LONG TIME LISTENER
LAST TIME CALLER

A GAME BY JEFF DIETERLE

Long Time Listener, Last Time Caller is a game for 4-10 players and 30-60 minutes about a radio show at the end of the world. It is inspired by great moments of radio where a crisis has enabled broadcasters to transcend the constraints of the medium and help their audiences on a personal level.

As the game goes on, the host gradually abandons the artifice of broadcasting, untileverything is stripped away and all that remains is two people talking to one another while the world listens. This game is designed to be a meditative experience where listening is as important as acting.

HOW TO PLAY

One player will play the DJ (the Host). While this player will be the only one constantly playing and will be able to control the game's pacing, they also have the least power to shape the narrative. This role is recommended for the most experienced player, the facilitator, the organizer, or whoever feels most comfortable assuming the responsibility.

The remainder of the players will play dual roles: they will act as one or more callers who establish facts about the cataclysm taking place in conversation with the host, and they will also serve as the radio show's audience, listening carefully during the remainder of the show.

The game is designed to be played on Skype or a similar group voice chat program, but can be adapted for in-person play.

SETUP

After determining who will be the Host, each player should review the section pertaining to their role, and take a few minutes to and understand what is required of each role.

As a group, agree on a general tone of the cataclysm that will serve as the backdrop of the game. It is not necessary to work out details, as that is a large part of play, but make sure that you're all generally agree so that one player doesn't add zombie aliens to a game that the other players thought was about the final stages of a global famine.

Then decide what kind of station this is: Where does the station broadcast? Maybe some people listen online, but part of the magic of radio is the regional limitation, and this can give you some additional framing information.

Finally, decide what sort of show this is under normal circumstances. Setting the game at a freeform station will create a very different experience than a game set at a conservative talk radio station or a Top 40 morning zoo. A college radio station is an excellent default setting.

IN-PERSON PLAY

While the game is best experienced in an online theater of the mind setting, it can be played live! Set up two chairs back to back, one for the host and one for the caller. The listeners should sit in front of the host, and when they are ready to call, they should hand the host a slip of paper with their caller name and location, and move to the caller side of the room to wait their turn to call.

HOST

You are responsible for setting the pace of the game. You choose when calls begin and when they end. The callers are important, but this is ultimately your show.

Take a minute or two before the game starts to think about two things: your on-air persona, and the nominal topic of the show. The persona is key. Are you crotchety, goofy, patient, or a know-it-all? It doesn't have to be in-depth; it's just a springboard to start your interactions. A topic is also highly recommended as a guide, especially early on in the game. Talk about something you care about: baseball, superhero movies, politics, or romance. Finally, consider having some music cued up; a high-energy talk show is fun, but playing 45 seconds of a song can give you the chance to breathe between calls and give callers time to think of something to say.

Most importantly, this is your job, or at least your responsibility, and you have a set of rules to follow. At the beginning of the game, you should follow all of them rigidly, and impose them on callers. You have the ability to "hang up" on a caller, ending the call. The first two calls of the game will be normal calls that set a baseline for the show. During these calls, follow all the rules. After that, each call will reveal the nature of the cataclysm; after each call and new revelation, cross one rule off the list and act accordingly. You are no longer bound by that rule. Once you've crossed off the last rule, take one more call, after which the game, the show, and probably the world come to an end. Keep this pacing in mind as you cross off rules, and especially during the final call or two. As the game goes on and the situation seems out of control, your polished radio persona should begin to show cracks.

It is recommended that you announce when you have time for one or two more calls to let the players know that the game is winding down. At all times during the game, you should try to give each call a couple minutes, unless it has hit a clear endpoint before that. Remember: the game is about conversations, and you are the facilitator.

AM RADI

Segment C
(12:58)

Segment A
(12:28)

STATION POLICY! DO NOT VIOLATE

Greet callers and tell them they are on the air.

Ask about the topic.

Stay on topic, and make the callers stay on topic.

Don't allow dead air.

Don't let the callers ramble.

Keep it light.

Keep the show moving.

Don't allow profanity. ✓

Seriously or the FCC will get on our ass

Maintain your ideological or philosophical position.

19:00
19:30
20:30

KMPS-AM — 1300 personality, country music. Morning simulcast with KMPS-FM. Week-day... Ralph Emery Show, at 6:30 p.m.

101.5 K...

102.5 KZOK-FM p...

103.9 KBRD, beautiful mu...

CALLERS

You will play multiple roles: one or more callers, and the audience of the radio show.

When you are an audience member, you should mute your microphone or remain silent, and just listen to what is going on. Listening is an important part of your role, and you should be mindful of your response to other callers, as this can be a springboard for your own call.

When you're ready to call in and contribute, use the text function in your VOIP program to indicate your character's identity by typing in "(First name) from (town)." You may call in more than once, but you will be a different character each time, and no one should call a second time until everyone has called at least once (unless someone has indicated that they don't wish to call).

During the first two "calls," your job is to set up the normal dynamic of the show and the world. After those first two calls, you will introduce new information about the cataclysm affecting the world in each call. Try to build up somewhat gradually; each revelation should be dramatic and build upon prior callers' contributions.

Don't just call in to give information about the disaster. Consider the following before the call:

- What makes your call **interesting?** How will you get and keep the host's **attention?**

- Why are you calling a radio station **at this time?** What need is it fulfilling, and what do you want to **communicate?**

- What is your **relationship** with the host? Are you a **regular, a listener, an antagonist, or someone they know?**

- After you hang up the phone, **what will happen to you?**

- Most importantly, **you want to be on the radio.** Enjoy it, and take your time exploring the role you've created. You may never use it again.