

## **How to use a split-track CD**

### **What is a split-track CD?**

To begin, let's define what a split-track CD really is. Answer—a regular CD that you can play in any CD player, that has the just the vocals on one channel and just the instrumental accompaniment on the other channel. On the side with the vocals, there are no solos, solo speaking, or small groups, so the soloist is free to interpret differently and so it really sounds like a solo in performance (no one else singing along on the track). This is sometimes called “accompaniment CD,” or “split-channel CD.”

### **OK, so a split-track CD has vocals on one side and music on the other side, now what?**

There are two ways to use the split-track CD, for rehearsal and performance.

#### **Using the split-track CD for rehearsals**

The reasons for using the split-track for rehearsals: 1) no piano player or accompanist available, 2) singing with the music only, what you hear on the listening CD, and 3) rehearsing a specific section and finding it easily.

Typically, the split-track CD will have numerous “CD points” noted on the sheet music. This is so you can press the number corresponding to the sheet music point and start the CD exactly at that spot. You won't have to start all the way at the beginning of a song and wait, or skip around and guess where you are. The split-track CD points will normally be at the beginning of every major section—the verses, choruses, and bridge, etc.

To play the CD and hear only the music part, you'll need a CD player system with detachable speakers. Just unplug the speaker that has the vocals. To rehearse with both sides of the CD, vocals and music, make sure both speakers are plugged in.

#### **What kind of CD player do I need?**

In looking for these systems, I found one at Best Buy. It's called “Compact Shelf System,” model number CMTMX5001. This unit had speaker jacks in the back (banana-plug type) that are unplugged and plugged in easily. Other similar units may have the bare-wire connection directly to a speaker terminal using spring-loaded metallic pinchers. This will work, but the banana plugs are easier for switching back and forth, connecting and disconnecting.

#### **Why not just sing along with the listening CD?**

You certainly can, and a lot of people do it this way. If you have a way to turn the vocal side up or down, however, then you could rehearse with your choir with the recorded vocals loud or soft, depending on how much help you need for your choir. When singing along with the listening CD, usually the vocals are too loud for the

choir to blend with the music. The split-track also lets you play just the music to rehearse with.

### **Using the split-track CD for performance**

The advantage of using the split-track for performance is that you have the same music to sing to as what you hear on the listening CD. There's nothing wrong with using just piano or a small group of instruments, but to sing with what you hear on the listening CD, use the split-track to perform with.

To use the split-track, consult with your sound engineer. They should know how to set this up. In short, they'll need to run a line out of the CD player (a stereo Y-cable, out of the headphone jack, or line-out, to two mono outs). Take the two mono outs from the Y-cable (one is the left channel and the other is the right channel) and plug these into the line-in inputs in the mixing board. (Additional adapters may be needed). Now the sound engineer has two controls for the split-track, one for the music on the CD and one for the vocals on the CD.

Use these two channels on the board to mix the level of the accompaniment and add the right amount of recorded vocals to the live vocal choir. This makes smaller groups sound a little bigger and helps with the overall sound. If you have a large or very large choir, then you may not need or want any CD vocals at all.

### **Are there any other options?**

There is one more option, a new product from Pam Andrews Music, called the "Performance CD." This is a re-mixed listening CD where the vocals are lower in volume. You can use this to rehearse—the vocals on the CD are not too loud to drown out the music accompaniment. And you can use this for the performance, especially for smaller churches. You won't have to worry about setting up the split-track CD and having a sound engineer mix the instruments and vocal. This is especially useful if someone is controlling a boom box from the front of the stage in a smaller room.

Some companies like JW Pepper use the term "performance CD" to describe what we are calling here the listening CD.