

# BRMUG

Baton Rouge Macintosh User Group

News and Views

February 2003



The February meeting will be held at the **Bluebonnet Library** on **February 20<sup>th</sup>**, the 3rd Thursday of the month, at 6:30 P.M. This month's presentation will be an **Overview of Microsoft Excel** by Don Ballard. Don will demonstrate Microsoft Excel. Feel free to bring your own Excel tips and tricks. Members and guests are welcome. After the meeting, we will have our normal Social Hour at Brewbachers. If you need help getting there (<http://www.brmug.org/about-brmug.html>).

## Meeting is at the Bluebonnet Library!

**January Meeting Review:** Thank you John Quebedeaux for hosting our 2002 annual game review last month. Seeing games on a Titanium PowerBook was a real treat. It was a great show -- thanks a lot!

**AAPL** - Financial news continued its rollercoaster ways (looks like I can leave this first line in here permanently). AAPL's price hovered in the mid \$14 range this past month. Wall Street was not impressed with Apple's updates of their product line this month (many potential Mac users did though). Actually, the price did rise to the high \$14s as Friday ended.

**Mac OS X 10.2.4** - Apple released another upgrade version of Mac OS X. I have installed 10.2.4 on two systems without issue. This version includes a number of bug fixes along with security patches. It looks like a definite yes to me.

**X-11** - Apple finally release a beta of X-11 (X Windows) for Mac OS X. X-11 is the software that allows a Unix graphical program to draw its graphics. While numerous solutions have existed in the past, the release of X-11 is like getting Apple's blessing. Apple's X-11 is a very good implementation that integrates nicely into the Mac OS X way of doing things. I have converted over to it already.

**iLife/Keynote** - Apple is offering these two products to educators at a price of

\$15 (normally \$50 and \$100). This is a great discount. I expect a LOT of educators to take advantage of this special deal. I guess Apple really wants to take marketshare from Microsoft's Power Point. I can't wait to see Keynote.

**iDVD** - iLife includes iDVD for \$50. When it was first announced, this appeared to be a legitimate way to use third-party SuperDrives with Macintoshes. Unfortunately, the license with iDVD prohibits this. This means that Apple still does not support the use of a SuperDrive in any system that did not ship with a SuperDrive.

**Safari** - A new version of Safari is available for download. Safari has made a huge splash. Lots of people are trying it. Numerous add-ons and patches for Safari have already been developed (we are still waiting on true tab support for Safari). Interest in Safari is making the other Mac browser makers reconsider the continued development of their product. Could Safari succeed in killing the competition while it is still in beta? Will we have a choice left then? What if Safari becomes our only choice? Regardless, I am hooked on Mozilla -- at least until Safari gets tabs.

**Meeting Schedule** - Inside is a tentative list of meeting topics. Please let us know if you have any suggestions. Some topics may get replaced with Keynote and/or InDesign (if and when the software is available).

## BRMUG Info

### Member Meetings

Regular meetings are held the third Thursday evening of each month at BlueBonnet Library at 6:30 P.M.

### Planning Meetings

The Thursday after the regular member meeting the planning meeting is held at 6:15 at Calendars on Perkins near Essen.

### About BRMUG

For more information call the User Group President, Isaac Traxler, 225-926-1552 or send e-mail to [info@brmug.org](mailto:info@brmug.org) or check our web page at <http://www.brmug.org/>

### BRMUG Volunteers

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 Contact anyone above if you have suggestions for BRMUG.

### After the Meeting

Join us at Calendars after the BRMUG meeting: fun, food, free

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## Nonessentials

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This month, I was asked to help a few friends work on a demo album of acoustic music. I have been using Digidesign Protools 5 free for a year or so to do all of my mixing. They basically recorded their demo on a Korg digital hard disk recorder with an array of microphones including dynamic and big and small diaphragm condenser microphones in a living room. They used carpet and office dividers to sound proof the room.

Against my objections, they chose to record the group playing together live. This cause bleed-in in all of the vocal and instrument microphones. It also introduced several annoying high and low frequency noises which were not apparent on several listening. The room also lacked dynamics because of its heavy carpeting and rectangular walls.

To compound matters worse, they chose to mix the sound down themselves and gave me the final mixes. The first CD had reverb digitally added to the mix without equalization. It caused several tracks to be dead and lifeless. Many tracks were mixed improperly with the vocal too low and certain instruments too high. This often reflected bias of individual members of the band to show off their playing. This was ok on solo, but made for a muddy mix on the rest of the song. Worse, the audio levels were low and each member was assigned a left or right channel, even if they were a lead vocalist.

The second CD had no reverb effects, but it was equally lifeless. They mixed the levels louder to make the vocals and some instruments louder, but overall distort was caused on all tracks because they had pushed their peak sounds over 0 dB. I had warned them that digital audio was different than analog and that you could not exceed this peak.

So, I had to fix each one of these CDs with a variety of tools. First, I used Sound App 2.7.3 to convert the CD audio to the Mac aiff format. Next, I duplicated the track 3 times to import into Protools. Then I panned two tracks into left 90 degrees and right 270 degrees of center. Two tracks were sent to center channel. Two tracks were sent to 60 and 300 degrees of the center channel and two tracks were sent to 120 and 240 degrees of center channel. I mixed them down with compression of 3 to 1 and a short delay. This created a fuller mix with no

distorted highs.

Unfortunately, then I had to use SNDSampler to increase the midrange frequencies crushed by compression. This increased the volume and so I had to use limiting and expanding to restore some of the sounds lost. This also raised the volume.

So, I had to use Prosoniq Sonicworx Artist to add reverb and delay to create space in the sound to create a natural sound with dynamic echos, note decays and brighter vocals that projected about the music. It worked great, but the band liked the flat reverb sound better.

Again, I disagreed and so did most of the people that listened to both. The band wanted a live document of their performance, but then decided they wanted a clean studio disk. So, it looks like they'll have to do a total redo.

Despite my trials and tribulations with musicians, I liked using all of these products to do what they do. They are all great and easy to use tools. Sound App is a great audio converter. Protools is the fold standard all audio mixing and recording programs are judged by. Sndsampler 4 is a great little shareware tool for those who can't afford Protools. Last, Prosoniq's Artist is another tool I like for its neat reverb and delay effects. The flanger is one of the best I know of. The moral of the story is there is no substitute for doing a job the right way and using the right tools, but if you can't you can always fix it on your Mac.

by Glenn Matherne

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## Essentials - PTHPasteboard

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PTHPasteboard (<http://www.pth.com/PTHPasteboard/>) is a small, simple, free addition to Mac OS X that has become invaluable for me. I often find myself needing to copy several items to paste elsewhere. You know, needing to copy three different things from one place and then paste them in another place (like name, address, and city). This normally means copy the first item, switch applications, paste, switch back, copy, switch back, paste, switch back copy, and finally switch back and paste.

PTHPasteboard can eliminate a lot of that switching back and forth. PTHPasteboard simply intercepts all copy commands and adds them to a paste buffer. PTHPasteboard does not interfere in any way with normal operations — it merely enhances the behavior.

By default, PTHPasteboard remembers the last ten items that have been copied. It adds an icon to the menu bar that you click on to select which item in the list to paste. It is that easy to use.

PTHPasteboard has a lot of options. You can choose from several icons for the menu bar. You can change how many items should be remembered. You can limit the maximum size of the items saved. You can have it record the buffers to disk so that it is remembered after reboot. PTHPasteboard also allows you to associate keystrokes with the various buffers.

PTHPasteboard is not one of those big applications that makes big headlines. However it is one that can change the way you work. It has changed the way I work. You also might want to check out <http://www.pth.com/Products/> for a list of all the products written by the authors of PTHPasteboard. They have some nice ones. I love great, simple software — especially for free. I really encourage you to try it.

by Isaac Traxler

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## Fink Revisited

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Fink is a project that aims to make the entire Unix Open Source software world available to the Macintosh user. This is a lofty goal considering the staggering number of Unix applications available. Even though the Macintosh is Unix underneath many of the basic libraries are different on the Macintosh from "standard" Unix. Fink attempts to solve this by "updating" the actual Unix distributions at install time so that they use



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the Macintosh libraries.

Fink has had phenomenal success. Over 200 packages are supported by Fink. If you intend to exploit the underlying Unix on your Macintosh, Fink is the way to get there. Now that Apple has released their own X11, Fink is even more valuable.

You can learn more about the Fink project by visiting <http://fink.sourceforge.net> (you can also download it from here).

Fink is actually several different things. The real work is in figuring out how to get each of these Unix packages to compile and function correctly in the Mac OS X environment. All this must be done before the real world ever learns about the package. Of course, these steps have to be repeated every time a new version comes out (in case the authors of the package have included a new dependency that the Fink gurus have not planned for).

Fink is also a repository of all these patches so that they are available each time someone wants to install or update a package on their Macintosh. Fink also archives pre-compiled versions of almost all the packages. This dramatically speeds up the process of installing software with a tiny performance penalty since the compiled code is not optimized for your specific system.

Fink also provides the control software to install, update, and delete packages from your system. This includes being able to update the list of possible software and versions. Fink actually keeps a database of exactly which packages at which versions you have installed.

The drawback to Fink for most people is that it is a command-line driven package. In other words, you have to open the Terminal applications and type commands at the prompt. While Fink provides excellent documentation and the number of commands you need to know is small (about 5), it can still be very intimidating.

A sister project called Fink Commander has been created (<http://finkcommander.sourceforge.net/>). Fink Commander is a graphical front-end for Fink that runs natively in the Macintosh environment. It takes a little getting used to but works great. I just installed Mac OS X on a iMac this weekend. I took advantage of the situation to retry Fink Commander. It worked great and was not hard at all (once I got started). By choosing to install

### Future Meeting Calendar

February 20, 2003	.....Microsoft Excel.....	Don Ballard	.....Library
March 20, 2003	.....Browsers (Safari, Moz, IE).....	Isaac Traxler	.....Library
April 17, 2003	.....iPhoto	.....Glenn Matherne	.....Library
May 15, 2003	.....X Windows.....	Isaac Traxler	.....Library
June 19, 2003	.....Mail.app	.....Isaac Traxler	.....Library
July 17, 2003	.....OS X Customization	.....Isaac Traxler	.....Library
August 21, 2003	.....	.....iCal/iSync	.....Isaac Traxler
TBA	.....BRMUG Picnic.....	.....Everyone	.....LSU
September 18, 2003	.....iMovie.....	TBA	.....Library
October 16, 2003	.....Mac OS X Utilities	.....Isaac Traxler	.....TBA
November 20, 2003	.....Annual Game Meeting.....	.....John Quebedeaux	.....Library
December 18, 2003	.....Christmas Party	.....Everyone	.....Library

pre-compiled code I was able to dramatically reduce the time required to make a nice, comfy Unix environment.

Fink does not auto-magically turn Unix programs into Macintosh programs. Unix programs that need X Windows in the Unix world, still need them in the Macintosh world. But with Fink and Apple offering complementary solutions for adding X Windows (X-11) to Mac OS X, this is not a big problem. With Apple's X-11, the display speed of X programs is pretty close to that of normal Macintosh programs. You still have to learn how to deal with needing more than one button on your mouse (the Unix world believes in three button mice).

Fink does not solve the inconsistencies. Unix programs have a tremendous amount of look and feel inconsistency when compared to Mac OS programs. In fact, some of them are just baffling to figure out at times.

Fink does not protect you from the mistakes in the programs. If a security problem exists in the software, Fink religiously propagates the security issue. Fink is a mechanism to provide Macintosh users the ability to enjoy the benefits of the Unix world (all the benefits).

Regardless, Fink is an invaluable tool!

*by Isaac Traxler*

### Web Site of the Month: hyperjeff

hyperjeff (<http://osx.hyperjeff.net/>) is a neat web site run. Jeff works as a freelance programmer and is really into the Macintosh. I highly recommend you visit

it. You will find all kinds of neat stuff.

Jeff has his site broken up into a number of distinct pages. The OSX page has a few news items from a programmer's perspective. Kind of neat stuff here.

Jeff has an articles page with links to some interesting articles that are on the technical side. His Mac Craziess page includes links to all kinds of Mac related web sites.

The OSX Apps page is really interesting. Like a number of sites, he has links to lots of applications that have been written for OS X. The links are organized by categories in boxes of size relative to the number of applications of that type.

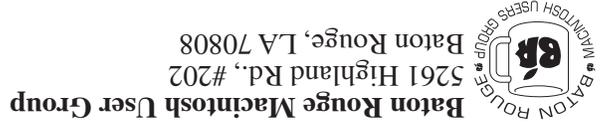
The OSX Links page contains an incredible list of links to web sites that are related to Mac OS X. These are divided into a number of sections. This is probably one of the most complete lists of web sites I have seen. You should really check this site out.

The Reference page has links to quality technical references. If you want to learn more about the unix and programming side of the Macintosh, this is a great place to start.

The Showcase page includes links to both Aqua and X11 screenshots. If you want to see something before you try it, this is a good place to go.

While this web site does not have any specific item to recommend it, it is a great collection of Mac OS X information. If you want to know more about the technical issues, this is one of the best places to start. And if you figure out Jeff's last name -- let me know.

*by Isaac Traxler*



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*Hiroshima 45  
Chernobyl 86  
Windows 95*

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS RECEIVED BY ALL  
BRMUG MEMBERS, CONTRIBUTORS, AND  
REPRESENTATIVES.**

The Baton Rouge Macintosh Users Group is a non-profit organization dedicated to Macintosh Users. Our mission is to help bring these users together in order to keep them informed of Apple Computer, Inc.'s trends, visions, and educate them on how to best use this most cost effective, easiest and friendliest of all platforms: **The Macintosh.**

If you are in the position of selling, supporting, or using the Apple Macintosh computer or any of Apple's products, we would like your participation and support for the benefit of our membership and your customer base.

Everyone is invited to attend the meetings. For a complimentary newsletter, or flyers to give out to others, or any information about the group contact the following BRMUG Ambassador: Isaac Traxler, President, (504) 926-1552, e-mail: *president@brmug.org*. We'll be most happy to talk to you about the Macintosh!

Send this form with \$15 (\$10 with copy of current school id for students) check payable to BRMUG to: BRMUG Treasurer, 5261 Highland Road, Suite 202, Baton Rouge,

**BRMUG Membership Form 2/2003**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Street, City, State, ZipCode

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Things the club should do: \_\_\_\_\_

My interest areas: \_\_\_\_\_

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