David Rosenberg, Artistic Director.

Glenn and I have been working together for over ten years, always making work for audiences in total darkness, wearing headphones using binaural to place each audience member into the centre of this evolving narrative. We began Darkfield in 2016 with the intention to have more control of the spaces in which we present the work. So we used the shipping container model, which very tourable and can sit in in public spaces, and we could create these short experiences for thirty people at a time that we could run for many hours in a day.

Glen Neath, Artistic Director.

When we started talking about what sort of work we wanted to make, it was key for both of us that we wanted the audience member to be at the centre of the experience. It felt as if it was very particular to them, which is the reason why presenting the sound in the dark is so effective, because you're able to speak to every audience member individually via the recordings.

David Rosenberg

This is something it wouldn’t be possible to do with live actors or in any other way, actually. So it really does feel in all of the shows that the stories revolving around you when you have a role within them - people are referring to you, and this gives the shows this very unique feel.

David Rosenberg

To us, the key to immersion is imagination, and by taking away the image from the audience, then we have this hole that the audience sit in and they place themselves into the spaces that we create and also into the narratives too. Immersive audio treats all of the audience members as if they are at the centre of the narrative, and that's the most exciting element that the binaural audio can offer.

Glen Neath

We suggest that the audience members maybe are interacting with some of the recorded characters. We locate most of the action within the space that they're sitting in, so it sort of blurs the boundaries between what is real and what is imagined.

David Rosenberg

Both the form and the content of the work very closely related. What we’re looking at is the nature of consciousness and what it is to be a self.

Glen Neath

And ghosts and vampires and monsters.

David Rosenberg

And ghosts and vampires and monsters…

So during the pandemic, when we couldn't tour our live activations anymore, we began working on digital work that we could present for audiences at home.

Glen Neath

Initially, these shows were made for more than one person. We wanted the audience members to invest in the shows, and by doing with somebody we felt it becomes something more of an event. When we started making the shows for Darkfield Radio, we were quite anxious first of all as to whether they would work because we obviously ee lost control of a lot of the elements of our work, you know, the darkness and the design of the space, and the idea that other audience members were interacting with the with the performers. But we found that by locating the shows in rooms in people's houses, they would started to feel as if their homes have been invaded by these recorded characters.

David Rosenberg

We worked with different rooms in people's houses, such as the kitchen, the bedroom, the phone booth, and in each of these spaces, there were certain number of objects that we knew would be there, so we could locate the audience in another version of their room. For example, in the bedroom we knew we could still play with the sounds of the blankets or the sheets moving.

So one key difference about the digital work at home is competing with a whole set of other forms of entertainment. So now you're competing with whatever's on TV, radio, podcasts. And it's very difficult to get people to think about audio as something that they do without doing something else at the same time. So this is really one big part of what this project has been with Darkfield Radio is to create a different kind of attention to audio.

Glen Neath

So now that we started to roll out our containers again, there is some discussions around the idea that maybe we will be able to present our digital work in a physical space. ‘Paradise’ in SXSW had a physical installation and Intravene in Tribecca is going to have a live duration. We are planning at the moment in R&D for a family show which will be sited in a container, but there will be a digital element to it.

David Rosenberg

The fantastic thing about audio based work is that in terms of the immersive technologies, audio is at a stage now where it is just such high quality and there's so many different tools for for recording and editing that the audio itself is indistinguishable from the sounds we hear around us. In general, the tools for making audio experiences are a lot cheaper thank for other immersive technologies and it's a really great way to thinking about how to how to begin to create immersive narratives.

When Glen and I started making work together, we didn't really see ourselves as making tech heavy work. And in fact, quite a lot of the solutions that we had for our shows were very analogue. But over the last few years, we've become increasingly more interested about what's possible with new digital technologies. For example, in one of our location-based shows, we added the element of speech recognition so the audience could have more agency within the work. Similarly we've expanded our digital platform in order to also include speech recognition. We're also doing some work on free roaming experiences, and geolocation, and other ways that audio can be triggered, either through time, space or due to some response of an audience member.

Glen Neath

Since we started Darkfield, we've been planning to create a number of experiences that we can bring together into a sort of sonic theme park and we're constantly adding to the to the concept.