

PodcastUser Magazine

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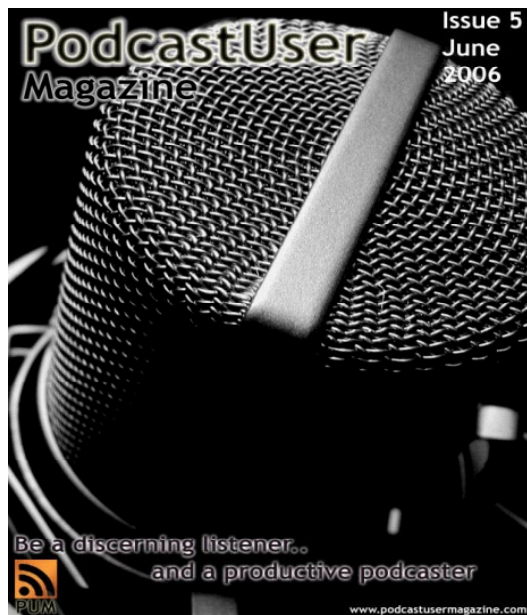
Be a discerning listener..

and a productive podcaster



www.podcastusermagazine.com

EDITORIAL



FIRST FOR . . .

Podcasts & podcasting news

Our monthly schedule and soon to be revamped website will allow us to keep you up to date with the latest news as and when it happens.

Product and service reviews

Each month, our dedicated contributors will review 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

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Editorial Ramblings

Paul Nicholls is away this month, so I have the honour of telling you a bit about what's in this Podcast User Magazine (Issue 5 - w00t!). It's a real corker, full of the reviews and articles for podcasters and listeners that you have come to expect of us. In addition to the usual band of PUM contributors, this month's writers hale from as far afield as New York (Mike Dionne, with his educator's view of podcasting), Michigan (Warren Johnson and his tips for using podcasts for career development) and California (Harry Lafnear's tips for podcast feedback and Hayden Black's adventures in the video podcast world).

We would also like to welcome Ewan Spence from The Podcast Network, who makes his debut in PUM with an article in place of fellow Scotsman Mark Hunter's column.

We are always looking for new contributors to the magazine - from all over the world - so if you have an idea for a column or an article, please don't be shy! Just drop us a line at Suggestions@PodcastUserMagazine.com and tell us what you'd like to write about. At PUM we aim to keep both listeners and podcasters interested, so we encourage articles that stretch the imagination, open new avenues and challenge the reader. We can't promise to use your idea or article - but can promise to read and discuss every email!

Finally - and it's quite a finally - we have an amazing prize competition next month. We have teamed up with one of the premier hardware distribution companies to bring you a prize worth over £200! Watch for July's edition for details on a free-to-enter podcasters' / home recorders' competition.

That's all from me. Have a great month till next month!

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Editorial support

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 submissions@podcastusermagazine.com. We would be glad to hear from you.

Special thanks

Go to Clustermaps.com and Frappr.com for granting us permission to reproduce their maps in this and future issues of Podcast User Magazine.

We would also like to thank you, the reader, for your support and enthusiasm over the last five months. Your feedback has been gratifying, and we look forward to reading your suggestions, comments and responses to futures articles.

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! Please keep your emails and postings coming in to the web site at www.podcastusermagazine.com General.Comments@PodcastUserMagazine.com

Congratulations

Chuck Tomasi, of www.chuckchat.com, has been selected to speak at the Podcast Expo in California this September. Chuck tells us that the subject he entered in the speakers' competition was inspired by the article he wrote exclusively for **Podcast User Magazine** in issue 3, 'Deeper & Wider', in which he described the various ways a podcaster can gain listener loyalty. Well done, Chuck!

BBC: Jumping on the bandwagon?

Jimmy Hastell keeps it simple

The British Broadcasting Corporation (demi-god of broadcasting) has, as we all know, been running podcast trials for the past several months with measured success. Some feel that it has merely jumped on the bandwagon of a popular fad, and I admittedly thought so too, but I could be wrong.

Technology has made great strides into what we now call multimedia. No longer does the humble television hold pride of place in the home: according to BBC figures, some 25% of the younger generation (beyond age 16) don't watch TV at all.

The Beeb, as we know them, have been quick to realize that "the times they are a changin'", to quote the song. With the advent of computers, mobile phones and the MP3 players, entertainment is now very much on the move, no longer confined to a plug socket on a wall. Its carry-away, on-demand capability demands that the most solid of institutions 'get with it'.

To this end, BBC Director General Mark Thompson has created the Creative Future team to address new strategies for the digital world. Mr. Thompson believes that if the BBC is to prosper in the years to come, it has to connect with the audiences of the future as well as those it already serves. The guideline for the development is very much focused on the younger generation.

So what can we expect to come out of all this? It is reasonable that some content will be designed exclusively for the mobile phone or portable media players. The BBC also intends "...to be the premier destination for unsigned bands", which may alarm some in the commercial music world who may already be unsettled by the success of BBC radio and its music downloads. "On-demand changes everything", Mr. Thompson said. "The BBC should no longer think of itself as a broadcaster of TV and radio and some new media on the side. We should aim to deliver public service content to our audiences in whatever media and on whatever device makes sense for them".

So can we expect to see great changes in the near future? Yes, I think we can. I hope the BBC realizes that podcasting is not just the ability to restructure existing content; they should look further afield in the podcasting world to discover that out there is actually quite a bit of talent reaching a growing audience.

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

What makes a successful podcast?

When I started podcasting, in around 1984, not only was I the UK's 3rd annual break dancing champion, the internet hadn't been properly invented and no one had ipods, and I had no listeners. Being five years old I didn't care much, so I spent my time being a hyperactive and occasionally rude (though well-meaning) child.

When the world finally caught up and I got stuck in, the Pepsi max podcast got about 20,000 downloads. This was amazing. It was early 2005 and no one but the savviest media types, bored people that spent too long online and the British civil aviation authority had heard of the medium. I did this through my day job, though, so didn't much care too much. What I did love, however was that my beautiful, sweet Simulacrum had about 20 listeners. This was, as Florence Nightingale might have said, 'totally #*\$%£ sweet'. Even better was that after six months I was reaching a few thousand.

These figures are small fry, however, compared with the massive audiences attained by regional and national radio stations or some of the most hyped podcasts. But it was 'official'; in my mind, my podcasts were successful!

The Sony Radio Awards, the British Radio industry's most significant awards ceremony, rewards radio stations on a range of criteria and has four 'station of the year' awards, depending on the size of the station. Risking the wrath of Pope Benedict XVI, this is a chance to demonstrate why a relativist approach helps give a bigger picture – 60,000 happy listeners in rural Cornwall can be better than 2 million disgruntled ones in Greater London.

So how does this apply to podcasting? The likes of Ricky Gervais, with his cross-Atlantic appeal and national newspaper backing, and the BBC with their international reputation should be getting huge download figures. National and multinational broadcasting organizations, with their huge budgets and large existing audiences are failing if they don't dominate the various charts and lists around to indicate popularity.

Where does that leave those of us, without advertising budgets similar to the GDP of Montenegro? I recently worked on a podcast for a marketing body called the ISP. The results programme for their annual awards was downloaded by about 150 people. This figure seems pretty small, but there were only 500 people at the event and it was of little interest to anyone away from the British promotional marketing industry. Therefore 150 downloads is a success, even if the podcast doesn't make the iTunes top 100!

My point is this: If you are prepared to go to the effort of creating something, don't be put off if you have only 20 listeners; you may have simply found a niche that delivers something that keeps a small bunch of people happy. You are also doing a much better job as a podcaster than a worryingly large amount of established, lazy broadcasters, few of whom have genuinely used podcasting to innovate.

CHRIS SKINNER

by Simon Toon



Comedy 365 is more of a channel than a straight podcast. Several different comedy producers allow their work to be presented through Comedy 365, including Chris Skinner (Simulacrum) and Ewan Spence (The Edinburgh Fringe Show). The channel also presents recordings of performers such as Doctor Cockney, Dogs Must Be Carried, Stratton & Eady, Collinge & Lord, and John Dredge. The most compelling content, however, is produced by the duo that are the brains behind Comedy 365: comedians Brian Luff and Georgina Sowerby. The couple's flagship, 'Sowerby and Luff's Big Squeeze', is an expertly structured show, exercising the pair's good-natured natural wit on well-chosen improvisational devices, such as 'Talking Bollocks', in which each person has to rant or tell an anecdote on a subject chosen at random, and 'What's The Question Triv', where a random Trivial Pursuit answer is given and points are awarded for guessing the most amusing, rather than the most accurate question.

Brian and Georgina keep Comedy 365 fresh by innovating with new shows such as 'Ten Pairs of Pants', 'Figgis and Krupp', 'Chicken Flaps' and the naughty puppet show video podcast 'Fluffy TV'. My only criticism is that they sometimes produce repeats, presumably feeling the pressure to release content every day.

Brilliant British comedy. From the amount of effort they put into it, you can tell these two are very serious about this project, and we, the listeners, reap the rewards!

<http://www.comedy365.co.uk/>

Star rating : 4 out of 5

BBC Radio News Pod

BBC Radio News Pod is a brilliant idea. Since I found podcasting, I hardly have had any time to listen to the radio or watch TV, and consequently I often miss the news. Now News Pod allows me to catch up on the latest news from the UK and the world.

The show is made up from excerpts of news items from the wide range of national BBC radio stations, especially Radio 1, Radio 4 and Radio Five Live. The excerpts are put together and presented as a coherent whole by one of BBC radio's respected newscasters or radio personalities.

This is not simply a recycled version of a traditional radio programme but a show made for podcasting and available to download every weekday evening at 5pm. (This timing is clearly aimed at people who download their podcasts to their MP3 player just before their evening commute home.)

This well-presented show is usually about 35 minutes long, but I would prefer it to be much shorter. I'd be happier with a 10-minute news bulletin from Radio 4's Today programme, and so have reverted to keeping an appointment with my wireless every morning.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/newspod/>

Star rating : 3 out of 5

by Colin Meeks



Dr Karl on Triple J

Tagline : Karl is an answer in search of a few thousand questions

Genre : Discussion, science

Keywords : discussion, science

Parental Rating : 15

For anyone who loves science shows but finds them to be a little dry, prepare to have you socks blown off, because this is science at its most accessible. OK, before we go much further, this podcast is from our Australian cousins and they don't mind saying what's on their minds. Anyone who knows of Sir Les Patterson will know what I mean. Consequently, wherever there is science, there is bound to be potty talk, and in the last few shows I've listened to, they've had discussions on what "makes your poo whiter" and "what makes your poo different shapes". Yes, it is toilet talk, and you might not want to have your nine-year-old listening along in the car; hence, the '15' parental rating.

It's not all lavatorial talk, though; there are some fascinating questions asked and answered, and I keep finding this 40- to 50-minute show flying by, which is always a good sign. This show is similar to the Quirks and Quarks podcast from the CBC (Canada's equivalent to the BBC), in that it's originally a radio show, re-purposed as a podcast, so adverts and breaks are trimmed out, and you do get the odd references to time and telephone numbers (as this is a phone-in on the radio), but it doesn't really distract at all from the show.

A special mention has to go to Dr Karl, because his whole presentation is infectious and fun, which for a science show is no mean feat.

Conclusion : This is the first Australian podcast I've heard, and excellent stuff it is, too. I'd be most interested to see what other podcasts the Land Down Under has to offer. If you want answers to all of those imponderables in life, why not submit a question via the website?

Star Rating : 4.5 out of 5

www.abc.net.au/science/k2/stn/default.htm
www.abc.net.au/science/k2/podcast/drk_rss.xml



Liberate your Libsyn

by **Chris Sherry**

You may be one of the many podcasters who enjoy Libsyn's (www.libsyn.com) excellent all-in-one podcasting solution. Libsyn service not only supports large bandwidth but also makes it very easy for a podcaster to upload audio and quickly generate an RSS feed and show notes or blog entry. One question that may arise, however, is "How can I have a remote file as the enclosure content of my rss feed?" Well, maybe not those words exactly, but you get the idea.

Recently, a few British podcasters contributed to the May Britpack, a monthly group of short 'casts, which included one from my podcast, Kaflooy (kaflooy.com). This Britpack was collected and hosted by Phil Coyne of bitjobs for the masses! (bitjobs.net). Phil wanted to host the file and have the contributing podcasters link in their RSS feeds to the file hosted at bitjobs.net. That way Phil could get accurate download and subscription stats for the file, which would not be possible if we all hosted the file separately.

Great idea! But the other contributing podcasters and I soon found that, as Libsyn users, there didn't seem to be any simple way of achieving this. After a few emails to Libsyn support, however, and some trial and error on my part, I was able to link to the remote file in my Libsyn-controlled RSS feed!

If you find yourself in this situation – perhaps as a member of a podcasting network or group – you may want to link to a remote file using your Libsyn feed, so here comes the science bit:

In your Libsyn account, in the 'publish' section:

1. Create a new TEXT BLOG POST (not a podcast episode)
2. Add your blog entry / show notes as applicable
3. Click 'Additional Options'
4. In the 'Extra RSS tags', enter:

```
<enclosure url="http://www.remotedomain.com/remotefile.mp3" type="audio/mpeg"/>
```

Change the domain and file names as applicable – for example, here's the enclosure entry I added in the 'Extra RSS tags' field for the May '06 Britpack entry:

```
<enclosure url="http://mp3.bitjobs.net/britpack-may06.mp3" length="41306240" type="audio/mpeg"/>
```

5. Publish your entry, and Kaflooy's your Uncle.

Please note that the entry does have to be a TEXT BLOG POST (I'm not shouting, just making a point), as a podcast entry just adds Libsyn's default MP3 to your feed rather than the one you want.

Good luck, and I hope this is helpful for your group podcasts!

Chris Sherry hosts the Kaflooy! podcast, which can be found at www.kaflooy.com.



Ewan's Musings

by Ewan Spence

Part of the larger MedienForum Conference in Cologne, Germany, the recent Podcastday2006 gathered together a large number of continental European podcasters, broadcasters and interested parties to discuss a wide range of issues this new media has raised. I had been invited to speak on the panel for "Business Models and How to Make Money with Podcasts."

Being in Germany meant that, naturally, the panel and discussions were held in German, and while I studied the language at school and know enough of the language to be polite, order a beer and ask if someone can speak English (as I only know 'a little' German), the conference provided real-time translation headsets to everyone who wanted them. What was more impressive was the number of Germans who could happily get along with the English speakers on the panel.

My panel was fun to be on, and it was exciting in an unexpected way. About ten minutes into the session, my translation unit stopped working. Luckily, buzzwords are the same in any language, so I could just about assemble the question in "mwhah mwhah Podcasting mwhah click through mwuah [positive noise] mwuah confidence [negative noise] [question]." German efficiency obviously decided I was coping and so didn't need a replacement unit. The conclusion of the panel was that there is money in podcasting, but as with any area, you need to approach everyone in the correct way, respect your listeners and advertisers and realise that you'll need to present yourself as a business, or at least as a switched-on individual.

And this raises one of the few barriers to podcasting. I met a number of German podcasters, with some great sounding shows, but my lack of foreign language skill means that "Chicks on Tour" isn't that accessible. As the internet drops our physical geographic boundaries, so another barrier is raised. You still can't go 100% global with a podcast.

Also at Podcastday2006 in from Britain was Chris Vallance, one of the men behind the BBC Radio 5 Pods and Blogs show. For those of you who aren't aware of it, the show is broadcast late at night and is a magazine and current-affairs-based show that uses podcasters and bloggers to talk about the news and to raise various issues. With the BBC as one of the main broadcasters embracing podcasting, Chris talked about how the BBC uses bloggers and 'casters in the show and also about the use that the BBC makes of podcasts.

The conference itself was very well organised, and unlike previous podcast conferences I've attended, succeeded in bringing together both the podcasters and mainstream broadcasters for intelligent and constructive discussions. It was definitely worth the two nights in Germany, and PodCastConUK and the PortableMedia Expo have a lot to measure up to!

Ewan Spence, executive producer at The Podcast Network and host of TPN Rock (www.tpnrock.com), hosted a joint podcast "mashup" with CC Chapman (www.accidenthash.com) at the recent Podcastday2006 conference.

As well as that show, he was speaking at the Conference, and tells all to PodcastUserMagazine...



A Lexicon of Love – the Lexicon MX200 digital effects



by Paul Parkinson

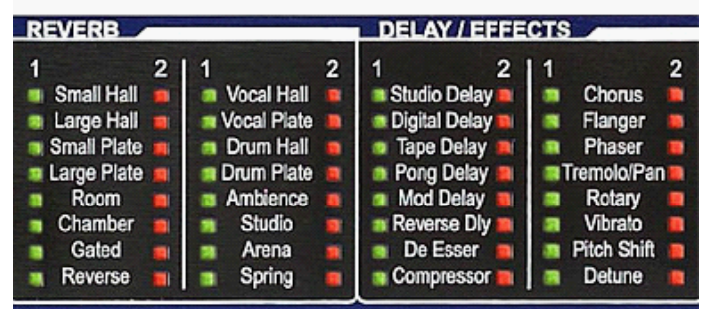
Lexicon has made a name for itself in the pro audio and home theatre space. I came across them in the home-cinema side of things when I owned a 'DC-1 home theatre' processor. Good days. That product was fantastic. It was with the DC-1 that I heard the famous Lexicon reverb for the first time and fell in love with its sound. I was delighted to hear it again on this product, but this time I could use it. The funny thing was that the DC-1 cost in excess of £3000 new, and the MX200 can be yours for around £160. Progress...

The MX200 is a dual reverb effects processor which will take up only 1U of rack space. The front is finished in a brushed blue stainless steel which should stand out from the rest of your gear. The Lexicon logo on the left leaves you in no doubt who made this kit.

But what does “dual reverb effects processor” actually mean? It means it has two banks of processors which can be used in a variety of configurations, depending on what you are trying to achieve. These settings are mono parallel, mono sum-to-stereo, stereo serial or stereo parallel. Essentially these distil down to two - series and parallel. You can run one channel through one processor and another channel through the other; you can send one channel through Processor 1 and then through Processor 2 or you can mix and match between the processors and channels. If that sounds confusing, don't worry; the extremely well-written manual explains it all very clearly. In fact, it hardly seems necessary to read the thing at all, but it does help.



The front panel controls are clear and easy to understand. They include input level, effects mix, balance, audition, tap tempo and configuration controls. The audition allows you to preview an effect in a variety of scenarios, and the tap tempo allows the manual setting of the delay by tapping the start and end of a beat: a nice facility if you are linking a beat to a delay. Balance controls the wet / dry mix of the output stage.



There are 99 factory presets offering beautiful reverbs and effects with an additional 99 programmable slots, which will allow you create a range of custom effects from a wide range of tools: plates; different sized chambers and halls; digital, studio and tape-type delays; and special effects like a flanger, tremolo and chorus. Once you have fine-tuned an effect, all you need to do is press the 'Store' button on the right and it's saved. Remember the number though, or you'll have the devil's own job finding it again! (This is, in fact, my only gripe, but it's not a big one.)



A note to the unwary: Beware of over indulging – the digital delays and reverbs can be mixed together to give some amazing effects. The Voice of Evil combines echo and a dose of reverse reverb, which is amazing, but you can also do a Voice of God, which is scary. Janet and I played around with the settings during a few podcasts and cut out all the stupid stuff afterwards as it sounded rubbish – but that was more to do with our overuse of the effects than the machine itself. This is a fine machine – any problems you may experience come between the operator and the controls rather than the controls and the output...

The advanced podcasters out there using serious software to play with - sorry - to enhance the sound will be pleased to know that the MX200 ships with a USB cable and drivers that will connect the machine to your computer (Windows and Mac) and on into software that understands VST plug-ins. VST compatibility allows third-party developers to create plug-in effects and enhancements to audio software across a wide range of applications. VST is a standard that the vast majority of audio applications, even Audacity, can understand. The MX200 will appear just like another digital software effect, even though it is hardware. You can control the MX200 from your computer as if it were software, a feature that never failed to impress.

So, to sum up: Do you NEED a Lexicon MX200 for podcasting? Frankly, no. Do you want one? Will you lust after one, desiring its digital-effects goodness and reverb reverie? Oh, yes.

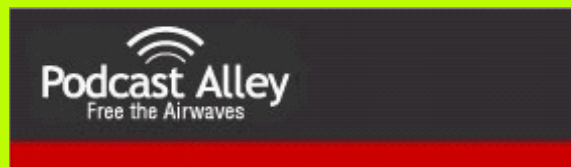
T-H-I-S I-S T-H-E V-O-I-C-E O-F G-O-D.
You just gotta have that, haven't you?

Sending the loaned machine back to Lexicon was so very, very, hard. I am now getting organised to get another one, but this time I'm going to have to buy it. And buy it I will.

Where are all the podcasts then?



A searchable directory by genre, also top pods listed, forum and podcast submissions.
www.podcastpickle.com



Probably the most well known directory of them all. Top 100 and easy search options.
www.podcastalley.com



The British Podcast Community

Does exactly as it says on the tin, a community for British Podcasts. Extensive list of Brit podcasters. Diverse directory.
www.britcaster.com

What is FTP?

by **Colin Meeks**

Although this article is not strictly about podcasting, it is about one of the many things that is handy to understand, especially when transferring podcasts to your hosting provider. Many hosting services provide web pages to upload your files, but you usually don't get you any feedback as to how much of the file has been sent, and the process can be very slow.

FTP stands for File Transfer Protocol and is one of the main backbone services on the internet, the other main ones being HTTP (for accessing Web pages), Telnet (for remote computer access) and POP/SMTP (for sending and receiving email). FTP sets up a connection between two computers, allowing you to send or receive files. Most of these files will be in a binary format, such as audio, video, computer programs, and so forth, whilst the rest of the files will be in a text format, such as source code and other kinds of written text. In the old days of FTP, it used to be a requirement to tell your FTP client what kind of file you wanted to download to your computer. Most FTP clients now are pretty intelligent, so you don't have to worry about this any more... most of the time.

In order to transfer a file, such as your latest podcast, from your computer to your hosting provider, the first thing you will need is an FTP client. Most operating systems come with some form of FTP client, but it is usually very basic and not the most intuitive to use. I'm going to cover what I consider two of the best free FTP solutions, one for Windows and one for Mac OSX. (I'm a great advocate of free and open source software.) Do not be deceived by the price: although this software is free, this does not mean it is limited or restricted in any way.

If you are using Windows, one of the best FTP clients is called FileZilla. This is a programme I have used for about four years, and in all that time, it hasn't skipped a beat. If you are a Mac OSX user, as indeed I am, too, then the FTP client you will want to download is called CyberDuck. (URLs for both programmes can be found at the end of this article.)

Here are some of the terms used with an FTP site, which will give you a general overview of how it works and how it can be used:

FTP address - This is the internet address used to access the site. Please bear in mind that just because a website is on the internet it doesn't

necessarily also have an FTP site. Both Microsoft and Apple have FTP sites, and their addresses are the fairly easy to remember [ftp.microsoft.com](ftp://ftp.microsoft.com) and [ftp.apple.com](ftp://ftp.apple.com), respectively. Both of these sites allow anonymous access, which is explained next.

Anonymous Access - This is a special kind of FTP access, which allows anyone to browse and download files. No specific user name and password is required. Sites such as Microsoft, Apple and numerous other software and hardware suppliers allow anonymous FTP access for downloading the latest patches and updates. On these types of sites, to login to the FTP server, enter 'anonymous' as the user name and either 'guest' or your email address as the password.

User name - FTP access requires you to enter a valid user name and password, usually given to you by the person or company allowing you access to their server.

Password - A special word or key phrase that allows you to enter and keeps other people out. When you enter in a password, as with many other websites and applications, what you type is usually replaced with an asterisk (*) or similar character, which prevents someone looking over your shoulder to read the password. Also, be very careful with the 'caps lock' and 'shift' keys, as passwords are normally case sensitive; a 'T' in a password is not recognized to be the same as 't'.

Local Path - This is where you want to send the downloaded files. If you set this within your FTP login, you usually have the option to change it by navigating through directories and folders in the usual way.

Remote Path - This is the directory or folder in which you want the FTP session to start. If, for instance, you go to your hosting service to download your logs every month, you would set this to '/logs' or the directory or folder where your log files are stored.

Most FTP servers and clients even have the ability to resume a file, both when uploading and downloading, should the internet connection be broken for whatever reason. Another benefit of using an FTP client is that it's easy to select many files for both downloading and uploading, which means for a group of lengthy files, you can select and click on the start button and just let it get on with its job, leaving you to do something else.

So now you know something about how to transfer files through FTP, a great and reliable tool. The internet is a vast expansive universe. The more you understand, the more you'll get out of it.

FileZilla – <http://filezilla.sourceforge.net>

Cyberduck – <http://www.cyberduck.ch>





Go on, slap it all together Or, how to edit an audio tour

by Richard Vobes

For the last couple of months, if you have been reading your Podcast User Magazine from cover to cover, you will recall we have been examining the process of recording out in the field and putting together what Adam Curry describes as a sound-seeing tour, the BBC calls 'packages', others give the blander title 'sequence' and I refer to as audio tours. Whatever you want to call your outside podcasting, there comes a time when you shall need to get your hands dirty and sit at the edit bench and pull the material to pieces. It's fun time.

What Adam Curry describes as a sound-seeing tour

I am writing this from the viewpoint of a Windows PC user, since I do not have a Mac and am not familiar with the Apple-compatible software; however, the process on either platform is identical even though the names of various tasks might be different. For my discussion here, I will try to take the generic approach. Ok? Good!

This will be my considered textbook approach. Usually, I am a lot more sloppy in my haste to create content for my daily show, but if you follow the maxim, 'do as I say and not as I do', then we should avoid all errors! (Fingers crossed.)



First, set up a new folder on your computer and call it the name of your project, for example, 'Gothic Castle Trip'. Then open that folder and create another one inside it, calling it something like 'rushes' or 'data' or, as I prefer, 'raw'. Copy into this folder all the recorded material from the field trip, the interviews, the sound effects, the rambling voiceover and any music you have selected. (Actually, I sometimes have music on another machine or in another folder. At times I try to keep music clumped together for a lot of the stuff I use, but at other times I like to keep a copy of the tracks in with the project's 'raw' files, so that I can use it again if I need to re-edit or change the project later.)

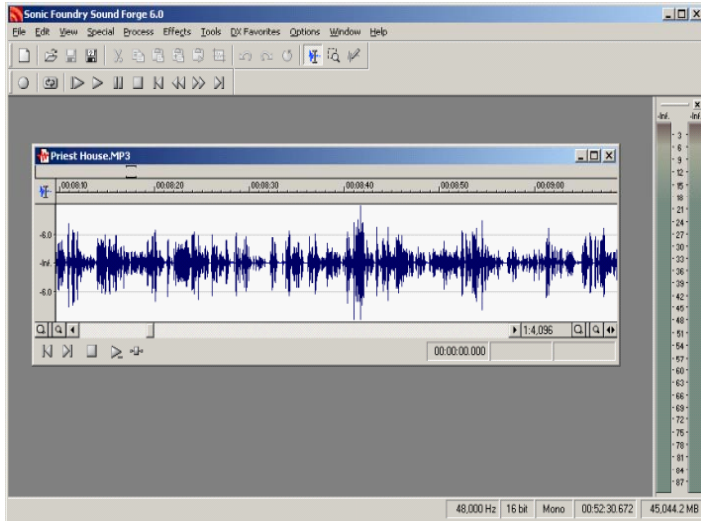
When everything is together in one folder, stop a second and think about the piece. How long is going to be? Who is it aimed at? Should anything else be added to make the audio stand up on its own?

In the example we are going to edit, we shall assume we have the follow files:

- 1) Various observations and conversations with a mate who went to the Gothic castle, the "Wow, look at that, Eric, it's a suit of armour! Notice, no flies on that... must have been hard to take a quick jimmy riddle!" stuff.
- 2) A few creaking-door effects and footsteps recorded on location.
- 3) An interview with the organizer of the trip.
- 4) A piece of scary music

Now it's time to consider the software. I use a number of programmes. These do different jobs, but more on that later.

First, the sound quality needs to be checked for each file intended for use. I use Sound Forge for this. There is another programme that I believe will do the same and is FREE: and that is Wave Pad (<http://www.nch.com.au/wavepad/masters.html>).



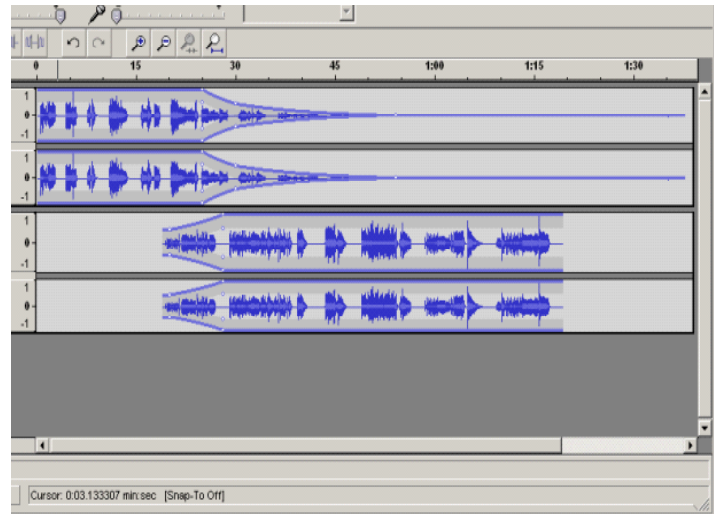
Load up the first file and check the levels. Are they loud enough? I tend to 'normalize' everything. This gives a general lift to the levels and evens out the low levels to a happy medium. It improves the overall recording no end, and if you have never done this before, you will be amazed how this alone can improve your audio tour. You will need to select the 'db' (decibels) required to which you wish to 'normalize'. Sound Forge offer a few default settings. Typically I use 16db (the music setting) or 12 db for vocals. It's trial and error. See what fits best.

Editing audio, as with film, is subjective, and I really cannot tell you how to put your piece together and what should go where and when. You need to muck about and see what works for you.

With all that being said, let's have a go and see what happens so that you can get started.

The next programme I am going to suggest we use is Audacity – it's FREE. You can get it here: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

(I actually use a different programme which is much more sophisticated and complex, but to even try to explain how to use it here would take forever, so send me an email if you wish to hear more about that!)



Audacity is an audio programme that lays out the sound files as visual wave tracks. You can layer the tracks, and in the example given, you can see I have placed a voice track on the top. Audacity plays the track from left to right. After about 20 seconds of voiceover ("Hello, and welcome to the Gothic Castle tour" and so forth), it fades in a second track, labeled music; spooky gothic music at that! You can also see how the upper track fades out as the graphics narrow. Other programmes do the same but use what is called rubber bands to do this. These are little visual 'strings' or 'bands' that indicate the volume of the audio and can be changed higher or lower as you go along the track.

Notice that in the example above in Audacity there are displayed two channels for each track, the left and right, indicating that it is in stereo. Depending on the programme you use, mono might be displayed as a single track or have both left and right channels shown but with identical wave patterns.

In general, you can keep adding layers, so you might have one for voice overs, another for music and perhaps a third for sound effects and so on.

As you work along, you can hear the results immediately and keep an eye on the time of the piece. The freedom a programme like this gives is wonderful, because you can improvise and try stuff out and save a version of it to play to others if you want feedback on your editing skills.

Another approach is to have a cue sheet. This is simply, as the name suggests, a sheet of cues or a script of audio.

It might look like this:

CUE SHEET		Gothic Castle Trip
Voice:	Hello and welcome...	VO1. mp3
Music:	Spooky Music	Gothic Collection No2
Interview:	People love old scary castles because ..	INT1.mp3

This helps you to work out in your head the way the audio is going to develop.

Your final edit can look very complicated, but that's ok – your listeners aren't looking at the graphic interface, they are just going to listen to the final edit and marvel at how wonderful it sounds.

The final step is the mix down. This is the process of taking the raw audio tracks and squishing them into another format, such as an MP3, and making that file small enough (in computer bytes) to be transportable, such as which happens with a podcast that is downloadable over the internet.

Personally, I do not find the encoder in Audacity to be very good, so when working with Audacity, save in a WAV (.wav) file, load that file into Sound Forge and use its encoder to turn it into an MP3 file. Then the quality will be superb. Wave Pad's encoder isn't as cool, either, I am afraid, but again, it is free!

What size should your file be? Obviously, the higher the bit rate, the better the quality of audio. Each programme's MP3 encoder gives a different effect. I find that Sound Forge's MP3 encoder works beautifully at 64 kilobites per second. Some prefer to encode at 96 kbps or even 128 kbps! I find on a rough scale, an audio file encoded at 64 kbps gives 2 minutes per megabyte of file size, so a 10-minute sound file (as an MP3) ends up at 5 MB.

A file at a lower bit rate (64 kbps) is great for portable transportation, or downloading from the web, but if you want to re-edit the file or use the sound again later, the quality will deteriorate quickly if you start to re-encode it.



It may sound confusing, but just because your audio is stored as a digital file, this does not mean that its sound quality will stay the same as you modify it. It won't sound the same if you re-encoded it or, to put it simply, 'squish it smaller a second or third time'.

You can copy a digital file as many times as you like and get no loss of data if it remains in the same format. However, re-encoding it ('squishing' it) to a smaller or different format (or bit rate) will affect the quality of the file, so taking a file with a low bit rate, such as 64 kbps, and then encoding it again will affect the sound quality badly.

This explains why some listener clips can sound dreadful when played into a podcast. They were encoded at source, by the listener, then get encoded a second time, by the podcaster in his final mix down. That's twice the squishing!

So, because I know I am likely to reuse elements from an audio tour, I keep everything together in one file. I also archive a second 'master' version of the final edit at the higher 128 kbps rate in case I want to use it again.

There is a lot to keep track of when editing and encoding, and the process can be confusing, but I hope this have given you some insight into playing about with sound and having fun as a result. Have a play, and do let me know your thoughts, views and successes with your audio tours.

Next month I will look at setting up your own studio and the things you need to consider when you do so!

Richard Vobes is the most prolific podcaster in the UK. He produces and presents the Richard Vobes Radio Show. Richard won the Sound Seeing Tour Award for the best audio tour in the Podcast Awards 2005

www.vobes.com
richard@vobes.com

STOP PRESS

On the 4th of June Richard Vobes will have achieved an incredible 500th podcast. Congratulations from the team at PUM



Hayden Black's real-life Hollywood adventures in vidcasting

Sunday was bearing down like a juggernaut - it was just over 24 hours away. That was when we were to shoot four new episodes of Goodnight Burbank. My lead actress was leaving town that Monday for a month so it couldn't be rescheduled. My director was getting cold feet. One of the other actors was complaining (rightfully so) that they didn't have enough lines. I had yet to learn a word of mine. And the owner of the studio I'd spent the last week frantically searching for called me up to demand more money. How the hell did I get here - and why would I want to stay?

In a nutshell: Two months ago an acquaintance approached me with free access to a studio that came with lights, camera and sound. Did I have anything I wanted to shoot? In less than two weeks I'd dusted off an old idea, written a script, and shot a pilot using some of the incredibly talented people from an Upright Citizen's Brigade Improv class I'd been taking. They contributed everything from acting to graphics.

Did I have anything I wanted to shoot?

The pilot went much better than it had a right to. There were a few mistakes, but I knew this was going to be a learning process - a unique one where the rest of the world got to watch. Having spent 10 years in edit bays writing and producing on-air promos, I didn't find it difficult finding a friend to edit the show. After it was done, I secured us a website and voila, there it was. I was surprised at how easy this was coming together. The universe must like this project.



And within a few days of it going up I got a call from an old high school pal who'd been forwarded the link, loved the show and wanted to re-design the website as a favor. Hell, the universe really likes it!

A few weeks later we shot three more episodes - all in one day. And again it had gone frighteningly smoothly.

Things were starting to happen. People were laughing at the stuff I was writing! It doesn't get much better than that. A talented and brilliant director came on board. More actors were asking to be a part of it. So I wrote four new episodes, planning to shoot them all at once. I thought that if the stress of trying to get four episodes done in a day was as bad as it got, it wouldn't be a problem.

Turned out, the universe had changed its mind.

Within days I found out that the studio we'd been using was going the way of the dodo, which meant I had one week to find a place that we could use for roughly the same price as the first - free (I'm not made of money). I started calling friends and friends of friends.

I met some lovely people along the way, but when someone offered me use of a green screen in his apartment for just \$5000, I was beginning to wonder who the insane one really was. (By the way, he kindly let me know that for that bargain price, he'd tell the neighbors to shut up. I thought for \$5000 he should have killed the neighbors.)

Just when I'd find a place for cheap, I'd have to start figuring other elements in.



Not every green-screen studio – especially the cheap ones – comes with lights. Or sound. Or cameras. In fact, for close to free, most of those green-screen studios were pretty much just a colored wall.

Then one of the actors called, asking if I wanted them gone. Turns out when I'd re-written one of the scripts, I'd accidentally chopped their lines. I mention this not to complain about the actor – who was completely right – but to show how more stress was piling up. I had to rewrite the rewrite while finding a studio.

The clock was ticking. Jamie (“Susan Jones”) was leaving for a month, so if we couldn't shoot on Sunday, the show would have to sit there for a few weeks – the kiss of death when trying to start a new venture. With days to go, an old friend came through. He owned a building that had a green screen in it (which belonged to a guy who was leasing space from him). I could use that AND have lights, cameras and sound for the unheard of price of just - \$200.

The universe did love me after all! Oh, universe, you hunky sex God.

My new director insisted we rent more lights for the place (another \$330) but...well, hey! The kids are putting on a show! And if that means \$530, then fine! Now all I had to do was learn my lines.

Hold up there, said the universe, in a faint Southern accent, because then the phone rang.

It was the owner of the green screen. He was in no way going to let me use the place for free. “\$350, please.” Not a lot in the grand scheme of things, but when every penny counts...my budget had shot up to a grand. I had to make a decision. I lost the lights.

My director wasn't happy, but my wallet was. But I wasn't. Does that make sense? And then the doubt set in.

Was this show any good? Was I wasting my time? Was I fooling myself? Looking down from the ledge I found myself on, the thoughts were dizzying. I really thought about throwing in the towel.

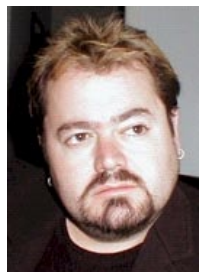
The night before the shoot, I was running lines with my wife. Sounds fancy, sure, but that translates to me pacing the bedroom saying “what's the next line again?” She was of the opinion that I was...well, ‘screwed’ would be the nice way of saying it.

Sunday morning: The guy isn't at the studio to let us in when he said he would. We're standing around, waiting. I wonder if this isn't the sign that I should have leaped from the creative ledge when I had the chance. A door opens. We're in.

And then...well, then the magic suddenly started happening again. We actually shot all four episodes, and most of the lines came to me. Most. The other performers were brilliant. My director was amazing. The cameraman he brought along was fantastic. It was as if the universe was saying to me that I had it all wrong. That of course it liked the project. But that I had to learn a few things about myself and the process if it was going to continue. I know I learned a lot that week, and I have a lot more to learn.

The process has begun again as I edit the new episodes, write newer ones and look into securing a studio for next month – while I try not to repeat my past mistakes and instead just make fresh ones.

But in the meantime, if you're going to keep laughing at what I write, it'll be worth it.



Hayden Black is the writer/producer/co-star of Goodnight Burbank. You can see the episodes and read the blogs at <http://www.goodnightburbank.com>.

and you can go rate it on iTunes at <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=134137700&s=143441> (pretty please with cherries on top).

Tell him directly what you think at cellmate27@yahoo.com.



Educators, Wake Up!

The Podcast Revolution is Here to Stay!

by Michael Dionne

Most educators still do not know about podcasting. They may have heard a news story in the media or may have read an article in a newspaper or magazine, but that is the extent of their knowledge. I know some educators, mostly the techies, have listened to or created podcasts, and I applaud them. The focus of this message is for the front-line people: the teachers who can take podcasting directly to the students. Make no mistake, though; the techies in schools are needed to facilitate the bold classroom teacher who wants to podcast. That collaboration is vital to the project's success.

I work in a small rural district in upstate New York, USA, that has approximately 1500 students in grades Kindergarten (age 4 or 5) through 12 (age 17 or 18). Students are podcasting at all levels. Fifth-graders (aged 10 or 11) podcast the news from their building. High school Spanish and Math classes are podcasting. Extra-curricular clubs are also getting into the act, and parents have written letters of thanks for involving their sons and daughters in podcasting.

Recently, a group of fifth-grade podcasters made a presentation to our board of education, and they were enthusiastically received by all who attended.

One parent in particular thanked us for allowing her daughter to participate because it had made her more self-confident. Every parent of these podcasters said that the children are most excited about school on the day they podcast.

Our high school media class now includes podcasting, and students are required to form groups, create a show and produce at least four episodes. Students are podcasting about 'podsafe' music, what's happening in the school and random thoughts about life. A few podcasts are humorous in nature and are very creative. Students love the ability to create a show that is uniquely theirs. They have learned about mass media, how to write scripts and what it takes to get behind a microphone and deliver information to a potentially large audience.

Students of all grades enjoy podcasting -- just give them a chance. Get them organised and cut them loose. (See what some students in the Sidney, NY school system had to say about podcasting in the sidebar on the next page).

Podcasting in the classroom does not require new equipment. Even the most modestly equipped school has a computer that can produce a podcast.



All the software that is needed is free and simple to use. Don't let the discussion of the technical requirements, such as what mic to use or how to choose the right type of mixer or editing software, intimidate you. Podcasting is about the enthusiast and their passion for the topic, not the technical ability to produce a perfect show. That's what radio is for.

Let's face it, any elementary student's podcast sounds cute no matter how many crackles and pops there are -- just ask the grandmothers. Schools have a built-in audience, and your goal should be to enhance your student's learning, not to build a large subscription base. As many of us already know, we learn best when we have to teach someone else, and that is the power of producing a classroom podcast.

Your students will love their 15 minutes of fame. You can create a classroom activity with one podcast or create several podcasts from small groups. Either scenario will require organisation. Here are some suggestions for getting started:

- Start your activity with a goal: What will the topic be? Will the students pick it, or will you give them the topic?
- Have students listen to other podcasts.
- Decide what types of segments will make up your podcast, such as book talk, math facts, interviews, and so forth.
- Give students choices of music and sound effects used for production.
- Let them be creative!
- Set up a quiet area, if possible, for recording. It does not have to be soundproof; some background noise will give the podcast the feel of school.
- Tape live to disk (my personal choice). This requires less time editing and gives the show a certain sense of authenticity.
- Have fun!

Your students will love this activity, and if you are not careful they may even learn something! The podcasting project will be one of those memories of school that will last them a lifetime. Who knows? Maybe one of them will become the next podcast guru.



Reactions to Podcasting from 12th-Grade Students

I enjoyed doing the podcasting and thought it was a fun activity. It's cool to hear my own voice and mix in sound effects to make a show. I liked having guests on to talk about school and sports and stuff, and sounding like a radio show host. The only problem I had with the podcasting was that I saved a couple of shows and couldn't go back and find where they had been put. But that is my fault so it wasn't really a big deal. I think that it's an overall interesting and fun thing.

Cody

Podcasting was a fun and interesting experience.

It was neat to figure out what sound effects and music would be cool to tie the whole show in together.

Matt

Podcasting, wow, where do I start?. Podcasting was a great introduction to the world of broadcasting.

Podcasting introduced us to so many different things like writing XML files and also teaching us how to use all of our radio equipment. Podcasting was a great introduction to many things and also a fun thing to do.

Josh

I thought that podcasting would just be something boring that we had to do in class, but it was really fun, and a good way to really listen to what other people had to say. I really enjoyed it!

Georgette

I really enjoyed the podcasting experience. It taught me a lot of new things and was fun to work with others organizing it, even through the difficulties. You should definitely keep on going with podcasting with future classes of yours.

Billy

Podcasting was a fun and creative project. It was really cool to be in the studio and operate everything like an actual radio/podcasting show. This project allowed us to be as creative as we wanted and it allowed us to open up on a different social level. I would definitely do this again!

Katelyn

I liked doing podcast. I think it's a new thing that everyone should try at least once. I think its going to catch on to a lot of people in the world. Other than our group screwing up it was really a good program. One day I bet everyone will use it in schools and at work

Jimmy

Michael Dionne is District Technology Coordinator at the Sydney School District, Sidney, New York. His podcasts about education can be found at www.techpodzone.com www.psucast.com and Hall Pass at www.podcasternews.com

Podcast Paul in Swaziland



The infamous mud hut temporary home to me and many bugs...

Swaziland

Paul Nicholls

www.podcastpaul.com

In November 2005, I was privileged to go to an AIDS orphanage in Swaziland, a beautiful and mysterious kingdom nestled in the bottom south-west corner of South Africa.

I was in Swaziland on a fact finding and gathering mission for my church; I'm on the leadership team of a 600-odd-strong Christian congregation. We support the mission over there and wanted to help build another home to house eight to ten children.

A small team went across to look at the needs of the mission and see if we could raise funds. We had paid our own fares and set out to see things for themselves. This really was not a trip to be missed, and I knew instinctively that I needed to record as much of the event as possible.

I won't bore you with duplication – the podcasts are there to be heard. I cannot in any way put into words the smell, textures, sounds and sheer awe-inspiring people I met. Pictures are all very well, but they are so one-dimensional. The best journal can convey only so much in textual format, but audio could add more, and I was determined to do much more justice to such serious subject matter.

Looking back, I can see that pictures and text are second-hand hearsay from one's own perspective. It's impossible to convey the passion that the workers felt, and to repeat, second-hand, my own perspective seemed cheap, distilled and weak.

The hairs on my arms and back of my neck still stand on end when I listen back to the audio of the phenomenal rainstorm, the Swazi native tour guide and Kevin Peat, the director of Teen Challenge, as he talks with so much ingrained passion at the plight and relief of the kids in his care.

It still brings tears to my eyes to listen to the nurse from Weston Super-Mare in England who gave a year of her life to care for children whom she realised may fall terminally ill.



The sheer depth of emotion wells up in me to hear the rescue of the Swazi children and the beautiful Siswati singers, many of them stricken with AIDS.

I've always loved podcasting, but it struck me as I sat recording that this wasn't just an opportunity to get some great audio, this was highly emotive, and if I didn't do this justice, I was cheapening something incredibly serious. The rate of AIDS in Swaziland was either approaching or over 50%. The kids I'd met desperately required love, attention and medicine; they had nothing and no-one else. The place the children were housed was their only hope. I had never encountered anything like this before.

I suddenly felt burdened to deliver a message, and podcasting seemed to be a wonderful medium for it. I learned almost immediately that the content spoke for itself; incredibly, the audio stood on its own legs. The real knack seemed to be to stay as quiet as possible but understand the direction the audio took both me and everyone listening.

Podcasting can be about off-the-wall entertainment, shock jocks, music, the whole panoply of subject matter, but the most compelling for me seems to be real people with a real subject for which the audio tells its own story.

The other wonderful thing about podcasting is the nexus of the listener; folks really got behind the subject matter and voted with their feet, well, actually their hands -- they put them in their pockets. A special and warm thanks to Kenny Little of the amazing Hollow Horse who also really got behind the project in donating "Love is all you need".

If you've never made a journalcast, try it. Your listeners will be interested in things that matter happening on your doorstep, you simply need a good portable recording device and to remember to let the audio stand on its two feet. It's incredibly simple: you'll find the hardest thing is to (a) remember when to stay quiet and (b) know how to steer the subject matter.

I have fond memories of sitting in a mud hut with my laptop, mixing the audio down. The experience was wonderful, and, I'm absolutely delighted to say, I'm back there in November. Listen out...

How Podcasts and Podcasting

Can Leverage Your Career

Warren Allan Johnson explains that getting ahead can be easier than you think

Regardless of your profession, the podcast revolution can help advance your career.

Surprisingly, just being an active podcast listener can leverage your career - you don't necessarily have to be creator to benefit from podcasting. Here are four ways you can begin to use podcasting to advance your career.

Learn job skills

Since there are podcasts available on every imaginable subject, you should be able to find one in your area of specialty without too much trouble. Listen to one or two episodes and subscribe to the best. An FM transmitter can be a great way to then apply underutilised time such as your morning shower or commute to catch up on these professional casts. Searching Podcast Alley's business genre (<http://www.podcastalley.com/>) is one place to start, or browse the iTunes business section, which includes careers, finance, investing, management and marketing sections.

Expanding your horizons from your area of specialty to related areas can also be beneficial. Supervisors in any field will find Mark Horstman and Mike Auzenne's Manager Tools (<http://www.manager-tools.com>) full of useful tips to become a better manager. Those only punching the clock until they can start their own enterprise will want to consider the Cubicle Escape Pod (<http://www.cubicleescape.com>), and those already running their own professional

business will want to consider any one of the many good public relations or marketing podcasts available such as the Private Practice Marketing Podcast (<http://privatepracticemarketing.blogspot.com>) or Heidi Miller's Diary of a Shameless Self-Promoter (<http://heidimiller.libsyn.com/>).

Technology fluency

Most podcast listeners are already ahead of the technology curve compared with their peers, but just being a regular listener to almost any program can improve your technical fluency. The reason is that in addition to topical discussions, many podcasts and blogs discuss 'new media' news and developments. There is frequent cross-fertilisation among computer, web, blog and podcast content referring to recent advances and useful tools in each's medium. Of course, should you actually become a podcast creator, you will force yourself into yet more learning curves – with technology, with marketing and with relationship skills.

Improve your technical fluency

Make contacts

Participating in the feedback or comment features of your favorite professional podcasts can be a great way to make business contacts. Like the bulletin boards that preceded them, blogs and podcasts attract some of the most talented professionals in the field.



In a recent interview with Lee Hopkins, (<http://www.leehopkins.net/podcasts/>) public relations podcasters Shel Hotlz and Neville Hobson (www.forimmediaterelease.biz) explained that they first met on Compuserve's PRSIG section. Not surprisingly, both podcasters and regular podcast listeners tend to be more fully engaged with their careers than the run-of-the-mill employee. They have made a commitment to life-long learning and frequently enjoy helping others by answering questions or providing advice. Becoming part of this crowd is excellent positioning for your career. It can also help you address challenging projects, as you ask questions of seasoned professionals or meet vendors through online venues. New friendships and new clients can develop whether you're listening or 'casting yourself.

Inspiration for the whole self

Finally, life is more than work. In the same way a liberal arts education makes a well-rounded individual, developing your hobby or extracurricular interests can give balance to your life and provide something to talk about at the next office cocktail party. Podcasts can be an avenue for developing your skills or interests in non-career areas. And sometimes it is surprising how hobbies and outside interests begin to cross over to your professional life as well.

Using podcasts and podcasting to advance your career makes sense. First, it allows you to get ahead by time-shifting professional development that might not otherwise even happen. In addition, podcasting engages you more deeply with your chosen career, sharpening your focus. Finally, it's easy. If you're not a regular listener, a podcatcher and MP3 player is all you need to start. If you're already a listener, the sweet spot for your career is through submitting feedback and audio comments to your favorite podcasts. For those running their own businesses, connecting up with an existing podcast or starting your own podcast can be a great way to narrow-cast to your target audience. Any way you go, podcasting can help you and your career.

Warren Allan Johnson is editor of the Unsolicited Marketing Advice blog, which is also available as an artificial speech pocast. <http://unsolicitedmarketingadvice.blogspot.com>

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 at now at:

submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

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Free software for audio recording and editing.



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



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

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

Portable Playlist

by Paul Parkinson

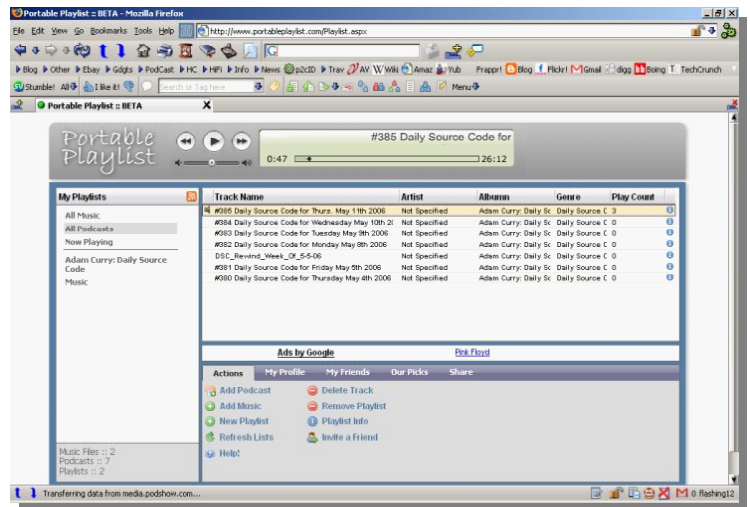
A flash new way to get your favourite podcasts

I used to travel a bit for work and was away about a week to ten days each month. Fortunately for me, this was BP (Before Podcasting), so I wasn't going to run out of good content to listen to, because there wasn't any! However, if you travel a lot and are an avid podlistener, you might need to get your fix of your favourite shows.

A serious problem can arise, though, because many corporate IT bunnies have nasty, sharp, pointy teeth and won't allow iTunes or Juice onto corporate PCs. This means that after a while, you will run out of podcasts to listen to if you are away for any length of time. What can you do about it? Use portableplaylist to get your fix over the interworldwidewebnet, that's what!

I first heard about www.portableplaylist.com through www.Britcaster.com. To be honest, I didn't do too much about it until I also saw it on the front page of Digg (1113 Diggs) and thought "yeah I know about that". (It's a nice moment when you know about something before Digg!)

Anyway, I visited the site and started talking to the creator of it, Floyd Price. Floyd owns and runs 'Component Workshop', a small software company based in Solihull, UK.



The idea for portableplaylist came to him in January this year, when he was working on a client's site doing some custom software development and realised that he had not updated his iPod with the latest Ricky Gervais podcast. Try as he might (and seven years of IT consultancy gives you skills), he could not get iTunes or Windows Media Player to work or install. The systems were all locked down tight as could be.

Out of despair comes triumph, though! He realised that a Flash-based online audio player that worked like iTunes, but required no client side installation apart from a web browser and Flash, would solve this problem for him and for many others out there. Six weeks later, the portableplaylist beta was available.

Portableplaylist is an online podcatching site. It's really intuitive: you click 'Add Podcast', and either search the provided directory or paste in the RSS feed and then click 'OK.' Job done. It really is that easy.

Having been playing with it for a while, I can see it is a valuable tool for podlisteners who want to listen to a podcast at work and have forgotten their iPods or have bosses who don't allow non-standard applications on the office PCs.

Another convenient thing Floyd has incorporated is the ability to import OPML files into portableplaylist. This will allow you to export an OPML file from Juice with ALL your podcasts in it and bring them into portableplaylist 'automagically'; just the job for people with a long list of podcasts they want to keep up to date with.

portableplaylist is still in Beta so you can expect a few wrinkles, but give it a chance. It might just save your sanity one day!

www.portableplaylist.com



Being Played On Podcasts – Can It Win You Friends and Influence People ?

By Grant Mason

Podcasting - it's still in the nascent stage, yet as a means for bands to reach new audiences with minimal effort and no promotional costs, it's being widely touted and praised. Simply email a track or two to a podcaster (the zero-cost option) and ask if they'd consider playing you, or if they've said they like the music, you can send them a CD (the minimal cost option) and a brief biography. (Remember though – if a podcaster has been given a CD and your permission to play any of the tracks, they'll more than likely play you more often over a period of time!)

So, you've sent the music off and now you're just sitting back awaiting worldwide fame and fortune; but does it really work? Does podcasting offer you any advantage over sending your tracks off to the local and national radio stations and crossing your fingers? What exactly can you expect if you become a band or artist featured on a podcast? In order to find out, I spoke to three bands who have been featured on my own show, Three From Leith, as well as many other podcasts.

"We were fairly quick at jumping onto the podcasting bandwagon. I think it was almost a year ago when we got our first play on the early tartanpodcast shows", explains Alastair Taylor of Edinburgh's finest alt-country-power-popsters, Dropkick. "We were just delighted that there was someone out there actually willing to play our songs as we'd been having no luck at all getting exposure via the radio."

This experience in the podcasting arena has not yet been gained by highly-regarded Edinburgh band Opal Sky. "We're relatively new to the podcasting scene but believe it has great potential to widen a band's fan base. We're definitely all for it!", explains Karina Hay. She and the band are excited by the potential reach that a podcast can give an artist. "Podcasting is a valuable tool for new (and more established) unsigned bands", she continues. "It's such a great feeling to know that someone on the other side of the globe could be commuting to work, listening to one of your songs and enjoying it; becoming a fan thanks to the hard work of the people who are willing to get your music out there."

Santa Dog from Bristol are equally enthusiastic about the growing popularity of podcasting as an addition to the promotional arsenal available to bands. "Podcasting is a burgeoning scene that we've been happy to tap into. As far as the band goes, it's a wonderful way of reaching new audiences via the internet", says singer and guitarist Rowena Dugdale. And Santa Dog have the evidence to prove that podplay from enthusiastic podcasters is getting them recognition across the globe: "I know for a fact that when we released our new EP we wouldn't have sold out of our first limited edition run without their support. Our EP has sold to the USA, Canada, Japan, Germany, Austria, Australia, and Indonesia, and we couldn't have done that without podcasts."



I know it's true, as the delighted owner of number 001 of 100 of their limited edition 'Belle De Jour' EP - the evidence is staring me in the face (courtesy of the fact that the band printed the names of the first 100 people to pay for the EP in advance on the gatefold sleeve). The roll of honour is a regular United Nations of Santa Dog fans. The ordinary EPs sold thereafter continue to wing their way to their destinations courtesy of the world's many postal services.

Dropkick's podcast exposure has led to a similar growth in worldwide play and subsequent sales of their merchandise. "Since we got our first podplay the band's profile has risen dramatically and our music is being played almost every week on podcast shows all around the world, including Germany, Holland, Australia, UK and in particular the USA, where our style of music appears to be very popular. This has directly led to many album and T-shirt sales throughout the world (we've even sold stuff to Singapore!) and our website hits have doubled since this time last year, which is definitely in no small part down to podcasting", enthuses Alastair.

it's a wonderful way of reaching new audiences

But there's an additional reason why bands are keen on receiving podcast playlisting: podcasters themselves are genuine fans of the music and use their shows to share that love and spread the gospel of their favourite artists, free from financial incentives or corporate influence. This fact has not been lost on Rowena: "As an unsigned band, we are limited in the amount of mainstream radio play we can access as we don't have the budget for radio pluggers and the like, but podcasting bypasses all that and is one way of building a grassroots following directly. The great thing about podcasting as it stands at the moment is that we know all the shows that have played us have done so for the pure reason that they like the music we do.... there is no record company twisting of hands or any murky stuff. It feels quite honest." However, she is prescient enough to see that this honesty may not last forever. "This may change soon - record companies are starting to sniff around.



The NYUB podcast commented on this recently: <http://notyourusualbollocks.squarespace.com/journal/2006/3/13/1-minute-song-competition-aka-some-labels-just-dont-get-it.html>"

In addition to being played on podcasts, bands have been starting up their own or have guest-hosted shows for established podcasters. This is providing them with additional exposure as well as being an excellent PR tool. "It's a window into a certain musical community and allows the listener to experience not just the music but also a more involved and in-depth look at the people involved in making this music", says Karina from Opal Sky. "Friends of ours, Santa Dog and Amplifico, broadcast their own (very popular) podcasts, and these seem to be a really big hit with music fans all over the globe". Fans love to hear the stories behind the songs and to get the opportunity to interact with bands through the show comments and emails. Additionally, bands get to play other unsigned bands that they like or have gigged with. From Santa Dog's perspective, it seemed a good idea to have their own show so that they could record when they wanted and play what they liked. "There are so many fantastic unsigned acts around that need more exposure, so that was part of the reasoning, too."

It leads to an almost exponential explosion of shows playing bands who do shows playing bands, and it begins to boggle the mind if you think about it for too long.



So, can any band manage to record their own podcast? As podcasters know, putting a weekly 20- to 30-minute show together sounds like a quick and easy thing to do, but in fact it can take many hours to plan, record, edit, post and publicise each week. Alastair from Dropkick found this out the hard way, as he explains: "I was lucky enough to be asked to 'guest' present the Tripcast Radio podcast, which was an experience I enjoyed but found to be much harder to do than I'd anticipated. I'd thought I would be able to record the show 'live' - like a radio show - but soon discovered that I had neither the flair nor fluency in my speech to carry it off without it sounding completely amateurish. I ended up writing what was essentially a "speech" and recorded each spoken part of the show separately and edited it all together on the PC later". (In emails I exchanged with him at the time in December 2005, he described his vocal style as sounding "like a BBC newsreader with constipation"). "I kind of felt like I was cheating... but that's just one advantage that podcasting has over live radio I suppose!" Would he consider doing it again? He was quick to respond positively. "Yes, though at the moment I don't have time. It took most of a day to do one half-hour show!"

Santa Dog know that things can go further yet and the boundaries can extend even more. "The effects of podcasting aren't just confined to the digital domain, though. The first date of our recent Scottish tour would have been just another gig with a couple of other unknown bands if we hadn't hooked up the Three From Leith podcast and created a showcase night with hand-selected bands that fitted under the TFL style. The night was a huge success."



As I covered in my article in PUM Issue 4, this is the relatively new phenomenon of podcasters running a live gig event to showcase bands, giving them exposure with a 'real life' element to it. Opal Sky were one of the bands to take part in my own event, and they are enthusiasts for the new possibilities that this offered them. "The TFL showcase gig was a rare opportunity for people to meet the voices on 'the radio'. It was great; people got to approach the bands and Grant himself and chat about their views and opinions. Audience feedback is so valuable and can really help you determine what your fans want, so it was a really successful night for everyone involved." Not only that, but there were sales opportunities. "It also gave us a chance to get CDs to the Three From Leith podcast fans; our merchandise sales were great on the night!"

All in all, the bands here are pretty much in agreement that podcasting and its spin-offs are an excellent way to get out there and be heard by as many people as possible. Yes, you might not get the same listenership you'd get in the UK if you were playlisted by Radio 1, but when you start adding up the number of people across the world who will hear you, you'll see that the possibilities and opportunities are out there and they're there for the taking.

What are you waiting for? The podcasters of the world are waiting for your email!

My grateful thanks to Alastair Taylor, Karina Hay and Rowena Dugdale for their time and willingness to answer my questions with refreshing honesty and thoughtfulness.

Dropkick - <http://www.dropkickmusic.co.uk>

Opal Sky - <http://www.opal-sky.com>

Santa Dog - <http://www.santa-dog.co.uk>

Winpodder, the multimedia subscription tool, rated 10/10 in issue 2, and it's free.





image by Sean McIntyre

by Harry Lafnear

Being a podcaster is great. I get to say things that really matter to an audience that really cares. But podcasting isn't all private jets and dating super-models.

All week, between taking care of family and a day job, I'm consumed with my next show: hammering out a script, recording the session, editing and adding music. And then I have to build and distribute sound files, RSS feed and web files. All told, it can take eight to 12 hours to make one episode.

Don't get me wrong--I've already admitted how great it is to be a podcaster. It's just that after all that work, plus the expense of audio gadgets and web-hosting, I often get something from the audience that is not much fun at all: Nothing. Silence. The chirping of crickets!

A caring audience is what makes podcasting worthwhile. But unless you, the listener, show that you care, I have no idea if my show matters. What can you do to lift the spirits of your hard-working podcasters? Here are 16 quick and easy suggestions.

Provide Positive Feedback

1. Most podcasters mention their email address or other contact information in their show. That's a huge hint that they'd like you to send them a note about why you listen, what you like, what you didn't and how you discovered the show. Many podcasters like to include listener comments in their show. Let them know if it's okay to use your name or if you'd rather be anonymous.

2. Some podcast web sites include blogs or user forums that let you add comments. Get involved. Not only will the podcaster notice, but you may spark a conversation with other listeners. too. >>

3. If you use iTunes or a web-based podcast listing service such as Odeo, Podfeed.net, or PodcastPickle.com (among others) you will often find that there is a form where you can leave comments. Use it. Leave a brief, positive comment to help others appreciate the show. Once made, such comments are very difficult to retract, so be generous. If you have a criticism, use private email instead so that the poor podcaster has a chance to improve their show behind the scenes.

4. Many other web-based podcast listing services, like PodcastAlley, Podfeed.net, DigitalPodcast.net and many more, use a voting or rating system to rank shows. If you use any such service, rate your favorites and help them climb to the top.

5. To find the lists where a show is registered, just do a Google search (or whichever engine you prefer) of the podcast name. Go subscribe, comment and rate the show at a few different sites. Spread the love.

Help Them Grow Their Audience

6. Tell your like-minded family, friends, co-workers, club members, and so forth about your favorite podcasts.

7. If you have a personal website, add links to the shows you like. Not only will you refer traffic, you'll boost the show's rating with various search engines.

8. If you take it another step and run your own blog, do a little review of your favorite shows. That's what Cheryl Haimann of Piker Press did, thoughtfully mentioning my show. I was so touched that I dedicated part of a show to her. I also linked to her article, sending a little of my own traffic in her direction.

9. If you visit any web forums or chat rooms relevant to the topic of the show, post a small notice with a link to the podcast site.

10. If you listen to shows on a live-streaming Internet radio service (such as BZoO HomeGrown Radio www.bzoo.org or Vocalized Ink www.vocalizedink.org), send e-mail to the site's manager listing the shows you like. This helps keep the shows on the air and may even count toward getting them a good timeslot. Bonus points if you forward a copy of the email to the podcaster.

11. If you are in a position to contribute to a group event, consider inviting your podcaster to give a talk or performance, especially if they happen to be local.

Make Creative Contributions

12. If you're a podcaster yourself, send comments to your fellow podcasters in audio form. Chances are fair they'll play it on their shows. And don't forget to include a brief, tasteful plug for your own show.

13. If you're not a podcaster, you can still leave audio comments. Many podcasters even have phone numbers where you can leave voice-mail comments. Some of them are even toll-free, depending on where you're calling from.

14. Write your own article and send it to your podcaster, as long as it's generally in line with their show. If it gets used in the show, you'll get a thrill hearing your work go out to the same audience of which you've enjoyed being a part. Now you're not just a passive observer, you're a social contributor!

Money = Lovey

Although there are high-end professional podcasters, the vast majority of podcasters are not paid. Most pay for their own web-hosting and equipment without any sponsor, benefactor, advertisers or subscription fees. And although they provide their shows out of generosity, if it moves you, there are ways you can help defray their costs.

15. Give a tip or donation. Some podcasters have taken a trick from various internet cartoonists and columnists and include a button on their web site that lets you to transfer money to their PayPal account. Often, a small donation gets you special privileges or merchandise discounts, but more often it just gets you a heap of thanks. Think of it as treating a podcaster to lunch every once in a while. Whether that lunch is McDonalds or Bistro d'Fleur is up to you.

16. Many podcasters sell merchandise. You'll sometimes find books, CDs, T-shirts or other products associated with their show. Most of the purchase price goes to the company making the items, but a decent portion supports the show and gives the podcaster a nice warm feeling. Often you'll even find more mainstream products listed straight out of Amazon.com. Items referred in this way are the same price as if you've gone directly to Amazon.com, but now a small percentage goes to the podcaster.

Click to It, Already

In the time it took to read this article, you could have made 10 podcasters squeal with joy, and all without doing anything seedy... unless you're a supermodel, in which case my private jet is in the shop, but we can go for a ride in my Civic.

Harry Lafnear explores the creative process, writing one poem every day for his podcast, *The Everyday Muse*.

**www.prosodyetc.com or
www.everydaymuse.com
graloo@hotmail.com**





GLOBAL VOICES - Germany

by Janet Parkinson

'Impressive' has to be the word to describe the German podcasting scene. Well organised and fully in control of the potential of podcasting, Germany has truly grasped the concept and is getting it to work across the board making what can happen, happen - in all areas of life, both in business and leisure.

The first German Podcast Congress took place on 7th April 2006 in Munich and was organised and run by the 'ECO-VERBAND DER DEUTSCHEN INTERNETWIRTSCHAFT EV'. Lectures were given on various aspects, including podcast production, podcasting from a company's perspective and legal 'positioning'.

Awards were also given to the 'best' German podcasts available, with categories that included content, action, music and entertainment.

Interestingly, two of the winners were:

Chillerstadt.com www.chillerstadt.com

A music-cast by singer-songwriter Markus Kaes. His songs are melodic, soulful - and pod-safe. A great easy listen and obviously a hit with the Germans, but frankly, 'not my cup of tea' (if I'm going to be completely English about it!). Clearly a winner, though. Well done and best of luck to him!

RARE
☆☆☆

Das Literatur-Cafe: www.literaturcafe.de

A 'cast for book lovers and writers. Wolfgang Tischer started 'Das Literatur-Cafe' originally as a virtual meeting place on the web. However, from July 2005 the podcast took this to a new dimension. Inspiring content and always brimming with new ideas, Wolfgang deserves the award!

WELL DONE
☆☆☆☆





I guess in theory I should really be reviewing the rest of the winners; however, being my usual inquisitive and easily distracted self, I just couldn't resist the urge to go off and search a little further afield....

kidspods.de

This is a great podcast for kiddies, with stories, songs and information aimed a young listeners. A really fun, bright and inspiring site, this is a great one for parents who have young children, but watch out - the kids will be downloading their own bedtime stories in no time!



Schlaflos in Munchen (Sleepless in Munich) www.schlaflosinmuenchen.net

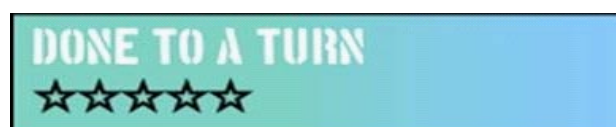
This has got to be the highlight of German language podcasting. A real gem...



Together with Tiger, her cat, Annik and her 3- to 5-minute daily chat have really hit a nerve with German speakers around the world. Her lively, engaging and totally unassuming stance has captivated a very large audience for around a year (she's now done over 340 shows) as she chats about nearly anything and everything. I noticed she is constantly hovering around the top of the Libsyn 'What's Hott Today?' listings, which definitely says something for her style!



I think this is clear evidence that regular, yet short and snappy, personality-driven shows really do work. Annik's cat deserves an award - Tiger's top of the tree for me!



Next month we're heading down to
South Africa...
so hold your breath for a bit of fresh air....!



**Don't miss the July issue and its free-entry competition
with a prize worth more than \$350 / £200**

**Issue 6 will be
available on the
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