

CHAPTER 8

Producing Commercials, Promos, and News

HIGHLIGHTS

Talent

Production Pre-Planning

Production

News Production

Suggested Activities

Web Sites for More Information

Pro Speak

Typically, when we think of production in a radio station we think of commercials, station promotional announcements, and the imaging elements that give a radio station its personality. And in fact, this is the bulk of what is involved in radio station production.

From a production standpoint, commercials, station promotional announcements, and public service announcements are all basically the same. A commercial is produced for a station client, a promotional announcement is produced for the station, and a public service announcement (PSA) is produced on behalf of a nonprofit organization, but the core production elements of recording, editing, and mixing are the same for each. When we refer to commercials, throughout this chapter, please think commercials, promos, and PSAs.

News is a different critter and gets its own special section at the end of the chapter. But even there, keep in mind that many of the core elements of production with regard to recording, editing, and mixing are all the same basic production skills, just used in a slightly different manner.

Talent

What in the world is talent? Simply, talent is a person's inherent, distinctive ability to do certain things a little better than other people do. Some people explain talent as God-given; others attribute talent to learned behavioral patterns or skills. It really does not matter how a person comes by talent. Some people appear to be naturals, whereas others work hard to build skills in a particular area. Talent is also a generic term used to describe announcers.

Whether they are talented or skilled, one of the pitfalls production people face in their day-to-day work is turning out "formula" production. Call it falling into a rut, or turning

out the "same old, same old." This is especially true in consolidated markets, where a production person typically has a more diverse and heavier workload. The individual may be producing work for five to seven different radio stations. Give any experienced production person the name, address, and phone number of a business and three items with price and product, and he or she can likely ad-lib sixty seconds for you based on clichés and meaningless verbiage. It won't be pretty, but it is a commercial, and if scheduled properly it stands a chance of working.

Of course, the time may come when you are backed into a corner and are forced to resort to a formulaic work product. When this author was a general manager, I had a standing house rule ("house" being the radio station). In an emergency, we would process a sales order and have the commercial on the air in an hour or less, using formula-type production. I can't tell you how many times a car dealership called in near cardiac arrest, because a newspaper had screwed up a big weekend ad or a competitor had under-priced the dealership, and the client wanted to use the flexibility of radio to correct the situation NOW. Once the emergency commercial was on the air, though, the salesperson and production had to re-vamp it and bring the commercial up to station production standards. That was the house rule.

To remain fresh, talented, and skilled, production people need to stop from time to time to evaluate their work and the production process, from the creation of the script forward. This evaluation can involve anything from a lunch away from the station to attending an industry seminar. Anywhere you can talk freely and objectively evaluate your production process with others will work. Evaluation should be a constant, ongoing process. If nothing else, use a simple form of

self-evaluation on a daily basis. Ask yourself at the end of each day what you did that day that was great. Likewise, ask yourself if there was anything you could have done better, and what you could have done to make it better. Regular evaluation is a valuable resource for news and public affairs producers as well.

Production Pre-Planning

Before going into the studio, take a moment to plan out what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. This does not have to be a lengthy process. Keep in mind that studio time is valuable, especially in a multistation complex.

Script

Regardless of whether you or the continuity coordinator wrote the script for a commercial, review it before you go into the studio. Believe it or not, people do make mistakes, and before you spend time on a project you should make sure you are working with good copy. Do the names, telephone numbers, and addresses in the script match up with the production order? A simple error caught at this point saves everyone time and trouble at some point in the future.

Check pronunciation and look for any new or unusual words you, or the talent, may not be 100 percent sure how to pronounce. If you find something you are not familiar with, ask the continuity coordinator or salesperson how the word should be pronounced. Sometimes it's the simple words that will jump up and bite you. As an example, a pronunciation that comes up frequently in the furniture business is a "suite" of furniture. Is the word "suite" pronounced like a man's suit of clothes, or it is pronounced "sweet"? The dictionary's pre-

ferred pronunciation and what the furniture store wants may be two different things. In this case, after confirming with the salesperson, you go with what the client wants.

Look for any phrases that require special attention, such as the client's slogan. Sometimes the client has a particular way he or she likes the slogan to be read, with emphasis placed on certain words. A car dealership, for example, uses the slogan "Nobody, but Nobody beats a Mountain Jeep Deal." The client insists that the talent read the first "Nobody" quickly, and that "but Nobody" be stretched out, with a lot of emphasis on the second "Nobody."

Check the script's timing by reading the script aloud and timing it with a stopwatch. How long is a sixty-second commercial? Sixty seconds. When it comes to timing, you also need to be aware that many stations use computer live-assist systems to play back the ads in the stop-sets. These systems are adjusted so that the ads in the stop-set play back to back, and often the system overlaps the ads by a fraction of a second. Check with the production director or the station's engineering staff to see what the overlap is. If a station is using a common overlap of 750 milliseconds, that means that during the last three-fourths of a second, the ad is being faded down and the next ad is starting. The end result is that your voice track must be finished at fifty-nine seconds or the end of the voice track will be clipped off by the live-assist system as it fades the ad.

Technical Considerations and Track Layout

After previewing the script, you should have a good idea of what is going to be required to create the commercial. The first question to get out of the way is whether or not you have everything in-house to complete the project.

Have you got the voice talent, sound effects, and music to produce the commercial? Are there any production elements, like a client-supplied jingle, or music bed, that you still need in order to complete the project? If the commercial is a simple dialogue (voice-only) commercial, then all you need is the voice talent and you are ready to go.

Of course, if you are producing an ad for a car dealership you might be asked to do a little more. For example, the dealership may be required to use a manufacturer-supplied music bed, to which the dealership wants to add synthesizer rips, called laser blasts, to emphasize price points. The dealership might also like to overlap the announcer's voice on top of itself with reverb and close the commercial with the eight-second tag line from a custom jingle the dealership has purchased.

As a part of studio prep, make a quick track count and see where you stand. For the car dealership's commercial, eight tracks are required to complete the project in stereo—two tracks for the manufacturer's music bed, two tracks for the client's eight-second custom jingle tag line, two tracks for laser blasts, and two tracks for the voice talent so that the voice can be overlapped. Most digital audio workstations (DAWs) have that many tracks and more, but you just need to consider the track count to make sure you are covered.

As a part of preparing to go to the studio, figure out how you want to group or lay out your tracks. There really is no set rule, except to try and keep it as simple as possible. The best track layout is the one that works for you. Don't ask me why, but this author's personal habit is to lay down (record) the voice tracks to the left, or top (depending on software), of the DAW monitor screen, starting at track one. Music tracks get set to the far right, or bottom (again depending on software), of the DAW

monitor screen. The sound effects (SFX) usually end up on the tracks in between the voice and the music. Regardless of how you lay out your tracks, though, you need to have a plan in mind before you go into the studio. It is at this stage that you can take a production/track layout form and begin designing the commercial (see Fig. 8.1).

Music Selection

The time to make general music and SFX decisions is before you go to the studio. To avoid tying up a studio, most people use the computer on their desk or a small boom box with a CD player to audition music and SFX.

Before considering music, consider the lack of it. In chapter 7, plain voice and dialogue commercials were discussed as being very powerful at communicating ideas. Some commercials really do not need, nor should they have, music behind them. When a friend is talking to you about the big sale at the electronics store, does he play music in the background? When a man and woman are talking about wedding plans, do they stop and play music in the background so they can talk? Nope.

If you think you just have to have music in the background of a straight voice, or dialogue, commercial, try this test. Go ahead and mix a track of music you like with the voice track. Play it back and listen critically to the commercial, then immediately play back the commercial without the music bed. Does the commercial message suddenly sound like it's missing something? If it sounds like it lacks something without the music, then you were right: You know the music is adding something to the commercial. But if the commercial message still sounds good without the music, drop the music.

WRPC PRODUCTION CREATIVE CONCEPTS

Client Number: 88-9679
Date: 5/29
Client: Carolina Furniture Outlet
Salesperson: Jim Underwood
Length: 60 _____ 30 _____
Date due for approval: 5/22

Production music bed used: _____

SFX used: _____

Any special music or SFX you created for this ad? _____

Track 1: _____

Track 2: _____

Track 3: _____

Track 4: _____

Track 5: _____

Track 6: _____

Track 7: _____

Track 8: _____

Track 9: _____

Track 10: _____

Track 11: _____

Track 12: _____

Use reverse side for more tracks.
 Complete form online or attach to completed production order.

Figure 8.1

A production track-layout form helps you to pre-plan your work before you go into the studio. It also serves as a record of what you did, should you have to re-create a similar commercial for the client at some time in the future.

The best music for a commercial is something written and scored specifically for the commercial, something that appeals to the commercial’s target audience, and that matches the tempo, mood, and style of the commercial. If you are fortunate enough to live in a larger metropolitan area, there are

likely to be a number of talented professionals who can quickly score sixty seconds of music for a very reasonable fee. Such fees will depend on a number of factors. For example, who owns the music and retains the copyright: the composer, client, or the radio station? Is the fee a one-time-use fee, with

additional fees to be paid whenever the client uses the music again? Or is the music an outright one-time purchase, where the radio station or client pays for it and it is the property of one or the other in perpetuity? Some radio stations negotiate quantity discount rates from these independent producers, making the cost even more affordable for the client. (Typically, the client pays for any additional costs associated with a custom music bed, even if the costs are folded into an annual contract or commercial rates.)

The next best thing to custom music is a music library. Very likely, most of the music for your commercials and station promotional announcements is going to be selected from a production music library. Production music libraries consist of sixty- and thirty-second cuts of music that are copyright-cleared for commercial use. Some libraries include ten- and fifteen-second cuts as well. Production libraries come in a variety of music formats, tempos, and styles, fitting just about every business and mood. Most libraries include news, sports, and public affairs theme music as well. A small production music library has been included with this text for your class projects, including news and sports themes (see Appendix).

Music libraries are created and sold by music production companies that specialize in production music and jingles. These libraries offer music to fit numerous radio formats. A music library can be acquired on a market-exclusive basis, meaning that the production company will only sell a format-specific library, such as classic rock, to one station in the market. However, the company will sell that same library to a number of stations across the country on a market-by-market basis.

There are three ways a station acquires the rights to production music. Firstly, a station

can buy the library outright, with market exclusivity, for a one-time payment. Prices for libraries purchased in this manner range from the hundreds to the thousands of dollars, depending on the number of cuts and the quality of the library. Secondly, a station can lease a library for a monthly fee, never owning the CDs in their possession. The advantage of a leased library is that it is updated on a regular basis, and you get fresh music to work with, exchanging older CDs for new ones. A third way, and the least common way to get a library, is on a **“needle-drop basis.”** This is a pay-as-you-go situation in which the station initially pays nothing for the library. Each time the station uses a cut from the library, it has to report the usage to the music production company and pay the fee for that cut. (The term “needle-drop” comes from the early days of radio, when record players had a replaceable phonograph needle, or stylus, and a payment was made for each drop of the needle onto the record.)

Clients sometimes request a popular song as the background to a commercial. It is not possible to use commercially released songs behind commercials. In virtually all cases, it is a violation of the copyright held by the music’s owner. When you hear and see national and regional ads with popular songs used behind them, additional rights fees have been paid to the music’s copyright holder. (An exception to this rule is when your station is promoting a music concert and you use the band’s own music behind the ad for their concert.)

As far as selecting the music for the commercial, there are a few more considerations to take into account. Firstly, your program and production director are going to require you to use music that complements the station’s format. You can’t have music that goes counter to the format. For example, if your

station is a light-rock station, you will not select something with a heavy-metal sound to it. Conflicts like this are usually avoided through the careful selection of the production music library in the first place, but don't be surprised if you occasionally see a production CD with a cut labeled "not for air" on the liner notes.

Secondly, consider the commercial's pacing and energy level. You are looking for a piece of music that will appeal to the commercial's target audience and complement the announcer's timing and energy level. The music is not the star of the commercial. The music is backing up the announcer and needs to remain in the background, assisting the announcer to reach the target. Often, the music influences how the talent reads the copy. If you select something too fast and intense, it appears as though you are trying to push, or rush, the announcer along. Likewise, selecting something too slow, with a weak energy level, drags the announcer down.

Thirdly, consider the emotional level, or appeal, of the commercial. Music is a very powerful emotional tool; use it wisely. Select just the right track for the commercial and you can greatly enhance the commercial's impact. Choosing music is often a trial-and-error process as you look for the track that fits just right with the commercial. What you are looking for is a piece of music that complements and reinforces the commercial to help reach the target audience, all without calling too much attention to itself. You want to affect listeners, but you don't want them to know it is the music doing it. You want the focus to be on the dialogue of the commercial message; the music stays in the background.

Fourthly, consider the client's business type. Try to match the music style and tempo, or pacing, to the business. A bank is going to get an entirely different music bed than a car dealership or a fast-food restaurant will. A

commercial for an Italian restaurant needs something that sounds like an Italian restaurant. Again the trial-and-error process comes into play, trying cuts of music until you hear the one that causes you to say, "That's it!" Of course, for effect, you can also try going one-hundred-eighty degrees from what you think the music should be. For example, try putting classical music behind a local Dairy Queen Halloween commercial for hot dogs. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, which is rather scary, makes a convincing background for Dairy Queen's Halloweenies!

Fifthly, you have to consider the client's request, or lack of request. Clients sometimes ask for a specific style or type of music and, just as often, clients leave it up to the salesperson to select something that fits with the commercial. The ultimate music decision is going to rest with the client, and it is a good idea, if possible, to run the music by the client first for approval before producing the commercial.

Sound Effects Selection

The purpose of a sound effect in a commercial is to give the listener an audible cue to what is going on. Depending on how sound effects are used, they can either add to your commercial and enhance the message, or they can detract from your work and make the message difficult or impossible to understand. It's a balancing act. Use too few sound effects, and the listener misses the point of the commercial. Use too many, and the listener misses the commercial message entirely (see demo CD, cut 66). When it comes to the use of sound effects, less is generally more.

There are three ways to use sound effects to enhance a commercial. The first is as background continuity, to set the stage for a commercial. For example, if you have a dialogue between two people who are supposed to be

hiking in the mountains, an outdoor background with birds would set the stage for the ad. Other examples for different contexts include street sounds, sports crowd noise, babbling brooks, and chirping crickets. Background continuity is just that, nondescript background sounds. Background continuity is sometimes referred to as a secondary sound effect. Nothing in the background should stand out and draw attention.

A second use for sound effects is as foreground continuity. Foreground continuity is a sound effect that supports the dialogue or the event that is being depicted in the commercial. For example, if an ad for a tire store talks about you having a flat tire, you need a tire blowout with the flop, flop, flop of the tire as the car comes to a stop. Foreground sound effects are sometimes called primary sound effects, as they give the listener important clues to what is happening.

The third use of a sound effect is as punctuation to the dialogue or action in the ad. This is an effect that has to occur at precisely the right moment or the ad does not work. For example, an ad for a cell phone company uses a single cell phone ring to punctuate each price point in the ad. A beer company depends on the sound of a pop-top and the fizz of opening a beer at just the right moment. Timing is absolutely key for sound effects used as punctuation.

Of course, there are also commercials with very little dialogue and are composed mostly of sound effects. (These are just the opposite of the ones described above, in which sound effects merely support the dialogue.) In this case, the sound effects have to carry the commercial; they have to be clear, simple, and definitive. This is not easy to do, since you are depending on the listener to figure out what is going on. Such ads require a lot of extra work and trial-and-error experimentation to find just the right

mix of sound and dialogue. It is always a good idea to test this type of commercial on a number of people to make sure they understand the ad, before it goes on the air.

Specific Sound Effects

One class of sound effects that you should try to avoid entirely is realistic-sounding police and fire sirens, or for that matter any realistic-sounding emergency alert effect, as a primary sound effect. Although this can draw immediate attention to your commercial, it can potentially cause confusion on the part of in-vehicle listeners and distract them from what they are doing.

There is one sound effect that scares everyone to death. It is so stark, startling, and abrupt, that many are afraid to use it in a commercial. Silence. Famed radio commentator Paul Harvey will hold the title “Master of Silence” forever. His pauses while delivering commercials and news copy dramatically punctuate and enhance his stories. Three to five seconds of silence sounds like an eternity on radio and can really make a point.

Talent Selection

Voice talent is what makes a commercial. The talent becomes the actor in the “theatre of the mind” story you are creating. As a production person, you need to develop a sense of what talent you have available within the radio station and what they are capable of doing with their voices. Most production people, as they review a script, are mentally casting station staff members in the various roles in the commercial. However, it is important to note that jocks with great voices are not necessarily going to be great actors for your commercial projects.

When selecting the voices for your commercials (in other words, casting), go for character and style first and voice quality second. Network with everyone you meet, because someday you are going to have to reach outside the radio station for a child, an elderly person, or an ethnic personality to do an accent or role in a commercial. Remember, too, that there is a distinct difference between an announcer and an actor. It is not how the person's voice sounds but what he or she can do with that voice that makes a person an actor.

Every commercial has a personality, character, or attitude to it. Your goal in selecting the talent is to reflect and enhance the commercial's character. As simple as a plain voice, or dialogue, commercial might seem, it can be the most difficult to cast because you have to match the speaker's personality to the commercial. There are male and female speakers who specialize in sounding warm and fuzzy, firm and authoritative, relaxed and easy-going, full of energy and upbeat, or even a touch goofy, but still with some credibility, just to name a few of the styles available. A key to the commercial's success is your ability to match the right vocal character and qualities to the commercial.

In the pre-planning stage, select the talent you need to complete the commercial and set a time for them to record, or cut, the tracks. With a multitrack DAW, keep in mind that the talent can cut their tracks anytime they are available and you can come back to the tracks later to produce the commercial. As an example, a station produced a series of commercials for a high-end jewelry store chain that involved a six-year-old girl and the chain's owner talking about Christmas and Hanukkah gifts. The little girl was brought in first and recorded her lines. The store owner came in a week later and, listening to the little girl,

recorded his responses to the little girl's lines. The voice tracks were recorded in September and mixed and edited in October; no one believed the two had never met.

However, you need to be aware that you don't always get to pick the talent for your projects. There are several instances in which station staff are assigned or outside talent brought in to work on a project. Most production directors rotate station talent on commercials so that voices don't get overused or scheduled back-to-back in stop-sets. Sometimes a client even provides the talent for the commercial, as in the case of the previously mentioned jewelry ad, and in most cases the salesperson works to try and accommodate the client's wishes.

Another aspect of talent selection is a talent fee. Who gets a talent fee and who does not varies from market to market and even within stations. Most often, a station's on-air announcers do not receive talent fees for in-house work, but they do receive a fee when a commercial is used on another station in the market at the client's request. In larger markets, it is not unusual for the talent to belong to a labor union. AFTRA, the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, is the most prominent union in the broadcasting field. SAG, the Screen Actors Guild, also represents some on-air talent. Radio talent working at a union station work under a local and national contract and must be paid accordingly.

As a word of caution, any time people are brought into the station as outside talent, be sure they sign a talent release authorizing the station to use their voice. This is particularly important when working with children. Depending on the state, you might need the parent or guardian's permission to use the child's voice or likeness in a commercial even if the child is not identified by name.

Scheduling Studio Time

The last stage of the pre-planning is to schedule your studio time to complete the project. Each facility has its own policy about studio time; don't be a studio hog. In simplest terms, use the studio for the actual work of creating the ad. The key to making maximum use of your studio time is first: to know what you want before you go into the studio, and second: to know how to create it with the equipment you have to work with. Do not be afraid to ask questions of others or to observe others while they work. Most people are more than happy to assist you when you ask for their help, and watching others is a great way to pick up tips and software shortcuts.

Production

It is time to gather the script, music, sound effects, and talent and head to the studio. When you stop to think about it, radio production is absolutely incredible. Where else can you create something so powerful that it actually motivates people to do something they would not otherwise do? Radio is particularly satisfying because it is such a cost-effective and creative medium, cheaper than print, television, or film.

Recording

This is really the easiest step in the commercial-production process. You pre-planned what was going onto each track of the DAW; now it's time to record each element of the ad as cleanly as possible on a separate track, or tracks in the case of stereo music and some sound effects. You don't have to do things in real time because you can digitally edit the project later. You are working in a medium that allows you to rearrange every-

thing, including time, so the order in which you record the tracks is immaterial.

Recording Talent

We are in the communications business, but sometimes we forget to communicate with those right around us. We just assume they know. In working with talent, let the announcer have the script early so that you can answer any questions he or she may have. Give your talent a general feel for what it is you are looking for. If you want an upbeat read with excitement in the voice, tell the announcer. He or she cannot deliver what you want without your guidance. As an example, one producer of an ad for a Florida retirement community had an almost twenty-minute-long discussion with the announcer doing the voice-over ahead of time about the read. The producer emphatically explained he did *not* want a typical commercial read on the script. He wanted from-the-heart sincerity, just as if the announcer were talking to her own parents, trying to convince them that this retirement community was the right place for them. Tell your talent what you want; it saves a lot of time in the studio.

Ideally, you would like the talent to give you a clean read, without errors, since this saves editing time later. Don't be afraid, though, to ask the talent for two or three reads of the copy, even when they have given you the read you want (see demo CD, cut 67). In fact, try asking the announcer to read the commercial however he or she would like to read it, and encouraging the talent just to have fun with it. Not every paragraph of every read is going to be perfect. As the talent gives you that second and third read, you may hear individual sections from the various reads that you want to mix and match in the final edit. Be

aware, though, that some talent finds it hard to read more than one paragraph at a time without a screw-up. That's fine—that's why digital editing was invented.

Don't ever let anyone you are working with gloss over screw-ups with the infamous words that editors hate: "Don't worry; they can fix it in post" (meaning post-production). Even with digital editing, there are some things that cannot be easily changed. Listen carefully to the talent as he or she reads your copy take-to-take, making sure that the announcer maintains the same distance to the mic, vocal level, intensity, and pacing. Also, follow the announcer's read with the script, making sure it is word-for-word. By doing so you make it easier to edit the voice track later.

This should go without saying, but after each track is recorded to your satisfaction, save your work and check playback to make sure it is OK. When you have completed recording all of the tracks; back up the project. Editing and mixing of the project can always be redone, but if you inadvertently lose a voice track, the talent is going to charge you to return and cut it again.

Recording Music

The music for your commercial has likely been recorded in stereo, on CD, by a composer/producer, or come from the station's production music library. Depending on your DAW software, you can either play the CD back in real time to record it or drag and drop the audio file from the CD into your project. If you are using multiple cuts of music, say different cuts for the open and close of the commercial, you'll need a stereo pair of tracks for each cut of music you are recording. Following your multitrack layout pattern allows you more easily to edit and mix the music later.

Recording Sound Effects

There are three sources for sound effects: a sound effects library, "foley," or go out and get it yourself. A sound effects library is just like a music library. It is a huge collection of copyright-cleared sound effects on CD that is catalogued and easy to find. Sound effects libraries range from a simple set with basic "door creaking" and "dog barking" kinds of sounds to the BBC Sound Effects Library, which includes just about any sound you can imagine from around the world. Often, sound effects are combined or mixed to produce just the right effect that the production person is looking for.

The second source for sound effects is foley. Jack Foley was a movie sound effects editor at Universal Studios for over thirty years who pioneered the creation of synchronous sound effects in the studio for film. The process of creating sound effects and matching them to dialogue is named after him. (Ironically, after all those years on the sound stage, there is no known recording of his voice.) A true foley effect is created in a studio and recorded. For example, you are producing a commercial about a wedding. A couple is celebrating a wedding announcement with a bottle of champagne. You need the sound of the cork popping out of the bottle. You have a choice: You can either open a real bottle of champagne (not always practical), or you can place your index finger in your mouth and pop it out to make the sound. Foley is about using things and objects to create sound effects in the studio.

The third source for sound effects is to go out and record them. Sometimes the needed sound effect is so unique that there is no substitute for getting the sound itself. For example, a station was producing a commercial for a tourist railroad that featured a historic steam locomotive. The ad called for the sounds of *the*

steam engine in the background. A generic steam engine from a sound effects CD was out of the question because railroad enthusiasts *know* what the various types of steam engines sound like. A bogus-sounding steam engine would have cost the railroad customers. Armed with a minidisc recorder and condenser microphone, the production person spent about an hour with the locomotive, even recording the train's historically correct steam whistle (see demo CD, cut 68).

Sound effects are like talent in that they can be recorded at basically any time and edited later. The goal is to get a good, clean recording. Most primary sound effects, like a phone ringing, are recorded on a single channel (monaural) to be close to the dialogue in the sound field. Background sound effects, such as street sounds, are often recorded in stereo to broaden the sound field.

Editing

Editing is the art of digitally cutting, pasting, and assembling the elements of a commercial in the specific order, or time line, that you desire. It is often referred to simply as “cutting.”

Editing Talent

When you work with good talent, you often get a great take in which every word is pronounced properly, the inflection in the voice is right, and the timing is dead on. Listen to the entire take carefully. Listen for the quality of the presentation, how the dialogue flows, and the impact and overall impression the track creates. If you are satisfied with the take, then leave it alone. If not, move on to editing the voice track.

Editing allows you to move lines around within a commercial and to cut and paste dia-

logue within the ad. When working with multiple voices, you have the control to edit voices as tight (close together) or loose (far apart) as you want. By adjusting the space between sentences, and sometimes between words, you have the power to make the commercial sound very natural. You can even overlap voice tracks and make the talent sound as if they are conversationally overlapping the ends of the sentences, as people do when they are talking to one another (see Fig. 8.2).

It is a good idea, as previously suggested, to record several takes of the talent while they are in the studio. Assuming that you did not get any one perfect take, select what you think is the best take and use that cut as your basis for building a better track. With the track selected, listen carefully to all of your other takes (see demo CD, cut 69). You may find a sentence, paragraph, or even a word, that is better in one of the other takes that can be edited into your original.

When editing dialogue, you have to use great care in making sure to match the vocal intensity, tonal qualities, audio level, and pacing of the original track you are cutting to; otherwise the audio edit won't match, which is quite noticeable. You also need to make sure that when a talent's phrases are edited together, the person's speech flows in a natural pattern.

Understand that when you edit a voice track, you do so at your own risk. With non-destructive digital editing this is not too much of a problem. However, even with non-destructive editing, if you spend thirty minutes editing, only to have to start over again, you have wasted valuable time. It is possible to do a perfect job of editing and still screw up a commercial. A person may cut and paste a voice track until each individual element within the commercial sounds just right, only



Figure 8.2

Editing allows you to move the announcer's lines around within a commercial and to cut and paste dialogue within the ad. In the example above, voice tracks one and two are very slightly overlapped to make the talent sound as if they are conversationally overlapping the ends of their sentences, just as people do when they are talking to one another. *Adobe product screen shot reprinted with permission from Adobe Systems Incorporated.*

to listen to the entire sixty-second voice track and have the overall impact and presentation fall flat. Early in the author's broadcasting career I edited a person who spoke broken English. I did a perfect job of taking out every pause, "uh," and stammer. One problem, though: in my zeal to make this person speak perfect English I forgot to leave in any breath sounds. The person spoke for sixty seconds without taking a breath! The words were in perfect sequence, but the natural flow of the person's speech pattern was completely off and it sounded very unnatural.

While editing, another thing to keep in the back of your mind is that the final voice track

has to be slightly shorter than sixty seconds. If you are cutting a dialogue commercial, then you can take it right up to your station's time limit. If you are using a music background, try for a voice track that is fifty-seven to fifty-eight seconds long. The two to three seconds left over gives you a second or so at the start of the commercial and a second or so at the end of the commercial for the music to establish and to fade out, respectively.

Editing Music

Music editing is an art, and the interesting thing is that when it is done well, no one even

notices the editor's work. There are four basic ways to approach the music track of your commercial. The first is to create a commercial and send it to a composer and have him or her score and produce a custom piece of music to appeal to the target audience and to fit the commercial. If you have the time and the budget to work with, this produces outstanding results because the music is written to match the tempo and style of the ad by surrounding and reinforcing the dialogue and sound effects. The music can even punctuate lines and elements in the commercial.

If you don't have the budget for a custom music cut, there is a way you can make your commercial sound as if the music were custom-scored for it. Select the music first and write the commercial to fit the music. You will need a stopwatch to time the breaks in the music where you want to put copy. Your talent will have to hit those timing marks as he or she reads each segment of the voice track to make it fit with the music. In essence, you are working backwards. If this is done with just a little bit of care, no one will ever know the music wasn't custom-scored for the ad.

The third way to add music to your commercial is to create all of the elements of the commercial as previously discussed. Then select a cut, or cuts, of music from your production library that fits the commercial. You can also select something that is close enough that it can be edited to fit. Depending on how familiar you are with your music library, selecting an appropriate music cut could take a few minutes. In any case, don't spend more than thirty to forty-five minutes trying to select music. If you have not found anything after this amount of time, you need to ask yourself whether the ad really needs the music or not. (Another option is to select a couple of cuts of music and edit them together to fit the ad.)

A fourth option is to use a commercially available music loop CD or loop service to create your own musical track. The music CD bundled with this text includes two-hundred-fifty music loops. "Looping," as it is called, can produce some interesting pieces of music (see demo CD, cut 70).

Even when you have found just the right piece of music, you are going to want to clean up the cut. A commercial is sixty seconds long. How long is your music? Chances are it is not exactly sixty seconds long; even in production libraries, you find cuts that range from fifty-eight to sixty-two seconds. You can easily correct this by loading the cut into your DAW and using a time-compression-and-expansion plug-in to adjust the music track length to exactly sixty seconds.

Working with production music, you will discover that much of it is written so that it can be easily edited. Production music typically has well-defined intros and extros with a bed in between. You may be happy with a cut but want to chop off the first two seconds before the downbeat. You may want to clip the end of the music, ending it on a more definitive downbeat instead of a fade. Then again, there may be two cuts of music you want to blend together, creating a third cut of music that fits the commercial.

Editing music on a DAW allows you to use hard cuts (butt cuts), butting the ends together, or overlapping cross fades to make an edit (see Figs. 8.3 and 8.4). A trick to mask, or hide, edits is to apply a small amount of reverb or delay to the music track. Reverb is also handy for smoothing out the end of a music cut that has been cut to a hard downbeat. The reverb adds a few milliseconds of fade, making the music appear to trail off naturally.

The simplest form of music editing is to use two cuts of music in an ad. One typically leads



Figure 8.3

A hard cut, or butt-cut, edit is when two audio clips are joined together end-to-end as shown above. This is fairly easy when there are clear indicators of where to cut within the audio waveform, such as at the ends of words, sentences, and beats of music. *Adobe product screen shot reprinted with permission from Adobe Systems Incorporated.*

into the ad, and the other leads out of the ad. Keep things simple: use the first cut of music to open the ad and slowly fade it out at the appropriate spot. If this is done properly, the listener is unaware that the music is disappearing. Likewise, for the end of the ad, slowly fade up the second music cut and time it so that the cut ends when the commercial ends. Don't try to overlap the music. Leave a couple of seconds, or more, of silence between the two cuts.

(If you have little or no knowledge about music, then the following suggestions may not make much sense to you. If this is the case, seek help from someone with more musical knowledge before attempting to edit music.) When cutting music, it is easiest if you can

butt cut on the beat and match the two ends of the edit together as you cut seconds from or add seconds to a selection (again, see Fig. 8.3). The beats are easy to see on the DAW monitor, which makes the job fairly simple. Only whole measures should be cut from or added to a selection (see Fig. 8.5). Refrain from cutting or adding individual beats. Cutting or adding just a few individual beats to or from the music can really bother listeners, even though they probably won't know why the music sounds a little off.

Finally, when you are cutting two pieces of music together, they must be in the same key, or very close. If they aren't, the abrupt change in the musical key will be distracting



Figure 8.4

When a butt cut edit sounds too abrupt, it can often be smoothed out with a cross-fade edit. In the cross fade above, the top track is faded down at the same time that the lower track is faded up, one crossing over the other at the same time. This is an effective way of making a smooth-sounding edit or transition. *Adobe product screen shot reprinted with permission from Adobe Systems Incorporated.*

to listeners and draw attention away from the message and to the music.

Editing Sound Effects

With the voice and music tracks cut to length, the next step is to add any secondary and primary sound effects to the ad. A secondary sound effect is the background continuity, like street sounds, a sports stadium, or car-interior sounds. In editing the background continuity, keep in mind you don't want anything in the effect that stands out and draws attention to the background. For example, if you are using an outdoor background that suddenly has a

blue jay screeching loudly several times, the blue jay has to go. The background is just to give the listener an audible cue as to where the talent is located; it should not draw the listener's attention.

After the background continuity is established, record the primary sound effects, which are the foreground continuity. These are the effects that you want noticed; they establish action or movement in the commercial. For example, in a commercial for a lawnmower the typical homeowner is trying unsuccessfully to start his or her old lawnmower. The sound of a lawnmower failing to start is needed to support the dialogue. The purpose



Figure 8.5

When editing music it is best to edit on the beat. Track 1 above shows just one beat of a drum track. However, adding or cutting just one beat can really throw off the flow of the music. It is best to edit whole bars of music instead. Track 2 shows a complete bar of music consisting of four beats.

Adobe product screen shot reprinted with permission from Adobe Systems Incorporated.

of the effect is to support the voice track and the action in the commercial, but it should not overpower the voice track.

Sound effects that you are going to use to punctuate the commercial are added last. These are effects that are critical to the success of the ad, such as a phone ringing at the precise moment, a car starting, or the sound of a cash register to match the dialogue. These are effects whose placement is critical and should dominate all other effects. Again, the effect should complement the voice track but not overpower it.

Experiment with different placements of a sound effect just before, during, or after dialogue to see how it works. Also learn to experiment with the length of the effect and the

effect's strength or intensity. Don't be afraid to shorten or stretch the length of an effect. What you are trying to create is an effect that complements and supports the dialogue in the commercial. Although it might be a great oversimplification, play with the effects until they sound like they belong in the commercial and sound real in your "theater of the mind."

Mixing and Processing

Until this point in the creation process, the concern has been recording good clean tracks and editing each segment of the commercial to fit within the sixty-second time frame. We have not been concerned with adjusting levels or using audio processing to enhance the

audio. During the mixing process, audio levels are adjusted. The tracks are blended together by assigning the various elements to particular channels so that a stereo-sound field is created. Mixing and processing is when the commercial starts taking shape and suddenly comes to life.

Mixing

As you learned in chapter 4, mixing involves track assignments and audio-level adjustments to create a sound field or stereo image. For commercials, music and background sound effects should be mixed in stereo and everything else should be assigned to the center channel (monaural). Stereo music and background sound effects give the commercial a bigger, wider, fuller, stereo-sound field. Primary sound effects and any music used as a sound effect, such as a radio on in the background, are assigned to the center channel to make them stand above the background with the voice track.

On a two-voice commercial, as we've mentioned before, don't even think about putting one voice in the left channel and one in the right. The reason you don't do this is because, although it may sound cool in the studio, it will not sound that way on most car stereos. In fact, depending on where the listener is sitting in the car, it very likely will sound as if one of the voices is disappearing into the background. This acoustic effect occurs because a car interior does not provide the same acoustic listening environment that your studio does. Likewise, you need to consider the home or office listener who just wants background music. In those contexts, since a stereo has two speakers, one speaker might easily get put in one room and the other speaker in another room or office.

After making the track assignments, start mixing with the voice track first, since it is the most important element. Use the solo feature on your DAW to isolate the voice track and adjust the track's level to near-maximum. After the voice track, blend in the background and then the primary sound effects, one-by-one, listening to the mix after each is added. The background sound effects should be very low behind everything else. The primary sound effects are more important to the ad, and their levels should be adjusted to stand out more. If you are using a music bed, at the start of the commercial the music should establish at full volume for a second or so before fading down under the commercial copy. At the end of the commercial the music bed comes back up during the last second or two and ends the commercial.

Processing

As you learned in chapter 6, less is more when it comes to equalization and audio processing. Unless there is a problem that needs correcting, there is really very little processing to do to a commercial to make it sound better. There are some basics, though, that work on just about every commercial.

For the voice track, there are two things you can do to make it stand out. Firstly, mildly compress the announcer's voice track with three to five decibels of compression. This gives the announcer's voice a consistent level and allows you to raise the overall level of the voice track, making it appear louder. Secondly, apply a small amount of reverb to the voice track and match the reverb on the music or the background sound effects. This takes the **dead-studio sound** off the voice, giving it a more natural sound (see demo CD, cut 71).

Unless there is a problem with the voice track, avoid the temptation to equalize it. On occasion, a voice blends with the background sound effects. As discussed in chapter 6, rather than boosting a frequency in the voice to make it stand out, cut a frequency from the background sounds and carve an “equalization hole” for the voice to sit in. If needed, apply this same technique to any other problem you want to try to fix. With regard to equalization, always try to lower background levels to bring out a sound effect or voice track first, and when equalization is the only option, cut before you boost.

As a final note on processing, keep in mind that most engineering staffs have spent a lot of time adjusting the station’s audio processor to obtain maximum modulation (loudness) and on-air presence for the station. Their adjustments are based on average program levels and frequency curves. Most engineering staffs request that you do not “over process” a commercial in an attempt to alter dramatically the overall equalization, intensity, or tonal quality of the ad. Such attempts often go counter to the station’s audio processing and only result in your commercial not sounding as good as it should.

Monitoring

How you monitor, or listen, to the commercial, is important to the mix and audio processing choices you make. If you are working in a nice studio, you may be listening to a big pair of high-end monitors at a pretty good volume level. But how many of your listeners are going to be listening on similar speakers at similar levels? How you monitor a mix can make a big difference in what the listener hears when the commercial is played back on the air or over a web site.

Firstly, learn to mix at normal listening levels; only turn the monitors up loud when you need to listen critically to a quiet passage. Secondly, when you have completed the mix, listen to it at a normal listening level on a sound cube or a portable boom box with the tone controls adjusted flat. (A sound cube is a small monitor speaker designed to emulate a portable radio or car speaker.) Can you understand the voice track? Is it clear and above the background? Can you hear all of the sound effects clearly? If the commercial does not pass the sound cube/boom box test, then a remix is in order. As an alternative, make a copy of the commercial on a CD and run out to the parking lot and listen to the ad on a couple of different factory car stereos.

Agency- and Manufacturer-Supplied Commercial Material

Advertising agencies often supply radio stations and local clients with commercial material. This material can be one of two varieties. The first type of ad that an agency may provide a station is a commercial that is already produced and ready to air. This material is supplied on CD or by some means of electronic delivery, such as posting the audio file on a web site for you to download. When a station receives an agency ad in this format, all the station does is dub, or copy, the ad into the station’s server system. The second variety of agency-supplied material is a script that still needs to be produced and must be produced by the station exactly to the agency’s specifications.

A common variation on the pre-produced agency-supplied ad is a commercial that is almost complete but requires the addition of a local tag or insert to complete it. The agency may send an ad that has a blank space of ten

to fifteen seconds in which the station is to insert local copy. The first of these “local insert” type ads is one that has the blank space at the end of the ad. At about fifty seconds, the agency voice is out, leaving ten seconds of background music, or sound effect, over which you put the local information the agency has specified (see demo CD, cut 72). This is called a **tag**, or “adding a tag.”

The second type of local insert commercial is one that has the hole for the local copy in the middle of the commercial. This hole can range from ten to thirty seconds. Because the copy is going in a hole in the middle of the ad, this type of ad is known as a **donut** (see demo CD, cut 73).

Producing a tag or donut-type agency commercial is simply a matter of laying down the commercial on two tracks (stereo) and adding a third track for the local voice. The mix involves matching the local voice level and intensity to the already-produced agency material.

Always check the timing when you are working with agency materials. Agencies sometimes forget their stopwatches in hopes of getting just a little bit extra for their client. Pre-produced agency materials sometimes run a couple of seconds long, a couple of seconds they have not paid for. Agency-recorded materials are easily time adjusted with the time-compression-or-expansion feature of your DAW.

In the case of scripts, it is not out of the ordinary for a “sixty-second” script to read longer than sixty seconds. When written scripts read overtime, the salesperson needs to let the agency know that the script is long and needs a rewrite.

Client Approval

After the ad is produced and you are satisfied with the mix, it is time to play the ad for the

salesperson and get his or her approval. Don’t be surprised if the salesperson has questions or makes a couple of suggestions for change. After all, he or she is representing the client and is more familiar with the client’s wants and needs.

The ad-approval process can take a couple of different forms. The salesperson may choose to call the client and, with your help, let the client hear the ad over the phone. This is how most ads get approved. On the other hand, the salesperson may choose to take the client a copy of the ad on CD and play it in person.

Either way, until the client approves the ad it cannot go on the air. Typically, clients who are more experienced with buying advertising are more likely to listen to their ad on the phone, whereas clients newer to the advertising-buying experience like to have a physical copy of the ad that they can play back for themselves and friends. As previously mentioned, if the salesperson is leaving the client-approval stage of the buying process up to you, ask the salesperson exactly what he or she wants you to do and what you should say to the client when you call on the phone.

Preparing the Commercial to Go On-Air

Once the client has approved the ad, the commercial is ready to go on the air. Depending on your station’s physical layout, this generally involves moving the ad, as a data file, from the DAW in production to the main on-air server. Usually, this is a drag-and-drop procedure. In many station systems, the new file is placed in a folder on the DAW that the on-air server automatically checks every few minutes, picking up new production and transferring it to the on-air server. Or you might drag the commercial audio file from the DAW across the computer network to the on-air server folder

where the commercial is to be stored for on-air playback.

If you are working with a local group of stations, this likely involves a LAN. In some cases it involves putting the commercial on a WAN server so that a number of regional stations within your company can access the commercial.

A less-sophisticated method for transferring audio from one radio station to another, but one that certainly works, is through standard Internet FTP (file transfer protocol). This involves logging into a computer via the Internet and either taking files from, or sending files to, the destination computer. FTP is discussed in detail in chapter 12.

Preparing the Commercial Archive: Backup

In chapter 7, backing up files was discussed in detail, and the points we made there certainly apply to commercial material. Files get corrupted, and computers crash. Each station has different procedures to follow. The best backup is one that is on a different medium from the primary work. If you created a commercial on a hard drive, then back it up on a CD and store it in a safe place. CDs cost only pennies and are easy to drop into a client's file.

You should do two kinds of backup if possible. Firstly, back up an audio copy of the final mix as the commercial aired. Secondly, back up a data copy of the individual audio files used to create the ad. These are the software files that hold the data that created your commercial. With a data copy, you can return months from now and open the commercial to change a price or edit an individual track.

Always back up your work. There is nothing more frustrating than to have a file corrupted or have someone accidentally delete a file, and it will happen. With a backup file,

you grin like a Cheshire cat and save the day for everyone.

Duplication for Other Stations

As previously stated in this chapter, many clients value a radio station for the quality of its production. Clients often bump up their advertising buy on your station since you are the one producing a great ad and sending dubs to the other stations in the market. When a client asks you to make dubs of a commercial, it is a compliment to your work.

Typically, a copy of an ad for another station is posted on a web site for the requesting station to download, or the audio file is attached to e-mail and sent to the station. Occasionally, a salesperson may want to drop a hard copy of an ad at another station as a courtesy to the client or to the other station. This is especially true in a market in which one owner has several stations that may be located at different sites. Make a quality copy of the ad, or ads, on a CD and give it to the salesperson. Likewise, you will retrieve dubs from other stations and ad agencies electronically to prepare to go on the air. The key to a good, professional, working relationship with other stations and ad agencies is to deliver a quality product on time.

Documentation

As discussed in chapter 7, it is critical that you leave a trail of information regarding the work you have done on a project. Each station has different procedures to follow. Usually, though, a client file contains a completed production order with clear notes on anything special you did. In particular, note the sources for all of your music and sound effects. Better yet, a track layout for the ad helps someone in your department who might be the next person assigned to work on the account.

Many production people keep personal backup copies of all of their work. These can be handy not only for station purposes, but also when it comes time to produce a personal audition CD if you seek other employment.

News Production

It is not that often that production people produce newscasts or sound bites for the news department. News people are pretty independent and prefer to do their own thing when it comes to creating a newscast. However, news people do need good basic production skills in today's consolidated market structure. The days of the news person just writing copy and delivering the news are long gone. Today, news people write their own copy, gather their own sound, and edit and produce their own newscasts. And to some degree, technology is to blame for this.

Using software such as the WireReady system, news people can sit at a single computer terminal and receive their news service, such as the Associated Press, write stories, record and edit audio cuts, and embed those audio cuts into the copy (see Fig. 8.6). They can retrieve data services and audio cuts from major news networks such as ABC, CBS, and CNN, and can handle their e-mail, all on one terminal (see Fig. 8.7). When they step into the studio to do the news, newscasters read from a computer screen and play back the audio cuts embedded in the story by pressing a key on a computer keyboard. It is a paperless news operation and one in which all of the sound bites are stored as computer files on a hard drive. Even more incredible is that with a wide area network (WAN), the news stories can be shared with any other station in a market, region, or nationally, all on a mouse click.

Generally, about the only time production people are directly involved in the newsroom is when they are asked to assist in producing long-form public affairs shows or to help clean up a poorly recorded sound bite.

Newscasts

As previously stated, news people do need good solid production skills. Typically, they are recording and editing sound bites that have been received over the phone, from a television audio source for which they have clearance to use the audio cuts, the Internet, or location sound recorded in the field. The key element here is that almost all of their work is comprised of recording and editing voice recordings.

Digital audio production has raised some interesting ethical questions with regard to news reporting. How much do we edit and mix when it comes to news? With digital editing it is easy to lift sentences or quotes out of speeches or news events, completely out of context. It is easy to rearrange digitally the time line of an event or the order of a presentation. Likewise, it is possible to reduce the background noise behind a newsmaker to make him or her easier to understand, or conversely, it is possible to inject more background noise to make it sound the way you think the event should. A news person could use a recorded background to enhance a report (see demo CD, cut 74).

In addition to editing and mixing, there is the ability to use audio processors to enhance or detract from a person's voice or likeness. How far are you permitted to go with audio processing devices such as compressors, limiters, or EQ to make a sound bite more intelligible?

You may ask why these questions are being raised here in a production text, and the answer is simple: They have already been

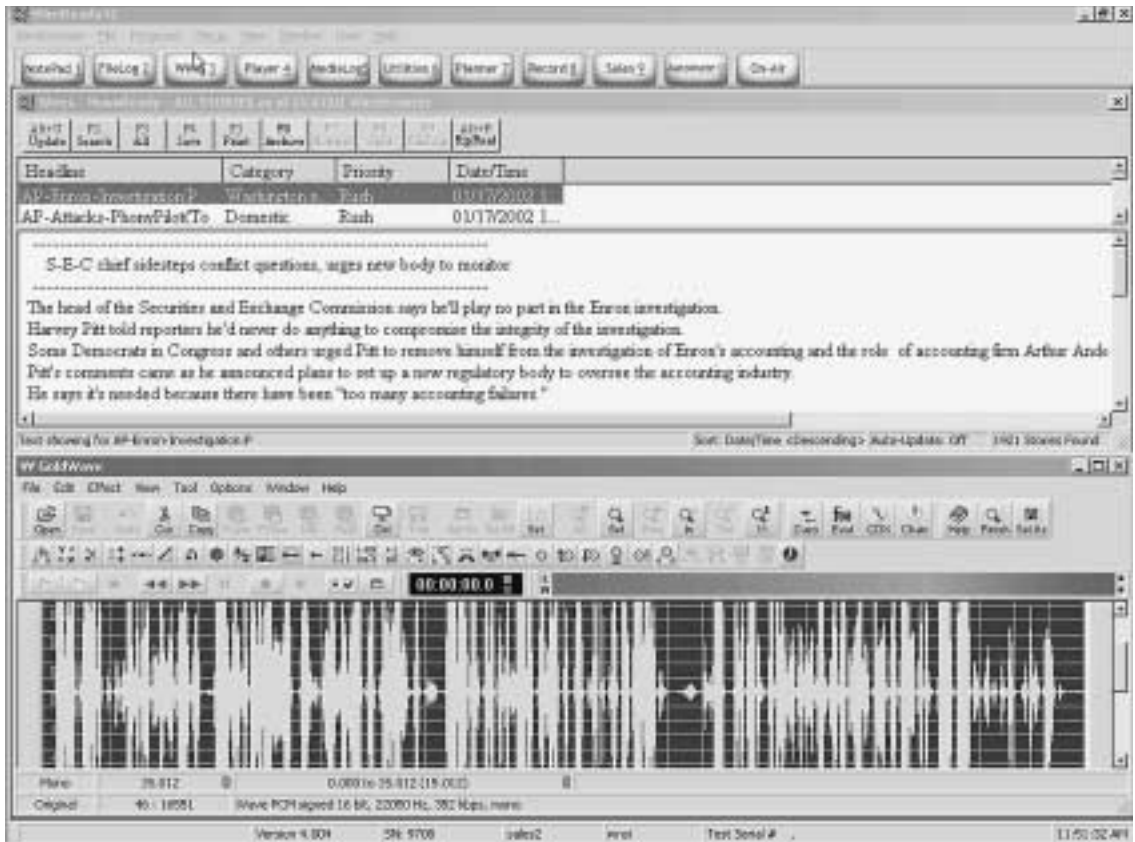


Figure 8.6

Digital workstations make it possible for news people to sit at a single computer terminal and receive their news service, such as the Associated Press, write stories, record and edit audio cuts, and embed those audio cuts into the copy. They can retrieve data services and audio cuts from major news networks such as ABC, CBS, and CNN, and can handle their e-mail, all on one terminal. *Courtesy WireReady and GoldWave.*

raised in newsrooms across the country. Your station should have its own set of standards, which you are required to follow. Keep in mind, if the *New York Times* has had to deal with someone altering the news, the potential is there for it to happen anywhere.

Basic news production is recording sound and then editing that sound to length, so that it fits in a newscast. The same recording and

editing skills required for producing a commercial apply to news. Although these skills make up the core of the news person's job, often considered just as important is the presentation style. Most stations design their news format and style of their newscasts around the station's target audience. Announcing style and newscast presentation are discussed in detail in chapter 9.



Figure 8.7

In a digital newsroom, the sound bites are embedded into the copy so that as a newscaster reads the story from a computer screen he or she can play the cuts by simply pressing a key on the keyboard. It is a paperless news operation and one in which all of the sound bites are stored as computer files on a hard drive.

Long-Form Programming

Long-form news programming is usually associated with public affairs programs or a major breaking story, such as a weather disaster. The news person most often needs assistance with the volume of work and the length of the project. Radio stations are required by the FCC to produce public affairs programs that serve the community interest. Most news departments rely on production staff to assist them as recording, editing, and mastering engineers. Usually, though, the news person wants to assist with editing the program to retain control of the program content.

Once produced, such shows are placed on a hard drive for airing. A backup copy should be made and given to the news person for safe keeping. News people like to go back and pull

archival cuts from such programs. In short, as a production person you are going to be more an engineer than a producer when it comes to the news department, since they have the final judgment with regard to content, just as a commercial client does with an ad.

Suggested Activities

1. Sharpen your dialogue-editing skills by editing the random numbers one through ten on the demo CD, cut 75, into the proper sequence, allowing for a natural pause, or breath, between each number.
2. Using demo CD, cut 69, edit the sixty-second voice track to create a good, clean read. Remember to try to maintain the natural flow of the announcer's voice.
3. Using demo CD, cut 68, edit the raw sounds of the steam engine to make a sixty-second secondary sound effect or background continuity bed to go behind a commercial.
4. Select a thirty-second music cut from the production music CD that accompanies this text. Identify the intro, extro, and bed of the music. Try your hand at turning the thirty-second cut of music into a sixty-second cut of music by repeating measures of music from the music bed.
5. Select a sixty-second music cut from the production music CD that accompanies this text. Identify the intro, extro, and bed of the music. Try your hand at turning the sixty-second cut of music into a thirty-second cut of music by removing measures of music from the music bed.
6. Using three tracks of a DAW, create a commercial with a monaural voice track and stereo music bed; experiment with mixing the dialogue to fit the music bed so that the dialogue is dominant in the mix.

7. Record a two-person dialogue commercial with a background sound effects bed and three primary sound effects. Add mild compression to the voice tracks to make them stand out and some reverb to help them blend with the background sound effects. Mix the project.

Web Sites for More Information

For information about:

- *custom jingles and production music*, visit TM Century at www.tmcenury.com
- *Foley*, visit the Motion Picture Sound Editors organization at www.mpse.org
- *newsroom software*, visit WireReady at www.wireready.com
- *production music*, visit Network Music at www.networkmusic.com
- *sound effects*, visit Sounds Ideas at www.sound-ideas.com

Pro Speak

You should be able to use these terms in your everyday conversations with other professionals.

dead-studio sound—A studio is said to be a “dead studio” when there is little or no natural reverberation—the less reverberation, the more dead the studio.

donut—A type of agency-supplied commercial that has a hole in the middle of the ad for the insertion of local copy.

needle-drop basis—An old radio term used to describe paying for production music on a per-cut-used basis.

tag—A ten- to fifteen-second space at the end of an agency ad over which the local station puts copy.

