

Episode Four Guest: Kou Aizhe (寇爱哲)

Music credits (sourced from freemusicarchive.org):

Lee Rosevere's Tech Toys

Lee Rosevere's What's Behind the Door

Lee Rosevere's Sad Marimba Planet

Chad Crouch's Wilsons Snipe

Lee Rosevere's You're Enough

Glad Rags's Wonder Under

Blue: Anita's narration

如果你时常听中文播客，你肯定不会对寇爱哲这个名字感到陌生。他是新媒体品牌大象公会旗下《故事FM》的创办者和制作人。

《故事FM》是一档亲历者自述的播客节目。它至今是我认为中文世界里最优秀的播客作品。这档节目不仅有令人着迷的叙事节奏，也在做着互联网时代非常难能可贵的一件事：拓宽人们的生命体验和认知范围，而不是缩窄和重复已有认知。

很多人不知道的是，在成立《故事FM》以前，寇爱哲曾在中国地质图书馆工作近4年。26岁，他说服自己转行成为记者，从在《南方周末》做实习生开始。

在这期节目中，我和寇爱哲聊了聊他如何从图书管理行业转行成为一个讲故事的人。你可以通过苹果播客、喜马拉雅等主流音频内容收听平台，搜索“语境”来收听本期节目的完整版。

Q: 你爸爸年轻的时候是文艺青年，他在阅读和纪录片上的一些偏好对你产生了很大的影响。能具体展开说一下你爸爸对你的影响吗？

A: 我小的时候，那什么故事书之类都是我爸买的。我们家的确有不少的书，然后因为我是在一个矿区长大的，像在那个地方，一般家里头有不少书，然后父亲还爱读书，这种家庭实际上不多见。而且我爸可以说他是有点崇洋媚外，喜欢读一些国外的一些小说之类的。

If you listen to Chinese podcasts, the chances are high that you've heard about Kou Aizhe, founder and producer of *Gushi FM*, a podcast under new media brand Elephant Magazine.

A first-person storytelling podcast, *Gushi FM* is, in my opinion, by far the best produced Chinese podcast. It's unique not just for its captivating rhythm of its storytelling, but also because it is doing something very valuable in this Internet era: telling stories to enhance people's mutual understanding, rather than reinforcing our own judgement or repeating what we already knew.

What many people don't know is that before creating *Gushi FM*, Aizhe worked at the National Geological Library of China for nearly four years. At the age of 26, he decided to do something different—starting his journalism career as an intern at Southern Weekly (one of China's most liberal weekly newspapers). It was from there that he moved on to work with several foreign media in China. In 2017, he joined Elephant Magazine, starting his new chapter as the creator and producer of *Gushi FM*.

In this episode, I talked with Aizhe about how he moved from library science into journalism. To listen to the full episode, you can search for "In Context (语境)"

我记得我很小的时候，我爸买了一个非常贵的收音机。还是80年代的时候，他就经常听敌台像什么莫斯科电台什么之类的，口音都非常奇怪的中文节目。然后那时候收音机信号不太好，所以经常你要是把你的手放在收音机的侧面的时候，信号就会稍微强一点，声音更清楚。然后我爸手经常伏在大收音机旁边，他累的时候有的时候让我过来给他扶着。

从小在听故事和看故事的氛围里长大的寇爱哲，高考时最理想的志愿是念广播电视新闻。他后来没有被这个专业录取，而是进入东北师范大学修读图书馆学。2006年毕业时，寇爱哲来到北京，加入中国地质图书管开启他的职业生涯。关于这份工作，描述中出现最多的三个字是——

A: 很机械。图书馆它分几个流程，叫采分边点留什么采购编目分类，典藏流通。然后我当时在就是做编目，怎么说编目怎么解释，其实就是相当于给图书去分类，然后给它分类，现在的解释就是tag了。那时候也都是小馆抄大馆。我们相当于直接抄国家图书馆的。然后如果是外文书籍，我们就抄美国国会图书馆的。所以其实很多活都是在复制粘贴，你明白吗？特别机械。然后包括我走之前，我是负责一个馆藏数字化的项目，它其实也特别简单，就是把咱们馆藏的那些书，然后其实请了一个外包公司，然后让他们把这些书都扫描。我其实负责把这些导入到我们图书馆的库里面。对，让外人可以检索，在网上也可以看这样。但其实都是比较机械的工作。

想从这样一个相对机械和缺乏挑战的工作中脱离出来，寇爱哲犹豫了好几年。他当时不确定还有什么其他职业可以去尝试。直到他开始参加北京的各种民间讲座。这些场合聚集了诸多学者和媒体人，他们讨论尖锐的社会议题，这段经历激发和形成了寇爱哲的问题意识，并逐渐推动他进入媒体业的想法。

on Apple Podcasts, Ximalaya or wherever you get your favorite podcasts.

Q: You had shared with me that your father was an artsy person when he was young. His taste for books and documentaries has made a great influence on you. Can you talk more about that?

A: My father bought me a lot of storybooks when I was young. Our family did own quite a lot of books. I grew up on a mining field; it was not common for a family over there to own many books and that the dad loved to read. People like us were rare. My dad was crazy about foreign culture and liked to read foreign novels. My fascination with radio also started because of him.

I remembered when I was very little, my father bought a very expensive radio. It was in the 1980s, and he listened to radio programs from abroad quite often, for example, the Moscow Radio. These shows were in Mandarin but they all had weird accents. When the radio signal was poor, my father would lean very close to the radio and place his hands on the side of it to strengthen the signal. When he was tired, he would have me take over.

Growing up listening and reading stories, it was normal for Aizhe to long for broadcasting journalism. But he did not get into his dream major when the Gaokao took place. Instead, he went to the Northeast Normal University, studying Library Science. Upon graduation in 2006, Aizhe moved to Beijing and started his professional life at the National Geological Library of China. When looking back at his library

A: 应该说我包括开始听讲座，见各种媒体人，然后包括最后辞职的2010年，这一段时间，其实都属于中国媒体最辉煌的一段时间。2010年可以说辉煌的末尾了。那段时间应该说媒体人记者都比较活跃，然后也很多人都是意见领袖。那时候大家都喜欢追学者，听他们讲话他们的言论，然后讨论。记者是其中的一部分。2010年其实我在辞职之前，我是先通过朋友就是到南方周末去实习。南方周末北京站这块。

Q: 以一个实习生的身份。在26岁年龄加入到一个相对来说开始走下坡路的一个行业。你当时我不知道你会有一些压力和焦虑，或者自己在思考这个决定前后也有一些矛盾的地方吗？

A: 当然有焦虑肯定是有的，因为你想已经工作了四年了，按理说一般情况下大家要这时候就很难离开自己原来的行业了，你在这个行业要积累什么的。然后那时候我其实这个问题想了很长时间。你包括跟好朋友打电话，跟家里人打电话，然后不停地商量这个事，然后我要告诉他们我的想法。看他们愿不愿意支持我，我不是说从物质上有什么支持，而说能不能支持我的决定。

Q: 你当时有想过最差的情况可能会是什么吗？

A: 对，我当时肯定想了这个问题，就是最坏能怎么样？我当时想最坏，那就是我在这转行转得不成功，我做不了记者，这不是我擅长的东西。那我就去跟家里人去做生意，对，所以我觉得最坏我也可以接受。

如寇爱哲自己的观察一样，在2010年前后选择进入传统媒体，至少从市场环境来看并不是一个太好的选择。他认识的很多记者也在那段时间先后离开媒体业，进入发展前景更好的包括房地产在内的其他行业。寇爱哲最终在《南方周末》实习了不到五个月，并在机缘巧合下先后加入了瑞典国家广播电台和加拿大电视网CTV的驻中国站，开始了他在外媒的7年工作经验。那段时间的经历也为他后来做《故事FM》打下基础。

experience, he could not comment more about it than saying it was—

A: Very robotic. The practice of library science can be broken down into several parts: collecting, cataloging, preserving and circulating. I was mostly doing cataloging, tagging books by group. But we were mostly following the larger libraries, which meant the national Library of China. For a foreign book, we just followed the cataloging of the Library of Congress (U.S.). Most of my job was copying and pasting, you know. It was very robotic. Before I left, I was in charge of a collection digitalization project. But even that was super simple. The library outsourced the work and asked a third party to scan all the books, and I took responsibility importing the scanning into our library database so people could search for the books on the internet. That was quite robotic work.

Aizhe had thought about deviating from such robotic and unchallenging work. But it took him years to figure out what else he could do. At the time, he started to actively participate in Beijing's public lecture scene, mostly attended by intellectuals and media professionals. The community would gather to discuss pressing social affairs, and these discussions had nurtured Aizhe's news sense ever since, which subsequently inspired him to pursue a career in journalism.

A: Between when I started attending these lectures, meeting people in the media industry and when I resigned in 2010—it was a prosperous era for China's media industry. 2010 was somehow the end of it. At the time reporters were very active under the public eye and many were thought leaders. Also at that time, the public

A: 其实所有的环节都会参与，包括前期的找选题、联系采访对象安排采访，这些主要其实是我们来做。去采访基本主要是记者的部分，当然中方雇员也会陪着一起还有翻译，然后回来整理采访，然后包括像电视台有的他要自己要帮助记者去剪辑。

外媒的工作让他接触到音频和视频新闻内容生产的方方面面，从技术上说提供了成熟的平台。但这份职业也有自身的局限，这种局限最终带来不安。

A: 你长时间可能未来多年，如果一直在这个行业里的话，你没有上升的空间，这是一方面。另一方面你不确定你自己capable什么东西，因为每一个故事里头都没有你的credit。然后如果让你独立的去操作一个故事，你能做成什么样，大众会不会欢迎，市场会不会接纳，我完全不知道。

而且其实在外媒有一个比较致命的一点，中方雇员是没有自己的作品。这是中国这方这面的规定。虽然你做了很多记者的工作，但是这个作品不属于你，所以你成就感是比较低的。

做爱哲电台从某种程度上，是反击这种不安的一种做法。它是故事FM的前身，原本是寇爱哲在2016年左右，在工作之外由兴趣驱动的一个音频项目，它对采访内容进行叙事化的表达，每期一个主人公、一个故事。其中非常打动我的一期叫做《跟着盲人去上班》。

在这一期节目里，寇爱哲跟随一位盲人在北京的街道上行走，他们需要穿过各种马路、登上公交车，最终来到主人公的工作地。整个过程被丰富的现场音所捕捉，交织着两人的对谈和安静环境下的一场对话。

[《跟着盲人去上班》15秒节选]

寇爱哲选择这种复杂而耗时的表达方式，和他自己的播客收听经验有关。从

liked chasing scholars and intellectuals to hear their concerns and discussions, and reporters played a big part in that discussion. Later I resigned from the library and get introduced by a friend to intern at the Southern Weekly Beijing branch.

Q: You were 26 at that time. How did that make you feel, to start an internship at a declining industry? Were you stressed or anxious? Were you conflicted?

A: Anxious was for sure. It was already four years into my professional career. It was not an easy time to start something entirely new. I was supposed to build up and achieve something already. I thought about my decision for a long time. I called friends and families and asked for their opinions, laying out my own reasoning with them. I wanted to get their support, not in a material sense but to get emotional support so I could make a firm decision.

Q: Have you thought about the worst outcome?

A: Absolutely I thought about that. What could the worst be? I thought to myself that the worst scenario may be that I failed at trying to be a reporter, knowing it was not for me. If that really happened, I could still follow my family to do business. I thought I could handle the worse-case scenario.

Like Aizhe has observed, joining China's media industry around 2010 wasn't a smart choice from a monetary standpoint. Many of Aizhe's journalism friends had since left the industry for more promising sectors such as real estate.

Aizhe ended up interning with Southern Weekly for less than 5 months, before

2007年开始，他听得最多的英文播客之一是美国一档名为This American Life的电台节目。这档节目在1995年成立，每一期聚焦一个主题并围绕这一主题展开新闻线索的搜集和采访。

A: 我一直期待有一种像类似This American Life这种类型的节目出现。等了很久一直没有，我当时也不觉得我是可以做出来。后来我在CTV工作的时候，因为最后那一年2016年的时候特别的闲，那段时间工作可以说没有工作，就是领工资，但是没有事干那种。所以我当时就想不如自己玩一玩。

从2016年8月开始，爱哲电台一共播出了五期。不论是从技术、选题、表达节奏感和整体收听体验来说，这都已经是一个相当完善的作品，也获得了身边朋友的认可。

2017年，寇爱哲受到新媒体公司大象公会创始人黄章晋的邀请，加入大象公会成立《故事FM》，当时打动黄章晋的正是这期《跟着盲人去上班》。

A: 这期后来改名叫《中国的盲道上为什么看不见盲人》。这样的标题就特别符合大象公会一贯的那种文章风格。提出一个现象，然后去解释它。本来我是想做这种类型的节目，我觉得这样更适合大型公会。然后黄章晋听了那个之后，他当时说这是他现在见过的最成熟的一个节目，所以那时候就开始请我来大象公会来做音频。

但那时候其实也没有任何的承诺，也没有说什么样的合作形式，只是说让我来做，而且那时候我不是说在外媒一直比较闲，所以我也没什么意见，那就来做。然后试了没多久之后，我当时就想告诉他还有另外一种形式的节目，亲历者口述这种。然后我就把我新做出来的爱哲电台最新一期，《我被传销组织囚禁了28天》，我当时给他放一下，我想给他放前五分钟，告诉他这是这种形式的，就只有一个人的声音，让他听完，五分钟我本来暂停，但他立刻制止我说

he was introduced to work with the Swedish National Radio and later Canada's CTV, both based in China. There he started his 7 years of journalism career with foreign media. That experience also laid a solid foundation for what he would do with *Gushi FM*.

A: My work there covered all phases of news production, including identifying news leads and booking interviews—those were mostly done by Chinese staff like me. Often times it was the foreign correspondents who conducted the actual interview, while we helped with translating and transcribing, sometimes editing as well if it was for TV.

Foreign media was a mature platform for Aizhe to develop professional skills; it also offered him an opportunity to learn all aspects of audio and video news production. But this career also had its own constraints, which eventually made him feel uneasy.

A: I had been in the industry for many years. It didn't look like that I was going to have a path for improvement and promotion. On the other hand, I was not sure what I was really capable of because we didn't get credited for the work we did. I had no idea what I could do if I were offered an opportunity to work on something entirely on my own—whether that would be accepted by the audience or could connect with the market. I had no idea at all.

And there's another thing about working with a foreign media as a Chinese—we couldn't have our own work (in another words, get recognition or credit). This was because of government regulation. Even we had accomplished a lot as a reporter, the final work didn't belong to

听让我听下去。然后他就一共听了半小时，就把这整个听完了。

寇爱哲的身上有很强的自我警觉性。在抢夺注意力的互联网环境下，《故事FM》是难得能够在高频率更新下依然保持宽阔的选题视角，和对事实核验保持较高标准的媒体品牌，这一点和寇爱哲最开始做这档节目的初衷有关。

Q: 你最开始做电台的时候，你是希望这个节目……你希望能够有一个东西让大家听了之后，可以减少人和人之间的这种误解，然后你有特别提到说这种意识是你当时在做记者的时候就开始了培养起来的。你能具体去谈一个当时的场景吗？是哪一类的场景让你开始有了这种做一档节目能够减少他人误解，让他让人和人之间更加相互理解的这样的一个想法？

A: 其实我现在也很难说，我这样的节目就一定会达成这样的效果。但我只能说它是最适合达成这种效果的方式。因为我不是说我之前长期听讲座吗？其实在讲座还可以比较自由的那段时期，其实可以发现在北京有偏自由派的这种讲座，也有偏那种保守或者中国意义上左派的这些这些讲座，他们是完全两两拨人，这两拨人是不能在一起讨论问题的。就只要讨论问题吵起来是轻的，很有可能上手的那种，你知道吗？

但我在想，大部分大家在讨论的这些问题，都是就理论去讨论。我觉得最有说服力的就是当事人的视角。他经历了什么？他那一刻的体验是什么？我相信这样亲历者的角度。你跟我讲再多大道理，毛泽东当年的初心是怎么样的，然后什么之类的，对我来说是没有意义的。具体的人在里头经历了什么，我觉得是更重要的。

故事FM如今的团队规模维持在8人左右，寇爱哲的工作内容也从亲力亲为地找选题、做采访，扩大到带领整个团队。他们也在持续尝试新的内容形式的创作和探索。2018年12月，故事FM在北京举办了首场Live，用现场音乐、视像和现场

us. So the sense of accomplishment was very low.

To some extent, the *Aizhe Radio* show was created to fight that uneasiness. *Aizhe Radio* was a prequel to *Gushi FM*, which was founded in 2016 as a side audio project driven entirely by interest. The show embraced a storytelling format and each episode featured one character and his/her unique story. One of the stories that impressed me was titled “I followed a blind person on her way to work”. In that episode, Aizhe followed a visually impaired person on her way to work. They crossed the Beijing streets, got on a bus and finally arrived at the workplace. The entire journey was documented in audio, interweaved with their talk during the trip and a sit-down interview that followed.

[15s clip from *I followed a blind person on her way to work*]

It was a time-consuming and complicated production. But Aizhe favored the approach. This had something to do with his own podcast experience. Since 2007, he has been listening to *This American Life* avidly. That show was founded in 1995, and each episode features one particular theme and reporters would build multiple stories around the theme.

A: I had hoped that there would be a show (in Chinese) similar to *This American Life*. But I waited and waited, and nothing got on my radar. I didn't think I could do it at the time. But remember that was 2016 when I was still with CTV. I had quite a lot of downtime as I mentioned, and in fact I had few projects to work on and all I did was getting paid and doing nothing. So I

讲述的形式，赋予故事新的生命力和表达效果。

他们还在进行更多的尝试，如果你有兴趣，可以在苹果播客等播客收听平台搜索“故事FM”找到他们的节目。

你正在收听的是《语境》第一季，在本季中我们聚焦年轻人的转行。请记住，我们好像是在聊职业选择，但我们希望走得更远一些。我是徐婧艾，本期节目由我编辑和制作。你可以通过在苹果播客或主流音频内容平台搜索“语境”关注我们的完整节目和更多更新。

你正在收听的是《语境 | 转行》，一档关于年轻人转行的播客节目。我们好像是在聊职业选择，但我们希望走得更远一些。我是徐婧艾，本期节目由我编辑和制作。我们下期见。

thought maybe I should do something on my own.

From August 2016, five episodes aired on *Aizhe Radio*. It has been a very mature program from many perspectives—the story angle, production technique, the pace of storytelling and the overall listening experience have all been quite well. The show has also gained recognition from Aizhe’s friends.

In 2017, Aizhe was invited to join the *Elephant Magazine* by its founder Huang Zhangjing. Huang was very moved at the episode about the visually impaired people’s experience, and he invited Aizhe to found *Gushi FM* under *Elephant Magazine*.

A: That episode was later retitled as “Why China’s visually impaired people don’t use their dedicated pavements”. The new title was more consistent in tone and style with the *Elephant Magazine*, which is all about defining a phenomenon and trying to explain why. I also thought this was going to be the type of audio stories I’d produce. I remembered Huang said, after listening to that episode, that it was by far the most mature program he ever listened to. So from there I got invited to work with the *Elephant Magazine*.

But I was not promised of anything. We didn’t even talk about how I would work with them, what type of partnership it was going to be. I was simply asked to join. And I thought fine, because at the time, like I said before, I had a lot of time to myself and I was not very busy with work at CTV. After a while, I showed Huang yet another episode I produced, in a different format. It was a first-person narrative show. I played one episode titled “I was imprisoned for 28

days by a pyramid scheme”. I had planned to play just the first five minutes to explain what type of show it was, but he was absorbed and insisted on finishing the entire 30-minute production.

There’s something about Aizhe that stands out: he was very self-conscious. In this attention-grabbing internet era, *Gushi FM* has managed to embrace a very broad view to explaining the world around us, while running production at a fast pace (three episodes per week). It also holds high fact-checking standards. Why? This has something to do with Aizhe’s original intention of running the show.

Q: When you first started the show, you had hoped to create something that make people understand each other a bit more. You mentioned this was an awareness you had built while as a reporter. Can you talk more about it? What was it that you saw or experienced as a reporter that made you want to create such a show to eliminate misunderstanding among human beings?

A: Honestly I can’t be sure whether my show has reached my original intention yet. But I can say the format (first-person narrative) we use is the best way to achieve what I wanted to achieve. There had been a long time, as I mentioned earlier, that I would attend public lectures. It was a very liberal time, so you could actually find those very liberal lectures. And conservative ones as well. Those are two distinctly different style of communities. They could not sit peacefully and talk. Whenever they talk, they would argue and fight with each other. Verbal disagreement happened all the time, sometimes the fights turned physical.

But I was thinking, whatever those people discussed, most of them were theory-based. For me, I think first-person experience speaks louder than anything. What did that person experience? What was he feeling at the moment? I believe in those real-life visceral experience. It means nothing to me if you only talk about big theories or what Mao Zedong had on his mind during his era. To me those are meaningless. Specific people experiencing specific moments, that's what matters to me.

Today, *Gushi FM* is a team of eight people. Aizhe's work responsibility has also expanded from identifying news leads, conducting interviews, to leading a team. They have also been experimenting with new ways of storytelling and content creation. In December 2018, *Gushi FM* hosted its first Live Performance in Beijing, to recreate their past production through live music, video footage and live storytelling.

More experiments are under its way. If you're interested in learning more, you could follow *Gushi FM* on Apple Podcasts or other podcast platforms you use.

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