



SANTA BARBARA MACINTOSH USERS GROUP

Mouse Times

News, Views & Reviews from the Macintosh Community

SBMUG Newsletter

September-October 2002

Santa Barbara, California

Macintosh Show Host to Visit SBMUG!

On **Thursday, September 19, 2002**, the general meeting features a presentation from **Shawn King**, the host of *Your Mac Life* <www.yourmaclife.com>. Shawn is not a journalist, he is a Mac user just like his audience. He brings a refreshing style and conversational tone to the thousands of interviews he has done over the years. Shawn will attend the Paris Mac Expo just before his SBMUG appearance and should have some interesting news and stories to tell. This is a special event, so don't miss it!

The Endless (Mac) Summer

On Saturday, July 20, the **MacMechanic** store hosted a garage sale, and many people were there early to check out the deals. There were good deals on older PowerPC Macs, but the amazing sight was a huge stack of older 680x0 Macs to seven feet high and 30 feet wide, all free for the taking, and they still worked! The entire history of the Macintosh was represented.

Beginning last July, **CompUSA** offers classes on OS X, iPhoto, and other iSoftware. They plan to offer demos of Jaguar (OS X 10.2) in September. Contact **Andrew Heuchert** at the Goleta CompUSA store.

A FileMaker Pro Visited

The July meeting featured Kent Silveira from Creative Data Design, who showed examples of what the cross-platform database program FileMaker Pro can do. His fancy layouts, which display one or more records of data in a window, were displayed on screen as he answered a range of questions from the group.

B.Y.O.P. (Bring Your Own Problem)

The August general meeting featured a panel of experts (Morri Glaser, Becky Davis, Harold Adams, and Bob DeLaurentis) fielding all questions about Macintosh. The free-form discussion covered many topics and never slowed until the end of the meeting. Then we had the drawing for a copy of Jaguar (OS X version 10.2 donated by MacMechanic) and an Apple iPod. Becky Davis took home her new iPod and Tom & Sally Gorey won the copy of Jaguar.

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Read the *Mouse Times* online at:

<<http://www.sbmug.org/MouseTimes/mtindex.html>>

If you prefer to read the *Mouse Times* online **only**, and not receive a paper copy in the U.S. mail, send an e-mail to the editor at <brian@sbmug.org>



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Special thanks to:

Tom Williams, Steve Hillery, & Santa Barbara County Education Office for sponsoring our monthly main meetings at the SBCEO auditorium; various **SBMUG Members** who volunteer for the refreshments table; **Guy DeMangeon** for donating fruit and vegetables from his business, **The Berry Man**; **Vicki Fletcher** for donating baked goods from her business, **The Good Earth Restaurant**; **Dan Logan & Santa Barbara News Press** for publicity; **Kinko's** for printing the *Mouse Times*; and many others...

THE SBMUG WEB SITE

Don't forget to stop by the SBMUG web site for regular updates on SBMUG activities. Our webmaster, Robert Winokur, does a good job of keeping the information up-to-date.

You can find basic information, such as the time, location, and topic of our next meeting. You can find the e-mail addresses of the board members. Issues of the *Mouse Times* are available as PDF files (launch the application Acrobat Reader, included with newer Macs, to view PDF documents).

The SBMUG web site is at
<<http://www.sbmug.org>>

THE SBMUG E-MAIL LIST

At the web site you will find a link to the e-mail list. If you subscribe you will receive e-mail messages from skilled Mac users, from Santa Barbara and beyond, helping list members with questions. It's OK to ask any Mac-related question, and the list members love to answer novice questions.

You don't need to be a member of SBMUG to subscribe to the list, and it's free.

THE BEGINNERS' SIG

The Beginners' Special Interest Group is headed by Dale Lowdermilk <dale93150@aol.com> and Harold Adams <harold@sb1ife.com>. They meet once a month, usually on the first Monday, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Goleta Public Library, 500 N. Faiview, Goleta.

Our thanks to the law firm of **Howell, Moore & Gough**, for allowing us to use their conference room for the monthly board meetings.

The Board meets normally on the Thursday, a week before the general meeting, at 6:30 pm in downtown Santa Barbara. The Board is made up of regular member volunteers who are simply taking their turn helping to manage the various activities of the group. They invite any member to attend the board meetings, whether to just listen in or to share ideas and participate in the discussions.

Calling for Your Favorite Web Sites

SBMUG member Sally Gorey suggested the *Mouse Times* collect favorite web sites from the membership and publish them in an article. This is a great idea, so please e-mail your favorite web site locations to brian@sbmug.org. You may want to include a paragraph about why the site is valuable.

By the way, Sally's favorite web site is <www.atomiclearning.com>. The site offers many short Quicktime movies that explain how to use features of Macintosh and Windows software. The movies show how the software is used with audio explanations. It's a great way to learn new software and recall features of some of your favorite applications.

Many of the movies are freely available to everyone. If you want to view the more detailed subjects, you must subscribe for a fee.

Mouse Times Errata

June-August 2002: Soon after the iTools article, Apple announced the free iTools service will cease operation September 30. Apple is replacing it with the new .mac Internet Service, which comes with more features and an annual subscription fee. See Apple's web site for details.

April-May 2002: In the Demo of the OS X Terminal, Brian forgot to mention that the C compiler ("cc" command) is only available if you install the Developer's Tools. The Developer's Tools CD came with the OS X package, or the up-to-date version is available as a download from Apple's web site.

Upcoming SBMUG general meetings:
September 19, October 17, November 21,
December 19, January 23, February 20,
March 20, April 24, May 22.

In the April-May 2002 issue, Mouse Times published David Paul's review of Click 'N Design 3d. Stomp, Inc. asked for an opportunity to respond to that review.

Dear Santa Barbara Macintosh Users Group:

My name is Steve DiGerlando and I am the Director of Corporate Affairs for Stomp, Inc. I recently came across your review of our product, Click 'N Design 3d in your April/May 2002 edition of "Mouse Times". Needless to say, we at Stomp were very disappointed with the content of the review.

I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the issues within the review. First, let me point out that Stomp, Inc. accepts all reviews and does not try to influence reviewers who are objectively analyzing our products. However, we do take note when inaccurate information or an unfair comparison is made with our product to another.

In the review of Click 'N Design 3d, the reviewer begins the article with his preference to Adobe Illustrator. Click 'N Design 3d has not been marketed nor is designed to replace Adobe Illustrator. Adobe Illustrator retails for about \$400, Click 'N Design 3d retails for \$19.99. Adobe Illustrator is used primarily by serious graphic artists and web designers, while Click 'N Design 3d's target audience is for the average user.

The reviewer also mentions that he had trouble placing text on the label. Included with Click 'N Design 3d is a 20 page manual that instructs users how to label, change fonts, add barcodes, etc. Information on how the text tools work is located in the manual on pages 13-16.

The reviewer seemed pretty flustered with the software. We all get that way sometimes with new software. I wish the reviewer would have contacted me or our tech support office to explain the difficulties he was experiencing. However, I never received a call nor does our tech support division have any record as well. I would like to point out, that Stomp, Inc. offers unlimited FREE technical support for Click 'N Design 3d.

Stomp, Inc. is committed to providing consumer-friendly, premier-quality computer software and accessories with state-of-the-art capability. I would like to invite the members of the Santa Barbara Macintosh Users Group to see for themselves what Click 'N Design 3d has to offer. We are offering a FREE 30 trial version of Click 'N Design 3d that you can download from our website www.stompinc.com. I am hoping that SBMUG users will come to their own conclusion regarding Click 'N Design 3d. And, I would like to hear from all of you about what you think of our product. You can call me and discuss it with me at (949) 263-8550 ext. 233 or email me at steve@stompinc.com.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

Sincerely,
Steve DiGerlando
Director of Corporate Affairs

A Local Mac Enthusiast's Success Story

Marley Graham is Information System Manager for Aqua-Flo Supply, a local area distributor of plumbing equipment. The story of his successful management of a Mac OS X network is featured in a must-read article at the O'Reilly website. With an office in Goleta, a tight budget, OS X, and WebObjects, Marley built a local network and an e-commerce web site. Read the article at:

[<http://www.macdevcenter.com/pub/a/mac/2002/07/23/mac_enterprise.html>](http://www.macdevcenter.com/pub/a/mac/2002/07/23/mac_enterprise.html)

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The MacHax Best Hack Contest 2002

by Adam C. Engst of Tidbits.com <ace@tidbits.com>

The centerpiece of the annual MacHack conference is the MacHax Group's Best Hack Contest, in which the world's best programmers compete (preferably during the preceding 48 hours) to come up with software that displays the ultimate in programming creativity, knowledge, or arcana, ideally presented with tongue firmly planted in cheek. Hacks that perform some useful task are generally greeted by the audience with derisive cries of "Useful!", and pushing the benefits of a hack will elicit jeers of "Marketing!" (*see web link #1 listed at the end of this article*)

The hacks were many and varied again this year, with a total of 65 hacks, 26 of which came from the yoots (the proper plural of "yoot" according to at least one sharp-eyed reader). That's down a bit from the last two years, but since the lower number meant the Hack Contest itself could end an hour earlier at 5 AM this year, no one complained.

The theme of MacHack was "Iron Hacker," a reference to the popular Iron Chef TV show, which brings a level of competition to cooking normally seen only in crazed sports shows like American Gladiator and BattleBots (an Iron Chef fan site even noticed MacHack because of the theme). The theme "ingredient" for the Hack Contest was Clarus the dogcow, a half-dog, half-cow creature that appears in the Page Setup dialog box in versions of the Mac OS up to Mac OS X. Many of the hacks were thus dogcow-oriented, and yells of "Moof!" resounded throughout the evening whenever Clarus appeared on screen. (It's worth noting, for those unfamiliar with Clarus, that "Moof!" is not a term of affection, and both the dogcow logo and her cry are bona fide trademarks of Apple Computer. Moof!) (*see links #2-#4*)

The Rest of the Best — Not everyone can win the Hack Contest, or even place in the top seven, but there were numerous valiant efforts. Most hacks were built on Mac OS X, and several played off Mac OS X's Unix core, such as Josef Wankerl's OldSchoolEdit, which let you open any text file in the Unix editor emacs (or vi) in the Terminal.

A few people hacked the Dock, making the icons somersault, roll around, or flee in horror from your mouse cursor. A yoot team of Travis Hicks and Paul Scandariato also built Dock Invaders, which featured Clarus defending the planet against icon invaders from the currently active programs.

Another yoot team - Andy Furnas and Noah Spies - hacked the Login screen in Mac OS X so you had to complete a round of the open source game TuxRacer before you could log in. (*see link #5*)

Peter Sichel of Sustainable Softworks wrote Mac Enforcer, which scanned the network and identified all the PCs by checking the Ethernet cards' MAC addresses. There were a few cries of "Useful!" but people around me agreed that it might have placed in the top five had it then connected to the PacketShaper Richard Ford had installed on the network and throttled the PCs down to 1200 baud. (*see links #6 & #7*)

Some hacks involved other hardware - Mike Neil wrote an editor for the secret Breakout game that's hidden inside the iPod. And Jorg Brown, Sean Parent, and John Shafer cobbled together a set of motors, pulleys, and cable, and then combined it with a USB controller kit to make AniMac, an animatronic iMac that could tilt its monitor up, down, left, and right. What's more, it could stick out its tongue (the optical drive tray), and all the actions could be controlled remotely, since they were actually scripts driven through Apache.

Seventh Place: Depth Perception — Seventh place went to Lisa Lippincott, who won the Hack Contest a few years ago with UnFinder, a hack that added an Undo command to the Finder (such a good idea that Mac OS X now has such a feature built in). Her entry this year was Depth Perception, a hack that made use of Mac OS X's transparency capabilities to let you look through a set of stacked windows by making them mostly transparent.

Sixth Place: Metadata — Allon Stern, who also serves up espresso to anyone at MacHack who needs a more refined caffeine kick than Jolt cola, won sixth place with Metadata, a biting commentary on Apple's silly reliance on filename extensions in favor of the more powerful type and creator information. With Metadata running, if you renamed a file using the proper creator and type codes as filename extensions, Metadata actually changed the file's type and creator appropriately. So, if you had a file named "foo" and you renamed it to "foo.R*ch.TEXT", it would have its type and creator changed to become a BBEdit file (which deals with files of type TEXT and uses a creator code of R*ch, a play on the name of the author - Rich Siegel).

Fifth Place: Clarus All Over — Fifth place went to the father and son team of Doug and Nigel Clarke, aided by P.D. Magnus, who put together Clarus All Over. It was a three-part hack: a dogcow made from Legos and animated with Lego Mindstorms to click the mouse; a set of attractive icons and a script to replace a variety of Finder icons with dogcow-oriented ones (the best was the Trash can, knocked over on its side with Clarus halfway in); and finally a hilariously hacked version of Apple's Power To Be Your Best television ad with Clarus trying three times to click the mouse button.

Fourth Place: Classic Edge — Tony Francis and Matthew Morse took fourth place for Classic Edge, a hack that aimed to return some of the tension about applications crashing to Mac OS X. When activated, it picked a random program, and then asked a multiple choice question. If you answered wrong, it performed a force quit on that application. Ouch!

Third Place: Load Minimizer — In third place was Load Minimizer, written by Mac Murrett and Philippe Hausler. Load Minimizer attempted to show the load on the system graphically by shrinking the screen as the load increased. To place a high load on the Mac (and to gain presentation points), Mac and Philippe played a movie of Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer in full rant - Load Minimizer promptly shrunk the display to a tiny window.

Second Place: NewsTracker — In a tremendously unusual event, second place went to a yoot - 12-year-old Adam Atlas - for his program NewsTracker. Amid catcalls of "Useful!" and job offers from the audience, he showed a program that could visit a set of Web sites, collect headlines, and display them. When you double-clicked a headline, it loaded in your Web browser, or you could choose to load it in the mini-browser that Adam had built in. He even had an interface for configuring which sites to load and how to interpret the HTML to find headlines on each site. It was an impressive effort, good enough for the Best Yoot Hack award (and a coveted Victor A-Trap award), and I'll be curious to see what he does next year.

First Place: FireStarter — First prize was, as always, the coveted Victor A-Trap award, a Victor Corporation rat trap whose name is slightly modified with an X-Acto knife (the R and T in RAT are excised) to match the name of the trap addresses used by programmers to patch the classic Mac OS. It went to Quinn “The Eskimo” for FireStarter, a program that draws a QuickTime burning flames effect and then propagates the effect to any Mac you plug in via FireWire, all without requiring any special software on the target Mac. That Mac can even be booted from an installation CD, or be waiting at the Login window. Basically, FireStarter is accessing the video RAM of the target Mac directly via FireWire’s physical DMA (Direct Memory Access). For those who might be worried about it being a security problem, rest easy - it requires specific information about the target Mac, and of course, if someone can get close enough to your Mac to plug a FireWire cable in, they can do far more nefarious things much more easily. Congratulations to Quinn, who has distinguished himself with a long career of programming on the Mac (including work on Internet Config, with Peter Lewis) and helping Macintosh programmers everywhere through his job at Apple’s Developer Technical Support. And yes, he just goes by “Quinn.” (see [link #8 below](#))

Getting the Hacks — In past years, CDs containing all the hacks, along with other papers and presentations from MacHack, have been available for about \$20, with profits going to support the next year’s MacHack. The conference organizers haven’t yet been able to set that up this year, but we’ll mention it in TidBITS when it happens. Even if you’re not a programmer, it can be fun to experience these hacks first hand, even if you have to imagine the occasional calls of “Useful!” from the audience.

Links from the MacHax Best Hacks article:

1. <<http://www.hax.com/MacHack/HackContest.html>>
2. <<http://www.foodtv.com/foodtv/show/0,6525,IC,00.html>>
3. <<http://developer.apple.com/products/techsupport/dogcow/history.html>>
4. <<http://clarus.chez.tiscali.fr/ENGLISH/>>
5. <<http://www.tuxracer.com/>>
6. <<http://www.packeteer.com/products/packetshaper/>>
7. <<http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.cgi?tbart=06595>>
8. <<http://www.quinn.echidna.id.au/Quinn/WWW/>>

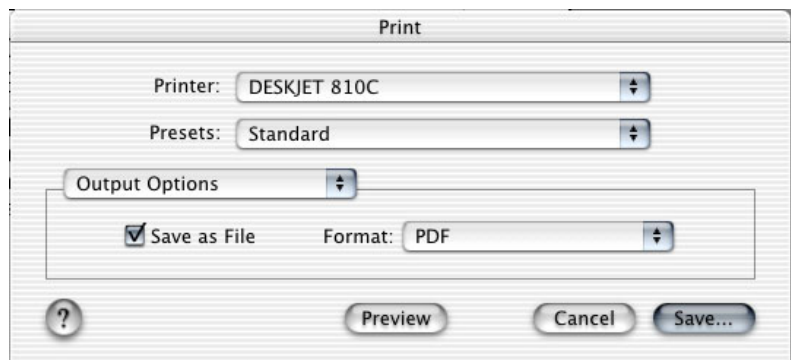
OS X Tip: Save a file as a PDF document

Sometimes people e-mail WORD documents to you, or some PC file format that you can’t read. These are not standard formats to send files for other people to print out or view, but PDF files are a standard format. OS 9 users can open PDF files in Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is included with every OS 9 install, and OS X can open files in Preview.app, which is installed with OS X.

OS X users can also create PDF files, simply by printing any document. When you select the print command and see the print dialog box, change the “Copies & Pages” menu to “Output Options.” Check the “Save as File” option and save as a PDF file.

This is a good way to send files to any other computer user to read.

Some of you have printers that still don’t work with OS X. Save your printouts as PDF files, restart in OS 9, and print your PDF files from Acrobat Reader. It’s a good stop-gap measure until your printer company can send you an OS X printer driver.



Customizing Darwin: Search for Text

First article in a series by Brian Carlin <brian@sbmug.org>

When they need to hide from the rest of the world, Batman goes to the Bat Cave, Superman has his Fortress of Solitude, and the OS X programmer has Darwin. Darwin is the secret underworld beneath the friendly GUI environment of OS X (GUI = Graphical User Interface). The Applications down here are more like using tools under the hood, but are just as powerful as their more interactive counterparts you are accustomed to.

Novice Mac users fear to tread in this world of flat files and Unix tools, and avoid opening the dreaded Terminal application that Apple hides in the Utilities folder. This is how computers worked in the dark ages before Macintosh. But have no fear, Darwin is accessible to everyone, and in a series of articles, you will learn how to customize it to do your work in the GUI world above. You don't even need to open the Terminal application to force Darwin to do your bidding...yet. Today we shall use simple AppleScripts to control Darwin.

Most people want to search a database of info, but don't have FileMaker Pro. We shall do fast searches of large text files, where a data "record" is one line of text in the file. Open the Script Editor application and type the following in one line of text:

```
do shell script "grep -i 'dallas' /usr/share/misc/airport"
```

Note the single and double quotes. Click the run button and you should see the following info in the result window (*figure 1*). If you don't see the window, choose it from the Window menu (if it's not there, press command-L). "grep" is a Unix command to search for a text string inside a file. Let's do another one. Make a new script and type in (one line):

```
do shell script "grep -i '93111' /usr/share/misc/zipcodes"
```

The result is (*figure 2*).

Let's make the user input the text string to search for & display the results in a regular dialog box. Type a new script in one line of text:

```
display dialog (do shell script "grep -i '" & (text returned of (display dialog "Type in a city or airport code" default answer "")) & "' /usr/share/misc/airport")
```

Run it and type in "dallas" (*figure 3*) to see the result (*figure 4*). Run it again and type in "sba"...which stands for Santa Barbara Municipal.

Every OS X user can do this because these text files (airport and zipcodes) are installed as part of OS X. But you are not limited to using Apple's data files, you can make your own.

Write something in TextEdit or any word processor and save it as a text file in your Home directory. Save the file as mydata.txt. Your script can search for strings in the file. Create a new script like this:

```
display dialog (do shell script "grep -i '" & (text returned of (display dialog "Type in a string to search for:" default answer "")) & "' ~/mydata.txt")
```

The path "~/mydata.txt" represents your Home directory. Run the script and type in a short text string that is contained in your text file to see the results. You can also get a text file of your Apple System Profiler and search for text strings inside the profile. Try this:

```
display dialog (do shell script "/usr/sbin/AppleSystemProfiler | grep -i 'IP ='")
```

See the results (*figure 5*).

Copy these scripts from the article on the web at:

<<http://members.cox.net/kb6nvh/Darwin%20Search%20Text.html>>

You can do more than just display the result. You can do calculations with your results and create reports. You can export your data to other applications, such as e-mail and word-processing. Next time we'll teach Darwin how to do math.

figure 1

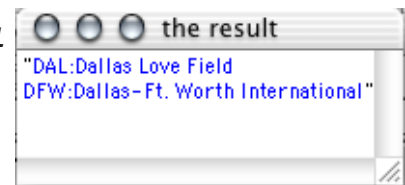


figure 2

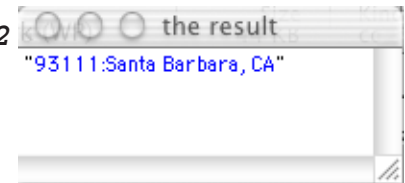


fig. 3

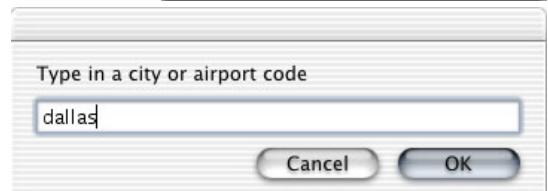
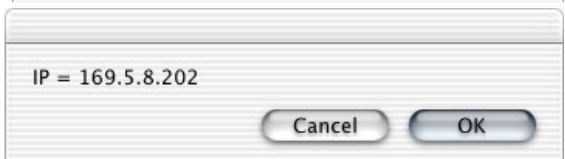


fig. 4



fig. 5



OS X Tips

Brian Carlin <brian@sbmug.org>

Some tips I discovered while using OS X.

Force Quit from the Dock

Click and hold the mouse on an opened Dock item. Hold down the option key and the “Quit” in the pop-up menu changes to “Force Quit.”

Dock Settings Menu Revealed

Control-click on the divider bar in the Dock. The Dock settings menu is revealed.

Desktop Folder on the Dock

Drag your Desktop Folder from your Home directory to the Dock, on the right side of the divider (near the Trash can). From this point on, if the Finder is hidden behind windows, click and hold the mouse on the Desktop icon on the Dock to see all the files on your desktop.

Command-Drag to the Dock

If you drag a document to a Folder icon on the Dock, you’ll notice the Folders tend to slide apart to allow you to drop your document onto the dock, which can be annoying. Hold the command key down while you drag and the Folders will not separate, allowing you to drop your document where you want.

Move around inside a Window

If you are in a Finder window’s icon or list view, then you can move around the whole content by pressing command-option and then click-hold with your mouse and drag. You can’t see the effect if all the files in that window are visible.

Script Menu for OS X 10.1

Jaguar users are fortunate enough to have a script menu in their menu bar. They can launch AppleScripts, Perl scripts, or Darwin Shell scripts with one click, from any application.

Those pioneers who already paid for OS X 10.1 must download this valuable tool from Apple’s website: <www.apple.com/applescript/script_menu/>

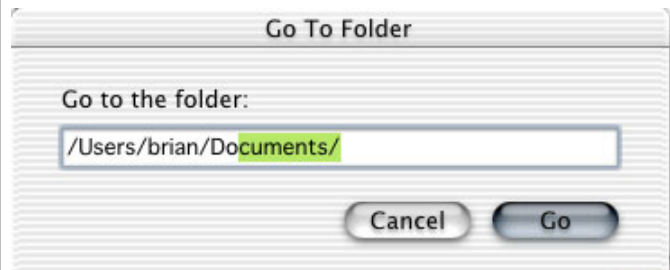
Go to the bottom of the page and click the link to download Script Menu for 10.1

Go To Folder...

From the Finder, press command & ~ or choose the Go menu->Go to Folder... and a dialog box appears for the pathname to the folder you want to open. You may type in a path to a folder, and keep in mind that your Mac will help fill in the path name for you. Also keep in mind that “/” is the delimiter for folders in an OS X pathname. For example, if I slowly type these keys in order:

/ u / b / d o

and click “Go” then I open the Documents folder inside my Home directory (*see figure below*).



OS X finishes your folder names for you.

Command-Tab to switch Apps

Hold the command key and press the tab key to select other open applications from the Dock. Keep tapping the tab key until you select the open application you want and let go. This works even if the Dock is hidden.

Reveal a Dock Item in the Finder

Hold the command key and click on a Dock item to open its parent folder and select the item.

Drag a text file to a word-processor

Drag a text file from the finder onto an open Word or AppleWorks document and the text appears in the Window. This does not work with TextEdit.

Open a Folder in a New Window

By default, OS X opens a folder in the current window, in order to reduce the number of open windows. Hold down the command key as you double-click on a folder to open it in a new Window.

By the way, the keystroke to create a new folder is now shift-command-N. Command-N opens a new window in the Finder.

Group email Lists

Anita Donohoe <adonohoe@utec.net>

Group email lists are also known as listserves, email discussion groups and chat lists. Generally, they serve special interest groups such as our own sbmug list, families scattered around the globe, alumni from a particular school or a multitude of other groups who have a focus and make use of the internet to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

If you are tired of entering several addresses to send the same message to a group of people, you might want to consider setting up your own group list.

You will have a single email address that reaches everyone on the list. There are several free services available. Here are the two I would recommend:

Yahoo!Groups

<<http://groups.yahoo.com/>>

SmartGroups

<<http://www.smartgroups.com/>>

A Google search brought up a multitude of hosting services:

<http://directory.google.com/Top/Computers/Internet/Mailing_Lists/Hosting_Companies>

In 1996, I started keeping track of email addresses from people I'd known in high school overseas during the 60s. We had lost touch with each other once we returned stateside, but the search was on in earnest. Few of the alumni we found were online at that point, so I had only about 40 email addresses; currently, I keep track of more than 1,100. Reconnecting after 30 years was a wonderful experience, but our phone bills were getting out of hand. We needed a meeting place. That's when I set up the first group list to cover my era, the mid-60s. We were on a roll, catching up, finding more old friends, planning long weekends so we could meet again face-to-face. The idea caught on and there are six active email lists covering the different eras of this particular group of overseas brats.

I started out with OneList, which was purchased by E-Groups, which was bought out by Yahoo!Groups. Fortunately, the transitions were smooth and the services remained free.

Why would you want to set up an email list?

There are many reasons, but the main advantage is having a designated forum for group communications. You can organize communications for your family, a group of friends or colleagues, or an organization such as the Santa Barbara Mac Users Group. You can eliminate the time it takes to enter multiple email addresses when you want to send a message to a bunch of people. Best of all, you will reduce your phone bill!

Besides email discussions, what else does a group list provide?

- Homepage—general information about the group
- Message archives—
- File section—store info
- Photo section—create albums and store photos
- Calendar—list upcoming events
- Polls—create your own

What about management?

If you create the list, you become the owner/manager. You can assign a moderator to help with list management. The Settings allow you to customize the list. You can set it up so all new membership requests are approved, which I recommend; you want to know who is on your list. You can also choose whether to allow attachments. Make your list private or open to the public. Members can be invited or directly subscribed. You can edit a member's subscription to change delivery options, such as individual emails, digest or no mail. None of these tasks take much time; you won't be overwhelmed.

In my case, group lists have been a rewarding experience. Perhaps you'll be inspired to start one yourself. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

SBMUG held our big iPod summer raffles, and Donald Burr was the first lucky winner. So *Mouse Times* asked Donald to write an article about his experiences with his new iPod.

Donald also posted this article on the web, so you may read it online at:

<http://www.borg-cube.com/ipod.html>

My Experiences with the iPod

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I love music. Ever since my grade school days, I have always carried around some form of music playback device, be it a transistor radio, a Walkman, or a portable CD player. I love to listen to music when I'm at work, at school between classes, and on the bus. I find that it helps me ease tension and focus on the task at hand, and it also beats boredom at those long bus rides or waits at the doctor's office.

Naturally, when the MP3 craze came about, I was one of the first to adopt it. Being able to digitize my entire CD collection and keep it on my computer, instantly accessible, sounded too good to pass up. And when the first portable MP3 players came out, I naturally was the first in line to pick one up.

I've tried just about every portable MP3 player out there – from the original 32 MB Diamond Rio, all the way up to the top-of-the-line 20 GB Nomad Jukebox hard disk player. However, every player that I've ever tried has had either a major bug, a minor but extremely annoying bug, or some design flaw that prevents it from being The Ultimate Player.

Enter the iPod.

When I first heard of the iPod, I became very excited. It could fit easily into the palm of your hand. (Most of the hard drive-based players were significantly larger and bulkier.) It had an 10+ hour battery life. (Almost all players I've ever tried suffered from poor battery life.) It synchronized your music with iTunes. (All of the other players required you to manually select which files you want to transfer over.) It used FireWire for amazingly fast transfer rates. (All other MP3 players used either USB, serial, or parallel port connections, which were painfully slow.) And it works with my Mac. (Sadly, many MP3 players were PC-compatible only.)

The only downside? The small capacity (only 5 GB). And the price. At \$400, it was unfortunately too rich for my blood. However, recently Apple unveiled 10 and 20 GB versions of the iPod, and have dropped prices across the board. The 5 GB iPod can now be had for a mere \$300, while the 10 GB is priced at \$400, and you can take a 20 GB unit home for \$500.

However, that point became moot when, in June of this year, I won a 5 GB iPod at a SBMUG meeting. As soon as I got home, I opened the box and set everything up. Which took all of 30 seconds. Setup was mind-numbingly easy: I just unpacked the iPod, plugged it into my TiBook with the (included) FireWire cable, and off I went. The iPod began charging, while iTunes launched and asked me to personalize my iPod. Once I did that, my entire iTunes music library began copying over.

The iPod can charge to 80% of battery capacity in 1 hour, while a full charge takes 3 hours. I highly recommend that you let it fully charge for 3 hours the first time you plug it in. In case you don't have your Mac with you, and you want to charge your iPod, Apple was thoughtful enough to include a dedicated charging adapter that you can plug into the wall.

Speaking of battery life, the iPod has the longest lasting battery in the industry, with a 10 hour stated battery life (with LCD backlight turned off). In actuality, I have found that my battery often can run for up to 15-20 hours of uninterrupted playback. To pack so much juice into such a small package, Apple went with a lithium-polymer battery, the most advanced battery technology in the industry. The iPod represents Apple's first foray into lithium-polymer battery technology. Hopefully they will be able to start incorporating LiPoly batteries in their laptops as well.



Working with the iPod

The iPod is, without a doubt, the easiest MP3 player that I have ever used. The interface is extremely elegant and very simple. The iPod has only five buttons and a scroll wheel, and with these controls, you can access every function of the iPod. The interface's stark simplicity belies its awesome power. Compare this to, for example, the Creative Nomad Jukebox, which uses a whopping eleven buttons! The screen is bright and crystal clear, and features a very strong backlight – strong enough, in fact, that I have, on more than one occasion, used a backlit iPod as a replacement for a flashlight. (It comes in very handy when coming home at night, when you have forgotten to turn the porch light on.)

You have the choice of viewing your songs by playlist (below), artist, genre, album, or composer. You can also view your entire music library. Selecting a song in any of these views begins playing that song and/or playlist. While playing, you can use the scroll wheel to turn the volume up or down; pressing either of the left or right arrow buttons skips to the previous and next track in the current playlist, respectively. Holding down the left or right button allows you to rewind or fast-forward through the song. And clicking the select button allows you to quickly shuttle to any point in the currently playing song.

In the Settings menu, you can set various options for the iPod, such as shuffle play, repeat play, EQ (equalization settings), default startup volume, and much more.

Working in iTunes

As I mentioned before, iTunes automatically synchronizes your music library to your iPod. The first time you plug it in, it copies your entire music library over. This took all of 10 minutes. Compare this to the first time I loaded my Nomad Jukebox, which took about 2 DAYS. Later, as you add or delete tunes from your iTunes library, your iPod will automatically update itself, and only the newly-added songs will copy over, making subsequent iPod syncs much faster, on the order of several seconds.

Now would be a good time to go through your music library and organize it, and create playlists of your favorite music. Actually, it would be a good idea to do this BEFORE you plug your iPod in for the first time. In particular, if any of your MP3's have unusual or incorrect song or artist data, it will make finding these songs on your iPod rather difficult. My advice to you is to go through your music library and enter or edit artist, album, and song titles. While you're at it, create some playlists of your favorite music (if you haven't already). To create a playlist, click the "+" button underneath the playlist list. A new, untitled playlist will appear; change its name to something appropriate (e.g. "Party Tunes," "Big Band," etc.) Then, from your music library, simply drag and drop music onto the playlist name, and they will be added. Easy as pie. Note that you can have the same song in more than one playlist; in this case, only one physical copy of the song is stored on the iPod.

What happens if you have more songs in your iTunes library than will fit on your iPod? You will get a dialog box to that effect when you try to sync up. At this point, you have two choices: either select or de-select individual playlists, or select or de-select individual songs. Notice that, to the left of the song name, there is a little blue check box? If you uncheck this box, that song will not get copied to the iPod. Uncheck enough of these, and you will eventually shrink your music library to fit on the iPod.

Or, a better way to do this is to select or de-select whole playlists at a time. In the list on the left, select your iPod; a new iPod button should appear in the bottom right of the screen. Click it to open up the iPod customization menu. By clicking "Automatically update selected playlists only" and clicking on one or more playlists, you will make it so that only those plaitis get synchronized to your iPod. Some other preferences of note in this window are "Open iTunes when attached" which, when unchecked, will prevent iTunes from automatically launching when you plug your iPod in; "Enable FireWire Disk Mode" which allows your iPod to show up as a FireWire disk on the desktop (more on this later); and "Only update checked songs" which will allow you to pick individual songs to update, as mentioned above.

FireWire Disk Mode

A unique feature of the iPod, which only one other hard drive MP3 player (the Archos Jukebox) has, is the ability to appear as a FireWire disk device, right on your Macintosh desktop. This way, the iPod can be used to store not only your music, but your documents, applications, and even a backup System Folder as well. To enable this mode, check the "Enable FireWire Disk Mode" checkbox as described above. Now, your iPod will appear on your desktop, just like any other disk device. You can copy files to (or from) it through the Finder. Or, you can whip out your System Install CD, run the Installer, and install a

System Folder onto the iPod. Why would you want to do this? Because, once you toss a System Folder and some data recovery tools on it, your iPod becomes an emergency rescue device, capable of fixing your computer (or your friend's computer, or the computer at your office or school) if it ever gets damaged. Both Mac OS 9 and OS X can be installed on your iPod...you can even have both installed and switch between the two. Here's an important note when using FireWire disk mode: **you MUST unmount the drive icon from your desktop (drag it to the Trash can) before unplugging your iPod!** Without doing this, you run the risk of data corruption on your iPod!

iPod and iTunes Updates

Recently, Apple released two updates of interest to iPod users: iTunes 3 and iPod Software 1.2. iTunes 3 includes many enhancements. "Smart playlists" allow you to create playlists based on search criteria – for example, all songs from the '60s, or Anime or Japanese tunes of the early '80s. You can give your songs "star ratings" (from 1 to 5 stars), which can also be used as a criteria for smart playlists. A new feature called "Sound Check" will automatically scan all songs in your library, and adjust their volume levels to optimum settings – so that, for example, one song does not play ear-numbingly loud while another plays inaudibly soft. Both the "smart playlists" and the Sound Check settings can be synced to and used on your iPod.

A new feature now supported by both iTunes and iPod is Audible.com audiobooks. These are just like the "books on tape" you can buy at Borders, except they are purchased online and sent to you as electronic files. They can be played on your Mac with iTunes, burned onto audio CD's, or synced to your iPod for listening on the go. Audible.com sells thousands of audiobooks in many different categories, both fiction and non-fiction. You can also get "subscriptions" to audio renditions of magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals, such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Scientific American.

Audiobooks are great for people who must endure a lengthy commute to work, or to listen to while driving on vacation. They are also excellent for low-vision and blind people. A few years ago I suffered a retinal detachment, and while they were able to halt its progress through surgery, I still lost a significant amount of vision in my right eye. This has changed the way I read and use my computer – reading is much more difficult now. With audiobooks, I can close my eyes and let them rest while listening to the latest and greatest thriller or newspaper.

The iPod 1.2 update adds compatibility for Smart Playlists, Sound Check, and Audible.com content, as well as fixing several outstanding bugs. In particular, a major bug involving "mix" MP3s has been fixed. (When encoding some "mix" CDs, where one song blends seamlessly into another, some people choose to encode the entire CD as one big MP3 file, rather than breaking it up into tracks, so that there are no gaps between songs.) Previous versions of the iPod software would not spin down the hard disk while playing these large files, which drained a significant amount of battery life. With the iPod 1.2 software, the iPod now spins down the hard disk while playing these long files, and automatically spins it back up to read the next chunk of the file. This has saved a tremendous amount of battery life for me.

Move Over Palm, Here Comes iPod!

A new feature in version 1.1 and later of the iPod software is the ability to load your contact list onto the iPod, in the form of industry-standard vCard (.vcf) files. In version 1.2 of the iPod software, you can also synchronize schedule/calendar information with Apple's soon-to-be-released iCal calendaring software. When I first read about this feature, I admit that I was somewhat dubious as to its value. After all, I already carry a PalmOS device with me that contains my contacts, calendar, to-do list, etc. What's the point of having this information on my iPod as well? It turns out that I actually use this feature quite often. If I am trying to look up a friend's number or e-mail address, sometimes I may not have my Palm device within reach. Sometimes the iPod is handier to get to. Also, if your Palm should ever run out of batteries, you can use the iPod to view your contacts. The data goes only one way – from your computer to the iPod. You can't change data on the iPod and move it back to the computer; it is a read-only device.

Yes! We do Windows!

In a shocking move, Apple recently unveiled Windows compatible software for the iPod. Now, with Apple's modified version of MusicMatch Jukebox (a very popular MP3 tool for Windows, similar in function to iTunes) and a FireWire (also known as i.Link and IEEE 1394) card in your PC, you too can enjoy the benefits of iPod on your Windows machine. While I did not have a chance to test this software, reports from other users say that it works very nicely.

Cases and other accessories

One of the iPod's major attractions is its sleek, elegant design. Unfortunately, this is also one of its main weaknesses. The chrome back and plastic faceplate of the iPod are very easy to mar and scratch. Some people may not particularly care about this, but many people would prefer to keep the iPod looking its shiny best. To do this, you really need to pick up a case for your iPod.

If you buy a 10 GB or 20 GB unit, Apple includes a rather nice case, complete with belt clip. But, if you have a 5 GB unit, you're out of luck...or are you? Here's a little "hack" I came up with to create some form of protection for your iPod while you search for the perfect case. When you unpacked your iPod, you may have noticed that it came wrapped in a little plastic wrapper. Put the iPod back in the wrapper, with the "Do not copy music" message covering the scroll wheel. Now, with a magic marker, carefully trace out the outline of the scroll wheel and the FireWire port, headphone jack, and hold switch on the top of the iPod. Now, remove the iPod from the wrapper, and with a pair of small scissors or (preferably) an X-Acto knife, carefully cut out the holes you traced. Now, place your iPod back in the makeshift case you just made – you may need some Scotch tape to make it close properly. Voila! You now have yourself a somewhat-protected iPod.

While the above-mentioned case trick is free, it is also not the most desired option. Your best bet is to still get a decent case for your iPod. And it just so happens that the CompUSA in Goleta has two excellent cases to choose from. The "NeoPod" case is available in both a neoprene fabric (the same material that wetsuits are made of) available in several different color choices, or a snazzy looking black leather case. Both cases come with sturdy belt chips, and they allow you to use the iPod while still in the case. These are very protective and are an excellent deal at \$25 and \$30, respectively. For more information, see their website, <<http://www.everythingipod.com/>>.

If you do a lot of traveling with your iPod, you might want to consider getting some accessories for it. The "iPod Connection Kit II" from Dr. Bott <<http://www.drbot.com/>> will fit your bill nicely. It includes a car power adapter for the iPod, a carry pouch, a set of cable to allow you to hook your iPod to your home stereo system, and a car cassette adapter to allow you to play your iPod through your car stereo. If your car stereo lacks a cassette deck, you'll need an additional accessory to complete the connection: the iRock Wireless Music Adapter, from iRock <<http://www.myirock.com/>>. This gadget plugs into your iPod, and beams a short-distance FM radio signal straight to your car radio.

If you wish to buy any of these accessories separately, that can be arranged as well. The Dr. Bott car power adapter can be purchased separately. A car cassette adapter costs \$10 and is available at most Radio Shack type stores. For connecting your iPod to your home stereo, you'll need a 1/8" stereo mini jack to RCA cable adapter, which should cost you all of \$3 at a Radio Shack.

You might want to consider getting a different pair of headphones. The original headphones that came with the first iPods are rather large and unwieldy, and are somewhat painful to wear, especially for those with smaller ears. Reports are that Apple has redesigned the headphones for the 10 and 20 GB iPods to make them less bulky. However, I still recommend that you go out and get a pair of Sony "Groove Fontopia" ear buds, model MDR-ED228LP

<<http://www.sonymstyle.com/home/item.jsp?hierc=9688x8746x8747&catid=&itemid=4054>>. They will run you \$20 at Circuit City, but they have unbelievably good sound quality for such a small pair of earbuds, they don't hurt your ears, and most importantly, they stay in place. They also have very little sound leakage, so the guy sitting next to you on the bus won't complain. If you prefer full-size headphones, you can't go wrong with a pair of Sony MDR-V6 "Studio Monitor" headphones (not the V600's, which are far inferior). They are a bit hard to find, but if you're willing to sleuth around a bit, you can still find them for \$100 or less. The sound quality is excellent, with clean, crisp highs and deep, but not overpowering, bass.

Conclusion

My quest for the "perfect" MP3 player has finally come to an end. The iPod has to be one of the slickest MP3 players I have had the privilege of using. Its extremely simple setup, fast transfer rates, integration with iTunes, and lack of major bugs and quirks has thoroughly impressed me. And now Apple has addressed the last remaining complaint I had about the iPod – disk size – by releasing 10 and 20 GB units.

The iPod may be a bit pricier than other MP3 players on the market, but it is worth every single penny of it!

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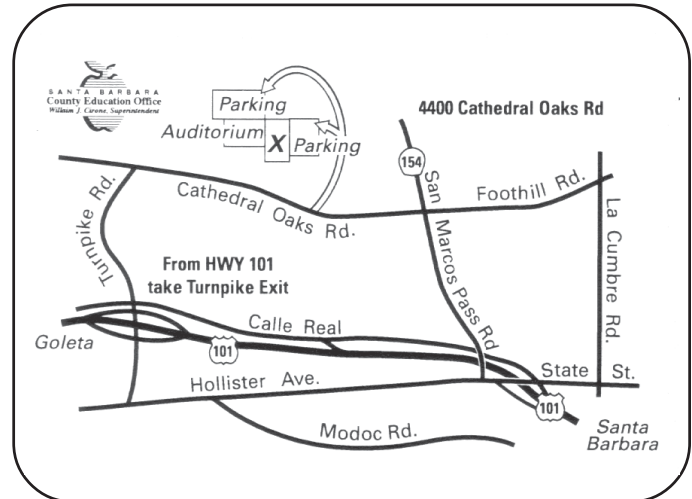
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