

C A S E S T U D Y



Tom McKinney

Vocal coach embraces PSD300 as a great rehearsal tool.

"The PSD300 will revolutionize what we can do with our students."

-- Tom McKinney, Vocal Coach

The Challenge

With more than 30 years experience as a vocal teacher, Tom McKinney, of Houston, Texas, has long been on the look-out for ways to improve his sessions with his students. One of those ways is to sometimes use prerecorded music rather than a live accompaniment.

"It can be difficult to play piano scales while listening to your student, because your attention is split," he notes.

Cassette tapes, however, must be rewound before a passage can be repeated. CD players can avoid this delay, but what do you do if you need to access the middle of a track quickly?

"We vocal teachers have also been on the look-out for technology that would allow us to manipulate prerecorded music.

We've tried Karaoke machines and other gear to find a way to change a song's key or tune it to a vocalist's pitch. We're also looking for ways to eliminate the lead vocalist from a prerecorded song, so the student can sing along.

McKinney has also been looking for a way to professionally record students and record vocal exercises that students might use for practice.

The Solution

Recently McKinney and a colleague purchased the Superscope PSD300. "Vocal teachers and choral directors are going to go nuts over this thing," he says. "It will revolutionize what we can do with our students."

McKinney uses both regular Music CDs and karaoke CDs as an accompaniment. Now, at the touch of a button, he can change a

BIOGRAPHY

Tom McKinney

- 30 years teaching experience
- Member of National Assoc. of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and the Texas Choral Director's Assoc. (TCDA)
- Long career on singing on Broadway and with opera companies

SITUATION

Using prerecorded music as an accompaniment with vocalists students. Also recording vocal exercises to give to students to take home for practice.

CHALLENGE

Search for technology that would allow the easy manipulation of prerecorded music. Move to digital recording to avoid having to fast-forward and rewind tape.

SOLUTION

PSD300 provides wide range of on-the-fly music manipulation without resorting to time-consuming computer software. Also

ABOUT THE PSD300 CD RECORDING SYSTEM

- Make high quality digital stereo recordings directly to inexpensive CD-R or CD-RW discs.
- Built-in mic, 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



song's key to match the vocalist's range, or intentionally alter the key as a specific exercise. He uses tempo control both to slow down and speed up songs.

Lead vocal reduction can greatly reduce or virtually eliminate a lead vocal from a song instantly. It doesn't work for every CD, however. The lead vocal must be perfectly centered in the stereo mix. Heavy reverb and other effects can also interfere with its effectiveness.

"When it works, it means you don't have to buy special Karaoke recordings," says McKinney.

He adds, "I can manipulate CDs in a manner that best suits my needs as a teacher, either to change keys, change tempo, reduce voice or all three simultaneously.

Recording Directly to CD

He records a student's rehearsal session, including his comments. The student can then take home a finalized 30 cent CD-R disc that includes the backing music, the student's performance, and the teacher's instructions.

"I can also use the PSD300 to create special accompaniment CDs using any of the Performing Arts music manipulation functions, as well as the A-B Loop to build up repetitive exercises," he says.

It is possible to use computers and software to do the same thing, but McKinney suspects that many teachers are much like him; they prefer an instant stand-alone

piece of audio equipment, than the multi-step process of transferring audio into a computer, learning software protocols for altering recordings, and then burning CDs in a computer.

"The only hitch I found was that I can't have my student's wear headphones while singing along to CD, because they need to hear my instruction," McKinney says. "You can experience feedback if you record while speaker is turned on, but turning the volume down has addressed the problem for me."

The PSD300 is portable, so it can go anywhere Tom goes. It does, however, require a power outlet nearby.



Find out more about Tom at his website:
www.mac-voice.com