



New President signs on

by Rick Cousins

Hello fellow CSIRP members, Rick Cousins here.

On November 1, 2003, I was elected President and Chair of CSIRP, replacing John Muir, who had served in those roles for the past year. I'd like to say, "Well done and thanks!" to John for his hard work during that time. I'd also like to thank all the Board and regular members of CSIRP for their contributions and commitment since I took office.

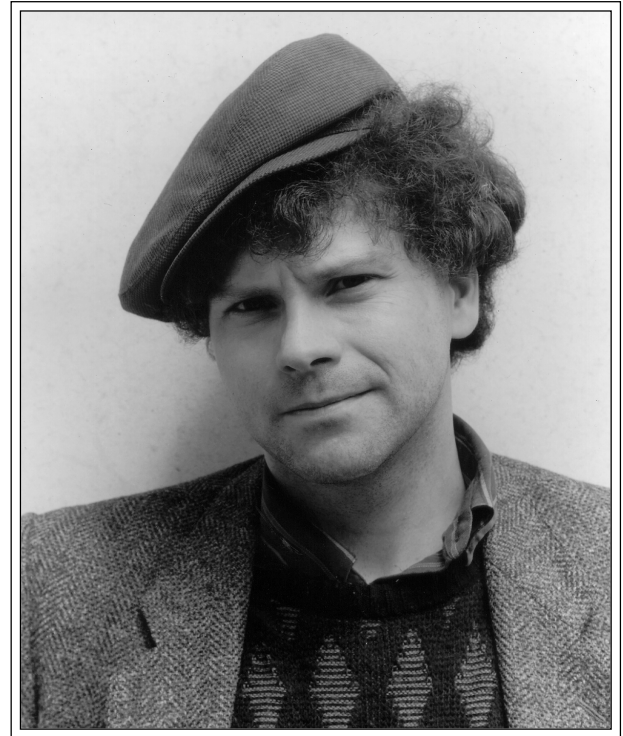
The year 2004 has begun with a renewed sense of purpose for CSIRP and its members. A great deal has already been accomplished, and the months ahead promise to be even more productive and exciting.

Now that I'm settled in my new role (and have fully recovered from a bout with the chicken pox) I want to take a moment to introduce myself to those of you I don't know personally, and to give you some information about upcoming CSIRP events.

In my years of making radio programs, both for community stations and for the CBC, I've gotten used to wearing many different hats: producer, writer, voice actor, sound effects man—even gofer. (I've learned already how much my experience as a gofer has helped me with this new job.)

Right now, I live in Deep River, Ontario, a town at the upper end of the Ottawa Valley, halfway between Ottawa and North Bay. While I enjoy the relaxed and peaceful lifestyle of this rural setting, I look forward to every chance I get to head into 'the big city' for business and adventure. As Chair and President, I'll be helping to ensure that CSIRP keeps on looking forward, moving forward, and makes the most of the skills, abilities, and experience of its members, so that we can better serve you, and all those who share our interest in and love of independent radio production and audio art.

A number of new initiatives are on the calendar for the weeks and months to come, as well as some of the old favourites. A fresh helping of "Audio Soup" was served up by John Muir



Rick Cousins will make sure CSIRP keeps looking forward and makes the most of its members.

and host station CFRC in Kingston, Ont., at the beginning of February. CSIRP's support of the Ontario Public Interest Research Group's "Un-censoring: MediaMorphosis" conference at Carleton University marks the beginning of a partnership which both organizations have long been hoping for. New Adventures in Sound Art counts CSIRP as one of the faithful co-sponsors of "Deep Wireless" once again this year. In addition, plans are already well underway for "Full Moon 2004" this coming August, in Sackville, New Brunswick. Thanks to Janna Graham, and to everyone who helped make the 2003 edition such a success!

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Wanted: trainers

Howdy pardners...this here message is what you might like to think of as a 'cattle call'. We're fixing to round up people with skills, experience, and a desire to pass those skills and experience on to others. Those among you who are already sporting the CSIRP brand know that our organization hosts and co-sponsors a number of annual and one-of-a-kind events. We do this to share and showcase ideas and techniques about the production of thought-provoking, cutting-edge radio.



sound art—you name it, our members are eager to know more about it. If you have an area of expertise, and an interest in giving others hands-on training, pitch an idea at us. We'll be glad to try anything that looks promising, creative, and well thought-out.

Your pitch can be as simple as a single sentence, or as detailed as you think it needs to be. All it really has to do is reflect your passion for the medium of sound, and your dedication to it.

If y'all have just ridden into CSIRP country for the first time on the Wavelength stage, I reckon you should know a bit about the locals. The interests of our members range the full spectrum from purely technical aspects of sound recording and production to the creative use of sound as a medium of artistic expression.

We're always on the lookout for people who can teach what they've learned in some facet of the 'radio game'. Drama, comedy, journalism, documentary production, interviewing, recording music live or in studio for broadcast, spoken word,

For your time and effort, you'll get more than just the warm feeling of doing something nice for people—you'll also be paid for your trouble in real live, honest-to-goodness negotiable currency.

If you have ideas for possible future events that CSIRP might undertake, don't hesitate to get in touch with us, at chair@radiosite.ca, office@radiosite.ca, or through any CSIRP member. For more information on what CSIRP is all about, check out our website at www.radiosite.ca.

So...to finish up in the same corny way I started...git along, little dogies!

Wavelength

is the newsletter published twice a year by *The Canadian Society for Independent Radio Production*. It provides articles about production techniques and opportunities for people who produce radio in Canada, and provides radio listeners and producers alike with lively discussion about the state of radio in Canada

Wavelength encourages submissions from members and readers. Wavelength is available in PDF format at www.radiosite.ca

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Sound effects in comedy— A real balancing act

by Rick Cousins

Eric Friesen looked at me as though he thought I'd lost my mind.

He had a point. I mean, there I was, feverishly stacking newspapers and other recyclables on top of a chair, then leaning the chair against a door in such a way that the whole arrangement could not fail to topple at the slightest touch. How was anyone going to enter the studio with a lunatic practical joker like me at work?

All this preparation was not for a prank, but for what turned out to be probably the first sound effect recorded live to air on CBC Radio Two's *In Performance*. It was far from the first time I'd done something like this, however.

That doesn't mean I go around booby-trapping classical music programs. My specialty is a type of comedy which sounds like animated cartoons without pictures. Over the years, I've used everything I could lay my hands on to create sound effects in the interest of making people laugh.

At first blush, nothing would seem easier. The funnier the sound, the better—right? More often than not, however,

the opposite is true. The cartoon sound effects that leave you giggling after you hear them by themselves on a tape or CD can leave you flat as an cartoon 'cel' when you hear them in support of a joke. The real challenge in using effects to turn a funny script into an equally funny finished product lies in knowing how to compose all the elements at your disposal so that they work with, and not against, each other.

The best starting point is ordinary care and attention. I try to select background effects as if I were producing serious drama. The audio backdrop usually isn't obtrusive—and it certainly doesn't have to be "realistic". It just has to establish a plausible setting for whatever I've dreamt up to take place.

Most of the time, I can find what I'm looking for in stock. The compilations now available from motion picture studios are very good for this—movie people, just like producers of good radio drama, highlight certain aspects of their soundscapes to create a desired impression. Every now and then, though, even the best stock background is missing one key element that makes or breaks the impression that you want to create.

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Sound effects,
continued from page 3

I've had a lot of problems recently in that regard with wolves. There's nothing that makes an innocuous nature background sound wild and threatening like a good wolf howl or two. I don't know where the people in sound effects companies are finding their wolves, but the ones I've listened to lately have sounded bored and listless, like staff announcers moon-lighting for half scale on their lunch break, doing voice-overs for toilet paper commercials. Dingoes, on the other hand, sound more like wolves than wolves do. Perhaps dingoes are just naturally gifted at impressions. If that's so, they could

undercut the entire animal sound effects market. If I were a bird with a union card, I'd watch out for those dingoes.

Once the background has been laid in (dingoes or no dingoes), it's surprising how few special effects you actually need to help the comedy along. It's also surprising how much effort you sometimes have to put into getting your effects the way you want them.

Something as simple as a door starts to get complicated when you realize how many times the sound of a door opening is necessary to signal character entrances and exits, how many ways a door can be opened, and how many types of doors there are. If you have to close the door once it's been opened, the complications multiply exponentially. The variety of ways one person can slam a door, depending on the circumstances and that person's frame of mind, could take up several CDs by itself. Since the complete boxed set of door slams isn't on the market yet, I've found I'm better off just locating the right door and slamming it over and over until I get the sound I need.

So far I've only described run-of-the-mill effects. If you make comedy for radio, you're going to wind up using things that just sound funny. Sound effects collections will help you find the basic ones you need, but there's no substitute for making them yourself. For some reason, heaps of debris falling prey to gravity have figured prominently in my work. Modern digital technology makes it possible to build up a crashing pile of junk from a number of separately recorded smaller crashes. The end result can be impressive, but somehow it always falls just short of the sound you can get from an armload of trash that you drop all at once—trash can and all. It's amazing to discover the variations in timing that the same objects, stacked the same way, can create spontaneously from one 'drop take' to the next.

The lengthy process of trial and error involved in all this crash-and-bang is more than balanced by the satisfying catharsis it produces. Tossing a pile of cans, empty tape reels, and plastic containers around a studio well after midnight is the best way I know to work off the frustrations of an all-night mix-down session.

Which brings us back to that pile of junk we left behind the door at *In Performance*. There was a method to the madness that you read about at the beginning of this article. I'd been invited on the show to discuss the place of comedy in music, and needed an appropriately comedic entrance. On cue, I hit the door at a dead run, and swan-dove through the pile, scattering it with a clatter that included an unforeseen half-bar rest and a coda, supplied by a pop bottle. It was a definite "keeper".

Eric Friesen probably still thinks I'm not in my right mind, but people in their right minds don't do comedy, now do they? ✍

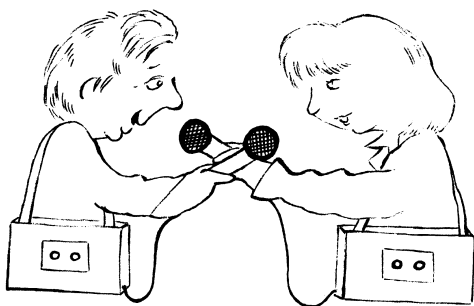
When he's not tumbling over bric-à-brac, Rick Cousins can be found in an increasingly cluttered house, trying to locate lost copies of comedy shows he's produced over the years. His body of work ranges from the surreal college radio series "Vasco da Gama" to the sacred-cow-tipping "Footsteps of Canadian History" for CBC Radio.



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**The on-line community
for Canada's radio
producers, audio
artists, and
soundmakers.**

- Articles about sound and radio.
- Workshops and training opportunities.
- Our twice-yearly newsletter "Wavelength".

Radiosite is a project of the Canadian Society for Independent Radio Production, an organization set up to encourage imaginative radio and audio production and build a sense of community for Canada's soundmakers.



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Wavelength is sent to CSIRP members, radio stations, independent producers, government legislators and broadcasting schools.

Wavelength provides an ideal opportunity to reach producers and broadcasters directly. Advertising revenues help defray the costs of printing and distributing *Wavelength*.

Our Rate Card, Past Issues, and further information can be found on line at

www.radiosite.ca/wavelength.html



A workshop during the Prometheus Radio Project's conference at Immokalee.

Shelter from the media storm:

Canuck heads south to volunteer for Prometheus Radio Project

by Janna Graham
janna@prometheusradio.org

“There should be opportunities for all sorts of citizens to speak and to participate. It’s as much about building a community as it is about building a radio station. It’s a way that people connect with each other.” (Pete Tri Dish, Prometheus Radio Project)

Mythical Prometheus brought fire to the people. The new Prometheus, based out of the Calvary United Church basement in West Philadelphia, brings community radio to the people. In the spirit of neighbours pulling together to put up a new building, Prometheus Radio Project works with local communities across the US to build low-power stations from the microphone up to the antenna.

Prometheus Radio Project is an organization that fights for media democracy and community-based media through a mixture of advocacy, research, activism and technical support. As a Canadian community radio devotee, I was curious to see low-power radio advocates in direct action. I headed down south to work with Pete Tri Dish, the founder of Prometheus and the poster boy for the low power radio

movement in the States. I spent the month of November interning at Prometheus headquarters in Philadelphia, then travelled to Southern Florida to help build Radio Consciencia, a trilingual community station dedicated to fighting for farm workers’ rights.

As most of us are well aware, media consolidation in North America threatens the diversity of our airwaves. In the US, media monopolies infest the FM spectrum. Corporations like Clear Channel Communications control the content of over 1500 radio stations. In Canada, Big Media giants like Corus Entertainment are swallowing independent local stations at an alarming rate.

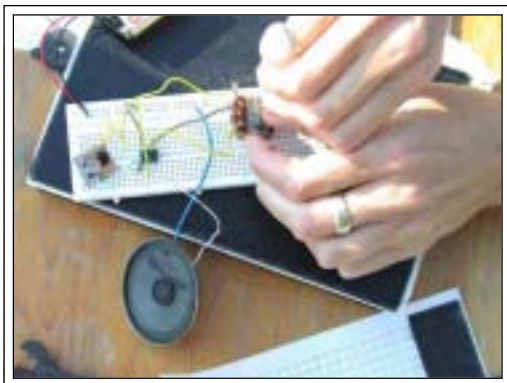
Without proper protection against media monopolies by the CRTC, one is left to worry about the fate of community-based media in Canada. As independent Canadian radio producers, are we ensuring that the diversity of our airwaves is defended? As devotees of public access radio, are we protecting the essential role community-based media plays in our culture?

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), in partnership with the Prometheus Radio Project, launched its new worker-run radio station (WCTI-FM) on December 7, following a 3-day media conference. Almost one hundred activists, journalists, technicians, community organizers and the generally curious gathered in Immokalee, Florida, to give birth to the multilingual community radio station.

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Artist in Residence Rita McKeough



A homemade amplifier



Sunporch studio

Good times, great lessons



Full Moon 2003

The 5th annual Full Moon Audio Art Camp was held in Rockport, N.B. August 17-23, 2003. For a week, 18 eager campers enjoyed the seclusion of this rustic setting, while taking part in a variety of workshops and creative exercises. Host station CHMA in Sackville, N.B. did a great job setting up facilities for the event. Many thanks to Bertholet Charron and Lesley Johnson for the use of their property, and for their help and hospitality.



Host Bertholet Charron (right) leading a workshop

During this week of “roughing it in the bush”, artists-in-residence Chris Brookes and Rita McKeough supervised work (and play) which touched on all aspects of sound production. Among the highlights were guided soundwalks through local points of interest, seminars on vocal and microphone techniques, and a “field trip” to a regional office of Radio Canada International. No opportunity was missed to take advantage of whatever was available. The temporary outhouse even did double duty as a makeshift studio!



Early morning soundwalk



Group soundwalking the Rockport shore



Chris Brookes and narrative group

All in all, it was an experience not to be forgotten, and well worth repeating. In fact, that's what's going to happen. This coming August, CHMA Radio will again play host to Full Moon, in the Sackville area. Here's hoping the 6th Edition of Full Moon will be every bit as successful as the 5th! (To find out how this year's Full Moon is shaping up, check in at www.radiosite.ca).



Bertholet Charron, en repos

Reel Pierre



Outhouse studio



**Prometheus,
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Radio Consciencia will serve as a primary organizing tool for the community, which is largely composed of migrant farm workers from Haiti, Mexico and Guatemala. They will broadcast news, educational programs, and music in Spanish, Haitian Creole and indigenous languages of Mexico and Guatemala. It will be a station that reflects the values of poor and marginalized workers. ✍

For information on Prometheus Radio Project:

www.prometheusradioproject.org
For information on Coalition of Immokalee Workers
http://www.ciw-online.org



Raising the antenna on the roof of Radio Consciencia.

COMING EVENTS

CSIRP has a number of interesting workshops planned for the months ahead. Here's what's in store:

“One Day Wonder”

This will teach you how to get material ready for broadcast on a tight deadline. It takes place April 24 at CKCU, on the campus of Carleton University in Ottawa, Ont. Registration is \$50, and is limited to 15.

Full Moon

This year's edition is set for August in Sackville, N.B. Station CHMA is once again hosting the event.

As well, CSIRP is proud to be a co-sponsor of two upcoming events:

Un-censoring: MediaMorphosis

Carleton University in Ottawa plays host to “Un-censoring: MediaMorphosis” from March 4-6. This conference, organized by the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, examines the ways in which mass media is manipulated, and the ways in which it manipulates us. Registration is \$10 for one day, or \$20 for the entire weekend. For more information, go to www.opirg-carleton.org/media.html.

Deep Wireless

New Adventures in Sound Art has a full slate planned for this year's “Deep Wireless”. Events take place throughout the month of May in Toronto, culminating in the “Radio Without Boundaries” conference May 28-30. Information: www.deepwireless.ca.

Here are some other items of interest to CSIRP members:

Nature Sounds Society

2003 Full Moon participant Paul Matzner extends an invitation to anyone travelling to Northern California to attend upcoming events at which the Nature Sounds Society will be recording migratory birds. March 26-28 sees the Aleutian Goose Festival in Crescent City/Del Norte County; April 16-18 are Godwit Days in Arcata (a godwit is a type of long-billed shorebird). For more information, go to www.naturesounds.org/announcements/.

New Music

Sound Symposium XII takes place at the International Festival of New Music and the Arts from July 8-18 in St. John's, Nfld. This biennial event brings together musicians, singers, filmmakers, performance artists, dancers, actors, visual artists and more from all over the world. For more information, go to www.sound.nf.ca/home.html.

**New president,
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Beyond that, we are working on new ways to continue to expand our membership. A membership pamphlet and other promotional materials will be ready very soon, to be distributed at CSIRP events and by CSIRP members like you. And here, of course, is the latest edition of our newsletter Wavelength. Our Web site, www.radiosite.ca, continues to provide a wide range of resources, including our on-line discussion group, [csirp-list](mailto:csirp-list@radiosite.ca), which is open to all members. If you aren't on the list yet, e-mail csirp-list@radiosite.ca for information on how to be included.

Our Board is also working on ways to make the administration of our national non-profit volunteer-run organization more efficient and effective. As well, we are looking to strengthen our ties with other organizations that have goals and interests similar to our own, such as CARFAC, OPIRG and the NCRA.

If you have any ideas or suggestions on how to make 2004 the best year ever for CSIRP, don't hesitate to pass them along. You can e-mail me at chair@radiosite.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Rick Cousins
CSIRP President and Chair