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## Radio with Pictures: Radio Visualisation in BBC National Radio

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### Abstract.

Radio has always had pictures. The ones the listener created in their own minds and this is, most of us agree, one of the medium's greatest strengths. However, radio is increasingly consumed on a digital platform (such as DAB Radio, Digital TV, a mobile device or a computer) on devices with screens, rather than a dial. This creates a problem for radio because when we look at the device we are listening to we see a screen that often lacks rich content. The process of Radio Visualisation is about filling this space. This paper's focus, though, is the other ways in which radio is visualising itself online in a process that deploys transmedia storytelling techniques that build relationships with the audience, builds brands and helps broadcasters to tell stories in ways never before possible.

In the spring of 2011 2.84 million British TV viewers watched a radio programme on their Televisions. They were tuning in via interactive television (or the 'red button') services to watch the BBC Radio One breakfast presenter Chris Moyles attempt to break a world record for the longest radio programme. The BBC installed a series of fixed cameras in the programme's regular studio at the BBC's Yalding House studios, with added 'roving' cameras to allow the presenters to broadcast from other parts of the building and a cafe across the street. Whilst this was neither ground-breaking television nor was it broadcast (in its own right) on any of the BBC's 4 live-to-air channels it did represent a notable milestone in the shifting nature of radio; something which in the words of Mark Friend Controller of Multiplatform and Interactive for the corporation "added an extra dimension to an amazing piece of broadcasting" (BBC: 23/03/11) Of course the introduction of cameras into radio studios is not new – or unusual – with radio stations such as the UK's Virgin Radio simulcasting their breakfast show (then hosted by Chris Evans) on the fledgling satellite channel Sky 1. In 2005 a British Governmental led mission to South-East Asia noted that new technologies meant that new digital platforms such as DMB meant that convergence between radio and visual media was happening there but adding that "radio studios rarely translate well to the TV screen, SBS has added a television set background to one of its radio studio" (DTI: 2005: P19) Other stations such as Radio RMF Maxx in Poland and RTL TV 102.5 in Italy have also engaged with the visual, using a mix of Digital Television and the Internet. So, whilst not an innovation

the Chris Moyles coverage was a clear and well-received statement of a developing strategy within the BBC to use visual, social and interactive opportunities to build relationships with audience in ways that recognise not only the increased digital consumption of radio (EBU:2011) but also other the relevance of audio-visual convergences such as audio-slideshows (Lillie: 2011) interactive television (Bennett: 2008) and on-demand content (McClung and Johnson: 2010)(Doyle:2010) in world where the nature of what we have previously understood to be radio is changing and evolving (Chignell, 2009) (Gazi, Starkey, Jedrzejewski, 2012) (Hendy, 2000)

This article will explore the ways in which radio, in a digital world, is using new technology and storytelling techniques to drive brand awareness and offer audiences new experiences by adding a visual dimension to radio content. In its simplest form radio is becoming more visual through the use of on-screen graphics on Digital TV's, Visually enhanced DAB Radios, smartphone apps or online players (such as the UK Radio Player) to webcams and social media content. Projects such as RadioDNS and dDAB have brought small graphics or photographs to radios to help "make radio better" (Duncombe: 2007) but mostly radio is still free from pictures. Research conducted by Duncombe and his industry partners suggested that listeners would look at a screen when they hear something that interests them or if they require information that they may have missed – a song title for example. The RadioDNS system takes this a step further by adding drawing visual elements such as photographs or graphics about songs, artists, news, weather or advertising from a web server to a DAB or FM radio service.

The 2005 DTI mission reported on the success of more televisual approaches in South Korea; noting that "Visual connections between the radio stations and their listeners are important to KBS...the studio and control room are fitted with a number of remote-operated professional video cameras, on pan/tilt mechanisms. The studios are lit adequately for video, and are well decorated and branded; (DTI: 2005:P4) Whilst the BBC has not yet taken to 'dress' their studios to such an extent - although the new studio centre at MediaCityUK does seem to benefit from improved lighting - there is acknowledgement here that the notion of radio is changing. Furthermore, there is an increasingly developed understanding of the need to offer content that extends broadcast programming into new spaces in ways that not only enhances programmes and personalities but also extends them beyond the schedule. It is my contention that these innovations far from confirming the notion that radio is a dead medium, actually confirm the strength and resilience of the medium.

As I have already illustrated there are numerous examples of how radio is becoming visual, using developed Digital Radio platforms (as in Korea) or through studio cameras for simultaneous broadcast online or television (such as the popular syndicated radio talk show host Alex Jones in the United States) but my intention here is discuss how these techniques are deployed on BBC Radio in the UK, primarily on the National News and Sport Network Radio “Five Live” and the popular music network “Radio One”.

These trends not only fit into the BBC’s long established track record of being an early pioneer of new technologies - such as Digital Radio or Podcasting (see Berry 2005) - but also they fit into a clear agenda within the corporation to find new ways to engage with their audiences. In 2006 The Director General, Mark Thompson outlined their plans under the “Creative Futures” agenda, coining the buzz term “Martini Media” defining an approach in which the corporation created content that flowed across platforms, was more available and that “wherever possible we [The BBC] need to think cross-platform, across TV, radio and web for audiences at home and on the move” (Thompson; 2006) This reflects well the desire amongst Public Service Broadcasters to embrace technology to reach out to their audiences, as Murray (2009) notes that there is a long trend of “public media adopting digital technologies to fulfil their public-service remit in the second media age” (P203) There is also wider attention being paid to the ways in which technologies – other than radio – can be used to build, maintain and interact with audiences (Ferguson and Greer, 2011) (Seelig, 2008)

#### Radio as a non-visual visual medium

Andrew Crisell quite rightly claims radio is already a visual medium, noting “the listener is compelled to ‘supply’ the visual data for himself. The details are described, or they may suggest themselves through sound, but they are not ‘pictured’ for him. He must picture them himself” (Crisell, 1986, P7) I do not propose to challenge this proposition, as it this ‘blindness’ that makes the medium so effective because as Bolls (2006) suggests radio producers know that “fundamental strength of their medium is imagery - content that vividly paints a picture in the imagination of listeners” (Bolls, 2006, 201) So, whilst in this article I will discuss the use of visualisations in radio I am not suggesting that the core characteristic of radio as an auditory medium should change, rather that visualisations adds a new dimension.

Mitchell (2005) argues that attempts to refer to mediums such as Television or film as “Visual Media” is misleading as “All media are, from the standpoint of sensory modality, ‘mixed media’” (2005, P257) and using this as our reference point we might be able to re-consider radio, not as an ‘auditory’ medium but one which is ‘mixed’ at its core.

I do, though, suggest that technology and audiences have evolved to the point where radio can introduce visualisation to compliment the auditory offering, in a way that neither diminishes the impact of sound nor substantially alters the nature of the medium. Furthermore, audiences in the digital world do appear to demand visual experiences, be this online, interactive TV, mobile or set displays; We encounter user manuals and learning materials via interactive DVD discs and our mobile telephones not only tell us who is calling us but shows us a photograph of them. These are media-rich experiences that enhance the user experience. They enhance, rather than change the activity; a user-guide still tells us how to use a product and our mobile telephones still receive calls that require us to talk to the caller but these are experiences enhanced by vision. In this visual and media-rich world radio was starting to look a bit dated and what radio has proved to us through its history is that it is capable of change (See EBU, 2011; Crisell, 1997 and Jackson-Pitts/Harms; 2003)

Radio as a medium is, as Crisell (1986) suggests a “blind” medium where we imagine what the owners of the voices we hear might look like. This led radio stations to create postcards of presenters that could be collected from radio station receptions or 'roadshow' events. What is interesting to note is that whilst the website for the BBC Radio 4 serial “The Archers” ([BBC.co.uk/thearchers](http://BBC.co.uk/thearchers)) offers a wealth of media-rich experiences it does not offer photographs of the cast. This maintains the dramatic illusion of the drama and grants the long-term listener the freedom to visit the pages without having their own visualised experience of the characters spoiled. As Thomas and Lambrianidou suggest, users are drawn to the site to catch up with the programme, they then migrate onto other functions, such as “checking background information and things that had happened in the past, that they have either forgotten or didn't know about in the first place as they happened before they started listening to the programme” (Thomas and Lambrianidou, P36) The programme remains the 'main event' but visualisation enhances and extends that experience. This process is also notable in the films created for “The Marshes” a two-part drama created by the Rural Media Company for BBC Radio Four. The producers created two accompanying films to compliment the plays in the series, which would

be shown simultaneously on interactive television whilst the plays were broadcast on the radio. The producer notes that the films were intended to “not only to illustrate the play but also reflect the community who helped create it. We also decided that we didn’t want to see any faces during the drama. The beauty of drama is that it allows the listener to conjure up his or her own pictures of the peoples who are talking and we didn’t want to interfere with this relationship” (Rural Media Company/BBC, 2012)

This use of visualisation across the BBC offers an example of how the corporation is using transmedia storytelling and visualising techniques to enhance listener experiences utilising the Internet in a supporting role. Henry Jenkins notes “A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best... each franchise entry needs to be self contained... Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole” (Jenkins, 2006,95-96) In this setting the primary medium is radio, the brand is built on radio and the website serves as a support act providing bonus content that fills gaps in listener knowledge but also provides visual stimulus in the form of text, images and interactive content that may help the audience to understand the programme better - but not in a manner that seriously undermines the self-visualisation already performed in the mind of the listener. In this sense, radio remains a non-visual medium that uses visual techniques to enhance listening, rather than replace the traditional auditory experience of radio. As Thomas notes in a later piece, “The Archers, as one of the most popular programmes on contemporary British radio, benefits from these developments” (Thomas, 2009, P64) as it, grants the listener a greater range of modes in which to experience and indeed interact with a programme they already appreciate. The same techniques applied here can be seen elsewhere, at both programme and station levels in other parts of the BBC.

#### Visualisation at BBC Radio Two

The Chris Evans Breakfast Show is the weekday morning programme on BBC Radio Two, a national radio station, which is described in its service licence as a “distinctive mixed music and speech service, targeted at a broad audience, appealing to all age groups over 35” (BBC Trust, 2008) The use of visual techniques at Radio Two is in keeping within the strategy of the BBC and of Radio Two to develop new technologies and encourage audiences to interact with them. Specifically that; “The broadcast output should be complemented by an online presence with interactive

features, including some use of visual enhancements that enable and encourage the audience to engage with the output and share their views with both the station and other listeners. Radio 2 should experiment with new technologies as they become available to provide opportunities for the audience to access programmes as and when they want” (ibid) That said, the embracing of new media strategies by the BBC is not about changing the nature of what radio is because as Lax observes that convergence “rather than replacing existing media, new media is as much about the augmentation of existing media” (2009, P176)

This move towards visualising the radio experience and building the brand presences of radio networks and key radio programmes online is explored by Grainge (2010) who discusses how BBC Radio Two sought to rebuild its brand in cross-promotional trailers on BBC television; noting that “Brands in the digital era are expected to function in far more extensive and complex ways than they were in the analogue age” (Caldwell in Grainge, 2010, P53) and we can consider visual developments in radio brands in this context. In his discussions Henry Jenkins discusses Transmedia storytelling within the Movie and Games industries, but those same techniques can be applied here to radio programming. A listener can experience the live, linear radio programme between 0700 and 0930 each weekday and enjoy it as a single episode in a continuous narrative. Some stories, themes and discussions will be raised, discussed and resolved within the programme, whilst others may be recurring elements. Each programme can be enjoyed as it stands, without the need for additional explanation or illustration. However, by adding additional content such as blogs, videos or images then the programme narrative can live on beyond the linear programme slot and in doing so, the brand of the programme and the radio station is enhanced. The listener does not have to engage with these visual experiences, nor does the viewer need to listen to the radio programme in order to appreciate or make sense of the visual content online but collectively they tell a deeper transmedia story and ultimately can create a richer listening experience. Radio Consultant Valerie Geller endorses the relevance of this new content as it creates “many more chances to create and deliver content, and ways of establishing deeper relationships with your audience” (2011: P320)

This approach builds on the success the network enjoyed in 2009 when the network screened a recorded session at the Abbey Road recording studios with the band Elbow and the BBC Concert Orchestra for a performance of the Mercury Prize winning album “The Seldom Seen Kid”. The session was recorded for BBC Radio Two but rebroadcast on a loop (with BBC Radio Two branding) on interactive

television, the so-called “Red Button”. Almost a million people watched the loop, (BBC Press Statement, 24/02/2009) thus proving that radio listeners will engage with visuals in large numbers given the right incentive.

The developments at Radio Two and elsewhere with the corporation are inline with BBC policy under the “Creative Future’ agenda started in 2007 when Director General Mark Thompson noted “ we want to develop the web and other digital platforms so that audiences can find, play and share our content. We want to deliver a powerful new suite of on-demand offerings. We need to work with others to distribute our content widely over all platforms.” (Thompson, Mark: 2007) In other words, BBC content would be available in places other than [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk), putting BBC branded into places that the audience already inhabit and in forms that allow the listener to interact, comment and share. This is especially of appeal to what Jenkins (2006) refers to as “loyals” (P74). By 2011 this strategy has developed into a fully-formed multiplatform strategy where content for big events such the Glastonbury music festival is shared across multiple BBC outlets and social media platforms.

#### Multiplatform Space and BBC Radio 5 Live

BBC Radio Five Live is a national radio station with emphasis on news and sport (discussed in detail by Starkey, 2004). Unlike BBC Radio Two, the network carries no music based DJ-led programmes, favouring instead a mix of news, discussion, interviews, live sports commentaries and ‘phone-ins. As a network it has deployed extensive visualisations to help programmes tell stories, add additional dimensions and build both brand and audience awareness and has, in effect, become a fully visualised network offering live video streams across most of the output. The aim of which is, according to Former Interactive Editor Brett Spencer is about “about drawing listeners to Five Live audio, anywhere within the multiplatform space” (interview, March 2010, when he was in post) In other words, the networks editors make no real differentiation between the multiple platforms through which the audience can receive content generated by the network. At the time of writing one can see Five Live making use of the four key forms of radio visualisation, namely: Live Video Streaming of all daytime programmes; the use of presenter “profile” videos; the use of videos to help build, develop or extend on-air stories and the creation of “5Live Now” a visualisation of listener text messages, tweets and comments. According to BBC research 53% of 5Live listeners have a DAB Radio, 56% go online everyday and are more likely to say that “interactive TV services are a good idea”(Information for independent producers 2010) So we can see that Five

Live has audience who are at home with technologies and so it allows the network to produce multi-platform content as it occurs in an environment where the audience is an active, willing participant who are more digitally aware and open to new media consumption opportunities.

When examining the nature of the visualised experiences on radio websites it is possible to categorise them and so build a clearer sense of what they are attempting to achieve. Firstly, there is use of the glance-able live content, as seen by the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) mission to South-East Asia. In this mode, listeners can turn briefly to view visuals on a screen, on either a device screen or a monitor. The second aspect is visual (usually video) material that is secondary (but not always related) to the broadcast output. This content fits neatly into the brand-building cross-platform content offered elsewhere within the BBC (as discussed by Perryman: 2008) and it is this second aspect that is of primary concern in this article. We can further break this visual content down into two additional sub-categories; visualised content of material that has been or will be broadcast in an audio form (and is repeated in a visual form online or on a television service) and visualised transmedia content that is additional to the auditory, on-air radio experience and has not been broadcast. In this regard, we see the facets of multiplatform production as witnessed in Television by Doyle (2010) where audiences expect the “hyper-engagement” (P438) that this type of content offers them. The benefit here for radio broadcasters is that these new digital spaces and opportunities allow them to enhance and extend the listening experience in new ways. (see figure 1 for a table of modes)

This approach is well used by BBC Radio Five Live ([www.bbc.co.uk/5live](http://www.bbc.co.uk/5live)) where listeners are able to engage with the radio station visually both via interactive television and the Internet. The network is – at present – the most visual of seven national domestic networks and is making extensive use of visualised content to develop new stories and build close bonds with the audience (as suggested by Geller). In 2010 the station added video profiles of each of their key presenters. Brett Spencer (Interactive Editor in 2010) says their logic behind this move was simple: “Most people think we are a sports station [and] we are constantly looking at ways to change that. 5 Live has a 49% awareness in the population. Much of the other 51% will have heard of our presenters but not know they are on 5 Live. We are trying to use them as leverage across online to increase brand awareness” (interview) Just as the presenter 'photo-cards' of the past visualised presenters, then presenter videos

perform the same function now. As Jackson-Pitts and Harms observed in 2003; “Radio stations can better serve their audiences... by developing websites that provide information to the user” (P272) – in this case information about the personalities on the station, which in turn will drive listener engagement and exploration.

It is becoming clear that contemporary radio listeners are becoming less passive as illustrated by National Public Radio in the United States who conducted research amongst listeners to “Weekend Edition” on how they did (or did not) interact with the programme through Social Media. Researchers Robins and Lazaro noted that their investigations “confirmed the power of radio, but also made clear that our digital offerings can complement and strengthen listener engagement” (NPR, 2010) The same research also found that listeners who also engaged with the programme through online social media also developed a clearer sense of connection between themselves and the programme hosts and saw them more as “real people”. This strengthened relationship is reflected by Schmidt (2012) and her examinations of interactivity in French radio, noting that “interactivity is very attractive to radio professionals because it ensures dynamism on air whilst establishing a relationship of proximity with the listener. This can build up a loyal audience” (P28). Although, not using social tools the same techniques of bond (and brand) building are being deployed here. Listeners can not only get to know presenters through visuals they can also raise their eyes to a screen to see programmes unfold in front of them. In doing so a listener can feel more involved as their experience feels more exclusive, as it is one previously denied to us. In short, active listeners are loyal listeners.

When considering the use of visual material to form part of a radio story we can look at the example of its use in the story of Gavin Solly, a sufferer of obesity who appeared on the Victoria Derbyshire programme in 2010. Brett Spencer explains that the programme came live from his home but that “what you really want is to see him. So a few days before the live broadcast we went down there to make a film about Gavin. That lived on our site and on (BBC) news online ahead of the live show... While radio is a compelling medium for telling a story, this film captures the story in a way speech alone perhaps cannot. It’s an example of how we are seeking to tell stories across the multiplatform space both on the radio and in vision” (copy of speech, included in email interview) Videos in this mode enhance the listening experience, they do not replace it and very much like DVD “extras” they are not required to fully understand the live broadcast, which remains the primary mode of delivery for content. As Evans and Smethers suggest “the flexibility of Web technology to provide visual information with audio features presents new

opportunities to offer services for listeners that were previously unimaginable” (2001, P17) and so broadcasters can use these approaches to build stronger stories and stronger relationships.

Turning now to the use of live visuals - where live text and live video streams from cameras within the radio studios or Outside Broadcast location accompany the live audio to create a media-rich radio experience. This is by no means something new but a tool the BBC have been experimenting with across other networks, notably with trials on the Chris Moyles Show and Zane Lowe on BBC Radio 1 and Simon Mayo (then) on BBC Radio Five Live during 2009. Mark Friend, Controller of Multiplatform and Interactive, BBC Audio & Music noted at the time, "The visualisation console is about enriching the digital listening experience. More people are consuming radio on different platforms and on devices that have screens. Just as DAB listeners might glance at their screen to see what track is playing or what DJ is coming up next, the visualisation console experiments with putting all of our glanceable content in a single place in order to create a richer user experience” (BBC Press Release: 02/06/2009) The trials at this time involved the use of a ‘console’ which integrated a live video stream from inside the radio studio with various other visual elements: such as interactive voting, listener text messages, programme signposts and news ‘ticker’ headlines. The current incarnation of the service on BBC Radio Five Live and BBC Radio One lacks these additional elements but it does allow the listener to peer inside the radio studio. The visual stream uses multiple cameras, which are cut automatically depending on the audio content and allows the listener to enjoy the programme as an online, visual experience that is not Television. The presenters do make to reference to the fact that the listener can see what is going but the listener is never excluded if he or she is listening on an audio-only platform. This is the key aspect of radio visualisation, the visual content does not require the listener-viewer to be attentively watching the images on screen to be fully involved in the programme; however, that content can be enhanced when the visuals are viewed. Spencer notes that the Richard Bacon programme (where this approach was pioneered in 2010 before being widened to a whole network offering) is not a television programme that happens to be on the radio, it is “a radio show with cameras that allows us to spread it across the multiplatform space” (ibid) On this Senior Interactive Editor Nigel Smith notes that visualisation works well, and where “audience really responds is when we've got guests in the studio. Richard Bacon has Ricky Gervais in the studio and they're both in vision, there is a huge appetite for that and the stats rocket” (BBC COP: 2011) So, whilst there is a desire to engage with audiences with the visual

content they expect, there is no desire to make television.

This use of multiplatform does draw listeners to the network, in particular younger listeners who may be more inclined to consume their media online – the so-called “Digital Native” that many in radio broadcasting fear are no longer consuming radio broadcast content. Research conducted across Europe by Ala-Fossi, Lax et al suggest that some listeners “suggested that radio lacked visuality” (2008, P17) Indeed, this reflects research from within the BBC, as Spencer suggests “that we are bringing in new audiences and certainly a younger demographic. There is also evidence people are discovering 5 Live in this way” (interview) suggesting that broadcasters are turning that threat into an advantage.

#### Building a brand: BBC Radio One and the Big Weekend

In 2010 the BBC began consulting on the future direction of the corporation and one of the suggestions put forward as being core the BBC's offer was for it be central at key national events as “ Far from losing relevance, media fragmentation and societal change may make this [being present at big events] responsibility even more critical in the years ahead.” (BBC Trust, 2010: P30) The same report also emphasised the need to create more content that flows across multiple platforms and serves active audiences looking for content they can engage and interact with.

As the primary radio station operated by the BBC for a youth audience nowhere has this become more apparent than at BBC Radio One. During 2011 the importance of visualisation was emphasised through increased use of a live studio camera providing a video/audio stream of the radio stations output (notably the use of a live stream of both cameras and music videos for the weekly Top 40 programme) but also through the re-branding of the networks news output, 'Newsbeat'. The bulletins are now introduced with imaging that urges the audience to “Listen, Watch, Share” A reference to the fact that the audience can visit the Newsbeat website to watch video versions of the stories and share the content with their friends by clicking on 'sharing' icons on the stories within the website. It is hardly surprising therefore that the Myers Report (Myers: 2011) into the BBC popular music networks found that 54 people worked within the newsbeat; creating content not only for the radio bulletins but also for the newsbeat website ([bbc.co.uk/newsbeat](http://bbc.co.uk/newsbeat))

The move towards visualisation is not something to which the BBC (and specifically Radio One) has suddenly engaged with. In 2008 the networks Head of Daytime Ben

Cooper told Broadcast Magazine that one of the biggest challenges facing radio was Television, not as a rival not radio but as a platform through which radio is being consumed. He told the magazine that “demands are more complex now – listeners want to interact.... I, like many people listen to the radio through the TV. It's great, but most of the time you are staring at a blank screen. I want to introduce visuals and graphics” (Broadcast: 30/4/2008). This is a clear reference to the presence of BBC Radio on Digital Terrestrial, Cable and Satellite TV, where the visual opportunities are obvious but had previously been ignored. Whilst it is outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth saying that since that article was published the appearance of BBC Radio on Digital TV has improved, especially on the free-to-air service Freeview, in which the BBC has a stake. Cooper goes on to hint at the direction they were about to take “if there is a funny moment in the studio just listening to it means you can't appreciate it in the same way. I want listeners to be able to see it” (ibid) This recognises that the audience no longer accept not being able access what they want, when they want and recognises the importance of maintaining relationships with audience across the day and in multiple, diverse spaces. In 2012 Cooper was appointed as Controller of Radio One and its sister digital service 1Xtra and the desire to reinvent was apparent in his first interview in The Guardian who reported that “He wants to be remembered for "reinventing radio for the young people of Britain". "Traditional radio for young people is dead in about a generation," he predicts. "We've got to work out what radio looks like on a smartphone, iPad and IPTV." (Plunkett, 2012)

The need for Radio One to be more visual had already been laid out by Cooper's predecessor, Andy Parfitt, who told the technology programme “Click” that ““Young audiences do expect different things from audiences that have grown up with that sharp divide between television and radio ...If you get hold of any of these hi-tech converged devices they all have a small, very high quality, colour screen. That means that audiences have come to expect to see as well as hear their favourite audio and radio brands to the extent that if you're using the device and there's nothing on the screen, it can feel and look like it's broken.” (BBC/Kelly: 9/12/2007) Whilst Parfitt here is making reference to the visual opportunities offered by DAB and Internet Radios, rather than the rise in brand-associated visual content or live studio cameras, it is clear that the changing (often technologically driven) environment for radio raises new challenges and expectations.

As Albrann at al note “the radio faces a key challenge in trying to compete for

younger audiences in this heavily technological era where variety and choice are key motivations for listening to music. If young people continue to abandon AM/FM radio for everything but news, it will have major implications for the medium in terms of programming ... and its long term future. (2007: P99). This trend is not lost on the BBC; Joe Harland an Executive Producer at BBC Radio One told a recent BBC podcast that visualisation recognises that audiences expect “that some of the things we [The BBC] make on the radio they’ll be able to see and meeting them by enhancing the radio experience, not by trying to make TV” (BBC COP: 2011). Harland takes this argument further, writing in the Huffington Post on the decision to broadcast the BBC Radio One Sunday evening Top 40 Chart show in-vision, “We are not making a TV show. We are making visual radio, which makes the most of what we already do on air, whilst giving new young audiences the content they want on the platform they want it on. The tickers, Astons and graphics will not try to emulate or compete with music television, but will add to enhance the visual just as Reggie enhances the audio. It represents not just the way that the chart needs to go to, but also the direction that radio needs to move in to maintain its stature. Radio needs a visual if it’s going to reach young people on their second favourite search engine, YouTube. Views of Radio 1’s live lounge performances frequently outstrip the numbers that listened live” (Harland, 2012)

## Conclusions

Whilst it would be difficult to present a truly complete picture of the use of visualisation in radio in all its forms in the space of this article, it is clear from the examples I have attempted to deal with here that there is a definite trend of developing ways in which radio is more visual. Present technology does mean that streaming video to mobile devices is not yet an option in the UK (at least in the current eco-system of DAB and download-limited 3G networks). However, developments with platforms such as “Radio DNS” suggest that future radios will be visual – or “connected”. The developers contend that such innovations add value to “10% of the people 10% of the time” (Piggott: 2010) so it is with added online visuals. The listener does not need to see Ricky Gervais in the studio being interviewed but by doing so they are engaging with the content (and by default the programme and the station) on a higher and more involved level. The listener/viewer can listen and look elsewhere but then easily switch modes from being a passive listener to an engaged (visual) consumer of the content. This extension of the content not only

recognises the expectations of the audience already highlighted but also the importance of building relationships in the heads of listeners. As Doyle (2010) notes the importance of added online content is now a fundamental part of broadcaster strategy, as audiences can be “directed back and forth across platforms towards additional opportunities to engage with popular brands and content properties” (P438) Thus engaging with the audience not in one place but many and not be asking them to passively listen to actively engage with presenters, programmes and stations.

There are, of course, different drivers in play here. For services such as BBC Radio One there is a public service interest in maintaining the relevance of the medium in the generation who grew up with the Internet. For other services there is recognition that the internet is now a means in which listeners can find the radio service or by making that (usually passive) experience richer. This approach was endorsed by Tim Davie, the Director of Audio and Music at the BBC; speaking at the “Redefining Radio” conference at the Houses of Parliament he noted that “whether it’s Facebook, IPTV, radio really wants to get out there... you’re going to see radio on the front foot rather... as opposed to traditional and dusty in the shed” (speech 2012)

From a radio perspective it does raise questions about the nature of the medium. Is radio a medium that is defined purely by its mode of delivery – radio waves - or is it something more nuanced than that, in which case the visual elements discussed here are merely an evolution? Meikle and Young (2012) argue that “Technologies are social and cultural systems” (P24) Radio as a technology was devised as a point-to-point means of communication but cultural process morphed into a one-to-many medium and is now evolving yet again into something which could be multiplatform at its core. Meikle and Young continue: “The one-way radios in our kitchens and cars exemplify the fact that technologies do not exist entirely in some kind of scientific or engineering realm, but are shaped by wider and social reality.. (where)... The actions of a technology’s initial designer are just the first act in a process of negotiation” (ibid, P25). In which “the established platforms of radio, television, newspapers, magazines and recorded music have all been displaced by a range of networked digital media products with new affordances of engagement and interactivity” (ibid, P199) . In this sense we can regard the development of radio with pictures not as acknowledgement that the medium is in some way broken or redundant but as a response to audience demands and the technological opportunities offered by the internet and a natural progression of the visual information offered by previous technologies. It can therefore be argued that the addition of images means that what we once knew as ‘radio’ becomes something more. It becomes audio or indeed a

new term needs to be developed and agreed upon. A “Radio+” or even “Radio 3.0” (if we take Digital as the 2.0) Hugh Chignell (2009) might endorse this view, noting as he does that in the converged worlds of mobile based consumption the “conventional categories of radio, film and television start to break down completely” (ibid, P124) This is, of course, nothing new as in 2000 Hendy noted that “the overall marketing pitch of digital radio... centred on its ability to create information-rich and responsive listeners, rather than passive ones” (P22) Whilst visual developments such as the Radio 1 Chart Show (which plays music videos, rather than audio tracks) may use the tools of television, what we are experiencing still feels like radio. Andrew Dubber argues in this review of the chart show that the programme “uses the web on its own terms, and makes what is unarguably ‘radio’ out of it” (Dubber, 2012)

It has not been my intention to argue here that radio as we know should be replaced by television, on the contrary it is my belief that radio is as strong as ever. However, in a visual world where technology and consumers demand and allow visuals there is creative, technical and editorial space that radio broadcasters and programmes can exploit to make their content even more compelling and engaging –whilst not excluding those who wish to only use their ears.

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*Figure 1: A table illustrating application of visual content in radio*

	<b>Material that uses studio cameras</b>	<b>Material that extends the experience</b>	<b>Material that enhances the experience</b>	
<b>Content which is live and synchronous</b>	Live streaming of studio cameras	Sharing of listeners interaction above and beyond those shared on-air	On-screen data, graphics or texts	
<b>Content which is consumed on-demand</b>	Elements recorded by cameras in a live radio studio	Use of videos or photographs that add fresh items to the radio experience	Visual content that provides needs imagery either before or after transmission	

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