Favorite sites from the world of Internet radio

SOUND SURFING

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Take a tour of some favorite Internet radio sites from the experts at Linux New Media.

BY MATHIAS HUBER, MARCEL HILZINGER, KRISTIAN KISSLING, OLIVER FROMMEL, AND PETER KREUSSEL

We have some very musical authors and editors at our technical center in Munich, Germany. We asked these experts to describe their favorite Internet radio sites. One of the best things about Internet radio is its international reach. You can easily tune in to a tiny station on the other side of the world if you like stream. Of course, you may not be able to understand the DJ if you don't speak the language, but if you choose the right address, the music is all good.

▶ MATHIAS HUBER
College Chaos and British Humor

The USA has a legendary radio landscape. Innumerable small stations run by colleges or local communities provide unbeatable diversity. And thanks to the Internet, you can listen in, no matter where you are. New Jersey-based WFMU (*http://wfmu.org*), for example, has a jam-packed program full of the kind of music that never makes the mainstream stations, including old soul rarities on

"Downtown Soulville," and the breath-taking world music mix on "Give the Drummer Some." The station has live streams in Real and MP3 format, along with archived broadcasts and Podcasts.

WUSB is based on the East Coast, at the Stony Book University campus in Long Island, to be precise. In the nineties Eric Corley proved what an independent radio station was capable of with night-long phone-ins on a wide variety of subjects, live reports from telephone booths, and music from an archive of tens of thousands of LPs.

The program, which has the unlikely sounding name of "Brain Damage," is archived at *http://www.2600.com/braindamage/*. Eric, dubbing himself Emmanuel Goldstein, is publisher of the hacker fanzine 2600. He chats with colleagues on the air about cellphones, RFID chips, data protection, and politics in the weekly "Off the Hook" show (*http://www.2600.com/offthehook/*).

Moving to Europe, the venerable British Broadcasting Company, or BBC for

short, has a great Internet department. I recommend tuning in to the wide spectrum of BBC radio stations that offer everything from sports, to news, to current Britpop *http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/*.

My particular favorite is BBC 7 *http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbc7/*, which treats listeners to light entertainment from the

Besides working for Linux Magazine, Mathias Huber puts a lot of energy into expanding his impressive music collection.

last 50 years of the BBC archives. This is where to meet old friends, such as Miss Marple and Sherlock Holmes, along with real treasures from the history of the "Beeb," including performances from the earlier years of comedians such as Peter Sellers and John Cleese.

Or maybe you would be interested in listening to the rising stars of British comedy? If so, try the BBC New Comedy Awards; "Listen Again" gives you Real streams of past episodes.

▶ MARCEL HILZINGER
Groove and Soul

No limits jazz, funk, and soul are available on SwissGroove at *http://63.249.3. 194:8010* or via a number or mirrors. SwissGroove offers me just the right kind of mix of excellent jazz and funky soul that I need to concentrate on my work. The program has a great mix of household names and lesser known artists. Unfortunately, the station is undergoing financial stress at present, and there is genuine danger of the operation folding.

Marcel Hilzinger is a Suse guru who integrates more or less any kind of device with his Linux system.

For current information and playlists, surf to *http://www.swissgroove.ch*. I use the Xmms player.

Luckily, you can find many Internet stations with excellent jazz, and if Swissgroove does come to an untimely end, you can always revert to a station such as *http://smoothjazz.com*, which broadcasts on the URL *http://64.236.34.4:80/ stream/1005*. Smoothjazz has a good mix of melodic soul and jazz, mainly featuring instrumentals. Smoothjazz mentions Xmms as one of its supported players.

Alpen Sounds

As a Swiss guy living abroad, I sometimes need a dose of Swiss folk to keep away the homesick blues. And when I need it, I go to Radio Top at *http:// streaming5.sunrise.ch:8162*. This station gives me the kind of music that 30 to 40-year-old Swiss people remember from their school days; the schedule also includes a smattering of current hits. To learn more, visit *http://www.radiotop.ch*.

I occasionally tune in to Radio24, Switzerland's first private radio station, and a former Italian-based pirate that broadcasted news and cool sounds to Italy and central Switzerland prior to the opening of the Swiss radio market. Today, the station has a balanced mix of current hits and evergreens.

For more information, go to *http:// radio24.ch*. You will find a live stream at *http://206.165.150.201:80/radio24-hi*, for example, although you need an MPlayer to play it. On the downside, both stations have regular advertising blocks.

In Paradise

When I want to chill out, I just click the

playlist entry for *http://www. radioparadise.com*. This takes me to a tiny private station broadcasting at URL *http://64.236.34.4:80/stream/1048* with music to suit a variety of tastes. Besides MP3 and Real Media, the online station also broadcasts AAC + . Linux is not just an exotic addition to the website for RadioParadise; in fact, they specify both Xmms and VLC as compatible players.
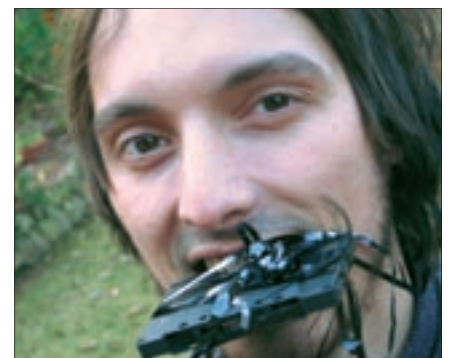
▶ KRISTIAN KISSLING
Berlin, Teheran, Marseille

Motor FM started regular Indie rock broadcasts February 1, 2005. This Berlin-based station, which was founded by ex-Universal boss Tim Renner, promotes previously unknown artists beyond the mainstream. The private station completely does without advertising and news and is funded via parties, sales of music via the Internet, and merchandising, which is quite an unusual approach in the private radio scene.

Motor FM plays good, but often totally unknown, local artists such as "T.Raumschmiere" or "The Robocop Kraus" but also plays successful international Indie bands such as "Art Brut" or "Block Party." If you happen to visit Berlin, you can also tune in on FM 106.8 MHz, a frequency that Motor FM shares with the children's channel Radio Teddy, broadcasting from 9 pm to 6 am every day. In Stuttgart, Germany, you can tune in on 97.2 MHz, but if you don't happen to live in the area, just tune in on the Web. The website at *www.motor.de* gives listeners a live stream, which you can play on Linux using the *Mplayerplugin*.

Radio Darvish

Tar, setar, du or tombak…no these are not new Linux archiving formats, but

Kristian Kißling works for the Linux New Media Software Competence Center and mainly takes care of multimedia topics.

traditional Persian instruments. Radio Darvish is named after Darvish Khan (1872-1926), a musician from Teheran who performed classical Persian music using the above mentioned instruments.

His heritage is now preserved by the Iranian Internet radio station *www.radiodarvish.com*. Although this music may sound unusual to Western ears, stick with it, and you too may be fascinated by its idiosyncratic style. The instrumentals, in particular, are very reminiscent of the psychedelic sounds of the 60s.

Radio Grenouille

Marseille, the old harbor town in France, lives from its African immigrants and its location close to the sea. Marseille is the hip-hop center of France, and the local radio station Radio Grenouille plays both traditional French music and Indie rock. On rare occasions, listeners are treated to programs that deny any attempt at classification, such as avant-garde music in the style of John Cage.

This is a big experiment, and it does take some tolerance on the part of the listener. You can check out the station on the Internet site at *www.grenouille888. org/dyn/sommaire.php3*.

▶ OLIVER FROMMEL
Internet Dreams

Soma.fm, from the homeland of Internet dreams, is an Internet station that provides a variety of streams to suit different tastes. The servers are located in a cellar in San Francisco's South Of Market area, which explains the idiosyncratic name. The musical repertoire covers everything from Ambient ("Groove

Figure 1: Soma.fm has eight streams to cater to a wide range of musical tastes.

Salad"), to House and Funk ("Secret Agent"), to Indie rock and pop ("Indie Pop Rocks"). The streams, along with bandwidth and formats, are all listed on the homepage (Figure 1).

Rusty Hodge, who started experimenting with Internet radio in 1995, launched Soma.fm in the year 2000, finally fulfilling a lifelong dream. Now, the insanely expensive broadcasting license fees (that now apply equally to Internet radio stations) threaten the existence of the station. At present, Soma.fm streams eight channels, with more scheduled.

As even the smallest Internet station in the USA is asked to pay royalties, Soma.fm relies on the financial support of its listeners; you even get a T-shirt with a donation of US$ 50.

Breakbeats and Samba

Whereas Soma.fm focuses on providing clearly categorized channels, Dublab. com (Figure 2) is always good for a surprise. The musical style is described as "Eclectic." You'll find minute-long breakbeats juxtaposed with Samba and low-fi tracks that sound like Simon and Garfunkel – but without the acoustic guitars.

Dublab.com sticks to its motto of "positive music and culture." The only drawback

with accessing the station: as the link to the stream is hidden in a Flash, you can only tune in if your browser is configured correctly. If not, just surf right to the stream at *http://205.188.215. 225:8008/listen.pls*.

Oldschool Hip-Hop

Beatbasement.com plays hip-hop that deserves the name. The stream is just 24Kbits, but with a fat bass sound that will soon have your speakers bouncing. The station tends to avoid MTV fave raves such as Eminem, focusing on old-school masters such as Guru and Kool Keith with original beats.
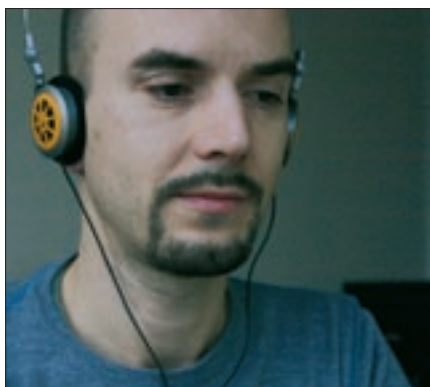
If you are a fan of mainstream US rap stations, you will appreciate the fact that the Beatbasement program is ad-free. Again, the station relies on financial support from its listeners, so "Keep it real!"

▶ PETER KREUSSEL
Classics

I've heard that there are still one or two souls who just don't like techno or hip-hop; they tend to run and hide when confronted with house or charts and would rather drink dishwater than listen to mainstream pop. On the other hand, these people revel at the thought of Neville Marriner's rendition of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. If this sounds like you, the Internet has plenty to offer.

To get away from the constraints of the daily rush, just tune in to Swissradio.ch. Besides a repertoire of Barock oratorios, Mozart operas, and romantic concert pieces, the radio station is characterized by the fact that its recording archives

Oliver Frommel runs the Linux New Media Software Competence Center.

Figure 2: Dublab.com is always good for a musical surprise.

Peter Kreussel also works at the Software Competence Center; if he is not hacking at his computer, you might find him playing keyboard.

comprise about 80 percent historic recordings. This is really unusual and maybe a bit crazy.

And that takes us to the name: "Radio Crazy." Besides classical music, the station also broadcasts jazz and swing. You will find the website at *http://www.swissradio.ch* and the audio stream at *http://www.swissradio.ch/streams/6034.m3u.*

The Complete Mozart

Fans of classical music are driven to distraction by the many radio stations that just play individual movements, rather than complete works. This is not the case with Mozart-mp3.com, a Mozart only station.

If the fact that the audio stream is a measly 32Kbps does not faze you, you can tune in to *http://www.live365.com/play/293999?SaneID=62.245.157.194-1135937415896&AuthType=NORMAL&VisitCount=1* 24x7 for the nearest thing to musical heaven.

The City of Birmingham Symphony Ochestra has played its way to international acclaim. Former conductor Simon Rattle celebrated rousing triumphs with this body of musicians. You can tune into recordings with this extremely disciplined or-

chestra at *http://70.85.180.114:8080* to the delight of your audio player and your ears. The complete musical offering of the City of Birmingham is online at *http://www.birminghamusic.com/radio.php.*

Soothing Classics

Klassikradio.de is dedicated to relaxing background music, juxtaposing classical compositions with pieces by symphony orchestras. Between 6 and 8 pm, the station broadcasts classic movie tracks. Klassikradio has an excellent sound quality due to its bandwidth of 128Kbps. You will find the station homepage at *http://www.klassikradio-shop.de/playlist/,* and the audio stream at *http://212.211.137.136/3165klassikradio_live.mp3?=.wmv.*

Variety on the Web

Web radio has breathed new life into a technology that many considered defunct. For the listener, this means greater variety and free access to music around the world.

If you haven't gotten started with Internet radio yet, surf the stations in this article and see what you think. Keep what you like, and surf on to compile your own list of favorites. ■