Getting Your Voice Out There!
No/Low-Cost Audio Recording & Sound Art for CD, Performance and Web

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Web links page: http://www.axondluxe.com/diy.htm

Don't have Garageband? Can't afford ProTools or a mixing studio? NO PROBLEM!!! When I made my first album, it was with a 2001 Windows machine running ME, $40 of RAM, a $1.50 computer mic from the dollar store, and freeware. This workshop / art project will teach participants how to use free digital software and assets to record and manage audio files for CD, live performance and Web use by making a group track.

Overview:
- Software: accessible audio recoding and mixing program, [Audacity];
- Vocal recording – using various mics, technique;
- Learn to gather digital sounds: live recordings, sourcing, and using loops and samples;
- Practicing normalizing sounds and mixing levels and sounds;
- Learning how to export a file for web use [mp3/m4a] vs. CD [AIFF/WAV] and
- Having everyone in the workshop make a group audio track, and
- time permitting, podcasting it.

1. Software:
* Audacity – Current gold star of audio freeware. For recording, mixing, outputting audio tracks.
* Garageband [Mac 10.4+] – Not truly free, good if you can get it, not a holy grail.
>   Software is used to:
>   - Import mp3, AIFF, OGG vorbis, or WAV files [bitrate, mono/stereo]
>   - Record vocals
>   - Use to loop
>   - Normalize vocals, add effects to sounds.

2. Audio Sources:
>   Collect audio and then **import** into your audio program
>   **1. Samples / Existing work:**
>   * The Freesound Project – A cataloguing project; has lots of lovely samples. CC
>   Licensing.
>   * Archive.org – full songs, albums, old clips, copyright-expired vintage stuff…[also the
>   Wayback machine, which archives the entire internet!]
>   * Google search "free samples". There's a psychotic amount out there.
>   **2. Creating music/sound** – use freeware programs to make beats, melodies. Save as
>   WAV files usually.
>   *Record into a minidisk/iPod recorder, load to computer and import
>   * Modplug Tracker [PC only. Worth getting a virtualizer] like AbletonLive, but freeware.
>   Amazing, in use for over a decade by the underground. For making anything from
>   beats to symphonies using basically a spreadsheet.
>   * HammerHead – Simple and fun drum machine for PC
>   * Link on reference page to lists of free audio software. Lots to use to make beats.
>   **3. Record** yourself or the world around you!

3. Recording: Record directly into your audio program
>   1. Audacity
>   → Open a new or existing track → Press red record button and it automatically creates
>   new stereo track

2. Also on a PC you have Windows Sound Recorder – [PC] Go to -->Start -->Accessories --->Entertainment -->Sound Recorder. It's there, promise
3. Recording Vocals Well
    *Mics: Using any mic is better than not recording yourself!
        1. Cost range $1 – $500 – eBay, radioshack, dollar store, etc.
        2. Angle the mic @ ~70 degrees to your mouth get the most sound waves [ie, noises] with the least air pops
    *Make a home pop-filter [fabric held still in front of the mic, basically]
    *Several takes are ok, better to do on same day so your vocal tone is consistent

4. Mixing
A. Normalizing –takes large waves and compresses them, allowing louder/quieter to be more audible [Garageband: preferences→check Auto Normalize to export w normalization]
    B. Other effects
        Repeat – loops selected, good for sampling [hint: hold shift to hear a selected section loop automatically]
        Echo – use a little to get a reverb feeling
        Fade in/out – to start/end a track; to intro/take out a sample.
    C. Mastering –Making all levels across multiple tracks similar. Important for an album or a club dance hit. *Note: It doesn't happen with Audacity. Or Garageband, really. Find a pal.*

5. Sharing
    A. Exporting for web – mp3 / m4a
        1. Install Audacity's LAME export encoding to make your track as accessible as possible in Mp3 format.
        2. M4a is Mac/iTunes version and less universal.
        3. Mp3s are compressed to be small, so are GREAT for web-based sharing!
        but less ideal for use on large speaker systems like at theatres or music venues.
    B. Exporting for CD/Live performance: WAV / AIFF
        1. The difference here is sound quality. For live, large speakers, home/car stereos, etc an Mp3 is a weaker version of the full sound file.
        2. Can be put on a CD and handed to a DJ. Music on an iPod can be plugged into a soundboard or amp with the right cord!
    C. Podcasting – uses RSS technology to push your content around the web to subscribers.
        1. Create track, the load to a web server [free or paid, you need to be able to keep the file there and know the URL]
        2. Fill out RSS or use a feed editor, then validate and burn the feed using online service to alert readers that your podcast is available
        3. Enjoy the love! Make a blog, website, go on tour.
    D. Online audio communities – streaming radio, online shows, music blogs, MySpace

6. Note / things to think of:
    1. You may be using/working with a lot of creative commons/alternative copyright work. Respect the rules of this type of work.
    2. Timing of music for live use – I often use really simple loops or non-exactly-timed music because I like to improvise while I perform and timing gets fucked sometimes
    3. BACKUPS! Maybe have an iPod w your music in case your CD is not readable…

Hadassah Damien is a working-class queer femme performer [Axon D'Luxe], a community organizer in Brooklyn, and has been making and touring audio recordings and electro art for over 6 years [Bad Girls' Belief System, 2005; Bombshell Lexicon/Wordwhore Tour, 2005; Exquisite Witness, 2008; Ice-9, 2009].
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