

Sounding Out! Podcast Episode #2: Building Intimate Performance Venues on the Internet

Andreas Duus Pape

Blog post published July 11, 2011 in *Sounding Out!*

<https://doi.org/10.59350/721ym-sts70>

Abstract

The podcast is (or, can be) an intimate performance venue on the internet because it allows you to whisper into the ears of your fans. It allows you to grow close to communities of listeners.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Article, Authenticities, Digital Media, Economics, Liveness

Recommended citation

Pape, A. D. (2011, July 11). Sounding Out! Podcast Episode #2: Building Intimate Performance Venues on the Internet. *Sounding Out!*. <https://doi.org/10.59350/721ym-sts70>

Copyright

Copyright © Andreas Duus Pape 2011. Distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.



The podcast is (or, can be) an intimate performance venue on the internet because it allows you to whisper into the ears of your fans. It allows you to grow close to communities of listeners. And podcasts also do one last thing, to be revealed at the end of this piece, after we've seen how far I can take you. For now, I will quote podcasters I admire to help explain these ideas in their own words. I also quote these podcasters in an audio format. I have recorded this essay as an episode of the [Sounding Out! podcast](https://soundstudiesblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/soundingoutpodcastep2-new.mp3). You can listen right here, and I suggest you do. Go ahead, press play:

<https://soundstudiesblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/soundingoutpodcastep2-new.mp3>

The podcast is what's happening if you're listening to these words. Are you? Because remember: my central claim is that a podcast is an intimate performance venue on the internet. Keep that in mind.

I am a podcaster, musician, and assistant professor of Economics. I have released six episodes of my own podcast, [The Lion in Tweed](#).



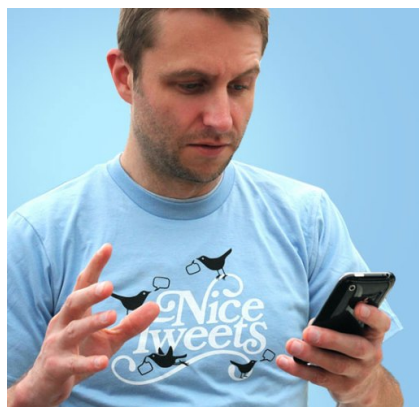
Me. (Photo by Hadassah Head)



The Lion in Tweed. (Drawing by Winston Rowntree)

My podcast is primarily a narrative, with music and sound effects interwoven. It is about a character, The Lion in Tweed, and his experiences as a musician and professor of economics. He is also a lion. The second half of each podcast episode is a references section where I cite my sources and leave the fictional Tweedoverse canon to discuss real things.

I am not the first podcaster to remark on the ability of podcasts to traffic in intimacy. [Chris Hardwick](#), of the [Nerdist](#) podcast, has claimed that, due to their intimacy, podcasts are the best medium going. He stressed: “you’re talking directly into the ears of your listeners.” There is no doubt that Hardwick was referring to those white iPod earbuds, which are a primary method of listening to podcasts. Part of a podcast’s intimacy comes from the closeness of the earbud to the membrane in the ear. Listening to earbuds evokes the intimate, and physical, closeness of someone whispering in your ear. Hardwick’s style of podcast is also intimate: vocal storytelling, mostly three comedians talking about the funniest things that have happened recently. The fact that it is not visual accentuates the intimacy of “whispering in your ears.” Although I would like to argue that the visual *always* reduces a sense of intimacy, I may simply prefer the sonic over the visual. Nevertheless, I believe that, the intimacy to which Hardwick is refers, is tied to the fact it is only sonic.



Chris Hardwick.



The Nerdist Podcast.

COMMUNITY

Podcasts as performance have a strange kind of liveness, episode-to-episode interactivity. By this I mean that they are not immediate; they lack the urgency of a theater-goer's applause, or a heckler's retort. Though not immediate, they are still dynamic, with their episodic pacing. And, unlike heckling, almost completely positive. This sense of long-term interactivity provides a foundation for understanding a second way that podcasts are intimate: they can cultivate intimate and interconnected communities of listeners.

They [Stop Podcasting Yourself, hosted by Graham Clark and Dave Shumka] have a really good community of people, community interaction: people send them stuff, sometimes people send them stuff unprompted. And they have a phone number [for people to call in messages that they play].

To illustrate how interconnected this community is, let me describe to you where this quote came from. It is a clip of [Dan Sai](#), recorded by [Davin Pavlas](#) at [MaxFunCon](#) (the annual convention of the [MaximumFun.org](#) podcast label). I know Davin because of our mutual love of MaxFun podcasts. When I brought *The Lion in Tweed* into the world, I advertised it on podcasts in the MaxFun network. When Davin heard the description, he began to listen to my podcast. Now we are collaborating on an episode of *The Lion in Tweed*, which will quote these very words when it comes out two weeks from now. Similarly, [UK resident Will Owens](#) and I [exchanged tweets after he started listening to my podcast](#) and I found out he [reviewed various narrative media on his website](#), and now he has [written a review of my podcast](#), which we both promote. Ours is a community in which a feeling of value comes with a sense of connectedness. The podcasts give a shared culture.

SO IN PODCASTS, WE FIND A MEDIUM that is both sonic and vocal. They provide a platform for intimate and interconnected communities, which are rooted in an alternative kind of interactivity (long-term liveness), to grow. The whisper-in-the-ear quality of podcasts, as well as the feeling of community, all but completely explain why podcasts are so intimate.

AUTHENTICITY

Podcasts may be hip and modern, but they are not ironic. Podcasts represent a distillation of what the podcasters genuinely love, and in that they find their authenticity. According to [Paul F. Tompkins, a comedian and podcaster](#):

It's very freeing to be able to say: "Here are all the things that I like; I'm going to put them all into this [podcast]."

That was at [minute 50:32 of Nerdist podcast ep 33 hosted by Chris Hardwick](#), with Paul F. Tompkins as a guest.



Paul F. Tompkins



The Pod F. Tompkast

Here is [Jesse Thorn](#), mastermind behind the aforementioned [MaximumFun.org](#), in [an interview by Neiman Labs](#):

I can mostly just do things that I am interested in, and so I don't have to do something that is false to me, and I can let my guiding light be, "Do I like this and think it's worth doing?"



Jesse Thorn.



The Sound of Young America.

And we see that authenticity completes the puzzle: podcasts are intimate because they feel so real. In podcasts it feels like you are listening to a real person because you are listening to the things that a real person loves...and interacting with real people is much more intimate than feeling like you are interacting with a marketing department (as you may when listening to a CD, or radio-show).

This is how I construct intimate performance venues: Audio-only, voice/storytelling focused, in which I try to build and exploit supportive, interconnected communities of fans with a shared culture (the podcasts). And, in doing so, I try to remain true to what I truly love. This authenticity, I believe, deepens the intimacy.

In the background of this podcast episode, Andreas plays an instrumental cover of “[Bound for Hell](#)” by [Love and Rockets](#).