



Basic 24/7 unattended play-out

I'll summarize the steps necessary to make a basic 24/7 unattended playlist based on the Mini Scheduler:

- Set up a new AIRCAST DB in the configuration software.
- Start Database application.
- Go to Administration -> Configuration, Storages tab, and add the music folder on your hard drive as a new storage. (Sub-directories will be scanned automatically, don't register them as a separate storage!)
- Also go to the Mini Scheduler tab and adjust the title/track/artist separation values as required.
- Save configuration and restart Database application.
- In the tree on the left, click the "Folders" node, then click "New folder" in the toolbar and enter a name, e.g. "Music". This will become your "virtual" database music folder (not to be confused with the hard drive folders!)
- Then click Synchronize in the toolbar, the Sync dialog will open and scan your hard drive music folder. New files found will be displayed on the left.
- At the bottom left corner, select your newly created virtual folder "Music", and also set item type to "Music".
- Click on "Import selected files" and wait while the files are analyzed and imported into the library.

NOTE: "Import" does not mean that AIRCAST will copy them into its own folder - all files stay where they are, AIRCAST DB just keeps an internal list of filenames. This is unlike most high-end radio automation systems that will always make their own copy of all audio files in their own format. (This is also the reason why AIRCAST works very well with an existing music library, because it just scans existing files and does not require a recording of the entire archive.)

- Close the Sync dialog, navigate to the "Music" folder - you will see the list of imported files.
- When you add more files later, you can just return to the Sync dialog and add them to the library.

Now that music files are in the database, we're ready to set up scheduling. AIRCAST follows the principle of "advance scheduling", so there is no "real-time" jukebox function, but you define hour templates that are used to generate hourly playlists. This can either be done in advance by the music editor, or the playout module can generate the playlist for the next hour just a couple of minutes before the top of the hour.

Here's how to set up a basic template:

- Go to "Administration -> Manage Hour Templates" and click "New"
- On the "General" tab, enter a name for the template, e.g. "My Template"
- On the "Items" tab, add multiple entries of the type "Random item from folder" - make sure to select your "Music" folder. Add one entry for each song that is to be played within the hour; from my experience you need 16-20 songs/entries for 60 minutes, but it actually depends on the average song duration.
- Hint 1: You can copy and paste the items and quickly duplicate them using Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V
- Hint 2: You can mark the last few items as "optional" (double-click the Optional column). Mini Scheduler will only use them if 60 minutes are not reached yet. I usually use 16 non-optional and 4 optional songs, works quite well.
- Save the template and go back to the main window.

Next step: Tell Mini Scheduler which template is to be used on which day and which hour. This is very simple because we only have one template so far (you can have as many as you like!).

- Go to "Administration -> Hour Template Assignments".
- In the 24/7 table, hold down the mouse button to select all 24x7 cells so that they turn blue.
- Right click and select the "My Template" template.

Now that Mini Scheduler knows which template to use, we can try to generate some hours manually:

- Go to the "Playlist" tab and click "Generate" in the toolbar.
- The Mini Scheduler dialog pops up. Select desired start/stop days, and click "Go". Mini Scheduler will start to generate playlists.
- Close Mini Scheduler dialog; you can now navigate through the playlists and check the results.
- Hint: Click the "Go To" button in the toolbar for a nice weekly overview; you can also check if all hours got fully filled; if not, adjust the template and add more songs, then repeat above steps.
- Of course you can now use the playlist editor to move the songs around, add songs or other audio items manually etc.

This is how playlists are generated manually. Now for the play out part.

- Open AIRCAST main application.
- Click "Events" in the toolbar.
- Add a new event: Run every day, every hour at 0 minutes, 0 seconds.
- In the "Actions" section, add a new action of type "Database -> Load and play database playlist". Use the default settings for the action.
- Save event and close Event Scheduler.

That's it. AIRCAST will load the next playlist from the database every hour at xx:00:00.

The final part is, how to automate the generation of playlists so that the Mini Scheduler doesn't have to be used manually:

- Go back to the Event Scheduler and add a second event.
- Run every day, every hour, but a few minutes before the top of the hour, e.g. at 55 minutes, 0 seconds.
- For the actions, use "Database -> Generate playlists", with default settings.

That's all - five minutes before the top of the hour, AIRCAST will start the Mini Scheduler to generate the playlist for the next hour, and then at xx:00:00 load and play it.

This is a very basic setup with only one music "category". Possible enhancements:

- Create multiple virtual folders and divide your music into them, one for each category/rotation. Adjust your template so that the music is picked from the individual folders in the order that you wish. You can set up music scheduling with multiples categories this way.
- Register your jingle folder as another storage, create a jingle virtual folder and synchronize your jingles into it. Then adjust your hour template so that a jingle is played after every two songs or so.
- Create multiple hour templates, e.g. with soft music for night time etc.

Once you understand how the Mini Scheduler works, the possibilities are endless.

Have fun

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