How to Produce Podcasts

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Listening to Podcasts
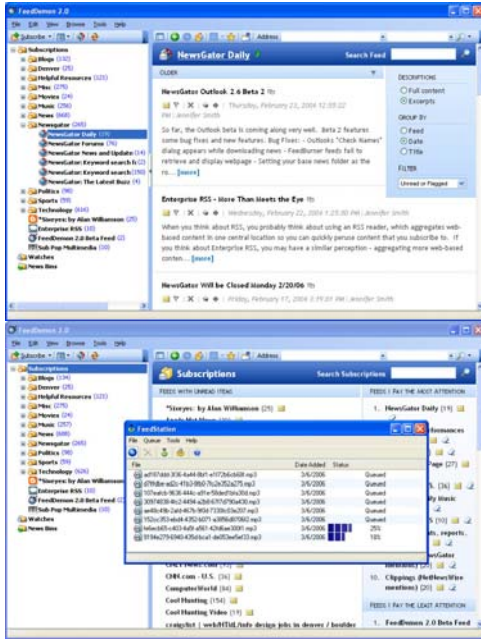
FeedDemon (www.feeddemon.com) is a "feed reader" that also has "podcatcher" capabilities. That means it can subscribe to podcasts and automatically download them.

This FeedDemon screen shot shows the FeedStation function downloading podcasts automatically.

Finding Podcasts for Listening

Technorati.com: A search engine for blogs and podcasts. You can also track different conversations across various blogs.

PodcastAlley.com: A directory of podcasts. One of dozens of sites that allow podcasters to list their programs.

Apple's iTunes Music Store (www.itunes.com): Podcasters can list podcasts for free, making them available to the 7 million iTunes subscribers.

Popular Podcasts

The Dawn & Drew Show: A 20-something couple podcasts from their Wisconsin farm house, mostly about their sex life. One of the most popular podcasts.

Father Roderick Vonhögen, Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Utrecht, The Netherlands, podcasts about churches and church history; did a superior job of reporting nearly live from Rome on the funeral of Pope John Paul II and the election and installation of the new pope.

Manufacturing Your Podcasts

Hardware
Computer with fast processor
Sound card
Microphone with wind screen

Phone patch into audio mixer: Isolates telephone audio and studio microphone. JK Audio (www.jkaudio.com) is a well-known manufacturer of telephone patch devices at various price points. You can also try some of the less expensive phone patches available at Radio Shack.

Software and hardware that works well for podcasting

Broadcast quality digital audio recorder: The Marantz PMD-660 portable stereo digital recorder is a premium quality digital recorder. It sells for about $500.

It's the kind the radio networks like AP and NPR use. It can record in high quality stereo PCM, WAV, or MP3 formats, using internal mikes, external mikes, or via line input from a sound system. Recordings are stored on removable Compact Flash (CF) cards like the ones used in digital cameras. A 1 gb CF card can store up to 17 hours of MP3 stereo sound. We transfer the recordings to a 2.5 GHz Dell 8300 Media Center PC with 1/2 terabyte RAID storage and an external 500gb Western Digital MyBook for editing.

Olympus DS-2 stereo digital recorder: This affordable ($150) portable digital recorder delivers stereo audio files in WMA format or the proprietary Olympus DSS format. It will also record directly to WAV files, but at a significant reduction in the available recording time.

We record the programs in WMA format to maximize the stereo recording time at about 2 hours and 15 minutes. The DS-2 connects to a PC with a USB cradle. We download the WMA files and convert them back to WAV for post editing. For conversion to WAV files, we use dbPowerAmp Music Converter (http://www.dbpoweramp.com/dmc.htm), which can convert in either direction from a wide range of audio file formats.

rSounds

Audio Mixer: Allows you to combine sound from multiple sources. The Behringer EuroRack UB-1204FX (discontinued) can handle up to eight input sources. Useful for recording panel presentations with multiple speakers.
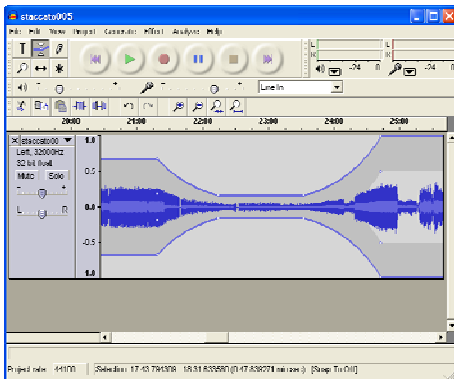

Wireless receiver

Wireless microphones and receivers: We use Radio Shack model 32-1250, a 900MHz wireless receiver, with the Model 32-1252 wireless adapter and a lavaliere microphone. This lets you mike speakers who are going to walk around.
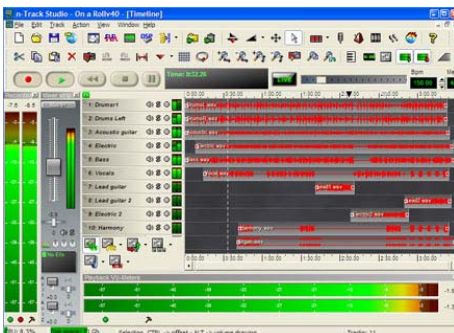

Wireless mike adapter

Software

**Audacity (http://audacity.sourceforge.net/):** Many podcasters use Audacity. It's easy to use, editing is very clean, and the sound files produced are very good quality. Best of all, it's free!


N-Track Studio (www.fasoft.com): A more sophisticated multi-track recording studio. Many features are more useful for music recordings than for voice podcasts, but it provides very sophisticated capabilities at a very low cost.
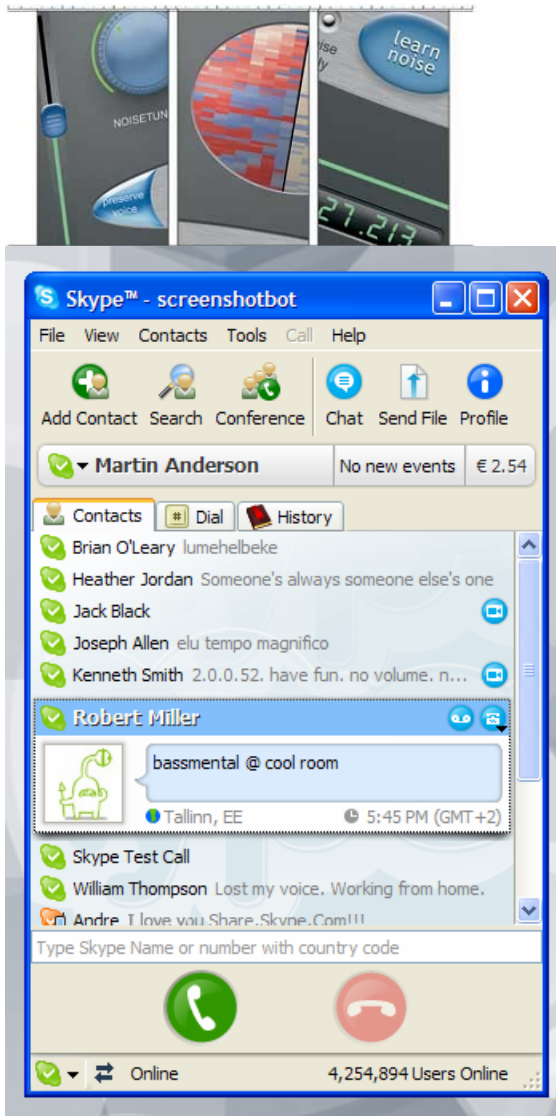
BIAS Software's SoundSoap 2 – Noise Reduction Software that learns about the noise in a recording, and then reduces it dramatically.

Skype: Free Internet telephony. Download Skype software (www.skype.com) and talk to other Skype users over your computer. The sound quality is exceptionally good, and with HotRecorder or Pamela (www.pamela-systems.com below, center), you can record your conversations for use in your podcasts.
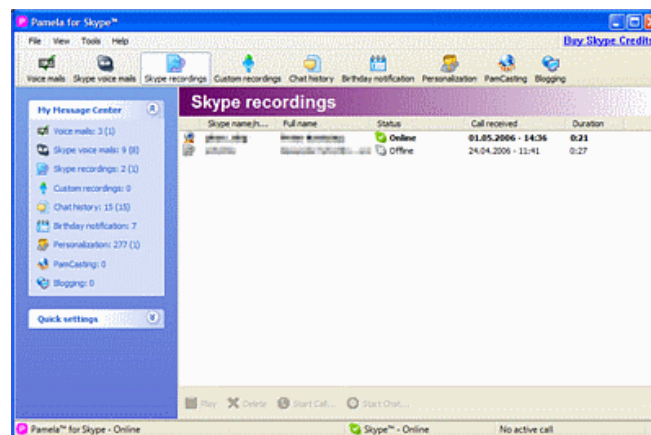
Microphones: For our main studio microphones we're using a matched set of Shure RS-130 vocal mikes (technical specs at http://www.shure.com/pdf/userguides/guides_wiredmics/rs130.pdf) , with a Tascam M-06 six channel mixer driving our Creative Audigy soundcard.

The technical steps involved in creating a podcast

Todd Maffin

You might want to purchase Tod Maffin's book, *From Idea to Air: The Freelancer's Field Guide to Selling to Public Radio* (http://todmaffin.com/ideatoair/) or the podcast edition at http://todmaffin.com/ideatoair/podcast_edition.htm.

Tod is a veteran radio journalist with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. His tips for quality production are extremely valuable.

Some guidelines
1) It's like radio. Be a professional. Edit out the mistakes and the audio goofs that no one but you can hear.
2) Room tone – record 1-2 minutes of ambient sound at the location where you are doing a remote recording. You can use this as an audio bed to create narration later.
3) Mikes should be close to the speaker's mouth.
4) One mike for each speaker
5) Skype (www.skype.com) for Internet telephone interviews.
6) Hot Recorder (www.hotrecorder.com) or Pamela (www.pamela.com) for Skype conversations. Records each person on a different track. Buy the premium version and you get the conversion utility to turn the audio file into a WAV file for editing. Separate tracks are great for editing when you step on the guest's words, and Hot Recorder also works as a voice mail system for Skype.

Sources of music that won't cause licensing issues (podcast friendly music)

GarageBand.com: Bands make MP3 recordings available for podcasters, no charge to use the recordings, but they request a link back to the band, and a mention in the podcast and show notes.
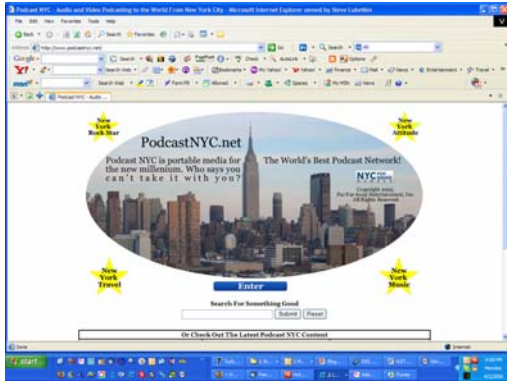
Podcast NYC: Another podcast friendly site with music that can be used safely.

http://www.podcastnyc.net