

For Emily and Tom

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ABSTRACT

Freelance Radio Practices: Producing Music Documentaries for Commercial Radio

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This study considers the practice of freelance radio producers creating music documentaries for commercial radio audiences. Commercial radio is an underexplored field of study, while investigations into music documentary content for commercial broadcasters are even more uncommon. Previous inquiries into radio documentary production have focused on public service models of broadcasting. These studies often view the subject from a journalistic agenda, overlooking technical approaches and ignoring the commercial imperatives that inform freelance practices.

I explore how advances in digital production tools and online technologies shape the work of radio producers. I address wider issues of debate surrounding freelance activities and question whether autonomous producers are capable of creating music documentary content of a calibre consistent with traditional team approaches to documentary production.

As an experienced practitioner in the field of commercial radio, I use a practice-based approach to reveal the practices a freelance radio producer adopts to make music documentaries for commercial radio. I argue that this method is essential in order to capture an accurate, first-hand perspective of contemporary industry practice.

It draws on a combination of data collection methods including iterative production research, industry interviews, and auto-ethnographic observations as a freelance radio producer across a five-year period of production. This data is interrogated using a theoretical framework that incorporates ideas of political economy, commercial broadcasting and documentary production.

I find that the advances in digital production tools and online technologies have streamlined workflow processes and enabled the merging of a various duties into a single production role. I argue that political, economic and commercial considerations impact on the work of radio freelancers in the field by shaping their production output. I acknowledge this is a highly specialised field, as music documentaries are not commonly heard on commercial radio. Yet I assert the industry is favourable towards this form of programming, and recognises its ability to attract new audiences, strengthen listener loyalty and reinforce a station's brand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	viii
Introduction.....	1

PART I: STATE-OF-THE-FIELD REVIEW

Chapter 1, Commercial radio practices	8
1. Academic investigations in commercial radio.....	9
1.1. Commercial radio practices	14
1.2. The political economy of commercial radio.....	19
1.3. Performance and risk aversion within commercial radio.....	28
1.4. The ratings war	36
1.5. Conclusion - commercial radio practices.....	45
Chapter 2, The radio documentary.....	48
2.1. Defining the documentary.....	49
2.2. Innovation in documentary production.....	55
2.3. Authenticity within radio documentary production	61
2.4. Music documentary for commercial radio environments.....	65
2.5. Audience and industry perceptions of the music documentary genre.....	71
2.6. Conclusion - the radio documentary.....	75
Chapter 3, Freelance radio documentary production.....	78
3.1. The role of the documentary producer.....	79
3.2. Freelance radio production in the cultural industries	82
3.3. Technological influences on radio documentary production.....	87
3.4. Comparisons between audio and visual forms of documentary production.....	94
3.5. Approaches to editing and structuring.....	100
3.6. Presentation and voice work	108
3.7. Conclusion - radio documentary production.....	114

PART II: FINDINGS: PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

Chapter 4, Methodology.....	117
4.1. Representations of radio documentary practice	120
4.2. Practice-based research.....	126
4.3. Iterative production research.....	130
4.4. Auto-ethnographic fieldwork.....	135
4.5. Interviewing	138
4.6. Limitations and ethical considerations	142
4.7. Conclusion	147
Chapter 5, Instinctive production phase: <i>Down Under the Moonlight</i>.....	150
5.1. Project overview.....	152
5.2. Commissioning processes.....	154
5.3. Production practices	162
5.3.1. Interviewing	163

5.3.2. Editing.....	165
5.3.3. Music	171
5.3.4. Presentation	175
5.4. Online technologies.....	179
5.5. Weaknesses and limitations	190
5.6. Conclusion	194
Chapter 6, Intermediary production phase: <i>XFM 25</i>.....	198
6.1. Project overview.....	199
6.2. Commissioning processes	202
6.3. Production practices	211
6.3.1. Interviewing	212
6.3.2. Editing.....	215
6.3.3. Music	221
6.3.4. Presentation	225
6.4. Online technologies.....	229
6.5. Weaknesses and limitations	237
6.6. Conclusion	240
Chapter 7, Reflexive production phase: <i>Let's Dance at 30</i>.....	243
7.1. Project overview.....	244
7.2. Commissioning processes	247
7.3. Production practices	254
7.3.1. Interviewing	256
7.3.2. Editing.....	259
7.3.3. Music	264
7.3.4. Presentation	268
7.4. Online technologies.....	273
7.5. Weaknesses and limitations	278
7.6. Conclusion	283

PART III: CONCLUSION

Chapter 8, Conclusion	287
8.1. Freelance music documentary production practices.....	289
8.2. New directions for radio documentary studies.....	292
Bibliography.....	294
Appendices
A: Submission of production artefacts: 10 x MP3 audio files.....	307
B: A selected sample of interviews.....	308
C: Let's Dance at 30 documentary transcriptions.....	326
D: Evidence of Xfm's online promotion for the <i>XFM 25</i> series.....	338
E: Evidence of email correspondence with Absolute Radio's management.....	340
F: Evidence of Absolute Radio's online promotion of <i>Let's Dance at 30</i>	341
G: Evidence of online promotion via fan websites of <i>Let's Dance at 30</i>	342
H: BBC Synchronisation licence	344
I: Absolute Radio PRS return for <i>Let's Dance at 30</i>	345
J: List of Intermediary documentary production work.....	346
K: Evidence of post-broadcast documentary responses on fan websites	347

LIST OF FIGURES

4.1: Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle.....	132
5.1: Example of LP distribution of a US music documentary for radio, 1981.....	180
5.2: Screenshot of on-demand RNZ audio for <i>Bowie's Waiata</i> (2008).....	184
5.3: Screenshot of RNZ audio slideshow for <i>Bowie's Waiata</i> (2008).....	186
5.4: Screenshot of <i>Down Under the Moonlight</i> (2008) audio-slideshow, YouTube.....	188
6.1: Screenshot of online <i>Xfm</i> promotion for the <i>XFM 25</i> (2013) series.....	231
6.2: Screenshot of web article promoting <i>XFM 25: R.E.M., Lifes Rich Pageant</i> (2013)	232
7.1: Screenshot of Absolute Radio's online promotion for <i>Let's Dance at 30</i> , (2013).....	249
7.3: Screenshot of Mixcloud on-demand audio for <i>Let's Dance at 30</i> (2013).....	276
7.4: Screenshot of online promotion for <i>Let's Dance at 30</i> (2013) on fan-site	277

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the production of music documentaries for commercial radio audiences from a freelancer's perspective. It uses a practice-based approach, which draws on my auto-ethnographic observations as an active radio producer, alongside iterative production research and interviews with industry practitioners. I reveal the practices which a freelancer uses in the creation of music documentaries for commercial radio, and suggest that producers are capable of autonomously creating content of professional broadcast standard. Through the research presented here, I argue that advances in digital production tools and online technologies have led to a convergence of production roles. Documentaries, which once required a production team to complete, can be fully realised by a single, multi-skilled freelancer. New approaches to documentary production and administration have allowed freelance producers to externally create content, without the need for traditional in-house production departments or independent production companies. I reveal how changes in political economy have shaped the output of radio freelancers. By considering the political and economic pressures on commercial radio, I demonstrate how key editorial decisions in the creation of music documentaries are informed by free market forces. Interviews conducted for this study indicate the UK's commercial radio sector recognise the value of music documentaries; viewing them as an effective way to build new audiences, increase listener loyalty, and provide differentiation in competitive radio markets.

The origin of this study stems from my personal experience as a professional within the radio industry. Between 1988 and 2005 I worked in the advertising departments of commercial radio stations in both the UK and New Zealand, and was self-employed as freelance commercial producer. In my spare time, I regularly created

radio documentaries for both commercial and public service broadcasters. This work utilised certain techniques drawn from commercial production within my documentaries, and vice versa. These activities started my interest in the interplay between commercial practices and the production of radio documentaries.

In 2005, having made the transition from industry practitioner to Senior Lecturer in higher education, I continued to produce documentary content for radio broadcasters in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. In June 2009 I delivered a paper at a media symposium held at the University of Nottingham. This was the first time I assessed my own practice as a documentary producer from an academic standpoint. As a result, I began to see the possibilities of using my production work as the basis for further practice-based investigations. By shifting my perspective from radio producer to radio academic, I moved from the position of ‘outsider’ to ‘insider’.

As a practicing radio documentary producer, I was used to having executive producers and management scrutinise my work, then provide feedback. These critical observations, questions and encouragement formed an invaluable part of the production process; enhancing and ultimately shaping my final productions. However, these opinions were often informed by tight deadlines and the biases associated with either public service or commercial broadcasting. Indeed, critical reflections on my own production output were similarly influenced by personal taste and my own industry experiences. Editorial choices were frequently confined by time constraints, technical limitations and budgetary restrictions, requiring immediate production decisions of a reactive nature. However, this study provided an opportunity to step back from my instinctual responses to the challenge of radio documentary production, and take a more detached, auto-ethnographic assessment of my work, encompassing both academic and industry viewpoints.

According to Street (2009), the study of commercial radio in the UK has been a neglected and undervalued field. As an emerging scholar and radio production tutor, I began to recognise this lack of representation and saw how many production handbooks and academic investigations favoured public service approaches to practice over commercial radio. Although authors such as McLeish (2009) discuss documentary production, they often use examples of BBC broadcasting as models of good practice. Few mention sponsorship considerations or how to construct content around commercial loads, for example. This study reveals how many contemporary radio scholars such as Hendy (2000), Beaman (2006) and McHugh (2011) previously had broadcasting careers in public service companies, such as the BBC and ABC. Although these researchers are experienced programme makers, they show little interest in commercial radio practices. Barnard's (1989) assessment of early commercial broadcasting in the UK approaches the subject from a journalistic background and not an academic perspective. I suggest the most insightful studies into commercial radio can be found in the work of academics like Flemming (2010), Starkey (2007) and Street (2009), who were previously employed as practitioners in the commercial radio industry before joining academia.

Although there is a great deal of investigation into documentaries for television and film, Lindgren (2011) believes the study of radio documentaries is an under-researched field. Makagon and Neumann (2009) draw attention to a lack of peer-reviewed outlets for qualitative audio work, such as radio documentaries. I have found relatively few studies which discuss contemporary radio documentary production practices, and much of this material ignores documentary production for commercial audiences. McHugh (2014) observes a "paucity of critical language" used to describe the field of radio documentary and feature production. She believes this shortage has

led radio scholars to appropriate theory from the study of television and film documentary (24). This research supports McHugh's claim by drawing from relevant investigations relating to visual documentary production. Crook (2012) endorses this approach, as he suggests the study of documentary production for television is "relevant to the radio form" (132). Over time, I have observed an increase in the number of academics studying radio documentaries, particularly in the field of practice-based investigations, such as the work of Lindgren (2011) and McHugh (2011). Yet these studies focus on journalistic approaches to work made for public service radio. They pay relatively little attention to the practicalities of radio production, while ignoring commercial models of broadcasting.

This study is aimed at the field of radio studies and seeks to contribute to the investigation of radio documentary production by providing first-hand insight into freelance music documentary production for commercial radio audiences. I identify the changing practices and technical innovations that have led to the emergence of multi-skilled, freelance radio producers. By examining the underserved field of music documentary for commercial radio, new insights are tested against existing investigations into public service practices. Commercial radio is the world's most dominant form of broadcasting (Barnard, 2000). I therefore suggest the field is deserving of further academic investigation.

My research seeks to explore a central question:

What practices does a contemporary freelance radio producer adopt to make music documentaries for commercial radio?

To answer this question, I examine my practice as a freelance music documentary producer who creates content for commercial radio audiences. As indicated, I utilise a practice-based approach, drawing on auto-ethnography, iterative production research and interviews to interrogate my work. In doing so, I position myself within the tradition of creative, artistic and entrepreneurial activity. My findings are informed by the production of three music documentary projects over a five-year period. The first (appendices A, 1), which focuses on the musician David Bowie, was created from an ‘instinctual’ approach to production. I then entered an ‘intermediary’ stage of production to complete the second project (appendices A, 2); a series of music documentaries for Xfm. Next, I revised my original Bowie project by drawing on the experience and newfound knowledge gained from the previous two production stages. This final radio documentary (appendices A, 3) was produced as a ‘reflexive’ practitioner.

My theoretical framework interrogates the data from three main positions. Firstly, I investigate the political economy of commercial radio and freelance practice. This analysis considers the use of music documentary within modern-day commercial programming and the context and drivers which impact on this form of content. Secondly, I bring to the fore the digital production equipment and online tools used in radio documentary production. I explore how the development of these technologies shapes the output of freelance producers operating in the commercial sector. Finally, I assess the overall content and form of music documentaries for commercial radio and the production processes involved in their creation. I show how contemporary freelance radio producers have successfully merged previously separate production roles into one convergent, multi-skilled position.

A state-of-the-field review in chapters one, two, and three provide a structure for evaluating the production work and administrative duties performed by radio freelancers. Chapter one considers the relationship between political economy and the creative industries, with a focus on the development of commercial radio. I discuss how the field has been represented in academia and historicise crucial moments in the industry's evolution to reveal how these milestones have impacted on the work of modern freelance producers. I argue that academic criticism often arises from not understanding the financial imperatives and pressures commercial radio faces.

Chapter two centres on the documentary genre and offers an overview of documentary studies, while considering how music documentary are situated within the field. This chapter attempts to define the term 'documentary', as Street (2015) believes the genre is a flexible one, while Beaman (2006) describes the radio documentary as being difficult to classify. I examine the work of pioneering radio producers, to show how they have shaped contemporary documentary practice, including my own work as a freelance music documentary producer. This chapter reveals how academic investigations, work texts and handbooks have overlooked new technological advances in the field. Themes of innovation and technology continue in chapter three, which interrogates the practice of radio documentary production and considers the changes brought on by advances in digital production tools. I concur with Ehrlich's (2011) claim that technical improvements and the increasing affordability of equipment has made radio documentaries a more accessible medium.

Chapter four sets out my methodological approach, while chapters five, six and seven present my findings. These three chapters provide a narrative of discovery, which documents my transition from instinctual to reflexive practitioner. My findings are constructed as a timeline, capturing my development as a practitioner and radio

academic across three distinct production phases in a five-year period. This iterative approach to music documentary production, coupled with auto-ethnographic observations, allowed me to track my progress as a practitioner and researcher. These three music documentary projects, submitted on the USB flash drive accompanying this thesis, are intended to be listened to alongside the corresponding chapters of my findings.

This dissertation argues that to fully understand the work of freelancers producing music documentaries for commercial radio audiences, it is necessary to employ a first-hand, practice-based approach to research. I conclude that political and economic considerations shape the output of freelancer producers. Although fundamental approaches to music documentary production have largely remained consistent from the analogue to the digital era, innovations in digital equipment, workflow procedures and online technologies have led to the emergence of a multi-skilled freelance role, capable of creating broadcast standard music documentary content for the commercial sector. Although music documentaries are a specialised and infrequent form of commercial radio programming, I claim the industry recognises they can attract audiences, build listener loyalty and enhance brand reputation. Finally, I suggest there is a need for further investigation into freelance production and commercial radio practice in the field of radio studies.

CHAPTER ONE

COMMERCIAL RADIO PRACTICES

The following three chapters offer a theoretical structure to support the analysis of the audio artefacts submitted for this production-based investigation into music documentary production for commercial radio audiences. Each chapter explores key considerations that underpin my approach to fieldwork as an academic and industry practitioner, while situating this work within the context of documentary production. I investigate the field of commercial broadcasting from three interlinked, historical perspectives, which stand as the foundation of my findings as a practice-based researcher.

The first chapter examines the development of free market practices which have shaped the output of commercial radio broadcasters. I explore how academia has positioned profit-making broadcasting amongst the wider field of radio studies and describe how public service models of broadcasting have learnt from the commercial industry. By comparing and contrasting the interplay and competitive rivalries between public service and commercial radio broadcasting, I demonstrate how neither model operates in isolation. This initial chapter also considers the relationship between political legislation and the development and output of commercial radio, with an emphasis on how spoken word / documentary programming is influenced by regulation. I identify landmarks in the history of commercial radio in the UK and US markets to show how changing political climates reflect the media legislation of successive governmental administrations. I consider how the work of radio documentary producers has been shaped by governmental control and the ongoing repercussions of broadcasting legislation.

Chapter two interrogates the documentary genre and situates it within the context of commercial radio. I evaluate relevant literature to reveal how visual and audio documentary production have developed alongside each other, in order to demonstrate shared practices and to better understand the increasing popularity of music documentaries. This chapter recognises key practitioners whose work has shaped the genre and provides a background against which to measure contemporary radio documentary production practices. I contend that well-targeted speech-based documentary programming can exist within contemporary music formatted commercial radio stations, and ultimately help to gain new audiences.

In chapter three, I investigate technical innovations in radio production and show how changing audience preferences have influenced the production of music documentaries for free market radio audiences. Although I primarily focus on radio production, I once again draw from the fields of television and film production in order to reveal similarities and differences between these forms of documentary. I argue that practitioners operating in one field can effectively deploy their skills and knowledge in the other. I begin this chapter by exploring the various academic representations of commercial radio and reveal how these views are inevitably influenced by the researcher's career background and political leanings.

1. Academic representation of commercial radio

Lewis and Booth (1989) believe the history of radio occupies a relatively small position within the field of media studies. Furthermore, Stoller (2010) claims that the history of commercial radio in the UK, unlike the BBC, has not been well served. Street (2009) agrees that the field is neglected and undervalued. However, in more recent years, this

deficit has been redressed through the work of scholars with industry backgrounds, such as Starkey (2007), Street (2015) and Fleming (2010), who acknowledge the impact of commercial practices on the development of radio broadcasting in the UK.

Arguments about the supposed merits or failings of publicly funded or commercial broadcasting often reveal the author's political leanings and career progress as a radio practitioner. This section assesses the work of several radio academics and considers how their representation of commercial radio is shaped by their past experiences studying certain fields of broadcasting, or as industry practitioners. This influence can be seen in the research of Fairchild (2001), whose early work investigated community radio in Canada. Fairchild's subsequent studies, which assessed community radio in both Australia and the US, reveals an affinity for this form of broadcasting. It is unsurprising that Fairchild's (2012) more recent research is biased towards the output of non-commercial stations, while rebuking contemporary free market broadcasting practices. Fairchild (2012) criticises commercial programming as an impersonal practice that does little to build intimate relationships with communities of listeners. Instead, he claims, modern commercial playlists are calculated to economically exploit niche audiences and are constructed statistically rather than from a nuanced understanding of the audience. Common commercial radio practices, developed through decades of research and implementation around the world are, in Fairchild's (2012) opinion, manipulative as opposed to the supposedly more virtuous practices demonstrated by community radio.

Hendy (2000) is similarly sceptical of commercial radio's relationship with audiences. He describes the commercial sector as being a 'ruthless' environment, in which "the audience becomes the product, which is then sold to the advertiser" (31). Hendy's views are informed by his background as a journalist and producer for the

BBC's Radio 4, which he joined in 1987. Hendy has written extensively about the BBC, including the award-winning publication *Life on Air: A History of Radio Four* (2007). Given his career path, and the subject matter of his academic output, it is understandable that Hendy does not seem overtly sympathetic towards commercial models of broadcasting.

More balanced views can be found in the publications of academics with prior employment experience within the commercial radio industry. One notable example is Starkey (2014), whose long career as a broadcaster includes positions within commercial stations, such as: Radio Nova International, City Talk 1548, Beacon Radio 303, MFM, and Radio City 96.7, amongst others. Although he is generally neutral in his assessment of the industry, he does not shy away from identifying perceived weaknesses, such as a reduction in commercial radio's localness and independence. On the other hand, Starkey acknowledges the industry's strengths. He believes that contemporary UK commercial radio listeners now have considerably more choice than when the industry was first established in the early Seventies. Starkey's work provides insight into the practice of commercial advertising production for radio. He is one of the few authors to credit the employment opportunities provided by the commercial radio industry. Although Starkey does not specifically study the field of music documentary production, his work considers how spoken-word content fits within commercial radio programming.

Fleming (2010) is another commercial radio practitioner who transitioned into academia. Fleming spent many years working as a radio news reporter and producer for both the BBC and the Independent Local Radio group of commercial stations. This dual perspective provides an impartial stance from which to view both free market and public service broadcasters. Like Starkey (2014), Fleming (2010) is neutral in her

assessment of the industry, but her work provides an even-handed analysis of industry attitudes. This is demonstrated in her appraisal of networking practices amongst local British radio stations. Fleming presents the arguments against networking, positing that it “produces less variety in radio output and it stifles talent”, yet she allows a representative from commercial radio the opportunity to counter this criticism by explaining the perceived strengths of networking practices (17).

This sense of objectivity can also be seen in the work of Street (2015), whose doctorate research investigated pre-war independent radio and its relationship with the BBC in the United Kingdom. Since 1977, Street has worked as practitioner in the radio industry and, like Fleming (2010), has the benefit of working across both public service and commercial models. His career began at the BBC’s Radio Solent station, before he moved into the commercial sector to work for 2CR Bournemouth, in 1980. Street (2015) was Features Editor at 2CR until 1987, when he left to pursue a successful career as a freelance programme maker. Although he has since worked on a considerable number of programmes for BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4 and the BBC World Service, he has also produced work for commercial radio, such as London’s LBC. His empathy for independent broadcasting, coupled with an ‘insider’s’ understanding of BBC commissioning practices, gives Street’s research an appreciation of the realities faced by radio documentary producers. He acknowledges the significance of the BBC in terms of British broadcasting history, yet he also argues that independent broadcasting is an important part of the industry’s wider story, deserving far closer attention and greater recognition amongst the field of academic radio studies.

Chignell (2009) is balanced in his appreciation of commercial broadcasting. He defines the goal of free market radio to be the pursuit of profit, yet believes “this does not mean that commercial radio is in any way inferior to the BBC” (114). However,

Chignell does not hold back from accusing the industry of “acute failures” as a result of “the essentially commercial profit maximising consequences of conglomeration and automation” (118). His research predominantly focuses on radio news, current affairs, and the study of radio drama. However, there are elements of this work that directly relate to the radio documentary genre, which he describes as a “strange radio hybrid, unique to radio” (22).

Tim Wall’s (1999) doctoral thesis for Birmingham University, *Constructing Popular Music Radio: Music and Cultural Identity in Radio Station Discourse*, and subsequent journal articles (2000, 2002) provide valuable insights into the influence of regulation on British commercial radio and the industry’s approach to building audiences. While this work is not practice-based in nature and does not specifically relate to music documentary production, it still offers a rare, in-depth investigation into commercial radio broadcasting practices. Wall’s (1999) analysis of DJ speech patterns, when talking over instrumental music, has informed my practice-based study of presentation in music documentary production.

I draw extensively from the written output of Myers (2012), a visiting professor at the University of Cumbria and the University of Sunderland. Although Myers is not a traditional academic, he has had a prestigious career within the UK commercial radio industry as the CEO of GMG Radio. Myers has authored a book which details his broadcasting experiences, alongside a comprehensive report for the Government (2007) and two independent reports for the BBC on the subject of UK Radio. Myers is a supporter of spoken word content within commercial programming and his observations address a gap in academic literature relating to first hand commercial broadcasting practices.

The examples provided show how academic investigations often belie the

researcher's past experience, and reveal a bias towards public service models of broadcasting. Research into radio practice is mostly viewed from the perspective of journalism (Lewis and Booth, 1989), which overlooks certain technical demands. This prejudice can be seen in Lindgren's (2011) auto-ethnographic work, which researched radio documentary production as the basis for her PhD dissertation *Journalism as research: Developing radio documentary theory from practice*. Similarly, McHugh (2011) was awarded a doctorate in creative arts for her thesis *Oral History and the Radio Documentary/Feature: Intersections and Synergies*, which examined the use of oral histories in radio documentary production. Both studies drew from a practice-based approach to radio documentary production, yet focused on journalistic, public service concerns. I return to the work of Lindgren (2011) and McHugh (2011) in chapter four. In the following section I explore the wider field of commercial radio and identify its key practices. I define common radio terminology and assess historical milestones in commercial radio broadcasting. By considering the origins of the medium and tracing its development, the ongoing importance of commercial radio in shaping the industry becomes apparent.

1.2 Commercial radio practices

Chignell (2009) categorises radio into four distinct sectors: public service, community, state run and commercial operations. This section focuses on the 'commercial' category in order to reveal the industry's motivations and to better understand accusations of its limitations. I explore an academic bias that tends to favour public service models of broadcasting over commercially run stations. By identifying landmarks and pioneers in the history of commercial radio broadcasting in the US and UK, I create a structure that

reveals changing industry practices and certain shifts in documentary production within commercial radio environments.

Government-broadcasting is mainly funded by general revenues, licences or a combination of both (Aspinall, 1971), while advertising traditionally finances private radio stations. The ultimate purpose of a commercial station is widely agreed to be the attainment of financial profit, achieved by selling airtime to advertisers (Fleming, 2002). A station that can demonstrate it has a large audience can command a higher price for its advertising space. Rothernbuhler and McCourt (1987) state that radio advertisements are “the most important portion of broadcast programming” as they are the “lifblood” that keep a station operational (104). Revenues are traditionally gained from advertising schedules, which employ a series of strategically positioned commercials within an hour of programming. Client sponsorship of a programme / feature, or presenter testimonials may also be employed to generate profits.

In defining the field, the term independent and commercial radio are often used interchangeably (Wray, 2010), as both relate to stations financed by sponsorship or advertising. I identify with McLeish’s (2005) definition of commercial radio to mean a station, or network, that operates as a public company, answerable to shareholders. Stoller (2010) does not classify the first decade of commercial radio in the UK as being truly commercial. Instead, he describes a “fusion” of public service and advertising funding, which should be termed as “independent broadcasting” (2). Street (2009) straddles these definitions of independent and commercial radio by describing a model of broadcasting that is; “independent sector populist radio driven by a commercial imperative” (10). The shift towards a more purely commercial approach in the UK emerged during the Conservative government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during the mid-Eighties (Stoller and Wray, 2010). This development is more fully

explored in following section, which focuses on the influence of political regulation on commercial radio.

The UK, unlike many other countries, was late to embrace legal, land-based independent radio (Wallis, 2008). The first commercial stations were required to wait almost twenty years to follow the arrival of commercial television in the UK (Street, 2009). Legal land-based commercial radio in the UK was eventually established in 1973 with the arrival of LBC and Capital Radio. At this point, the first music-based documentaries for commercial radio began to be broadcast. However, it was almost another twenty years before commercial radio was finally heard on a national frequency (Crisell, 2001). Nevertheless, free market broadcasting had a considerable influence on the development of radio in Britain decades before it was officially permitted (Chignell, 2009).

The possibility of deriving revenue from radio broadcasts was considered since the earliest origins of the medium. Indeed, speculation about the commercial potential of broadcasting predate the very first radio transmissions. In 1898 inventors contemplated the prospect of using publicly transmitted radio waves as a commercial service, before deciding that that this approach would be unfeasible to implement (Slotten, 2009). Lodge, a Professor of Experimental Physics who played a major role in the initial development of radio, did not fully recognise the practical applications or commercial possibilities of the medium (Garratt, 2006). However, Guglielmo Marconi, arguably referred to as the ‘inventor’ of radio, was a far more entrepreneurial figure, who went to great lengths to demonstrate the commercial opportunities inherent in his early wireless systems (Hong, 2001). Older academics like Lodge were slow to appreciate radio’s commercial value and tended to view the medium as a potential tool for education. Whereas, the possibility that radio could become an entertaining

commercial enterprise was the driving motivation behind youthful innovators, such as Marconi in the UK and De Forest in the US.

Smulyan (1994) views the early commercialisation of the American airwaves as a conscious move to reduce listeners to the lowest common denominator. This disparaging view overlooks the effort of early US radio innovators who were inspired by entrepreneurial opportunities. Radio pioneers such as Lee de Forest and Charles Herrold “the father of broadcasting” (Adams and Greb, 2003), primarily viewed radio broadcasting as a form of entertainment. Both included early examples of advertising within their broadcasts (Walker, 2011). De Forest’s radio experiments were informed by the farsighted possibility of using a central transmitter to provide individual homes with a commercial entertainment service (Slotten, 2009). I suggest that the opportunity to derive profit from radio transmissions was a key motivator in its early technical development. However, the best way to actually achieve finance gain from radio was far from clear as the medium sought to establish itself.

During radio’s infancy, business models for commercial radio in the UK and US constantly evolved and adapted. A company that transformed considerably since its earliest incarnation is the BBC. Although the British Broadcasting Company is now considered a bastion of public service broadcasting, it originally began as a fledgling commercial company (Fleming, 2010). In 1922 the BBC’s first broadcasts began as a means to promote and increase the sales of commercial radio manufacturers (Street, 2009). Two years earlier, in 1920, Marconi carried out experimental broadcasts that were sponsored by the UK newspaper *The Daily Mail*. These first steps are the earliest representation of free market broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Street (2009) regards the emergence of the BBC as a key moment in the development of European radio. At this point, radio documentaries for commercial audiences did not exist.

However, I suggest the ancestry of the genre in the UK can be traced back to Marconi's initial attempts to lure audiences with entertainment-based, sponsored programming.

No assessment of UK commercial radio would be complete without acknowledging the efforts of Captain Leonard F. Plugge, who is considered by many to be a "pioneer of European-based, English language, commercially funded radio" (Barnard, 1989: 18). Street (2008) credits him as an "entrepreneur of daring and vision" who, throughout the Twenties and Thirties, "constantly pushed and chivvied" the BBC, challenging their position as Britain's preeminent broadcaster (10). During the Twenties the UK government actively discouraged any form of competition to the existing model of exclusively public service broadcasting (Wallis, 2008). However, Plugge's first forays in commercial radio involved selling adverts to British companies, which were then broadcast on foreign stations whose transmissions could be received in southern England, in direct competition to the BBC (Barnard, 1989). I suggest this shrewd avoidance of regulation can be seen as the start of UK commercial radio's long tradition of 'sailing close to the wind' in terms of circumventing the intent of government policy, without actually breaking the law.

Plugge's initiatives had considerable impact on the development of commercial radio in England and his influence has been underestimated (Berg, 2013). His use of sponsored content to provide innovative programming throughout the Twenties and Thirties helped shape the industry as we know it today. Street (2008) goes so far as to suggest that Plugge "changed the face and the sound of broadcasting in the UK" (11). Although Plugge's company did not produce documentaries as such, his prophetic use of targeted, specialist audio content to gain wide populist audiences was a precursor to contemporary commercial radio programming.

This section considered the origins of commercial radio and explored how the industry has been represented in academic literature. I revealed a lack of research in the field, while underscoring the importance of commercial radio in shaping the development of the medium. I now assess the impact of political economy on the industry and the degree to which political pressure has shaped programming practices, with a particular focus on the documentary genre. I explore legislation and regulation as it relates to the UK commercial radio industry, as the majority of my practice-based research centres on this market. However, I also assess the evolution of US radio, to reveal the distinctive differences between the two.

1.3 The Political Economy of Commercial Radio

The term political economy relates to the way government and law are linked to production and trade. Tabb (1999) defines political economy as being the study of “social choices in production and distribution” and how these factors are constrained by the structures of governance alongside cultural “attitudes, norms and values” (15). Caporaso and Levine (1992) view political economy as being representative of a depoliticised society, stating it is “part of the erosion of politics and the rise to dominance of a largely autonomous private sphere” (218). It is therefore relevant to use political economy to consider how commercial radio conglomerates have evolved and to assess the ongoing relationship between these companies and governmental policy. Decades of lobbying, appeasement, gentle pressure and outright defiance from the industry have all played a part in shaping contemporary commercial radio around the world and consequently, the practice of documentary producers who work within the field. This section reveals how the legislation of successive UK governments has

impacted on the output and development of radio in the UK. I provide a historicised overview of industry developments to reveal the significant role commercial radio has played in shaping the wider sector. Although McQuail (2004) views the arguments for and against the deregulation and commercialisation of electronic media as being a fundamental debate in European broadcasting, I contend this dispute has already been won. Free market forces have been largely successful in pushing for increasingly relaxed governmental regulation. This, in turn, has resulted in limited amounts of music documentary programming on contemporary commercial UK radio.

The evolution of radio in the UK reflects the various socio-political influences which have unfolded since the medium's inception (Stoller and Wray, 2010). According to Hendy (2000), governmental regulation of the airwaves has a wide range of political goals, such as recognising national culture, increasing choice and ensuring certain broadcast standards are consistently maintained. At a simplistic level, countries that allow commercial radio demonstrate an adherence to the economic model of capitalism, which supports private ownership and corporate profit. Every time a radio commercial encourages a listener to buy a product or use a service it reinforces the consumerist principles that exist in a "capitalist paradigm" (Starkey, 2004: 161).

Hendy (2000) views the world's electromagnetic spectrum as being a "relatively scarce resource" that requires careful management (11). For this reason, radio regulation first stemmed from the need to manage the allocation of frequencies and limit interference between the transmission signals of different stations. Yet as radio continued to evolve this regulation became an ideological frontline between political parties (Starkey, 2004). A common source of this conflict came from the central political debate, as old as the medium itself, about whether the radio spectrum should be seen as either a public resource or a vehicle for free market enterprise.

The unfolding history of commercial radio in Britain radio is entirely dissimilar to the American market (Stoller and Wray 2010). Public service radio is traditionally associated with European models of broadcasting, whereas commercial radio has dominated the US market since the Twenties (Chignell, 2009). Yet there was initial opposition to the commercialisation of the American radio industry, as legislators feared advertising would limit the medium's ability to provide socially responsible content (Keith, 2007). As Slotten (2009) observes, most US stations did not feature advertising in the early Twenties. However, broadcasters soon moved towards commercialisation to remain viable (Keith, 2007). As more and more stations adopted this model, programme sponsorship quickly became a defining trait of broadcasting in the US and the industry began to flourish (Chignell, 2009).

The rapid growth in US commercial radio throughout the late Twenties and into the Thirties caused concern for the Roosevelt administration. According to Keith (2007), the proliferation of commercial stations led to an increase in misleading, often unsubstantiated, advertising. In response, the US Government introducing a series of advertising regulations and, for the first time, commercials were required to adhere to formal guidelines set by government policy. Another key development was the formation of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as an independent agency of the US Government. The commission was created by the *Communications Act* of 1934 to replace the regulatory functions of the Federal Radio Commission. To this day, the FCC still controls radio ownership in the US, enforces the allocation of frequencies and regulates programming content such as the provision of news and locally produced content (Hendy, 2000).

Commercial radio took far longer to develop in the UK than it did in the US or Europe. The Government's early refusal to allow, or even consider, the idea of

commercial radio is reflected in Tunstall's (2004) description of Britain's media policy as being "a tortoise" (262). This slow, gradual approach to media regulation in the UK contrasted with the more responsive policies of many Western European countries in the twentieth century who were generally more permissive towards free enterprise in radio broadcasting. Crisell (1986) believes that British audiences had begun to develop a taste for the 'light' output of the Forces Programme, created in 1940 to maintain the morale of troops. This content reflected the music based programming of the European-based commercial stations, which had proven popular before the Second World War. The BBC recognised the success of the Forces Programme, and replaced it with the Light Programme in 1945, along with an accompanying range of networks (Street, 2009). But this progressiveness did not quell a growing desire for change.

Following the Second World War, the BBC's domination of the airwaves began to be seriously questioned. In 1950 the Beveridge Committee became the first post-war committee of inquiry to investigate UK broadcasting (Scannell, 1988). In 1955, Ian Jacob, the BBC's Director General, echoed the concerns of early legislators in the US when he claimed that increasing competition could lower standards and potentially lead to the end of public service broadcasting (Crisell, 1994). Although the Beveridge Committee had endorsed the BBC's monopoly, a newly elected Conservative government rejected Beveridge's recommendations and chose to establish commercial television in the UK (Scannell, 1988). O'Shaughnessy (1990) believed the launch of ITV television in 1955 placed the commercial branch of the new medium in the control of "a small, elite group of financiers, controllers, and programme makers whose broad interests were still those of the capitalist state" (138). ITV soon proved to be a success with the public and television quickly unseated radio as the leading source of

entertainment (Keith, 2007). Government sanctioned commercial broadcasting was finally established in the UK, and radio was ready to follow television's example.

Street (2009) believes there was increasing pressure on the UK Government and the BBC during the Fifties to provide programming designed specifically for younger audiences. In the Sixties, this pressure came to a head with the arrival of entrepreneurial 'pirate' stations, such as Radio London and Radio Caroline, who, in the spirit of Plugge, defied government regulations by broadcasting commercially from international waters. In response to the popularity of these illegal, youth orientated stations, the government pushed back by implementing the *Marine Broadcasting Offences Act*, which became law in August 1967. However, the pirate stations defied the Act, and continued broadcasting. This disobedience served to increase their attractiveness to young audiences, who saw pirate radio as "a metaphor representing a spirit of freedom" (Wallis, 2008: 9). The best efforts of regulation had not lessened the attractiveness of commercial radio and, as Crisell (2002) observes, the impact of pirate broadcasters was profound and permanent; "British sound broadcasting would never be the same again" (144).

Hendy (2007) views the launch of the London Broadcasting Company (LBC) in October 1973 as being a significant point in UK broadcasting history. Yet he prefers to identify 1970 as a more meaningful year for the industry, as this was when the Conservative Party under Edward Heath came to power. The Party had previously pledged to legislate in favour of commercial radio. Therefore, the election of the new Conservative Government meant the BBC had to finally accept the reality of legitimate competition on the UK's airwaves. The Conservative Government published its plans for independent broadcasting in the UK in 1971 and one year later the Queen gave Royal Assent to the *Sound Broadcasting Act* (Hendy, 2007). 1972 saw the

establishment of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), who were to act as the regulatory body for commercial television and radio (Stoller and Wray, 2010). These regulatory milestones laid the groundwork for the arrival of radio documentaries on commercial radio formats.

At the outset of free market broadcasting in the UK, a commitment to spoken word content was enshrined in law. The *Sound Broadcasting Act* contained legislation that required independent radio to deliver regulated quotas of news, speech and local information. These new, independent stations also needed to provide specific content that would appeal to wide range of minority listeners (Barnard, 1989). Amongst these programming elements was a commitment to produce programmes of “inherent intellectual merit, whether arts programmes, drama or documentaries” (74). Commercial stations were now required by law to produce documentaries as part of their remit. The creators of these radio documentaries faced the challenge of producing content that was not just entertaining, but also compliant with the educational demands of government policy. These regulations reflected similar conditions imposed on ITV, designed to strictly control the output of the new stations, as well as the ownership and commercialism of independent radio in the UK (Stoller and Wray, 2010). However, the industry soon felt the constraints of this legislation and began to bridle against its various demands.

The UK radio industry’s desire for change reflects McQuail’s (2004) observation about the “steadily increasing scope for commercial enterprise and private ownership” in broadcasting throughout the Eighties (2). Commercial radio found a sympathetic ear with a Conservative Government who sought to dramatically end the “social market hegemony” which dominated the political landscape since the Fifties (Stoller and Wray, 2010: 30). The *Heathrow Conference* of 1984 was an initiative

designed to pressure the Government. The conference steered Conservatives in the direction of deregulation and thereby moved the industry towards a truly 'commercial' model of radio. In 1985 the IBA relaxed some of its rules to allow the 'co-funding' of programming. This early form of sponsorship helped contribute to a lucrative period for the industry (RadioCentre, 2013). The Eighties can be viewed as a crucial turning point in the medium's history (Barnard, 1989) as radio, along with the television and print industries, were transformed (Stoller and Wray, 2010). The need for documentary content was no longer of importance to an industry that preferred instead to focus on music programming; a far cheaper, less labour intensive, form of radio broadcasting.

Wray (2010) considers the *Broadcasting Act* of 1990 as the start of radio deregulation in the UK. The Act followed the advice of the *Peacock Committee* by replacing the IBA regulatory body with the Radio Authority (RA) (Street, 2015). Ownership and investment regulations for the industry were reduced, along with a relaxation of public service requirements for commercial stations (Fleming, 2010). As a result, commercial radio continued to become more music orientated and many stations were absorbed into increasingly growing radio conglomerates (Street, 2015). Although these changes led to substantial financial gains for the industry during the late Nineties, by the start of the Twenty-First Century, aggregate listening for commercial radio in the UK had reached a plateau. By 2004 revenues were once again starting to decline (Myers, 2009: 23). Street (2015) agrees that radio-advertising sales were low during this period, and notes the industry was also starting to face the challenges posed by new digital innovations. The emergence of the Apple iPod and streaming technologies allowed listeners to rewind, pause and generally avoid commercial advertising breaks (Chignell, 2009). Once again, the industry's response was to blame legislation as the cause of its difficulties and called upon governmental assistance.

However, according to Myers (2012), commercial radio itself was responsible for many of the problems it faced, rather than poor regulation.

In 2000 a paper was produced for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, as well as the Department for Trade and Industry, which outlined the Radio Authority's belief in the need for further deregulation (Street, 2015). This paper directly led to the *Communication Act* of 2003, which saw the Labour Government dismantle existing media regulation to create the Office of Communications (Ofcom) (RadioCentre, 2013). The *Communications Act* led to the removal of many barriers to station ownership and consequently allowed for the emergence of even larger media conglomerates, which still dominate the UK's commercial radio industry (Chignell, 2009). Street's (2015) assessment of the industry midway through the first decade of the Twenty-First Century referred to a "thriving vibrant media" which had supposedly reinvented itself in the face of emerging technologies and a new set of challenges (20). Yet, as the decade ended, Myers (2009) described a far bleaker outlook. In his independent review of the rules governing local content, Myers (2009) claimed that more than fifty UK stations were at risk of being "forced out of business unless there was a radical overhaul of the way the sector was regulated" (17).

The *Digital Economy Act*, which came into force in April 2010, gave Ofcom new powers to grant seven-year licence renewals to FM and AM stations in the UK. This move was designed to support the migration of commercial stations from their current analogue frequencies towards Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) radio. Ingram and Barber (2005) believe the UK is a world leader in DAB technology which, they claim, offers "much greater listener choice across most parts of the country" (8). The government, in consultation with the commercial radio industry, drew up an ambitious plan that timetabled a radio 'switchover', starting in 2015, to be completed by 2018.

However, three years later, following the completion of work on the *Digital Radio Action Plan*, the government was no longer able to commit to this timetable and was unwilling to set a confirmed date for the proposed transition to DAB. Although the industry has continued to build its presence online and through mobile technologies, most major stations are currently still wedded to traditional FM forms of transmission, with DAB broadcasts often providing simulcasts of analogue programming.

This section has demonstrated how political influence has shaped the development of commercial radio, and subsequently impacted on documentary content. Successive governments in the US and UK have relaxed legislative control of the airwaves, thereby providing far greater freedoms for private enterprise broadcasters. The fears held by earlier governments about the need to ‘protect’ radio audiences from supposedly unscrupulous free market practices have been largely set aside as big business has acted to increase profits and audience share in both the US and UK. It has revealed how the loosening of broadcasting regulation has lessened the desire for documentary content to be included as part of regular commercial radio programming. Legislation has, therefore, had a considerable impact on the presence of spoken-word content within contemporary commercial schedules. As indicated, there are differing opinions on whether deregulation should be praised for saving the radio industry, or castigated for lowering the perceived quality of commercial broadcasting. However, strongly experts, academics and industry figures argue their case for or against deregulation, there remains an underlying sense that the radio spectrum is, ultimately, a public resource and must therefore be run to serve broad public ideals (Hendy, 2000). Sadler (2005) is uncertain whether deregulation has ultimately had a positive or negative effect on commercial radio. Yet, there is a certain irony in Stoller and Wray’s (2010) observation that, despite the protests of industry, the limitations imposed by

regulation arguably helped to produce meaningful content, such as radio documentaries, that proved to be popular with local audiences.

By drawing together numerous sources, this section has revealed the complex history of commercial radio and its relationship to political economy. In doing so, I address a lack of research into the field, and provide a foundation on which to draw further conclusions about commercial radio programming. I now explore critical responses to commercial radio's output and consider the industry's supposedly 'safe' operating practices. I evaluate the management and procedures associated with commercial broadcasting and argue that the industry has often been unfairly castigated for simply following standard business practices.

1.4 Performance and risk aversion within commercial radio

US radio producer Norman Corwin believed that radio should "serve a higher purpose than merely peddling commercial goods" (Ehrlich 2011: 8). However, achieving this ideal has proven difficult for commercial broadcasters in fiercely competitive markets. This section investigates perceptions of 'worthiness' in regards to commercial radio output. By considering how audiences and critics view the performance and value of commercial radio, it is possible to gain an insight into how radio documentaries are perceived within the field.

Critics, as well as advertisers, were initially sceptical of independent radio in the UK. *The Daily Telegraph* described the launch of LBC in 1973 as being "a crashing mistake", accusing the station of amateurism and "lacking in authority" (Hendy, 2007: 139). A week later, the first broadcasts of Capital Radio received an equally dismissive response with *The Economist* and *Financial Times* referring to listener phone-ins as "an

embarrassment” (139). However, I suggest that the manner in which the industry responded to early criticisms and financial difficulties demonstrates one of the industry’s key strengths. Commercial radio must pivot quickly in response to certain challenges and opportunities, and is generally able to react more quickly than public service broadcasters, who are invariably bound by bureaucratic regulation. The speed and decisiveness displayed by the commercial radio industry when making difficult decisions stems from its survivalist instinct. This adaptability can be seen in the way that independent UK radio managed to establish itself at an economically challenging time, within an advertising market dominated by television (Barnard, 1989). At the start of the Seventies, Britain was faced with an international oil crisis, union strikes, and the introduction of a three-day working week (Stoller and Wray 2010). In order to survive, many commercial stations were forced to rationalise their performance and attempted to attract both advertisers and audiences by giving listeners “what they thought they wanted to hear” (Gage, 1999: xiii). By pushing against regulation and creating lighter ‘entertainment’ focused programming that relied on music output, the industry managed to save itself. Due to a swift series of modifications, ILR stations finally began to perform well (Stoller and Wray, 2010). However, by challenging regulations, the industry was at odds with the Labour Party, who had initially been against commercial radio in the UK. When Labour came to power in 1974 they strongly encouraged the IBA to be firmer with stations who put “the commercial above the community motive” (Barnard, 1989: 82). In 1977 the government-appointed Annan Committee required the creation of more ‘meaningful’ speech content within ILR programming. As a result, the average daytime output of music dropped from fifty-five percent to forty-nine percent, while the amount of speech content increased (Barnard, 1989). Although the Annan Committee had been convened to act on criticisms of ILR

programming, the Government nevertheless saw some merit in the industry and considered it robust enough to be allowed to expand across the UK, paving the way for growth in the Eighties and Nineties (Stoller and Wray, 2010).

Chignell (2009) believes the *Broadcasting Act* of 1990 in the UK and the *Telecommunications Act* of 1996 in the USA, had a dramatic effect on the industry. A consequence of these wide reaching Acts was the consolidation of the industry, which saw media conglomerates buying up smaller stations in both the US and UK radio markets. As Fairchild (2012) observes, large privately owned companies currently control the majority of international radio markets. This is especially true in terms of the UK and US commercial radio industries, where sizable networks are owned and operated by companies such as Bauer and Global in the UK, and Townsquare Media, and Cumulus Media in US. The ongoing effects of industry consolidation on the quality of radio programming is open to debate (Hilliard and Keith, 2005). Foege (2009) specifically holds the media company Clear Channel as being accountable for radio's decline in the US and accuses the company of increasing its revenues while at the same time alienating "scores of radio listeners who had grown weary of what they perceived as unimaginative programming" (Foege, 2009: xii). In a *Fortune* magazine article, titled *The Bad Boys of Radio*, Chen (2003), interviewed Lowry Mays, the founder and CEO of Clear Channel. Chen comments that Mays' detractors are infuriated by Clear Channel's "all business attitude" which ignores the creative possibilities of radio broadcasting. In response, Mays states, "We're not in the business of providing news and information. We're not in the business of providing well-researched music. We're simply in the business of selling our customers products" (71). This quote reveals the company's unashamedly commercial focus, which put profits ahead of programming.

Writing in 1951, Lewis Hill expressed concerns about commercial radio being used as a means of encouraging mass consumerism and, as a result, becoming averse to the risks posed by innovation (McKinney, 1966).

“For mass sales there must be a mass norm, and the activity must be conducted as nearly as possible without risk of departure from the norm. By suppressing the individual, the unique, the industry reduces the risk of failure (abnormality) and assures itself a standard product for mass consumption.” (21)

Hill’s observations in the middle of the twentieth century were just as relevant over forty years later when, according to Walker (2011), industry consolidation in the Nineties resulted in a narrowing of station formats, and developed an industry culture that was averse to risk and “obsessed with demographics” (214). The motivations that drive these corporate entities continue to be questioned by academics such as Fairchild (2012), who believes that large radio companies actively exclude the public, and view audiences as mere consumers. He condemns media ‘giants’ for their use of focus groups and demographic research to form “administered relationships of consumerism” which he sees as being economically exclusionary and anti-competitive (3). Conversely, Sadler (2005) presents the argument that deregulation has been largely positive for audiences, providing increased diversity through a range of different station formats and a greater variety of programming than was previously available. Chignell (2009) acknowledges the business rationale behind the consolidation of the radio industry, which enabled staffing to be provided centrally to a large number of stations, therefore allowing companies to achieve economies of scale. It can also be argued that by allowing large companies to purchase small, struggling radio stations, these troubled broadcasters have been able to survive, while advertisers have more options and are therefore “better able to hit their target demographics” (Sadler, 2005: 109).

Priestman (2002) believes that the evolution of commercial radio has led to “the homogenization of radio rather than true diversity” (19). Similarly, Sadler (2005) believes commercial radio playlists have become less diverse, due to the common industry practice known as ‘heavy rotation’. This relatively safe programming technique sees a limited list of popular songs played more often than others, in order to build audiences. Keith (2007) sees this lack of programming diversity as being the result of industry consolidation and cites interviews with industry practitioners who blame multiple station ownership for a lack of new programming ideas and a general lack of creativity. I suggest that a tendency to avoid risk and innovation can also be seen in the lack of radio documentary programming on commercial radio formats and in the relatively safe, predictable commissioning choices made for existing music documentary slots. However, there are still opportunities for pre-produced content within commercial programming. As Lloyd (2015) claims, commercial stations produce “an increasing amount of commercially funded mini features” (243).

In the UK, the accusation of uniformity and a risk adverse programming culture was apparent in research commissioned by the UK Government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2014. Value Partners were asked to conduct market research as part of a consultation on the renewal of analogue commercial radio licences. Much of this research involved individual interviews, carried out to gain insight into the views of key industry stakeholders. An anonymous respondent commented; “My view is that... lots of commercial radio stations are less creative with their content, are bland, and are not willing to take any risk” (Hadley and Psaras, 2014: 16). Although the industry’s reluctance to take risks is often viewed as a weakness, it stems from a need to ensure financial stability. Taking unnecessary chances with programming may potentially lose audiences and subsequently, advertisers. Aspinall (1979) claims radio

is particularly successful in building 'habit listening'. Listeners become accustomed to tuning to the same station at the same time every day of every week. To unnecessarily jeopardise listener ratings by changing existing programming goes against radio's strength as a provider of consistency and structure within listeners lives. As Geller (2012) observes, listeners are "creatures of habit" and can be very resistant to change (462), while Hendy (2007) claims that audiences form attachments to that which is familiar. Geller (2012) questions whether commercial radio should disregard the expectations of its audience members by disrupting their listening patterns for the sake of ill-considered innovation, which can annoy or frustrate an audience. It is therefore understandable why commercial broadcasters might be cautious to step outside customary scheduling practices by including music documentary content within formats that traditionally feature exclusively music-based programming.

Barnes (1988) advises commercial radio programmers to concentrate on playlisting familiar, least objectionable material, in hope of preventing audience 'tune out'. He stresses the need to "avoid at all costs the possibility of playing a record the listener doesn't like" (20). This reflects Starkey's (2004) contention that audiences may react adversely to unfamiliar content. He suggests this may be an influencing factor in a general wariness to challenge listeners with unexpected, unusual content. As Priestman (2002) observes, the viability of a commercial station depends on "maintaining a consistent and predictable share of the potential audience" (19). Rothernbuhler and McCourt (1987) agree that stations make predictable programming choices to enable them to make a financial profit. Barnes (1988) adds that predictability is not only attractive to listeners, but also to advertisers who are seeking specific audiences. Therefore, changes are only made after a great deal of careful thought and consideration as a station's profitability may be at stake. Rothernbuhler and McCourt

(1987) reproach the commercial radio industry for its “preoccupation with efficiency” (104). Yet this seems a curious accusation to level at any financially responsible company. Although there is a need for creativity and flair to attract new audiences and maintain existing ratings, I suggest that commercial radio follows predictable patterns of programming to fulfil its core objective of securing targeted revenues, while working within a set operational budget. Viewing these practices as being regressive or unimaginative is to ignore the ‘real world’ economic environment that contemporary commercial radio operates within.

A widespread hegemonic practice of large commercial radio companies is the use of automation and networking. Fairchild (2012) describes the way “hulking radio conglomerates” use automation and networking as a means to send remotely produced content to “robot” stations, which is then “presented to the public as ‘virtual live’ radio” (3). Chignell (2009) refers to this practice as being the radio industry’s response to the “relentless drive to cut costs and increase profits” (114). In the UK, Fleming (2010) accuses automation and networking as being responsible for the erosion of provincial distinctiveness and the increasingly homogenous output of local stations across the country. However, the industry itself sees merit in the practice and suggests that, although content may not be produced locally, what is most important is that there is an emphasis on local relevance (Myers, 2009). This response, however, does not answer Sadler’s (2005) concern that automation can effectively leave a station unattended, with no ‘live’ staff on hand to inform listeners about civil emergencies or other breaking news events.

In response to a consultation process from Government regulator Ofcom, a RadioCentre (2009) publication claimed that audience surveys do not show any evidence that listeners prefer locally produced content. They also argue that the use of

split links during networked programming is wholly justifiable, as this material is researched and prepared by local individuals and provides useful content to a wide range of stations (RadioCentre, 2009). Myers (2009) review of local content on UK commercial radio agrees there is little hard evidence to suggest that networking content from another region has a negative effect on a station's ability to deliver local content to listeners. He claims that location is "merely another 'input'" in a station's production system, and may have "little bearing on the 'outputs' broadcast to listeners" (70). Despite her misgivings, Fleming (2010) acknowledges the industry's defence of networking as being a 'common sense' approach, which allows smaller stations the opportunity to save money, while providing greater variety for larger stations. The practice of sharing content across numerous stations is often applied to radio documentaries. A single documentary may be networked across several stations in order to maximise its potential audience and thereby justify the economic outlay spent on production.

While it can be argued that advances in networking and automation technology has resulted in fewer jobs across a wide range of businesses, the commercial radio industry still manages to provide valuable training opportunities for aspiring broadcasters. In 2013, Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, praised the industry for its ability to "act as a breeding ground" for creative talent, which had gone on to become "the cornerstones of UK cultural identity" (RadioCentre, 2013: 2). Commercial radio in the UK often identifies and nurtures young talent, who are then 'poached' by another station, or employed by the BBC, once they have gained a suitable level of experience and expertise. Although the use of networking and automation raises questions about authenticity and localness, regional commercial stations fulfil a meaningful role within the towns and cities they serve.

Helen Goodman MP, Shadow Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, praised commercial radio in the UK, claiming the industry “does many things – enriching the lives of individuals, reinforcing a sense of local community, and playing an important role in local economies” (RadioCentre, 2013: 4).

This section has shown how commercial radio is frequently accused of not aspiring to the virtues expected of public service broadcasting. I suggested that many of the criticisms levelled against the commercial industry ignore the financial imperatives which inform programming decisions. Unlike commercial radio operators, public service broadcasters work in an environment that is far more conducive towards trying new programming approaches, as they are not accountable to shareholders or sales targets. As I have shown, the need to build and maintain loyal listenership is a crucial factor which underpins commercial radio programming. The next section explores how the industry measures audience size. I assess the interplay between commercial and public service radio and argue that both models of broadcasting are similarly driven by the need to acquire ratings, in order to prove their worth.

1:5 The ratings war

Listener measurements, in terms of ratings and research, are carefully analysed to help stations gain a better understanding of audiences and ultimately help to secure increased funding for both broadcasting public service and commercials models. A successful, financially secure commercial radio station is far more likely to commission original music documentary content. This section considers how the motivation to gain listeners impacts on the decisions made by commercial radio programmers. In chapter three I investigate how radio documentary producers are influenced by audiences, but it is

necessary to firstly assess how stations themselves view audience figures. I reveal how successful commercial broadcasting practices have been adopted by publicly funded radio in the UK to gain listeners, and consider the tensions that exist between these two models.

Regular surveys are used to measure the size of an audience and provide other information about who is listening to a station at a particular time (McLeish, 2005). Free market models of radio seek financial profit by providing attractive programming content that will gain audience figures, which are in turn sold to advertisers (Messere and O'Donnell, 2004). An increase in audience figures, in terms of individual listeners and the time they spend listening to a certain station, equates directly to the overall success of the station. Therefore, McLeish (2005) considers regular audience research to be of particular importance to commercial radio, as it is a crucial indicator for advertisers and sponsors who buy airtime. Glasser (1984) claims that commercial stations are more interested in appealing to potential advertisers than gaining large audiences. Similarly, Meehan (1984) observes that revenues are not derived from building audiences, but by selling ratings to advertisers. Ratings are an essential tool in measuring inter-station rivalries. The competition for ratings is described by Shingler and Wieringa (1998) as being "fierce" and "a ratings war, with all services fighting for the lion's share of their demographic" (107).

Given the importance of audience ratings, it is unsurprising that the veracity of survey results is often contested. Sourcing radio ratings can be unreliable as sampling techniques between various ratings companies operating in the same market can "produce wildly discrepant ratings reports" (Rothernbuhler and McCourt, 1987: 105). A small sample of a station's total potential audience are used to measure listenership and opinion. Silvey (1974) explained the rationale for the use of this methodology was

based on “the predicate that conclusions about large populations can be inferred from data about a limited number of them” (44).

William Siemering, the first Director of Programming of National Public Radio in the US, claims the one central goal of commercial radio is to make a profit (Keith, 2007). He believes public service broadcasting fulfils the “unmet cultural, information, and community needs” that commercial radio does not otherwise provide (16). On the surface, it may appear that publicly funded radio is very different structurally and financially to free market models. However, McLeish (2005) contends it is possible for a commercially run station to function in a similar manner to a public service provider, “especially in near-monopoly conditions or where there is little competition for the available advertising” (12). According to Aspinall (1971), advertisers can be convinced to fund public information through sponsorship, although he concedes this requires “effective station control of advertising and good salesmanship” (131). Similarly, the commissioning of music radio documentaries for commercial radio is often dependent on sponsorship opportunities, or the inclusion of advertising breaks, which help to justify a production’s value.

Fairchild (2012) is dismissive in his view that commercial radio is “not designed to do much more than turn a reliable profit” (1). However, the industry often takes issue with the notion it is solely driven by financial goals and publically promotes itself as having benevolent motivations. The RadioCentre (2013), the United Kingdom’s radio trade-body, claims that commercial radio does far more than simply make money. It argues that local commercial stations prove their worth by delivering regularly updated news and event information, and claim that research proves their listeners value the mix of music and entertainment offered by regional brands. An earlier trade body, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), also promoted commercial radio’s

altruism, claiming the model provided “public service without public expenditure” (Lewis and Booth, 1989: 2). Yet Fairchild (2012) views these rationales as “bland and self-serving justifications for (commercial radio’s) patent dominance of what are supposed to be public airwaves” (6). Fleming (2010) is prepared to consider the industry’s defence that a station which operates to make a profit “does not preclude it from providing a service to the public” and credits commercial radio’s ability to build community links as a key strength (7). Conversely, Walker (2011) rejects the perceived virtues of commercial radio, believing there to be a general decline in locally oriented programming. He describes local UK broadcasters as being “unadventurous, un-autonomous, and unconcerned with the real colour and flavour” (190).

These opposing views illustrate the schism that exists between the industry’s perception of its motives and how many critics and academics view the programming practices of commercial radio. The tension between the principles of public service and commercial broadcasting can be traced back to the earliest days of radio at the beginning of the Twentieth Century (Slotten, 2009). Chignell (2009) dramatically describes the arguments between these two camps as an “ideological battle” (115). Central to this debate is the way each model views its ‘duty’ to the listener and how this responsibility shapes the drive to attract larger audiences. The need to remain financially profitable has made commercial radio susceptible to accusations of viewing audiences as a single mass of consumers, rather than recognising them as individual listeners (Smulyan, 1994). Fairchild (2012) is especially pointed in his criticism of corporate radio practices. He accuses commercial radio for reducing their audiences to “some common enumerative denominator” and argues that statistical data is used by the industry to “whittle down mass audiences into manageable demographic niches” (3).

Audience measurements are of value to a range of broadcasting models. I suggest that Connelly's (2012) assertion that radio is a "consumer-driven platform" is true for both independent and publicly funded broadcasters (3). Listeners must choose to 'consume' radio stations in an often-crowded market. The need to demonstrate viability through audience figures is an imperative that keeps commercial stations financially operational, while also helping secure consistent government funding for public broadcasters and community radio. As Shingler and Wieringa (1998) observe, public service broadcasters still require strong ratings to justify license fees (106).

The stated purpose of the BBC is "to inform, to educate, to entertain" (Hendy, 2007: 87). Yet its didactic, overly formal approach to public service broadcasting helped give rise to the popularity of early commercial stations. Street (2009) argues the BBC's "paternalistic attitude" in the Thirties assisted populist radio to gain large audiences in the UK, thereby aiding the development of commercial broadcasting (9). Audiences were seemingly unconvinced by the virtues of commercial-free broadcasting and actively sought the independent alternatives that broadcast from Europe. Two independent surveys conducted in 1935 revealed that sixty-one percent of UK families with radio sets were listening to commercial broadcasts from stations such as Radio Normandy, Radio Luxembourg and Radio Paris (Lewis and Booth, 1989). Although audiences were not necessarily abandoning the BBC, it appeared that they were tuning to commercial stations based in Europe whenever the BBC was either off air or broadcasting "programmes with no discernibly entertaining features whatsoever" (Barnard, 1989: 19). This competition motivated the BBC to finally initiate the Listener Research Unit in 1936. Street (2009) sees a certain irony in the department being led by Robert Silvey, who had previously worked for a commercial advertising agency. Up until this point, aside from the occasional letter from a listener, there was very little

information known about the behaviour and tastes of the BBC's audience. Part of Silvey's work for the Listener Research Unit involved monitoring the advertising revenues gained by the BBC's commercial competition. Although these were still relatively small in 1933, Silvey's investigations showed that they were growing quickly.

John Reith, the BBC's founder and Director General, had little confidence in the concept of systematic listener research. He believed that "if the audience did not at first like what it was given, it would, through continued exposure, learn to appreciate it" (Potter, 2012: 24). Reith was concerned that audience measurement would influence and inevitably dictate broadcasting policy (Crisell, 2001). Reith's anxiety about the role of ratings in shaping content was prescient, as the issue is still disputed today. A debate exists across commercial and public service broadcasting as to whether minority programmes should be sacrificed in the quest for larger audience figures. In this respect, documentaries can be seen as 'minority' programming as their subject matter may not appeal the widest possible audience and could potentially lose listeners who have tuned into a commercial station with the expectation of hearing music, rather than spoken word content.

By establishing the Listener Research Unit, the BBC was quickly able to gather a great deal of valuable information about their audiences, including evidence of its "very broad social composition" (Crisell, 2001: 22). Thanks to the rivalry provided by commercial radio, the BBC now had a greater understanding of its listeners and was able to assess its output more critically. For the first time, BBC listeners were beginning to influence content, rather than simply having to accept whatever was deemed to be 'good' for them. Audience size had finally become an important factor in shaping the BBC's radio policy (Crisell, 1994). However, some BBC staff saw the emergence of

audience research as an irrelevant annoyance (Street, 2015). In the published memoir of BBC employee Lionel Fielding, he refers to the Listener Research Unit as an imposition and saw its establishment as being the point where the BBC's output began to decline (Fielding, 1960).

Although the BBC and commercial radio represent two distinct models of broadcasting, there are certain similarities between them. Both need to work within set budgets and strive to gain listeners in order to validate their continued existence. It should also be noted that the BBC runs a commercial division that sells content to supplement its income from the licence fee.

The BBC has often employed commercial radio practices in order to gain ratings. The growing success of the Independent Local Radio collective (ILR) throughout the Seventies and into the Eighties provided the BBC with fresh ideas about how to programme content and market itself in an increasingly competitive environment. Soon after the launch of the ILR stations, BBC radio programming policies began to mimic much of their output and operational practices. In 1985 Barnard (1989) interviewed Tony Fish, from BBC York, about how commercial radio had helped to shape BBC marketing initiatives.

“ILR taught us how to sell radio stations. I think it's only since ILR that the BBC has seriously marketed its radio stations. For many years the BBC stations didn't have anything like the kind of glitter that the ILR had. Some of our stations could have been criticised in the early days for being very worthy but rather dull, now I think we would say we're exciting and worthwhile” (66).

Barnard claims that Radio 1, the BBC's youth station, similarly learnt from the programming policies of independent radio and consciously attempted to replicate the sound and marketing of commercial radio.

“Radio 1 became commercial in the sense that nearly every aspect of its daily operation - the pursuit of audiences and satisfaction of same, the maintenance

of a particular image and sound for the station, the attempts to involve listeners in the life of the station through competitions and meet-the-people road-shows - drew much from commercial radio precedents” (59).

Crisell (2001) agrees that although Radio 1 is supposedly commercial-free, it still features forms of advertising, such as; programme trailers, promotions for festival and concert events and public service ‘commercials’.

“These are all forms of advertising that are conformable with the station’s public service obligations, and the BBC would no doubt argue that many of them promote worthier causes than conventional commercials do: but my point is that they quite consciously follow the commercials in style, duration and frequency” (73).

The flow of staff and ideas between public service and commercial broadcasting has invigorated all sectors of the UK radio industry and kept the industry open to fresh approaches. Nevertheless, the commercial radio continues to have an uncomfortable relationship with the BBC. Many stations do not view other commercial stations as competition, insomuch as they are in competition with the BBC (Fleming, 2010). The RadioCentre (2009) claimed the industry operated within a “walled garden” where there was a protracted “bun fight” between the BBC and commercial broadcasters in the competition for listeners (6). Street (2015) claims that commercial radio has struggled to compete with the ‘content-rich’ offerings of the BBC, while Myers (2009) notes how the BBC’s radio production budget, derived from the licence fee, dwarfs that of commercial radio. In 2009 it was estimated that the commercial sector was spending £74m per annum on radio production, while the BBC was spending an estimated £405m (17).

There are annual budgets across the BBC for the provision of radio documentaries, while the commercial sector often views each documentary project on a case-by-case basis, dependent on sponsorship or the inclusion of advertising. Fleming (2010) suggests there is an imbalance in the industry, with a bias towards public service

broadcasting. She draws attention to concerns about the BBC's increasingly aggressive marketing techniques, and the practice of paying presenters large salaries, derived from licence fee revenues, which the commercial industry is unable to match. In more recent times, however, the balance of power has begun to shift. In 2015, the industry body Rajar produced ratings figures which revealed that commercial radio was heard by 35.1 million UK listeners in the final quarter of 2015, compared to a total BBC audience of 34.9 million. This was the first time the BBC had been beaten by the ad-funded sector since the end of 2000¹.

In this section I have demonstrated the need for both commercial and public service broadcasters to justify their existence through audience measurement. It is difficult to rationalise a station, a programme, or a radio documentary without being able to prove that there is an audience who will actually listen to it. Detailed ratings data and survey information provide programmers and producers with valuable information and insights to help anticipate the interests of typical listeners. I considered the interplay between commercial and public service forms of broadcasting in the UK and revealed how the BBC has used the best practice of commercial radio in order to boost its own ratings and remain viable in the face of competition. In the following two chapters, I develop this theme by examining shared practices which exist between radio documentary production for commercial and publically funded programming. Having considered the defining traits of commercial radio and revealing how the industry's evolution has been shaped by political legislation and the need to attract audiences, I now draw my final conclusions.

¹<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/the-media-column-commercial-radio-is-enjoying-a-revival-and-it-s-not-because-of-chris-moyles-a6859576.html>

1:6 Conclusion - commercial radio practices

This initial chapter introduced many of the central themes which underpin my thesis. I identified key commercial radio practices and explored how the industry's output has been guided by external political control. In doing so, I have shown how radio documentary production is situated within the wider field of commercial radio. I began by investigating how academia views free market radio. These studies are often informed by the past industry experience of the researcher, and tend to reflect public service forms of broadcasting. While Street (2009) observes a lack of literature specifically relating to commercial radio, I suggested that even fewer studies investigate music documentary production for commercial audiences. Assessments of radio practice have a tendency to overlook the core production skills used in the creation of documentaries, and view the field from a journalistic perspective (Lewis and Booth, 1989). Criticisms of the industry often stem from a lack of consideration towards the financial pressures faced by commercial radio. By rationalising the complaints levelled against commercial programming practices, I revealed the factors radio programmers and commissioners consider when assessing the merits of documentary content.

I explored the development of commercial radio in both the US and UK by identifying industry milestones and considering the work of innovative practitioners who shaped its growth. Political economy was used as a framework to consider how regulation and political opinion has guided contemporary commercial programming and, therefore, impacted on the amount of radio documentary content heard on contemporary commercial stations. As Fairchild (2012) notes, the output of both public service and commercial broadcasters are moulded and controlled by the prevailing political and economic ideologies of the time. However, industry has often attempted to influence government legislation. I showed how radio conglomerates successfully

lobbied for the ongoing deregulation of the US and UK radio industries and considered the profound impact of this relaxation on programming practices. Like Sadler (2005), I acknowledge there are arguments for and against the deregulation of commercial radio. Although fewer restrictions provided opportunities for increased revenue, deregulation has directly led to fewer documentaries and spoken word content being heard on commercial radio.

In section four I assessed perceptions of value and worth in commercial radio programming and discussed the industry's perceived propensity for safe, risk-free programming. I broadly agreed with Walker's (2011) assertion that consolidation has led to a more risk averse commercial broadcasting culture. As a result, the industry now views music documentaries as specialist programming content and, therefore, of limited value as prime-time programming material. Yet I accept that his sheltered approach has been necessary to survive economically challenging times. Cautious programming allows the industry to work within operational budgets and to meet sales targets. Although commercial radio is often criticised for a lack of innovation, I nevertheless agree with Lloyd's (2015) belief that "commercial radio is a hugely creative industry that can deliver enormous entertainment" (250).

This chapter tracked the evolution of radio ratings in the UK and considered the importance of audience measurement in maintaining consistent funding for both public broadcasting and commercial radio. Regular audience research is of value to radio documentary producers as detailed information about listeners and their interests can enable content to be more precisely targeted. I also considered the uneasy relationship between public service and commercial radio in the UK, noting the amount of interplay between the two models.

By examining the operating practices of commercial radio and the impact of

political economy on the industry's output and structure, I demonstrated how the industry has pivoted and adapted to a constantly changing media landscape. In the following two chapters, I show how these transformations have directly altered the practice of radio documentary production. Having explored the wider field of commercial radio I now focus on documentary studies and the technical approaches used in the production of radio documentaries. I begin by investigating the documentary genre and its place within radio programming. I consider how pioneering producers have advanced the form and assess the development of music documentaries for commercial audiences.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RADIO DOCUMENTARY

This chapter discusses the field of documentary studies and considers how the evolution of the genre has informed contemporary freelance radio documentary production practices. I build on the previous chapter, which explored how political economy impacted on the presence of documentaries within commercial programming, by investigating the genre itself in greater detail. The term ‘documentary’ is applied to a range of distinct production styles. It is therefore necessary to define and clarify what a radio documentary is, to better understand the music documentary form. Although the field of documentary studies contains a great deal of investigation, the majority of these inquiries concentrate on television and film production (Tacchi, 2000). McHugh (2014) claims that although the digital age has made audio documentaries and features increasingly accessible to audiences, studies of radio documentaries are still “scant at scholarly or professional level”, unlike film and television (24). However, I have located several studies specifically relating to radio documentary production, which I draw from in this chapter. As indicated in the previous chapter, many of these studies reveal a bias towards public service broadcasting and often view the field from a journalistic perspective. I address this imbalance by showing how the commercial radio industry acknowledges the value of documentary content, especially music related productions, using them to build new audiences and to reinforce listener loyalty.

I examine the broader field of documentary studies alongside more specialised examples from radio documentary studies. By identify similarities and differences between the two, I situate my own practice-based research within these respective fields. I track the development of radio documentary production and consider how

innovation and technical advances have impacted on the genre. I suggest there has been considerable interplay between radio and film documentaries, which has pushed the form forward. By providing historical context, I identify pioneering documentarians and reveal how traces of their work can still be heard within contemporary radio documentaries. I question the use of ‘authenticity’ as a defining feature of the genre, and consider how accuracy and realism is represented within radio documentary production. I show how the journalistic approaches of public service broadcasters compare to the entertainment driven production work commonly found on commercial radio platforms.

I start by assessing historic milestones in the evolution of the radio documentary form and consider how the field of radio studies has attempted to describe the genre. Beaman (2006) considers the radio documentary to be “one of the most difficult types of radio programmes to define” (56). By identifying and evaluating how others have attempted to categorise the genre, I isolate certain distinctive traits and position my own production work amongst the wider cannon of radio documentary production.

2.1. Defining the documentary

This section historicises the development of technologies used in the production of radio documentaries and demonstrate how changes in recording and editing equipment have shaped the genre; opening up new production possibilities. I also show how the public reception of radio documentaries have shifted from prime-time programming, to being regarded as niche content. I begin by interrogating what is actually meant by the term ‘documentary’. The origins of the documentary can be traced back to the origins of radio broadcasting. Street (2015) suggests that radio documentary programme

making in the UK is “almost as old as the medium itself” and sees evidence of the form in early ‘Reithian’ models of BBC educational broadcasting of the early Twenties (121). Yet, the term itself originates from the field of film, with Grierson, a pioneering filmmaker, often referred to as the founding father of the documentary form (Rabin, 1998). The first actual use of the word ‘documentary’ is supposedly attributed to Grierson in his review of *Moana* (Flaherty, 1926), published in *The New York Sun* in February 1926 (Curthoys, Lake, 2005). Aspinall (1971) claims the word documentary is derived from the French ‘documentaire’ and was used by early filmmakers to describe an approach that was “neither wholly fictional nor wholly factual” (102). The term was seen to be appropriate in defining an emerging style of radio production as well, which was similar to the advances being made in film. The word was, therefore, adopted to describe what is now known as the radio documentary. Rabiger (1998) broadly agrees with Grierson’s definition of the genre as being the creative treatment of actuality, although he acknowledges that this wide classification is somewhat imprecise and all-encompassing (1998). Ehrlich (2011) prefers to use the term ‘audio documentary’ rather than ‘radio documentary’, in an effort to position the genre within the wider field of similar productions created for LP records, and more recently the Internet, rather than solely for traditional AM/FM radio broadcasts.

The instructive, educational qualities of documentaries can be seen as key identifiers of the genre. Makagon and Neuman (2009) recognise the educational strengths of radio documentaries and believe they can act as effective pedagogical tools. In its infancy, the radio documentary was seen as an educational form of broadcasting and a precursor to schools broadcasting (Aspinall, 1971). Crisell (2001) notes the similarities between educational radio broadcasts and documentaries, citing certain production parallels between the two. The need to balance the educational and

entertainment elements of a documentary is an important production consideration, which Day-Good (2015) believes is difficult to get right. McLuhan (1957), however, claims it is misleading to view any difference between education and entertainment; seeing both of these elements as equally important considerations.

According to McLeish (2005) the terms ‘radio feature’ and ‘radio documentary’ are often used interchangeably. He refers to them as being “exciting and creative areas of radio” but notes how there is often confusion when separating the two (264). McLeish (2005) believes that distinctions can be seen in the initial selection and treatment of source material. Documentaries are factual and based on evidence, while features do not necessarily need to be ‘true’ (McLeish, 2005). Starkey (2004) agrees that the documentary is a factually correct means of communicating a story, as opposed to a fictionalised one. Turtle (1985) notes similarities between documentaries and features, calling them both “methods of presenting factual subjects in a constructively created programme using a variety of voices” (68). He defines the documentary as being a programme that is based on recordings of real people and the use of actuality. This facet of documentary production shall be assessed further in section five of this chapter. Turtle believes that the feature form uses scripts based on reliable sources and notes how dramatic reconstructions, usually performed by professional broadcasters, are sometimes employed. McLeish (2005) suggests that part of the confusion between these two forms of production may be the existence of hybrids, such as the drama documentary, the feature documentary, and what he refers to as the “semi-documentary” (264). Turtle (1985) correspondingly observes how various approaches can be combined within the ‘documentary feature’ and notes that short documentaries are often referred to as a ‘mini-doc’, ‘featurette’, or a ‘package’. In more recent times, Bialek (2014) has observed a merging of production styles in radio documentaries

which she believes “makes it difficult to arbitrarily tell the difference (between) documentary audio drama, artist reportage or documentary programme” (263). I argue that these varying definitions, coupled with a convergence of production approaches, has led to a general sense of confusion when distinguishing between these forms. I have chosen to position my own work within the ‘music documentary’ genre.

The ancestry of the radio documentary in the UK can be traced back to the Thirties, with the emergence of a new form of BBC radio feature production that Niebur (2010) describes as being a distinctly British style that “embraced revolutionary sound techniques” through a combination of documentary reporting and dramatic storytelling (8). In the US, throughout the Twenties and Thirties, advances in radio technologies and new approaches to programming were mostly driven by commercial imperatives. Sponsored programming and ratings driven dramatisations, such as Welles’s accomplished productions for the Mercury Theatre on the Air, made full use of the latest technological recording and editing equipment. Winston (2000) identifies early documentary characteristics in Welles’s radio drama *War of the Worlds* (Welles, 1940), which was broadcast in 1940 on the CBS commercial radio network. As discussed in chapter one, the innovative broadcasts of Plugge can be seen as ground-breaking examples of entrepreneurial broadcasting in the UK. I therefore suggest the emergence of modern radio documentaries in the US the UK was supported and advanced by the early development of spoken word content on commercial broadcasters.

Biewen and Smith (2010) cite the advent of cylinder recorders as being responsible for the first ‘golden age’ of radio. However, the Thirties and Forties are most commonly referred to as the ‘golden age’ when “production people and performers created elaborate programmes that depended for their effectiveness on sophisticated production techniques” (Hausman, et al. 2004: 3). The production of radio

documentaries flourished throughout these two decades and into the beginning of the Fifties. Ehrlich (2011) believes the American audio documentary enjoyed a brief post war heyday, which “vividly reflected the social and cultural climate of the times” (3). He argues that radio documentaries in the US first developed from a fear that radio had become too commercialised, and represented “idealism in the flush of military triumph over evil - amid the sense that a new world was about to be born” (7). Building on the highly praised traditions of radio journalism during World War Two, documentaries in the Forties and Fifties provided an opportunity to educate the public on a variety of social issues, while showcasing advancements in recording technologies and the adept skills of radio technicians and producers.

According to Goodman (2014), there was a belief that post war radio should serve a higher purpose and improve the world by promoting the values of responsibility, democracy, and informed citizenry. During the Forties, radio documentaries were idealistically seen as a social tool, capable of enacting positive behavioural change. Following World War Two, US journalists joined with dramatists to create radio programming which attempted to “remake America and the world for the better” (Bliss, 1967: 94). There was a prevalent sense of optimism in the idea that radio documentaries had the ability to shape the political and cultural landscape. In 1946, Robert Heller, the head of the CBS Documentary Unit, hailed the emergence of a “virtual utopia for craftsmen who believe in radio’s usefulness as a social force” (Ehrlich 2011: 2). However, by 1951, Heller’s ‘utopia’ had begun to be supplanted by the increasing popularity of television (Hilmes, 2002). Radio documentaries, once considered ‘appointment listening’ and afforded preferential programming status, gradually became superseded by their visual counterparts on television. Station management in the US often had pragmatic reasons for including radio documentaries within

commercial programming schedules. Although documentaries were valued for their entertainment qualities, they were also seen as a useful way for commercial broadcasting companies to demonstrate civic responsibility, “burnishing their corporate image in the face of government scrutiny and public criticism” (Ehrlich, 2011: 8). This reflects the UK industry’s legal requirement for early commercial broadcasters to provide documentary content of public value, as discussed in chapter one.

As indicated, I situate my own production work within the field of music documentaries, as the subject matter focuses on music related subjects and music is a key production element. While Edgar et al. (2012) explore the music documentary form through the lens of music and screen studies, Barnard (1989) is one of the few authors to specifically comment on music documentaries as a recognised sub-genre of radio studies. He is often critical of the form, seeing the cultural worth of standard music documentaries as being confined to ‘middle-class’ concerns, claiming that they present “music as an expression of individual creativity, music as art, music as a statement, music as inherently meaningful - and (are) generally accepted uncritically” (160). Aside from this unflattering assessment of music documentaries, it has been difficult to locate many specific references to the field. For this reason, my investigations draw from a range of academic literature and critical online commentary, in order to source relevant contributions and address gaps in the field. By identifying the differing interpretations of what a radio documentary and a radio feature is, it has been possible to determine which characteristics are most commonly agreed on. I shall now apply these descriptions to the work of key pioneers in radio documentary production. I reveal how these early innovators have helped to shape contemporary radio documentary production practice, as a result of their progressive technological and creative approaches.

2.2 Innovation in documentary production

Throughout the history of radio production, certain radio producers have been acknowledged for advancing the documentary form and pushing against the limitations of technologies. In this section, I recognise and assess the work of radio documentary practitioners who furthered the genre. In doing so, I reveal important landmarks in radio documentary production and show how innovations in film, television and radio have shaped the genre. This historicising is necessary to situate my own work within the wider field and to identify past techniques that are still found in contemporary radio documentary productions.

Early film documentary producers and directors directly inspired their contemporaries working in the field of radio. Aspinnall (1971) contends that early radio producers were often frustrated by the confines of the studio environment and the lack of realism found in the dramatic productions being produced at the time. The technical innovation shown in early film documentaries were seen as a possible way to make radio “more alive and interesting” (102). Consequently, radio productions began to exploit similar stylistic and narrative approaches. According to Crisell (1998), the pioneering documentaries produced by the BBC in Manchester throughout the Thirties made the department the most distinguished throughout the English Regions. *Crisis in Spain* (Harding, 1931) by Archie Harding, the BBC’s North Regional Programme Director, heralded the birth of the radio ‘feature’ which was seen at the time as a “new art form” (Cox, 2008: 65). In London, the production work of the BBC Features Department was equally innovative in its approach, with Hendy (2007) describing it as the “epitome of creativity” (39). In 1936 Laurence Gilliam was given overall

responsibility for the Features Department, which subsequently ushered in a productive and creative period for the genre. Gilliam, who first joined the BBC Drama Department in 1933, was himself a critically acclaimed radio producer (Street, 2015). The work of the Features Department is now recognised for pioneering a new form of broadcasting, which creatively blended sound, words, and music in a previously unheard style and can be seen as a precursor for modern radio documentary production.

BBC producer Charles Parker had been influenced by both Harding's impassioned and creative radio production work, and by the documentary film work of Grierson. He believes the same creative techniques found in Grierson's film editing could be equally applied to radio (Cox, 2008). Parker, who worked at the BBC's Birmingham Department, is renowned for the meticulous production and editing work demonstrated in the *Radio Ballads*, (Parker, 1957-1964) broadcast during the late Fifties and early Sixties (Street, 2015). The BBC's website cites Parker's personal description of a radio ballad as being:

"A form of narrative documentary in which the story is told entirely in the words of the actual participants themselves as recorded in real life; in sound effects which are also recorded on the spot, and in songs which are based upon these recordings, and which utilise traditional or 'folk-song' modes of expression"².

Previously, radio documentaries had mostly employed professional voice actors with prepared scripts. Street (2015) notes how the *Radio Ballads* superseded these old approaches, through the use of field recordings and musical commentary. The eight-part series seamlessly weaved together Parker's on-location recordings alongside original folk songs from musicians Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. To this day, Parker's work is still revered as a pioneering example of production skill and creativity, with a *Charles Parker Day* held each year in the UK to celebrate his legacy.

² http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/radioballads/original/orig_history.shtml

In turn, Parker's memorable work paved the way for Charles Chilton's equally ambitious radio productions. Chiltern, a long-serving BBC radio producer, is recognised as a key innovator of documentaries that focus on musical subjects. While reviewing Chilton's *The Long, Long Trail*, (Chiltern, 1961), first broadcast on the BBC's Home Service, Guardian reviewer David Hepworth noted, "claims are made for Chilton as the father of the music documentary"³. The British film director and author Tony Palmer, who Long and Wall (2012) describe as being "instrumental in developing a serious critical appraisal of pop" is another notable practitioner in the field of music documentary production (30). Palmer began making documentaries in 1958 and his seminal 17-part music television documentary series *All You Need is Love* (Palmer, 1977), produced for London Weekend Television, is considered to be "television's first pop history" (Long and Wall, 2012: 25).

Returning to the field of radio documentary production, I draw attention to the work of Piers Plowright, who worked as a BBC radio producer between 1968-1997. Plowright's reputation for production excellence is reflected in the prestigious awards he received for his documentaries, including an RAI prize, two Italia Prizes and Gold in the 1997 Sony Awards. Plowright also received the Audio Luminary Award at the Third Coast Radio Festival in Chicago in 2006. Prior to achieving this international recognition for his radio documentaries, Plowright worked in the BBC's radio drama department (Street, 2012). Like Gilliam, his previous background in this field can be heard in the way his documentary work draws on the structure and techniques associated with radio drama. This concludes my assessment of UK radio producers.

I now consider the work of several eminent international practitioners, beginning with an assessment of US radio producers and their highly regarded

³ David Hepworth, Radio Column, page 76, The Guide, The Guardian 10th Jan 2014.

programmes. Ehrlich (2011) contends that American radio underwent an important transformation when the docudramas that used actors to impersonate real people, were succeeded by actuality-based programmes that took full advantage of new recording technologies. Many post-war, reality-based audio documentaries continued the tradition of socially conscious productions heard during the war years. Pioneering US documentary producers from this period include Shayon and Corwin (Ehrlich, 2011). According to Bliss (1991) Shayon's documentary *The Eagles Brood* (Shayon, 1947), on the subject of delinquent youth, represents a pinnacle of US radio production. Although the item was produced for the CBS Documentary Unit, a commercial network, it was broadcasting as an unsponsored programme. Corwin's *One World Flight* (Corwin, 1946), in which he travelled the world assessing the prospects for post war peace, is cited as another landmark in US radio production. Although it received mixed reviews, Ehrlich (2011) believes the programme helped to develop the emerging documentary form. Corwin's unique approach to production featured an "unusual combination of acute social commentary, poetic sensibility and inclusion of actuality" (Lindgren and McHugh, 2013: 102). Dunaway (2014), in his review of *Lonesome Train* (Corwin, 1944), refers to Corwin as a "guru of thoughtful radio producers" and a "poet-laureate of radio" (3).

I suggest that vestiges of the early documentary productions discussed in this section can be heard in the work of a new generation of US radio documentary producers, who Biewen (2010) describe as being "masters of the personal narrative" (10). Lindgren and McHugh, (2013) refer to producers like Jay Abumrad and Robert Krulwich from *Radiolab* (Wheeler, 2002) and Ira Glass from *This American Life* (Glass, 1995 -) as "stars", whose work has helped to revitalise the documentary form (105). As these shows are available through online technologies, as well as traditional

radio syndication on affiliate stations, these producers have become internationally renowned. Glass, whose work demonstrates an informal, narrative approach to radio documentary production, has become arguably the most well known of these ‘celebrity’ producers. His long-running *This American Life* series, distributed by Public Radio International, continues to attract large audiences and, according to Biewen (2010), has helped to make “public radio safe again for playfulness and storytelling” (2). I claim there is a natural, although tightly scripted, sound to these productions that distinguishes them from the more formal approach often heard in UK-based productions. Lindgren and McHugh (2013) detect “a more first-person, explicitly narrated format” in the work of contemporary American documentary producers (102). This approach can also be heard in the unassuming style of *Radiolab* co-presenter Jay Abumrad, who aims to “create a sense of transparency... It’s consciously letting people see outside the frame” (Walker, 2011). Other notable productions such as *The Radio Diaries* (Richman, 1996 -) *All Things Considered* (Seigel, 1971-) and the work of Peabody Award winning *The Kitchen Sisters* (Davia Nelson and Nikki Silva, 1979 -) amongst others, have made audio storytelling accessible to new audiences, who might otherwise have not thought of themselves as being interesting in older, traditional styles of radio documentaries. In more recent times, regular podcasts which utilise a documentary style of production, such as *Serial* (Koenig, 2014) and *S-Town*, (Reed and Snyder, 2017) have accumulated millions of listeners and won numerous industry plaudits.

Producers from outside the US and UK industries have also played a significant role in shaping new, creative approaches to radio production. The work of Canadian producer Glenn Gould provides a striking example of how the field of radio documentary production has been furthered through structural innovation and technical excellence. His musical, precise approach to radio documentary production led

Kingwell (2009) to state that Gould's output "cannot be ignored" (59). Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* (Gould, 1967-1977) is perhaps his best-known work as a documentary producer. This collection of three hour-long radio documentaries was created for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Weiss (2001) draws attention to Gould's perfectionism in the studio and describes his style as being "contrapuntal radio" (2), due to the way his interview recordings were intricately "cut, edited, spliced, and layered" (Neuman, 2011: 35) with overlapping contributors, much like a musical composition. Walker (2011) recounts the artist and critic Richard Kostelanetz's tribute to Gould, following the producer's death in 1982, who stated that Gould produced "some of the most extraordinary radio programs ever made in North America" (137). I argue that Gould's past experience as a concert pianist, before turning to radio production, greatly informed his approach towards documentaries and return to this theme in chapter seven of my findings. Neuman (2011) claims that Gould saw his technical approach to documentary production as being "a new kind of creation, a process free from the linear limitations of live performance and open to the vast possibilities of editing and splicing multiple interpretations into something entirely new, a montage" (41).

Another producer noted for the innovative use of sonic montage is the Australian documentary and 'radio film' producer Kaye Mortley. Mortley's abstract approach is described by Weiss (2001) as being "sonorous investigations of the unique relations between topography, history, language, and experience established by audio montage" (3). Madsen (2009) refers to her work as being "auteur" documentaries, closer in style to radio art than factual reportage or journalism. Mortley's productions often move away from traditional linear styles of storytelling, creating emotive soundscapes through a combination of music, on location ambience and poetic

narrative. According to Brettle (2016), Mortley's poetic production work is "acoustically complex" and has made a "significant contribution to the field of radio creation internationally".

The various producers discussed in this section represent an admittedly limited sample of practitioners in the field of radio documentary. However, I argue that the work presented here highlights shifting approaches to radio production and reveals how preceding generations have inspired and encouraged new attitudes towards the radio documentary genre. Although the names of many of these producers have become familiar to public radio listeners across the US (Biewen, 2010), I suggest there is not the same equivalent of recognition for documentary producers working in the commercial radio industry. In the following chapter, I explore how the various milestones represented by the work of these producers runs concurrently with advances in audio technology. I also return to the production output of these practitioners within my findings section and assess the lasting legacy of their work from a technical perspective. I now consider the use of audio actuality, which has often been a vital component in the audio productions investigated in this section. I explore representations of truth as it pertains to the study of radio documentary production, to better understand how it is represented within my own production output.

2.3. Authenticity within radio documentary production

The radio documentary is viewed as a factual media genre (Crook, 2012). As indicated, it is this representation of 'fact' that has, in many ways, come to define the meaning of the word documentary. This section considers concepts of actuality and authenticity within documentary production and discusses concepts of trust. I suggest there is an

unspoken agreement between the producer and the listener that a documentary will provide an honest portrayal of the story. There is also a supposition that the authorial voice of a documentary will be of educational value (Demers, 2010). Therefore, the producer has a responsibility to convey credible, thoroughly researched information. This not only satisfies the expectations of the listener, but ensures the station commissioning the item complies with legal codes and broadcasting standards.

Turtle (1985) defines 'actuality' to mean any real sound from a place or event which is "recorded at, or transmitted from, a place other than a studio" (10). It can be used to describe the recording of ambience, sound effects or other on location components. Crook (2012) believes it is the documentary producer's goal to "depict or represent a real rather than imaginary world" (198). Although, a producer may occasionally embellish or in some way manipulate the presentation of facts, they are ultimately aiming to portray a sense of realism with their work. This, however, need not limit the entertainment value of a documentary. As Makagon and Neuman (2009) point out: "the worlds in which we live are often far more interesting than those created in fictional entertainment" (xi).

The accuracy of a production is closely linked to its educational value. Aspinall (1971) believes a radio documentary should be "vigorous and stimulating" but still sees its main objective as being educational (103). According to McLeish (2005) the purpose of a radio documentary is "essentially to inform, to present a story or situation with a total regard for honest, balanced reporting" (264). Starkey (2004) agrees with this need for honesty and claims that radio documentaries should be factually correct, rather than fictional. However, a documentary should aim to balance a didactic approach with the need for entertainment, as it "illuminates and provokes further thought and concern" (McLeish, 2005: 265). Rabiger (1998) believes that documentaries seek to provide

truthful representations and have “a profound fascination with, and respect for, actuality” (3). Crook (2012) echoes this reverence for reality, observing that strands of documentary production “intend to record actuality that is unstaged” (198). As indicated in the second section of this chapter, pioneering producers utilised new technologies, such as portable recording devices, to finally step outside of the studio in search of authenticity. Lindgren and McHugh (2013) believe that the innovation demonstrated by early European radio producers, using portable equipment, represents liberation from the studio environment, and foreshadowed the “radio documentary genre of today, where on-location, actuality sound recordings and interviews are the staple diet” (106). However, the word ‘authenticity’ does not solely relate to the capture of ‘real’ voices, sound effects and ambience in radio documentary production. Authenticity can also refer to a sense of truthfulness when conveying a story. Roscoe and Hight (2001) see a certain paradox between the search for authenticity in documentary production and the use of sophisticated technologies, which have allowed the documentary “to penetrate the social world in newer deeper ways” (188). They believe an authentic story is one that tells a story from an honest, often dispassionate, perspective.

There is considerable debate relating to the ethics of documentary storytelling, particularly regarding the relationship between a producer and their subject matter. Crook (2012) questions the blurred boundaries that can arise in terms of objectivity, asking: “To what extent does the producer simply observe or control? And how genuinely objective is the record of presentation of reality?” (198). It is worth noting that Gould did not consider his documentary work to be factually based, preferring to call them “metaphoric comment” (Neumann, 2011: 35). Although journalistic documentaries purportedly aim for some sense of neutrality, total objectivity is near

impossible, since producers subconsciously bring their own personal biases and preferences with them. To demonstrate a sense of fairness a producer may present differing sides of an argument, or provide expert analysis to counter a layman's point of view (Schlesinger, 1987). Biewen and Smith (2010) believe that in today's post-modern age there is no absolute, objective truth and that every choice a radio producer makes "is subject to dispute, from where to point the microphone to the digital slicing of a phrase at the expense of some nuance" (5). These ethical concerns can apply to both journalistic, factually based documentaries produced for public service broadcasters, as well as entertainment focused music documentaries, more commonly heard on commercial radio.

McLeish (2005) raises the difficult question of whether the fabrication of actuality is ever justifiable in the field of radio production. An example of this might take the form of a producer adding sound effects or ambience to a production at a later stage. He rationalizes this approach by identifying two approaches to this practice. McLeish suggests that if the 'fabricated' sounds are typical of the actual environment, they can be assumed to be 'real' and are therefore permissible. However, if the sounds are designed to imply something other than the reality of the environment, then they are misleading and should be avoided, or clearly referred to as a simulation. Ultimately, McLeish believes the documentary producer should not deceive, or confuse the listener, who has "a right to expect that everything heard in a documentary programme is genuine material to be taken at face value" (269). Shingler and Wieringa (1998) see both sides of this argument, believing that manipulating the truth may raise ethical issues, yet can also provide an "opportunity for excellence" that can attract audiences and therefore extra revenue for commercial radio broadcasters (104). They support the rationalisation offered by radio producers who claim "'trickery' is harmless and is

merely offering the listener good radio” (104).

In this section I have examined representations of authenticity and truth within the radio documentary form and explored notions of trust between producer and listener. I return to this subject in chapter seven of my findings, when considering the portrayal of authenticity within my own production work. The balance between journalistic reporting and creative storytelling needs careful consideration in any documentary production. Although audiences may trust that a journalistic documentary for a public service broadcaster will not intentionally deceive them, I suggest that producers of entertainment focused productions for commercial audiences have more latitude with representations of ‘truth’. I now investigate the field of documentary production within the specific context of commercial radio. By assessing the presence of documentary content in commercial radio programming, I reveal how shifting attitudes and changing media regulation, has restrained and occasionally encouraged the production of music documentaries.

2.4. Music documentary for commercial radio environments

This section considers the relationship between documentaries and commercial programming from the dual perspective of academic radio studies and industry opinion. By broadening my investigations to include speech content alongside documentaries, I provide a sense of balance, while addressing certain gaps in the field. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the production of music documentaries for commercial radio is a specialised field of study, lacking in academic depth. Although there are many forms of radio documentaries, there appears to be a widespread assumption that they are an entirely journalistic genre, designed to investigate ‘serious’ subject matter. For

instance, an online article by Ludtke (2015) was titled *Radio Documentaries Take Listeners into Dark Corners*, reflecting Isay's belief that radio is "a great medium for getting into dark corners... telling stories that can't be told on film"⁴. Yet this statement overlooks the generally upbeat, entertainment driven documentaries that are usually commissioned for commercial radio audiences. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) claim that music radio is designed to remove "the more negative and disturbing aspects of life from its programmes and concentrates on something altogether more idealistic and romantic" (125). While Schulberg (1996) contends that music radio has the ability to provide listeners with an escape from the real world. 'Dark' journalistic documentaries would not sit comfortably within these lighter descriptions of music radio programming. I claim that commercial music formats require more entertainment driven productions, such as music documentaries, which fit more comfortably within their programming output. Although documentaries are not generally seen as a staple of contemporary commercial radio programming, I argue that music related documentaries have become one of the most common forms of pre-produced documentary content commissioned by the industry.

Music documentaries began to be widely broadcast on US commercial radio stations in the Seventies, when the increased popularity of high-fidelity FM radio led to the emergence of new formats and wider audiences (Neer, 2001). According to Durkee (1999) *The History of Rock and Roll* (Drake, 1969 -) is "firmly established" within the history of radio as a pioneering US music documentary (45). The series was created specifically for commercial audiences and syndicated for broadcast across the US. Programmer Bill Drake, who founded and worked on the series, claims to have

⁴ <http://niemanreports.org/articles/radio-documentaries-take-listeners-into-dark-corners/>

invented the word 'rockumentary' to describe this new form of music documentary form (Durkee, 1999).

Fisher's (2007) assessment of *The Beatle Plot* (Gibb, 1969), explores the production and subsequent reception of a music-based commercial radio documentary from the Sixties. Gibb produced the hour-long documentary, broadcast in October 1969, for WKNR 'Keener 13' FM in Detroit. The programme was self-described by Gibb as being "cobbled together" with assistance from two fellow WKNR DJ's (181). The documentary was focused around the persistent rumour at the time that *The Beatles* member Paul McCartney was dead, and featured phone interviews alongside presenter "evidence". The production used "a 'voice of god' announcer who invests each phrase with grave moment" in an attempt to add credibility to what Gibb already knew was a fake story (181). The documentary was rushed, so it could be broadcast before the rumour was debunked. Regardless of its hurried production values, the documentary is claimed to have gained the attention of hundreds of DJs and newspaper reporters and Gibb was flown to Hollywood to discuss the documentary on a TV show. The light-hearted, last minute approach to the production of this programme indicates a slapdash approach to in-house, documentary production from commercial radio at the time. Documentaries were not viewed as core station output and, therefore, producers had few resources to draw on. However, in the late Seventies and Eighties, several major independent production entities began mass producing music documentaries for commercial radio networks. *The History of Rock and Roll* (Drake, 1969 -) and Watermark's *Profiles in Rock* (Watermark, 1980) and *The Robert W. Morgan Special of the Week* (Watermark, 1980) were nationally syndicated specialist music programmes that featured high production values and demonstrated many of same techniques now heard in contemporary music documentary productions.

Youth orientated music documentaries began to emerge on UK radio around the same time as they gained prominence in the US. In the early Seventies, when commercial broadcasting in the UK was being established, the predominantly music formatted Radio 1 began to experiment with music documentaries (Barnard, 1989). However, *The Story of Pop*, (BBC, 1973) the station's first music documentary series, was criticized at the time for being linked to blatantly commercial practices. Each episode of the documentary series included an advertisement for an independently produced magazine publication, also called *The Story of Pop* (1973), published by the Phoebus Company. Concerns were raised in Parliament that this practice broke the terms of the BBC's Charter, due to the association with a private publishing venture (Barnard, 1989). The fact that this early example of music documentary production in the UK was reprimanded for overt commercialism is particularly germane to this study, demonstrating how entrepreneurialism in radio can collide with regulation.

As indicated in chapter one, governmental regulation in the early Seventies required the first UK commercial stations to provide mandatory levels of spoken word content for a wide range of listeners (Barnard, 1989). Wray (2010) comments on how the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) guided their members to produce a broad range of speech content that included regular features and hour-long documentaries. Because of the importance of maintaining local output, this material was not usually syndicated across the IBA, although there were exceptions, with documentaries, concerts and artist profiles occasionally shared between stations (Barnard, 1989). According to Stoller and Wray (2010) *The Programme Sharing Scheme*, used by ILR affiliated commercial UK broadcasters in the Eighties, demonstrates the extent of the relationship between governmental regulation and the industry's programming requirements. Sharing production content, such as

documentaries, allowed independent radio to showcase a wide range of programming and production skills (Stoller and Wray: 2010).

I conclude this section by assessing how commercial radio commissions' music documentaries and other spoken word content within music-formatted output. The majority of all radio programming must first be subject to some form of preliminary commissioning or approval and is, therefore, a critical stage in any radio production process. Station management must consider the expectations of listeners who have tuned in to hear music, and not necessarily a documentary. If the production does not reflect the station sound, listeners may react adversely to this unanticipated content and therefore tune to another station, or stop listening altogether. Conversely, the inclusion of a well-produced music documentary may offer a unique listening experience, which can potentially build a station's brand loyalty. Myers (2009) believes there is a place for original documentaries within commercial radio programming. In 2008, while Chief Executive of GMG Radio, Myers convinced the board to invest one million pounds in a series of radio documentaries, which was reputed to be "a first for commercial radio" (RadioCentre, 2013). In justifying this initiative, Myers expressed his conviction that speech-based content can work within the context of a music format station.

"I felt strongly that commercial radio ought to do more speech. It is not an automatic audience loser, as some might believe. Raising the bar a little is always a good ambition to have. Speech can work within a music format if you get the content right and your timing is appropriate. It may not get you a big audience but sometimes, programmes are just worth doing. It is the duty of every PD or Controller to sprinkle a little gold dust now and again"⁵.

Myers (2009) claims that traditional music programming has become increasingly irrelevant in differentiating local stations in a digital environment. Easy access to a multitude of international radio stations, which play similar music, has made it difficult

⁵ <https://www.myersmedia.co.uk/pages/blog/>

for stations to create a clear 'Unique Selling Point'. Therefore, Myers believes the content heard "between the records", is vital to help a station to stand apart from its competitors, and lists "talk, interviews, phone-ins, drama, opinion, documentaries, news, reviews or educational (content)" as examples (8).

According to Hope (2011) mainstream radio, consists of standardised formats and commercial stations which use "computer coded ad breaks" to "slice up the continuity of recorded music" (110). However, Beaman (2006) believes there is danger that ridged formats schedules and programming can become too formulaic. He suggests that stations need to provide diversity and surprises for their audiences. Yet these unpredictable elements need to be managed so they do not cause listeners to leave the station. Strategies must be developed that "encourage new listeners without alienating their current devotees" (Beaman, 2006: 2).

By investigating documentary content within music-formatted commercial radio schedules, I have revealed how this form of content can enhance a radio station's brand. The provision of original music documentaries, which possibly offer insight into the work of playlisted artists, provide a sense of connoisseurship and demonstrate a station's expertise and 'taste'. I return to this theme within my findings, to discuss how it relates to my own practice-based investigations. However, it must be acknowledged that music documentaries are ultimately a specialised and somewhat narrow field of programming. Nevertheless, I maintain that music documentaries are of value to commercial radio, as they successfully combine both spoken word content as well as music programming, in an accessible style that fits naturally within a variety of music radio formats. Having explored how the commercial radio sector views music documentaries, I now consider public attitudes towards the genre, alongside the opinions of media critics and academics. By assessing these diverging perceptions, I

reveal how music documentaries have increased in stature in recent years, gaining increased validity within the wider field of documentary studies.

2.5. Audience perceptions of the music documentary genre

This section considers the reception of general audiences and critics towards the music documentary form. I initially draw from references relating to the film genre before focusing specifically on music documentaries for radio, in order to compensate for a lack of studies in the field. The following chapter provides a closer inspection of how the production of music documentaries for both film and radio have similar technical approaches, but firstly, I assess the growing popularity of radio documentaries and the sub-genre of music documentaries.

Biewen (2010) maintains that early radio documentaries now seem overly instructive in their delivery of information and rather formal, and refers to Twentieth Century productions as being the equivalent of “sonic Brussels sprouts” (3). There appears to be a lingering assumption from audiences that documentaries are ‘boring’. Although Glass considers his *This American Life* programme to be a documentary show, he tries to avoid the term ‘documentary’ when referring his work; believing it to have negative connotations (Lindgren and McHugh, 2013: 104). However, this disparaging attitude has been changing in recent years, with contemporary public service radio audiences in the US now considering the word documentary “to stand for something almost cool” (Biewen, 2010: 3). Although Chignell (2009) described the documentary genre as being almost extinct, I suggest it has endured and even grown in stature in recent times. According to McHugh (2014) the public’s “appetite for exemplary audio documentary / features” is growing (31). However, radio criticism in

mainstream UK media appears to be decreasing with only a few regular, dedicated radio columns left in UK newspapers. *The Radio Times* continues to post detailed radio listings and comments on upcoming programmes, Miranda Sawyer is the *Observer's* regular radio critic, while in the *Guardian*, *David Hepworth on Radio*, by David Hepworth, provides a weekly preview of noteworthy productions including documentaries. Gillian Reynolds, the *Daily Telegraph's* radio critic, is perhaps the most respected of these remaining radio columnists. The calibre of her incisive, award winning reviews and her passion for the medium saw Reynolds awarded an MBE for services to radio in 1999. These reviewers have each helped to promote and champion the radio documentary form and provided insights into the work of radio producers who would otherwise been ignored. I draw on the comments of these and other radio reviewers within my findings, to add contemporary perspectives and to address gaps in the field of radio studies.

In 2013 Mwangaguhunga (2013) commented “this is the best time in modern memory to be a documentarian”⁶. Sexton (2015) supports this view, believing that the last decade has seen a significant increase in the number and quality of film documentary productions. He claims this ascendancy began with the success of Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore, 2004), which won the Palme d’Or in 2004 and went on to become the highest grossing documentary film of all time⁷. The music documentary form has seen a similar increase in popularity in recent years. During the Nineties, according to the British Film Institute ‘rockumentary’ films were not common (Delaney et al., 2007). However, Reynolds (2007) contends that the genre became more respected, and of higher quality, during the first decade of the Twenty First Century.

⁷ <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fahrenheit911.htm>

He believes the resurgence of the ‘rock doc’ can be traced back to Julien Temple’s *The Sex Pistols* film *The Filth and the Fury* (Temple, 2000). Edgar et al. (2012) claim that music documentaries now have a wide audience, and subject matter is not just reserved for “serious” musicians. This, they suggest, is evidenced in the increasing popularity of pop documentaries, “often afforded a full theatrical release” (19).

Evidence that film-based music documentaries have gained greater respect in recent years can be seen in the number of prestigious awards the genre has won in documentary award categories. I now offer an overview of these successes, to demonstrate the scope of these achievements. *DiG!* (Timoner, 2004), a documentary about the bands *The Dandy Warhols* and *The Brian Jonestown Massacre*, won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004 (Reynolds, 2007). That same year, *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* (Berlinger, Sinofsky, 2004), which provided unique ‘behind the scenes’ access to the band *Metallica*, won the Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary Feature. *Anvil! The Story of Anvil* (Gervasi, 2009), a film about a struggling Canadian rock band, was named Best Documentary of 2009 at the Evening Standard British Film Awards in London and a year later received the Best Documentary Feature award at the Independent Spirit Awards along with an Emmy for Outstanding Arts & Culture Programming. The films *Searching for Sugar Man* (Bendjelloul, 2012) and *20 Feet from Stardom* (Neville, 2013), both accomplished music documentaries, won the Oscar Award for Best Documentary Feature. More recently, the film *Amy* (Kapadia, 2015), which focused on the life and death of singer Amy Winehouse, quickly became the most successful British documentary to date following its release in 2015; subsequently winning the Best Documentary Feature category of the Academy Awards in 2016. As these films were competing against powerful journalistic stories, I suggest they demonstrate the legitimacy that music

documentaries have achieved in their own right. In regards to award recognition for music-based radio productions, the ‘best music special’ and ‘music documentary’ categories of various UK and international radio competitions have been growing in complexity over the years, and like their cinematic counterparts, demonstrate increasingly sophisticated production values.

Reynolds (2007) attributes several factors to the success of music-based film documentaries. Firstly, music films are relatively inexpensive to produce, with small crews and low production budgets. Secondly, ‘rock docs’ have an existing market of fans and therefore pose less risk in terms of recouping their production costs. He also asserts that music documentaries are gaining more attention through general releases in movie theatres, increasing accessibility on tablet technologies and mobile phones, and by capitalising on the growing opportunities for ‘at home’ viewing created by the expansion of cable and digital services. Music documentaries have also benefitted from what Reynolds calls the ‘retro-mania’ industry, with more and more fans seeking ‘rock docs’ alongside box sets, DVD’s, reunion tours and reissues. I suggest these observations can equally be applied to field of music documentary for commercial radio. However, the equipment associated with the creation of radio documentaries is far less expensive, and necessitates far fewer production staff, than the requirements of film production. Another similarity can be seen in the way that online technologies have made both film and radio music documentaries accessible to international audiences. Lindgren and McHugh (2013) maintain that contemporary radio producers can now reach international audiences and note how it is “no longer geography that defines an audience” (102).

This section has shown how the public’s perception of radio documentaries has shifted, while the music documentary genre has grown in stature and earned numerous

industry accolades. I argue that listeners and viewers alike have become more receptive to music documentaries on film and radio. My following conclusions summarise the observations made in this chapter and make the case for music documentaries to be recognised as valid sub-genre of the wider documentary form.

2.6. Conclusion - radio documentary production

This chapter has provided an overview of documentary studies and shown how the sub-genres of ‘radio documentary’ and ‘music documentary for radio’ are situated within this wider field. This interrogation forms a theoretical framework against which to consider my own practice-based production work within a ‘real world’ broadcast environment. I assessed attempts to define the term ‘documentary’ and considered certain variances between these descriptions. A convergence of stylistic approaches has made the genre difficult to categorise. This is reflected in Crisell’s (2001) observation that the boundaries between radio documentaries, news and current affairs can sometimes be indistinct. I claimed the commercial radio industry requires a different form of documentary than those produced for public service broadcasters. An example of this difference can be seen in the portrayal of authenticity. The presentation of accuracy and truth are often acknowledged as being key identifiers of the documentary form (Crook, 2012). However, I suggested that documentary producers working for commercial broadcasters have more latitude with representations of ‘truth’. The manipulation of authenticity can be justified if it adds to the potential for entertainment within a radio documentary; as long as this does not unduly distort or misrepresent the facts.

I considered the impact of pioneering radio documentary producers and maintained that contemporary producers have built on the earlier traditions of commercial and public service radio to create inventive new forms of radio documentaries. The innovation demonstrated by past producers has shaped current documentary production practices and therefore has a bearing on my own work as a music documentary producer. This theme of innovation and technological development continues in the following chapter where I focus on advances in production practices.

This chapter investigated the presence of music documentaries as programming content within contemporary commercial radio formats. I considered the commissioning of music-based documentaries, suggesting that this sub-genre is the most conducive for commercial broadcasters as they complement existing music programming schedules. I argued that original music documentaries offer commercial stations a 'USP' in competitive radio markets, to win new audiences and build existing listener loyalty.

Section five explored shifting audience perceptions towards documentaries and, more specifically, the music documentary genre. I drew comparisons between the growing popularity of music documentary films and radio productions of a similar nature, while addressing certain gaps in this area of study. Sexton (2015) believes that contemporary music documentaries demonstrate higher production values and reach wider audiences than ever before. I suggested that the increasing popularity of music documentaries for film and television can be equated to the field of music documentary for radio audiences.

Having considered the wider field of documentary studies, the next chapter concentrates on the act of radio documentary production. I investigate the role of the producer and assess the various duties and responsibilities this position entails. By

isolating key production practices and considering the impact of technology on these practices, I reveal how contemporary freelance producers approach the construction of music documentaries for commercial audiences.

CHAPTER THREE

FREELANCE RADIO DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION

This chapter considers the technical act of producing a radio documentary. I explore this activity from the perspective of a freelance radio producer, to provide a foundation for the practice-based investigations discussed in my findings. I build on the previous chapter, which considered the wider field of documentary studies, by examining the core structural elements that underpin the creation of conventional radio documentaries. I reveal key transitional periods in radio production and profile the work of innovative documentarians to make sense of the changes brought on by new technological approaches. By dissecting the process of documentary production I provide insight into the multiple tasks producers undertake when constructing music-based documentaries for commercial audiences.

Crook (2012) claims that documentary studies are an important field of sound textual communication. However, as indicated in chapter one, many of these investigations present a journalistic perspective which overlooks the technical work carried out by the producer. This observation is supported by Makagon and Neumann (2009), who claim “audio reporting has largely been a province of radio journalists” (21). By exploring documentary creation from a freelancer’s standpoint, this chapter provides insight into the practical skills and administrative duties required for contemporary radio documentary production. I consider the position of the freelance radio producer within the cultural industries and examine how this role has been shaped by external influences and the evolution of production tools and broadcasting platforms. Although digital technologies have democratised, simplified and increased the speed of

radio documentary production, I question the impact of modernisation on the livelihood of radio documentary producers. I claim that advances in production tools have enabled a more multi-skilled, freelance approach to documentary production, while adding employment precarity to those working in the field.

This chapter explores key radio production techniques such as editing, structuring content and the use of presenters. I draw parallels between the production of visual documentaries and audio documentary to reveal the degree of influence that exists between them. By identifying shared practices, as well as central differences, I demonstrate which approaches are specific to radio documentary production and consider how this relates to the field of freelance practice. I begin by identifying the various responsibilities and duties required to successfully fulfil the role of radio producer and explore how these roles have converged into one position.

3.1. The role of the documentary producer

Before focusing on the specific technical production practices associated with freelance radio documentary production, I firstly assess the wider position of ‘radio producer’ and consider the tasks this role entails. This section clarifies what is meant by the term ‘producer’ and isolates fundamental responsibilities relating to radio documentary production. I view the field through my own experience as a freelance radio documentary producer and compare my personal insights against industry and academic representations. Aspinall (1971) believes the term ‘radio producer’ can be difficult to define. *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary* (2009) describes the noun ‘producer’ as being “one who produces, brings forth, or generates” (776). However, Kaempfer and Swanson (2004) take issue with this definition, believing it to be a

simplistic overview that “doesn’t even scratch the surface” (7). I suggest the role of the modern radio documentary producer is a multi-skilled one, requiring expertise in a wide range of fields. This convergence has been possible by advances in digital equipment and online technologies, which have sped up and simplified the production process. Contemporary industry roles such as broadcast assistant, technical operator, studio manager, editor, and researcher each involve certain elements of a radio producer’s job description. According to Biewen and Smith (2010), seemingly disparate positions, such as audio journalist or sound artist, reflect certain aspects of the radio documentary producer’s occupation, as they are unified by a similar desire to “use sound to tell true stories artfully” (5). There is little agreement about the precise categorisation of what a radio producer actually does. I suggest that defining the role is made more difficult as it is a fluid position, requiring multiple skills, which adapts to industry needs and changing technological opportunities.

The term of ‘producer’ can be applied to a range of industry jobs. However, in most radio studies, the term producer is used to describe an assistant or director in the context of a live radio broadcast. In this capacity, the producer supports the presenter in the preparation and execution of a real-time live broadcast by arranging guests, taking listener calls, handling social media and other associated tasks (Geller, 2000). Beaman (2006) similarly refers the role of producer as an assistant to a live radio presenter, but makes no mention of the role in terms of a documentary or features producer. For the purpose of this investigation, I define the role of the producer as it pertains to someone who creates pre-produced audio content, such as radio documentaries and features.

The act of audio production, by ordering elements of sound to deliver a message “has always been and will always be a key element in radio” (Hausman, et al. 2004: 8).

It is the producer who selects and orders audio content, either as an employee of a broadcasting company or in an independent freelance capacity. In most instances, the overall accountability for a programme rests with the producer (McLeish, 2005). Aspinall (1971) believes that the producer is the person responsible for the overall organisation of a radio programme, while Kaempfer and Swanson (2004) agree that good organisation is a central to the role, calling it “the single most important skill for a radio producer” (8). Beaman (2006) lists a number of organisational skills relating to good production practice, including time management and the ability to meet deadlines. McLeish (2005) also refers to good organisation as being vital to ensure the successful management of administrative and procedural radio production duties. He cites paperwork, contracts, risk assessment, studio bookings, copyright returns, requisitioning music and correspondence as just some of the activities a producer is required to carry out. Attention to detail and disciplined organisational skills can be beneficial for many reasons, but crucially, successful time management can lead to an increase in productivity (Mancini, 2003).

It is the producer’s ultimate responsibility to take a commissioned concept and bring it to fruition as a final piece of programming that reflects the expectations of both the broadcaster and the targeted audience. Aspinall (1971) believes that researching skills, writing talent, and advanced technical knowledge are essential producer attributes. To become truly proficient, Hausman et al. (2004) claim there is a need for “professional commitment, experience, creativity and a certain sense of adventure” (17). Aspinall (1971) also cites experience as a key requirement in making effective radio documentaries. Producers improve new projects by drawing on the structural approaches and technical skills which were successfully employed in previous documentaries. As McLeish (2005) observes, a producer’s editorial decisions are based

on ideas and judgments about what is appropriate for a particular programme. It is personal production experience that influences this decision-making process.

Aspinall (1971) claims that assessing the development of radio production over time can help bring the role of the producer into sharper focus. In section three I explore this assertion by examining how changing technologies have shaped the role of the radio documentary producer. Firstly, I discuss what is meant by the term ‘freelance producer’ and consider how this position shapes the work of documentary producers working in both commercial and public service radio environments.

3.2. Freelance radio production in the cultural industries

This section explores the notion of being a freelancer within the cultural industries, and considers how freelance practice has both limited and enhanced opportunities for radio documentary production. This study uses the term ‘freelance’ to mean an independent producer who is not in full-time employment for a production company, radio station or network. They may produce documentary work for public service radio or commercial companies, or sometimes both. Mitchell (2005) believes there are difficulties associated with defining exactly what a freelancer is. However, they are required to have an “excellent grasp of the particular skill or craft” they are paid to perform (vii). Banks (2007) suggests there has been a rapid expansion of activity and employment in the UK’s creative sector since the Sixties. He groups together a range of activities that have become collectively known as the ‘cultural industries’, listing radio alongside advertising, art, television, film, fashion, design, and music amongst others. Miège’s (1989) analysis of the cultural industries categorises radio as belonging to the ‘flow logic’, as the medium is centred around the creation of a continuous “flow

of product, and the gaining of audience loyalty” (133). McRobbie (2004) believes that workers in the cultural industries often operate as freelancers and are both flexible and entrepreneurial in their approach.

Hendy (2007) claims that Thatcher’s free market approach came at the risk of “social dislocation and lowest-common-denominator entertainment” (277). Yet, for all the perceived faults of an increasingly unregulated radio market, I suggest there is evidence that deregulation had a positive impact on freelance radio practitioners. The government-appointed *Peacock Committee* of 1986, which investigated the financing of the BBC, encouraged the corporation to learn from commercial models of broadcasting and requested it to act “more commercially minded” (Hendy, 2007: 413). As a consequence, the BBC began to commission the work of independent radio producers. This practice is still used today, with independent, approved suppliers creating documentary content for a range of BBC stations. In a reference to television production practice, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) cite the BBC’s move towards commissioning freelance work from smaller, non-unionised, production companies in the Eighties and Nineties. This reflects the BBC’s approach to commissioning radio productions during the same period. The decision to seek increasing amounts of independent content created substantial growth for freelancers in both the television and radio industries. O’Brien (2014) claims this transition resulted in hybrid job descriptions that encompassed numerous specialties. Hausman et al. (2004), contend that economic trends may be responsible for an increase in demand for “multitalented production personnel who are skilled at in-demand tasks, such as computer assisted editing” (12). However, Cohen (2016) suggests that, as a result of deregulation, freelancers now have limited workers’ benefits, by being defined as self-employed. She believes this change in status is linked to a general decline in labour protections around

the world, brought on by deregulation. Mitchell (2005) claims that patterns of employment in the broadcasting industry changed as the independent sector grew in the Eighties and Nineties; resulting in the casualisation of employment. She describes the term ‘casual labour’ as reflecting “concern about the short term nature of many engagements and the vulnerability and lack of security experienced by many” at the start of their careers (3). Bonini and Gandini (2016) believe that employment in the radio sector has become “increasingly fragmented and insecure” due to transformations in the political economy of traditional media, alongside innovations in digital media and the economic crisis (138). As Mitchell (2005) observes, full time positions in the audio-visual industry are highly sought after and workers often have “no choice but to become a freelancer” (ix). In 2017 a survey by Creative Skillset, the UK body that supports the Creative Industries, claimed that 17% of the radio workforce were freelancers. They suggest this figure represents an increase in freelance culture, due to an increase in digital and communications technology, which has “enabled more and more freelance professionals to produce and deliver audio content to brief via home studios or on location”⁸.

Although the BBC has in-house radio producers responsible for the majority of documentary output, the BBC Trust sets requirements for stations to procure at least 10% of its eligible radio hours from independent suppliers, such as Falling Tree Productions, TBI Media, and Somethin’ Else. Freelance producers, operating independently, are also able to pitch content providing they are recognised as being ‘approved’ suppliers. This set percentage was recommended in the BBC Trust’s 2010 report, and has been in place since 2012/13. The BBC’s Window of Creative Competition (WoCC) system allows both in-house and independent producers to

⁸ http://creativeskillset.org/creative_industries/radio/overview

compete for BBC commissions: “to ensure that the best creative ideas reach our listeners”⁹. However, the UK’s commercial radio sector does not have a similar series of commissioning rounds, and assesses each project on a case-by-case basis. In 2010 the Radio Independents Group (RiG), which champions the rights of independent production companies, wrote a response to the *BBC Trust Radio Network Supply Review* (2010). This document described the concept of creating a similar commissioning round for commercial radio. However, the group believed there was “limited scope” for the provision of independent radio content “due to the economic factors affecting the commercial radio sector” and the idea was never realised (8).

Flexibility, initiative and the ability to react quickly are useful traits for freelance workers to possess. McRobbie (2002) suggests that flexibility, in terms of freelancing, means being able to do whatever is required in the interests of a commercial endeavour. According to Banks (2007) the desire to “control of ones’ destiny is what encourages workers to endorse the systems put in place to expedite flexible production” (55). Managing tight deadlines, operating with limited access to resources, and dealing with unpredictable administration tasks are just some examples of how a radio documentary producer displays flexibility in their work. Keeping within a budget and keeping costs low are especially important considerations for freelancers. As Beaman (2006) observes, minimising programme expenditure “without losing quality or compromising on content” is a regular concern for producers. (91).

In an online article for the BBC’s media training website, Simon Wright offered advice for aspiring media freelancers. The article, titled *Feel the Fear and Freelance Anyway*, refers to the importance of control, and the need to manage reputation.

“The nature of the industry is indeed changing and we are very much a freelance workforce, but there is no need to go running to the hills with visions of poverty

⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/radio/articles/who-we-are-how-we-commission>

and funding your career through dancing on bars. You can make freelancing work for you and ultimately have a wonderful career where you work on a variety of things you want to do, with you taking control”¹⁰.

However, Wright’s optimism towards freelancing is tempered by Bonini and Gandini’s (2016) assessment of freelance radio producers in Italy, who are “forced” to consider themselves as entrepreneurs and commonly experience insecurity, uncertainty, and isolation due to a lack of guaranteed work (139). Mitchell (2005) also recognises certain difficulties associated with freelance employment, such as limited job security, and the risk of uncertain career development. Although Mitchell suggests the problems and disadvantages of being a freelancer may appear to outweigh the advantages, she suggests there are certain benefits, such as the freedom to choose projects, flexibility and the ability to specialise.

In an industry which constantly adapts to the latest technological advances, there is the ever-present risk that freelance opportunities will be displaced by new innovations. An example of this can be seen in the way radio networking and automation has cost the industry jobs (Chignell, 2009). According to Walker (2011), computer programs and satellite feeds have replaced many presenter positions. Fleming (2010) similarly believes that jobs have been lost, due to networking practices which led schedules to become dominated by only few presenters; limiting opportunities for new talent. Sadler (2005) agrees, claiming “stations do not need to hire as many people when a computer can do the job” (110).

This section has interrogated the role of freelancer, with a specific focus on how freelance radio documentary producers operate within the UK industry. In the following four sections, I examine certain technical approaches to radio documentary production.

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/production/article/art20130830142647159>

I start by assessing historical developments in recording and editing equipment and consider how these advances have ultimately shaped the production of contemporary radio documentaries.

3.3. Technological influences on radio documentary production

This section explores the evolution of technical innovation in audio production and considers its impact on the radio documentary genre, to better understand how these changes are manifested within my own practice. By examining literature published in both the ‘pre’ and ‘post’ digital age, I argue it is possible to ascertain what practices have been lost and what residual approaches still remain. Although I assess the impact of various technical advances, I agree with Hausman et al. (2004), who believe that the “skill of the producer is still paramount” (21). While new technologies have made the job of the radio producer easier and provided new creative opportunities, I suggest that fundamental production techniques remain largely unchanged from the analogue era. Although production tools may have changed considerably, the overall form of the radio documentary has remained generally consistent since the introduction of portable recorders over 60 years ago.

I have identified a deficit of academic literature relating to the use of new digital technologies in radio documentary production. The latest edition of McLeish’s (2016) popular worktext *Radio Production* has only cursory additions that take into account new digital production practices. As an example, I cite McLeish’s (2016) representation of audio editing. As the practice of audio editing has not fundamentally altered, it is understandable that new editions of the book have remained largely consistent in their references to the editing process. His descriptions of editing, since the first edition was

released in the late Seventies, have remained largely unaltered. The original publication of McLeish's (1978) book outlined several principles under the heading "Tape Editing" (25). By 1999, when the use of tape was beginning to wane, these were renamed as "Editing Principles" (v). In the fifth edition (2005) these principles remained the exactly the same, word for word, as in the initial book published 34 years earlier. The book's sixth edition (2016) promised an updated "exploration of technological advances" (i). However, these additions reveal themselves to be predictable acknowledgements of hand-held digital recording devices, online stations, digital mixing desks and methods of digital music storage and playback. While I acknowledge that McLeish's work aims to only provide a basic introduction and is not intended as an exhaustive production guide, it is nevertheless an example of how new practices are often ignored in traditional radio production texts. Innovations which I regularly employ in my own documentary production work, such as 'ripping' online audio, use of Skype and social media, mobile technologies, and file sharing, amongst others, are seldom referred to in relation to radio documentary production.

Aspinall (1971) believes the origins of the documentary producer can be traced back to early technical operators who used their knowledge to pioneer new "distinctly radio" forms of broadcasting (62). As their expertise grew, producers were able to develop innovative approaches that harnessed new technologies to create more expressive and imaginative production work. As indicated in chapter one, technological advances helped reshape the documentary genre, providing new creative opportunities and speeding up workflow processes. Preistman (2002) states the advent of new technologies in editing and postproduction have "changed the way programmes were put together" (15), while Connelly (2012) contends that technology "reshapes radio on a daily basis" (3). According to Hausman et al. (2004) the evolution of solid-state

technology and microchip electronics freed radio producers “from bulky, stationary hardware” (3). Before the emergence of portable field recording equipment, programme production had been mostly confined to the studio, often employing actors to perform the speaking roles of ‘real’ people. Biewen and Smith (2010) describe early recording devices as being hard to manoeuvre, weighing “upward of a hundred pounds”, which meant most producers “tended to make their shows entirely in the studio” (6).

The emergence of disc and wire recording offered a greater degree of flexibility, yet these technologies were still bulky and often unreliable. It was the breakthrough provided by magnetic tape recorders, first made of steel alloy then plastic, which revolutionised documentary and feature production for radio. Reel-to-reel tape recorders, which first saw commercial usage in the Forties, quickly displaced both disc and wire recording (Berg, 2008). Lighter, battery operated tape machine such as the EMI L2B ‘midget’ reel to reel recorder, introduced in 1955, enabled producers such as Parker to easily capture on-location recordings and work in a more independent manner, without the need for an accompanying technical operator (Street, 2015). During this period, film and television documentaries moved away from formally scripted approaches and used portable equipment to record events and “authorial consciousness” as they occurred (Rabiger, 1998: 5). Innovations in audio recording equipment allowed radio documentary producers to capture and present actuality in a similar manner (Aspinall, 1971). Radio producers were finally able to “replace the tyranny of the production script with spontaneous conversation and the voices of real people” (Preistman, 2002: 15).

The transition from analogue to digital recording and editing marks a significant industry milestone. I claim this shift took place in the early Nineties, as digital technology saw widespread industry uptake during this period. Street (2015) observes

how the digital playback, storage and editing of audio was first introduced during the mid-Eighties. However, the ongoing affordability, ease of use and reliability of multi-track computer-based digital editors in the early Nineties led to an increase in its day-to-day usage in mainstream radio stations around the world. A crucial difference between the 'pre' and 'post' digital age can be seen in Shingler and Wieringa's (1998) observation that digital technology is "remarkable" as the producer "actually 'sees' the audio on the computer screen" (103). The visualisation of audio greatly enhanced the producer's ability to edit and mix documentary productions. Reese et al. (2006) believe the advent of digital technology "revolutionised how a production person can record, edit and otherwise manipulate and audio sound signal" (19). Biewen and Smith (2010) see the development of cheap digital audio recorders as being responsible for an "important trend" in contemporary radio documentary production; letting people "speak for themselves and tell their own stories" (6).

Before the introduction of computer-based workstations, the act of audio editing involved physical destruction. Magnetic tape was 'spliced' with a razor-blade, then repositioned within an audio production. This practice was still being described in publications dating from the early Nineties. Authors such as Siegel (1992) detailed the advantages of making a 45-degree splice over a 90-degree splice when editing tape, amongst other analogue-based production advice. Towards the end of the Twentieth Century Talbot (1997) still discusses the use of analogue production techniques. By 2006, Reese et al. (2006) had seemingly embraced the possibilities of digital technology. In the preface to the *Radio Production Worktext* they write, "the transition to digital has brought broadcasting new technologies and techniques that hold the promise of greater quality, productivity, and creativity in radio production work" (vi). However, the glossary section still mentions the use of 'quarter inch recording', 'tape

loops', 'splicing blocks' and other terminology associated with analogue production (255). The revised 2009 edition features a detailed section on analogue editing, which offers advice such as: "Be careful! Razor blades are sharp and will cut your fingers as easily as they cut audio tape" (174). I suggest relatively few audio editors would still be using these analogue approaches nine years into the Twenty First Century. Most leading tape and reel-to-reel manufactures had stopped production by that point.

The virtues of digital audio editing became apparent soon after its introduction. In the early Nineties, Ford (1993) was excited about the possibilities of this new production tool, citing a "lack of noise" as digital technology's primary benefit (95). However, some authors are less receptive to the perceived strengths of digital technology. Music producer Joe Boyd (2007) has definite views on the differences between analogue and digital recording. He asserts that modern digital processing results in a sound that is far narrower and confined than that of analogue reel-to reel recordings, commenting, "with the added limitations of digital sound, you end up with a bright and shiny, thin and two-dimensional recording" (204). Boyd argues that analogue recordings are less monochromatic than contemporary digital recordings. While this is open to debate, Reese et al. (2009) believe that advantages of digital editing "far outweigh" the disadvantages (28). However, they draw attention to potential drawbacks, such as the supposed starkness of digital audio and the risk of corrupted audio through computer malfunction.

The technical innovations discussed in this section have directly shaped the modern freelance radio producer's role and output. As analogue equipment was gradually superseded by its digital equivalent, the act of documentary production became far easier. Faster, non-destructive editing, improved recording clarity, and the possibilities of multi-track recording were just some of the benefits provided by digital

production tools. Fleming (2010) suggests that changing technologies have allowed radio to become “more creative in less time with a wider variety of voices and sounds” (144). Crook (2012) agrees that contemporary radio documentary producers have the ability to create their work “with a speed unheard of in living human memory” (120). Marvin (1988) is unsure about whether technologies actually inspire new practices, or whether these are “improvised out of old practices that no longer work in new settings”. I suggest that the ability to increase productivity in a relatively short amount of time has become a defining characteristic of the freelance radio documentary producer (5). Technology has enabled producers to perform a wide range of production skills, which once required a production team to carry out. This consideration is of particular relevance to freelancers working independently from stations or production companies, and therefore have limited access to resources. Ehrlich (2011) states that the affordability and improved quality of recording technology and editing software has “made radio documentary an increasingly democratic and accessible medium” (4). As the financial outlay to produce radio documentaries became less expensive, it consequently became easier for freelance producers to create content of professional broadcast standard.

The advent of new technology has considerably impacted on modes of radio transmission. I therefore extend my research beyond the practice of radio production to take into account the wider implications of evolving radio platforms which transmit documentaries. These include the introduction of FM, DAB, satellite broadcasting, and online technologies such as podcasting, streaming and on-demand audio. Producers must anticipate the sonic qualities of the transmission method used to disseminate their work, as this will inform their approach to production. The introduction of new broadcast technologies has generally improved the sound quality of radio production

work and radio transmissions. This can be discerned from listening to the archived recordings of earlier radio production work. Neer (2001) cites the shift from AM to FM frequencies as an example of technological progress, as he believes FM broadcasting was an improvement on earlier AM signals. A “mass exodus” from AM to FM radio, according to Keith (2007), culminated in 1979, when FM began to attain higher ratings in the US. Keith describes commercial FM radio as becoming “the medium to sell” (143). In doing so, he references political economy as an indicator of the format’s supposed success.

Keith claims the emergence of Internet based radio streaming during the Nineties was an important milestone in broadcasting history. In 1995 RealNetworks was the first audio player to enter the market. It continued to dominate the field into the late Nineties, when Microsoft’s Windows Media Player began to claim a larger market share (Reese et al., 2006). Priestman (2002) believes streaming was not necessarily an improvement on analogue broadcasting, describing the early days of web radio as being merely “reasonable” in terms of its fidelity (7). Fleming (2012) is similarly cautious about DAB’s supposed superiority to FM radio transmissions and sees several weaknesses in this digital mode of transmission. Nevertheless, digital broadcasting has provided several alternatives to “so-called “terrestrial” radio” (Hausman et al., 2012: 3). Crook (2012) sees benefits in the way producers can harness the internet to bypass state regulations and infrastructures, while also assisting in the creation of content. Although I agree that online broadcasting, or ‘narrowcasting’, has provided new opportunities for music documentary producers to have their work heard by international audiences, this has not diminished the importance of traditional radio. As Dubber (2013) asserts, online audio platforms have not replaced radio broadcasting,

but provide an environment where “listeners and producers can connect with broadcasters in new ways, so that those stories may find an audience” (122).

By exploring key advances in recording and editing technology, I have shown how the shift from analogue to digital production has shaped the development of radio documentary production. I claim the role and output of the radio producer is never static. The position evolves and adjusts to reflect new production tools and new ways to engage with audiences. Despite the benefits of new technology, it should be acknowledged that innovation has also been responsible for a loss of interest in radio documentaries. The Thirties, when there was no competition from television, were a ‘powerful’ time for radio documentaries (Ehrlich 2011: 15). Yet, according to Hilmes (2002), “as television’s picture strengthened, radio’s voice began to fade” (3). The rise of visual technologies diminished radio significance and relegated radio documentaries to niche programming status. In the following section I consider parallels and differences between television and film documentary production and audio documentary production. By widening the field of investigation to include these fields, it is possible to draw clearer distinctions between the two forms of documentary production. These observations help situate my own practice-based investigations within the field.

3.4. Comparisons between audio and visual forms of documentary production

Having identified how the documentary form has been furthered by new technologies, I now consider how the field of radio production compares to that of the television / film sound production. This interrogation is necessary as the music documentary genre is represented in both audio and visual forms of production; displaying similar

approaches to sound design. When assessing comparisons between radio and television production, Geller (2006) observes that “great storytelling and powerful communication” are central to both mediums (307). By defining certain characteristics of audio and visual documentary production I reveal shared practices and differences between the two forms. In doing so, I bring the specificity of freelance music documentary production for commercial radio into clearer focus.

Hendy (2004) believes radio producers have a far greater level of creative input than their visual counterparts, as radio production is a less technically complex process. He suggests that radio is more of a producer’s medium than television, since various roles such as researcher director, editor, sound recordist and presenter can be combined into the single role of multi-skilled radio producer. Emm (2002) describes radio as being “a more compact medium” than television, and therefore has a smaller range of jobs (136). Yet the jobs that do exist often encompass a wide range of duties and responsibilities. As McLeish (1999) observes, combining radio duties allows more radio programmes to be made by fewer people. This convergence enables freelance documentary producers to successfully complete projects within the confines of limited budgets and tight deadlines.

Radio producers are able to exercise a considerable amount of autonomy, as their production decisions do not require the collaboration and ultimate approval of the co-producers and technicians often required for television and film productions. Crook (2012) claims that the freedom of expression afforded to radio documentary producers is what makes the form the “ideal auteurs genre” (120). Because of this independence, Hausman et al. (2004) believe that an effective radio production will often carry the unique “identifying mark of its producer” (17). In the forward to Chantler and Stewart’s

(2009) radio journalism worktext, news presenter Jon Snow commented on the independence and freedom those working in radio have in comparison to television.

“Radio is an empowering medium. It’s you against the world. You are effectively dependent upon no one else. You retrieve, process and broadcast your entire report yourself. Television, for all the pace of change, is still labour intensive and heavily reliant on teams of other technicians and journalists, some of them unknown to you and unseen” (viii).

In an article titled *Real(ly) Good Stories*¹¹, Sherman reported on discussions held during *Doc NYC 2010*, a festival dedicated to celebrating the documentary form. She noted several comparisons between the structural approach and conceptual basis of both radio and film documentary production, which demonstrate comparable strengths and texturing. Sherman observes how various film documentary production techniques can be found in radio documentary production, such as the use of stock footage, interview segments, narration and scene recordings. Van Leeuwen (1999) also sees parallels in the way sound dubbing technicians working in the radio, film and television industries all tend to categorise sound tracks into three spatial zones: close, middle and far distance. The digital tools used to manipulate sound also utilise the same techniques in both fields. Crossfades, splicing, volume manipulation, use of wild-track recordings, and equalisation are just some of the shared practices common to audio production in both visual and audio documentary production. Dancyger (1991) describes a radio documentary as being a series of sequences. According to Stephen Smith, Managing Editor at American RadioWorks, this reflects another structural similarity, as these sequences can be likened to the scenes of a film documentary, where events often play out in real time¹².

¹¹ http://www.mediarights.org/news/really_good_stories

¹² <http://niemanreports.org/articles/what-the-hell-is-a-radio-documentary/>

The sub-genres of film documentaries, identified by Nichols (2001), can be applied to radio productions of a similar nature. The six “modes of representation” he categorises show the various approaches documentary producers use to convey ‘truth’ (99). These include:

1: Poetic. Although this documentary mode can be abstract and lacking in specificity, it can be harnessed to create challenging work which explores the various patterns and associations within documentary content. The conventions of continuity and logical narrative are often disregarded in poetic documentaries.

2: Expository. The expository style can be used to make sense of the historical world and represents a more didactic form of documentary production. It aims to make clear various meanings and interpretations. Therefore, the commentary in expository documentaries are usually associated “with objectivity or omniscience” (107).

3: Participatory. This approach uses interviews or interactions with contributors as the basis of the documentary. It provides the audience with a sense of what it is like to be in a particular situation, and shows how the documentary maker engages with the subject matter and reveals their relationship to interviewees.

4: Observational. In observational documentaries the producer dispassionately represents unfolding events as they happen, without added commentary or re-enactments. There is an emphasis on placing the audience within a situation, without unnecessarily involving the production team.

5: Performative. Performative documentaries question positions of knowledge and understanding. They are similar to poetic modes of production, as performative documentaries often draw on a stylistic approach, to highlight the subjectivity of knowledge.

6: Reflexive. This sub-category draws attention to the constructed nature of reality within a documentary. It tends to profile the producer’s relationship to the audience, rather than the relationship between the producer and the subject. Reflexive documentaries explore issues of truth and authenticity by often ignoring traditional production techniques and conventions. In this respect, the reflexive category is the most “self-conscious and self-questioning mode” of documentary (127).

I maintain that the conventions outlined in Nichols six categories, originally intended to define film documentaries, can be equally applied to the field of radio documentary

production. Although Nichols often discusses the relationship between images and the audience, it is nevertheless possible to compare the treatment of content and representations of truth to comparable radio documentary productions.

According to Priestman (2003), a critical advantage of radio over television is that “you can take it with you when you are doing something else” (3). However, this view has become somewhat outdated, due to the emergence of mobile phone and tablet devices, which have freed visual media to be consumed in a variety of locations outside the home. Yet Priestman’s claim can be applied to radio’s ability to allow listeners to perform everyday activities while listening, such as driving a car, or gardening outdoors, for example. Although Jenkins (2006) describes the consumption of traditional established media as “passive media spectatorship”, new technologies are challenging this passivity (5). Current research indicates that television is becoming a background medium, in an age when media multitasking on laptops and ‘smartphones’ is an “increasingly popular phenomenon” (Lin et al., 2011: 183). This practice of multitasking is already an accepted phenomenon with radio audiences, who Geller (2006) suggests are used to listening “while doing other things” (317).

The most obvious characteristic of radio, which separates it from television or film, is the lack of any visual element to accompany it. Radio makes a virtue of this simplicity, as illustrated by the way in which “a well recorded voice standing alone tends to draw people in and is intimate in a way that even film and video are not” (Hardy and Dean, 2006: 12). Ford (2013) recognises the ability of radio to reach listeners in a very personal way and claims it is “the most intimate of all mediums” (9). Although the use of sound is a crucial element in any documentary production, sound alone cannot provide the precise representation that visual objects can (Demers, 2010). This absence of pictorial content led Crisell (1986) to refer to radio as being a blind medium.

“We cannot see its messages, they consist only of noise and silence, and it is from the sole fact of its blindness that all radio’s other distinctive qualities – the nature of its language, its jokes, the way in which its audience use it – ultimately derive” (3).

Comparing radio to a disability is questioned by Shingler and Wieringa (1998), who disagree with the analogy that the medium is in some way handicapped or missing something crucial. Instead, they prefer to describe radio as being “invisible” (1). Conversely, NPR’s Ira Glass contends that radio is “our most visual medium” (Hardy and Dean, 2006: 12). This comment refers to the listener’s ability to use sound to create mental images that can, in some instances, be more visceral and engaging than reality. The audio producer often harness radio’s lack of visual precision by suggesting scenes and pictures which are open to interpretation. This allows the individual listener to build their own personal construction of what the sounds represent, based on their own experiences.

I suggest that neither film nor radio can be seen as inherently ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than the other; each has unique strengths that documentary producers utilise to create captivating stories. The observations of former BBC presenter James Naughtie, quoted by Trewin (2003), provides a persuasive argument for radio’s on-going relevance as a medium, in comparison to television.

“I’m not saying that TV doesn’t have enormous strengths but there is something about the directness of radio. You can communicate with the listener without pictures intervening. A good documentary or radio package, even an interview, is a wonderfully potent journalistic form” (142).

As indicated in chapter two, the documentary genre is wide in scope, ranging in diverse subject matter, and featuring multiple technical and stylistic approaches. This relative freedom informs Rabiger’s (1998) view that there are “no limits to the documentary’s possibilities” (3). This lack of restriction presents both opportunities and potential

problems for producers, who are required to choose between numerous possible approaches when constructing documentaries. Regardless of which creative path a documentary producer chooses to follow, the universal goal for both visual and audio forms of the genre is to build a connection between the audience and the subject matter. This is achieved through the judicious editing of content into an engaging and coherent story. In the next section I explore approaches to both editing and storytelling in radio documentary production.

3.5. Approaches to editing and structuring

The remainder of this chapter explores the various technical approaches and structural elements employed by producers when building radio documentary narratives. I begin by investigating technical considerations such as editing, presentation and scripting, before focusing on the tradition of storytelling and its importance as a structural device. The ability to edit is one of the radio producer's most important skills (Reese, et al., 2006). It is through this process that producer refines content and rearranges the order of various components, thereby shaping the final structure of the broadcast item. I investigate the act of editing radio documentaries and consider the use of music and sound effects within this process, to better understand my own freelance practice.

On a practical level, editing allows mistakes to be eliminated and helps to adjust the length of certain sections, thereby building a sense of pace and keeping the production within a set duration. According to Shingler and Wieringa (1998), the purpose of editing is to remove “flawed, repetitive, superfluous or uninteresting material” (101). They contend the practice is “far more complex than it appears at face value” (106). Willet (2013) agrees, claiming “creating clean sound edits can be tricky.

If you don't choose the right edit point you will get a kind of jerky, unnatural-sounding edit." (213). Lloyd suggests editing is about "chopping the fat off the meat. Juicy, lean content is the objective, assembled in exactly the right order" (244). McLeish (2005) expands on this view by identifying four core purposes for editing.

- To rearrange recorded material into a more logical sequence.
- To remove the uninteresting, repetitive or technically unacceptable.
- To reduce the running time.
- For creative effect to produce new juxtapositions of speech, music, sound and silence (31).

When starting a documentary project, it is firstly necessary for the producer to have a reasonably clear concept of how the finished product will sound at the conclusion of the production process. The producer will, in a sense, 'hear' the final artefact before it is completed, then consider the necessary production stages required to realise this intended outcome (Hausman, et al. 2004). Through editing, the producer selects and arranges content into an order that will hold the listener's interest. These editing choices will ideally help the audio content to flow together logically and comprehensibly through a progressive narrative structure. However, this does not mean that editing needs to be predictable, or presented in a chronologically linear sequence. I suggest that Godard's dictum that a film needs a beginning, middle and an end "but not necessarily in that order" can be equally applied to radio documentaries (MacCabe, 2005: 326).

Not all listeners will be familiar with the subject matter being discussed, or necessarily interested in it. De Fossard (2005) observes how many listeners are not necessarily focused on a broadcast, and are often doing other things while listening to the radio, "this means that sometimes listeners can miss important points - even inadvertently" (29). It should also be acknowledged that some listeners may tune into a documentary after the production has already begun its broadcast, and consequently miss important background information. Starkey (2007) therefore suggests that the

structure of a programme needs to appeal to listeners who hear the start, while also being inclusive to those who may tune in some way into the production. This contextual content, which often identifies the station and possibly the presenter, the name and purpose of the documentary and occasionally a short synopsis, is known as ‘sign-posting’. According to Shingler and Wieringa (1998) sign-posting, along with repetition and simplicity, can help to counter “the listener’s propensity towards confusion, inattention and forgetfulness” (84). In a commercial radio environment sign-posting will most likely appear shortly before the start of, and immediately following, a commercial break. Allowing space for advertising is an important structural consideration for commercial documentary producers, although this need not be seen as an imposition, as it provides the opportunity to create ‘chapters’ in the story which can be exploited for dramatic effect. Lloyd (2015) believes radio audiences are not unduly surprised by the appearance of commercials within programming, claiming “listeners live in a material world. Commercialisation is not alien to them” (248).

There is a balance that needs to be struck between creating content for a general audience and more knowledgeable music fans. Radio producers are often motivated by a desire to capture the interest of listeners who are not necessarily interested in the topic that is being covered (Kern, 2008). Yet, in trying to gain the attention of someone with limited knowledge of the documentary’s subject, the producer risks alienating informed listeners who may resent expositional content they consider to be common-knowledge. If a listener loses interest with an item they may mentally tune out, switch to another frequency, or in the worst case scenario turn the radio off (Kern, 2008). Rabiger (1998) notes the wide range of stylistic approaches documentary producers employ to capture the audience’s attention, including; “controlled and premeditated, spontaneous and unpredictable, lyrical and impressionistic, starkly observational” (3). The editor builds

fluctuations in mood, music and different audio environments to provide the listener with the sonic equivalent of light and shade. Contrasting elements can be used to hold the listener's attention and drive the narrative of a documentary onward. Sonneschein (2011) calls these variations 'valleys' and 'hills' and notes their importance in maintaining interest, claiming "contrast can be used in all sound qualities to keep the audience's attention, not bore or dull them" (94).

Aspinall (1971) describes the production practice of gathering of short audio extracts, culled from an interview, which are then "carefully edited and interspersed in the narration" (104). Radio producers often use this approach to break up a single interview into separate sections, then judiciously reposition these clips throughout a documentary. This helps to avoid the potential monotony of one voice speaking for a long duration. Lloyd (2015) believes these edits should be seamless, and not discernible to the listener, claiming "a perfectly edited piece should sound untouched" (244). Crook (2012) identifies a distinction between the use of quick-fire montages and a more 'stream of consciousness' approach when editing a succession of contributors. Producers must use their own personal judgments to decide which of these approaches seems the most sympathetic to the content.

Another consideration when editing documentary content is the use of music and sound effects, which Emm (2002) believes can both be used to "evoke radio's moods, emotions, atmospheres and environments" (51). Smaill (2010), comments that radio documentaries have the ability to harness and focus emotions in unique ways. One of the surest methods used to elicit an emotional response is to select appropriate music to accompany the mood and context of spoken word content. Connelly (2012) suggests that music can be effective in building connections with a radio audience and, when combined with a spoken narration, can powerfully "motivate people to continue

listening to your radio station” (10). This is especially relevant for the study of music documentaries, which can be expected to contain more musical content than a typical journalistic documentary. Adverts broadcast on commercial radio often use music to capture the listener’s interest. Tellis (2004) claims music in advertising is most commonly used to “establish mood or arouse emotions” and refers to music’s ability to “grab attention” (162). Bicknell (2009) also believes music can trigger emotions within a listener and can therefore be used to create a very personal response to a radio production. She observes how listeners recount being “overwhelmed or overpowered by music, reduced to tears, and experiencing chills or shivers and other bodily sensations” (45). Goodale (2011) agrees, suggesting, “music, voices and noise emote, manipulate and provoke in a manner that few people have ever been able to understand” (123). This combination of audio elements, such as music and spoken word content, is a technique commonly used within the production of music documentaries for commercial radio. By editing music to start or end at strategic points in a production, looping certain sections, or using music as a backing track, the producer is able to engineer emotion and add context to certain sections of a radio documentary. Music can also be employed to add a sense of location and history through the careful selection of appropriate songs. According to Shingler and Wieringa (1998) music can “make artificial shifts from one location to another” (66). It can also help to “act as a boundary demarcation”, separating certain ‘scenes’ and smoothly sealing any “gaps” in a production (64).

Sound effects and the use of actuality can be used alongside music to add variety and interest to a documentary. As McLeish (2005) states, sound effects can “stir the memory and paint pictures” (179). Used effectively they can help to illustrate a particular point, build drama or convey a sense of location. According to Bialek (2014)

it is acceptable to use sound effects sourced from radio archives or specialist sound effect CD's, while noting that some radio practitioners prefer to use authentic acoustic effects recorded themselves while collecting other material. During the editing process, sound effects can be used as a structural bridge to join together various sections in a radio documentary. However, there is a risk of creating clutter and confusion if these elements are over-played. Sonneschein (2011) maintains it is possible to gain more impact by featuring fewer sound elements, which allows the audience to be "more participatory by letting them fill in the gaps in their minds, as opposed to handing them a full plate" (279). De Fossard (2005) similarly believes the overuse of sound can be "more destructive than constructive on radio" (30).

The technical editing processes discussed in this section are not exclusive to the digital age. The introduction of reel-to-reel tape in the Fifties allowed producers to increasingly layer more and more tracks, edit with greater precision and create sophisticated mix-downs in the studio. However, as discussed in section three, the process of editing was greatly enhanced by the arrival of non-destructive digital editing systems that increased creative opportunities and productivity (Fleming, 2010). The 'undo' function available on most digital editing systems has allowed for various options to be explored without the risk of physically damaging the content. Reese et al. (2009) note how contemporary radio producers have virtually instant access to the audio stored in a hard-drive system. As physical tape spooling is no longer involved, these editing innovations are known as 'non-destructive' practices. Reese et al. claim the increased speed of digital editing means the time saved can be potentially spent on other, more creative, parts of a project. Therefore, a digital production should theoretically be of a higher standard than one produced on analogue equipment, as a producer's time is able to be used more efficiently and creatively.

Technical advances do not remove the need for skilful producers whose expertise remains paramount in the production process (Hausman, et al., 2004). I argue that the craft of creating narrative structures for radio documentaries has not altered greatly in the past 50 years. The splicing technique of accomplished magnetic tape editors in the Sixties, such as John Baker from the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop, created intricate and precise edits with analogue equipment that sound "as if assembled by a computer" (Niebur, 2010: 116). Montages, cross fades, use of ambient on location recordings and other features of contemporary documentary production are commonplace in the radio documentaries of Charles Parker and Philip Donnellan in the late Fifties and early Sixties. Cox (2008) describes Parker as an "editing genius" for his editorial decision-making and innovative production techniques (3). In many respects Parker's *Radio Ballads* are sonically similar to documentaries produced on digital equipment, with the possible exception of low levels of tape hiss and the general fidelity of audio interviews.

Analogue production skills have not entirely disappeared. The tape-based audio editing instructions offered by Siegel (1992) in the early Nineties remain just as relevant today. Analogue terms such as 'splice', 'fadeout', 'crossfade', and 'scrubbing' are still used to describe digital recording and editing techniques that approximate the practices carried out on earlier reel-to-reel tape machines. In the early Seventies, Aspinall (1971) claimed that effective editing takes skill and practice along with an attentive ear and an "understanding of inflections in human speech" (54). This observation is just as true in the digital age of radio production. The calibre of Parker's production work, and other contemporaries, using only analogue technology supports the claim of Hausman et al. (2004) that "radio production is about communicating a message, not about gizmos" (xviii).

Regardless of the producer's technical ability, the overall success of a documentary is often dependant on their ability to construct an engaging story. The use of storytelling within a documentary is ideally used to build a compelling narrative and can enable "a relatively large subject to be considered from a number of different angles" (Hendy, 2004: 207). Aspinall (1971) believes a radio documentary must be entertaining, as well as educational, regardless of the subject matter. If there is no entertainment value, an audience will simply stop listening. Structuring content into a coherent and appealing story is a common approach used by producers to create entertaining documentaries. Chantler and Stewart claim radio documentaries "must have a shape and a story to tell" (225). Yet Beaman (2006) sees a contradiction between journalistic endeavour and creative storytelling. The word 'story' is commonly cited in descriptions of the form. It is the producer's attempt to tell a story that often defines the documentary genre. Aspinall (1971) describes a documentary as being "a story of something" (103). Starkey (2004) sees the radio documentary as being "a means of communicating a story" (207). Ehrlich (2011) uses the phrase "long-form radio storytelling" when discussing the radio documentary form (7).

Small (2010) comments on the documentary genre's ability to harness and focus emotions in unique ways. This attribute builds on oral storytelling traditions, which have "used sound to invoke myth, suspend reality, and create emotion since the times of fire circles and protective caves" (Sonnenschein, 2001: xix). Biewen and Smith (2010) believe the medium of radio can tell stories "extraordinarily well", particularly "stories that explore the space between the ears" (6). According to Makagon and Neuman (2009), the use of stories allows documentaries to "have the potential to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar" (xi). As Geller (2006) observes, "people are busy and have short attention spans" (7). Therefore, effective storytelling is required

in order to hold the attention of easily distracted audiences. Soren Wheeler, Senior Producer of *Radiolab*, believes that by building a realistic narrative the listener “connects that story to their life, to the world they see around them”¹³.

Storytelling within radio documentaries can guide the listener through an unfolding sequence of events. Isay believes effective radio documentaries take the listener on a journey, “leading them into a world that they would not otherwise know of or experience. Letting them meet people who they otherwise wouldn't have met”¹⁴. Sonneschein (2001) describes the audience’s desire to “figure out what will happen next and revel in surprising twists and turns of the plot that ultimately bring us to some kind of climax we were all expecting even if we don’t know the exact outcome” (117). The producer is, in essence, a storyteller. The editorial decision making process in a radio documentary is ultimately driven by the need to tell a good story.

A presenter, or narrator, is often used as convenient structural storytelling device. The presenter of a radio documentary helps to shape the narrative and can be used to quickly introduce certain contributors, summarise key plot points, and concisely provide facts and expositional content (Rabiger, 1998). The following section discusses narration within radio documentaries, and considers issues of credibility and distortion within this aspect of production. I explore various styles of narration and assess how documentary presentation has adapted to prevailing trends.

3.6. Presentation and voice work

¹³ <http://www.ideastap.com/ideasmag/the-knowledge/How-to-make-a-radio-documentary>

¹⁴ <http://niemanreports.org/articles/radio-documentaries-take-listeners-into-dark-corners/>

A presenter provides a simple, dependable documentary production framework and is the most common technique used to deliver key information to radio listeners. According to Kern (2008) the use of a presenter is fundamental in conveying facts within a documentary format. I now interrogate this common, but not necessarily essential, production element by investigating the importance of presenters and scripts in radio documentaries. I assess the voice selection process and its significance in the commissioning process, with an emphasis on commercial radio broadcasters.

Kern (2008) believes the human voice has an almost unequalled power to affect people. It is the sound of a voice and the words an individual chooses that convey the way they feel. Therefore, the selection of an appropriate voice for the role of narrator is a critical decision that greatly affects the overall tone and emotional impact of a documentary. According to Aspinall (1971) the narrator is the leading ‘character’ in most documentaries. The differing articulations of the human speech mechanism evoke different feelings in listeners and demonstrate the “sensuality of sound” (Rodenburg, 2005: 247). Siegel (1992) identifies four variable voice presentation techniques, which are pitch, loudness, pace and emphasis (103). The presenter adjusts these variables, whether reading from a script or adlibbing, to give light and shade to their delivery and thereby hold the listener’s attention. However, as Rabiger (1998) notes, documentaries can be equally effective, if not more so, without the use of a traditional presenter. A difficult, but rewarding approach, is to craft a radio documentary in such a way that the contributors themselves tell the story, without the need for any extraneous exposition from a presenter. I return to this style of documentary narrative in chapters five and seven of my findings.

As Aspinall (1971) observes, a dull personality seldom holds the attention of an audience. Geller (2006) believes that increasing competition from the Internet and other

new platforms has led to an even greater demand for compelling radio personalities. Within the fast-moving audio environment of a commercial radio station, where commercials compete for the listener's attention, there is a need for the presenter to stand apart from traditional programming and provide a point of difference. Therefore, the delivery style and personality of a presenter is fundamental in achieving a connection to the audience. Writing in March 1947, Orwell (2008) discusses the need for a radio presenter's delivery to be more heightened than everyday language, in order to engage listeners. This, he believes, gives the presenter the internal impression that they are 'overacting'.

“To sound natural on the air one has to have the impression, internally, that one is overacting. If one speaks as one would in everyday life, or a platform, one always sounds bored. That, indeed, is the impression that the majority of untrained broadcasters do give, especially when they speak from scripts: and when the speaker sounds bored, the audience is apt to follow suit” (370).

I suggest that Orwell's observation from the Forties is still relevant today. However, the move towards a more naturalistic style of delivery has meant contemporary documentary presentation often has a looser, more informal feel than can be heard in past productions. This is especially true for commercial radio, which has a more relaxed presentation style than public service broadcasting. (Trewin, 2003).

According to Evans (1977), the former Head of BBC Radio Training, a presenter or narrator “holds a feature together and gives it unity” (82). Similarly, Lindgren (2011) views the presenter as audio adhesive, describing the role as “the glue holding together the many different components that make up the storyline” (56).

In regards to structuring a radio documentary, the use of a presenter can, as Rabiger (1998) notes, “get you out of tight spots” by linking disparate sections, concisely introducing contributors, providing context and papering over structural 'cracks' or technical issues (276). Although the producer ultimately shapes the authorial

characteristics of a documentary, it is the presenter or narrator who provides its literal voice. Therefore, choosing an appropriate voice is an important decision, which should consider the warmth and personality of the voice (Aspinall, 1971).

As indicated, a presenter can be a useful technique to link together certain scenes in a documentary, provide expositional content and generally drive the narrative forward in a logical, informative way. According to McLeish (2005), a presenter can provide statistical facts, offer context for the views of contributors, and provide practical elements such as the names of various speakers. However, Aspinall (1971) notes that the use of a presenter or additional narrative should be used sparingly; “Too much narrative, uninterrupted by action or other sounds and voices, makes a documentary sound dull” (81).

Nichols (2001) believes that a presenter with a professional, official tone can add credibility to a documentary, through the use of a neutral, or even disinterested delivery style. However, by sounding too professional, there is a risk of a presenter sounding overly formal and scholastic. Rabiger (1998) suggests that an improvised, adlibbed style of narration can be more effective in building a more informal “one-to-one relationship” with the audience (276). Preistman (2002) also refers to the illusion of one-to-one connection between a presenter and the listener, calling it a “horizontal conversation and an intrinsic part of listening to the radio” (26). According to Hausman et al. (2004), the presenter’s style “must be intimate, communicative and personal” (18). However, this direct, informal delivery technique is a relatively new production approach, seldom heard in earlier radio documentaries which often took a more authoritative tone. Aspinall (1971) makes the point that the presentation style for a documentary is very different to that used for reading the news or providing a music link, claiming it is more akin to storytelling.

Bruzzi (2006) draws attention to the risk of distortion from using the ‘voice of god’ method of narration, as the presenter may sway or influence an audience towards a certain view, risking impartiality. Yet McLeish (1999) sees merit in this approach, recognising the efficiency of the technique in providing key information to the listener, allowing the producer to cover several important topics in a short space of time. Nichols (1991), identifies the voice of god style as belonging to “expository” forms of documentary production that can be seen as “romantic and didactic” in their style of presentation (33). However, Adorno and Horkheimer (1973) believe the use of an overly instructive delivery style should be carefully considered as it can add to radio’s tendency “to make the speaker’s word, the false commandment, absolute” (159). Rabiger (1998) is also concerned by documentaries which employ an authoritative approach, claiming they have become increasingly unfashionable. According to Hausman et al. (2004), this form of narration is currently only heard in parodies.

“The days of the booming, golden-throated announcer are gone, and it is important that you avoid sounding like a stereotypical “hello-out-there-in-radio-land” announcer. That style is extinct and exists only when someone is making fun of it” (21).

The use of an appropriate presenter is not only an important structural consideration for documentary production. It has increasingly become a key factor in the commissioning process. The competition faced by independent radio production companies, along with the threat of increasingly limited budget opportunities for documentaries and features¹⁵, has led to presenters being chosen for their celebrity status, rather than their suitability. I question whether the selection of a ‘star’ presenter enhances the overall effectiveness of a production, or whether it distracts the listener from the documentary’s central story.

¹⁵ <http://radiotoday.co.uk/2015/10/rig-wants-ring-fencing-of-bbc-radio-budget/>

I return to this theme, drawing from my own music documentary commissioning experiences, within my findings.

Lindgren (2011) asserts that the role of radio documentary presenter “can be assumed by anyone” (56) and observes how producers will often fulfil the role of narrator by reading their own script. Yet this view represents a distinctively journalistic, public service approach to documentary production. I suggest that in the competitive and increasingly fragmented contemporary radio industry¹⁶, it is unlikely that ‘anyone’ would be selected to fulfil the role of presenter on commercial radio. This demonstrates a key difference between the way publicly funded corporations and commercial companies approach radio documentary commissioning. Schulberg (1996) believes radio programmers vigilantly try to maintain the “purity” of their station and “constantly ponder which program elements might provoke a listener to leave” (52). Therefore, in order to secure a commission, documentary producers must carefully consider the choice of presenter. The need to maintain or build audience ratings will largely inform the decision-making process when selecting an appropriate presenter for a commercial radio production.

The success of any presentation work within a documentary may be dependent on the production of a suitable script. According to Demers (2010), the documentary presenter “assumes the position of educated informant” (160). Although a presenter may be chosen for their pre-existing understanding of a subject, it is often the preparation of a well-researched script that ensures a presenter has relevant information. This display of intelligence should ideally be delivered in an approachable, personal style in order to build a connection with an audience. McLeish (1999) claims scripting for radio as being a very specialised form of writing, requiring the author’s words to be

¹⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/who_we_are/audience_councils/england/annual_review

processed through the listener's ears as opposed to being read by the eyes. He suggests that a script must be written in a conversational style, ensuring the speaker sounds like they are actually talking to the listener instead of reading to them.

Aspinall (1971) believes a radio script must contain everything that happens within a production, including the words that the listener hears and detailed instructions for the technical operator, which he refers to as "mechanising" (82). The completion of a presenter's script will usually be one of the last steps in the production process. Once interviews, music and archival clips etc. have been sourced and ordered into a draft narrative structure, the script will be woven around the content, wherever needed. Although the presenter's script is designed to link together certain sections within a documentary, it also may also provide important expositional content, mention the station's name, and add useful structural elements, such as identifying who is speaking.

This section has shown how the selection of an appropriate presenter, aided by a suitable script, is a critical factor in the success of any radio documentary project. As indicated, the presentation of a radio documentary is major production component requiring a great deal of forethought from the producer in order to secure a commission. Having assessed role of the freelance producer, historicising various transformations in the field and exploring specific technical considerations of radio documentary production, I now provide my final conclusions.

3.7. Conclusion - radio documentary production

This section ends my state-of-the-field investigation into commercial radio, documentary studies and the practice of radio documentary production. These opening three chapters have examined issues pertaining to the development and shape of radio documentaries and considered the effect of political legislation on commercial radio

programming. By assessing the documentary genre and the role of the radio producer, alongside key production elements, I have provided a framework for the practice-based investigations that follow.

This chapter began by examining the role of ‘radio producer’ as it relates to radio documentary production. I revealed how this position has constantly adapted and evolved in order to meet the needs of the radio industry. These changes have resulted in varying academic accounts of the duties a contemporary radio producer can be expected to perform. By tracing the development of certain production tools and assessing the wider implications of innovation, I argued that advances in digital tools and online technologies have turned the role of the documentary producer into a more individualistic, multi-skilled position. Affordable new technologies have allowed the radio documentary producer to carry out tasks that once required an entire production team to complete. This theme was explored further in my analysis of freelance radio production within the cultural industries. I revealed how freelance practices in the radio industry have been shaped by the impact of political economy. Economic changes have provided both opportunities and drawbacks for freelancer. Although there is the potential for freelancers to take control of their careers and choose specific projects to work on, Bonini and Gandini (2016) claim there is increased job insecurity for freelancer producers in the radio sector.

Although editing technology has changed considerably over the years, this chapter demonstrated how remnants of earlier production practices can still be found in the construction of contemporary radio documentaries. I identified a deficit in radio literature relating to the representation of new digital technologies. Although the work of McLeish (2005), Biewen and Smith (2010), and Crook (2012), amongst others, discuss the merits of digital production, there are several new approaches to radio

production that are not addressed, such as the opportunities provided by online technologies.

I drew comparisons between the practice of film and television documentary production and radio documentary production. Although the music documentary is genre commonly found in both visual and audio mediums, I identified certain distinctions between the two forms and revealed shared practices. Music documentaries have enjoyed increasing public interest in recent years, while gaining industry recognition as a legitimate form of documentary production.

Throughout this chapter I investigated numerous production techniques employed by radio documentary producers, including editing and the use of storytelling to build effective narratives. Although I agreed with Aspinall's (1971) belief that there is a need for productions to be factually accurate and fair, I argued that the manipulation of truth can be justified if it enhances the entertainment value of a production. Beaman (2006) claims there is a tension between journalistic integrity and creative storytelling. This is reflected in my own work as a producer for commercial radio, which demonstrates more journalistic latitude than productions made for public service stations.

The use of a presenter, or narrator, with a radio documentary can allow the producer to deliver important expositional content in a direct, engaging manner. However, research in the field of radio documentary presentation, such as Lindgren's (2011) investigations, tend to reflect public service approaches to broadcasting. I considered how radio documentary presentation have adapted to prevailing trends and argued that the choice of presenter has profound implications for freelancers during the commissioning process.

Radio studies have undervalued the technical effort and creativity of radio documentary producers, while ignoring the work of freelancers creating content for commercial audiences. Although fundamental production approaches have broadly remained consistent from the analogue to the digital era, I suggested that innovations in equipment have led to the emergence of the multi-skilled, radio freelancer; capable of carrying out all facets of music documentary production. In the following chapter I present my methodological approach to this research. I assess weaknesses in the field and justify my use of practice-based research as a tool for investigating the field of music documentary production for commercial radio audiences

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used for this study, building on the previous three chapters by addressing the limitations apparent in past investigations. I revealed a lack of research in the field of music documentary production for commercial audiences and claimed the impact of political economy on freelance producers is similarly underexplored. This chapter presents a way to investigate these deficiencies, through the use of a practice-based methodological approach. I propose that practice-based enquiry is necessary to truly understand freelance music documentary production for commercial audiences. This methodology is not commonly used to investigate commercial radio practices. A practice-based approach allows for a first-hand perspective of the political and economic conditions that affect freelance practice, while revealing the production processes involved in the creation of commercially programmed music documentaries. I have, therefore, adopted a practice-based approach, that draws on three submethods, to investigate my freelance production work for commercial radio audiences in New Zealand and the United Kingdom between 2008 and 2015. These submethods are as follows:

- An iterative assessment of my production practices
- An auto-ethnographic study
- Structured and semi-structured interviews

The first technique uses a process of iteration to examine the production of two music documentaries, about the musician David Bowie, to consider how my work as a freelance radio documentary producer answers the questions posed by this investigation. These two stages are separated by an interim phase of production activity.

My auto-ethnographic approach uses self-reflection and an ongoing process of critical evaluation to observe and record my practice across these three separate production stages. My final methodological tool was interviewing. I spoke to eleven radio practitioners as a means of testing my preconceptions and to gain an understanding of industry perspectives. This mixed-method approach allowed for the triangulation of my analysis; ensuring the validity of my research and allowing for “differences and contradictions to emerge” (Gray, 2003: 72). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1993), triangulation is a practical way to check “one set of data sources by collecting data from others” (231).

The primary question of this investigation interrogates the role of freelance radio documentary producers working in the field of commercial radio, by asking:

What practices does a contemporary freelance radio producer adopt to make music documentaries for commercial radio?

Several sub-questions have arisen from this central investigation:

- What political, economic and commercial processes are involved in the creation of music documentaries for commercial radio?
- What roles do digital technologies and online platforms play in the production of music documentaries for commercial radio?
- How do radio practitioners view music documentaries for contemporary commercial radio?

These secondary questions delve into freelance practices within the culture industry. I explore the impact of inter-media factors on music documentary production, such as the institutionalised production practices of state broadcasting, commercial radio and freelancers and consider how these conventions manifest themselves within production work. Freelance radio production practice is central to this research and therefore

cannot be ignored. I claim that radio documentary studies have traditionally focused on public service models of broadcasting and are dominated by a journalistic agenda. As a result, the role of the freelance documentary producer working in the commercial industry, has been underrepresented. The following section appraises past studies in radio production which used practice-based models of investigation, in order to position my research within the field. I begin by reviewing the lack of studies related to radio documentary production, then reveal how this limited field predominantly focuses on journalistic approaches to public service broadcasting. Finally, I assess specific examples of existing radio production research and compare these examples against my own approach.

4.1. Representations of radio documentary practice

As discussed in the previous three chapters, the approach chosen for this research has been selected in response to weaknesses and limitations I have identified in existing radio studies. These past examples seldom take the political economy of commercial radio and freelance practice into account. McEwan (2010) believes the medium is lacking in sufficient research, while Lewis and Booth (1989) argue that “academic neglect” has led to the inconspicuousness of radio within media studies (3). Few radio studies focus on contemporary radio documentary production practices, which Lindgren (2011) sees as being an “under researched field” (16). There are even fewer examples of radio research relating to commercial broadcasting. I support Street’s (2009) assertion that independent and commercial radio in the UK has been undervalued in assessments of UK radio history and is deserving of greater acknowledgement. The field of music documentary studies is another area lacking

detailed interrogation. Although Edgar et al. (2012) note how the profile of music documentaries has risen in prominence in recent times, they believe the genre has not been “subject to substantial critical and academic perspectives” (xi).

Secondary literature forms the foundation of my state-of-the-field investigation and are used to test my findings. Alongside more recognised radio texts, I have drawn from industry manuals, critical reviews and handbooks related to documentary production. This approach has been necessary to add context, address gaps in the field, and to assist in tracking certain historical developments within the genre. I assessed literature specifically related to my primary and secondary questions, then positioned this research alongside related sections of my state-of-the-field investigations and findings. As indicated in chapter three, many existing studies overlook new approaches to contemporary radio documentary practice, such as the use of online technologies to source archival material and as a means of recording long distance interviews. Lewis (2000) suggests that research into radio documentary production is underexplored, as most documentary investigations are located within the context of film and television, which focus on the study of the ‘image’. I have therefore utilised a range of ancillary studies relating to visual forms of documentary production to counter shortages in radio research. This approach supports Crook’s (2012) claim that the study of television documentary can be of relevance to the field of radio studies. By defining principle similarities and differences between radio and visual forms of music documentary production, I identify key production characteristics from each discipline and demonstrate the degree of impact each has had on the other’s development.

Makagon and Neumann (2009) have observed a lack of peer-reviewed outlets for qualitative audio, such as radio documentary production. This view is shared by Bonini and Gandini (2016), who contend that both the culture and practice of radio production

“have been substantially under investigated” (138). The work of Bonini and Gandini are of particular relevance to this study, as their ethnographic research considers the practice of freelance radio producers working in both public service and commercial sectors of the radio industry. However, their investigation focuses on Italian radio producers within the context of live radio programming, rather than pre-produced radio documentary / feature production. Although this research provides insights into an underexplored field, it does not specifically address the issues considered in this dissertation, such as documentary production practices and how technical advances have impacted on the role of radio freelancers.

In many instances, past researchers have positioned the analysis of radio documentary production within the traditions of the ‘investigative reporter’ rather than that of the ‘radio documentary producer’. For example, Lewis and Booth (1989) state that representations of radio practice in the field of media studies are usually focused on journalism: “unquestioningly reproducing the techniques and assumptions of that genre” (3). Past examples of research, which view documentary production from the position of a reporter / journalist, often ignore a key element of the production process; the technical practice of the producer. Aspinall (1971) believes a producer should be an experienced practitioner and ideally possess a flair for journalism, although, he believes this does not necessarily mean they have to *be* a journalist. Although many aspects of my role as a freelance producer can be seen as journalistic in nature, I do not identify myself as a journalist and prefer to situate my production work within the sphere of entertainment-based commercial radio programming, rather than public service orientated factual reportage. This distinction underpins my research, and addresses a current deficiency in the study of radio documentary production for commercial audiences. I argue that freelance producers, using online technologies and digital

production tools, can create music-based radio programmes of similar production values to projects produced by a team, which are more typically found in corporate radio environments.

Lindgren and McHugh (2013) identify two traditional methods used to investigate radio documentary production. These approaches, they claim, are either scholars who focus on the work of leading practitioners, or radio producers who reflect on their own practice. My study falls into the second of these categories. Lindgren (2011) used the production of her radio documentary *Deadly Dust* (Lindgren, 2008) to provide an analytical foundation for reflection on the practice of radio journalism. This project, designed for public service broadcast, focused solely on one particular documentary, providing insight into the ethical dilemmas of radio documentary production as journalistic practice. It included an assessment of relevant radio documentary literature, practitioner interviews and personal insights gained from a practice-based, auto-ethnographic approach. Lindgren selected a sample group of interview contributors who had all won internationally recognised radio awards. This qualification ensured her subjects had established industry credentials. Although my own investigations have included interviews with award winning practitioners, this recognition was by no means a prerequisite for my study. Instead, I sought to gather data that encompasses standard, everyday practices which represent the banal realities of the freelance documentary producer's roles and responsibilities.

McHugh's (2011) doctoral research examined the use of oral histories in radio documentary production. Her thesis concluded with a detailed case study of the production processes behind her radio documentary series *Marrying Out* (McHugh, 2009). This public service project, another example of practice-based research, was recognised in the New York Radio Festival international awards. McHugh (2014)

suggests that national and international radio production awards can be seen as a “tier of evaluation” and has interrogated the decisions of judging panels within her academic research (26). Her analysis of award recognition supports my own belief that radio competitions provide a form of industry ‘peer-review’, enabling practitioners to assess the worth of their productions. Each of the following three chapters discuss the awards won by the production work presented in this submission.

While McHugh (2012) acknowledges that awards provide a convenient international benchmarking system, she also recognises that they often do not provide detailed rationales to explain why certain productions are recognised as being ‘award winning’. This perceived deficit led McHugh to establish the *RadioDoc Review*¹⁷ website in 2013. The site provides a forum where leading documentary makers, broadcast industry professionals and academics offer detailed analysis of outstanding radio documentary productions, thereby providing a “model of assessment that truly ties together practice with theory”⁶⁰. Although the site is a welcome addition to the field of radio documentary studies, the majority of contributions represent public service approaches to documentary production. McHugh’s own practice-based investigations into radio documentary reflect a bias towards journalistic productions for public radio. This distortion can be seen in Lewis and Booth’s (1989) observation that the practice of radio is often taught in a “vocational context as a preparation for journalism”, thereby overlooking the production of entertainment based programming for commercial audiences and the activities of freelancers working in the field (xiii).

The practice-based interrogations of Lindgren and McHugh (2011) each assessed a single documentary, whereas my study reflects on the production of multiple radio documentaries during a five-year period. This iterative approach provided the

¹⁷ <http://ro.uow.edu.au/rdr/>

opportunity to capture my developing practice across a variety of projects, as I moved from *practitioner* to *researcher*. Thereby tracing my transition from being an ‘instinctual’ producer, to a ‘reflexive’ producer. Another critical difference with Lindgren’s (2011) study is that my own productions were carried out autonomously. As with many public service documentary productions, Lindgren had assistance from an experienced sound engineer who “technically improved the sound of the story” (161). This supporting production role was provided by the ABC to enhance the final mixing process, under Lindgren’s supervision.

Although I have found examples of practice-based radio research not centred around journalism, these studies were not directly related to commercial radio or documentary production. Dann’s (2010) PhD in Creative Writing assessed procedural alterations in the commissioning of BBC radio drama and considered the effect these changes had on the processes of radio writers. As Dann, a practicing audio drama producer and presenter of radio arts programmes, has worked for the BBC and independent production companies, his work reveals insight into the realities of freelance radio practice, such as the commissioning process and script writing. Dann produced two examples of practice-based radio output as part of his doctoral research, which mirrors the approach of my own research. Yet, once again, these outputs were designed for public service broadcast.

The field of ‘sound art’ is another discipline where practitioners have used a practice-based approach to explore production output. An example of this can be found in the work of Hall (2015), a UK based sound and radio artist, whose PhD thesis explored how radio art has been redefined through the convergence of new media technologies. Although this study was not specifically related to the study of documentary production, it nevertheless provides an example of radio research through

creative practice; revealing innovations in audio transmission and insights into how traditional radio is being redefined through contemporary technologies. The practice-based studies discussed in this section demonstrate how research active practitioners are advancing the field of radio studies. However, these efforts do little to address the lack of investigation into either freelance or commercial radio practice. As indicated, this study follows Lindgren and McHugh's (2013) assertion that the study of radio documentary production often entails industry producers reflecting on their own output, through the use of practice-based interrogation. In the following section I explore this particular form of research and consider the strengths and limitations associated with practice-based studies.

4.2. Practice-based research

As I have shown, past doctoral studies have often employed practice-based approaches to explore the field of radio production. I have selected this method as it provides the opportunity for detailed self-reflection and can capture an accurate depiction of contemporary industry practices and beliefs. The use of a practice-based approach is important, as it presents researchers with first-hand insight, based on 'real world' observations. In order to carry out this approach effectively, I have used iterative production, auto-ethnography and interviews as complimentary submethods, which I assess in the following three sections. Coleman (2010) claims there has been a general increase in the study of practice, as well as a growth in the investigation of modes of communication and "groups entirely dependent on digital technologies for their existence" (492). Candy (2006) identifies two main forms of practice related research, which are *practice-based* and *practice-led*. There is a distinction between practice-based

research, which views a creative artefact as the basis of new knowledge, and a practice-led approach, in which the research itself leads to new understandings. Although this study draws from both, I categorise my research as being more closely aligned to a practice-led approach.

Practice-based investigations are traditionally carried out through creative practice and scholarly writing, using methods that are familiar to both practitioners and academics. Arnold (2008) has described this form of research as a model where a practitioner utilises their own creative insights, practices, problems and successes as core data. My own use of this method was informed by Candy's (2006) definition of practice-related research as the analysis of practice through literature reviews and interviews with notable radio practitioners involved in radio production and programming. Candlin (2000) supports this approach, noting that practice-based PhDs should be accompanied by substantial theoretical and contextualising elements to make them more accessible to judgment. Arnold (2008) claims that successful practice-based investigations require a range of research tools. The production of an artefact is not sufficient in itself: "it requires linguistic description that relates the development and nature of the artefact to understandings about creative process" (Candy, 2006: 9). Lindgren (2011) quotes Murdoch University's definition of a creative or production-based thesis work as being:

"Research that is initiated in creative practice, and explores conceptual and theoretical questions, problems, or challenges that are identified within and formed by the needs of creative practice and practitioners" (91).

At its core, practice-based research is a methodology that requires an artefact to be produced by the researcher. I have therefore positioned my work within this field of research, as it is the production of my documentary work which underpins this study. In the introduction to this chapter I argued that to comprehend music documentary

production from a freelancer's perspective, a first-hand vantage point is required. In practice-related studies, the position of researcher and practitioner are intertwined and can be seen as equally important (Nimkulrat, 2007). My intervention follows this assertion by balancing the roles of researcher and active practitioner, to provide accurate insight into the field of music radio documentary production for commercial audiences. Lambie (2004) believes practice-based research in the field of radio documentary makes it possible to "capture and make explicit what is often taken for granted – the complex production process of radio documentary production" (103). This observation supports the use of a practice-based approach to investigate my day-to-day responses to the challenge of radio production as a freelancer.

The intent of this study follows Siegel's (1992) belief that if a producer wants to competently manipulate sound they "have to understand sound first" (1). I have used a reflexive approach to my practice-based investigations, as my path towards becoming a self-aware practitioner reflects the way reflexive studies capture the researcher's awareness of being the focus of their relationship to the field of study. Cunliffe's (2016) definition of reflexivity involves the critical examination of the assumptions that inform certain actions, the impact of those actions, and what might be meant by 'good' practice. My reflexive approach to this study can be compared to the reflexive style of documentary production identified by Nichols (2001). As indicated in chapter three, reflexive documentaries show an awareness of "the assumptions and conventions" of documentary production (34). The reflexive stage of my research similarly demonstrates my growing understanding of industry conventions, while questioning past practices and expectations.

I have used Schon's (2016) analysis of *reflective* practice to inform my *reflexive* studies, as these terms represent the same approach. Schon's investigation of the

epistemology of practice provides a framework that measures the intellectual rigor of professional practice. I agree with his assertion that practitioners have the ability to reflect meaningfully on their “intuitive knowing in the midst of action and sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice” (ii). Cunliffe (2016) claims the use of reflexivity as a research tool has been debated within numerous academic fields, including organisational and management studies. I suggest the study of radio documentary production has parallels with these two fields, as each involves management and organisational skills, such as budget administration, time management, data archiving, and professional correspondence, amongst others.

According to Arnold (2008), practice-based investigations can open the way for multi-layered research, which encompass the practitioner’s work and insights, alongside the relevant output of others in the field. However, there are also certain drawbacks associated with this form of research. MacLeod (1998) believes that practice-based researchers often suffer from “acute anxiety about retaining their identity as artists” as expertise and competence can be compromised by the institutional divisions that may arise between art and academia (35). Candlin (2000) agrees that practice-based research can create anxiety, claiming there may be unease about “criteria of competence, assessment and authority” (1). However, while I recognise these potential issues, my past experience as a practicing documentary producer and academic researcher eased these concerns and provided reassurance that I was capable of completing my projects to the required broadcast standard.

Some institutions are seemingly wary of practice-related studies as a form of scholarly research. Therefore, Davis (1999) believes that postgraduate practice-based research in the creative arts need “to demonstrate the rigour of a traditional PhD”, in

order to meet an appropriate level of credibility (18). A suspicion of practice-based research within academia informed Lindgren's (2011) doctoral work, which sought to justify how the work of practitioner-academics could combine production work with theoretical analysis, thereby confirming practice-based studies as "legitimate academic research" (3). Concerns about legitimacy may stem from the researcher's acceptance that they are required to demonstrate 'creativity' and are, therefore, under pressure to produce an artefact of sufficient merit. Although this judgement may be subjective, I use the benchmark of industry broadcast as a baseline for the required level of professionalism in radio documentary practice. Yet, the underlying knowledge that the work in question will be subject to rigorous assessment risks influencing the production choices of the practitioner. Jarvis (2009) sees a dilemma between the creative possibilities of practice-based research and the need for normative assessment criteria, claiming there is "the possibility of self-censoring and self-abnegation of practice-led research" due to a concern about securing a "safe" assessment structure (15). Despite these potential weaknesses, practice-based approaches have the potential to yield innovative and insightful data in the study of creative practice. As indicated, this study draws on iterative production research, auto-ethnography and interviews to carry out my practice-based investigations. These interlocking approaches work together to question my hypotheses and provide added rigour to my study. The following three sections outline my use of these research tools and reveal how they have been used to support this practice-based investigation. I start with an assessment of iterative production research as a means of exploring practice.

4.3. Iterative production research

The foundation of this study is the interrogation of my production practice through an ongoing series of music documentary projects for commercial radio. I have chosen a cyclical approach as learning in qualitative research often occurs iteratively and not through a linear process (Hunter et al. 2002). The repetition of production processes, across the fourteen documentaries assessed in this study, provided an opportunity to test theories and consider new approaches to my radio practice, within an industry-facing structure. Analysing repeated activities within practice-led research is described by Smith and Dean (2009) as a technique in which “creative practice or research processes are repeated with variation” (8). This reflects the multitude of opportunities within my practice to rework and adapt certain methods and technical procedures. According to Leavy (2015) iterative approaches are often employed by qualitative researchers in the visual arts, as it allows them to “better accomplish what they already do – and draw out the meaning-making process and push it to the forefront” (18). I suggest this interpretation of iterative research is equally relevant when applied to the field of radio documentary practice.

Black’s (1999) claim that the nature of understanding is cyclical reaffirms Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle, which explores the concept of experience as the source of learning and development. Kolb identifies four main processes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. I argue that Kolb’s Learning Cycle can be applied to this iterative study, as it mirrors the processes a producer follows when attempting to understand and improve his / her performance. However, Atkinson (2006) questions this approach, claiming that research “is supposed to be analytic not merely experiential” (404). I address Atkinson’s concerns by drawing from a range of research methods, and

maintain that Kolb's (1984) Cycle remains a valid model for assessing iterative, practice-based research.

According to Kolb, the first stage in the cycle occurs when the learner performs a particular action and observes its effect. The second stage occurs when they consider their action and reflect upon what they have done and the effect this has had. Then, in the third stage, they interpret the events and conceptualise a method to improve their performance. Finally, the learner translates their new insights into action, by modifying and refining their original action. However, this is not the end of the process, as the fourth stage feeds back into the repetition of the cycle, thereby allowing the learner to assimilate newfound knowledge into practice. This ongoing iteration of practice and reflection is evident in my approach to music documentary production and is therefore a convenient model to draw on.

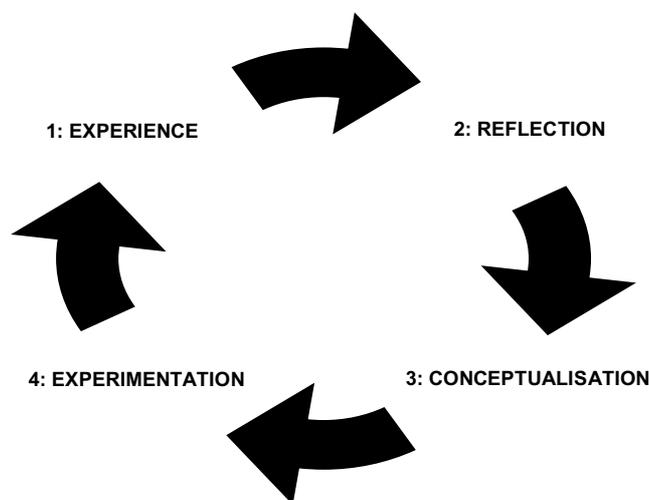


Fig 4.1: Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle:
Experience as the source of learning and development

An example of Kolb's learning pattern can, for instance, be seen in the example of recording of a Skype¹⁸ interview. The task of recording an online Skype interview

¹⁸ <https://www.skype.com/en/>

(experience) is followed by the producer listening back to their work and assessing its merit (reflection). If the audio level is low or captures too much room ambience they might consider this a poor result and develop ideas to enhance their performance, such as requesting the contributor to lean in closer to the microphone (conceptualisation). The next step is to modify their original practice in an effort to create an improved artefact in their next attempt (experimentation). They record the interview again, but this time with the interviewee positioned closer to the microphone, thereby capturing higher quality audio. I have used this approach when considering a range of radio documentary production procedures, as I found it to be an effective method for enhancing my practice.

Smith and Dean (2009) believe that any given process will need to be repeated several times “though probably with some variation” in order to create an ongoing “start–end–start” cycle (19). The production of multiple music documentaries, across three phases of a five-year production period, afforded me the opportunity to study variations in my approach and the final submitted artefact (appendices A, 3) can be viewed as the culmination of these investigations. My research began with the production of an initial David Bowie documentary for the commercial station Radio Hauraki, before I embarked on a series of music documentary projects for Xfm. I then returned to the same Bowie topic and produced a concluding documentary for the Absolute Radio network. The first documentary was produced before I began this study and can, therefore, be viewed as a point of reference against which to measure my future productions. As this initial work was conceived and executed outside of any notion of academic investigation, it stands as an example of my early practice. Reflecting on this project retrospectively allowed me to identify instinctual practices carried out as everyday responses to the act of music documentary production. By recognising

strengths and weaknesses in my approach, I identified a range of production considerations that provided the basis for future investigations. The intermediary period between the two Bowie documentaries was used as an opportunity to test my production theories and seek industry opinion alongside a review of relevant literature. Production tasks such as editing, interviewing, presenting and use of music, amongst others, were carried out repeatedly throughout the production of 12 documentaries for Xfm, while simultaneously being considered through the lens of an auto-ethnographic research, which I discuss in the following section. This knowledge was then used to inform the production of my final Bowie documentary. I then reflected on how this iterative approach informed my practice during the production of this final production artefact and drew my conclusions based on these findings.

The three chapters of my findings represent the three distinct, chronological phases in my research; initial, intermediary and reflexive. Each chapter interrogates the production processes carried out during the completion of these projects. By reflecting on production work which might otherwise have been carried out instinctually, chapters six and seven follow Schon's (2016) concept of reflection-in-practice, which producers often employ as part of their day-to-day activities. Although Smith and Dean (2009) view the process of iteration as being fundamental to both the creative and research processes in practice-led research, they note certain limitations. As the number of iterations can often be variable, there is a need for researcher to demonstrate skill in "learning to judge whether an investigative path shows promise or not" (159). As there are numerous procedures involved in the production of any one documentary, I was careful to select a controlled number of production approaches which could be extrapolated across a range of documentary projects, thereby providing focus and consistency to my investigations. By isolating and cross-examining key components

within my music documentary production, I follow the assertion of Hunter et al. (2002) who believe that iterative research allows meaning to develop through “labelling, identifying, and classifying emerging concepts; interrelating concepts and testing hypotheses; finding patterns; and generating theory” (389).

Iterative studies require the ongoing consideration of the project’s overall intent and an awareness of any preconceived assumptions. Black (1999) believes the legitimacy of any iterative research outcomes is dependent on the validity of internal, external, construct and statistical components. Therefore, the various processes and procedures I employed in my practice required constant evaluation, while the overall rigour of the study was continually questioned. Issues of subjectivity in iterative research must also be considered. In terms of judging improvements in the ‘quality’ or ‘success’ of an approach, Smith and Dean (2009) claim that measuring aesthetic criteria is “negotiable within the bounds of established cultural conventions” (159). By playing examples of my production work to industry practitioners to seek critical feedback, and having my work subject to the editorial guidance of station management, I was able to measure my own personal interpretation of worthiness against industry conventions. Having considered iterative production practice as part of my practice-based approach, I now assess the use of auto-ethnography as a research tool. This technique was employed alongside my iterative investigations, and was necessary to capture the insights gained from observing my performance as a freelance radio practitioner.

4.4. Auto-ethnographic fieldwork

According to Adams (2015) auto-ethnography uses “the researchers personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences” (2). In

this respect, my use of reflexive investigation and self-observation positions my study within the field of auto-ethnographic research. It was necessary to use a combination of iterative production and auto-ethnographic methods to accurately measure my practice-based activities. These two methods allowed me to reflect on my work as an active radio documentary producer, and measure my practice against the opinion of industry, in order to draw final conclusions. This approach is similar to what Van Maanen (1995) calls “confessional ethnographies”, where the attention of the research is focused on the ethnographer themselves. Reed-Danahay (1997) uses the term ‘autobiographical ethnographic’ research to classify a method in which personal experiences are transformed from the context of fieldwork, into ethnographic writing. By interrogating the radio production processes carried out throughout a set production period, I was able to closely examine my own practice as a music documentary producer, reflect on my performance and ultimately draw my final conclusions.

Lindgren (2011) views critical reflection as being a crucial skill in career development, and cites Schon’s (2016) assertion that reflection can assist practitioners to build links between theory and practice by uncovering the knowledge embedded in practice. In keeping with past auto-ethnographic approaches, I have drawn from personal reflections and observations regarding my production practices, alongside correspondence with industry during the completion of my radio documentary projects. I examined the visualisation of production work displayed on *Adobe Audition* digital editing software (version C5.5) and critiqued my audio productions to help capture technical considerations within this project. I also gathered online responses to my documentary work, such as online fan interactions via message-boards, chat-rooms and dedicated fan websites (appendices K), alongside correspondence with industry representatives (appendices E). In this respect, my overall approach can be seen as

qualitative, which Bryman (2008) describes as emphasising the use of words in the collection of data.

According to Anderson (2006), there has been ongoing growth in the use of auto-ethnographic research. Although the reason for this increase is debatable, I suggest the opportunity for innovation has added to this method's popularity. Auto-ethnography enables researchers to experiment within their studies, freeing them from the constraints of more traditional methodologies. Hills (2002) suggests auto-ethnographic research has advantages over ethnographic approaches as it can allow for greater reflexivity, while Sparkes (2002) sees benefits in the way it can inspire researchers to reflect critically on their own world. Wall (2003) suggests that auto-ethnographic research can be an "interesting and straightforward" way to assess listening patterns and personal responses to music. I have applied Wall's recommendation to the interrogation of music documentaries, by considering how my assessment of these productions have been shaped by "different media, variants of those media, and type of music" (226).

The growth of auto-ethnographic studies mirrors a general increase in the number of qualitative research studies in the field of social sciences (Le Roux, 2015). However, this method of approach has its detractors and certain pitfalls must be acknowledged. Auto-ethnographers risk their studies being viewed as "narcissistic" (Lindgren, 2011: 99), while Chang (2008) warns against "excessive focus on self in isolation from others" (1). As with practice-based research, there are concerns about the accountability, rigour and validity of auto-ethnographic studies. Denshire (2014) has reservations about the value of auto-ethnographic accounts and refers to the method as being a "contested field" (1). Le Roux (2015) is equally apprehensive about this approach, and questions whether the criteria used to assess quantitative research, such as auto-ethnographies, are appropriate for ensuring academic integrity. However,

Delamont (2007) is more forthright in her scepticism, accusing auto-ethnographic research as being intellectually lazy. To overcome these misgivings, researchers must support auto-ethnographic observations with a wide range of methodological tools and ensure that criterial assessments are carefully determined and applied (Le Roux, 2015). For this reason, I have used a process of iterative creation and interviews with industry to support my investigations.

Makagon and Neumann (2009) claim to be the first authors to explore audio documentary as a research method. They contend that the radio documentary form can be seen as qualitative fieldwork practice in its own right, offering a sense of the researcher's relationship to popular documentary practices. My research tests this theory and draws on other established practice-based methodologies to provide a solid academic structure. The following section explains the use of interviewing within my overarching practice-based methodology. I assess the advantages and risks associated with interviewing as a research tool, and discuss how my interviews have been utilised within this study.

4.5. Interviewing

My use of interviewing as a research method stemmed from a desire to fully understand the culture of freelance radio documentary practice, and the political economy of commercial radio. I sought to gain an 'insiders' perspective, in order to comprehend the realities of how the commercial radio industry truly operates. It was also necessary to question my assumptions against the opinions of other practitioners in the field. As indicated, I interviewed a total of eleven respondents who represented the opinions of radio station management and freelance radio producers, who are named in section B

of the appendices. This sample captured a range of perspectives against which to measure my hypotheses.

Burgess (1984) believes that interviews in qualitative research should be “conversation with purpose” (102). However, there is a risk in being too conversational, as this may create a sense of informality that lessens the academic credentials of the research. Hansen et al. (1988) advise auto-ethnographers to give careful consideration to their methodological approaches, as they may otherwise find themselves “in a free-for-all situation where anything goes” (11). With this in mind, I was conscious to select relevant interviewees and prepared an appropriate range of questions in advance, specifically related to my key research questions.

Bogner et al. (2009) believe interviewing has become an increasingly popular research method. They suggest that recruiting informants is a relatively straightforward process which can be of useful practical value. While this may be generally true, securing the involvement of radio industry practitioners for this study was not necessarily an easy process, due to the busy schedules of the contributors. However, I was successful in gaining the participation of experts within the field of radio documentary production and commercial radio programming, who were willing to provide professional insight. Several of these practitioners were involved in the documentaries discussed within this study. My interviews with freelancers asked them to reflect on their production processes throughout various stages of a standard radio documentary project. I questioned these respondents on topics such as initial idea generation, the commissioning process, narrative structuring, approaches to interviewing, use of archival content, presentation choices, and the use of music and sound effects, audience considerations, and funding, amongst others. These observations were then positioned within my research to correspond with related

subject matter.

McPhee and Terry (2017) consider to ability to build a good rapport as being an important requirement for qualitative interviewers. This involves offering “respect and recognition of the other person’s world” (116-117). As I was able to interview radio practitioners from the vantage point of being a producer myself, I brought a level of understanding and empathy to the interview process. However, I was wary that this position might tempt me to ask ‘comfortable’ questions, designed to validate my preconceptions, rather than challenge my practice. Schostak (2006) states that interviewing is not necessarily a “simple tool with which to mine information” and warns researchers not to be misled. He draws attention to the possibility that “views may clash, (and) deceive” and encourages interviewers to remain open to “hearing accounts, opinions, arguments, reasons, declarations” (1).

May (2001) has identified four main forms of research interviews: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, group and focused interviews. These same categories are also recognised by Bertrand and Hughes (2005). The specific approaches I chose were a combination of structured and semi-structured interviews. This enabled me to seek responses to specific questions, while also allowing for new directions to be explored. All interviews were captured on a portable recording device then transcribed (appendix B) for later assessment alongside the findings of my own auto-ethnographic research and literature investigations. By asking a series of pre-determined questions to a range of respondents I was able to gain a greater understanding of topics specifically related to my findings. Semi-structured interviews traditionally ask a variety of similar questions to a range of subjects, while also giving the interviewer the opportunity to seek clarification and elaboration (May, 2001). By employing this technique, I entered into a dialogue with the interviewees, thereby revealing a greater depth of relevant

information. A semi-structured approach allows for comparisons to be drawn between respondents. However, I acknowledge that during the course of my investigations, these interviews occasionally crossed into the category of ‘unstructured’. This form of interviewing offered a more ‘open ended’ aspect to the questioning and therefore provided the opportunity for interviewees to test my pre-conceptions and allowed answers to come from within the subjects own frame of reference. If, for example, I was surprised or unclear about a response from a certain interviewee, I would move away from set questions in order to seek further clarity and understanding. However, there is a risk that unstructured interviews may becoming too meandering, causing confusion, and were therefore used sparingly.

The interviewing process, as described by Bertrand and Hughes (2005), is never totally objective as the interviewer is always implicated in the interview situation. For this reason, I avoided closed questions and presupposition wherever possible. Bryman (2008) stresses that interviewers should refrain from expressing their own views or opinions on the topics referred to in the study, to avoid tainting the information. This belief is shared by May (2001) who refers to the importance of the interviewer’s neutrality. Although I broadly agree with this position, I have often found it valuable to play ‘devil’s advocate’ within interviews by positing a contrary opinion in order to gain a more pronounced sense of agreement or disagreement, therefore prompting further discussion. However, I recognise this approach is more suited to a broadcast environment rather than academic investigation, and I was therefore careful to remain impartial.

I have drawn from Schostak’s (2006) theories on interviewing as a means of gathering both academic data and production content. Schostak perceives a conflict existing between the “speaker-as-interviewee” and the “listener-as-researcher” (2). It is

the interaction between these two stances that creates the theoretical and practical tensions through which certain issues can be explored. This tension is crucial in gathering meaningful responses, yet needs to be carefully managed in order to preserve the authenticity of the data. By recording my interviews as MP3 audio files, I was able to fully focus on the respondent's answers without the distraction of having to write down their responses.

As indicated, each of my interviewees had industry experience in either radio production or programming, in order to test my assumptions about contemporary radio production practice. These participants were often freelancers themselves or worked alongside freelancers in a professional capacity. Following each interview, the process of transcription allowed for accurate interpretation of the responses and the ability to identify the linguistic signals which accompany the voice, such as sighs, ironic intonation, and thoughtful pauses. Although certain sections of my interviews have been edited and truncated within my research, longer more detailed responses have been left verbatim to preserve accuracy.

When producing radio documentaries, it is necessary to maintain a critical ear. Constant questioning and self-reflection throughout each stage of the production process is required to help refine and structure the final production. I suggest the need for a balanced interrogation of one's work can also be found within the context of academic research. Therefore, the following section offers an assessment of weaknesses within my research, alongside an overview of my approach to the question of ethics.

4.6. Limitations and ethical considerations

By exploring music documentary production practices for the commercial radio sector, this study offers a new perspective which widens the field of radio studies. However, I recognise there are certain limitations in my approach. This section assesses these drawbacks and summarises my response to ethical considerations. As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, a major shortcoming of my investigation was a lack of academic studies pertaining to radio and more specifically, commercial radio. As Higgins (2010) suggests, the study of radio has been condemned to “second-class status next to the more sensory-rich art of film” (17). Emm (2002) similarly describes radio as a being a “Cinderella” medium, in comparison to television (136). I suggest this reductive metaphor can be extended to academic studies, where television and film investigations are plentiful, in comparison to radio (Tacchi, 2000). Lewis and Booth (1989) support this view, claiming, “radio is hardly noticed in academic literature” (xiii). Few studies focus on radio documentary production, while even fewer specifically related to commercial production practices in the genre. McHugh (2014) attributes the lack of radio documentary scholarship to the “invisibility and ephemerality” of the genre (23). I have addressed this absence by extending my research to include relevant secondary texts and studies related to visual documentary production, alongside industry interviews and an iterative approach to production research.

My investigations mainly concentrate on UK examples of freelance radio documentary production, as the focus of my intermediary and reflexive findings relate to work produced for the UK radio industry. I contend that my observations are still of relevance to international radio production practices, although I accept there may be regional differences that are not considered within the overall structure of this study. The decision to concentrate on the UK radio industry provided access to specific

research material and interviewees, against which to assess my production practice. This approach also helped to contextually position my concluding Bowie documentary within its intended broadcast environment; nationwide DAB / AM / online / freeview transmission across the UK and on terrestrial FM broadcast in London. Stoller and Wray (2010) consider the UK to be a pioneering country in terms of radio broadcasting and suggest that studying it can provide a greater understanding of changes within international broadcasting structures. I therefore maintain that the study commercial radio in the UK makes this investigation of international relevance. The emergence of online technologies has enabled freelance producers to create content for global audiences, as evidenced in the first chapter of my findings, which explores the production of documentaries for New Zealand audiences, while I was based in the UK.

As a practicing radio documentary producer, active within the industry, I was able to provide a first-hand account of contemporary approaches to radio production and engage on a professional basis with industry representatives. However, I am aware that my personal background within the industry has shaped my views towards commercial radio. Van Maanen (1997) draws attention to the auto-ethnographer's relationship between "identity and selfhood" and authenticity, citing this bond as being a key concern for researchers (3). My earlier career as a commercial producer for various commercial production departments has afforded me insight in this field of study, but presents the potential for a bias towards commercial practices. Having produced documentary work for public service broadcasters in NZ and the UK has helped to balance my perspective. Nevertheless, I remain conscious of the need to maintain objectivity in my research.

Although I have been paid for the majority of the production work carried out during this investigation, it is necessary to disclose that the final Bowie documentary

was an unpaid project. This work was specifically designed as a piece of practice-based research and provided free of charge to the Absolute Radio network in return for the opportunity to have the documentary broadcast. Therefore, my final production work is not truly representative of the traditional commissioning processes found in the commercial radio industry. Although this can be seen as a weakness, the documentary itself was still subject to standard industry requirements, such as being vetted by station management to ensure it complied with relevant broadcasting standards, and timed to fit within the required lengths of duration to allow for commercial schedules. Copyright clearances were sought for all archival content and a full track listing was provided for compliance with the Performance Rights Society and Phonographic Performance Limited (appendices C). I therefore assert that the concluding Bowie project for Absolute Radio provided a valid opportunity to explore ‘real world’ approaches to music documentary production for commercial radio.

As discussed in section five, the method of gathering qualitative data through interviewing has disadvantages as well as benefits. A particular strength of this study comes from my respondents being active practitioners. However, the responses of interviewees must be carefully considered within the context of the study and questioned in terms of their value. It is necessary to be aware that interviewees can potential misinterpret questions, deliberately lie, or give answers they assume the interviewer wants to hear, rather than their actual opinions (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005). May (2001) suggests that some people find the idea of their voice being recorded as somewhat inhibiting. Given that my subjects worked in the media industry, this did not appear to be an issue. All interviewees were seemingly comfortable with the process and provided articulate, well-considered responses.

Before reaching my final conclusions, it is important to reflect on potential ethical issues surrounding this study. The subject of ethics in relation to academic investigation must be taken into careful consideration when planning, conducting and reporting research. Yeschke (2003) contends that a major problem in dealing with ethics is that there is often no universal definition, clear objectives, or agreement on appropriate behaviours. My approach to the ethics of this project uses Birmingham City University's guidelines and procedures for good research practice, which set out the ethical principles underpinning the conduct of University researchers.

A significant ethical consideration is the question of contributor anonymity. In this study each contributor was asked to verbally consent to the recording of his or her interview and to indicate they were willing for their comments to be included within my final findings. I emphasised their right to withdraw participation and ask that their comments be removed from my study. They also agreed to be named and attributed to any relevant quotes. Although it is common academic practice for participants to be quoted anonymously, it was important to identify the contributors in this particular investigation, as means of reinforcing their credentials and to underpin the validity of their comments. As these interviews were conducted with established broadcasters and academics, most felt comfortable to be named and quoted in this manner. However, one contributor who was an independent supplier of documentary content to the BBC wished to remain anonymous, as they did not want to compromise this relationship. At the start of the interviewing process each participants was made fully aware of the true nature and purpose of this study. Although, as indicated, I have paraphrased attributed answers within my research, I have also included longer quotes to preserve accuracy and not distort the views of the respondents.

My documentary productions allowed me to work closely with several commercial radio stations, including Xfm, Absolute Radio and Radio Hauraki. This access provided me with valuable insights into the hierarchical structure of these organisations. As I was a contractual freelancer, and not official staff, I was aware of my position as an observer, representing Birmingham City University, and maintained high standards of professionalism at all times. I was careful to ensure that my research did not divulge any potentially sensitive commercial information.

I am confident that the work presented here follows the principles outlined by the OST Research Councils on Good Scientific Practice, by maintaining professional standards of honesty and openness. I have attributed all my sources according to recognised academic conventions and provided a declaration that this thesis is my own work, which has not been submitted previously for a degree at any tertiary education institution. I now draw my final conclusions regarding the methodological approaches used in this study.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how a practice-based methodology can be constructively applied to research in the field of radio production. The practice-based approach used in this study utilised iterative production, auto-ethnographic investigation and interviews with industry practitioners as a means of collecting data. These three techniques provided a structure for the interrogation of my praxis as a music documentary producer. This approach was chosen to answer the primary and secondary questions presented in the introduction to this chapter, and as response to the limitations of past practice-based radio investigations. I argued that to fully understand the

freelance practices of music documentary production for commercial radio, it is necessary to provide a first-hand perspective as a practitioner in the field.

I examined examples of past practice-based radio studies and revealed how these were typically situated within public service radio. I concluded that the genre is mainly viewed from a journalistic perspective, which overlooks technical production skills and the financial realities of freelancers creating content for the commercial radio sector. The reason commercial radio is not fully understood is because of a political agenda which positions public service radio above free market models of broadcasting. Many contemporary radio scholars with established broadcasting careers have backgrounds in public service broadcasting, and therefore have an underlying motive to promote the field of journalism as a more 'pure' form of the radio documentary genre. This has restricted their appreciation of commercial broadcasting and resulted in a lack of investigation into freelance radio production practices. This study's emphasis on music documentary production for commercial radio audiences provides a distinctive standpoint that furthers the field of radio studies.

This chapter questioned the various strengths and limitations associated with practice-based research. While I acknowledged the certain drawbacks apparent in this form of research, I maintained that the use of iterative production, auto-ethnography and interviews added rigour to my approach. I agreed with Smith and Dean's (2009) assertion that iteration is essential processes in any practice-led research and drew parallels with Kolb's (1984) model of learning through experience cycle. I demonstrated how interviews can be used to compliment practice-based investigations. Interviewing industry practitioners provided professional insight into 'real world' freelance practices, however, I noted the importance of not letting my own industry experience sway my objectivity when capturing, and subsequently analysing, this data.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how the use of practice-based approach can be used to gain a deeper understanding of commercial radio practices and the specific production duties associated with contemporary freelance radio production. My own approach to practice-based research has assessed the production of three distinct projects for commercial radio, utilising three sub-methods of investigation. The use of iterative production, auto-ethnography and interviews, worked together to reveal my instinctual practices and then question these activities. These three approaches also provided a framework for the evaluation of my observations against current industry conventions.

I accept there are certain weaknesses and limitations within my approach. As indicated, there is a lack of academic studies focusing on documentary production for commercial audiences. Although this shortage limited the scope of my state-of-the-field research, I addressed this deficit by sourcing ancillary material, such as the study of visual forms of documentary production, and through interviews with industry practitioners. Although the production work supporting this research was subject to standard industry practices, the final 'reflexive' Bowie documentary was provided to Absolute Radio at no cost. In this respect it does not accurately represent typical freelance radio practice. Aside from this drawback, the documentary follows all other customary protocols relating to music documentary production for commercial radio.

In the following three chapters I draw together my practice-based research with the presentation of my findings. These successively interrogate the instinctual, intermediary and reflexive production stages involved the completion of the music documentaries submitted in support of this practice-based investigation (appendices A, 1, 2, 3). I start by assessing my initial documentary, *Down Under the Moonlight* (Coley, 2008), produced for Radio Hauraki.

CHAPTER FIVE

INSTINCTIVE PRODUCTION PHASE: *DOWN UNDER THE MOONLIGHT*

The following three chapters present the findings of this practice-based investigation, by interrogating the production of fourteen music documentaries I created for commercial radio between 2008 and 2013. These findings provide a narrative of discovery, which build on the first four chapters by capturing the multitude of processes involved in shaping my work as a freelance radio documentary producer. By isolating and identifying key responsibilities and technical considerations, I provide insight into contemporary freelance documentary production for commercial radio, enabling me to explore the central questions that underpin this study. This first chapter explores my initial ‘instinctual’ work on the *Down Under the Moonlight* (Coley, 2008) Bowie documentary, followed by a chapter focusing on *XFM 25* (Coley, 2011) my ‘intermediary’ documentary project. Finally, chapter seven assesses my concluding Bowie documentary, *Let’s Dance at 30* (Coley, 2013), produced as a ‘reflexive’ practitioner.

Each of these stages reflect standard industry practices, such as commissioning processes, compliance considerations, programme scheduling, administrative tasks and technical approaches used in the construction of music documentary production. I argue this approach has been necessary to reflect a ‘real world’ industry perspective and to gain a realistic appreciation of how freelancers engage with commercial broadcasters on a day-to-day basis. My practice-based research is measured against a theoretical framework, established in the previous chapters, which uses iterative production research, auto-ethnography and interviews with established industry practitioners. My

findings draw from a broad range of research material, to counter a lack of studies in the field, and to encompass a wide range of contrasting academic and practitioner perspectives.

As indicated, this first chapter interrogates the production of my initial David Bowie documentary, *Down Under the Moonlight*, the audio of which is provided for consideration as part of this submission (appendices A, 1). This two-hour production was broadcast on the 26th of November, 2008 on Radio Hauraki, New Zealand, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of David Bowie's album *Let's Dance* and his accompanying *Serious Moonlight* world tour. The documentary was produced alongside a sister-project, titled *Bowie's Waiata* (Coley, 2008), created for the public service broadcaster Radio New Zealand. I interrogate both documentaries within this chapter, as the two projects are conjoined by utilising the same collection of contributors, archival audio and music. By comparing approaches to the same Bowie story, I identify differences and similarities which exist between public service and commercial documentary production. I maintain that advances in digital production tools and online technologies have greatly enhanced the ability of freelance producers to complete music documentary productions to the level of standard required for broadcast.

The production work assessed in this chapter was performed without the knowledge that these two documentaries would be later used as the basis of academic investigation. My reflections have, therefore, been considered retrospectively. This has ultimately been a beneficial approach, as it provides a benchmark of my instinctual music documentary practice. Unlike my future productions, which were created within the agenda of academic investigation, these initial Bowie documentaries can be viewed as a more 'pure' example of my early production work, and offer a point of reference

against which to measure the documentaries discussed in chapters six and seven. I begin by providing a background summary of these initial Bowie documentaries, in order to contextualise the analysis of the commissioning processes and production work which follows.

5.1 Project Overview

The origins of this project can be traced back to 2001, when I happened upon an audio recording of the musician David Bowie singing live at Takapuwahia marae¹⁹ in November, 1983. This file was discovered in the digital news archive of The Radio Network (TRN), a commercial radio company based in Auckland, New Zealand. At the time, I was not in academic employment, and worked as the Creative Director of the network's Northern Division. This audio was originally recorded by a journalist during Bowie's tour of New Zealand and was subsequently 'lost' in the archive, unidentified and unused since its original broadcast in 1983. As a Bowie fan, I instantly recognised the value of the clip and began to formulate a documentary project based around this rare recording. Although the song was poorly recorded and only 30 seconds in length, it was the only known recording of an unheard, original Bowie composition and subsequently became a key component of the music documentaries discussed in this chapter. This clip was digitally enhanced through the use of audio compression, graphic equalization and volume enhancement, in an attempt to improve its quality, with limited success. However, I was not unduly concerned about the fidelity of this clip, as inferior audio can be used intentionally in a production to provide "a 'grainy' historical

¹⁹ The marae is a sacred place in Maori society, used for important communal events such as religious and social ceremonies and the welcoming of important visitors.

atmosphere” (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998: 105). The inclusion of this audio gave the project a distinctively New Zealand perspective and the added allure of exclusive content, unheard for quarter of a century. The use of this material reflects Long and Wall’s (2012) belief that documentary production can help to locate and rescue neglected archival material. The clip has since been featured in several of my audio productions and considered within published chapters and conference papers on the subject of music documentary production and fandom.

I strategically waited seven years until the 25th anniversary of Bowie’s NZ tour to employ this archival content, as I felt this milestone would enhance the commissioning potential of a documentary based around the clip. According to Reynolds (2007), there are far more music documentaries which focus on singers, musicians and bands, than productions about general musical scenes or sounds. This, he presumes, is because these types of stories are easier to produce and sell. In order to maximise the potential earnings for my production work, and thereby recoup my production expenditure, I decided to interpret the story for two distinct radio audiences. This approach demonstrates how the financial imperatives of working as a freelancer within the creative industries can inform production decisions. By securing a commission on both a commercial network and a national public service broadcaster I was able to expand the listenership for my work. Although the resulting documentaries sound entirely different, each was produced simultaneously and drew from the same pool of audio material. I had previously produced music documentaries for both Radio Hauraki and Radio New Zealand as a freelancer. This connection was invaluable in assisting the commission process, which I discuss in the following section. I also consider the significance of the target audience when attempting to secure commissions for music documentaries for commercial radio.

5.2. Commissioning processes

As discussed in chapter three, the commissioning process is arguably the most important aspect of any radio documentary project. Regardless of how well-considered an initial concept may be, without official approval from station management it is unlikely that a production will be broadcast. In this section I explore the commissioning of the *Bowie's Waiata* and *Down Under the Moonlight* documentaries from my perspective as a freelance producer, and assess the impact of political economy on the process. According to McLeish (2005), station management must assess whether or not new programme material will be successful, and carefully consider whether “it will enhance the manager’s reputation, as well as provide a memorable programme” (277). This observation about ‘reputation’ holds true for both commercial and public service broadcasters. However, I suggest that in a commercial environment, where documentaries are less frequently heard, the decision to include them within programming is a more visible decision, posing greater risk to the manager’s reputation. Therefore, the pitching of documentaries for commercial audiences requires thoughtful consideration; anticipating and countering potential objections well in advance.

The production phase represented in this chapter encapsulates two distinct documentaries for public service and commercial audiences respectively. I begin by assessing the *Bowie's Waiata* production for state-broadcaster RNZ, before focusing *Down Under the Moonlight* for the commercial station Radio Hauraki. Having previously produced four well-received music-documentaries²⁰ for RNZ, I had

²⁰ These RNZ documentaries focused on musicians Joe Strummer (Coley, 2003), Diane Swann (Coley, 2003), Hamish McKeich (Coley, 2004) and Rob Mayes (Coley, 2004).

established my credentials as a freelancer and was therefore in a position to submit unsolicited pitches for concepts I felt might be suitable for broadcast. While based in the UK, I contacted Liisa McMillan, the music documentary commissioner for RNZ, via email and outlined my idea. This pitch centred around the ‘lost’ Bowie marae recording and highlighted the involvement of Maori contributors, to appeal to the station’s remit of providing an inclusive platform for all New Zealand ethnicities. McMillan responded positively, and we began ongoing correspondence to finalise the deadline, payment and other considerations. The commissioning process for this production was reasonably straightforward as RNZ had an established history of broadcasting music documentaries via a regularly scheduled slot, *Music101* (RNZ, 2001 -), set aside for productions of this nature. Consequently, *Bowie’s Waiata*, a 26-minute documentary about Bowie’s visit to Takapuwahia marae, was broadcast on Radio New Zealand on the 22nd of November 2008. Additional content about the marae and its history, along with original photographs sourced during my visit to the tribe during pre-production, were made available on the station’s website to compliment the main documentary as on-demand audio. I return to the production of this online content in section four. Radio New Zealand requested me to produce two separate mixes of the documentary. The first, intended for terrestrial broadcast, contained copyright music that was covered by the station’s licensing agreements. The second documentary had all copyright music removed to make it legally accessible via the station’s website. However, the absence of music meant this online version lacked the emotional power of the original. Although much of the raw content from *Bowie’s Waiata* was also used in the *Down Under the Moonlight*, many of the recordings consisted of original contributions recorded specifically for inclusion in the public service version. Both documentaries featured the archived recording of Bowie’s visit to the marae.

As indicated, *Down Under the Moonlight* was produced for a commercial rock music station Radio Hauraki, and therefore required an entirely different approach to the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary for public radio. Whereas *Bowie's Waiata* focused specifically on Bowie's visit to the marae and predominantly featured interviews with members of the Ngati Toa tribe, *Down Under the Moonlight* centred on Bowie's concert at Western Springs Stadium, Auckland, New Zealand, which took place on the 26th of November 1983, as well as the album *Let's Dance*. The success of my commissioning pitches can largely be attributed to Bowie's sizable popularity at the time. The documentaries were centred around the 25th anniversary of 1983, a year in which David Bowie reached the most commercially lucrative period in his career. Perone (2007) states that Bowie's fifteenth album, *Let's Dance*, remains his best-selling album. In 1983 the record was selling well around the world, while his accompanying *Serious Moonlight* tour was playing to record breaking audiences. The tour was the longest and biggest of his career. Bowie performed 96 shows in 16 countries, and sold an estimated 2,601,196 tickets (Flippo, 1984). According to *The Herald* newspaper, the Western Springs audience for Bowie's *Serious Moonlight* concert was estimated to be 80,000²¹, and was deemed to be the country's "largest rock extravaganza" in *The Sunday News*²².

The *Bowie Down Under* website claims:

"The national attendance records set particularly in New Zealand made this tour relevant in any reading of the nation's modern cultural history. In terms of Bowie's career and the perspective of rock music, it is a testament as to how big a cult artist can become"²³.

In seeking a commission for the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, I first contacted Station Manager Mike Regal to gauge his interest in the project. As Radio

²¹ Major Bowie Controls 80,000. (28 November 1983) *The Herald*, p.3

²² Violence Rocks Concert. (27 November 1983) *The Sunday News*, p.2

²³ <http://www.bowiedownunder.com/tours.html>

Hauraki did not generally feature spoken word content there was no assigned manager to deal with documentary commissioning. Regal was, therefore, seen to be the most appropriate contact, as his position enabled him to ‘sign off’ on all programming content. Alongside my email, I attached a short montage of audio I had already gathered, designed to showcase the concept. According to McLeish (2005), the producer may need to persuade whoever is in charge of programming content that “the proposal is the best thing that could happen to the broadcast output” (277). Although my pitch was not that hyperbolic, I was nevertheless enthusiastic about what I perceived to be the merits of the concept. Regal’s response was positive and we began to exchanged emails to clarify potential broadcast dates, durations and other production considerations, before he agreed to broadcast the item across the Radio Hauraki network. The decision was largely informed by Bowie’s status as a core artist on Radio Hauraki’s playlists at the time.

Preistman (2002) claims that station managers, schedulers and producers “do not need to know much about the precise individual preferences of their audience” other than having a general knowledge of their listener’s preferences (137). I question this assertion, and suggest it is necessary for producers to have a detailed and accurate understanding of an audience, in order to create content that truly engages with listeners. This view reflects Aspinall’s (1971) view that the more a producer knows about an audience “the better we are able to serve it” (22). McLeish (2005) warns that producers working in the media industry can easily lose touch with listeners. Fortunately, having indirectly worked for Radio Hauraki as a commercial producer for TRN, I had a solid understanding of the station’s targeted demographic profile. Schulberg (1996) believes that people make strong connections to the music and artists they grew up with, and suggests that this attachment “almost always stays with the

person for a lifetime” (53). Radio programmers and producers often harness the power of these nostalgic connections when constructing music playlists to target specific age groups. Bowie’s enormous success in New Zealand in 1983 was a period well remembered by many of Radio Hauraki’s listeners at the upper end of the station’s demographic of “blue-collar male listeners” aged between 25-50 (Mollgaard, 2012: 62). I therefore designed *Down Under the Moonlight* to appeal to this core audience.

As discussed in chapter one, the output of commercial radio stations is largely shaped by political economy. The *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary needed to fit within the landscape of a highly competitive commercial environment. Chignell (2009) observes that New Zealand’s radio market is particularly notable for the exponential rise in local commercial radio stations that took place following the deregulation that occurred in the Eighties and Nineties. Mollgaard (2012) believes that governmental legislation in this period made New Zealand “the most deregulated broadcasting market in the developed world” (51). *Down Under the Moonlight* was produced for broadcast across the entire Radio Hauraki network. The documentary was re-laid from the head office in Auckland to affiliate AM and FM frequencies across the country through the practice of networking. The majority of these stations existed within tightly fought commercial markets. In order to differentiate itself within these competitive radio environments, Radio Hauraki broadcast a high rotation of ‘classic rock’ songs, designed to appeal to a middle-aged, predominantly male audience with a generally high level of disposable income. This precise targeting reflects the observation of Hausman et al. (2004) who believe radio has evolved from being a mass-audience medium to becoming a more exact medium; “it reaches a specific target audience that is more narrowly defined” (18). This specificity means music

documentary producers can create tightly focused content, designed to suit a precise audience, instead of having to appeal to a broad, ambiguous, station demographic.

At the time of broadcast, Radio Hauraki was part of the TRN network, owned by an international radio consortium comprising of Clear Channel Communications, Wilson and Horton, and Independent News and Media plc (Neil and Shanahan, 2005). TRN shareholders received returns on their investment based on the company's commercial revenues, and therefore expected programming content to be of sufficient quality to attract both listeners and advertisers. As Station Manager, Regal was well aware of this commercial imperative. Connelly (2012) states that commercial radio management need to justify the inclusion of content "that does not produce a profit or significantly contribute to the profitability of the radio station" (7). Although my documentary work was unsponsored and did not directly add to Radio Hauraki's profitability, it was still required to fit within a commercial advertising environment, designed to sell products and services. The commissioning success of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary was influenced by Regal's desire to brand Radio Hauraki as a station for aficionados of rock music. Mollgaard (2012) asserts that, at the time of broadcast, Radio Hauraki was a highly regimented format featuring "a small and targeted playlist of only the most popular mass-appeal rock songs" (62). Since my Bowie project reflected the musical interests of the targeted demographic and included song selections largely represented within the station's existing playlists, it was considered worth the 'risk' of alienating listeners who were not used to hearing documentary content within a music-formatted station. Regal's decision to programme the documentary reflects Myers' (2011) belief that commercial radio audiences appreciate the inclusion of specialist spoken word programming, which can, therefore, help to build listener loyalty.

When planning the date and time of a radio broadcast, McLeish (2005) claims there are several factors which need careful consideration, including an assessment of audience availability which “may include weekday / weekend work and leisure patterns, the potential car listenership, television viewing habits, FM / MW usage, and so on” (277). One of the most satisfying aspects of *Down Under the Moonlight’s* scheduling was securing transmission that matched the exact date and time of the Bowie concert at Western Springs Stadium. By starting the documentary at exactly 7pm on the 26th of November 2008, the documentary was broadcast exactly 25 years after the concert started. This sense of history helped to secure the commissioning of the Radio Hauraki documentary and was a key consideration in the arranging an appropriate timeslot and broadcast date for the final production. Had the documentary focused on a less popular Bowie tour or album, it is uncertain whether Radio Hauraki would have agreed to commission the documentary.

One of the earliest considerations a producer faces is the question of how long the length of a programme should be (McLeish, 2005). In both commercial and public service broadcasting environments the duration of a documentary is a decision rarely left to the discretion of the producer. The timing of a project is set by the programme controller, who has an allotted timeslot that the producer is required to fill. The length of a documentary is usually confirmed at the same time the commissioning of the project is agreed on. There may be room for the producer to negotiate for a shorter or longer duration with a programme controller, as discussed in the following chapter, but in most instances the final length of a documentary will be confirmed early in the production process. This need not be seen as a restriction; as Block (2001) suggests, creativity can work best when set within a framework of constraints.

When structuring a music documentary for commercial radio it is often necessary to create several separate sections, to accommodate the inclusion of an advertising schedule. For the *Down Under the Moonlight* project, I was requested to submit six separate clips, which were delivered as WAV files on a data CD. Each of these sections was required to be exactly 16 minutes' duration, to fit within an automated two-hour commercial radio environment. This enabled six separate commercial breaks to be included within the over-arching structure of the documentary. Connelly (2012) believes that radio production staff in commercial environments are, in a sense, working for the sales department: "In fact, everyone in the radio station works for the sales department" (6). This observation reflects the importance of advertising within a commercial radio environment. The ultimate success of a radio station rests on its ability to generate profits; therefore, the documentary producer working within a commercial environment must not view the inclusion of advertising breaks as an imposition; they are a necessity.

As indicated, I had formerly worked for TRN, the company that owned Radio Hauraki, and had previously produced a music documentary for the station in 2003. This documentary, *The Sound of the Joe* (Coley, 2003), focused on the death of the musician Joe Strummer and was awarded Silver in the New York Radio Festivals, and gained a special commendation in the New Zealand Radio Awards. Having worked on this earlier production gave me an insight into how my Bowie documentary would fit within Radio Hauraki's programming and strengthened my initial pitch, as station management trusted my abilities, knowing I was able to deliver a final production of sufficient quality for broadcast. Maintaining good relations with management and commissioners at Radio Hauraki and Radio New Zealand was crucial in ensuring a positive reception to my initial documentary pitches as a freelance producer. Having

considered the commissioning of both documentaries, I now investigate the various production processes involved in the completion of this project, with an emphasis on *Down Under the Moonlight*, as this production most closely relates to my investigation of freelance music documentary production practices for commercial radio. I begin by assessing my approach to pre-production research before discussing four key production elements in the construction of *Down Under the Moonlight*.

5.3. Production practices

This section interrogates the numerous technical approaches involved in the production of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary for Radio Hauraki. As indicated, this production work was carried out instinctively, without the knowledge it would later become the basis of academic investigation. Four subcategories provide the framework for this investigation: interviewing, editing, the use of music and presentation, as they pertain to music documentary production. According to Connelly (2012), broadcasting companies seek to employ multitalented staff with wide ranging skills “because production people are called upon to work in every aspect of station operations” (3). This multi-skilled style of production reflects my own approach as a freelancer, which required me to complete the project independently, while based in the UK. As Hausman, et al. (2004) observe, the ability to carry out a wide number of roles autonomously is one of the most satisfying aspects of the producer’s job: “It’s the chance to be, at once, an artist, a technician, and a performer” (17).

Aspinall (1971) believes the first production stage for any documentary is to conduct research. Having secured a transmission date for the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, I undertook extensive research that included relevant

literature, DVD's of Bowie's tours during the Eighties, tour programmes, websites and online message boards. Emails were sent to potential contributors in an attempt to obtain interviews with both primary and secondary sources. I also began to gather relevant music tracks and collect of various archival content, such as audio from press conferences, and news reports from 1983. According to Adams and Massey (1995), this preproduction stage is vitally important as "the better prepared you are, the better the final work will be" (75). At this early stage, an embryonic running order for the documentary was established. McLeish (2005) makes the case for constructing a written timeline that incorporates all the given components of a proposed production, as he believes that "by committing thoughts to paper and seeing their relationship one to another – where the emphasis should be and what is redundant – the producer is more likely to finish up with a tightly constructed, balanced programme" (266). I utilised this approach by constructing a written timeline which identified plot points within the documentary, sections which would require presenter exposition, the positioning of interviews, key music tracks and archival material. This structure constantly evolved through the production process, and was essential in trying to maintain a coherent storyline which linked together various interviews in a logically flowing narrative. I now assess the use of interviews within the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary and explore certain weaknesses my approach.

5.3.1 *Interviewing*

Interviews formed the foundation of my documentary and were, therefore, a vital production element requiring carefully consideration. This section reveals my strategic to approach to gathering interviews and questions whether this represents authentic

freelance practice. One of the main difficulties in producing this first Bowie documentary project was overcoming the geographical challenge of producing content for a New Zealand audience, while based in the UK. Interviewees who agreed to participate in the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary included musicians who'd worked with Bowie on the *Let's Dance* album and accompanying world tour, alongside promoters, DJ's and fans who'd seen the Auckland concert. The actual process of gathering interviews with these contributors mainly took place around an intensive period of recording throughout December 2007 and January 2008, when I was able to travel to New Zealand. This visit was timed to coincide with a personal holiday to New Zealand, as it is debatable whether I could have afforded to pay this expense solely for the purpose of capturing documentary content. This example of fiscal responsibility reflects the care freelancers must show when managing tight budgets, so their costs do not exceed their eventual return.

Recordings were initially carried out in Christchurch, before I travelled to Wellington to capture on location content at the nearby Takapuwahia marae. The remainder of the New Zealand based interviews were then recorded in the cities of Gisborne and Auckland. I then flew back to the UK to begin the interview editing process. Key US contributors were recorded during a visit to New York in March 2008. In order to lower my expenditure during this aspect of the project, I timed a series of interviews to coincide with an industry conference. As Beaman (2006) suggests, working with a limited budget "without losing quality or compromising on content" is a constant challenge for radio producers (91). Yet having the opportunity to have my University assist with funding the project must be acknowledged as an example of my privilege as an academic, and not fully reflective of industry practice.

All interviews were recorded using a *Marantz* PMD660 portable audio recorder with a *Beyer Dynamic* M58 microphone, to provide consistency in sound. As this equipment was supplied by Birmingham City University, it does not strictly follow typical freelance practice. By preparing well in advance and confirming a broadcast date that gave me sufficient time to assemble the required raw material, I was able to reduce the amount of stress involved in the production phase. This forward planning ensured I had sufficient time to carrying out research, seek and secure interviews, prepare scripts and complete the editing process. I did not wait until all the interviews were captured before editing the material. On the completion of each interview I would label and back up the audio file, then begin to listen back and isolate key moments for potential inclusion in the final production edit. Although this section reflects standard industry approaches to interviewing, I acknowledged that certain aspects of my approach were shaped by the benefit of having a full-time employment in academia. Having discussed the capture of raw interview content, I now consider the technical skill of editing this audio.

5.3.2 *Editing*

In this section, I interrogate my approach to editing this first Bowie documentary project. Hugh Levinson, the editor of World Programmes from the BBC Radio Current Affairs department, summed up the producer's duties in three succinct sentences for the BBC College of Journalism's website; "We discard. We refine. We order"²⁴. Levinson's observation refers to the iterative process of both editing and structuring radio content. The producer is required to judiciously eliminate all unnecessary content, or that which will not fit within a certain time constraint, and arrange the remaining

²⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/production/radio/editing-and-sound-design>, 2012

audio into a coherent narrative. As Aspinall (1971) observes “the flow between narration, sound and other voices needs careful plotting” (104). It is the process of editing that gives a documentary this sense of ‘flow’. The documentaries described in this chapter were all edited using *Adobe Audition 3.0*, multi-track digital audio editing software, which ran on a Sony *Vaio* Laptop, using a Windows 7 operating system, with 1.5 GB of Ram. Although this was a relatively standard computer, the processing power was sufficient for the task and supports my claim that freelancer producers using basic technical equipment have the capability to produce industry standard radio documentaries. Connelly (2012) believes that radio producers need to be technically skilled with software, as the role relies heavily on the effective use of computers (7). At the time, this computer system was satisfactory for my production work, although in hindsight, it was quite rudimentary, offering little in terms of vocal processing. However, the basic nature of this computer system began to cause difficulties during my future productions, as I discuss in the following chapter. This demonstrates a limitation of being a freelancer, as I could not afford a more powerful unit. Instead, I used a University issued computer, which was pushed to the limits of its processing capabilities.

The process of editing *Down Under the Moonlight* was begun in the initial stages of the project before many key interviews were conducted. By starting with basic music tracks and raw archival recording, I was able to get an early ‘feel’ for the sound of the production, then gradually introduce new interviews as they were recorded. By not leaving the editing to the final phase of production, it was possible to gauge the progression of certain storylines and then pursue specific topics in new interviews to help develop the narrative. I was also able to identify underexplored areas that needed further content to ‘flesh out’ the documentary. Editing a music documentary is an ever-

changing process, with certain sections being removed only to reappear at a later date, as dictated by a constantly evolving storyline. The positioning of music, archival clips, presenter narrative, actuality and other content will inevitably change as the producer moves towards a final edit. Documentary producer Matt Harlock describes this constantly shifting process as “shuffling” and considers it to be the essence of all editing²⁵. The newspaper columnist and media reviewer Caitlin Moran (Matthews, 2012) offered an analysis of film documentary editing that parallels the production of music documentaries for radio. In an article regarding *Britain in Day* (2012), a BBC commission for the Cultural Olympiad, Moran described the documentary as being “one of the best documentaries I have ever watched”. Moran pays particular tribute to the editor Peter Christelis by providing this analogy.

“A great editor is like a great rhythm section: they bring bass and backbeat. They can start and stop a dozen times over – increasing the pressure. They are the heartbeat; they are what send the story racing down the veins. They bring the funk. “Edited by” can mean, on a good day, “shaped by”. “Made by” (7).”

The comparison between a documentary editor and the rhythm section of a band is of particular relevance to the craft of music documentary production. The editor needs to keep a consistent rhythm, or pace, when structuring a production. In the following section I discuss this concept as it relates to editing music content within a documentary.

As indicated in section two, the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary was structured in six separate sections, to accommodate the inclusion of commercial breaks. It was important that the first five sections ‘teased’ ahead, in order to hold the listeners interest. Casey Casem, the American DJ noted for his *American Top 40* (Watermark, 1970 -) programmes, pioneered this technique by asking questions or offering

²⁵ Interview with Matt Harlock conducted 23 November 2011

tantalising facts designed to keep the audience tuned-in for the eventual ‘pay off’ which would come after the commercial break (Durkee, 1999). Each section of *Down Under the Moonlight* was designed to end in an appropriately upbeat, engaging style in an attempt to hold the audience through the three minutes of commercials that followed. Each section followed a Radio Hauraki station ID and featured a presenter introduction as a signpost, to remind the audience of where they were in the story, and to inform new listeners about the purpose of the documentary. Contributors who had already been introduced were reintroduced at a later stage with more brevity. Although public service documentaries do not usually feature advertising, and therefore have an uninterrupted narrative flow, I have argued that commercial breaks need not be seen as an imposition. If the structuring and editing of a documentary is carefully managed, commercials can be used to delineate certain ‘chapters’ within the storyline, building tension, and providing a useful opportunity to re-establish the topic of the programme. The regular inclusion of station ID’s, a requirement of Radio Hauraki’s licence, were used to help bridge the transition from commercial breaks back into the documentary. These ID’s were scheduled by the station, and therefore not included as part of the supplied documentary, although their appearance was anticipated within my overall production design. The producer must try to preserve the energy of a documentary’s pace, to sustain the listener’s interest through the interruption caused by the appearance of commercials. If this is done effectively, I suggest these pauses can be used to add pace and energy to a production, creating a sense of expectation for what comes next.

I was mindful to maintain Radio Hauraki’s station sound within my approach to structuring and editing. Starkey (2014) describes the term ‘station sound’ as being “the general ‘feel’ of the station, its output and on-air imaging” (246). Hausman et al. (2012) believe it is the producer’s responsibility to “reinforce the station’s sound”, as

their work is an extension of a station's programming philosophy (19). My knowledge of Radio Hauraki's overall station sound and core demographic helped to ensure the documentary's final production style met the expectations of station management. This insight informed a number of key production decisions, such as:

- The selection of contributors
- The style of the script
- The pace of editing
- The choice of music used throughout the production

Replicating the existing sound of Radio Hauraki's output within the documentary, the use of a station DJ as presenter, and the presence of station ID's, helped the production to blend into the station's regular programming, which did not traditionally feature music documentaries.

As discussed in chapter three, the importance of storytelling within a documentary should not be underestimated. Without an engaging story, there is a risk that the production will simply turn into a succession of facts. Reynolds (2007) asserts that music documentaries rarely have a narrative and are generally structured through a repetitive series of disconnected events, such as recording, touring and debauchery (Reynolds, 2007). I agree that this genre of documentary production can easily fall into a simplistic, journalistic approach that relies too heavily on old tropes and clichéd expectations of what a music documentary is supposed to sound like. It is, therefore, the producer's responsibility to seek fresh approaches to the construction of storylines. According to Wheeler, "a good documentary is, first and foremost, a damn good story"²⁶. This is also true for journalistic reporting, which often parallels documentary production. Chantler and Stewart (2009) advise radio journalists to ensure they tell listeners a story: "You are not 'broadcasting' to the masses or making ministerial-like

²⁶ <http://www.ideastap.com/ideasmag/the-knowledge/How-to-make-a-radio-documentary>

pronouncements; you are explaining to an individual what is going on” (96). Dick Ross, a former journalist and documentary producer at the BBC, believes that the use of ‘story’ is crucial in the success of any documentary production.

“You’ve got to make a decision in documentary that you’re going to tell a story. It’s not a collection of facts - it is not a polemic. Nobody wants to listen to a sermon or a lecture. They want somebody who cares about something to get to the point of why they care. That’s all that a documentary should be about”²⁷.

An overreliance on facts within a linear, predictable narrative may test an audience’s attention span. In an attempt to add extra interest to the storyline of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, I included anecdotes wherever possible. Able and Glass (1999), believes that radio documentaries work most effectively when the narrative is propelled forward by anecdotes, or "a sequence of actions where someone says 'this happened then this happened then this happened'" (5).

In retelling the ‘story’ of a concert or album, there is the possibility that a documentary will sound too retrospective, as contributors are often required to think back and recall certain events from the past. There is a risk that structuring a documentary as an on-going series of studio-recorded recollections may result in a one-dimensional sonic texture and a somewhat predictable narrative path. Smith believes the essence of a radio documentary is a series of live, recorded moments that allow the story to reveal itself before of the listener²⁸. These moments ideally unfold in real-time, in front of the producer’s microphone. This real-time content, or ‘actuality’, can add considerable emotional power to a documentary. However, I suggest this approach is mostly synonymous with public service forms of documentary production. As the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary referred back to past events, which occurred

²⁷ Interview with Dick Ross conducted 2 September 2008

²⁸ <http://niemanreports.org/articles/what-the-hell-is-a-radio-documentary/>

25 years earlier, it was difficult to capture these ‘real-time’ moments that Smith refers to. In an effort to address this lack of immediacy, and to provide an alternative from the traditional ‘question-answer’ style of interviewee responses, I sought to artificially create live moments within the documentary. An example of this occurred when I surprised Frank Simms, a backing singer on Bowie’s *Let’s Dance* album and *Serious Moonlight* world tour, by unexpectedly playing him the *Bowie’s Waiata* archival recording. While playing Simms the audio through a set of headphones, I recorded his reaction to hearing the track for the first time in twenty-five years. His initial shock, followed by delight, then curiosity, became a highlight of the both Radio New Zealand and Radio Hauraki documentaries. Simms previously had no idea that the performance had been recorded and had last heard the song while performing it live, a cappella, with his brother George Simms and Bowie at Takapuwahia marae.

A crucial element of any music documentary is the use of music. Although this may seem self-evident, music adds more to a production than may initially appear on the surface. Music has the ability to add extra context and meaning to a documentary as well as providing atmosphere or the chance to set a scene (Aspinall, 1971). In the next section I consider the how music has been utilised within this initial radio documentary project.

5.3.3 *Music*

As the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary was designed for broadcast on a music formatted station, the careful selection and manipulation of songs within the production was of paramount importance. In this section, I assess the decision-making processes which informed the use of music within my initial Bowie documentaries. According to

Crisell (1994), the use of music on the radio fulfills two main functions. It can be seen as an “object of aesthetic pleasure in its own right” or, when combined with other components, can offer “an ancillary function in signifying something outside itself” (48). The use of music accomplished both of these functions within all the documentaries produced for this study. In this first project, Bowie’s compositions could be enjoyed by the listener for their direct appeal as ‘classic’ songs, while at the same time subconsciously conveying extra meaning through the underlying context and atmosphere they gave the production. According to Shingler and Wieringa (1998) music can be used to act as a form of “boundary demarcation”, which can bridge a gap in a production by providing a “smooth transition from one scene to another” (64). This technique can be heard throughout the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, as I shifted between various contributors and topics. The natural ending of a track also provided a useful way to identify the conclusion of a certain section, often signifying the start of a commercial break.

Although the presence of music within a music documentary is to be expected, it is worth noting that producers often relegate its importance to a secondary status by focusing on contributors’ recollections of the environment that created or influenced the music, rather the music itself. In the instance of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, station management requested that music should be given prominence, given that Radio Hauraki was, first and foremost, a music formatted station. I should note, at this point, that the copyright usage of Bowie’s music was covered by the station’s pre-existing music licensing agreements.

When editing music within the context of a documentary, the producer is required to mix together different tracks to add energy, variety and meaning to a particular section. Aspinall (1971) defines the act of mixing as the process of fading

sounds in and out and blending them together “in various proportions” (49). The term fade is generally applied to the fading in or out of a particular sound source. The producer will draw from a range of fades, each of which has an established tradition of usage within radio production. The ‘cross-fade’ is when one sound source is reduced in volume while another is simultaneously faded in, so the two overlap for a few seconds. I often used this approach to move between two musical records or to blend a presenter link with a record. The ‘fast fade’ can be used to quickly shorten the length of a particular track; this needs to be made quickly in order to be effective, and will often come at the end of a musical phrase (Aspinall, 1971). It is the radio producer’s responsibility to determine the type and length of an audio fade.

Alongside the use of fades and cross-fades, I often employed the technique of ‘beat mixing’ tracks to shorten or extend certain sections. The use of an extended section of music provides the listener with a moment to pause and reflect on the meaning of the previous spoken word content. They are no longer required to interpret and process the contributor’s verbal information and can instead switch into a more neutral state of listening and process what has been said. Splicing a song on a given beat, then judiciously rejoining this edit to match the beat from another section of the song, enables the structure of the original track to be manipulated so it fits around edited spoken word content. If done effectively, the edit will be almost invisible to the listener. This technique allows the producer to create greater emotional impact within their production, as elements such as interviewees or archival content can be cued to end precisely before a musical crescendo or chorus. By looping certain instrumental sections of a song, an effective music bed can be created to sit underneath spoken word content such as a presenter’s link (Durkee, 1999). I used this approach to loop sections from the start of songs, before the first lyrics were sung, or from an instrumental

sections heard during a musician's solo or from the 'middle-eight' section of a song. In the Eighties producer / engineers at Watermark studios in the US, responsible for the *American Top 40* music programme, were initially opposed to this practice. They believed that looping "ruined a song's integrity" (198). These sound engineers found the process to be difficult and time consuming using analogue equipment, although they found looping far easier when they eventually began to use digital workstations. While I broadly agree that digitally altering an original song may interfere with the original intent of a musician's work, I suggest that if it is done well, the results need not be obvious. By editing a track to shorten its length, the producer is able to increase the pace of a documentary and ultimately include more songs, therefore allowing more time to increase the narrative scope of a production.

My overall approach to the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary, produced for Radio New Zealand, was to underplay Bowie's 'hits' in favour of a more subdued sound that gave prominence to the spoken word content. In contrast, the Radio Hauraki documentary was required to include as many of Bowie's best-known songs as possible, with an emphasis on tracks already featured within the Radio Hauraki playlist. Station Manager Regal requested the documentary to fill a two-hour slot in order to accommodate longer sections of songs. On reflection, I would have preferred to feature shorter music clips rather than extended sections, as I believe this adversely affected the audience's connection with the storyline. If the listener has to wait too long before the next voice is heard they may forget they are listening to a documentary, and lose track of the narrative. I also observed that the energy and pace of the production was considerably slowed down by the inclusion of long sections of songs. I therefore sought to overcome this issue in the production work discussed in the following two chapters. Having interrogated the use of music within *Down Under the Moonlight*, I now examine

my approach towards the use of a presenter. I assess the challenges this aspect of the production faced and reflect on how I dealt with these difficulties.

5.3.4. *Presentation*

This section considers the narration and scripting of *Down Under the Moonlight*, as a presenter and their accompanying script can be a critical factor in the overall success of a radio documentary. As radio only exists in the form of sound, Aspinall (1971) believes that a production must be heard accurately if listeners are to benefit from it. Therefore, spoken word content such as presenter links must be clear and easily heard. If the audience fails to understand the content “it’s unlikely that we’ll have a second chance” to reach them (20). I now assess the presentation work carried out for this first Bowie project and discuss how this production element impacted on the final documentary. In hindsight, I believe that this aspect of the production caused me the most difficulties and ultimately had a detrimental impact on the overall effectiveness of this particular project.

According to Beaman (2006), all the content broadcast on a station should match the expectations of the listener whenever they tune in. For this reason, there is a need for a sense of uniformity in commercial radio programming. In order to attain this consistency, I requested the provision of an existing member of Radio Hauraki’s on-air staff to act as the presenter for the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary. This was also a cost saving consideration, as I did not have to pay for a presenter, and can therefore be seen as another example of a freelancer’s decision making process being impacted by economic factors. Regal made the decision to select Nick Brown for the presenter role. Brown, a DJ with a regular presence on the station, agreed to perform

this role, although I remain unsure as to whether this decision was of his choosing, or if Regal directed him as a requirement of his job.

The script writing process occurred late in the production process, once all contributors were confirmed and recorded. Having decided on the final structure of the content, I was then able to construct a script which threaded the content together and added extra expositional information where necessary. Aspinall (1971) believes that programme designed for general audiences need to have “popular appeal” and of “wide general interest”, therefore the producer’s approach “must be one which is commonly understood, and the words must be the familiar words which everyone uses” (87). I subconsciously followed this advice by ensuring the language of the script was suitably colloquial English and written for “the ear not the eye” (Chantler, Stewart, 2009: 96). Crook (1999) suggests that a presenter’s script should be written in such a way that ensures the listener is able to “learn with you”, allowing the story to unfold through the contributors rather than from exposition provided by the presenter (216). This consideration can be seen in my instinctive attempt to reduce the number of times Brown appeared as the presenter, by having interviewees provide key expositional material wherever possible. I emailed the final script to Regal and two weeks later received a CD containing an unedited audio file of Brown’s presentation work. Although this recording was of broadcast quality in terms of its audio fidelity, I was unhappy with his delivery. My foremost concern was that Brown’s pace was much faster than I had intended. There was also a lack of variation in the audio provided. Having multiple versions allows the producer to select certain sections from separate takes, which can then be combined into one final composite, if necessary. Although I had requested this diversity in my email communication, it was not provided in the final audio package. However, I accept that the two-hour duration of the documentary meant

that Brown had to record a large number of links, and he may have recorded only one version of each link to save time. As there was little variety to choose from, I was often forced to use what I considered to be inferior takes. Brown's presentation work was not necessarily a poor effort, as he was an established radio announcer whose enthusiasm still brought a sense of energy and professionalism to the final sound of the documentary. However, it did not reflect my expectations and ultimately made the editing process considerably more labour intensive.

Wherever possible, I added extra space within sections of Brown's links by splicing and separating the small gaps between his sentences, using the *Adobe Audition* digital multi-track editor, in an effort to try and slow down his delivery. I then used backing music beneath these presenter links to help mask the edits. By not being able to produce the content myself, while in the studio with Brown, I was forced to work with the content provided. The impending broadcast deadline meant I was unable to request a second attempt or try another presenter in the UK. In retrospect I admit that the production notes I provided on the script, could have done more to reinforce the need for an unhurried, relaxed presenter delivery. Aspinall (1971) draws attention to the importance of radio producers being able to work alongside talent, and having some skill in "instructing and directing other people at the microphone" (63). By relying on self-produced presenter links and not directing the talent myself, this important aspect of a documentary producer's role was not tested, to the detriment of the final production. I revisit this issue in the following two chapters.

Lindgren (2011) believes documentary producers often carry out the role of narrator themselves by reading their own script. In doing so, the narrator / presenter will "link items and to describe people and places and to give facts and information such as time, place, interviewees' names and profession" (56). However,

documentaries produced for commercial radio audiences rarely feature a producer in the role of presenter. In the instance of *Bowie's Waiata*, I did not use a presenter. The content was structured in such a way that contributors linked together to tell the story without the need for a presenter / narrator to provide additional exposition. By prompting the interviewees to include relevant context and personal introductions within their responses, a coherent, uninterrupted narrative was established. This decision is supported by Arnheim's (1936) assertion that a speaker "who plays no part but only 'passes on' information" is a 'foreign body' in a radio production" and is therefore unnecessary (198). I felt the intimacy of the recordings and the poignancy of interviewees' recollections would be compromised by the intrusion of a presenter. As the documentary was only a relatively short duration, the interviewees were able to effectively sustain the narrative themselves. McLeish (2005) believes this structural approach can create a natural flow, which links each section together and moves a production forward: "This is not easy to do but can often be more atmospheric" (268). Cue material, read live by a Radio New Zealand presenter, introduced the item and offered sufficient historical context for the piece. Only a relatively small amount of Bowie's music was featured in the public service version of the documentary. Instead, atmospheric music tracks, featuring Maori voices and traditional Maori instruments, were chosen to separate certain sections, add mood, and act as backing beds. The decision to either use or dispense with a presenter, is a choice more aligned to public service forms of broadcasting, as commercially-based productions will more often than not be required to feature a presenter.

Having completed my interrogation of the key production practices involved in the creation of the documentaries discussed in this chapter, I now examine the way

online technologies have shaped my work as a freelance producer. I also assess how the distribution and promotion of this first Bowie project was impacted by the Internet.

5.4. Online technologies

A central contention of this study is that digital tools, such as online technologies, offer increased creative and practical opportunities for freelance music documentary producers. This section explores how the Internet has provided a range of new approaches, which have increased the speed of documentary production and provided alternative means of promoting and distributing audio music documentaries. During the initial stage of production in 2008, file sharing websites were in their infancy and not widely used. Therefore, the presenter's raw audio and the final documentary were transferred between New Zealand and the UK by the costly and time consuming method of couriered CD. This practice follows the way Watermark's popular *American Top 40* show was distributed internationally via couriered LP's each week, decades earlier. US music documentaries, produced in the Seventies and Eighties for commercial radio, such as *The Continuous History of Rock and Roll* (1981) and *Profiles in Rock* (1980), amongst other productions, were also couriered directly to affiliate stations on LP records for broadcast.



Fig 5.1: LP distribution of a US music documentary for radio, 1981

The Internet provided an essential resource during the research process, enabling me to locate possible contributors and gather rare archival audio for use in the final production. McEwan (2010) believes the Internet provides an opportunity to reinvent traditional relationships between producers and audiences. This is evident in the way radio producers use the Internet as a way to interact with audiences. The feedback provided by online chatrooms and comments sections enables producers to engage with listeners, both pre and post broadcast. Writing in the late Eighties, Rothernbuhler and McCourt (1987) claimed that radio programmers get “relatively little information from or about their actual audiences” (105). However, since the emergence of the Internet, online forums now offer a valuable way for programmers and producers to gain a deeper understanding of target audiences. McLeish (2005) states that a station’s output must demonstrate an understanding of the audience they serve, believing it is the producer’s job “to assess, reflect and to anticipate those needs through a close contact with his or her potential listeners” (276). I suggest that online chat rooms and message boards, along with social media, offer practical ways for producers to gain this ‘close

contact' and consequently create more effective, meaningful content for their audiences.

An unexpected by-product of my documentary work was the way certain content was re-appropriated and re-shaped by amateur producers. Post-broadcast, my documentaries were quickly adopted by Bowie 's international fan community and turned into on-line media via streaming, file sharing, Facebook, message-board, and YouTube. Jenkins (2006) refers to the development of online fan activity as being part of a "new participatory culture" that promotes a "DIY" approach to media production (136). In many ways, this reflects my approach as a freelance radio producer, required to carry out the majority of production duties myself. Carter (2013) claims that a culture of convergence has allowed digital technologies to challenge traditional mass media production by empowering audiences. Several of my Bowie productions became available online in edited or full form via file sharing, or in a series of clips on user-generated content providers such as YouTube. As many stations stream their live digital content online, audiences are now able to capture international audio, as well as local radio content, through the use of streaming audio capturing software such as *Totalrecorder*²⁹, *StreamripperX*³⁰ and *Audio Hijack*³¹. These programs, amongst others, have allowed music fans to record a direct digital signal with no discernable loss of the broadcast audio quality. Users can then save these recorded files as standard WAV or MP3 formats. The resulting audio files can then be easily uploaded to online file sharing platforms, as occurred with the Bowie project. Similarly, I used 'ripping' software to capture audio tracks from online videos to use within my *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary.

²⁹ <http://www.totalrecorder.com>

³⁰ <http://streamripperx.sourceforge.net>

³¹ <https://rogueamoeba.com/audihijack/>

By using the Internet as a distribution platform for my production work, I have been able to reach a wide international audience in both auditory and visual documentary forms. Throughout the entire production phase of this early Bowie project I created a total of two radio documentaries for AM / FM broadcast, two online versions, eight YouTube audio slideshows and four on-demand audio features. This use of the Internet to deliver extra related content reflects Geller's (2006) assertion that the web offers producers the opportunity to provide "a variety of, or multiple, feeds for different audiences" (316). McEwan (2010) believes the arrival of Internet radio succeeded in joining two separate technologies together "with such intimacy that they appear inseparable" (7). The medium of radio was well suited to adapt to new online technologies and, as a result, listeners are now able to use online audio platforms to engage with radio documentary content. New methods of digital broadcasting extended the reach of my freelance production work beyond analogue forms of transmission, allowing them to be heard long after the initial radio documentaries were terrestrially broadcast. Although both Bowie documentaries were heard live and simultaneous by traditional radio audiences, this work was also available as streaming live broadcasts and on-demand listening. This allowed the documentaries to gain individual listeners in the form of 'hits', therefore incrementally building an ongoing audience throughout the duration their existence on the Internet.

According to Chignell (2009), the failures of commercial radio in both the US and UK markets, brought on by automation and the drive to maximize profits, indirectly created opportunities for other types of radio and allowed for a "different philosophy" to emerge (118). One such outcome of commercial radio's shifting political economy was the rise of Internet radio. This new method of broadcasting, or narrowcasting, is evidenced by the multitude of ways audiences can access audio content. Smart phones,

tablets, laptop computers and increasingly reliable Wi-Fi services have made it easier than ever for audiences to have a portable, convenient means of receiving radio programming. The RAB (2015) believe that almost any device, which has access the Internet, can be used to consume audio as streaming and on-demand content. According to Bull and Back (2003) this means that new audio technologies “give us as much sound as we want” (8). As Geller (2006) observes, the Internet has not only provided producers with a “highway” to aid in the creation of programming and content, but also offers a platform to market and promote radio programmes (316). Before the advent of the Internet, audiences could be alerted to upcoming radio documentaries through promotional on-air trailers, announcer links, or through the radio listings section of newspapers and in magazine publications such as the *Radio Times* in the UK or *The Listener* in New Zealand. However, the development of radio websites, online chat-rooms, dedicated fan-sites, Facebook and RSS feeds now offer audiences highly detailed information about upcoming radio programming, specific to their particular interests.

The online promotion of *Bowie’s Waiata* began when a member of the *Bowie Down Under*³² fan website saw the documentary listed in *The Listener* magazine / website and alerted the fan community to its upcoming broadcast. On noticing this activity, I contacted the website to promote both the *Bowie’s Waiata* and *Down Under the Moonlight* documentaries. This allowed me to specifically target an audience of fans who had already demonstrated their interest in Bowie’s Australasian activities. The *Bowie Down Under* site had provided considerable pre-production research material along with photographic content for inclusion in the accompanying audio slideshows. As discussed in section two, ancillary online content about Takapuwahia marae and its

³² <http://www.bowiedownunder.com>

history, along with original photographs sourced during my visit to the tribe, were made available on Radio New Zealand's website to compliment the main documentary as on-demand audio and provide additional context.



Fig 5.2: On-demand RNZ audio produced to accompany the main documentary³³

Adam Dean, the Webmaster of *Bowie Down Under*, was enthusiastic about the project, posting a number of alerts on the site³⁴. These posts included detailed programme content and musical track listings alongside new photographs taken during the process of interviewing Bowie's associates from 1983, often holding items of memorabilia from the *Let's Dance* period. Promotional postings provided an international audience with specific broadcast information, including links to the Radio New Zealand and Radio Hauraki websites, where the documentaries could be streamed live.

After the completion of the two main documentaries I began to experiment with YouTube as a means of distributing specific sections of the original productions,

³³ <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/bowieswaiata>

³⁴ <http://www.bowiedownunder.com/maori/index.html>

alongside additional content that had not been used in the final edit. This activity was borne from a curiosity to explore how my documentary content could be re-purposed and delivered through online video platforms. The use of YouTube's search algorithms provided a new way for listeners to locate and consume my interview material. I also used my documentary work as the basis for a series of audio-slides, by combining audio with a narrative of related photographic images. This additional content, which complimented and promoted my documentary work, was subsequently made available through the RNZ and fan websites, alongside my own personal YouTube channel. According to McEwan (2010), the hyper-mediated experience of radio on the Internet begins with websites for a specific station or programme. As an instinctual producer, I wanted to maximise my production output and share the content with a wider range of listener / viewers. By creating a range of audio slideshows, which combined photography and newspaper articles with my audio production work, I extended the range of the audience beyond traditional audio platforms. This approach reflects the increasing 'visualisation' of radio and demonstrates how audio recordings can be merged with other media to create new interpretations of the music documentary.

RNZ Home News Radio Series & Podcasts Topics

HISTORY / MUSIC

Bowie's Waiata

From Radio NZ National Music

Bowie's Waiata: Ngahi Toa Mix

Explore our David Bowie collection Sound and Vision

In 1983 David Bowie was enjoying the biggest success of his career. The album *Let's Dance* had gone to number one around the world and the subsequent 'Serious Moonlight' tour was playing to huge, record breaking audiences.

The show finally reached New Zealand and on 23 November 1983, and shortly before his first concert in Wellington, Bowie was invited to visit Takapūwāhia Marae in Porirua. He was the first bonafide rock star to be officially welcomed onto a Māori marae.

Here is the full radio version of the story:

Listen 25'25"
Add to playlist | Download

Fig 5.3: RNZ on-demand audio for the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary with audio slideshow accompaniment

Day-Good (2015) questions whether audio-slideshows are a legitimate journalistic media format, claiming the industry has “variously hailed it as a breakthrough technology for telling stories on the Web and discounted it as a passing fad or a slapdash substitute for video” (15). Marsh, writing for the BBC College of Journalism, commented that some critics see the format as being too much of a hybrid; “neither one thing nor the other: something less than video while tainting the quality of audio”³⁵. Despite these misgivings, Lillie (2011) refers to them as an increasingly popular

³⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/blog/2010/03/in-praise-of-the-audio-slidesh.shtml>.

storytelling medium, commonly used by newsrooms to provide web-based, multimedia news content. As contemporary radio is often coupled with online visual imagery, the initial Bowie project provided a valuable opportunity to explore the practice of ‘visualising’ my radio documentary content. The BBC’s website describes the remit of their Radio & Music Multiplatform department (R&MM) as being “to reinvent radio and music services for digital audiences”, through a strategy that provides “high quality on-screen visuals”³⁶. This combination of visual and audio content within radio’s online presence has become a common feature on the websites of both public service and commercial broadcasters. Presenters often direct listeners to a station’s website in order to view extra video or pictorial content that relate to certain stories or topics of interest.

The Bowie related audio-slideshows I produced contained a combination of visual content. Although no video was used, I selected a range of official photographs from the *Serious Moonlight* tour, and other images sourced from the web alongside my own photographs. These were supplemented with marketing posters, *Let’s Dance* artwork, and scans taken from newspaper clippings relating to the tour. The duration of this pictorial content was timed to compliment the audio. I attempted to obtain permission for the use of copyright photography within my audio slideshows, most notably from official Bowie photographer Denis O’Regan, without success. However, as this production work was non-profit, I decided to feature this photographic content, while acknowledging the source of this art work and providing contact details.

³⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/radio/articles/radio-multiplatform>

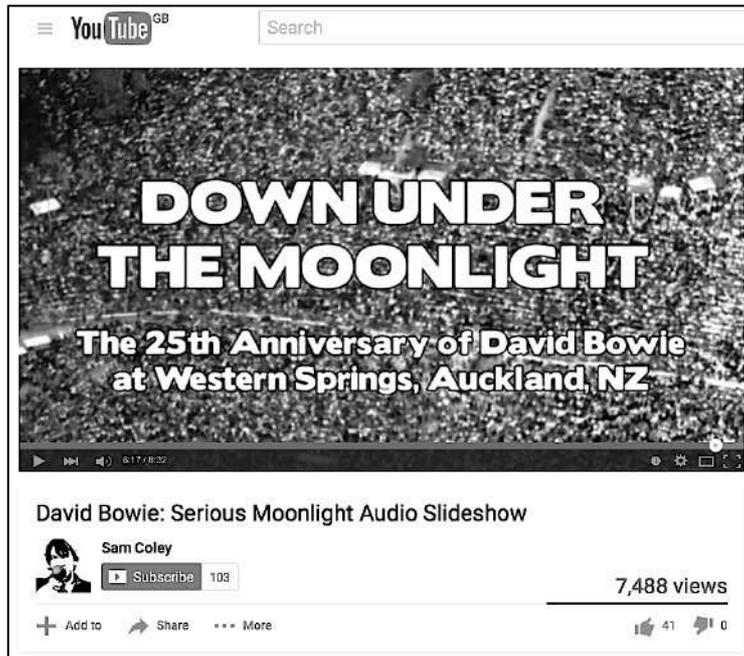


Fig 5.4: *Down Under The Moonlight* audio-slideshow, YouTube³⁷

By creating this series of individual YouTube clips, viewers were able to engage with elements of the audio documentary they might not have otherwise found. An example of this is the section of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary relating to the late Blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. Vaughan, who played on the *Let's Dance* album, was booked to take part in the *Serious Moonlight* world tour, but was replaced at the last minute in circumstances that remain unclear. In a section of my interview with the singer Frank Simms, he recounted his memories of events leading up Vaughan's controversial firing. A YouTube clip²⁰, which focused solely on Simms recollections of Vaughan's departure, was uploaded on the 18th of April 2009. This clip subsequently initiated much debate in the comments section, with many questioning or agreeing with Simms version of events. Saxophone player Stan Harrison, who also played on the *Serious Moonlight* tour, posted comments along with Craig Hopkins, the author of a

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBWFodNVXak>

Ray Vaughan biography, who contradicted the documentary's account of the story. I mention this example to illustrate the way online platforms offer listeners a chance to express their feeling and share stories relating to documentary content. Klein (2008) believes this type of internet-based activity can be seen as the continuation of a long history of production culture and, therefore, should not be viewed as new phenomena. Radio has traditionally encouraged listener feedback and basic forms of participation, with requests and dedications often included within live music programming. However, I suggest that online interactions are far more nuanced than these traditional exchanges, and can potentially provide rich new dimensions to a radio documentary production. Online platforms allow additional information to be added to a story, while certain points of view can be questioned and debated.

Despite the apparent advantages of audio distribution via the Internet, Geller (2006) is cautious about the merit of online radio, believing the delivery method to be of secondary importance to the actual quality of the content. Geller claims; "it's time to reinterpret philosopher Marshall McLuhan's commonly cited phrase: "It's no longer the medium, it's the message"" (316). Regardless of how a documentary is heard, whether through analogue or digital means, it is the calibre of the content that ultimately dictates how well it is received by an audience. I agree with Wall and Dubber's (2008) assertion that although the online streaming of radio "reshapes" the listener's experience, it has not replaced or replicated traditional broadcasting (64). In the following section I assess the overall weaknesses and limitations apparent in this initial stage of my practice as a freelance music documentary producer. I reflect on various drawbacks to ascertain how I could potentially improve my performance during the production of the subsequent projects discussed in the following two chapters.

5.5. Weaknesses and limitations

The radio documentaries assessed in this chapter fulfilled their purpose by being successfully broadcast on their respective stations and receiving positive feedback from their commissioners. However, I acknowledge there are certain weaknesses in my approach and areas where I could have improved my performance. By critically reflecting on my work retrospectively, alongside past studies in the field of radio production, this section assesses these limitations. Throughout this stage of my practice-based investigations, I was carrying out my administrative and production duties as an instinctual practitioner. Although this can be viewed as a weakness in my approach, as I did not fully question each of my decisions at the time, the intuitive behaviour recorded in this chapter provide baseline observations against which to measure the intermediary and reflexive stages which followed.

I suggest there is a divide between a producer's original vision of how their documentary might sound before embarking on a project, and how the final work is actually realised. Although it is possible that a resulting production may improve on its initial conception, more often than not, the producer's ambition for their work may not be entirely achievable. Compromises, unforeseen challenges, and the demands of station management, can all impact on the final shape of a documentary. It is the producer's job to navigate these difficulties as best they can, in order to reach a conclusion which bares at least some semblance of the original concept. Complications are to be expected and, therefore, the ability to remain flexible and adaptive towards challenges is a key production skill.

In my role as a freelance radio producer, I had a limited budget with which to complete the project. As I was paid after the final delivery of the documentaries, I was

required to personally fund the production of my work. This outlay provided motivation to successfully complete the project, in order to recoup my expenditure. I therefore designed my interview recordings to fit around holidays and conference presentations, to minimise costs. As indicated, this does not reflect industry practice, as my University activities helped cover these costs. Had extra funds been available to pay contributors, or travel to other interviewee locations, it may have been possible to secure more primary source interviewees. I was generally pleased with the calibre of the contributors I managed to secure, but a more ambitious, assertive approach could potentially have resulted in a greater number of higher profile interviewees.

While considering my production work during the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, I noted several technical aspects that I was, in hindsight, unsatisfied with. The final mixdown sounded quite ‘thin’ and would, I believe, have benefited from more compression or slightly more bass equalization. The transition between voice and music are occasionally too abrupt. Smoother, slower volume adjustments would have improved the sections where the levels lift quite suddenly. In terms of my interview edits, I noted certain coughs and stumbles that could have been removed. These were not limitations of the technology, but editorial decisions that would have been corrected had I been a more experienced producer. Structurally, the general pace seems slow moving in places, with long sections of one interviewee after the other. This linear approach gives an overly predictable feel the piece. Brown, the presenter, provides a great deal of exposition in overly long links. This also has a tendency to reduce the overall pace. I also believe the use of a more recognisable contributor towards the start of the item may have given the introduction more impact and energy.

In terms of my interviewing work, the use of on location recordings generally worked well. However, a problem associated with this approach can be heard in my

interview with Gee Ling, Bowie's girlfriend in 1983, and co-star of the *China Girl* (Mallet, 1983) music video. For various logistical reasons Gee Ling could only be recorded in a restaurant environment, which had no connection to the storyline. Although the restaurant was not busy at the time, the presence of background ambience (such as a telephone ringing) was slightly audible. To combat this, the interview was recorded in a very close-mic style, with backing music used as a 'bed' to disguise any room ambience.

As indicated in section three of this chapter, I was dissatisfied with the performance of the presenter Nick Brown. As I was not present when Brown recorded his voice work, I was unable to guide his delivery style. Consequently, his pace was too fast and lacking in variety. Therefore, my position as a freelance producer, working off station, hampered the documentary. Had I been a member of Radio Hauraki's staff, it would have been a relatively simple procedure to produce the talent myself and thereby improve the final production. I take accountability for the lengthy durations and overly didactic nature of some links which, on reflection, were overly long and slowed down the pace of the documentary's narrative. Crisell (1994) believes that radio scripts should sound "natural and spontaneous" as an informal and intimate style of delivery helps to build a relationship with radio audiences (35). Although Brown was an experienced 'live' radio presenter, his work on the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary was not as relaxed or as natural as I had hoped for. Chantler and Stewart (2009) assert it is not easy to write a script "that sounds easy and natural when read aloud" (96). If I had spent more time on the scripting process and provided clearer production notes, I may have been able to address this issue. Regardless of these concerns, Brown's effort was not without merit. As a regular member of Radio Hauraki's on-air team, he helped the production to blend into the overall station sound and managed to deliver a high-energy

performance.

My main criticism of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary is how it structurally sounds more like a traditional live radio programme, than a radio documentary. The long sections of songs, requested by Regal, caused the production to lose momentum and replicates the feel of musically formatted scheduling, instead of the faster flow of a traditional music documentary, where short sections of music are quickly followed by the next contributor. Given that station management commissioned a two-hour duration for the piece, and wanted the final production to fit within a traditional music radio format, these drawbacks are unsurprising. However, I sought to avoid these issues with my future work, as discussed in the following two chapters.

Aside from the issues noted above, I remain largely content with final Radio Hauraki documentary. Nevertheless, on reflection, I believe the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary for RNZ was a more effective effort, which suited its public service audience better than the *Down Under the Moonlight* production for commercial radio. *Bowie's Waiata* benefitted from the clarity of focus that resulted from its shorter duration. It was designed for an audience already acclimatised to hearing documentary content, which enabled me to make more creative production choices, such as the decision not to utilise a presenter. In 2009 the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary was named as a finalist in the New York Radio Festival Awards, in both the *Culture and The Arts* and *Community Portraits* categories. This industry recognition supports my assertion that it was a more accomplished production. In the closing section which follows, I draw my final conclusions regarding this initial phase of radio documentary production. In doing so, I identify the key characteristics displayed by freelance music documentary producers.

5.6. Conclusion

In this opening chapter of my findings, I revealed the core production processes employed by freelance radio producers in the creation of music based documentaries. Although I mainly focused on the construction of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary for commercial radio, I made comparisons with *Bowie's Waiata*, to demonstrate distinguishing factors which delineate the boundaries between commercial and public service approaches to radio documentary production. Through retrospective auto-ethnographic observations I have identified fundamental production practices, and situated these within the 'real world' context of the commercial radio industry. I argued that this insight can only be captured by using firsthand observations as an active practitioner in the field.

Firstly, I provided the context for this production project; outlining how my initial Bowie project was originally conceived and explaining my professional relationship to the stations involved. The decision to produce two versions of the Bowie story, for both public service and commercial audiences, revealed how financial considerations shape freelance approaches to music documentary production. This approach maximised the potential listenership for my work and helped recover production costs, such as travel expenses when capturing content. I showed how my freelance work was informed by political economy. This influence can be seen in a number of production considerations, such as structure, duration, presentation, music selection and editing style. I suggested there is a need for producers to understand a station's target audience in order to create effective content and to ensure a commissioning pitch is positively received by management. I claimed that freelancer radio producers can assist the commissioning process by developing and nurturing strong industry networks. Establishing

relationships with station management prior to commissioning helps to strengthen confidence in a freelancer's ability to deliver content on-time and to suitable broadcast standards.

This chapter assessed my instinctual approach to the 'pre' and 'post' production phases of these initial Bowie documentaries. By considering the use of digital technologies, I argued that advances in the field have increased the ease and speed of music documentary production, allowing freelancers to carry out a multitude of roles efficiently, and with relatively little economic outlay. I claimed that structuring content around advertising schedules need not be considered an imposition on the producer's creativity. Furthermore, commercial breaks provide an opportunity to create convenient 'chapters' within a music documentary and can be used to build a sense of tension and anticipation within a production.

I explored the impact of online technologies on the production and distribution of my Bowie documentaries, leading up to and following the terrestrial broadcasts of my work on Radio Hauraki and Radio New Zealand. The Internet has greatly enhanced certain freelance radio production practices. These include research gathering and the sourcing of rare archival audio clips. Online technologies also offer increased opportunities for listeners to interact with radio documentary content, through comments sections, fan forums and social media. Producers can learn a great deal about the tastes and expectations of target audiences by utilising these platforms to communicate with listeners.

Digital production equipment and online technologies enable freelance radio documentary producers to carry out a wide range of production tasks, thereby assisting them to create virtually autonomous projects. I claim this represents a new paradigm in radio production, whereby freelancers are independently able to conceptualise and

complete commercial radio content which previously required a team of several people to perform.

Although I was broadly pleased with my efforts during this initial phase of production, I identified various weaknesses and limitations within my documentary production work. I acknowledged that being a fully employed academic meant my approach did not entirely reflect the practice of a 'real world' freelancer, as I had certain equipment and travel costs subsidised throughout the project.

In summarising my findings, I identify three hallmarks of freelance music documentary production for commercial audiences. Firstly, there is a need for freelancers to think entrepreneurially with a realistic understanding of commercial imperatives. This includes the need to show initiative and flexibility in an effort to reduce costs and work within tight budgets. Secondly, freelancers must remain open to the possibilities of new production technologies, as these have the potential to speed up workflow processes and ultimately enhance the sound of a production. Thirdly, creative opportunities within a production should be fully exploited, within the restraints of station sound and compliance, in order to capture and hold the audience's attention, and 'reward' them for listening to a production. I maintained that the provision of creative music documentaries, with high production values, enable commercial stations to build new audiences, increase listener loyalty and enhance their overall brand.

As signaled earlier, the production work carried out during this initial Bowie documentary was completed outside of any research considerations. It has, therefore, captured my instinctual practice as a freelance producer. I have used these reflections, looking back on my intuitive approach to production, as a reference point against which to measure the production work discussed in the following two chapters. These consider my practice from an active auto-ethnographic perspective, using an iterative production

process, to compare my observations alongside the views of industry practitioners and relevant literature. In doing so, I track my progress as a freelance producer in the field over the five-year period which followed the production of the *Down Under the Moonlight* and *Bowie's Waiata* documentaries.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERMEDIARY PRODUCTION PHASE:

XFM 25

This chapter considers my freelance music documentary practice during the ‘intermediary’ production period between the two Bowie projects which frame this practice-based investigation. It was during this phase that I first began to interrogate my practice through the method of iterative production. My approach to the administration and production of this project was informed by my experiences working on the previous documentaries for Radio Hauraki and RNZ. These findings build on reflections discussed in the previous chapter, which documented the production of two Bowie documentaries, by viewing my practice from the perspective of an active auto-ethnographer. As my initial, instinctual production work was assessed retrospectively, my recollections of certain practices were at times uncertain. However, during this intermediary stage of production, I consciously interrogated my practice and carried out industry interviews to test these observations, while also seeking relevant literature related to specific radio production techniques. Throughout this period, I repeated and refined the process of music documentary production for commercial radio.

In the period between my initial and concluding Bowie documentaries I produced a total of twenty-one broadcast radio documentaries (see Appendix J). Nineteen of these were music documentaries. However, for the purposes of this investigation, I specifically focus on the production of twelve documentaries designed for the UK commercial radio industry. Selecting this particular project concentrated my iterative observations; allowing me to study the ongoing production cycle of similar documentaries for one specific station. This series, titled *XFM 25*, were produced for

the Xfm radio network, with one episode broadcast per month, throughout 2011. The repetition of similar production patterns provided insight into how I developed my abilities as a practitioner in the field. This chapter develops the themes discussed in the previous chapter by critically reconsidering many of the instinctual decisions made during the construction of the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary. I assess what lessons were learnt from this initial period of production and draw from the auto-ethnographic observations captured during this second, intermediary production period. I also consider the views of industry professionals, whom I conducted interviews with.

I start by providing an overview of the project's conception, before exploring the commission process for the project. I then assess my technical approach, using the same subsections employed in the previous chapter. I reveal how the digital technologies used for radio production had advanced since my initial phase of investigation and consider how these developments impacted on my work. This chapter updates and reconsiders my earlier approaches, revealing new production strategies and strengthening my argument that freelance radio producers, operating independently, are capable of creating industry standard music documentaries for commercial radio audiences. I consider the use of the Internet in the construction and distribution of the *XFM 25* documentary series. Online audio platforms have allowed audiences to engage and interact with radio documentary content in new ways, while providing a pathway of communication between listener and producer. I also assess certain weaknesses and limitations within *XFM 25*. The opening section contextualises the project by providing a summary of its origins.

6.1. Project Overview

A key difference between the production work discussed in the previous chapter and *XFM 25* is the total number of documentaries produced for broadcast. Unlike the initial Bowie documentaries for Radio Hauraki, and Radio New Zealand, this project was conceived as an ongoing series. I sought a production challenge that would provide the opportunity for an iterative approach to my documentary work. By crafting what was essentially the same story multiple times, I honed my practice to a greater degree than would be possible with a series of one-off documentaries. My usual approach to idea generation involved finding a story, then assessing whether it coincided with an upcoming anniversary; thereby maximising its commissioning potential. However, when considering potential concepts for this intermediary phase of production, I realised I could invert my approach by selecting a year first, then finding subject matter which fitted within that framework. Focusing on an anniversary milestone was central to the success of both the *Bowie's Waiata* and *Down Under the Moonlight* documentaries, which used the 25th anniversary of David Bowie's *Let's Dance* album and *Serious Moonlight* tour to add significance to the idea. I therefore took a similar approach by using the theme of celebrating a 25th anniversary to give the series extra relevance and help to 'sell' the concept. I chose Xfm as a potential broadcast station as it was a music formatted commercial network who, like Radio Hauraki, viewed themselves as music aficionados. I had worked with the station's Programme Network Controller in the mid-Nineties and felt this industry connection might strengthen the commissioning of the concept. As indicated in the previous chapter, maintaining networks within the industry can be advantageous when attempting to secure broadcast.

I developed a concept that centred around profiling 12 influential albums, which would all reach their 25th anniversary during the year 2011. From researching album releases throughout 1986, I located a number of critically well-regarded records that

matched the demographic profile of the Xfm target audience. I was initially uncertain whether the station would be willing to commit to an ongoing series of documentaries, but felt the idea was worth pursuing. Aspinall (1971) believes that radio documentaries are “generally best programmed as a series” (106). A set timeslot, allocated to documentaries, might feature a variety of individual programmes on differing topics, broadcast at the same time and day on a weekly basis. However, this timeslot may also be filled by a series which represents an ongoing story or topic, constructed as a succession of interlinked, concurrent episodes. In the instance of *XFM 25*, the year 1986 was essentially the main character, giving consistency and an overarching theme to the project.

Hillard (2015) states that the purpose of a programme pitch is to “convince the potential producer or distributor that the series... is going to attract a sufficient audience and make money for the company” (457). With this in mind, I gave careful consideration to how my proposed series of documentaries would fit within a commercial radio environment, without alienating clients or listeners. Hendy (2004) believes that choosing the most appropriate approach for the context and audience of a station is crucial in the initial stages of documentary production; of equal importance to the choice of subject and content. Unlike the documentaries discussed in the previous chapter, I had not previously produced work for Xfm. I therefore researched the station’s target audience and station sound and considered how the documentaries might fit within the station’s existing programming. An important deliberation was whether I would be able to produce a project of this scale as a freelance producer. I was aware that delivering a one-hour documentary, per month, over the course of a year, would place considerable demands on my time as full time member of staff at Birmingham City University. However, I felt that with careful time management and a

degree of assistance from the station, I would be able to complete the project satisfactorily. I therefore made the decision to contact the Programme Network Controller to discuss the commissioning of the *XFM 25* concept. I assess this phase of the production process in the following section.

6.2. *Commissioning processes*

By exploring the commissioning and scheduling considerations which underpin the *XFM 25* series, I build on my initial observations regarding the challenges freelance producers face when seeking authorisation for broadcast. Although *Down Under the Moonlight* was created for the New Zealand radio industry, it was produced as a freelancer based in the UK. *XFM 25* was produced and broadcast entirely within the UK. The ability to create music documentary content for both international and national audiences demonstrates how freelance producers are able to secure commissions and create content for global markets. Alongside commissioning processes, this section explores the balance between the educational value of a commercial radio documentary and its ability to entertain, as well as issues of compliance, such as copyright and ethics. I also consider the importance of understanding the target audience and the need for precise, well-considered scheduling.

According to McLeish (2005), radio programmers commission content they believe will either satisfy or increase the station's audience, although an effective radio programme "may do both" (277). I developed the initial *XFM 25* pitch with both these remits in mind. Given the general deficit of documentary content on commercial radio formats, as discussed in chapter one, it is important to have a realistic, well-developed concept when pitching an idea. I aimed to follow the success of my initial documentary

commissions by designing the *XFM 25* project around the 25th anniversary of a series of landmark albums which matched the station's demographic profile. In November 2010, an initial telephone conversation with Andy Ashton, Xfm's Network Programme Controller, was followed by a more detailed email. This correspondence outlined the broad concept of the *XFM 25* idea and my intended approach to its production. Ashton was receptive towards the pitch, which was ultimately successful in securing a commission for eleven one-hour documentaries and one two-hour 'special edition' to end the series.

The scheduling of the *XFM 25* series entailed one documentary being broadcast on the last Sunday of each month throughout 2011, culminating with an extended compilation episode being aired on Christmas Eve. As indicated, the selection of the featured albums was chosen to reflect Xfm's programming and station ethos. Each episode was broadcast at nine o'clock, with the album of interest played out in full following the broadcast of the documentary. The addition of the album was Ashton's request, as he felt it offered a more "artistic experience" providing the listener will "extra depth"³⁸.

When planning the delivery of documentary content, station management agreed that the final audio would be sent to the station through the use of online file sharing technologies. This represented a major improvement from the couriered CD delivery of my initial Bowie documentaries. As Connelly (2012) points out, being able to deliver the finished audio via the Internet saves costs and allows for extended deadlines. I often delivered the final audio for each of the *XFM 25* series on the day prior to broadcast, or, in more pressing instances, on the morning of broadcast. I also supplied the station with short clips of certain highlights from the documentaries, to

³⁸ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 12 June 2011

assist with the production of short promotional trailers which were scheduled in the week leading up to broadcast. This practice reflects McLeish's (2005) assertion that producers should be involved in marketing of their audio, regardless of whether they work in the field of public service or commercial radio.

As with my initial Bowie documentaries, it was important to consider the station's operational remit and targeted audience when approaching key production decisions. In 2011, Xfm was a member of the Global group of privately owned UK radio stations, which was formed in 2007 by the acquisition of the Chrysalis Group³⁹. At the time of *XFM 25*'s broadcast, Global was the UK's largest commercial radio group in terms of listening hours (Maxwell, 2012). Xfm was broadcast across a national network, which comprised of regionally based FM stations in London, Manchester and Glasgow⁴⁰. The documentaries were also simultaneously broadcast on Xfm's national DAB digital radio network, through live streaming online and as on-demand audio, via Sky satellite services, and through 'Freeview' digital television audio channel.

According to Aspinall (1971) it is essential for a producer to know exactly whom a programme is designed for. Before starting a project, there should be an understanding of "the size of the audience, the listeners' attitudes and general outlook, what they *think* and feel, where they live, and perhaps even how much they earn" (22). I sought to gain this level of insight by researching Xfm sales documentation and questioning Ashton about his perceptions of the audience. Goodman Associates (2015), a UK marketing agency, described the Xfm audience as being:

"A core audience of 15-34 year olds. It has a comparably high-end listenership and is a rock/indie/alternative music station. Its listeners mirror the personality

³⁹ The station was rebranded as *Radio X* on 21 September, 2015

⁴⁰ *Xfm* Glasgow ceased transmission in September 2015, when Global Radio handed the licence back to Ofcom.

of the station and its DJs: young, articulate, opinion forming, independent individuals with high levels of disposable income and social influence”⁴¹.

Although this core audience was the focus of the series, I was mindful of other listeners outside of the main demographic. It could be assumed that many listeners were not necessarily committed music fans with an appreciation of all the bands featured in the series. However, Ashton insisted that my main objective was to appeal to knowledgeable listeners who, he believed, would be receptive to the series.

“I think there’s an intelligent audience and they want to talk about music. They’re ordinary people, who do ordinary things every day, but they just happen to have a preference for quality music, and this series is exploring that”⁴².

There is a need for radio documentary producers to create content that is comprehensible and appealing to broad audiences. *The Guardian* reviewer / columnist Lucy Mangan (2014) believes documentary producers have a responsibility to make a story accessible to both fan and layman audiences.

“It is surely not the job of a documentary to preach solely to the converted but to gather in the mildly curious, some of the neutral and perhaps even the occasionally profoundly ignorant too, via a comprehensible narrative delivered with intelligence and verve” (29).

This need for inclusivity is demonstrated within the *XFM 25* series through the provision of musical ‘hits’ wherever possible, accessible narrative structures, and the presentation of expositional material in a variety of engaging production styles. According to Kern (2008), listeners who find radio content boring may “mentally tune it out, or select a different station, or turn the radio off altogether”, therefore producers need to “keep the attention of people who are not already interested in the topics we are

⁴¹<http://www.goodmanassociates.co.uk/images/resources/UK%20Radio%20Market%202014.pdf>

⁴² Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

reporting on” (5). Background information about a musician may be common knowledge to fans, yet unknown to general audiences. Therefore, when including detailed factual information, there is a need to strike a balance between these two audiences. I questioned Ashton about how he viewed the educational value of the series in relation to Xfm’s target audience.

“It’s probably at the top end of my target audience in terms of, you know, people who were of that age at that time. But, it is about education. Any documentary has got an element of education. I’m learning things about these albums as we’re putting the series together and, you know, there’s so many nuggets already within it of things that you go, “wow I didn’t know that about that album””⁴³.

As Ashton suggests, there is an expectation that music documentaries will be, on some level, educational. This reflects Reynolds (2007) observation that “the rock doc genre nicely combines mild edification (you’re bound to learn something)” (12). However, the delivery of this educational content needs to be carefully weighed alongside the documentary’s ability to entertain, in order to capture and hold the listener’s attention.

As discussed in chapter one, documentaries within commercial radio schedules were formerly used to add credibility to a station’s brand. Since the inception of the medium, the entertaining, emotional capabilities of radio were complemented by its ability to deliver messages of educational worth. McLeish (1999) suggests that radio excels as an educational platform due to its ability to convey both concepts and facts. Yet McLuhan (1957) believed it was misleading to view differences between the educational and entertainment aspects of broadcasting, as the two are so closely linked. Hendy (2012) asserts that in the early Seventies the BBC aimed to increase the cultural and intellectual value of programming on Radio Four by using documentaries, overseen by Archie Gordon, the BBC’s Head of Arts, Science and Documentaries. Part of

⁴³ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

Gordon's drive for more productions of educational worth was *The Long March of Everyman*, (Mason, 1971) a twenty-six-part documentary series first broadcast in 1971. As Hendy notes, this ambitious series was "careful to display its academic credentials" (64). For commercial radio, the provision of original, in-depth documentary content was initially required by law. However, following the impact of deregulation, as indicted in chapter one, this form of content became increasingly scarce. Contemporary commercial stations now tend to only commission music documentaries, which offer insight into the work and lives of playlisted artists.

During the early stages of the *XFM 25* series I met with Ashton and Mike Walsh, the Deputy Programme Director and Head of Music, to discuss important production factors. These included which albums would be featured, the involvement of Xfm production staff, studio access, and compliance requirements. Issues of compliance and ethics are explored in this section as station management wanted assurances that the documentaries would meet Ofcom broadcast standards as a condition of agreeing to commission the project. As the *XFM 25* series represented a total of 13 hours of air-time, I needed to pay far more attention to this aspect of my production work than I had with the previous one-off documentary projects discussed in chapter five. Certain tracks featured in the series were not official artist releases, and could be considered to be 'bootlegged' or 'pirated' material. However, I deemed this content to be essential to certain storylines, and therefore worthy of risking copyright infringement. These decisions were first cleared with station management to ensure they were willing to broadcast this content. Short sections of television programmes, 'ripped' from YouTube, were potentially contentious inclusions as they were not legally cleared first. I therefore made an effort to select only older, less recognisable content, in an effort to reduce the threat of litigation. At the time of writing there have been no complaints or

legal action resulting from the *XFM 25* series. I questioned Ashton about the producer's responsibility towards issues of compliance and standards of taste. He commented:

“The producers role in the show is also to identify things that potentially are libellous from a commercial radio point of view and look at all the aspects, you have to take responsibility for the output, so if you've got someone on there making a claim you've got to corroborate that claim in terms of “is that something that's been contested?””⁴⁴.

This need for corroboration was taken into account throughout the editing process and informed the selection of content. Ashton confirmed that all music and sections of film clips were covered under Xfm's music licensing agreements. Emm (2002) asserts that whether the music used in a production is live or pre-recorded, it needs to be covered by licenses from the Performing Rights Society (PRS) and the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS). I therefore provided the station with full artist and label information, which detailed the copyrighted audio used throughout the *XFM 25* productions. As well as copyright requirements, documentary producers must also reflect on ethical issues. An example of ethical debate in the *XFM 25* series related to sections relating to drug usage. Although this could be viewed as potentially problematic content, the fact that the content was broadcast after nine o'clock in the evening was seen to be a mitigating factor by station management. As the issues and situations being discussed were already widely known and previously mentioned in various articles and books, management approved the inclusion of this 'risqué' content. I was conscious to ensure that the documentaries did not overtly promote drug usage and came from first person accounts wherever possible. In an interview with Ashton, he stressed the importance of any contentious comments coming from contributors and not station representatives: “Moments where people talking in a relaxed conversational

⁴⁴ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

way about things that actually happened, that they were actually part of, is absolutely fine and dependable. We just need to be careful”⁴⁵. I ensured that the discussion of contentious subjects was not seen to be endorsed by Xfm, leaving contributors themselves to recount more provocative stories. Although Xfm can be seen as a conduit for these views, the station was not taking a position or condoning any illegal activity. I asked Ashton to comment on his responsibilities, as Network Programme Controller for the Xfm, in terms of compliance.

“I learnt a long time ago that Xfm is not my radio station, right? I love it. It’s my passion in terms of my work and I’m very lucky to do it, but I don’t own it and at any minute it could be taken away. I’m a Global radio employee who runs Xfm. The reality of the situation is, is that I’m giving you a platform on behalf of the person who’s employing me to run a radio station that I don’t own. My only job is to make sure that I never, ever put that business in a position where it is compromised either financially or creatively or litigiously. It’s about making sure that if we do take risks they’re assessed”⁴⁶.

Another example of an ethical dilemma came from the editing of a contributor who had a pronounced stammer. In the *XFM 25: New Order, Brotherhood* (Coley, 2011) edition, an interview with a member of the band *The Charlatans* featured the involuntary repetition of sounds and syllables associated with a pronounced stammer. The inclusion of this particular content was questionable from a production standpoint. However, I was concerned about the ethics of removing a contributor due to a disability. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) commented on this issue, claiming that removing stuttering can make a feature fit for broadcast, and “alleviates any embarrassment for the talent” (97). Although I contemplated removing all the stammers with judicious digital editing, Shingler and Wieringa ask, “is it ethical to completely polish the characteristics?” of a stammer (97). Ultimately, I decided to edit out most of the stammers, but left in a few

⁴⁵ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

⁴⁶ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 12 June 2011

that weren't too noticeable. I was satisfied that this compromise showed respect to the contributor, while maintaining industry standards and not unduly distracting the listener.

I was fortunate to secure a broadcast for the *XFM 25* series as, according to radio documentary producer Russell Crewe, it has become increasingly difficult “to secure documentary commissions in a market crowded with independent radio production companies”⁴⁷. As discussed in chapter one, the BBC first began outsourcing set quotas of radio documentaries from independent producers in 1986 as a response to the *Peacock Committee's* recommendations (Hendy, 2007). Every year, independent production companies across the UK submit hundreds of documentary concepts for consideration in the BBC's annual commissioning process, with only a few managing to pass the selection process. Although it is challenging to secure commissions for radio documentaries on the BBC, I suggest it is even more difficult when dealing with commercial radio companies in the UK, where documentary content is relatively rare. The success of the *XFM 25* commission was partly due to the low cost incurred by the station, as I only sought a minimal fee to help cover my expenses. The budget for payment mostly came from the air-time that would otherwise have been spent on the cost of an on-air presenter during the time the documentaries were broadcast. This highlights a tension between my practice-based approach as a researcher and the reality of freelance practices. I question whether this project would have been sustainable for a freelancer who did not have the financial support of full-time academic position.

Mark Goodier (2010), a former BBC radio DJ and owner of the independent production company *Wise Buddah*, claims there is a lack of commissioning opportunities for commercial radio, stating: “financially challenged commercial

⁴⁷ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

broadcasters are only able to do so much”⁴⁸. I discussed this lack of commissioning prospects on commercial radio with Ian Fish, a producer who, at the time, worked for Global. Fish had little awareness of documentaries being played on the commercial stations in the UK, although he was an advocate for their presence.

“I think it’s because the perceived wisdom, which is something I’ve always disagreed with, that you have to just play songs - and I disagree. I think if you’re entertaining the audience it doesn’t matter what you’re doing as long as they’re entertained. It can be speech, it can be music, it can be a documentary, it can be the news. People want to be entertained and what you entertain them with is almost irrelevant as long as it’s entertaining. But the perceived commercial radio wisdom is - there’s nothing better you can do than play a song”⁴⁹.

Once the *XFM 25* project was granted final approval and confirmed deadlines and timeslots had been approved by station management, I entered into the technical production phase. Ashton and Walsh acted informally as executive producers, monitoring and assisting my output throughout the process. The following section interrogates my practice throughout this production period and considers how this intermediary work was shaped by the use of digital technologies. I also highlight some of the issues freelance producers encounter when creating content within commercially formatted radio environments.

6.3. Production practices

By evaluating my approach to the technical production of the *XFM 25* radio documentary series, I expand on the initial practice-based research carried out in

⁴⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/tv-radio/six-is-the-magic-number-why-bbc-6-musics-reprieve-is-good-news-for-listeners-ndash-and-for-the-creative-output-of-our-best-radio-producers-2021128.html>

⁴⁹ Interview with Ian Fish conducted April 2013

chapter five of my findings. As indicated, I apply the same production subcategories used in the exploration of the production of my initial Bowie documentaries. This provides a consistent structure for my assessment, allowing me to compare and contrast my evolving practice. Once again, this ‘real world’ perspective comes from my first hand observations as an industry active producer. Connelly (2012) believes that a basic understanding of radio as a business, and the need to generate profits, can be advantageous to radio producers. Understanding the motivations behind commercial radio gives producers the ability to anticipate potential challenges in advance and assist in the delivery of fully-formed content that best represents the station sound and its commercial needs. As I have a background as a commercial producer and creative director within the industry, and had previously produced documentaries for commercial radio, I was able to draw from these experiences to inform my music documentary production for the Xfm network. I begin this section by considering my approach to interviewing contributors for the *XFm 25* project.

6.3.1. Interviewing

Interviews formed the foundation of *XFm 25*. It was crucial to obtain as many relevant interviews as possible, as the views of original contributors constituted the majority of content heard in each documentary. This section explores how interviews were recorded, edited and deployed throughout the project. The series demanded considerably more interview content than any documentary project I had previously worked on. One of the solutions to this challenge was to use single contributors across multiple documentaries. By anticipating upcoming episodes well in advance, I stockpiled responses relating to several albums from one interviewee, to be used at a

later date. To maximise the number of contributors, I sought the involvement of Xfm staff to carry out certain interviews, when I was unavailable due to prior work commitments. In these instances, I would supply written questions to be read on my behalf. The producer would then record the interview and file share the resulting unedited audio to me for final editing. This technique offered considerable cost reductions, as I was able to save on travel expenses and benefit from the professional sound of Xfm's recording studios, which were provided at no charge. A new approach, employed during this intermediary period of production, was to record certain interviews using Skype. This use of online technology offered better audio quality than a phone line and had the added advantage of providing a visual connection between the interviewer and interviewee. This approach encouraged more natural responses than with a phone interview, as the contributor was able to respond to my visual cues, such as encouraging nods, throughout the interview.

Although the interviews used in the *XFM 25* series were mostly studio-based, I also captured on-location recordings in the homes of contributors or in some other convenient setting. This flexibility was sometimes used to help secure an interviewee's participation, as they did not have to inconvenience themselves by travelling to a studio at a set time. Portable digital audio recorders were used to ensure the audio quality of these interviews was not unduly compromised. I would often attempt to eliminate any distracting background noises and positioned the microphone close to the contributor to avoid capturing too much room ambience. However, there were occasions where these ancillary sounds were used to the advantage of the production, as they helped to convey added meaning. Demers (2010) believes sound can transmit a great deal of information about space, place and location. Microphone placement, sound effects, and audio processing can all be layered together to give an interview the illusion of being

recorded in a specific audio environment. The use of on-location interviews helped to provide sonic diversity to the project and therefore helped to hold the audience's attention. This approach, used successfully during my previous Bowie documentary, was developed further during *XFM 25*. Throughout the series I often recorded contributors in relevant environments, which added extra context and atmosphere to the audio. An example of this approach can be heard in the *XFM 25: Metallica, Master of Puppets* (Coley, 2011) documentary, when I recorded a *Metallica* tribute band backstage, before a concert, in Leicester. The ambience of the small dressing-room environment and the nervous energy of a band about to head on-stage were captured within the recording. This content contrasted against the more sterile studio-based recordings and helped the listener to picture the scene more vividly in their imagination.

On-location recordings and sound effects enhances radio's ability to generate mental images in the listener's mind. This trait has led the medium to be referred to as the 'theatre of the mind', a phrase which Dubber (2014) calls "a useful cliché" (101). As Crisell (1986) notes: "the ear is not the most intelligent of our sense organs" (5). Producers will often use a combination of sonic elements to 'trick' the listener into believing an interview took place in a particular location. Kurubacak (2004), believes radio listeners have the ability to control and extract their own meanings from audio, while building their own mental 'pictures'. They argue that listeners interpret sound in many different ways, as each listener has their own unique listening experience. By adding music or location ambience beneath certain interviews, I was able to exploit this attribute. However, I was careful to avoid adding unnecessary clutter to my interviews, which might distract or confuse listeners. In my interview with Benedict Peissel, a television Postproduction Dubbing Mixer, he asserted that clarity is of paramount importance when producing speech content. The balance between spoken word content

and backing music or sound effects needs to be handled with great sensitivity. Peissel believes that spoken word content should be easily discernible amongst the other elements of a soundtrack.

“It doesn’t really matter whether you are working in documentary or drama, the words are the thing that tell the story and everything else is, sort of, the supporting act. So whether it’s effects or music, they are there to support, maybe guide your mood and change how you feel about something, but the story’s told in words. I remember a dubbing mixer trained me, saying ‘if you can’t hear the words you’ve not done your job properly’ and it really doesn’t matter how fancy, you know... how much work you put in, in every other element, if you can’t hear the words you, sort of, rather miss the point”⁵⁰.

The portable nature of radio means that audiences may be hearing a production in a noisy environment, which might not be conducive to attentive listening. I therefore ensured that presenter and interview content used in the *XFM 25* series was as clear and audible as possible, and able to be easily heard in a variety of everyday locations.

During this intermediary stage I recorded far more interview content than with the previous ‘instinctual’ Bowie projects. This field-work provided me with new recording experiences in a variety of environments, which were consequently employed in the following reflexive documentary, discussed in chapter seven. The editing of these interviews was important facet of my production work throughout the *XFM 25* project. The following section explores my approach to the editing and structuring of the series. I consider the need to construct the documentaries around commercial schedules, the use of digital technologies and the sequencing of storylines.

6.3.2. *Editing*

⁵⁰ Interview with Peissel conducted 30 June 2015

After gathering initial interviews for the project, I began the time consuming process of editing and arranging the raw content into coherent narrative structures. This section assessed the technical considerations employed during the editing stage of production and compare my practice to earlier examples of my documentary work. Unlike the individual documentaries discussed in the previous chapter, the construction of the *XFM 25* project needed to be considered within the framework of an ongoing series. The first episode in a documentary series may provide an introduction to the theme, with the final episode providing a sense of conclusion or final overview. The total number of episodes will ultimately be dependent on the story's ability to sustain the narrative while holding the listeners interest, or set by the parameters of the station's original commission agreement. Each episode in the *XFM 25* series was designed to function as a stand-alone documentary, although they could still be considered as ongoing chapters in one overarching story.

Aspinall (1971) believes the duration of a programme is a critical factor in any documentary project. Producers are required to think carefully about whether the subject matter will be able to sustain the length of the documentary and to consider what editing techniques could be employed to hold the listeners interest throughout this period. With the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary for Radio Hauraki, there was a station requirement to produce each section of the documentary in precise 16-minute durations. However, with the *XFM 25* series, I was allowed a much greater degree of flexibility. Advertising schedules were light on Sunday evenings when the documentaries were scheduled and, therefore, advertising breaks could be shortened or lengthened to accommodate each documentary. The lengths of the *XFM 25* series varied between 50 to 55 minutes. This adaptable attitude towards timing made the editorial decision making process of what to leave in and what to take out considerably

easier than the previous Radio Hauraki project. I was able adjust commercial breaks to fit around my content, rather than the other way around. According to Ashton, the deciding factor in setting the precise length of each documentary was the calibre of the content.

“I think the main crux of it is you have to look at the content - and if you’ve got a lot of really strong content that’s where you’ve got the opportunity to just tell the story with the people and if you tell that story in 40 minutes then it’s 40 minutes long. If you tell it in 60 minutes, it’s 60 minutes long. But, I don’t think we need to think in terms of we have to fill it to 60 minutes including ads. That’s just a boring way to look at it and I think the content would suffer”⁵¹.

One of the major improvements I noted in my production work during this intermediary period came from a change in editing and mixing software. The Sony *Vaio* laptop computer I had used in my earlier productions was reaching the end of its usefulness in the early stages of producing the *XFM 25* series. The *Adobe Audition 3.0* program had become increasingly slower and less able to deal with the large files required to produce multiple documentaries simultaneously. Although I regularly backed up my content, I would often experience computer ‘crashes’ that inevitably resulted in a loss of production time. In May 2011, it was necessary to switch over to editing the project on an *Apple iMac* desktop, running *Mac OSX* software, with a 2.7 GHz Intel Core processor and eight GB’s of memory. I also began to use version CS5.5 of the *Adobe Audition*, multi-track digital audio editor. This advanced computing power and software was far superior to equipment used for my earlier work, and considerably enhanced my ability to edit and process mixdowns of the *XFM 25* series. Yet, it must be acknowledged that this computer was provided by my University; an advantage which does not follow ‘real world’ freelance practice, and must therefore be viewed as a weakness of the study.

⁵¹ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

When reflecting on my earlier approaches to editing the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, I recognised that many contributors often spoke for long periods, relatively uninterrupted. As a result, I felt the documentary suffered from a slow pace, which I sought to address in the *XFM 25* series. Aspinall (1971) refers to specific ‘danger points’ in documentaries, when a listener’s interest might wander unless “something new or exciting happens in the programme to sustain the interest” (106). In a standard half-hour documentary, the supposed danger points occur at: “3, 5, 8, 16, 21 and 27 minutes”, although Aspinall does not provide any rationale for these potential lapses in audience attention (106). At these times, Aspinall asserts it is advisable to use a new voice, music or an attention grabbing idea to regain or hold the listener’s interest. Ashton, in his role as an Executive Producer for the series, regularly offered his advice on each episode. One of his comments related to the overall speed of edits within the series.

“The strength is in cutting quickly, not quickly in terms of not giving them (contributors) time to talk, but having, you know, more of a mixture of people. So it’s, sort of, more fast moving - because you’ve got so much good content and I think you can be really selective with it. And, don’t lean on the long clips of songs as much, like, put the hooks in, but don’t stretch them out so much”⁵².

This request to increase the editing pace of contributors and music reflects the commercial industry’s need to keep programming content moving swiftly forward, in order to hold the audience’s attention. Ashton refers to the need for a ‘mixture’ of contributors. A common editing technique, used to provide this variety, is to split an interview into separate sections. These short contributor clips are placed against contrasting opinions and vocal styles, thereby creating a more interesting listening experience (Crisell, 1986). This approach is utilised by Crewe when constructing

⁵² Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

documentary narrative structures: “I very often get lots of contributors to tell the same story that you cut them altogether and because you’re changing voices you keep momentum, but they’re all telling the same story and the same experience”⁵³. Following Ashton’s advice, I began to mix together more contributors and thereby increased the pace of editing throughout the remaining *XFM 25* documentaries. This approach resulted in a more diverse sound and faster flow to my production work. I suggest a slower pace of editing is generally more representative of a public service style of documentary production. However, it should be noted that documentaries dealing with more emotional content require a greater degree of sensitivity towards editing and pace. In this instance, contributors should ideally be left to run for longer durations, so as to not disturb the natural flow and intent of an interview.

With the *XFM 25* series, designed for commercial audiences unused to hearing long-form spoken word content, there was a need for the documentaries to capture the audiences’ attention, or risk becoming background noise. As Rubery (2011) observes, radio is often used as a background accompaniment, while the listener carries out other activities. For this reason, Crisell (1994) believes it is “typical listening behaviour to disregard it almost entirely” (220). Tightly formatted radio stations, which provide a stream of “essentially unvarying output”, encourage audiences to consider the radio as a secondary medium (204). By unduly surprising audience expectations, such as the inclusion of documentary content within scheduling usually reserved for music programming, there is a risk of losing listeners. Starkey (2004) contends that audiences may react adversely to content which is too challenging and unfamiliar and advises producers that being ‘avant-garde’ is not a suitable excuse to rationalise inappropriate content. Conversely, Barnard (1989) criticises the music documentaries produced by

⁵³ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

BBC Radio 1 in the Eighties for following “the standard ‘progressive’ interpretation of pop history” and accuses producers of creating ill-defined narratives, which tend to plot a musician’s career in terms of imprecise artistic development, “beginning with his or her influences and ending with the influence he or she has had on others” (160). Therefore, the structuring of a radio documentary needs to balance the need for a clear, understandable narrative against the producer’s desire to surprise and challenge an audience.

There is a risk that by editing a documentary in a style that is too simplistic and straightforward, the final item may become too mundane and unappealing. Listeners may resent a production that is perceived as being too didactic or laden with facts. According to former documentary producer Dick Ross, “If you hammer people too hard they simply don’t listen”⁵⁴. There is a need to surprise and illuminate audiences through engaging storytelling. Radio critic Sarah Vine (2012) believes that “many arts programmes on the radio, end up sounding dreary and self-obsessed, critic-centric and over-analytical” (15). To avoid this, as indicated in chapter three, the use of storytelling within the structuring and editing of a documentary can be used to provide an entertaining and compelling narrative. Throughout the *XFM 25* series, as with the earlier Bowie documentaries, I encouraged contributors to tell anecdotes and stories within their responses. This was influenced by Ross’s belief that the use of story can help to build a connection with a wide audience. As he suggests, “everybody is seduced by a story well told”⁵⁵.

A key technical objective when editing interviews and music is to make any splicing points seemingly invisible to the listener, thereby creating a smooth,

⁵⁴ Interview with Dick Ross conducted 2 September 2008

⁵⁵ Interview with Dick Ross conducted 2 September 2008

uninterrupted flow of audio. Good editing takes into account the overall structure of an interview, voice intonation, background noise and sense to leave the final programmes “without any evidence of the process” (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998: 98). According to Willett (2013) creating clean edits is not easy: “If you don’t choose the right edit point you will get a kind of jerky, unnatural-sounding edit” (213). Although practitioners such as Neer (2001) point to the high fidelity of a well-tuned FM radio receiver, earlier analogue documentary production could only be heard on comparatively antiquated radio sets. In more recent times, audiences are able to listen via increasingly sophisticated audio systems which easily reveal any technical issues apparent in a production. However, the emergence of powerful desktop workstations and advanced editing software have considerably furthered the sonic possibilities of digital editing and processing. Radio documentary producers now have a range of tools with which to polish and enhance audio content, such as equalisation, normalisation and noise-reduction. Audio that was once substandard can be ‘cleaned’ and brightened to reach broadcast benchmarks and the expectations of modern-day radio listeners. Edit points are able to be meticulously adjusted and refined to render them almost imperceptible to the ear. By using the latest version of *Adobe Audition* on a powerful new Apple *Mac* desktop computer system, the editing and processing of audio of most of the *XFM 25* series was more advanced than my previous productions.

Music played an important role in the series as it was a major production element, as well as being the focus of each documentary’s storyline. I now consider the use of music within the *XFM 25* project. I start by assessing the editing of music, before discussing its ability to add emotion and context within documentary productions.

6.3.3. *Music*

This section discusses how music tracks were incorporated within this intermediary phase of my documentary production work and explores how its usage was shaped by the need to fit within a commercial radio environment. Hendy (2000) considers the use of music to be a key factor in attracting radio audiences, referring to music programming as the foremost tool for “delivering the right audience to the right advertisers” (168). In 2011, Xfm was a tightly formatted music station, and therefore the documentaries discussed in this chapter were expected to focus on, and predominantly feature, music-based content, in order to blend into the prevailing station sound. According to Emm (2002), one of the more satisfying production jobs is the selection of music to “liven up an otherwise lackluster sequence and enhance its atmosphere” (93). However, she believes this can be a frustrating task. I agree that music selection is not an easy undertaking, as it requires careful consideration to find appropriate tracks which suit both the needs of the documentary and the station itself. By choosing music which fitted within the context of existing programming, the series did not alienate listeners or compromise the station’s need to attract advertisers. As the *XFM 25* documentaries filled an hour long slot, rather than the two hours required for the *Down Under the Moonlight* production, I was required to truncate music clips into shorter, more dramatic sections. This helped to give an increased sense of energy and a faster rhythmical flow to the overall sound to the series. I selected music from, and related to, the albums featured in each documentary. Live recordings, demos, and remixes were also used to add variety to each production. Tracks were often profiled in the order they appeared on each album, although this was not always the case.

The use of backing music which sits underneath presenter links, or music ‘beds’, is a common production component in music documentaries. These beds are ideally

instrumentals, to avoid distracting the listener from the spoken word content. As with the spoken links in a live radio show, a presenter will often speak over the ‘intro’ or ‘outro’ of a song, before the lyrics first come in, or after they finish. This technique helps to maintain the flow or energy of the programme. Wall (1999) draws attention to the patterns formed by DJ’s talking over instrumental music, claiming that music will often shape the rhythm and content of a link. Wall suggests it is the music itself, and the DJ’s effort to control it, that informs the length and pace of this spoken word content, and not the other way around. The music itself holds the dominant position in regards to live radio presentation; dictating the form of the announcer’s delivery. However, with pre-recorded documentary content, the producer is able to manipulate music tracks to create bespoke backing beds which can accommodate any length of presenter link or interview. By looping or editing certain sections of a song, as discussed in the previous chapter, producers have considerable flexibility in adjusting the duration and positioning of backing beds.

Sonneschein (2011) observes that music within a production “typically lies low until the last word, then rises at a moment of decisive rhythmic or emotional change in the scene” (196). This technique reflects the practice of US producers working on the *American Top 40* programme, who would carefully edit music to ensure that the presenter’s last word “came at the right beat or the start of a songs vocal” (Durkee, 1999: 241). These sudden contrasts between spoken word content and music, if employed effectively, can generate increased energy within a documentary and drive the narrative forward. When using music beds underneath interview content, I found it necessary to use sections without lyrics, or to otherwise reduce the volume of the music to a level that ensured the lyrics did not compete with the spoken content. In my

experience, when a singer's voice vies with that of an interviewee or presenter, it can be difficult to distinguish between these two elements.

In the opening of this section, which discussed my approach to interviewing, I referred to radio's ability to create pictures in the listener's mind. This can be achieved by combining spoken word content with music and sound effect to create audio pictures. Bolls (2006) asserts that radio producers know the "fundamental strength of their medium is imagery - content that vividly paints a picture in the imagination of listeners" (201). In the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, for example, I used the sound effects of a crowd and processed a voice to sound like a PA system, to produce artificial 'live' scenes from a concert. This type of approach was often employed to recreate certain moments within the documentary, thereby adding atmosphere and a sense of place. I developed this approach throughout the *XFM 25* series, using music, location ambience, and archival recordings alongside accompanying commentary to reconstruct events in the listener's mind. By layering these elements together, producers can dramatically represent or recreate a historical moment in time. I questioned the documentary film producer Matt Harlock about his approach to constructing audio narratives and the use of multiple layers of audio to reinforce a story and heighten listener interest.

"You're taking an audio bed which is maybe made up of archive clips which has material in it - but quite often just the voice of the person you have recorded and you're laying down images and your laying down material that you've found from elsewhere on top of that to counteract their point, to deepen the level of understanding or to provide the subtext or you're enforcing and reengaging the audience by doubling that message and not only showing, but also telling"⁵⁶.

Although Harlock's comment relates to film documentary production, I argue that the principle of using layers of music and sound to build extra meaning within a

⁵⁶ Interview with Matt Harlock conducted 23 November 2011

documentary are equally valid for radio documentaries. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) believe music can be employed to “both underline dialogue or provide a counterpoint to it, suggesting feelings that words may disguise” (64). An example of this layering approach can be found on episode five in the series, *XFM 25: R.E.M., Lifes Rich Pageant* (Coley, 2011). I was able to source an amateur recording of an R.E.M. concert, held in Manchester in 1983, which was uploaded to YouTube. At one point, the power can be heard to fail and Michael Stipe, the lead singer, then sings a capella, without amplification. An original interview with an audience member recounting the event was overlaid on top of this archival clip. The interview was synchronised to coincide with audio of the moment the power shortage occurred in the archival clip. This section was a personal highlight of the episode, as the archival material helped listeners to picture the scene, while adding context and actuality to the spoken word content. Although archival audio or bootlegged music is often poor quality, the use of processing software can be employed to enhance the sound of these clips. As with the *Bowie’s Waiata* clip, discussed in chapter five, inferior audio can be purposely employed to give an authentic sense of history within a documentary. Having assessed the use of music within the intermediary series, I now investigate the role of the presenter within this documentary project. I draw comparisons with this aspect of my earlier production work and consider weaknesses apparent with the presentation of the *XFM 25* series.

6.3.4 *Presentation*

This subsection considers the presentation work featured in the *XFM 25* series, and the use of digital technologies throughout this phase of the production process. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) believe that radio presenters create a bond that connects an

audience to a radio station. I claim that the choice of a documentary's presenter needs careful consideration, as they create a similar 'bond' between a production and its target audience. Before embarking on the *XFM 25* series, I reflected on the presentation issues encountered with the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary for Radio Hauraki, as discussed in chapter five. I was conscious of trying not to repeat the same problems that emerged from having an on-air announcer autonomously recording their own presenter links. However, the timeframe required to produce one documentary every month meant the script writing process was invariably completed under pressure, towards the end of each monthly production phase. I therefore concluded that it was preferable to use a reliable voice, with studio access and the ability to self-produce, as the safest way to meet production deadlines. Ashton provided the services of Ian Camfield, a presenter who was a regular DJ on Xfm's rock music show. As with the previous Bowie documentary project, this represented a considerable cost saving, as I did not have to pay for Camfield's involvement.

Aspinall (1971) believes the personality of a presenter can "help to build up a loyal following" (106). Although Camfield was not necessarily a 'celebrity' as such, he was nevertheless a well-known, somewhat larger-than-life presence on the station. I had considered the use of a known 'name' in the presenter role, to gain greater listener interest. However, given there were twelve episodes to produce, I felt the most convenient, economical path was to use Camfield. A radio station's presentation team is required to reflect the "personality, philosophy and image of the station" to its audience (Beaman, 2006: 24). Having built a reputation as a rock DJ on Xfm, I considered Camfield to be a suitable choice for the presenter role. His on-air personality was well suited to compliment many of albums covered in the *XFM 25* series. I discussed the provision of station voices for music documentaries with Crewe, who

commented on BBC Radio 1 and Radio 1Xtra's use of station DJ's as documentary presenters. Crewe memorably describes these types of presenters as being "effectively a gob on a stick", yet a cost effective solution to the question of presenter selection.

"If you make a documentary for Radio 1 and Radio 1Xtra, part of the deal is they will, at a small discount on the guide price, let you use one of their presenters. Because they have a deal when you sign up to be a presenter at Radio 1 and 1Xtra, part of the deal is agreeing to voice documentaries if asked"⁵⁷.

The use of station presenters for documentaries can, therefore, be seen as a relatively common practice within the UK radio industry. This gave me a sense of confidence in the choice of Camfield to present the series. Trewin (2003) believes that the selection of a presenter should be dictated by the outlet the production is designed for, and recommends that in a commercial music environment, "where ads abound", there is a need for a presenter to project their delivery more forcefully "to match your surroundings" (34). Camfield, like Brown who presented the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary, was an experienced radio announcer, competent at reading scripts and able to provide high amounts of energy in his delivery. In both the Radio Hauraki and Xfm projects the presenters were not anonymous voices, and regularly introduced themselves by name throughout the documentaries.

Camfield was unpaid for his presentation duties. Although I was fortunate to secure his assistance, I suggest the voluntary nature of Camfield's involvement, under the instruction of his Network Programme Controller, meant that sometimes the content he provided did not follow my production notes, or was relatively poor audio quality. An example of this can be found in the *XFM 25: P.I.L., Album* (Coley, 2011) documentary. In an interview with lead singer John Lydon (a.k.a. Johnny Rotten), Camfield, possibly awestruck from meeting a personal hero, veered away from the

⁵⁷ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

questions I had prepared. This led to considerable problems when structuring the final documentary. Although I was unable to produce the majority of these presenter recording sessions in person, I was able to be in studio for the recording of Camfield's links for the first episode, broadcast on January 30th 2011. Being present for this session helped to establish a uniform sound to the series, as I was able to offer direction and explain how the links would eventually be used in the final production. For the remaining episodes, Camfield self-produced the scripts I emailed to him. Then Xfm's production staff would use online file sharing technologies to transfer the raw audio to me for editing. The ability to share audio in this manner represented an important step forward from the previous *Down Under The Moonlight* documentary, which relied on the physical distribution of audio content via courier delivered CD's.

Each audio file of Camfield's presentation work was ultimately used in the final productions, however the fidelity of these recordings was varied. As Camfield was a not a trained sound producer, some of his audio was of reasonably poor quality and did not match my expectations. In some instances, there appeared to be a discernable level of background ambience or electrical 'hum'. Hausman et al. (2004) draw attention to the problem of signal-t-noise ratio, which was obvious in some of Camfield's productions, stating "noise is always present in electrical components, when there is not enough signal volume the noise become much more apparent" (25). Although Camfield's self-produced audio was of sufficient broadcast standard, I often felt there was room for improvement. In order to alleviate certain problems with the MP3 files I received from Xfm, and to generally boost the volume levels, I would often use compression and equalisation software. I was not satisfied with the results offered by my earlier *Adobe Audition* compression 'plugins'. However, the new CS5.5 *Adobe Audition* editor, coupled with improved computer processing power, gave far better

results and I regularly employed compression processing to improve the sound of interviews, archival clips and presenter links. Kaempfer and Swanson (2004) describe a compressor as being a processing device that gives consistency to an audio signal, reducing any fluctuations in the levels, “making sure that it’s never too high or too low” (208). Trewin (2003) believes the use of compression can be used to ‘squeeze’ the voice, making it sound “‘tighter’ and punchier” (34). The use of these advanced processing methods greatly enhanced the overall sound and quality of the remaining *XFM 25* documentaries, and represents a major improvement on the earlier *Down Under the Moonlight* project. This illustrates how continuing advances in technology have helped improve the performance of freelance documentary producers.

Another example of technology assisting radio documentary production can be found in the use of the Internet as a production resource. Having discussed the specific production practices involved in the creation of the *XFM 25* series, the following section assesses the utilisation of online production tools in the construction and administration of the *XFM 25* series. My interrogation draws parallels with the previous Bowie project, discussed in chapter five, and shows how interactions between the producer and their audience have been enhanced through online platforms.

6.4. Online technologies

This section reflects on how the Internet has shaped my approach to the production of the *XFM 25* documentaries. Firstly, I consider the online distribution of the series and the variety of ways listeners were able to engage with my final documentary content. McEwan (2010) believes it is important to distinguish between “radio on the Internet” and “Internet Radio.” (6). Although the boundaries between these two forms of radio

have become increasingly blurred, I define the *XFM 25* series within the first category, as each episode was created first and foremost for broadcast across Xfm's national radio network. Although traditional radio broadcasts can be streamed via the Internet, or made available as on-demand content, the *XFM 25* project was originally produced for terrestrial FM broadcast. Therefore, the series should be considered as being distinct from content solely designed to be heard over the Internet. However, the series was also made available through a multitude of other audio platforms. Alongside live broadcasts via FM, DAB, Freeview and satellite services, each of the documentaries was streamed live through the Xfm website and then made available as on-demand audio via the station's website, and on the Mixcloud⁵⁸ audio service. This abundance of platforms would seem to reflect Fleming's (2010) view that "radio is endlessly adaptable" (23), while Ford (2013) believes that the emergence of new forms of listening provides proof that "in some form or another, radio is here to stay" (12).

Producers are now required to create commercially viable content for a range of audio platforms and devices, which have opened up new listening opportunities to increasingly wide audiences (Ingram and Barber, 2005). According to Connelly (2012), the convergence of new production techniques and radio technologies have led to radio stations becoming "entertainment and advertising platforms" which offer "products and services on-air, online, on your phone, and on your tablet" (3). Both local and international audiences were able to use computer connections or mobile phones and table devices to hear the *XFM 25* series as either a live stream, or as on-demand / listen-again audio. In the early Seventies, Aspinall (1971) referred to the passing nature of radio, suggesting that listeners only had a limited opportunity to understand the message that was being delivered. However, in today's modern radio environment,

⁵⁸ <https://www.mixcloud.com>

listeners using on-demand audio via the Internet have the chance to pause, rewind or fast forward on-demand programme content, sometimes dating back weeks, months or even years.

Priestman (2002) describes online websites as being a “front door” for radio stations (45). Listeners are able to ‘enter’ a station, through the use of an online portal, and subsequently access a wide range of both live and on-demand audio content (45). Websites are where, according to McEwan (2010), the remediation of radio occurs, as audio content is usually found alongside a range of visual media and text. In the instance of the *XFM 25* series, embedded online audio was accompanied by accompanying written content and images relating to the album being discussed. The front page of the Xfm website was used to promote each episode prior to broadcast and then to encourage listeners to hear the on-demand versions following the initial broadcast (appendix D).

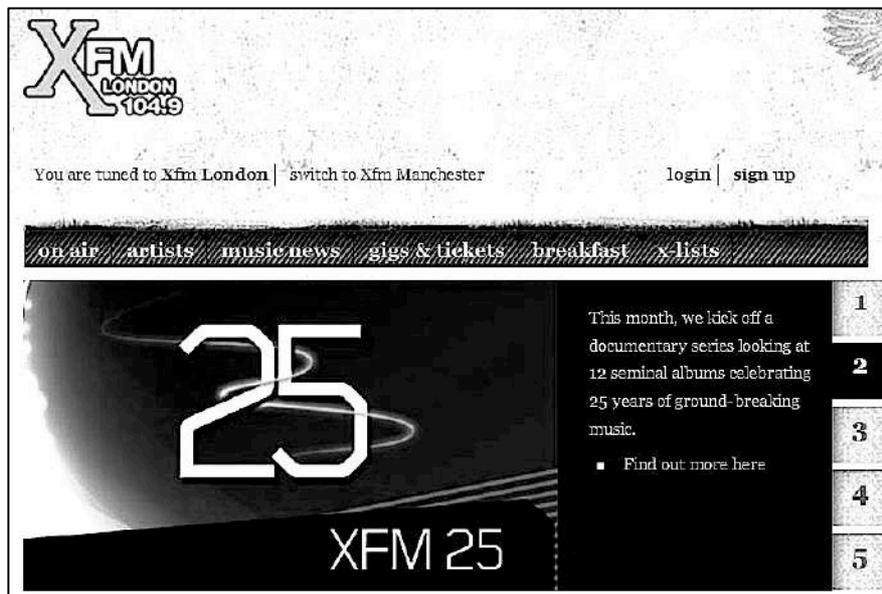


Fig 6.1: Online Xfm promotion for the *XFM 25* series⁵⁹

⁵⁹ <http://www.Xfm.com>

Xfm used social media in the lead up to each episode to promote the series and created forums for listeners to “join the discussion online”⁶⁰ about each album after the broadcast of each documentary (appendix D). Numerous fan based music websites alerted their members about upcoming editions, specifically relating to certain bands or artists of interest. The official *R.E.M.* website, *R.E.M. H.Q.*⁶¹, who assisted in securing the band’s bass player Mike Mills as a contributor, informed their international fan-base about the *XFM 25: R.E.M. Lifes Rich Pageant* episode as both a live stream and as on-demand content. I suggest this activity can be viewed as an official endorsement of the documentary. The *R.E.M.* website featured promotional material for the 25th ‘Deluxe Edition’ of the album, alongside their profile of the documentary. In this respect, the episode was used as a form of advertising to help promote the rerelease of the album.

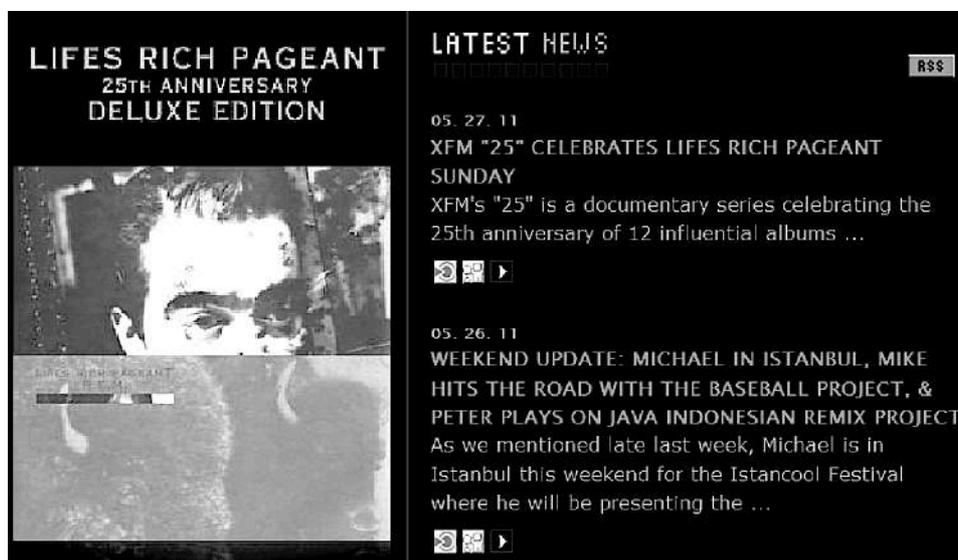


Fig 6.2: Web article promoting the *XFM 25: R.E.M., Lifes Rich Pageant* episode⁶²

⁶⁰<http://www.newsonnews.net/radio/7206-xfm-launches-25-series-for-influential-albums.html>

⁶¹ <http://www.remhq.com>

⁶² <http://www.remhq.com/news/xfm-25-celebrates-lifes-rich-pageant-sunday-3>

The interactivity provided by social media and online platforms offers contemporary radio producers the ability to gain insight into how their work has been received, and can thereby help to improve future productions. These online opportunities to engage with audiences should not be taken for granted, as radio has traditionally lacked the ability to gain instant, in-depth listener feedback. Radio's inability to interact and receive immediate feedback from audiences is seen to be a weakness of the medium. Although Shingler and Wieringa (1998) believe that radio is a one-way system communication, Ingram and Barber (2005) argue that all communications are, in fact, two-way, in the way they "create a reaction on the part of the receiver even when he/she has not physically responded" (160). Ingram and Barber (2005) assert that the medium has often sought participation from listeners in the form of competitions, promotions, phone-ins, dedications and helplines, claiming: "Rarely an hour goes by without the presenter inviting the listener to phone / text / e-mail their thoughts on a particular topic of conversation, or to enter a competition" (161). Yet these forms of interactions are of limited worth, as most are designed to provide the opportunity for on-air entertainment, rather than being a meaningful form of communication with an audience. Although Priestman (2002) believes that some radio listeners may be compelled to complain "or, even more rarely, praise" something they have heard, most solicited audience interactions are simply used for programming 'fodder' or as promotional, marketing devices in conjunction with advertisers and sponsors (8).

During the BBC's first fourteen years of existence it mostly relied on unsolicited correspondence from listeners to discover what audiences thought of the programmes. According to Silvey (1974) this feedback provided an uncommon reflection of listener

attitudes, as the correspondents were usually “literate people and, moreover, people with atypically strong feelings” (29-31). The ‘strong feelings’ that Silvey (1974) refers to can now be expressed instantly through the use of social media and official message boards. In a report produced to accompany a knowledge transfer project between the BBC and Birmingham City University, Klein (2008) comments on the way Radio 2 listeners use the Radio 2 message boards as a platform where requests can be made and members can engage with other posters. However, Klein notes that members mostly corresponded with each other, rather than engaging with the company, when using these types of message forums.

McEwan (2010) questions whether the convergence of traditional radio and digital technologies represents a shift in producer-audience relationship, and therefore qualifies as a “new” media experience, which is closer to the “normative ideals of a public sphere” (6). However, Wall and Dubber (2008) are more forthright in their assertion that online technologies provide a much more significant form of interaction with listeners; representing an improvement on the letters and phone calls that radio stations received in the days before the Internet. They believe the interactive nature of online platforms have allowed for more meaningful communication “between professional content providers and their recipients” (65). I agree that chat rooms and message boards, alongside social media such as Facebook and Twitter, have given radio producers a useful way to engage with audiences. I often utilised these online tools to seek content and audience opinion in the pre-production phase of the *XFM 25* project. An example of this practice occurred during the research stage of the *XFM 25: Prince, Parade* (Coley, 2011) edition. I used an existing member of the *Prince.org*⁶³ website to ask members if they had any questions that they wanted the documentary to answer.

⁶³ <http://Prince.org>

Some of these questions were subsequently put to certain interviewees, such as Prince keyboardist Matt Fink. This was a useful technique to source research data and helped to gain ‘buy-in’ from fans, ensuring they were more receptive to the final production.

Following each broadcast, I often used online platforms to seek feedback relating to the series and would occasionally respond to certain comments to clarify some of my production decisions. Listener feedback before and after the broadcasts helped to gain an understanding of audiences’ expectations prior to broadcast, as well as assessing how they responded afterwards. As indicated, the productions described in this chapter were distributed online through on-demand audio platforms, such as Mixcloud and as listen-again content hosted by the Xfm website. After listeners had heard a documentary they were able to post comments and contribute to discussion threads on fan websites. Although I actively sought both positive and negative feedback for the project, the comments I received were uniformly encouraging. *Digital Spy*⁶⁴, the UK entertainment and media news website, featured feedback from a member with the user name ‘Orgryn’. This post discussed the *XFM 25: Talk Talk, The Colour of Spring* (Coley, 2011) documentary and the subsequent broadcast of the entire album on Xfm. ‘Orgryn’ was seemingly surprised that a commercial station would be playing content of this nature.

“Not only was there an hour documentary on commercial radio tonight celebrating an influential and underrated band, but they then played the whole album in full. This isn't BBC 6 Music. This is a commercial FM station playing a full album from 1986. I'm very impressed and very, very happy. I hope they're rewarded for it”⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ <http://www.digitalspy.com>

⁶⁵ <http://forums.digitalspy.co.uk/showthread.php?p=54123882>

Members of the Prince online fan community *Prince.org* were similarly positive in their response to the *XFM 25: Prince, Parade* edition, (appendices, K)⁶⁶. I also logged into the chat room of the *NewOrder.com*⁶⁷ fan website following the broadcast of the *XFM 25: New Order, Brotherhood* (Coley, 2011) documentary to observe the comments posted by the members (appendices, K).

As well as offering a convenient way for producers to interact with audiences, the Internet has provided several other practical production tools. YouTube proved valuable in the search for potential contributors. During the production of the *XFM 25: Beastie Boys, Licence to Ill* (Coley, 2011) documentary, I used the platform to locate and contact a *Beastie Boys* fan in the US who had been present at a historically important concert. I subsequently recorded an interview over the telephone with this contributor for inclusion in the final production. When searching for a guitarist to discuss *R.E.M.* band member Peter Buck, I located a YouTube video made by Mark Bettis, an amateur guitarist and *R.E.M.* fan. I was able to assess his suitability as an interviewee, identify his proximity to me, then contact him directly via his YouTube account to enquire about his availability. Bettis ultimately proved to be a valuable contributor to the *XFM 25: R.E.M. Lifes Rich Pageant* episode.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the process of ripping audio from online platforms, such as YouTube, has provided producers with a rich repository of rare archival material to draw from. I would often source material in this manner for inclusion within the *XFM 25* series. Skype, telecommunications application software, was frequently used to record interviews when the contributor was either overseas or otherwise unavailable for a face-to-face interview. Specific music tracks were

⁶⁶ <http://Prince.org>

⁶⁷ <http://NewOrder.com>

occasionally purchased online through websites such as iTunes and Amazon Music, or found on file-sharing websites. Finally, the use of the cloud file sharing website Dropbox⁶⁸ enabled me to send high quality audio files of my completed documentary content to Xfm for loading and subsequent broadcast on the station's playout system. This allowed me to extend production deadlines, and provided the maximum amount of time with which to complete the final mixdowns of each episode in the series. All of these online technologies considerably enhanced my ability to produce *XFM 25*. Without them, it is questionable whether I would have been able to satisfactorily complete this documentary project within the given timeframes for each episode. The following section considers certain drawbacks and disadvantages in my approach to the production of this project.

6.5. Weaknesses and Limitations

By examining my practice across the production of the twelve *XFM 25* episodes, I was able to recognise repeated problems that arose and potentially identify solutions to help improve my future performance. I now reflect on these issues, along with other perceived inadequacies in my performance. Although this iterative process was useful in terms of my practice-based research, the constant need to carry out research, secure contributors, complete interviews, source archival material, script narration and complete a final mixdown, each month for a year, was challenging. Maintaining a sense of consistency between each episode became problematic, as finding interviews for certain albums in the series was more difficult than others. Although I attempted to locate primary contributions, such as band members, managers, producers and suchlike,

⁶⁸ <https://www.dropbox.com/h>

I often resorted to secondary sources as well. This ensured I was able to meet the required durations and deadlines, but ultimately meant some episodes in the series were weaker than others. Conversely, some productions featured a surfeit of high quality content. In these instances, the difficulty was in deciding what audio to leave in and what to leave out. With the *XFM 25: Prince, Parade* edition, I had a particularly good range of material to draw from and therefore struggled with the editing process. However, as Shingler, and Wieringa (1998) point out, the average listener is unaware of the editing process and “has no idea how much of a feature / story ends up ‘on the cutting room floor’” (105). Rather than waste good content, I decided to create *Prince "Parade" Documentary Deleted Scenes* (Coley, 2011). This half-hour feature, available on the Internet via Mixcloud, featured audio which was not included within the 55 minute confines of the FM broadcast version. Having another outlet for material made the editing process somewhat easier, as I could discard content with the knowledge that it could still potentially be used at a later date.

As indicated in section two, I experienced some of the same presentation problems encountered with the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary. The cost saving necessities of being a freelance producer, with a limited production budget, meant I was compelled to use a presenter from Xfm’s on-air staff. Although this decision provided certain advantages, the results were sometimes questionable. I resolved to avoid this situation with my final documentary artefact by selecting, then personally producing, an externally sourced presenter. This decision is discussed further in the following chapter.

Although I experimented with the use of audio-slideshows to accompany the *Down Under the Moonlight* and *Bowie’s Waiata* documentaries, I chose not to create any for *XFM 25*. Although I considered the possibility, I felt the tight deadlines and

constant pressures of having to create twelve radio documentaries did not afford me the time required to complete this additional content. In hindsight, this omission may have been a missed opportunity. However, I ultimately decided that this type of ancillary material was not necessary. I wanted the focus of the online versions to remain on the twelve documentaries themselves, and not be diluted by the potential distraction of separate audio-slideshows.

On reflection, I was personally satisfied with the *XFM 25* documentary series and believe the project maintained acceptable broadcast standards. However, by choosing the framework of the 25th anniversary of each album in the series, there was a risk that the work would suffer from a sonic sameness. Structurally, the production of each documentary was intentionally similar, in an attempt to give an overall consistency to the sound of the project. However, it could be argued that this ‘cookie-cutter’ approach resulted in a certain predictability to the narrative. Nevertheless, I believe that this uniformity helped to give a regular, episodic feel to the series.

Despite the weaknesses I have identified, Ashton and Walsh, from Xfm’s management team, expressed their overall satisfaction with the series and thanked me for my efforts at the conclusion of the project. Buoyed by their positive comments, and the encouraging feedback received from online listeners, I entered an hour long compilation of the *XFM 25* series in the *Best Music Special* category of the 2012 New York Festivals International Radio Programs Awards (appendices A, 2). This competition is judged each year by a ‘Grand Jury’ of industry representatives that consists of “award winning Directors, Producers, Writers, Reporters, Creative Directors, Program Directors, and various other radio industry experts from across the globe”⁶⁹. The *XFM 25* series was subsequently awarded ‘Gold Radio Winner’ status. I

⁶⁹ <http://www.newyorkfestivals.com/radio/main.php?p=2,7,9>

suggest this industry recognition is an indication of the overall success of the series. Furthermore, Xfm replayed a revised version of the *XFM 25: Beastie Boys, Licensed To Ill* documentary, following the death of band member Adam Yauch, while sections from the *XFM 25: Prince, Parade* edition were rebroadcast after Prince's death in April 2016. This repurposing of content, following their initial broadcast, provides further evidence that the project fulfilled its purpose and was of value to Xfm.

I now draw my final conclusions to this intermediary stage of my findings, which marks the midway point in my practice-based investigations. I reflect on the observations captured throughout the creation of the *XFM 25* series and consider how these insights build on the themes discussed in the previous chapter.

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter explored the on-going development of my practice and the newfound knowledge gained during the production period between the first and second David Bowie documentaries. Once again, my position as an industry-active practitioner has been necessary to capture contemporary approaches and issues related to music documentary production for commercial radio. I questioned the overall strengths and weaknesses of *XFM 25* and revealed how this project built on the earlier observations captured throughout the *Down Under the Moonlight* project.

The first two sections of this chapter provided a general overview of the project, and revealed my approach to the commissioning of the series. My observations supported the findings gained from the previous chapter by reasserting the importance of maintaining strong industry networks to help secure broadcast approval. The successful commissioning of the series reinforces my claim that the commercial radio

industry believes music documentaries can help build audiences and convey a station's sense of connoisseurship. I recommended that producers should have a detailed knowledge of a station's target audience, in order to create effective documentaries. The provision of original documentary content, focused on playlisted artists, can build audience loyalty and enhance a station's brand. However, I acknowledge that commissioning opportunities for this type of programming is generally limited in the UK, due to financial constraints (Emm, 2002). As Crewe⁷⁰ suggests, there is considerable competition amongst independent radio production companies vying for the same commissioning opportunities. This pressure adds to the challenge freelancers face when attempting to secure documentary broadcast.

I explored the specific technical practices involved in the creation of the *XFM 25* series, including: interviewing, editing, the use of music and presentation. These observations reflected the findings of the previous chapter, as my production decisions in these areas were similarly informed by the financial considerations that underpin contemporary commercial radio. Audio and online technologies had progressed since my initial Bowie documentaries were produced. I was able to employ these new developments within my work, to show how advanced recording and editing tools can aid freelancer producers in their ability to create industry standard productions. This was evident in the benefits that followed the upgrade of my computer and editing system during this intermediary phase of production. An increase in processing power, coupled with the latest version of *Adobe Audition*, provided new creative opportunities and ultimately improved the production values of my documentary production work.

An assessment of online resources, such as file-sharing websites, demonstrated how Internet technologies enhanced my ability to meet production deadlines and source

⁷⁰ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

contributor interviews. I claimed that new online tools improved my performance as a producer, and presented opportunities that were unavailable during the previous production stage, discussed in chapter five. The use of comments sections, social media and online fan forums have provided radio producers with the opportunity to engage with audiences, and thereby gain useful feedback to potentially enhance their projects. I agreed with Geller's (2011) assertion that online radio has allowed stations to create and deliver more content to wider audiences, as well as "establishing deeper relationships" with listeners (320).

I considered weaknesses and limitations within this stage of my practice and suggested future strategies for potentially avoiding these issues in the future. There was uniformity between each episode, which reflects Barnard's (1989) criticism of music documentaries as often sounding too standard. However, I maintained this sameness was necessary to build a consistent on-air sound across the twelve episodes. Whilst I recognised other failings within my intermediary production work, I was still able to gain substantial practical and theoretical knowledge to take forward into my final reflexive production project. Unlike the retrospective research discussed in the previous chapter, the multiple documentaries created in this interim period were assessed from an active auto-ethnographic perspective. Therefore, my reflections were more rigorous and immediate. The on-going, iterative nature of my practice across the twelve *XFM* 25 episodes in the series increased my technical / editorial confidence as a freelance radio producer, while interviews with industry figures provided the opportunity to test my observations against the views of other practitioners, thereby adding to my understanding of the field. The next chapter of my findings reveals how this newfound knowledge was put to use, as a reflexive practitioner, during the production of my concluding practice-based artefact for the Absolute Radio network.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLEXIVE PRODUCTION PHASE: *LET'S DANCE AT 30*

This chapter interrogates the freelance practices employed during the production of my final documentary artefact, submitted as the concluding evidence of my practice-based investigations (appendices A, 3). I term this period as being the 'reflexive' stage of my practice-based research, as I actively drew from the skills and knowledge learnt from the preceding instinctual and intermediary production phases, discussed in chapters five and six. This production project, titled *Let's Dance at 30*, was specifically created as an opportunity to revisit the subject matter of my earlier Bowie work, thereby testing the abilities and insights gained since my initial, instinctual production work on *Down Under the Moonlight*. This approach built on the iterative production method discussed in the previous chapter by revisiting and repeating certain processes to reveal new learning in the field of music documentary production for commercial radio.

Utilising the same structure as the previous chapters of my findings, I discuss the various production stages involved in the creation of this final radio documentary, assess the use of online technologies, and consider the responses which followed its broadcast. In doing so, I build on the observations captured during the intermediary stage of production. Firstly, I provide a contextual overview of the project before considering the commissioning procedure involved in securing broadcast. Next, I discuss practical production considerations such as: interviewing, editing and structuring, use of music, and presentation. I show how freelance radio producers continue to benefit from ongoing advances in digital technologies and assess the development of these tools since the instinctual and intermediary stages of production.

I then consider how online technologies have continued to shape my practice while providing new distribution possibilities. I argue that the online provision of music documentaries can no longer be considered as secondary in status to terrestrial broadcasts on AM/FM radio. Stations now view online content as being of equal importance to traditional forms of radio transmission. Section five reflects on the weaknesses and limitations evident in my approach to *Let's Dance at 30*, and evaluates my response to certain difficulties I faced. I assess responses to the documentary and consider what has been learnt from this final production project, before reaching my final conclusions.

By coalescing the skills gained from the production of the previous 14 documentaries, discussed in chapters five and six, into one production, I demonstrate my development as an industry-active, freelance producer. I have found that political and economic factors have a considerable impact on the shape of content produced by freelancers in this particular field; dictating factors such as editorial choices, durations and the structuring of content. I claim that digital technologies and online platforms have enhanced the freelancer's ability to produce music documentaries, by offering new creative possibilities, speeding up workflow processes and allowing a variety of roles to be combined into one multi-skilled position. Finally, I suggest that industry practitioners see merit in programming music documentary content, as a means of building new audiences and reinforcing a station's brand. I begin by providing a contextual overview that explains how *Let's Dance at 30* was conceived, and consider its status alongside my previous two music documentary projects for Radio Hauraki and Xfm.

7.1 Project Overview

As indicated, the background for this project stems from my desire to return to, and enhance, my original Bowie documentary for Radio Hauraki. I revisited this earlier production from the new position of ‘thinking practitioner’, whose work had undergone a research process of on-going iteration. Since my study focuses on ‘real world’ industry practice, it was necessary to seek a broadcast station for this final project, rather than simply revise the initial version of the Bowie story. Although I considered approaching Radio Hauraki to enquire whether they would be willing to rebroadcast a new version of the original documentary, the station had radically rebranded itself since 2008, and no longer played ‘classic rock’. Regal, the Station Manager who commissioned the original documentary, had left the station since the broadcast of *Down Under the Moonlight*. I therefore decided to pursue a UK based commercial radio station as a possible broadcaster for the project. As well improving my chances of securing a commission, by basing the project in the UK I felt it would be potentially easier for me to source contributors who were closer to my home in Birmingham, rather than facing the difficulties of sourcing new NZ based content. This issue of geography was identified in the opening chapter of my findings, however, I maintain that the ability to create content for international audiences demonstrates how freelance producers are able to exploit technology to widen the scope of their commissioning prospects.

I made the decision to approach the Absolute Radio network as, according to Bauer Media, the station is “commercial radio’s most ambitious and innovative brand”⁷¹. Given this self-professed desire for innovation, I surmised they might be willing to broadcast an original Bowie documentary. Another key factor was the past

⁷¹ <http://www.bauermedia.co.uk/brands/absolute-radio>

relationship I had established with the company. I produced a music documentary for Absolute Radio in 2010, which focused on the 30th anniversary of the band *UB40*'s debut album *Signing Off*. *UB40: Signing Off* (Coley, 2010), a one-hour documentary, was subsequently nominated as a finalist in the Best Music Special category of the 2011 Sony Radio Awards. Station management had expressed their thanks and appreciation for this earlier work. I aimed to build on this achievement by pitching a similar concept; a documentary celebrating the 30th anniversary of David Bowie's *Let's Dance* album. This provided a convenient opportunity to update my earlier NZ work which marked the 25th anniversary of the same album, as discussed in chapter five. In retrospect, this approach was somewhat problematic. Although focusing on an anniversary may help to secure a commission, it risks dating a production; tying it to a specific period in time and thereby limiting its future appeal. By relocating the project to the UK, I abandoned a great deal of content related to NZ. However, there was still an opportunity to repurpose a considerable amount of my earlier interview material. I was required to record original content and to completely restructure the documentary's narrative. This allowed me to trial new production approaches developed during the intermediary phase of research and production.

McLeish (2005) believes that producers view their projects as “intrinsically worthwhile or personally creative”, whereas station management are “more concerned with competitive ratings” (277). Although I agree that the producer should ideally have a personal investment or belief in a project, McLeish underplays the freelance producer's ability to think professionally and demonstrate an understanding of commercial imperatives. According to Mitchell (2005), a freelancer is ultimately a “business-person” and must develop an appreciation of standard business practices (12). I argue that contemporary producers are well aware that ‘worthwhile’ and

‘creative’ projects must equally understand the economic context their work exists within. I therefore ensured that the commissioning pitch for *Let’s Dance at 30* reflected industry requirements and fitted within typical commercial radio programming. This knowledge was informed by my experiences creating similar content for the Xfm radio network. I now explore the commissioning process for this final Bowie documentary, which expands on my earlier analysis of commissioning practices.

7.2. Commissioning processes

This section examines how the commissioning of *Let’s Dance at 30* reflected Absolute Radio’s desire to build its brand and drive new audiences. I consider the importance of scheduling and assess the opportunities for freelancers to produce documentaries for commercial radio in the UK. Before approaching Absolute Radio, I researched their target audience and developed my initial concept to a stage where I felt it would be received positively by station management. McLeish (2005) contends that a thorough knowledge of the target audience and their lifestyles is essential in understanding when they will be most receptive to a programme. According to an Absolute Radio Media Pack, a typical listener is defined in the following manner.

“Absolute Radio’s listeners are ‘Reluctant Adults’... They’re opinion formers in their group and they’re still passionate about music, using the radio station as a means of discovering new bands or re-discovering albums... Absolute Radio’s audience are intelligent, irreverent people who want a content-rich and challenging radio station where “Real Music Matters””⁷².

I contemplated the amount of work involved and questioned whether I would be able to satisfactorily complete the final project as a freelance producer. Given that I could

⁷² <http://www.bauermedia.co.uk/uploads/absolutemediapack.pdf>

draw on my past research and utilise pre-existing material, I believed I could realistically deliver the proposed concept. I therefore resolved to approach Paul Sylvester, Content Director for Absolute Radio, to pitch the idea over the telephone. Although this was an unsolicited proposal, Sylvester had championed my earlier work for Absolute Radio and, as a result, was willing to consider the pitch. After a lengthy discussion, Sylvester confirmed he was receptive to the concept. As with the earlier documentary work discussed in this study, maintaining industry contacts and establishing relationships with management was a vital factor in securing a commission. This reflects Mitchell's (2005) assertion that freelancers need to "market themselves" and ideally create a working database of clients and potential clients (39). I suggest freelance producers should build a dependable reputation in order to earn a station's trust and provide a sense of confidence in their ability to deliver a project, before a commission will be approved.

Once the concept was ratified by Sylvester, I corresponded with Tim Vernon, the Deputy Head of Music at Absolute Radio, to finalise durations and the use of imaging, amongst other considerations (appendices E). An initial broadcast date of April the 14th 2013, was agreed on, as this was the release date of Bowie's *Let Dance* album. As with the *Down Under the Moonlight* project for Radio Hauraki, the decision to pitch the documentary to coincide with a precise anniversary helped to secure the commission by adding historical relevance to the production. A preliminary version of the documentary was initially broadcast on Absolute 80's and then rebroadcast on Absolute Classic Rock at 8pm on the 28th of July 2013. Sylvester then contacted me later in the year to advise me of another broadcast of the documentary, across the entire Absolute Radio network, on the 26th of December 2013. This provided me with an opportunity to refine my earlier work and produce the final edition, which is presented

as part of this submission, in the form of three separate audio files (appendices A, 3). These sections were provided to Absolute Radio as high quality MP3 files, at a bit rate of 256,000. Two commercial advertising breaks, the first at 24:00 minutes and the second beginning at 52:00 minutes, separate each section.

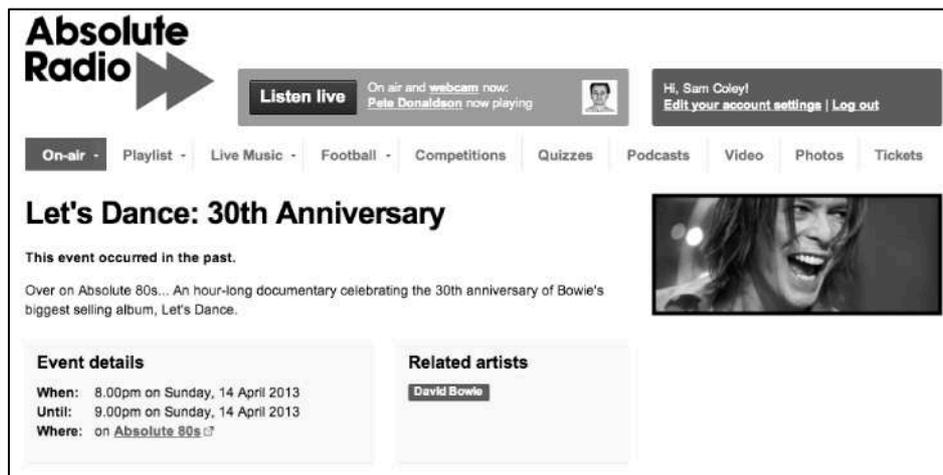


Fig 7.1: Absolute Radio's online promotion for the April 14 broadcast, 2013⁷³

According to Hausman et al. (2004), the goal of commercial radio is to provide programming “that will attract audiences” (4). McLeish (2005) agrees that station management are primarily concerned about ratings and believes that new programming concepts face the key question, “what will it do for the audience?” (277). I asked Sylvester whether his motivation for commissioning the documentary reflected this aforementioned need to build audience figures.

“Obviously we want them to drive an audience. We know that they do drive an audience. They actually often drive trial amongst people who don't normally listen to the radio station, thanks to the way that social media works, so actually they'll often drive trial rather than necessarily always driving a massive audience from our existing listeners, although obviously they are there. But, actually this is also about reputation. This is about the radio station saying “this is the kind of radio station you want to be listening to because we're giving over

⁷³ <http://absoluteradio.co.uk/>

one hour, two hours, three hours to tell this amazing story, to showcase the life of somebody that's really important”⁷⁴.

The opportunity to attract new listeners is cited as an important factor in Sylvester's rationale for commissioning music documentaries. A desire to build the station's brand reputation is also noted. This reflects Ashton's belief that the *XFM 25* series was not commissioned for the “cynical reason of trying to grow this or do that or particularly change or effect” but was based on desire to provide Xfm listeners with intelligent programming: “I just think it's an interesting thing and I think we should be about doing interesting things and giving our audience something intelligent”⁷⁵.

Sylvester outlined two core financial reasons for commissioning documentaries on Absolute Radio. He stated that either a client wants to make a documentary or some form of long form programming and were willing to pay for it, or the programming department has decided there is an event that should be relived, or a story that should be told. However, Sylvester believes that it is rare for documentaries to be heard on commercial radio in general, commenting:

“Commercial radio has moved away from doing documentaries in general and I think that's really, really sad because I think the craft of making documentaries and the craft of telling stories is what radio is really all about - because actually it's these moments and those great stories that people remember. And, radio, whether it's commercial radio or the BBC for me, is very much here to educate and entertain and documentaries are those rare things that do both. So, I think documentary making in radio has fallen by the wayside, certainly in commercial radio, and it's been something that we've been very keen to invest in to bring back and to use as something that sets us aside from other radio stations”⁷⁶.

This desire to stand apart from other stations, through the provision of unique music documentary content, supports Myers (2009) belief in the ability of spoken word content to help differentiate stations, as indicated in chapter two.

⁷⁴ Interview with Paul Sylvester conducted over the telephone, 15 August 2016

⁷⁵ Interview with Andy Ashton conducted 18 January 2011

⁷⁶ Telephone interview with Paul Sylvester conducted 15 August 2016

McLeish (2005) claims the precise scheduling of a documentary is critical for its success, particularly for more “demanding productions” (277). Programming a documentary at an inappropriate time can adversely affect a listener’s receptiveness. Ehrlich (2011) contends the ‘golden’ age of radio documentaries partially came to an end through programmes becoming aired “at irregular and less than ideal times”, coupled with the impact of television and McCarthyism (6). The *XFM 25* (9 PM) and *Let’s Dance at 30* (8 PM) documentaries were scheduled for broadcast on Sunday evenings. These timeslots were selected to engage with listeners at the end of the weekend, as many prepared for the working week ahead. It could be assumed the audience would be in a relaxed home environment, more conducive to absorbing spoken word documentary content, at this time. According to Ingram and Barber (2005), commercial audiences who listen in the evenings and at weekends demand a higher calibre of radio content. This, they believe, is due to competition from alternative entertainment opportunities, such as television. Turning on the radio during these periods is more conscious decision, therefore attention levels are higher, as “during the evenings and at weekends listeners are most likely to seek out particular music shows by appointment” (30). I questioned Sylvester about the station’s decision to schedule *Let’s Dance at 30* on a Sunday evening.

“Sunday nights, I think, are the perfect documentary slot because generally people have got more time. They’ve actually got more time to listen to longer form pieces of content. If you schedule this on a weeknight or in a weekday there’s so many different distractions. People tend to listen in short bursts commuting, at work, cooking dinner, washing up, making the pack lunches, whilst doing something else. Sunday night is a time when generally there is less to be being done. It’s a time when you can actually set aside something to listen to these documentaries and so that’s why Sunday night works. But, also as importantly for me it’s a clear part of the schedule, usually where things can be more malleable, you’ve got more room to manoeuvre with Sunday nights”⁷⁷.

⁷⁷ Telephone interview with Paul Sylvester conducted 15 August 2016

Alongside the added flexibility of a Sunday night schedule is the consideration that this period is a low advertising zone. Any risk associated with scheduling a documentary, instead of more traditional music programming, was relatively small. There was no impact on key revenue times, such as weekday ‘breakfast’ or ‘drive time’ programming. Although a Sunday evening slot does not reach a relatively large prime-time audience, there was still the need to provide quality content. I maintain that audience size is not necessarily an indication of a production’s worth. As Crisell (1994) observes, “a small audience might have been delighted with what it heard, a large audience disappointed” (205). The advent of time-shift, on-demand audio and instant online access had meant music documentaries, such as *Let’s Dance at 30*, can exist on the Internet to reach wider audiences beyond traditional broadcast time slots.

The chance to produce this project for Absolute Radio was a somewhat rare opportunity to create music documentary content for a commercial radio environment. The consensus of interviews carried out during this investigation agreed that freelancers and independent radio production companies have little prospect of providing content for commercial radio networks in the UK. Although Crewe expressed a desire to create documentaries for commercial audiences, he believes there are few openings within the field: “The only time a commercial radio station will spend money is on the basis of getting a return that will bring it more”⁷⁸. I asked an anonymous respondent to comment on whether they would be willing to produce music documentaries for commercial radio. Although he stated that he would, he nevertheless felt there were few opportunities to do so, due to the BBC having a ‘monopoly’ over the market.

“I’d be more than happy to do it, because I know that the pay would be better. But there isn’t a competitor. So this particular corporation (the BBC) has a

⁷⁸ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

complete monopoly over commissioning features and documentaries - and there are inherent problems with that”⁷⁹.

Emm (2002) asserts that commercial stations do not commission pre-recorded content because radio audiences are relatively small, compared to television, and therefore “the budgets are minuscule” (136). Although I generally agree with Emm’s (2002) observation, stations such as Absolute Radio are currently pioneering new approaches that may result in further opportunities for freelance producers in the future. The station has recently explored the use of ‘branded documentaries’, which are produced in conjunction with a particular client. An example of this concept is demonstrated by *Bowie: The Definitive Story* (TBI, 2013). This three-part documentary series was broadcast on Absolute Radio over consecutive weekends in April 2013. The project was developed in partnership between Absolute Radio and the independent production company TBI Media. It was, essentially, an advertisement for the V&A Museum to promote their *David Bowie Is...* exhibition. Amongst its range of contributors, *Bowie: The Definitive Story* featured the museum’s curation staff and promoted the exhibition within its overall narrative structure. After the series was broadcast, listeners were able to ‘catch-up’ with the programmes via a V&A branded section of the Absolute Radio website. According to Absolute Radio’s Commercial Director Simon Kilby, this form of funded documentary programming was made possible by changes to Ofcom regulations regarding advertising within programming content. Kilby commented:

“The relaxation of Ofcom’s Broadcast Code, allows a greater integration for brands and their commercial messages. Our bespoke show for the David Bowie at the V&A is a superb example of the new types of products we are able to offer our commercial partners”⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ Interview with anonymous radio producer conducted 2 February 2016

⁸⁰ <http://radiocen.formodaclients.co.uk/latest-industry-news/absolute-radios-ad-funded-programming-to-feature-documentary-series-on-david-bowie>

Jonathan Jacob, a writer for the *Earshot Creative* website used the series as an example of how commercial radio is increasingly looking to integrate a client's messages within content, rather than simply attaching their name to a programme.

“Gone are the days of standard sponsorship and promotions. Radio S&P (Sales and Promotion) isn't about a badging exercise any more. It's about looking at ways that stations can effectively integrate brands through programming content in ways that excite, engage and inspire listeners”⁸¹.

Sylvester believes that branded content documentaries are becoming increasingly viable, commenting: “I think it will become more and more the way that documentaries get made”⁸². According to Sylvester, this type of advertising provides clients with a deeper, richer, and more layered way to engage with their customers. I suggest the innovation represented by the *Bowie: The Definitive Story* series represents a new revenue stream for independent production companies and freelancers. Having assessed the commissioning stage of the *Let's Dance at 30*, I now discuss my approach to the documentary's technical production. I reveal how the experience gained from my initial and intermediary projects have informed my practice and consider the use of digital production technologies during the completion of this project.

7.3. Production practices

This section documents the technical processes involved in the creation of *Let's Dance at 30* and reflects on how my position as a freelancer has shaped my production practices. As indicated throughout this study, my work as a freelance music documentary producer has been largely carried out independently. This, I maintain, has

⁸¹ <http://earshotcreative.com/2013/04/absolute-radio-develop-branded-content-for-bowie/>

⁸² Telephone interview with Paul Sylvester conducted 15 August 2016

been possible through advances in digital workstations, which have allowed freelance producers to successfully manage the ‘pre’ and ‘post’ production stages of their projects autonomously. Connelly (2012) believes the radio industry has experienced dramatic changes, which he attributes to the impact of “consolidation, convergence and digital” (3). Factors of political economy have blurred the boundaries which define the roles involved in radio documentary production. Whereas in-house radio station production teams, or larger independent companies, have other members of staff on-hand to carry out various duties in conjunction with a lead producer, it has been necessary to perform the majority of production activities myself, in isolation. Bass (2015) believes that “three or more people working together on a project are much more effective than a single person spending all of his time doing the same thing”⁸³. However, this is not necessarily true for documentary production, where the involvement of too many differing opinions might dilute the producer’s original vision. There are also issues of efficiency and cost effectiveness that further the need to work alone. By covering a range of roles and duties themselves, a solo producer can maintain overall control and provide greater coherency and focus to a production. I suggest my practice as a freelancer reflects Beaman’s (2006) assertion that radio producers need “an ability to think and act quickly, flexibility, creative ability to develop and deliver ideas” (21). I begin my assessment of technical skills by exploring my approach to interviews within *Let’s Dance at 30*. This section discusses how I recorded interview content and assesses the role digital technologies played in this aspect of the project. I also consider the importance of on location recordings and notions of ‘authenticity’.

⁸³ <http://www.livestrong.com/article/105939-team-communication-important-teams/>

7.3.1. *Interviewing*

The ability to secure and record contributor interviews has been a central skill throughout the three production stages discussed in this study. In this section, I consider the use of interviews and reflect on the impact of digital technologies when capturing international audio content. Although I personally recorded the majority of interviews for *Let's Dance at 30*, I took the decision to outsource the interviewing of two contributors, who were based in Los Angeles. By using file sharing technology to send these interviews back to me, I was able to reduce expenditure. This approach reflects Connelly's (2012) assertion that production staff should remain open to the possibilities afforded by new technologies, as these may enable them to deliver a "more creative and effective product in a more cost-efficient manner" (7). As discussed in chapter six, during the *XFM 25* project I had assistance from Xfm staff who carried out occasional interviews on my behalf, using questions I had prepared in advance, and then file shared the raw audio to me for editing. However, this occasionally resulted in questions being left out or the audio being saved as poor quality MP3's. To address these potential problems, I employed Ian Fish, a trusted and experienced radio producer, to record US-based interviews. During a Skype conversation before the recording sessions took place, Fish and I went over the questions I had prepared to clarify what type of responses were being sought and to consider potential follow-up questions. Technical requirements were also discussed. This type of in-depth pre-production had not been possible during the hectic timetable of the Xfm project. Fish then carried out the interviews and immediately sent me the unedited, uncompressed audio he had recorded via the Internet. This aspect of the project worked particularly well, with Fish carrying out his duties promptly and to a high standard. He was paid a fee of £150.00 for his

services, which was considerably less than the expense of flying to LA to record the interviews in person. This practice reflects standard freelance practice, as outsourcing certain tasks can improve the economic viability of a project.

Recording interviews and presentation work within a professional radio studio can provide clean, easily controllable audio to work with. However, there is a risk that relying solely on this approach may result in a lack of sonic texture and a somewhat one-dimensional narrative structure. There is, I suggest, a sameness heard in documentaries which are created entirely within a studio environment. When listening to a variety of well-received public service radio documentaries, I noted that one of the key strengths of these productions was the use of on location interviews. I therefore sought to draw from these examples by employing this technique in *Let's Dance at 30*, in an effort to add atmosphere, extra meaning and aural diversity. This built on my earlier experiments in the use of on location recordings during the *XFM 25* series. According to Demers (2010) sound has the ability to “create a space” (119). By recording on location, the ambience of the location is instantly imbued within the interviewee’s audio. I therefore resolved to record several interviewees on location, in places of relevance to the storyline. Contributors were asked to describe their surroundings, comment on memories the site evoked, and to provide expositional context to clarify the location’s importance to the story. Sound contains information about its origins and trajectories and, according to Lefebvre (2000), can create not only a physical environment, but also a psychological one, which draws on the listener’s memories and sense of nostalgia. By recording the soundscape of various sites within the documentary, along with ‘live’ recollections from these geographic locations, I was able capture ‘authentic’ content that contrasted against the more sterile sound of a radio studio. I often layered background sound effects underneath these sections to heighten

the atmosphere and provide convenient edit points. These examples included the sound of vehicles driving past, police sirens, and general street noise. McLeish (2005) asserts that radio producers are free to use non-authentic sounds, but only if they provide an “authentic impression” (270).

I had previously recorded Bowie backing singer Frank Simms in a recording studio for the original *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary. For *Let's Dance at 30*, I captured additional interview material with Simms outside the former Power Station recording studio in New York, where he and Bowie had worked together on the *Let's Dance* album. Another on location interview, with Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, took place on the spot where the photograph for Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* album was taken. Perhaps the most effective on location recording took place outside the house where Bowie was born, in Brixton, London. Mark Sutherland, the documentary presenter, provided an adlibbed description of the house and discussed its importance in the storyline for the documentary's introductory sequence. Although it could be argued that the sonic ambience heard outside a typical south London home could easily be recreated, without the need to stand outside Bowie's actual birthplace, there is an authenticity that cannot be replicated in the presenter's voice. Additionally, there is an ethical responsibility to present an audio environment as being 'real'. Emm (2002) believes documentaries are supposed to capture reality and producers should therefore convey truthfulness in their work. A lack of accuracy may threaten a station's credibility (Chantler and Stewart, 2009).

The following section documents the editing processes involved in the production of *Let's Dance at 30*. This activity heavily drew on my previous production experience and most obviously represents my technical progress as a music

documentary producer. I assess my changing approach to editing and consider how issues of political economy shaped the structuring of this final documentary.

7.3.2. *Editing*

The editing and structuring of this final documentary was informed by the insights gained over a five-year production period. This section reflects on how my past projects developed my approach to editing as a freelance producer and considers how this concluding, reflexive, work was shaped to fit within a commercial radio environment. Although I was using the same computing and audio editing system employed for the previous *XFM 25* series, my skill at using this technology had improved. My confidence in making precise edits had increased, and I was more aware of *Adobe Audition*'s built in processing capabilities. I spent more time removing unnecessary breaths, repetition and meanderings within contributor interviews, in an effort to tighten the overall sound of the documentary, fit more content within the set duration of the production, and to increase the pace of the narrative. While reflecting on my initial and intermediary production projects, I was aware that the pace of my editing was often quite slow, with relatively long sections of contributor responses. *Let's Dance at 30* was an opportunity to employ a faster editing pace, thereby pushing the narrative forward far more quickly. Fish believes that commercial radio production is designed for short attention spans. For this reason, interview clips tend to be shorter than those found in public service environments, because of "the preconception that people won't listen to speech for more than two minutes"⁸⁴. Writing in the late Eighties, Barnard (1989) observed that music documentaries on the radio are often based on extended artist interviews.

⁸⁴ Interview with Ian Fish conducted 5 April 2013

However, the drive to create pacier, more energetic productions has led to these extended interviews becoming either shorter in duration, or spliced into sections which are then placed alongside other accompanying clips to maintain a sense of momentum, as discussed in chapter six.

By examining documentaries produced for both public service and commercial broadcasters, I noted an increase in the overall pace of editing over the years. Rose Anderson, in her position as Executive Director of the New York Festivals International Radio Programs Awards, agrees that there has been a rise in the number of edits heard in radio productions. Each year, Anderson monitors radio programme submissions from around the world, across a range of radio production genres. She commented: “I think faster paced is probably true, meaning there is more information packed into the same discreet amount of space – if time were space”⁸⁵. An anonymous producer respondent shared this view and concurred with Fish’s contention that an increasingly quicker approach to editing was due to the progressively shorter attention spans of radio audiences, stating:

“We live in an age now where attention spans seem to be getting shorter and shorter and either because of that, or as a reflection of that, the editing style of quite a lot of documentaries, as you say, you know, the sound-bites seem to be getting shorter and shorter. So, that’s where it’s going”⁸⁶.

Crewe similarly believes that editing styles in radio documentaries have generally quickened in pace. Although this might be expected from commercial stations or those targeting younger audiences, Crewe sees this acceleration occurring in production work for public service stations that have traditionally target older audiences.

“It’s got to be really, really, really quick. You haven’t got much time to hang about. It’s not to say that there’s a death of long form (documentaries) or

⁸⁵ Interview with Rose Anderson conducted 7 March 2015

⁸⁶ Interview with anonymous radio producer conducted 2 February 2016

anything like that. I notice that you do get long passages of speech, but I also feel that even on (BBC) Radio 4 I'm hearing things that are snappier and sharper. I used to make programmes thinking 'I've got room to breathe here, I can relax'. I do now sometimes think 'I'm getting bored' and I find myself having the urge to pull things along and move them on a bit faster"⁸⁷.

The structuring of music documentaries is sometimes criticised for following traditional chronological paths or presenting an unimaginative series of familiar, standardised tropes (Barnard, 1989). Reynolds (2007) is unimpressed by what he terms the 'retro-doc', which he claims largely drives the film and television music documentary sector. He condemns the genre for taking predictable production approaches: "The talking-heads element tends to involve a series of weathered-looking middle aged musicians and record business people dredging up their memories, often in what appears to be the kitchen area of a maisonette or on the living room sofa" (13). As my work for Xfm was uniform in its narrative approach, I sought to be more inventive with the editing and structuring of this final documentary, by 'shuffling' sections of interviews and including more music tracks than were present in my earlier productions. As discussed in the previous section, on location recordings provided sonic variety, while the inclusion of numerous news clips and archival interviews offered a sense of historic context. I also chose to feature less expositional presenter material, preferring instead to let the contributors tell as much of the story as possible, and directing them to provide their own introductions. This represented an improvement over the more formal, presenter heavy, structure of the *XFM 25* series.

As I have mentioned in the previous two chapters, a distinguishing trait of documentary production for commercial radio is the need to structure content around advertising schedules. Ingram and Barber (2005) observe how radio listeners are required to listen to advertisements regardless of whether they are interested in buying

⁸⁷ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

the product or not. For this reason, they assert that radio is “often referred to as an intrusive medium” (39). I asked Fish to comment on the production of content for commercial radio environments and whether he thought listeners found advertising unduly intrusive.

“I don’t think people mind them as much as they say they mind them. Again, as long as your content either side is entertaining people will sit through the ads. I always think of it as the ‘chapter marks’...Between this break and this break we’ll do this bit and I think it does give you a natural break where you can come back and be on a different subject when you come back. So, I think from that point of view it works and people understand that. People understand it from TV. That’s how TV works, isn’t it? You know the advert is a scene change or whatever or a cliff-hanger into a payoff”⁸⁸.

According to Fish (2013), radio audiences accept the presence of advertising and are willing to wait through a commercial break if they feel the calibre of what will follow is worth the supposed imposition. I shaped the flow and structure of *Let’s Dance at 30* into three ‘chapters’ which built up to the arrival of each advertising break. Then following the commercials and station ID, I reintroduced the audience to the documentary by having the presenter signpost the topic, before moving straight into a new section of the story. The initial section of the documentary, leading up to the first ad break, is the longest at 23 minutes’ duration. This was an attempt to capture and hold the listener’s attention, while the remaining two sections are shorter to accommodate the presence of three commercial breaks. This approach broadly followed the same structural approach to *XFM 25*.

While editing and structuring the final Bowie documentary, I once again worked in a freelance, independent capacity. However, I benefited from Sylvester’s input as an informal executive producer. I had previously found the use of executive producers to be helpful in providing compliance guidance and general technical feedback. Ashton

⁸⁸ Interview with Ian Fish conducted 5 April 2013

and Walsh had previously fulfilled this role with the *XFM 25* series. With *Let's Dance at 30*, Sylvester occasionally offered advice throughout the production process and was ultimately responsible for 'signing off' the final production before broadcast. When reflecting on the usefulness of an executive producer, Crewe commented:

“For the most part it’s a second paid of ears that’s going to stop you getting into trouble and there is of course the legal aspects to it and the libellous aspects to it, where it’s never a given that everything you say in public you can say in broadcast”⁸⁹.

An industry respondent, who wished to be unnamed in order to not jeopardise future BBC commissioning opportunities, agreed that an executive producer could be used strategically to maintain focus and saw the role as being a vital part of any radio documentary production: “You’ve got to have an extra pair of ears available, otherwise you can really loose the plot. It’s easy to lose the plot”⁹⁰. Although Sylvester is listed in the documentary credits as ‘executive producer’, this was a casual and infrequent contribution. I mostly worked independently, making the majority of final production decisions myself, but calling on Sylvester in certain circumstances to seek clarification on station policy and guidelines. Lloyd (2015) asserts that actively and critically reviewing radio production work is important to assess whether the final item is successful in terms of “content, pace, impact, flow and intelligibility” (245). Although I constantly reviewed my own work, I sought the opinion of other industry professionals to ensure objectivity. According to Lloyd “cajoling a trusted colleague” to listen to work in progress can be useful (245). I document this feedback in the following section, which discusses the use of music within my work for Absolute Radio.

⁸⁹ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

⁹⁰ Interview with anonymous radio producer conducted 2 February 2016

7.3.3. *Music*

This section considers how freelance radio producers use music to add context and entertainment value to their work and reflects on the wider use of non-verbal codes within radio documentaries. The selection of music for *Let's Dance at 30* was informed by the need to enhance meaning, while reflecting the station's programming ethos. Bauer Media's website state that Absolute Radio listeners are "passionate about music"⁹¹. I was therefore required to consider not only the selection of tracks, but the manipulation and placement of music within the production, to ensure my work matched the expectations of discerning music fans.

Emm (2002) claims the use of music can make a production sequence "more exciting by adding mood, atmosphere and pace" (93). This reflects Harlock's view, discussed in chapter six, that music in documentaries serves a broad purpose; counteracting a point, providing subtext, or deepening the level of understanding⁹². Although the use of speech enables radio to fulfil its fundamental function, "that of a voice speaking to an audience", the presence of music can enhance and add meaning to the spoken word (Arnheim, 1936: 177). Music can enable producers to unlock the creative potential within a production, and provide "a fuller picture and a richer texture" (Emm, 2002: 51). According to a RAB (2015) publication, radio gains a great deal of its emotional power from music, which has "a unique ability to influence our emotions and change the way we perceive and interpret things" (22). Bull and Back (2003) suggest that hearing a particular piece of music "can act as a kind of jukebox of remembrance" as the listener may associate it "with a particular time and place" (14).

⁹¹ <http://www.bauermedia.co.uk/uploads/absolutemediapack.pdf>

⁹² Interview with Matt Harlock conducted 23 November 2011

This attribute can be harnessed within music documentaries to generate a sense of nostalgia or to situate a certain section within a specific time period. The use of music to provide a sense of location and time was employed across the three music documentary projects presented in this study.

Although music informed the subject matter of *Let's Dance at 30*, the main focus of the production was centred around the recollections of contributors, with music tracks mostly relegated to a secondary position. No song was featured in its entirety. All tracks were either abridged, looped, faded out, or used as backing beds. In most instances, the listener only heard a short introduction to a song, a chorus, or some other distinctive element, which best represented the contributor's subject matter at the time. I consciously attempted to improve on my use of music within the initial Bowie documentary for Radio Hauraki, which suffered from the use of extended sections of songs. As indicated, these longer durations had a tendency to slow down the overall pace of the documentary. Shingler and Wieringa (1998) believe the use of music needs to be concise, as "long passages of music may draw attention away from the real business of a radio programme" (66). The decision to feature music extensively throughout the production reflected Absolute Radio's attitude towards the use of music within documentaries. An interview with Sylvester validated this approach:

"Whenever we make these documentaries the instructions to the producer is to always to deeply layer music within it. There should almost be a permanent underlying soundtrack that sits below the spoken word content and while it is more spoken word than what they're used to, it's relevant spoken word. It's not us doing a documentary on the history of World War Two, it's us doing a documentary on the history of someone they already love or they already know or is within the range of artists that they would expect to hear on Absolute Radio"⁹³.

⁹³ Telephone interview with Paul Sylvester conducted 15 August 2016

As discussed earlier in this section, all music tracks within *Let's Dance at 30* were manipulated in some manner. Songs were edited into either shorter forms, or extended to allow for spoken word content to fit precisely within a 'pocket' of mostly instrumental music. However, by heavily editing, restructuring and beat-matching a track, there is a risk that a production may sound disjointed, and therefore irritate a listener who has the expectation of hearing an unadulterated version of a well-known song. To overcome this issue, I attempted to make edit points within songs virtually unnoticeable, creating a continuous sound that made certain alterations undetectable.

I sought feedback from Andrew Dubber, a former producer for commercial radio, to gain his opinion on whether he felt my use of music was appropriate for commercial radio audiences. After hearing examples of my production work he commented: "You're making a show that sounds continuous, it sounds like a tapestry that is not out of place with everything else you hear on that station"⁹⁴. Dubber felt my approach reflected Absolute Radio's programming expectations, as music tracks were constructed together in a seamless flow, "which is because you 'get' music, you understand how it works". Dubber drew parallels between the field of music and radio production, commenting: "What you're essentially doing is you're composing musically as much as you're making a documentary". I agree with this analogy and suggest the practice of editing music can be seen as a creative musical act in of itself. Connelly (2012) believes it is useful for radio producers to have some musical knowledge and "an ability to express themselves artistically through the medium" (7). Crook (2012) states that learning a musical instrument will improve a producer's editing skills by building "an appreciation of the potentialities of sound structuring and mixing" (165). This philosophy is perhaps best exemplified by the work of Glen Gould,

⁹⁴ Interview with Andrew Dubber conducted 24 March 2013.

discussed in chapter two, who was a renowned concert pianist before becoming a radio documentary producer. Neuman (2011) contends that Gould considered his documentaries to be “musical compositions” (42). Crook (2012) advises anyone professionally working in the field of sound design to join a singing group or learn to play an instrument, as “it provides practical and emotional understanding of rhythm, timbre, tone, melody and the grammar of music” (165). Fish agrees that having even a basic understanding of musical theory can be advantageous when editing music, stating: “I think it helps to understand music a bit and tempo and measures, so if you’re going from a four, four track to a three, four track you’re not going to run into trouble because there’s a beat missing”⁹⁵. Fish believes his experience as a former drummer in a band benefitted his radio production work, as it gave him an appreciation for the rhythm of radio production. I also played in bands in my youth, and share Fish’s contention that an understanding of tempo and song construction can benefit a producer’s ability to edit music competently.

When selecting music for *Let’s Dance at 30* there was an obvious need to feature songs from Bowie’s *Let’s Dance* album. The structure of the documentary included sections from every track featured on the album, predominantly focusing on the ‘hit’ singles *Let’s Dance*, *China Girl* and *Modern Love* in order to appeal to a wider audience who might not be familiar with other, lesser-known tracks. Other Bowie tracks, not featured on the *Let’s Dance* album, were included to add variety and context when referencing other periods in Bowie’s career. Several other songs, not written by Bowie, were also included to accompany certain contributors and to convey expositional information. According to Emm (2002) a PRS blanket licence allows radio stations “usually play whatever they like and the cost is not an issue” (98). However, all the

⁹⁵ Interview with Ian Fish conducted 5 April 2013

music tracks used in the production needed to be listed and submitted to enable the appropriate distribution of royalties. The use of music tracks in *Let's Dance at 30* were covered under Absolute Radio's PRS, PPL and MCPS licensing agreements. Publishing details regarding each song were supplied to the station (appendices I).

Although the use of music within the documentary was essential in providing energy, emotion and meaning, there were also more pragmatic reasons for its inclusion. Music was used as a way to conceal technical deficiencies within the production, such as masking an edit, or disguising the presence of ambient noise. Music also provided a convenient means of providing separation between certain sections or contributors within the documentary, creating 'chapter marks' and giving the listener space to process the information they had just heard. Although the importance of music within music documentaries should not be underestimated, as I have discussed, its usage within *Let's Dance at 30* was always secondary to spoken word content, such as interviews and the presenter's expositional links. In the following section I assess the use of a presenter within *Let's Dance at 30*. I was unsatisfied with this aspect of my production work in both the *Down Under the Moonlight* and *XFM 25* projects and wanted to improve on my past performance. I consider how my approach represents a departure from my earlier use of presenters and assess the strengths and weaknesses of this new method.

7.3.4. *Presentation*

As indicated, I experienced various difficulties with the performance of the station DJ's provided as presenters for my initial *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary and *XFM 25* series. I therefore sought to avoid similar issues when selecting and producing the

presenter for *Let's Dance at 30*. In this section, I continue my examination of documentary presentation and consider the use of 'celebrity' presenters to help secure commissions and gain wider audience interest. The relationship between a radio presenter and the music they introduce is a bond that dates back to the origins of the medium. Crisell (1994) asserts that music radio has always combined an element of "personal presentation in order to satisfy the listener's need for explanation and companionship" (229). In the Thirties, Arnheim (1936) wrote: "the welding of music, sound and speech into a single material is one of the greatest artistic tasks of the wireless" (30-31). I suggest this observation is as true now as it was then. The producer's ability to blend the constituent elements of a documentary together in a unified, coherent production is key to its success. The use of a presenter, with assistance from a carefully crafted script, has become a well-established method of joining together otherwise disparate elements within a documentary.

A presenter can convey essential information to the listener as they introduce, explain or attempt to make sense of the documentary's content. Crewe views the documentary presenter as a tool to communicate important visual information to the listener. He describes a style of presentation that speaks directly to the listener: "Sometimes you need someone (the presenter) to be there, going "you won't believe what I can see", right? Sometimes you need someone to paint those pictures"⁹⁶. This comment reflects Bialek (2014) claim that narration can be used to present "the things that the author could not paint with sounds" (262). According to Aspinall (1971) a radio documentary series should ideally use "a featured narrator who preferably is heard only in that series" (106). For *Let's Dance at 30* I followed Aspinall's advice, by using Mark Sutherland, a presenter not traditionally heard on Absolute Radio. This represented a

⁹⁶ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

break from the production practices employed in my previous documentaries, which used station DJ's for practical convenience, economics and to help blend into the on-air programming environment. As Sutherland was not a regular presenter, and therefore not familiar with the typical Absolute Radio listener, I described the station's core demographic to him before the start of the recording session. This helped in pitching his delivery to suit this particular audience.

The decision to use Sutherland, an experienced music journalist and former editor of the *New Music Express*, was an attempt to address the presenter issues discussed in chapters five and six. These earlier productions suffered from the presenters self-producing their audio and self-directing their performances. By hiring a London studio and attending the recording session in person, I was able to provide immediate guidance and request multiple takes to increase my editing options. As the studio was conveniently situated in Brixton, near Bowie's birthplace, Sutherland and I were able to walk a short distance from the studio, to the house where Bowie was born, where we recorded an on location recording for one of his introductory links.

Having previously used Sutherland as a contributor in the *XFM 25* series, we had established a rapport and mutual trust in each other's abilities. Sutherland was chosen for his professional delivery and for his acumen as a music journalist, which helped to convey a sense of expertise. His affordability was another consideration, as Sutherland was paid the relatively small fee of £250.00 for his time. Although he had previously worked for BBC Radio 6 Music, Sutherland was not a well-known presenter. I had considered the possibility of using a celebrity presenter, but did not want to overshadow the interviewees. I was also concerned about the financial implications of securing more recognisable talent. The use of celebrity presenters in music documentaries was a contentious subject for many of the industry producers

interviewed for this project. Although many accepted and understood the reason why celebrities were employed, as ‘bait’ to help secure both audiences and commissions, they often questioned whether this ultimately resulted in more effective productions.

Crewe suggests that employing a well-known presenter is a virtual prerequisite for securing a BBC commission. As indicated in chapters five and six, the use of existing on-air staff for documentary presentation is an established practice that enables a production to sit comfortably within commercial radio scheduling. However, it is apparent that station management in both the public service and commercial radio sectors show a bias towards commissioning work which has the added allure of a celebrity, to enhance the reputation of the station and gain credibility for the production. Crewe has become increasingly concerned about this trend in BBC commissioning practices, commenting: “(BBC) Radio 2 are completely preoccupied with the celebrity and it is my opinion that they place the celebrity - and what they bring, whether it’s TV kudos, whether it’s Twitter followers and Facebook followers, whatever it might be, over the content”⁹⁷. Radio academic David Corser, a former producer of music documentaries for BBC Radio 2 believes that simply having the ability to sell a programme with a celebrity presenter does not necessarily ensure the final production will be of a high standard.

“I’ve come across independent producers who are very good at selling programmes and not very good at making them. And that may be partially down to using someone as a ‘name’ who isn’t actually, really a presenter in terms of communicating with the audience. I hear more stories about ideas not getting through because the right presenter wasn’t available as opposed to the ideas weren’t good enough”⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

⁹⁸ Interview with David Corser conducted 21 January 2015

According to Corser, independent production companies often feel required to ‘parachute’ a celebrity into the pitching process, in order to secure a commission, stating: “If it’s about selling – and it is about selling – that’s what you have to do”. This is not necessarily because of the celebrity’s ability to present effectively, but because of the instant recognition they may have with an audience. An anonymous respondent, who works as an independent documentary producer, shared this view. He stressed that some form of broadcasting experience was more important than simply being a recognisable name.

“I have to be a bit careful with what I say here because it’s a sensitive area. Anecdotally there is evidence to suggest that having a, quote, “name”, to present the documentary enhances the possibility of it getting commissioned, but it doesn’t guarantee it. Ultimately it’s all about the idea and does the idea appeal to the audience that is listening to that particular network. So you could have a documentary with a lesser-known figure, but they would have to have broadcasting experience. You couldn’t really slot in someone who they’ve never heard of before, who hasn’t done radio before”⁹⁹.

Although my research has identified examples of ‘star’ presented documentaries that critics have reacted unfavourably towards, I accept there are notable exceptions that suggest the use of celebrity presenters is not without merit. This is especially true if the presenter has some connection to the topic or artist being discussed in the documentary.

A method that avoids potential presenter problems is to simply not use one. In some instances, the absence of a presenter can create an even more powerful production. As Lindgren (2011) suggests “some stories lend themselves to a montage format, where the components drive the narrative forward all by themselves without the need for a voice explaining what is going on” (56). A well-constructed and judiciously edited narrative can seamlessly link archival audio with contributor interviews, avoiding the need for a presenter. Themes and timelines can be effectively

⁹⁹ Interview with anonymous radio producer conducted 2 February 2016

connected without the need for additional exposition. This can be a particularly effective technique, as it does not take the listener out of the ‘moment’ by drawing attention to the production framework behind a documentary. However, the decision to use, or not use, a presenter requires careful consideration. Although a presenter-less approach can be heard within many successful radio documentaries, my research has uncovered few examples from the music documentary genre. The most common practice is to use a presenter who introduces contributors, provides factual information and explains key points in the story. The use of a presenter is by no means a necessity but, as I have indicated, they can be an effective tool in music documentary production.

This section has assessed many of the practicalities and technical processes involved in the production of *Let’s Dance at 30* for Absolute Radio. By assessing my approach to these essential production components, this chapter revealed how my practice has evolved throughout the course of this study. I now examine the use of the Internet throughout this project, and consider post broadcast online responses to the documentary.

7.4. Online technologies

In the five-year period which followed the broadcast of my initial Bowie documentary, continuing improvements in digital technologies and mobile communications increasingly altered the way audiences engage with online audio. Mobile phone and tablet devices now offer easy access to online audio platforms, while stations have made digital documentary content more readily available. This section assesses the role that Internet-based technologies played in the production and distribution of the final *Let’s Dance at 30 Bowie* documentary. As with the *XFM 25* documentary series, the Internet

was used to quickly and cost effectively transfer interview audio, as well as the final documentary. On completing my initial production work, I submitted a draft version of the documentary to Absolute Radio, a week in advance of broadcast, using file sharing technology. This allowed the work to be scrutinised by station management to ensure there were no final compliance or technical issues. Once approved, the final audio was then loaded into the station's *Genesys* radio automation system for network transmission. As discussed in chapter five, the ability to send audio digitally represents a major shift from the analogue era, when independently produced audio was physically sent to stations via post or courier on either a reel-to-reel tape, LP record or CD. My final production work was delivered instantly through cloud file sharing systems, such as *Dropbox*¹⁰⁰ and *WeTransfer*¹⁰¹. As discussed, the practice of file sharing saves costs and allows producers extra time to concentrate on making final adjustments before having to submit the final mix.

Let's Dance at 30 featured a wide range of archival audio clips within its structure. Kaempfer and Swanson (2004) define the term 'audio clip' to mean a short section of spoken audio, that "can be a clip of a newsmaker, from a television show or from a movie" (207). Emm (2002) believes that without the inclusion of archival material "the product would be very bare, basic and with no extra dimension" (147). I regularly used short television and film clips within the documentary to provide separation between sections and to introduce certain themes within the storyline. They also helped to add energy and sonic variety, while providing historical context. This content was mainly researched and sourced using online platforms such as YouTube and fan-based file sharing sites. In an interview for BBC Arts, acclaimed music

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.dropbox.com/h>

¹⁰¹ <https://wetransfer.com>

documentary producer Julien Temple discussed his use of the Internet in the search to find appropriate content, claiming it had revolutionised the process:

"Just as you can now do initial research on film clips on YouTube, I often found myself hunting for suitable music on Spotify. The old way to do a documentary was to write and rewrite your script and then hunt out video and audio material to support what you've said. But now you can research material on the Internet and decide something is irresistible and has to go in. There's an element of beachcombing - though it still helps to have fantastic archive researchers"¹⁰².

This reference to 'beachcombing' for online content resonates with my own experience. By trawling through the vast repository of online audio and video content, it was possible to locate appropriate archival material, music tracks and potential contributors. Once identified, the use of audio-ripping websites, as discussed in chapter five, enabled me to download this content for final inclusion within my productions.

As well as being a useful production tool, the Internet has become increasingly important in distributing music documentaries. The online provision of *Let's Dance at 30* was a required output of my production work. According to an Absolute Radio Media Pack, the station's target audience are "tech-savvy and understand how the digital world can help them to access and share great content"¹⁰³. Sylvester stated that when Absolute Radio commission documentaries there is an understanding that the final audio will be made available as on-demand content, alongside the live radio broadcast. I assert that commercial stations, such as Absolute Radio, view online music documentaries to be of equal value to traditionally broadcast versions. This claim is supported by Sylvester, who commented:

"These documentaries nowadays as much as being scheduled for live broadcast are as important in terms of an on-demand proposition because we know we

¹⁰² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-36868393>

¹⁰³ <http://www.bauermedia.co.uk/brands/absolute-radio>

have to fit in with the lives of the listeners and we need to get rid of the probably previous slightly arrogant assertion that listeners would fit in with us”¹⁰⁴.

According to Mark Barber, Planning Director of the RAB, radio has become part of a much wider audio ecology, which includes on-demand audio and streamed music. This, he believes, means that audiences have more options than ever: “You can get almost anything, anywhere, at any time” (RAB, 2015: 2). In order to connect with this wider ‘ecology’, *Let’s Dance at 30* was made available through a variety of on-demand online audio platforms, including Absolute Radio’s on-demand service.



Fig 7.3: Mixcloud on-demand audio for *Let’s Dance at 30* documentary¹⁰⁵

All the documentaries discussed in this study were publicised on the Internet prior to broadcast. In the days leading up to transmission of *Let’s Dance at 30*, Absolute Radio’s website and Facebook page were used by the station’s web-team to promote the documentary and provide a discussion forum (appendices F and G). Certain fan websites, such as *Duran Duran’s* official website and Facebook page, similarly informed their members about the upcoming broadcast.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Paul Sylvester conducted over the telephone, 15 August 2016

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.mixcloud.com/bcu/bowies-lets-dance-at-30/>



Fig 7.4: Online promotion for the *Let's Dance at 30* on the *Duran Duran* fan-site¹⁰⁶

By uploading the documentary to Mixcloud¹⁰⁷ and Soundcloud¹⁰⁸, the documentary could be embedded within a web page or made available through links within an online article, a blog or via social media. An example of this practice was demonstrated by the website *Exploring David Bowie*¹⁰⁹, which posted a link to a Mixcloud version of the documentary and provided readers with a brief overview (appendices G).

This section examined how online technologies were employed in the production and distribution of *Let's Dance at 30*. Although, as indicated, the Internet provides audiences with considerable benefits, it has not signaled the end of traditional radio broadcasting. I suggest that both transmission platforms are now of equal importance to radio broadcasters. Ong (2002) believes the boundaries between radio and new media are somewhat blurred. Rather than cancelling out more established

¹⁰⁶ <http://duranduranmusic.com/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.mixcloud.com>

¹⁰⁸ <https://soundcloud.com>

¹⁰⁹ <http://exploringdavidbowie.wordpress.com/2013/04/newsflash-9-lets-dance-30/>

forms “they build on them, reinforcing them”. An ongoing process of convergence has meant “old media are stronger than ever” (84). Unlike the previous two documentaries, which were primarily designed for terrestrial broadcast, I view this final reflexive Bowie documentary as being a hybrid production; designed simultaneously for both traditional radio as well as online consumption. Nevertheless, I maintain there is a certain legitimacy bestowed on a production by having it transmitted on AM/FM radio. The Absolute Radio brand, as an established broadcaster, added a sense of integrity to the online versions of the documentary, and endorsed its credentials. I now consider certain inadequacies evident within this concluding radio documentary project.

7.5. Weaknesses and limitations

This section takes stock of weaknesses within the *Let's Dance at 30* project and considers critical responses, in order to gauge whether the production can be viewed as a ‘success’. The ability to objectively reflect on a documentary’s attributes and deficiencies is an important aspect of the producer’s role. Ongoing critiques throughout the production process continually help to refine and shape raw content into its final form. Although *Let's Dance at 30* was an attempt to counter certain issues with my previous production work, there were still aspects of my performance that I was unsatisfied with. I now assess these failings and suggests possible strategies that may have avoided them.

I was fortunate to secure multiple broadcasts for *Let's Dance at 30*. However, I acknowledge I had the fortunate position of approaching the project as a piece of research, without the need for financial gain. Unlike the *Down Under the Moonlight* documentary and the *XFM 25* series, I received no fee for my production work. In this

respect, the commissioning of the project cannot be seen as entirely representative of typical industry practice. However, I was still obliged to follow the standard production protocols and compliance considerations required by Bauer Media and the Absolute Radio network. I therefore maintain that the project can be seen as a legitimate example of practice-led research in the field of commercial radio production.

Let's Dance at 30 was mostly sourced from original content, recorded specifically for the project, although elements of my initial Bowie documentary for Radio Hauraki were still featured within the final production. Having this archive of raw interviews, historic audio and music was invaluable in creating the revised 30th anniversary edition of the project. However, on reflection, I question whether it was possible to obtain more interviews from primary musicians involved in the creation of Bowie's *Let's Dance* album. Although I was generally satisfied with the range of experts I managed to source, it would have benefitted the final production to acquire a greater number of prestigious contributors. I suggest this may have been possible had the project been created for the BBC. Since the Absolute Radio network is relatively unknown outside of the UK, securing international contributors was hampered by the broadcaster's lack of an established worldwide reputation. There were several prospective interviewees I was unable to secure, such as *Let's Dance* producer Nile Rodgers. I exchanged many emails with Rodgers's management team, and although these were initially positive, I was ultimately unable to obtain an interview. Fortunately, Rodgers had taken part in an interview for Absolute Radio in November 2011, in which he spoke about working with Bowie. I was able to utilise this content within the final documentary.

Former Bowie bass player Carmine Rojas and guitarist Carlos Alomar, who performed on the *Serious Moonlight* tour, were approached for interviews, but both

attempts proved unsuccessful. In Crewe's opinion, it has become increasingly difficult to secure contributors for radio documentaries. Although there may be many reasons a contributor is unable, or unwilling, to take part in an interview, he suggests the rise of Social Media and the Internet could be a contributing factor. Crewe believes the emergence of online communication technologies can be seen as competition to radio, rivalling interviews as a way for musicians to disseminate information and promote their work. He suggests that social media has made it easier for artists to reach large international audiences, and as a result, has lessened their desire to participate in traditional radio interviews.

“I can Tweet, as a famous artist or even a moderately famous artist, and I can get my message out to all the people who follow me and are interested in me. I don't have to worry about the other people who don't really care about me because I've got millions of ones who do. And, I can do that in a heartbeat and I can hit the whole world. So what is the value in me doing this, or doing a music documentary, or being interviewed for a music documentary about someone else, which is usually what you're looking for. So, I think it's been become harder to secure people”¹¹⁰.

I was concerned about gender disparity within the documentary. Although I attempted to source more female interviewees, I was ultimately only able to secure two female contributors within the final production. I accept this was not ideal, as it gave the documentary an overly androcentric perspective. Another weakness can be seen in the inclusion of a telephone interview. Although I requested a face-to-face interview with record producer Pete Waterman, I was offered a phone interview instead. Had I been more assertive in my approach, it may have been possible to carry out this interview in person, thereby resulting in a higher quality recording. However, I decided to accept the opportunity for a telephone interview, which subsequently yielded relevant content that was used throughout the final documentary. Chantler and Stewart (2009) believe

¹¹⁰ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

the inclusion of telephone audio has been traditionally considered as “a lazy and cheap way of doing interviews, avoiding the time and cost of travelling to a location” (122). They believe this can be a misleading view as there may be a valid editorial justification for the use of telephone interviews. I rationalised the inclusion of the Waterman interview as he was an enthusiastic, knowledgeable contributor, and the telephone recording provided a unique sonic-texture, adding variety to the overall sound of the production. However, I would have preferred the higher audio fidelity of a face-to-face interview.

The general response towards the documentary was positive, yet I believe the reception was somewhat diluted by the arrival of several other Bowie related radio documentaries, following the release of his first album in ten years, *The Next Day*. The unexpected release of this album, on the eighth of January 2013, had a considerable impact on the *Let's Dance at 30* project. It was my intention to create an original production for an audience ‘starved’ of new Bowie documentary content. However, several stations were spurred into commissioning new Bowie documentaries by the release of *The Next Day* album, and by the success of the V&A Museum’s *David Bowie Is* exhibition in 2013. I was required to radically alter the ending of my earlier draft versions of the documentary, in which contributors commented on the lack of any new Bowie recordings. Several interviewees claimed he would never record another album. Following the release of Bowie’s new record, this content became instantly redundant and had to be replaced with an entirely new concluding section. Although I lost valuable production time reworking the documentary’s narrative, this was necessary in order to produce an up-to-date, accurate production.

Although I recognise certain deficiencies in my performance as a producer during this project, I am generally confident that the final documentary improved on

my initial and intermediary radio productions. I suggest that *Let's Dance at 30* sounds 'tighter' and the narrative moves faster than *Down Under the Moonlight*. Contributors were of a higher calibre overall and the production featured a greater variety of on location recordings and archival material. The final mixdown was a more sophisticated effort, benefitting from the experience gained over the previous projects. My skill as an editor had improved since the intermediary project for Xfm, and the overall structure of the programme was more creative than the predictable, linear approach apparent in my work for Radio Hauraki.

Following the documentary's broadcast, I received feedback from Absolute Radio staff, expressing their satisfaction with the project (appendices E). Martyn Lee, a presenter on Absolute 80's, commented: "It was fascinating and had a wonderful roster of guests. Very, very well made"³⁹. James Curran, the Director of Music at Absolute Radio, emailed to say: "Thank you Sam. You are a gifted documentary maker as proved by the Bowie and *UB40* docs. We can't wait to see what you come up with next!"¹¹¹. *Let's Dance at 30* was subsequently entered in national and international radio competitions to assess how the work would stand alongside similar music documentaries created in the same production period. As a result, the documentary was nominated as a finalist in the Best Music Special category of the 2014 New York Radio Festival and I was named a finalist in the 2014 UK Radio Academy's, Radio and Production (RAP) awards Best Entertainment Producer section. Although the documentary did not win in these categories, reaching finalist status as a freelance practitioner, in categories featuring work from in-house documentary department and large international production companies, is an indication the project's overall success. McHugh (2014) believes radio awards provide a "tier of evaluation" which confirm the

¹¹¹ Personal email correspondence, 2013

worth of documentaries and features (26). Gillian Reynolds (206), *The Daily Telegraph's* radio critic and a judge for the ARIA awards, believes that awards are important to the radio industry, providing an externally recognised affirmation of a production's worth "by people whose judgment is respected but may not previously have been their listeners"¹¹². Sylvester agreed that radio awards could be "a real force for good", claiming they are of value for individual teams, stations, businesses, and for the radio industry in general.

"They bring your radio station credibility. They bring your radio station industry awareness. They bring, potentially if it's a client-sponsored documentary, they bring the chance of repeat business. I think they're a great morale booster for your team. I think it's great to reward amazing work and I think for our industry it's brilliant that we are seen to be celebrating success and promoting the great stuff that radio is all about and the great stuff that radio makes in whatever form"¹¹³.

Although award recognition can be gratifying, a more pragmatic measure of accomplishment can be found in Absolute Radio's decision to rebroadcast my original Bowie documentary. As indicated, *Let's Dance at 30* had a total of three transmission dates, across Absolute Radio's DAB, online, FM and AM platforms, including Absolute Radio, Absolute 80s and Absolute Classic Rock. These repeat broadcasts provide evidence that the documentary fulfilled the expectations of station management, validating my efforts as a music documentary producer for commercial radio. I now draw my conclusions to this chapter, which consider the findings gathered during this concluding stage of research. This section draws from the knowledge gained from my practice-based investigations across the three projects discussed in this study.

7.6. Conclusion

¹¹² <http://radiotoday.co.uk/2016/08/gillian-reynolds-on-the-importance-of-radio-awards/>

¹¹³ Telephone interview with Paul Sylvester conducted 15 August 2016

The completion of *Let's Dance at 30* brought to a close the final iteration in a concurrent series of music documentary productions, specifically created for commercial radio. This reflexive stage of my practice-based research provides an assessment of contemporary industry practice, up to the point of the project's conclusion. By reflecting on the technical and theoretical processes involved in the conceptualisation and construction of this project, and its subsequent reception, I examined the overall effectiveness of my practice as a freelance documentary producer. By returning to the same topic as my initial Bowie documentary, I have traced the evolution of my practice, from an instinctive to a reflexive freelance radio producer. I claimed that freelance producers are now capable of carrying out all facets of audio documentary production. The emergence of multi-skilled radio producers has been made possible by the increased affordability and advanced processing power of modern digital workstations and digital recording equipment. I concurred with Connelly's (2012) assertion that new technologies enable producers to deliver creative, cost-effective radio productions.

This chapter identified a lack of opportunities for freelancers and independent companies seeking to produce music documentaries for commercial radio in the UK. Although I agreed with Emm's (2002) assertion that commercial radio does not commission a great deal of external content because of limited budgets, I revealed future funding possibilities in the form of branded documentary content. The industry uses music documentaries as a way to differentiate stations in increasingly competitive markets. This reflects Myers' (2009) belief, as indicated in chapter two, that spoken word content can help radio stations stand apart from their competitors. I maintained

that original music documentaries drive new radio audiences, build loyalty amongst existing listeners and enhance a station's brand profile.

I assessed the key technical practices carried out during the production of *Let's Dance at 30* and claimed freelance producers need to be fully cognisant of commercial considerations at every stage of the production process. Music documentaries designed for commercial radio have specific requirements, such as the need to accommodate advertising and appeal to short attention spans. I discovered that contemporary documentary production has developed an increasingly faster approach to editing. This acceleration stems from increased competition for audience attention in multiple media environments.

The reflexive stage of my practice-based research sought to address the challenges encountered with the presentation of my previous two music documentary projects. I rationalised the decision to use Sutherland as the presenter of *Let's Dance at 30*, in response to issues arising from station supplied presenters. By selecting an independent voice, not associated with Absolute Radio, and personally directing Sutherland's delivery in the studio, this final production was ultimately more effective than *Down Under the Moonlight* and *XFM 25*.

This chapter assessed the use of online technologies during the production of *Let's Dance at 30*. The Internet was a valuable production tool; simplifying the research process and providing an expansive repository of audio material. Online file sharing technologies provide a convenient and affordable means of transferring audio, such as interviews, music and final mixes, across large distances, while providing extra time to finesse productions. The availability of *Let's Dance at 30* via online audio platforms, such as Mixcloud and Soundcloud, is indicative of the industry's move towards on-demand listening. I suggested that online audio platforms have made it easier for

listeners to find and consume music documentaries, and created global audiences for the work of freelance radio producers.

I considered weaknesses within the project and suggested strategies which may have improved my performance. Although certain deficiencies in my instinctual and intermediary projects were addressed, there were still limitations which impacted on the documentary's overall success. Nevertheless, I concluded that this final Bowie project fulfilled its purpose by demonstrating the professional broadcast standards required by the commercial radio industry. By documenting my progress as freelance producer across three iterative phases of production, culminating with *Let's Dance at 30*, I have revealed the newfound skills and knowledge accrued across five years of industry practice and academic investigation. In doing so, I provide a 'real world' insight into the field of freelance music documentary production for commercial radio. The completion of this section brings my findings to a close. I now draw my final conclusions, which consider the central questions underpinning this research.

CONCLUSION

By reflecting on my practice as a freelance music documentary producer for commercial radio, I have identified three findings. Firstly, contemporary freelancers are now able to combine a number of previous separate positions into one multi-skilled role. This has been possible through advances in digital production tools and online technologies. New approaches to music documentary production and administration processes have enabled freelance producers to create broadcast standard content outside the structures of in-house departments and independent production companies. Secondly, although the shifting political economy of commercial radio has resulted in fewer music documentaries within programming schedules, lower production costs and new revenue streams provide optimism for future opportunities in the field. Thirdly, commercial radio stations recognise the value of music documentaries as a means to reinforce listener loyalty, build new audiences and differentiate themselves in increasingly fragmented, competitive radio markets.

To reach these conclusions, I used a practice based methodology, which interrogated my performance as a freelance radio producer over a five-year period. Chapters five, six and seven detailed my progress across three specific music documentary projects. During this iterative process, I moved from my initial position as an ‘instinctual’ industry practitioner, through to an exploratory ‘intermediary’ phase that honed my craft and provided the opportunity for research. I then reached a final ‘reflexive’ stage, which employed the skills and newfound knowledge gained from the previous two projects. I tested my findings against the experience of industry practitioners through a series of interviews. These enabled me to question my

assumptions as a freelancer and revealed new insights into ‘real world’ production practices.

The use of a practice-based framework was chosen to address a lack of scholarship in freelance music documentary production and to reveal a first-hand, practitioner’s perspective. The purpose of this dissertation is to recognise music documentaries for commercial audiences as being distinct from journalistic documentary studies, which are typically situated within the field of public service broadcasting. In chapter one, where I historicised the development of commercial radio, I showed how free market broadcasting has evolved and discussed its role in shaping the wider industry. As Fairchild (2012) states, prevailing political and economic ideologies have impacted on the output of both public service and commercial broadcasters. Using political economy as a framework to consider how changing legislation has guided contemporary commercial programming, I revealed how music documentaries have been affected by external political control, such as the deregulation of international radio markets in the Eighties and Nineties (Stoller and Wray, 2010). Although radio documentaries were once a legal requirement for UK commercial broadcasters, as regulations were increasingly relaxed, they became less frequently heard on commercial formats (Barnard, 1989).

Global redundancies and a downsizing of the radio industry in recent years has led to an increasing need for multi-skilled producers, capable of sourcing and producing content with limited budgets and resources. As Connelly (2012) observes, new technologies have assisted producers in the delivery of cost-effective content. However, as the studies of Bonini and Gandini (2016) suggest, the changing political economy has created insecurity for freelancers in the radio sector. Although advances in technology have enabled freelance producers to carry out a multitude of tasks, they

have consequently reduced job opportunities as fewer people are required to create content. The development of new production practices has, therefore, provided both opportunities and drawbacks for freelance radio producers. I acknowledge this study comes from the advantageous position of being a fully-employed academic. My production work was often performed as a by-product of my research activities, which offset my expenses. This can be seen as a limitation of the study, as it is questionable whether a truly independent freelancer would receive adequate financial remuneration to complete these projects without assistance.

I positioned the sub-category of music documentaries for commercial radio within the wider field of documentary studies and identified key production elements used in their construction. Contemporary freelance practices have been shaped by the innovations of pioneering radio producers, who harnessed new technologies to further the medium's creative potential. Although my research centred on the UK radio industry, it offered a global perspective, as my initial practice-based study (appendices A, 1) focused on documentaries produced for the New Zealand market. This demonstrates how online technologies have provided freelance producers with international commissioning opportunities. As radio is no longer defined by geocentric transmission, documentaries can now reach global audiences (Lindgren and McHugh, 2013).

8.1. Freelance music documentary production practices

This study interrogated key components in the creation of music documentaries, including the commissioning process. I maintained there is a need for freelance producers to develop a strong network of contacts within the industry, to build

confidence in their ability to deliver industry compliant projects on time and within budget. Hausman et al. (2004) and McLeish (2005) assert that station management are primarily concerned with audience figures when assessing new programming ideas. However, I claim contemporary radio programmers are equally interested in the ability of music documentaries to build listener loyalty and to enhance the station's brand.

My findings explored the technical activities involved in music documentary production, and found the development of digital technologies has had a considerable impact on radio documentary production. The editing process has become faster and more precise, audio processing and noise reduction software has become increasingly sophisticated, and multi-track productions can be refined without the challenge of performing a real-time mix-down. Crewe¹¹⁴, Fish¹¹⁵ and Anderson¹¹⁶ supported my observation that the pace of radio editing has quickened over time. This reflects the production values of the work presented in this study, which increasingly built in speed and complexity throughout this study. This theme of innovation informed my investigation of online technologies. The Internet has provided a valuable production resource; simplifying the task of researching and sourcing content. The development of file-sharing websites has enabled producers to instantly send audio across large distances and therefore push back deadlines, while saving costs. Documentary producers can also use online communication platforms, such as social media, chatrooms and forums, to learn more about the expectations of target audiences, and gain insight into how their productions were received.

Following the completion of *Let's Dance at 30* Absolute Radio asked me to produce a two-part music documentary about the band *Led Zeppelin*. The project, *Bring*

¹¹⁴ Interview with Russell Crewe conducted 12 March 2015

¹¹⁵ Interview with Ian Fish conducted 5 April 2013

¹¹⁶ Interview with Rose Anderson conducted 7 March 2015

It On Home: The Led Zeppelin Story (Coley, 2015), drew heavily on the knowledge gained from this study, and was subsequently awarded ‘Silver’ in the music documentary category of the 2017 New York Radio Festivals. A review in *Radio Times*, titled *Why Radio Needs a Revolution in 2016*, specifically referenced this documentary as a model of good practice. Reviewer Jane Anderson commented:

“Absolute, for example, has started to commission music documentaries that would sit quite happily on (BBC) 6 Music or Radio 4. *Bring It On Home: The Led Zeppelin Story*, which went out last autumn, combined first-person accounts and rare recordings. It was well received by critics and listeners alike. Expertly researched and made programmes like these will engage audience loyalty a hundred times over the traditional DJ-song-DJ format”¹¹⁷.

Her comment supports my thesis by underscoring two central findings of this research. Firstly, Anderson was unaware the series had been produced by a freelancer, or as academic activity, yet she equates the calibre of this production to the music documentaries broadcast on BBC stations. This supports my claim that freelancers are able to independently conceptualise and complete productions which previously required a team of several people to perform. Secondly, Anderson concurs with my assertion that music documentaries on commercial radio can be used to build listener loyalty. My research indicates that commercial stations view music documentaries as a way to differentiate themselves in competitive radio markets. However, the industry still considers music documentaries to be niche content and commissioning opportunities are restricted by financial constraints (Emm, 2002). Although the commercial sector has struggled to fund music documentary content, I identified new revenue streams, such as branded documentaries, which provide alternative commissioning opportunities for freelance producers. McHugh (2014) believes public interest in audio documentaries is growing. This increasing appetite, coupled with

¹¹⁷ <http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-01-15/why-radio-needs-a-revolution-in-2016/>

improved access to online audio content, suggests an optimistic future for freelance music documentary production.

9.2. New directions for radio documentary studies

Past practice-based studies, such as the work of Lindgren (2011) and McHugh (2011), have investigated factual, journalistic approaches to radio documentary production, focused on public service broadcasting. By researching music documentary production for commercial radio, I revealed a need to broaden the field of radio studies to include non-journalistic endeavours, and to consider contemporary approaches to freelance radio production. Further research is required to provide a deeper understanding of commercial radio practices and to assess the impact of digital production tools and online technologies on radio production. Although McEwan (2010) questions whether digital technologies have reshaped traditional radio into a ‘new’ media experience, I suggest they have greatly enhanced certain production activities. Hausman et al. (2012) believe the emergence of internet radio has created new opportunities for radio producers and programmers, while Crook (2012) claims the development of online technologies has assisted in the creation of original radio content. Yet, the specifics of these new production possibilities are seldom recognised in academic studies and radio worktexts.

My study recognises music documentaries for the commercial sector as being distinct from journalistic, public service productions and acknowledges them as a legitimate strand of the radio documentary genre, worthy of further study. According to Keith (2007), commercial broadcasting is the most commonly used international model, while Barnard (2000) notes that commercial radio is “the most dominant form

of sound broadcasting in the world”, reaching large global audiences everyday (49). I therefore maintain the production of documentary content for the commercial sector warrants greater investigation; using practice-based approaches to yield new insight into an undervalued, seldom researched, field. To truly understand the political economy of commercial radio, and the activities of freelance producers working in the sector, a practice-based, first-hand perspective is necessary.

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RADIO AND FILM DOCUMENTARIES, RADIO SERIES, PODCASTS

- 20 Feet From Stardom*, 2013 (film) Directed by Neville, M., Tremolo Productions
Gil Friesen Productions.
- All Things Considered*, 1971- (radio series) Produced by Seigel, R., NPR
- All You Need is Love*, 1977 (television series) Directed by Palmer, T., London
Weekend Television.
- American Top 40 1970* - (radio series) Produced by Allyn, E., Watermark
- Amy*, 2015 (film) Directed by Kapadia, A., Film Four.
- Anvil! The Story of Anvil*, 2009 (film) Directed by Gervasi, S., Abramorama.
- Bowie: The Definitive Story*, 2013 (radio documentary) Produced by Critchlow, P.,
TBI Media, Absolute Radio.
- Bowie's Waiata*, 2008 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., RNZ
- Bring It On Home: The Led Zeppelin Story*, 2015 (radio documentary) Produced by
Coley, S., Absolute Radio.
- Britain in Day* (2012), Morgan, M., Scott Free Productions
- Conjuring Halie* 2012 (radio documentary) Produced by Cuddon, S. BBC Radio 4
- Crisis in Spain*, 1931 (radio documentary) Produced by Harding, A., BBC.
- Dark Coffee*, 2017 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Switch Radio
- Deadly Dust*, 2008 (radio documentary) Produced by Lindgren, M., ABC.
- DiG!*, 2004 (film) Directed by Timoner, O., Interloper Films, Celluloid Dreams.
- Down Under the Moonlight*, 2008 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Radio
Hauraki.
- Fahrenheit 9/11*, 2004 (film) Directed by Moore M., Lions Gate Films
- Let's Dance at 30*, 2013 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Absolute Radio
- Marrying Out*, 2009 (radio documentary) Produced by McHugh, S., ABC

Metallica: Some Kind of Monster, 2004 (film) Directed by Berlinger, J. Sinofsky, B., Paramount Pictures.

Moana, 1926 (film) Directed by Flaherty, R., Paramount Pictures

Music101, 2001 - (radio series), Produced by various, RNZ

One World Flight, 1946 (radio documentary) Produced by Corwin, N., CBS.

Prince "Parade" Documentary Deleted Scenes, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

Profiles in Rock, 1980 (radio series) Produced by Watermark, Watermark

Radio Ballads, 1958 - 1964 (radio documentary) Produced by Parker, C., BBC.

Radiolab, 2002 - (radio series) Produced by Wheeler, S., WNYC

S-Town, 2017 (podcast series) Produced by Reed, B. Snyder, J., Serial Productions

Searching for Sugar Man, 2012 (film) Directed by Bendjelloul, M., Sveriges Television, YLE, Passion Pictures, Red Box Films

Serial, 2014 (podcast series) Produced by Koenig, S, WBEZ

Solitude Trilogy, 1967 - 1977 (radio documentary series) Produced by Gould, G., CB

The Beatle Plot, 1969 (radio documentary) Produced by Gibb, R., WKNR

The Eagles Brood, 1947 (radio documentary) Produced by Shayon, L., CBS.

The Filth and the Fury, 2000 (film) Directed by Temple, J., Film Four

The History of Rock and Roll, 1981 (radio series) Produced by Drake, B., RKO

The Kitchen Sisters, 1979 – (radio series) Produced by Nelson D., Silva N., NPR

The Lonesome Train, 1944 (radio drama) Produced by Corwin, N., CBS

The Long, Long Trail, 1961 (radio documentary) Produced by Chilton, A., BBC.

The Long March of Everyman, 1971 (radio series) Produced by Mason, M., BBC

The Radio Ballads, 1958 - 1964 (radio documentary series) Produced by Parker, C., BBC

The Radio Diaries, 1996 - (radio series) Produced by Richman, J., NPR

The Robert W. Morgan Special of the Week, 1980 (radio series) Produced by Watermark, Watermark

The Sound of the Joe, 2003 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Radio Hauraki.

The Story of Pop, 1973 - 1974 (radio documentary series) Produced by the BBC,

This American Life, 1995 - (radio series) Produced by Glass, I., Public Radio International, NPR

UB40: Signing Off, 2010 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Absolute Radio, BBC WM.

War of the Worlds, 1940 (radio drama) Directed by Welles, O., CBS Radio

XFM 25, 2011 (radio documentary series) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

XFM 25: Beastie Boys, Licensed to Ill, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

XFM 25: Metallica, Master of Puppets, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

XFM 25: New Order, Brotherhood, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

XFM 25: P.I.L., Album, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Absolute Radio, Xfm

XFM 25: Prince, Parade, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Absolute Radio, Xfm

XFM 25: R.E.M., Lifes Rich Pageant, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

XFM 25: Talk Talk, The Colour of Spring, 2011 (radio documentary) Produced by Coley, S., Xfm

APPENDIX A

Submitted radio documentaries, to be considered alongside this practice-based research project.

1: 2008, Instinctual Production Phase

- *Down Under the Moonlight*
- Total duration 96 minutes, Radio Hauraki, New Zealand

- *Bowie's Waiata*
- Total duration 26 minutes, Radio New Zealand, New Zealand

2: 2011, Intermediary Production Phase

- *Xfm 25*
- Total duration 50 minutes. Compilation, showcasing the work of twelve x 55 minute documentaries, Xfm, United Kingdom (submitted for New York Radio awards 2012).

3: 2013, Reflexive Production Phase

- *Let's Dance at 30*
- Total duration 55 minutes, Absolute Radio, United Kingdom

Part One

Title: *Let's Dance at 30 Part 1*

Format: MP3

Size: 44,446,496 bytes

Duration: 23:09

Total bit rate: 256,000

Part Two

Title: *Let's Dance at 30 Part 2*

Format: MP3

Size: 53,234,720 bytes

Duration: 27:44

Total bit rate: 256,000

Part Three

Title: *Let's Dance at 30 Part 3*

Format: MP3

Size: 8,079,392 bytes

Duration: 4:12

Total bit rate: 256,000

APPENDIX B

A selected sample of interviews conducted with industry professionals and radio academics. These were carried out, where indicated, in person and on the telephone.

Extract One

Interview with Russell Crewe, documentary producer and manager of the Like It Is independent radio production company, conducted on 12 March 2015, Moor Street Station, Birmingham.

Interviewer: So, I want to start by asking you about presentation, specifically the role of the celebrity, in securing commissions. Maybe we should just start with the commissioning part of it. What are your thoughts on the use of big name celebrities, or perhaps musicians, or actors as presenters in order to secure commissions for independent radio producers?

Crewe: Yes, well if you make a documentary for *Radio 1* and *Radio 1Xtra* part of the deal is they will offer a small discount on the guide price if you use one of their presenters because they have a deal when you sign up to be a presenter at *Radio 1* and *1Xtra*. Part of the deal is agreeing to voice documentaries if asked. It tends to be the same voices quite a lot, for example Mr Jams, and Zane Lowe before he left. They tend to be the most popular voices because they're good at doing it, but they are effectively a gob on a stick. You might get them to go to an interview with you. There are some documentaries where they've actually gone out and interacted. In most cases the producer comes up with the idea, gets the interviews, puts the whole thing together and they read a script that you've written and they maybe make changes because of the way they speak, but it's relatively minor. *Radio 2* are completely preoccupied with the celebrity and it is my opinion that they place the celebrity and what they bring, where it's TV kudos, whether it's Twitter followers and Facebook followers, whatever it might be, over the content.

Interviewer: So, you can understand the desire of broadcasters to use celebrity talent in order to attract listeners?

Crewe: Oh, yes, I get it. I completely get it. I understand that... what I find frustrating and I guess this is because we don't get as many documentaries on commercial radio stations... my frustration with the BBC is that they're a public service broadcaster first of all. They're not beholden to listener figures, even though it's the thing that the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers beat them over the head with, it doesn't matter if they have less or more because it's about serving the public and they should be doing the types of things that other people don't do. And, most of the time they do it brilliantly, but at the same time I know that there are certain topics that they won't do because they get

fewer listeners. I'm like, hang on what about the minority listeners who do want to hear that? Surely we should be spreading this out a bit more.

Interviewer: And, so you're relating that to the use of celebrities - in that they don't really need to chase the audience with 'stars', they could find other appropriate presenters?

Crewe: Absolutely, because I don't think they need... I understand they go for big names because they want big listener figures. But as a public service broadcaster they don't need to have big audience listener figures. They don't need to have it all the time. They can have shows that are listened to by minorities of people because it's the British Broadcasting Corporation not the famous star people corporation, you know. It's not just about, "oh, all the people like all the mainstream stuff". Why can't we have lesser-known people that tell us something that might be magical and interesting and fascinating? So, it's hugely frustrating. To repeat what I said, that I understand why they have the big names, that doesn't make it right.

Interviewer: Do you even need to use a presenter at all?

Crewe: Not all documentaries can work without a presenter. Sometimes you need someone to be there going "you won't believe what I can see", right? sometimes you need someone to paint those pictures. I'm not opposed to presenters, but I do think there are other ways of making things. I love making music documentaries without presenters or limiting how much the presenter has to do in the piece. Because you can weave it together with the lyrics of the music and the different contributors - I very often get lots of contributors to tell the same story - you cut them altogether. And because you're changing voices - you keep momentum. But they're all telling the same story and the same experience.

Interviewer: Can I ask whether your company, *Like It Is*, makes documentaries for commercial radio stations?

Crewe: No. I'd love to make music documentaries for commercial stations. I would love to do it. Honestly, it's the one thing, because I know that they would have listeners who'd be wowed by it. Because there's a million ways you can make a documentary and you can make a documentary without it being obvious it's a documentary. The first thing is, you don't say 'and now here's our documentary about Paul McCartney'. You don't pitch it in that way. You sell it in a different way. I'd love to make documentaries for commercial radio stations.

Interviewer: What do you think it is that radio broadcasters in general are looking for in contemporary documentaries?

Crewe: We're looking at music documentaries, but actually if you look at documentaries across the board, what is wanted from commissioners is unique perspectives, fresh insights and imaginative treatment. Something creative, whether it's editorial treatment or production technique, that tells you something different. So, it might be that you've got a topic that we all know about, but it might be an alternative view, and alternative way of looking at what we're all experiencing. On the other hand there aren't that many new ideas anymore. There are not many things that come up that none of us new anything about, so it's about finding a different way in to the same story.

Extract Two

Interview with Rose Anderson, Executive Director of the New York Festivals International Radio Programs Awards, 7 March 2015, New York Festival Offices, 39th Street, New York.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your own pathway into the Festivals, and how the awards operate in general?

Anderson: I have a production background myself. I stopped my degree programme with a Masters in broadcast journalism – and then spent many years in network television, in news, sports, and entertainment and documentary production. So, I come with that sense of bias and that point of view. Namely, what you put on the air first has to be ready, second has to be true and third has to be of some value. It really is in my professional DNA. So, one of the things that we've been doing at New York Festivals since I arrived here five years ago is to create a place and a community where excellence is recognised and acknowledged. Now, how do you acknowledge excellence? How do you recognise excellence? In academia, many times, it's with honours, with highest honours, with distinction, with a grade point average, with peer review comments. I think in the practitioner world the best way to do that is to have your work listened to and be acknowledged by excellent practitioners in the field.

Interviewer: Can you explain how the judging process operates?

Anderson: So, what we do at New York Festivals in the radio awards is, as you know, we have two rounds of judging. We have preliminary judging and then we have a medal round of judging. We invite the medal round winners to be members of the next years grand jury, the thought being if you've created excellence – then you can recognise it. Another thing that we think is so important is something that I call the 360-degree perspective. That is if you're a producer or writer or a director you have an aesthetic code, you have a journalistic code, whatever that is – you have an ethos, a set of beliefs that define your creative output. That can be affected by the culture you live in, by the various things you read, the things you listen to, the things you look at. So, here at

New York Festivals we not only ask our jury members to be award winners, but we actively recruit them from many different countries. So, what you have is a situation where you'll have one judge from one country, another judge from another country, another judge from another country, etc. – all judging one piece of work.

Sometimes they'll give it exactly the same score, but whatever the score they give to my mind is less important than the fact that you had a group of many different points of view and many different references all coming together to decide on the intrinsic value of a certain piece. And, I think what that does for the entrants, is that it gives them a wider footprint for their own work. Many times if you think about it, certainly in recent times with so much unrest in so many different parts of the world, radio has taken a very strong position in change because the medium allows that to happen. And, in some cases peoples work isn't really heard because it could be dangerous to them, and so New York Festivals gives an arena that's larger than a local market or a single country and I think that's something that's very important, especially as the world today gets smaller and smaller.

Interviewer: To me, it seems one of the real strengths of the New York Festivals is that it recognises the output of commercial radio, something that a lot of other radio awards don't seem to do...

Anderson: Absolutely. We make room for every kind of programming. We have student radio. We have commercial local radio. We have commercial syndicated radio. We have public radio. We also accept entries from production companies that syndicate on a national and international level and this year for the first time we've been accepting audio books, since that is another form of radio. Last year for the first time we expanded our horizons to include sound art, so that we go beyond journalism, drama and go into sound itself.

Interviewer: Since you've been involved in the Festivals, have you noticed any sort of changes in approach to radio production? Has there been a shift perhaps? Is it becoming more 'naturalised' or more 'journalistic' or faster paced in terms of editing etc....?

Anderson: Well, I think faster paced is probably true, meaning, there is more information packed into the same discreet amount of space – if time were 'space'. So, what I would say based on what I've been listening to, is that more and more entries are becoming more rounded. I think there is always going to be a certain percentage of programming that is at a very innovative level – and I think there's always going to be some programming that's going to be more 'hard cutting' than something else. But, what I've noticed is the level of the sound quality is phenomenal. All I can think of is that technology has enabled some of that, but I think what we're seeing is a combination of sophistication across the board and people are really listening, so that I think feeds more innovative programming.

Extract Three

Interview with radio producer and academic David Corser, conducted on 21 January 2015, at Birmingham City University, Parkside Campus, Birmingham.

Interviewer: Can I start by asking you to recall a music documentary using a celebrity voice that perhaps didn't work so well?

Corser: The one that I remember was a Motown documentary that had Martha Reeves. And it was so obvious that she hadn't read the script, or written the script – nor could she read it. A name would obviously tick lots of boxes - but it didn't work as a programme that's for sure.

Interviewer: So, generally speaking, are you convinced that having a documentary presented by a recognisable voice is effective?

Corser: In terms of the ones that I've heard - for the finished programme - it doesn't work usually. I think the only way you'll get a good presentation - particularly for a documentary - is if the person is really involved in it. And has been involved in ideally the interviewing, if not that certainly writing the script and having some sort of, dare I say it, ownership of the script. When you just kind of parachute someone in - in my experience it doesn't work very well.

Interviewer: How important do you feel having one of these well-known presenters are in order to get a commission?

Corser: It does sell. And if it's about selling - it is about selling - that's what you have to do. I've come across independent producers who are very good at selling programmes – and not very good at making them. And that may be partially down to using someone as a 'name' who isn't actually, really a presenter in terms of communicating with the audience.

Extract Four

Interview with documentary producer and director Matt Harlock, conducted 23 November 2011, at Birmingham City University, Perry Barr Campus, Birmingham.

Interviewer: How did your team approach the structuring of your Bill Hick's American documentary?

Harlock: The interviewees were telling us these amazing stories and fantastically emotional and heartfelt anecdotes - but what we needed to be able to do was to tie that together with the archive footage of Bill. And what we realized very quickly was that the way to do that was to create an audio edit which is just the voices of these people and you leave black where their heads would be.

Interviewer: So, could you tell me about how you see the role of sound in terms of creating a narrative structure?

Harlock: Well, what you're doing is, you're taking an audio bed which is maybe made up of archive clips which has material in it - but quite often just the voice of the person you have recorded - and you're laying down images and your laying down material that you've found from elsewhere on top of that to counteract their point, to deeper the level of understanding or to provide the subtext or you're enforcing and reengaging the audience by doubling that message and not only showing, but also telling.

Interviewer: ...And then you place these sections together in some sort of timeline?

Harlock: The way we came to see the timeline of American the Bill Hick's story was as an audio bed which then had images and archive placed upon it. I think that's a very good way of thinking about a documentary timeline

Interviewer: And what, in your opinion, is the key to editing or structuring a documentary?

Harlock: Editing is always about shuffling. So basically what you have is a set of either narrative or character points which are being made by somebody's voice. And then you're looking for a way to place, for example Bill, in Eighties New York, or sixties Houston, or nineties London. And quite often the music will be a combination of a time and place cue, and also a mood cue.

Interviewer: So, the use of music fulfills several functions?

Harlock: Yes, you're looking for something, which says dramatic stuff, is going to happen and also it's happening in New York. So you're looking for something, which is jazzy and has a beat under it. But at the same time you've got something plaintive because Bill is going through something like that at the time in that place. And so, what you'll then find is that the music track, if you've selected the right one, has the right feel and the right pace and that will dictate when the words come in and out. So it's kind of like a gradual process where you're finding something which fits the mood and the time and place of the scene music-wise. And then trying to integrate that what you know has to be delivered story-wise and those two stands come together, hopefully, in a way that complement each other and drive the story forward.

Extract Five

Interview with Benedict Peissel, a television Postproduction Dubbing Mixer, conducted 30 June 2015, at Peissel's home in Worcester.

Interviewer: Regarding your approach to sound design - when considering all the

various elements - where do you feel that verbal information, for example the presenter, fits into the overall hierarchy?

Peissel: Top, absolutely top. Dialogue is everything, so it doesn't really matter whether you are working in documentary or drama the words are the thing that tell the story and everything else is, sort of, the supporting act, so whether it's effects or music they are there to support, maybe guide your mood and change how you feel about something, but the story's told in words and it's... I remember a dubbing mixer trained me saying if you can't hear the words you've not done your job properly and it really doesn't matter how fancy, you know...how much work you put in, in every other element, if you can't hear the words you, sort of, rather miss the point. So, yes, absolutely key.

Interviewer: Some film documentary producers I've interviewed have said that you can get away with good sound and poor images better than great images and poor sound. Is that your opinion?

Peissel: Yes, I would certainly agree with that. With my experience working in radio as well as television I would say that, if you've got a well-constructed television programme and you turn off the vision and you just listen to the sound it should actually be able to stand on its own. Radio works without pictures, it can and does stand on its own, so you don't need the pictures. The pictures they add a dimension and they add a wonderful dimension and it's a different experience to radio, but actually the pictures aren't the most important thing. Now I would say that because I am a sound person, but it is... everything that you perceive really the fundamental part of it is through the sound. The story's told through the sound, most of the moot elements of a piece are told through sound and the pictures are really there in support. Now, I know in television and film circles actually the perception is actually the pictures are...actually probably more so in television, I think good film producers really appreciate really good sound, but TV terms it's second-class.

Interviewer: That's very interesting. I didn't know you came from a radio background. Could you tell me more about that?

Peissel: When I started at the BBC 30 years ago I started as a trainee and I did a three-year traineeship or apprenticeship. Over the period of those three years I worked across radio studios, television studios, radio outside broadcasts, television outside broadcasts, location sound recording and post production sound for television. So, wherever there was a need for sound in the department that I worked in, it didn't matter whether it was radio, TV or film, we would work on it - and that gave fantastic grounding to appreciate sound in all its wonders, if you like.

Interviewer: And so, there was an appreciation of sound that went across both television and radio?

Peissel: Yes. That whole sort of notion about not being tied to the one element, whether it be radio or TV, seemed far too restrictive. Up at Pebble Mill the idea was that if you worked in the craft areas, whether it be camera side or the sound side, you could be put into just about any role, you were very flexible. I think it was a great environment to grow up in, because the place actually thrived on the cross-fertilisation between radio and TV, and TV and radio - and in fact none was seen as one was better than the other. They were just seen as interlocking parts of a bigger jigsaw puzzle.

Extract Six

Interview with Dick Ross, formerly BBC documentary editor, conducted 2 September 2008, at Ross's home in Vacluse.

Interviewer: How would you describe your approach to storytelling?

Ross: I'm an anti-structure storyteller. It's because I come from a Celtic background and the Celtic background stories don't go A, B, C, D - they go as the mind goes, so you go A1, then you go to B2, back to A3 and then you remember A2 and then you tell that bit then you jump to C, then back to D. So, naturally I like stories that feel natural, that feel like there's a human being behind them.

Interviewer: So, you try to use this technique in your documentary production?

Ross: Well, everybody is seduced by a story well told and if the story is not well told there's a feeling of regret. The telling is as important as the substance and therefore everybody who's working on fiction or documentary have to say, 'am I telling it well?' And, the trick is, don't tell too much, let people start to enter the world of the story, let them walk around the universe on their own then they're caught up then, they've made a commitment.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what you consider to be the most important things to keep in mind when producing a documentary?

Ross: You can't take on the problems of the world, nobody wants to look at them and nobody can do that, but a lot of young people think that's what they're going to do. It's better to make a short documentary that works than a long one that dazzles. You have to be factually accurate for a start. You have to check the facts on which it all rests and every so often you have to have the ability to stand back from yourself, tell yourself to camera that this is what I care about and then argue it with yourself so that there's an appearance of balance at least that you are aware that there are other opinions.

Interviewer: Some documentaries tend to be quite didactic and overly educational. Would you agree with that?

Ross: I find that if you hammer people too hard they simply don't listen. You've got to make a decision in documentary that you're going to tell a story. It's not a collection of facts. It is not a polemic. Nobody wants to listen to a sermon or a lecture. They want somebody who cares about something to get to the point of why they care. That's all that a documentary should be about.

Extract Seven

Interview with Andy Ashton, Network Programme Controller Xfm, conducted 18 January 2011, at the researcher's home, Moseley, Birmingham.

Interviewer: I've just played you some early draft excerpts from the series so far, and I wanted to know your thoughts on the speed of edits so far. Are you happy with the pace and the length of the interview clips?

Ashton: I reckon the strength is in cutting quickly, not quickly in terms of not giving them time to talk, but having, you know, more of a mixture of people so it's, sort of, more fast moving - because you've got so much good content and I think you can be really selective with it. And, don't lean on the long clips of songs as much, like, put the hooks in, but don't stretch them out so much. And, if it comes up as 50 minutes with adds rather than 60 minutes with adds I'd rather it finished to ten to the top of the hour and then we roll the album, because it's elastic at the other end, I can... you can treat it as get in use all the content, cut quickly between people, tell the story, with less Ian because they're coming in and out and progressing and he's just got to pop in an reposition bits. And, make it more fast paced, like, because you've got so much good content you can afford to cut between them in every section and let them all tell the story, sort of thing.

Interviewer: A faster pace, great, okay, excellent.

Ashton: That's it. Just let them tell the story, but be selective. Yes, I want a faster pace - because you've got the content.

Interviewer: Can I now ask what the motivation was for the station (Xfm) to broadcast the series?

Ashton: Well, I think it's really interesting to do. I think it's about the life of a band ultimately. It's like a moment in time and you might have released a good album in that moment of time or you might have released a transitional album or you might have made a bad album. It could be a low point in a career, a high point in a career, but documentaries tend to focus on, you know, what's regarded as classic albums, but lots of different things make albums classic, don't they?

Interviewer: Yes, but is it to build 'credibility', is that it? Is it to show you're actually serious? Is it to distance yourself from other stations?

Ashton: I'm committing to the bigger idea of that all their albums add up and mean something as a whole. It's a moment in time. It's 1986, 25 years ago. What was going on? Who were the influences? Who were on the down-curve? Who were on the up-curve? Across the year, as we go through album by album, we're building a picture of, you know, Britain 1986 and what was going on. And, yes, you could say it wasn't the most remarkable year in time for what I regarded as all classic albums, but I think albums are classic in different ways. I think different things make them classic to you personally, like, classic failures or classic successes. There's still, you know, lots of interesting stuff to explore and these are lesser-explored albums.

Interviewer: So, how does the series fit the target audience?

Ashton: Well this is obviously well within my target audience, do you know what I mean? It's probably at the top end of my target audience in terms of, you know, people who were off that age at that time. But, it is about education; any documentary has got an element of education. I'm learning things about these albums as we're putting the series together and, you know, there are so many nuggets already within it of things that you go, 'wow I didn't know that about that album'.

Extract Eight

Interview with Andy Ashton, Network Programme Controller Xfm, conducted 12 June 2011, at the researcher's home, Moseley, Birmingham.

Interviewer: So, we're now halfway through (the *XFM 25* series) and it's interesting to note how the production has possibly changed. I mean, would *you* say that there's been a change? You've listened to them as they've gone along...

Ashton: What I would say is that there was more archival content in their first one because we didn't have many band members, you know. We may have had a producer on the phone but a lot of it was not first hand.

Interviewer: How have the Xfm staff members that have assisted reacted to the series?

Ashton: The guys on the ground in Xfm know that if they do something and they do it really well it's going to contribute to something that once a month is going to be brilliant and has got a higher production value than a lot of the stuff we get a chance to do. And, that has got better and better as the seasons gone on because it's building a heritage.

Interviewer: What's your view on the duration of the documentaries?

Ashton: Yes, well I think basically in terms...well, what we've had is a bit of an embarrassment of riches in terms of circumstance because we've

got this 10pm start time and actually you could make a 40 minute documentary or a 50 minute documentary or a 55 minute documentary within that hour. We don't actually, sort of, say to you make it an hour. Whereas, at the BBC it's a half hour or it's an hour, you know, that would be it. The way we compose the episode depends on what content we've got, doesn't it? And, I think the point is in radio you can never...there's no point in ever packing something out to fill a specific time amount. It's better to work with what you've got, isn't it? And, if it ends up as an absolutely cracking 30 minutes, rather than an average 45 - it's all in the edit.

Interviewer: Well, it's nice to have that flexibility...

Ashton: And, it's 'all killer - no filler', isn't it? That's the basic thing. It's not a new thing.

Interviewer: It's good to know I can email you and say 'I need an extra five minutes' or 'it's going to be a bit shorter', you know. That's great for me.

Ashton: And, in fairness there's been more emails about extending than retracting, but that's because we've had a lot of great content, so, you know, I think that's all good.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your position in terms of compliance?

Ashton: Well, like, my position is this I learnt a long time ago that Xfm is not my radio station, right? I love it. It's my passion in terms of my work and I'm very lucky to do it, but I don't own it and at any minute it could be taken away. Do you know what I mean? And, it's happened before and it could happen again and what I am and what I've accepted that I am through going round the world and working for all sorts of other companies and actually understanding what it really is to be a part of a company at a really useful level, I'm a global radio employee who runs Xfm. But, I have the same responsibility as all the other major managers in that business and that business is the one that pays the bills and sorts it out so that Xfm can ever exist and they are responsible for ultimately what we do with the radio station. And, so from an artistic point of view the argument will always be, from yourself, that's important, but that tells this and that does that. But, the reality of the situation is, is that I'm giving you a platform on behalf of the person who's employing me to run a radio station that I don't own. My only job is to make sure that I never, ever put that business in a position where it is compromised either financially or creatively or litigiously or whatever. It's about making sure that if we do take risks they're assessed and that is the classic cliché of risk assessment, but I think we all do it all the time.

Extract Nine

Interview with Professor Andrew Dubber, former commercial radio producer, conducted 24 March 2013, at the researcher's home, Moseley, Birmingham.

Interviewer: So, we were just listening to the section of the draft Bowie documentary that features Jennifer Otter Bickerdike...

Dubber: Well, the thing I really like about it is because, like you say, it's not necessary about his (Bowie's) best album, but it's a really, really important album for a lot of people for a lot of reasons. And, having that kind of personal anecdote with connecting it to time and place and memory and, you know, roller skates with pompoms and people blasting that and *Men at Work* out their house, kind of, really gives a sense of place. But, also, like the *Men at Work* thing particularly, is a detail that conjures up everything else, you know. You know you're in a beach town. You know you're in a...you know, you've got a 12 year old girl, whatever, roller-skating, but having that other song puts it in to this, kind of, sound track of memories, which is kind of really nice, but it paints the rest of the picture, if you know what I mean.

Interviewer: I've had to be very judicious with the editing of this section because, you know, it's three minutes. That's quite a long chunk for any piece.

Dubber: Yes, is there a way you can, kind of, divide it up because there's, kind of, two sections to that?

Interviewer: I think I might put it in one of the hits in because I've only got the one introduction. I don't have the other guy (Sutherland) introducing her.

Dubber: Yes, but she doesn't need to be introduced again. She's one of the few female voices in the whole thing. She's an American voice. She's a female voice, you know. She speaks in a particular way, so she doesn't need to be reintroduced.

Interviewer: And what about the Nile Rodgers section? You said you felt that he needed more of an introduction?

Dubber: Well, if you're not that much of a fan, I mean, even if you're a reasonable fan - you might not know who Nile Rodgers is. So I'd refer to Nile Rodgers fairly promptly if you can. There's a tension here. There are two problems you need to solve. The first problem is Nile's mentioned right up front - but there's no mention of *who* he is. The other problem that pulls against is that the *Let's Dance* song doesn't happen till halfway through the documentary. The more you move stuff forward the later it's going to be, so it's basically you're going to spend most of the documentary on the first three tracks and then squeeze everything else in at the end.

Interviewer: But, those are the hits. That's what Absolute want, so I'm quite happy to focus mostly on those three tracks. Can I ask you now about your thoughts on the overall sound of commercial radio production as it

compares to public service broadcasting. This there a difference in terms of energy, you know, the pace of it?

Dubber: There is an aesthetic of commercial radio that doesn't transplant. I mean, it's interesting 6 Music has almost a Radio 4 aesthetic to it in a lot of ways because it's more tied to public broadcasting than it's tied to music radio, which is really interesting because it's a music radio station. But, the aesthetics of commercial radio, I mean, you're making a show that sounds continuous, it sounds like a tapestry that, kind of, is not out of place with everything else you hear on that station. So you've taken that approach. What's really interesting is that editing music together most people can't do that, like, I've heard so many, particularly ads for new CDs coming out that were terrible at it - and just not even thinking about where beat one is in the bar, not thinking about the music musically, just thinking about it in terms of I need this duration, so I'll cut it there, there's a beat there I'll put it in and it's really jarring. But what you've done is you've, kind of, made this seamless flow, which is because you get music, you understand how it works.

Interviewer: Yes, well I played in a band. I wasn't musically adept! But I at least understand music structure, the chorus then the bridge and where I can find those elements and blend them to create beds. In terms of the final episode, which contains elements from all the previous eleven documentaries - it's like making a 'mega-mix'.

Dubber: So, what you're essentially doing is you're composing musically as much as you're making a documentary.

Interviewer: Yes, I suppose so. It's a remix. But I don't have a lot of time. I'm not sure I'll even be able to fit in all the 'best of' content

Dubber: You've got a heard job ahead of you, but you have to kill your babies.

Interviewer: I have to kill my babies.

Extract Ten

Interview with Ian Fish, commercial radio producer, conducted 5 April 2013, at the researcher's home, Moseley, Birmingham.

Interviewer: I'd like to start by asking if you hear many documentaries on commercial radio?

Fish: No, none at all I don't think really. Certainly not on commercial radio I listen to and work for.

Interviewer: Why is that?

- Fish: I think it's because the perceived wisdom, which is something I've always disagreed with, that you have to just play songs and I disagree. I think if you're entertaining the audience it doesn't matter what you're doing as long as they're entertained it can be speech, it can be music, it can be a documentary, it can be the news. People want to be entertained and what you entertain them with is almost irrelevant as long as it's entertaining, but the perceived commercial radio wisdom is there's nothing better you can do than play a song.
- Interviewer: I guess it's cheaper too (to play music), rather than pay for someone to put together a documentary and to arrange a commissioning team...
- Fish: Well, yes, if you're doing it properly talk radio is obviously really expensive. But I think if it was me in charge of a radio station and somebody came to me and said, 'you know, I've got a documentary on one of your key artists', so say, you know, Beyoncé, you could do a really contemporary documentary. Actually, do you know what, we have run a documentary on Heart. It was a George Michael documentary and it was produced to death, but actually worked well and that style of documentary where it was basically just a presenter then clip of George Michael, presenter and it was like hosted by a presenter and the songs were all the big hits and stuff worked really well.
- Interviewer: So, it's still kept within the framework of the playlist?
- Fish: Yes. It was an hour of George Michael tracks, but there was a lot of music and not a lot of doc. It was tied into his last album release at the end of...around the Olympics last year, wasn't it?
- Interviewer: So, it was an advert?
- Fish: It was essentially.
- Interviewer: Yes, that's interesting.
- Fish: Yes, because George Michael again doesn't do interviews. The only reason he did an interview was if they did a special, so it was kind of, yes, essentially an hour long, 'hey the new albums out'. But, generally the perceived wisdom in commercial radio, which like I say I disagree with, is that the best thing you can ever do is play a track and I don't agree with that.
- Interviewer: Okay, obviously if I'm making a documentary for commercial radio I have to fit it around commercials. So, I'm having to structure documentaries around adverts. I quite like it. I think it gives it, like, a chapter marking almost. What are your thoughts, how do you think commercials impact upon the flow perhaps of a documentary?

Fish: Well, that's quite difficult to answer because I've only ever worked in commercial radio, so I've always been used to commercials. I would be inclined to agree that I don't think people mind them as much as they *say* they mind them. Again, as long as your content either side is entertaining people will sit through the ads. I always think of it as the chapter marks. So, you know, between this break and this break we'll do this bit and I think it does give you, like, a natural break where you can come back and be on a different subject when you come back. So, I think from that point of view it works and people understand that. People understand it from TV. That's how TV works, isn't it? You know, the advert is a scene change or whatever or a cliff-hanger into a payoff and stuff. So, I think if you're building it for that - you can be quite clever."

Extract Eleven

Interview with independent radio documentary producer, conducted 12th of February 2016, at Birmingham City University, Parkside Campus, Birmingham UK. The interviewee wished to remain anonymous and is therefore referred to as the respondent.

Interviewer: My subject is specifically about commercial music documentary for commercial radio, but I appreciate that your realm is probably more BBC related content.

Respondent: Public radio.

Interviewer: Public radio?

Respondent: Public service radio, yes.

Interviewer: Within that do you make music documentaries at all on artists or not really your thing?

Respondent: I haven't done. I mean, if I did it would be for Radio 2 and Radio 2 do run those kind of documentaries, you know, they take an artist and they look at their history and they play a lot of their music in its entirety, so they're usually an hour long those documentaries, or something like that.

Interviewer: Do you call them documentaries though?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Compared to some of your work, which follows a more 'traditional' style of documentary approach, would you say music documentaries are still part of the wider form?

Respondent: Yes, well there is a difference between what I call a feature and a documentary and the music programmes that we're talking about I would stick into the documentary box. They're more journalistic, you

know, that's the bottom line. They're more journalistic, you know, 'here is an artist, they were born in so-and-so, this is what their music was about, they did this, they did that, they had a number one with this record, they had a number one with that record'.

Interviewer: So, it's still a factual journalistic approach?

Respondent: Exactly.

Interviewer: And, what about the commissioning process in general? As I said, I'm interested in commercial radio. Would you make a documentary for a commercial station?

Respondent: I would.

Interviewer: But there's little opportunity?

Respondent: The problem with commissioning as it stands in this country at the moment is that there is only one broadcaster that commissions documentaries and that is a large corporation, which has three letters to its name.

Interviewer: But, you'd be happy to do it (for commercial radio)?

Respondent: I'd be more than happy to do it, because I know that the pay would be better. But there isn't a competitor, so this particular corporation has a complete monopoly over commissioning features and documentaries and there are inherent problems with that.

Interviewer: I wanted to touch on that, the commissioning process and the use of celebrities to secure a commission. I mean, what are your thoughts on the commissioning process and how an idea manages to get through the gates?

Respondent: I have to be a bit careful with what I say here because it's a sensitive area. Anecdotally there is evidence to suggest that having a, quote, "name", to present the documentary enhances the possibility of it getting commissioned, but it doesn't guarantee it. Ultimately it's all about the idea and does the idea appeal to the audience that is listening to that particular network, so you could have a documentary with a lesser known figure, but they would have to have broadcasting experience. You couldn't really slot in someone who they've never heard of before, who hasn't done radio before.

Extract Twelve

Interview with Paul Sylvester, Content Director at Absolute Radio, conducted over the telephone, 15 August 2016, Parkside Campus, Birmingham City University, Birmingham.

Interviewer: Firstly, can you tell me your thoughts on documentaries for commercial radio?

Sylvester: I think what's really interesting is that commercial radio has moved away from doing documentaries in general and I think that's really, really sad because I think the craft of making documentaries and the craft of telling stories is what radio is really all about because actually it's these moments and those great stories that people remember. And, radio, whether it's commercial radio or the BBC for me, is very much here to educate and entertain and documentaries are those rare things that do both. So, I think documentary making in radio has fallen by the wayside, certainly in commercial radio, and it's been something that we've been very keen to invest in to bring back and to use as something that sets us aside from other radio stations.

Interviewer: So, when it comes to commissioning documentaries for commercial radio, is it on a case-by-case basis?

Sylvester: For Absolute there are two ways that documentaries get commissioned. One of those ways is because programming has decided there is an event that we want to relive or there is a story that we think should be told. The other one is if a client decides that they want to make a documentary or is interested in making long form programming then they will pay for it. So, I have a very, very small budget for documentaries for myself and then actually the bigger budget stuff general tends to come when a client says we'd like to tell this story or we want to convey this message and we agree that making documentaries is the way forward.

Interviewer: I wanted to talk about the TBI Media, David Bowie: The Definitive Story documentary, which was fascinating because it was branded content for the V&A exhibition. It's almost an advertisement. Do you see that sort of branded content as being a possible way forward for commissioning music documentaries on commercial radio?

Sylvester: Absolutely, and I think it will become more and more the way that documentaries get made. You're right in what you're saying in the fact that actually for the V&A it was a brilliant advertisement and a brilliant way to promote an exhibition and to get people to buy tickets. Now, you can do ticket competitions and that will get an engagement and it will get a different engagement, but actually creating programming that actually teases what you will see and what you will hear and how you will feel and gives you the background is a much deeper engagement to a radio audience and an audience that they already know are interested in Bowie because they listen to Absolute Radio and we play lots of Bowie. So, it's a way of promoting something in a much richer, more textured, more layered way and it's a better way to say to people this is what you're going to expect, so buy and ticket and it teases them. And, I think that's so much more interesting for the client, and as for you say for the client, for the audience and for the radio station.

Interviewer: So, you see that there's the potential for more and more of that branded documentary content. Basically if an independent production company comes to you with an idea or with a client you're open to that suggestion?

Sylvester: Oh, absolutely, I think, you know, we come with some of the ideas to make it happen and then what also happens is the client comes to us to be able to make it happen. I think you kind of get a mixture of both and that's when it gets interesting, but for me it's very much about educating people to do it.

Interviewer: What do you think your listeners make of documentaries? I mean, Absolute, it would be fair to say, is intrinsically a music station. How do you feel the listeners relate to spoken word content of a documentary when they might be expecting to hear music? How do you think that sits within the format of Absolute?

Sylvester: I think it sits really well within the format because whenever we make these documentaries the, kind of, instructions to the producer is always to deeply layer music within it. There should almost be a permanent underlying soundtrack that sits below the spoken word content and while it is more spoken word than what they're used to, it's relevant spoken word. It's not us doing a documentary on the history of World War Two, it's us doing a documentary on the history of someone they already love or they already know or is within the range of artists that they would expect to hear on Absolute Radio.

APPENDIX C

Let's Dance at 30, full documentary transcription with accompanying timings.

Part One:

(0:00) **Presenter:** On the 14th of April, 1983, EMI America released an album from an artist they'd signed just three months earlier. Within days, it was at the top of the UK charts, becoming one of the year's biggest selling records with three international hit singles. I'm Mark Sutherland and for the next hour, we pay tribute to an album that helped define a decade. David Bowie's *Let's Dance*.

(0:25) **John Taylor:** How many seconds does it take to recognise that song? It's one of the most recognisable intros, you know, ever.

(0:30) **Archive / News reporter:** And now, the return of David Bowie, the man who has arguably dictated the sound and the styles of the seventies and the eighties more than any other single pop performer.

(0:40) **Bowie:** *Let's Dance* was open to so many possible interpretations because it works merely on an emotional level, there's no narrative story behind it.

(1:07) **Presenter:** So I'm standing outside what looks like a typical terrace house in Brixton, South London. Number 40 Stansfield Road, to be exact. It looks rather better kept than the neighbours although it's hard to tell if anybody actually lives here. The shutters are drawn, the curtains drawn upstairs. Although somebody has put the bins out. But it was here in this house on a cold January evening in 1947 that David Robert Jones, as he was known then, was born. Fast forward 36 years and he was David Bowie, international superstar, with a record-breaking world tour and an album that went on to sell over 8 million copies. It's exactly 30 years since the release of *Let's Dance* and tonight we're going to look back and celebrate its incredible success.

(1:57) **John Taylor:** This is John Taylor from *Duran Duran*. For me *Let's Dance* was one of the defining albums of the eighties. I think it was an important transition album from the sound of the seventies, particularly the disco sound that were coming out of New York. And it represented the kind of sound that everybody wanted at that moment. *Let's Dance* was the song of that year.

(2:31) **Pete Waterman:** I'm Pete Waterman. I'm a record producer and the record that changed my life was *Let's Dance*. Probably the greatest pop record ever made, simple as that. First heard it on an afternoon on *Capital* radio and literally I heard the intro and turned the rest up and then as soon as Bowie sings you know he's Bowie - but to me he crossed the Rubicon, he'd gone from being this style icon on to being a pop icon. I mean, here is he trying to prove a point about trying to prove a point. He actually achieved what 99% of all human beings never achieve and that's perfection. You know, he's out to prove he can be commercial. Well he can be commercial; you can't be any more commercial than *Let's Dance* because it is the ultimate commercial pop record. It smacks you right between the eyes and you walk away whistling it. There is nothing better.

(3:32) **Archive / News Reporter:** It seems that David Bowie's not just a kinky extrovert who flashed on the scene, he strikes one now as a somewhat shy, thoughtful and rather serious person.

(3:41) **Bowie:** I found that the experimenting that I was doing was eradicating a lot of the subject matter of my writing but now I feel for the next few years I'll be concentrating a lot more basic, earthier kind of material.

(3:56) **David Buckley:** Hi, I'm David Buckley, I'm a David Bowie fan and I've written two books about David Bowie, *The Complete Guide to the Music of David Bowie* and *Strange Fascination. Let's Dance* liberated a whole generation of David Bowie fans who no longer had to pretend that they were following a lunatic, a cultist, a strange beast from outer space. And it's when we felt vindicated - and it's the year that Bowie stamped his authority on popular culture and became an absolute superstar. And in interviews in 1983 he makes reference, quite a lot actually, to the fact that the body changes and his priorities had changed as well.

(4:48) **Bowie:** I think that there's a period where you have to decide not to try and grasp frantically for the feelings of desperation and anger that you have when you're in your mid-twenties and if you can relax into the idea that being mid-thirties is quite a nice place to be with an amount of experience behind you I think the perspective changes.

(5:10) **David Buckley:** At the age of 36 Bowie was neither terribly young nor middle aged in a difficult time of his life I think. He wanted to strip away the, the layers of artifice, so he said. And to become a more caring and humanitarian human being. And he said that to stay in music he wanted his music to be helpful and he wanted his music to be warm and to strip away the alienation that was so evident on the previous album *Scary Monsters*.

(6:03) **Bob Clearmountain:** I'm Bob Clearmountain and I engineered and mixed the *Let's Dance* album for David Bowie and Nile Rodgers. My feeling about working with Bowie was, I was very excited 'cause I was a huge fan, I'd been a huge fan for probably the previous ten years, but I was especially a fan of his previous album, the one right before that, which was called *Scary Monsters*, I thought it was fantastic. So I was really excited about doing it, I was very nervous about it as well, because he looms large in the imagination, you know, and I didn't know what he was like and I hadn't met him. And it turned out when I met David he was there on the first day, he showed up before anyone else while I was still setting the session up and I remember him following me around and I think that he was actually more nervous than I was, turned out. Because he was saying, 'oh do you know these musicians? Do you know?' And I said, yeah, I think I know pretty much Nile's guys, don't you know them, I mean it's your record, it's the first day of recording. He goes, 'no I only, I've only met Nile and he assured me that they're all really good'. And I said, yeah, well that's for sure, they'll all be top-notch, Nile would never use anybody that isn't the best thing for whatever it is you're recording. So it was so funny, me being nervous and then realizing, wow, he's really nervous too.

(7:25) **David Buckley:** *Modern Love* opens *Let's Dance* with 'I know when to go out, I know when to stay in, get things done'. It's that Cockney, 'all right mate?' You know, it's his old Anthony Newly self. I think it's very much a statement that Bowie was, I mean, he meant business. This was business now, you know, he was - yeah, he knew how to party but he also, he also now knew that music was serious and that was his job - and that he meant business. And the other thing that I really like about the opening of *Modern Love* of course is that very unusual guitar part from Stevie Ray Vaughan as well, which sounds a bit like, oh, it's like a really sort of scratchy, funky but scratchy guitar sound at the beginning which I'd never heard before on any other record.

(8:27) **Bob Clearmountain:** You know I think *Modern Love* was pretty amazing, it's just such a high-energy track. And that was the first song I think that he sang, and he went out there and he sang the first verse and chorus but he didn't do it the way you hear it on the record, he did it in that, that down an octave, like that Anthony Newly kind of voice, he does sometimes. And then he pulls his hand up at the end of first chorus and he goes, 'hang on a sec, just play that back for me'. And so he stood out there with the headphones, out in the studio, and I played it.

And I get to the end of the first chorus and he goes, 'just give me a sec'. And he stands there and just kind of rubs his chin a little bit and goes 'no no no, that's not gonna work, okay, let's take it again, right, and go back to the beginning of this song'. And then he sang what you hear, right, that sort of high-energy, and then we stop again at the end of the first chorus and he goes, 'yeah play that back for me', I play it and he goes, 'yeah that's it, okay, great, okay, just drop in from there', right? And didn't even redo that, he just picked it up and went into the second verse, finished the song and doubled it and that was it. About 15 minutes later it was finished. I was just, you know, my jaw was on the floor, I was like, okay who does that? But it was amazing.

(9:45) **David Buckley:** Some writers have actually tried to claim *Modern Love* as a gay song by saying 'I catch the paperboy'. Saying that there was a double meaning to that (laughs) I don't see that myself. I think that what it is, is David Bowie's disillusionment with the institution of marriage. And I think that he'd just gone through a marriage which had ended badly and he was now single and this was just an assertion that religion, religiosity, and the institution of marriage was not for him.

(11:02) **Bob Clearmountain:** It surprised me because it was very pop and dance oriented whereas, you know, *Scary Monsters* was more kind of a dark, more serious rock record. This is less of a real kind of a rock record. And so I was expecting of course, *Scary Monsters* but then I learned that's what you don't do with David Bowie, you don't expect anything, you know, he'll always surprise you. He took pride in surprising people and coming out with something that no one expected.

(11:33) **Eoin Devereux:** I'm Dr. Eoin Devereux, senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Limerick in Ireland. Last year we organized a major symposium, the first ever in the world, on the singer David Bowie which dissected a hugely complex and really interesting, fascinating body of work. I regard *Let's Dance* actually very highly. It didn't bother me that Bowie had become really truly a global pop icon. I particularly like the video content that accompanied the various singles from the album and enjoyed it very much.

(12:17) **David Buckley:** Integral to the prelaunch of Bowie were the videos. *Let's Dance* sees David Bowie really withdraw from the centre stage. He's only filmed singing in an Australian bar with that hysterical shot of that middle aged man in shorts doing like a funky chicken dance which is one of my favourite bits. But Bowie himself looks still pretty disconnected and austere and aloof. And the narrative follows the two aborigine men and women, obviously a boy and girlfriend, as they are made to perform ridiculous tasks. So the song is a kind of twisted love song but the video is a political piece. Brilliant really, to do that, to have a video which is absolutely nothing to do with the song. But it works.

(13:17) **Bowie:** I wanted to work with Aborigines but not in a kind of a cliché context, I didn't want them to be dressed up in war paint and all tribal gear. And I found these two in Sydney and they were just perfect for this thing that I wanted to do.

(13:35) **David Buckley:** The *China Girl* video, the second single off the album, was controversial in that it saw David Bowie writhing around in the surf with a beautiful Asian model in a parody pastiche of *From Here to Eternity*.

(13:54) **Gee Ling:** My name's Gee Ling, which is my Chinese name, actually, I have an English name but I'm not going to tell you what it is, and I was born in Auckland, New Zealand, and I'm not even gonna tell you when I was born in Auckland, New Zealand. (Laughs) And I grew up here so I'm of Chinese background, both my parents are Chinese, but I'm really just a Kiwi. The first album I ever bought in my whole life was *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. My friend Michelle and I had both bought it and we took it home and I showed mum the cover and mum just freaked out and went, 'who's the freak on the cover?' (Laughs) It was great.

Michelle and I played it until it was dead, that album, and yeah, that was the start of a long relationship with me and David's music. I was living in Sydney, I'd moved to Sydney, and I was naturally modelling and working as a waitress, goodness me, that's an original thought. And my modelling agency phoned me one day and said, 'would you like to work with David Bowie?' And I went, 'aw, yeah, probably could manage that'. And I went to what's known as the cattle call in the industry, where there's, you walk into a room, and there are a hundred Chinese girls in the room, and you look around and you go, 'oh, there's no chance on Earth I'm going to get this'. It was my turn; I got up and went into the room. And David Bowie was there with David Mallet who was the director of the *Let's Dance* and *China Girl* videos. They introduced themselves and David said to me, 'Do you know the song *China Girl*?' And I said, 'yes of course I do, I've got it on my Iggy Pop'. And he said, 'well my version's better'. (Laughs) Anyway, when I was at this interview, David said to me, 'would you mind taking your makeup off?' And I went, 'oh my god, no. I can't take my makeup off you'll see me, ooh.' Anyway, I was introduced then to Coco Schwab, and David said to Coco, 'take Gee Ling downstairs to your room and take her makeup off'. So we did that, came back upstairs and I walked into the room and David said, 'yeah you're it'. And that was it.

(16:24) **David Buckley:** The ending of *China Girl* is quite erotic. It was censored for *Top of the Pops* because the full-length video of *China Girl* you did get to see David Bowie's bum and I don't know whether that would corrupt a whole generation of people in the way in which *Labyrinth* corrupted a whole generation of people with his trousers, but obviously David Bowie's bottom was obviously far too much for the nation's youth in 1983.

(16:54) **Gee Ling:** The infamous beach scene was not spontaneous at all. It was dark when we got up and we went up to Long Reef Beach, which is one of the northern beaches of Sydney. It was freezing cold. It was closed set, they used as few people as possible, we were completely naked, obviously, but by that stage I have to say I had seen David naked before. So, um, you know, while we were 'rehearsing' our relationship. And so we had to jump in the water and play the scene from *From Here to Eternity*. And David, I remember David Mallet screaming at us, screaming at me, going 'Arch your back more! Arch your back! Get into it!' And all this sort of, it was just so cold! (Laughs) Very, very hard to feel sexy or anything like that. And well, I needn't tell you what happens to men's genitals in the freezing cold. So it wasn't very sexy at all. When I thought to myself when I first got the video, I thought, 'gosh, I'm going to be dining out on this for a while'. I didn't realize that it would last, that the notoriety would last for such a long time. There are still people now, they stop me in the street, they'll stop me in the supermarket and they go, 'are you the girl from the David Bowie video?' And I think, 'wow you've got a good memory, that's an awfully long time ago'. Doing the video has completely and utterly changed my life and every time I think about it I think about David and I think 'thanks', it's been a remarkable life, you know, I've done something that very few people in the world have done, and I've done something that I know a lot of women in the world would have wanted to have done.

(19:01) **Bob Clearmountain:** David is someone who really knows what he wants, you know he's very specific about certain things, and yet at the same time he'll let certain things happen. You know, and he would just go for spontaneity, like he'd just go for a first take. When Stevie Ray Vaughn came in to do his guitar solos. I remember on *China Girl* he actually make a mistake at the end, he didn't realize when the solo was going to end and there was like a chord change. And so he hit a note that was actually the wrong note for the chord and Stevie and I both, we looked at each other and we kinda both winced, you know? And we both said, 'let's just drop in and fix that'. And David said, 'no no no, no I love that, whatever that was, that's great'.

(20:04) **Jennifer Otter Bickerdike:** Hi my name is Jennifer Otter Bickerdike. I am a music executive and academic that teaches and writes about popular music and I'm standing here in front of the Ziggy Stardust plaque on Heddon Street and this street and this area was made

famous by David Bowie. His picture was taken here for his *Ziggy Stardust* album, an album that made him a star in the UK. However it was not until 1983's *Let's Dance* that Bowie became an icon in the United States, and it was that record that made me the Bowie fan that I've been for over thirty years. I think one of the most important things about *Let's Dance* the album, the song, the video, the whole concept, is it introduced David Bowie to a completely new fan base who would have never ever in a million years listened to him, had access to him, been interested in him. Particularly because that time period, MTV was new and exciting,

(20:58) **Archive / MTV Advert:** MTV Music Television. America! Demand your MTV!

(21:04) **Jennifer Otter Bickerdike:** The look of that record fit in with MTV, the cover art, the music fit in with MTV so it was this idea of new interesting and exiting ways to experience music and Bowie was, per usual, at the forefront of that.

(20:18) **Archive / MTV Advert:** I want my MTV!

(20:04) **Jennifer Otter Bickerdike:** Without that record, people my age, the Gen'Xers of the world, we probably never would have, we never would have learned about him, we never would have discovered him unless we stumbled upon it because we had an older sibling or if we were digging in the crates at a college radio station, unless those kinds of backwards ways of finding it, this was a way for us to learn about him and all become interested in him and all discover him and all the other bands he influenced after it. So many artists that I've come to really like worship, they all have the one trait in common, they all love David Bowie.

(21:54) **Chris Charlesworth:** Hello, this is Chris Charlesworth here. I worked for a magazine called *Melody Maker* for seven years, from 1970 to 1977, during which time I interviewed David and saw a lot of concerts and saw him socially a little bit. And following my *Melody Maker* career I then worked for RCA records in London and looked after David's PR and publicity for the period that encompassed the *Lodger* album, and the *Scary Monsters* album. David wasn't afraid to take risks, so he branched out, made films, and he was a passable actor (if not a brilliant one), and he changed the style of music dramatically, from the sort of hard rock, glam rock, *Ziggy* period - then he moved towards soul a bit, then of course he went sort of new wave-ish with the trilogy of albums he made in Berlin. Then came back fighting with *Let's Dance* as a big mega-rock star sort of thing, then he lost it a bit again, but he was always interesting and he was very very brave, I think to go along different roads and some of those roads may have been a blind alley but a lot of them weren't - and this is what I think has managed to sustain his popularity of the years. Through taking chances.

Part Two:

(0:00) **Presenter:** I'm Mark Sutherland, and tonight we're looking back 30 years to the release of one of Bowie's most important albums. It is, of course, *Let's Dance*.

(0:10) **David Buckley:** I loved *Let's Dance*, the single. It didn't to me feel like a step into more commercial music. It seemed to me very much in the tradition of David Bowie exploring black music in the same way he had done on *Young Americans*. What was possibly unexpected was how big a hit it was, because it entered the charts in the UK at number five and it was released at the same week as *Duran Duran, Is There Something I Should Know*. So obviously they didn't think that Bowie's single was going to be in competition for the *Duran Duran* single for number one - or else they would not have released *Let's Dance* the same week. But two weeks later *Let's Dance* had knocked *Duran Duran* off with a fantastic sort of poetic justice. That the master knocked the pupils off the number one spot, and I would imagine *Duran Duran* were more than happy with losing the throne to the hero.

(1:18) **John Taylor:** Well, *Is There Something I Should Know* was *Duran Duran's* first number one, and it was a very exciting hit for us because it went straight in at number one. I had forgotten that it was in fact *Let's Dance* that had knocked *Is There Something I Should Know* off the top slot - but I've got no problems with that and I don't think any members of the band would have a problem with that because for all of us really David was the governor and I think we really would have been quite gracious about letting him take the top spot from us.

(2:25) **Paul McLoone:** Hi, my name is Paul McLoone, I'm from Derry in Northern Ireland, I'm the lead singer of a band called the *Undertones* and I'm a DJ on *Today FM*. There's a lot of critical snobbery and a bit of ignorance about *Let's Dance*. I think it's a much more important record than people realize. It sort of stands for me as a kind of *Young American* two, where he pulled off the same trick again, he took a lot of disparate kind of influences and took his music to the dance floor, had a tremendous producer in Nile Rodgers, a really clever move getting Nile Rodgers in to produce, he'd done all those amazing records with *Chic* of course. It's a very unique record actually, there's very little, considering that it influenced a lot of eighties production, there's very little that actually sounds like it. It sounded like a lot of things, there's a lot of things in the mix, but what came out at the end is kind of unique, so I think it's a wonderful record.

(3:19) **Bowie:** I think you could dance to about everything on it, but I think really *Let's Dance* is the only real dance track on it.

(3:27) **Bob Clearmountain:** What's so great about both David and Nile is that they were so completely open to ideas, you know, they would have certain things, I mean sometimes they'd say, 'no, that's not, that kind of thing is not going to work out', but they would listen, and they would pay attention, and they'd say, 'well that's not what we're looking for but that's really cool, you know, we really like that'. And they were extremely open to many kinds of ideas. Nile said, 'put something on that guitar part just to make it sound more interesting' or something, 'put a delay on it'. And so we had this tape delay, and usually I would set it up so it was in time with the music and I would start with it kind of subtle with the faders down. I just had it really loud and I didn't time it to anything, I just put it on, I hadn't gotten to that point yet, and it was that, it was exactly what you hear on the record, was that crazy dun-dun-dun-dun duh-dun-dun-dah. Whereas what he played was really dun-dun-dah dah, you know, and it just created that, that crazy thing. I thought, 'uh-oh, let me fix that', you know, I went over to grab it, to say, 'let me make that better', and David and Nile just said, 'no, no that's fantastic, what the hell is that?' (Laughs) Perfect'.

(4:54) **David Buckley:** That album, *Let's Dance*, sounded incredible. It flew out the speakers with such definition. The top end was incredible, it sounded bassy, it sounded soulful, it sounded like David Bowie. We should give Nile Rodgers credit because he turned David Bowie into the superstar that we know now.

(5:27) **Pete Waterman:** I think it was the most commercial decision David ever made in his life.

(5:31) **Presenter:** Pete Waterman.

(5:33) **Pete Waterman:** You can't go to Nile Rodgers, who just had the best dance records on the planet, and come out with something that doesn't work. *Chic* were the greatest dance band of all time. David Bowie was the best rock artiste of all time as far as theatre concerned. You put the two together, what have you got? Pop theatre cum dance. Now, it covers every genre.

(6:02) **Bob Clearmountain:** I mean it was always fun with Nile because he was one of those guys who was just, he was one of the funniest people I ever worked with. He was such a great producer, besides his unbelievable musical ability, just a way to make everyone feel at ease.

(6:19) **David Buckley:** When Bowie hired Nile Rodgers in 1982, he told Nile, 'I want you to make hits'. Nile Rodgers was actually disappointed, he thought that this would give him the opportunity to do a kind of *Scary Monsters* part two, something that, to gain a bit of credibility from a white audience, but no, David Bowie wanted, if not the *Chic* sound, then Nile Rodgers' hit-making potential.

(6:50) **Nile Rogers (Absolute Radio content):** One night I went to an after-hours club and I ran into David Bowie who was sitting in the back all by himself drinking orange juice. And I walked over to him, we started talking, and of course, I knew all of his people from the *Young Americans* because they actually all lived in the same building, they were like really good friends. So we just started chatting about Luther and Carlos and everybody and at some point David and I agreed to make a record. And it was really that night, we just got on so well, it was actually early in the morning, I met him around five, six am.

(7:22) **Bowie:** We met at a club in New York and inevitably started talking about our own reference point, we wanted to find something, an area, common area, as one does with a new person, you know sort of, find out what you like. We both started talking about rhythm and blues stuff, and we both knew all exactly the same discs and records and bands. And then when I had to consider who I wanted to work with on the new album, I thought 'well let's give Nile a try, see if he'd be at all interested in working with me'.

(7:54) **Nile Rogers (Absolute Radio content):** He invited me over to Switzerland to work on pre-reduction. And he had this thumbnail of a song that would eventually be called *Let's Dance*. And it worked out so well that I, you know, I wrote out the arrangement and did the parts, we got these jazz guys to do it in Switzerland, and it just sounded phenomenal and David was thrilled and after that we wound up doing that album which had *China Girl* and *Modern Love*, it was just a huge record, the biggest album of his career.

(8:33) **David Buckley:** There was a, a change in the way David Bowie was promoted; he became something akin to a brand.

(8:40) **Archive:** Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. David Bowie.

(8:43) **David Buckley:** He was a now, a guarantor of a certain left-field cool without being that confrontational. And the interesting thing is that I think it was in the autumn of 1982, his contract with RCA had expired.

(9:02) **Bowie:** I think the belief had gone in each other, I didn't believe in RCA and they certainly had fallen out with me around the time of *Low*. There was no real interest in *Low* and none of the albums from there on. And it was sort of, walked, went through the movements of being artist and record company so I was really quite glad when I was able to terminate that particular contract.

(9:24) **David Buckley:** Well RCA wanted to re-sign David Bowie. But Bowie sent the tapes to EMI America and the fee has never been confirmed but it's meant to be around seventeen million dollars.

(9:39) **Archive:** Reportedly so, yes, I'm overwhelmed. (Laughs) *Is that anywhere near accurate?* It's absolutely nowhere near accurate. *Can you give us a more accurate figure?* Of course not. (Laughs)

(9:48) **David Buckley:** That was massive for 1983, so that, that really safeguarded David Bowie's financial interests for life.

(10:01) **Paul McLoone:** I think he wanted to be popular, I think, you know, David Bowie always wanted to be popular, I don't think he ever sort of went, 'well I'm just gonna make records and I hope nobody buys them'. Did he feel there was a certain commercial opportunity there with, I'm sure he did, the deal with EMI was a much trumpeted deal, it was one of the biggest record deals ever. Bowie at the time had just seemed to be about Bowie making money, 'oh he's got the biggest record deal, he's done the biggest gig at Milton Keynes, he's making the most money, Bowie's making so much money', and it became a little distracting from the music.

(10:34) **Frank Simms:** Hello, my name's Frank Sims, I was the backing vocalist with my brother George and David Spinner on the entire *Let's Dance* album with David Bowie early in 1983. So that's it, met him, did the record in the *Power Station* in New York, just in a couple of weeks. We sang on every song except maybe one. But virtually everything we sang on *Ricochet*, *Let's Dance*, *China Girl*, *Modern Love*, we sang almost everything. Everything was like, 'let's write it let's record it, boom, done, next, out. You guys, you're going great, I love you. You're fast, you're great, you're amazing, let's go. Let's sing, we're done, boom'!

(11:07) **Bob Clearmountain:** He had booked three weeks for the entire album. To record it and mix it. Which is, well in those days it was crazy, 'cause I mean people would spend six months making records or more. And umm... So I was a little shocked at that.

(11:23) **Bowie:** It was put together in three weeks because I had a very good idea of what I wanted to do so it's a very simple operation to actually execute it in the studio. The arrangements were done before we went it.

(11:35) **Frank Simms:** As we were leaving the session one day, David said, 'oh Frank, could I have your phone number, I like to have your phone number?' And I'm thinking, 'oh this is great, he wants my phone number, it's great'. So sure enough about a week or two later his manager Bruce Dunbar from Isolar called up and said, like 'well, David would like to have you guys come on the road with him' and I said, 'oh that's fantastic! I can't wait!'

(11:53) **Faux-Archive: Frank Simms:** Ladies and Gentlemen - David Bowie and his band!

(12:03) **Presenter:** The *Serious Moonlight* tour played 96 shows across 59 cities in 16 countries. He was the first to use state of the art computer controlled lighting. By the time it finally came to an end, Bowie had performed to an estimated audience of almost 3 million people across three continents. It was his longest, largest, and most successful world tour.

(12:28) **David Buckley:** The scale of it was just staggering, I mean, it was upgraded, upgraded all the time, it started off as an arena tour, and then it became a stadium tour, and then he played festivals in America which were probably some of the biggest gigs any rock star had ever performed. So it just, within three months, it had exploded.

(13:04) **Bowie:** I wanted something which would give a general atmosphere to the tour, *Serious Moonlight* for me, it's the romanticism, it's the inherent quality of two people being together, a relationship between two people. That I wanted, I wanted to retain what I feel is the positive force on the new album which is, um, trying to see the world through the eyes of a couple. And I wanted to retain that kind of feeling for stage, it's unlike, on a more humanist level, anything I've done on the stage before. It was not quite so icy.

(13:47) **Frank Simms:** Most every other rock star we met on the road, very isolated, very attitudinal very nose up in the air. David - never, never never. He was like one of the guys, he would go out with the crew, he would go out drinking, having a beer after the show with the crew guys. Never an attitude, never, never an attitude, and I used to tell people, I'd say, 'you know why? He knows he's the star'. He doesn't have to worry about somebody upstaging him. He used to put my brother George and I at the front proscenium him on the stage, singing with

the microphone, and he'd be forty feet in the back, you think he worried about his ego? Not a bit. But David was always totally confident, everything's fine, 'let's have some fun'. And David would come around in the hotel when we were in Japan I remember he'd knock on the door and I opened the door and here's David! And I'm thinking, like, David Bowie's standing in the door. And he's like, 'so Frank, would you like to go out drinking? Let's go round up George and let's go out'. And he wouldn't even bring a bodyguard. It'd just be George and I and him and we'd start walking the streets.

(14:43) **Lenny Pickett:** Hi I'm Lenny Pickett and I was on David Bowie's *Serious Moonlight* tour in 1983 as the saxophone player. And wore a costume and was part of the cast that he put up on the stage. When we were told in the beginning was that the characters that we were playing could all have been found sometime in the fifties and sixties in Singapore. We were given a general sort of job description of what we were. I was an explorer. I had two different, slightly different outfits; one with short pants and one with long pants depending on the weather. I've always enjoyed the theatrical aspect of rock and roll and I think David's done it as well as anybody ever has. He certainly understands that quality of the performance.

(15:36) **John Taylor:** It was a really triumphant tour for David because you know he'd been off the road for quite a few years and I think finally, you know, the success, the mainstream success of *Let's Dance* enabled him to be, you know, that sort of like headlining, festival, stadium act that the Brits knew he was, but very few people outside of that really, he was still kind of like a cult artist really, I think *Let's Dance* just rubber stamped him as a star of, you know, the greatest magnitude, you know, internationally.

(16:35) **Lenny Pickett:** David generally would only do two or three shows week, he was being careful to, you know, conserve himself so that he could, you know, do the entire tour which was, which stretched out over the better part of a year.

(16:48) **Bowie:** I'd like to introduce my band to you right now. On saxophone - Mr Lenny Pickett!

(16:53) **Lenny Pickett:** His usual method was that immediately after the show we would all leave the stage, get into vans, go to the airport and get onto the airplane, change our clothes on the airplane, and arrive in the next town late that night and be there for a day or two before we performed. So we could be incognito and David could be incognito which was pretty fun for David I think, to not have a zillion fans immediately swarming over him.

(17:18) **Bowie:** Thank you.

(17:22) **Presenter:** I'm Mark Sutherland and tonight we pay tribute to one of the biggest albums of the eighties, David Bowie's *Let's Dance*. Track four on the album, *Without You*, the only song to feature *Chic's* Bernard Edwards on bass, who took just thirteen minutes to finish the track.

(18:01) **Frank Simms:** Hi everybody, this is Frank Sims, I'm standing outside the Power Station, 441 West 53rd street in Manhattan, New York, between 9th Avenue and 10th Avenue, and this is where I recorded the background vocals for David Bowie's *Let's Dance* album. Well, the thing about the *Power Station* is whether you're a singer or a musician; everybody was always thrilled to be asked to go to the *Power Station* to be able to perform. Besides David and besides Madonna there were so many stars that performed there. *The Clash* did work there, *B-52s*, *Bon Jovi*, *Duran Duran*, Bruce Springsteen. John Lennon, Iggy Pop, you know, it was incredible. Stevie Ray Vaughan.

(18:43) **Bowie:** Over the last year I've made a couple of movies, and I've completed an album and a single called *Let's Dance*.

(18:50) **Presenter:** Opening side two... *Ricochet*

(18:52) **David Buckley:** *Ricochet* sounds like an older style of David Bowie song. I love the fact that the drumming and the drum pattern is indeed a ricochet and that it mimics the title of the song. And then there's this strange disembodied voice as if it's transistorized or even as if it's, it's somebody, talking through a loud hailer.

(19:37) **Bob Clearmountain:** *Ricochet* was the one thing where he had real specific ideas about, how I want this. I remember during the mix it was some little effect that he wanted but he just wanted it in specific places, it was almost a mathematical formula he had worked out. You know, it wasn't a regular interval that he wanted this thing to occur, and I thought, 'well that's pretty interesting', you know, it's an odd way of, an odd approach for something like that. 'Cause I couldn't, I didn't get it until afterwards, and I'd listen it to and I deciphered what it was that he was after.

(20:27) **Frank Simms:** We sang *Ricochet* as background vocalists after David had sung the lead. Now oftentimes you'll sing the backgrounds first and the lead will kind of lay in to what's on the background already but when he was already singing, he'd sing 'Ricochet, ricochet', he was stylizing, so we'd have to listen very carefully. So that took a long time. Whereas normally, he would be singing to us, we'd go 'ricochet, ricochet', and he would just sing, 'ricochet'.

(20:59) **David Buckley:** There was a criticism of the album in that it featured only five original David Bowie songs out of the eight. Three of the songs were in fact covers, if you can call *China Girl* a cover. He'd written it with Iggy Pop and Iggy Pop had recorded it. Then there was the cover of the Bowie / Giorgio Moroder *Cat People*, which has recently come to attention to a whole new generation of people, because it's on Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* soundtrack. But the real, the really interesting track was a song called *Criminal World* by *Metro*.

(21:38) **Peter Godwin:** Hi I'm Peter Godwin, I was a singer with *Metro* and we wrote *Criminal World* and released it on Sire records back in 1977. We had a couple of reviews that spotlighted that as our first single. And it got a little bit of nice attention, he might have noticed that, I'm not sure, some of it might have been word of mouth, but he in his interview with Kid Jensen later said that he had the album and liked quite a lot of it.

(22:15) **Archive Bowie / Jensen Interview:** One track that I didn't write, in fact, was by a London, I think they're a London band, might be wrong, called *Metro*. *They had a single out called Criminal World a few years ago*. That's the song that I covered on the album, I always thought that was a wonderful song. *Yeah, so did I, I remember that on Transatlantic Records*. It was really good. *Wasn't that to Peter Godwin?*

(23:32) **Peter Godwin:** I'm walking down the street in 1983 and I bump into Rusty Egan. Rusty Egan from *Visage*, DJ at the Blitz nightclub, you know, real eighties kind of figure, and still, you know, going strong and making good music. And he said, 'well, you know, it's amazing isn't it, you're a lucky geezer', or something like that, and I didn't know what he was talking about. And he said, 'well Bowie's done *Criminal World!*' And I, and I really thought he was joking, I really thought he was having me on, 'what?' Because I'd heard nothing about it. Anyway, turned out he was serious, you know, and of course for him, as you know, a huge fan of Bowie, and for all those contemporaries and *Ultravox* and all the people who were around at the time and *Spandau Ballet* and all these people were huge, huge Bowie fans, I think I can reasonably say that. And so what would all of them have wanted? They would have wanted Bowie to do one of their songs, it would be like the ultimate compliment, and it was to me, I have to say, because I was a huge fan as well, and still am, and think of him as a great innovator, and those, he'd just done a sequence of what was it, twelve years of great albums and great music culminating in *Let's Dance*, which was possibly his final truly great album, for me, you

know, it's a personal judgment. And a very original album I think, and underrated in fact. You know. And so it was a huge complement to me and I couldn't believe it, you could have blown me over and I then went and checked *Melody Maker*, he said he'd seen it in the paper, that's how he found out, and there it was.

(24:17) **Eoin Devereux:** *Cat People* is an example of David Bowie reworking a song in a relatively short period of time.

(24:24) **Presenter:** Owen Devereux.

(24:26) **Eoin Devereux:** Personally I prefer the first version, the Moroder version from the soundtrack to the movie *Cat People*, which sounds in a way, more Gothic, more menacing, the voice is deeper and so on. But you know, both are interesting songs, but my preference is the first version.

(24:43) **Archive (Film clip):** Kill me. *I can't*. You must! (Screams)

(24:55) **David Buckley:** I don't think the 1982 original single nailed the song. I do like it. And I do understand why people prefer it to the *Let's Dance* version and I probably do too, but the *Let's Dance* version is basically the song on Red Bull. It's completely hyper. The guitar solo at the end is incredibly aggressive. And I remember it was the B-side to the *Let's Dance* single and I loved it. I loved the song anyway, and I liked both versions. I would give the original 9/10 and the *Let's Dance* version 8.

(25:48) **Presenter:** Paul McLoone of the *Undertones*.

(25:51) **Paul McLoone:** The ace in the hole or the kind of joker in the pack, I think, was undoubtedly putting Stevie Ray Vaughn in there on guitar and putting that incredibly distinctive lead guitar, rock lead guitar, across this black kind of disco production. That hadn't really been done before as far as I know and it was a unique sound.

(26:13) **David Buckley:** Stevie Ray Vaughn was an unknown. David Bowie had heard him play earlier in 1982 and asked him on board the *Let's Dance* sessions. And Ray Vaughn owed a lot to David Bowie for basically discovering his talent. I think that his guitar work was extremely unusual for a David Bowie album, I don't think it would have worked on other David Bowie albums, I don't see David Bowie as a blues artist.

(26:51) **Bob Clearmountain:** I remember I had never heard of him and David, he said to me, 'have you ever heard of this guy Stevie Ray Vaughan', I said 'I haven't really', I should have, I'm sure, but (Laughs). What impressed me is that he, a lot of guitar players nowadays anyway, and even back then, would haul in a whole bunch of gear, they'd have giant pedal boards or they'd have some big rack of stuff and you know, some big amplifier. He had a Fender Super Reverb amp, and a guitar cord. And a Strat. And that was it. And you know, I mean, listen to the record, it's amazing what he does, it's just how he played. He was a brilliant guitar player, a great guy, just the nicest guy ever.

Part Three:

(0:00) **Presenter:** I'm music journalist Mark Sutherland and tonight we're celebrating the 30th anniversary of David Bowie's *Let's Dance*.

(0:07) **Frank Simms:** Here's what I think. I think that from the sound of it, even though David is listed as the writer on virtually every song, I don't think Nile got literal publishing credits on the music, but I think Nile did a little co-writing. For instance, take *Let's Dance*, and *Shake It*,

you know, 'shake it, shake it, what's my line dum, dum, dum, let's dance'. So you know, certain things were right in the same vein, you know, certain things were in the same vein, and you can tell that.

(0:36) **Presenter:** *Shake It*. The very last track on *Let's Dance*.

(0:42) **Bob Clearmountain:** For myself, when I hear a track come on the radio, I think it holds up really well. I think your ear is still drawn to that music. And being human we don't really change that much. A great song is a great song and it always will be.

(1:02) **Peter Godwin:** Critics often say that *Let's Dance* is too commercial, it's a sell-out. That's the most common criticism. I don't buy that at all.

(1:16) **David Buckley:** *Let's Dance* should be central in the Bowie canon. It should be spoken of in the same way as *Scary Monsters*, *Heroes*, *Low*, *Ziggy Stardust*.

(1:32) **Archive / Bowie:** I think it's very comfortable and very warm to feel that you've got a good, relatively large, solid audience of people who are interested in what one's doing as an artist. *I never expected him to be as serious!*

(1:50) **David Buckley:** It's thirty years since *Let's Dance* was released, I can't believe it, and it peeves me and disappoints me that critics so lazily dismiss *Let's Dance* as a major miscalculation when at the time it was not seen like that at all. And it also slightly disappoints me that David Bowie himself sort of regarded *Let's Dance* as a gateway to a floundering career as a commercial artist - when it was his own laziness with the next album, *Tonight*, where he just didn't have enough songs, recorded it too quickly, released it too soon, that really caused the problems. It wasn't *Let's Dance*.

(2:43) **Bob Clearmountain:** Bowie had an amazing influence on the industry. I think he changed the course of music. Maybe not as much as the Beatles did, but you know, substantially.

(2:55) **Eoin Deveruex:** Bowie, like Beethoven, will be listened to in hundreds of years from now. I mean, much popular culture, rock music culture, is fleeting, and perhaps increasingly so, but Bowie is one of the true iconic artists and I really mean that word, iconic.

(3:16) **Chris Charlesworth:** In the pantheon of rock David Bowie stands way up there with, with Elvis Presley, the Beatles, I mean if Elvis was to the fifties and the Beatles were to the sixties, I think David was to the seventies.

(3:29) **John Taylor:** I think Bowie's quite possibly the greatest living singer-songwriter of our age. I don't think there's anybody actually that created such a range of extraordinary music. From *Space Oddity* in 1969 - to *Let's Dance* in 1983. I don't think there's anybody that has got the kind of resume that David has - and I don't think anybody will ever be able to do it again. You know, he's one of the greatest artists of all time.

END

APPENDIX D

Evidence of Xfm's online promotion of the *XFM 25* documentary series

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Xfm examines another album by a groundbreaking artist in another special documentary.

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DEPECHE MODE BLACK CELEBRATION

XFM 25
DEPECHE MODE

Ian Camfield presents an in-depth documentary on the classic 1986 album Black Celebration...

- More info here

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Xfm's online embedded audio for the *XFm 25: Depeche Mode, Black Celebration* episode.

Xfm 25: 'Black Celebration'

25 March 2011



Ian Camfield presents an in-depth documentary on the band's classic 1986 album...

This Month... 'Black Celebration' by Depeche Mode.

Well established as one of Britains foremost electro-pop bands, by the mid-1980s Depeche Mode's music had taken a darker turn. Spawning the hits 'Stripped' and 'A Question Of Time', the album kick-started the Mode's metamorphosis into stadium-filling world superstars.

Xfm pays tribute to this groundbreaking album with another in our series of hour-long documentaries. **Ian Camfield** speaks to producers **Daniel Miller** and **Gareth Jones** about the making of the record, its impact and more... Plus, you'll be able to hear the album in full afterwards.

Xfm 25 is broadcast on Sunday March 25 at 9pm.

Tagged as Depeche Mode

tracks in this session

- Xfm 25 - Depeche Mode's 'Black Celebration' - clip 1 [listen](#)
- Xfm 25 - Depeche Mode's 'Black Celebration' - clip 2 [listen](#)
- Xfm 25 - Depeche Mode's 'Black Celebration' - clip 3 [listen](#)
- Xfm 25 - Depeche Mode's 'Black Celebration' - clip 4 [listen](#)

Xfm's Facebook promotion of the first *XFm 25* episode



Viorel Florin Sandu wow! that is a f*ckin' good start!
Sunday at 13:35 · Flag



XFm The first rule of Album Club is...that you talk about Album Club! Each week we'll feature an album here on facebook. Get the full run down on Album Club at...
<http://www.xfm.co.uk/onair/shows/xfm-album-club>

The first featured album is METALLICA'S 'MASTER OF PUPPETS'!!! It's part of 25, our new documentary series that lo...

See more



28 January at 09:56 · Like · Comment

Deisy Milena Vargas Najjar, Jack Davis, Emma 'Bublé' Riley and 12 others like this.



Patrick Hickey Metallicrap...
Saturday at 05:42 · Flag



Adam Taz Walker FU Metallica kick ass
Saturday at 17:00 · Flag

APPENDIX E

Evidence of email correspondence with Absolute Radio's management

Tim Vernon [Tim.Vernon@absoluteradio.co.uk]  19 February 2013 10:33
LET'S DANCE AT 30

Hi Sam
Great to speak to you again !

Around 50-52 minutes – in 3 self-contained sections, is perfect

Can confirm broadcast Sunday 14th April 8-9pm on Absolute 80s. Though please bear in mind that it may be used on another of our channels (e.g. Absolute Classic Rock) in the future, so don't make it station-specific - 'Absolute Radio' tags will do, as they can work on all our services. We will start pre-promotion (trails) on Monday 1st of April, so if you are able to supply some clips for trails, either w/c 18/03 or 25/03 that would be really helpful.

And if you are able to send a 'sample' – say 5 minutes? In advance, we will send this out to radio journalists with our listings document. We'll have this as soon as you have something ready please!

Although its not entirely relevant to 'Let's Dance' – you might want to be aware that Aladdin Sane is 40 years old the day prior to the Let's Dance 30 anniversary – see Bowie official re-release tweet below. Also the small matter of the new album out 11th March ☺ I'm sure you're across that!

Speak to you soon
Tim.

Tim Vernon [Tim.Vernon@absolute...]    Actions ▾
In response to the message from Paul Sylvester, 15/04/2013

To: Sam Coley
Cc: Ben Wolford [Ben.Wolford@absoluteradio.co.uk];
Paul Sylvester [Paul.Sylvester@absoluteradio.co.uk]

16 July 2013 09:36

Sam, just to let you know we are giving your excellent 'Let's Dance' documentary another broadcast, this time on Absolute Classic Rock, 8pm on Sunday 28th July. Trails should be running throughout next week

Hope all is well and you're enjoying the sunshine

Tim.

Sylvester, Paul [paul.sylvester@ab...]  07 November 2014 09:52
Personal SC

Well done Sam on your nomination for the RPAs. That's great news and thanks for entering the show – it's fabulous that you keep getting the recognition the programmes richly deserve.

I hope to see you on the night.
Paul

APPENDIX F

Evidence of Absolute Radio's online Facebook promotion of the *Let's Dance at 30* documentary.



Absolute 80s shared a link.
22 hours ago

PUT ON YOUR RED SHOES!

Coming up at 8pm, listen to our brand new documentary celebrating the 30th anniversary of David Bowie's legendary album "Let's Dance".

And, aptly enough, here is the title track to get you in the mood...



David Bowie - Let's Dance
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4d7Wp9kKjA&feature...>

Music video by David Bowie performing Let's Dance.

Like · Comment · Share 66

 388 people like this.

Evidence of *Absolute Radio's* Twitter promotion of the *Let's Dance at 30* documentary.



Absolute 80s @Absolute80s 13 Apr

Bowie fans! Listen to our special documentary tomorrow at 8pm celebrating the 30th anniversary of the album "Let's Dance" @DavidBowieReal RT

Expand

APPENDIX G

Evidence of online promotion of the *Let's Dance at 30* documentary series on the official *Duran Duran* website.

facebook Search for people, places and things

Duran Duran Timeline ▾ Now ▾

Tonight – John Taylor is part of the "Let's Dance" David Bowie doc celebrating 30 year's since that album's release. Tune in at 8p GMT on Absolute Radio this evening!

Let's Dance: 30th Anniversary
duran.io

Over on Absolute 80s... An hour-long documentary celebrating the 30th anniversary of Bowie's biggest selling album, Let's Dance.

Like - Comment - Share 56

882 people like this.

Russell Simpson You guys were the star of Doctor Who last night! Congratulations!!
about an hour ago · Like · 1

Lisa Flournoy Weiss Holy cow! I'm old! LOL! I saw Bowie twice on that tour!
about an hour ago · Like · 2

Michael Hubbard 30 years!?!?
Good Lord!!!!
about an hour ago · Like · 2

Kristín Hrund Andrésdóttir Has it really been 30 years?
about an hour ago via mobile · Like · 1

David Bazan Carques I'll be there @8 GMT
about an hour ago · Like

Meredith Small Oh why is everyone lying to me today?? First they say The Addams Family is 22 years old & now they say Let's Dance is 30 years old!!! It's not possible! I am only *ahem* 28 & I remember both of those coming out clearly!
about an hour ago · Like · 3

Alessandra Urracci wow good
about an hour ago · Like

Pamela Vette Lowe That just made me really tired. Where's my walker...
about an hour ago · Like

Online promotion of the *Let's Dance at 30* documentary on the *Bowie Down Under* fan website.

 David Bowie (Australia / New Zealand) shared a link. Yesterday

LET'S DANCE: 30 YEARS AGO TODAY

On April 14th 1983, David Bowie released his fifteenth studio album "Let's Dance", which blended the impeccable dance sensibilities of producer Nile Rodgers with virtuoso blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. The single and album went to number one around the world – and the accompanying "Serious Moonlight" world tour played to record-breaking audiences, establishing him as a mainstream international star. Exactly 30 years after the release of the album Absolute Radio pays tribute to "Let's Dance" with a one-hour documentary that explores this often over-looked pop masterpiece. An album that remains Bowie's biggest and fastest selling album.

Music journalist Mark Sutherland and noted Bowie author David Buckley provide track-by-track analysis, alongside original interviews and archival recording from Bowie in '83. Other contributors include the album's engineer Bob Clearmountain, backing singer Frank Simms, Pete Waterman and John Taylor.

 **Let's Dance: 30th Anniversary**
www.absoluteradio.co.uk

Over on Absolute 80s... An hour-long documentary celebrating the 30th anniversary of Bowie's biggest selling album, Let's Dance.

Online promotion of the *Let's Dance at 30* documentary on the *Exploring David Bowie* fan website.

APRIL 16, 2013 · 7:34 AM ↓ Jump to Comments

Newsflash #9 – Let's Dance @ 30

Folks,

one of David Bowie's best-known and commercially most successful albums celebrates its 30th anniversary these days. *Let's Dance* was released on 14th April 1983 after 3 years of relative silence from the Bowie camp since 1980's *Scary Monsters* – though 1981's hit single with Queen 'Under Pressure', 1982's *Baal EP* and his leading role in the film *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* were some exceptions. Despite of its huge success and a popular Serious Moonlight world tour to follow in mid-1983 *Let's Dance* is often regarded as the beginning of Bowie's artistic demise paving the way for his less liked 1980s dance and pop albums *Tonight* and *Never Let Me Down* which established Bowie as a mainstream superstar. However, in my opinion *Let's Dance* remains today one of Bowie's most underrated albums of his career. Next to the hit singles 'Let's Dance', 'China Girl' and 'Modern Love' the album has some other classics such as 'Ricochet' and 'Cat People' (which was another single in 1982 prior to the album release). Even 'Shake It' isn't that bad. For those who haven't listened to it for a while: it's worth a spin!

In honour of the album's 30th birthday I will post here two current radio documentaries that discuss the record in full detail, i.e. with a track-by-track analysis). The Mixcloud documentary is especially good and detailed. Some of Bowie's collaborators on that record are part of it, as well as noted Bowie author David Buckley.

<http://www.inthestudio.net/redbeards-blog/david-bowie-lets-dance-30th-anniversary-2/>

<http://www.mixcloud.com/bcu/bowies-lets-dance-at-30/>

APPENDIX H

Synchronisation licensing agreement with the BBC for the use of archival Bowie interview material.

BBC MUSIC		SYNCHRONISATION LICENCE	
<small>BBC Audio & Music, part of BBC Worldwide Limited (hereinafter referred to as "BBCW"), a fully owned subsidiary company of the British Broadcasting Corporation (hereinafter referred to as "BBC") - Principal Place of Business: Media Centre, 201 Wood Lane, London, W12 7TQ, UK</small>			
1. LICENSEE			
Sam Coley; Independent Producer for Absolute Radio, UK Address: 8 Dads Lane, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8PQ, UK Phone: 07791123235 Email: sam.coley@bcu.ac.uk			
Date: Feb. 2013			
1. Artist	David Bowie		
2. Title of Recording	"David Bowie, Kid Jensen Interview", featuring David Bowie / Kid Jensen <i>Date: 01/01/1983 Programme Number: 00YJ5199</i> <i>Category RADIO1 Cat Number 1901014</i> <i>Stock title DAVID BOWIE Duration 0:19:25</i> <i>Stock ln 3 AUDIO Stock lib 2 RX:01/01/83</i>		
3. Duration of Recording used	Extracts totalling 1:30 mins.		
4. Term of Licence	Broadcast on Absolute Radio / DAB & Online		
5. Grant of Rights	Non-Exclusive		
6. Number of Broadcasts	1 simultaneous (DAB & Online)		
7. Title of radio programme featuring Recording	"Shake It" Let's Dance at 30		
8. Description of use of Recording in the Project.	Usage shall be 3 inserts amongst contributor interview comments of relevance		
9. Territory	UK only		
10. Licence Fee	£500.00		
11. Payment Terms	Payable on issue of invoice from BBCW		
12. Format	Digital Radio Broadcast, Online Streaming; All rights		
13. Credit	"...First broadcast on the BBC Radio One "Kid Jensen Show" in 1983."		
14. Restrictions on use:	All not expressly agreed above.		

Kindly indicate your agreement to the terms of this Synchronisation Licence by signing in the place indicated below.

APPENDIX I

Absolute Radio PRS return for *Let's Dance at 30* documentary.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Station Name	Transmission Date	Programme Name / Promotion Name	Music Title	Artist	Composers	Publishers	Duration (hh:mm:ss)	
1	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:00:45
2	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	There is a happy land	David Bowie	David Bowie	Deram	00:00:38
3	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:02:40
4	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Fashion	David Bowie	David Bowie	RCA	00:03:20
5	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Modern Love	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:03:30
6	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Le Freak	Chic	Edwards / Rodgers	Atlantic	00:01:10
7	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	China Girl (Riff & Vox Club Mix)	David Bowie	David Bowie / Iggy Pop	EMI	00:01:40
8	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Ziggy Stardust	David Bowie	David Bowie	RCA	00:00:40
9	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	China Girl (Orstedberg Version)	Iggy Pop	David Bowie / Iggy Pop	RCA	00:01:50
10	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	China Girl	David Bowie	David Bowie / Iggy Pop	EMI America	00:03:00
11	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	China Girl (Riff & Vox Club Mix)	David Bowie	David Bowie / Iggy Pop	EMI	00:01:40
12	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	China Girl	David Bowie	David Bowie / Iggy Pop	EMI America	00:01:20
13	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	Duran Duran	David Bowie	EMI America	00:02:42
14	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Is there something I should know	Duran Duran	David Bowie	EMI / Capitol Records	00:00:40
15	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:00:52
16	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Teenage Wildlife	David Bowie	David Bowie	RCA	00:01:20
17	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Without You	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:00:20
18	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Some Like It Hot	Power Station	Robert Palmer, Andy Taylor, and John Taylor	Capitol / EMI	00:00:25
19	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:02:20
20	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Rhinochet	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:02:15
21	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Criminal World	David Bowie	Godwin / Browne / Lyons	EMI America	00:02:00
22	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Cat People (82 Single)	David Bowie	Bowie / Moroder	MCA	00:01:13
23	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Little Wing (Ray Vaughan Version)	David Bowie	Bowie / Moroder	EMI America	00:01:13
24	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Shake It	David Bowie	Jim Hendrix	Epic	00:02:40
25	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	South Horizon	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:02:10
26	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Where are We Now	David Bowie	David Bowie	BMG International	00:00:40
27	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	The Stars (Are Out Tonight)	David Bowie	David Bowie	ISO Columbia	00:01:30
28	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	You Feel So Lonely You Could Die	David Bowie	David Bowie	ISO Columbia	00:00:45
29	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	The Mysteries	David Bowie	David Bowie	ISO Columbia	00:01:20
30	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	BMG International	00:00:42
31	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:00:42
32	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:01:10
33	INVRG	14.4.2013	Let's Dance at 30: Radio Documentary	Let's Dance	David Bowie	David Bowie	EMI America	00:01:10

APPENDIX J

Full list of intermediary documentary production work completed between the production of the two David Bowie projects.

2009

- *Musical Chairs; Hugh Lynn* (Music Promoter)
Duration 26 mins, Radio New Zealand
- *Clinton in Christchurch; 10th Anniversary* (Historic Doc.)
Duration 30 mins, Radio New Zealand
- *Phil Lynott at 60* (Musician)
Duration 50 mins, BBC WM, Absolute Radio; UK, Spin 1038; Ireland, Radio New Zealand

2010

- *Urban Disturbance in Broadcasting House; The Zane Lowe Story*
(Musician, Broadcaster)
Duration 2 x 26 mins, Radio New Zealand
- *Musical Chairs; John Metcalfe* (Composer)
Duration 26 mins, Radio New Zealand
- *Signing Off at 30; UB40* (Music Doc.)
Duration 55 mins, Absolute Radio, BBC WM; UK, Radio New Zealand

2011

- *Musical Chairs; Graeme Allwright* (Musician)
Duration 2 x 26 mins, Radio New Zealand
- *XFM 25* (Music Doc. Series)
Duration 12 x 55 mins, Xfm Network; UK

2012

- *Studying the Starman; David Bowie Symposium* (David Bowie Doc.)
Duration 15 mins, Radio New Zealand
- *The Battle for Middle Earth; Remembering Tolkien in Birmingham* (Historic Doc.)
Duration 32 mins, Switch 107.5 FM; UK
- *West Midlands Stories* (Compilation Doc.)
Duration 8 x 55 mins, Switch 107.5 FM; UK

APPENDIX K

Online comments posted to fan websites from listeners to the *XFM 25* documentary series.

XFM 25: New Order, Brotherhood (2011) comments, from *NewOrder.com*;

- “This is like a breath of fresh air” (The Paradiseman)
- “Really well put together, most enjoyable” (Condemnation)
- “I love it! Thanks so much!” (Ger Boy)

XFM 25: Prince, Parade (2011) comments from *Prince.org*;

- “Not a dull moment from start to finish. Thank you! Also, nicely placed within the context of what came before, what was happening at the same time, and what came after Parade...” (Marxisreal)
- “Outstanding effort! Lots of great comments, and I loved how the music was incorporated.” (Blue Fish)
- “It was so good! You had so many people give a perfect scope on "Parade" that I had to play it again, so I can get a broader love for this fantastic album! The editing was perfect, and everyone shared what they needed to give it exactly the flow. I was surprised to hear from Dr.Fink! He shared a lot of information I was completely unaware of.” (Eyejester)
- “Great documentary. Well balanced between casual and hardcore.” (Squirrelmeat)
- “I can't tell you how much I enjoyed your documentary. I didn't want it to end because it lifted my spirits but sadly all good things come to an end.” (Ujustme)
- “This is majorly awesome! Very well produced. I was jammin’ and learning at the same time.” (Danny5050)
- “Thank u for this. I got to learn a lot. Really appreciate it!!” (Emancipation89)
- “The Parade doc was better than the recent BBC TV (doc) in my opinion.” (Black Bob)