

FH MMA – Michele Gaggia – Auditive Gestaltung SS 2009

Speech Recording Exercise

General Information

These are the requirements for the small speech recording task that you should carry out until the 5th of June.

I had originally planned to edit your recorded material in the lessons on the 15th and 22nd of May, but most of you did not complete the task in time for these dates, so we had to change the plan. We cannot afford to do this during the coming lessons (on the 5th and 12th of June) as it would leave too little time to work on your end-of-semester musical project.

I have therefore changed the schedule as follows: this speech recording will be delivered as MP3 to be uploaded on an FTP server (details below). I am also adding here the required information about how to edit and export the speech track.

Length

- about 1 minute

Text Content

Whatever you like, for example:

- some song Lyrics (also a rap)
- a short poem
- advertisement for a product or service

Recording Device

Recommended: FH's Tascam HD P2 Portable Flash RAM Recorder with speech condenser microphone.

Also accepted: a laptop with a decent sound card and speech/vocal microphone

Absolutely required: MANUAL regulation of the input level! Systems with automatic input level (such as most minidisk and mini-recorder devices) are not intended for professional speech or music recording.

Recording Tips

Before starting your recording remember to check the following:

- set input type to “mic”
- set mic type to “external”
- set “no pad” (= no attenuation of the input)
- switch phantom power “on” only for condenser microphones, “off” for all other types
- set the recording format: 24-bit, 44.1 or 48 kHz
- set the proper recording level so that the highest peaks are -6 dB fs maximum
- avoid “clipping” (overloads) at all costs!

Microphone positioning: about 25-40 cm from the speaker for cardioid types. Avoid reflections from hard surfaces (for example a table) as they can cause strong comb filtering coloration, that cannot be removed later. Make a few test recordings and listen on headphones if you are happy with the result before starting the proper takes.

Record several “takes” of each text section (at least 3 or 4).

After each “take” give – if required – tips about expression, intonation, speed, dynamic and pauses to the speaker. Repeat until you are completely satisfied.

Editing in Cubase

Transfer the material to your computer workstation or laptop (for example, using a flash card reader or USB cable, depending on the device).

Start a new project in Cubase and import all the audio files in the pool. Order the takes in the Project window (main window in Cubase) so that different versions of the same section are available on separate tracks under each other. Using the “mute” and “solo” button you can choose which version to listen to. All editing must be non-destructive and performed in the Project window (not in the Sample Editor!).

Compare the different takes until you find the best one for each section; then cut at the start and end of the desired section (scissor tool, grid OFF), and put it on a new empty track (an audio track you can call “montage”).

When you have selected all the best parts, put them together using short crossfades (overlap samples, press “X” - length about 20-100 ms). Crossfades are almost always placed BEFORE the beginning of a word (or in musical editing, before a note).

Add a short fade in at the start of the track, and a slower fade out at the end (even if all you have in background is a light noise). Avoid to completely cut off breathing, pauses, etc. or the recording might sound unnatural.

Remember to SAVE the project often (CTRL+S)!

Effects

Recommended effects settings for vocal recording (compressor, de-esser, EQ, reverb, limiter, etc.) will be discussed during our Auditive Gestaltung lessons. But you are welcome to experiment with some of the available presets in Cubase.

Mastering

Before exporting, make sure you mark the range to export (on the timeline, blue range) and mute all tracks you do NOT want to have exported (only “montage” track should be active).

If you are using effects, check out your output levels! Your peaks on the main stereo out should not exceed 0 dB fs over. You might add a “brickwall limiter” to make sure there are no overs and set the max peak at -0.2 dB fs (standard for mastering). In any case, avoid too much compression.

Export the mixdown as MP3 file, 192 kbps or higher and upload it on the FTP server listed below.

If you are not sure how some editing step is performed, consult the Cubase Operation Manual (can be found under C:\Programme\Steinberg\Cubase 5\Documentation\Operation_Manual.pdf). If you still do not come further, please go to www.digitalnaturalsound.com/contact/ and email me using the contact form.

File Format

The speech exercises are to be delivered as stereo MP3 with 192 kbps or higher quality. They must be uploaded to the following FTP server:

Server Name: <ftp.digitalnaturalsound.com>
Username: mma
Password: audio09

Create a folder with your [Vorname_Name](#) and a clear file name ([vorname_name-tracktitle-05062009.mp3](#)). Include a short description (as simple text file, or PDF document) about the recorded material (source of the text, recording equipment, speaker, etc.).

Deadline (Project Delivery Date)

5th of June 2009 until 22:00.

Evaluation Criteria

The exercise will be evaluated from these aspects:

- speech recording quality (clarity, bass/treble balance, etc.)
- speech expressive quality
- mastering (level, ev. distortion)

Kind regards

Michele "Xenomorph" Gaggia

xenomorph@digitalnaturalsound.com

www.DigitalNaturalSound.com