***Background of the Bugle Critique***

The final edit of my Radio Documentary is entitled “The Background of the Bugle”. I feel the name is relatively self-explanatory as to the content of the documentary and therefore is an appropriate name. The piece follows local Sound Artist Amie Slavins in the process of making her latest project “Call up the Men”. My own piece acts a “follow-up or a “behind the scenes look” into her documentary. In the documentary the role of the bugle instrument is looked into further to discover why the instrument has played such an important part in military history and ancient battles. This informs the audience of the bugles importance as well as entertains by adding information about the Bugle that they may not already know. Exclusive bugle sound clips from Call Up The Men are added for an additional entertainment factor.

I originally wanted the documentary to be targeted towards the 18-25 category as I would have liked to produce a piece which I personally found interesting and would also be enjoyed by people of a similar age to myself. However once I began to record my documentary I realised that would be a difficult task. I originally tried to do this by narrating the documentary in a way which explains to its audience exactly what a bugle is, as 18-25 year olds would be unlikely to have heard of a bugle before. However once I listened to the final edit of the piece I came to a conclusion that an audience aged 45 and over would be more suited to this documentary as they would have experience or knowledge of the bugle due to its use in military parades etc.

I mainly wanted to personalise the documentary to be targeted to a specific audience, to give the illusion that I am speaking to them and not at them. Everything is set in Lincoln City Centre allowing for easy access to record the piece. I believe Call Up The Men gives a great insight into an instrument, which has almost been forgotten among society, and I feel that the piece manages to highlight this point as well as explaining its significance. Personally, as an individual in the 18-25 category, I have learnt a significant amount about the instrument and I now understand why they used to play such an important role, as admittedly before starting this project I did not even know what a Bugle was!

My experience of studying Radio at an advanced level has proven to be significantly more challenging than I thought it would be. I feel that this challenge has further increased due to working alone on this project. Through studying Radio & Sound in the first year, I gained a great deal of radio experience and thoroughly enjoyed learning an aspect of media that was entirely different to the areas I had studied prior to university. Initially, I wasn’t aware of how much paperwork goes on ‘behind the scenes’ of recording audio material and it took some time to understand the procedures. Over the past two years I have discovered that Radio creates effects that other media forms cannot create to the same effect. The art form of radio can tell a story in a personalised way where the audience feels as if the piece is specifically directed at them. I don’t think the same effect is created in TV or Film as it is targeted at the masses. Radio has the unique feature of being able to use its ‘stereotype’ of a less popular media form to its advantage, by creating unique features for a certain demographic. I wanted to incorporate this personal touch into my own documentary.

With the use of sound effects and music, radio production, whether it is a radio show, drama or documentary, can also create an intimate atmosphere, which captivates its audience, which once again I feel doesn’t happen to the same effect with other media art forms. I have taken inspiration from this when adding music to my documentary as I have used the music I recorded from listening to the buglers play their instrument. I feel this has added a personal effect, in comparison to using a song or set of jingles that have been used previously.

I have tried to clearly establish where the documentary opens, develops and closes. In terms of the opening, when researching into similar styles of documentaries, many had similar openings that created a strong start to their piece. I wanted my feature to have a clear sense of development, in other words an obvious beginning, middle and end. Instead of leading my documentary up to a pinnacle point, I had a series of equally important interviews, however if I were to do this project again I would arrange the clips in some order of importance to create suspense. I would have preferred the ending to be more clear and precise although I believe that the documentary does not necessarily need an ending as the piece seems to end itself. The ending, closing on Amie’s intention for the Call up the Men piece, adds a personal touch. I feel this adds a unique outlook, which cannot be created in the same way in films or television.

The genre of the piece is educational entertainment, targeted at possibly a unique market. To a listener who does not have an interest in military history or bugles, this documentary may not be appealing because of the displayed subject. This is also why I have targeted my piece at a certain age group, as I believe only people over a particular age will be interested in the documentary due to the content involved. However I hope that people outside of these interests and demographics will listen due to the entertainment factor of the piece. The stylistic devices were deployed from inspiration of radio documentaries I had previously listened to, which gave a style of dramatisation yet a factual and educational purpose also. However as this piece is targeted to a real life client the only problem for me was to ensure I fit my documentary to the brief provided and I feel as if that has been successful.

The editing of the piece enabled me to connect all of the pieces I wanted to include in my documentary. These final stages helped to create the atmosphere of the piece and enhance it to the best of its ability. This was created through the use of music, narration and sound effects. In this project a lot of problems occurred within the editing stages, such as Chris Lawton’s interview, which meant a longer time, was spent in the editing studio, ensuring the piece was correct. I also was aware that the voiceovers used were spoken in a certain tone to fit the style of my documentary. Therefore the script for the feature had to the written in order to tailor around the tone of the documentary. As I took it upon myself to narrate, I initially struggled with this as I did not want the narration style to come across as dull but neither as extremely upbeat and happy because the tone of the piece was meant to be educational yet neutral, and I hope this has been successfully established in the documentary.

A lot about the documentary has changed since the original proposal, these changes occurred during the extensive recording period where I realised that some of my original ideas were better suited in a different format to make a better documentary overall. The target demographic can be used as a good example of this as I believe that the final documentary would not necessarily interest the original audience of 18-25 year olds/students. Nevertheless, I think the current target audience will enjoy the documentary due to its creativity and informative audio. This documentary has replicated similar traits to other documentaries and will draw in a similar target audience yet will, hopefully, interest its audience further due to its original twist with content and creativity aspects.