

RADIO DRAMA, THE EASY WAY

WORLDS OF ADVENTURE

Worlds of Adventure is WLPP-LP's weekly improvisational drama series. Everything is completely unscripted, and each episode is done in a single take. We use simple role-playing games as a framework to create our story on the fly, in the way that an improv comedy troupe would use improv games.

NARRATIVIST ROLE-PLAYING

Narrativist role-playing games differ significantly from Gamist or Simulationist games such as *Dungeons & Dragons*: they focus on producing a good story, which is what a radio drama needs. The primary game that we use, called *DramaSystem*, examines the inner lives of the main cast, in ways that traditional dungeon crawl games would never attempt. *DramaSystem* is also much simpler than *D&D*, and doesn't use visual elements such as miniature figures or character sheets full of lots of statistics.

ORIGINAL IP EVERY SEASON

We stay clear of copyright problems by creating, from scratch, an original setting for the show every season. There's an additional game called *Microscope* that's particularly good at this. During the pilot season, we created our entire world in a single evening, starting from just a single sentence. Owning our own IP, and using a Creative Commons game system such as *DramaSystem*, also lets us give away the rulebook and the setting to the audience, to play along at home.

VOLUNTEER CAST OF ROLE-PLAYERS

Finding good volunteer actors with radio experience, who don't need to be paid SAG-AFTRA scale, is hard. Finding role-playing gamers with 30-40 years of experience is actually fairly easy. Our cast members sound wooden when reading from a prepared script, but they're able to easily create nuanced vocal performances on the fly when they think of it as playing a game rather than acting.

CLOSE MIKING

Because the show is unscripted, traditional production methods for radio dramas aren't appropriate. Having SFX performers provide Foley straight into the mix, to cues in the script, doesn't work, because what a character is going to do in a particular scene isn't known in advance. Even microphone sharing is a little difficult, since anyone may come in with a diegetic or non-diegetic line at any time. So instead of a standing cast and a limited number of condenser mics, we have our studio laid out in a format taken from tabletop role-playing, with the cast sitting around a central table, close miked with dynamic mics.



A round table would be even better, but we're able to arrange the mics so that cast members generally aren't sitting in the pickup pattern of each other's mics. We can also assign each cast member a specific spot in the stereo mix, through the pan controls on the mixing board. We make up for not having live Foley through heavier post, and we're fortunate to have good free sound and music resources available on the Internet.

INTERNET AUDIENCE

In addition to Pacifica's AudioPort, we use archive.org and WordPress to release the show to listeners beyond the WLPP-LP broadcast area, and we plan to have iTunes and TuneIn integration before Season 1 premieres. WordPress natively integrates with archive.org, and both are completely free.

SEASON STRUCTURE

We record the show in 3-3½ hour sessions, which yields two hour-long episodes per session. We start the season with one session of worldbuilding, using *Microscope*, and then play a dozen or so sessions of *DramaSystem*, yielding 24 hour-long episodes. With a season introduction and a special or two, that's 26 hours of new drama in a year, with each episode airing twice.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

For Season 1, we may switch to a half-hour format, and air two new episodes in the hour-long slot that we're currently occupying, which would give us the flexibility to release new content to Internet listeners weekly, while still giving the broadcast audience an hour of drama every week. We're also trying to work out just how much non-diegetic discussion between the game moderator and the cast is appropriate. Should we put the game in the foreground, like the web series *Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana*? Should we retain non-diegetic discussion, as improv shows do? Or should we hide that we're creating the drama through a role-playing game from the audience altogether, and give them a straight radio play?