

Radio's 'This American Life' retracts Apple story

KAREN HAWKINS Associated Press

The public radio program "This American Life" on Friday retracted a story about what a monologist said he found while investigating Apple operations in China, citing "numerous fabrications."

The show's Friday broadcast will detail inconsistencies in the highly popular Jan. 6 episode that was an excerpt from writer Mike Daisey's critically acclaimed one-man show "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs," which currently is at the Public Theater in New York.

"We're retracting the story because we can't vouch for its truth," Ira Glass, host of "This American Life," said in a letter posted on the show's website. Spokeswoman Emily Condon said Glass wouldn't take calls for comment until after Friday's episode airs.

In his program, Daisey describes meeting workers who put in very long hours and were forced to do crippling, repetitive motions at factories that make Apple products in China.

But "This American Life" says Rob Schmitz, a China correspondent for the public radio show "Marketplace," located and interviewed Daisey's Chinese interpreter, who disputed much of the artist's claims.

"This American Life" said in its statement that staffers asked Daisey for his interpreter's contact information while fact-checking the story and he said the cellphone number he had for her didn't work anymore and he had no way to reach her.

"At that point, we should've killed the story," Glass said in the statement. "But other things Daisey told us about Apple's operations in China checked out, and we saw no reason to doubt him."

Daisey posted on his web site Friday that he stands by his work and that what he does is theater, not journalism.

"'This American Life' is essentially a journalistic - not a theatrical - enterprise, and as such it operates under a different set of rules and expectations. But this is my only regret," Daisey's letter said.

Apple has been rebutting Daisey's allegations for months, to little effect. An Apple spokeswoman declined comment Friday.

The original episode, "Mr. Daisey and the Apple Factory," has become the most popular podcast in the history of "This American Life" with nearly 890,000

Radio's 'This American Life' retracts Apple story

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

downloads.

In his show, Daisey splices career milestones of Steve Jobs and the transformation of Apple from a David into a Goliath with more personal stories about his own connection to the computer maker.

He has said that when he saw four photos posted online taken by workers at a Chinese factory to test the iPhone but mistakenly not erased, he suddenly realized people, not robots, were putting the sleek devices together.

In interviews and on stage, Daisey has said he traveled to the Chinese industrial zone of Shenzhen and interviewed hundreds of workers from Foxconn Technology Group, the world's largest electronics contract manufacturer.

"I talk to people whose joints in their hands have disintegrated from working on the line, doing the same motion hundreds and hundreds of thousands of times. It's like carpal tunnel on a scale we can scarcely imagine," he said while performing the show in New York in October.

While the piece specifically targets Apple, most of what Daisey said he discovered is applicable to many high-tech manufacturers. Daisey has performed the new monologue for some 50,000 people from Seattle to Washington, D.C., and it is now at The Public Theater until Sunday. Daisey was expected to take the show on tour, but its future is now in doubt.

In a statement, The Public Theater said the show would be performed in New York as scheduled and stood by what it called "a powerful work of art."

"Mike is an artist, not a journalist," the statement said. "Nevertheless, we wish he had been more precise with us and our audiences about what was and wasn't his personal experience in the piece."

AP Drama Writer Mark Kennedy contributed to this report from New York.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/28/2015 - 7:59pm):

<http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2012/03/radios-american-life-retracts-apple-story>