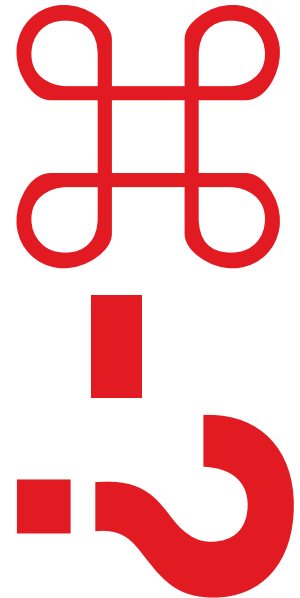


## Hotlinks

More on Stephen Bruel  
<http://thenotepad.com.au/>  
Brett Kingman's YouTube channel  
[www.youtube.com/user/Burgerman666](http://www.youtube.com/user/Burgerman666)  
SM Pro Audio MC-01  
[www.smpaudio.com](http://www.smpaudio.com)  
SM Pro Audio Mic Thing  
[www.smpaudio.com](http://www.smpaudio.com)  
Shure SM-57  
[www.shure.com](http://www.shure.com)  
Roxio Listen  
[www.roxio.com/enu/products/toast/titanium/listen.html](http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/toast/titanium/listen.html)  
Macs and Music – AMW Forums  
[www.macworld.com.au/forums/index.php?showforum=22](http://www.macworld.com.au/forums/index.php?showforum=22)  
Shorten for Mac  
[www.hornig.net/shorten.html](http://www.hornig.net/shorten.html)



# Audio Roundtable

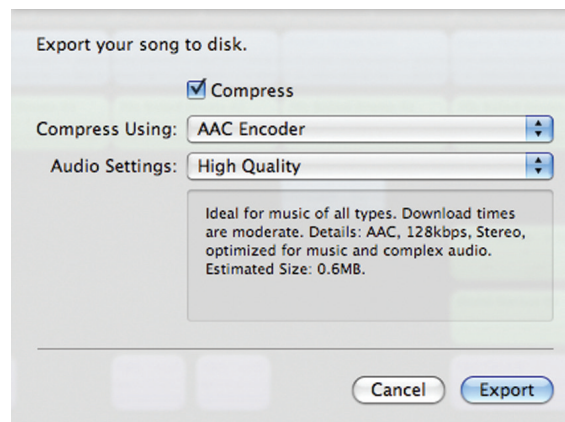
Welcome to the first of what will hopefully be a regular series of roundtables on everything audio, with *AMW* readers providing the topics of discussion. If you'd like something answered, the 'Macs and Music' section on the *AMW* forums is the place to put your hand up (see Hotlinks).

This month's roundtable participants are Stephen Bruel and Brett Kingman, who both work in the music tech industry as well as being musicians of note.

Stephen Bruel has worked in the music, professional audio, broadcast and media industries for 20 years and holds tertiary qualifications in marketing, music technology and journalism. He has international marketing communications experience with Fairlight and was marketing manager for Digidesign South East Asia for five years. He recently set up his own consultancy business, The Note Pad (see Hotlinks).

Brett Kingman is a Melbourne guitarist with a career spanning over 25 years as hired gun for many of Australia's greats including Daryl Braithwaite, Ross Wilson, Joe Camilleri, Vika & Linda Bull, Renee Geyer, Jenny Morris and James Reyne, with whom he is currently touring and recording with. Also well known in the guitar and guitar-related products international manufacturing industry, Kingman has just returned from a trip to Germany for the Frankfurt Musikmesse, where he successfully launched his own line of guitar effects pedals - DVK Technologies. He also has a

popular YouTube channel in which he demonstrates his collection of guitar stomp boxes, occasionally with young daughter Sadie (see Hotlinks) who is usually the star of the show).



1) How hard is it to take your old LPs, and convert them into AAC format, so they can be burned to a CD? And how on earth do you do it and what do you need?

*TLCAUS on AMW forums*

*As you are most probably aware, Advanced Audio Coding (AAC) is the default audio format of all Apple audio products (iPhone, iPod and iTunes) and it is widely believed that this format sounds better and takes up less space than an MP3.— Stephen Bruel*



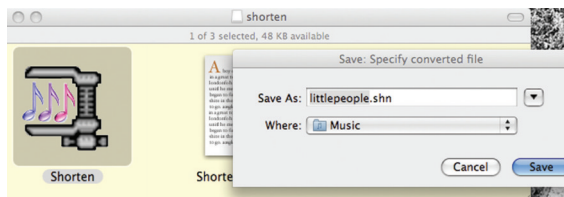
**The set-up:** To convert LPs to the AAC format you will need the following materials:

- record player with a stereo audio out
- Mac with the inbuilt stereo audio in
- a cable to connect the two (can vary depending on record players and whether you use a desktop or laptop)
- LP to AAC conversion software (GarageBand)

**For conversion:** The most inexpensive way to do this would be to use GarageBand. Simply set it up as you would to record any audio instrument, select record and drop the needle and away you go. This will record the audio as one large audio file. To separate the songs, you could cut the audio file at each song break, select and move each individual song onto a new track. You could then select Share – Export Song to Disk and do this for each song, so that you end up with a collection of AAC audio files, one for each song from the LP.

**For CD burning:** You could use the onboard Mac CD burning software. Easy, cheap and at hand.

**An alternative approach:** A few years ago I faced the same challenge as I had some rare old records (Sunnyboys, Beatles, The Jam – yes I am showing my age) that I was keen to digitise and be able to hear more regularly on my iPod. I used a software program from Roxio called CD Spin Doctor. This software was easy to use and saved a lot of time and editing (It is now called Roxio Listen – see Hotlinks). It had inbuilt features that automatically separated the songs, reduced noise hiss and crackles which old LPs inherently have, and also allowed some basic EQ options to “brighten” old recordings. I would suggest using this or some similar product.



2) Could you offer some advice on how to share a GB file so I can lay down bass and drums and send the file to the guitarist in London to add their tracks. I think there is another app whose name escapes me that does this.

*pmoeser via AMW forums*

*There's actually a few ways of doing this, although neither offers a simple sharing of the same GarageBand project workspace.*

*— David Holloway*

**Option A:** Record your tracks in GarageBand, ensuring that at least one of the tracks starts at Bar 1.

Using GarageBand's Share menu, export the song to disk as an MP3, AAC or AIFF file (AIFF is selected by unchecking the 'Compress' box when the export window pops up) (garageband.jpg)

Click once on the exported file and select the 'Compress' option from the File menu in the Finder. This will further decrease your file size. I managed to compress a 7.4MB .aiff file to 6.4MB.

Email the file to other GarageBand user who can uncompress it and import it into GarageBand.

Here's the crucial part – when they've recorded their parts, they need to do the same export process you did, except to delete the track you sent in the first place so that you receive their tracks only, which can then be imported and added to what you originally recorded.

**Pros:** Fairly quick to do

**Cons:** You end up working with files that incorporate multiple tracks, limiting mixing and effects options.

**Option B:** Save a copy of the project and complete the below steps using the copy rather than the original project.

Delete all audio data except for Track 1, then via the Share menu, export the song to disk as an .aiff file. You know have a separate file for just that track.

There is an important point to note at this juncture that will save a lot of heartache. If a particular track doesn't start at Bar 1, write down exactly what part of the project it does start so that the person at the other end knows where to place the track. Undo the deletion of the other tracks or re-open the copy of the project.

Repeat steps 1-3 for each track Compress the files and a text file with any information about start and end points for tracks into one archive via the File menu in the Finder. Email to collaborator

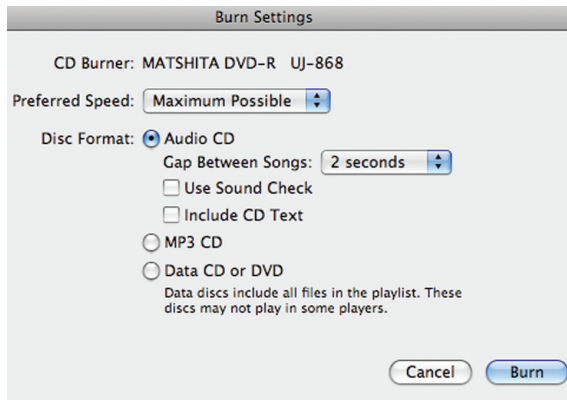
As with Option A, have collaborator go through same process, ignoring your original files unless he/she has altered them in some way.

Import the new tracks into your project and complete any further work.

**Pros:** Gives you full maximum flexibility over each track throughout the process

**Cons:** Can be time-consuming and may be frustrating for collaborator to line up tracks in a more complex project.

As far as an application that helps with sending large audio files, there's a great little application called Shorten (see Hotlinks) which reduces .aiff or .wav files in size by 50% without any loss of audio data. The only catch is that user at other end needs to have Shorten installed to expand the archive. It's a free application and well worth having if you send large audio files regularly to Mac or Linux users.



3) One of the most regular questions I get from readers revolves around microphones. If you could only recommend one microphone for broad general use under \$300, what would you recommend? I'm thinking here of a Mac user who may only have GarageBand and wants to maybe do some podcasting or record their acoustic guitar.

David Holloway

*The SM Pro Audio MC-01 studio condenser microphone would have to be one of the best buys on the planet at the moment. \$275 buys you a high quality all-round vocal and acoustic instrument mic, complete with a shock mount and carry pouch. This mic is suitable to record everything from vocals through to acoustic instruments and drums. You will need an audio interface that can supply the necessary 48v phantom power to the microphone. These can be had inexpensively from a wide variety of manufacturers including M-Audio, Digidesign, Edirol, Presonus etc. — Brett Kingman*

An alternative or 'one-stop-shop' solution would involve a simple XLR to USB cable that acts as a direct audio interface to your computer and a dynamic microphone (which doesn't require phantom power) along the lines of a Shure SM57 or similar.

4) Can you burn podcasts, and then play them on a standard CD player, and if the answer is NO, how do you convert them so you can?"

TLCAUS on AMW Forums

*I'll jump in among this esteemed company and answer an easy one. In iTunes it's as simple as:— David Holloway*

- Select 'New Playlist' from File menu in iTunes
- Drag any podcasts you want to add to that playlist.
- Click on 'Burn Disc' at bottom right of iTunes window. A window will open allowing you to select the CD format for burning. Click 'OK' once you've made your selections. (itunes-podcastburning.jpg)
- Insert a CD. Done!

If you are going to be burning podcasts to CD regularly, it may be worth setting up a Smart Playlist instead of a standard one. For example, I set one up that automatically adds any podcast downloaded to iTunes in the past seven days. If you're a podcast junkie, you may need to add an extra rule on limiting the number added to the playlist. For the regular commuter needing CDs, this takes a lot of the work out of the process and ensures you get new podcasts to listen to.

5) Another evergreen question falls around use of a normal bedroom or other space within a house for recording. What are some good basic acoustic tips for someone using a normal room for recording?"

David Holloway

*Firstly, you want your environment to be as free from ambient noise as possible. You'd be surprised at the things you hear when listening back to a recorded track; things like computer fan noise, tapping on floors when singing or playing, birds, dogs, road and air traffic all seem to appear after the recording process because you're so used to them in everyday life that they go largely ignored until you're listening back to your track ("what the hell is that?").— Brett Kingman*

Sonic isolation of your recording source can help here and there are some simple tools designed specifically for this purpose. The Mic Thing (again, made by SM Pro Audio) would be the obvious low cost solution that is both portable and highly effective. And it will save you from having to spend big dollars on sound-proofing your studio space.

Microphone placement will play a big part in the final quality of your recording. When recording vocals for example, perhaps with a condenser mic (preferred) you should consider using a 'pop shield' between you and the mic to eliminate loud 'P's' breaths and peaks in the vocal sound. Pop shields can be bought from most music stores, usually for below \$50-\$60 or you can be inventive and fashion your own from a coat hanger and stockings! (I've seen it done, even in pro studios..)

When recording things like acoustic guitars and other stringed instruments, even drums, it pays to experiment a little with microphone placement. Generally, the closer you place your microphone to its sound source, the fuller or more 'in your face' your recording will be. Placing your microphone a little off axis or farther away from the source can be desirable also, particularly if you want to give the listener a sense of space or dimension. Doing this will also add 'room ambience' (natural reverb or surface reflection from things like walls and floors) and so again, special attention must be paid to the elimination of background noise. 🗨️