

# Intermediate Podcasting



From  
Idea  
to  
Episode



# Agenda

- Review of last session: matters arising
  - Recording challenges
  - Sound design
- Brass tacks considerations
- Workshopping scripting / recording / editing

# Parameters for scripting

- What is the premise?
- What about you? Who are you and why are you doing this? Where are you in all this?
- What are your podcast inspirations for content, format, editing, sound, etc.?
- Who is the audience? What is the tone?
- What is the format (solo / interview / roundtable / mix)?
- How long will the project be?
- How are you going to record? Edit?

# What are the storytelling implications of a medium?



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# Audio scripting and sculpting (editing) implications: *Create, don't re-create an experience*

| Scripting elements                        | Examples  |
|---|---|
| Planning for sounds                       | Real and imagined settings, mood music and <i>evocative tonal effects</i> to accompany the script   |
| Make it personal                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relate topics to your own experience to reinforce both yours and the listener's investment in the story</li> <li>• Add cues for tone and pacing if you tend toward a breathless or monotonous read out loud style</li> <li>• <b>Expect to practice: record, review, rerecord, repeat</b></li> </ul>  |
| Concision and selective (paced) eloquence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solo: Short, clear sentences</li> <li>• Interviews: Questions that build upon one another (leading down a clear path); planned (and spontaneous) probes</li> <li>• <b>Be ruthless:</b> Clear up excessive vocal distractions (um, erm, ah) / rambling / less engaging passages</li> </ul>  |
| Sequencing, pacing, and transitions       | <p><b>Show AND tell:</b> Explicit control of flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pause and set the stage; explicitly wrap up a section and introduce the next ("So...up to this point we've learned about the background of X, X's motivations and X's expectations, and next we'll explore how X's experience of Y has been shaped by these...")</li> <li>• Interviews: the <b>"NPR" approach:</b> Short speaker quote + clear, quick introduction of speaker + longer speaker quote</li> <li>• Music or sound effects that fade in / out</li> </ul> |
| Eliciting soundbites                      | Interview: follow up open ended questions and general answers by asking for <i>specific examples - from the interviewee - and sharing common experiences; re-stage</i> portions where the effect could be improved  |

# Podcast structure

- For the introduction (60 seconds to 3 minutes), some options and considerations:
  - Cold open: Situational teaser of what is to come (e.g., snippet of conversation, narrated reflection or recollection, media report or sonic artefact, sample from “our story, already in progress”)
  - Host / Narrator setting the scene or establishing the podcast and episode premise
  - Will there be theme music? How will it be used? Will it be layered with a voice over? Typically, this is brief (5-10 seconds)
  - Will you spell out the episode, or keep it “mysterious”? If the latter, consider providing an ultimate destination or objective up front nevertheless

# In the thick of it: the episode proper

- Carve up the structure and timing provisionally:
  - Narration
    - Consider the classic storyline structure:
      - Subject (person, place, thing, event)
      - Situation (challenge, mystery, opportunity, etc.)
      - Subject's response (action)
      - Conclusion (resolution of the journey, cliffhanger for another episode)
    - How will you piece in or inject interview material (if applicable)?
  - Interview(s) and roundtable
    - How will you introduce the conversation and participants?
    - How many questions? Follow up prompts?
    - How will you “inject” yourself to build rapport with interviewee(s) and audience?
    - Don't hesitate to ask a guest to restate an answer

# Interviews: release form

- Make the understanding explicit, if not strictly legal:
  - <https://www.jotform.com/form-templates/podcast-guest-release-form>
  - <https://castos.com/podcast-release-form-guest/>



# The End.

- Consider summarizing the episode
- Will you suggest further resources?
- Will there be end music – the opening theme, something else, overtop of narration or stand alone?
- Will there be credits? Licensing terms of music/loops/sounds used?



Tools of the trade

# Recording guidelines

- Choose a single location, consistent circumstances, and consistent technology (microphones, apps) for each instance of narration and interviews
- If home, pick a smaller space with soft surfaces (beds, curtains, carpets, etc.) to mitigate reverb for baseline narration.
- Have remote interviewees record under optimal circumstances (this will be relative, but see last point)
- Practice your delivery, review, and develop the proper tone – this goes for narration AND interviews (workshop both)

# Audio recording and editing correlates

| Property of sound | Recording control  | Editing control (Audacity)                 | Effect (when intentional) |
|-------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Volume            | Gain (microphone)  | Volume /Amplification /<br>Fade in and out | Focus                     |
| Dynamic range     | Practice and intention   | Compression /<br>Normalization             | Texture                   |
| Frequency         | Practice and intention / autotune<br>filter                                    | Pitch correction                           | Emotion                   |
| Tone              | Practice and intention   | Equalization (EQ)                          | Balance and Depth         |
| Reverberation     | Distance from microphone, size<br>of space, textures and angles of<br>surfaces | Reverb                                     | Focus and Depth           |
| Direction         | Stereo / omnidirectional<br>recording (microphone)                             | Panning                                    | Focus, Balance, and Depth |

# Recording hazards

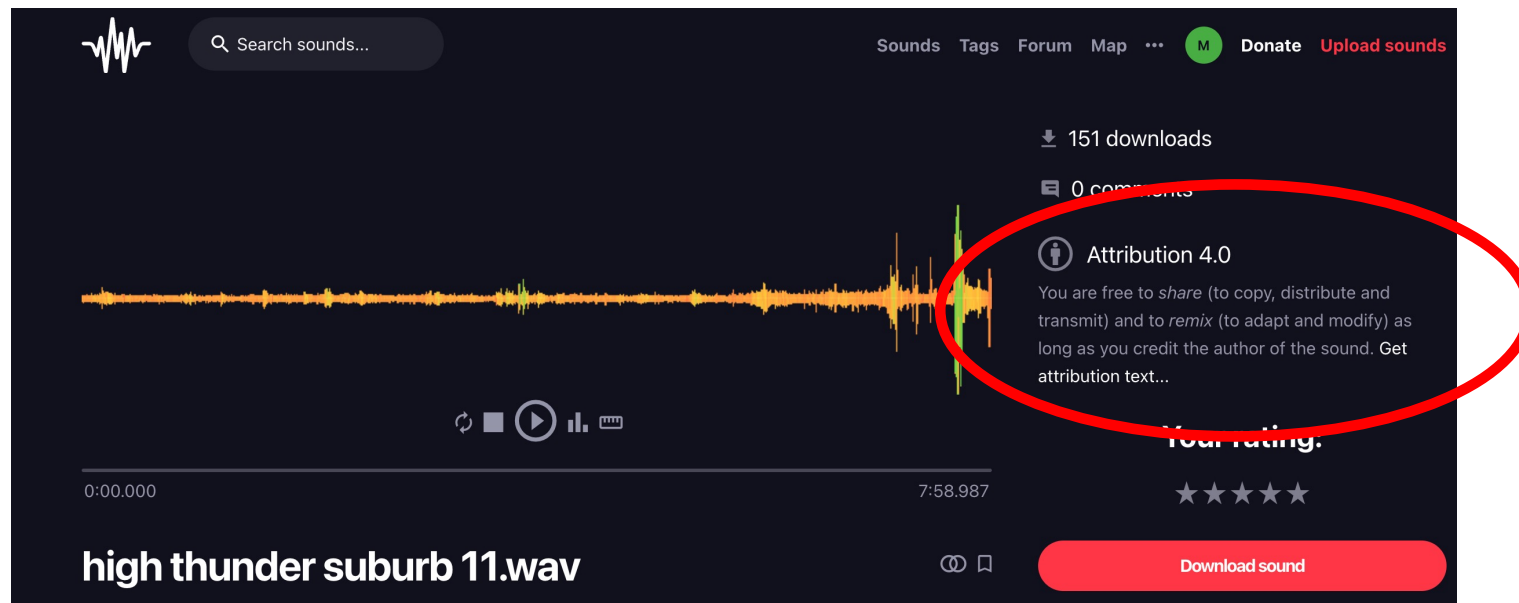
- Reverb (sound bouncing around):
  - Easy to add, hard to subtract
  - More reverb suggests large spaces or distances; control through room/space textures and size of spaces and distance from microphone
- Gain (mic sensitivity / input volume)
  - Easy to boost, hard to refine overdriven recording (distorted)
  - Check levels prior to recording, err on the side of quiet (lower gain)
- Breathing and other unintended noises
  - Possible to mitigate during recording and/or editing
  - Parcel script into breath size chunks / lean back in between or when taking a breath
  - Record a separate track of room/space ambience to cover any de-amplification during editing, or copy "dead air passages" and paste in a separate covering track

# Editing / sound design approaches

- Be ruthless with brain-fog, ho-hums, and overruns
- Reduce room sound / hum, if any
- Use sounds / effects to animate and distinguish passages from one another
- Use panning to guide focus
  - Position solo voice down the middle of the mix (where it is by default), while panning music and effects to varying degrees to the left and right
  - Pan interviewer slightly to the left and interviewee slightly to the right
- Sound balance:
  - Use primary narration as a consistent volume baseline throughout
  - Boost and dip music volumes with a gentle touch...

# Sound design resources

- freesound.org | soundtrap.com | upbeat.io | GarageBand | Ableton
- Make and record your own music and sound effects
- Copyright considerations and attribution



# Workshopping your podcast

- Write / Record at least two succeeding passages
- **Let's be honest:** how and where will you *really* record your podcast? Simulate *that scenario*.
- You can borrow microphones for laptops and phones
- Recording on an iPhone but editing in Audacity? Install the FFmpeg plugin:  
<https://support.audacityteam.org/basics/installing-ffmpeg>
- Add music or sound effects that enhance and distinguish the passages from one another
- Editing functions:
  - Fades
  - Panning
  - Voice effects / EQ
  - Export