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Essential Problem-Solving Accessories for Lav Mics

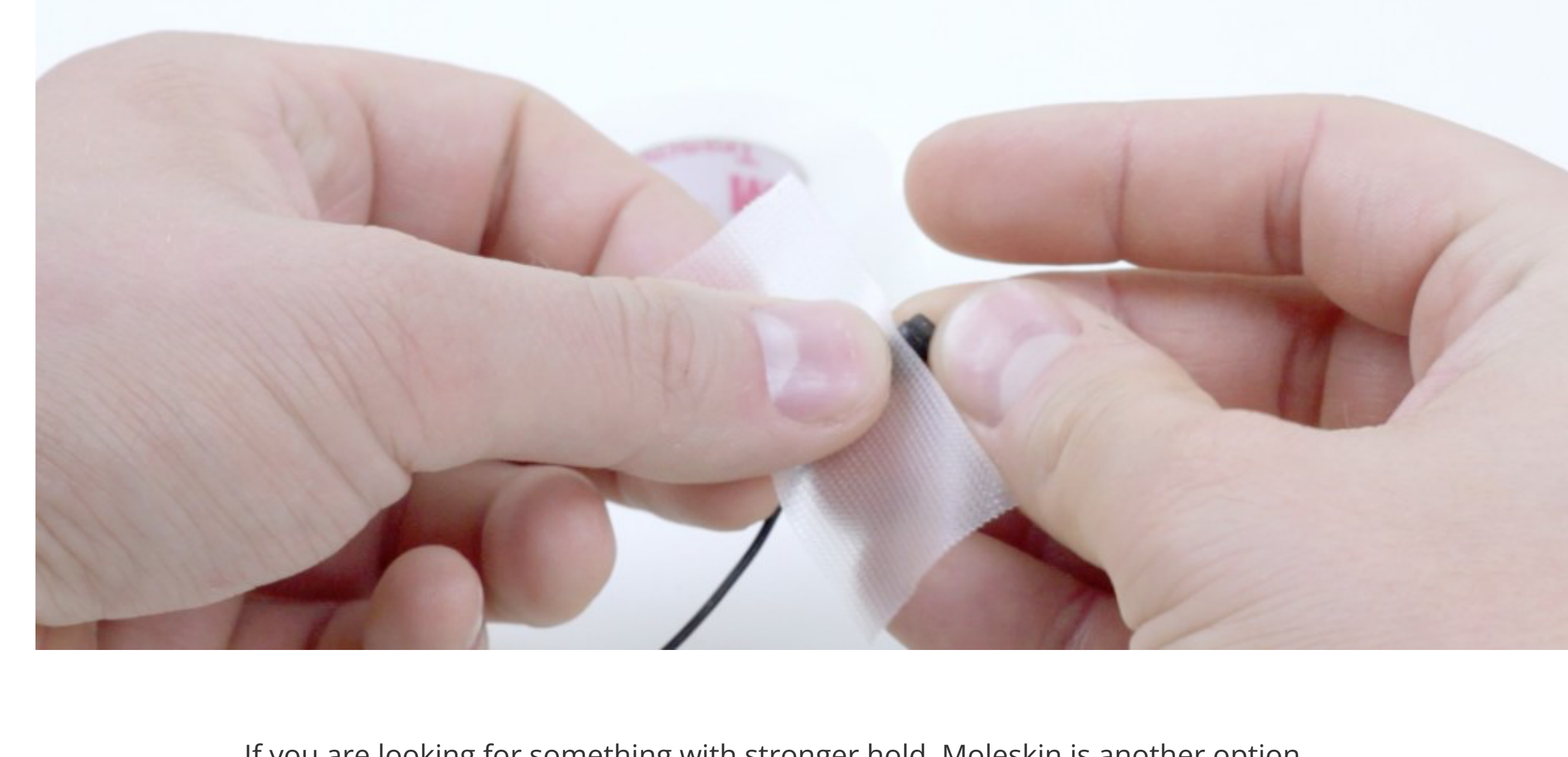
By Thomas Popp | 7 years ago Save 2 2 2 213



One idea that resonates for me, having worked as a Sound Mixer for many years, is that there is no one way to do anything. Putting a **lavalier microphone** on talent is a skill that requires as many "solutions" as you can possibly devise. The person with the largest number of options and tools is the one who will be prepared for any situation.

Unfortunately, no one accessory or wiring technique is perfect for every scenario, but if something doesn't work out on the first try, do not call it impossible; instead focus on determining how to improve the sound. Your "go-to solution" may need to be altered, or completely modified, depending on the actor and wardrobe you are confronted with. Professional sound people are always scavenging for the newest and best tools, as well as tips and tricks to help make their wireless systems perform and sound better. Below are some of the essential problem-solving accessories that you may want to add to your bag of tricks.

Transpore is something you will find in almost every audio gear bag around the world. It is a medical tape one can find at any drugstore that many professional sound people use daily. It is extremely tacky and works well on clothing, as well as directly on skin. When applying this tape, make sure that the skin is dry, as sweat will interfere with its properties of adhesion.



If you are looking for something with stronger hold, Moleskin is another option. This tape has a felt side, which helps to isolate the clothing from the lavalier beautifully. When sound mixers have down time, they will spend an evening watching their favorite TV show while cutting up a million little rectangles (about 2 x 1"), which are used to adhere the lavalier to a second piece, and then to the body.

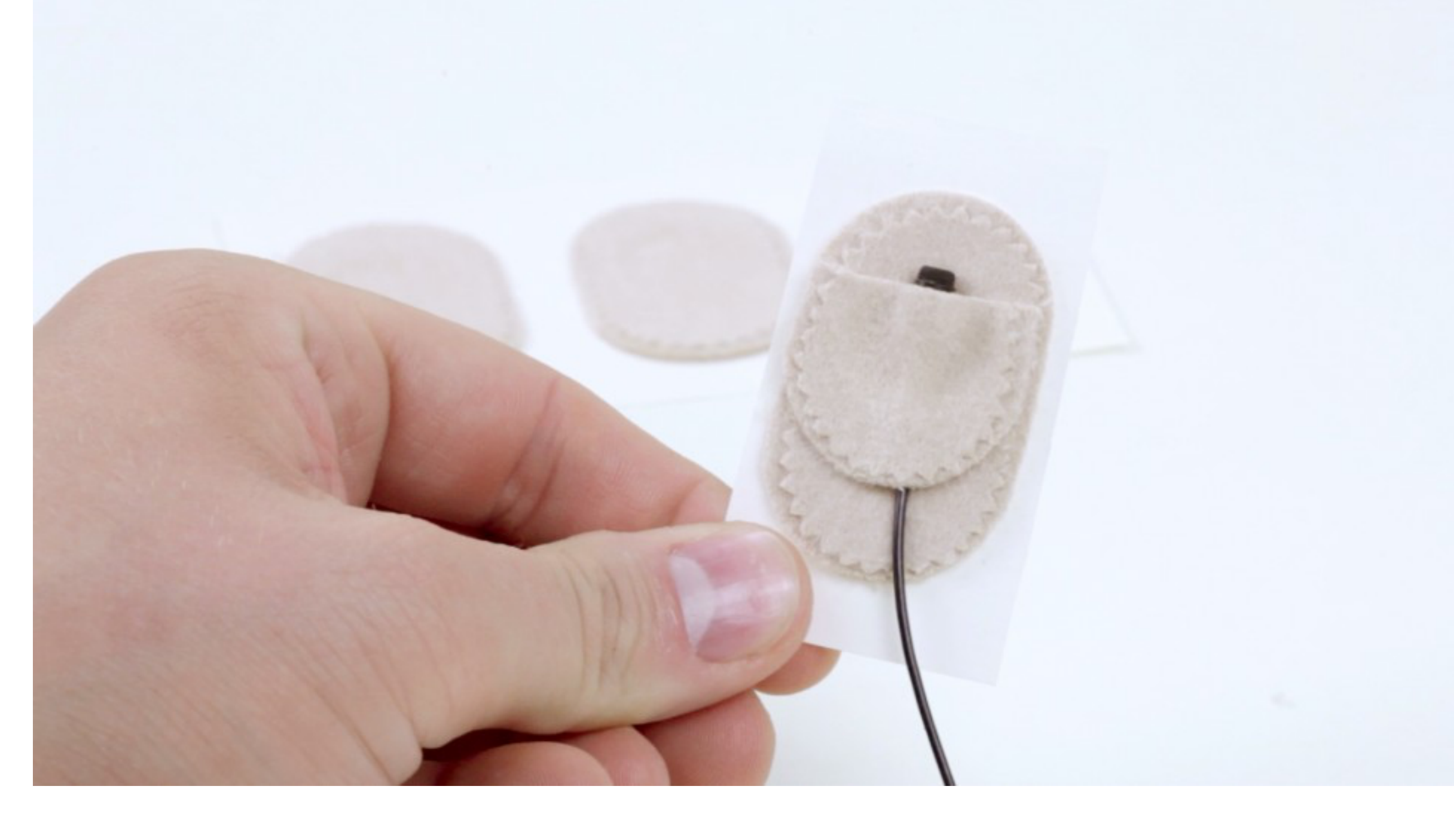


TOPSTICK is a double-sided sticky tape that is available in rectangular strips. It is extremely tacky and should never be placed directly on a hairy chest. This product is mostly used in tandem with other products, such as Moleskin and **Overcovers**, which we will discuss later. After making your perfect Moleskin vessel, you can reuse TOPSTICK four or five times before it gets too thick and you need to start peeling a few layers off.

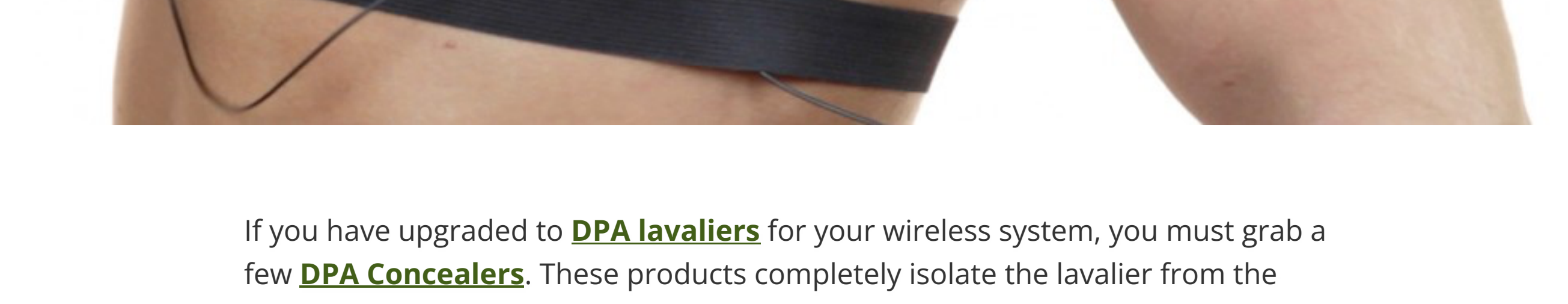
Turning up the Heat

Sets get really hot. When they do, actors sweat. When they do, microphones can (and will) fall off. Here are a couple of tools to help out in those sticky situations.

Bunion Cushions are used very similar to Moleskin, but are preferred in extremely sweaty circumstances. The absolute best kind to purchase is the Dr. Scholl's brand—they are the tackiest. When one of these is placed on perfectly dry skin, it will hold better than any other tape I have found.



Sometimes the heat is just too grueling, and nothing that you use seems to adhere for longer than one take. When nothing else works, a product called the Lav-Strap, by Sound Guys Solutions, will help to keep the microphone in the center of the chest without any tape. It also works well when wiring actors with extremely hairy chests—just by adding a piece of moleskin as a barrier on the side touching the skin. These items come in two different versions: the Lav-Strap 3 Pack (comes in black or beige) has three separate-sized straps (Small, Medium, Large), ideal for actors wearing tight shirts or thin shirts, while the Lav-Strap Universal (which has both a black and beige version in the package) can be adjusted to fit a wide variety of actors and is suitable for less tight-fitting attire. The next time you have a running actor, or someone playing sports, this reusable tool may be your best option.



If you have upgraded to **DPA lavaliers** for your wireless system, you must grab a few **DPA Concealers**. These products completely isolate the lavalier from the wardrobe by encasing the lavalier in a plastic holder. Then, using any of the tapes above (Transpore, Moleskin, or TOPSTICK) they will work perfectly for securing the mic. There are different sizes that cater to the variety of lavalier systems. Find the one that matches your system.

LMC Sound also makes another set of products called the **ISO Mounts**. These noise barriers work exceptionally well by isolating everything around the lavalier so it can't be touched or rubbed by adjacent materials. These work incredibly well for wiring a necktie for sound.

On reality and documentary shows, sometimes we need a super-quick way to throw a microphone on someone that also does not sacrifice the quality of sound we want to capture. This is why the **LMC Sound Y Clips** are such a useful product. They clip onto the clothing using little fangs (trust me—little or not, these suckers are sharp!). One misconception people have about these accessories is that sound people need to shove their microphones in as hard as they will go. Please don't. There are two different style clips: one that allows you to attach a windscreen, and one that doesn't. The one that doesn't only needs to allow the microphone to go flush or just above being flush (just enough to expose the grille of the lavalier).



The next major topic we need to discuss is wind protection. One of the biggest mistakes I see novices doing is not preparing enough for wind noise. Wind is the arch enemy of sound. It will completely and utterly destroy your sound track. In terms of wiring accessories to protect for wind, here are my recommendations.

Overcovers are my favorite accessory for miking talent because they offer great wind protection, and will also help to keep the clothing away from the microphone. They come with a few sheets of **Stickies**, but you will definitely need more, as Stickies can only be used once before a fresh one is necessary. Another option is to use Stickies in tandem with TOPSTICK. This creates much stronger adhesion to clothing.

Overcovers come in different colors. I recommend picking up twice as many black and gray as you do white, since you will use them more often. Of course, you should use only white when your talent is wearing WHITE. No one wants to witness a "fuzzy" sighting during a close-up!



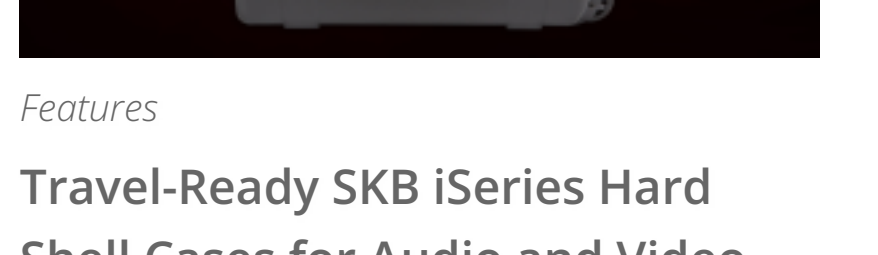
Another option for these Overcovers is to trim them. So many people use them at their 100% size, full and bulge. Sometimes the size may be a little too big for the wardrobe and will create a circular on the clothing. Try trimming off some of the hair, and even cut the circle into a rectangle. This works great for actors wearing polo shirts.

Sometimes clothing can be very smooth and it's simple to feed a lavalier through it; other times, not so much. Using a tool like the Lay-Bullet will speed up your wiring time tenfold. Drop your lavalier to one, using an LB-Adapter that mates with your connector, and attach it down the clothing of the talent. As fast as you will become, wiring with this product, if it gets lost, you'll be desperate to buy another one right away.

Finally, I always like discussing batteries. If you have ever taken the time to do research, you probably know that batteries are really bad for the environment when they are thrown away. If you aren't recycling your batteries, A) please start, and B) think about investing in a rechargeable-battery system like the **Powerex MH-C801D Charger**. This device is built well, doesn't get hot (the batteries will get warm while charging) and has a very easy-to-read display. I have been using mine with **Powerex MHRAA4 2700 mAh Rechargeable AA NIMH Batteries**. These batteries will not last as long as lithium batteries, but should be able to stand up to your normal alkaline batteries, saving you money when you won't need to purchase again, as well as keeping expended batteries out of the trash.

Finding accessories and techniques, as well as knowing how to use them, will become an ongoing quest when you start learning how each accessory will help you in different situations. In the end, you will have much cleaner, vibrant audio tracks with less clothing noise—music to any dialog editor's ears.

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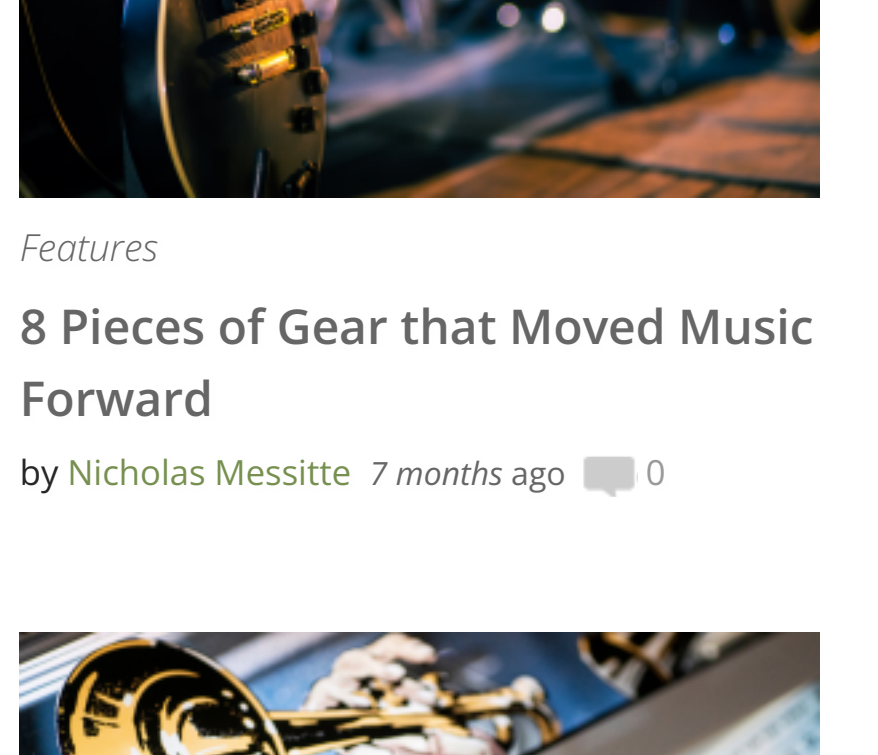
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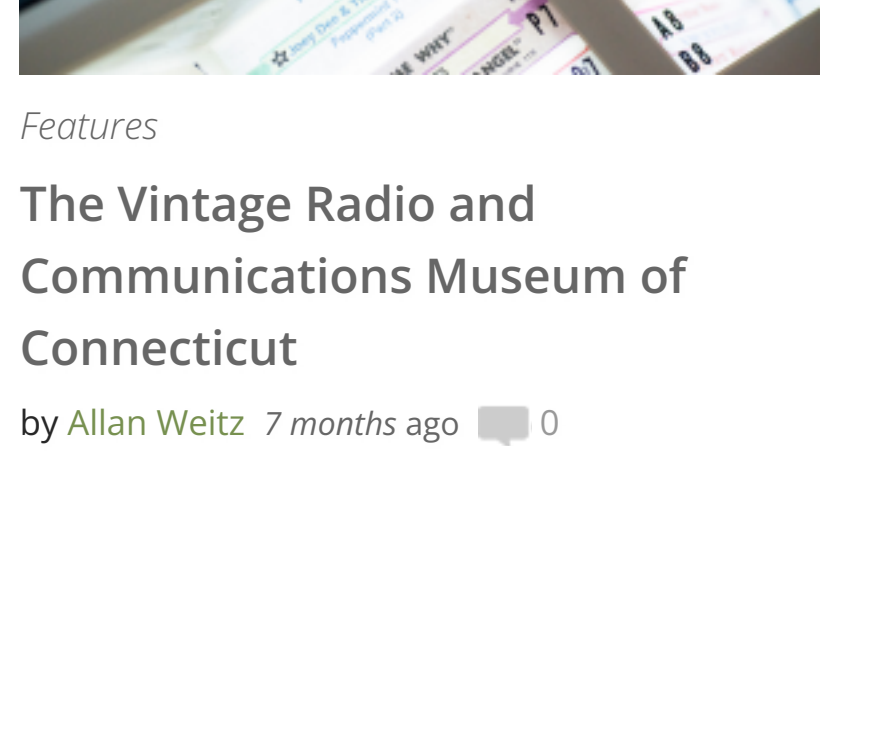
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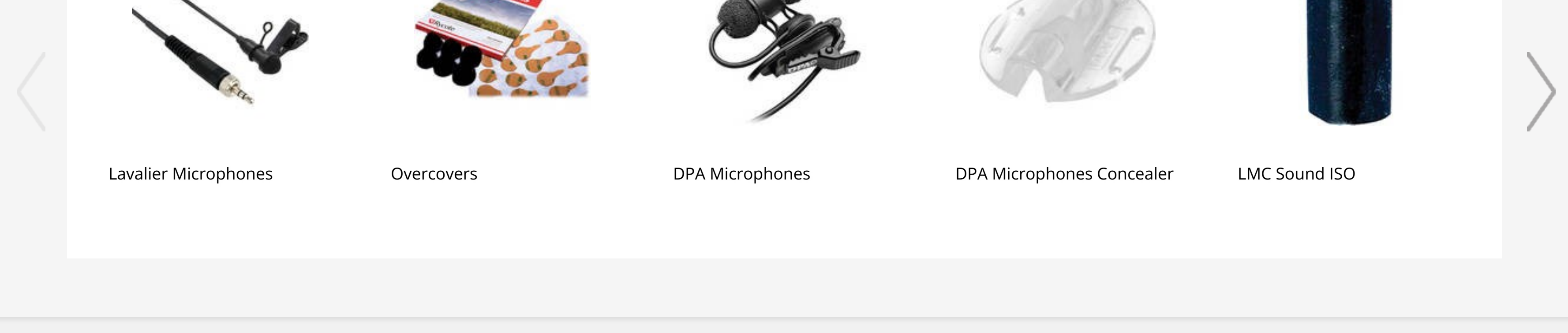


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