

Riseup Radio

Skillshare info



Riseup Radio

<http://riseupradio.wordpress.com>

Nottinghamshire Indymedia

<http://notts.indymedia.org.uk>

UK Indymedia

<http://www.indymedia.org.uk>

Riseup Radio

Some thoughts and considerations on use, progress and ambitions.

Competence in making a set of recordings and then, the editing and producing a 'show' from them.

Intro

For some years now, there have been a few groups producing podcasts here in Nottingham. NotinNottingham ¹, Leftlion ², etc have been making shows that are primarily entertainments, based on the local music scene, social matters, gigs and youth based issues, providing the main subject matter. Student orgs and bands etc have also found the format useful and entertaining. A common factor though is that they are mostly devoid of an issue based content.

I first suggested the notion of a podcast, presented and contributed to from people concerned with the 'issues' we regularly deal with. At the 'ASBO' community squat in Radford, I found many of the issues of concern, regularly being discussed in the course of normal conversation, but not formally in interview, as this would have scared many off. Further, there was a music room with a variety of instruments, both electronic and acoustic, and a number of computers with audio software already installed.

The notion appeared strange to many, that their private conversations would be interesting to anyone else, further, people then stressed about what format, questions and the intensity of material to be discussed. You see when you are surrounded by people already involved in 'stuff', it becomes harder to think of a casual listener actually being interested in what your saying. However, I have heard a number of formats now from around the UK and quite a few yanks as well, where a group of friends / activists simply converse with each other on a range of issues, perhaps someone might have entered the room with a few bullet-points on paper and thus to facilitate and bring the conversation back to the point, now and again

A microphone placed in the centre of the room when in a 'social situation' is soon forgotten. Perhaps if a little flush that week, the occasional crate of beer brought in might help. It is thus obvious that people who are generally intimidated by the idea of interview soon 'open out / up' and have as much to say as others. The object is to get material out in the community so that these conversations become infectious and that they are continued in other social settings. It is from these further discussions that we might then expect 'action' to take place and yet more people involved.

I personally, and over time, think I have learned more from friends and social sets in such conversations than I have from formal discussion on a range of issues. I think it is a great method to educate and inform and if someone occasionally strums a guitar, plays a flute, piano, bongo or triangle every so often, then great.

Mic

Technically this might be more difficult to accomplish than planting a mic in front of someone and dealing with a 'single source'. Care would need to be taken in

'equalising' levels from various parts of the room. Also, it probable that with these conversational methods, you would end up with yards of material. There is no doubt that it is harder work to edit down, than the more formal interview. But I do like the impression of spontaneity that can be achieved. It is then to be decided if it would be appropriate to 'stream' it live, to add more sound inputs to create a mix, or, to spend time cutting and re-editing to produce a show of a specific length. This of course could also be live, or, more commonly produced as a podcast MP3.

Style

At the moment Riseup Radio is presented as a monthly 1 Hour + show, prepared for the first of the month. Additional 'special shows' have been prepared on separate issues aside from the main routine. Depending on the number of events and people involved, it might be that more regular 30 min shows or weekly 20 minute ones might be more appropriate. Basically, assessments need to be made as to what is less work for most effect and what people want to do.

The format Riseup Radio is currently produced in is a number of issues are selected either from individual's preferences or an assessment made of the current issues going past on the Indymedia Newswire. A roving reporter then sets out to interview folks who have to do with the issue. You might also consider asking people, generally, on their reaction to issues, they not directly connected with. In both these circumstances, it is quite important to ask 'open questions' Say: "what do you think of the price of tomatoes"? As opposed to the more closed: "Isn't it awful how expensive tomatoes are? The later 'closed' question is likely to result in just a yes or no answer. The object is thus to get the interviewee to tell you more about 'it' and to expand, rather than imposing the interviewers thoughts on it all. With a number of interviews 'bagged', back at base it is defiantly easier to produce a coherent show than the 'social setup' I described above.

Tech

In both cases, a bit of practice is required in getting a recording of reasonable volume. Most equipment records to auto-levels. Thus the only adjustment possible is to position the mic so as to get the main speakers heard clearly. If there is background noise, say on a demo, traffic on the street, or, it's windy outside, you have to place the mic closer to the subject, but too close and you can hear puffs of breath and this is as bad. If it is windy, then some mics have a 'foam cover'. Failing this a woolly glove finger or sock does seem to take the wind noise out, while still admitting sound. These are the most elementary precaution to take since to the listener, it really is so distracting and they will loose the sense of what's being said.

Having got these 'raw' recordings, usually on a digital device, they are copied onto a computer. It is however, sometimes forgotten that you can plug a mic directly in the sound card of a PC or laptop, and using the really basic software like "Sound Recorder" supplied with Windows operating system, you can make perfectly good recordings.

Sometimes files are either copied / converted as large .WAV files or the more compressed MP3. A routine of cutting pasting and editing can then be done in programs such as Soundforge, Nero, Audacity and others.

Having got a selection of 'elements', you need nothing more than the same software to lay them end-to-end, speech and music in the order you decided and save to a resultant file. This is then a 'show'. Quite good enough for some.

A more polished refinement is by the use of software like Ableton Live, Cubase etc. These enable you take the same elements but to overlap and mix them together to give a better sense of continuity. It is a really steep learning curve to use these programs but like most software, you might only need to know how to perform a few regular routines to get some serviceable results. The programs allow you to 'export' an MP3 at different bit rates. This is a representation of the amount of quality available on the recording as balanced against the file size required to achieve it. Bare in mind what is it for! Is it for streaming, a link from a website, or upload to an existing setup like Indymedia? Will your average listener have a fast or very slow connection to the interweb? Is there a maximum file size beyond which it won't fit? For Indymedia on individual postings it's 20Mb for example.

For a guide on quality for your exported MP3, you might be guided thus:

320 - 256 KBPS is CD quality
128 KBPS is like FM Radio
64 - 55 KBPS is similar to AM Radio

KBPS = kilobits per second.

Mobiles & telephones

Without realising it, most people carry a recording device around with them most of the time. The mobile cell phone. These, and the network providers they are connected to, are many and varied in their capabilities and you need to practice and talk to your network to see what is possible.

With your basic mobile you can sometimes select that you want to make a 'memo'. This will then record a short note, directly on your phone. Some providers allow you to make a memo to your voicemail answerphone. A main problem is that many phones only allow you to record in their very compress 'proprietary' format, most commonly .aac .aif & .amr³. While a bit scary at first, I found that by starting from the phone manufactures website, you can frequently find their own software to convert these to the more usual .mp3 or .wav.

Some sites do already accept these mobile files and it is particularly useful in transmitting live, from the street or demo. It is currently a deficiency in Indymedia that the system does not recognise these files, but we are on the case!

You might also discover that you can assign your own number on a speed-dial. Hence, when you ring yourself up by simply pressing one button, you're engaged! However, in many setups, being engaged means you are put straight through to your voicemail. This of course, could be very useful in making covert recordings.

If in the course of your day, a policeman, security guard, company goon, bus conductor ... whatever, exceeds their authority or is rude to you, it might make suitable material [and evidence] for your show. Officers on finding a phone on you, do not instantly think of them being recorders / recording. In the past, I have been at some risk of violence, when an officer has discovered recording equipment on me, and realised what he has just said to me. Nowadays though, If they realise that information has already been transmitted, then they are out of their depth

For an inspiring example check out what a sixteen year-old in London, managed to do. The recording he made cost the officer his job ⁴. I was impressed.

Also, don't forget the ordinary telephone. You can buy a telephone recorder, which is just a mic on a suction cup, which you stick on the back of the receiver and a jack you just plug into a recorder. Don't do it, they're crap! Much better are the ones that you plug into the telephone wall socket directly, [the phone itself then being plugged into the back of this socket]. Again, these generally have a 3.5mm jack output, and again can be plugged into any recording device, or the mic socket of your computer. Telephone interviews are under represented on many reports [outside of the mainstream media] and I would like to see more folks give it a go. Very green – saves on travelling costs

Rules

I guess there are not many 'rules' of composition of what makes a show more listenable. [well, not any that I know about anyway]. The test is do you get the info across to your audience in a concise and entertaining way? The best way of checking this is to just do it! Then, listen to friends opinions that you've practiced on, and wider audience reaction and amend what you do next time. To be a perfectionist stops so many people even starting. It is so much better to give something a go and learn on the job.

Next step is to get an audience. Eventually you'll want to know about subscribing to RSS feeds and the like, but all that is for another paper.

Tash [alan lodge] October 2008

1 NottinNottingham <http://www.notinnotts.libsyn.com>

Podcast for Nottingham: A group of Nottingham residents have set up their own podcast to promote the art and culture within the city.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/nottingham/content/articles/2006/12/13/tom_whalley_podcast_feature.shtml

2 LeftLion Radio <http://www.leftlion.co.uk/articles.cfm/author/radio>

3 Audio File Types - File extensions used for audio files <http://www.fileinfo.net/filetypes/audio>

4 Racist abuse PC could be sacked within weeks – Independent 20 May 2005

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/racist-abuse-pc-could-be-sacked-within-weeks-491318.html>

Met race row after arrest recording –Guardian 20 May 2005

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/may/20/race.ukcrime>