



## Small Sound Booth With Big Impact

*Mikael Naramore turned his enjoyment of storytelling into a career*

**By Jeanie Senior**

On an average work day, audiobook narrator Mikael Naramore sits inside a closet-sized sound booth dimly lit by a computer screen, an iPad and a small lamp, and brings the written word to life.

As he reads and records the text of a science fiction book by J.S. Morin, the characters and their voices—male and female, young and old, aliens and a grouchy wizard—become real. His narration sweeps listeners into the story.

“It’s a great way to make a living,”

says Mikael, whose business is called Terrestrial Media.

Buy a Morin audiobook and Mikael’s name has equal billing on the cover.

He grew up in Nashville “where everybody is in the music business” and started out as a recording engineer.

He remembers a first-grade field trip to Music Row, where he got hooked on the smell and sounds of a recording studio. A friendly sound engineer let the students listen to the recording he was working on. It was Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers performing “Islands in the Stream.”



Influenced by Nashville, Mikael says he wanted to be a musician. But he also wanted to have a family, he says. The music industry has changed to such a degree it's like taking a vow of poverty to work toward success.

In 2001, after college, he interned at Brilliance Audio in Grand Haven, Michigan, not far from where his family lived. Mikael was quickly promoted to sound engineer and director. Brilliance, now owned by Amazon, is a major producer of audiobooks.

That was the starting place for his career as a narrator. Mikael has narrated more than 300 titles, ranging from romance novels to mysteries to nonfiction. He also has directed and



**Mikael's work earned him an Audio Publishers Association award in 2017.**

engineered about 1,000 books and works as an audiobook director.

Mikael earned an industry honor in 2017, when he won an Audie Award—the Audio Publishers Association's version of an Emmy.

For the past three years, a large share of the audiobooks he has narrated have been by Morin—a rising star whose titles include the popular *Black Ocean* series. Mikael says Morin's books remind him of *Firefly*, Fox's quirky sci-fi space Western series. Although the network canceled *Firefly* 15 years ago after just one season, it has a massive cult following.

"It was a perfect TV show," he says.

Science fiction and fantasy are his favorite category to narrate.

"It's a lot of fun," Mikael says. "What's great about it is you generally can invent accents."

Apart from imaginary alien-speak, Mikael has a keen interest in accents, which are important in his profession.

In a day, Mikael says he can record and engineer about three finished hours of narration. Morin audiobooks, for example, generally run from just under

nine hours to almost 12 hours.

He works for publishers and independent authors, and mostly gets jobs through emails or phone calls.

Amazon has a site where audiobook narrators can look for work, but Mikael says he has been busy enough that he doesn't need the service.

"It's taken me years to get to this point," he says.

He cautions that he works in a cyclical business. Although audiobooks are a growing phenomenon—recording double-digit sales—print book and ebook sales have been shrinking. Industry analysts point to audiobooks' portability and convenience as a reason for that.

In his White Salmon studio, there are photos of Mikael's wife, Leslie, and their two sons, as well as an array of music editing equipment. There are guitars, a collection of vinyl records and a restored upright piano that belonged to an uncle who was a professional musician.

Mikael continues to write and record music, and is an aquarium enthusiast. As a volunteer, he maintains the aquarium at Whitson Elementary School. ■