia merchants shaped a cultural understanding of creative radio as "old." This illustrated the historical context for both the formation of an old-time radio fan community as well as the new post-network industrial environment that creative radio was produced in after television. Post-network radio creative radio was now being made in an environment that including new conceptions of a distracted audience, the stigma of entertainment radio's association with the past, and the strategies being employed in format radio target niche audiences. Using three programs as case studies, I demonstrate how these logics shaped the production of *Theater 5*, *Earplay*, and *CBS Mystery Radio Theater*.

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[585] Will Straw, "Embedded memories," Charles Acland (ed.) *Residual Media* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 3 – 14.
[586] Kompare, op. cit., 34.

In chapter two, I traced how a community of radio fans connected through fan 'zines and conferences to form local OTR clubs, lending libraries, radio ham groups and preservation societies. The fact that radio recordings, for the most part, were never commercially released made the hobby of collecting classic radio a collaborative endeavor that necessitated connecting with other fans to trade or buy bootlegged recordings. Thus, in this chapter, I detailed the practices fans employed to counter the lack of commercially available radio recordings by seeking out transcription discs through radio stations and producers, and then using analog home recording techniques to duplicate and improve sound quality as they exchanged recordings with each other. This chapter describes the labor, technical knowledge, and money required for radio enthusiasts to participate in a bootleg community. This chapter also demonstrated how members of the OTR community came to establish interpersonal relationships with each other through their hobby of collecting, listening to, exchanging and discussing classic radio. Lastly, chapter two also highlighted the conflicting ways that OTR fans debated the cultural significance and meanings of these classic programs within in the post-civil rights, post-women's movement social context of 1970s and '80s.

In chapter three, I build on the foundation of chapter two to discuss how members of the OTR community translated previously established hobbies within the fandom to their adaptation of the personal computer. As I demonstrate in this chapter, fans initially used computer technology either for word processing, to type and edit program logs or fanzines, or for building databases with database software, to organize their collection and its catalog as well as manage their exchanges and dealings with other collectors. In this sense, fans took the protocols from fanzines, radio ham groups and conventions to debate and discuss classic radio, crowdsource for radio episodes or establish hobby standards through online spaces like Usenet, AOL, and personal websites. As I also discuss, fans began to reformat their analog recordings of classic radio and share them on personal websites in the late 1990s as technological advances in internet web browsing made it easier to create personal web sites while, at the same platforms like Real Audio emerging that allowed users to stream audio content online. This practice created what I term the digital radio artifact, and how the Internet Archive became the primary place for radio collectors and fans to upload, download and stream classic radio. I consider how the architecture of the Internet Archive encourages OTR collectors to become participatory archivists who collaborate to construct collections of classic shows freely available to browsers on the audio collection section of the Internet Archive. I also use this chapter to consider how the establishment of The Internet Archive's Old Time Radio collection has provided a communal space for amateur radio preservationists, radio collectors and fans to connect and listen to digital radio artifacts. In this chapter, I also demonstrated how listeners use radio to make sense of the past through what I call temporal sonic witnessing. Making sense of the past through radio encourages a comparative evaluation of what we are like now. Listeners responses demonstrates ambivalent, contradictory and politically charged meaning that remind us how understanding history through media does not produce fixed or unified understandings of the past.

In chapter four, I switch gears and turn from my research on the how classic radio circulated in fan communities to consider how it came to be a material object circulating through formalized commercial sites of exchange. In this chapter, I detail the how the commercial companies Radio Yesteryear, Metacom and Radio Spirits grew out of OTR fan cultures, yet, came to be distinct from fan collectors because these business were formally and legally established as commercial corporations. I argued that the commodification of classic radio as an object packaged and sold directly to consumers represented a third industrial cycle for these recordings, one that redefined classic radio as a material to be held, bought and taken home for playback in a car or home stereo system. The commercial companies, for the most part, worked to ensure that they properly licensed or bought the copyright for the radio programs they sold, and used direct marketing, retail, and later online market places to sell radio on cassette and later compact disc to consumers.

In this chapter, I end by detailing how the conglomerate MediaBay bought Radio Spirits, Metacom's Adventures in Cassettes division and David Goldin's company Radio Yesteryear in 1998. MediaBay decided to consolidate all of their sales of OTR materials under the name Radio Spirits, hoping to leverage their new classic radio content library as digital commodities in an online market. This new industrial valuation of classic radio as a digital commodity led to conflict with fans sharing free digital copies of classic radio online, creating a tension between OTR hobbyists and Radio Spirits. MediaBay went bankrupt due to mismanagement and over extension, and the company Radio Spirits was auctioned off during MediaBay's dissolvent to former employees. Today, Radio Spirits survives as the only company of what was once a million dollar OTR commercial market. This history of classic radio's third industrial cycle demonstrates a key transformation in how listeners engaged with radio directly as a recording they could buy directly from producers, listen on their own schedule, and replay on demand.

In my last chapter, I turn back to the topic I broached in chapter one, the production of new creative radio in a post-network era. I discuss what I see as a second wave of post-network radio that began being produced in the early 1980s within a public radio production culture. In this chapter, I argue that *A Prairie Home Companion* created a new model for creative soundwork in the age of convergence, pioneering both industrial strategies for self-distribution and additional revenue via live tours, merchandise, and extension to television and film projects. I discussed how *APHC* drew upon classic network radio aesthetics and played with them to create a postmodern parody of classic radio. This new wave of post-network creative radio was shaped by rise of audience fragmentation, cable television, and narrowcasting strategies. It is no surprise, for instance, as I demonstrate, that both *APHC* and later *TAL* had cable TV spin offs that capitalized on the niche appeal these two radio franchises honed. Following my analysis of *APHC*'s industrial and aesthetic historical significance, I discussed how *This American Life* very much copied APHC's model, leveraging a quirky aesthetic that played with and changed classic creative radio conventions to tell stories about "everyday" American life. I provide an overview of how *TAL* frequently leveraged its radio and podcast audience to promote its transmedia productions like *Sleepwalk With Me*, while also influencing the sound and style of contemporary audio storytelling in general, especially within public media. I end this chapter with a discussion of how the *TAL* spinoff podcast *Serial* adapted *TAL's* style for a long-form, digital-only format, emblematic of creative radio's influence on digital soundwork.

Omissions, weaknesses and future research

This dissertation could easily have focused solely on one of the three main areas it dives into: the industrial recycling of classic radio; old-time radio fan communities; and new creative radio productions after television. All three of these subjects have been neglected in radio history, and all three could have been discussed to a greater extent than I do in this dissertation. However, I see these topics as interrelated aspects of creative radio's larger legacy as a residual form. Many fans were first exposed to classic radio through OTR radio shows; the success of Charles Michelson's OTR syndication business in the 1960s, 70s through to the 1990s demonstrated to radio producers that audiences continued to be interested in scripted radio; the commercial companies that recycled classic radio were all formed by OTR collectors; and the ongoing waves of new creative radio all draw, to some extent, on the aesthetics classic radio producers established during the network era. Thus, I choose to apply a frame from material culture to chart out significant moments in creative radio's residual afterlife as a material object and aesthetic practice circulating through post-network production cultures, as well as syndication companies, fan communities, grocery stores, truck stops and podcast production studios.

Of course, the breadth of this study limited some of the depth of my research. For instance, National Public Radio produced a host of radio dramas in the 1970s and ‘80s, in addition to *Earplay*, were not covered in my research. An entire book could probably be written about KUSC’s five-hour production of *Star Wars* that was aired in weekly 30-minute episodes, and followed by similar five-hour adaptations of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. During my research, I also came across mentions of an all-African American radio drama titled *Sounds of the City* that was written by the award-winning playwright Shauneille Perry and aired on the Mutual Black Network from 1974-75. My ability to research this topic was limited by my inquiries with several archives that produced no leads on materials or recordings related to this show. It is my hope that these resources exist, and that either myself or other broadcast historians will someday write the history of *Sounds of the City.*

This brings me to the challenge all historians face, and that is the availability and access we have to traces of the past we can study and use to write historiography. I would have liked to write more about some of the companies who sold vinyl radio recordings that I discuss in passing in chapter four, especially those business with nefarious reputations. It is these companies especially whose business papers have not been preserved in traditional archives, and overall tracking down materials for this chapter proved difficult. In the end, much of my history of companies that packaged and sold radio came from business industry trade journals or interviews with prior employees and OTR collectors.

And, while archival materials related to companies selling radio as a physical commodity seemed difficult to procure, the ability to observe how OTR fans used AOL or other online spaces in the 1990s proved even more difficult. This is because digital media can be extremely ephemeral, especially when multinational corporations control it. It has been possible to garner from interviews with fans that American Online's software and platform was a central site for OTR community, but it is not possible to actually find records of the specific conversations or activities that occurred. My chapter on radio collectors and the personal computer thus mainly relies on the few instances OTR fans discussed computers or the internet in fanzines, and later, through Usenet. Indeed, while I am suspicious of Google's purchase and perseveration of every Usenet forum, I am grateful that I could browse through hundreds of Usenet threads that discussed classic radio. My work is not a comprehensive or a complete history of how creative soundwork persisted in the network era, yet, it can serve as a model for future work on the residuality of broadcasting content.

This is because the research in this dissertation is an important contribution to studies of media circulation, media production, and media audiences. As I mention in my introduction, most of the cultural research on radio industries is focused on the classic network era. My research brings radio studies into the post-network era, and demonstrates how some radio producers adapted to new industrial practices in the wake of television's ascendency to create several waves of post-network creative soundwork in the 1960s, '70s and beyond. The research in this project is also significant in its detailed overview of the formation of a community of radio fans and collectors. I demonstrate the labor and practices of radio bootleggers that led to the continued circulation of classic network era creative soundwork through to the post-network radio age. Very little has been written about radio fandom, in comparison to television fandom, and this research demonstrates the different mechanism and challenges fans of narrative radio faced in acquiring radio recordings that were not preserved or circulated by their original producers. I also demonstrate the role of home recording technologies and later personal computers and the internet as vehicles for sound reproduction and the cultural circulation of radio recordings. I also demonstrate how fan 'zines, conventions and later networked digital spaces like Usenet or AOL allowed radio fans to collaborate to create personal collections, preservation societies while also forming interpersonal connections through radio fandom. In writing a history of the collectors who formed commercial companies to distribute classic radio as packaged collections via direct marketing and retail, I demonstrate how radio became revalued as a material object imbued with nostalgic meanings about our cultural heritage.

Radio producers, industrial structures and audiences remain an understudied subject from 1960 onward in the United States. This research demonstrates some of the ways in which creative radio has endured and flourished within fan communities, aftermarkets and new productions in unexpected ways. Thus, this dissertation challenges linear histories of broadcasting that suppose television entertainment seamlessly replaced radio entertainment, and redefines radio as a material object has been reworked, reproduced and redistributed through unofficial and official channels. In this sense, I have contributed to the cultural understanding of radio history, and broadcasting history more generally, as variegated, complex and incoherent.

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Newspapers, Magazines and Trade Journals

This dissertation cites many popular magazines, trade journals, newspapers and online news outlets. While complete citations are available as footnotes in each chapter, I am only including the titles in this bibliography. The citations in this dissertation include:

The Atlantic, Audio Magazine, The A.V. Club, *BBC Online, Berkshire Eagle, Billboard, The Boston Globe, Broadcasting, Business Wire, Buzzfeed, Chicago Tribune, Clarion Ledger, CNN Online, Current, Daily Variety, Digg, Digiday, East Valley Tribune, Fast Company, The Globe And Mail (Canada), The Guardian, The Hollywood Reporter, IEEE Spectrum, Inc., The Independent, Lifehacker, The London Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Montreal Gazette, Mother Jones, The New Yinzer*, *New York Magazine, The New York Times, NiemanLab, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Podcaster News, PR Newswire Publisher's Weekly, Quartz, The Radio Annual Yearbook, The Radio and Television Annual Yearbook, Reading Eagle, Slate, Sponsor, Star Tribune, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Sydney Morning Herald, Time Magazine, Variety, The Village Voice,* and *The Washington Post.*

Appendix 1: Interview Protocols

This dissertation had permission from the University of Wisconsin's Internal Review Board to interview radio collectors, fans and radio professionals under the approved Submission ID Number: 2014-0127. These interviews were conducted via phone or email using the following interview outlines as the basis of open-ended interviews. The first set of questions was the framework for interviews with radio collectors, designed to both elicit historical information as well as an understanding of radio and collector practices, and reflection on how individuals made sense of themselves as OTR Radio enthusiasts. The second set of questions was used with personnel who worked in companies that sold OTR radio recordings, with the goal of obtaining historical information, as well as industrial strategies and practices.

Interview Protocols – Collectors

When and how did you first get into collecting old time radio?

What do you enjoy about collecting OTR?

How big is your collection?

What are you favorite programs and why?

How long have you been a member of the Old Time Radio Researchers Group? Do you work on OTRR projects? If so, which ones, and what do you do on them?

When and how did the OTRR start? And how do members coordinate with each other?

Have you every used Usenet, AOL, Internet Relay Chat, Yahoo Groups, Facebook or other online tools to connect with other collectors? If so, when and how were you using these forums?

Do you still find new material? What are the main sources for finding new material?

Do you write program logs? Which ones, and where do you go to for your information?

Do you mainly collect digital files? Did you ever collect tape, and if so, how is using digital files and technologies changed how you engage with the hobby today?

Do you use software programs to clean up mp3 files of programming? Which ones, and what sort of functions do you use to improve sound quality?

Are there considered good and bad practices in trading and collecting OTR today? What are they?

What are some of the main issues that collectors debate and discuss today?

Do you listen to any OTR broadcasts on local radio stations – or internet radio stations? If so, which ones?

Do you listen to any OTR podcasts? If so, which ones?

Do you listen to any contemporary radio drama? If so, which ones?

Is there anyone else you think I should speak with about this topic?

Interview Protocols – Professionals

When and where was your company founded, and by whom?

Do you know the motivation for starting the company?

How many people worked there, approximately?

Were employees mainly OTR fans? How did you end up working there?

What strategies were used to sell radio recordings?

How would you describe the customers, were they mainly OTR collectors?

What was your company's source for recordings?

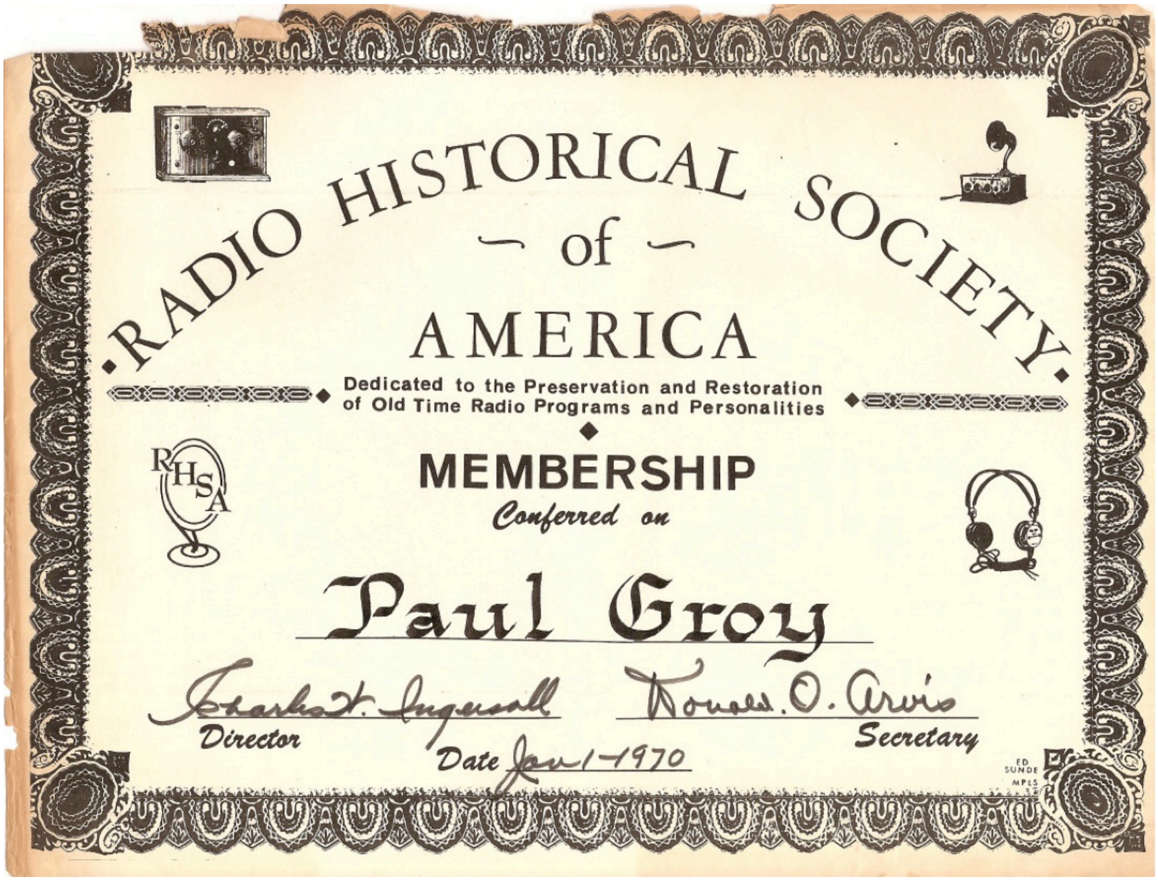
What were the most popular radio shows ordered? What about least popular? Where their requests for shows difficult or impossible to find?

Did your company pay licensing fees or own program copyrights?

Is there anyone else you think I should speak with about this topic?

Appendix 2: Figures

Figure 2.1: An example of a Radio Historical Society of America Membership Certificate. *Radio Dial* Fanzine Collection. Old Time Radio Researchers Digital Magazine Archive. http://www.otrr.org/Pages/Publications/magz_radio_dial.htm. Accessed November 15, 2014.



RADIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
— of —
AMERICA

Dedicated to the Preservation and Restoration
of Old Time Radio Programs and Personalities

◆

RHSA

MEMBERSHIP
Conferred on

Paul Groy

Charles H. Ingersoll
Director

Ronald O. Arvis
Secretary

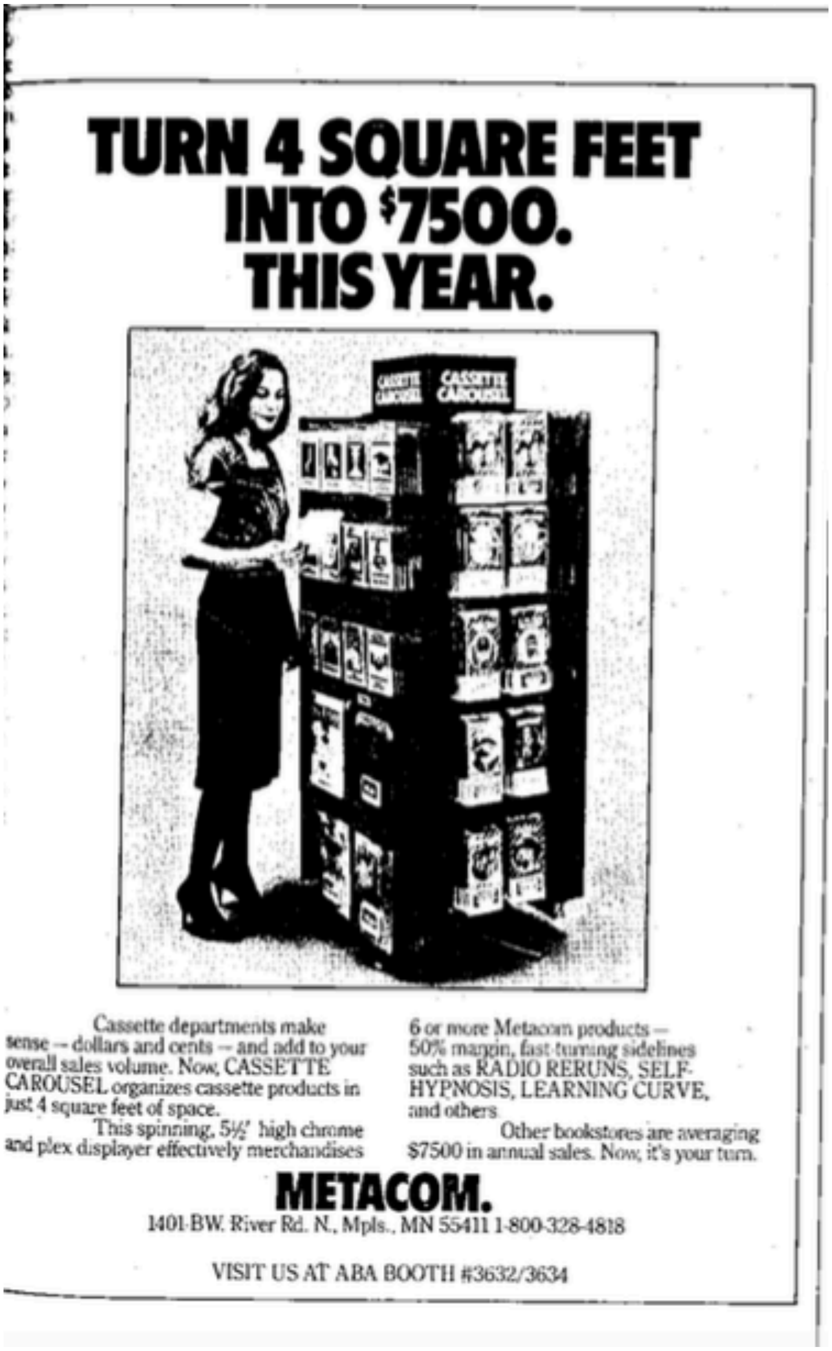
Date Jan 1-1970

ED
SUNDE
MPLS

Figure 2.2: A list of some of the more prominent old-time radio fanzines published between 1966 – 2013. Please note that this is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list. Old Time Radio Researchers Digital Magazine Archive. http://www.otrr.org/Pages/Publications/

- *Radio Dial* (1966 – 1976), publication of the Radio Historical Society of America.
- *Hello Again* (1970 – 2015).
- *North American Radio Archives News* (1973 – 2003), publication of the North American Radio Archives.
- *Radio Gram* (1974 - present), publication of Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy.
- *Nostalgia Digest & Radio Guide*, (1974 – present).
- *Return With US Now* (1975 – present), publication of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado.
- *Illustrated Press,* (1976 – present), publication of Old Time Radio Club of Buffalo
- *Airwaves,* (1976 – 78).
- *National Radio Trader,* (1977 – 79).
- *Collector's Corner,* (1978 – 82).
- *OTR Digest,* (1984 – 2006).
- *Aircheck,* (1991 – present), publication of the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound.

Figure 4.1: An illustration of Metacom's Cassette Carousel, and how it utilized the cassette storage technology to display radio compilations in a bookstore, grocery or truck stop. *Publisher's Weekly*, "Audiocassettes: A buyer's guide," 1985, 80 – 88.


CASSETTE CAROUSEL
CASSETTE CAROUSEL

TURN 4 SQUARE FEET INTO $7500. THIS YEAR.

Cassette departments make sense – dollars and cents – and add to your overall sales volume. Now, CASSETTE CAROUSEL organizes cassette products in just 4 square feet of space.

This spinning, 5½' high chrome and plex displayer effectively merchandises 6 or more Metacom products – 50% margin, fast-turning sidelines such as RADIO RERUNS, SELF-HYPNOSIS, LEARNING CURVE, and others.

Other bookstores are averaging $7500 in annual sales. Now, it's your turn.

METACOM.

1401-BW. River Rd. N., Mpls., MN 55411 1-800-328-4818

VISIT US AT ABA BOOTH #3632/3634

Figure 4.2: An example of the way Metacom packaged their radio sets to look like classic radio receiver sets.

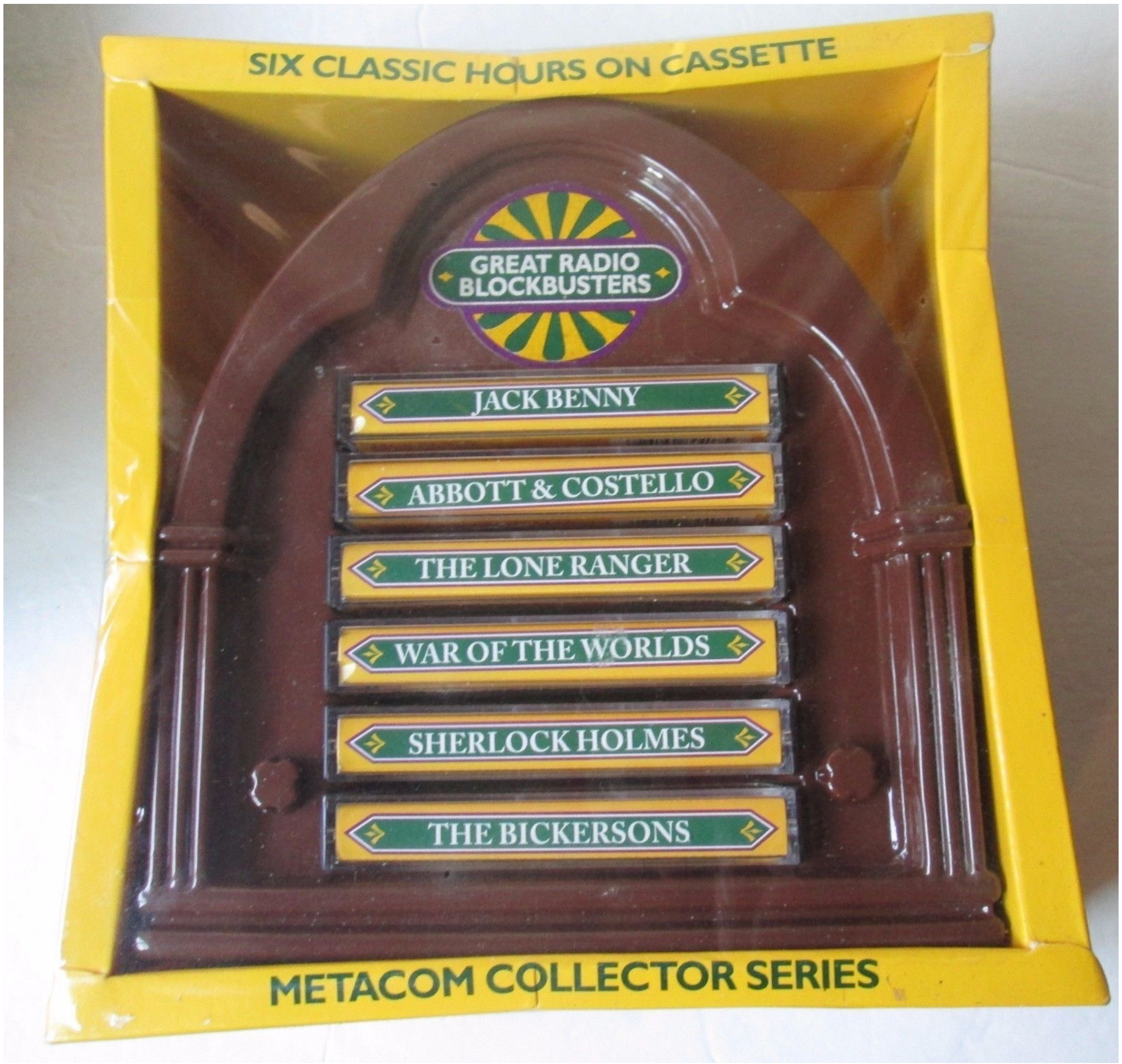
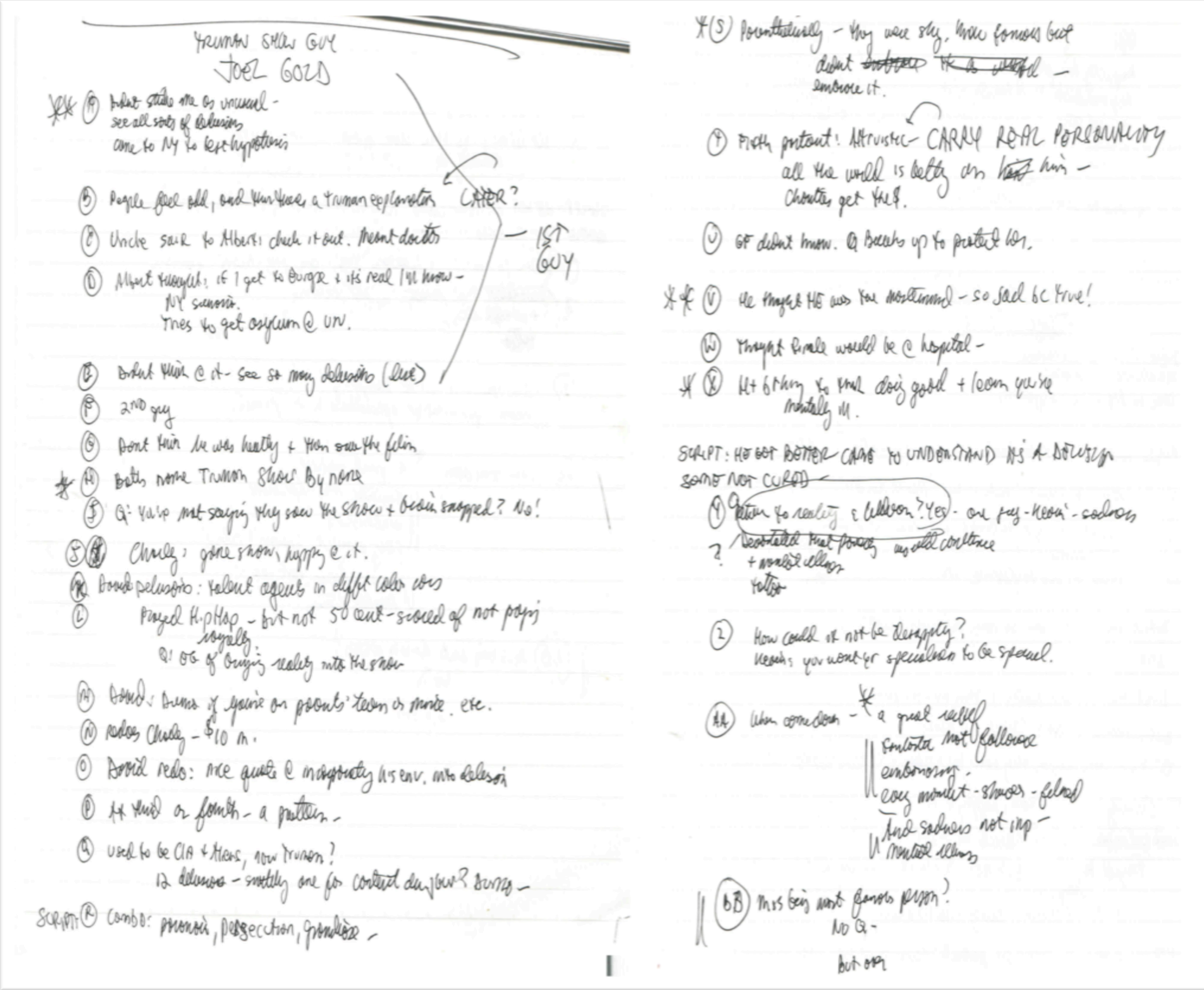

SIX CLASSIC HOURS ON CASSETTE
GREAT RADIO BLOCKBUSTERS
JACK BENNY
ABBOTT & COSTELLO
THE LONE RANGER
WAR OF THE WORLDS
SHERLOCK HOLMES
THE BICKERSONS
METACOM COLLECTOR SERIES

Figure 5.1: An example of Ira Glass post-production work crafting a narrative from interview notes. This example is a mark - up of tape logs from his interview with the psychologist and author Joel Gold for This American Life's "Episode 529: The Human Spectacle." See *Life Hacker,* July 23, 2014, accessed July 30, 2015, http://lifehacker.com/im-ira-glass-host-of-this-american-life-and-this-is-h-1609562031



TRUMAN SHOW GUY
JOEL GOLD

** (A) What strikes me as unusual -
see all sorts of delusions
came to NY to test hypothesis

(B) People feel odd, and then have a Truman explanation — LATER?

(C) Uncle said to Albert: check it out. Meant doctors — 1ST GUY

(D) Albert thought: if I get to [illegible] & it's real I'll know -
NY scenario.
Tries to get asylum @ UN.

(E) Didn't think @ it - see so many delusions (live)

(F) 2ND guy

(G) Dont think he was healthy + then saw the film

* (H) Both name Truman Show by name

(I) Q: You're not saying they saw the show + brain snapped? No!

(J) (K) Charlie: gone show, happy @ it.

(K) David delusion: talent agents in diff't color cars

(L) Played HipHop - but not 50 cent - scared of not paying royalty.
Q: OG of bringing reality into the show

(M) David: Dreams of you're on parents' team or movie. etc.

(N) redos Charlie - $10 m.

(O) David redo: nice quote @ incorporating his env. into delusion

(P) 1st third or fourth - a pattern -

(Q) used to be CIA + aliens, now Truman?
12 delusions - suddenly one for contest du jour? Sure -

SCRIPT: (R) Combo: paranoia, persecution, grandiose -

* (S) Paradoxically - they were shy, more famous but
didn't ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ -
embrace it.

(T) Fifth protest: Altruistic - CARRY REAL PERSONALITY
all the world is betting on ~~[illegible]~~ him -
Charities get the $.

(U) GF didn't know. Q breaks up to protect her.

** (V) He thought HE was the most famous - so sad bc true!

(W) Thought finale would be @ hospital -

* (X) Hard to think you're doing good + learn you're mentally ill.

SCRIPT: HE GOT BETTER CAME TO UNDERSTAND IT'S A DELUSION
SOME NOT CURED

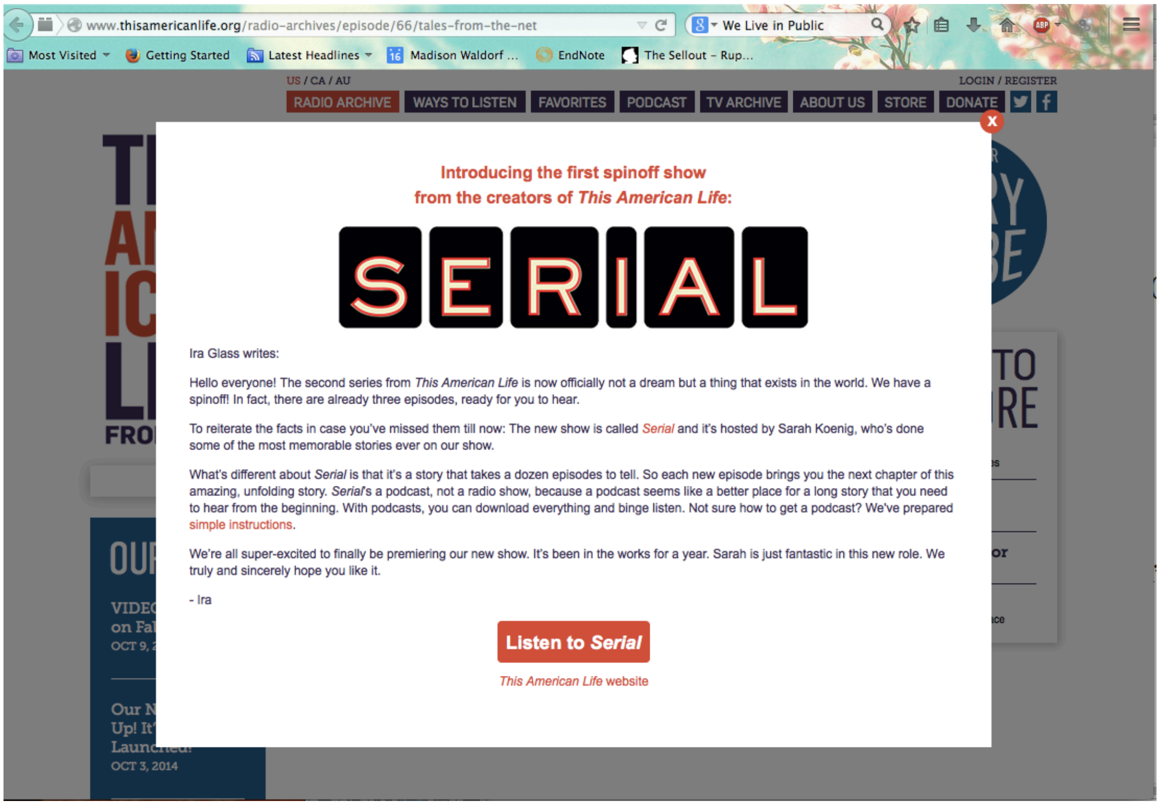
(Y) Return to reality @ delusion? Yes - one guy - Keon - sadness
? ~~Devastated that power~~ my ~~[illegible]~~ confidence
+ mental illness
~~[illegible]~~

(Z) How could it not be unhappy?
Means you want your specialness to be special.

(AA) When come down - * a great relief
sort of not following
embarrassing.
every moment - shows - filmed
And sadness not imp -
mental illness

(BB) This being most famous person?
No Q -
But [illegible]

Figure 5.2: Pop-up ad promoting *Serial* on This American Life's website, captured October 15, 2014 from thisamericanlife.org.


www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/66/tales-from-the-net
We Live in Public
Most Visited
Getting Started
Latest Headlines
Madison Waldorf ...
EndNote
The Sellout – Rup...
US / CA / AU
LOGIN / REGISTER
RADIO ARCHIVE
WAYS TO LISTEN
FAVORITES
PODCAST
TV ARCHIVE
ABOUT US
STORE
DONATE
X
SERIAL
Listen to *Serial*
This American Life website

Introducing the first spinoff show
from the creators of *This American Life*:

Ira Glass writes:

Hello everyone! The second series from *This American Life* is now officially not a dream but a thing that exists in the world. We have a spinoff! In fact, there are already three episodes, ready for you to hear.

To reiterate the facts in case you've missed them till now: The new show is called *Serial* and it's hosted by Sarah Koenig, who's done some of the most memorable stories ever on our show.

What's different about *Serial* is that it's a story that takes a dozen episodes to tell. So each new episode brings you the next chapter of this amazing, unfolding story. *Serial*'s a podcast, not a radio show, because a podcast seems like a better place for a long story that you need to hear from the beginning. With podcasts, you can download everything and binge listen. Not sure how to get a podcast? We've prepared simple instructions.

We're all super-excited to finally be premiering our new show. It's been in the works for a year. Sarah is just fantastic in this new role. We truly and sincerely hope you like it.

- Ira