

Innovations in Fiction Podcasts

Wil Williams | 2020

About Me

@wilw_writes

- Podcaster, critic, journalist
- Focus on fiction podcasts (audio drama)

Podcasts	Journalism/etc.
VALENCE (fiction)	Podcast Movement curator
Scoring Magic (making-of documentary)	Polygon
Radio Drama Revival (fiction showcase)	Spotify
Tuned In, Dialed Up (nonfiction)	Discover Pods
Empty the Queues (nonfiction)	Featured in Hot Pod, New York Magazine

Misconception:

Fiction in podcasting is
an innovation

- Goes back to early radio drama
- Consistently prominent in the UK
- Can be found around the world
- Only thing new is increased popularity post-*Welcome to Night Vale*



Misconception:

Fiction is only for big studios

- Huge number of small, independent studios
- Small studios can be successful and profitable
 - *Unseen*: \$40k Kickstarter!
- Most of the best is indie!



Misconception:

Fiction only affects
fiction

- Forefront of innovation! Nonfiction typically follows
- Sound design, storytelling, script, and narration principles translate
- Intra-industry innovation affects inter-industry production



Innovation 1: Stretching Sound Design

Subscribe!



A World Where

- Surreal sci-fi podcast - think *Black Mirror*
- Binaural sound
- Uses sound design for atmosphere and tension



Timestorm

- Kids' podcast
- Realistic sound and sci-fi effects
- Uses sound design for reeling in and hooking an audience

Your turn to innovate

- Sound design is genre-agnostic
 - Design almost always helps your podcast:
 - Radiolab
 - Beach Too Sandy, Water Too Wet
- But know your audience
 - Horror vs. kids' show
 - Fiction vs. nonfiction
 - Appropriate for subject matter
- Listen closely
 - Best way to start sound design is listen
 - Podcasts
 - Films

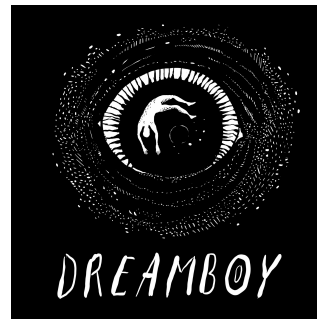
Innovation 2: Music

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Childish

- Podcast musical
- Blends Broadway and rap
 - If you can't say it, sing it
- Comedy and drama
- Gets stuck in your head



Dreamboy

- **Warning: NSFW!**
- Uses music as a score
- Whimsical, surreal feel
- Adds to tone and style

Your turn to innovate

- Use more music!
 - Reels the listener in
 - Adds important emotional cues
 - Can add reminders (leitmotifs)
- But don't overdo it
 - Should never distract
 - Keep level low
 - Ask several people, listen on several devices
- Consider setting as well as emotion
 - Use music to convey time and place
 - But allow yourself some freedom

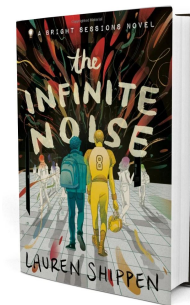
Innovation 3: Adaptation

Subscribe!



Limetown

- Facebook Watch adaptation
- Added more character development
- Weak visual language



The Bright Sessions

- Three novels, TV option
- Added different character perspective
- Strong written language

Your turn to innovate

- Think about the industry as an *industry*
 - More money moving in the States
 - More IP being purchased
 - Think about lawyers!
- Think about what adaptations you want
 - What is your podcast suited for?
 - How much of your IP do you want to own?
- Think about discoverability and saturation
 - How does your indie podcast stand out?
 - How effective is your marketing?

One Last Misconception:

Only innovative podcasts
are good podcasts

- Follow Shenee Howard!
@heyshenee
- Not every podcast has
to be innovative to be
good, important,
worthwhile, etc.
- Sometimes creating at
all is innovative
- You can make something
in whatever form makes
you love it most



Q&A!

For slides, email wil.williams.writes@gmail.com