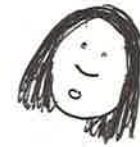




- How do I find a good idea?



- What should I have in my gear bag?

PODCASTING FROM SCRATCH

If I'm not making millions, I can just use whatever music, right?



- How do I set my podcast into the actual world?



- What equipment do I buy?

How to make a podcast if you don't know anything

By Alex Laughlin and Julia Furlan



- Which editing software do I choose? (And how \$\$\$ is it?)



which mic do I take out in the field?



Greetings, friends!



Welcome to Podcasting 101, zine edition! We certainly had more than a few crises of confidence, faith and creativity when we got started podcasting.

But we're in this together! Yay!

A disclaimer: This zine is not meant to answer every question you've ever had about podcasting. This zine is meant to be your guide and your partner throughout the process of developing and launching a podcast.

A bunch of shows we've made, together and separately
About Us:



Alex Laughlin is an audio producer who makes news podcasts for BuzzFeed News. She's launched podcasts both independently and for big fancy news organizations, and she's taught herself most of this nonsense using the Internet.



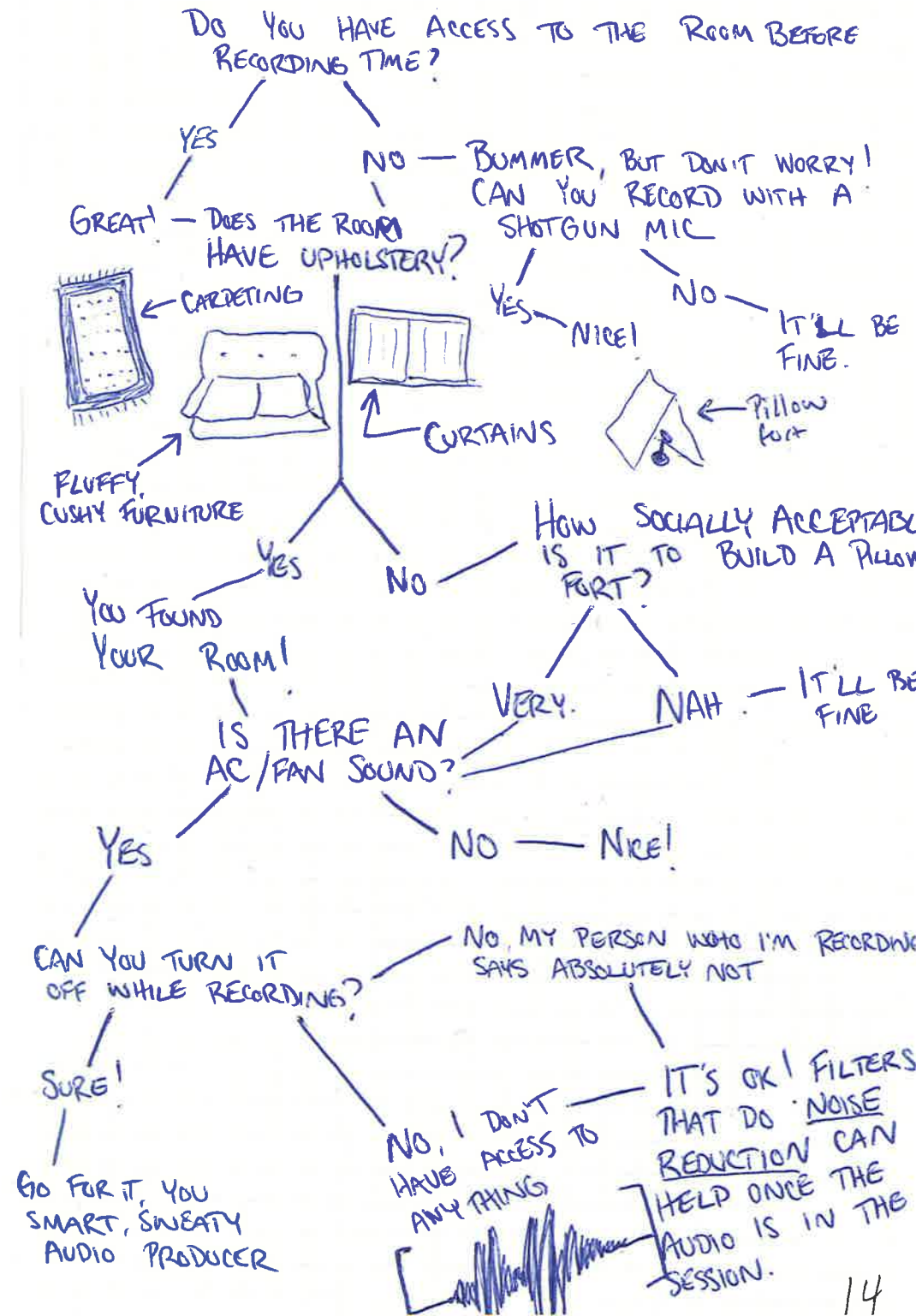
@alexlaughs

Julia Furlan is a supervising producer at BuzzFeed News. She hosts BuzzFeed's main podcast, *The News*, and she launched and produced ~mega hits~ like *Another Round*, *Internet Explorer* and *Thirst Aid Kit*.

@juliastmi



WHERE TO RECORD: A FLOW CHART



WEBSITE

Definitely let your podcast live on the internet! Using a simple Tumblr to house a podcast is totally fine, but it's helpful when starting out to create the habit of making your show available on the internet.

LOGO

Your logo is another thing people will judge you by before they even hear your podcast. So invest the time (and potentially the resources) it deserves! You can have a friend do your design, or find somebody on a site like Fiverr.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

* people LOVE to talk about this shit
So - ASK everyone!

TO READ:

- Transom.org → Almost everything you need to know can be found here
- <http://training.npr.org/category/audio/>
- Sound Reporting: The NPR Guide to Audio Journalism and Production, by Jonathan Kern
- Out on the Wire: The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio, by Jessica Abel

PODCASTS:

- Third Coast Pocket Conference
- HowSound
- Werk It: The Podcast

THIRD COAST IS THIS BIG RADIO CONFERENCE THAT'S WORTH CHECKING OUT!



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Topic Brainstorming

Maybe you have a fully formed idea. Maybe you just have a curiosity nagging at you. Maybe you have no ideas! Wherever you are in the process, hopefully this exercise can help.

THINGS I LOVE

THINGS MISSING IN THE WORLD

HOW DO THESE INTERSECT?

Some questions to ask yourself:

- Does this exist already? What does it look like if so?
- How is what I'm doing different from what's already there?
- Have you listened to things that are similar in topic, style, tone or subject matter to the thing you want to make?
- If what you want to do is make one story, what is important about telling this story with audio?
- If you don't care about any of the things above and just want to make something fun for yourself, DO IT!



MUSIC

Before your listeners even hear your podcast, they will likely hear your music and make snarky judgments for it (wow these people who get something for FREE are so picky!) Pick something that really embodies the message/image you're trying to cultivate.

FYI: Don't take music that's already been published (like pop songs, or even amateur covers of pop songs). That's copyright infringement and nobody in 2018 has enough money to get their asses sued!!!! → As Beyoncé says... "Don't play yourself."

Here are some spots that you can find inexpensive or free music:

- The Free Music Archive** (Make sure to check the permissions on each song you use!)
- Audioblocks
- Audiojungle
- Your friend's cousin's little sister's band that wants to get their songs out there.

Another idea is to *gasp* commission custom music for your podcast. It sounds fancy and expensive, but it doesn't necessarily have to be! Get in touch with indie artists in your city, or maybe a musician friend, and see if they'd be willing to write you something. It can be a lot of money, but it's also such a special experience to collaborate with an artist who gets what you're doing and it'll allow you to promote and support small artists!

Q: But Alex/Julia, my favorite podcast uses X popular song as their theme song!

A: Wow, also like base jumping? Because damn that's a risk and a half of getting sued. Audio people are proud, litigious homies that will come for you. Be careful.

WEB HOSTING

To get your podcast into people's ears, you need to host it somewhere online and then send your RSS feed to iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever else you want people to listen to your podcast.

Libsyn \$

Libsyn is a dedicated podcast hosting service, and you have to pay to use it. Plans start at \$5 and increase from there based on how big your show is!

Soundcloud \$

- This is technically a music hosting platform, but lots of podcasters use it. It's simple enough to use, but you hit the free hosting limit pretty quickly, after which you'll have to pay \$15 a month or your audio will disappear.

Megaphone \$\$\$ ← (we use this at Buzzfeed)

Megaphone is a podcast host created by Panoply, the podcasting arm of Slate. Its main appeal is that if you are a big enough podcast to be selling ads, you can manage and place them entirely on the platform.

EQUIPMENT

Ok, let's talk about the tools you need to get sounds from the world into other people's ears.

The kind of equipment you want depends a lot on what kind of podcast you're making, so we're gonna keep it pretty general here. A lot of people will say you can record a podcast using just your laptop or your phone, and **THAT IS POSSIBLE**. But making a podcast is inviting somebody to listen to and spend time with you, so it's nice to tell your listeners that they're worth it!

These are a few of the options out there, but definitely know that a little bit of research can go a long way to helping you find the tools that you like best.

USB Microphone:



This is a pretty simple setup -- you just plug the mic into your computer via USB and record onto your recording software (Garageband, Audacity, Hindenburg - more on that later!) You'll definitely want to use a pop filter if you have a USB mic.



PROS: cheapish, easy to use, relatively reliable, looks cute
CONS: quality of sound is ok but not great

Recording devices:

The most important thing about your recording device is that you're able to use it, that it reliably functions and that it moves with you the amount that you need it to. Usually, producers really like whichever recorder they use most often so we're gonna pitch you on a few that we like.

Please be aware that for some unknown reason, audio recording devices are all like a little weird to understand and each one has its quirks. If you are baffled by your recording device, do not be discouraged! Read up on it and you'll eventually get the hang of it.

Sony PCM recorder: \$329.00

Pros: very small and easy to cart around. Relatively simple functionality. Has built in mics for capturing ambient audio if you want.

Cons: expensive-ish, does not have XLR inputs so you have to use XLR to 1/4 inch (a.k.a. a headphone jack)

Zoom H6 recorder: \$350.00

Pros: holy cannoli, this bb works so hard! With 4 XLR inputs and a screen that's super easy to read, this relatively small recorder can record 4 separate mics (with attachments you can buy for SIX)!!

The menu and settings are pretty easy to navigate, too.

Cons: It's expensive - around \$390 new. It also gobbles up batteries if you use them, so make sure you have extra batteries.

Zoom H4n recorder: \$200.00

Pros: not too expensive! Also has 2 xlr inputs and an adjustable onboard mic

Cons: Not always the easiest menu to navigate, not the sturdiest homie on the block.

Tascam DR-40 recorder: \$180.00

Pros: The least inexpensive in this zine, has 2 xlr inputs, onboard mics and is pretty light to carry around

Cons: This is the menu that has vanquished me many times bc I truly don't understand all of its settings.

QUICK EDITING TIPS

True editing ~skills~ will only come with time and experience, but here are a couple of things to keep in mind:

1. Most audio editing software is made with musicians in mind, so there are often a lot of things in the software that aren't really *for* podcast production per se. Don't be intimidated if it is difficult or takes you a long time.
2. When you're editing someone speaking and you want to cut out a word or an "um", cut the audio to the end of the last breath they took — that way it sounds much more natural.

3. If you're bringing two tracks into a session in an interview, for example, you can mute/lower the sound from the person who isn't talking to make it sound extra specially quiet.



4. If you did your best to muffle your recording space, but there are still some noises on your tape, you can use the "noise reduction" tool in Audacity to reduce the baseline noise level. Don't get too aggressive though, because it can distort the audio.

EDITING SOFTWARE

There are about a million different different ways to edit your audio. Here are just a few!

Audacity

It's a free editing software that is great for beginners. It's a little bit clunky and somewhat limited in what you can do, but again: free!

Garageband

Also free! And it comes pre-loaded on Mac computers. This is also a fine option to use if you're just dipping your toe into audio, though again, you miss out on some technical options.

Hindenburg

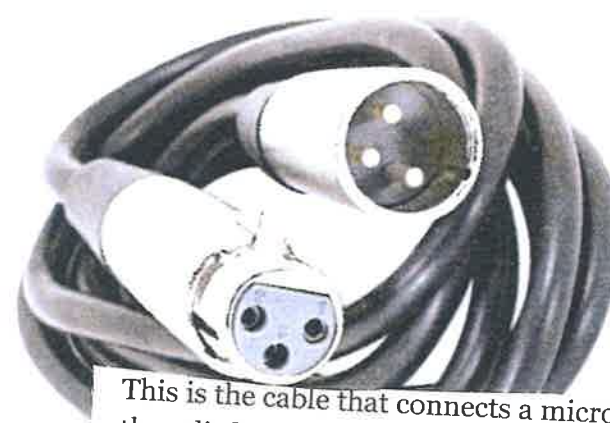
A-license for this costs about \$100, give or take, and you can beef it up by buying plug-ins and add-ons to make your editing setup a bit more sophisticated. Lots of professionals produce on Hindenburg!

Adobe Audition

Part of the Adobe Creative Suite, as you can tell from the name. This is great because if you pay for the Creative Cloud, you can have access to Audition on a monthly basis without having to shell out tons of \$\$\$ all at once.

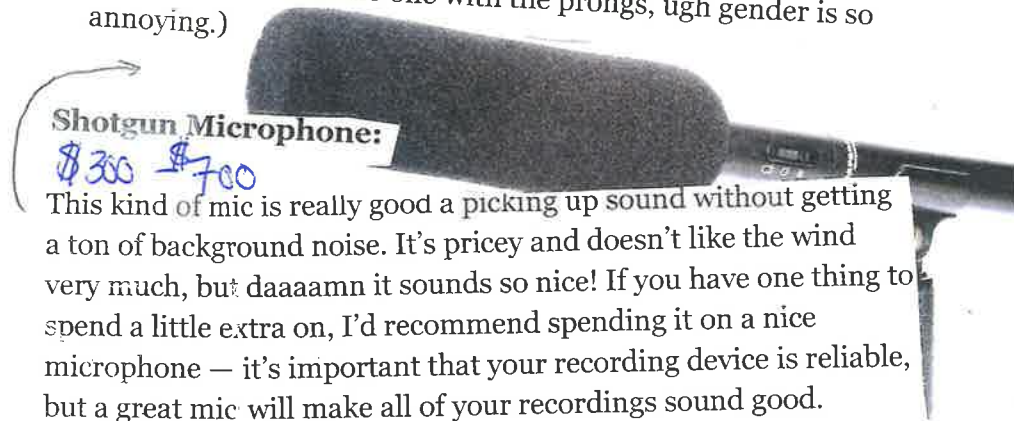
Pro Tools

Pro Tools is a bit more advanced and definitely a lot more pricey, but you can do some serious wizardry with it! This is the industry standard software.



XLR Cable:
cheap!
like
\$15-20

This is the cable that connects a microphone to a recorder. It has three little prongy things on one end, and three little holes on the other end. Gender is a construct so we don't need to call them "male" or "female" but like...that's what profesh people might call them. (The male is the one with the prongs, ugh gender is so annoying.)



Shotgun Microphone:

\$300 - \$700

This kind of mic is really good at picking up sound without getting a ton of background noise. It's pricey and doesn't like the wind very much, but daaaamn it sounds so nice! If you have one thing to spend a little extra on, I'd recommend spending it on a nice microphone — it's important that your recording device is reliable, but a great mic will make all of your recordings sound good.

PROS: great sound, versatile, can pick up focused sound even when it's noisy in the area (like a parade or a protest)

CONS: It's expensive and if you take it outside and it's SUPER windy, the mic will sort of short out so that it's hard to gather sound at all.

Omnidirectional Microphone:

\$100 - 150

The **RE-50** is the ole faithful of radio producers. This mic is durable, can handle being tossed in a bag and dragged halfway around the world, and is good for a variety of situations. Definitely a workhorse but the sound that it picks up is more general than the shotgun mic.

PROS: relatively inexpensive, sturdy, durable

CONS: Sound isn't quite as velvety as a shotgun mic.



Checklist of things you will need in your kit bag:

- Batteries
- SD card/memory card that's compatible with your recorder and has enough room on it for the recording you're about to do
- More batteries
- Headphones (for the love of all things good, use some nice headphones!)
- A backup SD card in case the other one gets filled up
- A notebook and pen/pencil for writing down people's names/notes and timecodes of the tape (pencil is better bc it doesn't run if it rains and you can write at awkward angles)
- Did you get enough batteries? Nah might as well get some more.
- Extra XLR cable**

old cat →



**** PRO TIP:** If your audio is sounding fuzzy as you're recording but you've checked that your cable is properly connected, the sound is at the right level and the volume in your headphones is also normal, try a backup XLR cable. XLR cables are just like cats in that sometimes they can get hissy in their old age. If you have one that is hissy with you, be a good sport and take it out of your bag right away — future you will thank you.

BASIC RECORDING RULES

No matter what kind of podcast you're making, some basic rules apply to recording.

1. You should bring the mic rllllll close to your face. Closer than you think! Like, a fist's length away.**
2. Since you're speaking so close to the mic, you'll need something *on* the mic to muffle your plosives, which are the puffs of air that happen when you make sounds like "p" and "b." That can be a pop filter, a dead cat (wow rude), or a foam cover. But remember: no thing you can buy can replace good mic technique!
3. Wear headphones! Listen! You can hear when you are on or off mic, and you can hear when your mic is popping. One of the most important things you will do while recording is listen, so make sure you trust your ears. If something sounds weird to you, stop and diagnose it!



↑ (This is an O Brother, Where art Thou joke, thank you for your time)

** That means if you are doing a two person podcast, each person should have their own mic, or you should take turns speaking into your shared mic.