

PodcastUser Magazine

PUM is going
to the Expo!

Also in this issue,
Amber MacArthur
Chuck Tomasi
LA Podcasters
Skinny White Boy
and
Ask Auntie PUM



PODCAST AND
PORTABLE MEDIA

EXPO



PUM

Oct 2006

Issue 9

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

Greetings everyone!

Lots of exciting news this month of mergers and acquisitions, expositions and winners of competitions!

As British Telecom gets into bed with Podshow to form BTPodshow – not exactly news for active podcasters and listeners to Adam Curry's show as Adam has been very open about it in the past few months – but the mainstream media got their knickers in a right old twist over it. Good luck to BT and Podshow, but folks don't forget they're not the only game in town.

We announced the winners of the SE Electronics Reflexion Filter on the web site just after last month's edition was published, so I have no shame in telling you all again here. Yes, you read that right. It was a plural 'winners' – those nice chaps at Sonic-Distribution decided to double the prize when they realised the quality of the entries! Thanks to everyone at Sonic Distribution for their generosity. Congratulations to Alastair Bishop from the Hotrod Cadets and Jonathan Wilson from www.Beatlemaniacs.com! Your filters should be winging their way to you shortly. Let us know how you get on, eh? You can read their winning entries at www.podcastusermagazine.com.

We're doing our best to get this edition out early in time for the Expo. If you're reading this in Ontario, California, and there's a lot of podcast people running about, then we did it! Linda Mills and I will definitely be on the Booth at the Expo and we're hoping a few of our contributors will be there too. Do come by and say hello!

It's another great issue, so thanks to all our writers, regular and guest, and special thanks to our editorial and proofing team. Great job - and on with the show!





Too tense?

We all need a bit of tension relief now and again, and www.tensimount.com have come up with this little beauty. If you want clean, distortion-free sound, then for less than \$20 here's the answer. Other models and sizes are available. Check out their site for full details and an audio clip of the difference it really makes... you might be surprised. (*Wonder if it can hold a beer bottle?*)



Myspace, myuniverse, mygoodness.

"The goal is to be one of the biggest digital music stores out there," MySpace co-founder Chris DeWolfe told Reuters. "Everyone we've spoken to definitely wants an alternative to iTunes and the iPod. MySpace could be that alternative."



TWIT

Leo Laporte, the host and man behind This Week In Tech, has announced the TWiT.tv Podcasting Network: <http://www.twit.tv/> featuring 10 tech podcasts. Each TWiT.tv podcast provides context and analysis of all the significant areas of technology. This man knows TOO much.



Used with permission of Chris & Fitz



Sticky Moments

OK, I admit it, I like this idea. Cars are just not (yet) designed with holders for iPods or other MP3 players, so this sticky pad is the ideal accessory to stop things rolling around the dashboard....at last!

Were you there?

Here's some of the links to people who were.

<http://podcamp.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.technorati.com/tags/podcamp>

<http://www.podcastingunderground.com/15-podcamp-boston>



Apple core

September 12. Apple delivers the goods, the iPod shuffle is now smaller, iTunes adds movie downloads, the iPod gets a bigger hard drive, and the Apple iTV set top box brings internet video to your TV screen. The anticipated iPhone failed to make an appearance, as did the predicted touch wide screen. *Next month, re inventing the wheel, it will probably be white.*

BT Teams With PodShow on British Podcasting Portal

BT (British telecom) has teamed up the PodShow the American podcasting network to launch BT Podshow, a branded UK version of the PodShow network.

BT PodShow will provide users with their own personal online media centers where they can post their own content and interact with others locally and across the globe.



DIARY DATES

PodCastCon 2006. Nov 18th. CCT Venues, West Smithfield. London. Admission £41.50

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

NETCAST - Canada 2007

Watch this space.



Roger Smalls, wrong end of the stick?

From a recent blog by Roger Smalls: It has come to my attention that I may have given the wrong impression to readers of podcast user magazine issue 8 pages 24-25. The answer I gave about relaxing in the bath with the snake wasn't anything to do with sharing my bath with an actual snake or any sort of boast about the length of my manhood. When I have a bath I will usually relax listening to a Whitesnake CD while lighting a few candles. I would like to clarify to the readers of this magazine for the record that I do not own any form of bendy reptile nor to I have a long penis, especially in cold water.



UKPA Press Release 11th September 2006

“The proposed Treaty would undermine those uses by layering a new and overbroad set of rights on top of copyright. This will require a second layer of rights clearance for transmitted materials. This will increase transaction costs for podcasters, who already face significant hurdles in obtaining necessary copyright clearances due to undeveloped licensing markets. But it will also give broadcasters the ability to silence podcasters who depend on use of copyrighted materials”

The WIPO Broadcast Treaty is being debated in Geneva tomorrow, and Gwen Hinze from EFF is presenting a joint statement from podcasters from around the world. This piece of internet history is an attempt to make sure that the development of the Broadcast Treaty into internet broadcast/netcast/webcast does not wipe out grassroots podcasting.

http://www.eff.org/IP/WIPO/broadcasting_treaty/podcasting.php

UKPA (UK Podcasters Association) has been working for months with the Irish PodRepBod, the German Podcastverband, the Open Rights Group in the UK and the EFF in the US to resist aspects of the Broadcast Treaty, which many podcasters, podcast users and a growing number of politicians feel are inimical to the healthy development of grassroots new media culture. The issues are about copyright, and the ongoing ownership of content.

Many podcasters fear that the Treaty is giving broadcasters the upper hand when it comes to rights, and creative people everywhere are becoming wary of blanket licenses which remove their rights in the small print - YouTube and MySpace have recently attracted widespread criticism and some legal action.

Activists are also pushing for recognition of Creative Commons licenses in the Treaty - millions of people who self-publish, webcast, and podcast use these licenses for their content; CC is a widely understood and established system which must be respected.

UKPA's campaign has unified podcasters globally, particularly in the UK, Eire, Germany, and the US, in a common cause, to influence the outcome of this looming - and binding - international legislation.

Background: In April 2006, a group of independent UK podcasters, including businesses, publishers, and enthusiasts formed a non-profit podcast association, UKPA - UK Podcasters Association.

UKPA is producing a UK-specific version of the Creative Commons podcast license with the author of the US licence, Colette Vogele, and working to develop podcast metrics standards with ABCe.

UKPA currently represents around one third of independent UK podcasters.

Dean Whitbread

UK Podcasters Association
<http://ukpodcasters.org.uk>



Electronic Frontier Foundation
Defending Freedom in the Digital World

ASK AUNTIE PUM

Although I'm not one to usually wear a dress, today I shall be Auntie, so pull up a seat and settle down for a nice cup of tea and some sage advice.

Ask Auntie PUM
(aka Colin Meeks)

Heather Gorringe wrote in

"Our listeners like nothing better than to join in the farm banter. The Wiggly Podcast is like The Archers.....but real! We have arguments on hedgerows, we have guests like Tim Smit and Clare Short. As one of our iTunes reviews said we talk of all things wiggly, stinky and bloomy down on the farm. Anyway, all this to one side, we want our listeners to be able to join in. At the moment they can record an audio file and email us, but who can be bothered with that?"

We want a comment line, one where you can telephone normally and leave a message. How and where do we get one? How do we then receive the audio file? How much should we be paying? And, having sorted all that, what else can we do to encourage feedback - a comment line for skype, a comment line on our website? How?"

Releasing a podcast for all to hear is a wonderfully liberating experience. The real payback, however, comes when you start hearing back from your listeners. For some reason, many listeners seem to have a real phobia with sending in emails. I can understand it to a certain degree. Many times I've been listening to a podcast while waiting for the bus and heard something that I'd thought about mailing the host about, but as with many things floating around in my brain at the moment, it ends up getting somehow lost. If only there were a better way of getting feedback from listeners. Well there is, and it's as simple as talking to your bookie. OK, maybe bookie isn't the best of examples, but you can solicit response from your listeners in a variety of ways that can be as simple as lifting the phone and leaving a voicemail.

There's a variety of services that enable your listeners to call in on regular telephones and leave voicemail. This voicemail then gets converted to an audio file and gets sent to you by email. Three services that work in this way are eFax, JConnect and Simple Voice Box. I had a UK eFax number for about seven years, using it to receive faxes and voicemails from the UK. Friends, family and businesses could send me a fax and voicemail here in Canada for the price of a local, UK phone number, which was considerably cheaper than sending the message by the normal route. eFax now offers phone numbers in many of the major cities of the world, so no matter where you are, you have the chance to have a number that is convenient for your listeners; this is, however only available for a fee. JConnect also charge for toll free or local phone numbers but do offer a free service with a random US area-code number. All of these services cost around the \$15 to \$20 per month mark for the basic service, which should satisfy most podcasters.

ASK AUNTIE PUM

Skype, whilst not being a traditional telecom company, does provide a nice alternative to the above services, and it may be something that you already have on your computer. For the small fee of 5 Euros for 3 months or 15 Euros for a year, you can have voicemail with your Skype ID so that people can leave you messages. For \$14.00 for 3 months, or \$40 for the year, you can purchase a SkypeIn telephone number in one of the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States. SkypeIn allows you to select a telephone number in one of the aforementioned countries that is then forwarded to your Skype account. This SkypeIn service also comes with voicemail for free. The only downside with the basic Skype voicemail is that the voicemails are saved in a proprietary format, so you can't just drop them into your podcast. However, if you have the correct set up, you should be able to play the message from within Skype and capture it in your podcast. There are also various software products that work in conjunction with the regular free Skype service to give your email and recording to MP3. I'll be looking at those next month.

The final option we're going to cover here is MyChingo. This is a service that has come to the fore quite recently, but already many popular podcasts have adopted it and seem to be quite happy with it. With MyChingo, you are given an applet to put on your website. When a listener hooks up a microphone to the computer and hits the 'Record' button, the message is then available as an audio file for all to hear. The messages can also be put into an RSS feed or can be marked as private and downloaded by the podcaster. The basic free service allows for messages of a maximum length of two minutes each. For \$3.95 per month or \$45 for the whole year, you can offer your listeners the ability to leave a message that's as long as 30 minutes.

As you can see, there are quite a few different options to choose from; each has its pros and cons.

I hope that I've answered your question sufficiently, Heather. If you or any of our readers have further questions regarding voicemail services, don't hesitate to contact me - colin.meeks@podcastusermagazine.com

It's now time to hang up the Auntie PUM dress for this month.... I wonder which of us will put on the gingham next month. Send your questions to help@podcastusermagazine.com - we're waiting to answer them!

Wiggly Podcast - <http://www.wigglywiggles.co.uk/>

eFax - <http://www.efax.com>

JConnect - <http://www.j2.com>

Simple Voice Box - <http://www.simplevoicebox.com>

Skype - <http://www.skype.com>

myChingo - <http://www.mychingo.com>

Review Roulette

Once again our team of fearless reviewers here at Podcast User Magazine offer up their ears to the mercy of the fickle hand of fate. Our mission: to find three podcasts we weren't particularly looking for, using the Podcast User Magazine Random Podcast Picker, and to tell you whether they're peaches or lemons. That way, we hope you'll find an unexpected podcast or two that you might want to listen to.



Addicted to Race

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

I was pleasantly surprised when the random podcast picker chose this podcast for me, as it's not the sort of subject I would have actively sought out, but I was intrigued to find out how it would be handled. "Addicted to race" thoughtfully explores racial issues in the U.S.A. – the episodes I listened to covered issues such as inter-racial relationships, foreign policy on Iraq, the pitfalls of participating in demonstrations, and a particularly fascinating study of the role of eugenics in artificial insemination. The show is very well put together by Jen Chau and Carmen Van Kerckhove and is highly supported by audience participation, including special material from so-called "summer interns". I get the impression that this show provides a popular focal point for a lively community of people interested in racial issues.

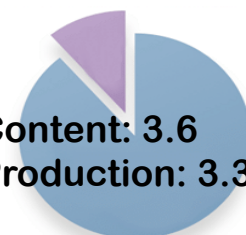
The content varies from clearly scripted items (which are not always recited in a fluent, natural manner), to ad-lib items such as great interviews and Jen's "rants".

This is one of those podcasts where the quality of the content often exceeds the production quality. Particularly surprising is the huge disparity in the sound quality of the two hosts: Carmen's microphone is very noisy, its levels are too low, and there is a distracting click every time she switches it off and on to minimise the noise from her mic while Jen is talking. Hopefully Jen and Carmen will be able to resolve this minor quibble in the near future.

On the whole I would say this is a thought-provoking show, covering some very interesting issues, which combined with Carmen and Jen's innovative approach, means that "Addicted to race" is staying in my subscription list.

Text by Simon Toon

Content: 3.6
Production: 3.3



YA Bookcast

Another great podcast hosted by LibSyn.com



YA Bookcast

<http://www.caseytolan.com>

Casey Tolan talks about and reviews the newest and best Young Adult books.

Much has been made in the last few years about JK Rowling's Harry Potter series almost single-handedly bringing children back into the world of literature and getting them excited about reading again. Reading is now officially cool, and 13yr-old student, writer, journalist, and podcaster Casey Tolan from Wisconsin is producing a great podcast to talk about and review books that appeal to readers of his generation.

Only three episodes old, the show already has a large subscriber base and sponsorship from the Wisconsin Times, a bi-monthly, fun newspaper described as 'The Onion for kids'. It's (currently) a monthly show, though Casey says he intends to produce them more frequently. He'll have to be a pretty voracious reader to maintain the necessary level of source material if that's the case, given how much he covers each month.

Each show is around 30 minutes (with the exception of the 19-minute first show), and Casey reviews the books, reads extracts and gives readers an idea of the prices they can expect to pay for the hardbacks or paperbacks. His style is squarely aimed at kids of his age, so although it gets a little tiresome on these sad old adult ears, I can appreciate that it would be welcomed and enjoyed by the intended audience. Kids don't need detailed discussions of themes, textual analysis and the like, so this isn't really a valid criticism. All they want to know is what the story's about and whether it's any good.

So far Casey's covered books based on Greek Myths, the works of Garth Nix and books by Cornelia Funk. Having seen many of these but never having read them, it was great to get an overview of each and find out what the readers might think about each one. Just call it advanced preparation for future reading material for my 'advanced reader' daughter!

Technically, I'm very impressed by Casey's skills as a podcaster. He has a good strong voice, slick production and music that suits the subject of his show. He'd put many an adult novice podcaster to shame with his skills. My only slight niggle would be that the vocal volumes vary wildly between shows – sometimes a bit too loud, sometimes too quiet and sometimes sounding as though he's halfway down the hall away from his microphone. But hey – he's only just started, and I'm sure with practice he'll get things set up and standardised over time.

Great work, Casey – you're doing a sterling job in continuing to instill your audience with a love of reading and books, and it's nice to see a younger generation of podcasters starting up.

Text by Grant Mason

Content: 3.5
Production: 3.8





NBC5 Podcasts

<http://www.nbc5.com/news/4436956/detail.html>

The Podcast: For someone living in the Chicagoland area, you might think they'd like this podcast, but you know, it's really just another re-hash of news items already broadcast on the morning newscast, afternoon newscast, or elsewhere. If you are a Chicagoan living elsewhere and want to keep abreast of news from the Land of Lincoln, then it's a good way to do so (as others might do with selected BBC podcasts, like Sportsweek from Radio 5).

This is more of a reference podcast than one we'd clutter up our MP3 players or aggregators with. By the way, the reporter on the "One More Thing" edition, Bob Sirott, is always worth listening to and is, and has been, a staple of Chicago journalism for many years.

Professional-sounding and slickly produced as you'd expect from a news broadcaster.

A good mix of lighter and more serious topics, obviously more relevant to a US audience, though they do cover global stories.

The Website: Good, rich website, but only interesting if you live in or around Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Typically you would choose to go this site if you want to review a news-worthy item or some cool video content.

Text by Phil Clark and Grant Mason



This month's podcasts were reviewed by:
Grant Mason
Phil Clark
Simon Toon
Chris Matson

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



Ireland



Global voices
by Janet Parkinson

PODCASTING THE IRISH WAY...

There's a podcast community slowly building in Ireland – and a really good mixture of talent too... But what's striking is how some good 'casts have a real 'do-it-as-the-mood-takes-you' attitude about the frequency of shows, which sometimes leaves you wondering if some still exist or not, but that's nothing to worry about. Podcasting's about enjoyment and the Irish certainly know all about that! Have a listen to a few.

**newmusic
ireland
newmusic
ireland**

www.newmusicireland.com

Eric Campbell guides you through a vibrant mix of seriously talented artists from all over Ireland. Eric was a natural choice to present this show, conceived specifically to help Irish bands and artists find a medium to showcase their goods, as he really does know about the music scene. Fast-paced and up-tempo, he packs a lot into this

Production 4/5
Content 4/5



spudshow

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

Presented in Gaelic, this short (5 to 10 minute) show features one unsigned Irish (mostly) female singer a day and features the artist's bio on the blog. All this makes it a quick and easy listen for those into the Irish music scene. If you like female vocals, it's a great intro to some new talent.

Production 3/5
Content 3/5



Ireland

2igtv.com

www.2igtv.com

Take two Irish mates 'with an unhealthy interest in awful movies and worse TV' and a bit of podcasting kit, let them press record and they're off! That's all 'Colonel Creedon' and Mark need to create a regular 40-minute show 'for people who should know better'. Taking sarcasm to the extreme, this show is ballsy and explicit in places – but seemingly totally unscripted; they crack each other up every minute. It's not going to be everyone's style (and goes a bit far for my ears on occasions), but the humour is infectious. Just be warned... you never know what they're going to come out with next...

Production 3/5

Content 3/5

(4/5 if you're happy with the risqué material on occasion!)

Talking Poker

home of the TP Poker Podcast

<http://www.talking-poker.com/>

Big Dragon produces a well-rounded informational show about poker. His easy interview style leads those he chats with into passing on tips and views on poker as well as what's going on and where in the poker world. There are only a few Talking Poker shows in the can so far, but Big Dragon is promising more!

Production 3/5

Content 4/5

I reckon it's early days for Irish Podcasting, but knowing the Irish and their love of 'the craic', it'll be great to return in the New Year to see what else has emerged on the scene. In the meantime, if you've got a show I missed, please do let me know and I'll make sure I give it a good listen! Thanks to Steve Ford Elliott for the picture.

Next month it's over to New Zealand – if I survive the haka, I'll hope to have some great shows for you!

Amber MacArthur

“Moving On Up”

by Paul Parkinson

*I've been trying to write this for about two months now. I'm busy (I still have a day job) and Amber's *always* busy, so getting to make this happen has been somewhat tricky. When you add in Amber's most recent news, it makes it into a small miracle that this happened at all. I am very happy it did.*

*For those of you who read the title and said “Amber who?”, quite frankly you need to stay **in** more!*

Amber MacArthur is an internet / podcasting / video casting / broadcasting / journalistic / technology phenomenon.

A whirlwind of activity, she is co-host of a number of podcasts such as CommandN.tv with Mike Lazzzero and her brother, Jeff, and Inside The Net with Leo Laporte. In addition she has been a regular fixture on Call For Help from G4TechTV which airs on US, Canadian and Australian TV.

On top of that she also co-runs Arktyp, a web design company which recently redesigned the www.twit.tv website. You get the picture? She's a busy lady.

This interview was done as Amber and I exchanged emails every once in a while, with me coming up with a number of questions and Amber not having time to answer them. In the end she said, “Can you give me a deadline for this? How about this Friday? I'm much better w/deadlines ;)!”

And so it was – I set a deadline and about 24 hours later, in came this amazing email with loads of detail and insight and, I think, Amber's spirit coming through. I hope you enjoy it.



I was born in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in the countryside, where I went to a one-room schoolhouse. For the first 10 years of my life, not much happened on the Island, but it is definitely a big part of who I am today. I grew up in Ottawa and always wanted to be a journalist, but I also really enjoyed using computers. In Journalism School I majored in broadcast journalism and online journalism, so now I have my dream job doing tech content on TV. I have two brothers, Jeff and David, and my parents are the most wonderful people in the world. (They're currently spending part of their time in Sri Lanka on a tsunami reconstruction project.) I don't have pets, but I'd like a Burmese Mountain dog. My dream is to have my own production company where I can create shows that are created for the web but are also appropriate for TV.

I am the New Media/Internet Reporter & Host at City-TV/CP-24 in Toronto.

Amber tosses this sentence in as an aside, but it's actually a very big deal. It turns out that the key reason she has been so elusive recently is that this deal has been in progress. She will host a one-hour prime-time TV show in Toronto dealing with what's happening on the internet, in tech and with a few gadgets in the mix. As I understand it, she is also going to have a slot on the nightly news, too. A big deal indeed.

Prior to working at City-TV, I spent two years as a host on G4TechTV on Call for Help, Torrent and Gadgets & Gizmos. I started in the tech industry as a content developer and information architect at Razorfish in San Francisco. While at Razorfish, I also worked at the Webby Awards reviewing and rating websites. Following Razorfish, I led all web initiatives and software usability for an e-procurement start-up, and I also spent two years managing a Microsoft web project called Microsoft Home Magazine. I have an undergraduate degree in English and a post-graduate degree in Journalism.

This somewhat understates things again. Amber kicked off her journalism experience at school when she wrote for the Youth Page of the Ottawa Citizen and worked as Opinions Editor at her college newspaper. She then completed internships at KQED Radio: The California Report, in San Francisco, and at CBC-TV back home in Charlottetown. She also worked as an associate television reporter at CBC-TV Charlottetown and at Marblehead News, just outside Boston.

Amber has a post-graduate Bachelor of Journalism degree, majoring in Broadcast and Online Journalism from the University of King's College, and she acquired an Honourable Mention in Online Journalism at the Atlantic Journalism Awards in 1999 and a Bachelor of Arts (English) degree from Dalhousie University. Amber has taught website content and usability workshops in Toronto and spoken about website design and tech trends at a number of industry events. After she sent her bio, Amber and I had a somewhat tongue-in-cheek conversational Q&A session:

Hi Amber, how are you?

I'm VG (short for, "Very Good!"). Please spread the VG word, it's too good to keep to yourselves.

Can I buy you a drink? What'll it be?

I don't drink alcohol, so it will have to be a Perrier - with lime. If I'm feeling really crazy, I might have a Diet Pepsi - but only a mini-can.

I was reading your current CV on your website – it looks like you are extremely busy all the time - how and when do you just kick back and just chill out?

When I want to chill out, I go home to my parents' house on Prince Edward Island (PEI). As soon as I get off the plane, I start to unwind. The neat thing about PEI is that there is a tight-knit tech community on the Island (bloggers, designers, etc.), so just knowing they're there makes me feel connected and disconnected at the same time.

Ice cream or sorbet?
**Low-fat Cherry
 Garcia frozen yogurt**

The list of TV-work and podcasts you do is pretty techy. On the podcast side there's TWiT, Inside the Net, CommandN and Torrent, and there's a whole swath of G4Tech TV programming. If you could do a non-tech podcast or videocast, what would you feel passionate enough about to make it work? And why?

I'm not sure I could do a non-tech production right now. I really love technology and the Internet, so it would be difficult to give up that obsession. One of the reasons I'm in this 'space' is because it's so fast-paced. I love that it's an ever-changing industry and there is never really any bad news, just new improvements.

You work a lot with Leo Laporte – how did you meet Leo and get that gig?

I first met Leo when I was a guest on Call for Help on G4TechTV. Eventually I became the co-host, so after hundreds and hundreds of shows together Leo and I are wonderful friends. One day we hope to start Leober Productions (get it? Leo + Amber). And if you're going to try to buy Leober.tv, it's too late - Leo just snagged it up!

Sunshine and heat or
 sunshine and snow?
**Sunshine and heat.
 I love humidity**

CommandN.tv is an amazing video podcast – can you tell us about it? What gave you the idea for it? Who is the team on that?

Originally my brothers and I were going to start a tech video podcast called Sibs on Tech. We're all spread across Canada (Halifax, Toronto, Vancouver), so logistically it was difficult. While we were playing around with this idea, my colleague Mike Lazazzera suggested we go out into a park and shoot a little tech news video. After an episode or two, we came up with a name and my brother Jeff (who lives in Halifax) got involved. We also were lucky enough to sign on Brian McKechnie, who is now one of the key players and producers in commandN.

On one of the recent CommandN.tv videos you snagged an interview with film maker David Cronenberg (Scanners, The Fly, Dead Ringers, Crash, eXistenZ). How did that happen?

It was surprisingly easy. We just asked if we could interview him at a Toronto press event. You'd be surprised how many people are keen to support video podcasters; Cronenberg is one of them.

iPod or Creative Zen
iPod!!

What gear do you use for CommandN – sometimes the quality of the A/V is great and sometimes it's um, less so. Does the recording equipment / engineer vary or is it more a question of the locations you end up at?

Our camera is a Sony PD-170. We now have multiple wireless and wired mics, so our sound problems should be few and far between. Sometimes it's difficult to shoot in certain locations, so our viewers just have to accept the kinks and love the content.

Bandwidth is expensive – especially for video – how does CommandN get paid for?
www.Netfirms.com in Toronto is one of our primary sponsors. We also owe a big thank you to www.smunique.com in Texas and www.libsyn.com.

Where do you see podcasting in three years?

I think more and more people will be podcasting in three years, and more traditional media organizations will jump on the podcasting ship

World of Warcraft or Second Life?
I'm not really into gaming, mostly because I spend too much time online. But if I had to choose, I'd definitely choose Second Life

What future is there for commercial podcasting?

I think podcast producers will have to start depending on advertising to keep the production qualities high and to warrant spending their days and nights working on their podcasting careers. The good news is that I think advertisers will be more and more comfortable working with podcasters.

Do you have any new podcasts in the frame?

I'm starting a new job at City-TV in September, so I really want to do a video podcast for them. I will be their New Media/Internet Reporter & Host, so I have to get some of the great content I'll be covering online. I can't wait!

What can you tell me about Arktyp?

Arktyp is a small design firm specializing in high-end design, specifically in the Web 2.0 space. We also do some branding work, which is the core expertise of the founder (and my good friend) Tony Schibono.

When did it form?

Tony and I worked together a few years ago on a project called Microsoft Home Magazine. He's one of the best designers I know and we really both enjoy the Web 2.0 space, so starting a company was a natural fit.

As I understand, you and your brother did the design for the new TWiT site, and it was developed elsewhere using Drupal. How does that kind of split responsibility work?

Arktyp did the design of TWiT.tv, which meant Tony was the lead designer and my brother Jeff did most of the information architecture. I was also involved since I'm so close to the TWiT.tv project and I love the challenge of taking a clunky website and making it shine. The back-end of TWiT.tv is based on the content management system Drupal, which was built by a team out of the U.S. called Lullabot. Basically we gave Lullabot the design and they made it work, but of course Arktyp was involved along the way to ensure the design was correctly implemented.

How long did it take, and what tools did you use?

It took a few months to redesign TWiT.tv. For information architecture we used OmniGraffle, and Tony used Adobe products for the design.

Finally, for those of you who like the silly questions here is a list of Amber's faves!

Film: The Princess Bride

Book: From Good to Great

Destination: Prince Edward Island

Label: Diesel Jeans (is that what label means? LOL!)

Band: Snow Patrol

<http://commandn.typepad.com>

<http://www.twit.tv/ITN>

<http://www.g4techtv.ca/>



Listen Up

www.spyndle.com

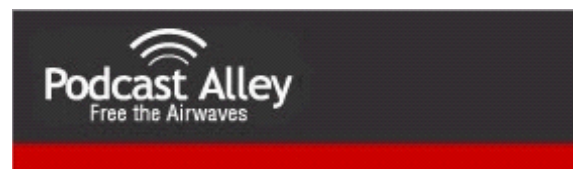
(c) 2006 Kreg Steppe



Rick's dreams of striking it rich with podcasting quickly faded with his first sound seeing tour



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



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

Podcast Peer Awards



Recognizing Excellence in Podcasting

PUM asks a few questions of Dave Hitt, founder of The Podcast Peer Awards

PUM: Why did you start the Podcast Peer Awards?

Dave: Last fall there was a long thread on Podcast Alley where people were complaining that obscure podcasts had no chance to be seen in top ten lists and awards based on popularity. What about all the little shows out there, great shows nobody has heard of? They couldn't compete against shows with thousands of subscribers.

The solution was the Podcast Peer Awards. It's based on the Academy Awards model, where members, in this case established podcasters, nominate and vote for shows. And our unique voting system means popularity isn't the only factor in winning an award.

PUM: What makes it unique?

Dave: During the nomination phase members can vote for or against a show. That makes it virtually impossible to game the system. A show's score is the number of yes votes minus the number of no votes, and a score of +5 was necessary to qualify for a nomination. That may not sound like much, but in some categories it was incredibly tough to qualify. A lot of shows, including some very popular ones, were knocked out of the nominations by "no" votes.

The finalists were the qualifiers with the highest scores. When they were listed we could sit back and see how well it worked. It worked great. Most categories feature both popular shows and shows you've never heard of.

PUM: What surprised you the most?

Dave: The difficulty of qualifying for a comedy nomination. In retrospect, it shouldn't have been surprising, because everyone's funny bone vibrates at a different frequency.

PUM: What do you personally look for in a podcast?

Dave: It has to be entertaining, and something I can't find on the radio. It should have a strong point of view. If it's an informational show I expect to learn something. And unless it's a brand new show, the production has to be very good.

PUM: Are there any subjects the Podcast Peer Awards won't entertain?

Dave: In this round we had an Adult category, for sexually explicit content, right along side a Religion/Spirituality category for godcasts, so there's room for almost everything. We do reserve the right to reject any show or any podcaster, but haven't yet.

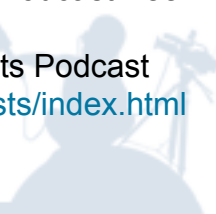
PUM: What sort of feed-back are you getting?

Dave: It's been about 98% positive. There are always nay-sayers, but not many and we're having too much fun with this to pay much attention to them.

PUM: How big do you expect this to get?

Dave: At the moment we've got well over 400 podcasters participating, and this is the first year we've done it. We want it to be huge. We want it to be THE podcast award, the one that makes reputations, the one with the most credibility and influence, the first place listeners check when they want to find the best shows. We want to be the Oscars of podcast awards. And we're well on our way.

Dave Hitt is the founder of the Podcast Peer Awards www.podcastpeers.org and the creator of the Quick Hitts Podcast <http://www.davehitt.com/podcasts/index.html>





‘You either can or you can’t make sweepers, that is. In this month’s issue I have enlisted the help of Mark Jensen from Studio1AProductions to tell us just what a voice-over company can do for you’.

Mark, I’m going to jump right in at the deep end, how much is this going to cost me and what do I get?

Voiceovers for radio and television are a completely different type of work. I’ll focus in on voiceovers for podcasters.

As always; there are options. a dry read (no music bed or effects) can run as little as \$11. If you would like royalty free music and effects added, the price goes up to \$39 for three “produced” spots up to 8 seconds each.

What you end up with are MP3 files that are ready to ‘air’ on your show along with an intellectual license to use these spots.

OK, so I’ve written a script, now I’m no William Shakespeare, if there was room for improvement, would you tell me?

After 23 years of radio, television and ad agencies, I’m finding it refreshing to see some of the scripts people write. Many of my podcast clients have an idea they want to get across and leave the final writing up to me. Sometimes, they want exact wording. Since we are usually talking about short liners, I’ll work closely with the client to come up with something that works for them.

If something just doesn’t sound right or gel into the image they are trying to create, I’ll mention it and suggest alternate wording. However, in the end, the customer is my client and I’ll do the read as they like. The only exception may be if the text is slanderous, offensive, or in really bad taste. In that case, I would simply decline. I’m happy to say that I haven’t run into that situation.

You have originally been dealing with broadcast audio for television and radio. When and how did you discover the relativity new media known as podcasting?

I think it was July, 2005 when Apple released iTunes 4.9 with podcast support. I had heard of podcasting previously, but knew it would be huge when Apple adopted it. When I was doing major-market radio in the 80's, things were changing rapidly. I entered radio at the end of an era when personality ruled and the whole atmosphere was fun and exciting. Being in radio often meant you could MC major concerts, pick some of your own music from the playlist and usually have your own producer that assisted in commercial production. I'm afraid most of that has disappeared in all but the largest markets.

Back to your question. ...the day iTunes 4.9 was released, I bought my domain and decided I would get into podcasting. I've never looked back.

I discovered your site, www.podsqod.com quite by chance when looking for a microphone review for research purposes and discovered that you also produce your own podcasts about the equipment. What made to take this extra step?

It all stemmed from very early podcasts I heard. For the most part, the audio quality was just terrible. Here was a group of intelligent, highly technical people that didn't understand the art of recording or broadcasting. They had very interesting things to say but simply lacked the audio knowledge to put out a pleasing 'sound.' I knew that this was an opportunity to talk about my passion for all things audio and electronic. For me, it was very natural. If you think about it, magazines have flourished for decades as they write about how a piece of audio equipment sounds. How cool would it be to actually hear the microphone you were thinking of buying instead of reading about how it sounds?

Mark "Jensen" Titterington
Manager, Studio1AProductions, LLC

<http://www.podsqod.com>
<http://www.hamradiocast.com>

mark@podsqod.com
mark@studio1aproductions.com



Podcast Station

by Audion Laboratories

Professional Podcasting Production for everyone!

By Phil Clark and
James Hastell

By the time you read this review, the Podcast & Portable Media Expo will be done and dusted. And if you were able to attend, then you may have seen the folks from Audion Laboratories touting the new Podcast Station release. If you were smart, you immediately bought a copy. www.podcaststation.com

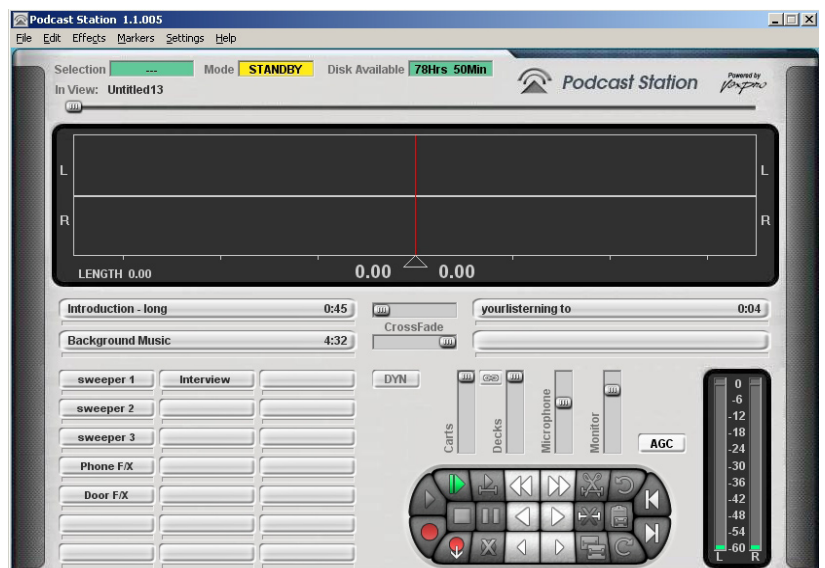
For our money, this is one of the easiest-to-use, and most flexible packages, that can upgrade the capabilities of the amateur podcaster to a level approaching professional production.

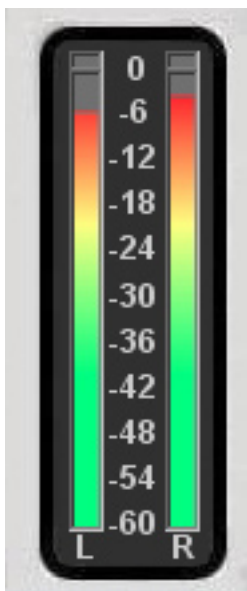
Podcast Station is designed for use with Windows 2K and XP gives you the ability to record, edit and mix, and publish your podcast without any additional equipment other than a microphone, and a computer, all for the price of \$59.95 / £32.00. Audion Labs are already well known to professional broadcasters and on-air talent for their VoxPro™ software and VoxPro™ Control Panel, two products which are priced way out of the range of the average podcaster. We must assume that they realized the potential for downsizing their software and producing a reasonably priced alternative to match the booming podcast market.

Jimmy and I came across this software via a tip from a friend, and we downloaded the trial copy, which is active for 10 days. This should be plenty of time for potential users to test it out and get hooked! We did want to find out if there were any limitations imposed by the trial version, so we emailed Audion Labs and they said there was no difference. They also provided us a link to a beta copy of the latest software release, version 2.0.1, and told us that by PME they will have an official release of the next version 2.0.2. We recommend this is the one to download, as there are several improvements over version 1.1 which put this product into the “must-have” category.

Perhaps we're guilty of eulogizing too much about this application, but what is clear to us is just how much fun this will be to a first-time podcaster; to be able to start off immediately and get a result is kind of a buzz!

Main screen version 1.1.6





Volume meters

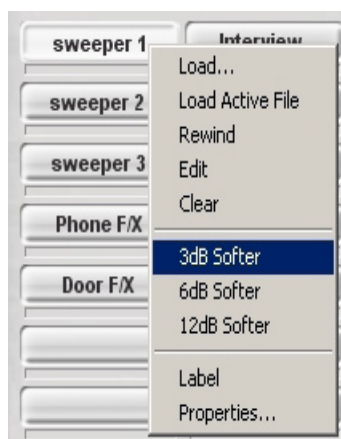
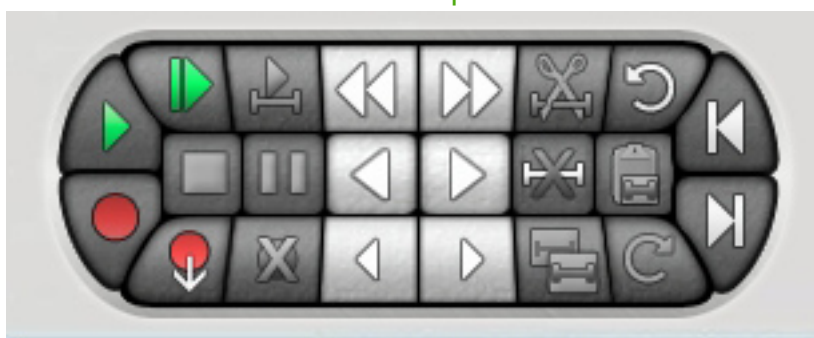
So, how did we test it the software? Well, Jimmy's a little more cautious than I, and he actually skimmed through the manual first. Me, I like to "install-and-play", and if I can use it in a few minutes, it's got potential. So, that's what I did and I was soon plugging in jingles and background music just like those BBC guys!

Then we got together and recorded a short podcast that put the software through its paces. You can hear the results at this link: [Here](#).

The hardware configuration we used was actually a little more than just a laptop. As we were connecting via Skype, I wanted Jimmy, playing the 'simulated co-host', to hear the jingles and music I was playing, so I used my Behringer mixer to facilitate this. The output from the laptop ran into one channel, my mic ran through an XLR channel, and the mixer output was played back into the laptop mic plug. However, the entire podcast was recorded using PCS on the laptop.

Note that the version 2 of PCS has the ability to directly interface with Skype and SAM (Skype Answering Machine) software from KishKish.com, to allow for recording Skype conversations. This record capability is only available under the SAM 'Gold' edition, which will cost you \$19.95. Alas, you can only record and insert Skype conversations into your podcast – you cannot do them simultaneously. We'll leave it to the reader to decide, but if you have a setup like mine, then maybe you won't need the additional software.

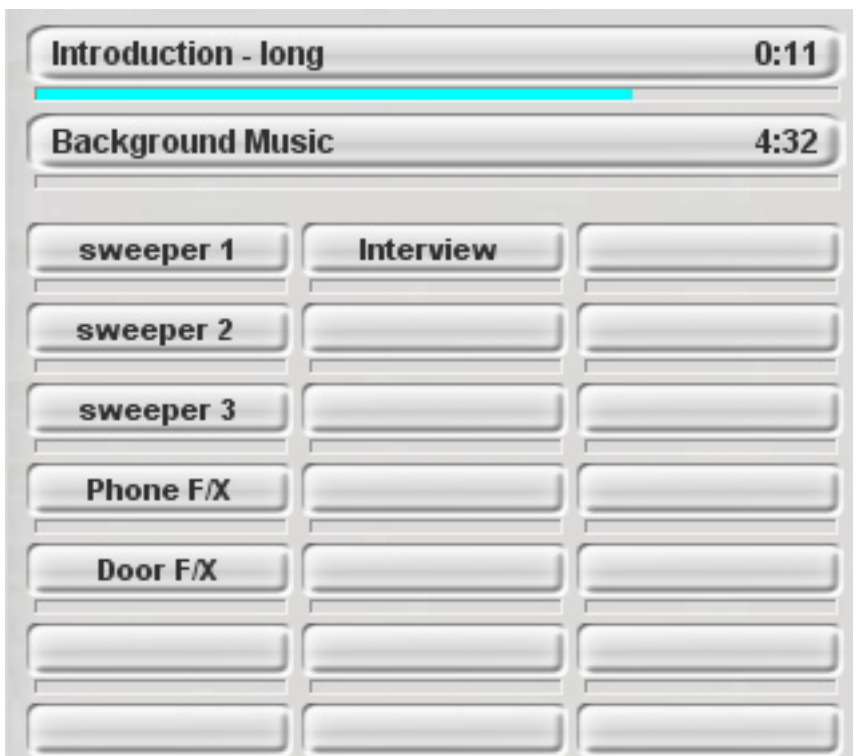
Control panel



Cart controls

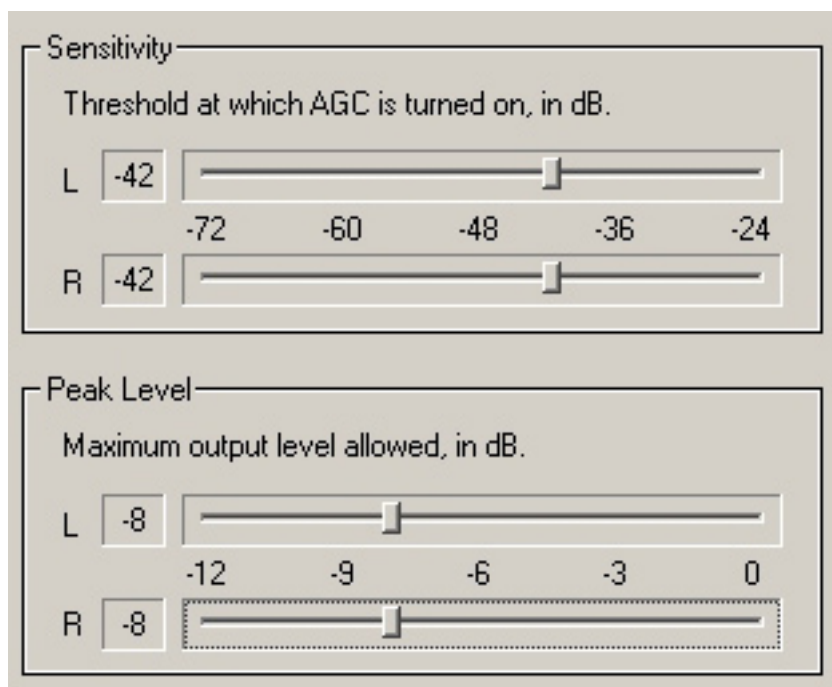
The Podcast Station interface is well designed, operational areas are grouped and the controls easy to use. It worked right out of the box, instantly finding a microphone which allowed us to record immediately. The main interface shows the cart or cartridge buttons, having the ability to preload sweepers and effects to be fired off at will during your recording. In addition, are the deck buttons that allow you to cross fade music or segments. In the original release we used, there were limitations on the number of carts and decks. This has now been removed with version 2.x and the creation of decks and carts is controlled simply by resizing or maximizing the interface window. I run my laptop at 1280 x 1024 and a maximized window gave me 20 decks and 49 carts. We're told you can go higher than this, but we suspect that 20 x 49 will be adequate for most needs.

We really liked the ability to auto-crossfade and auto-segue decks, which are turned on by clicking the Pro mode option. These features give you a capability to play sequential segments that automatically segue to one another, plus auto-fade at preset intervals (1-8 seconds) from one deck to the next. It takes some knowledge of the content, and maybe a practice run to get the timing right, but by no means is it cumbersome to achieve a professional outcome. Right-clicking on the deck provides a sub-menu of actions, and we particularly liked the 'Softer' option. As all content may not be recorded at the same level, this gave the ability to very quickly soften the loud ones by 3, 6, or 12dB, without changing the original file.



Carts and decks

The not-so-good category is rather bare. We found it takes some work to balance the sound levels and set the mixer configuration to work as you need it, but once it's done, then you can save the configuration for future reference. And despite favoring the segue options for the decks, this takes a while (15 minutes) to figure out how to use this effectively. The loop function also seemed to have problems, and we never did get it to work during our tests.



Once you have recorded your show, there is the option to edit and add effects. The menu bar provides an Effects option which gives you all the basics you might need, but if you are comfortable with Audacity, Sound Forge, Cool Edit or the like, you will probably continue to use those applications.

Once you've recorded and edited your podcast, publishing the finished product is a piece of cake using the PCS Publishing wizard. It is tailored to 3 levels of expertise: beginner . . . intermediate . . . and full control: We couldn't test this fully, as neither of us has a feed of our own (darn amateurs!), but it certainly looks to be fool-proof.

Applying AGC with conditions

Automatic Gain Control

- Enable AGC.
 - Apply to microphone only.
 - Apply to carts, decks and microphone.

As to documentation, the User Guide is an online affair, but is simple and easy to read and use. How simple? It's only 26 pages, and most of that comprises screenshots of the product. It is very intuitive, so you usually don't need to reference it to get results. A quick read should be all you need to figure out the finer points. We would recommend checking out the tutorial videos found on the website, as these are both informative and interesting to watch.

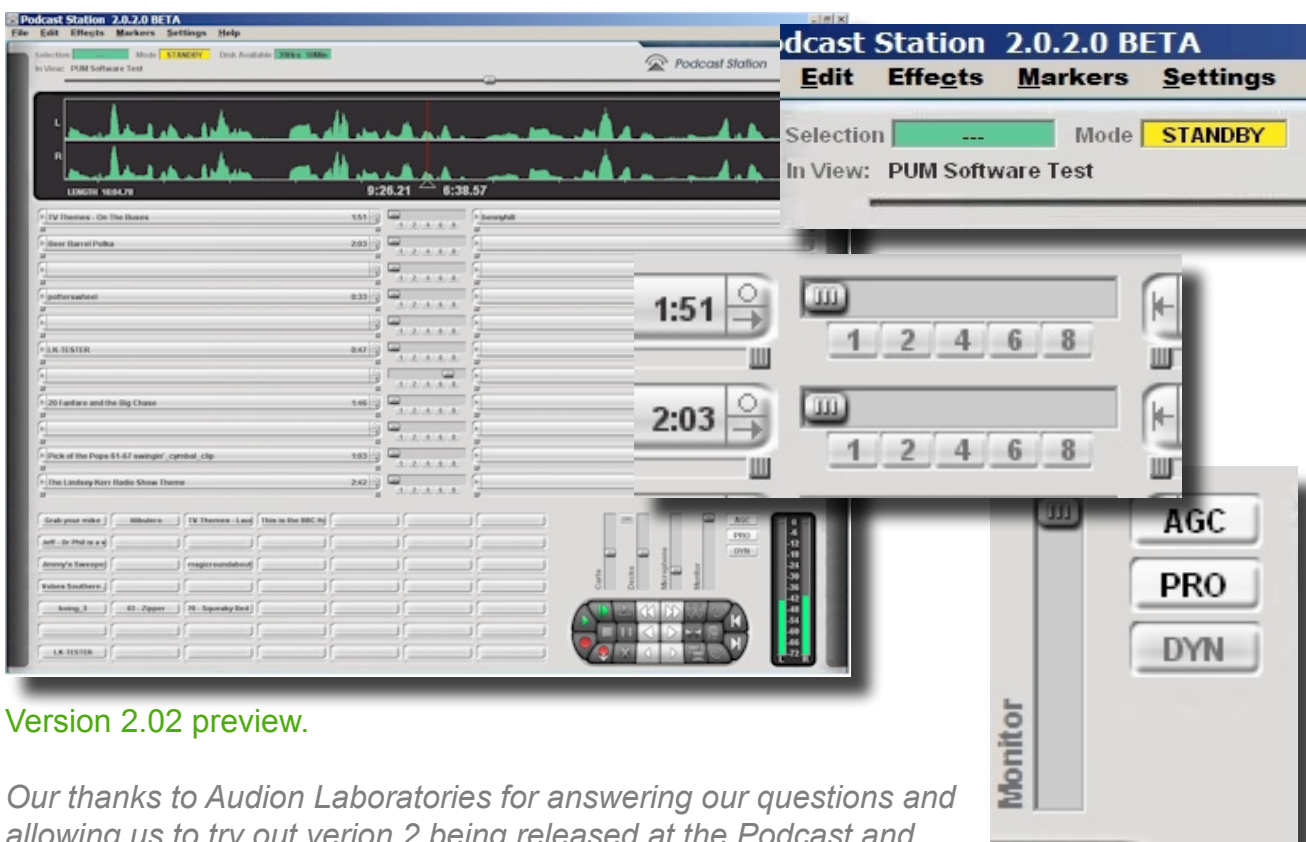
Just two of the AGC controls



Decks with cross-fades

In summary, we'd recommend this product. Podcast Station can immediately be used in a couple of ways. You can, for example, preload your cart buttons and decks, hit record and literally record a show there and then, fading background music in and out as required just as if you were live at a radio station, but perhaps without the traffic reports! The other way is to record it in sections and allocate these to the cart buttons and then sit back and join them together. We'd be willing to bet the imaginative podcast community will come up with a dozen others.

There are many pieces of podcast software out there, but so far, in our humble opinion, only Podcast Station took our fancy after a very short testing period. It should appeal to 'newbies' and seasoned podcasters alike, and the price is VERY attractive.



Version 2.02 preview.

Our thanks to Audion Laboratories for answering our questions and allowing us to try out verion 2 being released at the Podcast and Portable Media Expo. www.podcaststation.com

Phil Clark is an ex-Brit living in Chicago, Illinois. A true 'amateur' with audio, he is the contributing correspondent for the Vobes Show (www.vobes.com) and enjoys listening to podcasts that provide good entertaining content. He is firmly attached to Windows, but understand that there are alternative. He just doesn't want to be bothered with them!





Cartoon by Kreg Steppe

Interviews: Be Prepared to be Unprepared

One of my favorite parts of podcasting is doing interviews. Whether the interview is done person-to-person in the studio, via Skype or live on-site, each offers its own unique set of challenges. Most of my interviews start with an idea related to the show. Sometimes I know someone with whom I can discuss the topic, other times listeners contribute ideas, and still others need some research and queries. From the onset, no two interviews are ever alike, even if they are on the same topic. I have done interviews for which I pull out the iRiver, ask someone if they are interested in doing a quick interview and it comes out in one take. Other situations take months of planning, scheduling and research, but most interviews lie somewhere in between those extremes.

I would like to share a few things I have learned about doing interviews over the past couple of years. This is by no means a comprehensive list of things you should know or do before, during and after an interview, but it could save you some bumps and bruises along the way.

Step 1: Plan, plan, plan (as much as you can). Learn as much as you can on the topic you are about to discuss with your interviewee. Do a little research on the person and the topic on the internet. My general rule is to be prepared with twice as many questions as I plan to put in my show. It is better to have an interview run long and edit something out than to start scrambling for a discussion topic and cut it short only to feel let down.

Act as if you are there on behalf of the listener. It often helps to ask yourself "if I were going to listen to someone else do this interview, what would I want them to ask?" If you have the opportunity, ask your listeners "What are you interested in finding out about this person or topic?" You might be surprised at some of the answers you get back.

Chuck Tomasi

Practice your questions beforehand. Stuttering, stammering, and repeating can be tedious to the listener. Even if you are interviewing a “big name”, act as if you have done this 1000 times before. Be professional and sound polished. Remember, you are the interviewer, the other person is a person. Getting in to that frame of mind helps me get started, and once started, the rest of the interview goes more smoothly.

Record everything! You never know what tidbits might be “radio gold” in that chit-chat before the interview formally begins. Not only do I take this opportunity to adjust audio levels, but I also review what I plan to discuss. Be ready to take a few notes also. You might get some new ideas worth exploring during the interview.

Don't be afraid to ask the obvious. You don't know what level of familiarity the listener may have with the topic. Also, don't get discouraged if someone else has recently interviewed this person (or persons) and you have many of the same questions. Your audience is unique, let them hear the interview as you intend. In many cases, asking some of the same questions makes the interviewee more comfortable because the answer will come out quickly and smoothly. Remember, you are going to put your own unique twist on the interview so it won't be exactly the same as any others. One of my tricks is to conclude the interview with questions like “What's next for you?” or “What are you working on now?” to give the listener a peek behind the work in progress.

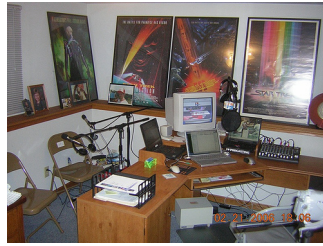
Always ask the interviewee how to pronounce his or her name. This can be one of the most embarrassing situations for an interviewer. Don't assume you know the name just because it looks obvious. ‘Johnson’ could be a hard ‘J’ in English, but could also be a ‘Y’ sound. Trust me, ‘Tomasi’ isn't easy for everyone. I have been asked for over 40 years, so I'm used to the question. Don't be embarrassed to ask. The interviewee will likely have more respect for you if you ask, rather than get it wrong.

If you are reading a scripted question, try to articulate it as if it is normal conversation rather than a written script. This echoes the previous tip about practicing your questions beforehand. Sometimes I have found that just a few key words to trigger my memory are better than a fully scripted sentence. Be sure to let your personality come through as you deliver the question.

This is your guest's topic, not yours. Even though it is your show, treat the interviewee as the guest they are. Try not to dominate the interview with your stories. There may be times when an anecdote is appropriate, but keep it short. You can always decide whether to keep it when you edit. The listener is generally listening to hear the interviewee and his or her story.

Whenever possible, share the questions with the interviewee. This can help your guest be better prepared to answer the questions right away rather than giving long pauses and “ahhs” and “ummmms” (which will drive you crazy at editing time).

Chuck Tomasi



Be flexible and be ready to diverge from the original plan. This is one of the hardest parts of doing any interview. Not only are you expected to monitor audio levels, listen to what is being said, and take notes, but you have to be ready to take the interview in a new direction at a moment's notice. In one case I had prepared several questions and printed them out for an in-studio interview. While doing the pre-interview chit-chat with the interviewee, we came up with an entirely new plan. You may feel rather silly asking the same questions and getting the same answers a few minutes later during a formal interview, but the listener will never know the difference.

What if there is no plan? I love a good challenge, and nothing is more challenging than trying to do an on-site interview for a topic with which I'm not very familiar. One example of this was at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) fly-in in Oshkosh Wisconsin in July. My partner and I found ourselves in the Honda tent avoiding a torrential downpour when we got the idea to conduct an interview with someone on the new Honda Jet. I know very little about flying, but while asking general questions such as "Where is it built?", "How long did it take to go from concept to initial flight?", and "What makes this different from other private jets?", I listened to what the interviewee was saying and started formulating my next questions. With a little imagination and alternating questions between the two of us, we got a decent seven minute segment out of it. Remember, an interview can happen almost anywhere, any time. Be prepared to be unprepared.

One final note, let the interviewee know when the final show has been posted and where it can be found. It's a great gesture and your guests will likely provide links from their site to yours.

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

Chuck Tomasi



Inside the Podcasters' Studio



Paul and Judy from TotalPodcastrophe ask questions of Marv

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 Marv K of The Mr. Nice Guy Show. His show is described as 'A smart, fun look at our world, pop culture and news'. Whilst admittedly bitter and rancorous simultaneously, Marv manages to be so in an entertaining and witty way. Being a man well acquainted with words, let us allow Marv to describe himself in his own...

Marv: Young-minded, 40-something male living in the Midwest USA (this is somehow different from immature, but nobody is sure how). BA in Communication Studies - Broadcasting from SUNY Oswego and a Master of Library Science degree from SUNY University at Buffalo.

Before earning the MLS, I held a whole bunch of different positions which either taught me important lessons about people and the human condition, or proved me to be a transient bum. I've been a radio personality in Oswego, Syracuse, Binghamton and Geneva, New York, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and sold advertising for several radio stations and a daily newspaper. I also sold retail furniture and clothing, worked as an assistant in the legal department of a state agency and DJ'ed dozens of parties, helping celebrate some of the most memorable life cycle of events of many nice people. I also had lots of smoke blown in my face while intoxicated folks requested Old Time Rock and Roll and the Chicken Dance.

I've been a reference librarian at public libraries in Florida, Ohio and at a community college in Tennessee and now at a public library here in America's heartland.

I'm very single and still hold out some minimal hope of marrying a reasonably intelligent, attractive woman with a good sense of humour and a whole lot of patience. Actress Kristin Davis would be very acceptable. I love following news and popular culture and am a crazed Canadaphile.

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

Marv: After a very, very rough few months, I was listening to the radio one Saturday morning in early 2005.

It was NPR's 'On the Media', and Bob Garfield was interviewing CBC Radio tech columnist [and now seemingly ravenous, podtrepreneurial media mogul Tod Maffin about this new thing called podcasting. In fact, the transcript link is at the foot of this page*. Hey, I'm a librarian, I love hunting down stuff. I had never heard of it before and was immediately intrigued, fascinated. After years away from radio, I always assumed there'd eventually be an Internet way to do it again without having to deal with big corporations that ruined terrestrial radio by making it a science of homogenous, lowest-common-denominator fluff. Without having to deal with program directors who usually were just high school dropouts who figured they didn't need none of that book-learnin' because spinning platters would get them pretty girls and free drinks at the bars on weekends, all anyone really needs in life. After being fired repeatedly from station after station, usually at two-year intervals, most of these people developed odd twitches and always, always spoke in absolutes: "You can't do that, you must do this, never play two girl songs in a row, never talk over the quarter-hour mark..."

Streaming had been around for years, but that seemed rather complicated and expensive. The podcasting thing sounded very doable. I was a man obsessed. I devoured everything I could find on the subject and, about seven weeks later, launched The Mr. Nice Guy Show.

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

Marv: I seriously have no idea. I jump in and out of podcast subscriptions often. Dilettante, dabbler. It takes a whole lot to keep me with a podcast.

What do you look for in a podcast?

Marv: I have very high expectations and am incredibly critical. I want to be enlightened, to be tickled; preferably both at the same time. The podcast shouldn't just be a show, performance. It must be good company, a friend. It must be smart, upbeat, fun.

The analogy is like meeting someone at a party or nightclub: I'll give you a few seconds of my time, now, do we click (no pun intended) or don't we? It is so nice to make a new friend. They're hard to find.

What puts you off a podcast?

Marv: People with nothing to say, with no forethought, preparation or research. People just in it to yammer and get off on themselves. People trying to be outrageous just for the sake of it, not for satire or comment. People seemingly incapable of thinking for themselves, just serving up material "sold" to them by podcast gurus who seem to have the exact same goals, mindsets and dollar signs in their eyes as the people who ruined radio.

It's a troubling conflict. I love the democracy of this medium and think it's great that you can 'paint any picture' you want and put it out there without the corporate gatekeepers, but I don't want podcasting to just be a new way to deliver variations of the Jerry Springer Show, portraying people at their worst, encouraging ignorance and selfishness. Podcasting should be - must be - better than that.

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

Marv: My previous experience in broadcasting and some type of sense that I had things to say, a talent (in all modesty) to make people think, smile, laugh. To be that good company people are seeking.

What motivates you, currently, to continue podcasting?

Marv: A rich, varied, interesting world full of information and hijinks to work with. Listeners who are loyal and kind and appreciative. The sense that, like a library, I'm doing some good, imparting some information, entertaining and enriching people in the tiniest way. Plus, I have nothing to do most evenings and it's good therapy for me.

* http://www.onthemediamedia.org/transcripts/transcripts_010705_podcasting.html

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

Marv: I watch maybe 30 minutes of TV a year. I only listen to the radio for an occasional newscast, traffic or weather report when conditions seem to warrant. I spent my entire youth consuming traditional media. It taught me a lot and was much smarter back then. Now, it has turned to trash.

I rarely went to movies before the podcast thing and that continues today. I miss the Milk Duds and Raisinettes.

Like many podcasters, I've discovered the wonders of indie music and love it. Obviously, we see in many of the artists kindred spirits.

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

Marv: I'm always on the lookout for material, always looking for things to share with the listener, my 'friend'. As a listener, I love the portability, the time-shiftability, the company. Mass media doesn't have to be stupid. It is so refreshing, so encouraging.

Now, we all must be aggressive salespersons and 'ambassadors' to get the word out. It's amazing to me that we're still in early-adopter mode almost two years later. No organization seems to have the willingness or smarts to promote the medium in an organized way.

We must prove the old adage true: word-of-mouth is the best advertising. We must make people understand that if they're so delighted to tell everyone they know about a new restaurant they've discovered, they should do the same with podcasts.

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

Marv: I'll just keep doing what I'm doing. Who knows where it's all going. Right now, it seems promising, is great fun and rewarding emotionally, to know that I'm making people all over the world think and smile a bit more. We have a world to fix. This is one of the ways I do my part

Marv K can be found at The Mr. Nice Guy Show
<http://mrniceguy.org/>

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

**A fun, smart look at our world,
pop culture and news from
Marv, reference librarian and
former radio personality**



Je Suis Un Plonker

by Colin Meeks

I should know better. I've been a professional programmer for nigh on 20 years and I probably know better than most that eventually what [ital]can[/ital] go wrong, [ital]will[/ital] go wrong. Most podcasters rely on numerous services: the web site hosted under one service, the podcast file served from another and the inimitable Feedburner doing all the magic of creating the correct RSS feed so podcast aggregators can know that a new file has been posted. That's not to say this is the kind of setup everyone is using, but usually it will be along those lines.

On Indie Launchpad, from creating to posting, I usually do the following steps:

1. Create my podcast
2. Upload to Libsyn
3. Post blog entry via Blogger
4. Wait to make sure Feedburner has updated my feed

As is usual, last week I did the above steps and waited to make sure Feedburner had recognized my new show, and then I went to bed, as I usually do all this in the wee hours of the morning. The following morning I saw my podcast both in Juice on my PC and on Egress on my Pocket PC and thought nothing of it. It wasn't until Wednesday, when I checked my stats, that I saw in shock and horror, only seven people had downloaded the latest show and they all did that all via Juice or directly via the web. As with the majority of podcasters, most of my audience is made up of iTunes subscribers, so seven people is quite a kick in the proverbial goolies.

My first port of call was Feedburner. When I click on my Feedburner 'Subscribe' link, I usually see a 'Play' button, which links through to the MP3 button. This button is inserted by Feedburner. When I checked this, out of all the previous 20 or so entries, this was the only entry that didn't have that automatically inserted button. The first thing I did was to inset another duplicate entry for show #36. For some reason, this was still not getting picked up under Feedburner, even though I waited nearly 25 minutes. The next thing I did was remove the original entry for show #36 and leave the new entry. This still didn't work. I finally moved the download URL link, the one that gets converted to a button, at the top of the page. This time everything sprung into life. I checked Feedburner, and the icon was back again. I then checked iTunes and, lo and behold, there was my latest show. Fortunately, within three days my stats were back to where they usually were, but it was a near miss.

Now I realize that one or all of the things I did to rectify the problem may not have been the ultimate solution. I hate it when you do several things to fix something and not know for sure what was the root of the problem. However, out of this comes some sage advice. When you have gone through all the hard work of creating your podcast, spend those extra few minutes to make sure your podcast is visible in Juice, iTunes and the rest of the aggregators from which you know your podcast is being downloaded.

The next time there's a problem, it could be something quite different, but at least if there is another problem, I will be all over it like a nasty rash. Talking of rashes, I'm off for a bacon sandwich. Auf wiedersehen.

Podcast User Magazine is at the Expo! Last month I wrote about how I wouldn't be in attendance myself, so it's good to know that the magazine will be represented.

I have had a look at the conference sessions for both days, and the list of talks and seminars is interesting. A clear theme is in place - making money. And that makes sense; 2006 was supposed to be the year when podcasters would be making money. In fact, quitting the day job was intended to be the *raison d'être*, the act that justified to your significant other why you've been spending so many hours locked away in your studio (or to the non-podcaster in your life, your den/spare room/shed).

Yet as the first quarter of the year ebbed away, few podcasters were making any money whatsoever via their podcast. Quarter two ushered in warmer weather, but it seemed a cold front still lay between the podcasters and advertising revenue. Blubbry set up a select number of podcast producers with ads, and Podshow rolled out Podshow+, but again the majority of podcasters were making little or no money from their hobby.

"It'll happen in the third quarter. Honest!" was the cry of Kiptronic, a middle-man company who pairs advertisers with podcasters, but as yet - and at the time of writing the third quarter is but a baby - there still seems to be a blockage in the ad revenue pipe.

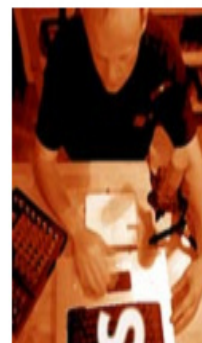
All of this makes the title of one of the Expo's sessions seem like required listening for anyone hoping to turn their hobby into a career: 7 Proven Strategies to Monetize Your Podcast in 30 Days or Less. Speaker Paul Colligan will "present 7 case studies and 7 proven strategies to monetize a podcast, past all expectations, in 30 days or less."

Wow. Quite a claim. And when you place that session next to 'Start & Grow Your Dream Business with Podcasting', 'Turning Passion into Profits - Converting Free Subscribers into Paying Customers', 'Monetize with Ads and Sponsorship: Use An Advertising Service or Sell Your Own?' and 'Solving the Corporate Dilemma: Create Your Own Podcast or Advertise On an Existing Show?' you may feel that podcasters have their eye on one thing and one thing only - ad revenue.

Well, maybe not. At least there's one session dedicated to the purists by a purist: 'Amateur Means You Do It For Love' by Dave Slusher.

I wonder what the fourth quarter has to offer?

Mark Hunter



Mark: My Words

THE LA PODCASTERS' STORY

by Lance Anderson

It was a scorching hot June afternoon at the LA Podcasters Studio at the Brewery Art Colony in Downtown Los Angeles. As founder of the LA Podcasters, I was conducting a planning meeting for our booth at the upcoming Podcast Expo in September 2006. Because it was so hot, I tried to keep the meeting moving, when one of the members posed a good question: "Maybe we should try something different, since so many other groups will be podcasting from their own booths this year at the Expo."

"I don't care what other groups will be doing at the Expo. No other group has The Radio Adventures of Dr. Floyd." Obviously, I responded with more than a little bravado, but it was also a clear reflection of how I truly felt. The LA Podcasters are an extremely talented regional group of podcasters that are about as good as you will find anywhere in the world.

The LA Podcasters started innocently enough back in March of 2005, a few weeks after my first podcast of *Verge of the Fringe*. At the time there were several Los Angeles based groups on - <http://Meetup.com>, but no one had pulled the trigger and scheduled a meeting. I asked my friend and pioneering podcaster, Dan Klass of *The Bitterest Pill*, if he would support me if I started a new group on Meetup. He said yes, so I scheduled a meeting at the Farmer's Market, which is a fairly central location considering the geographic size of Los Angeles.

At that first meeting there were about ten of us, including Tim Coyne (*The Hollywood Podcast*), Grant and Doug (*Dr. Floyd*), Kid and Fonz (*TresJefes*), Larry Winfield (*Sundown Lounge*), Edgar (*NerdBlurb*) and Douglas Welch (*CareerOpportunities*), who has worked tirelessly to help the group.



Like most of our meetings, it was mostly a casual getting to know each other session. Although we did have one order of business: At the time of the meeting, Meetup had made the decision to start charging a monthly fee to all their many groups. Since podcasters are web savvy and rebellious by nature, we decided to break away from Meetup and go it alone. It was a small, but important first step that helped shape the group.

For months we continued to meet at the Farmer's Market. Sometimes it was just a few of us, but we forged ahead anyway.

By the summer of 2005, the second major step took place when Tim Bourquin (The Podcast Brothers) offered to help us secure a booth at the first Podcast Expo. Tim is a great guy who had also founded the Orange County (OC) Podcasters, so he is very supportive of the Southern California podcasting scene and podcasting in general. With the booth, the LA Podcasters had a project and a mission. This really brought the core members together, including key new members such as Cush (Cush: Things I say) and Joseph Dougherty (Handwritten Theatre).

Our first Expo turned out to be a blast that included a sold out "Live Show" featuring Dr. Floyd and Dan Klass. Thanks to the advice of Eric Swartzman (On The Record... Online), we were also one of the only groups to podcast from the Expo floor, so our booth was always buzzing.

After the Expo, I rode this momentum and secured a studio space at the Brewery in December 2005. The plan was to have a studio that I could use and also share with the group. In the tradition of podcasting, the studio was very much a low-budget DIY affair. In fact, the guys from TresJefes even helped me pound grommets into the curtains that my girlfriend Marisol made out of a roll of fabric.

By the Spring of 2006 we had also participated in The Brewery Art Walk and the Mac Gathering and we had gained enough credibility to get iProng to sponsor our booth and live show at the upcoming Expo. Things were moving forward but also beginning to change.

When we had formed as a group, most of us were doing audio shows, but now some of our most energetic new members were the producers of high-profile video podcasts, including Tim Street (French Maid TV), Hayden Black (Goodnight Burbank) and Noah Bonnet (88Slide).

Back in the studio on that hot June afternoon, I proposed a "panel" for the upcoming 2006 Expo called "Video Killed the Audio Star." It was again my way of saying "I don't care what the video guys are doing, they don't have Dr. Floyd... or least not yet."

Lance Anderson
Podcast Producer

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

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

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



RSS-feed...what kind of a fish? - just send an email!

By Karin Hoegh

"Even my mum can do that". This is the reaction I got when I told a friend of mine about podcast-sender. And really, this service makes it so easy to subscribe to podcasts that even dads can do it.

Podcastsender shoots an email out whenever there is a new episode of a podcast. All you need is an email-address and a computer with either Windows Media Player or Quicktime.

Savvy podcast-listeners like me and you know more than we want to know about aggregators and podcatchers such as Juice and iTunes, and we have learned the benefits of RSS and XML. But what about the millions of other people for whom you might as well be speaking Swahili when you try to educate them about downloading an aggregator and copying-pasting the RSS feed into iTunes before they can subscribe (for free) to a podcast, which is an MP3 file containing a radio-like show that may never have been broadcast on a radio – only podcast?

It is much, much easier to tell them about podcastsender.



Karin Hoegh can also be reached at karin.hoegh@vip.cybercity.dk.

On my own blog, www.podblog.dk, new listeners can, just by submitting their e-mail address, sign up for the service. They get their first email, and after they have chosen a password, they can log in and can search through the already listed podcasts (and of course, mine is already listed). After that, they get an email every month with a link to the page where the link to my show is ready to click on. The script is there for all podcasters to put up on their blogs or homepages. Choose your own colour, font and type size, and you are ready to go!

Feedburner has a similar feature, which is limited to podcasters who have Feedburner accounts. Podcastsender, however, already has a long list of podcasts and blogs, regardless how the feed has been burned, and Podcastsender also works as a directory.

Jimmy Escherich, the creator of this service, was tired of having to download iTunes in order to listen to just one podcast every week. The fact that a lot of people, such as those who work at computers at their jobs, are not able to download aggregators such as iTunes made Jimmy come up with the idea to let the RSS-feed shoot an email instead of an MP3-file to an aggregator. No rocket science, just common sense.

He should soon realise how handy a tool this should be for all the mums and dads out there who now have a ticket to be podcastusers like the rest of us.



A Stranger Is Just A Friend You Don't Know Yet - Meeting Your Listeners !



On a number of occasions now I've had the good fortune to - and indeed great pleasure of - meeting some of my listeners, not only those who live in the local area or Europe but also those from the other side of the Atlantic. That they're willing to spend that kind of money to come all that way just to tell me how much they worship and adore me is quite touching and I do occasionally allow them to kiss my hand if I'm feeling particularly generous...

Of course, I'm only kidding about the worship and kissing, but I am quite serious about having spent time with listeners who have come from near and far. Last week I chatted and had a few drinks with a local listener and her partner whilst we waited for a gig to start (we all gave up and went home when it finally got underway two hours later than the 9:00 p.m. billing), and last month I spent the best part of two days in the delightful and charming company of a listener from Los Angeles. Prior to that, I've met and chatted with listeners at gigs we've been at and I'm hoping to meet a few more from other countries in the next few weeks.

What do these meetings achieve? Well, they can help form new friendships and strengthen the bond between the podcaster and the podcast listener; you get to know exactly (if they're honest enough) what they like about your show and what keeps them listening. You end up chatting about the music and what each of you really, really enjoys. It can be almost like having your own personal listener survey, straight from the horse's mouth. You get to hear of their relationships with the bands - a pure delight as it's then that you know that you've successfully brought the music to new ears as well as helping, in some cases, to strike up some lasting listener/artist friendships that will benefit both sides. For example, my LA listener was heading off a few days after meeting me to meet with a member of her favourite independent podsafe band and his wife; she told me later that she spent an amazing day with them which included being taken on a ferry to the Isle of Bute and watching seals on the rocks with a breathtaking view of the Isle of Arran behind them. It's an amazing progression which illustrates the power and friendliness of the podcasting community - from downloading a podcast, to buying the CD, to striking up an email friendship, to seeing Scotland.

Grant Mason



Ah, I hear you say – but is it safe? The listener could be a mad, axe-wielding homicidal maniac out to claim your head as some kind of macabre souvenir. Well, yes – I suppose they might well be; though thankfully they're probably your listeners rather than mine! On the other hand, who's to say that the chatty, friendly voice they hear each week on a podcast doesn't belong to someone who's sitting in front of the mic wearing the flayed skin of his or her last listener's victim? It all comes down to shared trust and a little cautious planning just in case things are a bit hairier than either of you expected. Meet somewhere very public, don't give out personal details like addresses... oh wait... I do that on the show most weeks.... damn! You get my point. This isn't some kind of online dating service meet-up – it's a meeting of friends who have something in common; your podcast. It gives you your opening conversational ice-breaker as you know you both like the same show. Be prepared though, as it can be a little unnerving suddenly finding out that you've given out so much personal info during your weekly podcast ramblings that your listener knows an awful lot about your life whilst you know next to nothing about theirs. Don't panic – it's not them stalking you; rather it's you and that big mouth you've had trouble keeping shut!

Of course, much of what I've said has been in jest and light-hearted, but it's one of the most interesting and refreshing things you as a podcaster (and you as a listener) can do. Podcasting can become almost like a 21st century pen-pal exchange, allowing new friendships to develop for the benefit of both parties. It gives you a focus when you're chatting on a show, because you now have a mental picture of some of those who'll be on the other side of the headphones listening; the show can become more personal when you know exactly who you're talking to.

Oh – and getting an invite to 'come visit LA and Hollywood' from someone who works in the industry has made this film-buff's year.

Grant Mason



Making the Bed!

Using loops or samples to create music is not just for remix-meisters and mashup-monsters anymore. Last time I wrote about using music as the background for your podcast voice. We talked about selecting the proper music. But what if you can't find the right sound? Knowing how to create music from pre-existing source material is a very handy skill to have. Today, I am going to take you, step by step, through creating something from... Something else!

True, there are some very tricky parts to creating music this way (which is sometimes called loop-based music creation). But opposite of what you may think, stitching it together is not the hardest part. The hard part is selecting the right music. Make a mistake here and you will end up with something that you will never be able to fix. To add insult to injury, often you will not be aware until you are half way into the project. What kind of music should you be looking (listening) for? Read on.

Go easy on yourself. Find music that speaks to you, that conveys a mood. At the same time make sure that there isn't too much going on. Too many instruments and you will have a hard time finding good edit-points. Make sure you can clearly establish the hook or riff of the song. That last bit will make more sense to the musicians among us. If on the other hands the words riff and hook scared the pants off you, maybe you need to find something else to do. (JUST KIDDING!)

Songs are split in parts, such as verse, chorus and bridge. Within these parts you will typically hear phrases (can you see the building blocks form?) that are being repeated multiple times. If you can find a portion of the song that seems to stand on its own, you are in good shape. Find the parts that the artists themselves keep repeating. Those are good candidates for loops. Be on the lookout for the one song you can't stop humming along to after only one listen. That's the one to use.

Got your tune all picked out? Great. Now forget about it. I would really like for you to listen to the samples I provided first. I can talk all day about this stuff, but someone much smarter than myself once said, "Talking about music is like dancing about architecture". I hope that by 'hearing' what I have to say, I can help you along that much faster.

Listen to the finished work. Do that first so that you will have a feel for what we are working toward.

You can download the track from my web site, Look at the end of the article for the address. As you can hear, I selected a fairly simple tune with a strong drum beat. The drum pattern will come in handy when we try to align our loops. It's a good visual clue of where things need to line up. Yes, I did say visual. Look at [Figure 1](#); it shows how the waveform of a piece of music might look in your favorite editing program. Notice the spikes at regular intervals? Those are drumbeats. Later we will use these to visually match all the parts. While it is possible to use music that doesn't have drums, not having them would make this demonstration much harder.

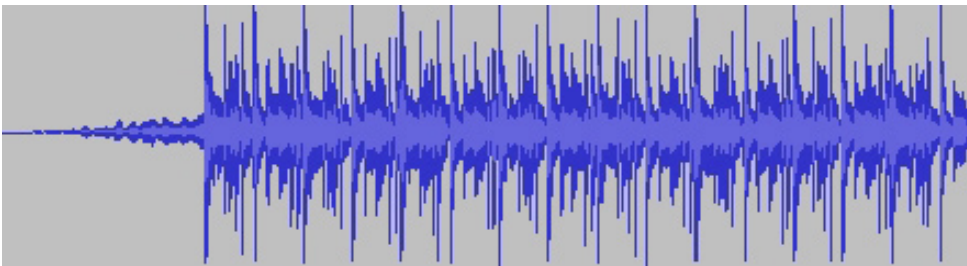


Figure 1: Waveform for a piece of music. Ok, so I am cheating here... This is NOT the MP3 we are using in this tutorial. It does, however, show the drumbeat quite prominently.

Let's go ahead and download our source material. I picked the song 'Golden Age' by Keith Jenkins and the Moving Parts, available from the Podsafe Music Network.

After listening to the song a few times we should have a good idea as to where the useful parts are. As you can hear, the Moving Parts don't waste much time. It's pretty much one big bang on the drums and into the meat and potatoes of the tune. The vocalist (I am pretty sure his name is Keith Jenkins) comes in at around 15 seconds into the song and doesn't really let up until the end of the song. Since the entire exercise is to create music to talk over (and in last month's article I mentioned why talking over the vocalist is a bad idea) we now know what we have to work with. The first 15 seconds is where we should concentrate our efforts.

Ok, let's load the song into our favorite music editor. I used Audacity for this tutorial, only because it's available for free and everyone can get his or her hands on it. If you'd rather use some other tool, be my guest. Most audio editing software will do, as long as it can handle multiple tracks. For the remainder of this article I will assume you know how to work with your audio-editing software of choice (or rather the audio software you already own).

Figure 2: shows Audacity with the entire song loaded. I also (roughly) copied the part of the song we will be looping onto its own track. I copied more of the song than we need; this is so that we can overlap tracks, which is an important technique in loop-based editing. From this point on we want to keep the original track available just in case we decide to use different parts, but we need to silence it so we can do our editing work, so I muted it.

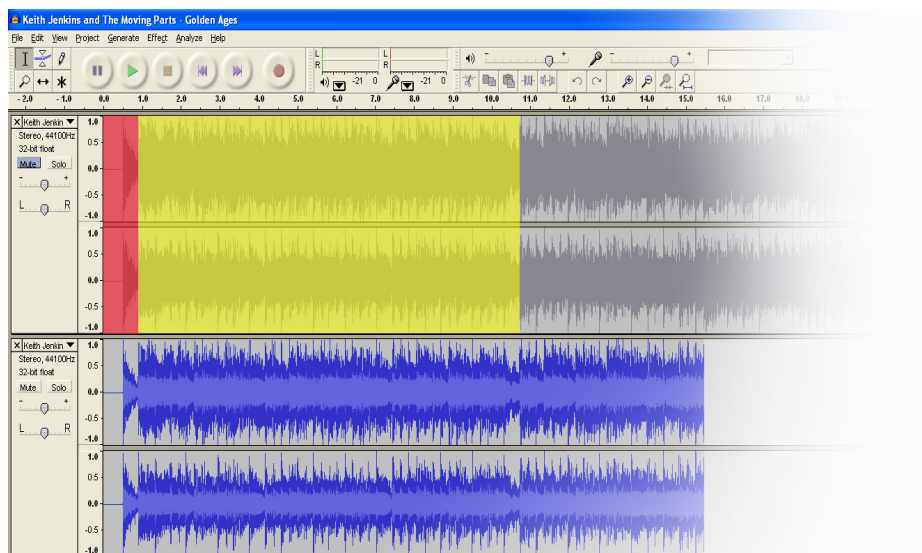


Figure 2: The original song (muted) and our 'loop' selection. Note the coloring. The yellow part is what we will be repeating (looping), and the red part is the song's intro, which we will only use once.

This is a simple song; the band starts repeating the basic riff about four seconds into the intro. I selected a much longer sample (as much as I could get away with) because, the longer the sample, the more natural our final product will sound. Unlike computers, human life forms will not play the same thing exactly the same every time. Selecting a larger sample will keep it feeling 'real'.

Now, this is where the going gets tough. We are going to copy a piece of music and then we will try to match the drumbeats of both pieces so that it sounds as if it was meant to be one. Don't freak out! While this takes skill and patience, after you have done it successfully once, it will quickly become second nature. I didn't put those fancy colors in Figure 2 without reason. Look at it again, this time you will be copying (and placing on its own track) everything I colored yellow and what is to the left of it. Mind you, you are going to copy not the original full-length song, instead you'll be copying the copy. Confused? Don't be. Look at **Figure 3** and you should quickly see what I mean. After the fresh copy is sitting on its own track, slide it over to where the first beat of the 'yellow part' roughly lines up with the first beat AFTER the yellow part in the track above it.

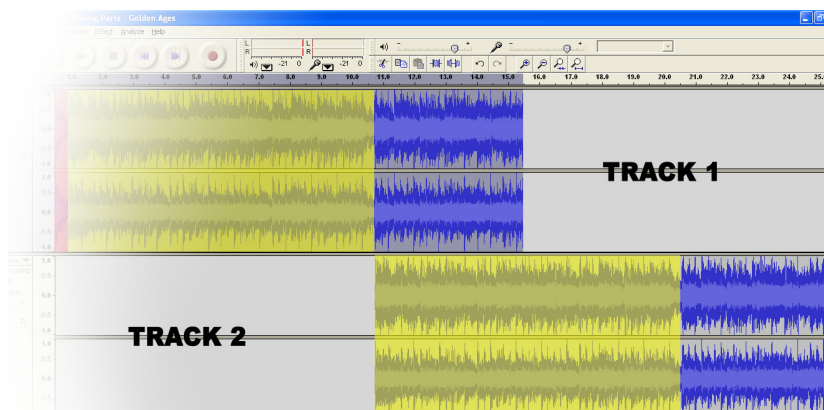
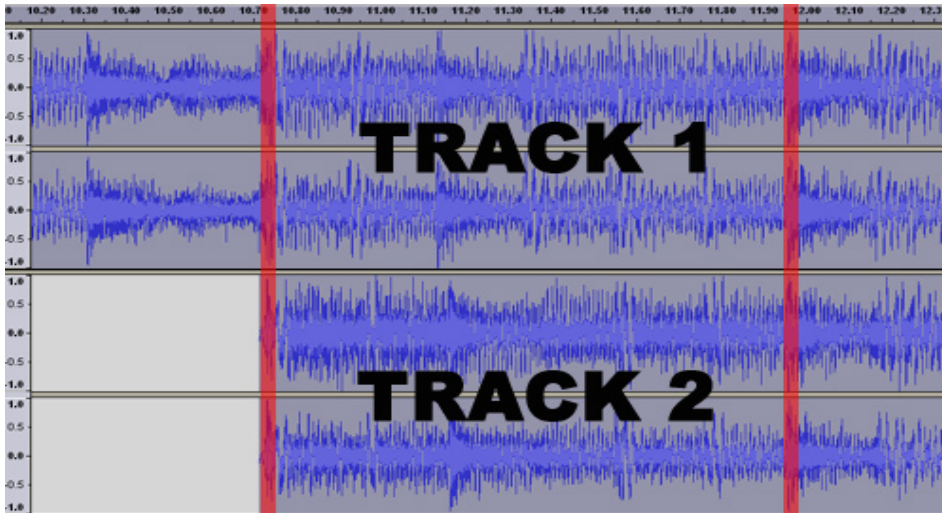


Figure 3: A loop is starting to form.

Listen to what you have got so far... By now you probably understand why, initially, we copied more material than we were going to use. I am using it to VISUALLY line up the drumbeats. In [Figure 4](#) I zoomed in so I can more easily line up beats. As you can see, this is not an exact science. I was able to line up beats on both tracks, but what is happening in between? Wow, looks like these guys can't keep a beat!



[Figure 4](#): Beat-matching the loops... The parts I am trying to match up are shaded in red.

Actually, this band is pretty tight. Keep in mind that you are matching different parts of the same song. People aren't drum-computers, there will always be slight variations. Also, you are looking at only seconds' worth of audio in EXTREME close-up. Keith and his band keep it together where it matters. Zoom back out and have a listen. Pay close attention to where the two tracks overlap. Does it sound natural? Congratulations, you did it.

While our one single student (there is an over achiever in every crowd) walks to the fridge in a state of euphoria and nabs a cold one (or a lukewarm one if she or he is in the UK), the rest of us have got some work to do. If the overlapping parts sound like a big echo (or reverb rather), then you have almost nailed it. Keep moving 'Track 2' in either direction. If the echo gets longer, you are moving the wrong way. The shorter the echo becomes, the closer you are to perfection. Close your eyes while listening, this is the one time when you don't want visual clues. If you can't get it just so, have a friend listen. I often think I am making a mistake only to find out I am already there. Remember that you know where the cut is supposed to appear, so you start to listen for it subconsciously.

I created a sample MP3 ([link at the end](#)) that gives you an idea of how it should sound up to this point. As a bonus it includes a sample of the echo-problem I just described.

Almost done. The last piece of the puzzle is to smooth the transition between the two clips. No matter how well you lined up the tracks, you can't just cut into the end of 'Track 1' where 'Track 2' begins. This would cause a very audible cut in your music, which is not pretty. The trick is to use a cross-fade. That simply means that you will fade out the track that is ending while at the same time fading in the track that is starting.

Select a very short piece of audio (less than half a second) at the beginning of 'Track 2' and set it to fade in. In 'Track 1,' select roughly the same length of the audio clip at roughly the same place and set it to fade out. **Figure 5** shows you how that will look in Audacity. Once you are satisfied (after listening multiple times, of course) with your cross-fade, you can delete all the audio from 'Track 1' directly after its fade-out.

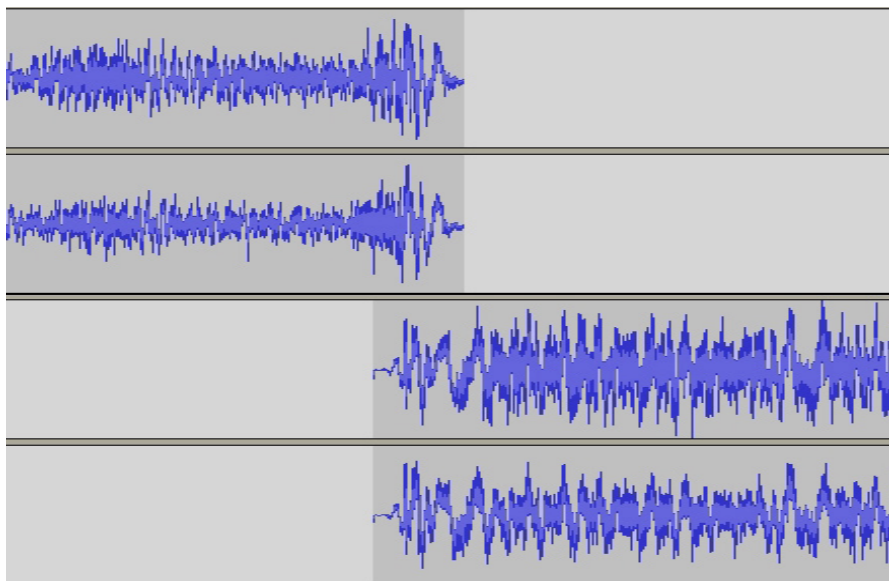


Figure 5: The all important cross-fade (I also deleted the extra audio on 'Track 1'). Notice how far I zoomed in and how short the fade is.

And that's it! Now just copy 'Track 2' to a new track ('Track 3'), slide the beginning over to the end of 'Track 2', and repeat the beat-matching process. From here on out, it's just like the directions on the back of a shampoo bottle. Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

I took the liberty to add a nice end to my version. I didn't just want to repeat the same loop over and over into a fade, so I looked (and listened) to see what the end of the song looks like. It turns out that the original end also nicely fits into our new musical masterpiece. See if you can duplicate my effort with the techniques described above. By now you really should know all there is to know. Now it's up to your creativity. Have fun.

“ *I know a few of you are going to think this is an insane amount of work, and indeed it is. It's also a tremendous amount of audio-geekery fun. There are applications out there, for both Mac and PC, that let you create music by simply dragging clips onto a grid. (On the PC platform, check out: Samplisizer) These software tools come with a truckload of predefined samples that are all perfectly matched to one another. It doesn't matter how you drop them on the grid, they all have the same time signatures and are played in the same key. You can't go wrong. That would have been a lot easier to do and, if you're serious about music editing, it might be worth checking in to. However, I wanted to show you a method that doesn't require learning new software and, I hope, also teach you something about how music is structured.* **”**

Podcast Listener. Where do you start?

What the simplest way?

Where do I go?

Do I need all this stuff

I just want to try one

HELP

by Jimmy Hastell

So, you've been told there are wonderful things called 'Podcasts' and you want to try it out. Where do you go? What's out there? Is it worth it?

It's a very confusing world as it is. If you heard about podcasts from a work colleague, then you might have also heard something about RSS and aggregators, so you've been put from the start... you only want to try one podcast out to see what the fuss is about.

Idealy, you'd like one web address, a big green button that says 'here's a podcast', and life would be so simple... well, almost. For your first steps to becoming a podcast listener we have produced this guide on how to get your first podcast downloaded and played.

In this example we visit Podcast Pickle, a directory listing site that's easy to follow. There are many sites like this.
<http://www.podcastpickle.com/sections/>

Arts
Belief & Religion
Business
Commercial
Computers
Entertainment
Hobbies
Home & Life
Instructional
Kids & Teens
Local & Regional

Music
News & Media
Politics
Public Safety
Science
Science Fiction
Society
Soliloquies
Sports
Travel
Vidcasts

STEP ONE

On the selected page you will see a listing of the podcast genres you can chose from.

In this example I selected 'Hobbies'

STEP TWO

Now we see a sub-section of 'Hobbies', here I selected 'Gardening'. The number to the left of the subject denote how many different podcasts there are on that subject.


Arts & Crafts (51) Outdoors (54)
Collecting (44) Travel (129)
Games (294) Vehicles (47)
Gardening (8)

STEP THREE

A Gardener's Notebook
 RSS - [Get Cast Info](#)

Last Updated: Sep 5, 2006 @ 03:48:53 PM
 Rated: A # Episodes: 41

Come and join me in my garden! Follow the trials and tribulations of and...



Feed:
<http://feeds.feedburner.com/agn>

Website:
<http://welchwrite.com/agn/>

Blog:
<http://welchwrite.com/agn/>

Comment Line:

Member Since: Jan 23, 2006 @ 09:23:03 PM

Genres:
 Hobbies > Gardening

You will now be presented with a list, in this case of eight podcasts on your chosen subject. I selected 'A gardener's Notebook' because I could see there were 41 episodes and the last one was very recent.

Get this episode: [Click here to download](#) - [Click here to listen](#)
Comment on this episode: [Click here to comment](#) - [Show all 0 comments](#)

Now that you have found a podcast, you have two options: one is to select, 'Click here to listen' which brings up the sites own player and you can sample a show. The second option is to download it directly to your computer and listen at your leisure. It's yours until you delete it.

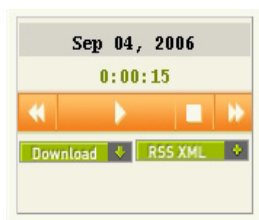
As your interests develop you will delve in to the world of the 'RSS' and aggregators, but these are not essential for a fore-taste of podcasing and its huge diversity



Podcast Listener. " I know the name, I just don't know where to look ."



Here's a clever site that will 'find' your podcast by just typing in the name of the artist or the title of the show, or even a suitable keyword?



In my example I selected Jimmy Jett, a list of shows appear and each has its Play or Download box. Next to each entry are the show notes which give you an idea of what's in each episode.

Jimmy Jett

Fly Away -

Episode #280. An udderly ridiculous Bad Joke Theater. Get it here. Or subscribe to the feed using one of the links in the column to the left. Links: Edison Electric ([additional episode information](#))



Podcaster in a box.

(Just add milk)

by Jimmy Hastell

In my endeavours to keep prospective podcasters on the straight and narrow, I will be taking a look at some of the various 'Kit-Casts' available over the 'net'.

Just what is a 'kit-cast'? you may be asking. Simply put, it is the collection of essential items required to produce a podcast, all packaged in one box from a single source. I would expect to find a microphone, with leads, of course, a mixer of some type and some audio editing/recording software. The presence of a computer is assumed.

We know from past articles published in Podcast User Magazine that a cheap microphone and free software is all that you need, but as time goes by you soon realise that your production could be improved, and we all like those extra gadgets and flashing lights, don't we?

So, what's out there for the eager-to-please podcaster? I searched on Podcast Kits and checked out the results. One thing to keep in mind is VFM, that's Value for Money. After all, they're not selling these things because they love you; they want to make a profit, too. Lets look at a couple of extremes.



here's a good example of what I would advise you to avoid, (picture-kit1.jpg) This basic package is available for \$175. Marketed as a sound-seeing kit, it's an MP3 player and some headphones; the software (not included) is a free download of our old friend Audacity. My opinion is that this kit is over-priced and hardly professional looking.



(kit2) Now this kit impressed me very much. In its favour, all the gear is made by the same company, Alesis, a well-known audio manufacturer. It's on the pricy side at around \$399, but it gives you the idea of what a real podcast kit should look like.

<http://www.alesis.com/product.php?id=99>

BSW offer a similar kit to the above, but have three versions ranging from 'The Podcast Starter' at \$249 right up to 'The Podcast Pro' at \$1,699. The first kit is made up from mostly Alesis stock, whilst the mid-range kit (\$599) boast names such as the Audio-Technica AT3035 studio microphone, a Yamaha MG8-2FX portable mixer with built-in effects, a dbx 266XL compressor, Edirol UA1EX USB audio capture device and the Podcast Solutions how-to book.

www.bswusa.com/promo.asp?promo=69



So what should you be looking for? For me, the inclusion of a mixer is a must, especially one that allows for more than one microphone input. The ability to interview adds a new dimension to your recording.

A reasonable microphone (or more than one) is another must; check out Richard Vobes' studio set-up article in last months' issue (no 8, page 18) to learn the differences. If the kit includes a mic shield or 'foamy' all the better; this is, a cheap extra that makes a great improvement to cut down those popping 'p's.

Next is one rather inanimate object that is so easily overlooked, the microphone stand. Some kits include a desk-top mic holder. This heavy-based stand will prevent those 'handling' sounds and will stop you fiddling with the lead that can create crackles. If you're a bit of a desk banger, then a floor-standing mic stand would be better suited to your needs; it is available for a few dollars from your local music store.

Software, many kits include LE (Light Editions) of known editing and recording software . Even though this is not the full version, it will have all you need to produce and improve your podcast, not forgetting that there is a range of quite cheap applications such as Podcast Station (reviewed in this issue), Cast Blaster from our friends who brought you Winpodder and PodProducer, to name but three.

On the whole, I would recommend a starter kit as an easy option to the 'mix and match' alternative, plus, of course, any supplier worth their salt will offer some form of support.

The History of Podcasting *

Let's take a look at the history of podcasting. Obviously podcasting would not be possible without the internet. Since the mid-90s, the internet has evolved at the speed of light. Suddenly the world got smaller and people were exposed to the information super-highway.

It's the presence of the internet and the personal computer in nearly every home that makes it possible for podcasts to be broadcast worldwide at nearly no cost. You can surf the web and tap into a giant pool of podcast content to download and sync to your MP3 player.

Shortly after the arrival of the internet, weblogs started to appear. You have probably heard weblogs more commonly called blogs. Blogging has become a popular way for people to share their thoughts and rants on the internet in a very casual format. You have probably read a blog or two while surfing the internet whether you realized it or not.

In many ways the blog is the predecessor to podcasting in this history. Over the years blogs have popped up on anything from politics to personal journals. In recent years blogging has earned its status as a very popular and legitimate medium.

Blogs allow anyone to be a social commentator. Anyone can be a journalist. Communicating your thoughts with the world is as easy as the click of a button in a blog. Podcasting was a natural progression from this online forum.

Reading your favorite blogs became easier with the creation of news feed technology, called RSS, by Dave Winer. By subscribing to a blog's news feed (also called RSS feed), you automatically are notified of and receive new information when it's posted. A program called a news reader (or aggregator) regularly checks for updates and downloads them to your computer.

The next step in the history of podcasting was audio blogging. The ability to transfer larger pieces of information and faster connection speeds led some bloggers to start audio blogs.

Instead of writing their thoughts, they recorded themselves speaking and posted it to their blogs as an MP3 file. The spoken word added a new personal element to the media of blogging. Some audio blogs naturally evolved into the first podcasts history.

The problem with audio blogs was that readers had to regularly check for new MP3 files, visit the web site to download them and then sync them to their MP3 players by hand. This was not convenient for taking the audio content on the go.

Adam Curry (also known from his stint as a MTV VJ in the mid-80s) wanted to simplify this process. He is the one that podcasting history gives credit to for coming up with the idea to automate the delivery and syncing of this content to portable audio players.

Jason Van Orden



The Ultimate Guide to Building an Audience of Raving Fans



Jason Van Orden

Adam talked to Dave about updating the feed technology so that a new MP3 file posted to a blog would be automatically detected and downloaded in the RSS feed. This was when Dave added the “file enclosure” to the feed technology. This simply means that the feed tells your computer where to download the audio file.

The last piece of this puzzle in podcasting history is when Adam started writing the first podcatcher software (news feed aggregator or collector for podcasts). The software checked for new updates, read the file enclosure to see where to go and download the audio file. The MP3 was then automatically transferred to an iPod.

Taking a couple of steps back in this history, podcasting would not have happened without the rapid spread of MP3 files and MP3 players. MP3s allow audio to be compressed into small enough files to be transferred on the internet and stored on small devices.

MP3 players came about to allow people to take their music with them on the go. The Apple iPod is by far the most popular of the MP3 players. I know I can't take more than a few steps in New York City without seeing those white headphones hanging off of (delete of?) someone's head. It's from the iPod that we get the “pod” in podcast (although you do not need an iPod to listen to podcasts).

The first appearance of the word “podcast” in history was in an article in The Guardian on February 12, 2004. The creation of the term is credited to Ben Hammersley who wrote the article and used podcast as a synonym for audioblogging or amateur internet radio. The word stuck.

A small group of early podcasters emerged from the blogging community. The buzz grew rapidly and the podcasting revolution began. Thousands of podcasters have popped up on the internet.

As MP3 players have spread and the storage on them has gotten larger, listeners have started looking for new audio content to take on the go. Not only that, but consumers are getting tired of the same old broadcast radio content that is controlled by large corporations.

In a nutshell, that is the history of podcasting. Podcasting has filled the need of those who want to share their audio creations with the world as well as the listeners who want new, better and more plentiful content to fill their MP3 players.

The story really doesn't stop there. New podcasting technologies continue to emerge. New markets are being created. New ideas are being formed. Podcasting is moving at the speed of light.

NOTE: The history of podcasting is sometimes debated in the podcast community. The above history is pieced together from the best of my understanding of the events leading to the creation of podcasting. You will probably find other opinions on who is credited with doing what in the history of podcasting.

Jason Van Orden is a podcasting consultant and the author of Promoting your podcast, published by Larstan Publishing, 2006. www.jasonvanorden.com

*Previously published at www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com by Jason Van orden. Used with permission.

Make Love to your Microphone!

by Richard Vobes

In our studio build, we have all the gizmos and the technical gadgets that should make your podcast rock. That's great but completely useless if we really have no concept on how to use them properly to get the best result from them. This month you'll see how to truly make your microphone work miracles with your other great asset in podcasting, your voice.

Stick a microphone in the face of some people, and they can go quite shy. It's not as bad as having a video camera stuffed so close you are going to faint, but it can be inhibiting, and usually the first words people utter are, 'Er.. what do you want me to say?', not very helpfully.

If you watch the setup of a public address system at a rock concert, the engineer will seem quite happy to walk about testing nursery skills and the ability to count: '1.. 2.. 3.. testing, testing..'

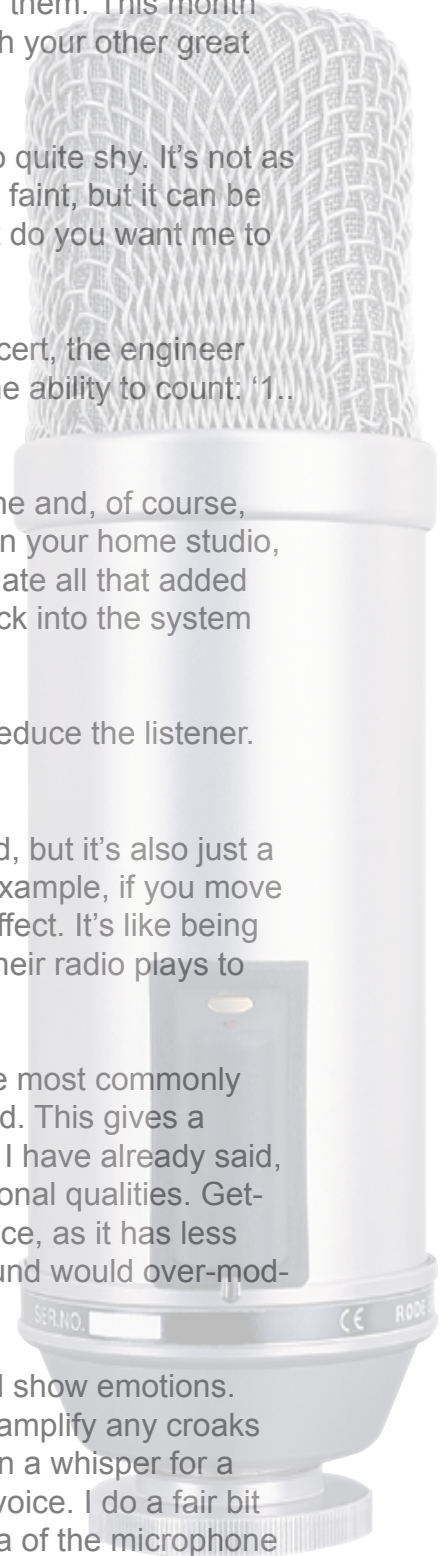
This is done to check the microphone levels and balance for tone and, of course, avoid the dreaded feedback, but you shouldn't have that issue in your home studio, as you tend to monitor the sound with headphones. They eliminate all that added squelch and the high-pitched screeches from sound feeding back into the system through the microphone.

But how do you get a great sound? Let's lower the lights and seduce the listener. Let's make love to that microphone.

The first thing to remember is the microphone is your best friend, but it's also just a tool that you can use differently to obtain different results. For example, if you move close to the mic and talk quietly, you get a warm, sexy kind of effect. It's like being inside the listener's head. The BBC use this technique a lot in their radio plays to convey a character's thought process.

The normal distance to speak into a condenser microphone, the most commonly used mic in podcasting, is about eight to ten inches from the end. This gives a standard sound and is the default from which we shall work. As I have already said, moving close has a different effect and creatively changes the tonal qualities. Getting in close adds base. It also increases the volume of your voice, as it has less distance to travel, and if you were to talk at normal level the sound would over-modulate and become distorted. You want to avoid that at all costs.

Being in nice and close means that you can be more subtle and show emotions. The microphone can pick up the breathiness of your voice and amplify any croaks in your throat. Try also slowing down what you say and talking in a whisper for a much sexier feel. The opposite is true if you want to raise your voice. I do a fair bit of shouting in my show, as people who listen will know. The idea of the microphone is to capture this emotion in its most raw state, create interest and keep the listener involved and wanting to hear more.



In this instance, lean back away from the mic, about two to three feet, and bellow to your heart's content. Also experiment with not facing the mic directly. The fall-off rate from a condenser microphone with a typical cardioid pattern polar diagram is fairly small, so you don't have to move away too far for a dramatic reaction.

These are the two extremes of using the mic with loud or quiet voice volumes and, in truth, you should vary this frequently within your performance.

However, it is really your vocal box and how you use your voice and speech that really counts. I read a lot of emails in my show on a daily basis. I could just read them straight and convey the message and meaning of them, but that would be plain boring. Where possible I 'act them out', and if the writer has placed something containing emotion, it's a great excuse for me to 'ham it up' with a bit of over-acting or a silly voice. That's my style and of course it may not be yours; however, a little bit of play-acting really helps to create interest in something that is written, especially from the first-person perspective.

So, fast and furiously I might read in a loud vocal stance away from the mic, 'Your show is the most dreadful example of podcasting on the internet and I am no longer going to listen!' And then I reply, close and slowly for dramatic effect, 'Well, good-bye!' Then I carry on with the rest of the text of the email as the mood takes me.

To help create more interest in what you say, try elongating the vowels. Reading or talking in a monotone is dull and will send everyone to sleep. To combat this, you need to vary the length of the words and pace of how you deliver them.

'Hello and welcome to my show. How are you today?' is a simple example of normal speech, but there is no real interest in the listener here; it's just an opening line.

Let's dramatize this up a bit: 'Hellooooooooo! Hooooooooow are yooooou today?' This is now directed to the listener. You are adding emotion and giving the impression you really want to know.

Combine that with different volumes and proximity to the microphone, and you start to create interesting results.

Loud and a little distance from the mic – 'Hellooooooooooo!'

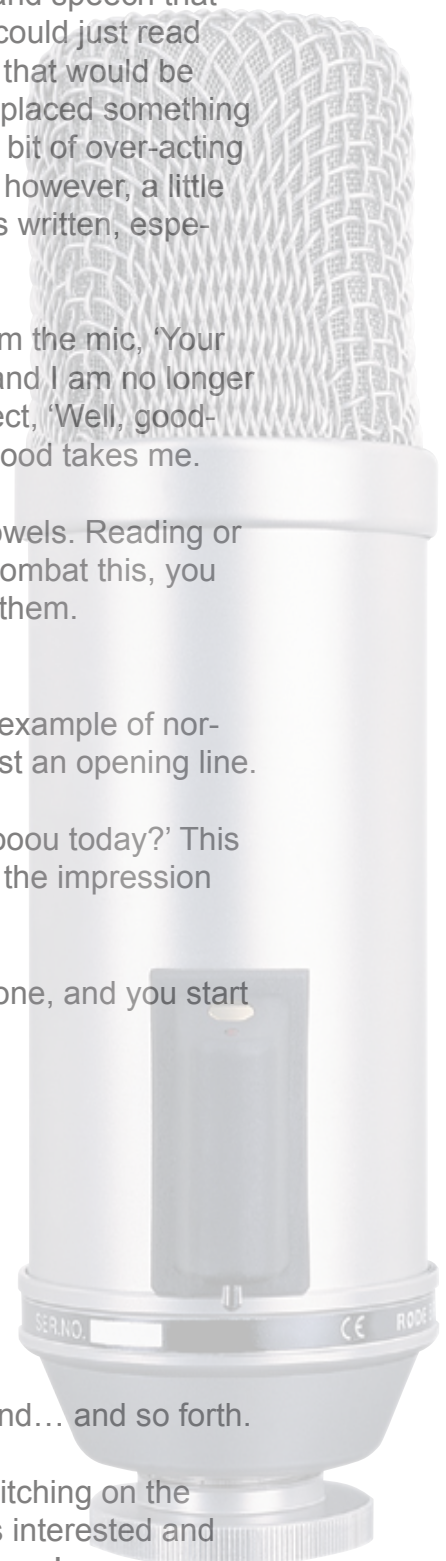
Then close and intimate:

'Hooooooooow are yooooou today?'

Then default distance:

'I am fine and dandy and feeling Randy' Just hope she doesn't mind... and so forth.

Play about and listen to the results. Podcasting isn't just about switching on the microphone and just plain talking. Be creative, keep your listeners interested and above all have fun as you make love to them through the microphone!



The quirky Podcast List

Each month we'll be looking for suggestions for the most unusual or 'out of the norm' podcast to join our list. Send your suggestions to:
submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

Worms and stuff.

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

Wiggly Wrigglers, Phil and Heather, famous for their wormeries, produce a wonderfully eccentric look at natural farm life, hedgerows, all things ploughing, a calf's post mortem, bats, Sunflowers, combines, worm composting the kitchen waste to grow salad leaves, Bokashi (go and find out) and special guests. "Join the Giggly Wiggly Team for another half hour of gentle learning and laughter."

Digging the dirt.

<http://events.wessexarch.co.uk/?cat=4>

Listen to how prehistoric pots were made. Phil Harding, one of the archaeologists, famous for his role on the UK's Channel 4's Time Team, explains the ancient technology of stone tools, experiences of students on their first-ever dig, and music from medieval musician Jonathan Weeks, we can hear about the progress of Jake Keen's iron smelting experiments in his bloomery furnace, complete with the clattering of bellows and the roaring of flames.

Gets under your skin.

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

"Mast cell CD30 ligand is upregulated in cutaneous inflammation and mediates degranulation-independent chemokine secretion," Journal of Clinical Investigation, Online 7 September 2006, October Issue 2006 - need we say more?

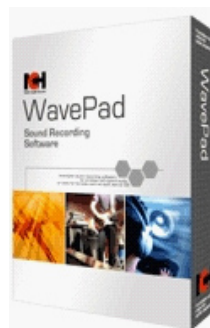
Brooom brooom

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

Matchbox USA Convention and Toy Show, Enjoy the interview with Hot Wheels Author and Guinness Book Record Holder Bob Parker, The audience is growing - we're up to about 180!! Tell 1 or 2 collector friends about diecast AUDIO!! Thanks



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



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

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

SUBMISSIONS

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

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

submissions@podcastusermagazine.com

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Podcast User Magazine

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



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Next issue
 November 1st
 2006



Were you at the Podcast & Portable Media Expo in California in September? Here's your chance to have your say Just tell us how much fun you had, who you met, and what you learned. Send us your comments, good or bad; we want your personal feed-back. Pictures to share? Send in the URL and we'll do our best to publish a link; we may even use some (with your permission, of course)

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