

MIC IN TRACK

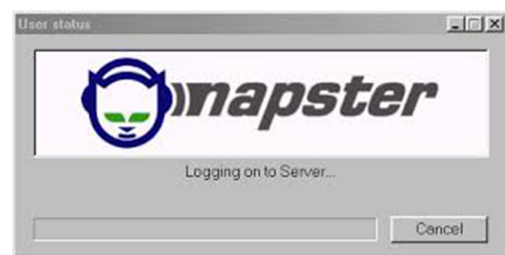
produced by **Manthos Karras**

We travel back to the unique period from 1999 to 2002, when many new PCs came packaged with software called MusicMatch Jukebox, allowing a user to record into the built-in microphone on the computer's sound card. If that person forgot to name the file, as many did, it was saved under the default name "mic in track," (as well as "Line in track" and "Mixer in track") followed by a number. If that person also happened to share his entire audio hard drive through widespread file-sharing programs starting from Napster, that small mp3 made in the privacy of one's own room went out for the whole world to hear. Because of the unique name, voyeurs could easily search for the files and listen to audio of unknowing individuals.

Typical recordings were of people singing, rapping, or playing along with the radio (often badly), kids practicing their school book reports, musicians practicing their craft, audio love letters, kids being silly, and so forth. The people who made these recordings might be surprised to know these files are circulating; some of them will be surprised to discover that they had ever recorded anything in the first place. These sonic findings place the listener right there in front of the creator's computer, to imagine all sorts of context. They represent unique examples of audio vérité, both fascinating and funny.

This phenomenon was brought to light thanks to TradeMark G. (aka Mark Gunderson), a musician and artist, best known as founder of The Evolution Control Committee. He is also a culture jammer, equipment designer, software designer and organizer. The Evolution Control Committee is best known for its copyright-challenging stance, using found sounds to create new musical works at the risk of copyright violation. At the time, Mark talked about this phenomenon on his site (even putting up a couple of his favorites to download), which became a rich source of oddness for those with the patience to bother downloading the tracks. This was not a passive activity when you consider that in the mid nineties the majority of the Internet was still connected via 28.8 to 56k speed modems. Another audio archivist and enthusiast, Cal Poly physics lecturer David Dixon, also collected as many tracks as he could find and made a precious compilation on his site.

For this radio show, dozens of "mic in track" excerpts were selected and edited in a sound collage composition, as a homage to this incredible treasure of found art.



References

The Evolution Control Committee <http://evolution-control.com/culturejamming.html>

Stark-Effect <http://stark-effect.com/mit.html>

Gabe Meline - Mic in tracks, file sharing and accidental fame <http://www.metroactive.com/bohemian/03.18.09/music-0911.html>