AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview
with

Brian Rio

By Dylan McAdams

Washington D.C., Atlanta GA

October 10th

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY:
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

NARRATOR: Brian Rio
DATE: October 10, 2020
INTERVIEWER: Dylan McAdams
PLACE: Atlanta, GA

NARRATOR'S PERSONAL DATA
Birthdate: N/A
Spouse: N/A
Occupation: Director/Sound Design

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

This interview discusses how Covid 19 has affected the broadcast media industry of a media company. This interview provides an in-depth look at how the news team is running now that Covid 19 is in full swing.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

More information can be found in the background journal of this interview

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INDEX TERMS

Media, News, CNN International, WarnerMedia, Covid-19, Sound Design, TNT, Full Sail University, Orlando FL, Atlanta GA, Turner Studios, Job Security, Working from Home, Social Unrest, Coronavirus, Black Lives Matter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, George Floyd, On Being With Krista Tippett, Family

Transcription of Interview with Brian Rio on October 10.

Dylan McAdams 0:01
Hello, my name is Dylan McAdams and I will be interviewing Brian Rio de is October 20 2020. And do I have permission to record this interview? Yes, you do. Alright, perfect. So just to start off could you tell me a little bit about yourself, like where you work, what department you work for, and what exactly your job is that you do?

Brian Rio 0:26
Sure, Dylan. I work for Warner media studios. We are a division of Warner media, which is a division of at&t. I head up our sound design department. It's a team of about 2725, full time staff post production mixers, and composers and sound designers. And then some management people and some freelancers.

Dylan McAdams 1:04
Now, how long have you worked in this profession?

Let's see, I've been with this company, and in this department for almost exactly 19 years, I didn't realize that until just now. Yeah. It would be 19 years. And 19 days. As a matter of fact, I didn't move into this leadership role until summer of 2018. So almost all of my career, and almost all of my time in this organization has been or was, as a craftsperson i was i was a sound designer, I was, you know, kind of the on the artist side sitting in the chair doing the actual craft work and design and mixing. So in this role, this this leadership role, where I'm no longer actually doing that work, more supporting the people that are doing that work. I've been doing this for just a little bit over two years.

And before you worked for Warner media, were you also in sound design before?

Brian Rio 2:15
I was actually in the music business. Well, I skipped a step there. So it was in the music business coming right out of school, which was what the school called full sail in Orlando. And so in 98, I moved up to Atlanta, and get started in the music business. And kind of worked my way up at a studio that work with some pretty high profile artists. And we're starting to see some momentum, and also started to see that at that time, the music business in Atlanta, pretty much every cliche you hear about the music business at that time was true, you know, there

was a lot of work, lot of drug addiction, some violence. And as I started to realize that, I probably wouldn't want to be in that environment for a career. I kind of started over a few years later, a couple years later, and got more into the post production side of the audio industry. That's where I moved into I moved to a studio called sound waves, which was a post production studio here in Atlanta, I worked there for one or two years, and then moved from sound waves over to at the time, we were called Turner studios. That was before Warner media ever existed. And we so many of us in the organization are legacy Turner employees. So when I started it was it was Turner studios back in 2001.

Dylan McAdams 3:58
All right. Tell me a little bit about the daily, like the daily basis of your job, kind of what you do every day. And this is all before COVID So what did you do what you do every day before COVID

Brian Rio 4:12
before COVID I'd go in a lot of meetings. Before COVID I worked on campus five days a week in an office but had a lot of meetings primarily focused on leading and managing people on a team. Everything from making sure they have everything they need. everywhere from emotionally to physically to the gear that they need. And all that comes along with that, you know, conversations about budgets, conversations about how we interact and interact with other creative teams. Keeping the team motivated, essentially, leading became a real passion for me, it's just leading, leading other people adding value to the other people around me. So day to day, you know, there was kind of the, the the maintenance and management part, which is how to kind of keep the existing system moving, keep the machine moving. I get help with that from a manager on our team. And Melissa, she's amazing. So she's moved into her role about a year ago, a little over a year ago. And she's really helped to take over a lot of that daily operational, you know, stuff that's needs a quick response. And this kind of opened me up to be able to think a little bit more about strategy about the future of the team, about the future of technology in the space. So pre COVID, I was that's, that's what I did, most the day, five days a week, and then in the evenings, and on weekends, usually ahead, a few things going on in the back of my mind. Again, with Melissa and her role I, fortunately, on evenings and weekends didn't often have to engage or problem solve some sort of urgent problem, Melissa really handles that stuff. So evenings and weekends, I would be thinking about work from time to time, but really, more able to focus on my family. I've got a wife and a four year old daughter and a two year old daughter. So they're the most important thing. So pre COVID. that's it in a nutshell.

Dylan McAdams 6:57
And what about after COVID happened, and everything kind of changed with the world around us?

Brian Rio 7:05
Well, the first thing, obviously, was we had to quickly disassociate our team in our organization with one physical, geographical location, we, you know, March, Friday, March 13, was the last day that anybody in the department was on campus, except I went in on Monday, March 16, for a few hours, just to make sure everything was kind of buttoned up. But so the first adjustment was, okay, we were all at our houses now. That was the first thing to get over, we did a very good job. In our department especially, we did a very good job of preparing in the couple weeks before, you know, we shut everything down. We did a lot of preparation to get people what they needed at home, to at least get started. We knew we weren't going to be able to have everybody working at full capacity from home for a long time. But we were able to, you know, by the time everybody left campus at Friday, March 13, we were able to pick back up work on the 16th with essentially zero downtime. We weren't at 100% efficiency or effectiveness. But we didn't have to cancel sessions because people weren't able to work at home. So that was the first thing you know, the first obvious thing is okay, you're no longer in your studios in your in your very high end facility in your offices. You're all scattered around the city. And in our case, we've got some folks on our team in Colorado and in Florida. So we'd manage that to a degree previous to COVID. But then we had you know 25 staff people all of a sudden all working from home. That was the first thing to deal with. Then after that the next thing to deal with is the people part. Trying to find that blend, strike the balance between being realistic and pragmatic. And the embracing how much there was there was unknown and remaining positive as positive as we could and starting to really really settle into Okay, we may be doing this for a while and then little by little restarted really good sense of, you know, okay, soon after that I wasn't spending any time on any sort of plan that would have us back on campus before June of 2019. Or no, I'm sorry. 2020. And then, you know, we heard from our senior leadership, okay, guys, well, we need to kind of start thinking more about Labor Day, you know, and we thought that was just insane. Like, what September, there's no way we'll be working from home that long. And then now, you know, here it is. October 20. And last Friday ish, or sometime last week, we get a note from Warner media, the head of HR, that most of us do not plan on returning to the workplace until June of 2021. So it's, it's been an evolution of managing expectations, and trying to keep people's heads right.

Dylan McAdams 10:59
And for when it comes to like, sound design and working with sound, it's a very equipment heavy job. How hard was it get equipment to your employees home. And so they can do the same work they've been doing in office. But now in a home environment.

Brian Rio 11:16
It wasn't easy. As I said, those first few weeks, people's home systems were very much cobbled together. You know, we, some people were working on their personal machines, computers, they had their own speakers, others we were able to from around campus, you know, oh, here's some speakers and storage, oh, here's this extra computer here. So kind of that first push was very much piecemealed. Again, we got everybody to a point where they were able to work. But we had to come up pretty quickly come up with a strategy to get some gear deployed to the team. One of the most important things when dealing with audio is consistency. And that's one of the reasons you know, you have really expensive studios with very precise acoustic treatment and very specific type of speaker. So you know, when you go room to room person to person, there's consistency and how things sound. Because you want that experience delivered to the consumer, you want a consistent good experience and audio. So that was the biggest hurdle right out of the gate. It's like I said, we had some people on computers they owned or speakers they owned or computers, they borrow from us or other places. And we didn't have a lot of consistency and gear across the across the department. So we got lucky in a few ways. from a financial standpoint, we were able to put together kind of a baseline system, that the we wanted everybody on the team to have, at a bare minimum, this certain list of things we were able to get that financed and deployed including some acoustic treatment. I'm trying to think of when that I'll actually get through it probably didn't get through until June. So until then, you know, we were getting by, but the gear was not consistent across the department and that was a challenge. So again, we feel very, very lucky and grateful as a team that we were able to get these more consistent systems and gear financed. You know, I'll say very frequently through all this, it's been really clear what a fine organization we work for. And their ability to finance and purchase and deploy this gear to make things easier for our crafts people just kind of emblematic of one of the benefits of working for this company.

Dylan McAdams 14:16
And what do you say Park department work on shows, movies, what is the your department focus on comes to sound?

Brian Rio 14:28

it's primarily short form. We do a lot of work for sports. You know the corporate division we kind of roll up into is Warner media news and sports. In the sports, you know properties it's kind of a legacy of Turner sports. And they still have a name Turner sports. But we do a lot of content for those those broadcasts you know, like these high value And opens, you know, a tease or open to a broadcast where you are kind of setting a story for what's about to unfold between two teams or, or a feature about something that's going on in that sport. And what we saw more and more. through the summer, as we saw a lot of the societal unrest is that those elements that were being produced by buy in for sports, were much more they kind of drifted into news. I mean, we were cutting things that were about racial injustice, and inequity and poverty. And all of a sudden, you know, it's like, wow, we you know, a year ago, it was just about, you know, the standings in the league. So the content shifted greatly in the late spring, in the summer. And then we also support all the entertainment brands across the portfolio for so for those brands, we do a lot of the trailers for the original programming, then a lot of promos promoting shows, graphic elements, and then we do we do some long form content, you know, Turner Classic Movies, we'll do full long form shows for them. And then some other one off long form shows for sports, NBA TV, documentary style programming. And then within the team, like I said, We do everything from dialogue, editing, to recording mixing to sound effects, editing, sound design, and all the way up to music, full original music composition for, for all those things I just listed.

Dylan McAdams 16:57
Right? Um, when COVID-19 really kind of hit the United States, what was your first reaction to it?

Brian Rio 17:09
When it first hit as in, like March, like early, March, candidly, was this confusion? And like, wait, what does this really mean? I remember Melissa and I were walking. We were on campus and walking to a meeting, I don't know, when this was maybe, you know, March 10, ninth, somewhere around there. Some point that who officially classified it as a pandemic. And I don't know when that was honestly. But I remember Melissa Lee pulled her phone up to me and showed me that headline, and my reaction was, what does that mean? And she's like, I don't know. And so it was, it was really just confusion and uncertainty. You know, I, the, we weren't given a lot of solid data about what was really going on. So it was a lot of confusion and uncertainty, and a lot of fear, a little bit of anger. So none of those are real, positive emotions. But then also, knowing that in the position, a position like the one, like the ones we hold is, we also have to manage

people, we have to help people. We have to support the people that are on our teams. So you have to balance that all those real real feelings and questions and concerns you have to balance with, we're gonna be okay, you know, you have to insert hope for the people that you support. We're going to be okay, we got to stay galvanized as a team. And we'll get through this and oftentimes, you're saying that and trying your best to sell it. But you're still uncertain how all that's going to look. So the early reactions I think were were quite mixed bag, but a lot of confusion and concern and fear. And then a lot of a lot of manufactured hope and and positivity to try to kind of balance that for the team.

Dylan McAdams 19:23
You mentioned fear, were you ever at any point when they started shutting businesses down and cutting staff around the world? Were you ever afraid of your job or if your team was going to be cut?

Brian Rio 19:37
I wasn't ever afraid of that. It may have been naive. But I wasn't ever really afraid of that. And I know that this doesn't totally reconcile with everything I've said previous to this, but in that specific point. You know, when you work in a organization the size of hours or in a corporate America to this scale, you go through a lot of uncertain times when it comes to job security when it comes to your team security and your individual job security. So you kind of have coping mechanisms practiced for that, you know, kind of like I've been through that a lot. We've all been through that a lot. Like if you've worked in corporate America for 20 years, you've been through several rounds of restructuring, reorganizing mergers, etc. in you, you've learned that it's, to a degree, there is a point where you have zero control over that. And it is wasted energy to feel anxiety or fear, over potential loss of your job or reduction on your team. So you know, I'm saying that coming off the heels of saying I was I was scared about all these other things, or angry or fearful about all these other things. And the same applies, you know, there was very little I could do about COVID to keep myself safe or to keep my family safe. There was little I could do that I wasn't doing. So it could be argued that fear and concern and anxiety was misplaced energy. The difference is, is I didn't have any experience with dealing with a pandemic, and how to compartmentalize that anxiety, or that fear or that anger versus when you think that your company may be reorganizing? Like, I kind of had some practice with dealing with that anxiety. So that combined with we had some very, very strong messaging from our senior leadership, specific to us, and just to sports and news. And at that time entertainment that, hey, we were not there yet. Like, we don't need to worry about that. You know, we

were, I don't know if some genius plan it this way. But you know, we Warner media doesn't have theme parks, you know, a lot of these other huge corporations had, you know, Disney had to deal with all the losses from theme parks and NBC Universal, all those theme parks. So it was a little bit different for us. And I'm not saying that we are making it through this without changes. But in those early days, that's a very, very, very long winded. No, I didn't have a lot of fear about my job security, or the job security of the people I support on my team.

Dylan McAdams 22:47
All right. What was your immediate first reaction to when COVID hit? Do you think it was a good response and how they handled it?

Brian Rio 23:00
Yes. The I mean, I have been so proud to work for this organization. For quite some time, but especially since March, it was absolutely made clear that the priority is to take care of yourself and your family. And then the work. It was made very clear, hey, don't be worried about your job security right now. I just feel like the company nailed it. They're identified and recognized and validated very quickly, that, you know, a lot of us are going to be working from home with kids out of school. Oftentimes, you know, spouses, both working at home with kids out of school. The company made it okay to step away, take a little bit of time, do what you have to do to get through this. Like nobody was really, really sweating the work. You know, we kept getting the work done. But it was really, really made clear and encouraged to pay to step away or if you need to, if you need to just turn off your computer and put your head down on your desk for a little while do it. You know and early on. There were pretty quickly some academic or intellectual type articles put out about how to manage a remote team. And one of the very first and most important things to get through to me was You have to trust the people around you. That has to be your starting position as you have To trust that they are going to do their best to get the work done, you can't go into it thinking, Hey, we're gonna have this person made game, this system or this, you can't, you have to start with a position of trusting the people around you. And I feel like the company communicated that clearly. They're gonna, they're gonna trust that if I need to step away, I'm going to step away, and I'm still going to take care of the people around me and my job. So I did that with the team that I support. And I feel like our leadership was doing that with me. So I was very, very proud of how the company reacted.

Dylan McAdams 25:37

It's great to be here. So it's been about eight months now, since COVID, has been affecting the United States and changing how all jobs are running, has it started to become more used to it in your work days? Or like, is it starting to become like, Oh, this is how my days run. Now I don't need to worry about going to the office during the night. Have you become used to COVID-19?

Brian Rio 26:05
I'd say I've become used to working from home. When I say I've become used to COVID-19. working from home, is you know, the reason we've been working from home is COVID-19. But if we're able to strip COVID-19, which is an inherently horrible thing, strip that away from the conversation, working from home is presented some beautiful changes in quality of life for a lot of people. You know, and there's a flip side to that. But first I'll talk about my experiences. I get to today at from at 1145. I walked up to my daughter's preschool and I picked them up from preschool and walk them home and had lunch with them and was back at my desk at 1230. That's not going to happen. If I'm working in Midtown Atlanta. It's not even, it's not even something you would think about. When I finish work at six o'clock, I take about five minutes to transition my brain. And I walk upstairs and I'm with my family. It used to take me an hour on average, to drive home, I used to leave my office at six o'clock, I'd be in my car, it's 610, then I'd be home An hour later. So I say all that with the disclaimer that it's not that way for everyone. And I acknowledge that. And I live in a state of gratitude for being able to look at working from home in that light. Because it's not that way for everyone. A lot of people are really, really struggling, working from home. They don't have the luxury of having a dedicated workspace like I have here. They don't have those little feel good moments of going to pick up your kids from school walking, you know, I mean, a lot of people are really, really hurting just working from home. Not talking about COVID. But it's been interesting. It has in a new way shined a light on the vast range in differences of the socio economic situations, different people on our teams are in. I never would have had a reason to in the past to be on a video call with an entry level person who maybe has roommates and lives in an apartment that's not that nice. And then they're on a video call and they never would have had a reason to look in on a more senior crafts person dedicated space or, you know, their acoustically treated room or how nice their house might be. Like we never really had a reason to look at those things or talk about those things until we all work from home. So it's another long winded answer, Dylan I know. But yeah, I've fully adjusted to working from home. I fully enjoy working from home. I anticipate a need for me returning to the office in some capacity, post COVID. But I'll never go back to well, if I have anything to say about it. I'll never go back to going into the office five

times a week. And I say that again, with the caveat that I'm on the lucky side of that spectrum.

Dylan McAdams 29:48
That kind of leads into my next question about how COVID-19 and the idea of working from home has really kind of busted the myth that you need to be in the office. Do you think that Warner Media in the future will kind of stick to this method of allowing people who can do their job as productively in the office, at home, continue being at home?

Brian Rio 30:09
Yeah, I think I think there's a lot, there's a lot of play there. I think the short answer is yes. We've proven and one of the most difficult things to prove would be for example, you know, an editor, like a video or film or whatever editor, a crafts person working from home. That was not easy to figure out. And it seemed like an insurmountable thing to figure out. Pre COVID, you know, we had some ideas about how it might work. But essentially, it was no to do this type of job, you need to be in this type of room, on campus with these type of people having access to you physically. We've proven that to be false, to a degree. So I think that, for all of the positive reasons I listed about working from home. For me, I think that Warner media will recognize that it's in their best interest to facilitate all those positive things I listed for me, by allowing me to work from home in some capacity. They also will recognize that there's people who are struggling working from home, you know, the flip side of that coin, so they're gonna want to facilitate those people getting back to a workplace, I would think. And then at the end of the day, there is some work that you can't get around it, it just needs to be I'm sorry, it is done more effectively and more efficiently. on campus. From a gear standpoint, from an infrastructure standpoint, and from a collaboration standpoint, sometimes you just can't be getting some people sitting in an edit room together, talking about ideas and watching something and talking about ideas and watching something, and so on and so forth. The other part of it is, real estate is not cheap. So, as organizations start to get a little taste of the potential savings, if they, if they start to look at real estate in a little bit of a different light, or as you look at you can maybe have several properties, you know, maybe even a few properties around the same city. And, you know, if I'm, you know, much further up in the organization, I'm going to say, Well, if we were able to consolidate some of those properties into one property, knowing that, you know, maybe 30% of the workforce at all, all of those properties can work full time remote, you might just have saved yourself millions and millions and millions of dollars in real estate costs. So there's the kind of mental health and morale productivity side to facilitating people working from home, if they want to, and they think that's healthy. And

then there's also the potential financial gains from not eating up a ton of real estate and downtown or Midtown Atlanta if you don't have to.

Dylan McAdams 33:37
Just to clarify, a quick clarification question, when you say campus, you mean Techwood campus?

Brian Rio 33:43
Yes, that's correct. I mean, the Techwood campus in Midtown Atlanta.

Dylan McAdams 33:47
Alright, Perfect, thank you. Alright, so throughout these eight months, what is probably the greatest challenge you have faced with the changing environment of the profession that you're in?

Brian Rio 34:03
Okay, so the biggest challenge of the last eight months has been not related specifically to our jobs. I'm just speaking for my little, my little carved out part of the company. It's been everything that's going on, and the world around us. You know, I mentioned earlier societal unrest, which applies to everything from COVID, and the number of people dying from COVID, and all of that fear to George Floyd and to all of the Black Lives Matter movement. And to, you know, the death of RGB. I mean, there's been so much societal unrest and so much loss in society. That there, there's a grieving that has to happen, right? And there's various stages of grief going on for various societal losses at the same time, in those stages of grief, interact with each other and complicate each other. So, as a person that heads up a team of people, I've found myself along with Melissa, in a very, very different position, where it's not as important for me to be there for them for the work, but people are just having a hard time dealing with reality right now. So, the work hasn't been that hard. I mean, there's parts of it that have been very challenging and very hard. But what's harder is everything that's going on around us. And keep in our heads, right. And when you had a pretty big team, there's a lot of people to think about. So that's been the hardest part to me is, is the, and not just me, I'll take me out of it. But seeing the people that I support is seeing them in different stages of grief for all of these different losses that are piling up on each other. And just when you think, or they think they're making progress on something, then something else really, really tough happens. So that's been the biggest challenge is being there for them. And it's been there for people on your team that in a way you're not accustomed to. It's a new type of support.

Dylan McAdams 36:57

As a team leader, how have you kind of like adjusted how you operate to kind of help them through this tough time? Yeah.

Brian Rio 37:09
What starts with giving myself a little bit of a break, like giving myself a little bit of room to not nail everything perfectly? Because I'm so tired of hearing people say these are unprecedented times, but they are. So there's no playbook for this stuff. Dylan, I cuss a lot. So when you hear me pause as me trying not to be profane. This stuff, there's no playbook for this stuff. So, you know, I've had to really give myself a pass on not like, Okay, I'm just not going to nail everything here, I'm gonna do my best. But then also, making sure everybody else feels that same. Same thing, that same feeling of Hey, this is an impossible time to bet 1000. You know what I mean? Nobody's going to bet 1000 through this thing, through all of these things. So I don't want to sound like I was a tyrant before this and had unreasonable expectations. But I certainly had pretty high expectations of myself, pre COVID, when it comes to getting things right, for a team. But through all of this, it's just been like, there's no, there's no chance that you're going to get every single thing right through this. So then, again, passing that on to the people that I support has been important. And then candidly, we've ventured into areas of people's lives that we just didn't use to venture into. You know, after the George Floyd killing, I think that next week, we held a department meeting where we talked about Black people in our country. That was something I never thought I would head up a department meeting that talked about how Black people in our country are being treated. And that's a totally different space for a leader. That's blurring a lot of lines. Then, our CEO, who has been a huge -- I've been very impressive for, but you know, on a corporate level, they hit us up with some, some pretty heavy stuff. You know, white fragility is a book that I'm blanking on the author's name, but they had her talk to our organization and just lay it out and talk about discomfort. But all of a sudden at the next department meeting, we're talking about anti racism, we're talking about tools for empathy, we're talking about how we're going to act. All of that is a very, very different way of leading people. You know, it's, it's, it's, I say this with caution, but it's like, when we start to get into a space where we're not just trying to be better collaborators and better team members or better employees, the like, you're kind of hinting at, okay, we're gonna make each other better people, right. And that really, I felt empowered by our CEO, to kind of start operating on that level.

Dylan McAdams 40:40
Very interesting, very, very deep stuff, I assume that you'd have to go through. You've kind of talked about this a bit, but how has working

from home affected your relationships and your family life, you mentioned that you're able to take your children to preschool and pick them up and what else has really been like, good for your family, because of working from home and the new policies that are in place?

Brian Rio 41:11
It's been time. It's been an interesting time. This is kind of of related to your question, but it's on my mind is, is the notion of boundaries, you know, my family, historically, it's always been like a work life balance. And you'll hear people talk now it's like, oh, it's a life work balance. And I remember pre COVID listening to some podcast, called On Being With Krista something. But she had somebody on there that was talking about how the notion of work life balance was flawed. because it implies that, you know, these are two separate entities, these are two separate lives or almost identities, that are at odds. And she proposed more of a work life integration. And I thought that was a fascinating idea. And again, this was far pre COVID. But you fast forward to now. And I really think about that a lot. And it brings me some peace of mind, is I don't, this has been forced for a lot of us. But there is no work life balance for me anymore. And for my family, you know, you asked about my family, like, I almost want my daughters to have a full understanding and appreciation of how much of me goes into work, and how that is a small portion compared to how much of me goes into being their dad. And those things are integrated. And they need to function in harmony. Like I don't, and this I'm not there. And this is maybe Pollyanna and maybe impossible. But I would like my family to have a very clear understanding of everything that I put my energy into, and have them understand that they are the biggest slice of my focus and life and have them live harmoniously with all of these other parts of my life, which primarily include work. So it's been interesting and healthy and valuable for, for me and for them to see, okay, Daddy's gonna go downstairs and go to work now, but they see how much more of me they get, then my work gets. So I think that's brought us all closer. And whereas before, it was this binary that was at workers at home, you know, and the two things didn't ever intermingle. Whereas now it's just like, okay, all of it just needs to integrate and be balanced and be harmonious.

Dylan McAdams 44:07
It definitely. Kind of flipping gears a little bit. Um, did you think that the media industry will kind of be different after COVID has finally passed? Hmm.

Brian Rio 44:24
Sorry, I'm sipping some coffee. The media industry being different after COVID?

Dylan McAdams 44:30
To think some policies will change, to think they've discovered new ways to work that just makes it more efficient.

Brian Rio 44:40
Yeah, without a doubt, yes to all of those things. So yes, the media industry will change. I mean, it's a really, really humongous idea. What is the media industry but yes, I mean, movie theaters. I don't know. I mean, movie theaters no longer a thing? Maybe? I don't know. They're not doing great. In our home theater experiences improving and becoming more accessible, yes. Is premium content becoming more available at home? Yes. Have we found ways to more cost effectively produce premium content? Yes. Those things won't get undone. You know, again, the movie theater thing, I don't know, maybe there'll be back, maybe it'll be fine. But what a huge thing that is just just thinking like, okay, the home theater experience. Like, I mean, home theater implies you're at home a version of a movie theater, and that that whole idea is kind of being rebalanced. And then, you know, there's, there was this moment, early in the pandemic, where we had a lot of production going on, that was pretty low fidelity. You know, you had interviews being done only on zoom calls, you know, you had sports broadcast being called with the announcer not even there, and, you know, there's there was a lot of anxiety I had over like, Okay, well, we can't let this level of fidelity become the new norm. Right, we've got to, we got to get back to producing things, you know, the way in, you know, high definition Ultra HD, immersive audio, all that. That corrected itself pretty quickly, fortunately. But we certainly look at different ways of, of creating that very, very high production value content. So short answer is, yes, it will, it has all changed, and it will not change back.

Dylan McAdams 46:58
And kind of speaking of what you said about home theater versus movie theater, has that changed how, like audio and sound is credited? For my little knowledge with the production field, the difference between a movie sets or a large broadcast sound is very different than like a home fader type of sound. Has that changed any way and affected the business?

Brian Rio 47:26
It's a conversation we're having. Essentially, for example, you know, when a major motion picture is being produced and released, you know, the soundtrack for that motion picture is mixed on a big soundstage with a humongous screen and, you know, half a million dollars of speakers all over the place. And really, really prioritizing

that theater experience. or trying to emulate that theater experience thinking that'll be the premium experience for the greatest number of people will be going to a movie theater that is roughly this size, watching a screen that is roughly this big listening to speakers that are roughly this expensive, large. Then after that, that mix is done. what's called a near field mix, we'll be done. And that's more mixed in you know, kind of more like the rooms we have on the Tech campus. So you know, they're, they're not these huge theater, soundstages there's some good size rooms, but they're you know, maybe 12 speakers, maybe 14 speakers in the room. None of the speakers are very, very far away from the mixer. That's why they're called near field. So I don't I mean, there's been conversations about like, which one do you prioritize now? Historically, it's been you get your theatrical mix done, your big room farfield big speaker mix done. And then you and then you do your near film mix. I'm wondering maybe there's a shift in priority. I mean, at some point, does the Near Field mix become the most important? I don't know.

Dylan McAdams 49:17
I just got two more questions left. First one is are you still happy in the field of sound design with all the changes going on?

Brian Rio 49:27
Yes, I am. I am passionate about sound and audio and how sound contributes to eliciting desired emotion in any content. So yes, and and I have a newly energized interest. I've always had this interest but just leading people is, regardless of whether it's in a field associated with sound or music or audio, but that notion of just adding value to the people around you, and supporting the people around you. That has been more what I've been doing the last eight months than focusing on the quality of audio. So that's been something I've always been interested in and enjoyed and studied. The last eight months have really highlighted that. Okay, that's the part of the job that I like the most is lifting up the people. It just happens to be a bunch of people working on audio.

Dylan McAdams 50:51
And lastly, are there any questions or things that came to your mind? I didn't ask but you think is important to share?

Brian Rio 51:00
Let me think on that one for a second. No, I think you covered every single thing I would ever want to cover.

Dylan McAdams 51:19
Thank you.

Brian Rio 51:20
Good questions. Great questions. No, Of Course

Dylan McAdams 51:22
So thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Everything you said has been super helpful and very interesting and enlightening. And we'll definitely be a very large contribution to like the understanding of the current state of media and broadcast industry and just about how this the system now works under the age of COVID and the changing times. So thank you so much.

Brian Rio 51:48
Of course, man. I'm happy to talk anytime and let me know if there's anything you need.

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