

PodcastUser Magazine

Issue 7
August
2006

Get your voice heard!

- setting up your podcast studio part 2
- podcasting: the Australian way
- Garageband 3

Be a discerning listener..

and a productive podcaster



www.podcastusermagazine.com

ABOUT PODCAST USER MAGAZINE

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

Advice and help

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

help@podcastusermagazine.com



SUBMISSIONS

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

We would be glad to hear from you.

submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

COMMENTS

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

general.comments@podcastusermagazine.com

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to this month's Podcast User Magazine!

We're at Issue 7 now, and I'm really proud of all the contributors this month - every month actually - but this month raises the bar a long way! The range and depth of the articles is amazing.

We cover hardware, from the esoteric (a \$1300 microphone anyone?) to the budget yet barnstorming Studio Projects B1. Mark Hunter has a terrific article on Garageband; Paul Nicholls carries on his love affair with Castblaster and Dean Whitbread from the UK Podcasters Association has a great article on the challenges of regulation in the podcast landscape.

Looking a little further forward, we are aiming to meet up with many of you at the Podcast and Portable Media Expo in Ontario, California, in late September. We're going to have a booth and people in the halls - come by and say hello, won't you? Look for more details next month.

I know it's getting a little lame to keep saying this, but if you have a passion for podcasting or a love for listening, please do get in touch. It's been said that we're a little UK/US-centric and we try hard not to be. Podcasting is an international affair, so we'd love to hear from many more international writers. Don't worry if you think your English isn't great; it's your opinion and your expertise we're after. We can "finesse" the English - after all we do it for the UK writers all the time! (ducks and runs as he hears the howls of the writers baying at his door!)

If there are any advertisers reading this with a little budget left over before the year end, please do get in touch with me (paul.parkinson@podcastusermagazine.com) to discuss how we can help each other! We'd like to raise some cash ahead of the Podcast Expo (we're in it for the love of it, not the money in it!), so if you can help we'd love to hear from you.

Finally, don't forget we have the competition to win an SE Electronics Reflexions filter. There is still time for you to enter, and you can't win it if you're not in it!

Thanks to you, our readers all over the world, for your continued support. Good podcasting!

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Flash little mic.

How's this sound to you? - A new cable-free microphone, records to its own 1 GB memory card and can transfer to a Windows or Mac PC, all in one unit? No more, no less. But of course this piece of heaven must have a price, and in this case it's around \$1300 (£700). Available in the USA, Canada and the UK from <http://www.hhb.co.uk>



PODFEST!

On Tuesday, August 15, Phil Coyne, of bitjobs for the masses! and Insomnia Radio UK is hosting Podfest, a night of music and podcasting from the Purple Turtle, Camden, London. The lineup of bands will be The Foxes, Goodbye Sergeants, Paisley Riot and Light Brigade, all of whom you have heard on discerning independent music podcasts. Join in the fun and become part of podcasting history! Doors open at 7:30 pm; gig starts at 8 pm. £6 on the door, £5 with a flyer printed from a link at <http://bitjobs.net>



Are they or aren't they?

Word on the street has it that Microsoft is going to make a rival to Apple's iPod. Microsoft has replied that this is pure speculation, and they have no plans to make any announcements at this time. *Hmmm... a simple 'no' would have sufficed, so they probably will, then.*

Update : The device they are NOT developing will be branded as 'zune' and may be available by the end of 2006

Are they or aren't they? Part 2.

Word on the street has it that the next generation of the Apple iPod will talk to you. Recognising that it's not a good idea to take your eyes away from where you're going, the new iPod will now tell you what track is next and announce the artist, virtually eliminating the need to actually look at the thing. *I wonder if it will come with the instructions breathe in breathe out breathe in*

I'm a Mac user apparently.

According to media research group Nielsen/NetRatings, the most popular place for people to go for podcasts is Macworld, and apparently podcasters are 3 times more likely to use Safari as their browser. It must be true, it's written in black and white. (*Hmmm, it would appear that the stats for PUM tell a different story*)

	Browsers	Percent
1.	Firefox	50.46%
2.	Internet Explorer	33.72%
3.	Safari	12.61%
4.	Opera	2.06%
5.	Mozilla	0.92%
6.	Camino	0.23%
		100%

http://news.com.com/2100-1025_3-6093494.html?tag=nefd.top

http://barnako.typepad.com/barnakocom/2006/07/nielsen_podcast.html (reviewed item)



One skin, two skin, three skin

iPod® bling takes yet another step forward (?) <http://www.skinpod> is a web site where for the small sum of FREE you can download a design for a new stick-on skin for your iPod. It covers (pun intended) the nano, mini, shuffle, G4 and G5. Full instructions are on the site. *Now, I just need an iPod. Offers?*

Size isn't everything.

What has to be the world's smallest MP3 player has been around for a while but you've probably never seen it (it is tiny). The DHA 1500i is a 24mm cube, weighs 18 grams, maximum memory option of 1 Gig, 8 to 10 hour battery life, FM radio and voice recorder.

www.mobiblu.com *Now, where did I put it?*



Keep your eye on...

InnerTOOB, an innovative way to organize shownotes and encourage audience comments. It was used on the July 18 Top of the Pods show featuring a list from Roger Smalls. Check it out here.

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

<http://www.innertoob.com/j.ump?id=in2-t5dcdd062c22490c7d838bd701b635be2>



The Podcast Peer Awards, a community of podcasters organized to recognize quality podcasts, is looking for podcasters to take part in its nomination and voting process. "There are over 50,000 audio and video podcasts available. Most of them are lousy". Peer Awards plans to draw on podcaster's knowledge to guide listeners to quality podcasts. <http://podcastpeers.org/index.html> *Get over there and kick some bottom.*

The Expo That's All About Having Your Media When and Where You Want It!



Podcast to Promote Your Business
Your Passion • Yourself



PODCAST AND PORTABLE MEDIA | EXPO

podcasting • audio & video content

The **2nd Annual** Podcast & Portable Media Expo is the only industry event that brings together influential podcasters, media, corporate executives and device makers to cover the complete range of business, marketing and legal issues for podcasting and portable media.

**Conference and Expo
SEPTEMBER 29-30, 2006**

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
ONTARIO CONVENTION CENTER**

Event Focus: The ability to take media with you and listen or watch when you want - on whatever device you want. Place and time-shifting technology is changing the business landscape of media in today's world.

The Expo is also about the new trend of individuals participating as media companies and producing content at broadcast quality.



ONTARIO CONVENTION CENTER

The Ontario Convention Center is accessible from Ontario International Airport and is in the heart of Southern California. The Ontario Airport Marriott, the headquarter hotel, is located directly across from the Ontario Convention Center. Be sure to reserve today for only \$92 per night single/double.

Visit us online for more information or to register

www.PortableMediaExpo.com

WIN an sE Electronics Reflexion Filter



Are your podcasts marred by the hum of your computer fan? Do you have to stop in mid sentence because the neighbours can be heard through the walls? Would you like to filter out the sounds of those annoying birds outside your window? Would you like to be able to record your guitar solos in the convenience of your busy house?

PUM and Sonic-Distribution (<http://sonic-distribution.com>) are giving you a chance to be able to filter out those problems with the first competition at Podcast User Magazine!

This is a \$425 (£229) piece of kit, that will provide you with acoustic insulation for the microphone in your podcasting or recording studio.

So, what on earth IS a Reflexion Filter?

The Reflexion Filter is a portable device that reduces ambient sound in a room when you record live sound sources. It is a wall, made from an

advanced composite material, that can be positioned behind any microphone by means of an adjustable and included clamp. The main function of the filter is to help obtain a 'dry' vocal or instrument recording. The Reflexion Filter can be especially useful in studios that do not have proper acoustic treatment, but it can also be used for recording within the control room, to muffle the sounds of the switches and buttons on various devices, and in a rehearsal studio, to reduce ambient noise.

The Technical Bit, from Sonic-Distribution:

The Reflexion Filter has six main layers. The first is a strong layer of punched aluminium, which allows sound waves to pass through it, diffused, to a layer of absorptive wool. The sound waves then hit a layer of aluminium foil, which helps dissipate energy and break up the lower-frequency wave-forms, and from here the waves hit an air space kept open by rods passing through the various layers. The air gap acts as an acoustic barrier. The sound waves then pass to a further layer of wool and then through an outer, punched, aluminium wall, both of which further serve to absorb and then diffuse the remaining acoustic energy.

The main absorber has four formed pieces of state-of-the-art specialist acoustic absorptive material attached to it's face via the extended separation rods. These further serve to absorb and then diffuse the sound waves as they pass to the main filter.

The stand assembly comprises a mic stand clamp fitting, which attaches by means of a vertical joint to the horizontal bar assembly, onto which both the Reflexion Filter and any standard-fitting shock mount can be fixed. The microphone (in its shock mount) can then be moved both vertically and horizontally along the bar, and the Reflexion Filter itself can be moved vertically to obtain the optimal working position.

How does it work?

The various layers both absorb and diffuse the sound waves hitting them, so progressively less of the original source's acoustic energy passes through each layer. This reduces the amount of energy hitting untreated walls and other surfaces, so there is less of the original source reflected back to the mic as unwanted room ambience. The Reflexion Filter also helps prevent any reflected sound reaching the back and sides of the mic. The filter's shape and size have been carefully tested to maximize absorption while keeping 'coloration' down to only around 1 dB and leaving the microphone's polar pattern unaffected.

In Summary:

All in all, the Reflexion Filter a very clever and desirable piece of kit. It allows you to record vocals and acoustic instruments with a 'drier' sound, without having to do so in an acoustically treated room. The filter is portable. It uses state-of-the-art materials. It works... and it's a fraction of the price of acoustically treating your studio environment!

SO HOW DO I WIN IT?

It's really easy. Take a look at the text above, answer the questions below, and then complete a tie-breaker topic in 20 words or less. One bit of advice, though: One of the questions is NOT answered above, so you might want to do a bit more research. [Hint: Use. The. Internet.]

Email your entry to contest@podcastusermagazine.com and keep your fingers crossed. This is the final month for this competition so there's no excuse not to enter. Good luck!

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Who distributes the Reflexion Filter?
2. How many main layers does the Filter have?
3. Which microphone is featured in the pictures above?
4. Which sE Electronics microphones do Steve Levine and Courtney Pine use?

Tie Breaker: EITHER: I want to win an sE Electronics Reflexion filter because:

OR:

An sE Electronics Reflexion filter will help my recordings because:

OR:

sE Electronics Rock! Discuss.



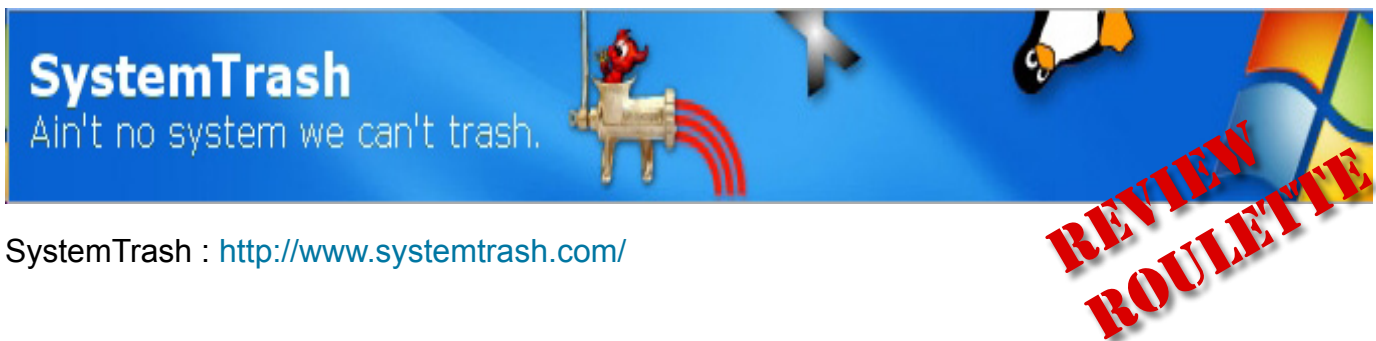
IMPORTANT SMALL PRINT: In the event you enter the competition, you expressly agree to the following terms:

1. You are aged 18 years or over
2. There will be only one winning entrant
3. You accept that the decision and discretion of PUM is final.
4. The winning prize will be one sE Electronics Reflexion Filter; there will be no cash or equivalent component
5. Members of the current Podcast User Magazine co-founder group are ineligible for this prize.

Review Roulette

Here at Podcast User Magazine we often write reviews for podcasts we listen to regularly, and if we listen to them regularly then we probably like them, so this means we end up giving them fairly high marks.

For a change of pace, we decided to mix it up a bit and review some podcasts chosen totally at random. Hence our new monthly feature, "Review Roulette" was born. We used a random-number generator to select three podcasts from the www.podcastalley.com directory, then we listened to them, reviewed and rated them... and this is what we thought.



SystemTrash : <http://www.systemtrash.com/>

"Systemtrash is a podcast in which some exotic computer system gets set up by our fine host Dimitri, who then turns it over to his co-host Frank who tries to trash it (figuratively speaking of course)".

In other words, "WWF 'Smackdown' for Ubergeeks". The content for Systemtrash was definitely not everyone's cup of tea. One called it "a real test of my sanity"; another confessed to "really, really hate techy casts".

All that being said, every reviewer recognized the enthusiasm in the hosts and their passion for their subject: "I liked the rapport between the two and found the production pleasing to the ear"... "the hosts are chirpy, natural and very, very knowledgeable in their field"... "give them their due, Frank and Dimitri very obviously like talking about these things and do so with fervour". Another reviewer also found them easier to watch (yes, there's an accompanying vidcast) than to listen to.

"Great production" and "solid content" but "this is for tech geeks only, especially those willing to sit through podcasts which are over an hour long". Likewise, though, the shownotes are "massively extensive". Subscription information is clearly marked for both the podcast and the vidcast.

Since starting the podcast in January 2006, Dimitri and Frank have trashed a system monthly. They have also added an interview feature and have managed to talk with some seriously well-known members of the IT community, such as Leo Laporte. If there's someone you'd like to hear talk about computer-trashing nightmares, in language generously sprinkled with tech-talk, give them a shout

Production: 3.3 out of 5

Content: 2.6 out of 5

China Business Podcast

Is China a threat or an opportunity for your company? Are there real growth opportunities for you in the world's fastest growing market? Expertise and insight from Technomic Asia China, a market strategy consulting firm with more than 20 years in China.

**REVIEW
ROULETTE**

China Business Podcast : <http://technomicasia.blogspot.com/>

“Expertise and insight from Kent Kendl of Technomic Asia China, a market strategy consulting firm with more than 20 years in China” is what it says on the tin. Although this is definitely a business podcast for the connoisseur, if you’re interested in business, particularly with an eye on Asia, this “must be a must”. These podcasts are produced approximately monthly, and they are a mix of interviews and informational programs.

Kent Kendl is “obviously someone in the know; his knowledge and expertise on business in China is excellent, yet not smug”, and one reviewer really enjoyed the interview with client Jim Pentecost. “The aim of this particular offering seemed to be to push a strategy in a book Kendl had an interest in”, but, at the same time, the reviewer felt he would rush out and purchase it if he were ever looking to break into Asian territory.

Kent speaks in “rather rapid tones”, reminding one reviewer of “those hastily-quoted disclaimers at the end of adverts promising to consolidate all of your loans into one easy monthly payment” and tempting him to close the media player prematurely. Another reviewer found the quality of the podcast “distinctly BBC, though distinctly American; it was also mercifully short”. Some reported distorted vocals, and another wished there was more attention paid to “establishing a clear intro to each program”.

The website accompanying the podcast “would benefit from a clearly marked RSS feed link and titles to the entries (which would also then appear in the downloaded files in Juice)”.

However, if you are interested in business in China, “then this is probably podcast nirvana”..... “A narrowcast for business, but very, very well done”.

Production: 2.8 out of 5

Content: 3.0 out of 5

This month’s podcasts were reviewed by

Chris Matson
Linda Mills
Paul Nicholls
Simon Toon
Grant Mason

Under the Tree

A Podcast for African-American Genealogists & Historians

**REVIEW
ROULETTE**

Under the tree : <http://underthetree.libsyn.com/>

Under The Tree is a podcast specialising in African-American genealogy. The show is “nicely presented and very informative”. The host, Meredith C Williams, was found to be “confident and knowledgeable”, and “her insights into the subject and guests she interviews are top-notch”. Many reviewers remarked on her “wonderful voice”: “I loved Marilyn’s accent and unquenchable politeness”. It was also obvious to all that she “has a real passion for her subject”.

In terms of her presentation, one reviewer noted that “her pacing is excellent”, whilst another thought that much of the content seemed “scripted, with some segments apparently read directly from authoritative books on the subject”. Her interviews are “very well conducted...well prepared, with great questions and answers”.

Around the words, Under the Tree uses “well-chosen music for intro, outro and music bed”. Most reviewers pointed out that there was room for improvement in eliminating background noise, especially in the studio parts, and a low-level hum in some of the podcasts. “She is slightly let down by the poor and sometimes distorted / clipped recording quality.”

One point that was mentioned by all was the technique of mixing the interviews so that the interviewer’s voice was only in the right-hand channel and the interviewee’s voice in the left-hand channel. This extreme stereo had various effects: “uncomfortable to listen to using headphones”.... “I almost started hitting my PC speakers thinking they were broken”... “I felt as though I’d knocked back a bottle of Scotch after listening – quite giddy and unstable after a bit”!

Podcasts for Under the Tree are produced about twice monthly, and the cleanly organized website posts the RSS subscription information clearly. A couple of episodes have not been compressed to MP3 format, though, so beware the “VERY large” WAV files.

A special feature of the website is an extensive bibliography included in the show notes for each show. One reviewer “especially appreciated the link to the free Personal Ancestry File software on the Mormon web site (via <http://www.familysearch.org/>)”; another found “some really interesting articles, particularly those relating to the slave trade”.

In summary, this podcast has a few areas where technical improvements could be made, but it is otherwise well constructed and presented, taking an innovative approach to bringing together previously published and brand-new content on this particular subject.

Production: 2.3 out of 5
Content: 3.2 out of 5

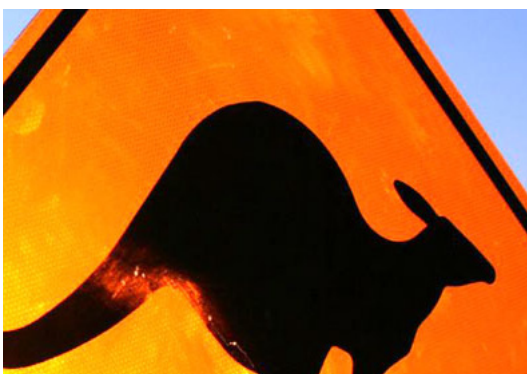


G'DAY FROM AUSTRALIA!

Global Voices by Janet Parkinson

This month I've been presented with a real dilemma: am I supposed to be researching indie podcasts, extensions of traditional media (such as radio or TV shows) or business podcasts? Yep, it's true, the 'shout-outs' from the Indies of Australia are being muffled by the sounds of the 'professionally produced'.

But fear not - I'm right behind all you Aussie Indies, because you offer some great classics which for me at least is what makes podcasting special: a true sense of a country's identity from the citizens themselves - people whose feet are firmly on the ground, real life 'mmm's and 'err's included - with no professional help, large studios or scripts! Good on yer!



Lost Out Back
www.lostoutback.com

So what does Oz really have to offer? You need listen no further than to John and Kevin who, being non-Australians, can give you the REAL low down on Australia's offerings in culture, history and traditions... and all with a canny satirical twist. Learn the true differences between various States' beers (if any!?), what Waltzing Matilda's lyrics really mean in the 21st Century - and oh yes, there's a T-shirt salesman involved.... And who else could create a whole 'cast around the Vegemite-virgin Kev's first ever mouthful of the stuff!?

Production : 3 out of 5
Content : 4 out of 5

G'day World!

<http://www.gdayworld.com>



Cameron Reilly is, of course, well known in the podcast world. Being the CEO of The Podcast Network and having clocked up an impressive 138+ shows (as the first ever Australian podcaster), it's clear that Cameron is a true professional at work.

Having worked for Microsoft, he naturally knows his stuff, and with the contacts he has around the tech world, his interviews and commentary about the podcasting, tech and general news scenes are what I'm sure many aspire to. Add to that his natural wit and charisma and the shows are fun as well as informative - holding the attention of even the non-geeks among us! A must listen for everyone, I reckon - it really does stand out from the global crowd.

Production : 5 out of 5

Content : 5 out of 5



Jeff K's Australian DVD Podcast

<http://www.australiandvd.net/podcast/>

Couple Jeff and Helen Kirkland take you on a steady guide through what's new in films and DVDs. Jeff has been serving up Australian DVD news and reviews since 1997, but it's Helen's enthusiasm for the subject matter that really makes this podcast work. You really get to feel like you're sitting in their front room in a cosy chair listening to a couple of old friends....

The production is simple, but that's not the point with this podcast; It's more a question of the content being quirky, and if you like the conversational husband-and-wife podcasts and are into films, you'll enjoy it.

Production : 3 out of 5

Content : 3 out of 5



League Cast

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

Now, I fully admit to knowing nothing about rugby, but Steve and Ben seem to know all there is to know about Rugby League.

Their backdrop on the web site sort of sums up the style of the show:

'...raised on a diet of Aussie Rules Football, Steve saw the light after watching Balmain's heart wrenching loss in the 1989 Grand Final, and thought, "This is a bit of alright then"... 'while Ben was well on his way to a shot at the big time, when someone spotted something that he was missing. The ability to run faster than the grass can grow'.

These guys love Rugby and it shows. If you're a ruggie-bugger this show's a classic. It's nice to see an active forum so now you can all join in.

Production : 3 out of 5

Content : 3 out of 5



Wildcast

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

Gordon has only produced a few episodes so far, but this is the stuff I love to hear and promote! This is set to be the real Ozzie outdoor cast with plans for how-to's on navigating, getting started in bush walking, interviews with outdoor types, including bikers at Alice Springs on the Central Australian Bike Challenge and Lucas Trihey who is planning to cross the Simpson Desert in of Australia. Just beginning to find his voice, Gordon has the ideas, so here's hoping he just goes for it!

Production : 3 out of 5

Content : 4 out of 5

In the hope of adding a touch of spice next month, India just seems about as exotic as you can get, so Bollywood here I come!

Thanks to all those who mailed me about Australia - it was good to talk, and also to Rob Qld for letting us use your 'roo picture. And to those who'd like to guide me round India, I'd love to hear from you!

janet.parkinson@podcastusermagazine.com.

the Reverse Engineers

Paul Parkinson reviews the band



I first found the Reverse Engineers (www.thereverseengineers.com) when I was trawling through the Podsafe Music Network (<http://music.podshow.com>). I was looking for bands influenced by the Bands I liked – Rush in this case specifically - and there they were. I liked the sound of the name and clicked through to their page. What was interesting was their other influences – the Police (another fave) and The Beatles (natch). I thought any band that can combine these styles into one has got to be alright. Clicking the ‘play’ button a few times introduced me to the delights of their music.

The Reverse Engineers (TRE) are a three-piece band in the classic Rush formation – guitar, bass and drums. They are based in Tampa, Florida (USA) and the three members, William Cote (guitar and vocals), Daniel Cote (drums) and Charles Cote (vocals and bass) -- are all brothers. As a band, they’ve been around for over seven years.

Now, you might be thinking “Rush? That’s all high pitched squeally vocals and songs about temples and trains” but you’d be wrong, wrong, so wrong. Sure, TRE are a progressive rock band, but the Police / Beatles influence gives them an edge that means they have a pace, drive and rhythm keeping them firmly in the alt-rock space with a prog-rock twist.

MaxQ, their current album, was released in November 2004. Interestingly, it was produced with help from a grant from the Jim Beam Company (can I get some of that?). What is extraordinary about MaxQ is the time the Cote brothers took to record it. The sessions to create what eventually became MaxQ started on New Year’s Day 2001 and was eventually released in 2004! Three and a half years!

the Reverse Engineers

But why 'The Reverse Engineers'?

"It fits us on so many levels. Charles and I are both web developers in addition to being musicians, and 'reverse engineering' is a term that gets used quite often among coders," says Dan. "In addition, I've got a real fascination with UFOs, and there are quite a few people who believe that some of our modern technology, including the transistor, was reverse-engineered from UFOs."

"Plus we tend to write about scientific stuff a bit," says Charles. "There aren't too many other bands out there writing about space shuttle launches and meteorologists."

"Musicians are really reverse engineers in the truest sense," adds William. "You sit down with a record, put it under the microscope and try to pull it apart to find out what makes it so cool sounding, what makes it so magical. We've put so much time and energy into Max Q that we're hopeful it might inspire other musicians to try to reverse-engineer our music."



“they have a pace, drive and rhythm keeping them firmly in the alt-rock space with a prog-rock twist”

The Reverse Engineers aren't going to take three and a half years recording their follow-up to Max Q. Moving forward, the band plans on releasing singles as soon as they're recorded through iTunes.

"With iTunes and digital downloading taking over, it doesn't really make sense to wait for the whole album to be done to release songs to your fan base," says William.

the Reverse Engineers

"We approached Max Q with an intense focus on perfecting each song one at a time, and it was really frustrating to just shelve that song until the rest of the album was done," adds Dan.

TRE plans on releasing a new song every month. This should keep their fans constantly interested in hearing the next new song. This will also help build their fan base by constantly having something new to release. And once they get a collection of songs together, they can be released as a CD collection of singles.

This is a fantastic idea and one that should be applauded. It won't restrict what type of song they write, and it gives them a lot of freedom when writing songs.

"We'll be using the new TuneCore service to upload our tracks to iTunes. It's definitely the way to go," says Dan.

TuneCore is a brand-new service that allows musicians to upload songs or albums to iTunes. TuneCore just charges the artist a 99-cent upload fee and a \$7.95 annual fee for maintenance, but they pass 100% of the artist's portion of the iTunes sale (70 cents per song) to the band.

So not only will this service allow TRC to upload a song as soon as it's done, it should help maximize profit from each sale of a single, thus helping them produce more great music.

Podcasting has been an essential tool in generating consistent traffic to their website, www.theReverseEngineers.com. The band is seeing a daily average of more than 120 visitors to the site. The biggest spike in website visits occurs when they've been played on high-profile podcasts such as the Daily Source Code or Podcast411, but in total they've been played on over 100 podcasts, which has definitely contributed to the increase in website hits.

I can also recommend their podcast "<http://thereverseengineers.libsyn.com>". With around 30 episodes of the show under their belt, they clearly have a great way to connect with listeners.

In summary then, I can honestly say I like The Reverse Engineers. They're a good, honest, hard-working band, and I'd love to see them live... Shame they're over there and I'm over here.

Studio Projects B1 Microphone Review

By Chuck Tomasi

Like most podcasters, I do not easily part ways with my hard earned money. However, in June I was having a Skype conversation with Michael R. Mennenga from the Dragon Page (<http://www.dragonpage.com>), and he sent me a link and simply said “Don’t think, just click and buy”. My curiosity was piqued. I respect Michael’s opinion because of his audio expertise. After all, the man has put thousands into his studio. His audio equipment sounds better over Skype than most hard-wired rigs!



“her sound improved 100%”

The link Michael sent me was to was for the Studio Projects (<http://www.studioprojectsusa.com>) SP-B1 large diaphragm condenser microphone. His timing could not have been better. I have been using my trusty Audio Technica AT-2020 condenser mic for the past year and liked it, but never loved it. I’m no audiophile, but I can recognize when something just isn’t right. The AT-2020 was picking up a lot of ambient studio sound and easily distorted, despite my efforts to move back from the mic when getting excited while recording Technorama. Michael noted that Mur Lafferty of Geek Fu Action Grip (<http://www.geekfuactiongrip.com>) recently purchased the SP-B1 to replace her MXL-990, and her sound improved 100%. That was enough endorsement for me!

Like most people, the first thing I checked was the price. The SP-B1 lists for \$120, but I was able to find it for \$99 from zSounds.com. One point of interest on the site is that they always seem to be down to their last unit. That \$99 was about the same price I paid for the AT-2020 one year earlier. As it turns out, I sold the AT-2020 on eBay for \$10 less than what I paid, making this 'upgrade' a lot more palatable.

The B1 has several features that make it a great value, in this podcaster's opinion. First, it sounds great right out of the box. The sound of vocals is warm and natural. Second, it comes with a shock mount (a recommendation for any podcaster). Third, it comes with a large foam windscreen. This replaces the 6-inch (15 cm) pop filter I used previously, making it easier to see my show notes or script on the screen in front of me. Finally, it's adjustable. In my geek world, more buttons and dials are always a good thing. The SP-B1 has two switches to allow you to clean up the sound before you even get to the mixer. One switch is a 'low cut', allowing you to remove sound below 150Hz, 75Hz, or not at all. The second switch allows you to cut the output by 20dB, 10dB, or not at all.

With both switches set to default, the Studio Projects sounds much like my old AT-2020. By tweaking it a bit I can cut down a lot of the background noise and give the vocals a richer, warmer sound. You may find different settings sound better in your environment and with your hardware set-up.

Overall, I am very pleased with the price, features, and quality of the Studio Projects B-1 microphone.



Chuck Tomasi, Wisconsin USA
www.chuckchat.com

Meet Chuck Tomasi at



www.portablemediaexpo.com

Deeper and Wider: Getting Your Listeners More Involved With Your Podcast

Instructor: Chuck Tomasi
 Room: 200ABC : Saturday 30th Sept.
 11.45 - 12.45 Session 6.

In this session, we'll go beyond listener numbers and gain listener loyalty with a variety of web tools. I'll show you several free and inexpensive ways to get your listeners more involved with your podcast. Make a strategic investment in your show and your audience by taking podcasting beyond the MP3 files and an RSS feed. Things like mail lists, listener lines, chat rooms, streaming audio, webcams, and even streaming video can more deeply involve your listeners and help them feel like part of your show. Getting listeners involved creates loyalty. Loyalty creates disciples. And disciples get the word out about your show to get new listeners. Join Chuck for an hour of hints and tricks to help your podcast go deeper and wider.

GarageBand 3

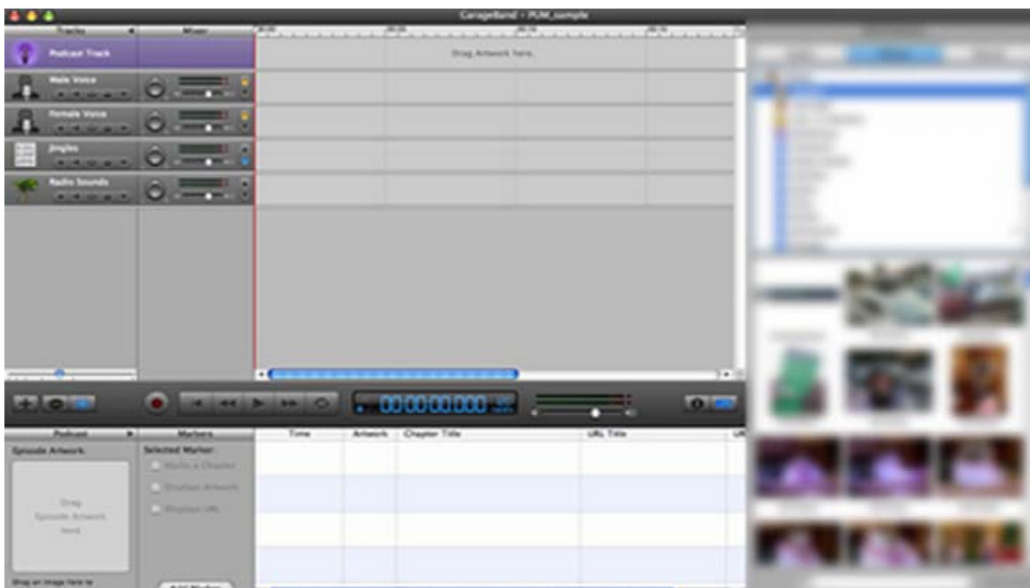
Released as part of the iLife '06 suite, Garageband 3 set out its stall to revolutionise podcasting. Whether you're an aspiring podcast producer armed with nothing more than the built-in mic on your Macbook, or podcast veteran complete with large diaphragm condenser mic mounted on a floating arm, Garageband 3 has enough power to aid you in the creation of your latest episode.

Upon opening Garageband 3, you're presented with four options. As we're creating a new podcast episode, we'll choose that option.



Tutorial by Mark Hunter

By default, Garageband 3's podcast episode starts with four tracks open and ready to go. They're marked Male Voice, Female Voice, Jingles and Radio Sounds.



For a quick and simple podcast, just choose the track you want to record your voice on, hit the big red record button and start podcasting. If you want to add a soundbed or bring in music or audio clips, that's easy, too. On the right-hand side of the screen you'll find the media browser. From there you can drag and drop audio found within your iTunes library or the iLife media folders. There you'll find jingles, sound effects and stingers, all of which can be dropped into your podcast when you need them.

Right at the top of the screen is the podcast track. Clicking that will allow you to add chapter markers and album art, again simply by dragging and dropping. Embedding hyperlinks to websites or email address is achievable by simply entering the URL into the relevant box within the podcast track panel. As Garageband 3 saves your podcast as an M4A file, listeners to your podcast can click between chapters and view album art for each chapter and then click through to websites, but this can only be done within iTunes or in a web browser with the Quicktime plug in. We'll look at converting the file to MP3 later.

Two of the tracks you're presented with when opening Garageband 3 are set up for vocals and have preset audio filters applied to them. Apple calls this feature the Podcast Radio Engineer and you will be able to get the best from even a cheap microphone when using these filters. Enhancements include compression, which adds radio-type power to your voice, and 'gate', which cuts out low-level noise. These settings can be adjusted and new presets can be created that best fit your voice and microphone.

The left-hand side of each track has a number of control options. The red button means that's the track you'll be recording onto. The speaker button mutes that track, while the headphone button plays only that track, muting the others. You can lock the track to prevent further changes, while the downward-pointing arrow expands the options available for that track, which we'll come to in a moment. Left and right panning is achievable through the knob that sits next to the volume slider. And lastly, we come to the 'ducking' arrows.

Adding music or sound effects under your voice is made very simple in Garageband 3, thanks to a feature called 'ducking'. You've heard 'ducking' when listening to the radio; the music fades up and down under the DJ's voice when he starts and stops speaking. Ducking is turned on by default. When you drag and drop a music or sound-effect file into a track other than the one you're recording onto, you'll notice a small blue arrow pointing downward next the track name. The track with the yellow arrow will always be louder

than the track with the blue arrow, the 'ducked' track. Beware, however: the 'ducking' could be a bit smoother. Ducked tracks tend to increase in volume sharply when you finish speaking. It's hoped that future builds of Garageband will smooth this out.

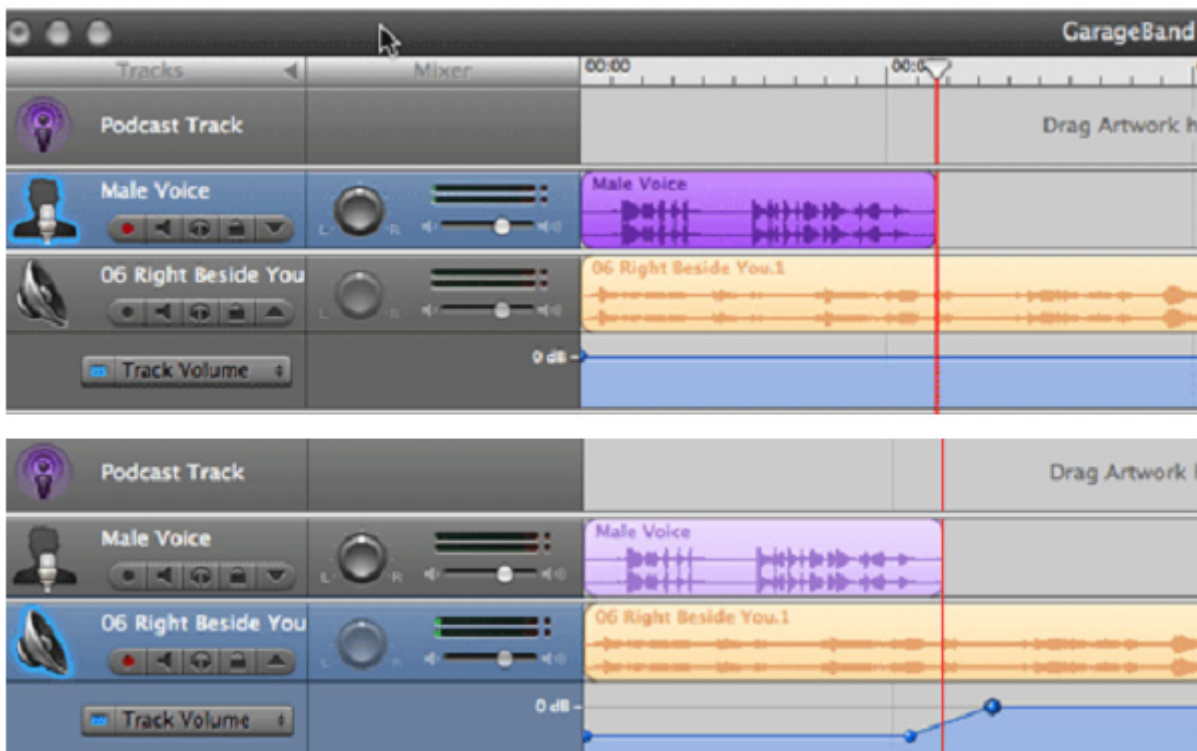




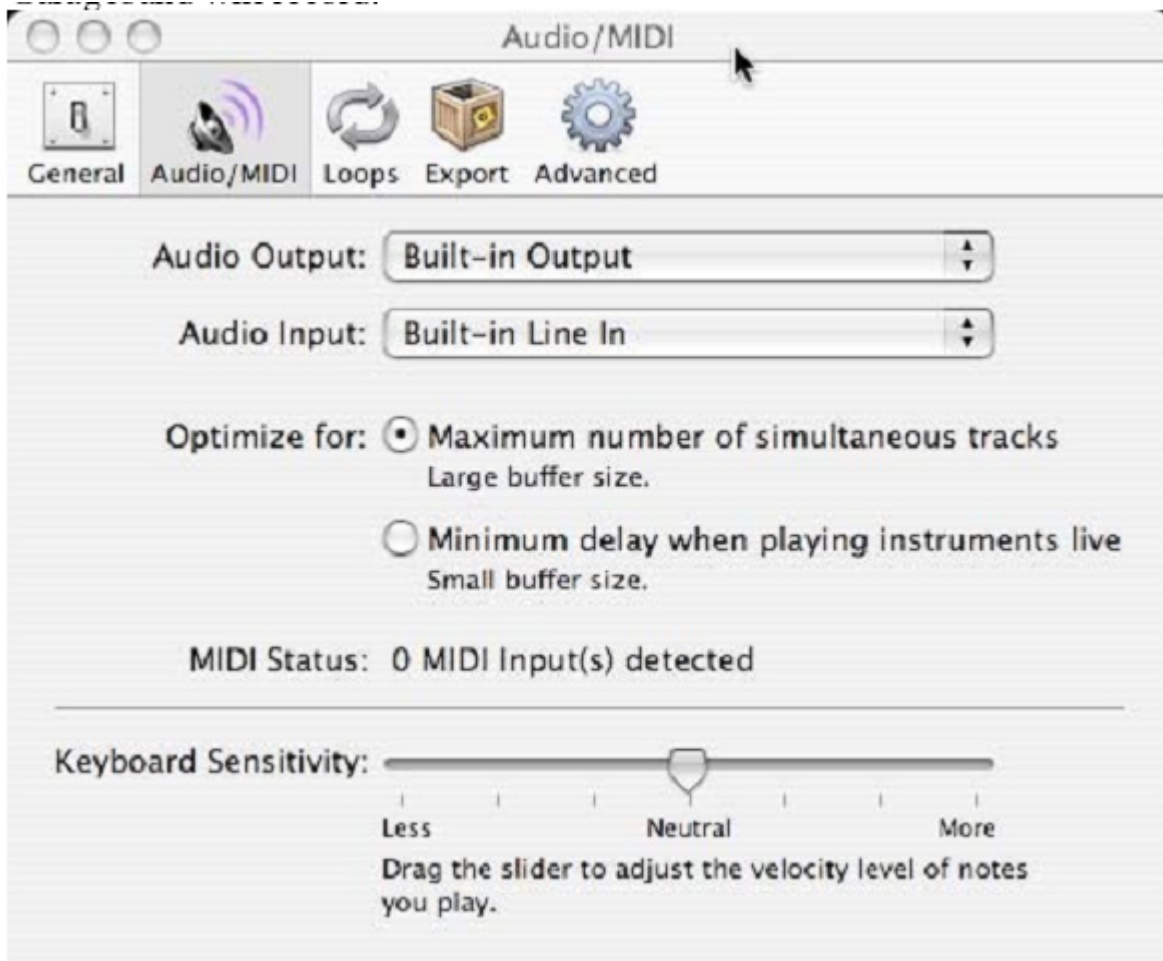
If you want to fade your music or sound effect tracks up and down yourself, this is possible. First, turn off 'ducking' by clicking 'control', then you can toggle 'ducking' on and off. Click the grey downward-pointing arrow on the track you wish to

fade up or down. This opens up further options for your track. Clicking 'track volume' greys-out the volume slider on the track control, creating instead a blue area below the track. This signifies the track volume. Click, hold and drag the blue line up and down as you see fit, fading the volume of the track up and down in the process.

The same principle can be applied to the panning of the track: you can fade the track from the left to right channel and so forth. Instead of clicking 'track volume', click 'track pan' and adjust the pan as you wish.



So far we've assumed that you're using the built in mic on your Macintosh. What if you've already got a studio mic? If so, you need to change the input from which Garageband will record. Click 'properties' and choose 'audio input'. Change it from built-in mic to built-in line in. Now Garageband 3 will record from your mixer or external soundcard through the line in.



Once you've finished recording your podcast you have a couple of options. Clicking 'export' gives you the option to export the podcast to iWeb, but assuming that most podcasters host their podcast files elsewhere, let's consider the other option, sending the podcast to iTunes.

Garageband 3 mixes the finished podcast down into one track and converts the file to M4A. Within iTunes, right-click the file, choose info and edit the ID3 tags, adding the name of the podcast episode, the album title and so forth. If you didn't add the album art through the podcast track within Garageband 3, you can add it now. You're almost finished. As M4A isn't playable on all MP3 players, it isn't the best format in which to offer your podcast. So, right-clicking your podcast within iTunes and converting the file to MP3 will mean that your brand new podcast episode, created in Garageband 3, is ready for the world to hear.

Congratulations, you've produced a podcast using Garageband 3.

If you have further questions about using Garageband 3, please email me mark@tartanpodcast.com



You may recall that last month we were discussing the wonders of setting up one's own podcasting studio and the process of doing just that. We looked at the chosen area to house the studio and how to deaden the room by using soft furnishings and even stapling duvets to the walls. Curiously, since writing the first article on this subject, I had cause to re-house my own studio to a large shed in the garden, and I did just that and can report that it works a treat!

This month we get down to the exciting bit: the toys. Installing and playing with all the gadgets and long, slim rack-mounted pieces of apparatus that have quite a gantry of flashing lights and whizzy knobs impress all but the missus. She never quite understands why you need that mountain of expensive gizmos, as none of it makes the podcast sound any better, does it? Unless of course, she argues, you change the presenter? ;)

I have deliberated long and hard about how to tackle the gear and where to start first. There are many things to think about, and each is equally important to give a good-quality sound recording, but one thing must be remembered above all else: as with most things, it is only as good as the weakest point on the chain. In other words, if you spend all that time and money on building the studio, sound-proofing and dampening the sound, and then you plug in a cheap, crappy karaoke microphone, it will be all in vain!

Let's start with you, the podcaster, first and the type of show you are presenting. There is no point finding a corner of a room, wedging yourself in there with a few carpet tiles and spare blankets draped from the walls if you are going to present a show with lots of guests and intend to give live cookery demonstrations!

Ask yourself these very important and serious questions. How much space will you actually need? Are you going to sit down to present, or would you prefer to stand? I know it may sound strange, but there a number of radio DJs who actually prefer to be on their feet when recording their radio shows. Do you intend to have guests on the show, and how many? They will need to be seated and have areas to be miked up and visible to the podcaster. Will you be taking or making phones calls in the show? How about linking up to other people online via Skype, Gizmo or Google Talk? And what about space on the table or desk in front of you to sample things, as for food tasting, wine and cheese sampling, building pyramids of cards or stripping the V8 engine and giving it a full oil change?



The next question then to consider is what is the actual purpose of the studio? I know this sounds a bit stupid to ask, and I know you are thinking that it should be obvious what the studio is for - to record the podcast! But...

How will you do this? Will it be recorded in one go, as live radio? Or in bits and edited in a layered sound editor program such as Audacity? In other words, are you using the studio JUST to record your voice, or will you be also required to record local bands, instruments, sound effects and so on?

Ok, now that you have thought a little about the needs and requirements of the studio, that will help define its size and shape and, most importantly, the layout. You are clearly going to spend a lot of time sitting (or standing) at your new set-up, and I want you to be comfortable and have everything you are going to plumb in at hand, because afterwards it's a right pain to re-wire and move the gear. Believe me, I know, as I have done this many times.

Let's have a quick checklist of the general requirements of what we might consider useful in the studio set-up.

Microphone - something to record your voice, instruments or the sound of natural objects

EQ unit – An sound equalizer unit to adjust the quality, tone and overall sound of the recorded voice

Compressor – a device to bring up the low levels of sound and crunch down the high levels of sound to give a dramatic and smooth signal for processing further or just recording

Noise gate – something to help get rid of unwanted noises

Limiter – a clever bit of kit to stop the recorded sound from over-modulating and becoming distorted

Effects unit – a series of digital signal processing to create interesting effects to the sound, such as added reverb, echo, chorus, flange, distortion, robotic and space-out types of sounds

Mixing desk – to mix various sources into one stereo channel

Phone connect – a telephone interface to connect phone calls to the mixing desk

CD player – to play CDs, obviously!

Cassette player – as above, but this plays audio cassettes (clever, eh?)

MP3 player – I will let you work out what this does.

Mini disc player – OK, we are getting the idea now

Computer – to either record onto or play out the CDs and mp3s!



A recording machine. In the old days, this was a possibly a quarter-inch open-reel device, such as a Revox or a Studer tape recorder, or a multitrack two-inch highly expensive box of tricks, such as a Soundcraft recorder. Maybe you remember the four-track Fostex cassette recorders that had the ability to bounce tracks and mixes from one to another. How we suffered in those days without really even knowing it! Great fun!

These days you can record in high quality onto a number of devices, from a CD recorder, to a PC hard drive, an MP3 player, a digital flash-card recorder or even a mini disc. Here, the choice is yours.

I have listed above just a few things you might want or need, and there are many more, but really and truly, unless you are setting up a professional recording studio, the rest is pretty unnecessary.

Next month we shall go through them all and see what they do and where in the chain of command they each fit. But before I finish, let's just think about the most important piece of kit that any podcaster should think about and one that isn't easy to just go out and buy new or even as an upgrade, and that is your voice!

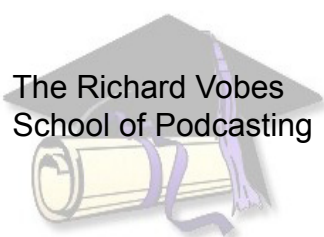
Your whole podcasting career and the success of your show depend on the quality and the performance of you and your voice. This is a whole article in itself, and I will add it to the list for the 'School of Podcasting' series. But in the meantime, just think about the way you speak, your delivery, the tonal qualities and your breathing.

Are you soft spoken, breathy, loud, excitable, monotonous, fluid, or do you mumble, shout, pause a lot, say 'er' and 'um' incessantly? And do you have idiosyncratic phrases that you repeat ad nauseum such as 'You know?' or 'see what I mean?' or 'basically'?

As I say, we shall look at this side of the studio, the performer, the podcaster and persona at a later date, but as we shall start with the microphone in next month's lesson, I wanted to just get you thinking about the sound that will be captured by that microphone so that we can determine exactly what type of mic to get!

Catch you next month!

Richard Vobes. www.Vobes.com



Castblaster Review

by Paul Nicholls

I've tried a plethora of podcasting applications - Audacity, CuBase, PodProducer, Mixcast Live - the list goes on. I purchased Castblaster a few months ago and can honestly say that I've not looked back since.

There are basically two ways I use Castblaster – with a mixer and without. Simply using a mic and headphone combination is something many will do, and here the application is at its most versatile.

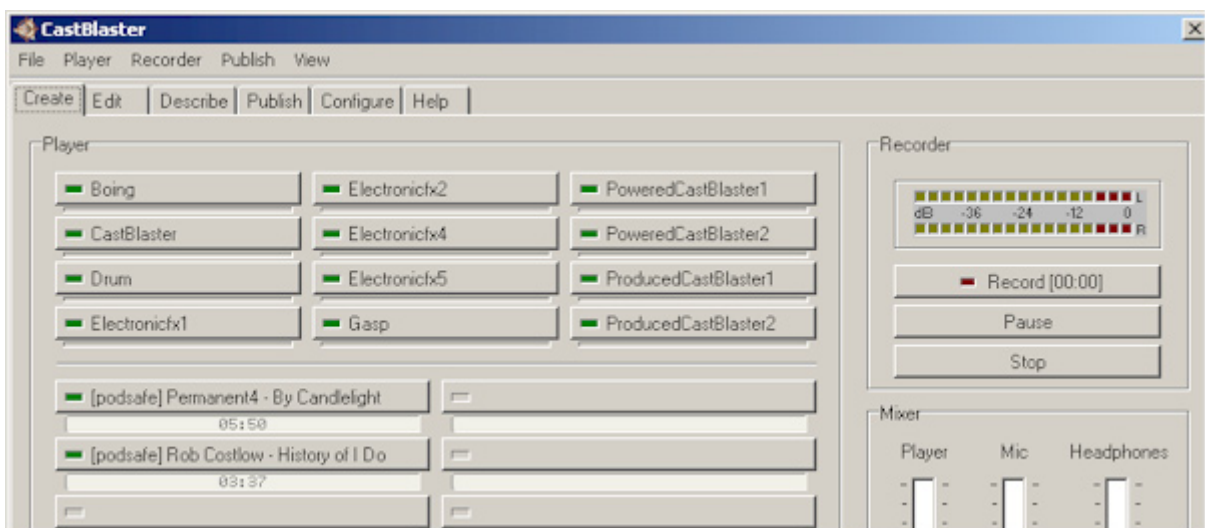
There are far too many features to run through, but, by far, the best features are the automatic audio leveller and 'ducking' feature – the player is intelligent enough to dip the level of the audio track you play when you speak.

The player has a number of 'triggers'; you simply mouse-over and click the desired track, and this has a 'player' audio level that can be toggled to suit and an LED indicator that can help you keep an eye on the audio levels.

Your show notes double as an ID3 comments tag, which embeds the show notes into your iPod or MP3 player with this visual feature. There is also an image display that neatly drops into Windows Media Player, iTunes and your iPod. Another one-touch feature drops your show, via FTP, right into play. Stepped audio quality is yet another feature (96kbs seems to be effective at 44khz), and a configuration button allows your set-up to adapt to accept an external mixer.

I'm chuffed to pieces with Castblaster; the audio quality and versatility of my show has improved no end. Cheap enough to suit the lower end of the budget, this is a great piece of kit that's an essential to my set-up.

Castblaster



Inside the Podcasters' Studio



Paul and Judy from TotalPodcastrophe ask questions of Rob and Jon.

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 Rob and Jon, the consistently highly entertaining duo that is "Top Of The Pods". Rob (31) and Jon (father of one) do a show based on top ten lists, either their own or one submitted by one of their many avid listeners. Topics range from "Top Ten Keyboard Shortcuts" to "Top Ten Happy Things That Creep Me Out". Based in Peterborough, UK, the pair are veteran podcasters, having put out over 200 shows since April of 2005.



Rob, a native of Peterborough, describes himself as a single, 30-something web designer and self-professed geek. Jon, born in Cambridge, describes himself as a 30-something creative director and now lives in Peterborough with his wife, Luna, and their daughter, Qwail.

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

Rob: "I downloaded an RSS reader that downloaded something called 'Enclosures', I thought 'Hello...!'"

Jon: "Rob was waffling about it right at the beginning of the whole thing."

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

Rob: "I think it was Engadget hosted by Phil Torrone as it was a default. I was very disappointed when he left."

Jon: "Yeast Radio and The Daily Source Code."

What do you look for in a podcast?

Rob: "Frequency of updating, nothing too polished. Presenters who are passionate about their subject matter."

Jon: "Originality."

What puts you off a podcast?

Rob: "Poor content."

Jon: "Radio 1."

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

Rob: "I was getting so bored of mainstream media, this was a great way to create something that I enjoyed listening to. It was also a good way of having a laugh with Jon."

Jon: "Rob."

What motivates you, currently, to continue podcasting?

Rob: "It's good fun, I'm keen to get good stuff out there, and our fans are so encouraging."

Jon: "I love doing it. Rob and I have a great time, and I think I have gotten to know Rob all the better for being his partner in crime!"



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

Rob: "It's painful to listen to most radio stations now. I waved goodbye to CDs a long time ago, I still ask for the odd DVD for Christmas although I don't have a clue what's out there anymore. TV is just on in the background in my house; I rarely sit down and watch it without using my laptop. Since producing the show I've noticed editing in traditional media much more, and it's led me to question how things have been cut up and for what reason."

Jon: "I was already watching TV on demand, so very little has changed. I watch what I want when I want. Much like the podcasts I listen to."

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

Rob: "I'm doing something constructive with my time; people seem to like it, otherwise they wouldn't listen. It's something interesting to tell people, and I've met so many cool new friends through doing this."

Jon: "I guess when I sit on the tube I wonder if anyone is giggling at our show. But I guess it hasn't really changed anything - it's not like we are stars."

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

Rob: "I wish I knew."

Jon: "We have some big plans for the show. My lips are sealed."

Top Of The Pods can be found at <http://www.TopOfThePods.com>

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

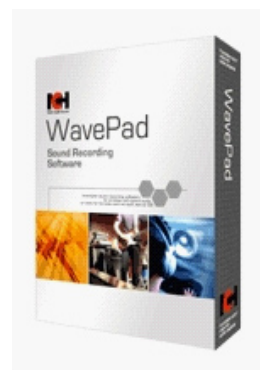


Advertisement

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



Subscription-only podcasts: the way of the future for podcasting ?

by Grant Mason

In February this year, the hugely popular and brilliantly funny 'Whack My Bush' comedy podcast, featuring the twice-weekly satirical adventures of the world's leaders (and everyone else from Prescott to Arnie to Bono), took the plunge into the deep end of the subscription-only podcast pool. Five months down the line and already well into the second renewal period for those who joined at that time, Grant Mason speaks to one of the writers/producers of the show, Ed Rikard-Bell, to find out how the team have found the experience.

GM: Ed, what made you decide to go subscription only? Was it a unanimous decision, or were there some doubts amongst the team?

ER-B: We'd always thought of charging at some point, so on that basis, it was a unanimous decision. Our show is quite labour intensive for what we are trying to produce; writing the scripts, editing the show with sound effects, recording sessions. We'd like to think we are being compensated for the huge amount of time and effort this has required. We love doing this, but at some point people have to realise that it costs money and requires time to make a show like ours. I think people have been spoilt in the UK as most audio comedy is funded by the licence fee and is seemingly free! Hence, we knew we had a mountain to climb when we decided to charge.

GM: So, once the decision was made to charge, did you wait until you had the right size of listener base before you went ahead, or did you just decide that was how it was going to go and jump right in?

ER-B: We'd built up a download audience of anywhere between 10 and 12 thousand listeners. However, that doesn't mean all of them are regular listeners to the show. We suspected it was less than this, but decided that we wanted to test the water and see if people would pay for content.

GM: Did you have a backup plan in case subs-only didn't work?

ER-B: Yes. If they didn't work we'd stop making the show. It is too time consuming for Nick (Hildred) and me to write and produce and perform alongside our comedy team. We're talking 4 to 5 days' work for the both of us for each three-weekly recording.

GM: That's a hefty workload, so it's understandable that you needed to be paid for doing it. How apprehensive were you as to how successful going subs-only would be?

ER-B: We made a bet between ourselves and our web guy Chris Percival on how many subs we'd get. I was very cynical. Nick was overly optimistic and Chris likes a bet. Guess what - The Geek won!

GRM: Talking of geekery and the web, was it difficult to set up your site and feeds to facilitate subs-only access to the shows and the feed?

ER-B: Chris would be the one to talk to about this, but it was relatively straightforward. We took as a given that there was a certain amount of trust from our listeners not to try and abuse the system – so far it has paid off. It was mainly a case of Chris building a programme to individualize the feeds. We just decided on Paypal as an easy payment system which - I think - is trusted by people. In all honesty it was pretty easy to do. Once payment is made and accepted, then the unique feed was sent.

We definitely had a few negative emails

GRM: As a fan and repeat subscriber myself, I'd have to agree that the subscription process and the feed access is completely straightforward and simple. Chris has done a sterling job there! Once everything was set and in place and you made the announcement to the world, what was the general listener reaction when they were asked to pay to continue to listen?

ER-B: We definitely had a few negative emails. Nick and I replied to them all and pointed out the time and effort to produce this show. I think because everything else is free (apart from Ricky Gervais, of course) people expect it to continue that way. Unfortunately, as anyone involved in podcasting knows, there are costs in production. So, yes, there was some negative reaction. A lot were from people who said they love the show – but wouldn't pay for it.

GM: Did you lose any listeners / make any listeners?

ER-B: Obviously, we shed all the tight wads out there! Bugger. Nick's optimism was severely dented, but as the months have gone on and the subscribers keep coming in, we've built slowly and surely.

GM: So, what has the income from the subscriptions allowed you to do to the show?

ER-B: The sound has improved enormously. This came through the purchase of Pro Tools and other recording equipment. It's also covered some of our basic costs and allowed our performers to eat food occasionally!

GM: Has the subscription option been a success for Whack My Bush, in your opinion?

ER-B: Yes. With respect to what we're trying to achieve – making the best possible show and covering our basic costs – we've got to a position where it may still be possible to continue putting all the effort in. The bottom line is we still want to make our show because it still gives us great satisfaction. It won't make us millionaires, for that dream I buy lottery tickets. I think the big thing we've taken from this is that people will pay for content they like – and that is hugely important for all involved in the industry.

GM: I know that there are many other podcasters out there who are contemplating subscription services to help them meet some of the costs of producing their shows. Do you see the subscription model as the future for shows like theirs and yours?

ER-B: Yes, I think subscription is the future. For any programming that is script and performance led, there are costs involved. I think for a small unit cost per download independent producers have the opportunity to make a business out of podcasting. The big question is when does charging for content become the norm? Is sponsorship the answer? I think the whole industry (new and embryonic as it is) will start implementing one or the other. The question for consumers will be: Do they want an HBO/licence fee style model (subscription/no ads) like Ricky Gervais or sponsorship/advertising (commercial radio style) like Baddiel and Skinner with The Times and Chevrolet.

Get on and do your thing

GM: Have you any words of wisdom for anyone looking to go down the same road?

ER-B: I think that if podcasters believe they are offering something unique and entertaining then it's worth having a shot – but only if they want to make a business or living from podcasting their content. Otherwise, like the thousands of free podcasts out there, get on and do your thing.

GM: Thanks, Ed. I'm sure that's given many podcasters out there some food for thought! There are so few subscription shows around at the moment that it's still a bit of a mystery to many. Hopefully they'll take encouragement from the success that WMB has had.

Before I let you go, I can't pass up on the opportunity to ask you – a veritable veteran of the UK podcasting scene – for some thoughts and comments on the changes you've seen over the last 13 months of Bush Whacking?

I personally believe that podcasting will be a sizeable niche in the entertainment sphere

ER-B: I think the whole podcasting scene is growing up. When WMB launched last June, Nick and I had a clear idea of what we wanted to achieve as writers and producers. Imagine our joy when iTunes launched three weeks later! During June/July 2005 our numbers went through the roof. We gained a firm footing in podcast land and were briefly in the top ten worldwide! Then the reality of holding an audience kicked in as we definitely dipped in downloads after the initial iTunes euphoria. However, we started to pick up again as the year ended and clawed back the numbers to be on parity with our peak in June/July 2005.

I'm sure we've all noticed the arrival of the big media players (BBC, Virgin, The Times, et al.) into the podcasting of content. The environment for independent podcasters is a harsh place. Without an original angle or a marketing strategy or a budget, it's very difficult for independents to make a splash. We were very aware of this when we launched our World Cup show – "Pod The World Cup". Though it is heartening that for a show only intended to run for 5 weeks that we made the top 100 of all shows (76 high) last week – then England go and blow it for us!

I personally believe that podcasting will be a sizeable niche in the entertainment sphere. But when will it achieve the critical mass of mass acceptance? When this happens I think there's a chance for podcast producers to make some money out of their content. For us to achieve a commercial turnover (on current BBC radio production budgets for scripted content) at our rate of 25p a 6-7 minute show we'd only need 4000 subscribers! We don't have 4000, by the way. The point is, that figure is achievable for our type of show. The question is when? Next year? Next decade? I'm sure this will all be answered for us!

My thanks to Ed Rickard-Bell for taking the time to speak to PodcastUser Magazine and to the Whack My Bush team for letting him answer my questions instead of writing their new scripts!

Whack My Bush can be found online at www.whackmybush.com.

Subscribing to their show gets you an individual feed which provides you with 24 shows over a three-month subscription period (12 weeks @ 2 shows a week) for only 25p or 45c a show, along with access to their complete show archive.

Although the first show of each new storyline will be available on iTunes along with teasers for each subsequent episode, only subscribers get to hear the whole lot!

Ewan Spence is set to run a second series of podcasts from the Edinburgh festival. Chris Skinner caught up with him to discuss the show, comedy podcasting and Def Leopard...

So Ewan, what do you do?

Er...what guise am I in? Er... Executive director. And executive producer. That'll cover it!



So for idiots and the uninitiated, please tell us, what is this show all about?

It's like the Tonight Show on American television. Except it's not on the telly and it's not at the night time and it's not in America! It will probably go out between 9 and 11 a.m. every day of the Fringe, with interviews of some of the top acts as well as some of the new exciting ones.

The Fringe is a long-established, cutting-edge event. So how did you stumble across this, and what exactly are you going to be doing?

Well, the Fringe is 60 years old and there are 1800 shows, making this the largest arts festival on the planet – I guess the challenge was can one man do this show? We'll have 40 to 50 interviews, plus we have the website (<http://edinburghfringe.thepodcastnetwork.com/>) which will carry loads of additional footage. We will have a team of roughly 10 or more people working on the show over the four weeks!

What was successful about last year, and what have you changed?

Last year we had over a hundred thousand downloads. Since March I've been getting emails pleading 'you are doing it again?!' We then had the BAFTA nomination (a 2005 Scottish BAFTA nomination in the Best Interactive Media category)...

...So with so many people downloading – how many of those are Fringe goers, and how do you keep non-Fringe goers interested?

I'd say 40% attend the Fringe. For the non-Fringe goers - how do you keep any audience interested? The people are interesting! The first couple of shows will have well-known names such as 4 Poofs and a Piano, Phil Nicholl, plus the UK's 8 ball pool champion(!).

Wow! A trickshot master! I love those acts!

Yeah, and there's one theatre company who have written a play and will perform it, and they've given it to another troop to perform as well at a different venue, but neither troop are allowed to talk to each other! Two totally separate productions of a new play, should be interesting...

Ok then - are you quite critical? Are you allowed to watch something like this and say 'that was shit!'?

Well if something is of dubious quality, we just won't phone them up for an interview. If Parkinson never liked Chris Morris, he wouldn't have him on!

Do you think your programme has the power to make or break a show yet?

I'd never like to comment on that; I've no idea! I do know that on individual cases people are going to the Fringe because of the show. I had one listener from Newcastle get in touch who said they'd looked at the Fringe every year and that "this year I listened to the podcast and I went and saw five acts in small venues one day and then headed back to Newcastle – and the five acts were all people I heard on your show".

So the podcast does have the power to bring people closer!

I think any sort of new media, as it were, can have that power – to paraphrase Cory Doctorow, more people are listening to more audio on more devices every day.

OK, I was interviewed by the BBC last year about Simulacrum and other bits 'n' bobs I was up to, and they picked up on my comments that comedy was under-using podcasting and that this was the perfect medium to promote funny things.... Since then, Gervais came along and had a trillion downloads, Comedy 365 came along, more and more comics have podcasts now, do you think comedy has realised the potential yet?

I think that given the circuit is so hard, so many people want to do it and, unless you're in London, you can't afford to make a living out of it – all of a sudden you have a chance to get your words out to more than 10 people in a bar, so why not put it out! It's the same how bands released singles (and now podsafe music) – do you go to see someone live who you've heard of or not? Hearing a new act on a podcast will increase the chances of going to see them, compared to, say, Def Leppard, a big band that everyone knows... I've seen them before and they're a bit 'armless'.

Wow! I admire you, you're at the home of cutting edge, the Edinburgh festival, and you're making one-armed Def Leppard jokes – no holding back!

Well not for him anyway!

I've never gotten over how good it is how he learnt to drum with one arm, this new band would have to be amazing to stop me seeing a band with a one-armed drummer!!

I love the fact that they waited... He's a drummer for chrissake – get a new one!

The sad thing is that I bet they use a drum machine these days.

Look.... their new album is good, and they were one of the few to crack America.

Yeah, but that was the hair. 80's rock was all about hair. It's why it all went wrong for Dire Straits. We digress. Who are you most excited about seeing?

I'm most interested in seeing Top Gun.

Not the homoerotic plane film starring Tom Cruise?

Yes – someone turned it into a play. We're getting the director on the show!

That sounds f*ing incredible, it must be a comedy!!!!**

Well my tip for comedy is Steven K Amos: very chatty, very confident, knows how to talk to and with the audience AND he's going to be making occasional diary posts for us. This year Gods Pottery also seem interesting - a fake Christian folk-rock band - a bit 'Spinal Tap'. And it wouldn't surprise me if Andrew Lawrence gets a lot of critical acclaim and sells out!

So if you do not listen to this podcast you...

...will be consigned to thinking the only good thing at the fringe is Stu Francis and The Krankies!!

Hahaha! I thought they were ill?

The lady/boy had a beanstalk fall on her last year, but she's not dead.

Oh.

So there you have it. Ewan returns with his BAFTA-nominated show, from roughly 3 August, throughout the festival. It's a great listen, festival goer or not, so get subscribed now.

For the remaining eleven months of the year, Ewan Spence is Music Channel Manager for The Podcast Network (<http://www.thepodcastnetwork.com/rock>) and hosts various shows, including TPN Rock Show and All About Symbian (<http://www.allaboutsymbian.com>)

Obscure Beginnings...

getting podcast regulation right isn't straightforward, but it is important

Intellectual property is a tricky business, especially when technology suddenly evolves a new medium that doesn't quite fit into any of the existing categories. Podcasting began in 2004, but 2006 has been the year it has really hit the headlines, and with its emerging popularity, regulation is now looming on several fronts.

In the June 2006 issue of M, their members' music magazine, the Music Alliance printed a paragraph on podcasting (see that issue, page 10) explaining that their podcast license "requires podcasters to obscure the beginning and end of tracks by using speech or production elements" in order to "stop podcasts from becoming simple album downloads".

This "obscure" issue is one of several preventing adoption of the MA's podcast license scheme by potentially hundreds of independent UK podcast-makers.



When UKPA met with the Music Alliance in May, it was clear that we, as both producers and consumers of podcasts, had a relatively sophisticated comprehension of the whole scene. The Music Alliance team were honest enough to admit to us that they had no knowledge of content outside the BBC and main commercial radio stations, and it also became clear that they had little personal experience of podcasts.

UKPA's position is that there are better ways to prevent content-stealing without ruining perfectly good podcast programs, and we are seeking a more acceptable way for podcasters to use their licensed music.

We explained to them that podcast content is regularly updated, that it is consumed, disposable content - few people keep old podcasts hanging about on their hard drives for very long. So yes, it is possible to podcast an album, but it isn't actually happening. Maintaining a podcast feed makes a podcaster easily traceable, so it isn't likely to happen in the future either. Plus, podcasting is not filesharing, it is almost always program-making, and if you are a podcaster, that phrase is well worth repeating to your MP, senator or member of Congress.

The MA can be forgiven for not having the same take on podcasting as podcasters. Podcast usage has not yet been adequately measured, studied or indeed understood by anyone, so it's hardly fair to expect the Performing and Mechanical Rights organisations to have got it right quite yet. In their magazine, they were addressing the concerns of their members without going into too much detail - entirely understandable, given the context of recent history.

by Dean Whitbread

Obscure Beginnings...

getting podcast regulation right isn't straightforward, but it is important

The fact is that the content cat is well and truly out of the technical bag, and no amount of new licenses will bring it back. Practically the entire catalogue is now in the wild, put there not by podcasters or even large-scale commercial piracy, but by via widespread filesharing by millions of individuals. I read that the time it takes a track once released on iTunes to show up in Kazaa is incredibly short, just a couple of minutes. Suing filesharers RIAA-style might scare some people off the peer-to-peer networks, but that is a drop in the ocean and ultimately futile.

The industry big-boys tout DRM as a solution, but it is no solution. DRM-protected media formats are inherently problematic, for reasons of consumer protection and advancing software technology, which rapidly finds a way around every protective barrier. Plus, it does not change people's habits.

Sharing of music and other content is not new. It is a widespread pattern of behaviour dating back to audio and video cassette days, and before that, the sharing of newspapers, books and penny-dreadfuls. 'Have content, will share' seems to be the general public consensus, and no amount of finger-wagging will change that. Podcasters work with that tendency. The vast majority of podcasts cost nothing and are produced without any copy restriction in the same formats as shared files, which gives them the huge advantage of universal reach. Access anywhere and everywhere is one of the great strategic benefits of podcasting. Few podcasters would accept any format that restricted their audience.

Plus, restriction isn't what large sections of the music industry actually wants, especially smaller-scale companies in the independent sector, for whom podcasting is a great new way to increase exposure. What these businesses want is light regulation and the price barrier not to be set too high. Music businesses large and small know, although they don't always admit it publicly, that too tight a hold on copyright is counter-productive, that excessive enforcement locks content away from new audiences, and that adopting a quietly 'leaky' approach boosts sales.

It's worth remembering that the vast majority of people are honest and will happily pay for stuff if the price is not high and the method is simple.

UKPA can see some very good reasons to make a podcast music license work, not the least of which is that a one-stop license has to be better than getting permission from every separate rights holder. If the Music Alliance were to effectively license the use of their repertoire to podcasters in the UK independent sector, it would open new revenue streams for them and expose a fabulous catalogue internationally to many thousands of new ears and eyes. UKPA can see the benefit to their members and ours of hundreds of honest podcasters paying a reasonable annual fee for fair use of their repertoire.

Licensing podcasting for (fast growing) low-level amateur use would also help to bring a chunk of the 'escaped' royalty-producing repertoire back into the financial royalty-paying fold, something that AIM in the UK is now tentatively trying to achieve with the adoption of a 'Vale Recognition Right'.

This would be a massive improvement for writers and other rights holders and is surely worth working to achieve. Here is a great opportunity to show that podcasters, which are both creators and users of MP3 music, can play a responsible role and promote good practice. PPL, after all, license a DJ's MP3 hard drive for professional use (up to 20,000 songs) without asking for receipts.

The bigger legal picture is a complex overlay of old laws and new practices, especially with regard to copyright and intellectual property law, in which every legislature is lagging behind advances in technology and social use. There are some initiatives in place, such as the Gowers report in the UK, and at the same time some attempts at international law-making that are cause for concern with regard to the future of podcasting. Examples of the latter are the WIPO Broadcast Treaty and the European Union 'TV Without Frontiers' Directive, (regarded as premature, unjustified, inappropriate, unworkable) which even Ofcom is resisting.

Society is only just getting used to our world of user-created content and citizen-driven media. The BBC, the International Herald Tribune and Channel 4 are all planning to allowing users to create their own custom programs using a personalised mix of media. Content comes in all shapes and sizes: audio, text, pictures, video, and any kind of interactivity, including games and social networking. Podcasting, a major part of this fast-developing scene, is truly a new phenomenon that deserves to be credited as such and regulated appropriately, and it is important to make the case if we are to benefit from the upsurge in creativity and business that it is bringing to the UK.

When UKPA met with PRS and MCPS, I realised I was the only person in the room who was a member of all three organisations, and I have some very good personal reasons to seek improvements in the system. After all, at the moment, I am supposed to pay them 400 quid a year for podcasting my own music... and they haven't yet worked out how they are going to pay me my royalties for doing that!

Regulation Abbreviations

- AIM** -- Association of Independent Music
- DRM** -- Digital rights management
- MA** -- Music Alliance
- MCPS** -- Mechanical-Copyright Protection Society
- Ofcom** -- Office of Communications (UK)
- PPL** -- Phonographic Performance Limited
- PRS** -- Performing Right Society
- RIAA** -- Recording Industry Association of America
- UKPA** -- UK Podcasters Alliance
- WIPO** -- World Intellectual Property Organization Broadcast Treaty

Dean Whitbread is a founder of the UK Podcasters Association, runs Funk, produces podcasts, maintains a well-read blog and writes occasionally for Podcast User Magazine.



<http://ukpodcasters.org.uk>

<http://ukpodcasters.org.uk>

ITUNES OR IPODDER?

GMAIL AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO

By Casper Labuschagne

www.krooninfo.co.za

The MP3 file format has been around for a decade, but it took the marketing visionary Steve Jobs to add the word iPod, which led to the derivatives podcast and podcasting to provide a new experience in listening to MP3 files. The word podcasting hides a complexity wherein MP3 files are recorded, published and made available via RSS feeds for downloading. While there is a perception that an Apple iPod (and associated iTunes software) is a prerequisite to listen to podcasts, nothing can be further from the truth!

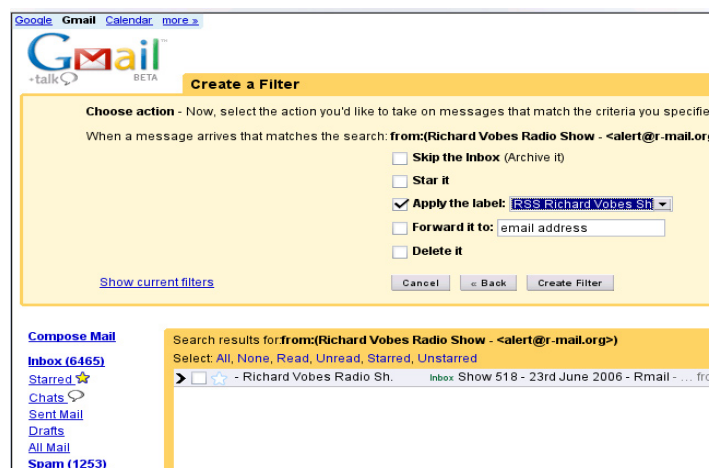
There are a number of devices that can play back MP3 files which are simply computer files in a specific audio format that have been compressed to a fraction of the original audio size. Those files can be played back on virtually any desktop PC with sound capabilities as well as a variety of dedicated MP3 players, PDA's, cellphones, DVD players, portable games consoles, automobile music systems and even portable CD players. And of course, Apple's iPod player. Personally I am perfectly content with listening to podcast (MP3 files) on my Palm PDA.

While iTunes or other pod-catching programs such as Juice or WinPodder are commonly used for subscribing and downloading podcasts, I will show you how to use Google's Gmail as a tool to subscribe to podcasts. This is possible because most podcasts are promoted via RSS feeds. By using a third-party service to direct RSS feeds as emails to a Gmail account, and by creating a Gmail label plus a filter, a message containing a link to download a podcast is provided in your Gmail inbox. While you may have heard of Web 2.0, this is a simple yet powerful example of Web 2.0 at work!

For a start, you must have a Gmail account. If you don't have a one, find someone with a Gmail account and ask them to send you an invitation! Gmail is super, and it is your passport to a host of different Google services, all free!

The single most difficult task is to locate the RSS feed of popular podcasts. Some podcasts make it easy by displaying the standard RSS logo on their websites. Copy the RSS feed from the website publishing the podcast by right-clicking on the RSS link and copying the shortcut. In the case of the popular and highly recommended Richard Vobes Show (<http://vobes.com>), the copied link will be <http://feeds.feedburner.com/RichardVobesRadioShow>.

Now go to the R-mail website (<http://www.r-mail.org>) and subscribe to that RSS feed so that every new podcast announcement is sent as an email to your Gmail account. In the box provided on the R-Mail website, enter the previously copied RSS feed and your own Gmail address. A confirmation email will be sent by R-Mail where you have to click on the 'confirm' link to verify your R-Mail subscription.



Create a label in Gmail by clicking on 'Edit label' and entering the name of the new label in the 'Create a new label' box (at the bottom of the screen.) I prefer to prefix my Gmail labels concerning RSS with 'RSS' to identify them among all the other labels. In this example, my label is now called 'RSS Richard Vobes Show'.

You will now have to wait until the first R-Mail podcast message arrives in order to create a Gmail filter for that message.

When the R-Mail message arrives in your Gmail inbox, open it and select the 'Create a filter' option. Fill in the 'From' mail address from the header of the message from R-Mail, which in this case will be 'Richard Vobes Radio Show - <alert@r-mail.org>'. Click on 'Test Search' to test your filter, and the message should appear below to indicate that the filter rule is valid. Now click on 'Next Step', select 'Apply the label' and choose 'RSS Richard Vobes Show'. Finally, click on 'Create Filter' and voila, a daily message with a link to the latest Richard Vobes podcast will appear in your Gmail inbox labeled as 'RSS Richard Vobes Show'.

Now you only need to open the latest Richard Vobes Show email, right-click on the link to the podcast, choose 'Save to disk' and wait for the podcast to download!

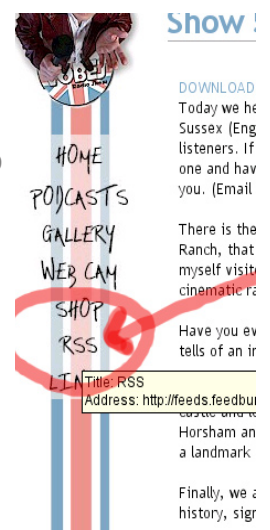
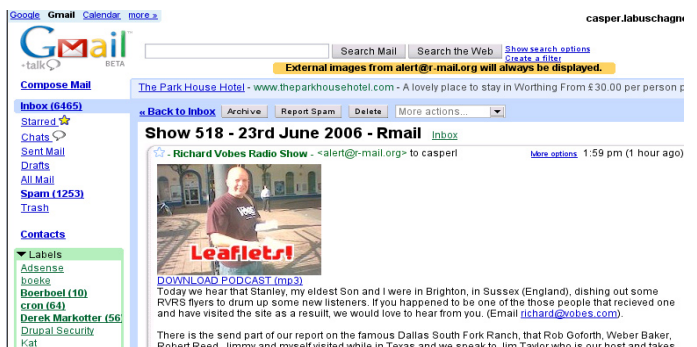
In my case, I prefer to save the file directly onto the 1Gb SD-Card that the Palm PDA, uses which makes it very simple to pop the SD-card from the PC into the Palm. Depending on your type of MP3 player you will still have to download the MP3 file to it.

In fact, any email client (including Outlook Express) can be used as the 'RSS subscription agent' with the assistance of R-Mail. But Gmail has an edge with labels and filters and the fact that a Gmail account is available, from anywhere provided an Internet connection is present. And of course there is absolutely nothing to install on your PC if you use the Gmail option! There are also dedicated programs called RSS aggregators that will perform the same function. Another program that is well worth considering is the Opera browser which is completely free and which has an excellent mail client and RSS feed functionality built-in to it. In the case of both the Opera RSS aggregators, subscribing to the R-Mail website is not required in order to access the RSS feed.

Happy podsurfing!

Casper Labuschagne lives in Kroonstad in the Free State province of South Africa. When not cracking his head over how to actually make money on the internet rather than spend money, he spends his time developing websites in the Drupal content management system. In his free time he complains about the excessive cost of broadband in the Third World, where internet access costs more than car payments or the national average for mortgages. He can be reached at casper.labuschagne@gmail.com

NOTE: The Richard Vobes Radio Show feeds have changed since this item was written but the principle still remains.





In the beginning there was stuff.....

“Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet, just as it was in broadcasting. “ Bill Gates 1996

Now he wasn't exactly talking about podcasting, but if the likes of 'the' computer nerd himself with all those ones and zeros flying around in his head can see the need for good content, then there must be something in it. Being a podcast listener as well as a newly formed podcaster, you have to approach podcasting from one of two positions:

- 1) Produce content someone you like will like
- OR
- 2) Produce content you would like

Simple. Producing a podcast that interests just one person is enough to get an audience. Keeping that audience is a different matter altogether. All podcasts have content, and producing content is easier than you might think; structuring it into a show couldn't be easier.

Most people who I talk to believe that they couldn't produce enough content for a show because they are not creative enough and would run out of ideas. Just like me. Well, here's the solution to your creativity problem, and believe me, it works.

Mind mapping.

Mind maps are a graphical representation of ideas. They help flesh small ideas into big show plans. Think of them as a 'podcast idea engine'. To get an idea of how mind mapping works, check out the links below and start jotting down a few show ideas and expanding them. I'm pretty sure that for a newbie, like me, mind mapping will get you enough material on almost any subject you want to produce.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_mapping
http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

With regard to the 'morning zoo', off-the-cuff shows that are out there, I can guarantee you that there is always some sort of show plan. However, after a bit of practice, even the most scripted and regimented format can sound fresh. That's the talented podcaster at work. We all can't reach that goal, but we can be the best we can be and that is prepared. At the very least, have a few points on a list written down. It can save a lot of editing in post production or save a lot of 'ummm's if you don't edit.

Keep going.

Dave. virginpodcaster.blogspot.com

What does this button do?

Don't touch that feed.

Fellow podcasters, take due warning from this tale.

Late in the month of May, early in the month of June, I noticed that iTunes wasn't showing the latest episodes of the tartanpodcast. Yes, I'm a subscriber to my own podcast. I tried refreshing the subscription, but no new episodes appeared. I tried deleting the subscription and re-subscribing. No new episodes. It doesn't take a podcaster long to break out in a cold sweat when they become aware of this. The reason for the clammy palms and pallid complexion is simple; if you're not getting the latest episodes of your own podcast, then it's likely other people aren't getting it either.

Last month I wrote that one's reasons and motivation for podcasting change through time. Once upon a time I was content to create the tartanpodcast three times a week simply for the joy of creating something. But that excitement soon wears off, and in the absence of financial compensation, one instead draws their podcasting kicks from knowing that one has an audience. I've been very fortunate in that I've managed to grow a global audience of true music fans, so the knowledge that some of them may not be receiving the fruits of my podcasting labour got me a bit worked up.

At the time iTunes was picking up the feed created from my Libsyn blog. Libsyn host my podcast files, and they supply me with a blog that I duly update, enclosing the relevant podcast file and creating a new entry into the feed that's then channelled into iTunes, with iTunes supplying 80% of the tartanpodcast's subscribers with their copy of the latest episode. But for some reason that I couldn't determine, Libsyn and iTunes weren't talking. I decided it was time for me to act as intermediary, so I rolled up my sleeves, and here, podcast producer, is where I made my mistake. I meddled with the feed.

A wise person would tell you that you should never meddle in the affairs of a married man and his wife. Well, I may not be a wise person, but let me create an addendum to that advice; never meddle with your feed.

The results were catastrophic. To cut a long and headache-inducing story short, I was forced to change the feed that shows up on iTunes to a feed that, yes, 80% of the tartanpodcast subscribers knew nothing of. And while some of that 80% have been tenacious enough to visit my website to find out what on earth had happened, thereby learning of the new feed and subscribing to it, a goodly number of them are still stuck with tartanpodcast #83 and nothing since then.

The lesson? Do not mess with your feed.



Hands in my Pocket!

by Colin Meeks

Whenever the term 'podcast' is mentioned, many people automatically think of iPods, iRivers and other such portable audio devices. Many people, however (such as yours truly), listen to most podcasts by using a regular desktop computer. I have around 60 subscriptions (massively pruned back of late) currently active and listen to them throughout the working week. Yes, I am lucky to be wired for sound while I work. However, there are only so many hours in the day, and come Friday night, I've often got between five and 10 podcasts still in my download tab in Juice. I'm one of those anally retentive people who likes to listen to every podcast that is delivered to my computer. I do, however, wish some podcasters would do slightly fewer podcasts in a week, especially the ones that do a podcast every bleedin' day (*grin*...hmmm... I wonder who that could be *grin*!).

So come Friday I have a choice: delete all podcasts still waiting to be listened to, let them carry over to the following week, or copy them to a CD or flash device so I can listen to them over the weekend? I've copied them to CD before. I'm fortunate that my DVD player is wired to the stereo and is able to play MP3 CDs, but this means that in order to listen, I'm stuck around the house. This is where my trusty Pocket PC, a Dell Axim X50V with a 1 GB SD memory card, comes in.

Copying files to a Pocket PC using the default Activesync method is a pain. Not only is it slow, but it can also be unreliable when the files are fairly large. I could take out the SD card, put it into a card reader, then copy the files to it and put it back into the Pocket PC, but I have a much better solution.

Using a piece of software called Card Export, I can switch from regular Activesync mode to Card Export mode, so that when my Axim is plugged into the docking cradle, it appears as a normal drive in Windows Explorer. Then I just copy across the files that I want to listen to over the weekend. This means that those podcasts can go where ever I go. No longer house-bound, I can happily listen to podcasts while mowing the lawn. Yes, all of this can be done with an iPod, but why would I want to buy one, when my Axim does all that and a whole lot more? How much more? Because Card Export is installed on the Pocket PC, I can also go to almost any Windows computer, even if it doesn't have Activesync, and copy files (any files), to and from the device. Thus, a decently sized SD memory card can also be used as a thumb drive, albeit a very expensive one.

Now that all these wonderful podcasts are on my handheld device, how do I play them? Most modern Pocket PCs now come with version 10 of Microsoft's Media Player. To be honest, this is fine for playing the odd file here and there, but as a media player, it isn't very good. There are a few really good free solutions available, and they each have their charm. For basic playlist support and streaming, GS Player is a great piece of software. It's a fairly basic package, but it has a nice and simple interface whilst also supporting streams and offering various skins. For me, though, it's hard to beat Mort Player, which seems to have every feature imaginable and then some. There are many other commercial packages available; two of the best ones are Pocket Music and Pocket Player. All of these packages, both free and commercial, have their pros and cons, but fortunately you can give them all the once-over before deciding which one is for you.

For the avid podcast listener on the go, the next piece of software caught me off guard. I'd seen Pocket PC RSS readers before, and some of them are pretty good, but I hadn't seen one that supported RSS enclosures or, in our case, podcasts before. This is one of those pieces of software that's a joy to find. Aggregation software can be pretty confusing for the first-time user, but Egress is a sync to set up. I haven't had a really good chance to put this piece of software through its paces, but am hoping to do so in the next few weeks. For \$12.00, it's pretty good value for money, and as is always the case with shareware, it can be tried out before purchase.

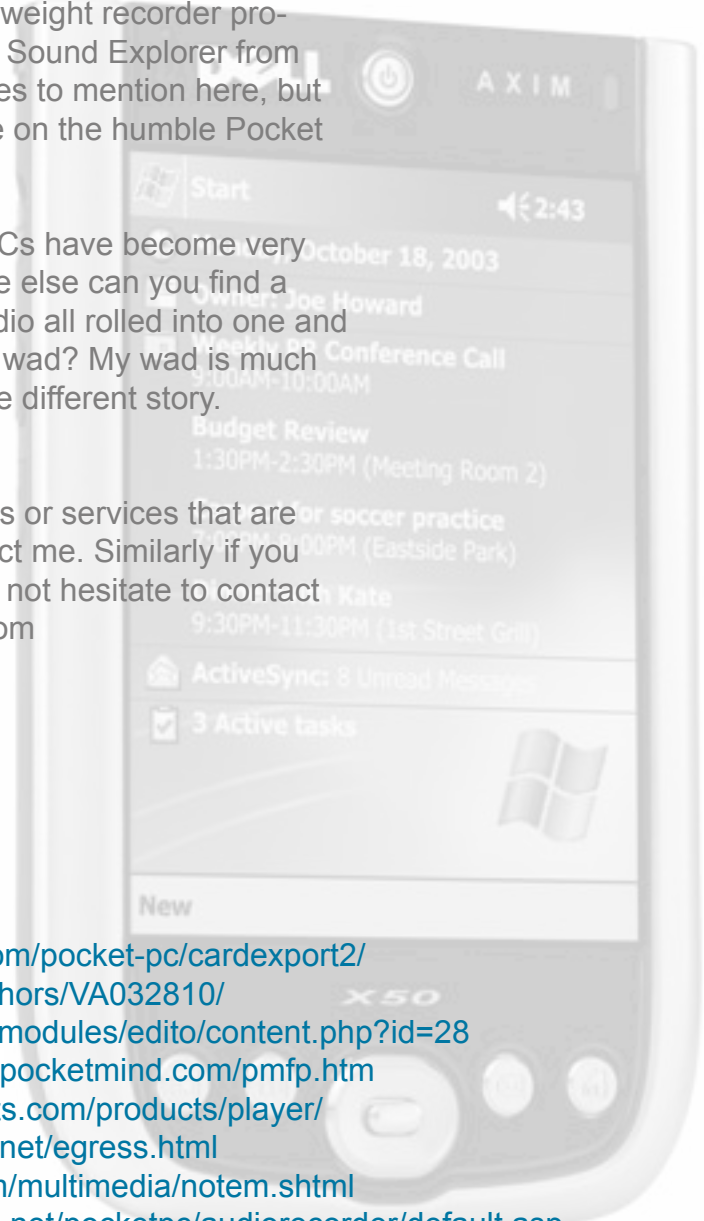


So podcasts and other files can be stored on a Pocket PC and listened to. Podcasts can even be subscribed to and downloaded directly to a Pocket PC, but did you know that a Pocket PC can also be used for recording them? I haven't had a good chance to test out these pieces of software fully (although I hope to for future articles), but my limited experience has been quite positive. Again, the cost of these pieces of software aren't too prohibitive. Of course, I can record on my Pocket PC using the built in recorder program, but this only supports recording in wave or raw format, which is very hungry for space. NoteM is a free program that expands on the basic recorder program, that allows the recording and storage of audio files in MP3 format. Two of the heavyweight recorder programs are Audio Recorder from Resco and Sound Explorer from Vito Technology. Each has too many features to mention here, but they should give a flavor of what is possible on the humble Pocket PC.

I hope I've whetted your appetite. Pocket PCs have become very powerful and exceedingly adaptable. Where else can you find a thumb drive, MP3 player and recording studio all rolled into one and still have space left in your pocket for large wad? My wad is much smaller than it used to be, but that's a whole different story.

If you have or know of any podcast products or services that are Pocket PC related, do not hesitate to contact me. Similarly if you have any questions or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact me, colin.meeks@podcastusermagazine.com

Card Export - \$14.95 - <http://www.softick.com/pocket-pc/cardexport2/>
 GS Player - Free - <http://hp.vector.co.jp/authors/VA032810/>
 Mort Player - Free - <http://www.sto-helit.de/modules/edito/content.php?id=28>
 Pocket Music Bundle - \$19.95 - <http://www.pocketmind.com/pmfp.htm>
 Pocket Player - \$19.95 - <http://www.conduits.com/products/player/>
 Egress - \$12.00 - <http://www.garishkernels.net/egress.html>
 NoteM - Free - <http://www.freewareppc.com/multimedia/notem.shtml>
 Audio Recorder - \$19.95 - <http://www.resco.net/pocketpc/audiorecorder/default.asp>
 Sound Explorer - \$24.95 - <http://www.vitotechnology.com/en/products/soundexplorer.html>





Backlog – Build up a catalogue

by Skinny White Boy

If you read the comments on my podcasting website (that's <http://skinny-whiteboy.kastpod.org>) you might get the impression that you are watching (or at least reading about) some podcasting superstar. So the first working title for this article was 'A day in the life of a podcasting Superstar'. However, you readers of PUM, unlike my five listeners, are neither family nor are getting paid for listening. So, my second working title was 'A day in the life of a podcaster'. But then I realized that the work I do to produce a podcast can't be captured in a day, so now I was stuck. I briefly toyed with the idea of calling this article 'What one insignificant podcaster thinks might be of significance to PUM readers to know about said podcaster'. But the editors shot that down as too long and, in hindsight, they are probably right! They came up with the novel idea of using a title in such a way that a reader could possible figure out the contents of the article by looking at said title. Hence, 'Backlog - Build up a catalogue'.

I think that what sets good podcasters (myself not necessarily included) aside from the more casual players is the ability to come up with a product that has an identity, something you can recognize as uniquely theirs. And while this might sound boring, the way to do that is by repeating certain key elements. Sure, terrestrial radio (at least in the US) has taken this so far that people have fled to podcasting en masse, but on the other hand, you can't expect to retain listeners if the only thing that is ever the same is your 30-second intro.

The best way to create continuity and to create your own personal style is to always have at least one more show ready! If you had just finished recording one, and someone asked you to do the next, you should be ready to go. If music is your thing and you play 10 songs each show, then you should have 20 ready, and not just downloaded to your PC (or Mac, just in case some of those people are reading this), either. You need to have all the information about these songs: The artists, the titles, the genre, the band's web site, everything you would normally tell your audience about a song.

Skinny White Boy



If sound-seeing is an important part of your show, have several edited clips ready. (Richard Vobes explained how to create good sound-seeing clips in PUM Issues 3 and 4.) Always have enough material for at least one more episode of your podcast. Have you noticed that if you go on hiatus, your listener-number drops? That's because your listeners are about continuity. So if work gets in the way, your backlog of material will save the day.

There is another good reason to produce or collect more content than you need for one show. It helps you to figure out what works and what doesn't. What seems a good idea 'on paper' might not work all that well in audio. Doing a couple of the same segments in a row will quickly show you if something sounds as good as you thought it would (as well as give you some catalogue to work with in upcoming episodes).

My own show, almost always, contains an opinion piece on a subject that I feel strongly about. There is no audio other than my own voice. And while these pieces do not get scripted, I do have a 'back-log' of them. As strong as my opinion can be about something, I can't just sit in front of a microphone and yap-yap-yap away. I create some guidance for myself in the form of written-down keywords. I also try to jot down the point that I am trying to make in a sentence or two. It takes me much longer to make the same point in front of my trusty Shure microphone, but writing it down like that helps me to think about it, and in the end I can make my (extremely opinionated) point so much stronger.

If I had to do a show, right this second.... I already know which three songs I'd use (picked from a list of 16); I'd grab the cue-cards for my 'opinion piece' (from a stack of six topics); I could select from three sound-seeing bits; I'd load up the text file in which I keep my listener comments and I'd have two more short segments that I could grab if all the rest doesn't fill thirty minutes.

I am READY!

Skinny White Boy, originally from Amsterdam, The Netherlands, has been podcasting for the past year from the midwestern US, where he shares a residence with his wife, a basset hound, two cats, a bird and lots of digital files but no fish. You can find him at <http://skinnywhiteboy.kastpod.org>.

Skinny White Boy

When is a podcast not a podcast?

By Jimmy Hastell

There is a growing debate as to what defines a podcast. Where is the line drawn and, perhaps even more important, who draws it?

In my eyes, podcasting was a natural development from the blog, where anyone could write about anything; this was the domain of the people, the everyday Joe. Along with the growth of the internet, blogging would develop from the written word to the spoken one, giving the author ability to explore and utilise a new dimension.

This may be a purist point of view, but the audio blog is very much a personal thing; the author was the creator, producer and content provider. As these blogs took on the mantle of podcasting, a more professional production was bound to follow, and to this end the audio blogger became 'equipped'.

The argument of defining a podcast is not a clear-cut one. Some insist that it must contain the whistles and flutes of technology, the RSS feed should be its transport system and even that it must be contained in a specific format. But this is not the case - it is a lot simpler than that. It must be an audio file, and you must be able to get it by whatever means possible.

Where I do have a dispute is with the 'commercial' podcasts. Both radio and television require the purchase of a receiving box solely for that use, whereas podcasts require only the internet (at the moment).

Radio stations now offer podcasts as an optional extra, but there is no creativity involved: they produce second-hand content that has already been broadcast. It's just been repackaged. They may have a podcast, but they're not podcasters.

The definition of what is and what's not a podcast is a little clearer: freedom of speech, individual creativity, hands-on production and delivery by any method seem to mark the boundaries for me. If podcast and podcasting has to be pigeon-holed, then file under miscellaneous.

If you feel you have a view or opinion to express then email PUM at submissions@podcastusermagazine.com



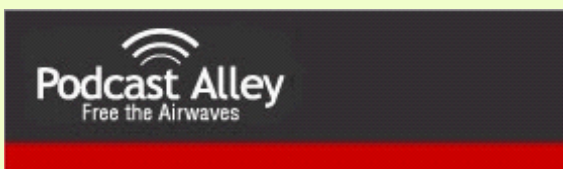
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