Blog four: Assessed Package (1)

After a few weeks of learning all about radio journalism, it was now time to create our own packages which would be assessed. Me and my partner Ashley Wilton decided that from our shortlist of three potential stories, the one regarding road works in the Cardiff city centre would be the most appropriate to go with for various reasons. Like with our previous packages we encountered slight problems along the way, but we’ve learned lessons as a result of this. On-the-whole however, the day went very well and I believe we have got a successful radio package at the end of it.

**What went well?**

- The presenter link really encapsulates the story, with the reporter link continuing on from this. It means that the package not only flows, but the listeners know exactly what the story is going to be about.

- After carrying out research in previous weeks, we decided to use the technique of inserting a wild-track at the beginning of the package. The sound used was of road works being carried out in the city, and again this added to the reality - it’s as though the listeners are with us in the centre of Cardiff.

- Following on from this point, we made it clear that we were there at the scene. This was achieved by Ashley simply emphasising the word “here” in the opening link, something we learned about from the previous weeks voice training.

- The links in general were successful, with each of them doing their job – working as signposts, helping the story along.

- I also believe that the package has been put together well. Instead of rushing in, we gave it a lot of time and thought (although obviously making sure we had plenty of time to complete it before the deadline), and decided very specifically which interview clips were good enough to make it into the package, and where they would fit in.

- Likewise, we made sure that none of the interview clips overran, a long clip can bore the listeners, so we instead broke them down into smaller chunks – something we learned through researching other radio packages.

- The interviews were conducted well, and I believe this comes across in the package. After interviewing a few people outside, we decided to try a few inside, and the sound quality improved as a result.

- Finally, the package ended with a strong pay-off. We decided to end with the reporter summarising the story, remaining neutral.

**What didn’t go so well/ What could we do differently next time?**

- Despite the links work well, the sound quality is not brilliant. We could have perhaps left ourselves more time to record the links, meaning we could have used the radio studio, that way any echoing/ other noises would have been eliminated completely.

- The length of the radio package was close to the three minute mark; ideally we were looking for something around four minutes. Despite having certain interview clips left over, we decided not to use them as it didn’t add anything to the story. We also had to make sure it didn’t sound as though we were simply using vox-pop's – three/ four interviews is usually more than enough for a package of this length.

- After breaking down the package, we decided it would be a good idea to get the views of someone who knows about the story better than most – a member of the road and transport department at the local council. We left this a little late unfortunately, and despite much work to try and get the interview, we didn’t manage to get it. The lesson we learned from this is to arrange interviews with plenty of time to spare, which we have already taken steps to rectify for our next package.

- Following on from this point, we were given a statement by the council for us to use, which I decided to read for the package. It perhaps would have been a good idea to have a female read the statement, but again, I don’t think this was a major issue.

- Finally, although the sound levels come across well overall, one interview does sound slightly quieter than the rest. It’s surprising how important it is to maintain a steady sound level, so we will make sure to focus on this for the next package.

**Next Package**

For our next package we have decided to look at how business is improving in the city’s shopping arcades due to various reasons. The six historic arcades (Castle, High St, Duke St, Morgan, Royal & Wyndham) are fighting against the recession, and many believe it’s as a result of the completion of the regeneration of St Marys Street. With Christmas right around the corner, it will be interesting to speak to shoppers, shop owners and those in charge of the arcades themselves, to give us their views.