

What is it?

Defining Podcasting

Also:

Friends in Tech, Dr Floyd,
Quirky Podcasts, Reviews and
much more!



PUM

ABOUT PODCAST USER MAGAZINE

Each month, our dedicated contributors will review a range of hardware and software to guide you to the right buying choice. We will also review a wide variety of podcasts, bringing you diversity and entertainment from both mainstream and niche.

Advice and help

Podcast User Magazine staff have years of combined experience. So, if you have any problems or would like any information, just email us at the address below. We're here to help.

help@podcastusermagazine.com



SUBMISSIONS

We are always looking for great new talent. So if you have a topic that you would like to write about, please email us at the address below.

We would be glad to hear from you.

submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

COMMENTS

If you have a comment, criticism or even praise for what we do please don't hesitate to let us know. We can't get better at what we do without you!

general.comments@podcastusermagazine.com

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Podcast User Magazine

invites and encourages submissions from all regarding podcasting. Any opinions on any subjects expressed by the co-founders or contributors in their podcasts are theirs alone and do not reflect the editorial opinion of the magazine.

EDITORIAL

This month's highlight for us here in ol' Blighty was PodcastCon 2006. Nearly 200 UK, European and some very welcome US podcasters turned out to discuss, disseminate and digress on and around the subject of podcasting. Some spoke drivel, others were driven. Notwithstanding the odd diatribe the whole day was delivered with a degree of decorum and decency except for one thing: Stealth Disco.

For those of you who haven't seen it (here is the link) it was the perfect way to finish the day; a light hearted yet cruelly funny video of people secretly dancing behind other people. Excellent!

And on to the evening where drinking and digestion were the order of the day – many beers were drunk (even Mr. C had a beer – woo) and even more stealth disco was completed. Someone nearly got thrown out of the pub for turning off the TV's with their TV-B-Gone – only bad people would do that eh? I mean it was only a bit of fun... I was also informed that I gave Adam Curry a bit of an earbashing but I don't remember. Apparently someone also spent far too long talking to Donna from Amplifico but I don't remember doing that.

And on to this month's mag. Once again the Review Roulette team swing into action with some corking reviews (pun intended), and we look into the world of the Francopod when Janet Parkinson visits France and French podcasting. Paul and Judy talk to The Radio Adventures of Doctor Floyd, and Tom Goskar has a fascinating article on podcasting archaeology. Finally I would like to welcome Conrad Slater, creator of the amazing Spainful Films, as a contributor to PUM. Conrad gives us his take on video podcasting / vodcasting / whatever in this month's super soaraway Podcast User Magazine!

PS: Did we tell you we've passed 100,000 downloads! Thanks everyone for your support.

PPS: If you like the magazine, subscribe and get it delivered free the same way you get your podcast fix. If you really like it – tell you listeners and friends! Thanks. And on with the show.





Podcast User Magazine
100,000
Downloads to date



ID3 Magazine - StreetIQ.com

ID3 Magazine was scheduled to launch in May 2006 as a printed magazine but during its development it was decided to switch the format to PDF. Shortly after that announcement Street IQ, a leading on-line provider of business audio content and services, announced the re-launch as an on-line news service for podcasters.

<http://www.id3mag.com/>



Don't judge a book by its cover

iDisguise have recognised the problem of having a valuable piece of electronic gear in full view of the general public and have come up with this clever solution to disguise your iPod when it's not in use.

This is only a theft deterrent; it does not guarantee that your digital devices will not be stolen. *(I'd be annoyed to find an iPod instead of candy, personally)*

<http://idisguise.com>

iPod - now you can wear it. <http://www.kenpofashion.com/mens/demo.swf>



Kenpo Inc of Los Angeles CA has come up with what must be the ultimate iPod attachment ever, by designing a range of male and female designer jackets that actually control your iPod. By clever use of a patented 100% fabric-control system, which in layman's terms means 'no wires', you control your machine from your jacket sleeve.

No additional power is needed, the system supports most iPods and the fabric is machine washable... just remember to remove your player first. *(And take the jacket off, of course)*



Podcasting NEWS

Podcasting News, the place to find what's going on in the podcasting world, mentioned PUM on the 17th of November. We're flattered, Thank you.

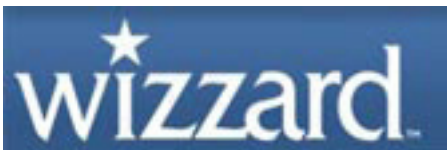
(What's that Paul . . . we sent it in . . . oh)

<http://www.podcastingnews.com/>



Podcast Pickle have added yet another string to thier bow, called Podcast Tree. Here you can see how podcasts have influenced each other and even add casts that have influenced you to your tree.

<http://pcp5.podcastpickle.com/app/podtree/index.pcp>



Wizzard have revealed in their latest shareholder announcement that it is now the largest podcasting network in the world. With the recent acquisition of Liberated Syndication (LibSyn) added to their portfolio, they join Switchpod and Blast Podcast. The combined organizations can deliver 43 million podcasts to around 13 million people worldwide.

(hmm, I have a little catching up to do, then)

Podcasters turn promoters

Howard Jones turned to podcasting to help with the promotion of the 'Hitmakers' tour featuring himself along with ABC and Toyah, by releasing the song to podcasters across the globe to download and play for free on their shows. The tour opened in November; its final two shows in the UK are on December 1 in Portsmouth and December 7 in Tunbridge Wells. Further information on the 'Hitmakers' tour and Howard Jones:

info@howardjones.com Further information on Podcasting from:
nigel@podcastlive.co.uk



MobiPod, the mobile podcast service of Bamboo Mediacasting and Britcaster, has partnered with Net Talk Radio, a leading internet radio group, to deliver Mobile Radio. Net Talk Radio's most popular shows can now be delivered to mobile users globally, and enjoyed on the go.

www.mobipod.britcaster.com

<http://www.nettalkradio.co.uk>



January 2007

Macworld Expo 2007 will feature Podcasting Day, a day-long series of sessions for podcasters, hosted by Dusty Wright and Richard Burns, the owners and hosts of the 'smart culture' audio and video podcasting site Culture Catch.

<http://www.macworldexpo.com/live/20/>

Macworld Expo 2007

imagine. inspire. ignite.

Conference: January 8-12, 2007

Expo: January 9-12, 2007

The Moscone Center
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Macworld
Conference & Expo

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for the user...

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Visit www.mobipod.britcaster.com or email mobipod@bamboomc.com

Mobipod is powered by Bamboo Mediacasting and BritCaster.

Happy Birthday Leo



Dont ask, its rude, but if there was a page 50, that's where this picture would be.

ASK AUNTIE PUM

Don't be shy, got a problem, just can't get your head around something, drop us a line and we'll do our best to explain it in plain English, or find someone who can.

submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

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Review Roulette

Podcasting is great for niche interests. But once you've filled up your MP3 player with podcasts about your own niche interests, it's very easy to get stuck in a rut. Sure, the podcasts you already listen to may give you some recommendations on some related podcasts, but how can you find some interesting different podcasts? You could check out some podcasts at random, but you might waste a lot of time listening to some real rubbish. Well, we took that risk for you, listening to three podcasts chosen arbitrarily, and it turns out they're not rubbish at all!



Baby Talk Radio

<http://www.babytalkradio.com>

No prizes for guessing what this one's about. Baby talk radio has been around for six months now and issues a new episode about once a week. It's a good length, at about 20 minutes, and is made up of multiple segments from multiple contributors. The segmented format keeps things tight and focussed and gives a better chance of delivering something of interest to people at various stages of pregnancy and parenthood: Breastfeeding, nipples, potties, food, manoeuvring buggies, and child psychology.

The segments are contributed by various people, including parenting authors, podcasters, and ordinary parents (yes, Dads as well as Mums). It serves as something of a showcase for other podcasts or authors wanting to promote their parenting books. The contributions from other podcasts make it a good sampler for other parenting-related podcasts. The contributions from authors help to ensure the high quality of the writing. It is definitely a useful gateway to more specialised books, websites and podcasts. Contributions are also welcome from listeners via a telephone answering-machine service.

The podcast is put together in a nicely minimal way. Production values are fairly high, with a pleasant intro and outro, and a matching bumper between each segment. The host reading the intro and outro didn't mention her own name, which was a bit of a shame. I believe they use the same intro and outro every time. These aspects give a polished, though slightly impersonal feel to the whole production. This must save on production time, but I would prefer it if the show had a host stitching the whole thing together by introducing the full contents of the upcoming show and doing some announcing between each segment.

The sound quality is fairly good, though of course the segments contributed via telephone don't sound quite as good as the rest of the show. I also found the overall production to be a bit quiet – so watch out as the next podcast in your playlist may blow your ear drums!

The concept is well conceived (sorry, I couldn't resist), nicely executed and easy to consume with its taut, segmented structure. Not being a parent myself, I can't judge the quality of the advice given in this podcast, but it certainly seems to be a good taster for various topics of interest in the US parenting scene and resources available to people into babies.

Text by Simon Toon

Production: 3.2
Content: 3.3

Review Roulette

DOGWATCH SOCIAL CLUB

www.dogwatchsocialclub.com

Grab a stogie and light up for a smoke and some chat with the DogWatch Social Club.

Despite the name, this podcast has nothing to do with the canine world and everything to do with the world of cigar smoking and appreciation. Since April 2005 the hosts Bob McDuffee and R. Dale Roush have produced a weekly podcast focusing on cigar reviews along with news and discussion of cigar-related products and issues. Each week the show opens with a 'Cigar of the Week' that is chosen and smoked on the show, with Bob and Dale giving running commentary on burn patterns, drawing ease and flavor. This podcast has a consistent format with recurring segments interspersed with podsafe music tracks and general chat. The segments include 'Value Recommendation', where Bob and Dale recommend a quality cigar at a good price, 'The Dark Side' comments about Cuban cigars, and 'DWSC News', covering all that is new and timely concerning cigars. In some shows there is a quiz in which listeners can win cigar-related items from one of DogWatch Social Club's several sponsors.

With Bob residing in Florida and Dale in Colorado, this team has had challenges in creating a show from 1600 miles apart. They have settled on Skype as their means of communication, and Bob has created a hardware plan to get the show 'on tape'.

The sound quality is solid, even though there did seem to be a consistent hum in the background. Both knowledgeable hosts speak rather slowly in a laid-back and easy-going manner, so the average length of each show is around ninety minutes. Given the length and terminology used in this podcast, it is definitely for the dedicated and informed cigar smoker. As a non-smoker, this reviewer was in the dark for much of the time as to what they were speaking about.



The website for the Dog Watch Social Club is well organized and easy to navigate. There it was learned that the term 'dogwatch' is actually a nautical reference for the two-hour shipboard watches that occur between 4 pm and 8 pm so that crew can enjoy their dinner. Bob and Dale consider this a time for 'reflection and relaxation in the transition between work and home'; a perfect time for cigar smoking. After clicking the 'What's Next' tab it was found that there is a list of the cigars chosen for the next few weeks so listeners can go out purchase the 'Cigar of the Week' and smoke along while listening. One detraction from the club-like atmosphere was the lack of a comment board for listeners. All in all, this is a solid, consistent and well-produced specialty podcast. If you are a cigar connoisseur, then you may well want to join the DogWatch Social Club.

Text by Marilyn Madsen

Production: 3.0
Content: 3.8

A pie chart with a blue base and a purple slice. The text "Production: 3.0" and "Content: 3.8" is written to the right of the chart.

This month's podcasts were reviewed by:
Grant Mason
Marilyn Madsen
Simon Toon

The ratings given are the average of the scores given by our team of reviewers.
All marks out of 5.
Edited by Simon Toon.

Review Roulette



The ZA Show podcast

<http://www.thezashow.com/>

Produced by Glen and Bridgitte Verran each week from Cape Town in South Africa. With over 70 shows under their collective belts, they have a deservedly popular podcast. After last month's (frankly) negative review, it comes as a breath of fresh air to hear a show that's a quality production from start to finish. You do sometimes land lucky on the roulette table!

The Website

A clear, colourful and professional podcast site that ticks all the right boxes for once. Glen works in IT, and it shows: bullet-point shownotes for every show, a very obvious download button for each one and clear and immediately visible feed subscription links for iTunes and the show's Feedburner feed.

Production & Content

From the very start, it's obvious that Glen and Bridgitte are natural podcasters. Their speech is clear, the sound levels are spot-on and the production quality is excellent. They immediately come across as very informal, and there's an easy-going, relaxed feel to the whole show. They love their country, and that sense of pride and belonging comes through in their vocals (you can almost hear a smile in their voices) as they talk about everything South African. News, reviews, interviews, culture, language, on-the-spot recordings and sight-seeing and – of course (and this is very important to me as a music podcaster) – they champion and play the very best in South African podsafe music (in all genres, including rock, traditional and electronica)! I was particularly impressed by RSL's 'Elungelo' – what a mix of styles (electronic beats and Ladysmith Black Mambazo on choral vocals). But I digress...

I had been worried that there may not be that much to talk about each week on the subject of South Africa, but I needn't have fretted as each show covers a diverse range of topics, and there's no repetition or tired re-hashing of old subjects to fill the virtual air-time. For example, in show 73 they managed to cover 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika', the National Anthem; Glen being interviewed on the Amateur Traveler Podcast about Cape Town; the death of ex-Prime Minister PW Botha; improving safety in South Africa's train stations and carriages; the South African government ending Aids denial; a new low-cost airline; seeing James Stewart live and Glen at the protest march for democracy. A real mixed bag, and the move from topic to topic is achieved with a fluidity that's impressive and not at all forced.

Even when a guest stands in for Bridgitte, he brings a unique point of view and his own totally relaxed style to the proceedings.

The high show standards continue outside the studio, too: attending the protest march for democracy and recording his thoughts and the voices of the people protesting around him, Glen doesn't allow production quality to slip at all. Indeed, through headphones you could almost close your eyes and believe that you were there. Top-notch mobile recording – a lesson to everyone in how it can and should be done. If you're interested in hearing in insider's view of today's South Africa, either as an interested party, a possible tourist or as an ex-pat keeping up to date with life back home, then this is most definitely the show for you.

Now – how do I go about getting MY show sponsored by a wine company like the ZA Show does...?

Production: 4.2
Content: 4.2

Text by Grant Mason



Belgianchocolate/ Frank Wouters

Podcasting a la française...

Global voices
by Janet Parkinson

In my monthly search for podcasts which give a true taste of what a country's really about I was determined to uncover some French in French. Well, I got there in the end – but the wading through numerous 'how to learn French the easy way' did become a bit repetitive after the first hour!! Anyway, here we go :

Le Casse-croûte
La cuisine en mouvement..

Le Casse-Croute
www.casse-croute.fr

Here's a weekly vidcast to get those juice buds moving. 'Le Casse-Croute' describes food you can eat anywhere, anyhow and when you fancy it – and can include anything (providing it's tasty!) Vincent has a great technique (watch what for me at least is a fascinating method of crushing garlic), marvellous mixes of ingredients - salmon & pears, goats cheese and avocado ravioli, and soon to come 'chocolate pizza'!! Well produced and all washed down with some red wine at the end, it's an entertaining watch and you really don't need to speak French to grasp this one – your mouth will just be watering!



Production : 4
Content : 4

AZEROOTH .fr

LE PODCAST FRANCAIS DE WORLD OF WARCRAFT

World of Warcraft

www.Azeroth.fr

If, like me, you live with males addicted to online gaming (or perhaps more likely – you are one) then this podcast had to get a mention. World of Warcraft has around 7.5 million players worldwide, claiming to be one of the largest out there. So Patrick and Daniel have come up with a good concept. Producing a monthly show containing information for novices of the game upwards, news about what's happening where in this virtual world, and offering advice to anyone who cares to ask they should have a good and growing audience. A great website – but a blog would I imagine go down well allowing easier participation for listeners.



Production : 4
Content : 4



Meltingpod and Meltingtalks

www.meltingpod.com

www.meltingtalks.com

Annie Viglielmo claims to be the first woman podcaster in France. Her first podcast, www.meltingpod.com 'Sounds and colours from the planet Marseille', started in March 05, and focuses primarily on Rock & Roll music from bands from around the globe with excellent interviews primarily in English. Annie has a relaxed and open style, making it an easy and interesting listen.

In December 05 Annie added www.meltingtalks.com to her bow, the concept being to bring to light things which concern her as a woman of the 21st century and to share conversations between women and men about the world, different cultures and to 'connect with interesting humans'. She's certainly achieving that, interviewing a range of people globally on various subjects, but primarily about women and where they stand in the world at large. And if that's not enough, she's even starting a company 'Meltingworlds'. All I can say is: 'Go Annie, go!'



Production : 4
Content : 4

I'm off to Japan next month – so if anyone out there speaks Japanese perhaps they'd like to lend me an ear!?

Q-MIC PRO MICROPHONE ARM

This review is about a microphone stand.

“Ho hum”, I hear you say, “so what?”

By Paul Parkinson

One of the key issues in getting a decent quality sound is to have the microphone at the right distance from the source of sound - your mouth. However, traditional mic stands are designed for studio use, with the vocalist standing up and concentrating on singing and not worrying about the computer, the mixing desk, sweepers and bumpers, Skype calls, Podsafe Music and so forth. The traditional mic stand is, frankly, rubbish for podcaster use, but finding alternatives is hard work and expensive.

Mounting a microphone in front of you means you have a lot less room to work with, and the little tripod-style mic stands are not very stable. The six-inch disk and column stands work very well but take up a lot of desktop real estate. I realised a while ago that what I needed was a decent microphone stand which will clamp to the far side of my desk and allow me to move it about as I need to.

Add a heavy microphone to that equation and you'll realise why I spent ages looking for the right piece of kit. All the usual suspects were asked if they stock that kind of thing, and only one supplier in the UK could deliver it – at a price which I thought was ridiculous.

In this situation I did what I often do – I wondered about eBay. After a little judicious searching I found a seller in eBay with the moniker “cdpeddler” selling the “Q-Mic Pro Mic Arm”. The pictures here are taken from the eBay sales pages for these mics.

As always when I trade on eBay I checked the sellers Feedback Rating (572 at time of writing this) and the Percentage Positive (99.7%), all of which augured well for a deal. Just look for “cdpeddler” in eBay. The Q-Mic arm was significantly cheaper than shop-based products so I took the plunge and ordered one. This article, after some weeks of use, is what I found.

The Q-Mic arrives in a non-descript brown “Made in China” box. First shock was the weight – it's HEAVY! This was a surprise as the shipping costs aren't terrifying even from the USA.

Once the box is opened and emptied (mind your feet as you tip it out) you realise the Q-Mic is a solidly constructed unit with all the main parts made of metal of a decent gauge. This ensures there is little or no “ring” when you tap the arm, which is important especially if you don't use a shockmount.



The “elbow” has three legs and super strong springs which give it great stability and a 3kg (~6lb) tension weight – this means it really does hold the heaviest of microphones with no movement whatsoever. My Rode NT1000 just sits there for hours on end - wherever I leave it, it's still there when I get back.

As illustrated here, the package comes with a number of very useful accessories. I use the C-Clamp base which should be good enough for most people's use. The short base and the 12" riser all look like they mean business, and being made of what feels like cast iron with a black powder-coated paint job they should look good for a long time. If your podcasting space means the mic will need extra reach, I'd suggest using the 12-inch riser.

The supplied XLR cable isn't too bad, but I'd like the ability to swap it out for a higher quality – this is a quibble as I'm struggling to find anything negative to say about this product.

I really am a very happy user of this mic arm and by way of proof, I ordered a second one for Janet shortly after the first one arrived.

Marty, the man behind the Q-Mic, supplies a one-year warranty for parts, which he will repair or replace if broken. He also offers a money-back guarantee: “Buy it and if you're not 100% delighted, simply return it for a full refund (excluding shipping). No questions asked, no 'restocking fee'. Just return your item complete and undamaged and we'll refund your purchase price.” Further details, including a “we will not be undersold” policy, can be found on his website.

To clarify, let me again say that I have found, through personal experience, that Q-Mic is a great asset to my studio and a product that could find a place in many podcasting setups. This review is NOT an advertorial, just an honestly positive response from a very satisfied customer.



For a limited time, Podcast User Magazine readers can enter the promotional code PUM2006 for a \$5.00 discount on the QM-50 from 'cdpeddlar'



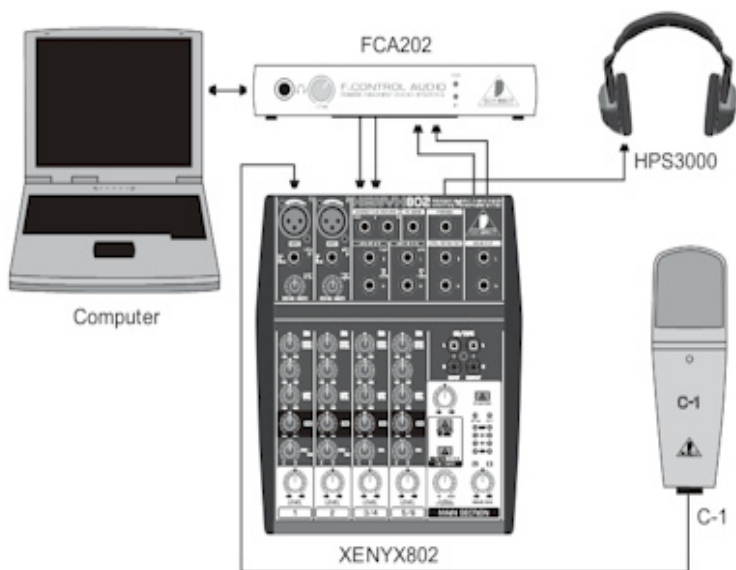
BEHRINGER PODCASTUDIO KIT



You may recall we touched on the subject of podcast kits in 'Podcast in a box' in Issue 9, page 45. It looks like Behringer have gone ahead and put together a kit of their own: The FireWire Podcastudio.

What have Behringer decided to use to make up the ideal home studio/podcast kit? The mixer is a Xenyx 802 Professional 8-input 2-bus mixer with premium mic preamps and 3-band EQs, the microphone is the C1 large-diaphragm studio condenser, complete with table microphone stand, microphone windscreen and cable, four 1/4" jack cables and two FireWire cables. There are also High-performance studio headphones (HPS3000) with ultra-wide frequency response, and joining all this together is a FCA202 Firewire interface to your computer.

They include an Illustrated quick-start guide 'How to Podcast', and an interesting software package which includes Audacity, Kristal Audio Engine and Ableton Audio Workstation Lite Behringer version - - Just about all you need to create your own home studio on either a PC or



Pricing at around \$270

<http://www.behringer.com/>
<http://www.behringer.com/PODCASTUDIO-FIREWIRE/index.cfm?lang=ENG>



by Chuck Tomasi

Portable iPod Recording

By this time everyone has probably had their fill of news from the Podcast and Portable Media Expo at the end of the September (whether they attended or not). I only reference the PPME because that is where I got hooked up with my latest podcasting gadget, the Belkin TuneTalk. Those of you who have heard my Freestyle and Technorama shows know that I do quite a bit of recording “on the road”. Like many other podcasters I relied on my trusty iRiver ifp-795 to get the job done; however being the loyal iPod fan that I am, I never really cared for hauling around two devices with similar functionality all the time.



While at the podcast expo, Victor Cajiao of the Typical PC User (<http://www.typicalpcuser.biz/tpcu/>) and Typical Mac User (<http://www.typicalmacuser.com/wordpress/>) podcast allowed me to try a couple different recording devices that connected to the dock connector of my iPod video. The first was the XtremeMac MicroMemo and the other was the Belkin TuneTalk. I tried out both devices during the four-day stay and found both to be very good products. They both work by simply clipping the device to the iPod. The Belkin has a slight edge in “ease of use” because it seems to work better with many (not all) iPod cases and skins, thanks to a removable shim.



Both devices have a button to quickly take you to the Voice Memo (record) menu on the iPod. Both also have 1/8” jacks to accommodate your favorite external microphone as well as a switch to change from mic to line-in level recording. The MicroMemo comes with a pretty decent (flexible) mic, while the TuneTalk has a built in stereo mic. Both mics are adequate, but I will still use my Sony when given the chance. The Belkin TuneTalk has a USB port to allow you to charge the iPod from any USB port; however, the MicroMemo has built-in speakers to allow instant playback. Unfortunately I never got the speakers to work during my testing period.

Both the MicroMemo and TuneTalk record to WAV files at 128K/44100, unlike the iRiver, which records to MP3. Having raw WAV files is a big plus when it comes to editing later. The fact that the iPod has a nice big hard drive greatly reduces concerns about storage capacity, and the seamless integration with iTunes makes it a snap to download. The one advantage the iRiver had over either the MicroMemo or the TuneTalk was that you could monitor your audio while recording. I hope that XtremeMac and Belkin will correct this important oversight in a future revision. I was willing to forego monitoring in exchange for consolidating devices and lessening the load when I travel.

The XtremeMac MicroMemo retails for \$59.95 while the Belkin comes in at \$69.95 US. Using a site such as <http://www.retailmenot.com> or <http://www.fatwallet.com>, you should be able to find a coupon code to save yourself some money.

For this product comparison, my vote goes to the Belkin TuneTalk because of the all-in-one design with its built-in mic, and the ease of use with iPod cases and skins.



MicroMemo

- Full iPod integration and on-screen display
- Built in speaker for instant playback
- One-touch recording in stereo or mono
- Accepts other microphones and line-in cables
- Records 16-bit audio at 22 kHz and 44 kHz
- No batteries needed—iPod-powered

TuneTalk

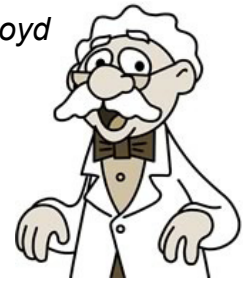
- Offers CD-quality, stereo recording
- Charges while recording with included cable
- Includes external microphone adapter
- Features one-touch navigation for quick memos
- Operates hands-free with included stand
- Offers real-time adjustable gain for changing noise levels

 **XtremeMac**
<http://www.xtrememac.com/>

BELKIN.
<http://www.belkin.com/index.asp>

Chuck Tomasi is the host and producer of Gmail Podcast, Radio Yesterday, Technorama, and Freestyle available at <http://chuckchat.com>

Dr. Floyd



Inside the Podcasters' Studio

Paul and Judy from TotalPodcastrophe ask questions of Grant Baciocco

In an effort to better know our colleagues, we are taking a look 'Inside the Podcasters' Studio'. We want to know what makes podcasters do what they do, what motivates them and where they see their podcast going in the future.

This month inside the podcasters' studio, we are privileged to meet Grant Baciocco.

Grant Baciocco and Doug Price are the creative force behind 'The Radio Adventures Of Dr. Floyd', described as a family-friendly new twist on 'old-time radio'. Featuring 'the adventures and exploits of the World's Most Brilliant Scientist, Dr. Floyd, as he tries to thwart the plans of his evil arch nemesis, Dr. Steve, all the while learning about the people and events that shaped the history of the Earth.' Dr. Floyd is aided by his young protégé Dr. Grant, and C.H.I.P.S., the plucky robot. The evil Dr. Steve has a sock-shaped assistant called Fidget. Their first episode was released April 5, 2004, and the fifth season is currently underway. Many famous names have lent their voice and talent to the show over the years, and it has become a favourite with children and adults alike. It is certainly one of ours since seeing them record a live episode at this year's PPME in Ontario, CA.

Let us begin with a brief self-introduction...



Grant: I was born in 1974 in Burlingame, California. I currently reside in Burbank, California, in the shadows of Warner Brother's Studios and am unmarried (no kids to my knowledge, either). I am a full-time 'comedy musician' with my comedy music act Throwing Toasters - www.ThrowingToasters.com - and I also work on web stuff from time to time for family and friends.

When, and how, did you first hear about podcasting?

Grant: I first heard about Podcasting in October of 2004. We had been producing Dr. Floyd for about 12 people since April and we were building the website where folks could download episodes when I stumbled across info about it on some website. (I don't remember where, unfortunately.)

What was the first podcast you subscribed to, and why?

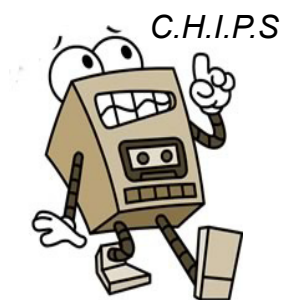
Grant: The first podcast, as I believe was many people's first podcast, was Dawn & Drew. It was the first one that most people listened to regularly in those days. "Back in the old days we only had two podcasts! Adam Curry and D&D! And we liked it!"

What do you look for in a podcast?

Grant: Entertaining, informative and relatively short. The only podcast I listen to that's over an hour is the Bluegrass Preservation Society. The only hour-long show is Seven Second Delay. The rest are shorter.

What puts you off a podcast?

Grant: Excessive dirty talk. I'm in NO WAY a prude, but there are only so many times I can hear you talk about your body parts. That's why I eventually dropped Dawn & Drew. Couldn't take it anymore.



What drove you, personally, to become a podcaster yourself?

Grant: Well, at the time, there were no other family entertainment podcasts out there. We saw a void and filled it. I'm still very surprised there are only a few 'audio drama' shows out there even two years later.

What motivates you, currently, to continue podcasting?

Grant: The fans. For sure. We get voicemails from kids and parents and each one confirms to us we're doing good. Heck, we just got an email from a 17-year-old girl who got a personalized license plate on her car that says "Fidgert" after one of our characters. I think that's a podcast first! Our fans are the best, and the show is a direct result of their support.



How have podcasts changed your attitude toward, and consumption of, traditional media?

Grant: Radio? What's that? :-) I'm listening to podcasts probably about 70% of the time I'm listening to audio at my computer or on my iPod. I listen to NPR [National Public Radio] to get news, but then usually it's back to podcasts.

How have podcasts changed your life in a more general sense?

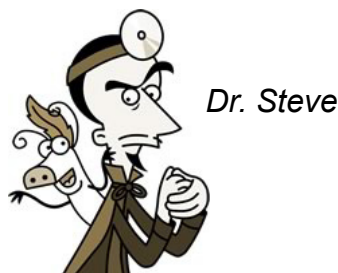
Grant: I tribute my recent weight loss to podcasts as they have given me something to listen to and just run, run, run.

What, in relation to podcasting, gives you the most hope?

Grant: It's a DIRECT contact to your fans. You have something you need to say to your fans? You record a show and send it out and the fans have it. My friend Tim Coyne of the Hollywood Podcast said, "In Hollywood you're always asking somebody for permission and hoping that they'll give it. Can I be an actor in a TV show? Can I be a writer? Can I make a movie? With podcasting you need NO ONE'S approval. You just do it."

What do you see in the future for you, and your podcast?

Grant: I hope podcasting continues to grow. I'd love to see a major resurgence of audio drama. There really is nothing like it. As for Dr. Floyd, we'll just keep making shows. We hope to keep being able to have guest stars on our show and just keep entertaining families all over the world!



Grant Baciocco can be found at <http://www.doctorfloyd.com>

Judy and Paul Hutchinson can be found at Total PodCastrophe <http://www.TotalPodCastrophe.com>

Friends In tech

Collaborative audio projects



by Kevin Devin

Friends in Tech (FiT), having just celebrated its first year in existence, have successfully put together three holiday audio specials ('The Server Room of Horrors' 2005 and 2006 and 'A Geek Christmas Carol 2005') and various other tech tips. Since we are currently working on the next special, for a Christmas release, I thought it might be helpful to explain how we go about managing such projects from afar and share our experiences. We hope that any group of podcasters can learn from our mistakes and not have to endure some of our growing pains.

Finding someone who has project management skills

Project management skills are a must. Someone needs to 'ride herd' on projects, and that person needs to be committed and completely dedicated to the task. Whoever volunteers, or is assigned this role, needs to be capable of juggling several tasks at once and remain organized throughout. It is important that this person be identified in the early stages of the production so that when a whip needs cracked, other participants will know who will be cracking it. Project managers must establish hard deadlines and do their best to enforce them in order for a production to come to fruition smoothly.

Create a good plan

One of the first steps for a successful production is the drafting of a good plan. Establish your timeline for each step in the process as early as possible.

Here is an outline for a typical Friends in Tech project:

- Establish roles and responsibilities
- Project idea / brainstorming
- Script writing
- Casting
- Sound Effects (SFX) sourcing
- Audio Collection
- Engineering / Editing
- Final Edit / Mastering
- Marketing

Depending on the project, there may be more steps, but these are the ones that immediately come to mind. Many of these tasks occur parallel to one another. This is where the organization and juggling skills of the project manager come to play. Often, several people will already have a basic idea for a project, so you can move ahead to assigning roles and responsibilities. While the script writers are busy writing, the project manager should be establishing the schedule -- when are tasks due? and who is accountable for each task? Be sure to build in enough time for procrastination, it's going to naturally happen. It's not easy getting someone to be excited about a Christmas special in the middle of July. Finally, ensure that enough marketing time has been built in to the schedule. Listening habits vary among podcast listeners, so giving your production between four to six weeks of notice before your release date could help increase the number of listeners.

Everyone within your group has certain strengths. The key is to identify what those strengths are and exploit them for the good of the group. I don't mean this in a negative way, but rather, if you have a couple of people who are good at audio engineering, it only makes sense to keep them focused in that area. If you have a couple of people who are creative, keep them focused on script writing. Also ensure that these people are identified in the credits of the production. The key is, the more folks can show off their talents, the better the product will be in the end. People will naturally want to venture into new areas to develop new talents – that is to be expected, but assign the heavy lifting to the seasoned veterans and leave the easier tasks to the rookies. In this way, the rookies will still get the experience they desire but the production will still be as good as possible.

Dealing with different personalities

This can be tricky, and the person who is going to be heading up the project management role also needs to be a good 'people person'. Any time there are several creative minds in the same virtual room, they're naturally not always going to see things eye-to-eye. It is best to establish, up front, methods that will be used to settle any differences of opinion. It's standard workgroup dynamics -- Forming, Storming, and Norming. There will be a rocky period (storming) once the group has formed and begun working on the project (forming), but with a basic set of ground rules the group can quickly address issues, reduce the time spent on administrative and personnel issues and remain focused on the end product. People will begin to understand how each other work (norming).

Using helpful tools

This could turn into quite the grab-bag of tools, but I did want to mention a few that I feel are absolutely vital to keeping a production on track.

Who is Kevin Devin?

Kevin is the founder of Friends in Tech, <http://www.friendsintech.com/> an alliance of technology podcasters and bloggers, joined together for the express purpose of cross-pollination, cross-promotion and, most importantly, fun. Kevin is also the host and producer of "In the Trenches," <http://www.kevindevin.com> THE podcast for SysAdmins and IT Professionals along with his co-host, George Starcher.

Use a wiki

Wikis are not that difficult to set up, and they provide a very easy way for project members to collaborate. If a wiki is being hosted on an Apache web server, access to it could even be secured by using a .htaccess file. This will do a reasonably good job at keeping non-members out but will allow access to those who truly need it. The cool part of the wiki is that once the script writers get the basic framework laid down, other project members can add or suggest little snippets of script to improve the overall production.

PRX MP2 Encoder

http://help.prx.org/index.php/Member_Tools

This is an invaluable tool. When a lot of audio is moved from computer to computer, all over the country, doing so in raw WAV or AIFF format is difficult due to the time necessary for uploading and downloading. Data transfers on typical 6 MB/sec cable modems can take as long as 45 minutes, depending on the file size, so it is important to achieve similar file compression results to that of encoding the file to MP3. Our favorite tool for this job is an MP2 encoder. When everyone uses the free MP2 encoder from PRX, passing around audio files is much easier but still allows the files to be decoded back to WAV or AIFF with little loss of quality.

This has been just a glimpse of what it takes to get audio productions up and off the ground when your workgroup is located all over the globe. The ability to work in a collaborative manner and still produce great work -- on time -- is difficult but rewarding to everyone. If your group is considering producing a podcast special of its own, we hope this information has been of some help.

Next time, real-world lessons learned from producing our specials.



THE MONSTER IN THE PODCAST – THE LISTENERS!

by Richard Vobes

Having rambled on into the microphone since January 2005, when there were only three other podcasters in the UK, I have started to get an idea of what the listening audience are like and, more importantly, what power they have over the whole kabosh.

If ever there was a demon lurking in your podcast, giving its sound of approval, a nod of accent and confirmation that you are doing well, it is the Listener. In my humble opinion, and yes, I have been humbled my times by my listeners, they are the be all and end all of this rather strange and self-indulgent hobby. Without the listener and his freely available ears to absorb the diatribe of thoughts and cacophony of sound that we, as podcasters, produce, there would be little point in lumbering to the microphone, setting up the mixing desk and warming up the valves in the laptop, let alone exercising the larynx and opening our gobs.

The Listener is king. They must be obeyed. They must be pampered, and they must be acknowledged continuously. And on occasion they must be whipped and tethered to a post, for they are hungry monsters that will gobble your work in a trice, skip important bits, tread on your ego and without the barest hint of disloyalty they will desert you and listen to some thing else instead. Rotters, the lot of them!

Over the past 22 months of producing over 800 podcasts, I have started to build up an idea of what the listener seeks from a podcast. This is not by any means a definitive guide, and it is purely my own observations. I share them here with you in no particular order:

Recording Quality

The feedback I have received shows that most of my listeners appreciate a podcast to be recorded as clearly as possible and with reasonable sound levels. There is nothing more frustrating for a listener to have to continually adjust the volume on their MP3 player from one podcast to the next. Listeners like to be able to hear all the of speakers equally well, and so the miking up of each presenter is essential to make it a pleasurable listening experience.

Length

Some podcasts go on a bit. Some go on a bloody site longer, and some never actually seem to stop. There are, of course, no hard-and-fast rules set for the length of time a podcast lasts. Many times I have been criticized for suddenly ending a show when in the middle of something interesting in order to keep within my own self-inflicted time zone. Equally, emails can also remind me that I didn't half waffle on in one particular show. Although some people recommend podcasts to be roughly 30 to 45 minutes long, as a general rule of thumb, I think it important for the podcaster to ask him or herself continually, "Is this still interesting to a listener, or have I plainly exhausted the subject?"

Personally, there is nothing worse than subscribing to a great podcast that you enjoy listening to and then having to wait an unknown period of time for the next episode to come out. Most television and radio scheduling lets you know when a programme is going to be transmitted, and if you think about it, our whole lives evolve around timetables: times for work, times for trains, time for play and time for bed. I believe that most listeners would prefer their favourite podcasts to adhere as nearly as possible to a timetable that the producers can set for themselves, rather than a plan that follows the "one every now and again or when I can be bothered" philosophy.

Personality

Ask yourself why you listen to certain things or watch particular television programmes, and the chances are the reason is because of the personality of the presenter or performer. We know in feature films that crowds fall in love with a star and go out of their way to watch all their films because of their being in it and not necessarily because of the actual content of the movie or the storyline. I believe this is also true with podcasting. The nature of recording your voice and talking to your audience is a very personal thing, and listeners can feel very close to you. I have been told many times that I have become a personal friend, even though I have never met those listeners or even communicated much through email. It's the steady drip-drip feed of the podcast that can create this incredible relationship.

Honesty

As just mentioned, podcasting can be very personal. I share a lot of very intimate thoughts with my listeners though my personal audio blog and frequently have been criticized for being so honest. Yet others will email and tell me that my frankness has helped them address and understand some of their own problems and personal issues. In my entertainment show, I sound off many opinions and outrages with my rants. I play the part of an entertainer and perform in an over-the-top, egotistical manner, but underneath it all is the element of truth, even if that truth be misguided and plainly wrong. I believe the listeners appreciate a podcaster's honesty, even if they not share the same ideals, viewpoints and opinions.

Replies

I try to reply to all my listeners when they email me. I make a big point of asking for the opinions of my audience. The show demands it. So I believe it to be absolutely imperative to acknowledge that feedback either by personal correspondence, where possible (and I know that of course this isn't always so), or vocally in the podcast. If anyone takes the time and trouble to sit down and compose a letter with their point of view, then a simple reply is just good manners, and if there ever was a podcasters code, that should be included right at the top.

There are many more observations of the needs and requirements of those monsters out there, the podcast listenership. I would gladly love to hear from other podcasters to determine what they have found important. Perhaps Podcast User Magazine can print the responses from the other producers, so we can all learn to tame the beast and supply them with the best content we possibly can.



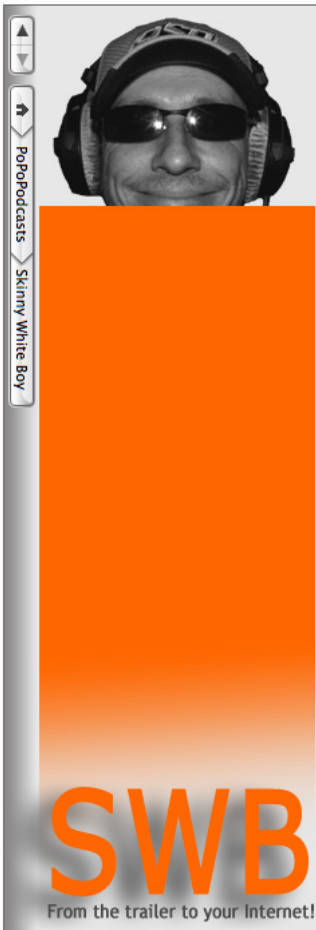
Richard Vobes – copyright 2006

Richard Vobes produces two daily podcasts, 'Vobes', an entertainment show and 'The Naked Englishman' a very personal audio blog, available from all good podcast directories on line.

<http://www.vobes.com>

<http://www.nakedenglishman.co.uk>





by Skinny White Boy

Jingle Bells!

Or: What on earth are you talkin' about?

When you are talking to an electrician and you use the letters AC, he (or she) might mistakenly think you are talking about Alternating Current. Of course as a podcaster you know that the abbreviation AC is most commonly used to identify Adam Curry, the guy sometimes credited with the invention of podcasting. Oddly enough, when you are talking to the Program Director (sometimes called the PD) of a radio station, he (or she) might believe – mistakenly – you are talking about the format called Adult Contemporary. The guy's (or gal's) job title might have some folks believe that we are talking about the Police Department, but what today's topic of conversation really is about, is lingo (not to be confused with the game show that involves blue and red balls and spelling out five-letter words).

Lingo, or jargon, is useful in that we can quickly communicate an idea to our peers without having to spend too much time explaining ourselves. Sometimes we can even shut out our unpeers by deliberately using words we know they will not understand (but we will leave that an untopic for today). Not sure of lingo's usefulness? Imagine the following conversation:

"Hey, where did you get that highly compressed digital audio file?"

"Oh, on the computer-network that was created in the 60s to withstand a nuclear blast but since has been renamed and has become a worldwide favorite pasttime."

"Did you use Apple's proprietary music-buying network?"

It's a lot easier to use the words: MP3, internet and iTunes.

As podcasters we have our own set of words. If you want to be 'on the inside' you have to know how to 'talk the talk'. Podcasters use a lot of words that are borrowed (or hijacked) from radio. Makes sense, after all... a lot of what we do is closely related to radio (at least for us 'audio podcasters'.... you know - the old folks). But with so many people coming in that have no professional background or are from parts of the world where things might be named differently, familiar words sometimes take on different meanings. Add to that the fact that at times these borrowed terms do not apply because (let's face it) this is NOT radio, and chaos is complete.

Fear not... Since it is that time of year when publications compile lists, I figured that Podcast User Magazine should have one, too. And I thought I was pretty smart... until I started the research for my end-all-be-all-end-of-year-jargon-buster-extravaganza. It turns out I don't know my stingers from beds to save my life. Good thing there is the 'free encyclopedia that anyone can edit' (Wiki). Cut out the list below and tape it (with the sticky kind, not the stuff your grandfather recorded on) next to your mixer (not the kind your mom uses in for making a cake) and you'll be set. On with the year-end countdown!

#1

JINGLE: No Christmas could be complete without this favorite. The idea behind jingles is that words (as in advertising messages) are easier to remember when set to music (so the message is sung rather than spoken). Companies started creating musical compositions of their slogans. The word jingle actually comes from 'ringing a bell' (because a bell jingles, apparently – or so the Christmas song has us believe). The very first time one could be heard on the radio was in the mid 1920s, advertising breakfast cereal. In later years radio stations started using jingles to identify the station or the host/presenter. Short phrases, mainly performed as multi-part harmonies, were used to give the radio station a unique image. For some great examples listen to: <http://www.pams.com/audio/pams/voices.mp3>. Advertisers seem to have found their way back to jingles lately. If you start singing "Pah Da Pah Pah Paah" anywhere in the US, someone will finish it with "I'm loving it!" Of course most podcasters do not have access to professional singing groups... So why are we still using the word?

#2

SWEEPER: The word sweeper (and I don't mean vacuums) refers to a short – albeit relatively – transitional element used to bridge two songs or different segments of programming. (In the 'good ol' days of radio' that meant to-and-fro commercials.) A jingle could be used as a sweeper (and I don't mean Hoover). There is no law that states that a sweeper can't be a harmonized choral ditty, but mostly sweepers are shorties that contain spoken word (see the word Jingle for the explanation about our lack of access to professional singers) over music or just over sound effects (so that you can place them on top of whatever music is already playing).

#!

Stop right there!

I have to admit that the usage (or rather 'abusage') of the first two words in this list is somewhat of a pet peeve of mine. All too often people use the words in ways far removed from their intended usage. I am by no means saying it's my way or the highway, but when too many people start to apply different meanings to the same word, the idea behind 'industry-specific language' turns too crud (the latter being, according to some geeks, an acronym for Create, Retrieve, Update, Delete). Where I come from – that wonderful small country on the mainland of the continent referred to by everyone but the British as Europe... everything that is not a full-length song is called a jingle. That is just as wrong as calling everything a sweeper. One of my friends worked at a radio station in Memphis where they got around the entire nagging issue by calling everything not a full-length song a tag (which, where I live, is something you stick on your car). They just made that one up! Wrongo Bongo! So when you are referring to the piece of audio you always play at the beginning of your podcast, maybe the words show-opener or theme are better suited. OK, I'll get of my soapbox now.

#3

RAMP: I just had to throw it in here because it's such a cool word. I doubt many people will ever use it, because it simply means the intro of a song - you know... the part leading up to the vocals? But it's so much more dynamic than the simple word intro. The singer is 'ramping up' to start, it's an 'on-ramp' into the song... From the perspective of DJs (those annoying guys that insist on talking over the music), it could be a 'ramp up' to giving the listener the title of the song. I just love this word!

#4 STINGER: It's unclear who used this word first, the comedians or the radio folks or the funny guys on the radio, but a stinger is used to emphasize a point. Often, it's used for the punch line of a joke. I was once interviewed about my podcast for Dutch National Radio, and every time the host said something funny (mostly at my expense), he played that annoying standard 'ding' sound made famous by Microsoft. Richard Vobes used to have one of those 'squeeze horn' sounds, and I was sure it was a sound effect generated by his computer until I actually saw a picture of him actually using the actual thing, actually!

#5 PROMO: We all know that one. It's the piece of audio you recorded to have your show promoted by other podcasters, right? We call it promo because it promotes something. You, to be exact! Then why is this not called a commercial? Have you ever heard someone say "We'll be right back after this promo-break"? Of course not. In podcasting we use the word promo precisely because it isn't the same as a commercial. The other podcast host is really endorsing your product/podcast by playing your promo instead of simply satisfying a financial obligation (by getting paid to play commercials). This is a good example of a word that means something else in the industry we borrowed it from. In radio land, promos are used to showcase an event, not another show.

#6 BED: My personal fave, and no sleepwear is required for this one. The word bed refers to music (instrumental) that is specifically selected (or created) to talk over. That's why it's called a bed. You can put something on top of it, much like with a real bed. See my earlier article in PUM Issue # 8 for a more in-depth overview of beds.

#7 DROP: When using sound bites lifted from movies, TV shows and other sources (as in: other podcasts), we speak of drops. Drops can be used in sweepers, promos, stingers, and so forth. I have also heard the term: grab, to mean the same thing. I guess both are equally correct, you can 'drop' a movie quote in your program or 'grab' a sound bite from a TV show to use in your program. A drop or grab is typically very short - a single phrase or one-liner. Drop is also the Dutch word for liquorish (just in case you were interested).

#8 SOUND EFFECT: While musicians usually refer to a sound effect as something that shapes the sound of their instrument (such as echo, reverb or distortion) this really should be called audio-effect or sound processing. The rest of the world usually means a short sound when they say sound effect (often times shortened to sound FX or simply: SFX). SFX can be footsteps, or water dripping, or a car starting or something altogether more abstract, such as laser-type blasts and zaps. The abstract type sound FX are heavily used in modern imaging, not only for radio but also in podcasting. Listen to Adam Curry, Jan Polet and erm... my own podcast for some examples.

And there you have it - the December list of all words you didn't know the meaning of but were afraid to ask about. What? You expected ten of them? Just because I said countdown? You got your jargon mixed, buddy! Since when does that word imply any predetermined number? Forget it! It's December! I've got better things to do. I still need to fight someone at the mall over the new PlayStation III. Betcha I can get it, too; I just have to use my uppercut (that's a boxing term)...

Ok, one more, just because you asked.... **Podfading:** it's what I plan to do right this very instant.

Podcasting the Past

by Tom Goskar

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk>



I'm an archaeologist - not the first type of person you might think might write something in an electronically delivered podcasting magazine - but that's the beauty of podcasting: anyone with a computer and a microphone can do it.

Podcasting and archaeology go hand-in-hand, believe it or not. Archaeologists tell the story of our human past through physical remains, and it's our duty to tell people about our findings, as it's everyone's past that we unearth.

Broadcast Media

We already use broadcast media as a way to explain archaeology, and anyone who watches the Discovery, National Geographic or History channels won't be able to escape these shows. Here in the UK, Time Team has been running since 1994 with regular audiences of 3 million people or more. There is great popular demand for archaeological shows.

But there is a problem with televised archaeology: in order to appeal to viewers, it can only cover archaeological sites that are considered likely to make interesting television. The public rarely hears the gritty reality of life as an archaeologist or gets the point of view from the developers who actually fund most excavations in advance of construction work. Likewise, we rarely broadcast about our techniques or what happens after the excavation has finished.

Podcasting empowers us to cover all of that and more.

Starting Out

When I first heard of podcasting, at the beginning of 2005, I was very excited by its possibilities. My employers, Wessex Archaeology, already had a large website, which, conveniently, was run by me. Wessex Archaeology is one of the United Kingdom's largest commercial archaeological practices, employing over 160 people; it is also a registered charity with educational objectives and plays a vital role in helping people learn about their past.

It didn't take much to persuade them to allow me to run around with a microphone and see what would happen. As it turned out, it wasn't until September 2005 that I got around to recording my first podcast, but I was surprised at how successful it was.

I had never interviewed anyone before, so this really was a first for me. I decided that the best way to learn was just to leap in at the deep end and give it a go. To this day, I'm glad that I did.

First go

I began using a borrowed and ageing MiniDisc recorder, which had to be firmly but precisely tapped in the right place before it would be convinced into recording (or playing) anything, but once going, it did the trick for the first two episodes. I used a (not very good) battery-powered microphone, purchased from Maplin (the UK's equivalent of Radio Shack), and headed over to Wessex Archaeology's archaeology course to interview students who were learning to excavate for the first time. I talked to the farm owner, who is himself a very experienced archaeologist, and he gave a really good introduction to the archaeology of the area, to put the excavation in its context. I made some mental notes beforehand so that I could record the audio in roughly the correct order to make the editing easier, and give the podcast a flow that could be easily followed.



I gathered about an hour of audio and headed back to the office. The recording was captured using Garageband on one of our Apple Macs. Of course, one hour of audio took one hour to record onto the computer, but once it was there, editing was quite a quick process. I chopped up my recordings and interviews into a 40-minute podcast, which didn't sound too bad; then I uploaded it to our WordPress blog and set myself about the task of informing the world of its existence through submitting the RSS feed to podcast directories. I was hoping that I'd get about 200 downloads of the first episode, which is about the equivalent audience of a public lecture. We've just passed 6,000 downloads, and it's unanimously agreed that podcasting is a rather good tool for archaeologists!

Choosing a name

At that point, the podcast had no name, and "The Wessex Archaeology Podcast" didn't really have much of a ring to it. After recording a second podcast, I found out that the UK's first podcasting conference was about to be held. I was bitten by the podcasting bug and could see its possibilities already. I had to go.

At PodcastConUK 2005, I was briefly interviewed by Richard Vobes. When I was asked my podcast's name, I instantly realised that 'The Wessex Archaeology Podcast' sounded rather dull. It was whilst I was sitting in the audience listening to James Cridland of Virgin Radio, who was abbreviating 'podcasts' to just 'casts' or 'me casts', that the perfect name came to me. Mine wasn't a 'me cast' as it wasn't just me - it was archaeologists as well - an 'archaeocast' in fact. So the name stuck. Archaeocast it was and Archaeocast it now is.



Evolution

And so Archaeocast evolved. The MiniDisc recorder began to make a lot of noise whilst recording and had to be retired. I replaced it

with an Edirol R-1 digital recorder, which records directly to WAV or MP3 on a Compact Flash card. This device has some big benefits, namely no more real-time re-recording onto a computer, making podcasts quicker to produce, and of course superior sound quality, making them sound better.

I bought a Sony ECM-MS907 stereo microphone, which looked as if it would be a good all-purpose mic for voice and atmospherics, as you can switch between 90- and 120-degree sensitivity. Coupled with the R-1, this has been my podcasting equipment ever since. The R-1 has been to all sorts of places with me - down lots of holes in the ground - and it's proven to be quite rugged. A clear plastic resealable bag is all it needs to make it rain-proof, too.

Niche podcasting works

To date, Wessex Archaeology have had about 30,000 downloads of Archaeocast. Due to other demands on my time, I have managed to record only eight episodes so far (making it a bi-monthly podcast on average), so we are very pleased to have had so much interest. We hope that in the coming months, we will be making them on a more regular basis, so if the past is your thing, make sure you subscribe at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/Archaeocast>.



We believe that Archaeocast is the first “grass roots” archaeology podcast, but we hope not the last. Podcasting is such an ideal medium for communicating the excitement of the discoveries that we make, that it would be great to see others follow suit. The stigma of enduring history lessons at school, with their often dry and unreadable books, is a hard one to shake off, but podcasts are one way, perhaps, to help liberate learning about the past.

I'm proud to have done my bit if just a few of those thousands of listeners have enjoyed Archaeocast and changed their minds about archaeology and history.

Tom Goskar, Wessex Archaeology, Salisbury, UK.

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk>

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/Archaeocast>



<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>



Note : some features in WavePad are time limited until a licence is purchased.

www.nch.com.au/wavepad/masters.html

SUBMISSIONS

We here at PUM welcome letters and suggestions and also invite submissions for inclusion in the magazine.

If you have a story to tell, an insight or even advice for the podcaster or listener why not email it now at:

submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

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Podcast
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Downloaded in 104 countries

Video Podcasting: Where it's been and where it's going

Let's take a look at the evolution of video podcasting, where it's come from and where it's been.

by Conrad Slater

Before Video Podcasts there were Web Movies

YouTube.com's main marketing drive has been toward home-grown amateur content; short stand-alone, word-of mouth (or 'viral') pieces of the sort that have made up television clip shows of camcorder footage for years. The reality of YouTube's success, of course, is far from this. The top 10 most-watch clips at any given time have been ripped from commercial DVDs, television shows or at best have been produced by professional media outlets and have appeared on YouTube either with or without consent.



None the less, the appeal of home-spun viral web movies is enormous, both for viewers and producers alike. The inclusion of an RSS feed (of which YouTube now offers, with only limited functionality) has had little effect on many of the successful web movie-based sites. Ebaumsworld.com, b3ta.com, brickfilms.com all offer RSS but are still principally consumed by viewers on-site rather than through an aggregator. (Notice also the inclusion of Google ads and other banners on the sites but not embedded in the content.)

A quick note on terminology: I define Video Podcast as a global term, Vlog as time-sensitive, citizen journalist-based video; Vidcast as non-time-sensitive and otherwise unruly content, (for example, webmovies with an RSS feed); Vodcast as repurposed professional/commercial video content with an RSS; and non-RSS enable video content as Webmovie (regardless as codec, including flash-based moving image content with sound).

With this in mind, the early video podcasters looked to these and other large web movie sites as a sources of creative inspiration. Ask a Ninja, Tiki Bar TV and French Maid TV are typical examples of vidcasts that are derivative of classic web movies with the intention of becoming viral. Made to a professional standard, they seemed to offer the best of both worlds.



The early Video Podcasters, quite rightly, wanted to be viral

Meanwhile in the vlogging world, which had looked to blogs and other forms of citizen journalism, video content was and to a large extent remains complementary of the real content - the text - in the form of editorially slanted news or the musings of personal diarists. The vlogging community has always been a strong network that promotes discourse and honesty, at times with the intention of offering the viewer with a less-biased version of true events that any media corporation can offer. The appeal of a one-off, much-downloaded hit potentially considered vulgar – like a one-hit wonder.

So, united by a common technology - video - producers of content, regardless of their audience or style, were neatly bundled together as video podcasters, simply because in the early days there simply didn't seem like enough content to go round. You can immediately see the problem, as if radio journalists, recording musicians and DJs were all grouped together as producers of audio.



ROCKETBOOM 2.0

daily with joanne

If the pigeonhole is too small, it cracks at the seams

But as podcasting has evolved (some of you remember that when itunes began, its default listing for podcasts was 'audio blogs'!), so have the popular and sometimes less popular sub-genres evolved. Audio blogs, whilst still being with us, have become more relevant and increasingly topical in order to compete, and in the video world the vidcasts are slowly starting to dominate the vlogs in terms of download numbers.

I would argue that the biggest shift in video content has been the shift away from time-sensitive content. Whilst some shows, such as www.geek-brief.podshow.com and www.rocketboom.com, experience high numbers of downloads, others are starting to see the benefits of the 'long tail'. Speaking from direct experience, people who find a new show they enjoy will often download a number of older episodes in order to enjoy more. Would they also wish to download yesterday's (or even last month's) news?

100% pjk - Podcastcon2006



The bell tolls for time-sensitive video content?

More and more vloggers are likewise enjoying a shift towards serialised content that actually encourages the downloading of older shows. A great example is Paul Knight (<http://pjkproductions.blogspot.com/>) who, whilst starting as an online video diarist, is enjoying pushing his resources to the max by making an on-running sci-fi comedy series. Likewise <http://goodnight-burbank.com/>, whilst allowing each episode to be standalone, is using story arcs to great effect to promote audience loyalty.

In short, the emphasis has shifted from getting an audience to keeping that audience. The era of the viral web movie may be coming to an end, for now, and as more mainstream media is presented online - surely you'll be able to subscribe to 'Lost' before it reaches a fourth season - how the video podcasters will be able to cope with this remains to be seen.



Conrad Slater (the 'Victorian space pimp' shown far left being interviewed by John Buckley at PodcastCon2006) has been making Painful Films, a British comedy vidcast series, since Christmas 2005 and is an active member of a number of online communities.

<http://www.painfulfilms.co.uk>

I Wanna Hold Your Hand...

in the Podcast Sense, of Course.

Facing a blank word processing screen each month is no fun, especially when you have no idea of what you want to write about. So after scraping the inside of my brain, I ended up with a big fat nothing. Then the trees cleared and I could see the wood again. Podcast User Magazine is all about informing and enlightening both seasoned podcast users and also new users who have never subscribed to a podcast before. I've run a sort of 'podcast 101' before, but I thought it would be useful to go over some of these points again for people who are still a little tech shy, or for new readers who are looking to find out how to try the latest podcasts.

A recent study apparently showed that podcasts are still taking a while to find popularity. I think the main thing that still seems to scare people off is the jargon and the mistaken belief that you need to pay for the podcasts you subscribe to. Yes, there are some podcasts that are only available for a fee, but these are few and far between.

So what is a podcast? Simply put, a podcast is an audio file that is available by subscription, using RSS. Real Simple Syndication (RSS) is simply a text file that is formatted to include all the vital information on each episode of a podcast. You do not need to know anything about RSS to make full use of podcasts. In fact, you don't really need to know anything about RSS to start your own podcasts, but for podcast creation it does help to have some rudimentary knowledge.

To subscribe to a podcast you need to use a 'podcast aggregator'. This is just a fancy word for a piece of software that handles your subscriptions and regularly checks for new shows and downloads them. Some of the most popular podcast aggregators are iTunes, WinPodder, Juice, Doppler and my current favorite, Google Reader. So you've got your podcast aggregator and installed it; now you just need some shows to add to it.

Depending on the podcast aggregator, subscribing to a podcast can be as easy as clicking the 'subscribe' button. For some, however, it can be slightly more complicated, but relatively straightforward once you know how. If you are viewing a podcast's web page with a 'subscribe' link and finding that when you press it you get a page full of gobbledygook, this gobbledygook is in fact the RSS file we talked about earlier. You can either select the address that appears in the address bar of your web browser and copy this to the clipboard by either pressing [CTRL] +[C] on the PC or [Apple]+[C] on the Mac, or hit the back button and instead of pressing the subscribe, right click on subscribe and select the 'Copy Link Location' in Firefox or 'Copy Shortcut' on Internet Explorer. Then go to your podcast aggregator, hit the 'subscribe' button and click in the box that's prompting you for the address, then press [CTRL]+[V] on the PC or [Apple]+[V] on the Mac. You should now see the address you copied, pasted in the web address box. Just confirm this address by pressing the [OK] button, or whatever button you need to click to confirm this on your podcast aggregator, and you should now see the podcast is now part of your subscribed list. You can then either load your podcast aggregator each day and check for new podcasts, or where available have the podcast aggregator check for new podcasts at intervals you set. This is how I used to use the Juice aggregator, having it check for new podcasts every six hours

Colin Meeks

Colin Meeks

So that, in essence, is all there is to subscribing to podcasts. A basic level of understanding is often the main barrier to entry when it comes to new technologies. I hope this has helped you to get over that initial hump.

There really is a wealth of podcasts available for every conceivable subject under the sun. The next hurdle is finding them. As mentioned before, iTunes is the 800-pound gorilla when it comes to podcast directories. The reason for this is it's so easy to get up and running with no prior knowledge. This really shows when it comes to my own podcast's stats. Approximately 95% of subscribers to Indie Launchpad subscribe using iTunes. This doesn't include users who just download the latest episode from the web, of which there are also a quite sizable proportion. Although iTunes is the daddy, it can still be difficult to find what you are after. For this reason it's good to have a few other resources to hand. Two of the most popular are Podcast Pickle and Podcast Alley, which provide a wealth of ways to search for podcasts in their respective directories. One problem, however, can be the amount of entries that are apparently no longer valid. Podcast User Magazine uses Podcast Alley to select the podcasts used in the podcast roulette feature. We do this by using a spreadsheet that selects podcasts at random. Unfortunately many times a podcast selected does not seem to have recent shows. That being said, between those two directories and directories such as Odeo, Yahoo Podcasts and Podcast.Net, there's still a whole ton of great podcasts to be found. Let's not forget one of my favorite methods of find podcasts, Google. Just enter a subject and add 'podcast' to it and you'll be amazed at what you can find.

I hope that if you've been wary of dipping your toes into podcasts, this has helped. Also remember, never be afraid to send us your questions. If we get enough people asking about the same thing, we'll try our best to answer your questions in the magazine. Happy podcast listening.

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Take 2

As another year in podcasting comes to an end, it's time to look around and take stock, both from a personal point of view, but also from my place within the UK podcasting community.

It promised to be the year where the money was going to roll in, podcasters would be quitting their day jobs and the medium would be competing with it's mainstream cousins. And in my opinion that has not happened. The global community has grown, suggesting that the notion of podcasting for creative types is alive and well, but have the listeners followed? With the capturing of podcasts as appearing as obscure as ever to your ordinary person in the street, audience figures have not experienced the level of growth that many of us expected, and with that the means to generate revenue from your podcast has remained negligible.

There is money in podcasting, but my contention is that the money will continue to go to those providing services in and around podcasting. For example, both Libsyn and Switchpod, companies who supply hosting for podcast producers, have been purchased by Wizzard. Podshow received another injection of venture capitalist funding to the sum \$15 million, which joined last year's \$8 million, allowing them to set up a network of podcasts and provide tools to fledgling producers.

But where is the money to be had for the average podcast producer? While at least 25 US-based producers are earning enough money from podcasting to consider quitting their day jobs, this is not typical. So you could argue that the way to make money from podcasting is not to be a podcaster. If the money is flowing towards companies providing podcast-related services, perhaps the way to stake your claim of the cash is to provide podcast-related services! With the medium still being but an infant, and with businesses, charities and organisations switching on to its potential, the experience of your average veteran podcast producer must surely be worth something in monetary terms? Expect more and more independent podcast production consultants to appear in a small town near you during 2007.

The UK community has certainly grown and evolved during 2006. 2005 saw a fair amount of ambivalence towards Podshow and a perceived snubbing on their part of the UK podcasting fraternity. 2006, in contrast, has seen an informal meet up in a London pub between Adam Curry, Ron Bloom (president and CEO of Podshow respectively) and various frequenters of Britcaster (seen by many to be the hub of podcasting in the UK) to the formation of BTPodshow. BT-Podshow is the UK arm of Podshow, partnering with BT (British Telecom), and during the first couple of weeks of November there were numerous announcements from podcasters who'd signed the BTPodshow contract, redirected their domain name to a .podshow.com site and allowed audio bumpers to be added to the start and end of their podcasts.

While it's a vote of confidence in the UK to sustain its own podcast network, is the demarcation necessary? And while it's clear the UK can provide the content needed to sustain the network, can the network provide the income to sustain the podcasters?

2007 will have the answers.



The quirky Podcast List

Celebrity Afterlife

<http://celebritymedium.livejournal.com>

What dead celebrities are doing in the after-life. You'll not believe what John Lennon is up to these days. (*Totally roaring*)

Balloons are fun

<http://www.balloonsrfun.com>

Not the big ones, the little ones, Animals and stuff; you know what I mean. This is the only time I've ever heard the word 'poppage'.

Wichita's blog

<http://www.wichitasblog.com/>

With more than a hint of Bluegrass, Wichita Rutherford has a unique interview style with some of the 'names' in the Country music scene. He's also precious!

Parrot Chat

<http://www.scratches.com/podcast/index.html>

Everything parrots, honest. (Lovelyly plumage)

2 guys 1 brain

<http://2guys1brain.com/>

The 2 Guys work for the Sheriffs Office, and on this podcast we discuss life behind bars with some of the country's most interesting citizens... the criminals. But like most people, there is more to us than our jobs; we also discuss our families, our hobbies, and the things we find entertaining.

Letterboxing

<http://www.letterpod.net>

Letterboxing - not what you may be thinking. Treasure hunting in the open, 20,000 in the USA alone. Solve the clues, leave your mark.



This is the BBC speaking

As a regular visitor to the BBC News web site, I was interested to see an on-line survey being carried out. I cast my vote and grabbed an image of the results (shown below).

VOTE RESULTS

What is your stance on podcasting?

I download and listen to them
23.43%

I download but rarely listen
14.46%

I am not interested at all
62.11%

12318 Votes Cast

Results are indicative and may not reflect public opinion

The survey was on the technology page and seemed to show some strange results, who for example, actually downloads podcasts but doesn't listen to them, I asked myself. The whole thing is open to interpretation of course, those not interested may not actually know what podcasts are. I returned the next day to find a small but significant change to the survey, one that perhaps reflects a truer picture.

VOTE RESULTS

Do you listen to podcasts?

Yes
56.79%

No
43.21%

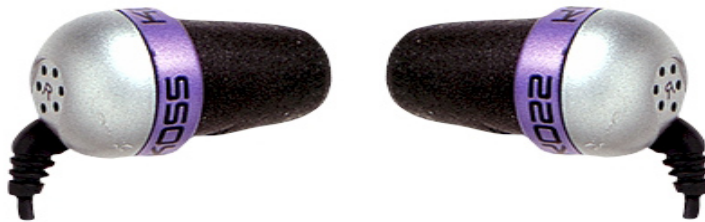
10131 Votes Cast

Results are indicative and may not reflect public opinion

Aural Pleasure

Getting it to your ears

Jimmy looks at the more convenient ways of listening to podcasts without the hassle of ear buds



For me, wearing ear buds or even headphones after a while becomes something of a discomfort. As unobtrusive as an MP3 player may be, there is also the degree of isolation from the outside world it imposes, with this in mind, I have looked at two of the most common solutions available to those that want to listen whilst driving.

The simplest has to be the mock cassette tape. This must be the easiest and cheapest way to get your MP3 audio out of your car stereo system. It is designed to fit both front- and side-loading on-board car cassette players. Connection to your player is by the basic 3.5mm connector means of course that the playing device does not have to be an MP3 player at all - you can use your laptop, CD player or any device with a 3.5-mm audio out socket.



The alternative is the FM transmitter device. This is perhaps the ultimate way to go as it is not restricted to just the car - in essence it will transmit to a near by FM receiver such as a car radio or your home entertainment unit.



There are many makes and models on the market for FM transmitters but it is up to you to ensure that they are legal to operate in your own county. These devices are common in the US, and they have just received approval for future use in the UK

STOP PRESS

Ofcom (Office of Communications – United Kingdom) is to legalise the use of low powered FM transmitters such as the 'iTrip' and other makes, permitting the use of MP3 players through car radios systems. Although banned throughout the UK because of possible radio interference they have been widely available. The approved 'CE' marked versions can be used from the 8th of December.

Unfortunately due to technical reasons we have not been able to bring you the review of Røde's acclaimed USB Broadcaster microphone as mentioned last month. We hope to rectify this in a future issue.

Phil Clark (Chicago) manages to pin down Linda Mills & Jimmy Hastell from Podcast User Magazine in a trans-Atlantic three-way phone call just to ask what we do, and why.
<http://www.thebritandyankee.com>
Available December 3rd



BACK PAGE

INSTRUCTIONS:

The easiest multimedia subscription software you'll ever use

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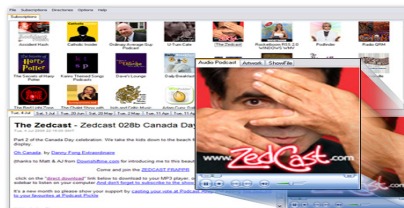
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