



Rmug News

March 2004

This Month

RMUG Meeting, Saturday Morning
March 13, 2004 9-11:30AM

All Mac users, new & old are invited to attend the next RMUG general meeting in the classrooms at:

Little Country Church
873 Canby & Churn Creek Rd.
Redding, California

(RMUG IS NOT CHURCH AFFILIATED)

Coffee and donuts are served during our "Get Acquainted" time, 9am to 10am. There are classes for "Beginners" and "Intermediate" from 9:15am to 10:00am.

Topics this month will include general Q&A and as yet unspecified topic. What would you like to see?

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Charlotte Ruskowitz - Librarian
Ken Lorenz - Editor
Barbara Benefield,
Louise Zegers, Pat Hiner
- Hospitality

President's Letter

Spring is around the corner and the new flagship Apple store is now open in San Francisco. I think as a club we ought to go visit the kind folks in San Francisco and see what a flagship Apple Store looks like. I know that I will not wait until the next MacWorld San Francisco to go visit the new Apple store. There are many ways to get to San Francisco and maybe we could make an adventure out of it. I know that Cal-Train goes to San Francisco from Sacramento, and busses, airplanes and limousines all make round trips from Redding to San Francisco. We could create a caravan of cars and vans to head down to where they wear flowers in their hair. If we made the trip on a Saturday and did not stay over night then probably quite a few of us would be able to fit an adventure into our schedules. At this next months meeting let me know what you all think of an excursion to San Francisco?

I am sure that quite a few of you are wondering how I did in a month with-out my beloved OS-9. I have faired quite well and found a work around for most of my OS-9 server tasks. The biggest work around was I ordered three new G4 & G5 servers that will all run OS-X only. I placed an order for new web serving and email software that will take advantage of the OS-X platform. I will admit I was very uneasy at first, but Al returned my Tangerine iBook as he now has a faster iBook. My Tangerine is my safety blanket and an inspiration to move on. Twice I used the old Claris Home Page on Tangerine to update the jett.net web page and it looked great on the Tangerine, but when I put the page on the web it was all messed up. The moral of the story is: Get over OS-9 and move on. My inspiration to move on is my new development server. The development server is a new dual 2Ghz with 2.5GB of RAM and all the usual whistles and bells found in the best Apple has to offer. I am taking digital pictures of the servers before and after, and I will create a web page for anyone who wants to watch our growing pains. I may even put one of my iSight cameras on the G5 and let everyone watch us. hummm.

RMUG Information

Why RMUG? The Redding Macintosh Users' Group was formed to help members and new users obtain maximum enjoyment and performance from their computers. This is accomplished through group activities and our direct affiliation with Apple™.

Resources: RMUG resources include monthly mailings from Apple™ and numerous outside vendors. We have a library of public domain programs, games and shareware software. We have videos and other computer-related guidebooks and information.

Meetings: RMUG meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 to 11:30 AM at Little Country Church, 873 Canby Rd. Room B-6. (we are not church affiliated) The meetings give members and visitors an opportunity to share information, opinions, personal experiences and techniques regarding Macintosh computer systems—hardware & software.

Membership Information: We invite you, as a guest, to attend our next monthly meeting. If you decide to join RMUG, your membership fee includes your whole family. We need your help as much as you need ours! Please participate!

Welcome To Our Meetings: Call the President, Dale Josephson at 244-7262 or contact other RMUG officers for help. Go to <http://rmug.org/membership.html> for numbers.

Membership Dues: \$24 / year. Includes newsletters, access to shareware, monthly workshops, troubleshooting help. Payment of dues can be made at the monthly meetings or send them to: Don Lapray, 1745 Crosby Lane, Redding CA 96003. Please make check payable to: Redding Macintosh Users' Group.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER
CONTINUED

Now on a different subject: Cell phones. Most of us have cell phones and many of us have phones that work in town but not at our homes. I personally have both Nextel and AT&T and they both perform very poorly if you are more than a mile or two away from the interstate 5 corridor. I was visiting a Verizon store the other afternoon and I told the sales lady how the day I got my Nextel phones they worked at my home, but 98% of the time since, they have not worked unless I am in the middle of my driveway facing east while standing on one foot. She told me that they have a loaner phone that they could set to only make local calls so that I could check out their service. It was a rainy afternoon and on rainy days is when my AT&T & Nextel do work at home, so I asked the sales representative if I could do the test on another day. She said yes, but she went on to say how I could have the phone for a couple of nights and days. Whoa that is service with a capital "S". By the time of the next meeting I will probably have new cell phones, but in the meantime, if anyone has any suggestions on how to get good cell service in and around Redding be sure to drop me a line at dale@jett.net.

dale j



RECORDING STUDIO
IN A BOX

SINCE Steve Jobs's return to Apple in 1997, the company's most important new products have all begun with the letter i. There was the iPod, of course, and the iMac, and groundbreaking programs like iPhoto (for digital photos), iMovie (for camcorder video), iTunes (for organizing music) and iDVD (for creating homemade DVD's). In every case, Apple's goal was obvious: to create products so simple and creative that people would say, "iWant, iLove, iBuy."

At the Macworld Expo in San Francisco last week, Apple unveiled a new version of its "i" software suite, now called iLife '04. Because it's on the biggish side (several gigabytes in all), it will no longer be a free download. You'll have to buy it for \$50 or get it pre-installed on a new Macintosh.

Each program in the updated suite (except iTunes) offers about a dozen enhancements. For example, the new iMovie offers video trimming with an "undo" feature right in the storyboard strip. The iDVD program introduces 20 new professional-looking templates for your DVD menu screens, and can now fit two hours of amazing-looking video onto a disc.

For iPhoto 4, the chief improvement is speed, enough to handle 25,000 photos per collection without bogging down. (Its predecessor, iPhoto 2, got draggy at about 2,000 pictures. For new parents and pet owners, that's about a day's worth of shooting.)

But iLife '04 (for the Mac OS X operating system) also includes a new program called GarageBand. It's designed to let people with even the feeblest musical talent, or even musical interest, create professional-sounding digital recordings. It puts at least as much power into amateur hands as its i-predecessors; all it lacks is the traditional first initial.

You can build a song using three distinct tools. First, GarageBand comes with 1,100 loops: snippets recorded by studio musicians (bass, drums, guitars, strings, keyboards, mallet instruments, horn and string sections, and synthesized choirs). You can drag these snippets into a sequence as though they're tiles, stretch

BIB Continued

the blocks on the screen to make them play over and over, and layer one instrument upon another. It's a lot of instant gratification, even if you don't know a quarter note from a quarter-pounder.

The loops almost always sound good together - even when you layer Island Reggae Drums 03 with Nordic Fiddle 01. That's because all of the loops play essentially the same, unchanging chord. (Of course, these days, building a song whose harmony never changes is no barrier to commercial success, as Pink demonstrated with "Get the Party Started.")

You can transpose these loops, making them play higher or lower, and even change their tempo. (Indeed, that's one of GarageBand's most impressive bits of magic; how can software make a digital recording play in a different key, or at a different tempo, without distorting it?) Still, that's not quite the same thing as complete freedom to choose chords or melodies. In terms of compositional choices, non-musicians are pretty much limited to fooling around with when various instruments play, not what.

GarageBand's second primary tool requires a little more training. Using your Mac's U.S.B. jack, you can plug in a MIDI keyboard, guitar or drum pads. (MIDI stands for musical instrument digital interface, and refers to a standard connector for plugging electronic instruments into computers.)

For \$100, for example, Apple will sell you a four-octave, touch-sensitive MIDI keyboard that produces no sound of its own. But when plugged into GarageBand, its plastic keys trigger (from the Mac's speakers) the sound of a \$50,000 Yamaha grand piano, an orchestra full of strings, the brassy sting of rock-hall trumpets, or any of 185 other sampled instrument sound variations.

At this point, GarageBand is a 64-track digital tape recorder. The program can even count you in with clicks - the software equivalent of, "And-a one! And-a two! And-a three! And-a four!" - and provide a metronome as you play.

As in more expensive MIDI sequencers

(recorders) like Cakewalk, you can then clean up your mistakes by editing the notes, which appear as horizontal bars on a piano-roll grid. You can also perform an old favorite trick of electronic musicians: recording your performance at low speed and then playing it back at a much faster tempo, so that you sound like a virtuoso.

GarageBand's third core feature is direct-to-hard-drive recording. You can sing or play a real-world instrument directly into your Mac's microphone as GarageBand records your performance, and even "sweeten" it with studio effects like reverb and chorusing. You can't edit these recordings, except to delete muffed sections and re-record them. You can, however, sing into one track after another, eventually turning yourself into a barbershop quartet, octet or 64-tet.

Using these three musical sources in combination - prerecorded loops, sampled sounds, live recordings - you can build a rocking little band right in your Mac. Then you can adjust the relative volume levels of the tracks, add fade-ins and fade-outs, specify the balance of each instrument in the left-to-right stereo field, and finally export the finished product to iTunes. From there, you can download your masterpiece to your iPod, export it as an MP3 file for mailing to friends, use it as royalty-free background music for a movie or presentation, or burn your own CD.

Of course, none of GarageBand's three personalities are particularly new. Loop building is available in Sonic Foundry's Acid Pro 4.0 (\$400) or Apple's own \$300 program, Soundtrack. MIDI recording has been around for years in programs like Cakewalk and Cubase. Direct-to-disk recording is the norm in the recording and movie industries, too (Pro Tools and Digital Performer, for example).

But judging by their delighted applause, most audience members at Apple's GarageBand demonstrations last week were witnessing these software categories for the first time. This, of course, is precisely Apple's i-software specialty: turning what were once rarefied, expensive, technical tools into simple, inexpensive, everyday programs.

BIB Continued

In some places, Apple stripped GarageBand down a tad too far. For example, the program desperately needs some sort of bookmarking feature. And the editing window never shows more than two octaves at a time, which makes it hard to edit piano parts.

The program's heavy pop music orientation can be frustrating, too. The instrument sounds, for example, don't include such expressive choices as trumpet, clarinet, harp or solo violin. (Buying Apple's \$100 Jam Pack doesn't help. This expansion pack offers 2,000 more loops, 15 more guitar-amp simulations, 100 more audio effects, and 100 additional instrument sounds. But the new samples are all in the same categories: guitars, vibraphones, drums, basses and keyboard instruments.)

Similarly, GarageBand can quantize your performances - that is, clean up the timing of recorded notes by nudging them into alignment with the closest sixteenth note, eighth note, or whatever - but only an entire "take" at a time (you can't quantize only a few selected notes). Most seriously of all, GarageBand doesn't let you create tempo changes. Your song can never speed up or slow down, which puts a severe limit on musical expressiveness.

But even in version 1.0, GarageBand is an exciting breakthrough. Not so much for established musicians (although even they may find it useful for practicing, experimenting with arrangements, and rough-draft composing), but for musicians who are yet to be established.

In the "American Idol" era, it's clear that commercial talent, if not great musical talent, is always out there, untapped and undiscovered. How can a gifted singer or talented play-by-ear instrumentalist reach what could be a grateful audience? Not by mailing out demo tapes recorded with the church accompanist, that's for sure.

It won't be long before the GarageBand creations of no-name singers and players start popping up on Web sites - indeed, it won't be long before Web sites start popping up just to accommodate them - bypassing

the talent scouts and gatekeepers of the American recording industry. GarageBand and the Internet give tomorrow's stars their own democratic recording and distribution channels.

That prospect of new artists growing from grass roots is probably what inspired Apple to name the software GarageBand, abandoning its lowercase i naming tradition. But when you consider both the fledgling state of the 1.0 version of this program and the immense musical and commercial forces it could one day unleash, you might conclude that there is, after all, an i-name that might have suited this remarkable software: iPotential.

By David Pogue
E-mail: Pogue@nytimes.com

WANTED for Upgrades



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iLIFE '04

When Apple chief executive Steve Jobs (news - web sites) introduced iLife '04 early this month, he called this bundle of jukebox, photo-album, movie-editing, DVD-burning and music-recording programs "Microsoft Office for the rest of your life." The idea was that, just as Office handles the work you do at your office, iLife is ready for the digital-media fun at home.

But the comparison works in more ways than one. Like Office, iLife offers more features than many users need, but you can't avoid buying the whole package.

Fortunately, it costs \$49, not \$400; unfortunately, most of its component programs were no-charge downloads until iLife '04's advent.

Now only iTunes -- unchanged in this bundle -- remains free, while upgraded versions of iPhoto, iMovie and iDVD, plus the new GarageBand (see Bob Massey's story for a review) cost \$49 unless you buy a new Mac, in which case iLife comes pre-installed.

Of all these applications, iPhoto most desperately needed a rewrite, owing to the unbearable sluggishness it exhibited once its photo library grew beyond 700 megabytes or so.

Apple essentially put the paddles to this application's chest and shocked it back to life. The new iPhoto 4 started up in half the time of its predecessor and scrolled through an 1,800-photo library in a tenth of the time, down from roughly 30 seconds to three seconds on the same two-year-old iMac.

It also takes less time to find the photo you want in iPhoto 4, since you can finally sort your photos chronologically to a limited degree, displaying a photo library in yearly chunks. However, there's still no option to group photo albums in folders or sort them by category.

"Smart albums" offer a partial remedy to this; like the "smart playlists" in iTunes, you can set them up to automatically find pictures that match certain criteria -- for instance, when they were taken or what file names they share.

When you import new photos from a digital camera, a new "batch change" command edits their titles, dates and other info. Fire up a slide show of them, and a toolbar overlay lets you rotate pictures sideways, delete the shots that didn't work out and assign ratings of 1 through 5 stars to those that did. The last feature felt slow in practice, though.

Editing features here have advanced little in comparison. The sole addition is the option of converting a photo to sepia tones.

As before, you can share photos as printouts, in slide shows (which now can feature entire iTunes playlists for their soundtracks, instead of just one song), via e-mail, on the Web (with Apple's \$100-a-year .Mac service), in custom-printed books, on data CDs (awkward to view in anything but another copy of iPhoto) and in DVD slide shows.

If you have more than one Mac at home, iPhoto 4 can share your pictures over your home network. Using this, however, requires adding a new rule to Mac OS X (news - web sites)'s firewall, and for some reason photo sharing worked in only one direction in my tests -- the iMac could get to the PowerBook's photos, but not the other way around.

No PCs can join in this sharing, because iPhoto's picture archives remain unreadable to other programs. For the same reason, uploading your photos to any of the numerous photo finishing sites that charge less than Apple's service remains irritatingly tedious.

Compared with iPhoto, the other applications show far fewer changes. iMovie 4 adds new, surprisingly slick video effects, which can now be applied to multiple clips at once. You can also trim clips right in the timeline view and add bookmarks to your project.

Just as in iPhoto, you are no longer limited to

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SECRETARY'S NOTES:

Hi to all, this has been a very busy time of the year for me. I seem to be traveling a lot, so I have not been able to get to the meetings. I have been trying to get to Michael's Monday meeting at the Anderson Senior Center. I know that every time that I do go, I either have at least one question answered or find out one thing that I did not know. It is so nice to BELONG to a group where you know that you can get free advice, and help. If you have any suggestions on what you would like us to talk about at the meetings, please contact me or one of the other board members - remember, the meetings are for you. Also, if you have a favorite piece of software that you know fairly well and would be interested in showing us how it works, please contact me or one of the board members.

Mary Gililland

iLife Continued

selecting one song at a time for your soundtrack. You can also see the waveform of each song, which lets you match audio and video more precisely.

Should you forget your digital camcorder, iMovie 4 can record footage though Apple's iSight webcam; this took two tries to get right, however.

iMovie adds a few more ways to share your movies, but only the shortest flicks can be sent via e-mail or online. For some reason, Apple included an option to export low-resolution copies of movies to Bluetooth cell phones, but not Palm handhelds.

IDVD 4 includes a new batch of stylish, interactive menu screens that look as pretty as anything Hollywood has put out lately, plus a "map" button to show the different menus, videos and slide shows added to a disc. The latter is a smart addition, but it leaves out such useful info as the duration of each clip or the number of photos per slide show.

The slide show feature, meanwhile, continues to omit captions, so you'll need to remember what set of ruins you saw each day in June when you treat your family to the summer-vacation-in-Italy slide show.

IDVD is least informative when you're actually burning a disc (only DVD-R is officially supported, although you can spoof it into using rewriteable DVD-RW blanks). Since it never offered any estimates of how long I'd be waiting for my brief movie to be encoded, then burned to disc, I kept thinking the program had locked up on me. Many Mac users will never need to deal with that particular aggravation, since they own neither a camcorder nor a Mac with a DVD-R drive -- just as many others lack the musical instruments and aptitude required by GarageBand. And that's the biggest issue with iLife '04: Despite all the sophisticated tools it includes, for a lot of customers it will amount to a \$49 upgrade to the photo program they got free last year.

Living with technology, or trying to?

By Rob Pegoraro

E-mail Rob Pegoraro at rob@twp.com.



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VIRUS HOAXES

BY CNETNEWS.COM STAFF

When Kate got the message over the Internet warning of a deadly "Penpal" virus, she did what she thought was the right thing. She warned everyone she knew that they could be at risk.

"I sent it all over the place," she said. "I thought, 'I'm going to warn everyone I know who has email.'"

It's easy to see why. The email, dubbed "Virus Alert," made it sound as if the security of the entire Internet was at risk: It warned of a self-replicating virus that not only would destroy your computer but also would seek out and destroy data in the terminals of anyone who has ever sent you email. "If this virus remains unchecked, it has the potential to do a great deal of DAMAGE to computer networks worldwide!!!!" screamed the message making the rounds this week.

Of course, virus experts and people familiar with viruses could tell right away what they were dealing with: yet another virus hoax set off to scare unwary Netizens. Thousands, maybe millions, did just what Kate did, forwarding the email everywhere they could--newsgroups, chat rooms, email lists--with warnings like, "This is critical and valuable information. Please pass it on."

Rumors on the Net are hardly new. Two years after it was born, the so-called Good Times Virus is still making its way around the Net.

As opposed to the pre-Internet days, when a person had to pick up a telephone to pass along information, now email allows thousands of people to send a message at virtually the same moment. And it only takes another few seconds for those people to send a message on.

The result? A propaganda machine that would have exceeded the imagination of even the most inventive Cold War veteran.

"Right now we're having more trouble with hoaxes than we are with real viruses on the Web," said Joe Wells, senior editor

of Antivirus Online, which maintains a page dedicated to hoaxes.

People spread hoaxes unwittingly because they're well intentioned, said Sarah Gordon, a security analyst with Command Software Systems "People think they're being helpful," Gordon said. "People spread them unintentionally."

Of course, the people who start these hoaxes have different motivations.

In Kate's case, according to the Energy Department's alert on the Penpal hoax, it may have been started by someone trying to kill a penpal chain letter by saying it was infected with a virus.

In any case, virus experts emphasize that Internet users should be aware that viruses are not transmitted through text in email--but rather, through email attachments. And they warn that Netizens should be wary and follow the rules of safe computing: download only from known sites and, even then, use a good virus-scanning program.

If you suspect you have a virus, check it out. And always keep backups.

Submitted By:
Bill Benton

LIBRARIANS CORNER:

Are you suffering from winter blues? There's only one cure for that — a dose of paradise. What flavor would you like — exotic beaches, warm turquoise waters, lush tropical jungles or mystic ancient ruins? If you can't plan a dream vacation today, you can at least enjoy a virtual getaway to paradise via QuickTime VRs.

Start your journey in the Pacific islands of Hawaii, Tahiti, Bora Bora and Fiji. Next stop — Thailand to explore the luxurious palaces of Thai royalty. Wind your way over to the gorgeous French Riviera to bask in the sun on a yacht. Then cruise over to Italy to see the Coliseum in Rome and the leaning tower of Pisa.

All that ancient history in Italy will put you in the mood for the great pyramids of Egypt. And if you like those pyramids, don't miss the mystic Mayan ruins of Tikal, Guatemala. While you're in Central America, visit the Costa Rican rain forests and a volcano.

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Policies

This newsletter is published monthly for the Redding Macintosh Users' Group and is distributed to all club members.

No other individual, group or business may use any portion of this newsletter without prior written permission.

RMUG News welcomes articles and questions relating to Macintosh or Macintosh compatible computers. Articles may be hand written, typed, or submitted on a 3.5" floppy disk (using any popular word processing program).

Submissions must be accompanied by the author's full name, address and telephone number. The submissions become the property of RMUG unless otherwise specified.

If you have a change of address or other questions, please notify the newsletter editor or other RMUG officer as soon as possible.

Deadline for submissions is the last Saturday of each month. E-mail or deliver all material to:

Ken Lorenz

E- mail submissions to:
krlore@cwnet.com

OR

rmug@rmug.org

(stuff files if possible)

Ad Rates

RMUG members are invited to place "Wanted For Sale" & "Trade" ads in the newsletter at no charge. Business cards or commercial accounts are welcome at the rates listed above. One of the best reasons for belonging to a user's group is to let other people know about your activities, as well as learning what other people are doing with their computers and software. Please give your business cards or ads to the newsletter editor.

<p>AD Rates</p> <p>\$4 – business card</p> <p>\$6 – quarter page</p> <p>\$9 – half page</p> <p>\$15 – full page</p>
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Advertisements in the RMUG newsletter will not influence reviews or critiques of hardware, software companies or stories.

RMUG does not endorse any specific dealer or product, but we do encourage the distribution of information which may assist club members in identifying best buys and services.

Editorial

There should be something for everyone in this edition.

Everyone enjoy your iLife, iTools info and trip.

See you at the meeting on the 13th.

Ken

Librarians Continued

Want to see it all in one place? Well, in Las Vegas you can find beaches, jungles, gondolas, a pyramid, a volcano, the Colosseum, the Eiffel Tower, Elvis and much more.

Doctor's final orders: Chase that winter blues cure with a tourist-style fruity drink sporting a paper-umbrella.

Tahiti/Bora Bora <http://www.apple.com/enews/2004/qissue/05/01h2.html>

Fiji <http://www.apple.com/enews/2004/qissue/05/01h3.html>

Las Vegas <http://www.apple.com/enews/2004/qissue/05/01h10.html>

Costa Rica <http://www.apple.com/enews/2004/qissue/05/01h9.html>

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