



[webmonkey](#)/multimedia/

Streaming Audio with Shoutcast

by [Nate Manchester](#)

I first heard about Internet radio in 1996 when I moved into my cellblock at the San Francisco State University dorms. My roommate's CD collection consisted of crap like MC Hammer and C+C Music Factory, so to hear more interesting stuff he'd get online and listen to RealAudio stations. The sound quality was terrible — I always thought it was like listening to music through two cups connected by a piece of string. But things have changed a lot since '96. With the arrival of new and improved audio formats, namely MP3, streaming audio sounds cleaner than ever.

These days, there are several major players in the [streaming media](#) game. Big names like Microsoft, Apple, RealNetworks, and Macromedia are all battling for a piece of the market, but the dark horse is Nullsoft and its Shoutcast server. Shoutcast streams MP3s, is extremely easy to set up, sounds great, and requires relatively little bandwidth. But wait, here comes the best part: Shoutcast is *free* for noncommercial users. That's right folks — free! This means any yokel with a PC and a phone line can serve streaming audio without paying a dime.

Now, you can't just fire up your machine and give the gift of music to the world. If you want more than one person to hear your favorite jams you'll need a faster connection than a modem can offer. But you could [create a library of MP3s](#), [set up a server](#), hook up a [DSL line](#), install a Shoutcast server, and jockey your disks to all of planet Earth.

I was curious about this whole Shoutcast deal, so I [downloaded](#) the necessary goods and had myself a look-see. Turns out it's pretty easy to get up and running.

Getting on the Air

The [Shoutcast site](#) explains pretty much all you need to know to get your Shoutcast server working. It's a fairly straightforward process.

You need Winamp 2.05 or above to play Shoutcast streams, so make sure you're [up to date](#). You'll also need to download and install Winamp's DSC plug-in and download an MP3 [codec](#), but this is all available at the site. After you unzip the DSC file, the ReadMe will give you step-by-step instructions on how to configure your Shoutcast/Winamp package.

I followed the ReadMe's simple directions, made a few tweaks here and there, and the next thing I knew I was Wolfman Jacking my very own music from our very own Webmonkey quad. After considering the consequences of such an action (and after our sysadmin hunted me down and beat me for taking up bandwidth), I decided to take K-NATE off the air. Nevertheless, I was in love. It was *so easy*.

All in all, it took me about half an hour to download, install, and configure all the necessary components of a Shoutcast server. The hardest part was deciding what to name my Webcast.

The Future of Shoutcast

You're probably thinking this Shoutcast thing is really cool, right? Well, apparently so did America Online. Earlier this month, AOL put down US\$400 million to [acquire Nullsoft](#). Just the thought of zillions of AOL users armed with a future AOL browser featuring Shoutcast and Winamp ought to send a shiver down the spines of record execs everywhere. That's exactly why the record companies are trying to get their own proprietary, digitally secure music formats ready as soon as possible.

You see, the record industry is [more than a little nervous](#) about this whole Internet music thing. When you give the masses a free tool to broadcast songs or listen to other people's broadcasts, the industry's business model goes straight down the drain. And as you know, when business models go down the drain, all hell breaks loose.

But until then, I've found a new hobby.

[Nate Manchester](#) was Webmonkey's production assistant before he was kicked to the curb by the other Monkeys for constantly begging for margaritas. He now works over at [Organic Media](#), where he makes fancy-schmancy advertising stuff.

[Feedback](#) | [Help](#) | [About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

[Copyright](#) © 1994-2004 Wired Digital Inc., a Lycos Network site. All rights reserved.