

Podcast User

NUMBER ONE FOR PODCAST NEWS, REVIEWS AND TIPS



Reviews

ROLAND EDIROL R1
PODCAST REVIEWS

Articles

THE DISCERNING LISTENER
THE WEAKEST LINK
THE REVOLUTION HAS BEGUN
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PODCASTING JARGON
PODCASTING TIPS & TRICKS



Courtesy of Apple



EDITORIAL



PODCAST USER - CONTENT YOU CAN RELY ON

FIRST FOR...

Podcasts and podcasting news

Our monthly schedule and website allows us to keep you up to date with the latest news as and when it happens.

Product and service reviews

Each month, our dedicated contributors will review the latest hardware and software so to allow you to make the right buying choices.

We will also be reviewing a wide variety of podcasts so that you don't have to waste hours of your life. We are kind like that...

Advice and help

Podcast User staff have years of combined experience. So, if you have any problems or would like any information, just email us at

help@podcastusermagazine.com

WWW.PODCASTUSERMAGAZINE.COM

Welcome to the first edition of **Podcast User**, an online periodical for podcast creators, listeners, and anyone else who uses a podcast for business or advertising.

Entering the word 'podcast' for a Google search in October 2004 brought up the response "Do you mean Broadcast?" I know that's true, because I tried it way back then. The same search today will direct you to an Oxford English Dictionary reference, and alert you to the fact that there are, as of February 1, 2006, 95,700,000 entries for the word 'podcast'.

Podcast User is the result of a dozen or so podcasters and listeners, all passionate about podcasting and talking about all manner of subjects in the field. Each contributor has given their own time freely and eagerly.

Podcasting has a great community feel to it, and that is precisely what this magazine celebrates; a thriving community of people, discussing and providing different content by using the same medium.

Thanks to the BritCaster (www.britcaster.com) for the forum to meet and discuss this project and to Writely (www.writely.com) for the online processing tool used to assist the collaboration of articles.

Podcasting has a great community feel to it, and that is precisely what this magazine celebrates



Paul Nicholls is our editor. He is a lawyer and the brains behind the Podcast Paul and Jukepod Jury podcasts. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of music. Sadly it's the 80's...

<http://www.podcastpaul.com>
<http://jukepodjury.blogspot.com>
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To provide a comment in relation any article, please send email to the authors directly or to:
general.comments@podcastusermagazine.com

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NEWS

Apple release GarageBand 3

Timed to coincide with the release of the new Intel iMac and MacBook Pro, Apple Computer have released GarageBand 3 as part of iLife '06, the award-winning suite of digital lifestyle applications.

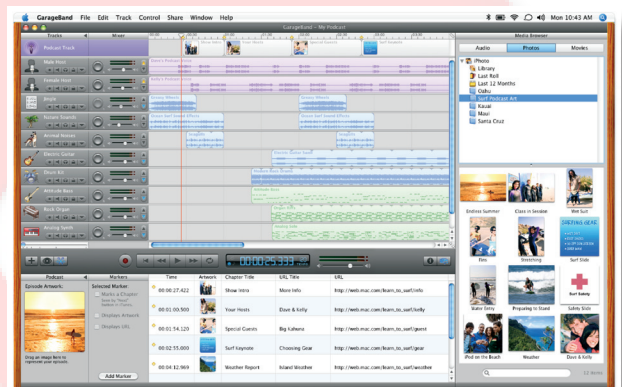
GarageBand 3 now offers a complete solution for creating high quality podcasts. Voices can easily be recorded using the built-in expertise of an audio engineer and podcasts can be enhanced with radio-style sound effects and music jingles, chapter artwork and

URL links.

Talk show podcasts are created easily by interviewing one or more guests simultaneously in iChat AV and recording directly into GarageBand 3. Podcasts can be posted for the world to enjoy on .Mac and submitted to iTunes using iWeb.

At least one podcaster here at **Podcast User** is trialling the software and a

review of its podcasting capabilities will appear in the March edition of **Podcast User**. The iLife '06 suite retails for £55 / \$79. It is also bundled with all new Macs. •



Courtesy of Apple

GarageBand 3 – Podcast heaven?

Mark Hunter quits Podshow

Mark Hunter, the well respected producer and host of the Tartanpodcast has left Podshow to once again pursue an independent podcast career. Mark left the company at a time when many other podcasters are joining in the hope of “quitting their day jobs”.

Mark released this statement via his blog...

“I am no longer part of the Podshow network. This was instigating by me, and management complied with my wish to leave.

“Part of my contract with Podshow meant producing 3

shows per week and while they’d given me written grace from producing the 3 shows, I still felt I had to pull my weight. After all, everyone else was. So I’d continued putting out as many shows as I could, factoring in the little things like earning a living and being a capable father and husband. But when I looked at the tartanpodcast with a critical eye I could see a reduction in quality and that was due to me spending little time preparing the podcast in advance...

“Another reason for my leaving Podshow’s fold was the new distribution network. I’m not

sure how much information about this network is already out in the ‘wild’ so I won’t go into the mechanics of what I understand it to be. That being said, what I do know about it didn’t fit in with the direction I want to take the tartanpodcast. So I felt it was prudent to leave before the network was up and running, with the tartanpodcast incorporated into it.

“I realise this may mean I lose out on sponsorship deals and advertising \$s, but that doesn’t matter when compared with the feeling of excitement and optimism I have looking ahead to bringing you the ‘all new’ tartanpodcast.” •

One man's meat is another's poison

Paul Nicholls talks about becoming a discerning listener

You won't catch me sky-diving, snowboarding or mountain climbing. To embrace the immortal words of the crooked-toothed 60's throwback spy, "It's just not my bag, baby"

Platitudes are generally self-serving and irritating, but I've found out that you can't please all of the people all of the time, and some of them can't please me at all.

I can very easily tell you what I like and dislike, but that might not be your 'bag', suitcase or carrier. I do like to think that I'm a discerning listener though.

Podcasting is a theatre with no age limit, restriction or demographic, and the wealth and breadth of stuff out there is testament to this.

In any theatre, those with their backsides on seats will sit through their given genre of desire, but they won't stand for poor content; alternatively, some may sit through one poor performance and not repeat the experience.

Giving the best of content is key, whether you're talking

about knitting, wine, music, politics or any subject to hand.

The podcast forums seem to sprout forth self proclaimed experts. I've never heard of these experts before – some even publish books, and of those books I've read, I don't really agree with their message as to content. You don't need to read a book, you just need to apply a little common sense. It all seems pretty simple to me. These are some of the things I've, well, learnt from producing

I can very easily tell you what I like

and listening to hundreds of podcasts over the last year:

* The popular podcasts don't always have the best content, far from it. Here I could list plenty of examples, but it would be unfair to name and shame. However, I do think that someone has to tell the emperor he's naked. >>>

What's that then?



Colin Meeks offers a handy guide to podcasting terminology

As is always the way with new technologies, they all have their buzz words, some are regular words, given a new purpose, whilst others are totally new words, like podcast. Once these new words are introduced and the technology juggernaut begins to gain momentum, it's hard to change the word, so it's helpful to have some understanding of these terms.

Podcast / Podcasting

"Podcasting" is the term that combines two words: "iPod" and "broadcasting". One of the many confusions is that you do not need an iPod to listen to podcasts. In their simplest form, podcasts are just MP3 audio files that have been made available for easily downloading. In 2005, the New Oxford American Dictionary declared "podcasting" the word of the year, defining the term >>>

LISTENER



Daily Smalls Code
Roger Smalls from Guildford, UK

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2006

panic ahoy

i only have 15 days left until valentines day which is a panic. there are no girls at work who catch my eye. i do not know where to go to meet girls. i have tried most things i can think of, the workplace, gyms, pubs, nightclubs and i even speeddating. i want to try, but dont want to get my fingers burnt again. its the one time of year that i can have an excuse to properly approach girls, i dont want to let this year slip.

if only i could meet someone, i have so much to give. the thought that this time next month i could have a girlfriend excites me, i could be sitting downstairs with my arm round a prettygirl, massaging each others feet, caressing her hair, the feel of her skull under her skin, the smell of her clothes made of wool. yet i do not know who that person is, this frustrates me and makes me angry. my intoxicating desire for a mate keeps me awake at night.

am i alone? do many single men read this blog? if so what do you suggest???

About Me

Name: Roger Smalls
Location: Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom

i'm looking for a girlfriend am not fussy. i enjoy using the internet to find prettygirls. if anyone would like to go out with me for a date my email is roger_smalls@hotmail.co.uk. i am not free on tuesdays.

[View my complete profile](#)

Skype me!

Roger Smalls breaks the mould with his podcast from his mobile phone

* The best treasures sometimes seem to be hidden. Don't fall for the Top 10, Top 100 or 'popular' lists. Don't be led like a sheep, take a shovel and dig around.

* Some of the very best content can be found in the poorest publicised and sometimes ignored podcast. There are some hidden gems to be found that have a tiny audience. A good example of this is 'Pocket Planet Radio'; www.pocketplanetradio.typepad.com. The quality and depth of content, presentation and interest appear to me to

be a winning formula. The presenter, Chris Vallance, I thought was 'very BBC'. My hunch was right; Chris actually is a producer, working for and amongst others, the BBC.

* There's nothing generally better than recommendation of other shows from your favourite podcasts. The best builders, accountants and chip-shops are recommended by word of mouth, and the same holds true for podcasts. Additionally, look for links on a favourite site, another source of inspiration that should not be ignored in quite the manner it is.

* Hearing a confident presentation is a comfort. Nervy, breathless rambling is a complete non-starter



as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the internet for downloading to a personal audio player". A personal audio player can be anything from a desktop or laptop computer, a hand-held gaming console, a portable MP3 player or even a regular audio CD player if the podcasts have been written to a CD.

Subscribe / Subscription

One of the many misconceptions regarding podcasts, are the terms "subscribe" and "subscription". To anyone not too versed in the ways of the internet, these can seem somewhat confusing and intimidating. Many people see the term "subscribe" and choose to give podcasts a wide berth because they assume that subscribing costs money, as it usually does with magazines. Many people whom I've introduced to podcasts, come back to me and say "yes, all very interesting, but I don't want to pay for something before I know whether I'll like it or not". This has happened all too often and now I make sure to let new users know what to expect so now I have a lot fewer questions regarding the subscription model.

Aggregator

This is the computer program you use to subscribe to our





for me and, I'm sure, for others. I like to think that the presenter is speaking to me as a friend would, in a pub. That, you see, is the beauty of podcasting: it's so much more informal and accessible. Don't underestimate the strength of something that sounds like a fire-side chat.

* Over-produced, sanitized audio is

Source Code, www.curry.com is a further example as to how I believe audio should sound in terms of quality and delivery.

* Audio quality goes a long way in covering a multitude of sins. Saying that, Roger Smalls breaks the mould with his podcast from his mobile phone; www.rogersmalls.blogspot.com.

In this case the sheer

relaxed presenter and good quality audio.

So, The moral of the story? I'm a discerning listener. At least, I think I am. There are some great podcasts out there... and some that are poor.

Recently there has been an underlying move to commercialise something that has, for the better part of last year, been an amateur enthusiasts' paradise, this is bitter-sweet. Don't be led by the nose by the "Monetising" crowd. On the flip-side, the BBC have some great offerings, notably the BBC4 'Today' key interviews at www.bbc.co.uk. Ignore the lists produced by the 'popular' polls and look for yourself. Be discerning, not lazy; it will certainly enrich your listening experience.

Try meat. You may find that it's a little more savoury than the poison you may have been served by list. •



favourite podcasts. The aim of the aggregator is to intermittently check to see if there are any new podcasts available for the shows you are subscribed to and, if so, download them without any manual intervention from you, thus making the whole podcasting experience much more effortless.

RSS Feed

This is the behind-the-scenes magic that the aggregators use to download and analyse to determine if there are any new podcasts available. This is one of the things you look for on a website, where you want to subscribe. You will usually see a "Subscribe to Podcast" button or a "Podcast RSS" button.

XML

This is what an RSS feed is comprised of. "XML" stands for E[x]tensible [M]arkup [L]anguage, used to store or transport data. XML differs from many other forms of data in that it is for the most part human-readable.

I hope this has clarified some of the most confusing terms. If you would like to see a further breakdown of some other words, do not hesitate to email me.



uncomfortable. It's nice to have the human nuances of a few 'erms' occasionally. I think the best British example of quality audio delivered in a relaxed style is Lynn Parsons's show, www.lynnparsons.net. Adam Curry's relaxed style on the Daily

quirkiness and integral poor quality audio are a successful marriage.

* Variation on a theme is something that keeps me subscribed to a podcast. I like to know the style and format, but I like something that is new each time I listen, with a

Colin Meeks is a programmer and the brains behind

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LISTENER

How to listen to a podcast

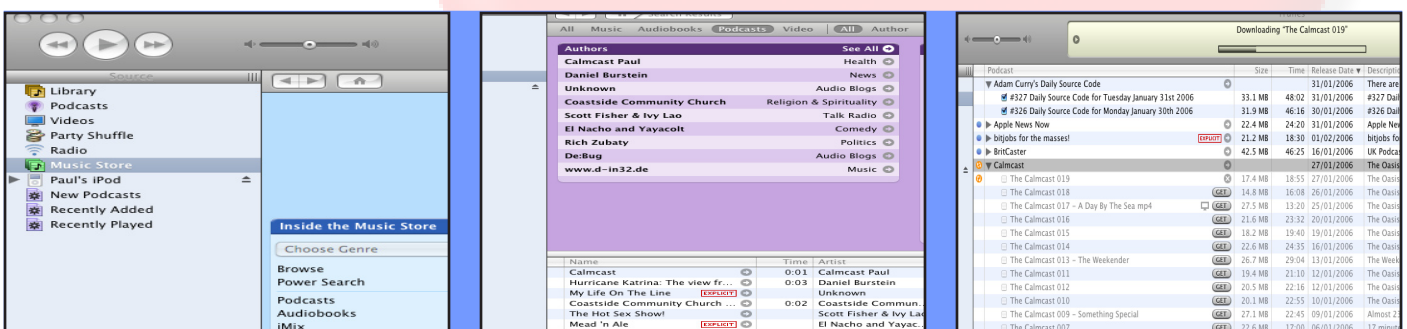
Paul Pinfield explains how easy it is to become a podcast listener

Before we get to the end of this sentence, I need you to understand something really important... You do not need an iPod, or any other mp3 player for that matter, to listen to or create your own podcasts. The only prerequisite is that you have access to a computer. Now (and I speak as an Apple fan), Apple Computer would love you to buy an iPod, and very cool they are, too, but don't believe the hype. OK, now that has been cleared up, let's get down to business.

There are two main methods of listening to podcasts: directly from the podcaster's website, or by subscribing to the podcaster's RSS feed with an appropriate piece of software known as a "podcatcher". The RSS feed is a specially formatted text file which describes things such as how many episodes of the podcast are available to download, how long each episode is and the podcast author's name. However, at this stage, as a listener you do not have to worry too much about the contents of an RSS

feed. Just be aware that it is what your podcatcher will use to find out whether there are any new episodes which need downloading.

Before you can listen to anything, however, you will need to track down a podcast that might interest you. Luckily, thanks to Apple and Yahoo, this is really easy to do. If you have Apple's free iTunes software installed on your computer, available at www.apple.com/itunes/download, simply open it up and then do the following:



1. Click on the green Music Store icon in the left hand Source pane.
2. Next, click on the Podcasts link in the Inside the Music Store pane.
3. Once the podcast page has loaded, you can browse the categories, or you can enter a term into the search box and let iTunes do the work.

4. Once you have found a podcast that interests you, click on the grey circular icon with an arrow in the centre. Here you will be presented with an extended description of the show.

5. If you decide that you would like to try out the podcast, just click on the Subscribe button, and the latest episode of the podcast will be downloaded into iTunes for you.
6. For as long as you stay subscribed, new episodes will be downloaded into iTunes as soon as they are released.





If you are not ready to subscribe just yet, iTunes gives you the opportunity to download individual episodes without subscribing.

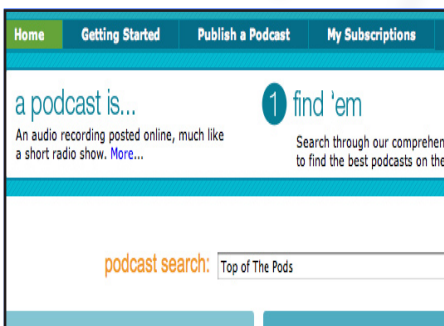
Below the current episode you will also see a greyed-out

list of previous episodes. If you enjoy the podcast, simply click on the previous episodes to download them.

To unsubscribe from a particular podcast in iTunes, simply select the podcast title

and delete it.

Yahoo approaches podcasting in a slightly different way in as much as the interface is a website, www.podcast.yahoo.com.



1. Once you have created a free account, you can search for podcasts by name or by keyword.



2. If you find something that looks promising, Yahoo gives you the chance to listen to the podcast before subscribing, which is very handy.



3. Should you wish to subscribe, the latest episode is downloaded into your iTunes software or whichever other podcatcher you choose to use.

The only frustration that you may have with Yahoo is that if you unsubscribe from the podcast on the Yahoo website, it does not remove the podcast from your podcatcher.

Finally, the other method of listening to podcasts is technically the simplest, though you do have to remember to keep going back to the podcaster's website to listen to the next episode.

1. Search for podcasts via Google or some other search engine

2. Go directly to the podcaster's website or blog, and click on the direct link to

whichever episode you would like to listen to.

3. After clicking the link, the episode will play in your browser, providing that you have the QuickTime plug-in installed.

As a podcaster, I can tell you that most podcasters prefer their listeners to subscribe to their podcast, as this guarantees that the listener will receive each new episode as soon as it is released. But obviously, it is entirely up to the listener.

So, there you have it. You now know what to do, so what are you waiting for? There are tens of thousands of podcasts

just waiting to be discovered.

And, no matter what it is that you are interested in, there will a podcast to cater to your needs. Alternatively, you might want to read Alex and Grant's reviews of their current favourite podcasts on page 21 of this issue. There is a revolution going on, and it's time to get involved. •

Paul Pinfield runs various businesses and is the producer of the Calmcast. He is in love with his Intel iMac.

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REVIEW

Roland Edirol R1

James Hastell
and
Paul Parkinson

There comes a time when the desire to record outside of your home studio becomes overwhelming, but where can you find a suitable device that has flexibility, good sound quality and a range of digital recording options? Sure, the basic MP3 player often has a record option, but this is little more than a simple Dictaphone, and “proper” professional recorders are simply out of reach.

The Marantz PMD660 is the ideal choice, but at a price range of £400 to £600 it excludes itself from the average podcaster. Enter the Edirol R1 by Roland. Retailing at around £299 new, less with the discounters on line, this solid-state machine boasts a wide variety of options in a handy package about the size of a paperback book.

The R1 is joy in its simplicity. Familiarisation is a must, but it is actually fun as a well-written, clear manual with illustrations makes setting up a hassle-free task.

Yes, there are lots of buttons and options, but if



you want to record there and then, just press ‘record’ and you’re away. The features include built-in stereo microphones on the top edge that pick up a conversation with ease; you have hands-on level control as well as a range of filters to combat most conditions. The various

digital recording options are excellent, ranging from 64kbps MP3 all the way to glorious 24-bit WAV recordings.

A big selling point to me was the ability to plug in a microphone. There is no phantom power on the R1, so you’ll either need a battery-powered mic or a mic





which requires no power at all. Walking around with a reporters' type mic gives you a certain level of credibility, but on the other hand a tie clip is ideal for discretion. Interestingly, I used a £1 cheapo-cheapo mic with the R1 at a recent Bass Day event in central London with surprisingly good results

A fabulous package, well thought out and put together

– more a testament to the R1 than the £1 microphone, I think!

Solid state is a phrase coined in the seventies and, going from strength to strength with the iPod Nano, this technology carries on in this machine with the use of readily available Compact Flash cards in a wide range of memory sizes; the card that comes with it, a 64 MB, will give you around a hour's recording time. The whole



thing is powered by 2 AA batteries, so economics here is an asset. Be aware, though, that the batteries drain pretty fast, so make sure you keep a supply with you at all times when you're out and about – but they're cheap to buy and readily available, so this should not be an issue.

Included in the package are a USB lead to transfer files to your computer, a mains power supply, a 64 MB flash card, a pouch for protection, a manual and supplemental instructions. Noticeably missing was the inevitable CD-ROM but that's no problem with USB, just plug it in, turn it on and the computer recognises it as an extra hard drive, making file transfer quick and easy. Failing that, a simple cheap flash card reader will do the same job. In fact, the only thing that stops you using it from opening the box is the lack of batteries.

One feature that has often been a problem in the past with MP3 machines is the menu selection options; Edirol have made this easy with the use of a thumb wheel at the side that flips the menus to and fro. The R1 also has a selection of sound filters that can be applied before, during or after the recording, ranging from a noise limiter, anti-hum, de'esser, EQ and reverb, to name but a few.

On the downside, and speaking from personal experience, the built in mics only work when the DYN mic option is selected from the side button. This is, I think, a flaw in the design. Take care to be sure that this is selected correctly and that the input level is high enough – there is a "level meter" in the display options and a limiter which both work very well. I didn't, and the wedding party concert by the Gothic Chickens (no, really, they're jolly good) on Portland in the summer was gone for ever.... •

Pros: just about everything – a fabulous package, well thought out and put together.

Cons: sensitive built-in mics pick up 'handling' noise. Battery life can be a little on the low side. Would recommend the use of rechargeable NI-HM at 2000 to 2600 mAh.

James Hastell is an occasional co-host (Fridays) on the Richard Vobes podcast

<http://vobes.com>
james.hastell@podcastusermagazine.com

Paul Parkinson claims to be still learning about podcasting – particularly getting a decent sound. Paul presents The Flashing12 Podcast and is occasionally helped by his wife, GeekGirlUK

<http://flashing12.blogspot.com>
paul.parkinson@podcastusermagazine.com

PODCASTER

I've recorded a Podcast – now what do I do with it?

Paul Parkinson looks at the podcaster's next step

This is the first in a series of articles intended to introduce the newbie podcaster to some real-world tips and tricks for getting your 'cast distributed, listened to and having a healthy feedback loop in place with a forum or two.

So right now your podcast is a pretty large MP3 file sitting on your hard disk – what now?

Firstly, a little background. I came into podcasting with a basic knowledge and love of audio. I'm a hi-fi and music loony, and I'd been involved with bands, live performance and recording studios in the deep and distant past. So what did that actually mean for getting a podcast distributed and picked up by a potential audience? Frankly, not very much.

The keys to getting your podcast out there are distribution, awareness-building and content. There are many ways to approach the issue of content but, I am sorry to say, without good content your podcast

is going to be rubbish. There is a huge variety of podcasts out there covering hundreds if not thousands of subjects and styles and some of the successful ones are, to my ears, rubbish! You're not going to know if your 'cast is rubbish until you realise that you're 20 shows in and you've only got three listeners – and one of those is your mum.

This is how and what I did. Your results may vary, but if I can help you avoid some of the rat holes I fell into (and luckily they were quite few and far between) then I'll be happy.

I went with www.1and1.com (one of the largest hosting and domain companies) and grabbed the domain name, www.theflashing12.com. You should aim to have the domain name of the podcast the same as your podcast. It doesn't matter if it's a plain ".com", a ".co.uk" or a ".com.au" or whatever – get

the domain and register it. This is crucial, as people will remember the website easier if it's the same as your podcast and vice versa. As your experience and knowledge of the internet grows, you will want to do more with your own site. Grab that domain name now and it will be there ready for you to get clever. If your

As your experience grows, you will want to do more with your own site.

podcast is called "Soap Stars", then don't end up with www.wobblynetservice.com/users/joebloggs/podcast/soapstars/index.html, as people won't remember it. And don't click through the link -- I made it up, Smart Alec!

The same advice goes for registering your own name (and those of the members of your family) as domains – but that's a different story.

Once the podcast domain name is registered, >>>



you'll need to arrange the distribution. Initially I tried to do this directly from the web page I had built with

I heard on another podcast that someone has got an enormous bill for the bandwidth they consumed

my hosting service. If you do this, too, it may well be the biggest mistake you'll make. I heard on another podcast that someone got an enormous bill for the bandwidth they consumed. If your podcast takes off, you'll soon end up with a soul-crushing bill from your web-hosting provider as well. Typically, these guys will only give you a few gigabytes of bandwidth each month – one show I put out last month got nearly 2,600 downloads which, because it was a 15Mb file, equated to about 40 gigabytes of download. That would have cost a lot of money....

Luckily for me I had heard of this issue before it became a problem and was looking for alternatives. I was pointed towards Liberated Syndication just in the nick

of time. Libsyn (www.libsyn.com) is a podcaster's dream – for a very low monthly fee, Libsyn provides an unlimited bandwidth service plus a primitive blog. For US\$5 (which is about GB£3.50) a month

they'll give you 100Mb of on-line storage, an RSS feed (believe me, you won't want to play with these just yet) and no limits to the number of downloads.

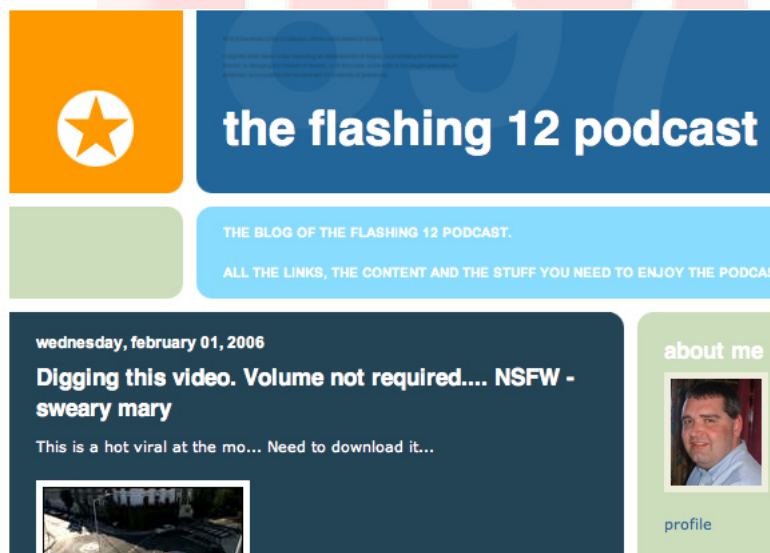
separate from your own personal email. Why not use your own? In my opinion, a separate account provides an extra layer of security – people won't have your personal email address unless you want them to. Should you make it big and take off in podcast land, you won't want email from your Aunty Mary in Australia being mixed up with audio feedback on your article from the last show.

I use Google's Gmail (flashing12@gmail.com). It's very easy to set up and has plenty of tools to manage the deluge of email you're sure to be receiving as a result of your fabulous podcast. Adam Curry is always going on about the limited amount of space he has on Gmail, but for the average podcaster, nearly 3 gigabytes should be more than enough for now!

So you've got the distribution and a basic feedback loop sorted. Next time I'll drill down into how to use them

better; how you can integrate a Libsyn RSS feed into a Blogger page and how you can build the awareness of your podcast.

Have a good time until next time, and happy podcasting! •



Paul Parkinson as he lives and breathes

So if your podcast turns out to be the next Daily Source Code or Daily Breakfast you'll be home free – for the beginning beginner in podcasting, Libsyn rocks.

The next thing you'll need is an email account that is

PODCASTER

Keeping going, keeping growing

Simon Toon describes how to grow your audience

Some people think of podcasts as radio shows for even the smallest of niches. Others think of podcasts as a cool new method for receiving mainstream radio content on an MP3 player. This is very narrow-minded thinking; and it's not just listeners that think this – many podcasters seem to think this way, too!

Podcasting is a new medium with unique attributes. For

rearing”, “a round up of all the latest news in gerontology”, “a showcase of the latest ukelele music”, or “a modern version of Name That Tune”. These may be perfectly good starting points, but cross-breeding established formats or reviving old formats is just not good enough – as a podcaster you should resist becoming stuck in a rut or cliché, and instead you must think outside the box and come up

promo and a press release.

Collaborate

Certainly, podcasting enables a show to get all the air time it needs – no matter how small its audience. Its audience, however, is perhaps its strongest asset. The podcast audience is highly internet-enabled and spends a lot of time online. These characteristics must be capitalised upon. They have a superior capability to give feedback, to spread the word and to contribute to a podcast's content.

Firstly, the audience has a superior capability to give feedback. They can be called upon for voting, and as they can vote on a web site, a higher quality of voting system can be employed. Television and radio shows cannot assume their audience has internet access, so they must use technologies such as mobile phone text messages, which do not allow the same level of detail. Their voting systems, therefore, are normally limited to a single multiple-choice question. A podcast's web site can carry voting systems with as many questions as a listener has the appetite for, and each question can have multiple answers or a grading

Many podcasts are based on a simple idea, such as “a Question-Time-style show on the subject of Badger-rearing”

your podcast to thrive and survive it needs to take into account the things that make podcasting different, and ideally use them to its best advantage. That way it will not only keep going, but your audience will keep growing.

Existing content produced for another medium, such as broadcast radio or television, should not be simply saved off to MP3 and called a podcast. I fart in their general direction.

Many podcasts are based on a simple idea, such as “a Question-Time-style show on the subject of Badger-

with new twists, incorporating the limitations of the medium (such as its time-shifting), and taking full advantage of its unique properties. So here are some things to take into account...

Innovate

Podcasters must continuously come up with new ideas to keep their shows fresh. Once the podcaster is bored, the audience will get bored. Every time you do something new, consider whether it is newsworthy. This could be an ideal opportunity for a new





system, giving you a much finer detail of responses.

Consider all the available community tools – for example: comments, forums, wikis, flickr, frappr, and whatever else is new – to build an audience community feel.

Mark Hunter said that podcasts should be art and not wallpaper

Secondly, the podcast audience has additional tools that they might use to spread the word, such as e-mail, instant messaging and blogs. Each can be used to spread the word about this great podcast they're listening to.

Thirdly, the more creative listeners will be aching to contribute some content to a podcast that welcomes it, so the wise podcaster will build that in. When a listener hears their contribution featured in your podcast, they are much more likely to spread the word, thus recruiting new listeners for you. Some of those newly recruited listeners will choose to contribute to your podcast, and the feedback loop is completed! Some listeners will go on to become podcasters, and they will probably never forget the podcast that inspired them to start; they therefore can be relied upon to provide further

promotion. Also, influences from collaborators can help to keep your podcast fresh and innovative.

Cross-pollinate

A wise podcaster will build relationships with other podcasters. Again this draws in fresh ideas to stop a podcast from getting stuck in a rut.

If you play someone else's promo on your podcast, then they are more likely to play your promo on their podcast.

As your podcast is so much better than everyone else's, then naturally you will come out better off in the exchange.

Propagate

Recruit listeners who are not already podcast listeners.

This is good for the podcast community in general. Established podcast listeners will often have a saturated list of subscriptions, whereas a newbie will have capacity in their listening day.

Educate

Teach your listeners how to subscribe to podcasts. That way they will boost your figures, and you're more likely to retain them as a listener, because they don't need to remember to download your show.

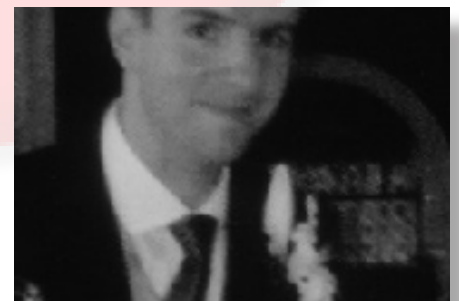
Truncate

A lot of people say that 40 minutes is the perfect length

for a podcast, because that is the length of the average commute. Well, the average person probably only has two commutes in their day, so if you're going to do a 40-minute show, you'd better be certain your show is in your listener's top two shows. If they already subscribe to two daily podcasts of 40-minute duration, there may be no room for yours.

Mark Hunter said that podcasts should be art and not wallpaper. The longer your podcast, the more likely it is to be treated as wallpaper. So try to keep it short.

Podcasters who think along these lines, and keep an open mind, will be able to make the most of the podcast medium. They will also achieve results that cannot be achieved in any other medium and will attract a great audience. •



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Column

Mark Hunter has decided that he is going to talk about himself in the third person to make him sound more interesting. Mark presents the world famous Tartanpodcast

<http://www.tartanpodcast.com>
mark.hunter@podcastusermagazine.com



When you start podcasting, it's usually because you want to find your voice. Now, you already have your voice; it's heard in your home by your wife or husband and your children, it's heard in your place of employment by your colleagues and it's heard down the local by your friends.

But for you as a new podcaster, you desire your voice to have greater reach than just your home and your immediate surroundings. That's why you want to start podcasting -- you've got something to say and you want to be heard.

Perhaps one of the first issues that you'll encounter as a new podcaster is quality related, and that's usually due to the hardware. You've plugged in your cheap Argos-purchased headset and mic. You've sat comfortably in front of your computer. You've had a wee bit of a ramble to yourself. And you've recorded it. On playing it back, what have you noticed? You sound small. Your voice doesn't have any real body or weight. You say 'um' and 'ah' and smack your lips more than you ever realised. But putting those common discoveries aside, did you actually have anything to say?

And that's one of the key areas that, from day one, you need to address as a new podcaster. With over 10,000 podcasts listed at podcastalley.com alone, people all over the world are finding their voice, and your challenge now won't be overcome by throwing money at it - a new mic, a mixer, some audio processing trick.

Like any produced 'thing', a podcast is only as strong as its weakest component. And if the weakest component in your podcast is your subject matter, you will struggle to get yourself heard in the cacophony of voices making up the world of podcasting. That's why the mantra 'content is king' was born, and while it's easily said ("content is king content is king content is king", etc.), it requires thought and effort to execute.

In the same way each of our individual voices is different from everyone else's, each of us has defining interests, stories borne out of personal experience, opinions shaped by our politics or upbringing, tastes in music and so on that separate and identify us from everyone else. The key to having a podcast that allows your voice to be heard is to find the thing that gives weight to your voice. Usually it will be something you're passionate - not just knowledgeable - about. And while there may be other podcasts, or voices, out there about that very topic or genre, it will be your passion that will give your voice its clarity, distinction and weight. Something that hundreds of pounds thrown at studio gear can't buy.

So after listening back to your recorded ramblings, do listen for the vocal quirks that will through time drive people nuts, and work to iron them out. Do consider buying a few bits and pieces of audio gear to improve the quality of the recording. But more important, invest time and thought into the subject about which you're going to podcast. Find the subject that allows you to put your passion into it.

Doing so will give your voice the ability to reach people that no amount of hardware could ever achieve. •

Mark: My Words

Colin Meeks is a programmer and the brains behind

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I'd wanted to start my own podcast for a few months, as an extension of the Indie Launchpad website (<http://www.indie.launchpad.com>), where I feature reviews of bands and artists. I thought it would be a good idea to feature the same bands and artists in a podcast. So one day I sat down at the computer with my crappy little mic, and off I went. After toying around for a few hours, I was ready to start my new mega production.

I'd started off with some brief notes, listing the things I wanted to cover and all other relevant information, like web addresses and email, etc. However I just couldn't string several words together without pausing with an "errr", or "ahhhhh" or numerous other devices for pausing while I thought of what I wanted to say. So I put down my pad and left the podcast for a few days. This happened every time I tried to get the podcast recorded.

So, I thought, why not script each segment, then that way I can get rid of all the pausing and vocal gaffes and have a nice clean show. And that is what I did. I got to the end of the show feeling very satisfied with myself. Here was 18 minutes of great music and some nice clear, succinct words from me. Well, that's what I thought until I listened to the podcast. The music, of course, was fine, but my voice was horrible. It sounded like some awful kind of Apple/Mac, speech-synthesised voice, only not as friendly. Again I walked away and pondered my podcast future.

After a couple of days it dawned on me that no matter how hard I tried, my podcast was never going to be perfect. I decided to send out my sample podcast to a few select people, just to make sure it wasn't painful listening, and I received some very positive feedback. Yes, my voice needed some work, but I got some great advice and decided to release the podcast as is.

The following week I did another podcast. This time I decided to do it all off the cuff, with my brief notes, and wow, what a difference. Yes, the pauses and stuff are there, but the show, on the whole, feels a lot more natural. I recently released the third episode, and I'm getting there. It's going to take work and lots of practice, but I'm on my way and already have quite a respectable audience, so I must be doing something right.

It's better to have something out there to build on, as opposed to holding back all the time until you have something you consider perfect. I'm not saying you just release the first thing you record; you have to have something that people want to listen to. Audiences can be quite forgiving if they can see what you are trying to achieve. Here's some of the advice I received; hopefully, it can be of use:

1. Slow down, it's not a race. This also gives you the opportunity to think a bit longer about what you want to say
2. If are passionate about your subject matter, don't be afraid to let it show
3. Don't think of yourself talking to an audience, think of yourself talking to a friend; intimacy is the key

My last piece of advice is to have fun and enjoy doing your podcast. If you don't, it will soon show.



Perfection

MUSIC

How Podcasting is helping independent bands bring their music to the masses

Phil Coyne

Picture the scene. Early 2005 in a small, quiet house in central England. A 19-year-old guy who previously attempted to learn to play the drums, and failed, sits at his computer listening to a Podcast for the very first time, amazed that he is able to listen to some guy in the US talk with another guy and play music – their own music. The concept immediately has him thinking of the many “radio shows” he had recorded with a friend while at school. Only this time, there actually might be a chance for people to hear what he had been trying to say.

That was my very first experience of podcasting, listening to Steve Lacey sit down and have a chat with a friend from his band, Spank. They talked about everyday things, podcasting, music and their band’s impending CD-release party. I was immediately bitten by the

podcasting bug and wanted to know more. How did it all work? What did I need to do to get my own one out there? These answers were quite

but as I started to find and email bands via UKBands.net, I discovered that a lot of the UK scene had absolutely no idea what podcasting was. A

good portion of the emails I sent out to bands were left unanswered, either because they had no idea what I was talking about or because they just weren’t used to people emailing them with a request to play their music.

As the weeks went on and the emails to bands around the world started flying out of my small

flat just outside Birmingham, I started to see a lot of local bands realising that getting their music played on a podcast would allow them to open it up to a very large audience.

Typically, many bands around the UK have a website; some even have their CDs available to buy online, so the amount of material available to podcasters is almost never-ending. Since the launch of the Podsafe Music



Uncle Seth: Immediate increase in sales

hard to come by, but after about a week I managed to hastily cobble together a very quiet podcast entitled “El’s Thoughts”.

After the first show was complete and uploaded, I decided to do some research into the independent music scene. I obviously wasn’t the only person doing a podcast concentrating on music that wasn’t in the mainstream,





Network last year, it's now even easier for bands that have their music available as an MP3 to enable podcasters from around the world to promote their music for them, absolutely free.

Quite a few bands have gained a lot of publicity from having their music listed on the Podsafe Music Network. The Scotland-based bands Hotrod Cadets, Amplifico and Hollow Horse are just a few that have been heavily featured on podcasts from around the world over the past six months.

Although not a major factor for a lot of bands, podcasting has definitely proved that it has the potential to sell CDs for those that are featured. Earlier

found the interview and music so compelling that he went out and brought the album straight after listening.

As we put the first year of podcasting behind us, it will be very interesting to see



Barnsley's izzie Voodoo

how many bands actually manage to carve themselves a deal with a record label from play on Podcasts alone.

With increasingly easy-to-use and affordable recording tools available, we are already seeing some artists using podcasting not only to promote their music but also to allow their

fans to join them backstage on tour, at a recording session for their new album or to an exclusive performance of their gig.

Cardiff based singer/songwriter Pippa Rogers has

been podcasting monthly since late 2005, sharing her knowledge of the music industry and playing tracks from local artists. Similarly, Barnsley-based izzie Voodoo has been able to secure a

regular replay of her monthly podcast on ExtremelndieRadio. New York based quartet The Lascivious Biddies have gone one step further and enabled listeners to follow them all over the world, recording songs and talking about issues that affect their everyday lives.

Record labels are also beginning to understand the potential that podcasting has for their artists. Earlier this month a number of labels submitted music to the Podsafe Music Network, enabling podcasters to play, among others, The Subways, Tom Waits and Marianne Faithfull. Time will tell if the 'majors' will allow the same to be done with acts that they have signed, but it's definitely the opinion of many podcasters and musicians that the longer the music industry ignores podcasting, the more naïve they will appear.

A revolution is in progress, welcome aboard. •

Phil Coyne: Host of the Bitjobs for the Masses! podcast

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Cardiff based singer/songwriter Pippa Rogers has been podcasting monthly since late 2005

this month I interviewed Jay Moonah from the Toronto-based band Uncle Seth. A few days after the show was available for download, I found a review of the show in which the owner of the blog

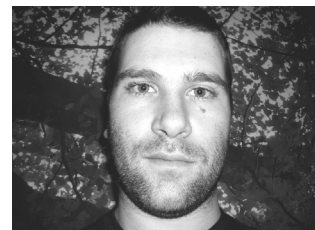
COLUMN

Chris Skinner is a radio producer who has a dream of making a sitcom about a cricket team made up of techno DJ's, with David Hasselhoff as the lead. One of the 1st British Podcasters, Chris's show Simulacrum has won a worldwide audience

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Radio has bought into podcasting and will benefit for it...says Radio Producer Chris Skinner to Simulacrum's host with the, er, time — Chris Skinner



Unlike most Brits who were attracted to podcasting in the 'good old days' of 2004, I was lucky enough to already get paid to make radio. I had been a radio producer for two years or so, but when I started writing 'Simulacrum' in December of 2004, none of my colleagues and few of my peers had even heard of this expanding medium. By February, Pepsi Max had paid for my company to produce five 'X-rated' podcasts to accompany a radio campaign, and the radio industry's links with this medium had begun.

Since then podcasts have achieved worldwide fame – every radio station has one (a BBC podcast pipped my own Pepsi Max Podcast to a New Media Age Award), Ricky Gervais does a version of his XFM show (without the music getting in the way) and the BBC are set to expand their podcast trial to 50 shows. With LBC and Virgin (whose James Cridland is one of the industry's sharper users of technology) in on the act, it's quite feasible that more than half the iTunes top 100 will soon come from traditional British broadcasters.

Every pitch I was involved with in 2005 had me and my rivals trying to out-do each other with exciting podcast ideas in hope of providing 'added value'. Podcasts have become more than that, though. The BBC, and (to a lesser extent) commercial radio are realising that these bits of audio can improve the listening experience, they can help gain new listeners (Melvyn Bragg's 'In Our Time,' anyone?) and they can keep old ones excited.

2006 will see the true arrival of the podcast in the radio industry – for the first time ever, radio stations and production companies will be allowed to submit podcasts for the prestigious Sony Radio Awards, for talkability alone — don't rule out a few nominations.

Me personally, I see podcasting as a way that I will get all the extra footage that I can't fit into a 57-minute broadcast to an audience that desperately wants it, as a teaser to forthcoming series and as a programming avenue entirely in its own right. My peers in the radio industry would be wise to think the same: It's a revolution, baby!

Links:

Pepsi Max Podcast - <http://www.pepsi.co.uk/max/#>

BBC Podcasts - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/downloadtrial/>

Ricky Gervais Podcast - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/rickygervais>

LBC Podcasts - <http://podcast-audio.chrysalis.com/>

The Revolution Has Begun



Alex Bellinger is the creator of the SmallBizPod podcast. He also runs Origin PR which specialises in public relations for small and medium-sized businesses

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The Bluggcast – <http://blugg.com/cast/>

There are some podcasts that appear as regular as clockwork. You know where you are with them and enjoy them. There are others that disappear off the map for weeks and then delight you with an unexpected return.

One that I'm always pleased to see randomly pop into my podcatcher is a UK tech-based podcast by two rather delightful beings from another world. If you wanted to sum the show up in a few words, you'd say it was the tech ramblings of two surreal Terry & June alien geeks. In other words, a must listen!

After transmogrifying their space craft into a London terraced house, Blugg and Doctoe, the male and female hosts of the show, present their own distinctive take on tech news. This is mixed with some great music (check out Koala at www.planetkoala.com), some bizarre incidental music, quirky English humour, funny voices and equal doses of domestic bliss and strife. What's more Blugg must have one of the sexiest male voices in podcasting ... or at least so I'm told. As for Doctoe, many British podcasters have met her and have been entranced by her stunning ... tentacles.

Critics of the Bluggcast might say it's way too long and way too random. If you like your podcasts short, sharp and informative, this is not for you. People joke about bloggers who write about their cats. If you don't like cats, then this podcast is not for you. If you think you're going to get an English Dawn & Drew, then Blugg and Doctoe are not for you.

Otherwise give it a try. It's well worth an hour of your time and hell, it only comes out about once a month these days – it's not like keeping up with the Daily Source Code!

Highlights for me over the last 20 or so episodes have been the robotic Skype interview with Dave Winer, Blugg and Doctoe rowing (with each other, not a boat) in San Francisco and letting their alien alter-egos slip, the visiting Manc and the band in the living room.

Daily Source Code – <http://live.curry.com/>

Podfather with a voice as viscous as unfiltered bio-diesel provides podcasting inspiration with big hair, big ego and a plane full of cannabis.

Daily Smalls Code – <http://rogersmalls.blogspot.com/>

Small but perfectly formed podcast from lonely comic genius – think a teenage, mobile phone-toting Morrissey stalking the stars of podcasting and rifling through the rubbish bins of suburbia. – Alex Bellinger

PODCAST REVIEWS



To find out just what we as a nation are watching, TV has BARB (British Audience Research Bureau). A lovely acronym, but one that's beaten hands-down in this brave new technological, whizz-bang world by PARP (Podcasting Audio Research Panel). This month I've been PARP'ed and asked to select and review three of the shows subscribed to here in Three From Leith Towers; a difficult task given that I have over 15 shows set up in RSSRadio! My choice of shows may reveal something of my psyche, rather like having my tea-leaves read; so let me begin this insight into the mind of a disturbed human being with the following:



Grant Mason is a professionally self-conscious Scot, if that were possible. However, he still manages to produce the fabulous Three From Leith podcast

<http://www.threefromleith.com>
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Whack My Bush – www.whackmybush.com

Originating in the UK, this is a politically-minded comedy show done by a small team of impressionists. Central characters appearing in every episode are usually Tony Blair, deputy PM John Prescott, George Bush, presidential pooch Barney, Condoleeza Rice and Arnie. Secondary characters making the odd appearance include Big Brother's famed thicko Jade Goody, Donald Rumsfeld (played as Yoda), Sly Stallone, Osama Bin Laden, Jacques Chirac, the Queen, Prince Philip and Mr T, to name but a few.

Reminiscent of mid-80's satirical UK TV show Spitting Image without the pictures, the characters are all imbued with their own idiosyncratic (and often stereotypical) foibles and characteristics, leading to that sense of cosy familiarity which stays with you throughout each storyline. Tony is vain, well aware that George is a moron but unable to escape from the fact that when George says "Jump", he can't help but say 'How high?'. George is idiotic and childlike in his worldview, and more often than not he's guided in his actions by his dog Barney, who's the brains behind the presidency. Prescott's aim in life is to eat constantly, preferably something curried, and then fart like there's no tomorrow. Condie's played like a blaxploitation female lead, referring to everyone as 'sugar' whilst attempting to get them into bed. And Arnie's.....well.....Arnie.

Guaranteed to make me laugh, WMB is NOT a family-friendly show as the language can be rather blue. It may not even be a US-friendly show, as many Americans may see the character portraits as either too close to the bone to be funny or may just find the stereotyping offensive. However, no-one in this show is given any sympathetic treatment so the UK half are parodied and poked fun of in just the same way and just as viciously.

It's hard to accurately give you a sense of just what this madness is like, but let me try. Our heroes go undercover as an Abba tribute band, Yabba Dabba Doo, to rescue George from under the noses of French security. Or the gang get miniaturised to get into George's body (a la the Fantastic Voyage) to fight off the Nanobot Afghanis who have invaded his body. Tony Blair trying to impress the judges of World Leader 2005 by playing the US National Anthem very badly on guitar, only to lose out to a goat as the winner. Prescott following through (the sound effects for this are tremendous) always makes this toilet-humour obsessive snicker like a schoolboy.





It's just one of those shows you have to hear to believe, so rush on over to www.whackmybush.com and prepare to be amused.

Tea With Hungry Lucy – <http://blog.hungrylucy.com>

Some bands have embraced podcasting as means of communicating with their fans, and US-based Hungry Lucy do it with aplomb. As well as their website, they do an occasional videocast and their weekly Tea With Hungry Lucy, where War-N and Christa Belle (often in their pyjamas) sit down and chat over a cup of tea (though of late War-N's taken to having a wee dram instead, complete with clinking ice cubes). They play and then dissect one of their songs, revealing the influences, inspiration, meaning and musical and lyrical development behind it. It's a fascinating glimpse into the creative process. Afterwards they'll natter about what they've each been up to over the week and what music they've been listening to.

They're a very cosy and close pair, and their tone is relaxed, quiet and jokey. In fact there's quite an intimate atmosphere between the pair and the audience, so much so that Christa will occasionally break out of quiet lady-like contemplation with a deafening belch, yet no-one feels offended. It's like being part of a loving family when you listen in, with pet names bandied about, the cat wandering in and jumping on Christa's lap, and the pair throwing Little Britain impressions back and forward (War-N's originally from the UK, which explains why he's into the show).

It's one of the few shows that I genuinely look forward to every week; the level of friendliness and humour are perfect and it's a delight being drawn into their little world and being part of it for that precious half-hour. Laaahvely !!

The Bob and AJ Show – www.bobandaj.info

When first got into listening to podcasts, I saw a link from the tartanpodcast site to these 'rum-fuelled Canadians who discuss hockey..' I thereafter avoided trying the show as I had visions of drunken, foul-mouthed hock-jocks

boring the pants off me talking about a sport I have no interest in. How wrong I was...

I have no idea what made me download and listen to them after that, but listen I did and I've been hooked ever since to this weekly show which mixes chat, discussion and music from the perspective of these two Canadian family men and best friends.

Together since they flirted with pirate radio in pre-internet days, it's easy to tell how deep their friendship runs. They finish each other's sentences, they pretend to be upset with each other and they often crack each other up with unexpected jokes and unintentionally hilarious comments (viz the time they started a show by saying hello in other languages, and suddenly AJ barked out "Heil !", resulting in me (and Bob) just about wetting ourselves laughing. Another of those had-to-be-there moments, but those around me on the bus that morning won't forget it...

In fact, there's no hockey (except when Bob got a thick lip playing it one night and had to explain why his speech was sounding weird) but there is a barrel-load of amiable chat and discussion on topics plucked from news stories and daily life, surveys like "Who's the best drummer ?", interruptions by wives Cat from the Catfish Show and Interplanet Janet and top-class music from Canadian artists selected from Magnatunes and Garageband. Let's not forget the witty thoughts of their good friend Fuzzy Logic either, whose philosophical meanderings are occasionally phoned in, or their educational series on French swearwords. "Tabarnac !"

As a whole, this is a well-rounded, homely, funny and friendly show by two of the most amiable Canadians on the planet. I'll forgive them for their Rogic Conglomerate's rendition of 'Auld Lang Syne' at New Year simply because it was, to a Scotsman, the funniest thing since their fellow countryman Jimmy Doohan attempted a Scottish accent and came over sounding more Paddy Murphy than Scotty. Drop by and catch them. – Grant Mason



Podcast User

NUMBER ONE FOR PODCAST NEWS, REVIEWS AND TIPS

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