



RAISING YOUR SHOW

TO NEW HEIGHTS!

A Niche Worth Scratching

25 Tips for Digging Up Free Music Online

The amount of free music available on the internet for download is astounding. The problem is that some of it comes with nasty strings attached: pirated files (meaning free to you but often stolen from the copyright holder), embedded Trojan viruses or spyware, and much more. Getting through this minefield can paralyze even the most stouthearted into inaction.

But I have spent a lot of time digging through that online minefield and discovered some great gems buried out there: public domain music, vintage archive collections, sample production music, royalty free goodies, old vinyl, and freebies from musicians who post their work just because they want to share it. As you know, links come and links go. Hopefully most of these will still be active when you get around to looking. I have cut & pasted them directly from my browser to ensure accuracy.

Before you dig in, be prepared to get a larger hard-drive. Seriously. My iTunes library of production music and sound effects is nearing 21GB. And I have only scratched the surface.

FIRST, A SHORT AD

Before I share the freebies, please consider this earnest appeal: support the music makers among us who create and sell product. Guys like Arthur Stead (<http://arthurstead.com>), Nathan Roberts (*MagiTunes* at www.BarryMitchell.com) and Alan Skogerbo (*Magical Music* at www.magicalan.com). I've purchased most their music CDs over the years and

encourage you to support them too.

And, if you should ever need some custom music for a reasonable cost, contact me and I'll connect you with my friend Mike Tyo. He was born blind but is a stunning musician. He arranges on the fly and can play in any style or genre. He produced a lot of the music for our current cycle of shows called *Once Upon a Circus*. Brilliant and affordable.

TIP #1 - I've posted one of Mike Tyo's pieces called *Celestial Circus* on our web site. Performed with a carousel/bandorgan sound, you might find it useful this Easter since it is based on the hymn *He Lives!* You can find it at: www.kistlerministry.org/magic

TIP #2 - And while you are visiting that page, scroll to the bottom and download my free workshop notes called *Soundtrack Wizardry*. You will find eight pages of info that supplement this article.

TIP #3 - Also, for the beginner, downloading online files is a snap. If a site does not have a clear "Download" button next to the file you want, right click on the name of the file and select "Save Target As..." Select a place on your computer for the file to download (Desktop, Music folder, etc.) then click Save. After the file has been downloaded, you can import these files into your iTunes library or organize them however you choose, burn to CD, etc. Refer to *Soundtrack Wizardry* for more on iTunes.

OUT OF PRINT VINYL

Looking for a new hobby? Join the hordes of "crate divers" whose mission in life is to haunt the dusty milk crates at garage sales and thrift stores, searching for old vinyl castaways from the 50s-70s. After converting these old LPs to MP3 files (with varying degrees of quality), they post the albums (or custom



mix collections) on their sites or blogs for free download. At each of these charity blog sites, you will also find a long list of links to other, similar, sites. And each of those sites has a long list of links. And each of those sites has a...um, better drop some bread-crumbs along the path so you can find your way back home.

For most of these people it is not about the money. It's about the hunt—and a desire to share with others the fruits of their labors. In fact some of these people actually pay file hosting services like Megaupload or Rapidshare to hold their “licorice pizza” collections for people like us to download. I am glad these hobbyists exist because most of this old, out-of-print vinyl will never be reissued and would eventually become lost.

TIP #4 - So, are all of these old records in the public domain? No. If you want to dig deeper into the details of public domain music, or do a specific song search, visit the Public Domain Information Project at <http://www.pdinfo.com/index.php>

It is wise to do a search to see if the material has been officially, commercially reissued for sale. For instance, I wanted to use some clips from the (long disbanded) Christian comedy team Isaac Airfreight. Even though I could have downloaded their 30 year old albums for free, I found a site where one of the original guys has reissued most of their albums on CD. So I bought them. Do your best to be ethically responsible and do the right thing.

TIP #5 - If you are ready to begin your digital milk crate diving, a nice starting place is The Thrift Store DJ at: <http://www.records.fruityfamily.com/>

TIP #6 - Some of these charity sites are dedicated to one specific genre like:

Christmas <http://feelslikechristmas.com/>
 Monster movies <http://monstermoviemusic.blogspot.com/>

Hollywood Musicals <http://hollywoodmusicals.blogspot.com/> (click on the movie posters to begin downloads)

Crime & Spy: <http://thecrimelounge.blogspot.com/>

And much, much more.

TIP #7 - How is any of this old music valuable to us? Suppose you are working on a routine about the Spirit of Christmas and

you get an idea. “Hey! I could insert a few bars of ‘You’re a Mean One Mr. Grinch’ in my soundtrack!” Well, you can find that old classic (and crate-loads more) at <http://staxo-wax.blogspot.com/> Use the search engine there to find a topic, title, artist, etc.

ARCHIVE & VINTAGE DOWNLOADS

TIP #8 - Nearly 9000 television show theme songs are available at <http://www.televisiontunes.com/>

These are not midi files but mp3s of the actual themes, like, *I Dream of Jeanie*, *The Magician*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Wild Wild West*, *Hogan's Heroes*, *Twilight Zone*...er, guess I had better quit showing my age. These go way back to the early days of TV. But I would tread carefully. When using commercially produced songs it is prudent to contact the copyright owner for permission to use the song.

TIP #9 - I would not usually use midi files in a show. A lot of them are just plain cheesy. But, if you are looking for a really nice circus calliope sound, try <http://cobs.rollerorgans.com/cobs> Roller organs are a type of organette—a hand-operated, table-top sized mechanical musical instrument, manufactured from the late 1880s through the mid 1920s. You will find over 3000 different songs (many of them hymns), and most have midi files which can be downloaded.

TIP #10 - Check out the many music collections which can be downloaded from the Library of Congress. You will find thousands of songs spanning old Edison recordings (including hymns), Blues, Gospel, Civil War Band and much more. Follow this link: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html> and begin browsing the Performing Arts/Music index.

TIP #11 - You can get lost at <http://www.archive.org/details/audio> where you will find thousands of audio items. After entering the Audio area, search under general terms like mood, ambient, soundscapes, etc. Or, look specifically at Music & Arts (which lists 78s & wax cylinder recordings), Netlabels (especially the Ambient Collective), and Radio Programs (for Old Time Radio Shows).

TIP #12 - Remember the old story records on 78s? Get ‘em while they’re hot! I still can’t believe this is all free at <http://www.kiddierecords.com/> and won-

der how long it can last. This site contains several hundred vintage kid's story records from the golden age of children's records (mid-forties through the early fifties). Look around and you will find some Bible stories for children and some Christmas items you might be able to use (perhaps puppets or chalk art?).

TIP #13 - More public domain vintage-ness can be found in these collections which contain American Roots, Gospel, Blues, Jazz, Ragtime, Classical, Ragtime and more.

<http://www.publicdomain4u.com/>
<http://juneberry78s.com/>
<http://www.openmusicarchive.org/>
<http://www.mfiles.co.uk/mp3-files.htm>

BROADCAST PRODUCTION MUSIC

TIP #14 - Free Notes is a place where broadcast production people can download professional quality music beds for free. No registration or fees, they only ask that you submit the track info to the station that airs your commercial. Since that doesn't apply to performers like us, the site seems to imply that we are free to pick it, mix it, and use it. There really is no mechanism to accept payment. In fact, if you are a broadcast production house in the UK or Ireland, they will send you CDs of the music gratis! If you find something you decide to use, it might be nice to send a quick email and let them know how much you appreciate the resource. You can find the link at: <http://www.freenotes.co.uk/index.aspx>

TIP #15 - High quality production music in a zipped, full .wav format can be downloaded from www.digitaljuice.com One small catch—you will need to take a moment to register and subscribe to a FREE e-newsletter (you can always unsubscribe later). I think it's worth the bother because, once this is done, you have access to 19 full-length, professionally produced background tracks. All royalty free. My favorites? *Mystic Rise*, *Conspiracy*, and *Gremlins*. Reeeeeeally nice stuff.

TIP #16 - Chris Martyn and Geoff Harvey have adopted a "pay what you like" system for their high-quality production music at <http://www.purple-planet.com/> There are eight main themes (including Mystery and Comedy) with six different titles under each theme. They also give three versions of each title: theme, pad, and stinger. You can't lose on this one.

TIP #17 - Here are two more smaller collections of production tracks. Two of my favorite pieces are *Bring Back Route 66 Boogie* and *Slow Walk*. <http://www.dangercollie.com/music/>

<http://www.internetaudioguy.com/iaq/free-music/freemusic.htm>

MUSICIANS WHO WANT TO SHARE

TIP #18 - Michael Crawford runs a site that includes an important article discussing how the Recording Industry Association of America is using the Digital Millennium Copyright Act to sue hundreds of file-sharing citizens in civil lawsuits. His solution: "You can avoid all of these problems by enjoying music from the tens of thousands of talented musicians who offer legal downloads of their music [to promote themselves]." Near the bottom of the page is more than one hundred links to such musicians. Find his site here: <http://www.goingware.com/tips/legal-downloads.html>

TIP #19 - If you like the Christian parodies produced by Apoletix and Mark Bradford (the RPM series), take a listen to Randall Hyde's *Parodeities* at: http://webster.cs.ucr.edu/Page_Christian/ and click on the MP3 link. Randall sent me free CD copies of his recordings several years ago but now they are available as free downloads so you can burn your own copies.

TIP #20 - Free kids music can be found through the links page at <http://freekidsmusic.com/> There are a few rules about usage but this one applies to us: "[This music] is NOT intended to be played...in public as warm-up music for a paying audience." So, if there are no tickets sales you should be okay.

TIP #21 - These sites focus on specific genres of music:

All kinds of solo piano work: <http://freesolopiano.com/>

Improvisational piano music (including sacred) <http://ghostnotes.blogspot.com/>

A world of Classical piano awaits you <http://pianosociety.com>

More public domain Classical is available here <http://www.musopen.com/music.php>

Acoustic-based music <http://www.tomhansonmusic.com/music.cfm>

Need some Celtic or Irish? You'll find a pot o' gold here <http://www.songhenge.com/>

Medieval or Renaissance <http://www.jsayles.com/familypages/EarlyMusic.htm>

Spooky Halloween? <http://www.oddioverplay.com/ears/fiends/>

TIP #22 - Careful or you will fill your hard-drive at these sites which cover many genres, including Christian.

<http://music.download.com/> Free sample tracks abound.

<http://www.soundclick.com/> (scroll down and select a Genre, then a Subgenre—not everything is free but a lot is)

<http://www.oddioverplay.com/> (a great collection of links to those who want to share)

BIBLES & SOUND EFFECTS

TIP #23 - *Faith Comes By Hearing* has the world’s largest catalog of Audio Bibles, including downloads available in more than 300 languages. You will need to go through a quick install of the free Audio Bible Download Manager software. I’ve downloaded four different versions of the Bible in both dramatized and non-dramatized versions. <https://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/store/languageconfig>

TIP #24 - More free audio Bibles PLUS a collection of public domain hymns & contemporary music (and more) are available at <http://www.audiotreasure.com/> Scroll down to the download matrix, start the

downloads, make a pot of coffee and then a donation, if you can.

TIP #25 - If you custom mix your own show sound tracks you will eventually need some sound effects. Here are a few sites for free sfx:

<http://www.pacdv.com/sounds/>
<http://www.freesound.org/>
<http://www.findsounds.com/>

SEND ‘EM IN!

If you have a favorite free music link you would like to share, send it my way and I’ll include them in the next issue—which reminds me—this article marks the third anniversary of my Magic Beans column. I think it’s about time to step aside and make room for others—maybe even you? So, to honor the performer’s creed (*Leave them wanting more*), we’ll close the curtain on Magic Beans after the next issue.

See you down the road! †

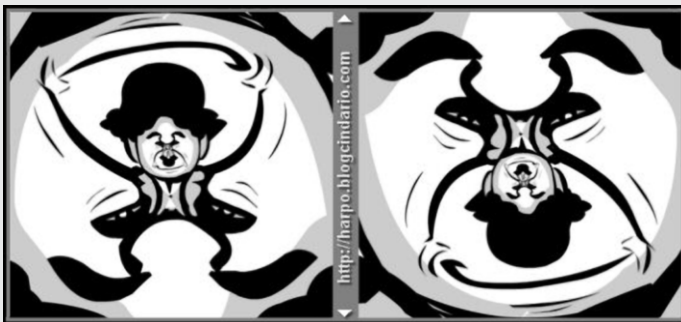


Kerry serves as an evangelist for The Salvation Army. Comments are always welcomed at kkistler@wowway.com. Past articles can be read at this hidden link:

www.kistlerministry.org/magic

Bonus Bean Ambitoon Collection!

This link will take you to a whole collection of turn-over caricatures: <http://harpo.blogcindario.com/categorias/21-figuras-reversibles.html>



On the left side is Charlie Chaplin. Turn it over and you will see a close up of his face (right side). Clever, eh?