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Capturing the past through the

The Opportunity

In June, 2011, the City of Richmond will welcome an international fleet of Tall Ships in the historic port town of Steveston. Hundreds of thousands of spectators will line the banks of the Fraser River and stare in awe at these magnificent vessels of the past as they wonder: *How big are the ships? What was life like aboard? Were crew members really flogged? What is the poop deck, anyway?*

In other maritime festivals, these questions have largely remained unanswered; however, with ©

Sound and Story and new mobile audio technology, the City of Richmond may set sail in a new direction.

By using the power, style and audio special effects of radio drama to recreate pivotal historical moments, the spectators attending the 2011 Tall Ships Festival could *experience* key events in a visceral way.

New mobile audio technology -- iPods, Smartphones and computers -- will enable children and adults alike to immerse themselves in, and relive history, through spell-binding audio dramas or events that once took place on the decks of vessels just like these.

Tall ships have a dramatic history that can be re-enacted as convincingly as Orson Welles convinced American radio audiences, some 70 years ago, that they were being invaded by Martians. So effective was his audio drama, propelled by the energy and power of a commanding human voice and a few sound effects, that his simulated news broadcast had people hiding in cellars and loading guns.

Such is the power of an audio drama, so convincing people can think it's real. An audio drama can create vivid imagery and powerful emotions, letting the imagination take over, bringing events and characters to life. It can re-create a pivotal moment in history.

It's an approach that can be used to memorable effect for the Tall Ships' visitors.

The Approach

We at © *Sound and Story* will work with the City of Richmond to create dozens of brief, compelling audio dramas, each downloadable for a fee as an audio file, on a CD, or as a print version. This would generate sponsorship as well as public and media interest, enhance the Tall Ship experience and offer a unique, high level of visitor engagement in a cost-effective way.

Links to community libraries, schools and museums would provide wide public access, even for those unable to attend the Festival. Audio files could also be made available to teachers/librarians for their classes/clients and school outings.

The Drama

Take a remarkable figure like Captain Vancouver, the foremost explorer and navigator of his age, a man assigned an almost impossible task. In 1791, and only 34 years of age, he set out on the *HMS Discovery*, a 100 foot sloop with a crew of 100. His task: to lead an expedition that would explore and chart the countless bays and channels of the Pacific Northwest coastline from northern California to Alaska. It was considered the most arduous adventure ever undertaken by a mariner.

He and his crew sailed into an unknown world of unpredictable and severe weather, of uncharted rocks and reefs that could rip apart a ship. There were dramas at every turn. In August of 1792, they barely escaped disaster in the Queen Charlotte Strait when the *HMS Discovery* struck rocks in the fog in the aptly named Cape Caution.

An adaptation of Captain Vancouver's own account is an example of a riveting 30 second mini drama, one that could be woven into the bigger story of his exploits. Imagine Captain Vancouver's voice

(rendered by a powerful actor) with sound effects of the creaking yardarms and the explosion of thrashing surf as he and his crew fight for their survival:

“When in the midst of a whirlpool, the Discovery refused to answer her helm and was for a moment beaten about by the angry water, when all of a sudden there came a crash that shook my 330- ton full-rigged sloop as if she had been fired into a battery of guns. We were aground, off a dark land tolerably covered with trees, the Discovery's wooden plank keel caught upon the rocks with the fog thick about us and wetting us to the bone. I swept blood from my eyes, held fast to my sextant and charts and bellowed for my coxswain...”

The Benefits

- In the same way that the re-enacted mock battles of Tall Ships festivals of the past were the biggest draw, spread by word of mouth, the audio dramas will be hugely popular, enriching the spectacle of the Tall Ships in a unique and powerful way.
- The exciting and new dimension created by the audio dramas will entice sponsors and draw media attention.
- Audio drama is entertaining, captivating, enriching and offers something for the whole family as did Richmond's successful O-Zone, thus positioning Richmond as a “go to” fun city to visit.
- The audio dramas could be downloaded from the City of Richmond website raising public interest before, during and after the Tall Ships Festival.
- Audio drama will help boost ticket sales.
- The audio dramas can be linked from the City of Richmond website to community library, museum and school websites.
- The audio dramas can be used by teachers to enhance their history lessons, creating excitement around the Tall Ships Festival. School outings to the Tall Ships can be organized around these history lessons and the audio dramas made available to each child.
- The audio dramas could be offered as part of tour packages, CD's, and take-away storybooks.

- At Tall Ships events in the past, large crowds of people waited in long line-ups, sometimes for hours. But now, time in line would now fly as visitors to the ships would be able to enjoy vivid historical perspectives – audio drama vignettes bringing to life the secret stories of the Tall Ships.
- Questions that intrigue adults and children alike will be answered through the dramas: *What were the ships made of? How fast did they travel? How far and how long ago did they sail? What did crews eat? Were there really marauding pirates? Was there really a Captain Hook?*
- A visit to a Tall Ship, enhanced by a series of audio dramas will fully engage visitors.

Seeing the Tall Ships will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience but *experiencing* the lives and journeys of their sailors will be a lifelong memory.