



Listening to Other Podcasts

19.07.2019, Episode 22

A Thousand Words

Hi. This is "A Thousand Words", July 19th, 2019. I'm Richard. Welcome to the podcast.

This is the last podcast before we take a summer break. So, no more episodes for a little while. But, you know, there are some really good podcasts out there. Today, I'll be talking about a podcast I've been listening to called Disgraceland. Elvis Presely lived in Graceland, which he named after his mother Grace. But this podcast is called Disgraceland [1], and it's about famous musicians who behaved badly [2]. There's something almost hypnotizing about discovering [3] people's unknown sides, the parts they don't show or think are too dark for other people to see. Hearing about such things tickles [4] something in me, maybe in all of us. Maybe it's why a lot of us like a really good crime story.

I've always liked listening to things. Listening makes my imagination work harder. Movies and TV don't always ask as much from me [5]; and reading, too, enters through the eyes. But sound is different. Sound hits the brain differently from the eyes. Oral stories [6] have always interested me. Even when I was young I listened to whatever came on the radio - Danny Kaye, Firesign Theater, stand-up comedians like Lenny Bruce and George Carlin and Woody Allen. I even listened to old broadcasts [7]. Orson Welles made War of the Worlds back in 1938, the day before Halloween. He and his theater group pretended [8] aliens had landed in New Jersey. It's hard to know just how much chaos it actually created. But police almost stopped it in mid-broadcast [9] to force the actors to remind the audience none of it was real.

At the start of the broadcast, a voice announces [10] that it is only a radio production. But not everyone listened from the very beginning. And so not everyone knew the context for what they were listening to. Context is important. Still, I was always surprised to hear that people back then were so gullible [11] - how could they have believed it was real? Aliens landing in New Jersey?



But, back to Disgraceland. I've listened to about ten episodes, and every time I do I hear something that's hard to believe. Jerry Lee Lewis drunkenly crashed his car into the gates [12] of Presley's Graceland in 1976, because he wanted to shoot the so-called King of Rock 'n' Roll. Marvin Gaye's last name was Gay, GAY; but he was embarrassed that his father was a cross-dresser, so when Marvin was old enough he added an E at the end of the name because he didn't want people thinking he was gay. Keith Richards was arrested [13] in Canada for 22 grams of heroin - he faced [14] a long time in prison and the breakup of the Rolling Stones. But at the last minute he was saved by a blind girl who Keith had visited. She wrote the judge that Keith was a kind man, and the judge went easy on him [15]. A lot of the information is new to me, and I usually take notes while listening so I can check later to see if it's true. It always is.

The other day I started listening to an episode about Jim Morrison. You know Jim Morrison? Or the group The Doors? Jim wrote most of The Doors' lyrics, and if you listen carefully you can hear they come from the mind of someone interested in exploring unknown, dark things.

So, the podcast begins by saying that Jim, James Douglas Morrison, grew up on military bases. His father was a Navy man. They moved around a lot and Jim didn't have many friends. So he did what lonely children often do - they turn inward [16] and work on their creativity. He read a lot - poetry, the Greeks, occult authors. He came across [17] the writings of Aleister Crowley, who planted some

very far out thinking in Jim's mind. One idea was that the only true happiness one can find in life comes when you kill another person. Jim read this, and being a curious [18] person open to new experiences, he wanted to test it. So he took a gun from his father's collection, went out and found a couple [19] on the street, followed them, and then shot and killed them both.

What!?

What was that? Jim Morrison killed two people? How had I missed that? When did that come out? I know I've been away from the US for some time but... that would have made international news. Did some new DNA evidence connect him to the murders?

The podcast went on to say that not only did Jim kill those two people, he killed more. In fact, he was the Zodiac Killer. Have you ever heard of the Zodiac Killer? At about the same time Sharon Tate was killed by the Manson Family in Hollywood, up north around San Francisco someone murdered seven people and wrote letters to a local newspaper about doing it. They never caught the person. Until now! And it turns out [20] it was Jim! The handwritten letters of the Zodiac Killer match the handwriting on the lyrics Jim Morrison wrote. Every Zodiac murder took place at the same time and in the same area The Doors played a concert. Jim was known for disappearing for days at a time; everyone thought he was off getting high somewhere. But he was really off killing, trying to find that ultimate happiness.

I wrote all these strange things down - concert dates, murder timelines. Jim left clues [21] in his music, too: "The killer awoke before dawn [22], he put his boots on". The Zodiac Killer wore boots!

"There's a killer on the road, his brain is squirming' like a toad [23]." Yes! Of course! And when Jim went to Paris, he didn't die of a drug overdose. No - he went there to kill himself - to perform an exorcism to remove the desire inside him to kill more.

For almost 45 minutes my mouth hung open as I listened and scribbled down notes [24]. When I listen to podcasts, I'm usually alone. So there was no one there to share this with. And as the podcast came to an end, and my hand hurt from all the note-taking, the speaker said that he wondered if Jim would have been surprised to learn how popular The Doors became after his death. And he wondered if Jim would have been surprised that one day a podcaster would tell his audience that Jim was the Zodiac Killer.

Well, he said... April Fools [25]!

What!? Damn! April Fools. He got me! [26]

The only problem is... it wasn't April 1st when I listened to it. It was late in June. That's the thing about podcasts - you can listen to them anytime. And like those people back in 1938 who turned on War of the Worlds late, I had no context that it was all just a joke.

Still, I was surprised how gullible I could be. How could I have believed it was real? Well, it was on a podcast where I hear fantastic, provocative news. And the news has always turned out to be true. Hearing about Jim murdering person after person went against my better judgement [27]. But I found myself believing it because it was so convincing [28]. There's something hypnotizing about having information come through the ears. If stories or "news" are spoken well, they can be very believable.

I wish you a very good summer, and watch out for convincing fake news!

Thanks for listening.

If you liked this podcast, or others you've listened to on our website podclub.ch, tell a friend. You can also write us a message. You can even download our app if you'd like, and we have a vocabulary trainer to help you practice some of the new words you hear.

I'll be back on August 30th with a story about making eye-contact with strangers.

Bye for now.

Glossar: A Thousand Words

[1] Disgraceland: a word creation derived from 'disgrace', meaning behavior leading to shame, to a loss of respect

- [2] **behaved badly**: acted in awful ways; made trouble
- [3] **to discover**: to find out; to learn something new
- [4] **to tickle**: to excite; to interest
- [5] **to ask as much from me**: to make me work to understand something
- [6] **oral stories**: stories that are spoken from mouth to ear
- [7] **broadcast**: a radio or TV transmission
- [8] **to pretend**: to act as if something is real which is not
- [9] **in mid-broadcast**: in the middle of the transmission
- [10] **to announce**: to declare, to explain
- [11] **to be gullible**: to believe things easily and quickly
- [12] **gates**: the doors of a wall or fence that open and close
- [13] **to be arrested**: caught by the police
- [14] **to face something**: to deal with something; to meet head-on
- [15] **to go easy on someone**: not to punish someone too hard
- [16] **to turn inward**: to be focused and interested on one's own thoughts and feelings
- [17] **to come across something**: to find out by chance
- [18] **to be curious**: to want to know or learn things
- [19] **a couple**: two people who are together
- [20] **to turn out to be**: the result of something
- [21] **clues**: hints; information that helps someone understand something
- [22] **dawn**: the first light in the sky of a new day
- [23] **squirmin' like a toad**: twisting and turning in discomfort (like a frog)
- [24] **to scribble down notes**: to write things quickly
- [25] **"April Fools"**: what people say on April 1st when they have tried to trick or fool someone with a joke
- [26] **to "get" someone**: to trick or fool someone with a joke
- [27] **to go against one's better judgement**: to believe the opposite of what you think you know
- [28] **to be convincing**: believable; sounding like it is true