The Zoom H4N Recorder, included in one of our mobile podcasting kits, allows a podcaster to record with or without a laptop computer. The H4N can store audio signals in an .mp3 (or other format) audio file on an internal storage card, or can pass the audio on as a digital signal via USB to a laptop. Both possibilities are discussed below.

In addition to the below tutorials, the podcasting kit contains the Zoom H4N manual, which provides everything you see here as well as other options.

The Zoom H4N recorder has all sorts of impressive features, but most importantly sounds very good with a great set of external microphones. However, in certain procedures it will need a minute or two to do things. So if you get a "please wait" screen, give it a chance to complete the process before unplugging or further attempting to do things with it.

Basic Operation

On the H4N, menu navigation, option selection, and of course operation is by the provided buttons.

To navigate menus, you will usually use the scroll wheel and MENU button located on the H4N's right side. The MENU button opens settings menus, as well as provides (prompted on screen) a "back" button. Turn the scroll wheel above the MENU button to scroll through the menus. Press the wheel to make menu selections.
Microphone Options

The H4N has built-in microphones that do a good job of recording. However, the microphones provided in the kit will do a better job of isolating the podcasters' voice, and should be used for maximum quality recording.

If you have plugged in external microphones before powering on the H4N, it should default to using those microphones. If it does not, you can select use of those microphones using the “1” and “2” buttons on the front of the unit.

Using the H4N as an Interface

To use the H4N as a digital audio interface, that connects analog microphones to a laptop PC, do the following:

1. Start by plugging the H4N's adapter into external AC power. If power is not available you'll need to rely on the internal batteries.
2. Plug in the two SM 58 microphones to the XLR Jacks located at the bottom of the H4N, using the provided XLR cables.
3. Lastly, connect the H4N to your Laptop PC using the provided USB cable, which connects to the left side of the H4N.
If you plugged in the H4N while it is powered off, it may power on by recognizing the USB connection and showing, on-screen, the Interface option. If so, use the side scroll wheel to highlight the AUDIO I/F option, and select it to activate the Interface Mode. Then, scroll to and select CONNECT.

The H4N is now configured to act as an audio interface.

Select the USB source (perhaps named H4 or Zoom, etc.) in your DAW.
You should now be able to record audio into your DAW from the microphones, through the H4N.

You can plug monitor headphones into the H4N to monitor while recording, but more useful is probably plugging them into your laptop to listen to test clips.

Recording to the H4N's Internal Storage

In most cases, users probably want to use the H4N as an interface that connects the SM 58 microphones to their laptop computer, as described above. But there may be situations where you cannot or would rather not carry a laptop to a recording space, in addition to the podcasting kit. You are able to record to the H4N's internal storage and later, connect the H4N to your laptop to retrieve the recordings.

Start by plugging the H4N's adapter into external AC power. If power is not available you'll need to rely on the internal batteries.

Plug in the two SM 58 microphones to the XLR Jacks located at the bottom of the H4N, using the provided XLR cables.

Power on the H4N using the switch on its lower left side.

The unit should power on to "Stereo" mode, and be ready to record MONO .mp3, as indicated by the LED above the screen and the on-screen indicators. This is the optimal configuration for two-microphone podcasting. If the H4N is in a different configuration, use the menu controls, and the included H4N manual, to find and reconfigure these settings.

Be certain Microphones 1 and 2 are activated for use, by pressing their buttons on the left side of the H4N's front face controls.
You can plug the provided monitor headphones into the Zoom to hear how you sound through the microphones. Adjust volume as necessary, using the righthand-side (for microphone gain) and lefthand side (for monitor headphones volume) controls. Make sure there’s plenty of gain for your recording.

To record, Press the "REC" button **twice**. You should see the record counter start on the screen.

You can pause the recording using the Play/Pause button.

When finished recording, press the Stop button.

Obviously, you’ll want your recording files off the H4N, and copied onto your laptop for your own use. Here’s how to do that:
Using the provided USB cable, plug the H4N into your laptop computer. The cable connects to a jack on the H4N's lefthand side.

Using the menus, choose USB, and then STORAGE. This makes the H4N like a hard drive, and your file will be in one of the folders under STEREO. Find your file, using a Windows Explorer or Finder window. Copy the file to your hard drive.

Once you are finished, use the menu on the Zoom Recorder to choose DISCONNECT.
After the H4N is disconnected from your laptop (and you are certain you have the file safely on your laptop) use the menu system to delete your file from the H4N: FILE DELETE or DELETE ALL.

Return to the Podcasting Tutorial Main Page