



Music in Podfic

Podfication 2017

Why this panel?

- To discuss the various ways music can be used in podfic!
- Deciding when to use music in podfic and how to find what's right!
- Discussing the technical aspects of editing music for podfic!



What are some ways music
is used in podfic?



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- **To set the tone and ease the listener in by bookending the narrative.**

Example: Coming of Age, by FayJay

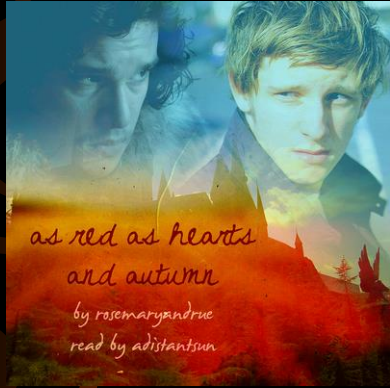


- **To create a mood by playing behind the narration.**

Example: Out of the Drift by SomethingIncorporeal

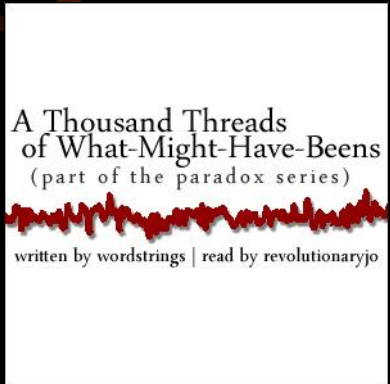


What are some ways music is used in podfic?



- **As a marker between sections or chapters.**

Example: As Red as Hearts in Autumn, by adistantun



- **As an indication of a shift outside the normal narrative: Flashbacks, dream sequences, alternate realities.**

Example: A Thousand Threads of What Might-Have-Beens, by revolutionaryjo



What are some ways music is used in podfic?



- **Incorporating song lyrics from the text into the narration.**

Example: 14 Tracks, by vassalady



- **To recreate the source material.**

Example: Second Date, by thingswithwings



What are some ways music is used in podfic?

- Interpreting challenging/visually oriented/experimental text.
- To avoid singing at any cost!
- A convenient excuse to show off your singing skills!




Example: Election Night Fireworks by Opalsong, Paraka, Cantarina, & Yue_ix



- Other examples?

You've decided to use music!
Oh crap, what music should
you use??






You've decided to use music!

Oh crap, what music should you use??

- Is the fic titled after a song, a particular song featured in the narrative, did the author mention songs they listened to while writing in the notes?
- Keep playlists of music that resonates with you for a particular character/ship/fandom to draw on.



You've decided to use music!

Oh crap, what music should you use??

- If you don't have something in mind already: start your reading before choosing your music.
 - Familiarize yourself with the story and its themes so you can effectively search.
 - Take stock of the mood and feel of the story: Is it sad? Fluff? Bittersweet? Crack? Look for music that matches the tone and can enhance or compliment that feeling.
 - Then do some creative lyrics googling using story themes or keywords.
- Keep an ear out for songs that have a narrative build.
 - Songs that start out slow or sort of down and come to a climax/resolution. Sets the tone of the story at the beginning where there's conflict and closes it off at the end where there's resolution. Or the song could be heard in a new context following the resolution of the story.

You've decided to use music!

Oh crap, what music should you use??

- Spotify & other music streaming services.
 - Search on themes/keywords, find covers of songs that fit but don't have the right tone, use the radio feature to find songs that are the right tone but don't match in other ways.
- Creative Commons & royalty free music searches.
 - Great for short instrumental jingles or something without lyrics to set a mood.
 - See also: Two Steps From Hell on YouTube. Great for dramatic, instrumental music for cinematic style background music unattached to a particular property.



Example: Seven for a Secret by LavenderFrost, Kalakirya, RsCreighton, Ada, RevolutionaryJo, Dr. Fumbles McStupid, & Lunchee



You've decided to use music!

Oh crap, what music should you use??

- Instrumental music can be simpler than songs with lyrics.
 - No need to edit around lyrics.
 - Can come with drawbacks too: Picking a musical queue that's strongly associated with another property can set the wrong tone or be jarring to the listener.
- Cover versions of songs.
 - For when you find a song that is PERFECT lyric-wise but COMPLETELY WRONG in tone.



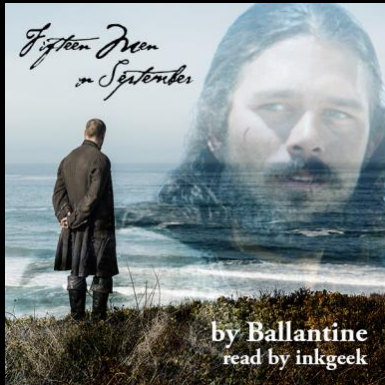
Example: It's Not the Violin by FayJay



You've decided to use music!

Oh crap, what music should you use??

- You can also search for karaoke versions of a particular track if you don't want lyrics to get in the way of narration.
- You can of course also music from the show/movie/property! It has the benefit of being 1) already thematically appropriate 2) pulls your listener right into that headspace.



Example: Fifteen Men in September by inkgeek



- **Any other ways people find music for their podfic?**

Wait, wait. Should you use MORE THAN ONE MUSIC?

- Absolutely you should if it works for you! This is useful if you can't find a song to frame the reading that has the right feel at both the start and the end of the story. Also useful if the story references more than one song.



Example: All the Angels and the Saints, by revolutionaryjo

Starts with a 40s version and ends with a modern version of *It Can't Be Wrong*. Mirrors the narrative that starts in the past and ends in the present.



Example: Mission Report: Operation Sidestream, by bessyboo

Uses Star Wars character-specific musical queues to differentiate between the Luke, Leia, and Han POVs.

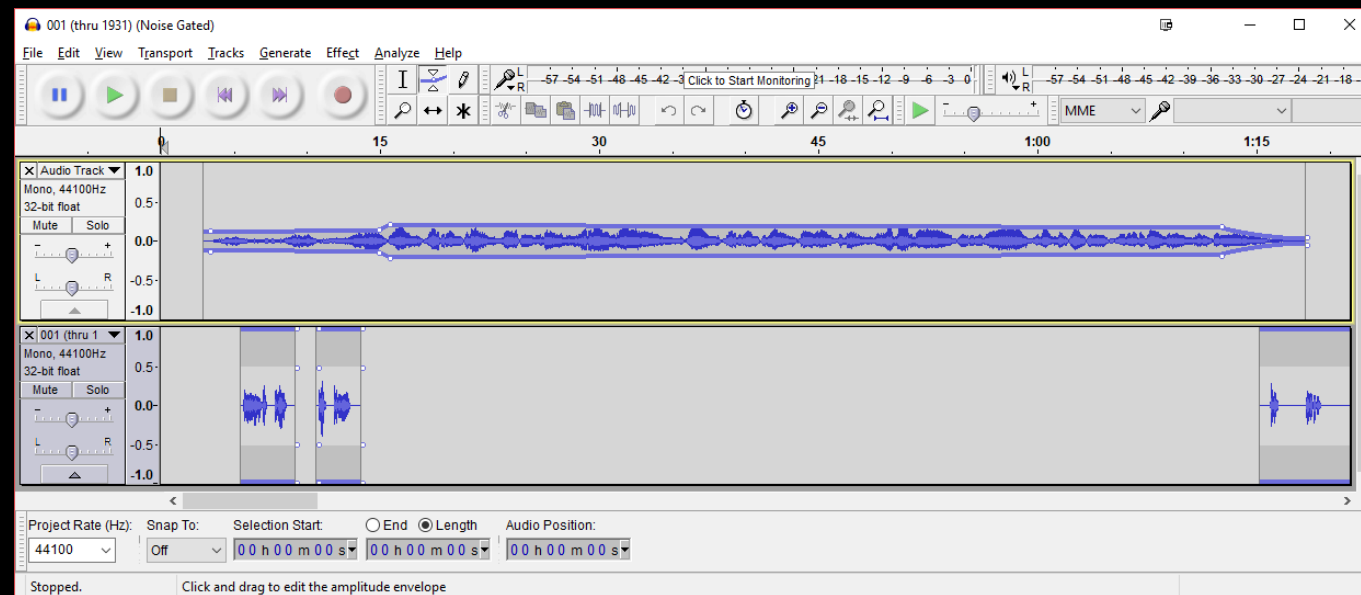


Editing Music: Probably
not as difficult as you think



Editing music: Probably not as difficult as you think

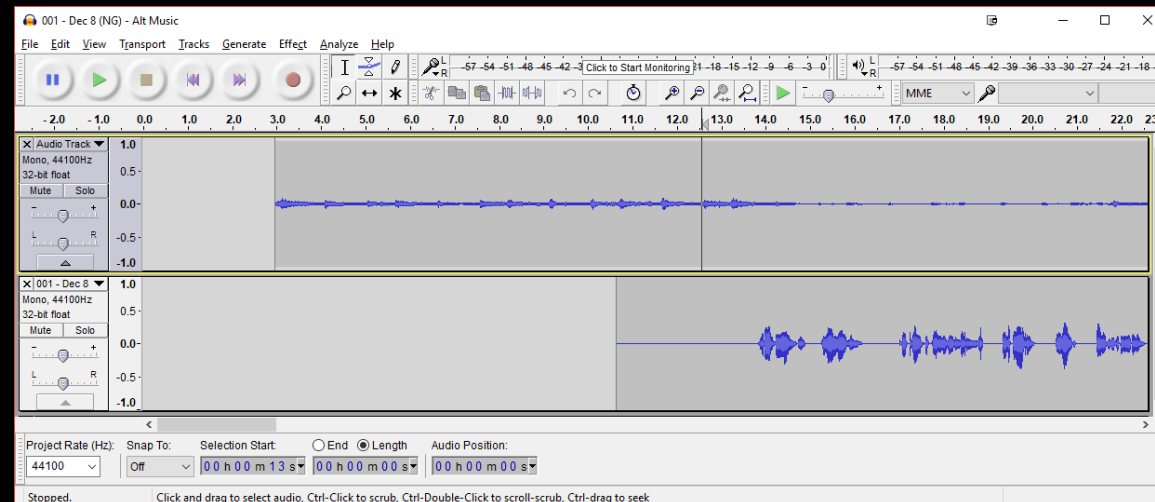
- Fade In & Fade Out are your friends.
 - Simple bookending of a podfic just requires a selection of the music and fading to bring the reader into and out of the narrative.
 - Audacity's Envelope tool is great for when you want to play around with the fade in/out settings. You can change the points as you go instead of committing to it.



- Can be difficult selecting how *long* you want the music to run though. Too long and a listener might skip over it. Too short and there's not enough time to set the mood. How long do you run your music?

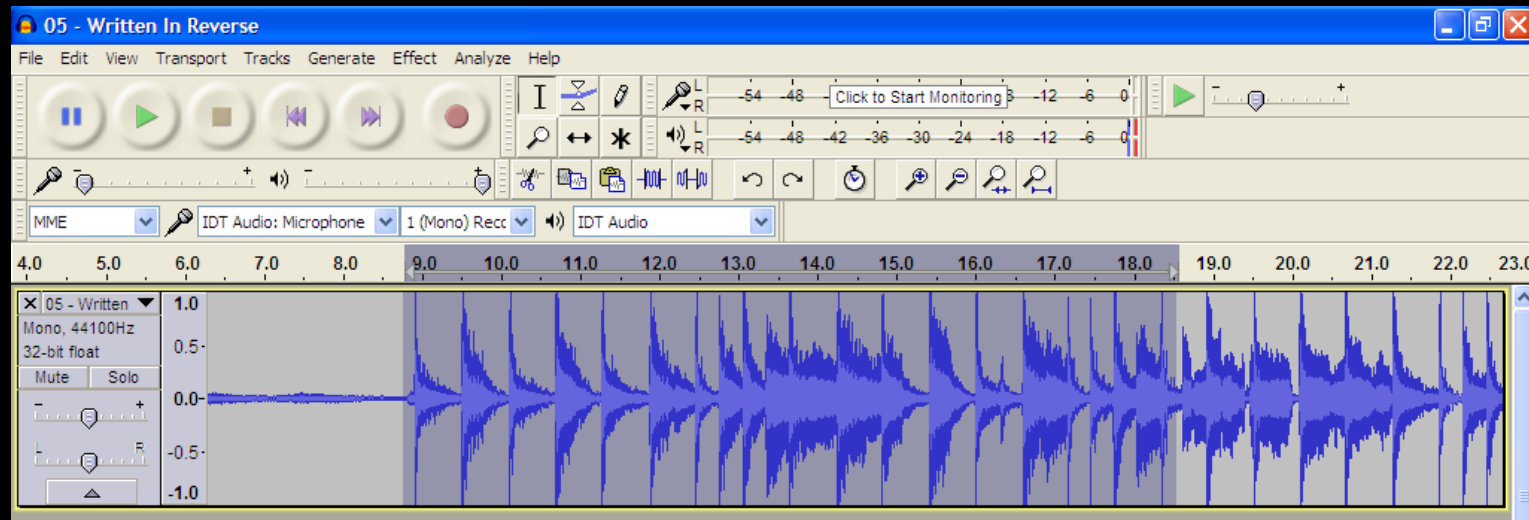
Editing music: Probably not as difficult as you think

- Stereo vs. Mono.
 - If your narration recording is in mono convert the music track from stereo to mono before editing it in. This will prevent technical issues in playback later on. LEARN FROM JO'S MISTAKES, FRIENDS.
- Using multiple tracks makes it easy to layer music with narration.
 - Allows you to tweak the audio on one track without affecting the other.



Editing music: Probably not as difficult as you think

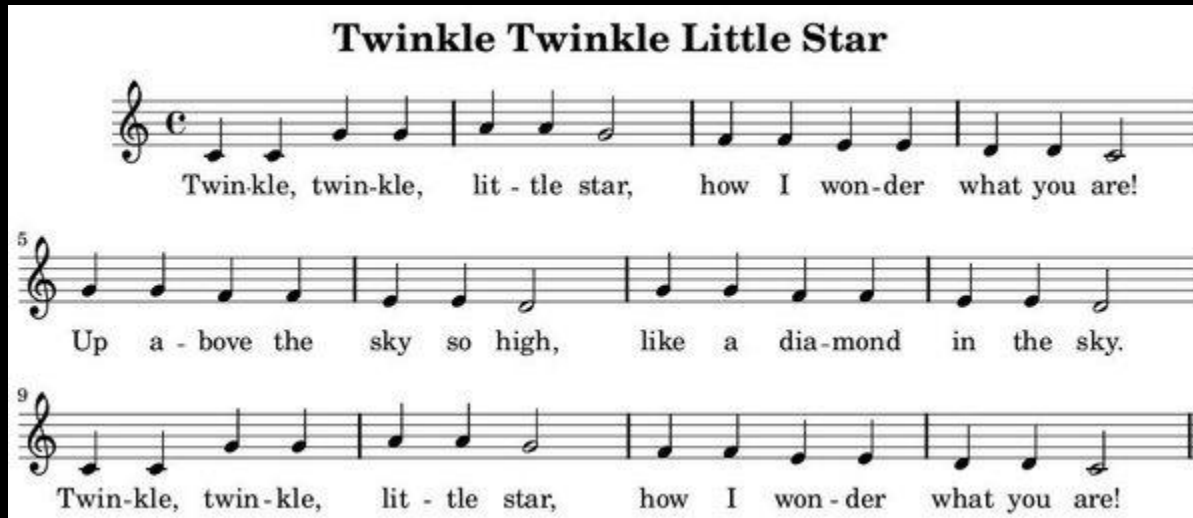
- If you can spot a pattern in a waveform you're halfway there.
 - Creating an instrumental loop from the beginning section of a song is a good way to create section breaks. Some songs lend themselves better to this than others. But listen to the track and look for patterns you can copy/paste into a loop.
 - You can abridge songs too either for intro or outro purposes.
 - You can rearrange or pull entire sections out of songs to use where you need them.



Editing music: Probably not as difficult as you think

- Let's talk music theory!
 - Most music exists in 4/4 time. Count the bars to determine where to make cuts.
 - If you have trouble counting notes or bars, listen for where repetition happens.
 - A very simple example:

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star



The image shows a musical score for the song "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" in 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music, each with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the first line of the song, the second staff contains the second line, and the third staff contains the third line, which is a repetition of the first line. The notes are simple quarter and eighth notes, making it easy to count the bars.

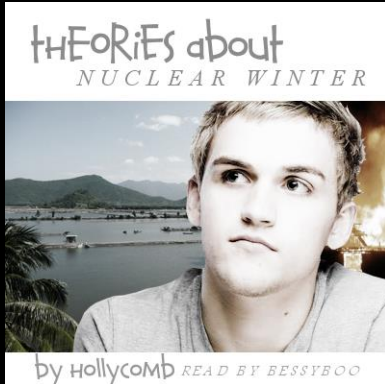
Twinkle, twin-kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are!

Up a - bove the sky so high, like a dia-mond in the sky.

Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit - tle star, how I won-der what you are!

Editing music: Probably not as difficult as you think

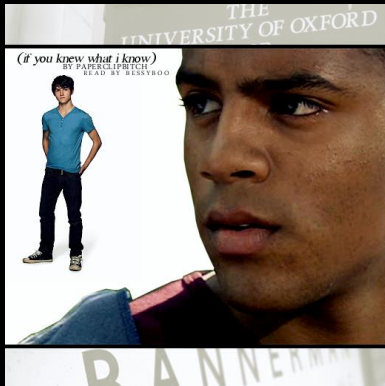
- Is music editing too daunting? You can still work with music! Edit your narration into the natural lulls in the song.



Example: Theories About Nuclear Winter, by bessyboo



- Or you can GO HARD MODE and MAKE the song work for you.

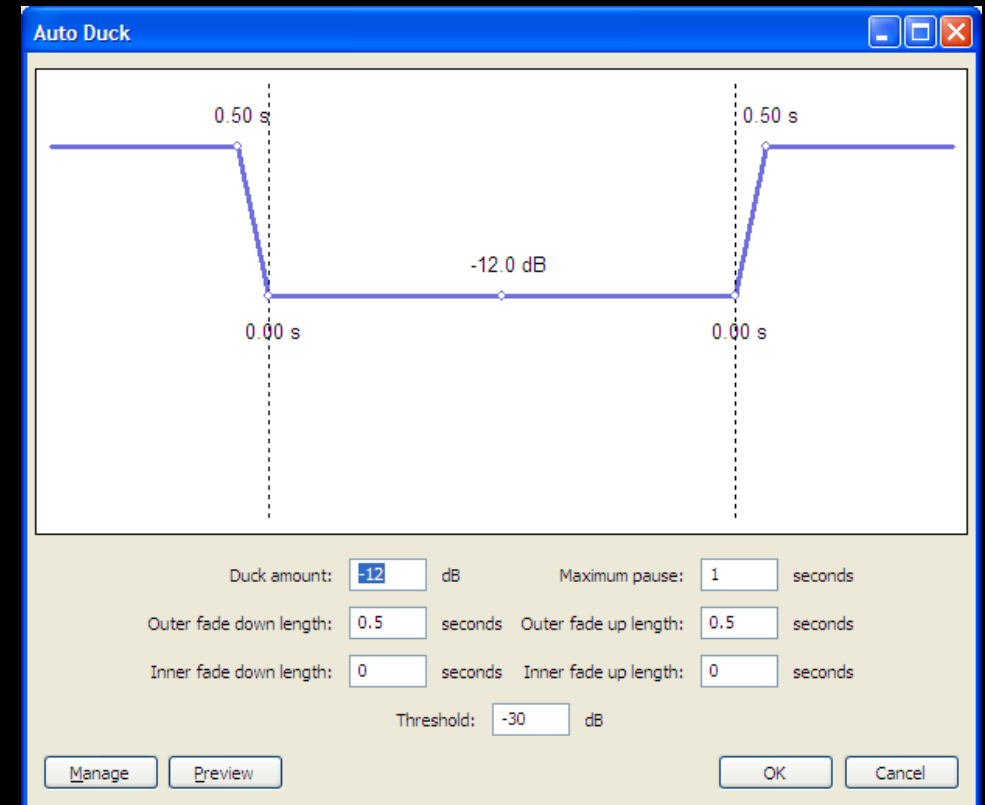


Example: (if you knew what I know), by bessyboo



Things to keep in mind when using music

- Audio mixing!
 - Listen to it without headphones. Listen to it WITH headphones. Listen to it with DIFFERENT headphones. Listen to it with earbuds. Sometimes you will be LIED TO by one or the other and your music will completely drown out your narration. Try to find the happy middle between them all.
 - If you're cutting bits out or rearranging parts of the song, listen carefully for any blips and look for breaks in the waveform to create smooth transitions.
 - Auto duck is not only a hilariously named tool, but a very useful one in Audacity. You can do this manually too using the Envelope tool to lower the volume of the music behind your narration or opening credits info.





Things to keep in mind when using music

- Accessibility!
 - Some folks aren't able to parse narration over music. Many release a version with and without music.
 - Not putting lyrics over narration helps too if it can be avoided.
 - Make sure your music level is at a sufficiently lower volume than your narration.

**MUSIC IN PODFIC IS
GREAT! PLEASE DO IT!**

