Music CD Manufacture & Production

Resulted from

1. Frequent requests from our audiences to produce a CD they could buy & play as desired.
2. Another group recorded & had CDs produced, including art, at a local studio – cost about $1500 for an unknown number.
3. Another acquaintance recorded his group performing, burnt his disks, but paid for art work (cost unknown). I first decided to do this.
4. Visited a computer mate in Robertson & told him of my intentions. He showed my his new Canon iP 4950 color printer, bought on a special for about $120 & would print excellently on CD disks. I decided to go that way, bought one on eBay for $110, including 2 sets of ink cartridges. I also bought 2 more sets for $10 each.

Process

!. Choose music
2. Making backing music
3. Record melody
4. Edit melody
5. Choose order (type, key, tempo)
6. Burn CD (space between tracks, normalize tracks)
7. Picture onto CD (text, hole in middle)
8. Design & print covers (type list, text)
9. Do 50 & put into jewel cases)

Choose music

No problem for this job – all music designed for oldies audiences, so just selected 18 favourites from my master discs. I intend to use about 4 different instruments with different music styles. Val's songs are divided into (a) romantic (b) bouncy.

Make backing music

Have lectured about this in detail before so will not repeat this. I used software called Sonic Forge as I am accustomed to it. Lots of other recording software will be as good. For personal taste I often increase volume of bass, drums, piano & banjo. Each track can take up to 3 hours to produce as I am a perfectionist..

Record melody

 I again used Sonic Forge. Recording my instrument was easy. It has 2 (stereo) outputs. Left side was plugged into my PA system so I could hear my solo, Right side plugged into the "line in" of my computer sound card. I used "Sound Forge" again but any recording software would do. I played my backing track in my home CD player & played in sync as the computer only recorded the melody.

Recording Val's voice (only) was much harder, using a $30 microphone into the sound card. For later mixing of voice & backing, Val had to hear the backing music as she sang, whilst I only wanted to record her voice. I tried earphones for her to hear the backing but she couldn't hear her voice properly & sang poorly. I tried just ONE earphone but that was only a little better. Her lack of confidence was the problem.
 I was almost giving it away when I had an idea. Most microphones do not record much sound coming from directly behind them. So I discarded the phones & played a soft backing through my CD player's two stereo speakers on my lounge wall. Placed the mic on a tripod exactly in the center of the speakers with the mic exactly at 90 degrees to the wall. MUCH better – Val sang up a bit & the backing hardly recorded. Turned the backing up to normal & tried again. Success! Even if the backing music WAS a bit too loud, it disappeared when I mixed this track into a full blast backing track.

Edit melody

I have also lectured before about this, so will only mention a new thought I had. My lounge with its curtains & carpet in acoustically rather dead, so I added "reverb" to voice or instrument & was amazed at the increase in quality & reality I got.

Choose order on CD

Alternate tracks between Val & me. Choose the best two tracks for the first & last. Similar sounding styles to be kept apart. Same key tracks to be kept apart. Similar titles to be kept apart. Generally, musicians recognize the importance of these choices – a good group I know split up permanently over music order on a CD.

Burn CD

I use "Nero" for making CDs but there are lots of other good software. I leave space between each track & "normalize" all tracks – this makes them all the same volume so that users do not have to make volume alterations.

Print picture on CD

As colour printing is costly, print the CDs AFTER burning music, not before. I found that the Canon printer was simple to install & use. As there is a hole in the CD centre, the picture should be carefully chosen. Text should be meager & to the point & use the best colour & font.
   When I started printing I did 3-4 discs each run as time permitted. Found that I was using ink at an impossible rate. At a recent ICE meeting Pat Colby told us why – every time I switched the printer on, it used valuable ink to clean the heads.
    I changed to 15 disks plus 15 covers each run & the difference was astounding!

Design & print covers

I used Microsoft Publisher 98. Layout is important for (a) appearance value on the outside (b) good information inside. Once again, the Canon printer did an easy job.

Sale

   I first made 50 & decided that $5 each would pay my costs (including printer & ink) & would be attractive to my audiences. Other acquaintances have charged $10 & $15 without problem. I would prefer not to make a profit. Ours are selling extremely satisfactorily with much praise. I'll make some more soon.