



BRMUG

Baton Rouge Macintosh User Group

News and Views

May 2003

BRMUG Information

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 or check our web page at <http://www.brmug.org/>

BRMUG Volunteers

Isaac Traxler president@brmug.org
 Glenn Matherne vp@brmug.org
 Don Ballard treasurer@brmug.org
 Don Ballard sec@brmug.org
 Richard Johnson m1@brmug.org
 Jeff Sheldon m2@brmug.org
 Contact anyone above if you have suggestions for BRMUG.

After the Meeting

Join us at Brewbachers on Bluebonnet after the BRMUG meeting: fun, food, open format. Get to know each other.

Newsletter Articles

Please submit newsletter articles to newsletter@brmug.org. Articles are printed on a space available basis. Submissions are welcome!

The May meeting will be held at the **Bluebonnet Library** on **May 15th**, the 3rd Thursday of the month, at 6:30 P.M. This month's presentation will be on **iPhoto** by Glenn Matherne. iPhoto is a phenomenal software package provided by Apple that handles importing pictures from cameras (many of them), media cards (if you have a reader), and disk. Glenn will give an overview of iPhoto. I suspect he will demo iPhoto by sharing pictures from his honeymoon in Hawaii. Members and guests are welcome. After the meeting, we will have our normal Social

Meeting is at the Bluebonnet Library!

Visit <http://www.brmug.org/next-meeting.html> for more information.

April Meeting Review

Last month we had planned to do iPhoto. A conflict with Glenn's brother's wedding prevented him from being able to attend the meeting and present the topic. We solved the problem by swapping my talk on Mac OS X Customization to April and moving iPhoto to May. In support of the Mac OS X Customization, I added a new page to our web site (<http://www.brmug.org/osx.php>) that lists the various useful pieces of software I have found. In covering these, everyone learned at least one new trick. I hope you enjoyed the meeting. If you missed it, check out the web page for a links to the software I talked about.

AAPL

Finally a good month! Apple stock gained about \$4 this month (almost 30% increase). A shame we were not smart enough to see it coming. Actually we did talk about the rumors around Apple's music offering and come to the conclusion it was going to be really good or really bad (turned out even better than hoped). AAPL closed at \$18.30 a share bringing the market cap to \$6.69 billion. Finally, Wall Street thinks Apple is worth more than its cash on hand. I wonder what will happen when the Windows version of iTunes comes out?

Apple iTunes Music Store

Apple upgraded iTunes to version 4 and announced the opening of their online Music Store. You access the store via iTunes (suddenly iTunes feels a lot more

like a browser). You can purchase single tracks (songs) for \$.99 each (unless the track exceeds a maximum time limit - then you must buy the entire album). Albums start in the \$10 range. When the Music Store opened Apple had about 200,000 songs in their catalog. This number is planned to increase. In fact, Apple has received numerous inquiries from independent studios about the possibility of having Apple carry their music. Apple hopes sign these labels, but their current goal is to get past the initial startup. The first 18 hours netted 175,000 tracks sold. This grew to over a million tracks in less than a week. Many observers (including me) were surprised to discover that over half of the first week's sales were complete album sales -- not individual tracks. When you start thinking about how many tracks a week they might sell when Windows people can access the service, it gets very exciting. In fact, Apple is hiring programmers to port iTunes to Windows. Of course the drawback will be the legal battle with Apple Records when the iTunes Music Store open in Britain. Read part II of this inside for a lot more details about the new store.

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iTunes Music Store II

Apple opened the iTunes Music Store this month. It was not a big surprise. The rumor mills have been talked about it for a while. An editorial was even written last month saying that Apple's upcoming music store may be the last hope for the ailing music industry. So why the big jump in the stock price if the opening was not a big surprise?

Lots of reasons. Maybe people did not really believe the rumors. Maybe people did not expect it to work. Maybe it did not occur to people that Apple could make money selling music when everybody else is not. Maybe they thought the Macintosh user community was too small to buy enough music to matter. Maybe they thought DRM would kill any hope. Maybe the fact that no major Apple event was coming up.

It could have been any and all of these. In fact, all of these (and many others) probably had a lot to do with the surprise. I believe people were surprised because they were totally pre-occupied with the possible purchase of Vivendi Apple. Think about it. All you heard last month was how crazy Steve Jobs was to try and buy a recording company. Everyone knows that you can't make money in the recording industry now. Everyone knows you do not buy a company for more than you are worth.

Maybe the Vivendi deal was just a big diversion. Maybe Steve Jobs is brilliant. Maybe he is just lucky.

So what did happen? First, the iPod got a facelift. iPods now come in 10, 15, and 30 GB models. The 10 and 15 GB models are even thinner than ever (4.1

by 2.4 by 0.62 in.). The 30 GB model is 4.1 by 2.4 by 0.73 in. -- still very small. The new iPod has gained four navigation buttons on the front plus a hold switch on the top. All three models have a new connector at the bottom designed for the new docking cradle that charges the battery and provides FireWire and USB 2.0 connections (USB 2.0 drivers in June). The iPod can also connect to a new cable (via the bottom connector) that provides both FireWire and USB 2.0 connections. The screen is now backlit. Lots more has changed. With the new software, the iPod can now play AAC (16 to 320 Kbps), MP3 (32 to 320 Kbps), MP3 VBR, Audible, , AIFF, and WAV.

Apple now even has a Beyond Music web page for the iPod. It can store your calendar, text files, play games and act as an alarm clock. Almost a full featured PDA -- just needs input. Then you could copy your pictures right off the camera memory card. No need to have a laptop! The only things the iPod really can not do now are: play Ogg Vorbis/Flac, do stylus/keyboard input (what about a driver for a USB keyboard?), receive pages, be used as a phone, and clean the house. What a bright future!

iTunes also got a facelift. iTunes has always been more a music management system than merely an MP3 player. iTunes 4 (upgrade still requires a reboot) includes a lot of changes. Obviously the Music Store interface has been included. Beyond that, iTunes now supports AAC (Advanced Audio Coding -- part of the MPEG-4 specification). iTunes will now import (rip) songs into MP3, AAC, AIFF, and WAV.

Via Rendezvous, iTunes can now Share Music (stream music to other machines). No more having to copy all the music to all of your computers!

iTunes has always taken advantage of the Internet to download song/artist/album information. Now iTunes knows about album cover art. It does not automatically download the art, but does track art via album and display the art now.

The Internet Radio feature is useful again. When iTunes first came out, it was compatible with a broadcast method disappeared from the net. It took a while, but it now works fine -- I love being able to listen to Classic Rock at work (yet another thing that probably got fixed a while back). Don't forget the graphic equalizer either.

iTunes now tracks how many times things have been played and when they last played. Yet another neat little addition. You can now rate your music. In one sense

features like this might be considered wasted effort. But it's little things like this that appeal to individuals. Things like this are the difference between okay and neat. Apple sure has a lot of them.

Now, iTunes Music Store. In one sense it is no big deal. You now have just another music source called the Music Store on the left of your iTunes display. Clicking on it is kind of weird though. There is a short delay while iTunes connects to the Music Store via the Internet (exactly like waiting for a web page to load in a browser). In fact, it is easy to think you are in Safari instead of iTunes. You are presented with a page that allows you to search for music (by genre, artist, album, and song name). To make things easy, Apple has lots of lists on the screen (Top Album, Top Song, etc.).

Purchasing music requires that you set up an account with a credit card. Then purchases are automatically charged to your card. There is no membership or monthly fee. When you find a song you are interested in, you can simply click Buy Song. If you are not sure you want to buy the song, you can play the first 30 seconds of the song. This is really neat. You can make sure that you have the right song before you buy and download it!

When you buy a track, you are downloading an AAC file. Of course iTunes automatically pulls it down and inserts it into your music collection. This leads to several other issues. First you want to make backup copies of the music you purchase. You do not have an original CD to go back to and re-import.

Next we need to talk about Digital Rights Management (DRM). DRM is more about the music copyright holder's rights than about your rights. In fact, DRM has become a 4-letter word that means hassle and loss of individual rights. When someone obtains copyrighted music without paying for it, the artist and the publisher do not make money. Just like shoplifting. But when you can not play the music you bought because of anti-piracy measures, something else is also wrong. It is like buying a car and then finding out it only works on interstates. For Apple to be able to buy the rights to redistribute this music, they had to give in and support DRM. Fortunately Apple's DRM is not very intrusive. It allows unlimited duplication of a song onto iPods. It allows three computer system copies.

We also need to talk about sound quality. Since sound was first imitated, the argument has gone on about how perfect an imitation it was. MP3s were



BRMUG Mailing Address

5261 Highland Road #202
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

For more information call the User Group
President, Isaac Traxler: (225) 926-1552
e-mail: info@brmug.org
web: <http://www.brmug.org/>

never intended to make audiophiles happy. MP3s were intended to preserve as much sound quality as possible while dramatically reducing the size of the music. WAV files are the uncompressed music for the Windows world. No sound quality has been lost. AIFF is the WAV of the Macintosh world. These files are huge (640 MB for about an hour). MP3s can compress music do that dozens of raw CDs can be put on a single CD. This compression process loses some of the original sound information. An MP3 encoded song does not sound exactly like the original. Fortunately, you can adjust encoding parameters to minimize size, minimize loss, or somewhere in between. In fact, a good compromise setting when played back on the majority of audio equipment sounds just like the original. Under maximum quality, you can get to the point where very few systems can easily reproduce the difference. Most people can not hear the difference. Regardless, MP3 is a lossy format. AAC is like MP3. It compresses the sound and in the process loses some of the information. AACs do not compress as well as MP3s but they lose a lot less sound. Ogg Vorbis is yet another lossy encoding that compresses almost as good as MP3 and loses less sound quality than AAC. For now, iTunes and Apple do not support Ogg Vorbis. AAC is the best you can get from Apple.

So, is the iTunes Music Store right for you? It is obviously easy, convenient, and very reasonable (especially if you want individual songs). Drawbacks include: DRM, lossy encoding, and nothing tangible. Apple's DRM is not bad at all. This one can probably be ignored. The loss that an AAC has is exceptionally minimal. Even when turned back into a WAV/AIFF and then put onto a CD that any CD player can play, it is unlikely that you will tell the difference between that music and the real CD created by the vendor. But there is a difference. Probably the most significant issue for most people is that you do not get a physical copy of anything. You must make your own physical copy. Fortunately, iTunes not only will record it to CD for you, iTunes will even rip it into a WAV/AIFF so the songs you buy can be played on car and home stereos. All is left is that you have no physical proof that you own this song. The same can be said for most of the vinyl, 8-track, cassette, and many of the CDs that have been bought in the

Future Meeting Calendar		
May 15, 2003.....	iPhoto	Glenn Matherne ...Library
June 19, 2003	Mail.app	Isaac TraxlerLibrary
July 17, 2003	X Windows.....	Isaac TraxlerLibrary
August 21, 2003	iCal/iSync	Isaac TraxlerLibrary
TBA	BRMUG Picnic.....	EveryoneLSU
September 18, 2003	iMovie.....	TBALibrary
October 16, 2003.....	Mac OS X Utilities	Isaac TraxlerTBA
November 20, 2003.....	Annual Game Meeting.....	John Quebedeaux.Library
December 18, 2003	Christmas Party	EveryoneLibrary

past. They have been lost or discarded.

Clearly a lot of people do not see a problem with Apple's service. I have not bought any music yet. I am sure I will. As their catalog increases and gets rare older stuff, I am sure that I will take advantage of the service.

Wow. The iPod, iTunes, and the iTunes Music Store combine to make an impressive service. One that will change the future of music, the music industry, personal audio habits and more. In fact, the change is just starting. You better tighten your seatbelt -- Steve is driving.

by Isaac Traxler

Non Essentials

Ever since my wife and I purchased our new home in April, I have become the reluctant gardener. This is quite a change my slacker days of never going outside in broad daylight, much less watering a plant. I did not own a pet for ten years, except for a few gold fish. Actually, I have dabbled a bit here and there with plants at various apartments for a few years, never really landscaped a yard.

So this month, we are going to explore ways to get off the couch and get to work in the back yard, with a little help from your Macintosh. You would be surprised how much is available on the internet and in software to help you make your long neglected yard look like a well maintained garden.

First of all there is landscaping or planning out your garden for you needs. You can use canned programs like the home landscaper software for \$9.99 to actual Better Homes and Garden's garden series of CDs. You can always get neat plans from many sights on the internet, if you feel uncomfortable doing the planning yourself. I strongly recommend doing the landscape planning yourself because not all landscapers do good work. The good ones are expensive and have one to three month delays between jobs.

Second, you want to plant trees, shrubs and other perennial that will grow well in Louisiana, not just in temperate or tropical climates. Sure anyone can plant annuals and they grow well for a season or two here, but a true gardener can keep perennials growing for several years. That takes hard work and good research.

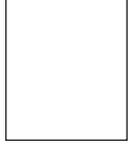
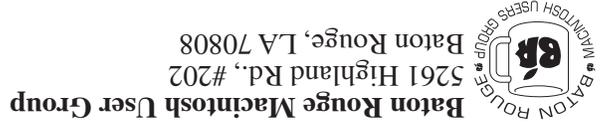
Next, you want to look at drainage and water consumption. This can be expensive depending upon the weather here. Some trees like Live Oaks and plants like tomatoes gobble up lots of water which makes for a huge water bill. Other plants like roses and rosemary need more drainage than the clay soil found in most of Louisiana. So you need to either plant

Then you need to purchase the plants, often for really exotic plants like orchids and carnivorous plants you get a better selection by shopping on the internet. There is a really poor selection of aquatic plants and Louisiana native plants in town. Lots of nurseries advertise on the internet and offer overnight deliver.

Perhaps the best source of information on plants in Louisiana and planning gardens for and around Louisiana is the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. It is a division of the state department of agriculture and is closely connected to LSU's agriculture research facilities. The Burden research center has annual plant sales on Essen Lane. For more information checkout the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service's web site.

I have learned more about roses and water gardening than I ever wanted to know. Trouble is I always hated pulling weeds and mowing grass. Now I have a big yard and lots of flower beds to care for. I guess it had something to do with my reading Mind Storms by Seymour Pappert, the founder of the LOGO programming language. He is an avid gardener.

by Glenn Matherne



This Month:
 Photo
 by Glenn Matherne

*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 5/2003

Name: _____

Address: Street, City, State, ZipCode

Home Phone: _____

Office Phone: _____

Things the club should do: _____

My interest areas: _____
