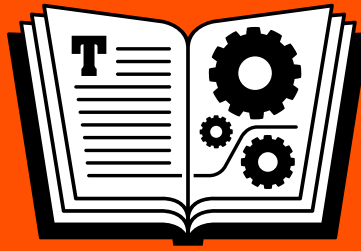


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TAKE CONTROL OF

AUDIO HIJACK

by **KIRK McELHEARN**

\$10

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Audio Hijack*, version 1.1, published in June 2016 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This book was written by Kirk McElhearn and edited by Geoff Duncan and Tonya Engst.

This book tells you how to use Rogue Amoeba's Audio Hijack 3 to record any audio on your Mac, and to enhance audio while you listen to it. The book also has a chapter explaining how you can edit your recordings with Rogue Amoeba's Fission 2.

If you want to share this ebook with a friend, we ask that you do so as you would with a physical book: "lend" it for a quick look, but ask your friend to buy a copy for careful reading or reference.

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rogue amoeba

This book was sponsored by [Rogue Amoeba](#). Special thanks to Paul Kafasis for giving us great feedback (the good kind) and keeping our signal-to-noise ratio at the correct level.

Updates and More

You can access extras related to this ebook on the Web (use the link in [Ebook Extras](#), near the end; it's available only to purchasers). On the ebook's Take Control Extras page, you can:

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Basics

To review background information that might help you understand this book better, such as finding System Preferences and working with files in the Finder, read Tonya Engst’s free ebook [Read Me First: A Take Control Crash Course](#), available for free on the Web or as a standalone ebook in PDF, EPUB, and the Kindle’s Mobipocket format.

What’s New in Version 1.1

Version 1.1 of this book contains two new paragraphs of text, each of which describes capabilities added in Audio Hijack 3.3:

- **Latency slider:** Audio Hijack’s preferences now include a Latency slider that may help reduce echo in certain live recording situations. See [Audio Hijack Preferences](#).
- **New default .mp4 container for AAC and Apple Lossless:** I describe this in a new sidebar, [Using the New Container Pop-up Menu](#). You can also now convert a file from .mp4 to .m4a from the Recordings tab—Control-click the file’s listing on the tab to open the new-in-3.3 contextual menu, which offers a command for this conversion.

Introduction

I've been using Audio Hijack for so long, I can't remember when I first bought it from Rogue Amoeba. The app has been around since 2002—for many years under the moniker Audio Hijack Pro—and has evolved as OS X's capability to play and stream audio has changed. I bought the app to record streaming audio, such as concerts or radio shows, captured from the once-essential RealPlayer. This was before podcasts became common and before radio stations offered Web streams.

I also remember using it to digitize cassette tapes, connecting my tape deck to my Mac with a Griffin iMic, a nifty device that served as an interface between a 1/8-inch audio jack and a USB port. I've used it since then to capture audio from DVDs, record interviews on Skype, and record concerts streamed on the Internet. I also use it weekly to record my own podcast episodes.

Designed for occasional recorders as well as professional podcasters, Audio Hijack lets you record any audio, from any app, or from any microphone or audio input device connected to your Mac. It's easy to use, and as you'll see in this book, you can start recording with just six steps. Audio Hijack also has plenty of advanced features, such as recording audio in a variety of formats and bit rates, and recording multiple streams and saving them to one or more files.

You can also use Audio Hijack to enhance audio that plays through your Mac, increasing volume, equalizing the sound, enhancing mono audio, adjusting balance, and much more. (Don't worry if you don't understand those terms; you can get a lot of mileage out of Audio Hijack without learning anything complicated, and I explain these features in the book.) And, you can listen to audio while it's recording, pausing and rewinding, or *time shifting*, as you record.

In this book, I look at Audio Hijack 3, and I call it Audio Hijack throughout. To run Audio Hijack 3, you'll need a Mac running OS X 10.9 Mavericks or later. You'll find that Audio Hijack strikes that rare balance of software that is at once powerful, flexible, and easy to use.

Audio Hijack Quick Start

If you have a particular question or area of interest, you can dip into the book at any point, but I recommend that everyone read the first two chapters, [Meet Audio Hijack](#) and [Make a Basic Recording](#), because they cover the basics that are assumed in the later chapters.

Get Audio Hijack up and running:

- Install the app and set up the preferences in [Install Audio Hijack](#).
- Explore the Home window and Template Chooser in [Tour the Interface](#).
- Learn how easy it is to capture audio in [Record Audio in Six Steps](#).
- Once you've made a recording, what can you do with it? Read [Work with Recordings](#) to find out how to [Edit Recordings](#), [Share Recordings](#), [Add Recordings to iTunes](#), and [Archive and Delete Recordings](#).

Learn more about recordings:

- Set up a more complex recording session in [Create a Session](#).
- Experience a real-world workflow as you [Record Audio](#).
- Consider the housekeeping aspects of keeping sessions around for later use—or sharing them with others—in [Work with Sessions](#).

Record different types of audio:

- Learn how to [Record from a Microphone](#).
- Set up a Voice Chat session and record Skype and FaceTime chats in [Record Conversations](#).
- Discover how Audio Hijack can [Record from Multiple Sources](#) and how it can [Record to Multiple Files and Formats](#).
- Learn how to record audio from DVDs in [Record DVD Audio](#).
- Do you have a bunch of old LPs and cassette tapes that you want to digitize? Take control of this process in [Digitize LPs and Cassettes](#).

Enhance audio while you listen:

- Audio Hijack can enhance audio as you listen to it, using an equalizer, boosting the volume, enhancing mono audio, and more. Start enjoying these features in [Enhance Audio While You Listen](#).

Create podcasts:

- Audio Hijack is a great tool for creating your own podcast episodes. Learn how to [Record from a Single Source](#), [Record from Multiple Sources](#), and [Record from a Mixer](#).

Edit recordings with Fission:

- Audio Hijack isn't an audio editor, but a companion app from Rogue Amoeba, Fission, can perform editing tasks like trimming, cropping, splitting, and combining audio files. It can even [Create Ringtones](#) and [Make Chapterized AAC Files](#). See [Edit Audio Files with Fission](#).

Audio 101:

- You don't need to be an audio expert to use Audio Hijack, but [Learn More about Audio](#) offers you a primer about the audio formats, bit rates, sample rates, and more, so you can make the right choices when recording.

Meet Audio Hijack

Everyone wants to record audio from a Mac from time to time. It may be a concert streamed over the Web by a radio station, audio from a DVD, or a Skype or FaceTime call with grandchildren.

Audio Hijack records audio from any application on a Mac. This may sound simplistic, and, in a way, it is. Audio Hijack has been designed to be easy to use, yet incredibly powerful. You can record audio streamed over the Internet with just a few clicks, or you can set up a complex recording process that applies a variety of effects and saves multiple files in different formats.

In this chapter, I'm going to explain the concepts behind Audio Hijack and walk you through the interface. You'll see that Audio Hijack is easy enough to use that you can make a recording in a few clicks. I'll give an overview of what to do with your recordings after you've made them: how to share them, add them to your iTunes library, or easily open them in other apps for editing.

But if you're interested in high-end features, fear not, because later chapters will go under the hood and look at audio effects, podcast recording workflows, and much more.

Note: Audio Hijack 3 replaces Audio Hijack Pro 2. It runs on 10.9 Mavericks and later. The name has been simplified, as has the interface. Audio Hijack 3 is very, very different from its predecessor, with a new design, improved ease-of-use, and a ton of new features.

Install Audio Hijack

If you don't already own Audio Hijack, buy it from [Rogue Amoeba's Web site](#), expand the Zip archive (if it doesn't expand automatically), and move the Audio Hijack app to your Applications folder.

You can also download a trial version from the Rogue Amoeba site. The trial version overlays noise on all audio captures longer than 10 minutes, but once you purchase a license key, you can unlock the full version without downloading the app again. To purchase a license key from the trial version, open the app and choose Audio Hijack > License.

Note: The Mac App Store has many rules about what apps can do. Among other restrictions, Apple insists that apps sold in the App Store be *sandboxed*, a way of fencing off what an app can do from the operating system and from other apps. While this can be useful for security reasons, it also hobbles some apps by blocking access to some parts of OS X and preventing interactions with other apps—such as capturing the audio they produce. As such, Rogue Amoeba only sells Audio Hijack directly via their Web site.

The first time you launch Audio Hijack, you see a window offering you an Audio Hijack Guided Tour. You can view the 2-minute video now, or you can click Dive Right In to close the window and start working with Audio Hijack. (You can always watch the video later, by choosing Help > Audio Hijack Quick Tour, but I recommend you give it a whirl right away, because it helps familiarize you with Audio Hijack's basic concepts.)

In the first-launch view of Audio Hijack's Home window, you can import sessions from Audio Hijack Pro (if your Mac has any previous sessions) or start fresh with Audio Hijack 3 (**Figure 1**).

Make a Basic Recording

Before you read this chapter, I suggest that you look over [Tour the Interface](#) and [Record Audio in Six Steps](#) to make sure you can navigate in Audio Hijack and understand the basics of making a recording.

In this chapter, I'll look at how you can set up a recording with different or more powerful options. We'll create a session with customized blocks, and then we'll [Record Audio](#). With the recording captured, we'll examine the Sessions tab, in [Work with Sessions](#).

How Audio Hijack Records Audio

When Audio Hijack records, it captures a digital stream of audio. When it records from an input device—such as a microphone—it grabs the digital stream from that device. And when it records, say, audio streaming over the Web or audio from a DVD, it captures the audio before your Mac converts it to analog audio to send to your speakers or headphones.

Create a Session

An Audio Hijack recording starts with a *session*. A session is a reusable collection of settings used to capture audio. When you set up a session, you can tweak its blocks to meet your needs. Once that's done, you won't have to change anything the next time you want to make a recording from that session. You can even create multiple sessions from the same template that work in slightly different ways, depending on how you want to record and what you plan to do with the file afterward.

To create a session, click the New Session button in the Home window (or press Command-N). The Template Chooser opens (**Figure 17**). Choose a template by double-clicking it (or select it and click the Choose button at the lower right). For this example, I've chosen the Web Audio session.

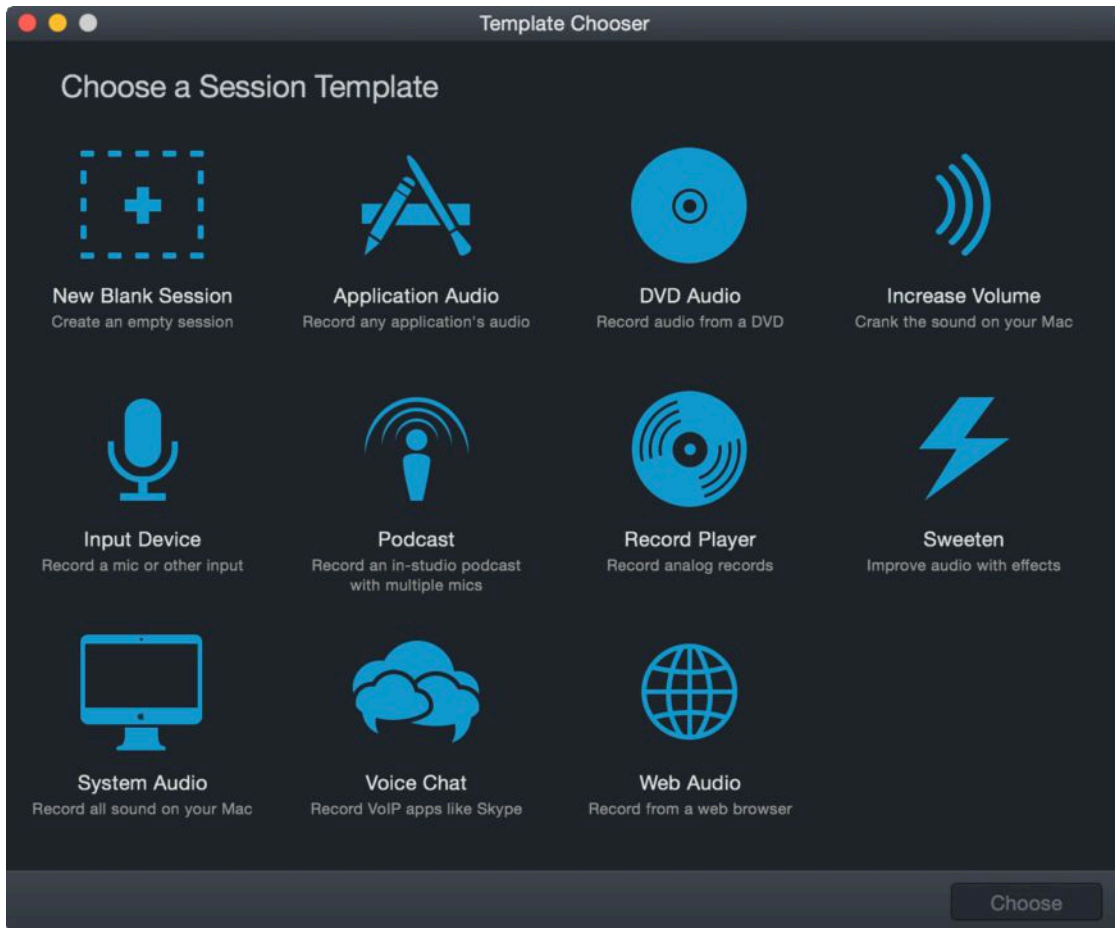


Figure 17: Create a session by double-clicking a template in the Template Chooser.

Audio Hijack creates a new session based on the template and displays it in a new session window (**Figure 18**). Audio Hijack also adds it to the Sessions tab in the Home window.

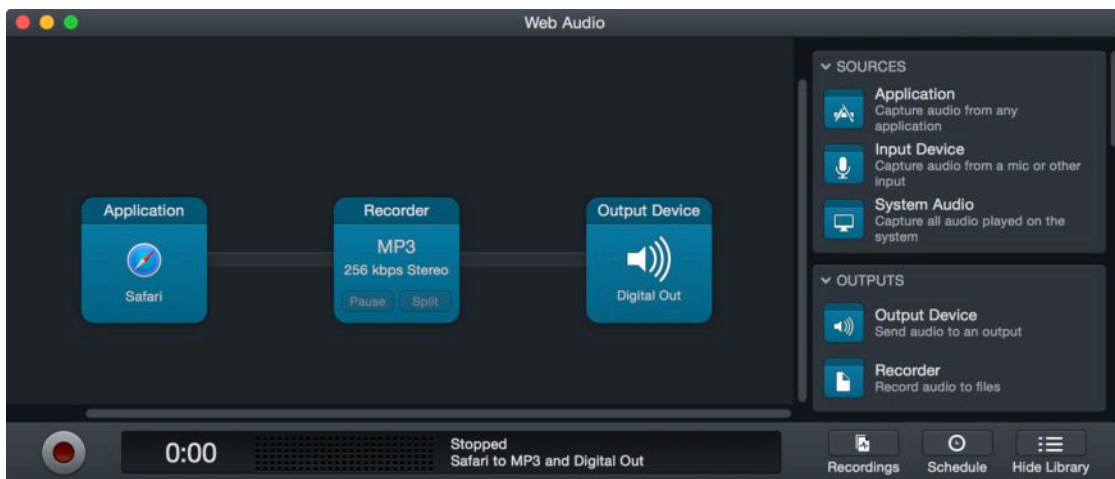


Figure 18: A default Web Audio session, with blocks for a source (Safari), a recorder (MP3, 256 kbps Stereo), and an output device (the currently selected output device on your Mac).

Capture Many Types of Audio

Before delving into this chapter, it's a good idea to read the previous chapter, [Make a Basic Recording](#), to learn how to set up a session and record with it while starting, pausing, splitting, and stopping. In that chapter, I looked at how to record from the Web.

In this chapter, I'll cover more types of sessions as I explain how to record from a microphone, how to capture voice chats (such as with Skype or FaceTime), and how to record system audio, as well as how to record audio from DVDs, LPs, and cassettes.

Record from a Microphone

If you want to capture audio from a microphone, start with one of Audio Hijack's simplest sessions, the Input Device session. The default Input Device session, which you can see in **Figure 29**, contains only two blocks: Input Device and Recorder.

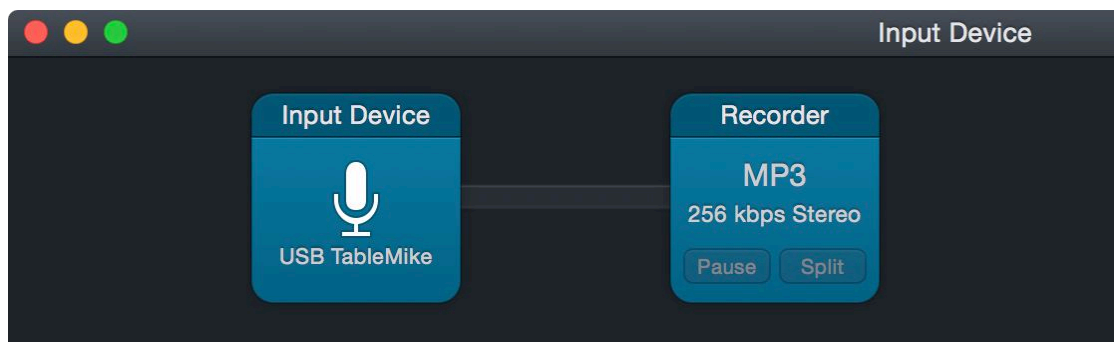


Figure 29: The default Input Device session, which you use to record from a microphone or other hardware device, has only two blocks.

Click the Input Device block to set up your recording options:

- **Pick a mic:** Open the Audio Device menu and select a microphone to use for your recording. Most Macs have an internal microphone,

so you may see that entry in the menu. You'll also see any external microphones or even any connected headsets with microphones, such as Apple's EarPods, which come with iPhones and iPods. If you use a Bluetooth headset or microphone, it will appear in the menu if it's turned on and paired with your Mac.

- **Choose channels:** Click Advanced to see the Channels menus. You can set your microphone to record only to channel 1 (the left channel) or channel 2 (the right), and you can then put something else on the other channel, such as music, when you edit later.

Note: You can, of course, record from two microphones (or from additional channels on some audio devices) by adding another Input Device block to a session. I look at recording with multiple sources later, in [Create Podcasts](#).

The Recorder block is exactly the same as what you saw earlier, in [Set Up the Recorder](#). See that section for more on setting up this block.

Add a Level Meters Block

I recommend that you add a level meters block to your session. Audio Hijack offers three types of level meters. You can see them by scrolling down in the Block Library (at the right of the Audio Grid) to the Meters section.

The two primary options are the [VU Meters](#) and [Peak/RMS Meters](#) blocks, and you can use just one or both. VU meters have a touch of old-school class and, most of the time, offer enough information to set a good level or monitor your recording. However, if you hear clipping or distortion but never see a problem on your VU meters, the Peak/RMS meters will probably show you when your audio is clipping.

Note: *Clipping* is the term of art for audio that distorts because it is too loud.

A secondary option is the [Menu Bar Meters](#) block. It adds a dynamic level meters icon to your Mac's menu bar. It's a great feature, but a touch small for showing a detailed read-out.

Enhance Audio While You Listen

If you've been reading along, you've seen that Audio Hijack sessions can include Output Device blocks, which allow you to listen as you record. But you may not have realized that you can use Audio Hijack's equalizer, volume boost, balance, and much more, to make your audio sound better. In fact, you don't have to make a recording at all—you can just listen.

Audio Hijack can also help you sync live audio up with another media feed or time-shift it with features like pausing and rewinding. I cover those options at the end of the chapter, in [Time-shift Audio](#) and [Sync Audio](#).

Equalize Your Audio

If you listen to music through iTunes, you can use that app's equalizer to adjust your audio and make it sound better on your speakers or headphones. But Spotify doesn't offer this feature. Neither does Apple's QuickTime Player or most apps you may use to play videos. Audio Hijack can step in here, offering you a powerful, yet easy-to-use equalizer.

You use a Sweeten session for equalizing. To create this session, click the New Session button at the lower left of the Home window (or press Command-N). In the Template Chooser, double-click Sweeten. Audio Hijack creates a new Sweeten session (**Figure 43**).



Figure 43: The Sweeten session lets you run an equalizer and take noise out of your audio.

The Sweeten session contains four blocks:

- **System Audio:** The session uses System Audio as the source so that it can enhance and playback all audio that your Mac plays, regardless of where it comes from. System Audio requires the Instant On extra; see [Installing the Extras](#) for more about what Instant On does and how to install it.

If you want to enhance only one app, you can delete the System Audio block and then replace it with an Application block from the Block Library's Sources section.

- **10 Band EQ:** The 10 Band EQ block is a standard equalizer, like the one found in iTunes if you choose Window > Equalizer. It has a number of presets, accessed through the Presets menu at the bottom of its popover (**Figure 44**), including Small Speakers, Bass Booster, and Loudness, as well as a number of genre settings, like Jazz, Dance, and Lounge. The most useful settings are those for small speakers, and those that increase or decrease bass or treble. I have never found the genre settings to be especially useful, but try them and see how they sound for you.

Create Podcasts

Audio Hijack is a podcaster's best friend. The app can record simple podcasts with just one person and a microphone, as well as complex podcasts with some speakers in a studio and others talking over Skype. Audio Hijack can record each speaker to a different file, making it easy to edit one person's speech after recording, while simultaneously recording all the audio to another file, so you have a master recording.

Recording a podcast is not very different from recording other types of audio. You might use multiple sources and record them to different files, but your podcast session still uses the same types of blocks that you've seen elsewhere in this book. Rather than describe everything here in detail, I include references to earlier sections in case you want to review them.

The procedures I discuss in this chapter can also be used for recording audiobooks, learning materials, or any other type of audio content that you distribute to others.

Note: I discuss recording podcasts only with Audio Hijack. There's a lot more to know about podcasts, such as how to choose the right microphone, and how to edit and distribute podcasts. See [Take Control of Podcasting](#).

Record from a Single Source

The simplest type of podcast is one person speaking into a microphone. You record this kind of podcast using the procedure in [Record from a Microphone](#). In that section, I explained how to choose a source (a microphone), how to use level meters to ensure that your audio isn't too loud, and how to set up a Recorder block.

The settings you use to record a podcast depend on how you plan to work with your finished file. Your workflow might call for only minor

edits, such as with Rogue Amoeba's Fission, which I discuss in [Edit Audio Files with Fission](#), or it might call for making enhancements or assembling a layered recording in some other audio tool, such as GarageBand.

If the file you record will be the file you distribute, you should adjust the Recorder block settings accordingly. Because a podcast episode should be easy to download, its file should be compact. If it contains only voice (perhaps with some intro music), it doesn't need to use the highest quality settings. As such, it's best to record in mono—which is half the file size as stereo—and at a fairly low bit rate, such as 64 or 96 kbps. (I discuss Recorder block settings in [Set Up the Recorder](#).)

If, however, you plan to import your file into, say, GarageBand, and edit it, adding music, applying effects, inserting ads, and more, I recommend that you record in a lossless, uncompressed format: AIFF or WAV. After you've finished editing your podcast, you'll export it in a more download-friendly format, but it's always better to use the best possible quality input when you plan to work on the file afterward. Especially if you'll use audio effects—perhaps you want to filter out high or low frequencies, or add a touch of reverb—the higher the file quality, the less likely it is that the audio editor will introduce audible artifacts or produce undesirable results.

Record from Multiple Sources

In [Record Multiple Sources](#), I explained how you can use multiple sources, such as an application and a microphone, in a session. Many people record podcasts in this manner: one person is in a home studio on a microphone, and the other can be anywhere in the world, talking over Skype.

Audio Hijack's default Podcast session includes two sources, each of which is an Input Device block. If one of your sources is an application, delete one of the Input Device blocks and drag the Application block from the Blocks Library to its place. Your session will look like the one in **Figure 49**.

Edit Audio Files with Fission

When you've finished making a recording with Audio Hijack, you may want to edit it. If you recorded a concert on the radio, for example, now's the time to edit out announcers or commercials, or trim stray noise from the beginning or end. If you digitized an LP, you might want to split the file into tracks that match the songs on the album, or perhaps you'd prefer to combine some automatically split tracks. And regardless of the type of recording, an edit pass enables you to tweak the recording in other ways—for example, to increase the volume.

Although you can use a wide range of audio editors, in this book I cover [Fission 2](#), a nifty \$29 app made by Audio Hijack's developer, Rogue Amoeba. Like Audio Hijack, I've used Fission since it was first released, because it's very easy to understand and it edits without converting files to a different format. Fission works with Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and later.

In this chapter, you can read about the main types of edits you can perform in Fission after recording with Audio Hijack. (Fission's built-in manual will tell you about the app's many other features.)

Meet Fission

Fission is a powerful, easy-to-use audio editor. It has the unique capability to work natively with audio files without converting them to another format. So no matter whether you've recorded an MP3 or AAC file, Fission edits it directly, without converting it to a lossless format and then back again when you've finished. This saves time and ensures that you don't introduce artifacts by decompressing and recompressing files.

Note: If you pay attention to audio formats, you'll be interested to know that Fission works with MP3, AAC, Apple Lossless, FLAC, AIFF, and WAV formats.

To open a file in Fission, you have a bunch of options, including using the Actions menu in the Recordings tab in Audio Hijack, dropping the file's icon in the Finder on Fission's icon, and dropping the file's icon on the main Fission window (**Figure 52**).



Figure 52: The Fission window when you first launch the app.

An audio file in Fission looks like this (**Figure 53**):

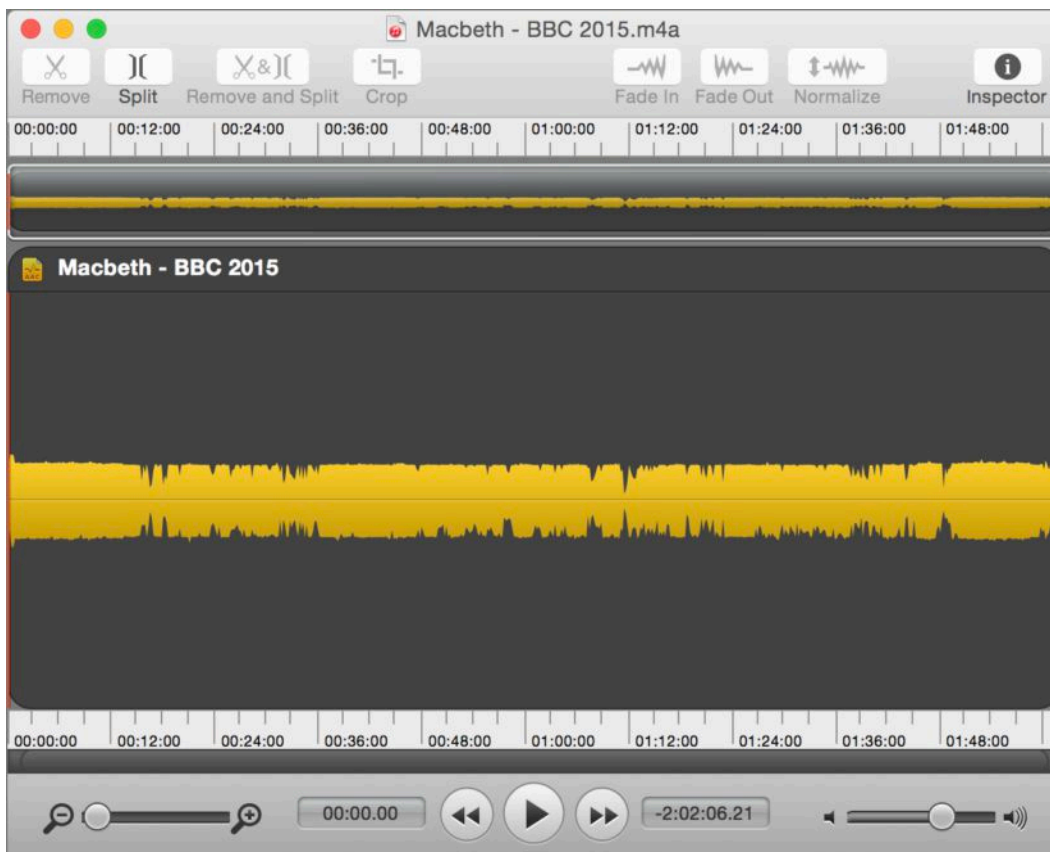


Figure 53: My Macbeth recording in Fission.

Learn More about Audio

Throughout this book, you've seen examples of the many Advanced Recording options available in the Recorder block. Audio Hijack's default settings are fine for most people, in most situations, but in this chapter, I give an overview of the various audio formats and the many available options, so you can make informed choices when setting up your sessions.

Understand Audio Formats

Audio Hijack lets you choose from a number of audio formats and quality levels. To see all your choices, click a Recorder block to open its popover and then click Advanced Recording Options (**Figure 65**).

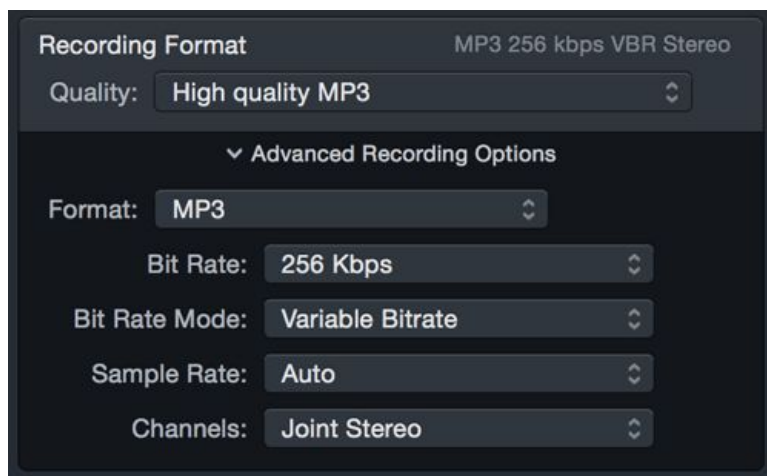


Figure 65: The Recorder block lets you choose from a number of custom recording options, including format, bit rate, and more.

The figure above shows MP3 settings; other formats offer fewer options. What follows is a walkthrough of these menus, with explanations of what each of their options means.

Quality

Recorder blocks let you choose from a number of recording formats and bit rates. You may find that the default options, which offer just

a few different “quality” levels, fit your needs. The Quality menu gives you some shortcuts, allowing you to quickly choose some commonly used format and bit rate combinations (I explain the terms used in these shortcuts just a little later in this chapter, so keep reading if something here doesn’t make sense):

- **Regular Quality AAC and High Quality AAC:** These settings use the AAC format at 128 and 256 kbps respectively.
- **Regular Quality MP3 and High Quality MP3:** These settings use the MP3 format at 128 and 256 kbps respectively.
- **Compressed Apple Lossless:** This setting uses the Apple Lossless format which, although compressed, retains all the data of the original recording.
- **Uncompressed AIFF:** This format offers the same quality as Apple Lossless—in fact, the same quality as a CD—but takes up more space.

If you wish to tweak these settings, click Advanced Recording Options or choose Custom to access the Advanced Recording Options.

Format

From the Format pop-up menu, you can choose from six recording formats:

- **AIFF:** AIFF files (and WAV, see below) store sound data encapsulated with file headers so the data can be used on computers. The audio data is similar to music CDs, meaning it’s uncompressed and takes up a lot of space: at CD-quality resolution, AIFF and WAV both consume about 10 MB per minute of audio, or 600 MB per hour. However, AIFF files can be opened and manipulated by most other audio programs, making it a good choice if you plan to edit or process your recordings in apps like Fission or GarageBand.
- **MP3:** MP3 files, which are compressed audio files, can play on just about any device or program that handles digital music.

About This Book

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About the Author

Kirk McElhearn writes about Macs, iPods, iPads, iTunes, books, music and more. He is a Senior Contributor to Macworld, where he is [The iTunes Guy](#), and he contributes to TidBITS and other publications. Kirk has written and co-written more than two dozen books about using the Mac, including [Take Control of iTunes 12: The FAQ](#), [Take Control of Scrivener 2](#), and [Take Control of LaunchBar](#).

Kirk's Web site, [Kirkville](#), presents articles on Macs, iPods, books, music, and much more. A lapsed New Yorker, Kirk has lived in Europe for 30 years; he currently lives in a barn near Stratford-upon-Avon, in the United Kingdom. You can email Kirk at kirk@mcelhearn.com or follow him on Twitter: [@mcelhearn](#).

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This book was written in Nisus Writer Pro on a Retina iMac, under the influence of some wonderful Chinese and Japanese green teas and wulong, and some first flush Darjeelings. Titus the Cat provided

companionship during my writing sessions and ensured that he got his daily dose of headscratches even though I was busy typing.

The soundtrack for this book included music by the Grateful Dead, John Foxx, Ultravox, Bill Nelson, Bob Dylan, Harold Budd, Brian Eno, Yes, Miles Davis, Fela Kuti, Pat Metheny, the Beatles, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Dimitri Shostakovich, Morton Subotnick, and others.

To relax, and to keep my mind nimble, I like to see performances of Shakespeare plays; I live a few miles from the Royal Shakespeare Company's two theaters in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. During the period when I was writing this book, I was fortunate to see excellent productions of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. If you're a Shakespeare buff like me, check out my [articles about Shakespeare and reviews of productions I attend](#).

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