

# Film Podcasts as a New Form of Cinephilia

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The article focuses on a modern-day media phenomenon that stands at the intersection of art, society, and technology. It starts by briefly outlining the history and context of podcasting: when, how, and under what circumstances did it develop? What are its main features? Is it merely the last stage in the development of radio, a golden age of the ‘aural culture’<sup>1</sup>, or perhaps a new art form? This is followed by considerations as to how podcasts connect with cinema or audio-visual art at large, about the nature of this connection, and attempts to demonstrate why film podcasts are becoming a vital platform for film culture and cinephilia.

The rise of podcasts from a DIY garage sensation to a medium that has come to play one of the central roles in the 21st-century media landscape has much to do with today’s society: with the developing and increasingly accessible technology, especially broadband Internet access and smartphones, with the growth of social media, and the subsequent blurring of the lines between what is public and what is private, with the public domain shrinking or being commercialised, and with new ways of watching (and listening) brought about by the so-called on-demand culture.

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1 Llinares, Dario et al. 2018: *Podcasting – New Aural Cultures and Digital Media*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 3.

Despite being produced in audio format, podcasts are considered a highly visual medium.<sup>2</sup> The official website<sup>3</sup> of *This American Life* even likens this podcast's episodes to little movies for radio. "Podcasts have the potential, through their toolkit of speech, music, effects and silence, to trigger and guide the listener's imagination and manifest what we call an 'audio-cinematic' experience."<sup>4</sup> This experience refers to something the listener can picture in their mind, something that can come to life in their imagination. Is this perhaps why cinema has found a kindred spirit in podcasts? What is it that connects podcasts with films?

Film podcasts are one of the most vibrant segments of today's film culture.<sup>5</sup> They are turning into a relevant common ground for a new form of cinephilia, or the next stage in developing this nearly century-old idea manifested out of love for everything film. *Filmski leksikon (Film Lexicon)* defines cinephilia as a "love of cinema, manifested as enthusiastic filmgoing (or, nowadays, as subscriptions to a myriad of video streaming services, Author's Note), fascination with specific films and directors, genres, actors; passion for collecting film images and other data, and interest in establishing film clubs and film magazines."<sup>6</sup> And, one could add, film podcasts.

### ***Before and after Serial: A brief history of podcasts***

While less than two decades may seem like a brief period, podcasts have quite a history, at least on the Internet timescale. The term 'podcasting' dates back to February 2004, when the British journalist Ben Hammersley first used it in his article<sup>7</sup> for *The Guardian* on audioblogs and online radio.<sup>8</sup> It is a neologism coined from *broadcast* and *pod*, the latter referring to Apple's iPod<sup>9</sup>, a device that has supported podcast

2 Abel, Jessica. 2015: *Out on the Wire – The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio*. New York: Broadway Books, p. 25.

3 [www.thisamericanlife.org](http://www.thisamericanlife.org)

4 Llinares, Dario and Fox, Neil. 2022: "Intimate conversations in cinema's 'elsewhere'". *Notebook*, no. 1, August, p. 95.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

6 Kavčič, Bojan and Vrdlovec, Zdenko. 1999: *Filmski leksikon*, Ljubljana: Modrijan, p. 100.

7 Hammersley, Ben. 2004: "Audible Revolution". *Guardian* [online]; retrieved 5 August 2022 from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/feb/12/broadcasting.digitalmedia>.

8 In addition to 'podcasting', he also suggested naming the phenomenon 'audioblogging' or 'GuerillaMedia'. Both terms unambiguously suggest some fundamental features of the new medium.

9 The name is said to be a result of the misconception that a user needs Apple's iPod to listen to podcasts. Due to this connection with Apple, the term 'podcast' initially met with a good deal of disapproval, not least because the tech giant wanted, but failed, to claim ownership of the word. Podcasts are not conditional on a portable player, let alone the products of a specific company. Even so, the media often associate the pioneering era of podcasting with Apple, primarily because of the company's role in popularising them. One of the milestones was in 2005 when podcasts were added to their iTunes Store.

listening from the very beginning, and indicating the practice of listening to podcasts using portable players. With the coinage, Hammersley aimed to describe “*the growing amount of digital content in mp3 that users could download to their portable mp3 players*”<sup>10</sup>. By December 2005, less than two years later, podcasts had become so popular that the New Oxford American Dictionary chose ‘podcast’ as the Word of the Year.

Hammersley’s text became the gravitational core for the early discourse on podcasts, which mainly focused on the technological aspect of the new medium, its key emphases including easy production and distribution, open-source solutions, amateurism, anti-corporate sentiment, and the potential emerging technologies have in advancing democratic ideals.

Podcasts were largely made possible by the decades of technological progress, which kept improving access to good-quality computer hardware and software: voice recorders and audio editing software. The key enablers also included broadband internet, to allow for quick uploading and downloading of large files, and RSS (Really Simple Syndication), to enable automatic updates with news content and audio and video files. “*RSS is a powerful means of organising seriality online because it relieves subscribers of the requirement to look for new content every time they go online; the content comes to them instead.*”<sup>11</sup>

The short history of podcasts has three phases.<sup>12</sup> Since in the ‘first phase of podcasting’ (2005–2010), the enabling technologies were still quite complicated, it was mostly people with good technology and computer skills who could use them. The fact that technology was neither practical nor widely accessible kept podcasts stuck on the margins for a little more than a decade. The beginning of the ‘second phase of podcasting’ (2010–2014) marks the time when podcasts, after being the domain of the odd tech enthusiast, started to enter the international cultural landscape, driven by economic, technological, and creative reasons. Around 2010, smartphones (with easy-to-use applications for podcast listening) became a relatively widespread good (the first iPhone entered the market in January 2007), and the evolution of the Internet and simple online payment solutions gave rise to new financing options. With technological barriers gone, the field started, in part, to become institutionalised and professionalised. In this second phase, podcasts went from being a tech innovation to a mature, easily and widely accessible medium.

Thanks to the easy-to-use and increasingly accessible technology, quality content, and exponential growth in listeners, this was soon followed by the so-called ‘golden age of podcasting’. Its beginning is usually dated to 2014<sup>13</sup>, after the release

10 The Slovene Wikipedia: entry Podcast.

11 Sterne, Jonathan et al. 2008: “The Politics of Podcasting”. *The Fibreculture Journal*, no. 13 [online]; retrieved 5 August 2022 from <http://thirteen.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-087-the-politics-of-podcasting/>.

12 Llinares et al. 2018, p. 1.

13 Spinelli, Martin and Dann, Lance. 2019: *Podcasting – The Audio Media Revolution*. London: Bloomsbury, p. 1.

of the viral internet sensation *Serial*, a podcast in which “serious investigative journalism was recorded as a radio drama, split into gripping episodes full of characters and riddles, similarly to popular series that transformed television storytelling: *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), *The Wire* (2002–2008), *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013).”<sup>14</sup> Podcasts entered the mainstream, making sound an important digital product.

The next milestone in the history of podcasting, one that suggested new dimensions could be added to the synergy and merging of various media types and methods, was 2020. In May of that year, the episode of *This American Life* titled ‘The Out Crowd’ won the Pulitzer Prize.<sup>15</sup> This was the first time in more than one hundred years (the first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded in 1917) that the prestigious award for achievements in journalism was given to any audio medium. Two months later, in July 2020, one of the leading global newspapers, *The New York Times*, acquired *Serial Productions*<sup>16</sup>, a leading podcast production company and the producer behind *Serial* and *S-Town*, two of the most popular, ground-breaking podcasts. Several other similar high-profile media takeovers followed that year,<sup>17</sup> raising the question of whether such developments, in a way, indicated the last stage of podcast formalisation and commercialisation, or a point where the creative potential and development of this medium were only just beginning.

Combining elements of popular and elite culture, podcasts are a hybrid, self-contradictory medium that is both intimate and mass consumed. They are a mix of old and new media, merging the familiar foundations and types of traditional radio programmes with the chaotic, transgressive, and infinite scale (and reach) of the media in the Internet age. While their form aligns with the 21st-century digital zeitgeist, they are rediscovering long-form, in-depth content – once a rule, now a rarity – and the ancient art of storytelling, which, thanks to them, is enjoying a renaissance. “*The hosts of the most popular podcasts can make you feel as if they are at home or in a bar next door, chatting.*”<sup>18</sup> This way, their stories get under your skin.

Podcasts are not just a new form of broadcasting audio content but also a new way of expression, interaction with listeners, and community building. According to the film theoretician and scholar Dario Llinares, who has co-created the podcast *Cinematologists* since 2015, the podcasting culture is about the symbolic gesture of

14 Kučić J., Lenart. 2016: “Umirjena evolucija podkastov in ponovni izum novinarstva”. *Ekran*, vol. LIII, no. April-May, p. 36.

15 Ugwu, Reggie. 2020: “This American Life, Now a Pulitzer Winner, Is Once More a Pioneer”. *The New York Times* [online]; retrieved 5 August 2022 from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/arts/this-american-life-pulitzer.html>

16 Quah, Nicholas. 2020: “Holy S–, The New York Times Just Acquired Podcast Powerhouse Serial Productions”. *New York Vulture* [online]; retrieved 5 August 2022 from <https://www.vulture.com/2020/07/new-york-times-serial-productions-podcasts.html>.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Kučić 2016, p. 38.

seizing back control over the media,<sup>19</sup> entailing active participation and dissemination of ideas as opposed to the apathy of top-down, one-way messaging of commercial media.<sup>20</sup> The rise of participatory media such as podcasts has increasingly turned content ‘consumers’ into the ‘producers’ of the content they consume, making them active participants in the public sphere. Podcasts, therefore, play a vital role in raising the debates that the traditional media often (even intentionally) overlook, in challenging canonised thinking and ‘correcting narratives’.<sup>21</sup>

### **An audio-cinematic experience: Podcasts in film culture**

Conversation about cinema or a critical discourse on cinema is one of the key elements of film culture. It is vital to reflect on and articulate one’s opinions, thoughts and feelings to develop a more complex relationship to cinema and a passion for everything film. “*There is something in the sheer act of articulation, in the joy of articulation, and in the community built by people expressing themselves, being curious, and listening.*”<sup>22</sup> The desire for in-depth yet informal conversations, for knowledge sharing and information exchange is a strong motivation for making podcasts, according to one of the episodes of *Filmspotting*.<sup>23</sup> Its guest Dave Chen, the founder and host of */Filmcast*, said he started making this podcast out of frustration for not being able to talk to anyone after watching a film, and out of the desire to share his knowledge of and love for cinema with fellow cinephiles.

“*The popularity of film podcasts draws on the para-textual pleasures of discussing, sharing, arguing, and opining about film.*”<sup>24</sup> From anticipating the premiere of a new film to scrutinising it afterwards. A quick search of various podcast platforms (Apple Podcasts, Spotify) shows an endless array of film programmes for all tastes, of all genres and lengths, made by various individuals, groups and organisations. As they live in an age of atomised audiences, it is niche listeners worldwide that podcasts most often target,<sup>25</sup> for instance, the lovers of *Heat* (Michael Mann, 1995),<sup>26</sup> fans of the *Queer Eye* (2018–) reality TV star Jonathan Van Ness, who runs his own podcast,

19 Nowadays, anyone with a personal computer can create their own written, audio, or video content, and distribute it (more or less) freely online. The low production cost and accessible, easy-to-use technology allow this content to circumvent the vertical structure of power that large media networks have in place. Anyone can make podcasts without needing special permission, an editor, or any other gatekeeper.

20 Llinares et al. 2018, p. 3.

21 Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 96.

22 Gumzi, Marina. 2020: “Lepo je, če je film pametnejši od tebe”. *KINO!*, no. 40-41/2020, p. 87.

23 *Filmspotting*, episode #694: “Crazy Rich Asians/Top 5 Things We’ve Learned Podcasting (About Movies)”.

24 Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 96.

25 Spinelli and Dann 2019, p. 8.

26 In *One Heat Minute* (2017–2021), Blake Howard dedicates each episode to analysing a 60-second segment of *Heat* (1995) by Michael Mann.

*Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness*, or aficionados of *Star Trek* (1966–1969) or *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019).<sup>27</sup>

When talking about films, podcasts have only voice to rely on, no image. “They need to put film images in many more words to make up for the listeners’ lack of seeing them. But perhaps their attraction comes precisely from this detachment from the eyes, where they are at the mercy of the listeners’ ears.”<sup>28</sup> Podcasts must compensate for the absence of image with complex sound design (sound effects, music, various inserts) and by stimulating the listener’s ‘auditory imagination’.<sup>29</sup> Like radio and telephone, podcasts are an ‘acousmatic medium’<sup>30</sup> that makes the listener establish a visual connection and picture an image to the sound they hear.

Kevin Smith, a film director and podcaster famous for his mid-90s indie hit *Clerks* (1994), said: “When you listen to my stories via spoken word, you’re doing all the heavy lifting for me. I don’t have to string together visuals or move a camera; it’s theater of the mind, so the listener builds word pictures for me in their head, directing their own internal movie based on the yarn I’m spinning.”<sup>31</sup> That said, it takes an excellent, compelling narrator (when describing film scenes) to fire the listener’s imagination this way.

Sound has extraordinary capacities for storytelling: the right sound at the right time is worth a thousand words and can be as effectively descriptive as photography.<sup>32</sup> Another strong point of podcasting is the expressiveness of the human voice—few things have an effect that is as emotional as that of the human voice.<sup>33</sup> What the power of the human voice emphasises in a podcast is the intimate process of listening, with users usually listening to programmes on their own, through an app on their phone, using headphones. “To be a private, silent participant in other people’s interests, conversations, lives and experiences, relating to a subject you are passionate about, generates a deep sense of connection.”<sup>34</sup>

The void created by the absence of images has to be filled by both the narrator and the listener, and there is something profoundly empathetic about this process. In his book *Postcards from the Cinema*, Daney reminisces about the pleasure he felt when listening to his mother talk about films. “It’s the voice that counts, which

27 Both series are also the subjects of discussion in two Slovenian podcasts; *Star Trek* in *Opazovalnica*, and *Game of Thrones* in *Glave*, both part of the podcast network Apparatus.

28 Oberstar, Ciril. 2016: “Poslušati filme”. *Ekran*, vol. LII, no. April-May, p. 2.

29 Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 96.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

31 Smith, Kevin. 2012: *Tough Sh\*t – Life Advice from a Fat, Lazy Slob Who Did Good*. New York: Gotham Books, p. 150.

32 Kern, Jonathan. 2008: *Sound Reporting – The NPR Guide to Audio Journalism and Production*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 3.

33 Podbevšek, Katarina and Žavbi Milojević Nina (Ed.). 2013: *Govor med znanostjo in umetnostjo*. Maribor: Aristej and AGRFT UL.

34 Llinares et al. 2018, p. 2.

recounts, which says that this took place /.../. During Sunday brunch my mother would tell my grandmother about the film she and I had seen that week. I thought she told it sublimely. The pleasure of listening to her was as great as seeing the film for a second time.”<sup>35</sup>

**Filmspotting: Where critical discourse meets cinephilia**

In the traditional mass media (television, radio, newspapers), the space for in-depth reflection on films is shrinking – as is the space for other cultural content. Even so, criticism has lost none of its former prominence or visibility; it has merely moved elsewhere. The inexhaustible supply of new online magazines, websites, blogs, YouTube channels, video essays and podcasts, which are gradually assuming the central role, suggests that the need for reflection has never been greater.

“The purpose of a film magazine is for us to see again, or to see at all, what we have failed to see the first time,”<sup>36</sup> said one of the most highly acclaimed film critics and the guru of cinephilia, Serge Daney, in the Jeu de Paume arts centre in May 1992 while presenting the second issue of his magazine *Trafic*. Replacing ‘film magazine’ with ‘film podcast’ would make the statement equally true today. If he were still alive, one could imagine Daney founding a film podcast rather than a magazine today, given that he considered cinephilia an oral tradition. “It has always seemed incomprehensible to me that people can watch films without talking about them /.../. One couldn’t have seen things well if they are unable to talk about them.”<sup>37</sup>

Cinephilia, a passion for cinema or love for films, is usually associated with the ‘revolution’ caused in cinema by the French New Wave movement. “Cinephilia as a way of life and a type of counterculture was closely associated with the Cinémathèque française and the liberalised import of American films.”<sup>38</sup> At the time, a cinephile was deemed to be “erudite in cinema, some kind of an ‘amateur scholar’ practising ‘classicist writing’ who could recognise ‘metaphysical depth’ in an American B movie.”<sup>39</sup>

With a short delay, the French New Wave and its cinephile relationship to cinema resonated with filmgoers in the United States. The ‘second-wave cinephiles’, better known as the ‘Movie Brats’, acquired their knowledge from TV and film schools rather than cinémathèques. With their work, Peter Bogdanovich, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Paul Schrader and others contributed substantially to the rise (and subsequently the fall) of New Hollywood, also known as the Hollywood Renaissance, in the 1970s.

A new form of cinephilia was born in the late 1970s and flourished in the 1980s with the emergence of the videotape. The VHS technology also changed how films

35 Daney, Serge. 2007: *Postcards from the Cinema*. Oxford: Berg, p. 65.

36 Daney, Serge. 2001: *Filmski spisi*. Ljubljana: Slovenska kinoteka/Imago, p. 7.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

39 Kavčič and Vrdlovec 1999, p. 100.

are consumed and watched, prompting “a ‘mass’ presence of films in people’s daily lives and the viewer’s imaginings.”<sup>40</sup> In the 1990s, the birth of DVDs gave rise to ‘digital cinephilia’<sup>41</sup> and, by allowing (illegal) downloading of digital files from websites that enabled film enthusiasts to access a wealth of previously unattainable film art, something we can call ‘pirated cinephilia’. “In the 21st century, file sharing sites (i.e., torrent sites) have done more to keep the fire of cinephilia burning than all film archives and museums in the world combined.”<sup>42</sup>

Legal access to an unprecedented amount of content has never been as easy and affordable as it has now become with video on demand on online video streaming platforms. As said at the beginning, the dominance of VOD has coincided with the rise and increasing popularity of podcasts. If early on, cinephilia thrived on cinema-theques’ screens and between the covers of film magazines, today, in the ‘digital age’, it is mainly associated with online video streaming platforms and podcasts. “Podcasting as an aural form plays a vital role of discovery, dialogue and appraisal of the cinematic landscape. As producers and consumers, podcasting has become not just a secondary platform that augments cinema’s primacy but the apparatus that shapes our cinephilia.”<sup>43</sup>

Although the primacy of the written word is still alive in the domain of (film) criticism, any new practice that encourages intellectual curiosity beyond rigid conventions and breaks with the traditional ways of creating and sharing knowledge can only be a welcome change. Podcasts allow for the growth of “new modes of expression /.../ and new ways of generating meaning and forming relationships.”<sup>44</sup> In a similar way to what VHS did, podcasts, too, reconceptualise our perception and ways of watching or exploring films, creating new contexts in which, as viewers, we are confronted with cinema.

Like written texts, podcasts can be backed by quotes, excerpts of interviews by other experts or colleagues, snippets (dialogues) from the films they discuss, music from the films, etc., allowing the listener to build a very complex ‘image’ of the film in their mind. One of the reasons why film criticism seems to have the capacity to be more effective in podcasts is the subjective nature of this form of journalism/art. In a podcast, a subjective point of view is all the more manifest. On paper, the written word has more weight, with a higher rate of self-censorship. Talking is more a relaxed activity than writing, and thoughts, when uttered in speech, more personal, direct, unfiltered. In a podcast, a critic gets more exposed ‘with their voice’. Podcasts make critical discourse more honest, attractive, accessible, and down-to-earth. As a form, podcasts are also more dynamic and open, centring on dialogue, a format that intrinsically comes with a greater plurality of views/voices/opinions.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

42 Meden, Jurij. 2021: *Kaj je kinoteka?*. Ljubljana: Slovenska kinoteka, p. 57.

43 Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 95.

44 Spinelli and Dann 2019, p. 1.

A good example of quality film criticism in audio format, contemporary cinephilia, and successful film community building is *Filmspotting*, one of the oldest, most popular, and best film podcasts.<sup>45</sup> Hosted from Chicago by the film critics Adam Kempenaar and Josh Larsen, the programme began as a pioneering effort during the ‘first phase of podcasting’ in 2005, as a progression from *Cinemascope*, a film blog Kempenaar started as an aspiring young journalist. *Filmspotting* is a weekly programme with a listener-friendly, dynamic structure.

Briefly outlined below, our study into *Filmspotting* is based on a qualitative text analysis of more than one hundred episodes. In the process, we were interested in how the programme is structured, how it builds its cinephile community, and above all in its specific features: what is it that attracts listeners to take two hours of their time to listen to it once a week.

Many film podcasts have a structure similar to radio programmes on film. In terms of content, they usually include reviews of new films, a recap of recent events (film premieres, festivals), various subject-specific lists of best films, and interviews with guests from the industry. *Filmspotting* is one of the podcasts designed to mirror a professional radio programme as closely as possible. In *Filmspotting*, Kempenaar and Larsen have managed to find the right balance between in-depth knowledge, genuine enthusiasm, and friendly interaction with listeners, between casual dialogue and a complex soundscape, the latter having become a template for many other film podcasts that followed, including the abovementioned *The Cinematologist*.<sup>46</sup>

Each episode starts with a short introduction, in which Adam and Josh introduce the episode’s topics. This is followed by a debate about one of the films that had their theatrical release in the preceding week. After about 30 minutes, there is a short music break, followed by a segment called ‘Massacre Theatre’, and occasionally by a short interview, but more often by a brief discussion about a good film available on streaming platforms which the hosts want to encourage people to see. Finally, Josh and Adam end each episode with listener feedback and the obligatory Top Five: top five films on nostalgia, top five film casts, top five filming locations they want to visit, top five scenes from Wes Anderson films, top five music biopics, etc.

Through their friendly chats and detailed analyses, Larsen and Kempenaar can give a truly vivid account of the film they talk about, stimulating the listeners’ memory and imagination, and deepening their emotional connection with the film (assuming that the listeners have already seen it). Although their tone is casual, informal, and relaxed, as if they have just walked out of the cinema, they always consider very carefully what they are about to say, and how. *“The way they talk about films is a result of an exercise in dialogue as the heart and soul of the programme. The level of discourse on film is a happy marriage of theoretical skills and a sense of rhythm and humour*

45 Bregar, Bojana. 2016. “Najboljši filmski podkast pod soncem”. *Ekran*, vol. LIII, no. April-May, p. 45.

46 Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 96.

(which is most likely the same thing), meaning that the hosts focus on all aspects of the film that deserve highlighting – from camera work and editing to possible references to the French New Wave – all the while maintaining a personal approach.”<sup>47</sup> The hosts’ authority comes not from their detachment and formality but from honesty, straightforwardness, and authenticity.

The most listened to and popular episodes of *Filmspotting* include those in which the hosts fail to agree. An example of this is episode #570: *The Hateful Eight vs The Revenant / 2016 Movie Preview (Pt. 1)*, in which Adam and Josh can’t seem to see eye to eye on *The Revenant* (2016, Alejandro González Iñárritu) and *The Hateful Eight* (2016, Quentin Tarantino). It is precisely this dynamic, always proposing an alternative perspective, that is interesting for listeners as they need to face multiple opinions at once. Larsen and Kempenaar are skilled at delivering content in a vibrant, spirited way that piques one’s interest, inspires, and makes one feel included. All these make crucial elements of good storytelling. This personal, empathetic and humorous, but also serious, critically relevant exchange of two cinephiles, combined with a carefully designed structure and well-planned production (especially the complex editing of the soundscape, which is richly evocative with film clips, interviews with guests, music, and other audio inserts), creates an aural experience to unlock a whole new way to the audio-visual.

In the course of eighteen years, a lively community has grown around *Filmspotting*, one existing not only in the abstract digital world but also regularly meeting in person at film screenings, get-togethers, and live podcast recording sessions. After all, cinema is both a social matter and a chance to socialise. With their comments and feedback on films (which they submit as voice messages), listeners are regularly included in the programme and have an important say on what topics Larsen and Kempenaar should discuss. Genuine interaction with listeners and community building are the key to the podcast’s success and popularity.

### ***Back to the Future***

One of the basic rituals of cinephilia, as described by Zdenko Vrdlovec in his preface to *Filmski spisi* (Essays on Film), titled “The Ethics of Cinephilia”, used to involve

passionate and at times quarrelsome debates about films, which made young cinephiles into an ‘interpretative group’ of sorts, confident they were the only ones able to appraise films—and even the outside world as they saw it in films. From debating, they progressed to writing, in cafés or sitting in the offices of Cahiers du Cinéma, where articles were often first uttered out loud and only then written down, a habit described by Daney in retrospect as ‘the chatter practice’.<sup>48</sup>

47 Bregar 2016, p. 46.

48 Daney 2001, p. 9.

This was a lively, critical, and above all, living community that caused a revolution by breaking with the dominant way of thinking (about cinema).

Without question, films and series are currently the media and art form with the highest reach and, like it or not, talking about them is what brings us together. We are submerged in a sea of audio-visual content offered online and by streaming giants. Increasingly programmed, this content is becoming a driver of the dominant culture and political correctness. In a battle with computer algorithms, how can one keep cinema alive as a public good, as a place of encounter? How does one think outside the box and step outside their comfort zone? Podcasts are currently one of the emancipatory, vibrant cultural forms that can circumvent the traditional centres of power, allowing individuals and society at large easy, active participation in the production and dissemination of ideas and knowledge.

As said before, the desire for both in-depth and informal conversation, for knowledge sharing and information exchange is one of the key motivations behind podcasting. “*The media developed from dialogue. Between a politician and their voters, an artist and their audience, a critic and a scholar, a writer and a reader, a journalist and a citizen. Podcasts have helped me rediscover journalism as such a dialogue.*”<sup>49</sup> Podcasts are a democratic, accessible, communicative, personal medium that brings new ways of reporting, storytelling, and connecting with audiences while returning to the roots: to casual, evocative, collegial conversation. If conversation about cinema is one of the pivotal elements of film culture, podcasts are now at the core of this culture, having revitalised the traditional forms of film journalism and film criticism and, as a result, cinephilia.

Considering the number of film podcasts available, and their variety<sup>50</sup>, which resonate with listeners ranging from casual filmgoers to passionate cinephiles, obsessive fans, film industry professionals, acclaimed directors, film historians and scholars, one could say that podcasts are becoming a vital platform for public dialogue, discussion, and information exchange about cinema. Podcasts have started to appear that can offer more than just cinema.<sup>51</sup> Podcasting has come to produce relevant works of film criticism (*Filmspotting*), film history (*You Must Remember This*), and theory (*The Cinematologists*), which reaffirm the social meaning and role of cinema,<sup>52</sup> and produce new ways of watching and exploring films. Known as the audio-cinematic experience, the unusually harmonious synergy between podcasting and cinema also generates other new ways of combining and perceiving the two media.

49 Kučić 2016, p. 37.

50 Šturm, Ana. 2016: “Štoparski vodnik po filmskih podkastih”. *Ekran*, vol. LIII, no. April-May, pp. 39-43.

51 In Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 99: They are referring to *The Last Movie Ever Made* (2021), a podcast offering a behind-the-scenes look at the Netflix hit *Don't Look Up* (2021, Adam McKay).

52 Llinares and Fox 2022, p. 99.

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