

## CASE STUDY

# Suncoast High School Riviera Beach, Florida

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**T**he Superscope PSD300 is a wonderful music rehearsal and recording tool that no choral director should be without. It's the easiest way to record your own CDs. I simply plug a pair of microphones directly into the PSD300, space them apart to create a nice stereo field, and start recording. I can use my good Shure microphones with an XLR (three-pin connector), since the PSD300 can accept either XLR or 1/4" mic connectors. I can adjust the record levels manually, or set the unit to adjust them automatically. I've also got high, mid, and low recording EQ. The sound quality of recordings made on a PSD300 is just astounding.

I'll first discuss the ways I use the PSD300 to record, and then describe some of its additional music rehearsal capabilities.

### CDs for everyone

I use the PSD300 to make CDs for several purposes. First, I make custom accompaniment CDs for my students to use when they audition for college music programs. I

typically record myself playing piano, and can back off or simplify my playing so the student can shine. This way, a student doesn't have to bring me or any other musician along for accompaniment. Students don't want to use cassettes for this purpose (if they are even familiar with them), since tapes have to be rewound or fast-forwarded, so you can't quickly navigate between numbers. Also, there's always the risk that something will happen to the tape, and the sound quality is an issue.

Similarly, soloists and ensembles need to submit CDs for state choral competitions. To make these CDs, they may transfer a tape recording to CD using a computer, or try recording using a computer. In both cases, odds are the final recording won't sound as good as something made on a PSD300. Just as importantly, it takes time and know-how to record a WAV file to your hard drive and convert that to CD.

Speaking of time, with the PSD300 I now have time to record students in daily rehearsal, and simply stop the

### About Suncoast High School

- Palm Beach County, Florida
- Enrollment 1,360
- Magnet School
- U.S. Dept. Education "Blue Ribbon School"

### ABOUT THE PSD300 SOLID STATE RECORDER

- Make high quality digital stereo recordings directly to inexpensive CD-R or CD-RW discs.
- Built-in microphone, stereo mic inputs and speaker.
- Manipulate Music CDs on the fly:
  - Change a song's key in half steps without changing tempo
  - Change tempo -33% to +50%
  - Reduce lead vocals
  - Create A-B practice loops



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recording and play it back to them immediately, so they can hear how they sound. This helps them better understand my direction and leads to faster improvement.

Last but not least, I can record concerts and recitals with confidence. If I want to make the best possible recording, I'll use my 8 track mixer with built-in reverb and more extensive EQ capabilities to sweeten the mix. I simply send the stereo output from this mixer straight into the PSD300.

#### Music Rehearsal

The PSD300 has both a CD recording drive (that uses CD-R or CD-RW discs) and a CD player drive with controls specifically intended for music rehearsal. I can manipulate music on CDs for accompaniment, record a new CD with the changes, and even mix soloists and ensembles with backing music on CD and record this mix to CD. (But be aware of any copyright restrictions).

Key change buttons let me use any music CD, including accompaniment I've recorded, and change a song's key up or down at the touch of a button. Recently, I had a student who wanted to use a song that was out of her range for an audition. I moved the key up a couple of half steps and it sounded just fine. Unlike with "pitch change" found on some tape and CD players, the music's tempo didn't change. I simply recorded the song in its changed key to a blank CD-R disc and finalized it, and the student had her finished accompaniment. I could have gone into Finale software to transpose keys, print out a new chart, and play that, but that would have been more labor and time intensive.

Conversely, tempo change lets you slow or speed the pace of a song without the key

being affected. If I want a student to zero in on a certain passage, I might mark just that passage as a track using the track increment button. That way, I can go right to that part by going to the track, without having to rewind or fast-forward tape. I can also use the A-B loop button on the PSD300 to select a segment of a song to continuously repeat.

Lead Vocal Reduction is a way to use any music CD for accompaniment, and mask the lead vocal, leaving the rest of the music intact, so that a singer can take the lead. The effectiveness of this entirely depends on how the CD was recorded, so it is very much a hit or miss proposition. It only works for stereo recordings, when the lead vocal is centered. Otherwise it fails. It also doesn't work very well when a song includes effects such as reverb.

#### In Conclusion

One other use for the PSD300 I've found is to transfer my old tape recordings to CD. I no longer have to worry about losing my old college recitals from tape wear and tear. They are now archived to CD-R, and can be duplicated forever without a loss in quality. I did this simply by plugging my cassette deck into the stereo input jacks on the back of the PSD300, and I even marked tracks between numbers during the process. You can do the same with your old vinyl LP collection ... if you still have it. Now that I've hopefully persuaded you how great the PSD300, you may be wondering how you can afford to purchase it. At my school, I raised funds by selling chocolate bars and getting additional funds from the PTA. I'm also sharing the unit with our band director. Where there's a will, there's a way.