

# PodcastUser

Magazine

Issue 13  
Feb 2007

## Dan Klass

Inside the Bitterest Pill

Plus:

- Why Making  
Money Is  
Essential!

- Podcasting  
in Scandinavia

- Recording  
Skype/Googletalk

- Political  
podcasting



PUM

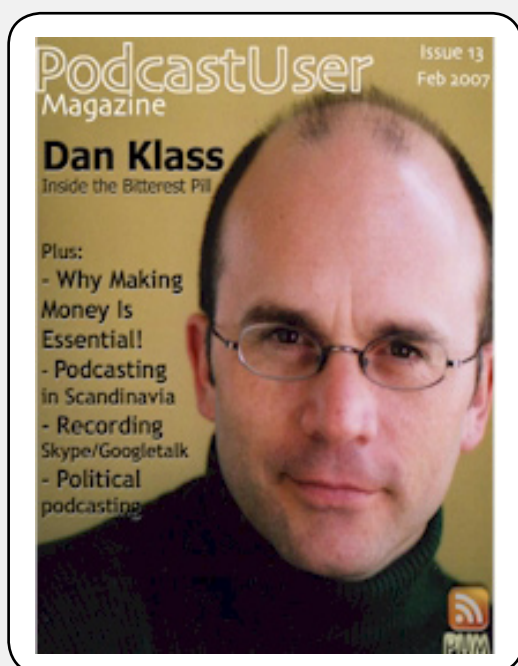
## ABOUT PODCAST USER MAGAZINE

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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

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## EDITORIAL

Greetings and welcome to this the 13th issue of Podcast User Magazine!

As we enter our second year of publication, and as corporate podcasting starts to gain momentum, how can we get to the millions of people who have portable MP3 players and turn them on to podcasts? You see them everyday listening to the same old rubbish from the same old record companies pumping out the same old garbage. We want to open their ears to the newest, freshest content and independent music out there - people and bands who deserve to be heard!

Apple, Inc. helped enormously when it embraced podcasting, but by locking out non-iPod players from iTunes (a decision which has just been ruled illegal by the Norwegian courts – so let's watch this closely) was it, in fact, a bear-hug, squeezing the life out of the non-iPod community?

When I talk to people who are just learning about podcasting and want to listen to podcasts, the first thing they ask about is how to get a podcast. It's really easy to answer if they have an iPod: "Use iTunes" is the refrain for a newbie. However, what if you don't have an iPod? What then? What if you use a Creative Zen, a Sony, an Archos, or even a Zune?

WinPodder is the clear market leader in Windows-based applications, and there are a number of others out there. Web-based solutions exist, but the information is all very fragmented. We, as a community, need a single solution to tell people. 'One ring to bind them all': a solution across all platforms that everyone can use quickly and easily.

I've been looking for a while for something that operates on Linux and Mac as well as Windows. Juice is great, but it's not point-and-click to the same level as iTunes or WinPodder.

We need to develop a platform that embraces the concept of 'podcasts for all' and create an application that is quick and easy and simple to use. Any takers?

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who has helped make PUM what it is today. We are grateful that so many of you download the magazine each month and send feedback by email either directly to the magazine or to us as individuals. I am proud to work with a team who consistently produce great articles for publication and receive the warm, rosy glow of seeing their words in print as the **only** payment for their effort. I want to thank the Editorial, Marketing and Publishing teams who give up so much of their spare time to proof, lay out and market the magazine, and I'd like to thank the advertisers who help us offset some of the costs of bringing this to you each month.

PUM is free to you, the reader, and it always will be. Thanks for your support and happy ~~New~~ Second Year!





## Olympus moves in to podcasting?

Olympus, a respected name in cameras and office equipment, has forged into the world of podcasting by producing a voice recorder with high quality recording in mind. Olympus has been producing voice recorders for some time but more in line with dictation: This new model is specifically designed to record and play podcasts. [Press release](#)



# NewMediaGear.com™

## New Media Forum Launch from Studio1A

Mark Jensen of Studio1A and PodSquad (as featured in Issue 9) has launched a forum for discussions and questions on pro-audio/broadcast equipment. A well focused tool for anyone interested in New Media Hardware and techniques. <http://www.newmediagear.com/forum>



ubuntu studio

## Coming this April - for Linux OS

*'Ubuntu Studio is aimed at the Linux audio, video and graphic enthusiast as well as professional'.* No further details are available as yet, but check out <http://ubuntustudio.org/> for the latest developments.

## Mixcraft 3 in beta

Since we last reviewed Mixcraft in Issue 4 (May 2006), the beta 3 version has been announced. In their own words, it is 'radically different' with 'a major face-lift' and is due to be launched in the first quarter of this year

[www.acoustica.com](http://www.acoustica.com)



## Wallet MP3 Player – the slimmest yet

Known for their ultra-slim credit-card-sized USB flash cards, Walletex have used the same idea to produce an MP3 player. It is completely functional and is designed as a corporate promotional item for company branding. The cards can store from 256 MB to 2 GB of data. There's a unique double-sided USB plug, which doubles as a data cable, headphone adaptor and charger, and the device is even waterproof.

<http://www.walletex.com>

# BELKIN®

Never thought I would see the day . . . Belkin have produced this rather sexy mixing station named the 'TuneStudio' for the 5th generation ipod. Designed with portability in mind and feature packed, it's the ideal solution most audio recording tasks.

[Press release](#)



Our thanks to Podcasting News for mentioning our first birthday. <http://www.podcastingnews.com>

## PodCamp

The PodCamp experience crossed the Atlantic this winter when the first PodCamp in Europe was held at the IT University of Copenhagen. At the one-day event in December, a small but enthusiastic group discussed new podcasting applications, learned about hardware and software solutions for recording Skype interviews, and shared ideas about the state of podcasting in Denmark. In mid January PodCamp Germany was held in Berlin. Their post-event press release can be found at <http://www.podcamp.de>.

## Podcamp Toronto



February 24-25, 2007.  
Rogers Communications Center  
at Ryerson University  
80 Gould Street, Toronto.

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# Corporate Podcasting Summit Europe

[www.podcast-summit.com/europe](http://www.podcast-summit.com/europe)

**19 – 20 March 2007 - Cophorne Tara Hotel, Kensington, London, UK**

Engaging Presentations > Podcasting-in-action Case Studies  
Interactive Panel Debates > Expert Analysis

## How organisations can apply the podcast to their business activities for profitable gain

**PLUS!** Key issues that will help the community capitalise on this emerging channel

- > **UNDERSTAND** how you articulate the podcasting value proposition in business terms
- > **HEAR** exclusive podcasting-in-action case studies from trailblazing organisations
- > **MONITOR** the success of your podcasting campaigns and find out where we go next
- > **IDENTIFY** the podcasting strategies that have worked best, and what made them successful
- > **DISCOVER** how podcasts can help you prompt word of mouth excitement about your products & services

HEAR EXCITING PRESENTATIONS AND LIVELY DEBATE FROM TOP ENTERPRISE PODCASTERS:

Jenny Southwell,  
Head of eMarketing,  
**first direct**   
Member HSBC Group


Philip Filleul,  
Banking Sector Manager,  
Finance Industry Marketing,  
**SUN MICROSYSTEMS** 

Mark Prescott,  
Head of Cultural Campaigns  
and Liaison, **Mayor of London  
and the Greater London Authority** 

Genie Lutz, Partner,  
**PricewaterhouseCoopers** 

Pascal Roobrouck,  
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# Review Roulette

At Podcast User Magazine we strive to bring you balanced reviews of podcasts you may not have heard of, in contrast to the sycophantic 5-star reviews you find on many podcast directories. We in the Roulette team try to do this by forcing ourselves to listen to podcasts randomly chosen from Podcast Alley or Podcast Pickle by the PUM Random Podcast Picker. We risk our ears, so you don't have to! The whole team listen to all the podcasts and rate them, and present you with the average ratings, plus a full review by one of the team.

This month, to celebrate the anniversary of PUM, we took on an extra podcast to review, so whether it's comics, wine, TV or life in general, there may be something here for you...

This month's podcasts were reviewed by:

Simon Toon, Linda Mills, Phil Clark, Marilyn Madsen and Grant Mason



The C Word Radio <http://www.thecwordradio.podomatic.com/>

I do like to watch TV - not in volumes, but selecting shows that entertain and provide some 'brain-off' time after a hard day working for 'the man'. So I was looking forward to this show that describes itself as 'A review of the week in TV', although I did have some foreboding from the title and the 'explicit' tag.

The format of the show is a collection of friends (not sure how many but it seemed like a lot!) sitting around some microphones, interpreting the week's viewing. Their conversation is very 'today' and 'hip', so being an old-fart of senior years, it was rather jarring after about 15 minutes. It was interesting to hear some of the opinions and comments on shows that I do watch, but as this podcast is really all about a bunch of friends getting together to chat, the comments are more like plot updates and who likes who on what show.

The website is just a blog-style, as supplied by Podomatic and adds nothing except a record of the shows available. That isn't necessarily a negative aspect if the content is up to par - that's where the meat is to me.

On the positive side, the sound quality was very good. All the voices were clear, and apart from a few pops here and there, you could definitely hear all the participants. The opening and closing is rather sudden - it just jumps in and out with little warning.

If you like this type of thing, then great - subscribe away! Personally, it's not my thing. I really would like more production and content to make me keep the show on my podcast subscription list. With the plethora of similar shows hitting the podosphere, this one just got the 'delete' key on my iTunes podcast list.

Content Score: 1.67

Production Score: 2.00

Text by Phil Clark

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

# Fanboy Radio Podcast - The Voice of Comics

FbR is the predominate comic book talk show on the air and net. See [fanboyradio.com](http://fanboyradio.com) for more information and show archives.

The Fanboy Radio Podcast <http://fanboyradio.com>

Calling all Super Heroes! Grab your tights and capes!  
It's time for Fanboy Radio - The Voice of Comics.

A radio talk show broadcast from KTCU FM 88.7 in Fort Worth, Texas, and also posted on the internet as a podcast, Fanboy Radio covers all aspects of the world of comics. Each week, host Scott Hinze, along with rotating co-hosts Oliver Tull, David Hopkins, and T.J. Colligan, produces two hours of comics commentary. The Sunday show heard at 6 PM CST is LIVE from the Fanboy Studios and usually includes an interview with one of the industry's leading artists or creators along with live calls from listeners. The Wednesday show heard at 1PM CST is pre-recorded and contains book reviews, DIY segments, comedy bits and general discussion of all things comic related. To quote Scott, "We are Fanboy Radio. We talk about comic books, we talk about pop culture through the lens of the comic book fan. So we also make sure that we talk about TV, movies, video games and everything that hits our life."

Not having read a comic book since grade school, this reviewer was once again entering a new world. First stop was an online dictionary to find out what is meant by the term "Fanboy". It was found to mean "a passionate fan of various elements of geek culture (e.g. Sci-fi, comics, video games, anime, etc)" - a very apt description of the host Scott, whose enthusiasm and passion for this subject comes through the microphone. The interviews with his guests are very informative and entertaining. With a great breadth of knowledge, the hosts present comics and their related arts in a way that is accessible to the non-comic fan. I found that I was soon drawn in by the diversity of their conversations and wanting to know more.

Having been on the air since 2004 and posting as a podcast since mid 2005, Fanboy Radio is a very professionally produced show with great sound quality. Consistent in its creation, the show released #363 as this review was being written. A perusal of the website found an easy-to-navigate page with episodes listings, forums, comic-related columns, and a Fanboy Radio shop. It was also quite nice to find the RSS feed prominently posted in the upper right hand corner of the home page and not buried deep in the site. If comics and graphic art books fill your shelves, then you will want to add a subscription to Fanboy Radio - The Voice of Comics to your library of podcasts.

Content Score: 4.00  
Production Score: 3.67

Text by Marilyn Madsen

A well-produced, interesting, guest-filled show which is the podcast version of the KCTU radio show. Darn - I thought it might be an Indiepod for a second!  
If you are interested in comic book collection, and I know plenty of people are, this podcast is the one for you. I listened to the show on which the guest was Paul Jenkins, apparently a legend in the comic book world, and writer of such books as Civil War: Front Line, Civil War: The Return, The Agency, and The Darkness & Hulk. Hosts Scott Hinze and Oliver Tull know their stuff and are excited about their topic.  
Now, if I can stop the world from destruction by a mutant shape-changing tax collector, my day will be complete.

Text by Phil Clark



# Podcast: Wine for Newbies

Your free online wine course-wine education, wine tasting, and more

Wine for Newbies <http://winefornewbies.net>

The show's host and wine guide, Bill Wilson, loves wine. He loves nothing more than tasting, blogging and podcasting about it. The listener receives a fascinating and informative grounding in Oenology (that's the science and study of all aspects of wine and winemaking from the grape harvest to bottle, if you didn't know). We learn about blending, tasting, matching wines with food, grape varieties and much more, in an easy-to-understand and easy-to-follow style. In describing the flavours and notes in the wines as he tastes and smells, he's descriptive in a restrained manner and doesn't wander off into the UK's Gilly Goolden "old toffee soaked in turpentine and strained through a tramp's sweaty vest" tasting-notes territory. Full marks for this, as the descriptions do allow a wine drinker like me to almost taste the flavours from his words alone; in fact, I'm getting the urge as I write to go and open a bottle!

Although the show is US-based, Bill carefully caters for listeners and wine devotees from across the globe - for example, when discussing wines for matching with food at Thanksgiving, he's quick to point out that his suggestions will go well with typical Thanksgiving fare at any time of the year - so we UK residents could equally embrace the suggestions for our Christmas turkey extravaganza. Brownie points for recognising the rest of the world there.

The shows are usually between 10 and 30 minutes long, depending on the topic, and the production is excellent. Sound quality is spot on, even when Bill does his occasional foray 'outside' and is tasting and reporting 'live' from events and tastings. He manages to keep the levels just right so that you can hear audience comments on his questions, too.

The website is clear, the presentation is easy on the eye and - essentially for a podcast - the visitor will easily locate a podcast player, as well as feeds and subscription links for various podcast directories.

I'm raising my glass to Bill - he's one of life's enthusiasts and natural teachers, and a 'vintage' podcaster. The show's been nominated in the best overall wine blog and best wine-related podcast or videoblog in the American Wine Blog Awards and deservedly so. Cheers!

Content Score: 4.75

Production Score: 3.75

Text by Grant Mason

Host Bill Wilson takes a straight-forward approach to instructing you in the art of enjoying, tasting, blending and selecting wines. If you go back to the early episodes, it explains how he came to begin the podcast, and the recommendation, if you really want to learn about wine, is to listen to all the episodes from day 1. However, if you only want to hear about selected topics, individual programs will be fine to listen to. This is an independent podcast that is worth laying a bottle or two down for, and it encourages opening up one while you listen.

Phil Clark

I liked this podcast. Lots of good information given in a clear and straight-forward style. It was easy to follow along and I learned quite a bit about wine tasting from the episodes to which I listened.

Marilyn Madsen





Squadcast <http://www.squadcast.com/>

“While overlooking New York City, a couple guys get together and podcast once a week to goof on sports, politics, dating and life in general. All while slightly pissing each other off. (Oh, and they play the occasional mashup.)”

In the true spirit of the Squadcast, I’ll say right at the start that I hated this podcast. I knew it was in trouble (or maybe I was in trouble) when one of the first remarks I heard was ‘whaddya mean? No women listen to this!’ I cringed at the obscenities and the body-function jokes. I was unimpressed by the New York attitude and accents (but hey, I’m from Philadelphia, and there is that Giants/Eagles/cross-Jersey rivalry). I hated having to readjust the volume -- what’s up with the levels, guys? Over seventy shows and you still don’t check to see if the mics are on? Djeez....

And I hated it every single time, in the middle of what I thought was going to be another half-hour sacrificed to a PUM review, when one of the guys said something that hit a home run. I hated that part the most, especially when I found myself thinking about what they said days after I heard it. How dare they be so thoughtful?

Here’s a sample of gems dredged from recent shows: Guidelines for figuring out who’s worth pursuing as a friend. The absurdities of family conversation. The curiosity about how other towns decorate for Christmas. The challenge of having to become traditionally social when the first child arrives.

Squadcast is niche podcasting, aimed at young urban middle-class guys or the people with a sociological interest in that culture, and although it begs the question of ‘who cares?’, it also shows that these easily amused, incredibly disorganized and wildly opinionated guys can actually produce an interesting moment if given the chance. You just have to wait for all the flailing about to stop before the cream (or whatever) can rise.

So here’s wishing Anthony good luck in keeping everyone in line, and Chris increased joy with fatherhood. Bryan, keep laughing, and Yo! Scott! How about some ‘levelating’ and a player on the website? Good luck, too, to your wives, girlfriends and, for that matter, any social contacts you may have in the future who happen to listen. At least we’ll all know better, if tempted to light natural gas.

Content Score: 1.63

Production Score: 2.13

text by Linda Mills

Not funny. Sounds like it was recorded in an echo chamber. The ‘guys’ are annoying. Maybe the odd comment actually makes sense, but I doubt it makes sense to subscribe on a regular basis unless you know them personally. I couldn’t listen past 15 minutes. Website: Basic blog style. Nothing special. No additional information provided that would cause you to go to the website after listening.

Phil Clark



Could barely get through one show of this podcast. This show is categorized as a comedy, but I found this group of guys to be totally NOT funny, and completely unentertaining.

Marilyn Madsen

# PODCASTING IN SCANDINAVIA

Land of the Midnight Podcast

## Global Voices by Janet Parkinson

From the far North of the globe where, in parts, two hours of twilight in deep midwinter is the norm, it's great to hear some sounds emerging to brighten the evenings. Despite the incredibly articulate English that Scandinavians are renowned to speak, it's good to note the number who are sticking to their own language. Still in its infancy, Scandinavian podcasting is picking up speed, and it will be interesting to see how the land lies in a year's time.

**Podradio**<sup>BETA</sup><sup>TM</sup>

**RADIO PLEPPO**

<http://podradio.nu/feed/view/192/>

Based in Finland but produced by two Swedes, Ted and Kaj, this show won the 'Best Swedish Channel' category of the first Swedish Podcast Awards 2006, run by the Swedish podcast portal Podradio.nu. Clearly professionally produced, presented and formatted, it is a highly entertaining, well-paced, and humorous show in Swedish. Ted and Kay are obviously professionals and know exactly how to hold the audience's attention.

**Production: 5**  
**Content: 4**



**THE POLAR BEAR PODCAST**

[www.polarbearpodcast.com/index.pol.html](http://www.polarbearpodcast.com/index.pol.html)

In his impeccable English, Andy (or Anders, being his real name – he is Swedish, which is easy to forget) brings you a sound round-up each week of much that is happening in Sweden. Aiming at the international community, he's keen to share a bit of Sweden – showing both its serious side and also the more 'bizarre'. With its Swedish podsafes music, this is an easy-listen show, and after being mentioned on a recent CommandN, this is a show to watch – or should that be listen?

**Production: 3.5**  
**Content: 4**



# PODCASTING IN SCANDINAVIA

Land of the Midnight Podcast

## Svein-Tore Iversen - Min hjemmeside

### SVEIN-TORES PODCAST

<http://www.home.no/sti/index.html>

This Norwegian podcast is created by Svein-Tores and focuses primarily on his life and those who come his way. It's always great to hear a show which allows you into people's lives in a completely natural and unpretentious way, and this Svein-Tores achieves. His audio tours, interviews and natural steady pace are a warm welcome to his fireside in these cold winter months!

Production: 3.5

Content: 4

## The C64 Take-away podcast

Commodore 64 remixes and original SID sounds to go!

### The C64 Take-away Podcast

<http://c64takeaway.com/>

And here's something just a bit different.... From Denmark the Commodore 64 community's continuing mission is to play Commodore 64 remixes 'as loud as we can'. It features reinterpretations of tunes from or inspired by the Commodore 64 home computer. In English, this is an interesting listen, with Jan Lund Thomson presenting. Interviews and commentaries keep it ticking with the music which I guess many Commodore 64 users will recognise....

Production: 4

Content: 3

(5 if you're a Commodore 64 addict!)

I'm staying in the Northern hemisphere for March; Canada is next on my journey – so don't be shy in sending me those links as it helps me so much! If I can't find you, I can't listen to you!

Big thanks to Erik Kolstad for letting us use the amazing photo above.



reviewed by  
**Bob Cartwright**

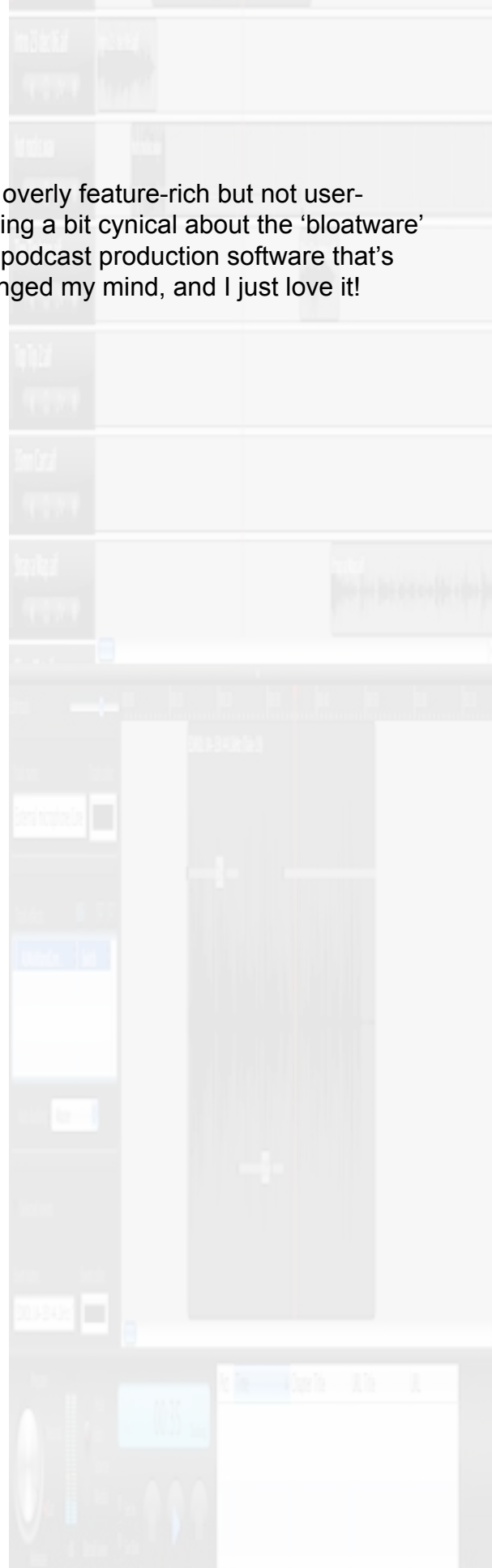
In a day when most new software offerings are over-developed, overly feature-rich but not user-friendly and with an inflated price to match, I have to admit to being a bit cynical about the 'bloatware' that's offered as new media software. However, Übercaster, the podcast production software that's currently in the beta stage (but on release) for the Mac, has changed my mind, and I just love it!

My 20 years in radio, TV and studio production have been very hands on, right from the days of reel-to-reel decks and cart machines, combined with the creative use of razor blades, to the pure excitement and many late nights experimenting with overdubs on four-, eight-, 16- and then 32-track machines, numerous mixing desks and outboard effects units just to create weird sound effects. All of this was so much fun -- you could switch everything on and get to work in less than a minute.

The digital media revolution was supposed to make production easier, quicker, faster and cheaper. What a pack of lies! Driver conflicts, hard-drive issues, processor clashes, input/output problems and dubious support has left me working slower and less organically than ever before. By the time I'd got it all working, I would have lost the creative urge and generally never be happy with the result.

These days my production activity is predominantly in audio and video podcasting. As a user of both a Mac and a PC, I find the Mac a more intuitive machine, offering fewer conflicts and a faster workflow. It is also prettier on my desk and technically easier to use. Given those reasons, for my audio work I generally use the multi-track software Emagic Logic as my weapon of choice. I pre-record my interviews or audio pieces, create jingles, add idents and then just do a voice-over to link them all together. After a quick fiddle with the mixer levels as each piece overlaps, everything then goes straight to mix down.

And this is where most podcasters have now become stuck between a rock and a hard place with some of the software available. They either have to use an expensive multi-track 'sledgehammer' program or get by with basic two-track editing with slight enhancements, which just isn't enough for what they need.



I recently became aware of Ubercaster through a passing comment from Adam Curry on an episode of the Daily Source Code, and within an hour I had downloaded the program and had it fully operational, in itself a miracle! On initial inspection this package appears to be everything a podcaster might need: a nice balanced mix of recording software, multi-track editor and FTP client that is simply laid out and so intuitive that I doubt if you'll ever need a manual! Is it perfect for a modern-day podcaster?

Once Ubercaster is installed (OSX 10.4.4 and higher), you are presented with a clean interface in 'Prepare' mode and a microphone icon. Double-click the icon and create a keypad 'hot button' to turn it on and off. Next, drag onto the screen all your audio files, AIF, MP3 or WAV. These neatly line up as you drag them, which is a nice touch. (Figure 1) Again, each of these can be assigned a keypad 'hot button', which triggers the start and stop of the track. By pressing the button (or double-clicking), you can review the track and then adjust the volume slider knob on the right of each panel to set the initial level. Note that this can be adjusted both 'live' and in post-production.

At the bottom of the main screen there's a master dial switch indicating the mode you are in; a '+/- tab panel' to add or remove audio files; 'Display', 'Audio' and 'Effects' buttons that are next to a sub-window referring to each button and, finally, iconic stop, play and pause buttons with a timeline indicator.

When the 'Display' button is depressed and you have clicked on any item within the main screen, the window allows you to change the title of the file, the colour of the icon and the size of the icon and to change or add a shortcut 'hot button'. The timeline navigation buttons allow you to scroll forward and back to trim the audio starting and ending points.

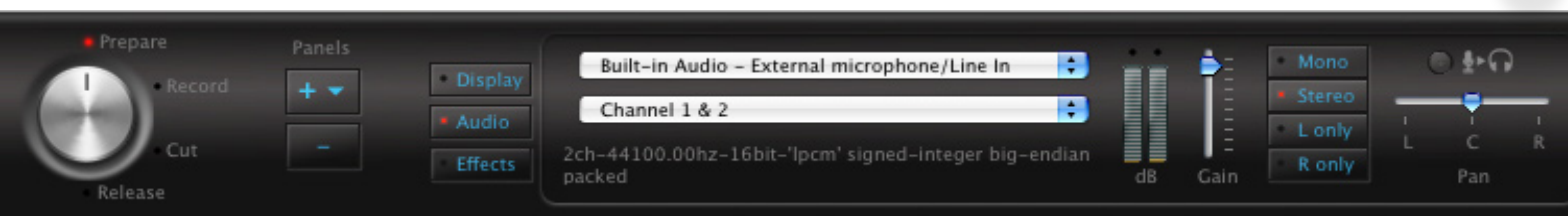
Changing from 'Display' to 'Audio' alters the sub-window, and you can further prepare your file by selecting to have it play in mono or stereo, left or right only, and to pan, which is a very useful feature. Again there's the option to alter the file trim. (Figure 2)

Clicking the 'Effects' button again alters the sub-window, and you can see the accurate numeric start and end time of your file and its duration. There is a switch for 'auto ducking', which tells the software which is the 'master'

1

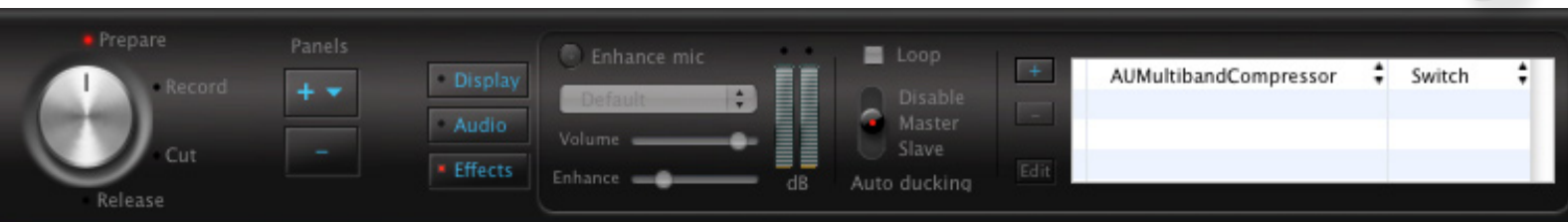


2



(normally the microphone), which is the 'slave' (usually the music); this feature can also be disabled. You can also set the gain of the track, which is of course different from the volume when recording, and there is a 'loop' button, which makes life easy for those long voice-over adverts and such. It is interesting that when the microphone icon is selected, you have an additional 'enhance mic' tab, which adds a variable limiter/compressor to the chain, making the mic sound more radio-like. (Figure 3)

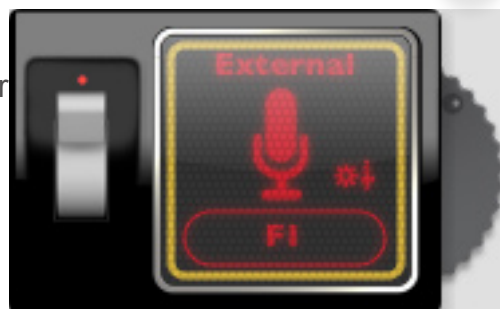
3



The 'Effects' section is very well designed, because it also has a subtle '+/-/edit' tab. Highlight your audio file, click '+' and the first of the standard AU effects units enters the window, with a 'disable/enable' switch next to it. (For the Mac, there are 16 AU, or Audio Unit plug-ins for effects that cover more than you will ever need when podcasting: reverb, echo, compression, gating, parametric equaliser, filters, high/low pass, graphic equaliser and so on.) The switch for the AU effect means that it can be permanently off or on. You can also add a 'switchable icon' to the icon for your audio file, allowing you to throw the switch at any time during the recording, which is just brilliant! (Figure 4)

You can have as many of these AU effects on each audio file as you wish, and clicking 'edit' allows you to edit the effect to suit your taste. Although there appears no current way to save your personal settings for another podcast, you can hear the preview of the audio 'live' as you alter the effect.

4



So the 'Prepare' mode does everything it says on the tin: you can rehearse your presentation, set your microphone compression, add effects to audio files, prepare all the playing levels of each file, set the pan or track, trim the audio and so on. The files trigger without much delay, for smooth presentation.

5

Take a quick visit to the 'Preferences' and you will see even more enhancements, such as auto fade-in of files, ducking sensitivity and amount, keyboard shortcuts, changes in count ins and much more. (Figure 5)

After you have prepared, click the master switch over to 'Record' and you will see the option to record mic, audio clips or both, with a time-line indicator and the stop/start buttons with level indicator, as you would expect. Click 'record', you get a nice count in and away you go. Your voice is recorded in a neat little wave form, and when the audio clips get triggered, either by a mouse click or hot key, they are indicated with a yellow marker. Thus only your voice is actually recorded; the rest is a record of the trigger points and levels, a situation similar to that with a MIDI recorder.



You may be wondering about editing of poor overlaps, intros, gaps and the like, but all these are handled through the 'Cut' mode. The screen turns into a simple multi-track representation of a timeline on which all the files are moveable and editable. Brilliant! You can delete sections, insert microphone recordings, adjust levels, create fade-outs and fade-ins, move audio up and down the timeline, and much more. You can even add AU effects to the voice-over track, switching it in and out to suit your needs. The lower part of the window allows you to go into even more detail of each track and to micro-adjust the whole presentation to give it a very smooth appearance. If this sounds too technical, it isn't -- honest! Of all the interfaces I've seen over the years, this one seems to be the most likely to be very clear to a first-time user.

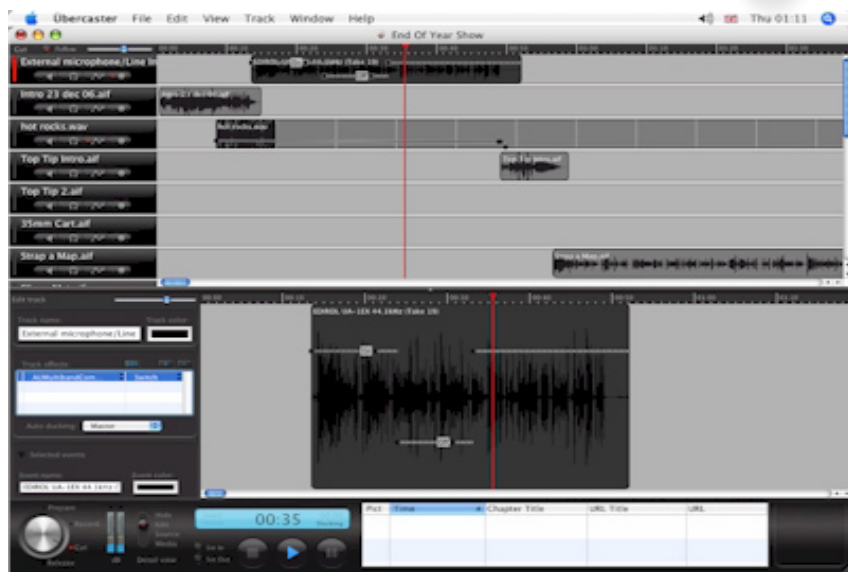
If you have recorded a program that has a music intro, a voice-over, various music tracks and a musical ending, the amount of screen information is quite respectable and easy to understand. The option to be able to insert better takes to replace poor ones is most useful, especially as you can then move the remaining audio up to where you finish, so as not to leave silent gaps. (Figure 6)

Finally, the master switch takes you to 'Release' mode, where you have all the various options to add show notes, title, cover art, FTP details and such. It also creates as many 'slots' as you desire, and each slot can be set to mix the final presentation to MP3, AIF or AAC automatically. You can create as many different presets as you require of the same content. For example, if you want an AIF file, a 160kbs MP3 stereo version and a 32kbs MP3 mono version of the same program, set the slots, make a cup of tea and when it's ready, your chosen files can be uploaded via the included FTP client to your server. (Figure 7)

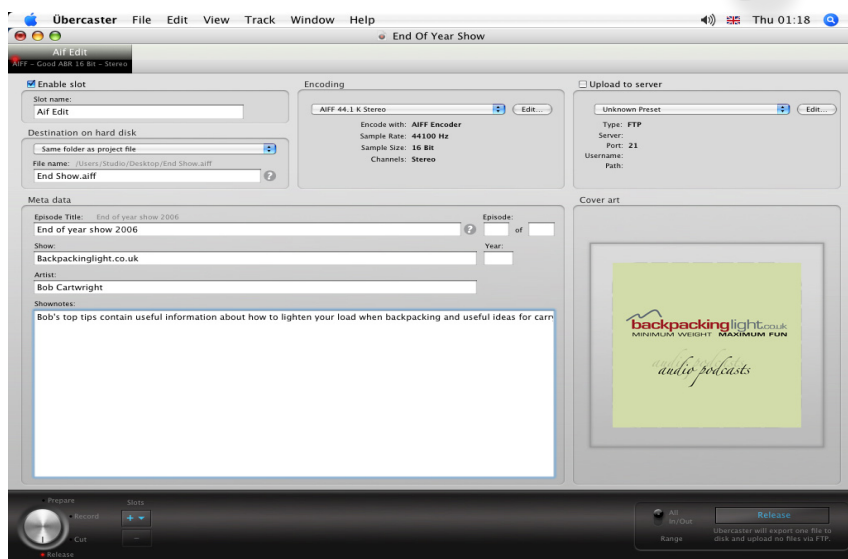
I did set this whole system up on my ancient original 400mhz G4, and it worked the first time without a hitch. The mix-down of a half-hour program to AIF didn't take long, but it did take a long time to compress to MP3. However, mine is a very old Mac, so in these days of Intel chips and dual processors, I would expect the process to be considerably quicker. (Figures 8)

To conclude, I'd say that this is the first piece of software that is intelligently written with the podcaster in mind. It is easy to use and elegantly designed, with a balanced feel of radio station and multi-track studio. You can use it as simply or as elaborately as you wish, or with care, even cut and edit complicated promos on it. As with

6



7



Castblaster, an earlier program developed for audio files, Ubercaster allows you to stop files in mid play and rewind them, even when the file is playing. In use, Ubercaster accomplishes with style what Castblaster weakly tried to do. Ubercaster is the far superior program.

Ubercaster is still in beta, and there are numerous enhancements that are being made for its final release. Some improvements I would suggest would be a larger level indicator (screen height) with a switchable 'peak hold' feature, audio preview on the AU effects and the ability to set presets on the AU effects. A template can be set up for podcasts, but this isn't as clear as it could be.

For me the perfect set-up would be Ubercaster software on a fast Mac Mini, which has no fan and is therefore silent. Add a simple phantom-powered USB interface and a large diaphragm mic, and you'd have everything needed to create high-quality podcasts. The additional beta software also allows recordings to be made from a Skype or iChat conference, and at the time of this writing, the latest release (version 280) allows the person interviewed to hear the full audio coming from the Mac, rather than just through the voice-over-internet connection.

I would be very surprised if Ubercaster didn't become the benchmark in 2007 by which all future podcasting software will be judged. Some think the price of £45 (\$79.95 USD) is expensive, but I think it is about right for such a premier piece of programming created by a person who obviously understands what podcasting is all about (which is more than can be said for the current offerings from Apple and others) and has put a lot of work into writing it. Since using Ubercaster, I've been scouring eBay for an inexpensive second-hand Mac Mini, and I bet after one play, you will be doing the same!

8



Bob Cartwright first fell in love with the magic world of audio aged 10 when he stripped and fixed a neighbour's ancient reel to reel machine and record player. By his mid teens his enthusiasm for tinkering with bits had led to building a mixing desk from scratch and somehow, he ended up working for the Independent Radio Network. How he came to run a commercial studio complex for several years is quite beyond him, but this led to the murky world of broadcast and the once lucrative title of 'freelance producer' of audio and video programs. He gladly gave all this stress up two years ago and started a nice quiet webshop selling outdoor gear. Then along came podcasting, so 'just for a laugh' he dragged out all his old gear from the cupboard and has since rediscovered his love and passion for audio once again. His podcasts can be found at [www.backpackinglight.co.uk](http://www.backpackinglight.co.uk), [www.gapyearlight.co.uk](http://www.gapyearlight.co.uk) and shortly [www.theoutdoorsstation.co.uk](http://www.theoutdoorsstation.co.uk).

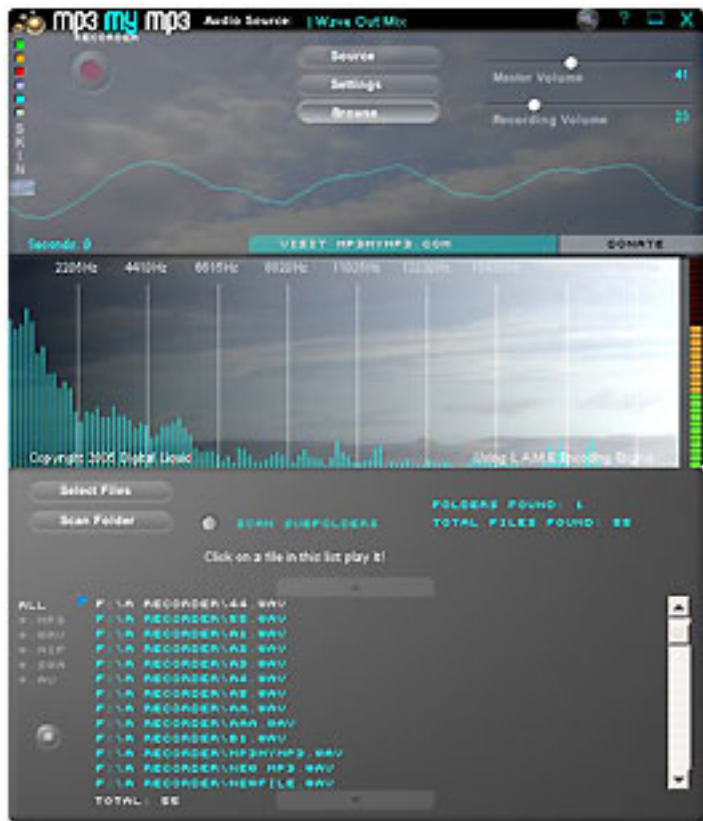
Ubercaster can be found at: <http://www.ubercaster.com>

# ASK AUNTIE PUM

## Recording live from Skype or Google talk

At last, a simple way to record Skype and Googletalk as it happens

by Jimmy Hastell



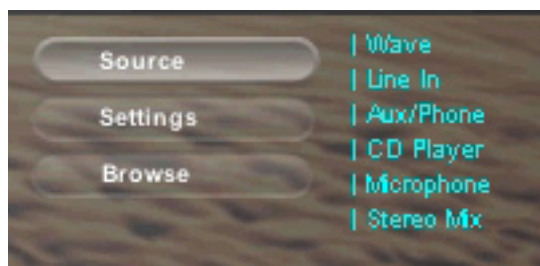
MP3 my MP3 Recorder has the two main elements I look for: the first, being free, and the second, being simple - so simple it worked for me first time.

For months I had played around looking for ways to link in to my mixer and to record both sides of a conversation, but the quality of the recordings was always debatable and an irritating hum in the background or a voice echo made the exercise pointless and frustrating.

This mini-masterpiece does exactly what I would have wanted a software programme to do, it just records whatever goes through the sound card. There are no wires, no sliders, nothing but deep joy; you can sit back and use a headset, leaving your arms free to gesticulate to your heart's desire. As they say in the site:

**IF YOU CAN HEAR IT, YOU CAN RECORD IT!**

There is not a lot to say about this product; it just works 'out of the box'. Setup means just selecting different source choices until you see a graphic display wave moving. Recording means just hitting the red button. There is a time stall as the finished file is saved, but I can live with this. It just works - bliss.



Download from [MP3 my MP3](http://MP3 my MP3)

# PODCAST GENERATOR!

An Open-Source Solution for Publishing a Podcast

by Alberto Betella

Your new podcast is ready; you spent several hours thinking about the subject, recording and mixing it... now it's publishing time!

Publishing is a key step in producing a podcast; every time you add a new episode, a special XML file (called feed) must be created or updated. This feed contains all the information about your podcast and the other media objects that are downloadable by aggregators (such as Juice or iTunes).

You have to pay great attention during the feed creation: detailed information such as title, description, publishing time and author must be provided; moreover, optional metadata such as keywords or detailed description should be specified.

[Figure 1: Example of a podcast feed]

The syntax of the XML feed is not very complex, however you should have a basic knowledge of XML and be very careful avoiding syntax or typing errors. Consider, for example, the publishing time syntax: date and time of publishing for every episode must be specified in a particular order (DayOfTheWeek, day, month, year). Time must have 24h format and include server timezone. Here is how a correct publishing time in an XML feed should look like:

Tue, 19 Sep 2006 16:11:18 +0200

A missing comma, closing tag, or a simple typing error could corrupt the entire feed, preventing an aggregator from downloading your podcast. Moreover, changing a feed manually requires a lot of your time in downloading, editing, re-uploading and testing the feed.

For this reason, some podcasters prefer to use third-party services, but in most cases they opt to host their own podcast and change manually the feed. On one hand, a third-party solution is faster for novice podcasters even though it is sometimes limited and not customizable. On the other hand, manual administration is virtually unlimited, as you can completely customize every aspect of your podcast.

[Figure 2: Podcast Generator Homepage]

Whether you are a novice podcaster, a teacher who wants to use this new media during classes or an experienced podcaster, you can now try a free, open-source podcast publishing solution called Podcast Generator (<http://podcastgen.sourceforge.net/>). Podcast Generator is a free web-based

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<rss xmlns:itunes="http://www.itunes.com/DTDs/Podcast-1.0.dtd" xml:lang="EN" version="2.0">
<channel>
<title>Podcast Generator Demo</title>
<link>http://www.podcastgenerator.net/demo_v09/</link>
<description>This is a 100% working demo version of Podcast Generator, a free PHP script released
<generator>Podcast Generator 0.93 - podcastgen.sourceforge.net</generator>
<lastBuildDate>Mon, 15 Jan 2007 17:36:33 +0100</lastBuildDate>
<language>EN</language>
<copyright>Creative Commons</copyright>
<itunes:image href="http://www.podcastgenerator.net/demo_v09/images/itunes_image.jpg" />
<itunes:summary>This is a 100% working demo version of Podcast Generator, a free PHP script releas
<itunes:author>Demo Author</itunes:author>
<itunes:owner>
<itunes:name>Demo Author</itunes:name>
<itunes:email>noemail@podcastgenerator.net</itunes:email>
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<itunes:category text="Alternative Health" />
</itunes:category>
</itunes:category>
```

1

2

Podcast Generator - Open Source Podcast Publishing Solution

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

**Podcast Generator**  
Open Source Podcast Publishing Solution

Home | Features | Demo | Download | Documentation | Credits

**What is Podcast Generator?**

Podcast Generator is a free web based podcast publishing script written in PHP: upload media files (audio-video) via a web form along with episode information and automatically create podcast w3c-compliant feed including iTunes specific tags. It also features a comprehensive web administration.

**Latest News**

**New Podcast Generator release!**  
2006-10-27 05:08  
[Read More »](#)

Podcast Generator presentation in Barcelona  
2006-10-13 05:09  
[Read More »](#)

Looking for Translators  
2006-07-14 09:57  
[Read More »](#)

[Site news archive »](#)

**Podcasting has never been so easy!**

Podcast Generator allows you to publish your audio and video podcasts in a few steps.

**Main Features**

- Easy to install (Setup Wizard)
- Supports ANY media filetype: mp3, ogg, mpeg, m4v, mov, pdf, etc... Create easily mixed audio and video podcasts!
- XML feed generated is fully compatible with Juice and iTunes, meets the w3c standards and supports iTunes specific tags!
- Password protected web administration interface: upload, edit, delete episodes and fully customize the script!
- Dynamic "All podcasts" and "Last n Podcasts" web pages showing title description of the file.
- Multilanguage support
- Web mp3 streaming with Podcast Generator Player!
- Free :-)

SOURCEFORGE  
PROJECT

podcast publishing script written in PHP. Media files (audio or video) can be uploaded via a comprehensive web administration, along with episode information, and a w3c-compliant XML feed, including iTunes specific tags, will be automatically generated. You will be able to publish your audio and video podcasts in a few steps.

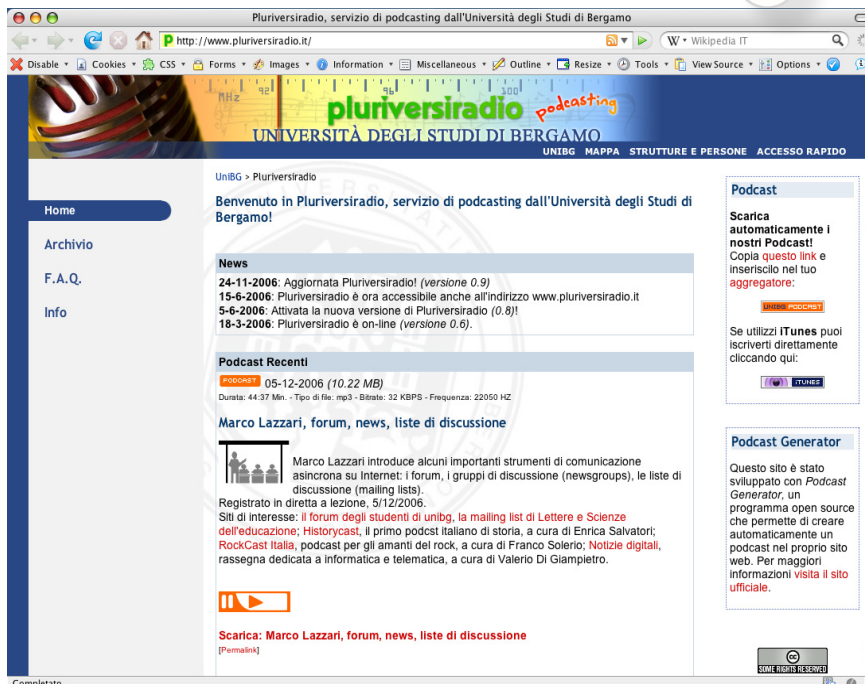
3

## The Story of Podcast Generator

[Figure3: Pluriversiradio Homepage]

The program was originally developed to implement Pluriversiradio ([www.pluriversiradio.it](http://www.pluriversiradio.it)), one of the first academic podcasting services in Italy, from the University of Bergamo.

The idea came from Marco Lazzari ([www.unibg.it/lazzari/](http://www.unibg.it/lazzari/)), professor of multimedia communication and computer science, who has also been working on e-learning technology solutions since 2001. I am a student of Professor Lazzari and am also a web designer and developer, and I carried on the practical development of Podcast Generator.



The first version of Podcast Generator was released on April 2006 and presented in Bologna at the first Italian podcasters meeting. The latest release of the script, which features major improvements such as support of iTunes-specific tags, was officially presented by me at the 'Jornadas de Podcasting 2006', a three-day podcasting event held on October 20-22 in Barcelona, Spain. (The conference, in Spanish, can be downloaded [here](#).)

Podcast Generator has been downloaded thousands of times from SourceForge servers and hundreds of websites have adopted it, among them universities and colleges in the United States and around the world. The script has so far been translated into seven languages (including Chinese and Japanese), and several volunteers are currently working on translations into their various native languages.

Podcast Generator has been developed in an academic context. It is especially suitable for amateur podcasters and teachers who don't have technical knowledge but wish to use podcasting in their classes and courses. Due to its flexibility, it is also suitable for experienced podcasters who want to save time and avoid the risk of syntax errors without having to manually modify a feed.

## Podcast Generator requirements and features

Podcast Generator only requires hosting with PHP support (no MySQL or other service is needed). The program can be installed on your website in less than five minutes through an automatic setup wizard, and you will be able to handle the administration of your podcast (uploading/editing/deleting episodes) without further configuration.

**The main features are:****Easy-to-install setup wizard**

Support for any media file type: MP3, OGG, MPG, M4V, MOV, PDF, and more. Mixed audio and video podcasts can be created easily

Generated XML feed is fully compatible with Juice and iTunes, meets the w3c standards and supports iTunes-specific tags

Password protected web administration interface: upload, edit, delete episodes and fully customize the script

Dynamic 'All Podcasts' and 'Recent Podcasts' web pages, showing title and description of the file

Multi-language support

Web MP3 streaming with Podcast Generator Player

Free and open source

**Installing Podcast Generator**

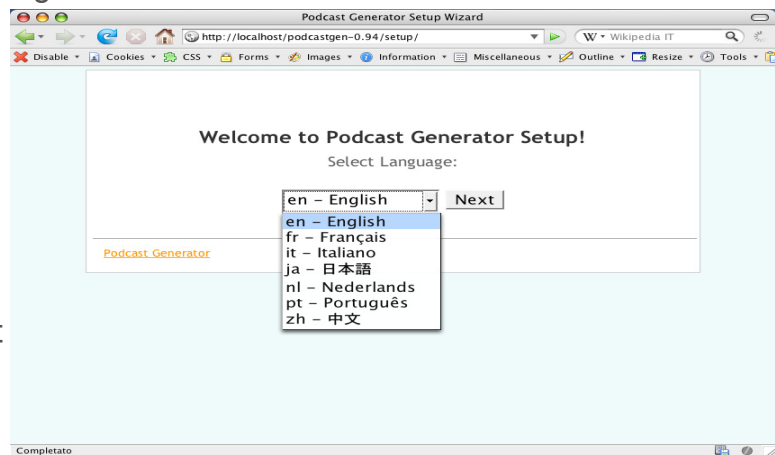
The latest release of the script can be freely downloaded from the official website:

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

Once you have downloaded the compressed ZIP file, extract it and upload to your web server the resulting folder, which contains the program.

[Figure 4: The Setup Wizard]

Now take your browser to the URL where you just uploaded Podcast Generator, and you'll see the setup wizard page. This installation procedure will automatically check writing permissions on your server and ask you to provide some basic information about your podcast. You will have to select the script language, feed language and iTunes categories and specify podcast title, description, author's name and administrator password. In a few steps the program will be fully operating and you will be able to upload your first podcast.

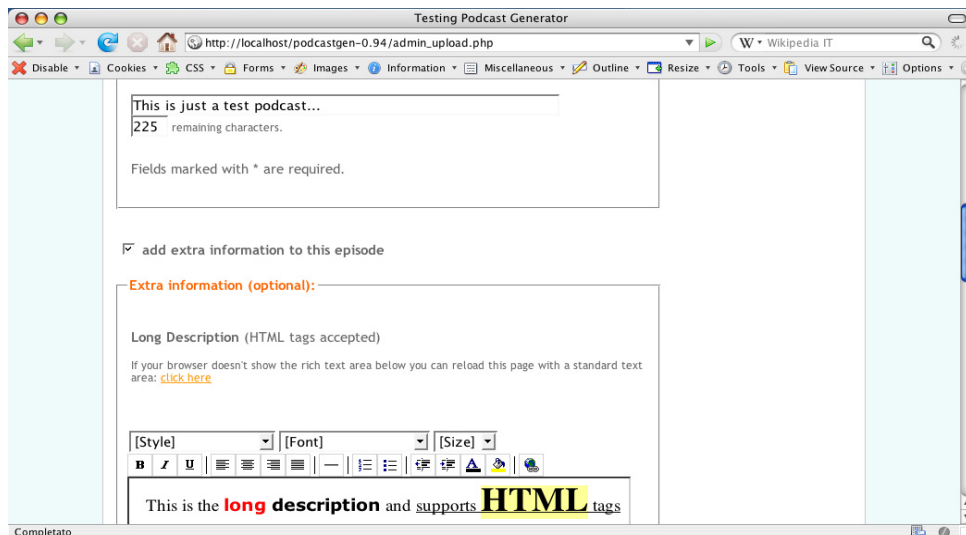
**Using Podcast Generator**

Once the program is installed on your server, you will be able to manage every aspect of your podcast from the administration interface by clicking on the 'Admin' button and logging-in with the username and password you specified during the installation process. From this interface you can upload new podcasts, edit or delete previously uploaded episodes or change the script configuration. The 'Change Podcast Generator Configuration' option allows you to change every aspect of the script, including parameters you already set during the installation: you can change your podcast title, description or language. It is also possible to set different iTunes categories and upload an image to be displayed in iTunes Music Store. (These options are very important if you decide to submit your podcast in the iTunes Music Store in order to increase your visibility.)

The uploading process is very simple: just select 'upload podcast' and browse for the podcast file in your computer, write the title and a short description and press the 'Send' button. That's all.

[Figure 5: Podcast Generator uploading interface]

There are also optional data that can be provided during this procedure: you can specify a long description (which will appear if you click on the circled 'i' in iTunes) using the WYSIWYG editor, define a different author, set an 'explicit' tag if an episode contains explicit content and associate an image to every episode that will be shown in the recent podcast page and in the podcast details on your website.



As a matter of fact, Podcast Generator not only handles the podcast feed, the script also produces dynamic web pages showing the 'Recent Podcasts' and 'All Podcasts', generating a detailed page for every single episode (permalink). Title, description and iTunes keywords are used in the XML feed but they are also included in the dynamic web pages meta tags in order to optimize search engines indexing your web pages.

The only limitation you can encounter could be the max upload size for a single file. This value doesn't depend on Podcast Generator, but is set in the server configuration and could be too low to upload big files: for example, an 8MB limit could be enough for audio files but not for video podcasting. If you are the server owner, this value can be increased easily (see documentation on Podcast Generator's official website), while if you use shared hosting and can't access the server configuration, be sure your hosting company allows you to override the standard settings (php.ini override) and increase, for example, the max upload size from the standard 5 or 8MB to 50MB or more.

## Customizing Podcast Generator

The script is ready to use and is totally automatic; no manual changes are required to the end user. However, if you have a little knowledge of web design, you can customize the pages by editing the extremely versatile css stylesheet. (Themes support will be added in future.) You can also include the script into your current website design and freely change the program code to fit your needs.

I hope that Podcast Generator meets your podcast publishing needs. Please let me know your thoughts about the program, and feel free to suggest future enhancements. I look forward to your comments.

# NOKIA N91

By Paul Parkinson

The Nokia N91 is a do-everything mobile phone. Everything? Sure – from a geek perspective it's got everything. It's a 3G Symbian phone with wireless networking, Bluetooth, USB connections, 2 megapixel movie and stills camera and a whopping 4Gb hard disk. In fact it's acronym savvy with EDGE, GRPS and UMTS as well.

Let's start with the phone itself. Powering up takes a little while, but once you're through the power-up sequence, it's quite quick going through the menus. Coming to this phone from a Motorola RAZR, I noticed the difference in size and weight (the N91 weighs 164g), but the added functionality does make up for it.

The case is chrome (shiny-shiny) metal with a slide-down cover hiding the key pad. If you've got chunky fingers you might find the keys a little fiddly for a while, but I got used to them.

The menu structure on the front menu is clear and easy to use. There are a series of icons across the screen covering Address Book, Messaging, Calendar, Podcasting, Camera and Web. These are soft menu items and can be changed by the user for something more individually relevant.

There is a button on the right edge that gives access to the Main Menu, and it is here you'll find all Front Menu items plus all the other features and functionality you will need on a less frequent basis. Interestingly, holding this button down for about three or four seconds accesses a shortcut list to all the open apps - neat feature, but not in the manual.

Are you wondering why this phone is in a magazine about podcasting? Because it's a podcasting phone: with this device and an internet connection you can search for, find, subscribe to and download podcasts using wireless networking, 3G or EDGE functionality. I would hasten to add, though, that there is a small flaw in this, which isn't Nokia's fault or problem. Data downloading is expensive, and a podcast averaging 20 MB is a lot of data. If you don't have an unlimited data plan, you will be better off using the wireless (802.11g) and a friendly access point. You can, of course, copy the podcasts from your PC or Mac using the very straightforward software that comes with the package.

Accessing the podcasting feature through the front menu, you are presented with three options: Podcasts, Directories and Search. The 'Podcasts' section will take you to any podcasts you've already downloaded, so the most relevant option is the 'Directories' section, which contains four blocks: Podshow Top 10, The Digital Podcast, Podcast Alley Picks and Digital Podcast Top 50. Opening the Digital Podcast directory takes you to a folder view with many categories from which you can quickly identify the podcast you want to subscribe to. I'd like to see more directories featured, such as The Podcast Network and Podcast Pickle, but that's a personal preference. The 'Search' feature works well with predictive text helping from time to time.



Once you have subscribed to podcasts, the 'Podcasts' feature gives you a list of them, when they were last updated and how many you could download. Selecting one and pressing the 'Options' button enables you to perform additional actions such as updating, deleting or sending it by Bluetooth, which is handy when you are carrying your podcast with you and someone wants to grab a copy from you.

Replay of podcasts and other multimedia is excellent. As is usual with audio gadgets, the supplied headphones are dreadful, but plugging in my Etymotic Research headphones soon showed what this machine can do. The replay quality is excellent – up there with an iPod Nano or Shuffle for sure. I even tried my Grado SR-80 headphones from my hi-fi, but they were a bit too revealing.

One of the slickest things about the N91 is its ability to replay lots of different kinds of multimedia. It certainly looks like Nokia have spent time with the usability folks, as switching between the phone and the multimedia player and back again is seamless. The N91 supports many audio file formats, including AAC, AAC+, eAAC+, WMV, WAV, MPEG, MP4, M4A ASF and M3U. There is no support for the OGG Vorbis format, which is a pity, but I guess you can't have it all.

You can switch very easily between audio player and phone with a single key press, and if you use the Nokia-supplied headset, it switches to the phone automatically when a call arrives. When you answer, the music pauses, and then continues after the call. Another interesting feature is that the N91 comes with an FM stereo radio with Visual Radio.

Being a Symbian phone, it can also access key Symbian services; my N91 is set up to happily connect to GMail and Google Calendar. I am sure there are dozens of other services I could use with the email features of the phone. Moblogging is one I haven't got round to doing with it yet, but I can't imagine that it is too difficult.

#### Summary

If you are looking for an all-singing, all-dancing phone that you can buy now (and yes, I want an iPhone, too!), then the N91 should certainly be on your short list. It can replace three devices in one go – the phone is great, the audio and video player stacks up very well with the equivalent iPods and the camera at 2 megapixels is good enough to cut it. The wireless and mobile podcatcher is excellent and well worth it if you have access to a suitable connection.



# Inside the Podcasters' Studio

Paul and Judy from TotalPodcastrophe ask questions of Dan Klass



*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 Dan Klass. We are self-admitted fans of Dan Klass, being regular listeners to his podcast *The Bitterest Pill*. And we very much enjoyed meeting him in person at PPME 2006 and witnessing the debut of his pilot video production. *The Bitterest Pill* is essentially a cathartic comedy audio blog which provides an outlet for Dan's creative yearnings. Somewhat like a 'fish out of water', Dan is an East Coast guy living on the West Coast, and a man in a traditionally female role. His situation provides ample material for his amusing observations. Dan Klass is also a new media pioneer, who About.com calls "one of the smartest minds in podcasting," and is the co-author of "Podcast Solutions: the Complete Guide to Podcasting."*

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

**Dan:** I am a stay-at-home dad/actor living under the flight path at Los Angeles International Airport. I was born long ago in San Bernadino, California, but grew up in the suburbs of Rochester, New York. I live with my wife, two kids and three Macs, and I do a lot of laundry. A LOT. I am 5' 7", bald and hope to see the end of hunger and war in my lifetime. Please vote for me in November '08.

I also have a little company called JacketMedia.com through which I produce audio and video podcasts for hire. That is the serious stuff. Is this an interview of me the neurotic self-centered storyteller, or me the self proclaimed podcast know-it-all?

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

**Dan:** My wife bought me an iPod for my birthday in September of '04. I soon realized that the little white-plastic-and-chrome wonder scratches more easily than Grand Master Flash, so went on-line looking for an iPod cover. I stumbled onto a video clip where two tech guys were talking about Adam Curry and podcasting. If I hadn't seen that little clip, I would probably not have heard of podcasting for another year or more.

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

**Dan:** Adam Curry's Daily Source Code. It was all podcasting, all the time. Listening to Adam's show was the best way to learn about feeds and blogs and other shows and podsafe music and all that. In those days, 90% of the shows included at least some content about HOW to podcast, because we were all still figuring things out. I would listen to Curry and Dave Slusher and Michael Butler partly for the shows themselves, and partly to learn what they were doing to put their shows together. I think everyone who got started back then owes Mr. Curry a debt of gratitude.



## What do you look for in a podcast?

**Dan:** Personality, honesty and stories.

There are a lot of decent shows out there, but I really love the shows where the host is talking about life and their life in a really direct, open and humorous way.

Also, I like pretty girls. Pretty girls will get me to watch a video podcast. Then, I stop watching, and go listen to a guy talk about pretty girls driving him crazy.

## What puts you off a podcast?

**Dan:** Boringness. Is that a word? Boringfulness?

Salesmanishness. I can't stand salesmanishness.

I apparently need a minimum level of audio quality. It doesn't have to sound professional by any means, but it does need to be effortless to listen to. As long as the voices are clear and loud enough, I'm fine. Levelate, people!

It's all about the content. I can't listen to a show where the people talk and talk and have nothing to say.

And, I can't stand poorly handled swearing. Swearing isn't jokes. It can really help the meter, the rhythm of a joke, but it can never BE the joke. If you're going to swear, make sure you're good at it. I, for one, LOVE a good 'F-Bomb'. I hate the \*word\* 'F-Bomb', but I love a good 'F-Bomb'. Actually, I would rather hear an 'F-Bomb' than hear the word 'F-Bomb'. I find the word 'F-Bomb' very offensive.

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

**Dan:** The F.C.C., my need to perform and my desire to raise my own kids.

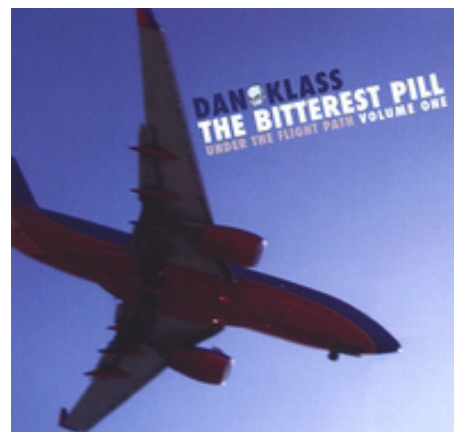
I did a 'Morning Zoo'-type radio show in college (Z89 FM in Syracuse, NY) and loved it. After college I wanted to be a MTV VJ, but Adam Curry had already beaten me to that. I moved to Los Angeles in the late 80s and started doing stand-up and acting professionally. Eventually, staying up listening to the same comedians tell the same

jokes every night pales compared to hanging out with your wife and new child. And, I wanted to talk about deeper things and talk longer between laughs than you are really allowed in front of a drunk stand-up audience. I needed change.

I thought about trying to get a tape together to try to get a radio job, but the idea of doing an internship or overnights at my age seemed disastrous. I worked quite a bit at ways to 'perform' on-line. I even did stand-up in a chat room. I know it sounds lame, but it was reviewed in Entertainment Weekly. Seriously.

I put my first website together maybe ten years ago, and was really involved in on-line entertainment in 2000. I'd sold a show to a DreamWorks/Imagine on-line venture called Pop.com. The show was going to be a daily animated comedy news show. Right before we went into official production, Pop.com folded and all the venture capital dried up.

When I heard about podcasting, I knew it was a perfect fit. But, I still felt a bit burned by the dot.com bust, so I didn't tell anyone I was doing one for weeks, maybe months.



## What motivates you, currently, to continue podcasting?

**Dan:** The connection with the listeners. I live on e-mail and blog comments. I never have time to respond, but I always eagerly await the next e-mail.

I \*need\* to podcast. I get very cranky when I go too long between shows. It's not good for anyone around me. I need to get the thoughts out into the air, and hear what the listeners think about what I've said. It's a dialogue: I record the show, they write back.

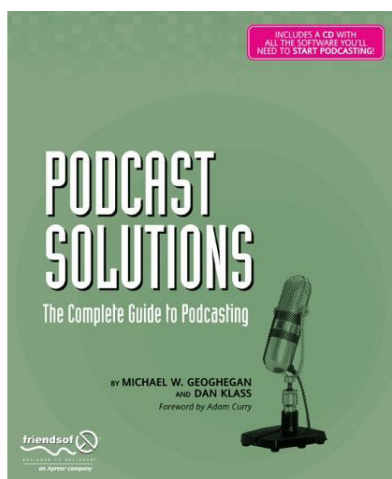
At least with The Bitterest Pill and Old Wave Radio, that is the thing. I really enjoy the process. With professional clients, I love putting together a package for them quickly and professionally, with a little touch of 'Dan' (I would rather die than say 'Touch of Klass').

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

**Dan:** I seem to have dived head first into the On Demand, User Generated Media...thing. I grew up on vinyl and cassettes, now I don't even buy CDs anymore. I would rather hear a great unsigned band being brilliant, than whatever the labels are pushing this fiscal quarter. I listen to and watch podcasts all the time. I watch every little 'professional' TV, although we just got TiVo. If you don't know what TiVo is, it's like podcasting for television...

I can't listen to radio. My iPod wasn't working for a couple weeks, so I listened to radio in the car, and I could drive all the way to my son's school and back in the morning and never hear a moment of real content, just commercials. NO THANK YOU. And now they're talking here in the states about 'digital radio'. Great, now we'll have four times the crap we have now. Hurray for Clear Channel!

I might start listening to radio when they wake up and start airing podcasts. Well, when they start airing my favorite podcasts. When I'm in the car. Never mind, it'll never be good...



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

**Dan:** Well, MY podcast has saved my life. It has given me the creative outlet that I have always dreamed of, and a direct connection to a group of people whose language I speak.

It has kept me sane. As long as I'm podcasting and I'm listening to podcasts, I will never feel alone. And, I feel alone a lot. Even when everyone is home.

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

**Dan:** The new iPhone. Well, not really, I just want one really badly.

What gives me the most hope is that my fear that once iTunes 4.9 brought podcasting to the masses it would be overrun by corporate morning radio talk shows has not come to pass. There are brilliant programs being made independently, on shoe-string budgets, that are being recognized for their value. The world is full of really talented people who no longer have to play the Hollywood game and who are making real strides. And, there are people doing it their way, and Hollywood is finally come a-knocking. Not on my door, but on doors somewhere.

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

**Dan:** I want JacketMedia to become a multimillion dollar podcast production juggernaut.

I'll move The Bitterest Pill officially into video. It's going to be a tough shift, but it's a must. Doing video is so much work, I really respect the podcasters who are putting out such great video stuff.

I want to do kind of a sitcom, except my wife will be played by my wife, instead of a 27-year-old model, which is who the networks would cast. I would cast a 27-year-old model as a 27-year-old model. Crazy, right?

Okay, maybe not a sitcom. Maybe a sitcom but with the tone and style of 'Lost in Translation' or a Jim Jarmusch film like 'Broken Flowers'. I think I just want to be Bill Murray. Bill Murray wandering around doing mellow two character scenes with other podcasters.

I feel like I need to take the The Bitterest Pill to another level, whatever that is. Maybe another 'Best Of' CD, maybe take a stab at syndicating it to satellite radio. Maybe write a book based on stories from the show. I don't know. I just want to keep telling my silly stories and I want to keep getting e-mail in return.

Dan Klass can be found at The Bitterest Pill  
<http://www.thebitterestpill.com>

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



# WHY MAKING MONEY FROM PODCASTING IS ESSENTIAL!

By Richard Vobes

**Oh**, it's an ugly subject, and I know podcasters out there absolutely hate the idea that money, the love of which is the root of all evil, is anywhere near associated with the noble art of podcasting. But I firmly believe that the association should exist and that it is essential for podcasting's future. This article will attempt to explain why.

Podcasters, as I see them, fall into three camps:

**1 The Enthusiasts.** Those who do it as a hobby, for fun, as a pleasure activity, to boost their ego, or to send audio or video messages to their friends, family and so forth. They produce their podcast shows as and when they can. They juggle their time between making a living, feeding the kids and having a social life. Somewhere in amongst that schedule they produce and upload their latest podcast for the world to enjoy.

**2 The Professionals.** These are the business people who are delivering their corporate messages through the medium of podcasting and the RSS feed. It is revolutionizing the way they work and communicate with their employees, clients and customers. They are not necessarily making money from the podcasting, but as part of their business process, it being paid for from their overall turnover. These podcasts can be out-sourced by any number of private companies springing up to produce them or made in house by a few staff members who have either had some recording experience or who dabble as a hobbyist podcaster at home.

**3 The Artists.** These are the wannabes, the people who are enthusiastic but don't just see their podcasting as a hobby; they are not making a bean from doing it, but would very much like to. I place myself in this vague collection of artistic speakers, performers and 'creatives'.

As a general rule, if you have a hobby, you don't expect to make a profit from it. It is reward enough spending your time engaged in your chosen activity. Podcasting as a hobby offers plenty of benefits, not least having other people listen or watch your efforts and comment on them through a blog, email or elsewhere in print. Audience size isn't really an issue, and while many enthusiasts try to make the best quality shows they can muster, it isn't really essential in the grand scheme of things. You can make a great deal of friends from all over the world through the hobby of podcasting, and it definitely adds a global dimension and appreciation to your life.



“You can make a great deal of friends from all over the world”

The business people have to make a professional-sounding podcast on a corporate theme. It helps sell their products or services, and as such it is just one part of their commercial arm. It's not really a vocation, just work.

For the artist and wannabe radio star, podcasting IS a vocation. It becomes a way of life. It's a creative and expressive way to reach out to people and communicate. Financial reward would be nice, but regardless of the compensation, the artist is driven to create and hopes that people will listen.

I think, as the title of this article suggests, that this group (and in my humble opinion the most important group and one that podcasting really was tailor-made for) are the ones that essentially must strive to make money from the medium.

The factors are simple when you look at them. First, it takes time to create anything, whether it is a painting, a novel, a short film or a podcast. Without payment for that pursuit, that time is time that you have not used to earn a living, which in turn means you are limiting your potential. Yet many argue that it is wrong to earn money from a podcast. Surely the same people wouldn't expect their favourite best-selling authors to write only in their spare time? If they did, wouldn't the quality and quantity of the books diminish as the poor authors have to juggle a full-time job in order to pay the mortgage and food bills with writing?

Second, it takes money to create something of value. Suppose I want to create a podcast about a famous person from history. I need to spend time to research my subject. Yes, I could just look up the Wikipedia entry and quickly rewrite that and read it out, but that's not very satisfying for me as a podcaster or you are a listener. Remembering that I need to engage audience, entertain and enthrall them to keep them, I need to do more when being creative. I might wish to interview historians and get different perspectives on this historical figure. I may wish to visit his or her home town, their dwellings, walk in that person's footsteps to bring the same sounds and sights they saw as they achieved whatever it is they achieved, and so on and so on. All this takes time and money, and before I know it I am out of pocket.

Without a financial reward for my efforts, I cannot continue to produce this type of content for my podcast. Without quality content, the podcast will not encourage people to listen and keep listening. The show will not grow and develop, and my artistic bent will not be realized.

It is not a matter of greed, but economics. Few of us will get rich making podcasts, but without a revenue stream, what exactly shall be the original content for the shows? An artist needs to invent, create, perform new and fresh ideas. You can only do this for a short time on adrenaline alone. Without support, financial banking and reward, the artist will die and it is the artists who inspire, give life and meaning to this crazy world. We need them.



My personal vision of the future of podcasting is that similar to the Sky TV model. Yes, we have the internet. Yes, we can all be individual and have our own independent blogs, podcasts and video shows, and yes, we can all get lost within the giant haystack the internet has become, only to be discovered by a very small and dedicated audience. That's fine for the hobbyist, but it is death for the artist.

The Sky TV approach offers many rewards. You take one company or many (and I am surprised BT Podshow isn't doing this), and they put up the initial capital investment. They commission podcasters to produce content

for their 'channel', and I am talking about professional rates of pay here, not Mickey-Mouse hand-me-downs!

The company has a large number of channels, which they either charge per listen, have subscribers or place commercials within the content (or a selection of all three) to maximize their profits. The company advertises globally the fact that they are the number-one podcast provider: they are on billboards, television adverts, tube train hoardings, sides of buses, internet banners, everywhere!

They naturally have standards, and it would be mean podcasters would have to actually start thinking more about how and what they produce and the content within the show. But the difference is, they would have a budget! They could afford to go and research their characters from history, the interviews and the 'where they trod'-type trips. Podcasting would be elevated to the mainstream media that it really ought to be.

And the great news is that the hobbyist benefit as more and more people start to listen to podcasts and begin to discover the off-the-wall enthusiast shows too.

For podcasting to really grow, you can see now why it is absolutely essential that it makes money!

Richard Vobes

<http://www.vobes.com>

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



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



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

[www.nch.com.au/wavepad/masters.html](http://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](mailto:submissions@podcastusermagazine.com)

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# Mark Hunter

I keep getting crazy 'Nam-style flashbacks to February 2005. Around then I was rabidly pouring over iPod websites, like the resource formerly known as iPodlounge.com (before the cease and desist letters started arriving). The reason for my wide-eyed, saliva-producing enthusiasm was the imminent arrival of my first iPod, a 4th generation 20GB model, being shipped to me by a friend in New York, a money-saving exercise that actually ended up costing me about £50 more than if I'd been patient enough to wait for iPods to come back into stock in the John Lewis department store.

I'd first heard of the iPod not long after Steve Jobs announced it in October 2001, when my father explained he'd seen a device about the size of a deck of playing cards that could hold 1000 songs. Of course, at that time I had no idea that I'd develop a huge lust to own an iPod and that that lust would lead to me discovering podcasts, and that within a few weeks of that discovery my life would be changed forever.

iPodlounge.com had a great gallery page where people around the world could upload pictures of their iPod, and oh how I'd while away a Saturday evening carefully examining each and every picture, marveling at the iPod's exquisite design, and so on and so on. But one particular Monday morning after I'd taken receipt of my iPod, I noticed an article on the website about podcasts. I don't remember if I understood the principle at the time, but there were links to podcasts and links to software that would allow you to fill your iPod with all of this free content. Two of the podcasts linked to were Dawn and Drew and The Daily Source Code. Another was Insomnia Radio (at the time known as Hardcore Insomnia Radio, if I remember rightly), and it was this podcast that I listened to on my iPod the following day at work. I wrongly assumed that Jason, the podcaster, was a professional. It took me a long time to come to the realisation that most podcasters were unpaid amateurs, and that the music on such shows as Insomnia Radio were by unsigned bands.

A cursory listen to Dawn and Drew left me baffled as to their hype and several listens to Adam Curry's enthusiasm on the Daily Source Code created the desire to become a podcaster myself, to create something of my own, to have my voice heard.

There was only one stumbling block: how do I even begin to start podcasting? Next month, in time for the second anniversary of tartanpodcast #1, I'll explain how I managed and how someone called Hilary made it all make sense.



Mark: My Words

# WORLD-WIDE PODCASTERS

## The Preface

by Lance Anderson

The idea to do a series of stories about the 'podcasting scenes' in different countries has come to me in pieces. An early and key ingredient is NYC chef and writer Anthony Bourdain, who does a very hip show called No Reservations on the Travel Channel. The fearless and sharp-tongued Bourdain travels the world and devours anything that is served on his plate. The process of diving into the heart of a country's unique food culture allows the observant Bourdain to better understand the culture and its people.

Although I was going to take my journey virtually (at least for now!), my plan was to do much the same about the unique 'podcasting cultures' in different countries.

My new column idea also has a dash of my new podcast-related obsession: the 'Live Hits' on FeedBurner, which I now check incessantly. I no longer focus on my number of subscribers but instead on the number of countries that are hitting my feed.

Lastly, but most relevant, I noticed that Podcast User Magazine was now proudly publishing the number of countries in which it is downloaded. The current number is 107, which is something we all feel needs to be embraced.

Armed with all of these elements, I assumed it would be pretty easy to get started. The basic idea is that I would 'virtually' learn about the podcasting scene through interviews and email. I assumed that there would be something resembling the LA Podcasters in every country - some group that meets on regular basis to share ideas, tips and fellowship. I thought it was going to be a breeze.

Our managing editor, Linda Mills, liked the idea when I pitched it to her, so really all we had to do was pick a country. Since PUM is mostly a UK and US production, we wanted to choose somewhere that was, at the very least, not physically close to either country. We chose Australia, and at Linda's suggestion I contacted our mutual Scottish friend Ewan Spence to get the contact information of Cameron Reilly, who runs The Podcast Network from his home base in Australia.



Here was Cameron's email response:

*"I'm not aware of any such grass-roots podcast get-together in Australia unless it's the occasionally TPN dinner I put on for my hosts. Aussies aren't really good at the whole networking thing in general. It's not like the US where people are comfortable networking with people they don't know. We've still got a little bit too much British in us I think. :-)"*

I also posted notices on the forums of Podcast Pickle and Podcast Alley. There were no serious bites, and the clock was ticking on the deadline, so Linda and I brainstormed for another country. We knew Canada would be a good choice, but we also knew we could both drive our cars to Canada. (Canada will be featured in April!) But Linda also mentioned that Nicole Simon was going to be going to the PodCamp Berlin, and we both thought, maybe we should try Germany.... So that is where I stand, in the center of a virtual airport, getting ready for the first of many journeys.

With Nicole's help, I am currently gathering information about the podcasting community in Germany, but if you are a German podcaster or podcast listener, please get in touch with me. Obviously, that also goes for my friends 'Up North' and anyone else from the 107 different countries that read Podcast User Magazine.

Lance Anderson  
Podcast Producer

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

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

<http://www.lanceanderson.com/lape/>



# My Ashes Nightmare

by Chris Skinner

Ok, for those who don't know... Cricket is the second most popular sport in England (after 'soccer'); it's the one that involves players dressed in white shirts and trousers, chasing a ridiculously heavy red ball that has just been hit by a wooden bat. Games often last five days, and nations play a series of up to five games at a time over a period of several months.

One of sports' oldest rivalries is when England play Australia at cricket, in a contest called The Ashes. England won last year for the first time in about 20 years, and the return series in Australia that started in November was one of the most hyped ever. Podcasting had the chance to be more relevant to sports reporting than ever before. The reason for this was the approximately 12-hour time difference – the games were played whilst most Brits slept.

Excitedly, I signed up to offerings from myriad providers, including 'independent' podcasters, traditional broadcasters and newspapers-cum-podcasters. This was just about the most exciting things to happen for me for the next four weeks, and this wasn't great.

England were embarrassingly beaten, but despite this I was faced with a barrage of new podcasts each morning to report a range of opinions. The BBC, heavyweights in this field, were there with their team of journalists and ex-pros (including the excellent Geoffrey Boycott), and they managed to deliver high-quality reporting and analysis with a real sense of location (most recording happened pitch side). The Guardian weighed in with some nicely produced work, which also managed to compliment its newspaper reporting and popular online 'OBO' service. Beyond this, the quality was as poor as



England's bowling attack. The podcast by The Times was terrible – quality guests, but out of date and out of tune.

Somehow, bloggers managed to offer so many more angles to the series – subscribing to six or seven of them added opinion to the experience, but in the world of podcasting there was a desperate shortage exciting reporting. The range of the podcasts, in terms of their style and quality, was fascinating, however, and gave a real look into how the market is shaping up. Doing it well, newspapers were able to compliment their print and online media; the BBC also stood out, but most failed – whatever the budget.

So how can podcasting improve the quality of sports analysis in a way that blogging has? Personally, I think it should be more acerbic, more a voice of the fans, more consistent in hitting deadlines and far more interactive with its audience. Hundreds of thousands of people missed out on sleep throughout the series – there could have been some incredible sleep-deprived contributors out there. Thousands more people spent huge amounts of cash travelling to Australia – those were the people I wanted to hear, not just the 'pros' paid to be there. Good content doesn't need big names, just imaginative writing and solid production.

I hope that in four years' time, when England next travel to Australia, the coverage will be dramatically improved, and maybe the cricket will be a little better, too.



## Getting the word out

by Chuck Tomasi

One of the biggest challenges to any podcaster is how to get the word out about their show. After all, what's the use of doing a show if nobody is listening? I would like to share with you some of the ideas I have compiled over the past couple of years.

One of the easiest ways to start the ball rolling is to have an audio promo for your show, a 30- to 60-second spot that others can play on their show. If you don't have the talent or the knowledge to make one, there are plenty of places that do voiceover work for a nominal fee online. They may even barter (perhaps a mention or a spot on your website in exchange for a 30-second promo.) Be creative!

Once you've got your audio promo done, now what? My guess is, you listen to podcasts, so send it to the hosts of those shows. Again, offer like services in exchange. They probably have a promo that you can play on your show. If you want to do something extra special, try sending them a customized spot. Drop your name and site, but make it about them. "Hi, this is Chuck Tomasi from Technorama. When I want to find the best 'blah', I listen to the 'fubar' podcast. 'Sna' and 'Fu' really know how to mess things up." This is all part of that wonderful brotherhood of podcasting I enjoy so much.

You can also send your audio promo to 'clearing house' sites for promos. There are podcasters who watch these sites and pull their promos from there. One of the best known is Adam Curry's Daily Source Code. If you want a chance of getting your promo on DSC, submit it to <http://promos.podshow.com>. There is also <http://www.podcastpromos.com> and a few others.

That's all fine for reaching existing podcast listeners and trying to draw them to your show, but we veterans know that the universe of potential listeners is much bigger than the solar system of existing listeners. How do you get those potential listeners?

One way is to frequent online forums and message boards related to your topic. For a show such as Technorama, I go to geeky sites dealing with technology, science, and sci-fi. The trick here is that you don't want to beat people over the head with the marketing. Being active in the forum and using a subtle approach has a much stronger effect. I usually put in my signature that I'm the host of Technorama. If a given topic comes up on something I've covered, I can always throw in a reference to a blog post or podcast. If you come across as the loud screaming car salesman, you'll be banned, and that group of potential listeners will have no respect for you.

Another way to get the word out is through traditional media. Yes, that's right: television, radio, and newspaper. They've got an audience, and you have every right to try and tap into that. Send a friendly letter, submit an idea on their website, or give a call to your local station or affiliate asking if they are interested in doing a story on podcasting. They probably haven't heard about it either. They may want to learn more and start their own. (That's what happened to me.) For this one to work, you may have to be persistent and ask more than once. Remember, they have a lot of other stories competing for their attention.

I also recommend setting up Google alerts for specific subjects. If you already have a Gmail

account, just go to 'All my services' at the top and then find 'Alerts'. You can define keywords that Google will email you when it encounters websites carrying that content. I use this when I do interviews with notable people. I can then go to a site that mentions them, see if it takes comments, and add a link to the interview. Remember the (bad) screaming car salesman example, though, so be sure to make a comment about the site's article, too. Don't just leave a link and say "Come listen to me interview so-and-so."

Make a presence. If you happen to be fortunate enough to attend conventions and expos in the field of interest to your podcast, you need to make a presence there. You don't need to rent a booth (although that's not a bad idea if you can afford it), but introducing yourself to a target audience is an excellent way to get new listeners. Don't be shy. You are marketing yourself. You need to stand out and be remembered. People at these shows are collecting lots of business cards and freebies. How are you going to be remembered so they give you a listen when they get back home?

You can also make a presence by being on other podcasts. If some of the podcasts you listen to play segments or short clips, offer to produce one. Come up with ideas and help them out. You can throw in a reference to your podcast quickly at the end. I realize this is back into the 'existing listener, sphere, but it never hurts.

A third way to make a presence is to think outside of audio production. This article is an example. Offer to contribute to publications related to your podcast (or podcasting in general, in the case of Podcast User Magazine.) Again, be creative.

As a podcast producer, you know things that others don't. Share it, and they will come to you for more.

My final idea for getting the word out is the simplest and cheapest - word of mouth. That's right, people talk. If you have an audience of musicians, they probably hang around other musicians.

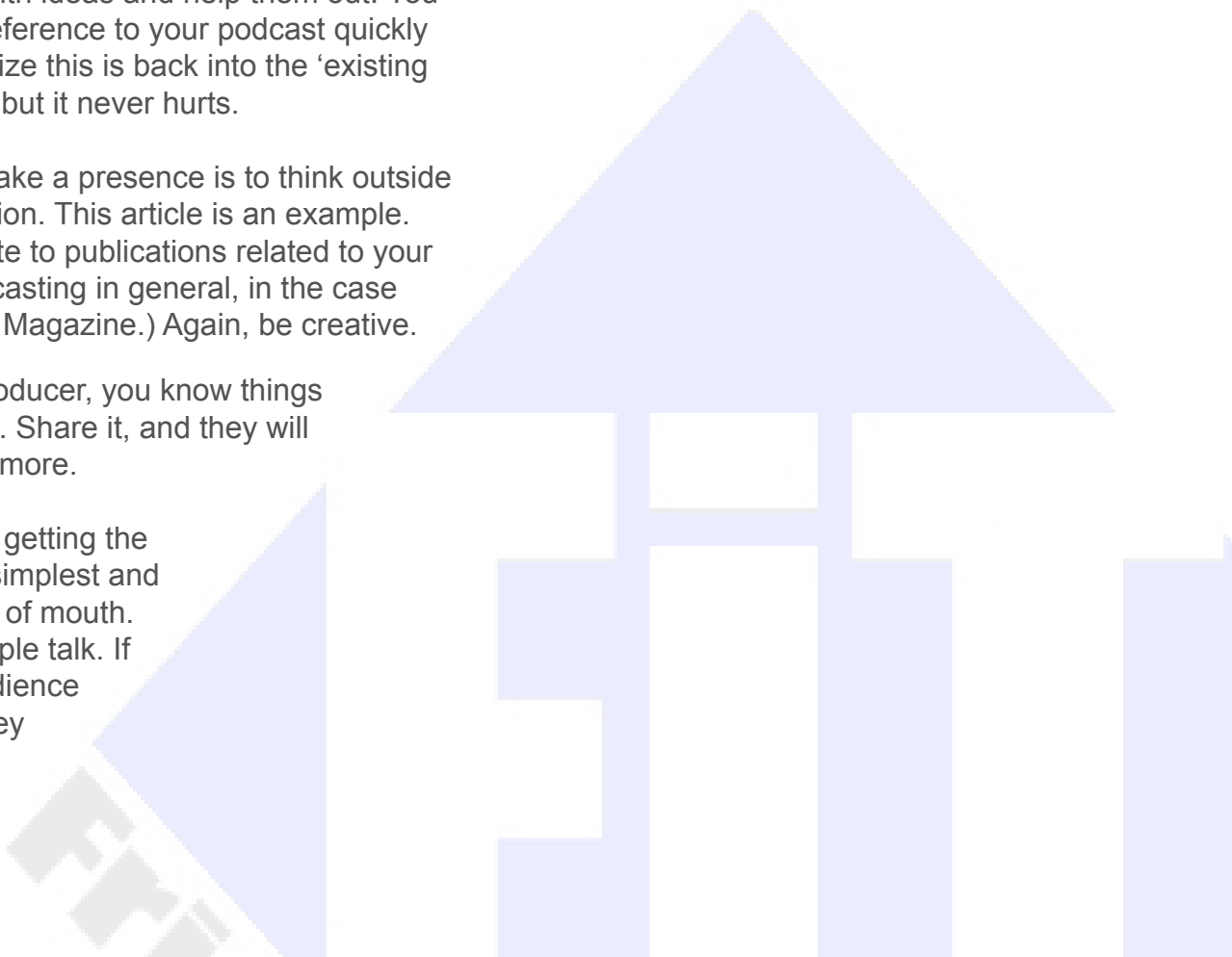
Ask them to tell their friends about you. You know what they say about "birds of a feather".

None of these ideas are going to get you a million listeners over night, but a handful here and there add up over time.

If you have an idea that I've missed I would love to hear it. Send your idea to [chuck.tomasi@gmail.com](mailto:chuck.tomasi@gmail.com) or Skype me ([chuck.tomasi](https://www.skype.com/en/people/chuck.tomasi)) and we can talk. I'll be happy to write it up for future editions of Podcast User Magazine.

<http://www.chuckchat.com>

<http://www.friendsintech.com>





by John Buckley

As the podosphere shakes off the collective hangover of the festive season and the merriment fades, thoughts are inevitably turning toward the challenges confronting podcasters in the year ahead.

I was really interested to read the feedback from Bernadette, from Podcast Fanatics, this month, where she stated her disagreement with podcasters who insist that the average web user is still confused by the technical jargon surrounding podcasting and that this is preventing wider adoption.

Bernadette writes:

*“Listening to a podcast is no more daunting than ‘TiVO-ing’ a favorite program or recording your child’s birthday party with a digital camera. Millions of people have learned to do those things but clearly haven’t yet been given reason enough to learn how to listen to podcasts. It is, I think, a little disingenuous to lay blame for poor uptake rates at the feet of technology: when provided with enough incentive people will learn.”*

I broadly agree, in the sense that I believe there are many web users who should have little or no difficulty figuring out how to download a podcast or how to subscribe to one through iTunes or another directory. It isn’t theoretical particle physics, is it?

It isn’t even as complicated as using a VCR, a programming task that apparently only one in five us can actually manage. Visions of angry consumers incompetently poking and prodding the programming buttons on their VCRs haunted the 1980s, so much so that the industry responded by having the machines become smarter than the people who used them. We now lounge comfortably on our sofas with remote controls in hands and either use the ‘series-link’ on devices like ‘Sky+’ or tap in the number codes we find in the daily newspaper.

By comparison, the one- or two-click subscription process required to engage with podcasting is hardly as difficult or as annoying. Anyone who surfs the web regularly, uses chat and instant messaging, sends e-mail or downloads movies or mp3s is easily capable of figuring out how to get access to a podcast.

Granted, there are generational issues involved in the use and uptake of new technologies. Anyone under 25 is likely to be intuitively comfortable with both the mind- and skill-set of downloading and subscribing. For 'Generation Net', it's natural to consume online, they've been reared on blogging, interactivity and social media. To them, it's television and radio that represent the past. These mediums are still relevant and occasionally diverting, but they remain (currently) monolithic and broadcast-based. They are fully mature mediums with a narrow ability to control the programming.

There's nothing wrong with finding ways to simplify the technology. Efforts to do so are laudable and valuable. Diversifying the content to broaden its appeal is equally worthwhile. Those most ready to adopt it and, equally importantly, to create it, will be the digitally literate who already understand its usefulness and its value. To them it doesn't matter 'how it works', they prefer to just use it and receive the value and benefits it has to offer.

It is to this mindset and to this generation that podcasting should address itself.

The most important thing podcasters can do in the year ahead is to focus more time and energy on creating a compelling experience for their audience. We need to find new ways to identify and involve our audiences, to allow them to participate in the conversations and the experiences created by the content we create and, where possible, to encourage them into the creative process.

If there is a problem with podcasting right now, it's that many of us are making shows that are locked into the creative paradigm built for us by broadcast media. We work as lone individuals creating 'shows' that we 'deliver' to our 'audience'. This in itself is a limited mindset that is not that far removed from the traditional 'programming' of mainstream media. The only real differences are that we have smaller budgets and different content restrictions.

The challenge is in finding new ways to break out of these format boxes, to improve not just the presentational quality of our individual shows and formats but the overall quality of our vision of what podcasting can become. We are still in the infant stages of developing our ideas about podcasting and, indeed, about the network in general. On the web there is a niche for everyone; some niches are wider and deeper than others. Finding ways to innovate in your niche and to connect it more fully to the community you wish to address will prove a fruitful way of growing audiences and gaining a share of the ever-diversifying attention market of the online world.

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

# Happy New Year from Podcast User Magazine to all our readers



by Colin Meeks

2006 was certainly a doozy of a year for podcasting and vidcasting. Indications so far are that 2007 is going to be even more exciting. Apple, in particular, started the year with some amazing news: the new iPhone was finally announced, with availability some time in June, pending FCC approval. Yes it's a phone, but more interesting are the other capabilities and cool features Apple has bestowed on it. Certainly it is a nice device for listening to podcasts. Apple also announced their Apple TV, formerly know as iTV. This is a really interesting device allowing you to stream music and video from your PC to the Apple TV box and from there play directly on your television. It also has a 40 GB hard disk that allows you to store a good few hours of video. I'm kind of undecided about this device. I personally use a Mac Mini as my media station, which works very nicely and allows me access to music and video through iTunes and also video through the Democracy player, which is an open-source video aggregator available for Windows, Mac and Linux.

So aside from Apple, there's also a hive of activity elsewhere. One of the projects that's gaining lots of media exposure is The Venice Project, or Joost, as it's now called instead of its work-in-progress name. This is a really neat video-on-demand system, which is still in beta and available at present only through invitation. Early indications are very favorable, but content is still a little patchy. Joost are looking to provide a more user-friendly immersive experience, such as you would get from the digital box on your TV.

Castblaster, the podcast creation environment, now has a Pro version in the pipeline, which gives many more slots for sound effects and music. Other than that I have no further details, but you can be sure it's going to be good, especially with Mike Versteeg, the man behind the Winpodder podcast player behind it. Mike is also working on a vidcast version of CastBlaster, which will surely also be very interesting.

The previously mentioned Democracy aggregator is also due for a new version. This is a beautiful-looking piece of software, even on the PC. For the nerds out there, it suffers a bit for speed by being based on Python, which is an interpreted language, but being cross-platform more than makes up for this.

While there was an influx of new podcasts last year, including my own Indie Launchpad, many of these fell by the wayside after 30 or 40 shows. It takes a lot of work to produce a show that's of a consistently high quality, and it can sometimes be somewhat overwhelming. I used to do mine every Friday night, but this became too regimented and began to take some of the fun out of it. Once I realised this, I just stated that the podcast would come out over each weekend. This can mean Friday, Saturday and even Sunday, which takes some of the pressure off. One of my favorite podcasts, I Miss Blighty was pressured into closing up, which was a real shame. The Little Show, which was also one of my favorite

rock music podcasts, just dropped off the face of the earth. Another firm favorite, Dark Compass, also took an extended hiatus, but, thankfully, it's now returned, and it's good to have the miserable sod back again.

We also had a bit of controversy regarding the word 'podcast'. Apple looked as if they were going to claim the word as their own, but after much public outcry, they seem to have seen the error of their ways. But it's never over till it's over, and this blip on the podcast radar found people looking to find an Apple-less alternative. Leo Laporte, the TWiT guardian and defender of the faith, came up with the term NetCast, which he has adopted, but now realises the term podcast is pretty much here to stay.

After using Juice as my aggregator of choice, I switched to Google's Reader and haven't looked back. Just when you think it's the perfect solution, they come up with more stellar features and take it to a whole new level. I can now listen to podcasts at home, work or anywhere else I have access to the internet and my subscriptions are all available to me, along with the shows still not heard. There's still no sign of Transistr, the aggregator formerly known as iPodderX. This was due for release last March but has still to open its doors to the world. Finally, on the subject of aggregators, I still use Egress on my Pocket PC and listen to podcasts while on my way to work on the bus. I could easily use Egress as my main aggregator, were it not for the fact that my Pocket PC seems to suck the life out of my battery quicker than you can say Wolfschlengehausenbergerdorff.

I couldn't finish off this article without mentioning Podshow, more specifically PodShow+ and its UK counterpart BTPodshow. Previously Podshow was better known as the player? to get music safe for podcasting. They've now branched into a podcast directory and hosting service, which has gained many firm favorite podcasts, at the expense of those very annoying GoDaddy mentions. Not that I have anything against GoDaddy. I've used many of their services myself but hate hearing the constant reminders of how I can save 10%.

So there you have it. That's a very brief look at what happened last year and some things to expect this year. It's an exciting time to be associated with podcasting, and I'm sure there's going to be the odd surprise or two in the months to come.

Democracy - <http://www.getdemocracy.com>

Joost - <http://www.joost.com>

Castblaster - <http://www.castblaster.com>

Winpodder - <http://www.winpodder.com>

Indie Launchpad - <http://www.indieLaunchpad.com>

Dark Compass - <http://www.darkcompass.com>

Juice - <http://www.juicereceiver.com>

Twit - <http://www.twit.tv>

Google Reader - <http://reader.google.com>

Transistr - <http://www.transistr.com>

Egress - <http://www.garishkernels.net>

Podshow - <http://www.podshow.com>



# Recording the Piano for *Forgotten Melodies'*

by Mike O'Hara

I recently started producing a new podcast series called *Forgotten Melodies*, featuring international concert pianist Danny Grimwood, who plays some of the more obscure works in his repertoire and then discusses them with me. The purpose of this new series is to bring these rarely heard but captivating piano pieces out to a wider audience and to educate listeners on some of the background behind the works and their composers.

Since the first episode went out in January 2007, a number of people have asked how I went about recording Danny's piano. If truth be told, it was a pretty straightforward process, and I was pleasantly surprised with how the recording turned out, given the fact that it was an extremely simple setup.

Danny's piano, a full-size Kawai grand, sits in his study, a converted shed in his garden, where he practises for up to ten hours a day. The room itself is not very large; it contains just the piano, a small desk and some bookcases filled to bursting point with sheet music. It's a fairly dry, dead-sounding room, and there's not much natural ambience, which has its advantages in that the sound doesn't bounce around too much.

To record the piano, we opened its lid about 30 degrees and I set up two Audio-Technica AT4033 condenser microphones on boom stands; each were about three feet away from the piano, and both mics pointed in at an angle toward the strings. One mic was placed at the bottom end of the piano and pointed at the bass strings (mic1), and the other was pointed in at the treble strings (mic2) at the top end of the piano.

I connected the mics to my Korg D888 digital multi-track recorder, set the levels so that the very loudest passages were peaking at about -1dB and then just hit the record button.

Once the recording was completed, I was left with four 44.1kHz 16-bit WAV files on my D888, one each from mic1 and mic2, and one each from the two lapel mics I used to record our conversation. I transferred these to my computer via USB2 and loaded them into Cubase, a sequencer/audio editor.

In Cubase, I panned mic1 hard left and mic2 hard right. Some purists might argue that this produces an unnaturally wide stereo image, but as the mics were not positioned too far apart during the recording process, the resulting image didn't sound too wide to my ears.

The final step was to make the recording sound a touch more lively and ambient (just so it didn't sound like it had been recorded in a converted shed!). To do this, I added a touch of Knufiinke's free 'SIR' reverb with a 'medium hall' setting.

That was pretty much it. I encoded the stereo MP3 file at 192 Kbps, which is a higher bit-rate than your average podcast, but I felt it was worth the extra file size and bandwidth to keep the sound as close as possible to CD quality. Danny plays with a very wide dynamic range, and I didn't want to lose that.

You can hear the results at [www.forgottenmelodiespodcast.com](http://www.forgottenmelodiespodcast.com). Take a listen and let me know what you think. -- all feedback is appreciated.

Mike O'Hara has a wide dynamic range of podcast productions, including the *Fishbowl Acoustic Podcast* <http://www.fishbowlacoustic.com> and the *Cold Calling Podcast*. <http://www.coldcallingpodcast.com/>

## Independent Artist Album Review

# Phideaux - The Great Leap

reviewed by Grant Mason

Prog is dead – long live prog ! Yes, good music never dies (he says, giving away his teenage allegiances) and the new lord and master is Mr Phideaux Xavier of Los Angeles, California. Already a seasoned artist with four previous albums to his name (Fiendish, Ghost Story, Chupacabras and 313), he brought 'The Great Leap' into the light of day in 2006 as part one of a planned trilogy.

With a skilled band of core musician friends, Phideaux (say it like the dog's name, Fido, and you can't go wrong) has distilled the essence of the history of prog and prog instrumentation down into a potent liqueur, which he's bunged into a cocktail shaker along with lashings of his own style and served up with a twist of modernity. It tastes damn good. From the moment you hear the guitar being jacked into the amp and the local taxi company coming through as interference just as the pounding bass lines stomp in, you know you're on a winner. It's not a party album, as Phideaux himself has admitted – it's a dystopian view of a dark world. There are musings on the worst excesses of the Nazi abductions, repeated later in Russia by Stalin and now being applied to the modern world ('They Hunt You Down'). There's a frissant of torture in 'I Was Thinking' - "I was thinking about you; Hanging lights electric blue; And neck restraints for two". This is the kind of thing you might not want to be listening to before drifting off to sleep at night, yet the music is pounding, soaring and searingly catchy and you might never want to take your headphones off.



Indeed, there's so much classic prog instrumentation going on you'd be a fool to miss any of the subtle nuances or surprises in there by concentrating on the obvious. 'Rainboy', for example – manages to squeeze in the sounds of a rainstorm, mellotronic flutes, female repeating layered vocal phrasing, an Armenian Zurna and Lieutenant Pigeon's trademark pub piano arpeggiating downwards... and that's just the introduction. 'Last' brings to mind the best of anguished Roger Waters' acoustic masterpieces towards the end of 'The Wall', with an accidental backwards piano chord intro and outro which would flow into each other on repeat and create a circular song, leaving the artist in a hell of sadness that would never end.

There's just so much to love in this album; if you've lost faith in progressive rock over the years, then I'd seriously suggest you grab this with both hands and prepare to never let go. It's a modern masterpiece, full of new promise and twists from the man sent into this world to regenerate the genre.

Band Website: <http://www.bloodfish.com>

Hear the music: <http://www.myspace.com/phideaux>

Buy the music: <http://cdbaby.com/cd/phideaux5> or <http://www.bloodfish.com/purchase.html>

# Political Podcasting



by Jonathan Sheppard

Less than a year ago, Tory Radio was established - a political podcast which, as its name suggests, is linked to the Conservative Party but is wholly independent of it.

We essentially conduct interviews with key people in politics, and our independence means we can cover the topics we want to talk about. The site now attracts around 150,000 clicks a month, and downloads of the podcasts have increased month on month.

Whereas political blogging seems to be well established, podcasting doesn't seem to have taken off in the same way. However, 2007 could see the situation change dramatically.

Members of Parliament are always looking at ways to get their message out to the electorate without it being carved up by the mainstream media, who often just want a soundbite. What better way to do that than to start podcasting?

The mainstream media are now paying serious attention to bloggers and podcasters alike. On the back of Tory Radio podcast, I have appeared on Sky News on numerous occasions, on Radio 4's Today programme and on The Politics Show, and stories which broke on Tory Radio have appeared in every national newspaper. Far from seeing podcasting as a threat, the mainstream media actually sees it as a further source of stories, and is more than happy to run with something even if it has appeared on a podcast first. Francis Maude's "Mincing Metrosexual" quote, and Lord Tebbit's revelation that he backed a "hug a hoodie" approach both came from Tory Radio before gaining further coverage on the BBC and in the national press.

Why should politicians regard podcasting as an opportunity as opposed to going to the papers or TV? I explained that point to the East Midlands editor of The Politics Show, John Hess, when he filmed Tory Radio in action. The film he shot would have to be taken back to the studio, edited and pieced together, and then it would appear on a pre-scheduled slot at the weekend. The podcast of the very same interview was edited and uploaded onto Tory Radio in under an hour and was available on demand to any listener.

Podcasting has the ability to allow politicians to get their story out to who they want, and when they want, which is a very attractive proposition. Furthermore, one only has to look at America to see how podcasting is used in campaigning. Come an election, a podcast is a very cost-effective way for candidates to get their message onto a website and out in the public domain very quickly, something that is attractive to candidates, MPs and political parties alike.

At the moment there aren't that many political podcasts in existence in the UK. Other than Tory Radio, there is the excellent Paul Linford, a former lobby journalist who produces a Week In Politics podcast at [www.thisisderbyshire.co.uk](http://www.thisisderbyshire.co.uk). However, after that I would struggle to name any regular political podcasts - unless anyone knows differently?

I suspect in 2007 that situation will change and there will be more than a few new kids on the political block.

Jonathan Sheppard is Editor of Tory Radio and has established a company to help people start to podcast, particularly in the area of politics.

<http://www.toryradio.com>

The following article appeared in [http://www.all-podcast-secrets.com/component/option,com\\_jd-wp/Itemid,30/p,164/](http://www.all-podcast-secrets.com/component/option,com_jd-wp/Itemid,30/p,164/). It is reprinted here with permission of the author.

# Where and how is Podcasting Happening Around the World? - Part 1

Monte Silver

Are the best cooking-related podcasts in France or Italy? Are the British listening to them for ideas, or does the secret ingredient get lost in translation? There are jokes galore about Italian policemen, but is it true that their State police have a popular podcast? Are the Chinese forced to subscribe to "Let's Learn English" podcasts in preparation for the Olympics? Where is podcasting most developed outside the U.S.?

Before setting out to answer these questions, and examine the status of podcasting outside the U.S. 1 the assumption was that the average American podcast-enthusiast (I was born and educated in the U.S.) knew little about podcasting elsewhere. However, I was certain that outside the U.S, they were well connected and informed about cross-border activity, especially in the European Union. This article, part 1 in a series, examines podcasting outside the U.S, answers the above questions and tests my assumption.

Many factors influence podcasting in any given country. Two factors, however, are of key importance. Language is one. Broadband Internet is the other.

It is easy to predict the impact of broadband internet on podcasting. Clearly, people with low-speed dial up connections will not regularly download huge podcast files. In terms of analysis, however, broadband Internet either exists or does not exist, and does not make for interesting analysis. And in the countries examined, broadband Internet is now sufficiently available.

All things being equal, the more broadband subscribers there are in a country, the more podcasting is developed. In France and Germany, 11.1M and 12.4M subscribers have

high-speed Internet, respectively. China has about 30M subscribers. 2 On the other hand, Australia, Italy and Spain have only 3.5M, 7.7M and 5.9M broadband subscribers, respectively. Judging by local podcast creation, in France, Germany and China, podcasting is flourishing according to Bertrand Lenotre, 3 France produces 2650 different French podcasts, including 490 video podcasts. China produces approximately 20,000 podcasts, few of them video, according to Chinese Jack Gu. 4 Germany produces 3300 different podcasts, including 800 video podcasts, according to Fabio Bacigalupo. 5 In Italy, the largest of the second group of countries, there are only about 220 active podcasts, and podcasting is still in its infancy, according to Valerio Di Giampietro. 6

Surprisingly, however, the UK produces only about 300 different podcasts, very few of them video. How can that be? The UK is clearly a very active podcasting hub. It is home to Podcast User Magazine, 7 the world's only podcast magazine, according to Co-founder and Editor Paul Parkinson. UK Podcast-enthusiasts can also boast to have hosted the world's first Podcast conference. 8 So why are so few people in England producing podcasts? The answer is language.

The impact of language is both more interesting and far-reaching than that of Broadband. Language will impact podcasting on a country-level long after broadband Internet becomes common-place.

In talking to leading podcast enthusiasts in nine countries, what became immediately clear was their near total isolation. Leading podcast figures in one country had absolutely no idea what was happening abroad. Passionate podcasters and

podcast-entities were creating beautiful gardens, but they were walled gardens. The English knew nothing about podcasting in France. The French knew nothing about German podcasting. Of course, no one knew anything about podcasting behind the Great Wall of China.

There was one clear exception: common language. French and German podcasters know nothing of each other, although they may live within a 30 minute drive of one-another. On the other hand, the flow of podcasts and emails between Australians, South Africans, English and Americans is very common.

Common language tears down national boundaries. Here are some examples. British Telecom and U.S.-based Podshow just launched BTPodshow 9. 75% of Podcast User Magazine subscribers come from the U.S. Its editor is a proud Brit. Keren Flavell is a proud Australian, 10 but 70% and 50% of the podcasts they subscribe to respectively are from the U.S. According to South African Mark Taylor, 11 it was listening to Adam Curry that inspired him to “jump right in”.

Spanish-speaking podcasters know no borders either. Jose A. Gelado is a leading Spanish podcaster and he runs a portal too 12 Of the nearly 500 Spanish podcasts he lists, 150 are from Spain. The others are mainly from Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. Carlos Fernandez, 13 his fellow countryman, agrees and is very familiar with the top podcasts and portals in Latin America.

Language can also unite communities dispersed around the world. ‘Afrikaans in Sydney’ is produced by an Afrikaner who moved to Australia, says Mark Taylor. In Afrikaans language, the podcast compares life in Australia with life back in South Africa and is popular in South Africa, as well as in the many South African communities around the world.

Other than in cases of common language, however, language is a barrier. A wall that isolates people. Here is a subtle example: Nicole Simon of Germany 14 started her podcast in German, then switched to English. She drastically increased her reach, but only at the cost of alienating her fellow Germans, who see this as a snub and treat her with suspicion.

Language has a direct impact on local content creation. The more isolated the country is in terms of language, the greater the opportunity for local podcasters to fill the vacuum. Although France and the UK have roughly the same population and number of broadband users, France creates ten times more podcast titles. Germany creates 15 times more. Amateur and big-media podcasting is booming in France and Germany, less so in the UK. U.S. podcasters are setting a very high standard. With UK listeners selecting U.S. content 70% of the time, it is clear that content generation in the UK, both amateur and big-media, it may be that potential UK podcasters are asking “why bother”?

Yet, while France prefers French and China Chinese, English remains the “global” language. English podcasts have a worldwide audience. In Israel, 2 of the top 10 podcasts are in English. In Italy, two of the top 16 podcasts, and a few of the most popular Chinese podcasts are “lets learn English” tutorials. Bonjour-America, a wildly popular French podcast is in what Bertrand Lenotre of Podemus describes as “kitchen” English. While providing a humoristic view of America and Americans, it underlies the universal fascination with the U.S, and the desire to blend into universal English culture.

The impact of language may decline somewhat with video podcasting. Funny videos are more easily enjoyed by all. YouTube videos are very popular in China, according to Gu. Interestingly, however, the Chinese do not frequent the YouTube.com site due to the site’s English interface (language), and slow international Internet (bandwidth). Rather the Chinese prefer to cut and paste YouTube videos onto comparable Chinese sites.

To summarize, while broadband is becoming ubiquitous, language will remain the single most dominant factor influencing the evolution of domestic podcasting. Language will continue to impact many aspects of podcasting: the walled garden phenomenon, local content creation, the formation of multi-country groups, and the manner in which national brands, such as Podshow will port across borders.

# Home-Made Special Effects In Video

by Paul Knight

For the purposes of this article on special effects in video podcasting, I hope to not bore you stupid with the ins and outs of various software packages that allow you to do this by editing out the green or blue backgrounds that you have filmed; that would take days, and I am still awaiting the "Final Cut Pro for Dummies" book. Besides, there are plenty of tutorials to be found online that can walk you through what chroma keying and colour keying is, so I will leave that up to the experts.

I want to tell you about a lot of special effects you can do in-house - that is, your own house. You need the following equipment: a camcorder, a computer, a lot of types of lighting, green stuff such as cardboard, fabric and paint, a little imagination, a tendency to think in a 3-D world, a tripod and a very, very understanding and supportive wife.

All that, and the video editing program Final Cut Pro. I have been addicted to Final Cut Pro, almost as one would be addicted to the latest video game. Actually, I have likened this software application to a cross between some kind of first-person shooter and Lego - the bricks, that is; not the game by the same name; for me it seems just so easy to build a video in real time as well as do all that exploring that one would do in a combat situation.

So once you have the technical issues all sorted out, let's get down to the actual filming. What you are going need for a video such as Space (<http://pjkproductionsspace.blogspot.com>), my every-so-often science fiction saga, are first, a digital video camcorder, preferably recording to tape. The camcorder doesn't have to be an expensive one, but do bear in mind that the best picture you are going to get for editing purposes is through a firewire connection on both your camera and your computer. A USB connection slows down the process and the result gets all washed out and grainy. You also need a computer. I use an Apple eMac that I bought a couple of years ago, but it is still going strong. I suppose if you are so inclined, you can use a PC with Adobe Premier and After Effects; hey, you could always go nuts and buy Avid.

You also need somewhere to film. Notice in the 'Space' series that I have used most of my house, kitchen hallway, bathroom, and a large part of my back garden. But will you believe I used a life-sized model on a crane to get the all-important take-off and landing sequences for the yellow spaceship, PIG1? Well, that's where my small studios come in.

A small studio consists of two or three pieces of green or blue card stock, the kitchen table and PIG1, which is basically the Corgi version of Del Boy Trotters Reliant Regal (the vehicle made famous in the TV classic 'Only Fools and Horses') with some 22-mm copper pipe cut to size on the sides to act as boosters and a little model-maker's stuff to make the insides look like jet engines. I have found that with the colour of PIG1 being yellow, the best background for keying is blue, not green. A little bluetack or stickum can

secure the card stock, which is letter-sized, onto the wall; another piece is stuck on the table, and maybe a third can go on either side of this so to blank off your shot. I have found table or flexible desk lamps do the job of lighting quite well, but adjust them so that you limit shadows and reflections.

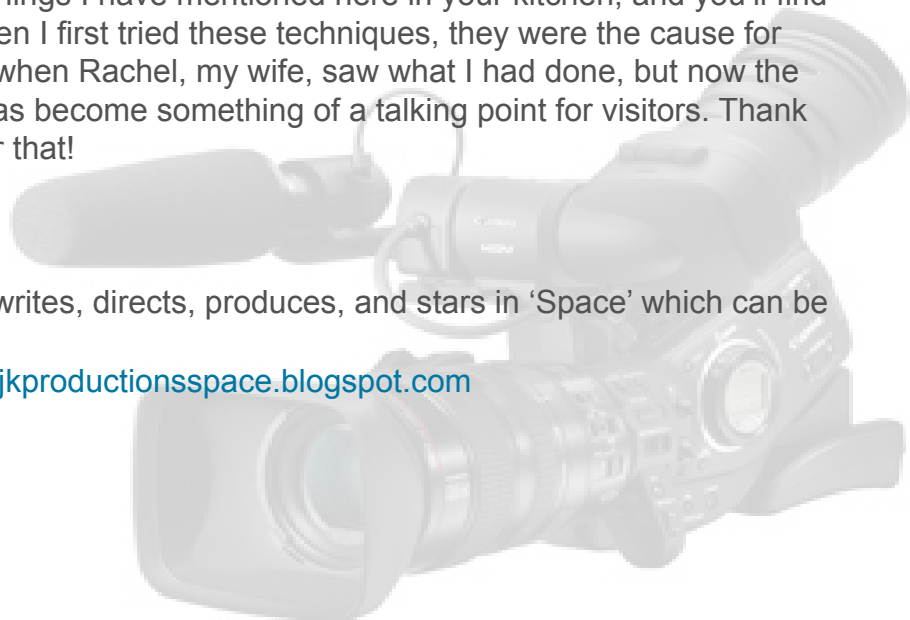
I use either a clear cylinder (actually, the container that my iSight came in) as a base to balance PIG1 on for in-flight sequences, or nylon guitar strings for take-off and landing shots. Remember that when you are using card stock and indoor lighting, always make sure that your settings on the camera are set to either indoor or outdoor compensation; otherwise, your greens will end up yellow and your blues, very dark blue.

As for special effects with big objects, such as people, green screen techniques couldn't be simpler. I painted the largest and best-lit wall in my kitchen green. You can buy special, yet very expensive Chroma Green Paint from Amazon or E-bay, but the colour I wanted was already on the colour chart at the local DIY store, so for about £15 (\$30.00 US), I got myself a tin. The trouble with this method, though, is that it is only good for close-up or waist-upwards shots, due to there being a great big white radiator in the way. In addition, the sink and the opposite wall are only 10 feet away from my green wall, so even with a wide-angle lens, I can get a shot that reaches only down to my knees. Plan B was to get green baise fabric material from the local market; it was only £4 (\$8.00 US) per metre and wide enough even for my bulk. Now I can use the longer dimension of my kitchen, so between the cat dishes and the cooker I can thumb-tack the material to the ceiling and let the fabric hang from there to cover the wall and enough of the floor to include my feet in a shot. Lighting is a problem here, but I find that using outdoor floodlights work equally as well as studio lights, especially the dual 500-watt ones that come on a tripod for about £10 (\$20.00 US).

So there is a start as to what you can achieve in the world of special effects and green screens in your own house. Do I hear you ask, "But why do you need an understanding and supportive wife"? Just try doing most of the things I have mentioned here in your kitchen, and you'll find out why! When I first tried these techniques, they were the cause for many a row when Rachel, my wife, saw what I had done, but now the green wall has become something of a talking point for visitors. Thank goodness for that!

Paul Knight writes, directs, produces, and stars in 'Space' which can be found at

<http://www.pjkproductionsspace.blogspot.com>



# Decibel, Schmezibel!

The other day I was talking to the chiefs here at Podcast User Magazine and they suggested that I'd write an article about 'levels'. I asked, "What kind of levels?" and they said, "Volume." I said, "Zero dB!" I didn't tell them I had already once tried to write something about volume and had given up. Truth is, volume is entirely hard to understand. I can just about see you sitting there blinking in disbelief. Volume? Hard to understand? It goes up, it goes down, what else is there?

You have probably heard, or read somewhere, that 130\* decibels is a dangerous sound level. It's so loud, it's painful! To get an idea how loud it is, imagine standing pretty close to a jet aircraft's engines (when they are running, of course). That's LOUD! In comparison, a soft whisper is about 20 decibels.

Now, for those of you who have a mixer, look at the meter... You will see that it's labeled 'dB' (dB is the abbreviation for decibel). You will also notice, most likely, that the last green light on it will read 0 (zero) dB. After that, the color changes to orange, and after that to red. If you are one of those people who actually reads manuals, you will undoubtedly have come across the text that tells you to keep your recording level around this 0 dB mark. So, if 20 dB is a soft whisper, and 130 dB is a painfully loud jet aircraft, then 0 dB is.... I told you that volume was complicated!

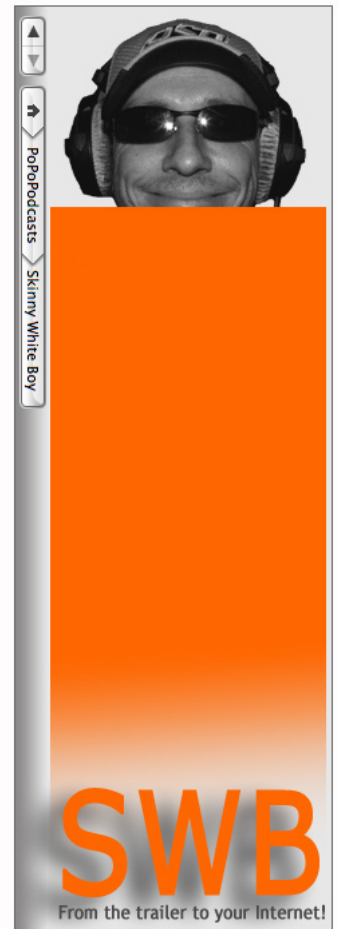
All right, I admit, I deliberately tried to confuse you there. You see, the word 'decibel' can be used to describe more than one thing. While the example of the painful sound of 130 dB refers to Sound Pressure Levels (SPL), the 0 dB mark is a 'reference level'. If you didn't understand that, don't worry.... Luckily, you can usually get away just with what I am about to explain next. The whole bit about 130 dB being painful (not to mention dangerous) only applies when you want a job at the airport, anyway.

This article isn't titled 'Decibel, Schmezibel!' for nothing. SPLs and dBs and all that good stuff aside, there are only three things important when recording a podcast. They are:

- 1)Loud
- 2)Not so loud or not loud at all
- 3)Loud sometimes but not at other times

You may be thinking there is a lot more to recording than adjusting loudness, and I suppose you are correct; as a matter of fact, I know you are. However, everything else will fall apart if we don't keep an eye on the basics. And as simple as that sounds, it's oh, so simple to forget. Even if it goes to 11, if we don't keep an eye on the volume, even Nigel\*\* is going to walk away with his hands to his ears.

What is volume? If you type exactly that question into Google, you get a slew of very strange answers, my personal favorite being "A generic term describing the level of activity in a market but referring specifically to the number of shares traded in a market or of a particular stock." I haven't a clue what that means,

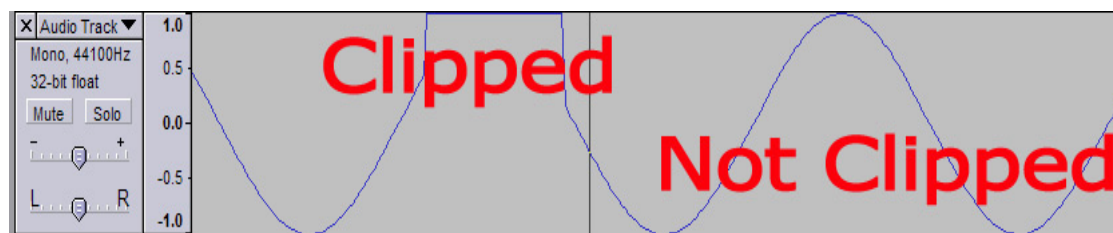


by Skinny White Boy

but I do understand the answer Google helped me find at [www.songstuff.com](http://www.songstuff.com):  
“This term is used to describe the signal level of an audio signal, or the intensity of the sound.” See, it’s all about how loud it is... If you are recording a podcast - before anything else - make sure you have that volume correct.

### 1)Loud

Or rather, Too loud. When a signal is louder than the device playing it back can handle, clipping will occur. I am sure you have heard of ‘clipping’; when a signal’s peak levels are so high that the device cannot process the signal, the result is horrible distortion. This happens because the signal is flattened (‘clipped’) at the peak level. The signal will look like a square wave (see the figure).



### 2)Not so loud or not loud at all

When a signal is clipped, it is destroyed. Look at the image in that figure. There is no saving that clipped region; it was simply recorded at too loud a level! So what do you do? You turn the volume down. Beware, though, because when you do, you will introduce noise. The less volume you send to your recorder, the more noise the listener will hear. This is a perfectly normal phenomenon. Every signal, no matter how well recorded, contains noise. Normally this is not a problem, because when your signal is sufficiently loud (without clipping) you will not notice the noise. Turn down the volume, however, and the noise will become audible. This dynamic interaction is called signal-to-noise ratio. Try it. Hit ‘record’ on whatever it is you use to record, but instead try to record nothing. When you listen back, you will hear noise. For this reason it is important that you make your recordings as loud as possible without causing distortion.

And that brings me to...

### 3)The volume difference of your signal during your recording, or “Loud sometimes but not at other times”

While you can try to find a sweet spot between loud (don’t let it clip) and not so loud (signal-to-noise), you can’t possibly avoid a loud voice dropping to a whisper or a quiet singer belting out that high note. This will not ruin your recording, but big differences in volume are annoying. If the listener constantly has to reach for the volume control, you will lose her sooner or later. Luckily, you can play with the volume even after you are done recording. It is possible to minimize dynamic differences by clever editing. You can also use a tool such as the much-talked-about Levelator (free, from [www.gigavox.com](http://www.gigavox.com)). Be careful, because there is a trade-off. Too much normalization, and you’ll end up sounding just like those guys on the radio!

And you thought I was crazy when I said volume was complicated.....

\* That is approximately 130 dB. Other sources might quote 120. Either way, it’s damn loud!

\*\* If you didn’t understand that, look up “This is Spinal Tap” on [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com).



Hello, and first of all, thanks for a year of interesting and informative PUM.

My comment is in response to Richard Vobes article in PUM12. Podcasting is likely to get Big Boy support only when the Big Boys get the lion's share of any profits and the artists/content producers get scraps. Sound familiar? And as Richard points out, the podcaster will lose control of content and quality.

Unless you can find some way to make podcasting use oil, we just have to wait until the great unwashed become tech savvy or a technology becomes available to make podcatching as simple as FM radio.

Supporting podcasters has not been a problem for me. Television and commercial broadcast radio in the USA has become a waste of good bandwidth with very few exceptions. Even though podcasting is over two years old, when I ask people I meet if they have heard of podcasting, they look at me like a tree full of owls.

It seems the young, computer literate population listen mostly to "music" (which I put in quotes as I would not waste disc space on what most of them have on their ipods) and so can not be relied upon to spread the word about podcasting.

Obviously the podcasters themselves try to spread the word. Therefore, I call on others like myself who are devoted listeners to tell friends and neighbors about this incredibly diverse medium. There really is something for everyone.

Best regards,  
Charles Stell  
Arkansas, USA

Hello Podcast User Magazine,

Of course I have been a reader of your magazine from the beginning. And I enjoy it very much but...

I can't believe that my long-running "What's Happening In Tokyo" podcast - will be two years in May 2007 - wasn't mentioned in your article "Pod casting In Japan".

I am also a foreigner (American) in Japan and I have the only podcast that really promotes Japanese Independent musicians. Also most of the Japanese music on the Podsafe Music Network is there because I told the Japanese artists about it.

I also feature entertaining stories about life in Japan in my "Frustration Station" segment.

Well, maybe next time.

Happy 2007 and Kindest Regards,  
Dan Huffman

<http://www.whitokyo.info/WHIT.htm>

## A listener's lament

As I perused the January issue of Podcast User Magazine I grew increasingly bemused at the frustration I discerned on the part of a couple of correspondents. Firstly, Mark Hunter repeated a claim I've heard many times before: that most people don't understand words like 'feed' and 'subscribe' and so haven't embraced podcasting. I don't buy this argument. Listening to a podcast is no more daunting than 'TiVO-ing' a favourite program or recording your child's birthday party with a digital camera. Millions of people have learned to do those things but clearly haven't yet been given reason enough to learn how to listen to podcasts. It is, I think, a little disingenuous to lay blame for poor uptake rates at the feet of technology: when provided with enough incentive people will learn. Why not write a weekly article on podcast production or podcast listening for a local paper? Or record podcast reviews for a radio station (you have all that equipment, after all). Or offer a session on podcast listening as an after-dinner speaker to community groups in your area (taking the time to find a couple of shows that would appeal to each audience, of course).

Next, Richard Vobes correctly observed, and seemed annoyed by, the fact that only 'the big boys' are having success engaging people with this new medium. Is that really a problem? My first podcast was a re-packaged broadcast from the ABC (Australian public radio). It didn't take long for me to wonder if there was more content I could fill my iPod with, and I now have a subscription list of more than 60 podcasts, the vast bulk of which are independently produced. So, rather than seeing re-packaging of mainstream content to podcasts as a negative thing, podcasters should take advantage of the fact that it's an entry point to the medium for many people. Why not have your podcast sponsor a heavily-downloaded NPR show (or get a group of shows together under a network banner if it's too expensive to do on your own)?

The final point that prompted me to put fingers to keyboard was Richard's disappointment that podcasting has not produced any superstars. Podcasting, particularly the independent content, is by its very nature an everyman medium, not a superstar one. There are far too many shows for any particular one to achieve the kind of stranglehold on the market that is needed for megastars to shine. To me this is the beauty of podcasting: people who have odd interests can produce content for the few (or few thousand) people who share that interest. No longer are we all required to be entertained by a smattering of cookie-cutter radio personalities. If this makes it difficult for those who want to make a living producing podcasts, I'd argue it's only because they're not being as creative about earning money as they are about producing content. The vast bulk of the podcasts I listen to regularly have made no serious attempt to separate me from even one of my hard-earned dollars. This, despite the fact I've happily paid monthly subscriptions, bought artists' CDs and other products from show sponsors and made donations to those who have asked. I found it a little odd that someone who has embraced the new medium as a producer appeared to want to hang on to the success measures, revenue streams and other trappings of the old media.

If you're wondering why I've bothered raising any of this, the answer is that I love podcasters. I love the community spirit you display, the entertainment you provide and the pioneering way you're forging place for yourselves in a changing world. Consequently, when I saw a hint of something troubling, I wanted to remind you to embrace the opportunities which do exist and resist the temptation to be distracted from your mission by temporary roadblocks. There's a growing band of listeners out here who'll be ever grateful to you for it.

by Bernadette from podcast fanatic at

<http://www.podcastfanatic.com>

([fanatic@podcastfanatic.com](mailto:fanatic@podcastfanatic.com))

Hi there

Jan 07 issue is great. I was just thinking about ID tags and where to start. You have made it so much easier. Also your story about where podcasting should be heading in 07 was great. It shows we all have our bit to do to make podcasting known and grow.

Thanks

**Lady Helga**

<http://ladyhelga.libsyn.com/>

# The quirky Podcast List



## The Difficult Listening Channel

<http://www.f7sound.com/podcasts.htm>

The Difficult Listening Channel is extreme recording, studio mishaps, audio-engineering disasters, deconstructed digital, cut-up personal documentaries, brutal noise and impersonal chatter, all moulded into a frothy MP3 mess that is podcasted across this vast wasteland known as the internet.

## How not to be DREADFUL

<http://notdreadful.blogspot.com/>

How Not to be Dreadful is a lifestyle blog and podcast all about dreadfulness. Join Amanda and Bill in this important conversation and help conquer dreadfulness for good.

## The Handbell Podcast Community

<http://handbell.libsyn.com/>

Dean Jensen and Paul Weller are the hosts of this weekly show about all things handbells. Through our podcast we hope to bring the handbell community together and entertain you a bit while we do that.

## Ten Minute Lessons

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

Ten Minute Lessons is dedicated to helping you find the answers you need to the questions you have. Founded in 2006 by a group of people with a whole lot more questions than answers, we are grateful to have a wide variety of experts available to assist us in providing you those answers.

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