

“Radio Waves” learning activity

Introduction

Did you know that radio began broadcasting in Australia in November 1923, thirty-three years before television’s arrival in 1956?

Before television, radio played a crucial role in the lives of Australians as most people relied on it for news, music and entertainment programs such as plays or serials and quiz shows. Through the power of radio Australians visualised worlds both real and imagined and had their lives shaped and reflected by their favourite programs.

More than eighty years after it began in Australia radio remains a highly influential broadcast medium, although the types of programs people listen to have changed. Today, radio programming is dominated by “magazine”- style shows that often combine interviews, talkback, news, sport and music.

The National Film and Sound Archive collects, preserves and provides access to Australia’s audio-visual heritage. We are the home of many important historical films and sound recordings – including the radio extracts and music featured on this site!

Doing the online learning activities below will give you a better understanding of how radio programs are produced and help you to use this knowledge to create your own programs.

Questions about the SUPERMAN! radio serial:

- Other than dialogue, what sounds did you notice in the *Superman!* extract? How would those sounds have been created?
- Why do you think radio serials were so popular with people before TV came to Australia in 1956? What are the current equivalents of radio serials?
- What do you think that serials aimed at women in the 1950s focussed on? What about those serials aimed at young people in the 1950s? Give reasons for your answers.
- Ask an older family member (someone 50 years old or more!) if they can remember listening to serials on the radio. What were some of their favourite serials and why?
- Apart from serials, what other types of programs were popular with listeners in what became known as the “Golden Age of Radio” from the 1930s to the 1950s?
- Why do you think The National Film and Sound Archive has collected this radio serial to have in our National Collection of Film and Sound?
- If you were a radio program maker creating a “magazine”-style program today, how might you include radio serials or drama in your programming?

Activity:***MAKE A RADIO SERIAL!***

Create a short episode of a radio serial with roles for at least three people, or use the one attached here (which was written by two of our Archive staff) called “Nurse Florence” episode 1249.

There are 3 steps you need to follow –

1. Write a script for your serial (or use the “Nurse Florence” one supplied). Think carefully about who your characters are and what relationship they have to each other.
2. Decide on some theme music for your serial and work out what sound effects you need to help tell your story.
3. Record your serial on cassette or some other way. Remember you don’t have to wear costumes because your audience can’t see you!

Make sure you play your serial back to your class!

Discover more...

- Hear an extract from Australia’s longest running radio serial BLUE HILLS (it ran from 1949-76 for 5,795 episodes!) from this website: www.abc.net.au/archives/av/radsamp