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Book review: European Radio Documentary: A History of the Format and its Festivals

Virginia Madsen, Macquarie University, virginia.madsen@mq.edu.au

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Tereza Reková's book on European radio documentary is a welcome addition to the developing international literature on this distinctive yet still underestimated genre and field—as likely to be heard today via podcast as 'on' traditional/'legacy' radio broadcasts (however accessed). Considering the proposed subject matter and potential scope of this book, published in 2024 (and of obvious interest to this journal's readers), perhaps I should start this review by tackling why the author might have chosen to use only 'radio' in her title, rather than 'audio' or 'sound'? This terminology has also become commonplace, employed by both mainstream 'broadcasters' and media studies academics, as well as among contemporary radio producers. Some public media organisations, even when they are referring to their own radio programme offerings, have opted to drop 'radio', replacing it instead with 'audio' or 'sound' (e.g. BBC Sounds, or in Australia, SBS Audio). (Some of us might equally ask why *RadioDoc Review* uses only 'radio' in its title, considering that much of what is discussed here also encompasses the two related and often overlapping audio media domains.)

Reková states boldly in her book and early on her aim to 'draw attention to the international radio community, to help connect its members and to show different approaches to documentary production' (6). She certainly does these things and more, exploring and surveying radio forms that encompass the hard-to-define and often European-identified 'radio feature' (in my view a genre closer to auteur documentary cinema, and surprisingly championed by key figures in the German tradition), to episodes of the highly popular *This American Life* where the reporter-host may dominate, or to the likewise American long-running series, *Radio Diaries* (both also podcasts), where the 'interviewees' assume the leading role. Reková has a strong focus on the more recent 'audio' storytelling communities, their makers, and documentary podcasting. This seems somewhat surprising, however, for a book announcing itself as 'a history'. When so much of the book addresses relatively contemporary developments in forms and organisational or institutional contexts, along with the extensive discussion of the 'audio' community engaged in nonfiction podcasts (as opposed to radio production as such), I wish to also then raise the question: what kind of a history does this hope to be? In this account and 'mapping' of a 'format', the documentary in radio, is the history presented here adequate to the task the author claims for her book, and which, as she reveals, was 'originally written' as a PhD thesis?

I should make clear that these questions are not designed to be pedantically applied or to overly provoke, nor to disavow the right of the author (or this journal) to stick with 'radio' in their titles. 'History' can certainly appear in a work dealing with more recent or even contemporary analysis, surveying, and reflection, helping us to understand how a field has become what it is today. I'd suggest, however, that through the naming of this book, and with its aim as expressed to provide a history of

the 'format' and its 'festivals', we might expect more from the history as it is presented here. Or, alternatively, the author might be clearer from the start as to the predominant terrain to be covered by this book.

By asking these kinds of questions, my aim here is to: 1) stress, above all, the deep connections between the newer podcast space for documentaries and non-fiction audio with the radio's own distinctive but lesser-known international developments (these distinct radio formations constitute national and transnational media traditions well worth digging into, and the two spheres furthermore interact and intersect); and 2) address the core content of this book, as proposed by its author, as 'a history' and 'mapping' of the 'European radio documentary', with close reference also to its unique producer communities. The thesis offered here, among other things, suggests these specialist communities are able to discover they are not alone in their endeavours as they come together at these selected festivals and through these initiatives. They can connect with one another in rich ways, gaining precious access to diverse works produced globally and in many languages. These makers (and they are not only European) thus come to understand what they do as part of something larger. Although not stated as such in the book, this dynamic community might then be thought of as a distinctive and historically located formation.

I am appreciative of these aims and insights, and that we have new research available to us in the form of this book. Insights and perspectives new to me, that share some of the highly sophisticated and theoretical work done on 'radio features' and radio documentary in the Czech context and language, were a treasure to discover. New territory has been opened in the transnational appreciation of this field. Also, here we encounter, first-hand, perspectives and experiences from leading or pivotal players, and from those who have perhaps been the master builders in this space, first occupied by radio, now expanded into online and podcast realms. Both domains where documentary 'soundwork' (Hilmes, 2013) is to be found—radio and podcast—have a strong basis for inclusion in this monograph on European developments then because there is this shared history, culture, and development across the domains, and I find this well demonstrated by the author within this strand of audio media. A book on this subject should be aimed at engaging with this expanding and passionate community of makers—also the readership of *RadioDoc Review*—while also shedding light on the past, so as to understand and appreciate the now.

I suspect some of the questions I have about terminology or frames of reference relate to this being a translation from the original Czech; reading this e-book, I encountered many instances where corrections were needed, and greater care should have been applied to the English expression and terminology. The work would benefit from greater attention from the editors to address some confusions or

ameliorate sometimes awkward expression. A particularly concerning example is the use of the term, 'format', employed by Reková (or her translator) throughout the book and in the title. This may strike many English-speaking media and radio studies academics (and industry professionals) as problematic. 'Format' (in English) has quite specific meanings within the radio industries—usually referring to, or indicating, a style or a type of programming for a whole radio station, e.g., familiar formats include Newstalk, Talkback, Adult Rock, Classical, or Easy Listening.

I wonder also about the transition from PhD thesis to published monograph: what role did the editors and academic readers (peers) play in this process? Attention to the scholarship, as well as to the language, could have addressed some of the weaknesses I found to be disappointing in this part-profile, part-study of a set of forms we mostly encounter through their interaction with the events and initiatives encapsulated in the 50-year-old International Features Conference (IFC), plus the other key festivals/competitions for radio/audio documentaries (the Prix Europa, Prix Italia, Third Coast International Audio Festival, and Hearsay Audio Arts Festival). All but one of these events are located in what we might broadly recognise as Europe.

Staying with terminology a moment longer, I find the 'European' of the title not straightforward, even as it holds within it so much potential, especially in terms of the history of this form and strand of radio production. As we do discover in this book, much of significance, as far as the history of radio documentary is concerned, can be, or is, located in what we might broadly frame as the European sphere, even if we acknowledge that the 'idea' of Europe itself, and its borders, is harder to pin down, certainly not agreed upon, and dynamic—even when the descriptor may, in some commonsense way, seem quite unproblematic. From an Australian perspective, or even a British one, should Britain (and the BBC) be considered within the frame of 'Europe', or outside of it, or both at once? When speaking of the adjective 'European' in 2001, the writer Timothy Garton Ash wrote that its 'elusiveness...is true in all European languages, but particularly English' ('Is Britain European?' *Prospect*, February 2001). The *Collins English Dictionary*, he also noted in his essay, described Europe at that time as 'the continent of Europe, except for the British Isles', and did so even as Britain was participating in The European Union (EU). Garton Ash additionally cites a 'BBC Mori poll in 1995 [which] asked its audience in the UK: "How European do you feel?"' Garton Ash seems vindicated when 'only 8 per cent of respondents said "a great deal," with 49 per cent saying, "not at all."'

Some more space devoted to the theorisation, conceptual unpacking, and agency of the terms 'Europe' or 'the European' in relation to this subject of the radio documentary, and how it has been cultured as a common project across much European public radio in particular for nearly 80 years, could have helped us to understand and appreciate so much more about how and why this field for expression evolved as it did across Europe, and particularly after World War 2. The

development of this form in relation to other media (especially documentary cinema?), and including its presence in Britain at the BBC (also part of the EBU), appears somewhat downplayed in this account. This is so even as work heard over the last two decades on outlets such as Radio 3 and Radio 4 (that produced by *Falling Tree*, for example) and conceptualised as ‘features’—especially longform, carefully crafted audio work of this kind—intersects with and is in dialogue with European *auteur* and craft traditions in cinema, literature, and radio.

Why might we detect recognisable traits or ‘attitudes’ applying to European work in this domain, as Reková suggests do, or have done historically? She claims that:

European production is much more nuanced than American production is and offers a broader spectrum of options. In Scandinavian countries, intimate and perfectly executed features are often created that focus on delicate and very personal testimonies (where the narrator also plays an important role). The creators do not shy away from revealing surprising details from the personal lives of the interviewees (6).

These observations are interesting and begin to map a landscape of the radio documentary in Europe, endowed with, or in the process of developing, certain features, and with links to other mediums, but we need more sustained thinking on this subject and greater extrapolation of the strands of development.

Reková also suggests that European radio documentary can be distinguished in some ways from its American counterparts, in that the former is more likely to use ‘scenes’—producers going out on location where ‘a scene’ in sound might be captured (a connection with drama is also made). These actuality scenes are then employed to tell the story. Story comes from scenes here, as well as from interviews and narration, and perhaps more space is, or was, given to this kind of approach in the European context than in American radio documentary work. Her observation is perhaps astute, but the reflection and rationale for the hypothesis remain underdeveloped, dissatisfyingly simplistic. Reková, for example, suggests in a ‘common sense’ way that producers in Europe live in a smaller geographical space and can also travel more freely in and across countries within this space, taking less time to gather this kind of material (80). Her conclusion is that European producers are more likely to travel and make these recordings than their American counterparts, given the larger geography of the USA.

A discussion here of the specific institutional contexts for making work and their affordances might have been productive to focus on (cultures developed within state and public service models), or a reflection upon the differences in technologies and traditions of making in various European contexts would probably also have shed light on these contrasting approaches and facets. Should we assume also that this delineation applies to all work from either Europe or the USA? What of the European *auteur* tradition in radio features transmigrating to Australia or Canada via these conferences and prizes? What does ‘European’ mean when not all of Europe is

represented through these events and initiatives? And how differently might the frame 'European', as a descriptor and as an idea, apply between countries, cultures, and languages? How is 'European' understood and employed by an undisputed leader of the IFC formation, Peter Leonhard Braun? Thinking about the use of 'scenes' and Braun's desire to look out beyond Berlin, what kind of agent was this European idea for him? At the time (1970s), the city was cut off from Western Europe, yet connected to it. In this divided site, Braun looks to where in order to launch a new phase of the radio documentary? Here it is hard not to recall the work of the renowned Polish producer, a pioneer of the radio documentary yet not mentioned in this book, but who recorded his 'radio film' (1965–1966), which inspired the German maker Peter Leonhard Braun as he embarks on his own 'acoustic film' experiments (*Hyena*, *Bells in Europe*, and more). Witold Zadrowski's *Death of an Elephant*¹ (winner of the 1966 Prix Italia for radio documentaries) is all scene, and the microphone, its conduit, gives us something real and almost 3D in immersion. Why this is so, why one producer chooses to take this route, opening his mono omnidirectional microphone to this actuality, which is also a 'real fiction' (Farabet, 1994), is not clear, but a work like this, and its encounter with Braun, may be able to speak well to this 'difference' the author and many others might locate in European radio features, or in specific documentary traditions found in European broadcasting but spreading beyond these sites by the late 1960s.²

Reková has referenced (although very briefly) the set of six CDs and booklet curated and produced by Edwin Brys for the IFC, *The IFC Collection: 30 Years of International Radio Documentaries* (EBU/IFC 2004: 4, 305), yet she does not appear to have drawn from any of the texts therein or the excerpted audio works. This is doubly strange because, as she tells us, a Czech version of the collection was produced (4) and therefore available to her in Czech. In this collection (CD 1, to be precise), we find the Zadrowski feature that so captured the imagination of Braun when he heard it (and noted by Braun in his 'The genesis of the International Features Conference', a 1999 reprint found in the booklet). The reaching out to Poland by Braun and the IFC also ensued from this encounter (at the Prix Italia) and may have been the kind of interaction worth noting, if not reflecting upon, especially

¹ Witold Zadrowski's programme won the 1966 *Prix Italia National Press Association Prize for Documentaries* (Radio). It was made for *Polskie Radio i Telewizja* and later an adaptation made for SFB by Peter Leonhard Braun.

² I cite Farabet, Mortley, Lindemann, and others based on extensive interviews and documents in various book chapters and articles on this subject I have written since 2005: e.g., Madsen, V. (2009). Radio and the Documentary Imagination: Thirty Years of Experiment, Innovation, and Revelation. In A. Crisell (Ed.), *Radio: Critical Essays in Media and Cultural Studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 207–219). London & New York: Routledge.; Madsen, V. (2010). A Call to Listen: The 'New' Documentary in Radio—Encountering 'Wild Sound' and the 'Filme Sonore'. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (Routledge), 30(3), 391–410.; Madsen, V. (2013). 'Your Ears are a Portal to Another World': The New Radio Documentary Imagination and the Digital Domain. In J. Loviglio & M. Hilmes (Eds.), *Radio's New Wave: Global Sound in the Digital Era* (pp. 126–144). London; New York: Routledge; Madsen, V. (2023); Illuminated Radio: Imagination and Affect in the Tradition of the Audio 'Feature', 'Acoustic Film' and Radio Documentaire de Création. In H. Chignell. H & K. MacDonald. (Eds.), *Bloomsbury Handbook of Radio* (pp. 95–111). London: Bloomsbury.

relevant to the 'European' question as applied to the radio documentary. It seems odd, this kind of omission, as Reková also concentrates many more words on the IFC than on most of the other festivals covered in her book.

Opening this analysis further, into the history of ideas, and as expressed in the thinking explored in a broader range of producers and sites who have had significant impacts upon the evolution of this craft, I'd argue, could have greatly enriched the reflection this book offers upon its subject: the formation of a radio documentary culture in the European space/s. Extending the sources and literature drawn upon would have been my first thought to address some of the core lacunae. For example, while Reková includes numerous interviews with a number of these figures who have ensured that development, investment, and revitalisation in this field continue, there are also notable absences, particularly of some of the leading women radio makers from the 1970s onwards, and countries across Europe are also not in any way evenly represented. Some of those shapers of the organisations (playing a substantive role) can, however, be accessed via the web-based materials accessible online—and this is a valuable addition.

Having some bearing on these questions as well, the author of this study does make explicit that this genre of radio programme has primarily been supported by public and state media institutions and their radio outlets (at least, this is the case in many European countries, including Scandinavia, and also in Australia and Canada). Reková recognises this important aspect, that it was only in this media ecology that these 'formats', as she (or her translator) calls them, 'were permitted' (2). (Radio drama is named here also as a 'format'.) In other words, it was only in this sector, more generally labelled as Public Service Broadcasting (PSB), that these forms were able to flourish from the late 1970s onwards, surviving both the transition from golden age radio to television (when distinct programme forms were dropped for formats in commercial radio), and from a world war and a 'cold war' that irreversibly touched and re-organized bodies, spaces, and ideas, especially, but not exclusively, those associated with Europe or the European. Making these kinds of forays into history, geography, and bodies marked by these ruptures would potentially turn this subject more into 'a medium' for channelling new but also interleaved stories, as well as animating a more intense and embedded encounter with the European voices of radio documentary.

The author does chart in some detail how individual producers, coming from distinct yet related cultures and languages, could be brought together to create an international field of activity around documentary, and around forms aligned with the radio documentary and feature. This is demonstrated in the focus on the festivals, particularly in the more detailed account she gives us, devoted to the founding and expansion of the International Features Conference (IFC, since 2024 renamed the Audio Storytelling Festival), as well as in the commentary surveying the Prix Europa

and its prize for radio documentary. Both these initiatives are also the work of a radio visionary in this field already cited, Peter Leonhard Braun, who was interviewed for the thesis and the book. Along with Edwin Brys, these informants provide much of the historical material for this book. Reková unfortunately does not attempt to go much beneath the surface as she summarises and steps through these organisations' development. Nor does she appear to ask more complex questions from her range of sources. These ideas are there as part of this mapping, yes, but they flicker in the shadows like subconscious presences or ghosts lacking corporeality, and are not sounded for the meanings and greater richness that can be found when one attempts to dive deeper.

Reková's goal, as she writes, is to provide 'evidence on how creators' thinking about audio documentary production has evolved' with 'historical insight into and a description of the fundamentals on which modern audio documentary production was built' (10). This latter and admittedly ambitious remit might not be so much of a problem to claim, if we can be confident in the end that the 'history', built on this 'fundament' with its culture (community?) created around it, and whose members inherit and pass on this history, is being explored with sufficient depth and breadth, plus adequate attention devoted to the more important and even core sources. The proposal to us, and surely announced in the title, that this is a history of the 'format and its festivals', is not delivered in my view, even as there is much here to interest us: in the discussion of 'documentary' versus 'features', for example, and in the varying perspectives on this division that alert us again to different traditions—geographical as well as political—with their varying historical contexts. The value of the more recent iterations of these festivals and producers' engagement with them is also amply affirmed, although the meaning of their Europeaness, and the fact that their support in Europe is connected to public media cultures (and organisations like the EBU) in still very strong ways, could have elicited new and highly pertinent questions, prompting thinking that might be directed towards the future of this ecology in particular: what might it mean for this artisanal sphere of production, for example, if these ecosystems of support were to weaken?

Despite these limitations, the book does offer much to think about 50 years after that first gathering was held in Berlin (IFC 1975), and which was exclusively devoted to the development and internationalisation of the radio documentary—also perhaps oddly at that time termed the 'radio feature'. In 1975, this English word, or nomenclature, was not only used by the BBC in the UK for their documentary-styled radio programs. As Reková reports, and drawing on wider literature here thankfully, the man behind this initiative, Peter Leonhard Braun from Sender Freies Berlin (SFB, then a public broadcasting station of West Germany), had inherited the term in the radio culture he worked in as a 'writer-producer'. And so, for many in the community of radio or podcast and not understanding this history, an English terminology is

adopted by a German public station for documentary programmes, and then afterwards a producer adopts this term (used in sound broadcasting as early as the 1920s) for his new event and organisation. As Reková reports on this development and is a witness to it as well in later years when she becomes a participant (from 2015, 153), the IFC will go on to forge a community of passionate practitioners across Europe, but also reaching to Australia, Canada, and the USA. The community that comes from the past and continues to form with each new iteration connects itself not only through practices and works, but also via ideas. These ideas about form, subject, voice, sound, narratology, rhythm, reality and fiction, even the place of silence in a documentary, give to makers and their radio departments (or within stations) an opportunity to seek and encounter new and wider horizons.

Reková is then right to focus more attention in her book on this organisation, the IFC, compared to the others she looks at (such as Prix Italia and much later events like HearSay in Ireland). The IFC is the place that becomes intimately engaged with the promotion and building up of the feature and documentary forms as a field and craft, and it importantly seeks out the best of the creators at first—these producers are sought as a point of difference, rather than the bureaucrats or department heads, as Peter Leonhard Braun relates. This strategy importantly ignites new thinking as well as the sharing of expertise and techniques. Moreover, this site allows for sophisticated conceptualisation of practice, as well as new ideas about the potentialities of radio itself as a medium, and how these multiple forms may be valued and appreciated—either as core discoveries and spaces of/for this medium, or to enact provocations (as the other performing, cinema and visual arts also propose). Sometimes radical gestures or experiment would be presented, and these could be safely aired at the IFC, even as they might also be vigorously challenged.

We might then expect to hear more about this space that invited in and attracted these radio visionaries. Shall we say these might be the philosopher-intellectuals, artists, and poets of the radio at this time? Reková's book does give us an inkling of this unlikely yet startling contribution, but these voices who should appear on this stage more strongly are barely perceived. These are also leading actors or figures in this historically rendered space and formation, yet they are missing in action or muted in this telling by Reková. I am not sure why this is the case. Fundamental texts by important voices and figures do not enter this story: for example, Klaus Lindemann's 'What is a feature?', appearing in multiple editions of the IFC's own collections detailing its community of producers and their works (in Ed. Flor Stein, 1981) does not appear to be consulted. This and other omissions give cause to my doubts about this work delivering 'a history' as it proposes to do.

I applaud the numerous oral history (or oral history-styled) interviews. For example, Edwin Brys, Director of the IFC from 1996–2003, was pivotal for much longer than this period in this organisation and field. He is also described as a

‘Belgian creator and theoretician’, when he has also won awards for his documentaries and runs the EBU/IFC’s Documentary radio masterclasses. Or Peter Leonard Braun, who was the founder of the IFC and is also renowned in radio documentary circles for his many award-winning radio features—what he would sometimes call ‘acoustic films’. This oral history appears to have been a phone interview, and as such, I would imagine it may suffer from the lack of co-presence that face-to-face interviews can more easily provide. Depending on duration of interview, the lack of this co-presence may also impact the level of depth or breadth of the conversation. (Yet, this is not always the case, if we read some of the literature on oral histories.) In this case with Braun, I do find absences that are hard to explain. Those working with him were also important players in this history of a form, rather than a format. Perhaps the questions asked did not allow these stories to emerge. I am left asking, if Braun doesn’t get to these other visionaries, perhaps it is because time simply ‘ran out’? There are other ways to dig into your site, especially when writing history, so why the lack of consultation of a wide range of authoritative secondary and primary sources? As I have said, this history is weakened considerably by these absences and unasked questions. Why not bring these others in, especially some of those with different yet comparable impact or influence into this theatre, especially those who played significant and influential roles in both making and developing the forms of this field, as well as making a mark or taking on a leadership role in the extended community or in the festivals and IFC? I can think of Barbro Holmberg, leading the Swedish atelier in radio from Finland, or Lorelei Harris from Ireland, also directing the IFC at an earlier time while she was also Director of the prime audio documentary programme for the public broadcaster in Ireland. Or Kaye Mortley from France, whose work has won so many awards and is held in very high esteem, and whose adaptations of numerous international documentaries have helped to bring a wider range of works to the public in multiple languages. These three women barely make an appearance, and yet they have, in less obvious ways, shaped the documentary in sound and its community of makers. Interviews, while they are important, also need to be much more cross-referenced with other sources, documents, and scholarship. Any historical undertaking that seeks to account for a field, or ‘map’ a ‘format’, will be compromised if it does not attend to these aspects.

There is no reference at all in this book to one of those unforgettable and pivotal figures in this universe, René Farabet (Radio France), a significant presence from the earliest days of the IFC, who represented the forms and exploratory gestures, the propositions and the ‘essays’, as he might describe them, of that hugely influential space, the ‘*atelier de création radiophonique*’ (ACR, Radio France, France Culture, working there from 1969–2001). Not only was his work, and that of others who also made for this space, influential for other European sites of documentary

radio production, but it was also so for Australian, some American, and Scandinavian producers. Farabet was there at the Prix Futura, Europa, Italia, and EBU from almost the beginning, and for decades he was contributing by hosting co-productions and workshops, these also the subject of his many books and writings, and to are no doubt to be found in the IFC's documents as well as referenced by myself and other scholars of the form. He activated these unorthodox sessions focussed on form and ideas, reality and fiction, challenging preconceived conceptions and boundaries. The French context as a rich and vital space for this production, a source of extraordinary thinking and examples in the realm of the *documentaire de radio* and *documentaire de création*, including the more recent ARTE Radio, is also barely mentioned by Reková. If materials were hard to source, or language a barrier, the very rich milieu for this work and in its historical dimension could have been accessed through other means, even questioning the chosen sample of producers would surely have delivered missing perspectives such as these. The work and writing of the German producer-director and close colleague and collaborator of Braun, Klaus Lindemann, also does not receive even a footnote. The beautiful vistas opened by these artists of the radiophonic documentary imagination—how could they not have a place here, or barely receive a mention? It seems incredible that they are invisible and silent. Whether it is Lindemann or Farabet or indeed others in our midst (Barbro Holmberg, Kaye Mortley, Lorelei Harris...) these luminaries of the radio feature and documentary, as well as core to the IFC, brought astounding work and thinking to these events. They also won many of the prizes, or their work proved impactful in other ways and continues, moreover, to be broadcast. They were charged with the responsibility (at least in the IFC) of provoking debate and discussion. They opened the space and our ears to deeper thought, soundings and responses.

While Reková does provide a generally accurate yet limited summary and timeline of the key steps forward for some of these initiatives—festivals and prizes, with comparisons to the American Third Coast Festival (but other international events overlooked)³—she does not quite succeed in her mapping or historical accounting for this radio culture and community as it has evolved in the European setting. The fabric is sewn in such a way that significant threads are left hanging, or seams fray, or are not attended to at all. Europe, in its complexity and placement, is intuitively present but also overlooked or absent as a question and a potency, and there are too many holes requiring attention in this uneven weaving of voices and experiences. The voices and perspectives of seasoned and key players, as well as those observing or participating in these events for perhaps the first time, are audible and vivid, yes, and this is appreciated, although the history does not hold, and its texture

³ For example, the Phonurgia Nova festival for audio works, held annually in Arles, France, attracting international entries submitted in any language but with English transcription, is comparable to other European festivals.

is unfinished and uneven. The claims to 'a history' suggested by the title and in the opening pages are considerably weakened by other more noticeable absences too: voices and core texts and materials that have not registered and remain unexamined. These are not small details solved by a footnote.

That being said, and with some disappointment, I would still recommend this book, particularly to audio documentary and radio practitioners working in this community of practice today. There is much of value here in the way the book has captured some of the spirit and excitement in this community, and in their love of these forms, and in the craft they honour and continue to shape, whether these works are for the radio or for podcast, or both. The book introduces the reader to a field and conveys vividly the craft and forms for audio storytelling whose history many will not be familiar with. This field, across both domains of new sound media such as podcasting and radio, is being re-energised by a younger set of makers who also form part of this valuable portrait of a vibrant European and indeed international community of producers and their festivals. This concentration of creativity within whatever we understand as 'the European' has allowed for traditions to continue and to be rightly challenged and revitalised: this ideas-craft-and-public service ecology has meant these diverse makers will continue to hear work and forms beyond their own languages and understanding, bridging places and times, thus imagining so much more than any 'format' can encompass.

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