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Life @ Work

Web-prowl for Audiophiles!

By Neil Sadwelkar

Ok, this one isn't a very original question, still give it a try! And the question is, 'What's the single, greatest thing about the Internet?' Hello… just don't fill in the whole page with your take on the Internet! For some of us, the single greatest thing that Internet has managed to do is to liberate user experience from the shackles and boundaries of geography and money! Like some of the net-pandits say, the Net is the ultimate user-empowering entity. You and me no longer have to walk listlessly across technology exposition halls, no longer have to salivate at the glossy brochures, no longer have to consult the local 'expert' to clarify some of our doubts… All we need to do is, dial that dial-up modem [*or whatever other means that you have of entering this web-paradise*] and log on… Leave alone all the information and knowledge sites. Just check out the product manufacturer's homepages! They have product pictures [*some have 360 degree virtual views also*], data sheets, prices, e-stores, distributor lists, white papers, testimonials, sample works… what else do you need? You are the new empowered user, thanks to the Internet! Rejoice and celebrate!

Jokes apart, this article in **Life@Work** section talks of some of the best reference websites for audio guys. And all of them turn out to be audio product manufacturer's websites, not surprisingly! These sites, cumulatively or individually would give you a definite picture of where the industry and the technology are headed for… They also would give you an idea about what's hot and what's not! They also would tell you about the skills that you would soon be expected to have if you plan to stay on in this line of work. So here we go - Web-prowl for audiophiles…

Digidesign
http://www.digidesign.com/
The mother ship - makers of the venerable ProTools. If you haven't heard of ProTools, you either aren't a pro audio guy, or haven't arrived yet. The last word in recording for many decades! It finds competition, but ProTools lives on and always will. Digidesign's web site also has a forum that even has answers to questions that you haven't yet asked. And, of course, you can download the free version of ProTools and find out what all the noise is about.

E-magic
http://www.emagic.de/home/news/index.php?lang=EN
Ok, Ok, I really really didn't want to bring Apple and Mac into this. But some time ago, Apple bought out this company that makes Logic Audio and audio interfaces to go with it. So Logic is now Apple Logic Audio Platinum. But they still have their own site that I've linked above. But the latest is at Apple's site.
Here http://www.apple.com/software/pro/logic/
And while you're there, check out SoundTrack - their new music creation software, and of course the iPod.

Edirol
http://www.edirol.com/
Tiny USB audio interfaces for stereo audio, MIDI or even S/PDIF and for rather modest prices, this company makes recording-on-the-go gear and is either a part of or backed by Roland.

Ego Systems
http://www.esi-pro.com/
A Korean audio gear company that makes some innovative if cost-effective interfaces. Some pros may still turn their nose up at these guys, but their day may yet come. Check out an 8-out interface that will fit in your pocket in more ways than one.

Fostex
http://www.fostex.co.jp/int/index.htm
Multi-track recorders, DAT and DVD-RAM, mixers, effects gear and speakers. Fostex seems to have one of each. These are the guys who've allowed many to stop dreaming and start owning a DAT - wild or time-coded. And check out their location DVD-RAM recorder. It could change the way you think about recording location sound.

Kudelski
http://www.nagra.com/
Yes, only those who have used a Nagra have heard of the word Kudelski - the last word in

audio recording. Period! But check out where Nagra is at these days. If you're really into sound, this site may convince you to mortgage your house and finally get some sensible audio gear.

M-Audio
http://www.m-audio.com/
For the 'starting-out' as well as the 'arrived' pro music and audio person, M-audio makes interfaces that don't hurt the pocket. From tiny USB stereo interfaces to mobile microphone preamps, to FireWire audio interfaces and even a PCI 10-track I/O interface. M-audio has a size for all.

Mackie
http://www.mackie.com/
Their user guides alter the definition of the term 'manual'. And in those long hours of patient waiting, that every shooting-schedule is full of, a Mackie manual has kept me entertained. And has even drawn curious looks from other unit members. A recordist sitting alone by his mixer and laughing out loud. Mackie also makes great mixers and speakers, and DAWs.

Mark of the Unicorn
http://www.motu.com/
Mark of the Unicorn or MOTU makes high end audio interfaces. Not your Sound Blaster compatible gaming accessories, but serious audio recording and editing set-ups. Now they even make FireWire interfaces with multi-track recording and monitoring capabilities. And MIDI interfaces and slave-sync accessories to do the 'Q-lock' mode of audio recording and editing.

Neutrik
http://www.neutrik.com/start.asp
Absolutely, definitely, undoubtedly the last word in connectors. XLR, RCA, phono… you name it. And if you want all your gear to keep sounding nice all the time, then get them to talk through Neutrik.

Roland
http://www.roland.com/index_f.html
Keyboards, MIDI gear, speakers, mixers, etc etc. They got them all. One of the oldest pro audio name in the business, they also make gear under the names Boss, Edirol, and Rodgers.

Sennheiser
http://www.sennheiser.com/sennheiser/icm_eng.nsf
Headphones like no other. Period! And mikes that have given a 'voice' to just about any famous actor and actress in the past few decades.

Shure
http://www.shure.com/
Mixers and microphones are what this US Company is best known for. And they have quite a line-up too. From the tiny and well-known FP-33 that has accompanied many a location sound guy through thick and thin without making a noise about it, to the venerable SM58 - they've given us a lot of things to make some noise about.

Soundcraft
http://www.soundcraft.com/
Mixers R us is what they should have called themselves. Many a serial, game show or even live event in this country has used a Spirit Folio. These are the guys who make those 'thin' mixers.

Steinberg
http://www.steinbergusa.net/
Cubase, Nuendo, WaveLab is their main product line. Cubase is known to most pro musicians while Nuendo is coming up as an alternative to working in ProTools. Steinberg also makes excellent audio interfaces - PCI and USB - to tie in with their software.

Tascam
http://www.tascam.com/index.php
They really have been around and for decades at that. But Tascam has managed to keep up with the times and keep dishing out consistently good - and eminently useful gear.

Terratec
http://en.terratec.net/
Another relative newcomer and makers of innovative audio gear for consumers and even pro level interfaces. Click on the products button at the top of their home page. Their Aureon series of PCI cards and USB devices are for multi-track sound.

Yamaha
http://www.yamahaproaudio.com/
Apart from great bikes, Yamaha has been in pro audio for an equally long time. Many of you might have seen their synthesizers at one time or the other. And their OM series of mixers may have been bettered by others. But for out-of-the-box working and rock solid reliability, you can't beat a Yamaha.

Zaxcom

http://www.zaxcom.com/
They make the Deva location hard disk recorder which is a whole new way of working. I know of one Hindi feature film [*yet to be released*] that has almost all live sound recorded on this recorder. That too, working in a very wide range of temperatures, and altitudes.

This list is not exhaustive. We will surely bring in more in the future issues. In case you know of some notable omissions, please don't hesitate to write to me.

Wish you a happy web-prowling and a happier new year…

About Neil Sadwelkar

Neil Sadwelkar has little formal training, so he just about makes a living in the film & TV industry in India. His profession is a higher form of meditation through which one can deny hunger and sleep - it's called editing. In his spare time thinks hard and writes stuff like this piece above. And in whatever time is left over, he does his own accounts and chases clients for money. As you must have noticed by now, he is also shamelessly besotted with Macintosh machines and considers them as God-sent gifts to man kind!

He builds and tinkers with computers, so some people get conned into believing that he knows a lot about computers and editing software, so they even pay him as a consultant. Really! If you love what he's written you can drop him a line at neil@misenscene.net and tell him he's the greatest. He even has a web site dedicated to Final Cut Pro where you can take in more of his writings.

If you're a budding editor you can make him feel good by asking for advice. But if you're looking for work, don't bother because he doesn't have contacts. And if you really hate his writings, write to him and give him some work, so he has no time to write stuff like this. But don't make him chase you for money; else he'll go back to writing.