

PodcastUser

Magazine

What podcasting needs to
become in 2007

PLUS

Podcasting in Japan
Four Eyed Monsters
Talkshoe
Zune Gloom
ID3 tags

January 2007
Issue 12



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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CONTENTS

Editorial	Page
News	Page 4
Review Roulette	Page 7
Podcast Review: Global Voices	Page 10
Software - Make ID Tags	Page 12
Hardware - Zune Podcast Gloom ..	Page 14
Inside The Podcasters' Studio: Andrew Darlow	Page 17
Four Eyed Monsters Interview	Page 20
Podcasting Goes Live and Interactive with TalkShoe	Page 23
Hardware - The sE Reflexion Filter .	Page 27
Moans, Groans & The Future of Podcasting	Page 30
Citizen Scoop	Page 32
Mark: My Words	Page 34
Picking The Songs	Page 35

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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

Welcome to the twelfth issue of Podcast User Magazine – a collaboration between podcasters and podcast listeners.

It seems hard to believe that our first issue came out in February 2006 after a conversation that started in late December '05 on the Britcaster Forums – you can still see it [here](#). We're looking forward to making Issue 13, the first of our second year, a monster, so don't forget to let us know what you'd like to see in it.

As we scamper into 2007 and our own first anniversary soon, I thought I would take the opportunity this month to reflect on the past year and how podcasting and the podcasting community have changed.

A number of key events have happened this year that affected podcasting.

Clearly Apple's inclusion of podcasting in its iTunes service back in June of 2005 gave us all a massive boost, but since that time the benefits of iTunes has been tempered by the frankly awful "top" lists – why Apple hasn't made it more effective is beyond me.

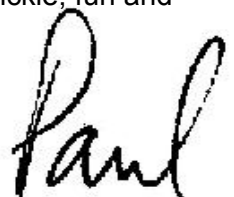
The Podshow Network continues to provoke strong opinions, and if you're in a camp that says this is a good thing or in one that says Podshow is evil, here at PUM we'll be doing our level best to discover and present a balanced view of what is going on. Podshow's venture capital backing of USD 23.5 million is a lot of skin to have in the game, and I for one will be interested to see what the exit strategy is for Adam and Ron and, more to the point, when that will happen.

The Portable Media Expo and PodcastConUK have come and gone with significant up-ticks in attendance and size. Having attended both, I came away with a very warm feeling about the state of podcasting on both sides of the Pond. US podcasting is bigger and more developed and is attracting top money to it, but UK podcasting is getting there, too. Yes, it's smaller, but what it lacks in size it more than makes up for in passion and enthusiasm. More to do? Certainly! But we are ALL on the right track.

The key thing we need to avoid in the coming year is for the podcasting community to be split between the monetising podcasts (Podca\$ters anyone?) and those who do it for fun. Irrespective of your view of the end game in podcasting, we must all stick together and make it work everywhere and not become a niche play – the CB of MP3?

A diverse podcasting community is a vibrant, fickle, fun and marvellous thing, but a factionalised one is one I will fight tooth and nail to prevent.

Happy New Year everyone, and may your God go with you.





Now read in
105 countries.
Thank you.

Marketing Shift – claims ‘Podcasting’s 15 minutes are almost up’

<http://www.marketingshift.com/2006/12/podcasting-15-minutes-almost-up.cfm>

Reported on December 1st 2006, this interpretation of the Pew report seems to have caused a bit of a stir in the ‘cast’ society, Lines such as ‘Podcasting technology has been around for a decade’ doesn’t go far to give them credibility, does it?

One Million Downloads

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

Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing, claiming 1,000,000 since the end of July 2006, has been making fun examples of the English language in answer to sender’s questions.



Podcast & Portable Media Expo changes name

<http://www.newmediaexpo.com>

Now to be known as **Podcast and New Media Expo**, the show will, in effect widen its reach to include new technologies including blogging, video and user-generated content.

Mythbusters shoot a Zune

WEBSITE ADDRESS TO ADD

An unconfirmed report claims that Jamie Hyneman and Adam Savage are to fire a Microsoft Zune from an air cannon into a Sony Playstation 3. It is also claimed that ‘MAKE’ magazine will feature an interview on the subject with the two presenters.



iTalk Pro by Griffin Technology <http://www.griffintechnology/products/italkpro/>



Last month Chuck Tomasi reviewed the Tune Talk by Belkin; now Griffin has released their iPod add-on, the iTalk Pro. With built-in twin mics and adjustable gain control, all goes toward CD quality recordings, the manufactures claim, and as with the Belkin, an external microphone is an option.



BritCaster closes.

Often controversial but always informative, BritCast-ers Forums have closed. Sighting many reasons in his personal blog (<http://neildixon.com>), Neil Dixon and partner Jen have decided to move on.

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



Digg - the people-driven site for the most up-to-date news and stories, launched a podcast directory.

“Digg Podcasting is a one-stop destination for discovering, Digging, discussing, and sharing the podcasts and podcast episodes that you like. Digg Podcasting provides all of the benefits of the other sections of Digg, but with features specific to podcasts and the related podcast episodes.”



The Sony Radio Academy Awards (UK)

The Sony Awards this year now includes The Internet Programme Award for audio specifically designed for the internet - Podcasts.

Closing date for submission is Wednesday 17th January. There are several conditions involved to meet the criteria set, and full details can be found at <http://www.radioawards.org/categories/cat.htm> under the section marked THE INTERNET PROGRAMME AWARD on the left-hand menu. The winners will be announced on Monday 30th April at London's Grosvenor House Hotel.

New UK Podcast Forums

In the wake of the demise of the britcasters forum, two new UK centric forums have arisen: <http://ukpodcastforum.com> and <http://www.teaandpodcasts.com>



Tea and Podcasts

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

San Francisco

Macworld
Conference & Expo

Forthcoming events 2007

If you know of or are organising a forthcoming event centered around or including podcasting we'd be happy to promote the event here in Podcast User Magazine.

email : submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

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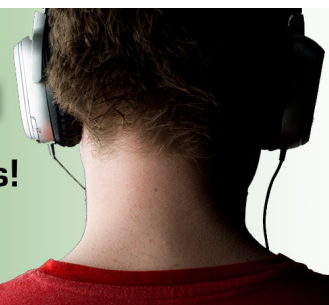
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SUBMISSIONS

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

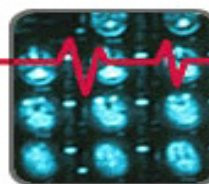
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Review Roulette

Your New Year's resolution: to become a better, more-rounded individual, by adding a different podcast to your subscriptions list. If you're a cigar-smoking South African ex-pat who's really into babies, you're already subscribed to the shows we reviewed last month, but how do you get out of your esoteric rut and inject some fresh subject matter into your listening list? You could choose some podcasts totally at random and listen to those for a while to find out whether you like them – but that sounds awfully risky, doesn't it? Well, we take that risk for you every month. This time, the random podcast picker chose for us two quite different music podcasts, plus the ideal companion to your post-Christmas health-drive...



Sound Medicine: <http://soundmedicine.iu.edu/>
text by Grant Mason

Host Barbara Lewis is joined each week by faculty co-hosts Drs. Steven Bogdewic, David Crabb, Eric Meslin, Kathy Miller, and Ora Pescovitz to interview medical experts on a wide range of current issues in medicine. Calling Dr Kildare! Stat! This month it's the turn of the medical student's friend (or the hypochondriac's nightmare): Sound Medicine. You really never know what you're going to get when you take a spin at the PUM Roulette table, but this has to be a first for me. The program's aim is to educate and encourage listeners to make sound health decisions, as well as being a forum for health issues affecting local communities.

The website gets top marks for clear navigation, the current podcast's shownotes and obvious podcast and RSS feed subscription links. No fuss, no flashiness – just getting the basics right straight off. The podcast itself is the rebroadcasting of a weekly show on Indiana public radio stations, which surprised me as I originally visualised it as a training aid for medical students. Instead, it's pitched squarely at the level of the layman and is a fascinating and informative look at a variety of medical conditions and issues. The hosts are studio-based, and the guests are either interviewed by phone or in person. The sound and production quality are very high, which caught me off-guard as I saw the encoding rate was 64kbps; nonetheless, things sound very clear and crisp with recording levels perfectly balanced – the sound engineer Kirk Butler is doing a great job and obviously knows his stuff! I managed to get a good listen to a wide variety of the shows that have been done recently by the Sound Medicine team: they've covered vascular surgery in Iraq, pulmonary hypertension, Alzheimer's disease, a caregiver study, medical definitions and book reviews. Regardless of the topic, each specialist is able to keep the discussion at a level that anyone can understand, and if they wander off into jargon territory then Barbara is quick to get them to explain any medical terms.

A fascinating insight into medicine for the layman, this is well worth subscribing to – even if you only pick and choose the odd show which appeals to you, you'll still come away with a much richer appreciation of all things medical.

Production: 4.38
Content: 4.45



Homemade Music Podcast - <http://www.homemademusic.co.nz>

text by Marilyn Madsen

Crank up the volume and dance to the music! From south of the equator the Homemade Music Podcast comes at you with the unrelenting beat of house music. Homemade Music, based in Auckland, New Zealand, is a collective of DJs, producers and promoters committed to supporting 'proper house' music. Spearheading the group are Chris Reed and Paul Radley, both originally from Leeds, UK. Between the two of them they have been involved in club culture for 30 years and have a wide range of experience as producers and sound engineers.

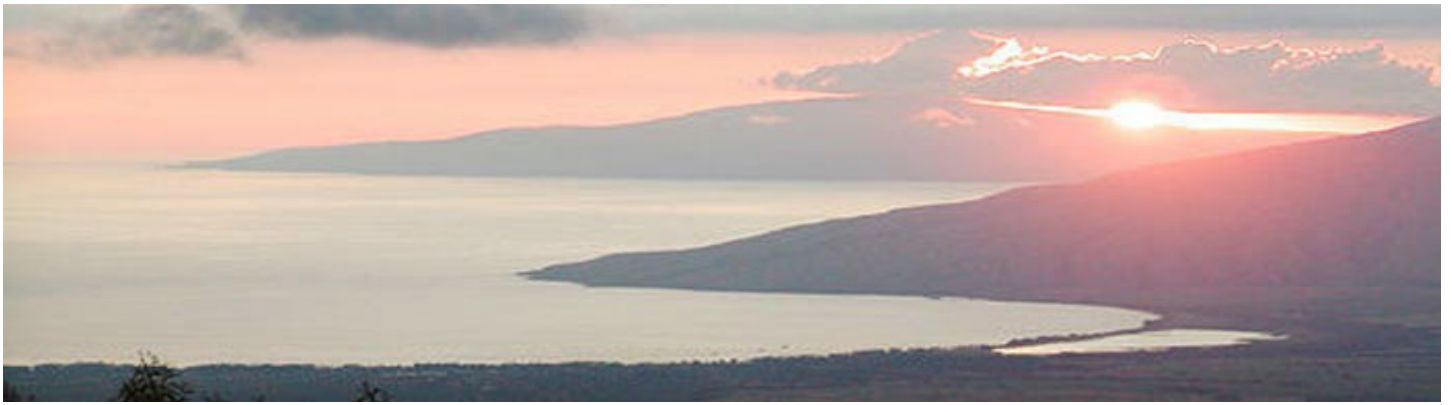
Being unsure as to the *true* meaning of house music, I needed to do a bit of research. A quick side trip to an online dictionary provided this definition: an up-tempo style of disco music characterized by deep bass rhythms, piano or synthesizer melodies, and soul music singing, sometimes with elements of rap music.

Produced on a monthly basis with thirteen shows to date, this podcast is ALL music and zero chat. There is an occasional sound bite with the Homemade Music web address, but that is it; the rest is a steady stream of music, music, music. Lasting from 70 to 90 minutes, each show brings you the best of house from around the globe. The most recent show includes artists' offerings from London, Seattle, Paris and New York City and southwestern Germany. Most of the shows are programmed and mixed by Paul, though some are compiled by their Homemade associates, George and Rich Long. The sound quality is excellent and well balanced. This reviewer was soon dancing about whilst cleaning up around the house.

If one links to this podcast using iTunes, a new enhancement enables the listener to find artist information and purchasing links as the mix plays by clicking on a bar in the album-art window. This was found to be a nice perk for those who use iTunes, and you may soon find yourself ordering up some downloads to support the talented artists that are being represented. At the website it was discovered that, besides the podcast, this group of music lovers produces a regular club night in Auckland called 'Mum's The Word', radio segments for local radio and free parties. The website itself is neatly presented and has entertaining photos. The artists for each show are found through: Music- Podcasts- Tracklistings. With no links for the artists at tracklistings, it appears that the most listener-friendly way to subscribe is to use iTunes. Our primary complaint is that it was very difficult to find the links and RSS feed for this podcast, but after searching through many layers it was finally discovered under: Music – Podcasts-FAQS- What is podcasting? If Homemade Music wishes to increase their listening audience, a direct link to the feed on their home page would certainly improve that possibility.

But on the whole, once you find it, The Homemade Music Podcast is perfect for dancing the night or day away

Production: 4.0
Content: 3.67



Nahenahe.net - <http://www.nahenahe.net>
text by Simon Toon

Now here's a challenge: how do you review a podcast in a foreign language? Well, Nahenahe.net is a Hawaiian music podcast, perhaps **the** Hawaiian music podcast, and its host, Keola Donaghy, has made it slightly easier for us by creating the website in English. Most of the podcast is conducted in a language I don't understand (presumably Hawaiian), but English translations of the transcript of each show are thoughtfully provided on the website.

According to the website, which is clean and logically laid out (using Dave Winer's Scripting News as its model) Nahenahe.net was founded in 1994 as a centre for the promotion of Hawaiian music on the World Wide Web, and many Hawaiian musicians had their first web presence designed and hosted by Keola on this website. Even today, Nahenahe.net provides a pivotal place to discover dozens of artists and resources for Hawaiian music.

Keola is clearly a web pioneer in the Hawaiian music community, so for him to take the step in June 2005 to create a podcast from Nahenahe.net seems like a perfect and most logical progression. The show lasts usually 20 to 40 minutes, and comes out every week or two. It is comprised of music and interviews from the Hawaiian music scene, plus information (presumably in Hawaiian) about the artists and their CD releases and gigs. The sound quality is excellent, and Keola's soothing, lilting voice is backed by a trademark acoustic guitar music bed. The interviews I heard were recorded in person, presumably in a good recording studio, so good is the sound quality.

As if a Hawaiian music podcast was not niche enough, Keola produces a Hawaiian Mac podcast, too. If Wikipedia is to be believed, the Hawaiian language is spoken by very few people, even in the State of Hawaii itself, so Keola seems to be doing his bit to preserve and spread the tongue.

The only niggle I had is that the audio files are provided in M4A format only, which is surprising from someone who clearly holds Dave Winer in high regard. Many people would insist that this disqualifies Nahenahe.net from being a true podcast in its purest sense, maintaining that the platform-agnostic MP3 format should be used.

Nahenahe.net is a very pleasant listen, very well produced, and must surely be a wonderful resource for anyone who loves Hawaiian music and the Hawaiian language.

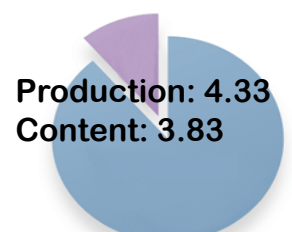
This month's podcasts were reviewed by:

Grant Mason
Linda Mills
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.





Podcasters of

JAPAN

Global Voices by Janet Parkinson

Japan is a country full of fascination for Westerners, not simply because of its complex language and writing, but also because of the differences in lifestyle, education, and culture as a whole.

So amongst the English speakers living there, it is not surprising to find English-speaking podcasters full of enthusiasm to share their experiences with the rest of us. It appears, however, that many who started podcasting have fallen by the wayside, and there is a lot of room and potential up for grabs.



TOKYO CALLING

Japan's First Podcast

Tokyo Calling

<http://www.tokyocalling.org/>

Japan's first ever podcast is produced by Scott Lockman, an American living in Tokyo with his wife and 3 daughters. This bi-weekly cast is a great listen for anyone interested in learning what life is like in Tokyo and is a family oriented affair. His natural chatty and casual style together with his eagerness to hunt down topics and events that could be of interest for his audience is inspiring and the 45 minutes is easily filled with a well balanced mix of news, dialogue and interviews. It has to be said that being able to produce a show while ironing is impressive!

Production : 4

Content : 4



Guzen Media Japan

Guzen Media

www.Guzenmedia.com

'Live, learn, share' is the ethos of Guzen Media. Having lived in Japan for 11 years Chas has lots to teach and share with us all, while running 3 podcasts and a forum does not seem to faze him. In his podcast 'English Teaching in Japan' he discusses his experiences teaching English (he has also begun to use video too). 'Guzen Radio Japan' is Chas's general podcast in which he shares information about life generally in Japan and includes a 'Teaching Japanese Listening Challenge' for those learning Japanese, while 'Guzen Video Japan' is relatively new but of course with video it's easier to share so much - and this I found particularly fascinating. All shows are well produced, the new website well structured and the forum is going in the right direction!

Production : 4

Content : 4



Japan Talk (Japundit Podcast)

Japan - A whole lot more than raw fish!

Japan Talks (Japundit Podcast)

<http://www.japantalk.org/>

Music plays a large element of this show – and increasingly there is more Japanese podsafe music creeping through. Updates and news from Japan are also high on the agenda and contributors are from around the world. Quite a straightforward show it is entertaining none the less - though unusually the host appears not to advertise clearly who he is.

Production : 4

Content: 4



Thanks to David Sanz for the amazing picture above of Himeji Castle in Japan. Next month I'm going to brave the odd blizzard and venture north to Scandinavia (Norway / Sweden / Finland / Denmark) – where I am hoping for some podcasts with a difference!

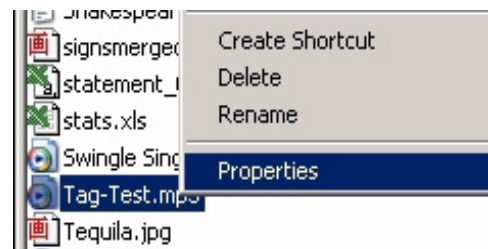
Keeping it simple

AUDIO ID TAGS

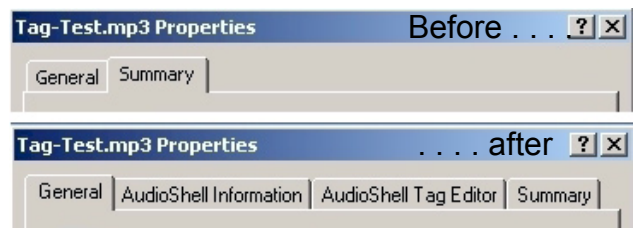
by Jimmy Hastell



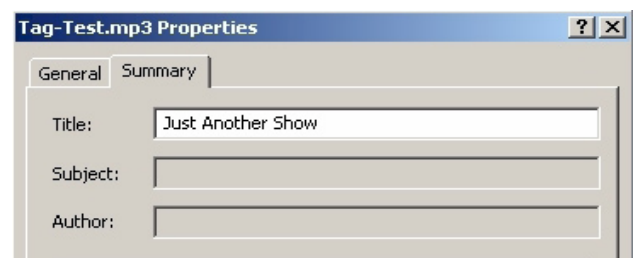
Ever wondered just how MP3s can carry that extra bit of information on your player screen or computer media players, here's how to do just that. In this example I've used AudioShell 1.2, a free programme from www.softpointer.com which keeps this simple task . . . Simple!



Go to <http://www.softpointer.com/AudioShell.htm> and download **AudioShell 1.2** (for some reason 1.3 Beta failed for me), download and install. AudioShell will not appear as a separate program on your computer but will instead add extra tabs to your 'Properties' option of your audio file.



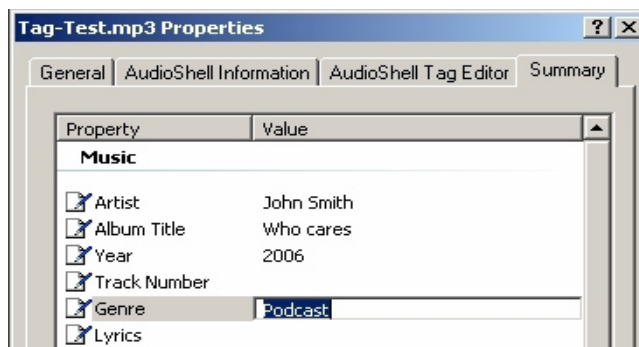
Under the default Properties settings there are only two tabs; General and Summary, and in most cases you can only change the title of the file, which you can do by just re-naming the audio file anyway, AudioShell now gives you much wider options and scope to become more informative and creative to your listener.



Under the 'AudioShell Tag Editor' tab we can now fill in details such as the **Title** of the show/podcast, get your name up there as the **Artist**, and under '**Album**' why not put the show number, or even the web site address?

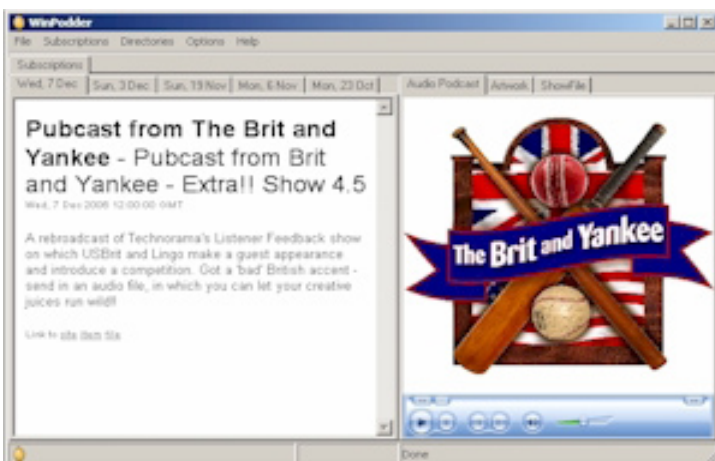
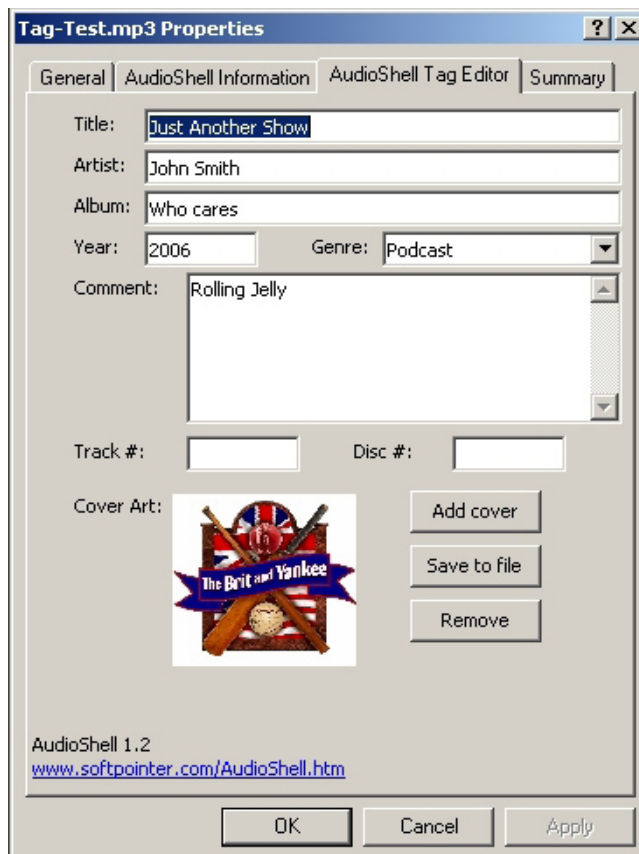


Under '**Genre**' in the upper picture you can see that I've managed to add 'Podcast', this option does not appear on the drop down menu but you can add it yourself; Select the '**Summary**' tab and you will find you can click in the genre field, now just type in podcast and bingo, done.



Another useful feature is the ability to add an icon-like picture within the file, that will display in iTunes and other aggregators such as WinPodder (shown below).

Oh yes, don't forget to press the '**Apply**' button before closing.



Thanks to Phil Clark for permission to use his icon



<http://www.softpointer.com>

AudioShell is designed for Windows 2000/XP and higher.

Zune Podcast Gloom



Podcasting was a niche area, albeit a fairly small one, until Apple in their infinite wisdom decided to add podcasting support to iTunes. With one swoosh of Apple's magic wand, thousands of podcasts were available to the masses in a way that was much more accessible than it had been. You no longer had to know anything about RSS or have to fathom out what an aggregator was. Couple that with the iPod, undoubtedly the most popular portable audio player, and you have a combination that's hard to beat.

Microsoft has missed the boat on more than one occasion: They underestimated the enormous potential of the internet, giving their competitors a huge head start. This time Microsoft is on their scooter, pushing hard to catch up yet again, seeking to eke out a slice of the portable audio pie with their Zune portable music player. Let me say at the outset that I do not have a Zune and am basing this overview on other users' feedback and on internet reports. I did approach Microsoft's press agency to secure a review unit but was told it was currently only available in the US. I will, however, try to secure a unit upon its launch in Canada to do a follow-up, hands-on article.

A cursory look at the Zune's specifications shows it to be a very capable music and video player. Indeed, with a three-inch colour display, it's more than adequate to view movies on the go. A 30-gigabyte hard disk enables you to store up to 7500 songs, 25,000 pictures or 100 hours of video. It also has wireless networking, allowing you to share media files, and it has an FM radio receiver. It's available in three colours – black, white and the more interesting brown model that has been stirring up a considerable amount of interest. So on the surface, the Zune looks like an excellent music player that holds up pretty well in looks when compared with the iPod.

The Zune software is Microsoft's equivalent to iTunes and accesses Microsoft's Zune Marketplace. The software will function only on Windows XP with Service Pack 2 or on Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 Update Rollup 2. No other operating systems are currently supported, and that includes, surprisingly enough, the newest Microsoft operating system, Windows Vista, although I believe the recently released Zune update has done something to alleviate these problems. Even though I didn't have the Zune itself, I thought it would be interesting to install the software to see what artists were available, and although I had Service Pack 2 installed on my PC, the software still insisted that I needed an update. Once I performed the update, the software installed fine.

Colin Meeks

Running the software for the first time, I was prompted that the system wanted to do a download of the catalog. This went on for a long time. I left the machine at around the 20-minute mark and it was still going. I only got back to the machine the following day, and unfortunately my machine had reset itself due to a power outage. I relaunched the Zune software, and it had obviously remembered where it was up to, as I was now prompted to create a user account. Not only did I need to create a Zune account, I also needed a Microsoft Live account. Fortunately, my Hotmail account worked just fine. This initial registration probably took 20 minutes or so.

Scanning my laptop, which didn't have much music on it, the software found five albums, and they played as was to be expected, without a hitch. I searched for several popular artists in the Zune marketplace, and they were all available, so at first glance, it looks like the catalog is pretty extensive. I have to admit, however, I'm not a great fan of the Zune software's user interface. It looks very sparse, and the software itself is very unresponsive. My laptop is by no means a state-of-the-art machine, but it's no slouch either, with its 1.7 gigahertz processor.

The Zune software currently has no support for podcasts. This isn't to say you can't copy podcasts onto to your Zune device and listen to them, but it is not a patch on the iTunes-iPod integration. This is a major failing if you are used to the iTunes way of doing things. For me, however, this isn't a major drawback, as I currently copy podcasts manually to my PocketPC, so the Zune would be a natural replacement for the way I currently do things.

One of the most worrying things about the Zune is the absolutely awful byline Microsoft are using for their advertising: 'Welcome to the Social'. This may sound great in the US, but in the UK, the 'Social' is where people go to sign for their unemployment benefits. I can't believe no-one at Microsoft raised this as a possible problem.

That byline, though, is the least of their worries. For me, the biggest drawback is the Zune's best feature: wireless networking, enabling the sharing of tracks. Whilst digital rights management, or DRM, is considered by some a necessary evil, I have no problem with it, as I choose not to buy from places that enforce DRM of any kind. However, the Zune takes DRM to a whole new, rather uncomfortable level. If you send a music track over to another Zune, or 'squirt it', as Steve Balmer, Microsoft's CEO, likes to say, the recipient Zune can play the track only three times, or for three days, whichever comes first. That's fine if the track has been purchased and has DRM protection, but Microsoft in their infinite wisdom have decided to enforce DRM even on freely available MP3 tracks - that includes music and podcasts - which is potentially a breach of these works' Creative Commons or similar licences. Yes, you read me right: If you were to send a copy of my Indie Launchpad podcast from one Zune to another, the recipient would have three days to listen to it, or three plays, whichever came first, as the Zune adds its own DRM to the file you sent.



Colin Meeks

Adding DRM in this way is especially interesting, given the fact that Bill Gates was recently reported to have told an influential group of bloggers that copy protection for digital music and video is too complex for consumers to understand. That's an understatement. It is surprising, however, that Microsoft has all but abandoned their PlaySure DRM, which is used by Napster, and has gone about yet again reinventing the DRM wheel. This has not gone down well with manufacturers who built devices compatible with the PlaySure standard.

The Zune's addition of DRM to an otherwise free file is totally unacceptable and is, for me, a total sale breaker. Having said that, though, I have discovered that there are ways to circumvent these kinds of restrictions. Whilst not the most intuitive methods, they do work and give your Zune capabilities that Microsoft deemed verboten. [Gizmodo](#) has a couple of useful articles that could prove useful reading if you are a Zune user or are considering a Zune and need this kind of functionality. Be forewarned that these tips haven't been tried by Podcast User Magazine, and we accept no responsibility for fried Zune players. That being said, many users seem to have successfully implemented the tips in those articles.

The Zune has been out for only a few months, and Microsoft has already issued a firmware update for it. This update addresses some of the compatibility problems with Vista and also improves performance, but it adds no new features. Leo Laporte, tech guru extraordinaire, originally gave the Zune a favorable nod, but oh, how the mighty have fallen. The Zune was recently called "Doggie dookie" by Laporte in a fairly critical video segment that is available on [YouTube](#). He noted all the shortcomings mentioned here and also revealed the deal Microsoft made with Universal Music, to give them one dollar for each Zune sold. The inference is that Microsoft is admitting that their audio device will be used for pirated music. Microsoft's agreement with Universal Music could now open a floodgate for all other music labels that will want to renegotiate deals, after their current agreements expire with iTunes, and this can only be a bad thing for the consumer. It does, however, play right into the arms of independent artists, many of whom make their music freely available in MP3 format.

Microsoft has a huge opportunity to make serious inroads on Apple's iPod market share, but they are going to have to try a lot harder, giving the users the features they want and freeing off some of the restrictions they don't. It's certainly an interesting time for those seeking to purchase an update or new portable media device.



Colin Meeks



Inside the Podcasters' Studio



Paul and Judy from TotalPodcastrophe ask questions of Andrew Darlow

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 Andrew Darlow.

The Imaging Buffet is a podcast by photographer and digital consultant Andrew Darlow. It is geared toward professional and amateur photographers, graphic designers and others interested in imaging topics. Featuring tips, techniques and reviews, it's a taste of what's cool and what's hot in the world of digital imaging and entertainment. Queen B is Andrew's college sweetheart and wife. She brings her love of movies and television to the site and the podcast in the form of "Queen B's TV and Movie Reviews (with Food References)."

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

Andrew: I was born in New Jersey, USA in 1970, and currently live in Middlesex County, NJ. In between, I've lived and worked on three continents, and I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity to study in Japan and Germany. I'm married, with one child. I'm a photographer, educator and digital imaging consultant and for over 15 years, I have consulted on the topics of digital photography, output and color management for individuals and corporations such as Elliott Erwitt and Tiffany & Co. My commercial clients have included Brooks Brothers, Kenneth Cole, Tourneau watches, Cigar Aficionado and The Body Shop.

I served as Editorial Director of Digital Imaging Techniques magazine for two years, where I wrote and edited numerous articles and reviews on the topics of digital and fine-art photography, inkjet printing, and Photoshop techniques. I've also conducted seminars across the United States at photo-related conferences, for professional photography organizations and at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York.

My photography has been exhibited in numerous group and solo shows, and my work has been included in many photography publications. I'm the editor and founder of The Imaging Buffet Digital Magazine and Podcast (<http://www.imagingbuffet.com>) and I publish the Inkjet & Imaging Tips Newsletter, which includes tips and techniques related to fine-art printing and digital imaging.

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

Andrew: I first heard the word podcasting on a recorded training call related to the Big Seminar online marketing event about February of 2005. The person who was speaking about podcasting and who, in my opinion, accurately predicted its phenomenal growth was Alex Mandossian (www.alexmandossian.com).

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

Andrew: Inside Mac Radio (www.insidemacradio.com) was the first because I'm a long-time Mac user and it was the first one that caught my eye in the iPodderX directory (www.transistr.com). I was amazed at the amount of great content and high-end radio-like sound quality. Actually, it was and still is a live radio show that is then made available as a podcast.

What do you look for in a podcast?

Andrew: I look for either entertainment or information (it's even better if I can get both in the same show!) I'm particularly drawn to shows about Adobe Photoshop, digital photography, language learning and the Macintosh.

What puts you off a podcast?

Andrew: I don't like hearing the same news on four or five shows, which sometimes happens on the Mac-related shows. However, if the news is done with a little attitude, then I usually don't mind listening to the same topics discussed.

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

Andrew: I have always liked sharing information with others. After learning so much from other podcasters, I attended the first Podcast Expo (www.podcastexpo.com) in Ontario, CA in 2005 and "caught the podcasting bug." I vowed to have a show by the following Podcast Expo (2006), and I'm very happy that I did just that. I think you'll get a sense of how much I enjoyed the most recent Podcast Expo by viewing my photo gallery from the event here:

<<http://imagingbuffet.com/?p=104>>

What motivates you, currently, to continue podcasting?

Andrew: Although I'm not creating a large number of podcasts, my main motivation comes from the people who I meet and who I want to interview on the show. When people come up to me and tell me how much they enjoyed a specific show, that doesn't hurt, either.

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

Andrew: I now get more impatient during long radio commercial breaks, and I feel that the people on some TV shows are just reading TelePrompters, whereas I feel many of the independent podcasters are speaking from their hearts. Also, I find myself watching less TV overall.

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

Andrew: More than anything else, podcasting has expanded my circle of friends. I feel a special connection with other podcasters, similar to how I feel connected to other photographers when I communicate with them online or in person.



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

Andrew: Observing how many people show an outpouring of caring and support to others when a member of the podcasting community has a problem or loses a close family member. I've seen this happen many times and it gives me great hope to know that there is a lot of respect between podcasters and their audiences.

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

Andrew: I see more content! I'd like to continue having my wife Belinda (code name Queen B) do her TV and movie reviews. She picks shows that have food references and gives them a salt and pepper rating for overall quality and quality of the food references.

My love for technology, photography and podcasting has also led to my creation of a Cafe-Press powered website with many different text-based designs and photographs, so if you need a t-shirt, mug or thong that reads: "I speak at 44.1 Khz," you can find it at www.BigDiner.com!

Andrew Darlow can be found at:
<http://www.imagingbuffet.com>

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



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Four Eyed Monsters

An interview with Arin and Susan by Mark Hunter

Artistic but shy, videographer Arin Crumley was fed up with the usual dating game. So when he met waitress Susan Buice on the internet, the spark of their relationship was fanned not through inane small talk, but through different artistic mediums; the couple decided not to communicate verbally but to talk to each other through art instead.

Sounds pretentious? Perhaps, but the relationship blossomed and grew and after a year the couple decided to work on a feature film inspired by their courtship. The film 'Four Eyed Monsters' was submitted to Slamdance in September 2004; its world premiere came in January 2005.

Determined to create a buzz around their film, the couple edited their first video podcast, launching Episode 0 on the day the video iPod was released, October 12th 2005. The video podcast had its desired effect: a phenomenal internet buzz was created around the film, with sell-out audiences attending theatrical screenings every Thursday across the United States.

Arin and Susan talked to Podcast User Magazine about how and why they create their video podcast.

PUM: What's your podcast about?

Arin: It's about the creation of Susan's and my relationship, the creation of our film, and the creation of a fan base for our film. It's also about being obsessed with work and compromising relationships of people around you, self-sabotage and the constant struggle to feel connected.

PUM: How did you first hear about podcasting? What was your gut reaction to it?

Arin: We first heard about podcasting online someplace randomly at the beginning of 2005 and started to joke how it would be really funny to have a website that talked about the weather in New York City and just other random seemingly useless stuff. At the time we just thought it was using audio on the web to add character to an otherwise static environment. Then we went to South-by-South West, and Cinematical.com interviewed us for their podcast and we said, oh, cool, right, a podcast. Then after we got back from SXSW 2005 I read our complimentary issue of Wired Magazine that was talking about Adam Curry and his ideas around podcasting.



PUM: What do you use hardware-wise to record your podcast?

Arin: We use a KSM-27 microphone hooked up to our DVX-100 and a Color Tran 300 watt back-light along with a Color Tran 500 watt keylight, above the camera, which shines through a three-foot diffusion ring.

PUM: Why did you decide to create a podcast?

Arin: Podcasting is very clearly an evolution in communication. So it was really the inspiration from the first podcast I ever listened to, which was Adam Curry's episode 200 where he spoke about that evolution. He also spoke about bands that were selling more albums because he'd play a song on his show.

We had previously done a video blog out at SXSW for four days in a row, so we started to think we could create more material like that, but released on an RSS feed in order to build a subscriber base. We decided we could justify going into it full time because we knew the value of our film would go up by creating all of this additional content around the film, as well as forming a base of support for future projects. But we didn't realize the medium of the video podcast was going to become so much of its own living, breathing project and we didn't understand the social interaction aspect of it until we got into the middle of it.



Susan: It seemed like a pretty natural progression in a lot of ways, though. I don't necessarily consider myself a 'filmmaker'. I just want to make stuff that's going to connect, whether it's a drawing, a short video, or some sort of long-form video content. Podcasting was just the next best effective way of establishing a connection.

PUM: What tips do you have to overcome podcaster's block? (*We all have times where we just can't motivate ourselves to podcast.*)

Arin: Well episode 3.5 is all about podcaster's block. In that episode we just start looking at it as a battle that pulls us over the hump. It's sometimes painful to just sit down and make yourself do it; you might start kicking and screaming, but that is what you need to do. It will get fun again at some point during the process.

Susan: Once you're in the process of 'doing' it's not nearly as painful as the process of trying to get yourself to do the thing you're avoiding. You almost have to convince yourself to just get started so you can quickly move out of the agony phase. I think that's true for any creative process.

PUM: Do you plan to move into audio podcasts?

Arin: We already have. We did a 'review of a review' on our site which is currently on our press page as a Quicktime audio file but will eventually be put on our feed when we don't have anything else going on. It's 10 minutes of us reviewing the bad review we got for our film from David Fear.

Also we recorded these discussions each night our film was playing at Cinema Village and will soon be releasing those as an audio podcast on our feed. Also we've created a new feed which contains video and audio reaction about our project, which you can subscribe to separately

Susan: Whatever's most efficient. We sometimes find ourselves wanting to quickly get an idea out that doesn't require the big song and dance we put into the video podcast.

PUM: Can you give me three production tips to pass on to other video podcasters?

Arin: Use a good microphone as if you were creating an audio podcast. 24p is a good frame rate for online video, because 15 is too little but 30 is sometimes hard for slower computers. The DVX-100 can shoot in 24pa, which allows you to edit in true 24p.

Susan: Color correction. Use color correction to enhance the video, but like Arin says, definitely pay attention to audio. Video is useless if the audio isn't up to snuff.

PUM: Do you listen to other podcasts? If so, which ones?

Arin: Diggnation, Karmabanque, Democracy Now, and I have a Podzinger alert feed for 'net neutrality' and try to listen to most of what comes out on it. We also watch the burg, rocketboom, tikibar, suicide girls, 'First Hour Movies' and Simple_Coat productions.

PUM: What are your plans for 2007?

Arin: Keep putting out episodes while starting on some new projects. Also we'll be doing stuff with the Sundance Channel.

PUM: If you were able to, what changes would you make to allow easier creation of and downloading of podcasts?

Arin: A portable wi-fi aggregator would be great; my device finds an open wi-fi connection and downloads any new podcasts that I'm subscribed to. Also I'd love to have my voicemail as a podcast, and to have unlimited recording length for it. I think podcasts for an audience of one is something that can have more value than those created for an audience of many. Also the idea of time-shifted communication shouldn't be reserved for those trying to mass communicate.

Four Eyed Monsters can be found at www.foureyedmonsters.com. Their video podcast is on iTunes.



Podcasting Goes Live and Interactive with TalkShoe



by Lance
Anderson

I had just stepped outside of our booth at the Podcast Expo in September when I was approached by a guy who asked, "Who do I talk to about the LA Podcasters?"

"You're talking to him" I replied. TalkShoe's Senior Vice President Brian Schuliger then introduced himself and his 'live interactive podcasting' service. Brian went on to tell me that with [TalkShoe](#) anyone could now create their own internet radio talk show. Plus, listeners (TalkShoe calls them 'participants') can call in with their phone or voice-over-internet-protocol (VoIP) service such as [Skype](#), [SJ Phone](#), or [Jajah](#). Participants can also add comments in the real-time chat room, listen to the live stream or download the show later as a podcast - TalkShoe uploads, hosts and creates the dreaded feed! Brian then put the cherry on top when he told me that TalkShoe pays the hosts monthly by inserting ads. And most important, at least to me, is that the host has 100 percent ownership of the show.



Dave Nelsen

All of this sounded great, but since at the time I was busier than the proverbial one-armed paper hanger, I could barely give him my full attention for more than a couple of minutes. In the blur of the Expo, I almost forgot about Brian, TalkShoe and the services they provided.

A few weeks later I was having a conversation with my good friend and fellow LA Podcaster, Dan Klass ([The Bitterest Pill](#)). We were talking about making money with podcasting and wondering out loud about how we would go about creating our own radio-style talk shows without investing in tens of thousands of dollars of equipment.



Mark Juliano

The very next day Brian sent me a follow-up email reintroducing me to TalkShoe. Later that day, I spoke with Brian on the phone and he pitched TalkShoe to me and, by extension, the rest of the LA Podcasters. If truth be told, it felt like magic: yesterday Dan and I were looking for a solution to create our own talk shows, and the next day we had our answer... well, almost.

The first thing that struck me about TalkShoe, beyond being the possible solution to my dream, was the extremely helpful and personable customer service. The whole staff works from a small office in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and it is 'all hands on deck'. Even the company's president, Dave Nelsen, jumps in to help new hosts learn the how to use TalkShoe. As Dave always says, "the hosts and the quality content they create are the foundation of TalkShoe."

Even more refreshing was the fact that they actually pay the hosts. Instead of taking the typical podcasting company attitude of "we'll pay you once we get our advertisers in place", Talk Shoe pays their hosts now (automated ad insertion will begin early 2007). In fact, last month they paid Cliff Ravenscraft (of [Generally Speaking](#)) 1000 USD for his cumulative audience of callers, streamers and downloads over time.

For all of these reasons, I decided to give TalkShoe a try back in late October by doing a few 'Radio Experiments'. Again I was pleased to learn that after I downloaded the free software from their site, which allows you to use the interactive TalkShoe control panel (or, as they like to say, 'the client'), TalkShoe was easy to use, especially since several of the TalkShoe staff walked me through the features of the interactive client.

Essentially, the control panel is a combination of a chat room and a very simple radio-style caller queue. If a participant has also downloaded the client and is logged into the show, both the host and the participants can see and interact with each other.

The window lets both the host and participants know who is calling in and waiting to talk. The host has total control, he or she can mute and unmute callers, mute chatters and start and stop the show at any time. It is almost as simple as hitting 'record' and 'stop'.

One of the best features of TalkShoe is the accessibility. Just as in traditional talk radio, a telephone is all anyone needs to participate in the show. The caller dials TalkShoe (a US-based phone number) and then enters the show code and their PIN. Anyone can easily set up an account on the TalkShoe site without downloading the client.

A person can also dial in through Skype or another VoIP service. This is where it gets a little tricky. Sometimes it can be very difficult to 'dial in' because the technology in the VoIP world is still in development on both the TalkShoe end and the VoIP industry itself. Not being able to dial in can be very frustrating, especially if you are a host!

“If a company says they are in beta, believe them.” - Lance Anderson



Listen

Browse The Directory



Talk

Talk and Chat Live



Host

Create an Interactive Podcast

At the same time I was experimenting with TalkShoe, so was the pied piper of podcasting, Leo Laporte ([This Week in Tech](#)). It is safe to say that Leo opened the floodgate for most of the people now on TalkShoe. He and his Net@Nite co-host [Amber MacArthur](#) were looking for a way to do a live and interactive version of their show.

Since Leo and Amber have such a large listener base outside of TalkShoe, they have had to deal with technical issues. They have generated so much traffic to the TalkShoe site that they consistently overwhelm the system; new servers have been recently installed to help combat the problem.

Leo still sees TalkShoe as a “promising technology” and a useful tool. “We’re used to being on the bleeding edge. We don’t expect everything to work from day one.”

Leo also believes that Dave and the rest of the TalkShoe staff are committed to making it work, and he plans to continue to use TalkShoe as a ‘production element’ for their show.

My friend and Orange County Podcaster, Victor Cajiao, is also using TalkShoe to create interactive versions of his [Typical PC & Mac User podcasts](#). Victor says that “we have a responsibility as hosts of TalkShoe to make sure that we mentor people as to how they can get engaged. Once they do, they will be off and running.”

Carter Harkins, the CEO of [InnerToob.com](#), co-hosts a show with Dave Nelsen called [Conversational Podcasting](#), “where we are examining some of the things that are possible with the tools that we built but also examining ways that we can invite people in to create the atmosphere of participation.” The live interaction between host and audience is what Carter felt was lacking in podcasting until now.

Not everyone on TalkShoe is a podcasting celebrity. [Kurt Nelson](#) is a 15-year-old who hosts a show called Go Debate. When I asked him if his teenage friends have joined into his ‘talk cast’, he said for most of them, the ‘barrier to entry’ is the long-distance phone call and lack of computer microphones.

Dave Nelsen says that it was always his plan to have an integrated VoIP element in the client but that it has been very troublesome to find the right fit for TalkShoe. He and his staff hope to have the new VoIP-integrated client by February. This will be good news to any podcaster who isn’t calling from the US. But in the meantime, many hosts are using VoIP successfully. As for me, I’ve found the phone connection to be the most reliable but, unfortunately the most costly.

All that being said, TalkShoe is an excellent and revolutionary tool for both the new and experienced podcaster. In fact, I used TalkShoe to conduct the interviews for this story. (You can listen to the whole interview at Podcast User Magazine: Interview.)

I also think most of the future users of TalkShoe will be those who have no podcasting experience. This is because TalkShoe makes it so easy to start podcasting. After you have downloaded the client, you simply schedule a show, then log in and call in before the show begins. The host hits 'record' when they are ready to start and the 'stop' button when they are done. TalkShoe takes care of the rest by automatically hosting your show on their server and creating the RSS feed for you, which, of course, is still 'the barrier to entry' for most people who are still sitting on the sidelines, waiting to start podcasting.

Back in 2005, when I started my podcast, Verge of the Fringe, Skype was the main accessory that every podcaster had to use. In 2006, it was MySpace (despite my kicking and screaming). Now as we enter the New Year, I believe that Talk Shoe will be the podcasters tool of choice for 2007.

Hear the Lance Anderson TalkShoe Interviews - [click here](#).

Lance and PUM wish to thank all who participated in the TalkShoe interview. In addition to those mentioned above, the following podcasters contributed to the development of this story:

Art Blanchet (Your Home, your Money):

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=1009>

John Buehler (Rebuilding Eden):

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=777>

Philip Gatlin (BBN: Growing Business and Making Money):

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=2362>

Kain (Tech Bytes):

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=7375>

Scott Kurtz (PVP Live Podcast):

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=5809>

Paul Stanton (Home Business Radio Internet Talk Show):

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=2317>

Lance Anderson is a founder of LA Podcasters.

He can be found at Verge of the Fringe

(<http://vergeofthefringe.blogspot.com/>)

and, in January, at The Wild Card Line

(<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=4381>)

The sE Reflexion Filter – a podcaster's dream ?

by Grant Mason

I suspect I'm typical of the average podcaster, with my 'studio' being tucked away in the corner of a room. Being in a two-bedroom flat doesn't leave me with any option other than to be set up this way. Of course, this situation results in a plethora of sound issues – fan noise from being so close to the PC, sound bouncing off the adjacent wall, rear wall and side of the wardrobe; the list of problems I have to fight against is endless as I struggle to balance sound quality against the limitations introduced by my working environment. So when I was approached to review the sE Electronics Reflexion Filter (aka 'the portable vocal booth'), I jumped at the chance as I knew that I'd be able to really put it to the test. If it would work for me, it could be every podcaster's dream purchase.

Who are sE Electronics?

sE Electronics is a fairly recent arrival in Europe. Founded by Mr. Siwei Zou, a successful classical musician, conductor and composer from Shanghai, the company has gained a serious reputation in the industry for its top-notch microphones over the last three years. It describes the Reflexion Filter as "basically a portable device for recording live sound sources with reduced room ambience" - in other words, you can use it to help produce 'dry' vocal recordings without any of the acoustic nasties mentioned in my first paragraph that your average podcast studio will introduce.

First Impressions and Installation

When PUM gave away a Reflexion Filter as a prize a few months ago, the impression I got from the product photos was of a small item that sat behind the microphone in a fairly unobtrusive fashion. Obviously I should have paid more attention at the time; when the box arrived I was stunned at the size and weight of it as it was handed over. I was even more shocked when I opened it, to be confronted by what I described to friends at the time as 'half of a washing machine drum'. It's one heck of a seriously sturdy piece of kit, and I started to realise why the recommended retail price is £195.00 (£229.00 inc VAT). It even comes with its own hefty spanner for putting it together – none of your weedy Ikea-style Allen keys here!

The filter is constructed in six main layers- punched aluminium, absorptive wool, aluminium foil, an air gap, further wool and then the outer, punched, aluminium wall. These are all designed to dampen the sound down and diffuse it as it passes through – thus giving the dry vocal result.

Putting the thing together was pretty simple – attach the filter to the support rod, fix the support clamp to your mic stand and then pop the filter and rod into the clamp and tighten it up. Attach your mic to the sliding support and position it as indicated in the manual (centrally in both the horizontal and vertical axes in relation to the face of the filter, with the mic capsule sitting roughly level with the front edges of the filter) et voila! You're ready to roll. Well, almost. In my studio, I use a small, boom-arm 'table top' mic stand in a very limited space. I was initially terrified that the filter wouldn't fit the desk, but I was pleased that despite its apparent bulk, it squeezed in nicely. However, the combined weight of the mic, clamp and filter just tipped my stand over. Without any effective way of applying a counterweight, I had to resort to using a DVD case standing on end to prop the clamp up. Very Heath-Robinson, but also satisfyingly effective.

The Filter In Use

The immediate effect of using the filter was staggering.

Gone was the sound 'echo' bouncing back unevenly from all the angled surfaces and walls in the room – I no longer needed to sit with my face almost against the mic with heavy gating / limiting applied. Indeed I was far louder with the filter in place and I had to start a long campaign of forcing myself out of a 13-month ingrained, habitual way of working with the mic. I had to stay further back, as I could get the same vocal level from a distance with-

out the ambient noise. Indeed in the end I gave in and – fighting a fear of change – readjusted nearly every setting on my 16-dial, 24-buttoned compressor/limiter/gate box. Over the course of a few weeks, I gradually got the settings right until literally two weeks ago, when I could safely declare the settings as perfect. No sudden drop-outs if I moved slightly too far back, and no sudden clipping if I got too close and therefore too loud. I'd balanced my processing with the filter's effect. I could almost imagine that I was sitting in a professional studio vocal booth with the massive improvement in quality that the filter was bringing.



It's very difficult to describe the improvement that this has made to the vocal quality, though the words 'tighter', 'together', 'stronger' and 'smoother' come damn close. The best way to illustrate is to provide 'with' and 'without' samples, which you'll find links to at the end of this review.

Of course, you can experiment with the sound by sliding the mic back and forth so that it moves closer and further away from the filter. Moving into the filter effectively deadens the sound (though I noticed that this introduced some frequency peaking and therefore clipping), and moving it further out starts to introduce more ambient room noise. You may find that certain positions other than the recommended one might suit your own mic and room situation better, so it pays to play around until you get the sound you're looking for.

Other than that, that's your filter in a nutshell. Simplicity personified.

SE Electronics can be found at www.seelectronics.com.



Summary

I have to say that I was staggered by the huge difference that this made to my vocal quality. Once I got past staring into a black void when I was recording, I grew to love what I affectionately began referring to as 'the beast'. Yes, its big (at least comparatively when viewed in my small studio space) but it looks good with all that shiny metal and matte black cladding, and I've grown very fond of it these last two months. I'm really going to miss it when it goes – it's made such a marked difference to my sound that going back to the old ways will be a real wrench. To my ears, I'll be returning to the amateur vocal sound, whereas I've been coming over all smooth and Terry Wogan with my filter. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the sE Reflexion Filter to any podcaster who's looking to have their vocals tighter than Michelle Pfeiffer's catsuit – it really is a dream come true.

My huge thanks to Ian and James at Sonic Distribution (<http://www.sonic-distribution.com>) for the loan of the filter.



Samples:

without filter -

<http://media.libsyn.com/media/threefromleith/Without.mp3>

with filter -

<http://media.libsyn.com/media/threefromleith/With.mp3>

(both recorded in uncompressed wav format and encoded down to mp3 at near-CD quality 256kbps)

MOANS, GROANS AND THE FUTURE OF PODCASTING?

Happy New Year, fellow Podcasters! Having been an independent contributor to this delightful online magazine for last few months, I wish to start this article with a large pat on the back and well wishes for the dedicated team who work tirelessly in producing the Podcast User Magazine! Well done and good luck!

As it's now 2007 and two years on from my original podcasting dabbles, I want to look at the current state of podcasting and its future. My very first question has to be, has podcasting become little more than a delivery mechanism for the large corporations and commercial outlets?

The readers of this magazine, I imagine, are primarily podcast producers and a small handful of enthusiastic listeners or commentators. This is good and as it should be, but I fear the lay public are not downloading this or any other publication dedicated to this unique medium of free speech.

I cannot help but conclude that the podcasters are still talking to the converted and not reaching out to a new and possibly more critical audience, that of the general public. I never see on billboards at the side of the road, or in magazine adverts or in half-page newspaper spreads any notice proclaiming the merits and originality of podcasting or the fact that there are many times more podcast producers than there are radio and television stations in this or other countries around the world. It concerns me that this amazing format, with its hugely diverse and individual content (not to mention sometimes cynical or political points of view), is remaining firmly underground or purely in the realm of the geeks, bloggers and IT specialists. Surely that cannot be a good thing?

The only people who are really making a connection with the ordinary people in the street are the large corporations and commercial outlets such as the BBC, Channel 4 television, Virgin Radio and so on.



Why has this been allowed to happen? Why did a movement of free expression, as podcasting certainly is, allow itself to be hijacked by the Big Boys and have its originators appear as insignificant voices bleating in a wilderness of its own?

Maybe I have this all wrong, and I hope I do, but I can't help feeling that we have been walked over and are not likely to be given the chance to rise.

I listen a lot to BBC Radio 4, a massive exporter of quality programming and a supplier of wonderful podcasts – none originally produced as a podcast, of course, but repacked as radio-on-demand. I am not annoyed by this at all. Radio 4 do make great content, and isn't it wonderful that it is free – even if it is available to people who haven't paid their license fee and don't even live in its country of origin?

What I do find disheartening is that still no-one is able to make a proper career out of podcasting. It is continually looked down upon as poor-man's radio, and if a program isn't a re-packaged piece of radio broadcast, then it is just amateur drivel and not valid.

Why have we not seen any rising stars come from the podcasting world? Where are the talent scouts looking? Surely in the first two years we must have seen a handful of podcasters picked out for fame and fortune from their dedicated hobby, but no. Dancers, fisherman, builders, doctors and even airport staff and people failing at driving tests have been made into household names. Podcasters are just ignored.

Even Adam Curry, the grand daddy of them all, isn't generally known to the mass public (well, certainly not in the UK.) And if he can't make it big with all his money and wealth and flying lessons, what chance do the few of us who would like to make a living or a reasonable wage out of podcasting have?

The answer is, of course, investment. Who, apart from corporations and commercial concerns, is investing in their podcast? What about Curry's Podshow, you may ask. But have we seen that advertised on the billboards, the television and the glossy magazines, alerting us to its presence and audio-visual library of unknown, new and exciting talent?

I thought that when British Telecom invested in Podshow, we were finally going to see a commitment to marketing podcasting to the great unwashed. Alas, as yet I haven't seen it.

Everybody wants their content for free, it seems. Nobody want to pay for podcasts, and by so doing invest in the future of shows, helping them to develop and grow into products that can give more than corporate-biased, commercially sponsored audio messages.

People exclaim to me that putting commercials in a podcast is the answer, but I still haven't seen a model that truly works to give the producer a living wage with a supply of relevant commercials that can sit comfortably within the 30 or 45 minutes of a show produced to appeal to a potentially global audience.

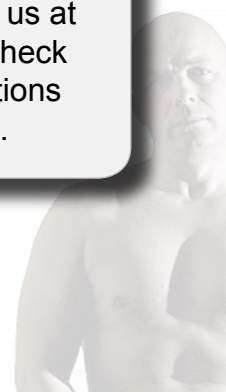
But it's a hobby - that's the other explanation I am given as to why I shouldn't look to make any kind of living out of something I just love to do and have spent nearly every day of my life engaged in for the past two years. That's rubbish.

Yes, a hobby it may be, but the implied reasoning that I shouldn't think of making a living from it is just plain crazy. You look at sportsmen, art collectors, beer drinkers, gun owners and even little old ladies who knit. Many of these people manage to turn their hobbies into a wage-giving job. So why not podcasters? Not all, of course, want to, but there are some who have the talent, the drive and the desire to excel at this fascinating and inexpensive method to communicate with the rest of the world.

<http://www.vobes.com>

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

Do you agree with Richard's own personal musings and questions for the future of podcasting? We at Podcast User Magazine welcome viewpoints from all sides, so send your comments and submissions to us at the contacts listed on page 2, and check back for answers to Richard's questions throughout the coming year in PUM.





John Buckley's observations on the podcasting scene

The UK podcast community's gossip of choice over the last month or so concerned the demise of the Britcaster Forums. Solidly at the heart of the UK podcasting community for the best part of two years, Britcaster has acted as a one-stop aggregator and RSS feed for most of the UK's podcast output, and the forums hosted some unique conversational content by being a gathering place for almost everything and everyone involved in the British podosphere.

The forums began with a small group and a few posts back in May 2005 and became a focal point for an emerging community. They spawned a host of ventures, ideas and collaborations, numerous meet-ups, a yearly podcast conference and Podcast User Magazine. Along the way the forums produced many moments of fun, frivolity and outright silliness. In later stages the posts were often snarky, ill-tempered and prone to bouts of factionalism and subtle flaming. Nonetheless, the forums helped to give a unique character and flavor to the early days of British podcasting, and the archives will remain available for search and investigation by anyone wanting to get a sense of what they were like.

The forums finally closed for active posting at midnight on Friday, December 15, 2006, with the last few threads containing the usual mix of ill-tempered backbiting and warm-hearted anarchic fun. One frequent poster commented, watching them go was "like seeing a dear old auntie fade into the ether!" The passing was marked with a community podcast, to which over 20 British podcasters contributed music, chat and observation. The forums will be sadly missed, but their demise has given online activities in the UK podosphere new life and impetus.

What happens next will be equally interesting. The often ill-tempered exchanges that became a part of the malaise on the Britcaster Forums have temporarily dissipated, replaced by two new forums that have emerged to claim the mantle of "the place where the UK podcasters hang out."

BritCaster.com



The first candidate is the smartly dressed 'teaandpodcasts.com' which has adopted a more informal style, both visually and in the overall tone of its early topics and posts. Put together over a few online chats by a three podcasters, it's designed, in the words of one of its creators, Pete Cooper, "to be nice to the eye" and, he joked, a place "where the hippy podcasters hang out." He added, "We're just trying to be nice and not have any ulterior agenda."

Alongside this, the '[UK Podcasters Forum](http://ukpodcastforum.com)' has also emerged, basing its design and layout on the same phpbb format as Britcaster and presenting a certain cosy familiarity to longtime Britcaster Forums users.

"I deliberately stuck to the same software; familiarity is a good thing", said founder Dean Whitbread.

"Necessity is the mother of invention. It needed doing, so I set it up. I stuck it up online and then thought, you know what? I really need help. I really wanted it to be a community forum. I looked around to see who would be good at it and asked Pete [Cooper]. There was a long pause, and then he said.... 'I'm already doing one!'"

"Neil and Jen Dixon [of Britcaster] have made a brave decision", Dean said, before adding, "The gossip disappears, and what you're left with in the end are two really good forums."

It will certainly be interesting to see how they both evolve and what differences emerge over the coming weeks and months. It is hoped that the newly arrived variety will help inject additional vitality and new critical ideas into the vibrant UK scene without producing arguments over where it is that the UK podcasters really hang out. After all, important as they are, these sites are just forums, and when all is read and done, it's the podcast content and creative ideas that really count.

Links:

<http://britcaster.com/forum/>

<http://teaandpodcasts.com/forum/>

<http://ukpodcastforum.com/podcastforum/index.php>

<http://citizenscoop.co.uk>



What Podcasting Needs to Become in 2007

The general opinion of many involved in creating and listening to podcasts is that the whole process needs to become easier. First of all easier to understand. Words like 'subscribe', a word which litters many podcasts but almost always denotes people parting company with money, may make sense to us in the podcast world, but is potentially off putting to new listeners. 'Feed' is another. Couple that with 'subscribe', as in "subscribe to my feed", and it isn't hard to see how people can be confused and then quickly put off by your average podcaster describing the mechanics of having their show downloaded automatically. We need to make it easier for people to get our podcasts; get, both in understanding and in receiving.

How can we do this? Well, make sure we have a direct download button within our show notes. Couple that with the simple instruction to 'right-click and save', or similar, and visitors to our site will have quick and easy access to our content. Look into putting a Flash-based player on our site, too. There are plenty of them available, many of them are free, and you just point it to your RSS feed. Visitors to your website will be able to stream all of the episodes in your RSS feed via the player.

The jury's still out on whether iTunes is the easiest way for new listeners to become subscribers to your podcast. Admittedly, if they have iTunes on their computer already, and anyone with an iPod will no doubt be using iTunes, making a 'subscribe with iTunes' button for your site will turn them into a subscriber in 2 clicks. Just replace the http at the start of your RSS feed with itpc.

The ultimate thing that podcasting needs to become in 2007 is better known. If your grandmother doesn't know what a podcast is, or if your workmates haven't heard of podcasting yet, then the medium will continue to lack social impact. Evangelise, proselytise, advocate and instruct. That's your responsibility as a podcast producer or discerning listener during 2007; simply spread the word.

Here's an example of why I believe podcasting hasn't hit the social subconscious quite yet. I regularly get bulk emails from indie bands whose music I've played, or whose music they want me to play. Often times there will be an excited paragraph about how one of their songs is going to be played on an FM radio station somewhere in Central Scotland. Now, I know for a fact that many new music podcasts have far greater audience figures than a typical FM station in Scotland. The logistics are very simple; an FM transmitter has a limited reach, therefore it has a limited audience. Because a podcast is distributed via the Internet it has a much greater reach, therefore it's audience – and potential audience – is huge, spread not just across a few cities or towns, but across hundreds of countries. But bands at the moment won't get as excited about being played on a podcast with an audience of several thousand the way they get excited about being played on a radio show at 10pm at night with an audience of a couple of thousand.

Why? Because at the moment it's not the same telling your grandmother you were played on a podcast as it is telling her you were played on the radio.

In 2007, let's turn podcasting into something to be proud to tell your granny about.



Mark: My Words

Picking the songs...

by Paul Nicholls

This article will never be right, and it will certainly never be wrong. How *do* you pick the songs for your podcast?

I can only answer for me. My podcasts are varied – sometimes I'll plan an entirely music podcast, other times I'll be focused, serious and journalistic in context and need something very particular to highlight the content.

I love music and totally immerse myself in it daily. I was playing sessions at 16 and had the opportunity to follow music or law professionally as a young teen. Though I still play almost every week, I chose law professionally and part of me regrets it. However, podcasting has allowed me to re-immense myself into music, and I love it.

The first ten seconds of a song need to grab me to make me want to listen to the rest. A great example of this is the classic "Forget the Girl" by Hollow Horse. The first few seconds of sound effects lead into that beautiful telecaster-sounding riff; reminiscent of an Eagles power ballad, followed by Ken Little's amazing vocals. The song *demand*s you to listen to more, and the Beatlesque chorus is the reward. Classic. I wish there were more songs around like that.

There are a number of great portals we can access, notably www.music.podshow.com, www.magnatunes.com, www.garageband.com and of course the many bands on MySpace.

Whilst I'm well aware that poor production doesn't necessarily mean a poor band, it often is the case that poor production means a poor eventual song.

For me I listen to a number of things that tick the boxes before a song can be played:

1. Excellent musicianship
2. A strong, tuneful vocal
3. Good production qualities
4. A song that isn't forgettable



I've often heard amazing vocals marred by amateur and poor musicianship. It wouldn't be fair to name names, but one wonderful female singer had a very poor drummer that marred the quality of the song to the extent that I wanted to gouge out my eyes with a spoon. I've often heard incredible musicians with a terribly dreary singer, and that seems such a travesty, too.

If you're not sure what song to play, listen around to some of the music podcasts and see what grabs you. Here's a tip: just about anything played by Lynn Parsons' [Red Light Zone](#) meets every tick-box above. Lynn is perhaps the pinnacle of music podcasters as far as I'm concerned, and she is someone I respect a great deal. I know that Lynn pores over her tracks before listening to them and often researches the artist, too.

I never treat the music in my podcast as incidental, and I don't know why some folks do. Often folks tell me:

- 1 I listen to your show and tend to fast forward the music as I want to hear what you're saying
- 2 I fast forward your talking bits as I like the choice of your music
- 3 That the balance of music and speech content is something they like

In other words, everyone listening to your podcast listens to it from a different angle, so there are never hard or fast rules as everyone expects something different. I often have folks send mail or comments to tell me that they've purchased a band's music, and occasionally I have mail from a band or an artist to say they've seen an increase in sales as a direct consequence of podcast play.

I will often spend three to four hours picking three songs. I'll listen over and over and draw a shortlist. I'll critique the shortlist and then whittle the tunes down, thinking carefully about where I'll play them. Generally speaking, I like to open with a high-energy 'belter' and then look for a smoother tune mid way, finishing off with another attention-grabbing tune.

Genre is something I'm not at all fussed by. I love playing the obscure if it's warranted. Check out rock cellist Jamie Sieber (www.magnatunes.com) and listen to some of my archived casts – you'll hear mainstream songs alongside world music and even choral pieces from the Russian Orthodox Church. Don't ever be afraid to play outside of the box; mainstream radio is often too safe, and the music homogenised as a result.

We've got the opportunity to play outside of the box – in terms of wonderful content and genre – so play well.

I'll be compiling a list of some great podsafes music for you in the next issue. Make sure you come back and access it next month.

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



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



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from the team at Podcast User Magazine



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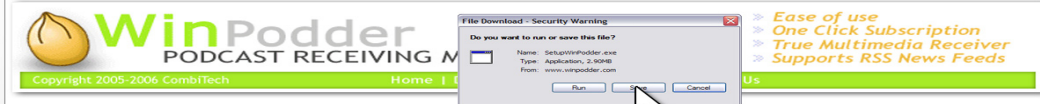
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