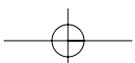


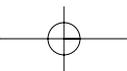


..... Part I

..... Genres and

..... Production





Acoustics

Acoustics refers to the quality and nature of sound in a particular physical environment. It also refers more generally to sound and hearing as in 'acoustic dislocation'.

The word acoustics is used in two rather different ways in writing on radio. It has a specific technical meaning in radio production, which refers to either natural sound qualities of different locations or to their treatment. This use of the word acoustics is usually seen in discussion of radio drama. It is also used, however, in a much more general way to refer to sound production and hearing and especially in cultural or historical accounts of sound.

In radio production, and in particular on location, the sound quality of the environment is an important factor. This is partly determined by the reflective properties of surfaces and their distance from the microphone (Starkey, 2004a: 11). In reflective environments, sound bounces off hard surfaces to create an echo or 'reverberation' or 'resonance'. Lobbies or toilets cause high levels of reverberation and so does a church or a hall where the greater space creates a slower echo. In drama production these effects are either achieved on location or are created artificially in the studio to add atmosphere to the drama. Acoustics allow the listener to 'hear space' or, to put it differently, 'space is created acoustically' (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998: 56). These sound qualities add something to the listener's experience:

If the sounds are produced in a studio and all resonance is deadened then these sounds seem to occupy the same space as that of the listener, replicating the acoustic qualities of most people's homes, where typically sounds are deadened by carpets, wallpaper, curtains and furniture. (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998: 56)

Here the acoustic deadening of the studio is used to enhance the intimacy of the listening experience and the simulation of co-presence between the presenter or DJ and the listener.

The other use of the word acoustic is found in cultural and historical accounts of listening. Emily Thompson's (2004) history of sound and technology in the early 20th century is entitled *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural acoustics and the culture of listening in America, 1900–1933*. The book is not directly concerned with radio but looks at the wider soundscape of modern America, its 'aural landscape'. She comments on the way that in the noisy urban environment of the American city, acoustic technology was used in architecture and building materials to try to reduce the din of modern technology (trains, cars, gramophones). Gradually, 'electroacoustic' devices such as the telephone and the radio changed the listening experience and gave the listener greater control over what they heard. A feature of the new listening was that 'sound was gradually dissociated from space' (Thompson 2004: 2). So the telephone conversation separated the human voice from their location. Similarly, radio allowed voices, some of them from other countries, to speak into enthusiasts' headphones.

Returning to the word 'acoustic' we can say that the acoustic experience has historically moved in the direction of both *control* over what is heard but also in the *separation* of sound and place. This is a point made not only by cultural historians but also in contemporary cultural accounts of audio consumption. Personalised audio players (such as the Walkman® or its replacement, the MP3 player) contribute to the acoustic experience in ways very similar to those described by Thompson:

... listening with headphones on is like a wonderful decoding instrument of the urban sonic environment. The walking listener uses it not only to protect himself from the sonic aggressions of the city but also to filter and enhance the events that give the place its meaning. (Thibaud, 2003: 330)

In this case the older technology of the Walkman® audio cassette player is used to screen out unwanted sound and replace it with selective listening, 'the passer-by with headphones navigates through several worlds at once, the one in which he hears and the one in which he walks' (Thibaud, 2003: 331). The acoustic dislocation of the listener from their physical place is also a feature of mobile phone use. Here the acoustic experience seems to lift the user out of the urban environment to other places, 'I am no longer embedded in my immediate locality' comments Caroline Bassett on her phone use, 'today the city streets are full of virtual doorways, opening into other places' (2003: 345).

The idea of acoustics and the related concept of the soundscape are particularly useful for an understanding of contemporary radio. They

force us to connect radio to other modes and technologies of listening and to acknowledge both the historical and cultural influences on our sense of hearing.

FURTHER READING

Shingler and Wieringa provide a very useful introduction to this and related topics (1998: 54–61). Thompson's (2004) history of American audio life is fascinating while Thibaud (2003) is a more contemporary account.

Broadcast Talk

Broadcast talk refers to talk on radio as a specific form of public, broadcast speech.

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of talk on radio. In the same way that visual images (or pictures) are fundamental to film and television, so talk is often described as the 'primary code' of radio. This may even be true in music radio where the linking words of the DJ are of critical importance and make the output 'radio' rather than just a juke box.

But what exactly is 'talk'? Is it the same as language? In addition, what is 'broadcast talk'? Is that the same essentially as 'ordinary talk', which just happens to be transmitted over the radio? The answer to the first question is clearly that language is a resource with its own rules, vocabulary and grammar that can be used in a number of different forms of 'talk'. So the English language can be used in the formal context of the court room but this is quite different from the informality of talk in the playground or on the street. In the context of radio theory, 'talk' is used to refer to use of language (vocabulary and grammar) but also mode of address (including 'direct address' which uses 'you', 'we', 'I' and so on). It also includes the sound of someone talking, so accent, noise levels and the rapidity of speech are all included. But 'broadcast talk' is clearly different again from everyday conversational talk. What we hear on the radio in the exchanges between a presenter and someone phoning in, or

in the chat of the DJ, or between co-presenters has a number of largely hidden but distinct characteristics. What we hear *sounds like* everyday talk but is in fact quite different.

To begin with, broadcast talk (a term normally associated with the work of Paddy Scannell [1991]) is meant to be overheard. This is obvious in the direct address of the presenter or DJ who speaks directly to the listener, but it is also true of the talk we hear between the presenter and others involved in the programme, including listeners who have phoned in. Scannell used the term 'double articulation' to describe this characteristic of broadcast talk; there are two simultaneous forms of communication occurring, that between the presenter and the person they are talking to and also between this talk and the audience. So it sounds like 'chat' but it is chat that is designed for thousands of listeners to hear. There is an important tension here between what radio sounds like to the casual listener and a deeper reality. The reality is that the radio station and the presenter have, more or less, complete control or power over what is heard and said. As Scannell puts it, 'the power of broadcasting, like that of any institution, lies in the way it can define the terms of social interaction in its own domain by pre-allocating social roles and statuses, and by controlling the content, style and duration of its events' (1991: 2). This institutional authority is illustrated by the fact that so much of the apparently casual banter that we hear on radio is either scripted or rehearsed. First, jokes, asides, topics, exchanges may have been rehearsed beforehand and are written down in front of the presenter. Second, callers to phone-in programmes are always carefully screened and when they say what they are not supposed to say are quickly cut off.

Broadcast talk may be institutional and contrived but it must sound very different. In the case of the DJ or the phone-in host, quite an effort is necessary to sound spontaneous and everyday. Despite the size of the audience and the pre-planned nature of the talk, the presenter has to perform 'being ordinary' and their speech has to sound much more like everyday conversation than something being read. In Britain there is an interesting and well-documented history of the development of broadcast talk. The first Director of Talks in the BBC, Hilda Matheson, was one of the first to understand the importance of making scripted radio sound informal and spontaneous and not like a lecture (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 166). For some presenters the performance of 'being ordinary' and sounding spontaneous simply reflects their character, but the need to reproduce this consistently for several hours a week or even every day makes this much more of a performance than it might appear.

The ordinariness of talk on radio and the performance of being ordinary is related to another concept developed by Scannell, 'co-presence'. The key to the success of a lot of contemporary radio is the sense communicated by the presenter or DJ that somehow (s)he and the listener exist in the same place at the same time. So when we switch on our radio in the morning and hear 'it's another beautiful day here in downtown Memphis' (or wherever) we are being encouraged to feel a sense of 'being with' that presenter in the same place at the same time. The performance of being ordinary by the presenter adds to that sense of co-presence and shared experience and these are communicated largely (though not entirely) through broadcast talk. This sense of shared participation in everyday life is probably easier to achieve on radio than television because the presenter is not an objectified presence on a screen. A sense of co-presence is much more difficult to experience with the carefully made-up presenters of day-time television addressing us from their studio couch than it is with the disembodied voice of a well-known DJ.

Another related feature of broadcast talk that compliments its ordinariness and adds to that sense of co-presence is its 'liveness'. Up until the middle part of the 20th century almost all radio was live. The listener knew that the words coming from the wireless receiver were being spoken at that very moment in time, usually by someone in a studio in front of a microphone. Although a lot of what we now hear on radio is pre-recorded, the 'rhetoric of liveness' is still dominant in radio (see the entry on **Liveness**). Arguably, one of radio's great strengths, and one of the reasons why it survives in an age apparently dominated by visual media and forms of audio on demand such as the MP3 player or over the internet, is its insistence on live communication. I say 'insistence' because the word 'live' is continually used by presenters to affirm this essential virtue; 'coming to you live ...', 'right here live on ...', and so on. In broadcast talk the liveness of radio is communicated in the spontaneity and immediacy of the talk. What we hear feels more live partly because the references made by presenters and DJs are to today's events (nationally or locally) but also because the talk contains the 'ums' and 'errs' and pauses of unscripted and spontaneous speech.

If we examine an example of broadcast talk we can see the interplay of these different characteristics of radio. Karen Atkinson and Shaun Moores (2003) have analysed the phone-in programme *Live and Direct*, which was broadcast in the late 1990s on the British national commercial radio station **Talk Radio** and presented by Anna Raeburn. As they point out, the title of the programme captured that sense of liveness and immediacy. The

(AQ) Comment (JT1): AU: Isn't this now called talk SPORT, should a parentical note be added?

programme encouraged callers to discuss personal problems with the well-known presenter in a programme genre typical of the ‘therapeutic advice-giving’ developed on US radio in the 1970s. Although Raeburn was giving advice she presented herself not as a therapist or expert but as an ordinary person, someone just like the caller, as this extract shows:

I don't fix anything (1.0) you do (1.0) what we offer on freecall 0500 105839 is the chance to talk (2.0) to check out a range of options (.) to run the decision by somebody who has no vested interest in anything but you (.) telling often the uncomfortable truth as I see it (1.0) and I would just like to remind you at this stage that I'm human too (.) just as fallible just as vulnerable just as bashed about and world-weary as you are (.) so if you want to talk about something and you're worried about and you feel foolish and silly and small don't bother (.) everyone else feels just as (laughing) foolish just as silly just as small (.) that's the predicament (.) and if you'd like to join us that number once more is freecall 0500 105839. (Atkinson and Moores, 2003: 133 – The numbers in brackets indicate the length of a pause in seconds. (.) indicates a short pause)

The pauses, laughter and direct address all contribute to the liveness and apparent spontaneity of this talk. Anna Raeburn also portrays herself as just an ordinary person (‘I'm human too’) and in her use of ‘we’, ‘everyone else’ and ‘join us’ she fosters a powerful sense of co-presence with and among her listeners.

Talk on radio is of course extremely varied depending on genre, format, the target audience, the nature of the station or network, the time of day and so on. The presenter or whoever is talking will also influence broadcast talk depending on their cultural background. News, analysis, documentary, live sport, conversation and different types of music radio will all employ variations of talk. Andrew Tolson, for example, describes BBC Five Live, the news and sport network which, as its name suggests, foregrounds liveness (2006: 94). The emphasis on sport appeals to a working-class, male listener and the commentators and presenters speak with a rich variety of accents and dialects unusual for the BBC. In the Saturday post-match phone-in programme *606* all the characteristics of liveness, co-presence and ordinariness are evident as is the undisputed authority of the presenter. Tolson describes the use of ‘confrontation talk’ on *606* as the caller and host argue about football in a manner that perfectly (and deliberately) mimics two men in a pub.

The extraordinary variety of broadcast talk is captured by Susan Douglas (1999) in her account of American radio and culture. She describes listening to radio in 1978 in New York. On AM the talk radio

host, Bob Grant is yelling 'you creep! Get off the phone!' and 'you mealy-mouthed pompous oaf', at callers to his late night show. Meanwhile on National Public Radio over on FM, Joe Frank is reminiscing about the experience of being a child, 'when you're a child, you're so alive to experience. The world dazzles you, especially the world of living beings' (Douglas, 1999: 284). Different though these examples are, in both cases, and in every case of broadcast talk, the words we hear serve to keep the listener tuned in by evoking spontaneity, ordinariness and co-presence.

FURTHER READING

Scannell's (1991) short collection of articles is an obvious starting point. Tolson's (2006) much more recent book on 'media talk' is very interesting and readable while Atkinson and Moores (2003) is a wonderful example of the analysis of radio talk (and much else beside).

Comedy

Comedy is a speech radio genre, which includes a wide variety of entertainment programmes. Comedy is also often a feature of the performance of the radio DJ.

There is something odd about the success and importance of radio comedy. Why is something so inherently visual (think of facial grimaces, silly clothes, slap stick routines) a success on an invisible medium? To take this point further, comedy has been a vital ingredient in radio's development and success but even highly visual forms of comedy, including ventriloquism, have worked well. This question is posed by Crisell, who also comments that we normally listen to radio alone but laughter, the natural response to comedy, is usually a collective act (1994: 164). Some comedy clearly works well on radio; the simply narrated joke for example or the sitcom based on strong and familiar characters and a good script. But comedy can also exploit the

invisibility (or 'blindness') of radio; the iconic 1950s British radio comedy, *The Goon Show*, being a good example. For Crisell this is a 'radiogenic' programme, exploiting the lack of visual images in a surreal audio experience.

What exactly is radio comedy? The term 'comedy' is used to describe specific genres of radio; the sitcom, the quiz show, the sketch show, all of which have a comic component. But humour, a state of mind or form of communication which is comic or witty, is a feature not just of comedy programmes, it may also be found in a DJ's presentation, sports coverage or even in a light news item. So what characterises humour? At least one feature is the 'transgressive' quality of humour, the stepping over boundaries of normal decency and taste to mock or even ridicule the serious and important aspects of life. The problem is that such transgressions can quite easily offend and take us to 'the perilous terrain that lies between humour and offensiveness' (Lockyer and Pickering, 2005: 3). So although humour is often seen as a good thing, as a therapeutic way of getting things off our chests, it can easily offend and reinforce prejudices, and especially those against minority or disadvantaged groups. In recent years the mounting tensions between the West and Islam have provided plenty of good examples of this. In 2006, cartoons in a Danish magazine making fun of the Prophet Mohammed led to riots in parts of the world. Any discussion of radio comedy needs to acknowledge comedy's potential to offend, and indeed some radio presenters have deliberately strived to do just that.

The histories of radio reveal how central it has been in the development of the medium. In the USA there can be few more famous or infamous programmes than *Amos 'n' Andy*, first broadcast in 1928 and featuring two white actors playing the parts of two black 'country bumpkins' who have recently arrived in Chicago. In her discussion of the programme, Hilmes notes that at the time there was almost a complete absence of black performers and producers in 'radio's resolutely white address' (1997: 75). Here is a short extract from an earlier show, *Sam 'n' Henry*:

Sam: Henry, did you ever see a mule as slow as dis one?

Henry: Oh, dis mule is fast enough. We gonna get to de depot alright.

Sam: You know dat Chicago train don't wait for nobody – it just goes on – just stops and goes right on.

Henry: Well, we ain't got but two blocks to go-don't be so patient, don't be so patient.

Sam: I hope they got faster mules dan dis up in Chicago. (Cited in Hilmes, 1997: 87)

This needs little comment. In addition to their ungrammatical and confused use of English, the two main characters are depicted in the most stereotypical fashion. Amos and Andy were variously lazy, stupid, superstitious, manipulative and prone to womanising. This minstrel inspired early comedy made the black American experience more visible but did so in a patronising and excluding manner.

Today we would find the thought of two white men painting their faces black and pretending to be rather stupid African Americans unacceptable and racist. But we would probably find Mae West's 1937 appearance on *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* (featuring the ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his dummy Charlie McCarthy) quite acceptable, unlike the audience at the time. West's notorious reputation as a 'loose woman' and her free use of sexual innuendo in the show transgressed sexual taboos of the time and caused widespread offence. The show managed to produce the most vitriolic response because, 'in the space of thirty minutes, during what was to be West's only major radio performance, heterosexual female desire was accorded unprecedented license over the airwaves' (Murray, 2002: 136).

Early British radio comedy, like its American equivalent, also relied on theatrical (or 'music hall') styles and performers. Early BBC comedy was part of the output of Light Entertainment and was characterised by short sketches and stand-up routines. Pre-war comedy provided one of the few places where regional or working-class voices could be heard on the BBC. But working-class comedy was prone to vulgarity and needed to be made safe and inoffensive:

Working-class entertainment was collective, disorderly, immediate – 'vulgar' by definition. Middle-class entertainment was orderly, regulated and calm, and it was this aesthetic that informed the BBC's understanding of listeners' leisure needs ... the problem was to fit entertainment as occasion into an intimate routine, to take pleasures that were essentially live (with the elements of risk and uncertainty) and script them so that nothing untoward happened. (Simon Frith in Barnard, 2000: 111)

The Second World War provided a boost for radio light entertainment, both comedy and popular music, in the absence of cinema and theatre (closed for the duration of the war) and of course before the arrival of television (the pilot London service was also closed during the war years). The BBC saw the need for entertainment to lift the morale of the population and one of the best examples of war time radio comedy was *It's That Man Again*, (also known as 'ITMA'): the 'man' referring to

Adolph Hitler. The show featured 'quick-fire humour and zany characters' and its 310 episodes ran from 1939–1949 (Street, 2006b: 148). As early American radio comedy betrayed a cultural obsession with race so British comedy was so often based on social class. *ITMA* featured gin-soaked colonels and screeching cleaning ladies among its social class stereotypes. In the 1950s *Hancock's Half Hour* featured Tony Hancock, one of radio comedy's most successful performers, colourfully described here by Stephen Wagg: 'The Hancock character is in many ways the model of a dyspeptic, status anxious, petit bourgeois suburbanite stomping grumpily about the reaches of Middle England' (1998: 7).

Although comedy programmes can still be found in radio around the world they have none of the importance of the early shows. Perhaps the dominance of television and film comedy has reasserted the simple fact that this is a genre that seems to work better with visual images. BBC Radio 4 has for some time been a place to find innovative comedy programmes, including sit-coms, sketch and quiz shows, but when these are successful they usually make the switch from radio to television.

If radio comedy, however, is in decline it certainly does not follow that radio has lost its humorous content. In fact humour and irreverence, the transgression of boundaries, is a distinctive feature of the DJ's patter and that of the talk show host. When the DJ was invented in the USA in the late 1940s and early 1950s, their role was partly to create a 'fun' feel to their shows. Music radio, often targeted at youth audiences, includes a discursive space, which expresses youth culture and is invariably comic and entertaining. On BBC Radio 1, the most successful day-time DJs are often the funniest, able to use prepared and ad lib wit to keep the audience listening. The same was true of early examples of talk radio in the USA. The early 'shock jocks' Dom Imus and Howard Stern conveyed an atmosphere of fun in their studios using a cast of characters and the sounds of laughter, rude noises and boisterous disorder. Howard Stern was particularly funny and especially when ridiculing self-important celebrities. Although a great deal of talk radio is serious, an underlying theme of some of the most successful shows is a sense of humour based on irreverence and transgression.

Listening to live radio today we might think that a good sense of humour is a pre-requisite for the successful DJ or presenter. In music, phone-ins, magazines, sport and other forms of live programming the use of wit and repartee are almost universal. Visual gags are, of course, excluded, although they can be described, but the essentially linguistic

mode of so much humour, in other words wit, works particularly well on radio. The move towards collective presentation, as in 'zoo' techniques, has greatly enhanced the opportunities to include repartee and comic banter and keep alive the comic radio tradition.

FURTHER READING

The literature on radio comedy is disappointingly thin but for a general introduction see Crisell (1994: 164–85). Hilmes' (1997) discussion of the early years of American radio comedy shows how comedy served to reinforce racial stereotypes. In addition many of the classic British and American comedies are available commercially.

DJs and Presenters

Radio DJs and presenters provide the spoken and performed link between the programme content and the radio audience.

The music radio DJ (or disc jockey) and the presenter of speech radio are both operating at the interface between the audience and the radio station (Hendy, 2000: 57). Largely through their use of broadcast talk and their persona, DJ/presenters have a key role to play in making radio listening possible and desirable. Their performance is often important in the creation of station identity as well as building and maintaining a regular listening audience. In this entry I am going to look at DJs and presenters jointly because the similarities between the two of them are so great, but there are important differences too.

In her historical account of the rise of the American DJ, Douglas sees this as a phenomenon of the 1950s and concurrent with the introduction of the transistor radio and its resulting popularity with American youth (Douglas, 1999: 229). She cites the example of the influential 'superjock', Wolfman Jack, the persona of the radio businessman, Bob Smith. Like other early radio DJs, Wolfman Jack used his magnetic and cool personality to connect

with the growing teenage audience. Unlike the pre-war 'emcees', who joked with their studio audiences, the new radio DJs spoke directly to the individual listener, embracing and flattering their youth. A part of the illicit attraction of DJs like Wolfman was their racial pedigree: the origins of rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll lay in African American music and many DJs used slang from the ghetto to reinforce their cool and non-white credentials.

In both the USA and the UK, the radio DJ has come to do what Douglas described in her account of early DJ talk:

DJ talk had to be invented and had to serve – and mediate between – very particular cultural and corporate interests. It was a monologue that sounded like a dialogue. The talk had to dramatize and personify the station's identity, and it had to make the audience feel personally included in the show, feel sought out and enfolded into a special, distinct community. (1999: 230)

So the DJ is in effect facing in two different directions; at the corporate boss (or public service broadcaster) but also at the listener. In doing so the DJ is at the centre of music radio and this is physically represented by the lay out of the radio studio in which the DJ operates the equipment and presents the show from the desk (Starkey, 2004a: 63).

Most of the literature on DJs, such as it is, tends to focus on their performative use of talk (see the entry on **Broadcast Talk**). So, for example, much has been said about the way the DJ uses direct speech ('you', 'we', 'I') to create an intimacy with the listener and also to conjure a simulated sense of 'co-presence', the sense that the listener has of being with the presenter and also with other members of the audience (Montgomery, 1986: 428). Modern DJs, often using a phone, may talk directly to a named listener who has phoned the show. In this case other listeners find themselves cast as 'overhearers' to a one-to-one conversation. In this talk it is important to recognise that the DJ is always in control, no matter how informal and jokey they may be with their listeners. This is particularly well illustrated by the case of *The Tony Blackburn Show* (1984–1989, BBC Radio London). While creating a carefully crafted and highly complex persona, Blackburn built a discursive space (what I call in a separate entry, a '**radio world**'), which has 'tightly defined boundaries' (Brand and Scannell, 1991: 223).

The modern radio DJ is very much a part of celebrity culture, often vying for celebrity with the music stars whose music they play. The radio DJ as celebrity will foreground their own performance and identity at the

expense of the music they play, for example by talking over the beginning and end of songs. They may also appear in a variety of other media; on television, in the press and in magazines. The celebrity status of some DJs is a way of retaining radio audiences in the face of competition from portable music players playing audio on demand. An interesting variation on this theme is the 'music star as radio DJ'. Bob Dylan's experiments as a DJ playing his own choice of music is a good example of another way of maintaining the appeal of the genre.

There is something fundamentally conservative and traditional about music radio and the role of the radio DJ. Very little has changed since the introduction of Top-40 radio in the mid-1950s in which DJs played repeatedly the top 40 hit records in the charts. The speech radio presenter, however, is quite different in the sheer variety of genres for which they are needed. Quiz shows, comedy, news magazines, current affairs, talk radio phone-ins; all require a presenter performing differently in each case. In pre-war British radio the wide spread use of news 'announcers' and radio talks meant there was little need for presenters as we know them today. In addition, because almost all speech on the BBC was scripted, the role of the presenter as 'referee' or interviewer was simply unnecessary. An exception was the early, unscripted discussion programme, *Men Talking* (1937) for which a 'chairman' was used to guide (or control) the discussions. It was the introduction of the magazine programme during the Second World War, in programmes such as *The Kitchen Front* mainly designed for women and also in panel programmes such as *The Brain's Trust* that made the presenter or 'chairman' necessary.

In the USA, journalists were increasingly used to 'anchor' radio news and an early and very important example of this is the CBS war-time news sequence, *Foreign News Roundup* presented (or 'anchored') from London by Edward R. Murrow. He brought together the reports of journalists in different European cities as the war unfolded as well as providing his own distinctive war reports.

Gradually the news (or current affairs) magazine became a feature of British radio as well and in particular from the 1960s when the traditional boundary between news and comment in the BBC began to break down. Here is a particularly graphic description of a news presenter from the 1960s:

William Hardcastle, who had been a Washington Correspondent for Reuters after the War and an Editor of the *Daily Mail* ... was a large, beetle-browed, untidy person, cigarette-smoking, hard-drinking and shirt-sleeved, and he

brought to *The World at One* some of the urgency and heat of Fleet Street. His breathless delivery mangled the conventions of measured speech that still held sway across most of the Home Service, and prompted a regular flow of complaint by disappointed listeners. (Hendy, 2007: 48)

British speech radio has produced a procession of famous and highly accomplished presenters who, often presenting the same programme over a long period of time, have come to be identified with, or even to be the identity of, the programmes they present. On commercial radio, Brian Hayes presented a morning phone-in sequence from the mid-1970s to 1990; BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* has been presented by Jenni Murray since 1985 and on the flagship radio current affairs programme, *Today*, John Humphrys has been intimidating politicians for 20 years.

The emergence of **talk radio** in the USA in the early 1970s produced one of the most extreme forms of speech presenter and importantly one that combined characteristics of both the radio DJ and the speech presenter. The shock jock used a variety of sexual references and obscenities, often combined with right-wing or libertarian political views, to literally shock their listeners and entertain them at the same time. The persona of the shock jock was epitomized by Howard Stern:

Stern's on-air persona was that of the class trouble-maker – and often the bully – in seventh grade, the guy who made fart noises during study hall and tried to snap girls' bra straps in the cafeteria. He was obsessed with sex and was also relentlessly self-absorbed. One of the adjectives most frequently used to describe him was *pubescent*. (Douglas, 1999: 304)

Another similarity between shock jocks and DJs is in the boundary maintenance they exercise over their 'radio world'. Although an impression of libertarian anarchy was conveyed on their shows this was never at the expense of tight control over what listeners could say on air. Indeed an abusive control over callers was a feature of talk radio as far back as the 1960s when the Los Angeles presenter Joe Pyne told those with whom he disagreed to 'go gargle with razor blades'. Similarly, the phone-in presenter, Brian Hayes, on the London commercial station, LBC efficiently and briskly processed callers in order to extract whatever newsworthy comment they had to make. The appearance of an equal and friendly relationship between presenter and caller was maintained but the presenter is always in charge and callers are simply 'processed' within the strict routines of the show (Hutchby, 1991: 130).

There are few notable examples of presenters who worked successfully as both DJs and speech presenters but one such broadcaster was the veteran DJ, John Peel. From the 1960s and the era of pirate radio in the UK and the launch of BBC Radio 1, Peel was the main champion of music beyond the limits of the charts. He discovered and promoted the most innovative British music, including punk, and as a DJ typified the knowledgeable guide introducing listeners to new music, which they would otherwise never have heard. Towards the end of his life, Peel also started to introduce speech radio and was particularly successful on the BBC Radio 4 Saturday morning magazine, *Home Truths* (1998–2006). Once again, the creation of a radio persona lay at the heart of Peel's success. He presented himself as a family man, a rather bewildered character confronted by the fads, gadgets and mores of the modern world. He made a unique 'radio world' in which listeners were encouraged to contribute their own crafted writings which mirrored his own eccentricities. Over the years that he presented the programme he became an ironic and self-deprecating sceptic, celebrating these same qualities in his listeners (Chignell and Devlin, 2007).

So long as speech radio survives, and in particular in news and comment, and entertaining factual programming, it is surely true that radio presenters will continue to personify the programmes they present, help the listener make sense of the different voices featured and keep the unruly callers in order. The fate of the radio DJ is far less certain. The death of the radio DJ is a popular theme with the rise of 'voice tracking' and 'cyber jocking', the deadening influence of ultra-niche assembly line radio and the ever-present threat of audio on demand MP3 players. But as Keith and Sterling point out, the story of the radio DJ may have gone full circle (2004: 473). The amateurs of web radio or podcasting may reclaim radio once again from the stars and personalities of presentation. Once again the voice that presents the music, like the nameless announcers of the 1920s and 1930s, will be unknown.

FURTHER READING

There is some very interesting and insightful work on the performance of the radio DJ but very little indeed on the speech presenter. Douglas (1999: 219–56) discusses the rise of the DJ in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s. Montgomery's (1986) early article on the DJ is an important and influential contribution as is Brand and Scannell (1991) on Tony Blackburn. John Peel's presentation of the speech programme *Home Truths* is one of the few discussions of speech radio presentation (Chignell and Devlin, 2007).

Documentaries and Features

Radio documentaries and features are both factual radio genres. Documentaries share many of the characteristics of the television documentary but features are often more creative incorporating a wider variety of speech and music.

Radio documentaries and features are really two different genres but they are in most respects so similar it makes sense to consider them in one entry. Radio documentaries, like their television counterpart, are factual accounts of ‘reality’ often based on interviews, observation and actuality. The term radio ‘feature’ can be traced back to the pre-war BBC and the Features Department. An early features producer in the BBC, Laurence Gilliam, wrote that the term ‘radio feature’ had come to signify ‘a wide range of programme items, usually factual and documentary, presented by a variety of techniques, but mostly making use of dramatisation and edited actuality’ (1950: 9). This strange radio hybrid, unique to radio and like nothing to be found on television, has existed both in Britain and in the USA.

Radio documentaries continue to survive, just, on public service radio around the world and are often remarkably similar to television documentaries. It is sometimes not easy, however, to distinguish between radio documentaries and current affairs. The latter, however, is far more journalistic and prioritises factual information, presented in a well-structured and balanced way. The radio documentary is more likely to exploit the possibilities of sound often in the representation of an aspect of everyday life. Crisell (1994) has controversially accused radio of being a ‘blind medium’ (see entry on **Blindness**) but the ambiguity of the messages of radio that he describes can be used to advantage in the documentary. Hendy argues that radio documentary, unconcerned by the visual priorities of television, can take seemingly bland, everyday phenomena and create something ‘rich in meanings’ (2004: 173). He takes the example of a programme about collecting (for example collecting beer mats, records or insects)

which can quickly take on wider significance to become a programme 'about passion, or obsession, or loneliness, or sociability, or indeed all of these and more' (2004: 174).

The radio feature, almost extinct now, is a particularly intriguing radio phenomenon. It is unusual in radio output because it is so radio specific: there is simply no equivalent on any other media of its eclectic mix of sound. Features exploit the sonic qualities and diversity of radio; speech (spontaneous and scripted including prose and poetry), music and varieties of other sound (both artificial and actuality) are all available to the features producer. This diversity and the attempt to create a 'built' or crafted programme were originally made possible by the introduction of sound recording in the 1930s. One important producer of pre-war UK features was Olive Shapley who used one of the seven ton, 27-foot long BBC recording vans to go out and record the voices of homeless people, shoppers, barge people working on the canals, long-distance lorry drivers and people in an all-night café (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 345). Back in the studio Shapley used the newly invented Dramatic Control Panel, which enabled her to combine recorded sound with a variety of studio presentation, music and commentary.

You would be right to see a political dimension to Shapley's work, and the potential of radio features to make an explicitly political statement was not lost on either side of the Atlantic. In the USA, from the late 1930s to the late 1940s, a cultural front emerged that expressed the various 'progressive' or radical political movements of the time, including anti-fascism, trade unionism and challenges to segregation and other left-wing causes (Smith, 2002: 210). Radio offered an opportunity to express these political views and also to challenge the white, middle-class bias of radio's imagined audience. In a manner remarkably similar to the British features tradition there was an attempt to retell history and to recover the voices and experiences of ordinary working-class people so long ignored.

The great US radio dramatist and features maker, Norman Corwin, made the 'dramatized documentary' *They Fly Through the Air with the Greatest of Ease* (1939) which condemned the actions of airmen who bombed and strafed innocent people in war. At the beginning of the Second World War in Europe, the USA was neutral but even so this was a radical programme. Corwin's most famous 'dramatized documentary', *We Hold These Truths* was broadcast in 1941, just one week after the attack on Pearl Harbour. It was made to mark the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights and was broadcast on all networks simultaneously to an

audience of 60 million. It praised the ordinary citizen and in particular the soldier-citizen. After the war, Corwin travelled to Europe to make an ambitious 13-part series on the 'status of mankind' (evidence of the extraordinary ambition of radio at the time!):

In one programme he interviewed a widowed Italian woman and observed: 'This voice and the echo of guns only lately stilled, and the silence of the cemeteries ... and the begging of alms, and the whimper of hungry children; this voice, and the mute rubble of wasted towns and cities – these were the sounds of need: need for the hope and for the reality of a united world'. (Keith, 2004: 407)

This quotation is revealing because it shows both Corwin's political romanticism (a trait also evident in later UK features) and also his poetic use of words to evoke a response in his listeners.

In post-war Britain the arrival of the magnetic tape recorder in the early 1950s made the imaginative gathering of speech and actuality possible, and this was fully exploited in the remarkable work of Charles Parker whose eight *Radio Ballads* (1958–1963) combined the speech of working-class people with folk song and actuality. Parker was influenced by both the folk song and oral history traditions of the time and *The Ballad of John Axon* (1958) was a typical example telling the story of a railwayman killed in an accident trying to halt a runaway train. Parker celebrated the speech of ordinary people, vernacular English as opposed to 'BBC English' and the powerful combination of the vernacular with folk music was an important development in this politicised form of radio. Writing about *John Axon*, Street claims that 'its blending of actuality, natural speech and music narrative into a continuous montage changed the thinking about how features were made' (2004: 189).

Aficionados of radio continue to listen to and value Parker's radio features but even at the time they were seen as part of a dated radio tradition, not in tune with the more audience friendly and populist mood of the 1960s. Despite the closure of the BBC's Features Department in the early 1960s the genre managed to live on and most dramatically in the epic 26-part series *The Long March of Everyman* (1971–1972). That this was undoubtedly a part of the great tradition of radio features associated with Corwin and Parker was reinforced by Parker's own involvement as 'Producer for the Voices of the People'. Like those who went before him, the producer of *The Long March* had extraordinary ambitions for

his feature. He wanted to create the 'Great music of audio', a new art form no less which would once again dramatise the voices of ordinary people down the centuries and would consist of the:

Ordinary talk of ordinary people; poetry; prose fiction; folk-song; historical documents; natural sound; radiophonic sound; the reflection and analysis of the learned; drama; the expertise of actors, instrumentalists, singers; radiophonically treated speech. All these things can be orchestrated to create a 'new sound' which is something more than all its components taken separately. (Mason, M. in Hendy, 2007: 64)

As David Hendy points out in his history of BBC Radio 4, *The Long March* was certainly epic in scale with contributions from some of the UK's leading historians and was a 'production effort of Herculean proportions' (2007: 65). It did, however, get a very mixed reaction from reviewers who sympathised with the modern radio listener, often listening on a cheap transistor radio in a busy house while doing something else. The days of the classic radio feature seemed to be numbered in a world where radio had fundamentally changed to be the sound track of people's lives rather than some sort of sonic theatrical performance.

It would be wrong to see the radio documentary, or even the radio feature, as of only historical interest. I would suggest two reasons why the genre survives, if not as a grandiose political statement in the spirit of Corwin and Parker. First, the radio producer equipped with relatively cheap and unobtrusive sound recording technology can easily record people talking and going about their business without too much intrusion and distortion. As a record of everyday life and of 'ordinary people' it is hard to beat the cheaply made radio documentary aimed, as it often is, at the small but discerning audience and beyond the intimidating glare of television. Second, the radio documentary seems to have found an important place in the output of UK music radio. BBC Radio 2, for example, often broadcasts specialist music documentaries (on the birth of country music, how a song writer gets inspiration, the early career of a famous performer), which have proved to be particularly popular with an audience of music fans. In the music documentary, archived performance and recordings can be combined with interviews with musicians and fans to greatly enrich the listeners' knowledge and pleasure.

FURTHER READING

This is a growing area of interest within radio studies and a useful starting point is Hendy (2004). The same writer's history of BBC Radio 4 is also full of references to BBC features and documentaries (Hendy, 2007). Keith (2004) provides a useful introduction to the work of Norman Corwin while Street (2004) looks at the continuing relevance of Charles Parker.

Drama

Drama is a radio genre which features the radio play. Radio drama includes complete 'one off' plays and longer running serials.

Radio drama is perhaps a contradiction. How is it possible in such a visual age for 'invisible' drama, drama without faces or scenery, to exist? The truth is that, with a few notable and even distinguished exceptions, it has, like radio comedy and radio soaps, partly disappeared. But this is not the complete story. Radio drama has some vociferous advocates, including many of those radio scholars who have helped create a distinct 'radio studies' within the study of the mass media. In addition there is evidence in the recent developments in 'new media' (including both radio and audio) that there is a future for this genre. The structure of this entry is slightly different from some of the others; it starts with a brief history of radio drama and then considers the arguments of what might be called the 'sceptics' and the 'advocates'. It might be useful to read this in conjunction with the entry on radio **Soaps and Serials**.

The introduction and survival of radio drama in the USA and the UK is often connected to a desire to show evidence of 'quality' in broadcasting. The US radio networks in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, were keen to show the cultural calibre of their output and used single dramas for that purpose. The commercial nature of US radio often led to conflict between broadcasters, listeners and members of Congress over the quality of radio output. Network broadcasting was only made possible by commitment to

the sort of public service and cultural content associated with the BBC: 'The National Broadcasting Company in its opening declaration promised the same kind of promotion of the culturally desirable and exclusion of the culturally suspect that systems such as the BBC made overtly, behind a façade of consumer choice' (Hilmes, 1997: 10). What form did this early, 'quality' radio drama take? A popular approach was to recreate Broadway stage plays for radio. From 1929, NBC's *The First Nighter* regularly recreated Broadway hits. This approach was then followed by *The Lux Radio Theatre* but the obvious limitations of this approach, its reliance on a finite supply of plays written not for radio but for the stage, led to the production team moving to Hollywood. Here plays were presented by the famous film director, Cecil B. DeMille and performed by Hollywood stars. Towards the end of the 1930s the networks were under renewed criticism arising from concerns about monopoly, cross-media ownership and the potentially harmful effects of radio on its audience. The networks responded to the criticism in two main ways. Increased air time was offered to the government and in particular to President Roosevelt who used it to broadcast his famous 'Fireside Chats'. Another response to the criticism was found once again in high profile radio drama. The theatre director, Orson Welles was 'the boy genius of the new York stage' (Hilmes, 1997: 218). In 1938, his Mercury Theatre performed as *The Mercury Theatre of the Air* and began with nine adaptations of the 'classics' of literature; *Treasure Island*, *Dracula*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and, most famously, *The War of the Worlds* were all adapted for radio as part of the networks strategy of stressing the quality of their output.

In Britain, post-war radio drama was particularly interesting. The reorganisation of the BBC radio networks after the war led to the creation of the explicitly high cultural Third Programme (one of three 'networks' in BBC radio). With its commitment to the arts and innovation this became a hothouse of avant-garde drama. As television became increasingly popular and populist 'radio at its most esoteric became freer to innovate and explore' (Street, 2002: 88). The Third Programme in this period broadcast some of the most famous of all radio plays, specifically written to exploit the medium of radio; including Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* (1954) and Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* (1957).

In his history of BBC Radio 4, Hendy discusses at some length the state of BBC radio drama in the 1970s and early 1980s, which by that time was largely confined to BBC Radio 4. If drama survived on radio, he suggests, it was, it seemed, merely by accident, or through a dutiful signal from the BBC of its continuing faith in the creative dimensions of the medium: an

act of tokenism that could be – and probably would be – extinguished at any moment. In the television age it appeared to be living beyond its allotted time (Hendy, 2007). In fact radio drama continued to survive at the BBC and at that time had about 30 drama producers in what was the centre of radio drama production in the English-speaking world. But Radio 4 had then, and still has, a famously conservative, middle-class audience with very precise ideas about what they did or did not like. Much of the output was ‘safe’, most notably the endless reworking of the ‘canon’ of English literature; Dickens, Austen, Trollope and so on. The problem was that Radio 4’s drama output seemed to have woven about itself an aura of cloying, suburban predictability. This is not to say that there was no innovation and one of the most important developments was the use of more ‘filmic’ approaches to drama production including the use of location recording: an early example of this was *Why I Did It* (1976) recorded on a staircase at Broadcasting House and in the street outside. This combination of an overall conformity with occasional moments of innovation and brilliance is also noted by Peter Lewis (2004). He comments on the fact that in the mid 1980s there were 10,000 or more drama scripts submitted to the BBC each year. This level of supply tended to increase conformity as writers competed to achieve an acceptable style and content. At the same time the use of location recording had the potential to create atmospheric and successful drama. This pattern on BBC radio of a very large output of rather banal dramas combined with some occasional moments of brilliance has continued to this day.

Despite the global decline of radio drama in the face of the remorseless rise of music formats and other populist output, it still has its supporters. For some commentators there is something rather extraordinary and magical about radio’s ability to set a scene, draw a character and tell a story. Shingler and Wieringa claim that there are two main areas of radio drama’s artistic strength, (i) its spatial and temporal flexibility, and (ii) its access to the inner recesses of the mind; both of which are the direct result of being invisible’ (1998: 88). They argue that radio’s invisibility is an asset that some drama producers embrace and exploit. At a mundane level the absence of lighting, cameras, make-up, scenery and a host of actors all make radio drama relatively cheap – hence the sheer quantity of drama on BBC Radio 4 but also the freedom to innovate at times. The ability to move rapidly from scene to scene and to move about in time is another advantage. In addition, the fact that radio plays are in effect staged ‘inside our heads’ not on a set or stage produces an

intimate quality as we create the *mise-en-scene* (scenery, costumes, actors' movements and so on) for ourselves. Even more enthusiastic about radio drama is Crook who savages the accusation that radio is 'blind' (see the entry on **Blindness**) asserting that although there are no visual images '... it cannot be said that the ear cannot see. Blind people see' (1999: 7). He explains this by referring to the power of the brain to visualise and imagine a drama communicated by sound. Crook also points out that in the cinema hearing is as important as seeing:

Which comes first in the experience of film consumption by the audience? Seeing or hearing? If dramatic development and introduction and development of character are communication through sound then their artistic importance in film should be elevated and consolidated to a degree unacknowledged by most film studies scholars. (1999: 25)

For Crook, and other advocates of radio drama, the flexibility of the medium, combined with its ability to create dramas inside our heads, is evidence that it has a future. To dismiss radio drama as an archaic leftover from the days when radio was the dominant medium is to seriously undervalue the importance of sound and hearing. The dominance of the visual in contemporary culture should not lead us to ignore the importance and potential of purely aural drama (that is to say, drama received by the ear).

It would be wrong to deny the existence of radio drama outside US and UK public service radio. In Kenya, for example, the state-owned radio station, KBC, has broadcast up to 54 plays a year on *Radio Theatre* (see the entry on **Development**). In *Not Now* a young girl escapes becoming the fourth wife of an old man. The story is told as a dramatic monologue delivered by the girl, now a woman looking back on her life. In her discussion of the play, and Kenyan radio drama more generally, Dina Ligaga shows how everyday life (the 'quotidian') and language can be enacted through 30-minute plays. These not only reflect the lives of people, especially in the use of local languages and with reference to familiar spaces, they also communicate 'moral lessons' in tune with the government's development agenda. In the case of *Not Now* the message is an unambiguous disapproval of forced marriage.

Radio undoubtedly has the power to produce extremely high quality drama and there are many important examples of the genre. The question remains, however, if it can survive in the modern radio environment. In Britain there is plenty of drama on the air but it is almost entirely

restricted to its BBC Radio 4 ghetto. The demographic of the Radio 4 audience, with an average age of over 50, suggests that drama is popular with an audience who may have grown up listening radio at a time when mainstream children's radio still existed. There is evidence, however, that various forms of audio-on-demand may come to the assistance of this beleaguered genre. Unlike a great deal of other radio output, drama does not necessarily benefit from being live. If the right kind of dramatic material could be produced to suit the internet or MP3 player then this may provide a way forward. The continued existence and popularity of the audio book suggests that there is a market for extended fictional audio narratives.

FURTHER READING

A very useful introduction to radio drama is Shingler and Wieringa (1998: 73–93). For some historical background, Hilmes (1997: 218–29) details the very important pre-war career of Orson Welles. There are also important sections on BBC radio drama in Hendy (2007). One of the most important discussions of British radio drama is by Crook (1999).

Magazines

A style of speech radio programme in which the content is divided up into short items or features.

The radio magazine is the audio equivalent of the print magazine and has many of the advantages of the latter in terms of its flexibility and relatively undemanding qualities. In Britain, the magazine has become a widely used format in the speech network, BBC Radio 4 where it is used for both general magazines, which range over a wide variety of topics and more specialist magazines which appeal to a smaller target audience. The radio magazine was a largely American invention of the 1920s which, after the war, began to spread to British radio and is now the preferred format for the regular factual output on Radio 4.

Historically, the radio magazine is associated with a female and domestic audience. In the 1920s in the USA, day-time programmes targeted at women were extremely popular and populist to the point of being tabloid. The colourful magazine publisher, Bernarr Macfadden produced titles like *New York Graphic*, *Physical Culture* and *True Romances*. Unsurprisingly he saw the potential in the new medium of radio for an extension to his magazine empire. In 1927, *True Story Hour* appeared on CBS to be followed by other magazines including *True Detective Mysteries* and *True Romances*. The first of these radio magazines was clearly aimed at women, 'originally, *True Story* may have provided the closest thing to an untrammelled venue for young urban women's voices in the public media' (Hilmes, 1997: 100). It was largely based on stories sent in by listeners and which included 'I killed my child', 'I want you', 'How can I face myself' and 'I let him cheapen me'. The themes were of particular concern to women at the time and, controversially, returned repeatedly to the subject of sex. Few of the Macfadden radio magazines survived into the 1930s but there were other, tamer women's magazines providing a 'home service' of domestic advice for the 'housewife'. *The Women's Magazine of the Air* was launched on NBC in 1928 and by 1932 there were over 20 'home service' magazines. The most successful women's magazine was Mary Margaret McBride's daily day-time show which ran for over 20 years into the 1950s and made McBride a huge radio celebrity. When the war effort called for paper for recycling, McBride supplied three million letters, which her adoring listeners had written to her (Hilmes, 1997: 278). An important feature of her success was her ability to present using unscripted speech and to combine a wide variety of items, both serious news and current affairs, with celebrity interviews and other lighter fare.

Meanwhile, on the BBC, the magazine format first appeared in the 1930s with programmes such as *In Town Tonight* and *The World Goes By*. These all featured the 'human interest approach' in which ordinary people spoke about the sometimes humorous aspects of their daily lives. The BBC North Region's folksy *Owt Abaht Owt* (loosely translated as 'anything about anything') might offer a table of contents containing 'an aerial flood-shooter, a harmonizing boy's club, a well-known Northern itinerant bagger of gags, an inveterate drummer, a master of mistletoe and a pantomime star' (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 175). During the Second World War, the radio magazine was a particularly successful format for advising women about how to prepare food during a time of considerable scarcity and food rationing. From 1940, *The Kitchen Front* consisted mainly of informative talks to start with but gradually became a more general talks magazine with celebrity visitors and even a 'comedy housewife' (Nicholas, 1996: 78).

The BBC's most successful magazine targeted explicitly at women is *Woman's Hour* (1946–present). In all of that time the programme has addressed 'women's concerns' (more and more broadly defined) and retained a format that includes a dominant female presenter (although the first presenter was, remarkably, a man), interviews and other short feature items, discussions and a drama serial.

The success and ubiquitous nature of the radio magazine on UK speech radio reflects the realisation, almost 40 years ago, that the listener was no longer prepared to listen to complete speech programmes and preferred to dip in and out of something more fragmented. If we take the example of current affairs, there is clearly a place on public service speech radio for in-depth, single subject investigations of political and social issues (see the separate entry on **Current Affairs**). On BBC Radio 4, however, the daily news magazine, *Today* has all but replaced the more weighty and longer form investigation with a fast-paced, itemised treatment of the major news stories. Short, often hard hitting, interviews with politicians and others in the news are combined with equally brief on the spot reports by BBC correspondents in 'two way' interviews with the anchor presenters. There can be no doubt that this approach fits the way radio is listened to in the morning while seeming to remain a serious and comprehensive treatment of news stories.

In his history of BBC Radio 4, Hendy describes the way that the magazine was introduced across the schedule during the early 1970s. The arts programme, *Kaleidoscope* (1973–1997) was a daily arts magazine that replaced the more serious and taxing talks programmes such as *The Critics*. For some of the BBC's own critics this was evidence of the dumbing down and trivialisation of radio (Hendy, 2007: 81). Furthermore, remembering the origins of the radio magazine, these same critics saw the introduction of the format as evidence of the Americanisation of British culture, at the time one of the worst slurs that could be used against the BBC. The fact that such criticisms are no longer heard and sound implausible today is probably a testament to the ability of the radio magazine to deal with both light and entertaining items as well as much more serious material.

FURTHER READING

There is some important historical writing on the phenomenon of the radio magazine. Hilmes (1997: 97–130) discusses the pre-war American magazine and there is an excellent account of British war-time radio magazines in Nicholas (1996). Hendy (2007) has a full discussion of the 'magazinisation' of BBC Radio 4.

Music

Music is one of the codes of radio and a universally important content of radio programming.

Imagine two people listening to the same piece of music. One of them has an MP3 player (or something similar) and chose this record from among many others. The other person is listening to the local radio station, which is playing this record at the same time. The same music at the same time but one is radio and the other is not. The concept of music radio, the reason for its existence, lies in the fact that the radio experience is somehow different and indeed is in some ways better than just listening to pre-recorded music. There seem to be four major features of music radio that distinguish it. First, the music played has been chosen by someone else and not by the listener; second, most music radio is live and gives the listener a sense of co-presence with others; third, the music played is accompanied by the words of the DJ who frames the music and adds meaning or significance to it and, finally, radio stations and their audiences have a constructed identity (often around notions of youth) which the experience of listening reinforces.

The words 'music' and 'radio' have been endlessly combined in the existing literature on radio. This is usually in the form of 'music radio' as opposed to what might be called 'radio music'; the first referring to radio programming, which mainly consists of recorded 'popular music', and the latter meaning the composed sound that is used to enhance radio presentation (in the form of music beds, station 'idents', signature tunes and so on). The main interest here is to write about music radio itself and to try to answer some basic questions. What is music radio and why is it like it is? Why is music radio so dominant in radio programming around the world? What changes seem to be happening to music radio as a result of new technology?

In most parts of the world, music radio is the dominant format and far exceeds radio based on speech programming. In the UK, for example, all local commercial FM radio is music radio and almost all of the stations feature contemporary hits and are targeted at a young audience. On BBC network radio, transmitted to the whole of the UK, Radios 1, 2 and 3 are

all music networks and BBC local radio includes a combination of speech and music for its 50 plus target audience. In the USA, with the exception of talk radio and National Public Radio, music radio is dominant. So how have we arrived at a situation where music radio is so ubiquitous? In their discussion of the 'redefinition' of American radio after the Second World War, Rothenbuhler and McCourt (2002) describe the transition from network-dominated mixed programming which existed up to the end of the war, to the situation in the 1960s when most stations were playing chart music for a largely teenage audience. The growth of music radio post-war can be explained by the arrival of television and the crisis this created for radio. The huge success of television forced the radio industry to turn to cheaper ways of reaching the audience and also a search for new audiences. Initially helped by the advent of the transistor radio in 1953, there was a growth in local programming with local DJs playing recorded music (see the entry on **Reception**). Rothenbuhler and McCourt illustrate this by referring to the development of radio for black communities, by 1955 there were over 600 such stations in 39 states. Although 'minority radio', as it was called, often served to reinforce racial stereotypes it also played rhythm and blues and made this music, so important in the evolution of rock and pop, available to white audiences for the first time. In the 1960s in the USA music radio had become increasingly uniform as its commercial potential was fully realised. The emergence of rock and roll and with it a youth culture influenced by iconic figures, such as Elvis Presley and James Dean, was intimately connected to the development of Top-40 radio, playing hit records from playlists to a teenage audience with disposable income.

The relentless commercial pressure exerted on radio since the evolution of music radio in the USA in the 1960s has led to the growth of music formats. The intensity of competition between stations has produced increasingly refined music choices to target the audience in new and more exact ways. As Hendy puts it, 'a radio station's decision to play a particular genre of music means it is also choosing a particular audience' (2000: 169). So the music we hear will reflect the station format, be it contemporary hits radio, album orientated rock or contemporary country, and at the same time detailed playlists and careful scheduling all conspire to maximise the audience and keep it listening. In his analysis of a breakfast show, Garner shows how music is carefully chosen to capture the precise mood of the audience at any particular time. As he puts it so memorably, the 'real text' of the breakfast programme is not the music or the lyric but 'the clock on the studio wall' (cited in Hendy, 2000: 174).

How can we explain the dominance of music radio? Or to put it differently, why is there such a natural fit between music and radio? To answer this question it is worth exploring the fundamental nature of music on radio and how it differs from speech. In his application of semiology, the study of signs, to radio, Crisell refers to speech as radio's 'primary code' (1994: 42): see the entry on **Codes** for evidence of this. In his discussion of radio's 'raw material', of the noises and silence we hear over time, he suggests that it is the power of speech to convey meaning that makes it so important. This of course contrasts with film and television in which visual images can be the dominant code. As Crisell acknowledges, music is much harder to examine in semiotic terms because, unlike words and pictures, it appears not to signify anything. It exists on radio as an object of pleasure, which we can assimilate to our own mood as we wish. There is a sense in which listening to music is much easier than listening to speech which requires our effort to interpret its meaning. Music is not handicapped by the invisibility of radio and this is one of the reasons for the dominance of music radio. Music is highly 'radiogenic' and the partnership between music and radio as been phenomenally successful, 'a partnership which has been crucial to the formation of modern popular culture' (Crisell 1994: 42). But music radio is not just music, it is the framing of music by speech which is the key to its success. See the entry on **DJs and Presenters** for some ideas about how the radio DJ takes the raw material of music and creates a much more meaningful radio experience.

A further aspect of the success and dominance of music radio lies in its ability to reflect and reinforce our sense of identity, as Hendy says, 'if it is true that through radio we *hear what we are*, it is also true that to some extent we *are what we hear*' (2000: 214, original emphasis). The power of the mass media generally to aid the construction of identity is an axiom of media studies. Susan Douglas, for example, provides a particularly vivid account of young women in the USA in the 1960s listening to pop music and finding in it the resource to find themselves:

The most important thing about this music, the reason it spoke to us so powerfully, was that it gave voice to all the warring selves inside us struggling, blindly and with a crushing sense of insecurity, to forge something resembling a coherent identity. (1994: 87)

Music radio not only reinforces gender and age identities but also national identities. In his discussion of radio in the apartheid era in South

Africa, Hendy describes the way radio was targeted at 'tribal groups' in a deliberate attempt to reinforce ethnic divisions within the black African population. So Radio Bantu played traditional tribal music to emphasise the separate identities of Zulus, Xhosas and so on (Hendy, 2000).

Music radio has the potential to succeed and attract large audiences, especially of young people for whom the music played expresses and helps structure their identity. But this is to be very optimistic and to fail to acknowledge the crushing uniformity of much music radio, driven into the banal repetition of the same commercial product by the highly competitive nature of the radio industry. As both Berland and Douglas have so vividly described, radio has become dominated by a certain type of formatted, uniform, centralised radio which has largely eliminated the nuances of the local and the community (Hendy, 2000: 4). They and many others would treasure those moments in the history of music radio when it has been possible for an original DJ to play not just chart music and engage a local or national audience in an exciting and imaginative way. In British radio one of the best examples of that originality was John Peel who in his long career at BBC Radio 1 played an eclectic range of recorded music and also had live music sessions performed by frequently unknown performers. Some of the greats of contemporary pop including Hendrix and Bowie were largely unknown before they performed live on a Peel show (Garner, 1993).

New technology offers opportunities for music radio and at the same time presents some serious challenges. The ability to download thousands of records and play them back on a tiny portable player seriously challenges the value of traditional music radio. The solution for radio stations has broadly been to reinforce some of the features that make music radio different, the distinct characteristics mentioned at the start of this entry. Specialist music shows often playing outside peak time, try to introduce listeners to music that they would not otherwise have heard of. In the UK, BBC Radio 1's evening and night-time output is designed to introduce new music and uses specialist presenters. DJs are critical to the success of music radio and the 'celebrity DJ' can draw the listener in and keep them listening; as Crisell puts it so memorably, by acting as a 'broker' between the glamorous world of pop music and 'the mundane concerns of his listeners' (1994: 69). Music radio can also enhance its sense of 'liveness' and hence the feeling of co-presence by maximising audience interaction. The widespread use of phone-ins, text messaging, competitions and direct references to listeners by name all enhances this feature.

FURTHER READING

Most of the introductions to the study of radio provide interesting analyses of music radio (Crisell, 1994 and Hendy, 2000 are both particularly good). For some historical context, Douglas (1999: 219–56) charts the emergence of pop music radio in the USA. Wall's (T., 2004) discussion of Internet music radio is also a helpful starting point.

Phone-ins

The radio phone-in (or 'call in') is a production technique that incorporates listeners' calls into the content of the programme.

The radio phone-in is a universally popular programming device and has become one of the most important ways of filling the 24-hour radio schedule. The technologies of the phone ('telephony') and radio ('wireless telegraphy') are intimately connected, but the telephone had a head start and in Britain was a fully developed wired network by the time wireless telegraphy was in its experimental stage before the First World War. Before radio broadcasting became established in the 1920s there were various experiments in which concerts and plays were sent down telephone lines. After 1922, however, radio and the telephone went their separate ways until the invention of the radio 'phone-in', 'the term was coined in the United States in 1968 and was first heard as a phrase in the United Kingdom in 1971' (Street, 2006b: 204). More recently, the invention of the mobile or cell phone and the possibility of listening to radio via mobile phones has brought the two technologies back together again in the increasingly convergent communications media.

The first British radio phone-in was on BBC Radio Nottingham in 1968 and, because of the relative cheapness of phone-ins, it became widely used throughout BBC and commercial local radio in the 1970s. On the national BBC networks, the phone-in is still a rarity on Radio 4 but used extensively on the news/sport format of Radio 5 Live. In the USA, 'call-ins' are an established feature of much music programming

but they are particularly important in talk radio. Jerry Williams show *What's On Your Mind?* on a station in Camden, New Jersey in the 1950s may have been the first to take listeners' calls. The talk radio format was born and the distinctive combination of opinionated presenter and callers, many of whom were there to be insulted, became one of the most popular, and politically influential, US formats.

In his discussion of the radio phone-in, Crisell distinguishes between three main types. The 'Expressive' call allows the caller to express their views, often contrary to the consensus; this is particularly important in the case of minority, excluded social groups or where the opinions are themselves minority views. The 'Exhibitionist' call is, as its name implies, an opportunity to project a personality, for someone to exhibit themselves and the 'Confessional' call seeks advice and uses the relative anonymity of radio to get therapeutic help (Crisell, 1994: 119). He goes on to describe the complexity of an exchange that on one level appears like a private conversation even though in reality it is highly public. 'Thus the phone-in is capable of unique effects within radio, for it is a half-private, half-public medium in which one element of the audience becomes part of the performance and involved in a complex and unusual relationship with the other half' (1994: 197). The appeal of the phone-in is thus partly the pleasure of 'listening in' to an apparently private conversation, what Crisell calls 'aural voyeurism' but also having the potential for phoning ourselves even if we do not. This is, as Shingler and Wieringa put it 'participation and reciprocation, at best, by proxy' (1998: 114).

A good example of a radio DJ using the phone-in is Chris Evans on BBC Radio in the early 1990s. Evans was something of a celebrity DJ, known in the tabloid press for his late night antics. He pioneered the use of the Zoo format (working with a number of regular contributors in the studio) and was known for a laddish, funny and rather insulting approach to callers. Evans used calls as a way of creating and affirming the community of his listeners and their unique identity, as well as his own kudos as the clever, witty radio celebrity. For listeners, the chance of phoning in meant they could share, if only for a moment, that glamorous world:

It is, however, a world where anyone can enter the media and, like Amanda [a caller], have their fifteen seconds of fame. It is a world where ordinary people interact with media personnel, and, by extension, the mediated community of the mini-celebrity which they inhabit. (Tolson, 2006: 129)

A very different example is the case of the Anna Raeburn's show *Live and Direct* on the UK station **Talk Radio** in the 1990s. This is an example

(AQ)**Comment JT2:**

AU: see earlier comment about its being called talk SPORT now

of the 'confessional phone-in' or therapy radio. What is interesting about it is the considerable skill of the presenter and her ability to employ a wide repertoire of reactions to the often very emotional comments of her listeners. She used humour, she 'broadened the relevance' of the caller's problems, sometimes she diffused their despair, she identified with callers or chose not to, sometimes she spoke to the caller but at others addressed them and the audience (Atkinson and Moores, 2003). Both Evans and Raeburn were extremely skilled broadcasters who were able to use a range of techniques to exploit the phone-in format in order to make popular radio.

Another very important example of the phone-in in British radio was the daily morning show on LBC presented by Brian Hayes (1976–1990). Hayes was a controversial and opinionated presenter who brought at least something of the flavour of the US talk radio 'shock jock' to the UK. He was an advocate of the phone-in and argued that it made radio a more democratic medium than any other (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998: 118). There can be no doubt that unlike most news and current affairs, the radio phone-in does allow for the expression of a variety of views and so does contribute to the mediated public sphere. The reality is, however, a good deal more complicated. First of all, although potentially anyone can call, only a very few, unrepresentative listeners, do. There is also a tight vetting of callers to make sure that those chosen are 'appropriate' for the programme. In addition, the presenters of phone-ins are always in control, 'the centrality of the presenter in the phone-in sequence is not negotiable' (Starkey, 2004: 83). This is particularly well illustrated in a highly influential analysis of the *Tony Blackburn Show* on BBC Radio London. Blackburn's 'discursive kingdom' allowed callers fleeting entry provided they played by the rules. Anyone who strayed from what Blackburn wanted was 'summarily dispatched' (Brand and Scannell, 1991: 213).

Another way of critiquing the belief that the phone-in is in any way empowering is to see the content of much commercial radio as inherently ideological, as a means of promoting consumerism. Australian research found that callers were often conveying the message that 'life was tough' but the message of the station was a brash and positive blend of commercials, music and the optimistic banter of the presenter (Higgins and Moss, 1982). The phone-ins were disempowering, not empowering as they trapped listeners and callers in a false consumerist dream.

The connection between the mobile phone and the radio studio is one which is clearly full of potential. Now it is the case that the listener on the street can speak directly to the radio station as a 'citizen journalist'.

This is of course particularly valuable for reporting dramatic news events and calls from mobiles played an important part in reporting events like 9/11 and the terrorist attacks in London. Sports fans can also phone up radio stations and report on the match they have just seen, a technique frequently used in the popular BBC Radio Five Live phone-in programme, *606*. For the first time in British radio, the voices of listeners have become an essential ingredient in both sports and news coverage on a station such as BBC Radio 5 Live. 'Because phone-in comments from listeners are a staple of the station's diet, they can be used to bolster coverage of breaking news, without seeming incongruous. This extra dimension can add perspectives that enrich the output at little cost to the BBC' (Starkey, 2004b: 35).

The mobile phone offers particularly interesting potential for the future of radio, both as a receiver but also as the source of comment and experiences. In her discussion of the mobile phone, Bassett claims that the mobile fetishises a form of life 'operating at a particular speed and intensity' (2003: 351). The mobile user is not embedded in the locality, in a particular physical space, but connected to people in other locations around the world.

This change in space means that today I can walk here in the streets and simultaneously connect with other people in far away spaces. I find new perspectives, and not only because I can be *reached* on my mobile phone but also because I can use it to *reach out*. (Bassett, 2003: 345, original emphasis)

The enormous connective potential of the mobile phone is reminiscent of the wonder expressed at the possibilities of radio and its ability to allow us to talk to people around the world. Radio and mobile telephony, therefore, share in their use of sound to communicate over distance, but in the latter there is something particularly intense and exciting: 'mobile spaces compel attention because they produce an accelerated, intensified, sense of freedom of movement and of speed-up – a sense that might spill over from the phone space into others spheres of life' (Bassett, 2003: 350). Little surprise then that mobile users might want to speak to a yet wider audience by phoning a radio station and so allow their experiences to spill into a more public sphere.

This entry suggests that the phone-in has made a major difference to the potential and the popularity of radio. Despite the critique of the ideological nature of phone-ins there is plenty of evidence that the opportunity to phone the radio station can be empowering and can also increase the range of voices and opinions expressed. As listeners we are

attracted to the opportunity to listen in to what others have to say and this can, especially in the hands of a skilled presenter, be genuinely rewarding and entertaining. As mobiles also become radio receivers the opportunities of extending the communications web and the connect- edness of people are greatly increased.

FURTHER READING

Crisell (1994: 189–200) spends some time reflecting on the radio phone-in. For a more recent discussion I would recommend Starkey (2004b). The question of the mobile or cell phone and its relationship to radio is addressed in Bassett (2003).

Podcasting

Podcasting refers to producing, and uploading onto the Internet, audio files to be heard using MP3 players.

The creation of MPEG Audio Layer 3 (MP3) technology at the turn of the century made it possible for people to download and transfer sound files from the Internet, often for no charge. The initial impact of this new technology was in its direct threat to the music industry. The illegal file sharing website, Napster, encouraged users to download free music, much to the horror of record companies. Eventually Napster was forced out of business, but in 2004 Apple® brought their immensely popular MP3 player, the iPod®, on to the market which put MP3 technology at the heart of sound media.

The iPod®, and the phenomenon of listening to downloaded sound files, clearly has important implications for radio. First, the iPod® poses a serious threat to music radio because it offers such a flexible and consumer-driven alternative. Why listen to a DJ playing the station's playlist when you can listen to anything at all from your own music collection? Does the iPod® signal the end of music radio, or as Richard Berry puts it, 'will the iPod[®] kill the radio star?' (Berry, 2006). Alternatively does MP3

technology offer the potential for a new form of broadcasting, in other words for 'podcasting', which may help radio to reach new audiences?

As a device for playing music on the move, the iPod® has enabled users to create what Bull calls a 'personalised soundworld' (2005: 343). His research on iPod® use reveals the way people create their own privatised auditory bubble as they listen to the songs they have selected while negotiating the often alienating space of the city. 'Technologies like the Apple[®] iPod[®] produce for their users an intoxicating mix of music, proximity and privacy on the move' (Bull, 2005: 344). The iPod® becomes a tool for carving out a little bit of personal space by allowing the user to listen to the music which they have chosen. There is a striking contrast in Bull's analysis between the uniform and alienating urban backdrop to people's lives and the intensely personal nature of their listening:

Privatised and mediated sound reproduction enables consumers to create intimate, manageable and aestheticised spaces in which they are increasingly able and desire to live. (2005: 347)

There is something profoundly unradio-like about this description of listening to the iPod®. The orthodoxy of radio studies insists on describing radio listening as a profoundly *social* act. For example, Scannell's references to 'co-presence' and the role of the presenter in achieving this (Brand and Scannell, 1991) or Douglas on the way listening helped fashion generational, gender and national identities during the 20th century (Douglas, 1999). The literature referred to in the book you are reading is full of references to the way that live radio in particular built and positioned its audience and encouraged in them a sense of collectivity. But the iPod® user in Bull's view is almost entirely focused on themselves. They deliberately exploit the potential of the iPod® to turn in on themselves and attend to their own thoughts, moods, reflections and memories – 'being warmly wrapped up in their own personalised space' (Bull, 2005: 349).

The counter argument to this pessimism, at least as far as radio is concerned, is provided by Berry. For him the iPod® is more opportunity than rejection and indeed this has become the mantra of the British radio industry faced by the potential threat that the iPod® offers. Berry's optimism lies in the potential for speech podcasting. For relatively little cost, a listener can become a radio producer and podcast their own audio output. This seems to fulfil Brecht's vision in 1930 of the potential for a truly democratic radio:

The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship not isolating him. (Brecht quoted in Berry, 2006: 147)

Building on the success of the web log ('blog') which allowed people to communicate creatively to an internet audience, podcasting opens up an opportunity to radio amateurs which has been largely denied to them since the birth of broadcasting in the 1920s. There is a danger that all that is produced is the work of the highly esoteric amateur, and Berry acknowledges the amount of podcasting by outspoken evangelists, ego-maniacs, pornographers, audio artists and others. But at least this is radio that has not been censored, it is 'gate-keeper free' technology and all the more stimulating and varied for that. Some of the most successful podcasts are made for niche audiences and provide for a specific need; travel guides for cities and countries, political campaigning speeches and messages and educational podcasts have all been very successful. Comedy is also well suited to podcasting and at the time of writing (2008) the podcasts by the British comic, Ricky Gervais, have been the most popular podcasts of all.

The mainstream radio industry in the UK has seen the potential of podcasting and used it to 'time shift' programmes and forms of output. The BBC has been at the forefront of this use of podcasting to repackage its output. Speech programmes including *In Our Time*, *Fighting Talk*, *The Reith Lectures* and the *Today* programme have all been re-released in MP3 format. The attraction of the podcast to broadcasters is in the potential to give added life to programmes and edited output. The podcast audience becomes an added statistical factor in the measurement of the radio audience, which may help to bolster listening figures.

As a radio optimist, Berry (2006) sees the potential in this new technology to encourage the largely young iPod® users to 'regain the radio habit.' In the particularly telling words of one of Berry's interviewees, the podcast can change 'who's talking and who's listening.' To purists this may not necessarily be radio as we have known it but that seems a slightly sterile debate. The important thing may be that a previously lost generation of listeners to speech output in particular might be attracted either to the brave new world of amateur or esoteric podcasts or to speech radio itself, on their iPods®, on their digital radio or through an integrated mobile phone/ MP3 player/radio.

FURTHER READING

This is clearly a rapidly developing area but for some early thinking about the podcast there are two very readable and important contributions by Berry (2006) and Bull (2005).

Recording

The capture of sounds (including speech), either on location or in the studio, for use in radio programming.

Radio output can broadly be divided into three categories; pre-recorded, live and 'as live'. The meaning of the first two is fairly obvious but 'as live' refers to radio output that although it sounds as if it is being created at the moment we hear it, was in fact pre-recorded; it has the quality of 'liveness'. It follows that there is rather more recorded output on radio than appears to be the case. An interview in a speech magazine, for example, or even the chatty presentation of a DJ may have been recorded but that fact is hidden. The reason why 'liveness' is valued is discussed in the **liveness** entry and the purpose here is to discuss the development of recording technology and its impact on radio.

In both the USA and Britain, the introduction of recorded programming was partly the result of commercial necessity. In the USA, the formation of the networks in the 1920s encouraged the recording of programmes by affiliate stations for play-back at a different time, important given the different time zones across the continent. The technology for recording was in its early stages and only 15 minutes of sound could be recorded on large aluminium discs. In Britain in the 1930s, commercial stations like Luxembourg and Normandy began to use programming pre-recorded in London and then broadcast from abroad, as Street explains:

... up to this time, radio had been principally a 'live' medium, but as the influence of commercial radio grew, and sponsors demanded more famous

personalities to take part in increasingly sophisticated popular broadcasts, recorded programming became the mainstay of output. (Street, 2006a: 115)

Perhaps the most famous of these recorded programmes was *The League of Ovaltineys*, made in London and recorded on the soundtrack of ordinary 35-mm film (as used in the film industry) and then exported for broadcast by Radio Luxembourg on Sunday evenings (Street, 2006a: 112). In the BBC, historically always slower to adopt new technologies, the need to use recording technology grew in the 1930s with the development of the Empire service and so the need to 'bottle' programmes for dispatch abroad (Street, 2006a: 134).

It was not only the need to transport whole programmes from one place or time zone to another that encouraged the use of the new technology. There was also a growing awareness in the 1930s among producers that recording could create new, better and more exciting radio:

... within the BBC the pressure grew from journalists, and drama and features producers to develop a technology which could respond creatively to a sense of place, and hold the 'live' moment. The idea of capturing actuality, the eye-witness account, the sense of an event, became increasingly a vital factor in what made radio journalism different to newspapers, and the same idea of getting 'fresh air into the microphone' also influenced writers and producers of drama and features in the latter art of the decade. (Street, 2006a: 134)

This desire for actuality was to be satisfied as a result of the need to report on the Second World War, a powerful catalyst for change in the BBC. There was a growing realisation, reflected in the quote above, that the public needed to hear what was happening on the battlefield and preferably to hear first-hand reports and even the sounds of battle. BBC reporters used mobile recording vans, which at first only allowed three minutes of recording on portable discs. Once recorded the discs were rushed back to a place of safety where the report could be beamed to London for use in the news (Nicholas, 1996: 204). In this way, war-time reporters like Richard Dimbleby managed to convey the sounds and drama of the war. By 1943, portable disc recorders made it possible for a recording to be made inside a bomber over Berlin and then later to record the Normandy landings. Meanwhile, on the other side of the enemy lines German engineers were developing and using magnetic tape recording. When the British army over-ran the Deutsche Grammophon

factory in Hamburg they discovered Hitler's speeches on magnetic tape, 'stored for the posterity of the Third Reich' (Street, 2006a: 133).

After the war, the BBC was comparatively slow to convert from disc to magnetic tape. In 1951, all sound recording was on disc but in 1952 it had six EMI Midget recorders. The impact of tape recording on early current affairs broadcasting, to take just one example, was slow to have effect, but it had the potential to solve many problems including the need to get enough up-to-date and interesting source material. Recording allowed unscripted discussions to be controlled and used effectively in a magazine format and producers realised that taping discussions allowed them to remove hesitations and repetitions in interviews. Tape recording also greatly increased the quantity of programme material available. Journalists could provide commentary and interviews from around the world and greatly improve the variety and topicality of programme content. Indeed, by facilitating a move to more actuality, recording took production increasingly away from the studio and thereby undermined the increasingly old-fashioned live radio talk.

It is interesting that not everyone in radio embraced the arrival of recording. It may be convenient and the source of huge amounts of new material but for some recorded sound was *inferior* to live radio. Street quotes Briggs on this view, which was common in the post-war BBC:

'Live' broadcasting was greatly preferred, almost on moral grounds, to recorded broadcasting: it suggested to the listener, 'this is it'. Suggestions were made also that at the other side of the microphone if artists knew they were being recorded and retakes would be made, they would give mediocre performances. (quoted in Street, 2006a: 118)

Despite this view, recording became increasingly common in radio. Understanding the importance of this development requires thinking about radio's qualities and strengths. One of these is undoubtedly to broadcast the voice of ordinary people, to be a 'democratic' medium that goes beyond the voices and views of the elite. The voice of the people or 'Vox Populi' ('Vox Pop') as it is commonly known was at the heart of the pre-war American programme *Vox Pop*, first broadcast in 1932. Without recording technology this was no mean feat: 'dangling a microphone on a long wire out of the window of radio station KTRH in downtown Houston, the hosts stopped unsuspecting passersby and peppered them with questions – live, uncensored, and on the air' (Loviglio, 2005: 47). The

invention of the genuinely portable tape recorder complete with relatively cheap tape made this attempt to record ordinary voices a good deal easier. In Britain the innovative radio producer, Charles Parker, used recording to capture the unscripted and everyday speech of working class people in particular (what is sometimes referred to as the 'vernacular'). Fifty years later, the use of sound recorders continues to make it possible for the views of people 'on the street' to be used in radio programming and so contribute to radio's democratic potential.

In the last 10 years or so the technology of sound recording has gone through a dramatic period of change. Reel-to-reel tape recorders were initially replaced by digital audio tape (DAT) at the end of the 1980s and then minidisc (MD) recorders replaced DAT. MD recorders were exceptionally light, portable and cheap. At the time of writing, the solid-state recorder has become the industry standard in the UK. This digitisation of recording technology is reflected in the radio studio where solid-state recording and greatly improved digital play-back systems are common. These changes have occurred in tandem with the introduction of digital editing which takes place on the computer screen where a visual representation of the waveform of the audio is used to make editing decisions.

Today, much of the very best output of speech radio is recorded (see the entries on **Documentaries and Features** and **Drama**). Producers are able to select and combine a variety of sounds in a particularly imaginative and creative way, almost to 'compose' radio using modern recording and editing techniques. The pre-recorded programme can be the closest radio comes to being an art but it should not detract from those other essential qualities and strengths of radio; its liveness, intimacy and immediacy – the qualities of unrecorded live radio.

FURTHER READING

For a recent description of sound recorders see Starkey (2004: 1–24). Harman (2004) provides a technologically based history of recording with an emphasis on developments in the studio. The most interesting historical account of recording and its impact on radio is to be found in Street's (2006a) account of British radio between 1922 and 1945.

Serials and Soaps

Radio soaps (or serials) are long-running dramas, which played a very important part in the early development of American radio.

The contemporary student of the media is familiar with the importance of the long-running television drama serial or 'soap opera' (usually shortened to 'soap'). Much has been written about the television soap, if only because of its huge importance in the schedule; at the time of writing the top five most popular programmes on British television were all soaps. But the radio equivalent is now seen as a rather archaic phenomenon and examples of it are, though interesting and important in themselves, hard to find. The soap may have largely disappeared from radio but its origins, like its name, are to be found in 1930s American radio (see also the entry on **Drama**).

In their influential, separate accounts of US radio in the 20th century, Hilmes and Douglas both deal, unsurprisingly, with similar themes. It is interesting to note, however, that Hilmes sees the radio soap, its genesis and mode of production, its largely female creators and audience, as worthy of detailed discussion. Douglas, on the other hand, barely mentions the radio soap, choosing instead to focus on comedy, sport and music. This is perhaps symptomatic of the genre; for some the soap is a critical example of what radio does best, the creation of the intimate, often feminised, everyday world of the soap, but for others it is something of an irrelevance.

Soaps first appeared on US radio at a time when a real conflict existed between the populism of advertising-driven radio typified by radio comedies (including *Amos 'n' Andy*) and popular music, and the large radio networks with their 'high culture' pretensions (reminiscent of the BBC at the same time). Advertising agencies began to see the potential of radio to reach mass audiences, and in particular women, providing the content was sufficiently popular. This explains why a type of programming which spoke to women's interests and concerns began to take over day-time radio.

Clara, Lu and Em began in 1930 as an evening comedy sketch show performed by three young women who had recently graduated from

Northwestern University (Hilmes, 1997: 151). There were three characters in the largely improvised show, including a mother of five with an unreliable husband.

In 1931, *Clara, Lu and Em* joined the NBC Blue lineup at 10:30 each weeknight, sponsored by Super Suds detergent – indeed the first soap opera. In 1932 it moved to daytime, sponsored by Colgate, thus representing the first daytime serial drama now understood to be specifically for women audiences (Hilmes, 1997: 109).

What followed was the extraordinary takeover of day-time radio by the soap, by 1936 55.3 per cent of the daytime schedule consisted of serial dramas.

The early soaps, and indeed this is arguably a feature of all radio and television serial dramas to some extent, focused on the lives of women and were explicitly targeted at a female audience. As Barnard points out, there was a close link between the early radio soap and women's magazine fiction (2000: 115). Themes of infidelity, life choices (often whether or not to marry), motherhood, unreliable husbands, estrangement and divorce were often featured. Women were frequently represented as strong and dominant and men were marginal characters if they appeared at all. Above all the soaps connected with their huge female audiences by reflecting their concerns.

Under cover of daytime, women addressed the issues confronting them during the conflicted decades of the 1930s and 1940s, especially the tension between the enforced domesticity of the 1930s and women's increased frustration with this limited role, in forms developed specifically for this purpose and least likely to be penetrated or understood by the executives and critics whose discourse dominated mainstream radio reception (Hilmes, 1997: 154).

There is clearly a tension here (and one which also exists in television studies) between interpretations of soaps that stress their feminist, liberalising qualities and those which see them as reinforcing a woman's domestic role. For advertisers and executives the radio soap produced a captive audience of domestic consumers and preferably one that would not challenge the role of women as the principal consumers of domestic products. Hilmes's emphasis is rather more on the empowering potential of the soap both in terms of the audience but also in the dominant role of women producers. The soap can be seen as a 'subaltern counterpublic' to the essentially masculine public sphere (see the entry on **Gender**). What women producers and writers did was to use the serial drama as a space in which to make 'women's issues' open for public

discussion. The production process for these soaps was factory-like in its scope and organization. Stories were largely scripted by women who worked in teams on very long-running shows like *Road of Life* (1937–1959) and *The Right to Happiness* (1939–1960).

The early soaps were a highly feminised stretch of the schedule and, perhaps unsurprisingly, they were disparaged as melodramatic and frivolous by the male cultural establishment drawn to the higher cultural terrain of night-time radio. If the soaps were seen as women's radio then the more lofty ambitions of, to take the most famous example, Orson Welles' *Mercury Theatre of the Air*, were a more masculine concern. Indeed, Welles was encouraged to work on radio by the CBS network partly to counter the perception of members of the Roosevelt administration that radio was becoming excessively populist and commercial. This view was particularly associated with the day-time soap about which Sidney Strotz, head of NBC's Chicago Bureau, wrote, 'it panders to the crude emotions of the shopgirl type of listener, and it trades upon the maudlin sympathies of the neurotic who sits entranced before the radio, clutching a copy of "True Confessions" and (possibly) guzzling gin and ginger ale' (Hilmes, 1997: 157).

The radio soap did not survive the advent of television, although the television soap maintained the sub-genres, codes, conventions and production routines created for radio. Many of the most popular radio soaps made the transition to television together with their producers (for example, *The Goldbergs* after 20 years on radio was taken by its creator, Gertrude Berg, on to television for a further 10 years).

The British history of serial dramas could hardly be more different from the American one. The high cultural, public service values of pre-war radio, together with notions of 'mixed programming' made a routinised programme like a radio soap an impossibility. The war, however, created much greater flexibility in the BBC and the expansion of the radio networks from one to three created greater space for less high-brow content. It would be hard to overstate the iconic position of the first, and perhaps last, British radio soap, *The Archers*, which began on the Midland Region in 1950 and remains to this day one of the most popular programmes on BBC Radio 4 with six daily episodes of 15 minutes, all repeated daily and a weekend omnibus (a total of three broadcasts per episode). This 'everyday story of country folk' owes its extraordinary longevity to a strange fact about British society, that although the large majority of the population are urban dwellers and know little about the countryside, British identity is often bound up with the rural way of life.

For them *The Archers* provides an insight into the world of fox hunting, foot and mouth disease and organic food production and of village cricket and a pub full of 'regulars'. The programme has always had an agricultural story advisor, which helps give it a greater authenticity and revolves around the Archers, a family of farmers. An anachronism, but an extraordinarily successful one, on British radio.

Before the arrival of format music radio and the near obliteration of anything else (with some exceptions, including talk radio in the USA and public service radio in Britain) the radio soap was highly successful. That success was partly due to the sheer novelty of a genre that gave women a voice and addressed their concerns. There is also another reason for the temporary popularity of the genre that relates to its *radiogenic* properties (see the entry on **Radiogenic**). As Scannell (1996) has pointed out, radio scheduling, the timing of programmes, reflects the rhythms of the day and also reinforces them. 'Breakfast' shows both fit the mood and activity of the listener having breakfast but also serve to embed 'doing breakfast' as a natural part of everyday life. Breakfast, 'drive time', 'weekend' are in a sense ideological constructs which pattern and restrict everyday life, and radio plays an important part in that construction. A similar point is made by Ellis in his influential discussion of the fragmented 'flow' of television, mirroring the domestic routine (2000). The temporal everydayness of radio is a very important feature and adds to its popularity and relevance for its listeners. This has implications for radio soaps because they have the potential not only in their subject matter to echo the everyday domestic concerns of listeners but also in their reassuringly fixed place in the schedule and in the creation of a fictional world in which time passes in exact parallel with the real world (Hendy, 2000: 184).

This leaves us with an interesting conundrum. The radio soap is, potentially at least, a highly radiogenic genre. Fitting snugly into the schedule it could mark time with the listeners' lives and reflect their intimate concerns. It could, but it does not, because the radio soap has all but disappeared. That it has survived in one or two places, and indeed is very successful where it survives, is testimony to its special radiogenic qualities. The absolute dominance of the visual in dramatic productions, however, whether on film or television, has almost wiped out this form of production – almost but not quite. There are some good examples in African radio (and no doubt elsewhere) of radio soaps being used for development purposes. Messages of AIDS awareness, health, nutrition and agricultural practice can be conveyed using the form of the radio soap.

FURTHER READING

As the radio soap is a largely defunct genre, and even where it does exist it is generally vilified, the literature is unsurprisingly sparse. Fortunately, Hilmes' fascinating and detailed account of the American pre-war radio soap (1997: 150–82) is almost all a student needs.

Sport

Sport radio is a genre and a format based on live coverage of sporting events and follow-up discussion, analysis and phone-ins.

There is a contradiction in the very idea of sport on radio; given the physical nature of sport and its highly visual quality; how can it succeed on this invisible medium? There are no words uttered, or at least few that we can hear, in a sporting contest and the sounds, such as they are, are usually drowned out by the roar of the crowd. And yet the marriage of radio and sport has been so complete that Susan Douglas claims that 'sports on the air may have been the most important agent of nationalism in American culture in the 1920s and 1930s' (1999: 200). Indeed, the history of radio is intertwined with stories of sports coverage, commentators, outside broadcasts and dedicated listeners. How can we explain why these two unlikely partners are so close?

Early experiments with sports coverage on the BBC in the 1920s were severely hampered by the anxieties of the newspaper publishers. There was understandable concern that newspaper sales would be damaged by BBC radio reports of sporting events. As a result, the first experiment in radio sport was a sound-only (commentary-free) report of the Epsom Derby. Unfortunately, it had rained all day, 'and during the race, not only were there no sounds from the hoofs in the soft going, but even the bookies, tipsters and onlookers were more occupied in taking shelter under their umbrellas than in speeding home the winner' (*BBC Yearbook* quoted in Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 25). The granting of a charter to establish

the BBC lifted this censorship and 1927 saw a series of sporting 'firsts' including the first rugby match, the first football (soccer) match soon followed by regular coverage of other sporting occasions; test match cricket, the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, Wimbledon and so on.

As Scannell and Cardiff explain, the pre-war BBC was fashioned by Reith and others in the role of guardian and synthesiser of national culture. A sense of national identity was fabricated in the early part of the 20th century by a number of different institutions of which the BBC was pre-eminent. Radio in the 1920s and 1930s, 'made the nation real and tangible through a whole range of images and symbols, events and ceremonies, relayed to audiences direct and live' (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 277). Over the years a calendar of events was created which marked out the passing of time with religious festivals (Christmas and Easter), saints' days and other celebrations, and, importantly, events from the sporting calendar.

In the USA, sport started on radio a few years earlier than in the UK. The first baseball game was broadcast in 1921 (Pittsburgh Pirates versus the Philadelphia Phillies) and in the same year the boxing contest between Dempsey and Carpentier began what became a wildly popular form of radio. The popularity of these two sports helped to establish the medium and to create huge audiences, sometimes measuring tens of millions of listeners. By 1942, there were 25 million regular listeners to baseball on radio and it is estimated that two thirds of all radio sets were tuned to hear Joe Louis defeat Max Schmeling in 1938.

The skill of the early radio sports commentators was extraordinary. They fully exploited the medium with their relaxed or excited, colloquial, dramatic and evocative commentaries. These were frequently invented without actually seeing the game. It was much cheaper to pay for a Morse code account of a baseball game (courtesy of Western Union) than actually send a commentator to wherever it was played. The 'announcer' would then use his imagination to fabricate the excitement of the play from a ticker tape with the support of the occasional sound effect (Douglas, 1999: 210).

Sport on radio in the USA, according to Douglas, played an important part in helping to define and reinforce American and male identities. The US population in the 1920s was highly diverse and a significant percentage of the population were born abroad. What it was to be an American and whether there was a need for some form of Americanisation were questions asked at the time. One solution lay in the enthusiastic response to sport on radio. Fans from different backgrounds united in their support for a local or national team and also learned to appreciate

the importance of rules and 'fair play'. Sport embodied patriarchal and democratic values and helped to bring them from the public into the domestic sphere. When the great African American boxer, Joe Louis knocked out the German, Max Schmeling, black and white fans were united by a victory that seemed to symbolise democratic values as well as America's claim to embody a toughness and virility. These were attractive and pertinent qualities for American men feeling emasculated by the Depression.

Sport, and especially the types featured on radio, has always been a predominantly male activity. For Douglas, the act of listening to sport on radio did much to articulate American masculinity at a time of great anxiety over what it meant to be a 'real man' (1999: 66). Radio sport did not just represent masculinity in the form of the boxer's brutal strength. Sport gave the listener different models of masculinity. The strength and determination of the boxer (whether he was white or black), the talent, cunning and dexterity of the baseball player and the verbal mastery and wit of the sports announcer. Men also learned the values and mores of rule following, deference to authority, contained aggression, competitiveness and fair play. Fathers and sons bonded together around these values as they listened to the fight or game. Douglas argues that the sports announcer was particularly important in offering a nuanced and diverse representation of masculinity:

In individual broadcasts, from moment to moment, these men ranged over a broad emotional terrain in a way that simply wasn't permitted in the office or on the shop floor and that offered men a variety of personas to inhabit. Ironically, in listening to something rugged like sports, an act which in itself confirmed one's manhood, one could let loose and verbally and physically express joy, elation, worry, hope, despair, and a deep attachment to others without being feminised. (1999: 217)

It could be argued here that Douglas is overstating the influence of sport radio on masculine identity but it is certainly true that sport does offer men a licence to display a range of emotions which are normally proscribed because they are perceived as feminine.

Much has been written, at times with a distinctly nostalgic enthusiasm, about pre-war radio sport, but the genre and format also remain surprisingly healthy in the television age. Although television is awash with live coverage of golf tournaments, football matches, baseball, tennis and so on, radio has adapted to compete and a lot of its success is due to the skill

and techniques of live radio sports commentary. The BBC's *Test Match Special* has provided live coverage of every ball bowled in cricket test matches in England since 1957. The famous cricket commentator and poet, John Arlott epitomised the skill of the radio sports commentator in his ability to both describe and 'read' the game; in his case done with a poetic use of language ('you can hear the sighs come out of the spectators like punctured bicycle tyres', 'the trees away in the distance heaving under this strong wind', 'every Englishman in the ground with him. Every west Indian after his blood' (John Arlott in Crisell, 1994: 131). Football coverage on BBC radio is a very different affair. Since 1994, BBC Radio 5 Live has combined news and sport in a highly successful mix. Football is at the heart of the programming and this includes not only live commentary of Premiership games but also a great deal of sports news and discussion, most notably the very popular phone-in, 606. Because sport is a largely working-class game in the UK and because, unlike most other aspects of British culture, it is particularly strong outside London and the south of England, football coverage often utilises a variety of working-class and regional accents. The experience of listening to sport on 5 Live could hardly be more different than listening to the predominantly middle-class, southern accents of BBC Radio 4. This has given the network a richness, which extends to its phone-ins. 606 benefits greatly from the mobile phone used by football fans who, either elated by a win or despondent because their team has lost, phone on their way home from the match. The result is almost a celebration of 'fandom' and of the regional accents of the callers and their unquestionable working-class credentials; a very pleasant contrast to so much of the rest of BBC radio.

In his discussion of live football commentary on BBC radio, Tolson notes, following Crisell on cricket commentary, that the commentator not only describes the game but also provides comments which 'read' the game for the listener (2006: 104). So whether a side is performing well, benefiting from the new manager, lacking the right strategy and so on is all provided in the commentary. In addition, the comments may be related to a 'meta-narrative' of broader themes (for example the decline of skills in English football, the incompetence of referees, the large number of foreign players in the game) which may then feature in the following discussion and phone-in programmes.

Tolson also compares football commentary on radio and television. He suggests that television coverage is more cerebral and analytical whereas sport on radio is an excited, collective experience. The radio listener is positioned as a fan somewhere in the crowd, sharing the experience with

the commentator (Tolson, 2006: 112). A defining feature of radio football commentary is the exchange between the commentator and the specialist 'summariser', often a famous former player or manager. This creates a clever conceit that both presenters are in the crowd together with the listener. This is why in radio football commentary direct speech is not used but instead the informal interactive banter of two spectators which the listener overhears.

The success of BBC radio sport and the national commercial station TalkSPORT is reflected in the USA where niche sports radio has proved to be not only very popular but also extremely profitable. In New York, WFAN is a specialist sport and sports news station, which also has the talk radio star, Don Imus, presenting a morning show. The comparatively low cost of sports chat and commentary combined with the affluence of the largely male 25–54-year-old target audience made WFAN the first radio station to earn over US\$50 million in commercial revenue. The combination of highly skilled, virtuoso sports announcers and the enthusiasm of sports fans (some listening over the web) means that this radio genre appears to have a healthy future.

FURTHER READING

There can be no question that Douglas on the 'playing fields of the mind' is the single most important contribution to the literature (Douglas, 1999: 199–219). Crisell (1994) is interesting on the coverage of cricket on BBC radio and Tolson (2006) has a fascinating account of sports commentary.

Talk Radio

Talk radio is an American radio format that features a prominent and often highly opinionated presenter (sometimes referred to as a 'shock jock'). Usually combined with phone calls from listeners.

Talk radio is a radio format and an almost exclusively American phenomenon that owes its remarkable success to the specific conditions in the US radio

industry. Between 1987 and 2003 the number of talk radio stations in the USA grew from 125 to 1785, often broadcast on AM radio. Talk radio is, as its name implies, speech based and features a prominent or celebrity presenter. Most talk shows include a mix of news, interviews and phone-ins and, that crucial ingredient of the talk format, the strongly held opinions of the presenter.

A forerunner of the talk radio presenter was the infamous Father Charles Coughlin whose diatribes against communism and international banking morphed into attacks on Roosevelt's New Deal in the mid-1930s before their final descent into anti-semitism and apologies for Nazism (see the entry on **Hate Radio**). The modern form of talk radio can probably be traced back to the Jerry Williams fronted show, *What's On Your Mind* on a station in Camden, New Jersey. In the 1960s on KLAC in Los Angeles it was Joe Pyne who added that special ingredient of the format, the outspoken and provocative, 'in-your-face' quality that earned his show the name 'insult radio'.

Rush Limbaugh has probably been the most successful and influential talk radio host. He used his shows to express conservative Republican views and to preach against feminism, environmentalism and liberal causes more generally. Originally he was a fervent supporter of President Reagan and then, with the election of the Democrat Bill Clinton to the White House, he became an outspoken and damaging critic of the Clinton presidency. Limbaugh's success and extraordinary political influence owes a lot to his mastery of the medium of radio. He was a radio DJ at the age of 16 and learned to use talk and sound, satire and sound effects on the radio in a fully developed persona of showman as political guru. He was a demagogue but also a pedagogue in his patient teaching of the audience, 'he brought his listeners into a spectral lecture theatre hall and helped see themselves as part of a literate community where everyday people, and not just elites, must have knowledge' (Douglas, 1999: 316).

Talk radio has produced some particularly outspoken 'shock jocks' including Howard Stern and Don Imus. Their shows were characterised by obscenity and political reaction, most notably against feminism and liberalism. Stern was opposed to affirmative action policies designed to eradicate discrimination, he decried 'bleeding heart liberals' and 'welfare queens'. Sexist, racist, rude and self-obsessed he displayed the obsessions of the pubescent boy in the locker room. And yet, according to Susan Douglas, Stern was also very funny and in his testosterone-fuelled attacks on feminism he articulated deep male anxieties with his unique, self-deprecating wit. Her account of Stern portrays him as a complex

combination of libertarian, liberal and conservative views which were at least refreshingly different from the mainstream media. Stern was a passionate supporter of free speech and believed in talking about sex openly. He also connected with a disenfranchised male audience and the 'sense among many Americans, especially many men, that they were not being addressed or listened to by the mainstream media – that propelled talk radio into a national phenomenon, and a national political force' (Douglas, 1999: 300).

As we see in the statistics above, talk radio really took off in the late 1980s and this extraordinary growth can be explained in three main ways. First, Satellite technology introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in a modern reinvention of the old radio networks as the syndication of programmes across a range of stations was made possible. These brought the famous celebrity presenters to local stations and also substantially reduced costs. Rush Limbaugh's shows, for example, were aired on 650 stations across the USA in the 1990s. There were also technological developments that made logging calls and communication between presenters and producers easier and quicker. Second, the deregulation of radio in the 1980s, and in particular the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) abolition of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 meant that there was no need for political balance in the output of a radio station. One very right-wing presenter could be followed by another one. The expression of largely unrestrained political bigotry became possible, large audiences were listening and so the format spread through the industry.

The third reason for the success of talk radio is to do with its audience and their sense of being politically disenfranchised. The main audience for talk radio has been the white working class. They felt ignored by mainstream liberal media and the comparative anonymity of the radio phone-in gave them a place in a populist public sphere (Hendy, 2000: 209). So when Bill Clinton nominated Zoe Baird for the post of Attorney General in 1992 the mainstream media reacted slowly to the revelations concerning her tax avoidance and employment of illegal immigrants for domestic work. Most press and television providers failed to pick up the public mood but talk radio phone-ins were quick to express the outrage felt by 'ordinary Americans' (Hendy, 2000: 208). Mainstream media had become good at expressing the views of the Washington elite but had lost touch with a dissatisfied proletarian audience who saw the world through traditional and conservative, American lenses. Talk radio presenters understood that community of listeners and could use great skill

and understanding of radio to marshal prejudice and give it a loud and shocking voice.

We are left with other questions about the format which are more difficult to answer. Why is talk radio mainly conservative and anti-liberal? Does the reactionary nature of talk radio matter? A possible answer to the first question is that in the early years of the new format and especially in the 1960s, liberals and progressive deserted radio for the glamour and visual possibilities of television leaving radio free for the political right to use. Radio is of course not inherently a right wing medium but the history of radio is full of examples where the voices of the right have found a place which was denied them in other media. As for the overall impact on American democracy there is clearly cause for concern. There has been a debate about the damage that the constant repetition of right-wing prejudices has done to the public sphere. Some people believe that talk radio has fuelled prejudice and, in the words of the *World Press Review*, helped make the US 'a bitter self-doubting nation' (Ellis and Shane, 2004: 1373). The UK has nothing to compare with US talk radio. The regulation of commercial radio and the public service values of the BBC have prevented British listeners from encountering a British Stern or Limbaugh. Whether British audiences are disadvantaged as a result is very much a matter of opinion.

FURTHER READING

For an excellent introductory discussion of issues around talk radio I suggest Hendy (2000: 205–11). Once again, for the definitive account and analysis see Douglas (1999: 284–327), this is a sophisticated and nuanced examination of presenters such as Limbaugh and Stern and highly readable.

