

You can be a rock star!



Turn your MAC into a recording studio!

What MUG
WHATCOM MACINTOSH USER GROUP



Apple User Group

www.whatmug.org

Our MISSION is to create a community forum for “Mac” users in Whatcom County and beyond to come together to learn, share knowledge, resolve problems and have fun using Macintosh computers in daily life.

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Cover Story

If you would like to have your photos or designs featured on the cover please contact Carol at design@whatmug.org
Thanks!

President's Spotlight

President's Spotlight, JULY '04

Mac Carter, president@whatmug.org



The JUNE meeting was terrific. The topic was **"BETTER BACKUP"**. We held the meeting at the Fairhaven Library and it was standing room only. It's clearly a topic that is

(or should be) of interest to all of us. Penny did a great job presenting it. She had created a spiffy, well thought out Keynote presentation. There were lots of questions, comments and many an "AHA! I should be doing that!" as people realized just how disruptive it would be if your hard disk failed.

There are lots of solutions for backing up. That's half the challenge – deciding on a backup strategy. Penny (with some help from Laron) covered all the bases.

And to top it off, the door prize (an Epson inkjet printer) went to a member who had just commented that his printer driver was too old for OS X and he needed to get a new printer. We all got a good chuckle when he won the raffle.

The **JULY** meeting topic is **"GARAGE BAND"**. This should be interesting. Apple claims, "with GarageBand it's easy to perform, record, and create music, whether you're a musician or just want to feel like a rock star. GarageBand turns your Mac into a high-quality musical instrument with amazing built-in sounds and gives you the complete power of a recording studio. With GarageBand you don't need to be a musician to make original music." This sounds like a dream come true for all those people (like me) who've wished they had some musical talent. Sounds like Apple is bridging the gap for us.

AUGUST: IT'S "PICNIC/SWAP MEET " TIME!! We're planning our first annual Picnic / Swap Meet for some Saturday in August. We'll let you know the date as soon as we have a location booked. The club will supply burgers and hotdogs and cold drinks. You just need to bring a side dish and all the computer gear sitting in your closet that you want to unload. It should be a lot fun.

We're also looking for someone to help organize this event. If you are willing to pitch in and help, please contact Alan Sanders at: programs@whatmug.org.

***** SPECIAL NOTICE:** Carol Ensminger has informed us that she is no longer able to continue her role as a Board member and graphics designer for our club newsletter and website in order to focus on family priorities. We wish Carol the best and extend our thanks for doing a great job helping get WhatMUG, our website and our newsletter off the ground.

This change opens up a great opportunity for someone else to step up and take on the "graphics designer" role for our club. This role involves being a member of WhatMUG's Board (we meet once a month). If you have skills in this area (Adobe "InDesign", Illustrator, etc.) and would be willing to join the Board and help publish the monthly newsletter, please contact me at: president@whatmug.org ■

July Meeting

The general meeting for JULY will be held in the "Northwest" room at the Fairhaven Library located at 1117 12th Street in Bellingham

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: "GARAGE BAND", the HOT, new member of the iLife suite. If you've ever had aspirations of creating music, this is THE tool.

Editors Notes

by Chuck Dingée
editor@whatmug.org



This month marks the last issue (at least for a while) with Carol Ensminger as our (excellent!) graphic designer. Carol needs some more time with her family and other activities, and we wish her the very best. We will sorely miss you, Carol, and hope you'll be back again soon. We thank you profusely for all your hard work; it was crucial to revamping WhatMUG.

Our theme this month is Garage Band, and I am also including reviews of 2 different options for playing your iTunes collection over your home stereo. My favorite is Squeezebox—although I haven't actually used the other option, Airport Express. The main advantage I find with Squeezebox is the easy-to-use remote control that comes with it, which means it does not have to be controlled by the Mac (although it can be). But the Airport Express has the advantage of being able to play Protected AAC files (like the ones you buy from iTunes). With Squeezebox, I have to somehow "unprotect" those files—a fairly easy but sometimes cumbersome task.

The easiest way to "unprotect" your iTunes songs is to make a playlist, burn a CD, and then import the

songs from the CD. (Of course you should first back up your original protected files!) If you use the LAME MP3 encoder (<http://www.blacktree.com/apps/iTunes-LAME/index.php>) they will be high-quality MP3 files. (This takes a little longer and yields a slightly bigger file than simply hitting the "Import" button, but it works very well with Squeezebox...)

There are other methods, including a program called HYMN (Hear Your Music aNywhere – available at <http://www.hymn-project.org>) but Apple doesn't like that and every new version of iTunes cripples decoded by HYMN (and then a new version of HYMN comes out...)

As I am writing this, Steve Jobs is onstage in San Francisco at the WorldWide Developers Conference introducing the newest update to OS X— "Tiger" (OS X 10.4)— which will be available in "the first half of 2005." It promises to be a great update, especially if you have a G5. (just picked up a dual 1.8 Ghz G5 with a 23 inch Cinema display and I'm loving it!)

Tiger has some very cool new tools, including Spotlight which promises to "Find anything, anywhere on your computer in no time flat," a new version of iChat AV with improved video and ability to video-conference with up to 3 other people, and Dashboard, which allows you to access "Widgets"—mini-applications such as a Datebook, Address Book, Calculator, etc.—very quickly and easily.

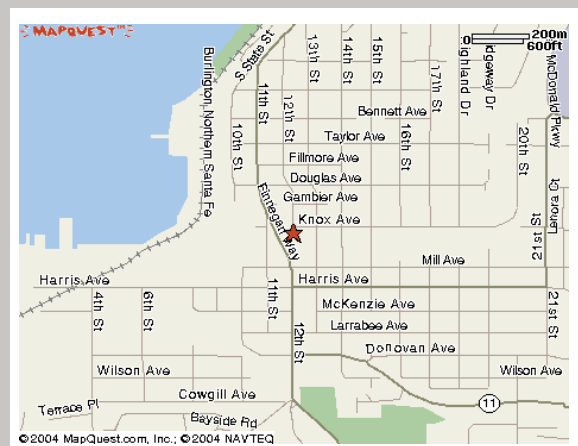
As Apple says: "Innovation Never Sleeps." ■

Meeting Place

See You July 14!

NOTE!! The general meeting for JUNE will be held in the "Northwest" room at the Fairhaven Library located at 1117 12th Street in Bellingham.

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: "GARAGE BAND", the HOT, new member of the iLife suite. If you've ever had aspirations of creating music, this is THE tool.



Tips From The Wiz!

by Laron Southcott
thewiz@whatmug.org



Classic and beyond

What is classic? OS9 in disguise?

Here's the concise description:

"The Classic environment is a complete implementation of Mac OS 9.x on top of Mac OS X."

To us normal beings, that means it's an application running in OS X. It is also a portal to use older software.

Why bring up Classic? Most of us still use it one way or another. Besides that, there are a bunch of folks still running their Macs on OS 9 or older systems. And yes, the same rules apply when running OS 9 in OS X.

If you need more memory for an app then you allocate it. Go to the app, select it, get info, select the memory drop down, and change the preferred size.

If you need to print, you must install the print driver for OS 9, and use the chooser.

Launching Classic is as easy as double clicking on the app you wish to use and wait.... Wait?! Yes, the app *Classic* must run before you can use the app you selected.

This brings up the system preference panel. Within the Classic pref panel, you may change several attributes.

For example you may wish to have Classic startup when you boot your Mac. (This saves time when launching your Classic app).

You can also stop, start, and force quit. The other tabs in the pref window are generally ignored. Not a good idea. The advanced tab, allows you to restart classic with extensions off (for trouble shooting), or restart and then going into the extension manager (for trouble shooting).

In addition you may set the sleep time for Classic. Why? By sleeping classic you reduce the load on your OS X system.

There will be a slight delay to "wake" it up again. If you have a scanner or similar device you will want to set the sleep to never. Otherwise, the device will not always function after the sleep, and you will have to restart Classic.

You can also rebuild the desktop from this tab. Another item in this tab is the ability to set your OS 9 preferences to your home folder.

Why? In a multiuser environment, each user may have different prefs for OS 9.

The last tab is Memory/Versions. This window allows you to observe the memory usage, and may explain why you are out of memory for a particular Classic app. You may also select to show background processes.

Most OS 9 apps and older seem to run. If you wish to see the familiar desktop boot, then click the arrow down on the start up window for os 9 and you will see the process. In Panther (OS 10.3x) you can have the OS 9 symbol (access) in you menu bar.

You can also set Classic to hide, and/or ask it to warn you, while starting up, .

In conclusion, we still have the familiar OS 9 and its apps when we require them!

The Wiz

What's New at TD Curran

What's new @ TD Curran

Apple has finally announced updates to the Power Mac G5! Although this long awaited revision fell short of many expectations, it is still a significant change. Apple has eliminated the 1.6 GHZ G5, and all of their current models feature dual processors, running at 1.8, 2.0, or 2.5 GHZ. In addition to the processor upgrades, the G5s now feature 8X SuperDrives, and updated video cards. Dual 1.8 and 2.0 models are in stock at TD Curran, while the dual 2.5 systems are not expected to ship until July.

For those looking for a more cost-friendly computer, TD Curran has special deals on eMacs and iBooks! The following models are on sale for a limited time:

eMac 1 GHZ, 40GB HD, 256MB RAM, CD-ROM Drive, No modem - \$599

eMac 1 GHZ, 80GB HD, 512MB RAM, Combo Drive, With modem - \$699

eMac 1 GHZ, 80GB HD, 512MB RAM, SuperDrive, With modem - \$799

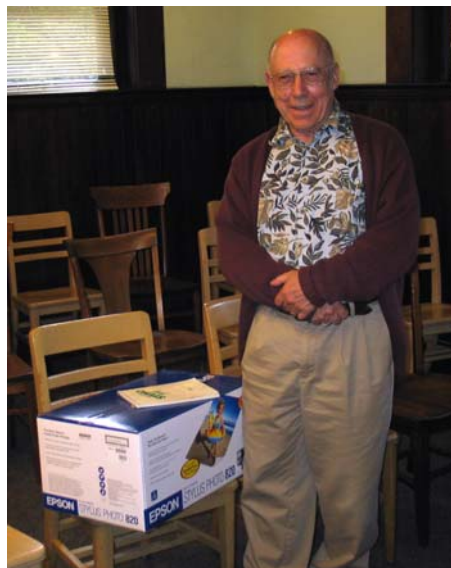
iBook G3 800 MHZ, 30GB HD, 128MB RAM, CD-ROM Drive - \$599

Refurbished iBook G4 800 MHZ, 30GB HD, 128MB RAM, CD-ROM Drive - \$699

Hot off the rumor mill are talks of new iPods. Toshiba let slip that they will be selling 60GB miniature hard drives to Apple - the same drives which are currently being used in 40GB iPods. Analysts believe this is a clear sign of Apple releasing a 60GB iPod in the near future. There are still speculations as to what other new features the new iPods will include. Rumors range from color screens, to TV output, to video playback! Only time will tell. Meanwhile, be sure to check out TD curran's selection of cases and accessories for your current iPod.

TD Curran, 800 Marine Drive • Bellingham
800-645-2533

@td curran



Door Prize Winner

Dave Panek, winner of the drawing at the June WhatMUG meeting, poses next to his new printer. Dave had earlier been trying to figure out how to make his old printer work, during the Question and Answer session. He came up with a novel solution- Win a new one!

Congratulations Dave!

WhatMUG Discounts

1] - Print Shop for Mac OS X and World Book for Jaguar

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The Print Shop for Mac OS X Edition 1.0 by Software MacKiev

Create professional-looking CD labels and cases from iTunes playlists. Import photos from iPhoto to create greeting cards. Make a wall-poster-size sports calendar for your favorite team and import all the team's games from iCal with a single click. Print Shop has everything you need to create great-looking projects. Regular price: \$49.95 (US), User Group price: \$39.95 (US).

In addition, MacKiev discounts their World Book Jaguar Edition. User Group price: \$49.95 (US), upgrade price: \$19.95 (US).

Order today.

<http://www.mackiev.com/mugs/>

This US Only offer is valid until September 30 2004.

2] - Tech Tour Apple User Group Offer:

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Enjoy Macs in the Mediterranean with Adam and Tonya Engst of TidBITS on November 7 - 13, 2004 on the magical Mediterranean island of Gozo, legendary home of Calypso.

Techie Tours is offering a week of Mac workshops and discussions followed by afternoon photo safaris to stunning locations. User group members get a 25 percent discount off the workshop portion of the trip -- \$100 (US). Register early as space is limited, with final payments due October 1, 2004.

Be there.

<http://www.techietours.com/MUG/>

This worldwide offer is valid until August 15, 2004.

3] - Graphic Authority Discount

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Get quick solutions and outstanding results.

Create layered or photo collages, apply edges to photos or learn dynamic warping and more. Kits, including Extreme Edges, Euro-Collage Kit, Photo Collage Kit and more, offer a compliment of PDF and Quick Time tutorials and royalty-free images. \$39.95 (US) each or download

WhatMUG Discounts (Cont.)

all for one outstanding price of \$69.95 (US). Domestic and International customers save the shipping and taxes with their MemberZone download subscription. User Group members receive 20 percent off the entire product line.

This worldwide offer is valid until November 30, 2004.

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MyControls -- Control your system's control panels

OS X Style System Preferences For Earlier Systems

Control panel management/launching, "System-Preferences" window and separate toolbars, multiple monitor support for docking any toolbar to any screen edge and contextual menus for toolbar control.

Phonebook -- Full-Featured Contact Management

OS X Style Address Book For Earlier Systems

Contacts database with address fields, name/company designation, multiple numbers, free form notes, multiple phone books, small footprint, print options, number dialing, optional color-coded categories, custom field support and display options.

Get a 20 percent discount.

<http://order.tropic4.com/?ugoffer>

This worldwide offer is valid until September 30, 2004.

5] - The LAPINATOR (Insulated Laptop Desk)

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The Lapinator's Thinsulate insulation blocks 95 percent of laptop heat, yet weighs only 11 ounces, keeps your computer cool and provides a stable platform on the road or in your favorite easy chair.

Regularly \$24.95 (US), the Lapinator is available to user group members for \$19.95 (US), with volume discounts available. Shipping is additional and satisfaction is guaranteed.

Order by phone or mail and identify yourself as a user group member.

1-800-809-5658

<http://www.lapinator.com>

This worldwide offer is valid until December 31, 2004.

WhatMUG Discounts (Cont.)

6] - The MUG Store

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The MUG store always has great deals for your members.

Remember the MUG store for the following benefits to all User Groups:

- Free freight on all orders
- Knowledgeable consultants available for every customer
- Great deals on new, refurbished and used Macs
- Blowout deals on a large assortment of goodies and accessories
- One percent goes back to your group in merchandise

For a complete list of all current deals, go to:
<http://www.mugcenter.com/vendornews/vendornews.html>

WhatMUG Library

WhatMUG Library

Here's what's currently in our library:

[Mac OSX Panther: Visual Quickstart Guide](#), Maria Langer

[Mac OSX Panther: The Missing Manual](#), David Pogue

[The Complete Idiot's Guide to iMac](#), Brad Miser

[Upgrading & Troubleshooting Your Mac](#), Gene Steinberg

[Macintosh Troubleshooting Pocket Guide](#), David Lerner

[Mac OSX Unwired](#), Tom Negrino

[Learning Unix for Mac OSX Panther](#), Dave Taylor

[iPhoto 2: The Missing Manual](#), David Pogue

[Photoshop CS Studio Techniques](#), Ben Willmore

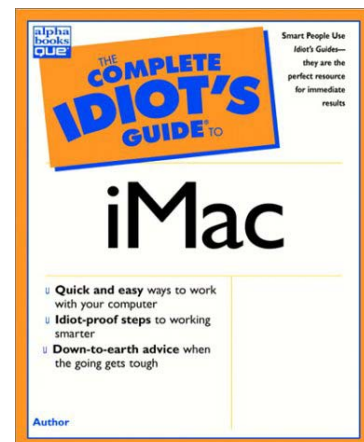
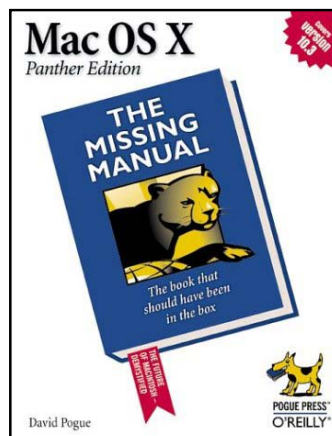
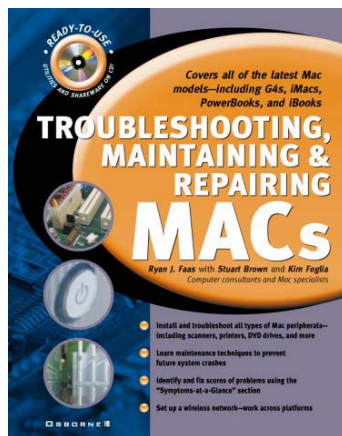
[Photoshop CS Artistry](#), Barry Haynes

[The Best of The Joy of Tech](#), Nitrozac and Snaggy

[Troubleshooting, Maintaining, & Repairing Macs](#), Ryan J. Faas

[Real World Digital Video](#), Pete Shaner

Books can be checked out at any meeting and should be returned the following meeting.



Mac 911 Help Desk

Help Desk

Mac 911

By Christopher Breen



Do you wonder whether sending AppleWorks documents to PC users is strictly for the birds? Do you seek the means for sending a Mail message to one user's many e-mail accounts? If so, then this month's Mac 911, in which we examine Apple's

bundled applications, is for you.

Will AppleWorks Work?

Marti Hokans, Santa Ana, California

Probably. I waffle because a successful translation from AppleWorks to Excel depends on the elements you include in the spreadsheet. With a straightforward table -- one including headings, colored text and cell backgrounds, a book title, an author name, and an ISBN number, for example -- you should have no problem. Excel for both the Mac and Windows can read spreadsheets that include lists and standard formulas. To save the file in a format acceptable to Excel, just select Save As from AppleWorks' File menu; then, in the Save: AppleWorks 6 dialog box, choose the appropriate Excel format (Excel Win 97, 2000, XP, or 2002, for example), and click on Save.

You'll run into trouble, though, if you place charts in the AppleWorks spreadsheet or slap an image of a black-crowned night heron into the file. The data should be readable, but any charts and graphics you've inserted won't appear in Excel.

One Recipient, Many Addresses

I have some people in my address book who have multiple e-mail addresses. How can I pick a person's name once when typing it in the To section of Mail and have my e-mail sent to all of his or her available addresses?

Mike Drinks, Baltimore, Maryland

You can't do it by default, but I know a workaround. Create a group that includes multiple e-mail addresses for one individual.

Let's say I wanted to generate a group that sends a message to your home, school, and work addresses. I'd create one contact that I might call Mike Drinks Home (with your home e-mail address), another called Mike Drinks School (with your school e-mail address), and another labeled Mike Drinks Work (with your work e-mail address). I would then create a new Drinks Contacts group and drag the three Mike Drinks contacts I'd made into this group. When I wanted to send a message to all those addresses, I would use that Drinks Contacts group.

Secret Schedule

A friend would like to publish her vacation itinerary as an iCal calendar, but she wants to restrict access to only her family members. How can she do this?

Amy R. Miller, Austin, Texas

Your friend can do this with her .Mac account, but I recommend that she do so only if she has a nearly pathological trust in her family. To password-protect her calendar under .Mac, she must provide family members with her .Mac user name and password -- the same user name and password she uses to purchase Mac goodies from the Apple Store and music at the iTunes Music Store. With that user name and password, others can log in to her .Mac account.

If this gaping security flaw doesn't bother your friend, she need only select an iCal calendar, choose Publish from the Calendar menu, select On A WebDAV Server from the Publish Calendar pop-up menu, and enter `http:// idisk.mac.com/ username/Documents` (where username is her user name). Then she must enter her .Mac user name and password and click on Publish for the calendar to be published to the Documents folder of her iDisk.

Mac 911 Help Desk (cont.)

To share the calendar, she can pass along its address (which will take the form of `webcal://idisk.mac.com/username/Documents/calendar.ics`) and her user name and password.

Family members can access her calendar by choosing **Subscribe** from iCal's **Calendar** menu, entering the URL for the calendar, and placing her user name and password in the Authentication dialog box that appears.

I strongly advise your friend not to allow this kind of access to her .Mac account. She can use a far safer service such as iCal Exchange (www.icalx.com) or iCal World (www.icalworld.com/hosting.html), both of which allow you to publish password-protected iCal calendars for a small fee (\$12 a year for iCal Exchange and \$25 a year for iCal World).

With Your Permissions

I have removed a user account in OS X 10.3, but many of the permissions are set to the account I deleted. How can I change all permissions from the old account to the new one?

Darrell Keach, Robstown, Texas

There's a way to do this in Terminal, but I don't recommend going this route unless you and Unix are on very friendly terms (failing to enter the proper commands in Terminal can lead to disaster). Instead, I suggest Renaud Boisjoly's free **BatChmod** utility (<http://macchampion.com/arbysoft>) -- which places a friendly face on the Unix `chmod`, `chown`, and `chgrp` commands.

To change those permissions, launch the program and drag an affected folder or file to the **BatChmod** window. The path to that item will appear in the **File** field. From the **Owner** and **Group** pop-up menus, select the entries that match your user account -- `darrell` (if that's your user name) and `Staff`. If you're changing the permissions of a folder and its contents, enable the **Apply Ownership And Privileges** option in the **BatChmod** window. Click on **Apply**, and then click on **Apply** again in the resulting "Are you sure?"

sheet. Enter your administrator password in the **Authenticate** window that appears, and click on **OK** in that window to make the requested changes.

'Ware, oh, Where?

My ISP says that there are invisible files placed on my system by sites I visit, and that these files regularly send information about me back to those sites. The ISP used terms such as **adware** and **spyware**. What's really going on?

Walt Hammonds, Monte Vista, Colorado

If your ISP were more in tune with the Mac world, it would have prefaced its message with "For Windows Users Only." Currently **adware** and **spyware** -- which, respectively, are bits of code that display pop-up ads and send information from your computer to a third party without your permission -- are all but unknown on the Mac.

There are applications that can log keystrokes and capture snapshots of what someone is doing on a Mac. Unlike much of the **adware** and **spyware** made for Windows, these applications aren't installed by a malevolent software download. Rather, they're placed on your Mac by someone who has access to your computer -- a parent concerned about a child's Internet activities, a prying boss, or a jealous mate, for example.

Such tools are designed to be difficult to detect, so if you suspect that your activities are being monitored, you might take a look at Aladdin Software's \$30 **Internet Cleanup** (831/761-6200, www.aladdinsys.com). Among its components is **SpyAlert**, a utility that searches your hard drive for traces of applications known to track your activities. When it finds such traces, it alerts you to them and -- with your permission -- attempts to remove the offending software. When Aladdin learns of new **spyware** applications, it updates **Internet Cleanup** to deal with new threats.

Tip of the Month

Although you can assign images to contacts in

Mac 911 Help Desk (cont.)

Address Book or iChat applications, wouldn't it be nice if your i-apps recognized all your friends and loved ones? Here's a tip for doing just that.

Find a TIFF image that represents the person in question (around 64 by 64 pixels works best). Name it with the e-mail address of your contact, and make sure to include the .tiff file extension. For example: person64@example.com.tiff.

Create a folder called Images. Within that folder, create another folder called People. Drag the Images folder into the Library folder at the root level of your OS X volume to make the picture available for all users on your Mac. (To make it available for a single account, use the Library folder in that user's Home directory.)

Now whenever you look up "Person 64" in Address Book, and whenever he sends you an e-mail or joins you in an iChat session, you'll see the image you assigned to him.

Chuck La Tournous, Port Reading, New Jersey

Unsolicited Advice

iPhoto 4's slide shows are far more flexible than those created in previous versions of the program. You can not only elect to play an entire iTunes playlist behind a slide show, but also rate and rotate pictures as you view a slide show.

What's a little less obvious is that you can perform all these actions from the Mac's keyboard. For example, to rate pictures as they slide by, press 0 (zero) through 5 (0 for no stars, 5 for five stars). To rotate pictures clockwise, press 1-R. To rotate pictures counter-clockwise, press 1-option-R. Press delete to remove a picture from the selected album. To change the speed of the slide show, use the up-arrow key to display pictures for a shorter amount of time and the down-arrow key to slow things down. To pause the slide show (but not the background music), press the spacebar. ■



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AirPort Express Brings Audio, Portability to Wireless Networking

by Glenn Fleishman <glenn@tidbits.com>

What's slightly larger than a PowerBook power brick, has three ports, and talks Wi-Fi? Apple's latest wireless entry, the AirPort Express, a 6.7-ounce (189 gram) 802.11g base station. Announced today, the AirPort Express will ship in mid-July for \$130, replacing the low-end AirPort Extreme base station, which cost \$200.

<<http://www.apple.com/airportexpress/>>

The AirPort Express plugs directly into any electrical outlet and supports alternate power standards with no external adapters. It has three jacks: Ethernet, to link in a single computer or an Ethernet hub or switch; USB, to add a printer; and audio, to support either analog two-channel or digital 5.1 with surround. If you need cables to connect the AirPort Express to your stereo, Apple sells the \$40 AirPort Express Stereo Connection Kit with Monster cables: it includes a Monster mini-to-RCA left/right audio cable, a Monster mini-to-optical digital Toslink audio cable, and an AirPort Express power extension cord for greater flexibility in placement.

The audio feature is the most intriguing. The system, called AirTunes, works with an iTunes 4.6 update, due out later this week, and software built into the AirPort Express. Anyone on the wireless network with iTunes, whether for Mac OS X or Windows, can choose to direct music to the speakers connected to an AirPort Express base station. In one sense, AirTunes turns a Mac with iTunes into the ultimate remote control for your stereo.

<<http://www.apple.com/airportexpress/airtunes.html>>
<<http://www.apple.com/airportexpress/unwireyourlivingroom.html>>

If multiple AirPort Express base stations are on a network, each one can have a separate set of speakers controlled uniquely by a separate copy of iTunes. iTunes recognizes available speakers through Rendezvous. iTunes and the base station negotiate control so that only one copy of iTunes may play through a given set of speakers at once. The stream of music is sent losslessly but in encrypted form between iTunes and an AirPort Express unit to protect the music "from being stolen," Apple said.



The new AirPort Express base station can connect directly to a broadband DSL or cable modem via its single Ethernet jack, or it can use Wireless Distribution System (WDS) to join an existing AirPort Extreme or AirPort Express network. Apple said that while the AirPort Express's version of WDS might work with base stations from other companies (we've found compatibility with gear from Buffalo Technologies, for instance; see "AirPorts Where the Buffalo Roam" in [TidBITS-696](#)), the lack of a standard for WDS meant they could only guarantee it would work with Apple equipment. If your existing network doesn't support WDS, you must tie in the AirPort Express via its Ethernet jack.

<<http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?bart=07341>>

The AirPort Express doesn't have all the features of an Extreme unit - exactly which ones are missing won't be clear until I see its configuration software - but the specs say it can only support 10 users versus 50 on the \$250 models. That's a guideline based on processing power and other parameters, of course, but one worth keeping in mind. The \$250 models also have antenna jacks; one offers Power over Ethernet and a fire-safety rating, while the other includes a modem. Apple said the AirPort Express, like the AirPort Extreme, could share an Internet connection using DHCP and NAT, among other similar features.

The portability of the AirPort Express shouldn't be understated. In a survey a few months ago, I tried and

Reviews (Cont.)

failed to find an effective portable base station. Similar devices cost substantially more than the AirPort Express and still require a tangle of cords. The AirPort Express's small form factor and weight mean it will become a standard item for business travelers to pack for maximum flexibility in working on the road.

<http://www.apple.com/airportexpress/onthego.html>

What's the real difference between AirPort Express and just turning on Software Base Station/Internet Sharing in Mac OS 8.6/9 or Mac OS X? At home, you're not dedicating a Mac to a problem that a standalone box with great features can solve. On the road, you're not stuck connecting your laptop to an Ethernet cable on a carpal-tunnel inducing desk with a cruddy chair. Additionally, Software Base Station/Internet Sharing doesn't offer WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) encryption, which some users find important, especially when traveling.

From our perspective at TidBITS, the AirPort Express is an important step. Apple has once again followed its traditional strategy of charging somewhat more

than the bare-bones competition, while including far more capabilities. With the AirPort Express, Apple has dropped the price of a wireless base station to a far more competitive level while combining features rarely found in a single device such as print sharing, wireless bridging, and audio streaming. If you were to try to assemble the same set of features using the best, cheapest products from other makers, you'd easily spend \$300 to \$500. The AirPort Express also offers a compelling form factor that enables true portability and adds an elegant method of integrating wireless into your home entertainment system. Barring any nagging technical problems that might arise, AirPort Express could be another hit product for Apple. Wall Street may already be anticipating sales: Apple's stock closed today at its highest

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Good Vibrations from the Squeezebox

by Andrew Laurence atlauren@uci.edu



(When last we left our intrepid music junkie, he was annoyed that the Slim Devices SLIMP3 streamed MP3 music, rather

than being a disk-based storage and playback device like his beloved TiVo. Let's see how things have progressed.)

Since I reviewed the SLIMP3 last year (see "SLIMP3: MP3, Get Thee to the Hi-Fi" in [TidBITS-676](#)), disk-based media players have either vanished or morphed into the "home theater PC," but media-streaming devices have flourished. As just a few examples, Alex Hoffman reviewed TiVo's Home Media Option ("TiVo Series2 Improves on Original" in [TidBITS-698](#)); Gateway introduced their Connected DVD

Player; Turtle Beach soldiers on with their venerable AudioTron AT-100; and MacSense is finally shipping the HomePod. The market has spoken: streaming it is.

<http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?tbart=07150>
<http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?tbart=07366>
<http://www.gateway.com/home/ce/dvd.shtml>
<http://www.turtlebeach.com/site/products/audiotron/>
>
<http://www.macsense.com/product/homepod/>

Enter the Squeezebox -- Slim Devices introduced the Squeezebox in November 2003. With a new look and a slew of new features, it replaces the SLIMP3 as Slim Devices' flagship hardware product. Where the SLIMP3 felt like an exercise in home-brew hardware, the Squeezebox looks and feels like high-quality consumer electronics. It retains the SLIMP3's excellent vacuum fluorescent display (VFD) but is packaged in a slimmer, more attractive case. The SLIMP3's stark black metal is replaced with a rubberized exterior. The display is no longer angled upward, but faces directly outward just

Reviews (Cont.)

like the rest of your hi-fi components. The unit is much more at home in the entertainment center, or on a desk or dresser. Inside, the Squeezebox plants itself directly at the demographic intersection between computer and audio enthusiasts. A wired version connects to a 10/100/1000Base-T wired Ethernet network; a wireless version adds the capability to connect to an 802.11b wireless network. Your streaming audio is delivered to the stereo via either analog RCA or digital optical or coaxial jacks.

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

The Squeezebox's setup is remarkably intuitive. After a series of questions guides you through setup for your network, the box is off and running. In a nice improvement over the SLIMP3, the Squeezebox automatically detects if a new firmware version is on the server, and prompts the user to upgrade.

Where the SLIMP3's digital-to-analog converter only handled MP3 audio, the Squeezebox supports most popular formats: AAC (on Mac or Windows), AIFF, FLAC, MP3, Ogg Vorbis, WAV or WMA (Windows only). AAC, FLAC, Ogg Vorbis and WMA files are supported through server-side conversion into uncompressed audio; the conversion is only available for files that aren't protected by digital rights management, as are those purchased from the iTunes Music Store. In other words, the songs you rip into AAC or WMA are playable, but purchased (and protected) songs are not playable. (AAC playback requires QuickTime and is therefore only available on Mac and Windows servers. The Ogg and FLAC formats require that those programs be already installed on the server.)

The Squeezebox's interface is exactly the same as the SLIMP3, and you control its functions via either the included remote control or the server's Web interface. See my earlier review for descriptions of its operation.

SlimServer -- The SlimServer software, which is installed on the Mac hosting your music files, remains an impressively robust and flexible music platform. Where most players lock you into iTunes's predefined constructs of songs, albums and playlists, the SlimServer incorporates an "internal playlist" concept that opens the door to ad-hoc playlists. You can build a playlist for the moment, intermixing any number of songs, albums or pre-defined playlists; any unit of

music available to iTunes can be a component of an ad-hoc playlist. I've always dreamed of an unending stream of music, limited only by my mood and imagination. With SlimServer, that dream has arrived (and yes, I know full well that I sound like I'm spouting advertising copy).

As testament to the strength of the SlimServer platform, competitor Roku Labs has adopted the GPL-licensed open-source SlimServer software for their not-yet-shipping Roku SoundBridge. Roku's literature proudly lists the device's support for multiple audio formats, the Web server interface, iTunes support, and compatibility with multiple operating systems. Interestingly, the SoundBridge appears to also use a VFD display. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, adoption must point to sheer adoration.

<<http://www.rokulabs.com/products/soundbridge/>>

Costs and Benefits -- Streaming music devices all seem to be priced around \$200. However, just as Macs cost more than PCs, the Squeezebox costs a bit more; enough to make you say "hmmm." The wired version costs \$250; adding wireless bumps the price to \$300. Although the Squeezebox is full-featured and rightfully claims a spot in the consumer electronics milieu, the price feels a bit high to me. Otherwise, the Squeezebox is a heck of a nice product.

While I was writing the SLIMP3 review, my wife and I noticed that we played music more often, and more easily. The seamless access to the music heightened our use and enjoyment a great deal, similar to the yield one gets from TiVo. After I sent the demonstration unit back to Slim Devices, we noticed its absence. Forced to once again shuffle CDs, we lapsed into old habits of leaving the same set of discs in the player and suffering through commercial radio. Now that we've gotten our hands on the Squeezebox, I just might have to buy one for the entertainment center.

[Andrew Laurence has almost figured out how to store all his CDs in the living room. Almost.]

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