Tuning in the world of Internet radio

HEARTH SOUNDS

Did you think the Internet was out of revolutions? With Internet radio, anyone can be a broadcaster. If you want to start broadcasting or podcasting, or even if you're just looking for the perfect station, check out this month's Internet Radio cover story. **BY JOE CASAD**

Once upon a time, the young and old gathered by the radio to hear news, opinions, humor, and music from far away. Everyone knew that anything worth knowing was happening somewhere on the radio, and you could travel around the world just by turning your dial.

But radio fell on hard times with the rise of television, settling into a narrower niche for sports fans, commuters, and the teenage pop music crowd. The medium still had meaning for those who listened, but the promise of radio as a magical tool to make the world smaller had worn away.

The radio of old languished in this diminished state for a pair of long generations, until at last it was born again.

You may not have noticed, but the past few years have seen the re-emergence of a new kind of radio – or is it something else that just feels like radio?

The appearance of Internet radio mirrors the emergence of streaming technology and recent advances in audio hardware. You really can listen to your computer the way an earlier generation listened to a radio console or HiFi system. And if you're connected to the Internet, you can pick up sounds from all around the world.

The Internet radio revolution has given rise to a new breed of listeners – and a new breed of broadcasters. The corners of the Internet resonate with ideas and exotic sounds, if you know where to find them. Or were you thinking that you would be the one with the new ideas and sounds?

In this issue, we look at the Internet radio experience – from the viewpoint of both the listener and the broadcaster. If you want to start your own radio site, or even if you just want to tune in, you'll find something you can use.

Our article titled "Sound Saver" describes how to record, edit, and tag an audio file for podcasting using the open source Audacity sound editor. We'll also focus on streaming audio with an article on the Icecast streaming server. We'll show you how to stream live content to listeners with Icecast.

If you'd rather just listen, you'll enjoy our article titled "Sound Surfing," which tours some favorite Internet radio stations around the world. And in the final article of this set, we'll show you Last.fm, an Internet-based service that lets you create a "virtual radio station" tailored to your own musical interests.

This month's cover story examines Internet radio from all sides of the dial. Read on for a look at the exciting world of Internet radio. ■

COVER STORY