



TAKE CONTROL OF

AUDIO HIJACK

COVERS
Audio Hijack version 4

by KIRK MCELHEARN

\$14.99

2ND
EDITION

Table of Contents

Read Me First	5
Updates and More	5
What’s New in Version 2.0.1	6
What’s New in the Second Edition	6
Introduction	8
Audio Hijack Quick Start	10
Get Started with Audio Hijack	11
Install Audio Hijack	12
Install ACE on an Intel Mac	13
Install ACE on an M-Series Mac	14
Meet Audio Hijack	19
Session List Window	19
Template Chooser	19
Session Windows	20
Block Controls	21
Audio Hijack Preferences	23
Make a Simple Recording	25
Create a Session	25
Record Audio	38
Work with Recordings	44
Work with Sessions	54
Record Various Audio Sources	58
Record from a Microphone	58
Record from Other Input Devices	65
Record Conversations	66
Record All Audio from Your Mac	70
Record Multiple Sources	71
Record to Multiple Files and Formats	75
Live Stream or Broadcast Audio	77
Record DVD Audio	81

Digitize LPs and Cassettes	83
Use Scripting with Your Sessions	87
Edit Pipelines Manually	91
Enhance Audio While You Listen	94
Improve Your Audio	94
Increase Volume	97
Magic Boost	98
Enhance Mono Audio	99
Adjust Bass and Treble	99
Adjust Balance and Pan Audio	100
Time-Shift Audio	101
Sync Audio	103
Simple Compressor	103
Create Podcasts	105
Record from a Single Source	105
Record from Multiple Sources	106
Record from a Mixer	109
Use Ducking with Multiple Sources	112
Edit Audio Files with Fission	115
Meet Fission	115
Trim Audio	117
Crop Audio	120
Replace Audio	121
Split Audio	123
Combine Files	125
Adjust Volume	125
Fade Audio	126
Tag Files	128
Create Ringtones	129
Make Chapterized AAC Files	130
Convert Files to Different Formats	131
Learn More About Audio	134
Understand Audio Formats	134
Use Audio Unit Effects	139

About This Book..... 140
Ebook Extras 140
About the Author 141
About the Publisher 142
Copyright and Fine Print 143

Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Audio Hijack, Second Edition*, version 2.0.1, published in October 2022 by alt concepts. This book was written by Kirk McElhearn and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book tells you how to use Rogue Amoeba's Audio Hijack, focusing on version 4, 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.

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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What’s New in Version 2.0.1

This small update makes a couple of minor adjustments to reflect the fact that Audio Hijack no longer supports macOS 10.14 Mojave.

What’s New in the Second Edition

The second edition of this book covers Audio Hijack 4, released in March 2022, which is a major update to Audio Hijack. If you read the first edition of this book, or if you’ve previously used Audio Hijack 3, you should feel right at home in version 4. In addition to a refreshed interface, Audio Hijack 4 offers many new features, including:

- **New blocks:** Audio Hijack 4 has a number of new blocks that you can use in your sessions, including a Mixer block to mix up to five sources, a Magic Boost block to increase quiet audio, and a Simple Compressor block to make your recordings sound better with minimal configuration. See [Use the Mixer Block to Mix Multiple Sources](#), [Magic Boost](#), and [Simple Compressor](#).
- **Improved input and output blocks:** The Input block now requires that you select a source, so you don’t accidentally begin a recording using the wrong microphone, such as your Mac’s built-in mic instead of your professional podcasting microphone. And Input and Output blocks now let you choose to use the default devices set for the system. See [Record from a Microphone](#) and [Set Up the Output Device](#).

- **Other block improvements:** You can now rename blocks—such as naming an input block after your microphone—and you can pin all blocks for easy access when Audio Hijack is in the background. See [Rename Your Blocks](#) and [Pin Blocks](#).
- **Manual pipeline editing:** Audio Hijack has always automatically made connections between blocks in a session, but you can now manually edit the pipeline, or the audio flow, in your sessions. See [Edit Pipelines Manually](#).
- **Scripting:** Audio Hijack now supports automation using JavaScript. You can trigger actions when a recording starts, ends, or when timers start or finish. There are a number of built-in actions, but you can roll your own. And Audio Hijack also supports Apple’s Shortcuts. See [Use Scripting with Your Sessions](#).
- **Menu Bar Control and Background sessions:** You can now run sessions without their window open, notably via a menu bar icon. This icon gives you quick access to sessions, allowing to start or stop them, as well as view their status. See [Use the Audio Hijack Menu Bar Icon to Control Recordings](#).
- **Auto Run sessions:** You can set up sessions that start automatically when you launch Audio Hijack, or when you start up your Mac. See [The Session List Window](#) for more on using Auto Run.

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 macOS'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 of Grateful Dead concerts, 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. As a prolific podcaster, Audio Hijack is my tool of choice for recording both my and my guests' audio.

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 record any audio on your Mac with a few clicks. 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. And broadcasters and live streamers can use Audio Hijack's powerful features to create compelling live audio with multiple sources and effects.

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 take you through all parts of Audio Hijack 4. 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, [Get Started with Audio Hijack](#) and [Make a Simple Recording](#), which cover basics that are assumed in the later chapters.

Get Started:

- Install the app, set up preferences, and discover Audio Hijack's interface in [Get Started with Audio Hijack](#).
- It's easy to start recording with Audio Hijack. Learn how to create sessions, record audio, and work with recordings in [Make a Simple Recording](#).

Record different types of audio:

- Audio Hijack records all types of audio: voice chats, DVDs and LPs, lets you record from multiple sources record to multiple files and formats. See [Record Various Audio Sources](#).
- Audio Hijack is a great tool for creating your own podcast episodes. See [Create Podcasts](#).
- 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.

Enhance audio while you listen and edit with Fission:

- 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](#).
- Audio Hijack isn't an audio editor, but a companion app from Rogue Amoeba, Fission, can perform 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](#).

Get Started with Audio Hijack

Everyone wants to record audio from a Mac from time to time. It may be a concert streamed over the web, audio from a DVD, a Zoom meeting, 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 explain how to install and set up Audio Hijack. If you've already installed Audio Hijack, then you can skip this section.

In the next chapter, I introduce the app's interface, and show you what preferences you can set. After that, I show how Audio Hijack is easy enough to use that you can make a recording in a few clicks.

Later, I give an overview of what to do with your recordings after you've made them: how to share them, add them to your Music library, if you want to store them in that app, or easily open them in other apps for editing.

If you're interested in high-end features, see subsequent chapters, which look at Audio Hijack's powerful features, such as the variety of blocks you can use to create sessions and enhance audio; how you can use the app for podcast recording, broadcasting, and live streaming; and much more.

Note: To run Audio Hijack 4, you'll need a Mac running at least macOS Catalina (10.15 or higher).

Install Audio Hijack

If you don't already own Audio Hijack, buy it from [the Rogue Amoeba Store](#), 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 Help > Purchase Audio Hijack.

The first time you launch Audio Hijack, a dialog explains that the software needs to install ACE, Audio Hijack's Audio Capture Engine (**Figure 1**).

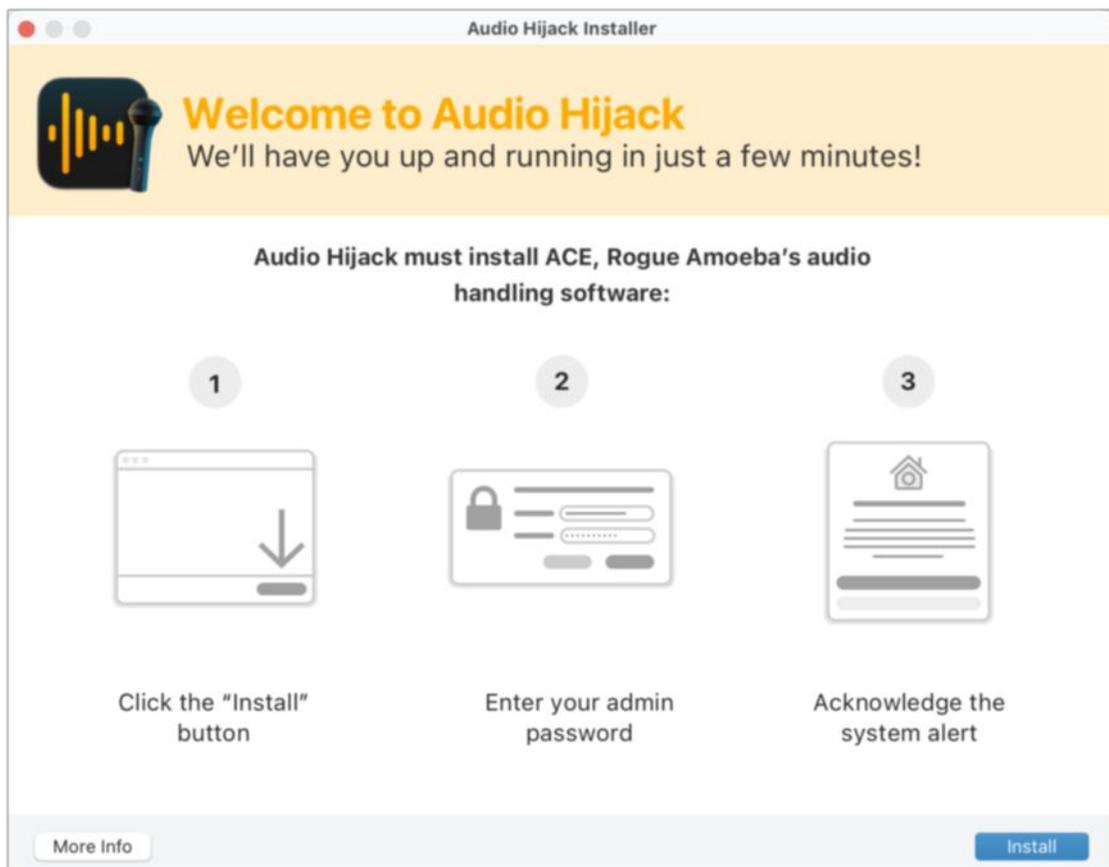


Figure 1: You must install ACE for Audio Hijack to be able to record audio.

Meet Audio Hijack

Audio Hijack is an app in which most of your work is preparatory. You set up sessions to work with audio, but you generally don't spend much time with the Audio Hijack interface when using the app; you most often record in the background. As such, Audio Hijack has only a few windows.

Before we get to creating sessions, let's look at Audio Hijack's main windows, and see what preferences the app offers.

Session List Window

The Session List window is where you configure and launch sessions, which are the settings necessary to record audio. Your window may be empty like the one shown in **Figure 5**, above, or it may contain existing sessions.

For now, click the New Session button in the lower-left corner to create a new session (or press ⌘-N).

Note: You can bring up the Session List window at any time by pressing ⌘-0 (that's a zero, not a capital O).

Template Chooser

When you click New Session in the Session List window, Audio Hijack opens its Template Chooser.

This window (**Figure 6**) gives you a good idea of the many ways that Audio Hijack can record and enhance audio from your Mac. Choices include capturing audio from an app or input device, from a record player, from a web browser, and more. There's even a Blank Session, which lets you create a session from scratch.

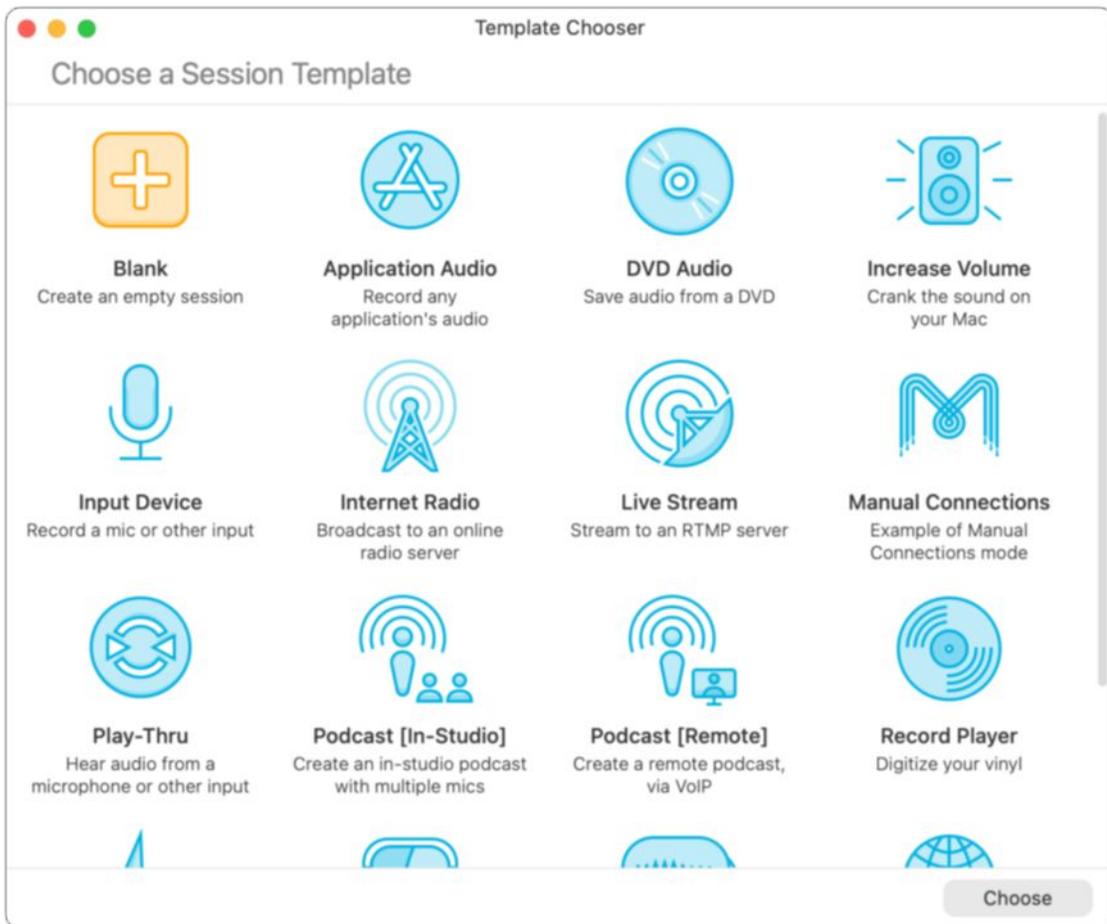


Figure 6: Audio Hijack’s Template Chooser, showing examples of the types of projects Audio Hijack can handle.

Session Windows

As I show you later, when I discuss creating and using sessions, each session opens in its own window where you can configure it, tweak it, work with its recordings, and more. Each session window’s title bar shows the name of the session (“Application Audio” in **Figure 7**, below) and contains a sidebar with five tabs: Blocks, Recordings, Schedule, Scripting, and Info.

Make a Simple Recording

In this chapter, I tell you how you can set up a recording with basic options. I show you how to create a session with customized blocks, and then how to [Record Audio](#). With the recording captured, I explain what you can do with your recording file 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 add several blocks to the Audio Hijack session window, then you tweak the 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 using 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 files afterward.

To create a session, click the New Session button in the Session List window (or press ⌘-N). The Template Chooser opens (**Figure 10**). Choose a template by double-clicking it (or select it and click the Choose button in the lower-right corner).

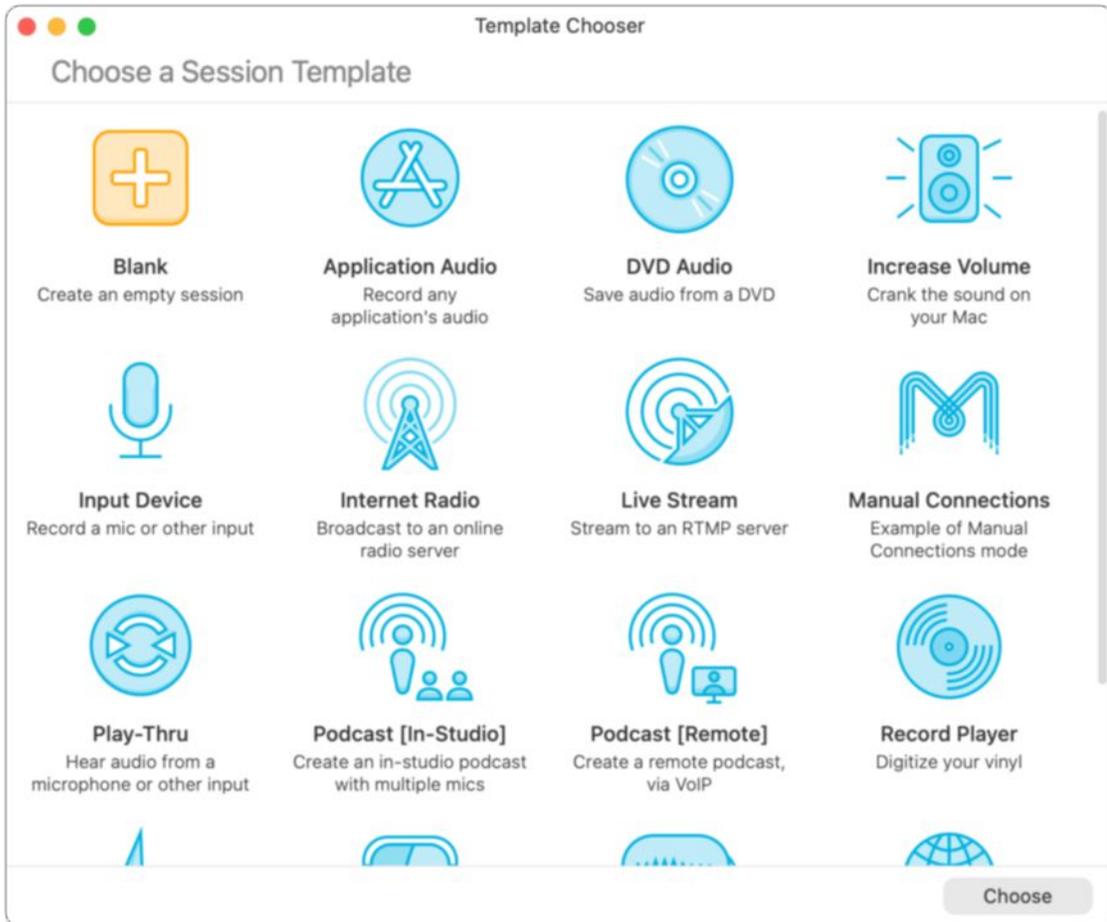


Figure 10: Create a session by double-clicking a template in the Template Chooser.

For this example, I've chosen the Application Audio session. Audio Hijack creates a new session based on the template and displays it in a new session window (**Figure 11**). Audio Hijack also saves it automatically and adds it to the Session List window.

Record Various Audio Sources

Before delving into this chapter, it's a good idea to read the previous chapter, [Make a Simple 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 audio from the web.

In this chapter, I cover more types of sessions as I explain how to record from a microphone, how to capture voice chats (such as with Skype, Zoom, or FaceTime), and how to record system audio, as well as how to record audio from DVDs, LPs, and cassettes. Many of these sessions are easy to use, because of the availability of templates, but you can always tweak the blocks and add others to make them flexible enough to record just about anything.

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. While the basic session is simple, I discuss it over several pages, because there are some useful blocks that you might want to use in many of your sessions.

The default Input Device session, which you can see in **Figure 29**, contains only two blocks: Input Device and Recorder.

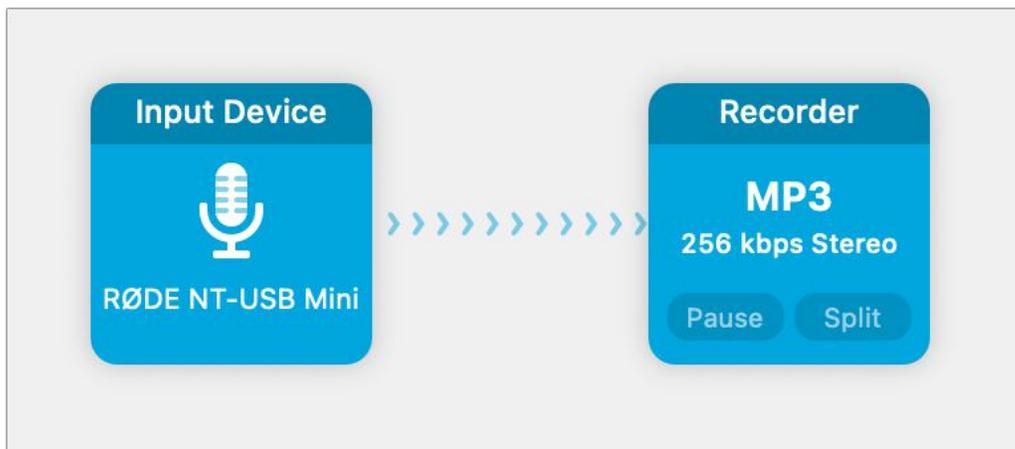


Figure 29: The default Input Device session, which you use to record from a microphone or other hardware device, has only two blocks.

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

- **Pick a mic:** Open the Input Device menu and select a microphone to use for your recording. All Macs have an internal microphone, so that entry always appears in the menu. It may also list any external microphones or even any connected headsets with microphones that you may be using. If you use a Bluetooth headset, such as Apple’s AirPods, or a Bluetooth microphone, it appears in the menu if it’s turned on and paired with your Mac.

You can also choose Default System Input to tell Audio Hijack to use whatever you have selected in System Preferences > Sound as your current audio input. If you select this, and change the default system input, Audio Hijack uses the current system input device each time you run the session.

- **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](#).

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](#).

Improve Your Audio

If you listen to music with Apple’s Music app, 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 TV app, 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 in the lower-left corner of the Session List window (or press ⌘-N). In the Template Chooser, double-click Sweeten. Audio Hijack creates a new Sweeten session (**Figure 56**).

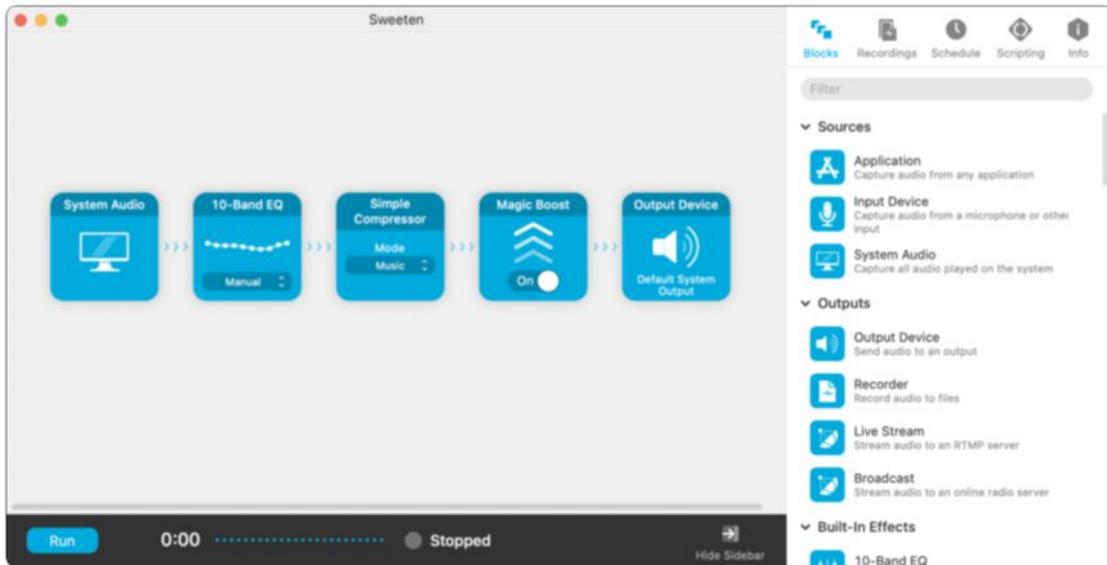


Figure 56: The Sweeten session lets you run an equalizer and remove noise from your audio.

The Sweeten session contains five 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. 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 Blocks Library's Sources section.
- **10 Band EQ:** The 10 Band EQ block is a standard equalizer, like the one found in the Music app if you choose Window > Equalizer. It has a number of presets, accessed through the Presets menu at the bottom of its popover (**Figure 57**), 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 or Zoom. 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 focus on recording podcasts 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 multitrack recording in some other audio tool, such as GarageBand or Logic Pro.

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 higher quality. Since most podcasts are distributed in low-bit-rate files, you can stick with the default 256 kbps MP3 or AAC, which you downsample after you're finished editing. 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. You then need to add on Output device block after the Application block, so you can hear the audio from Skype. Your session will look like the one in **Figure 64**.

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](#), a nifty \$35 editor 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 macOS 10.14 and later.

In this chapter, I tell you 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 several options, including from your session's Recordings tab in Audio Hijack (see [Work with Recordings](#)), dropping the file's icon in the Finder on Fission's icon, and dropping the file's icon on the main Fission window (**Figure 67**).



Figure 67: The Fission window when you first launch the app.

An audio file in Fission looks like this (**Figure 68**):

Learn More About Audio

Throughout this book, you've seen examples of the many Advanced Format 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 Format Options (**Figure 80**).

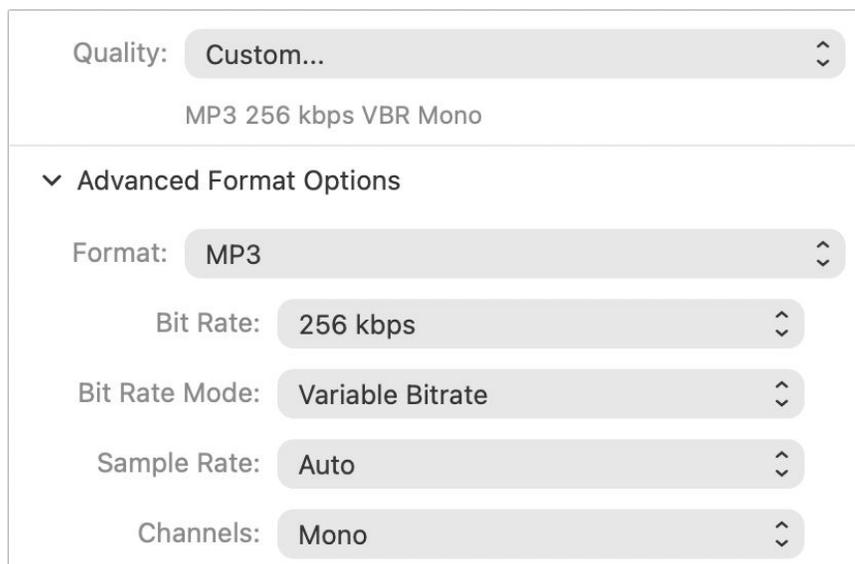


Figure 80: The Recorder block lets you choose from a number of custom recording options, including format, bit rate, and more.

The figure above shows MP3 settings; other formats offer different 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 want to adjust settings, click Advanced Format Options or choose Custom.

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. 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 that convert audio files to a lossless

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Kirk McElhearn writes about Apple hardware and software, photography, books, music, and more. He contributes to TidBITS and other publications, and co-hosts several podcasts. Kirk has written and co-written more than two dozen books about using the Mac, including [*Take Control of macOS Media Apps*](#), [*Take Control of Scrivener 3*](#), and [*Take Control of LaunchBar*](#).

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to Joe Kissell for editing this book shortly after he made an international move, and in the midst of the spread of the omicron variant. Thanks also to my podcast co-hosts: Doug Adams, Jeff Carlson, Jundo Cohen, and Josh Long, with whom I use Audio Hijack regularly. And thanks to TJ Connelly who shared the Audio Hijack session he uses for his internet radio station Uncertain FM.

I'd especially like to thank the entire team at Rogue Amoeba, who have made one of the essential Mac utilities. In particular, Paul Kafasis's support for this book was invaluable, and he remained calm as I pestered him with questions about the minutiae of Audio Hijack.

This book was written in Nisus Writer Pro on a 24" M1 iMac and a 13" M1 MacBook Air, with the help of a variety of audio gear, under the influence of some wonderful Chinese and Japanese green teas and wulong, and some first flush Darjeelings.

The soundtrack for this edition included music by the Grateful Dead, Brad Mehldau, The Clash, Harold Budd, Brian Eno, Miles Davis, Steve Reich, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Chiku Za, Okuda Atsuya, Robert Fripp, and others.

About the Publisher

alt concepts, publisher of Take Control Books, is operated by [Joe Kissell](#) and [Morgen Jahnke](#), who acquired the ebook series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.'s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst, in 2017. Joe brings his decades of experience as author of more than 60 books on tech topics (including many popular Take Control titles) to his role as Publisher. Morgen's professional background is in development work for nonprofit organizations, and she employs those skills as Director of Marketing and Publicity. Joe and Morgen live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, with their two children and their cat.

Credits

- Publisher: Joe Kissell
- Editor: Geoff Duncan (first edition), Joe Kissell (second edition)
- Cover design: Sam Schick of [Neversink](#)
- Logo design: Geoff Allen of [FUN is OK](#)

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Take Control of Audio Hijack, Second Edition

ISBN: 978-1-7780439-0-1

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