

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

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We
speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

X and Gone

OS X (ten) first impressions. I've been working with the "finished" version of OS X for three weeks now. OS X is installed on my G4 desktop and G4 PowerBook. Both installations were simple and straightforward (unlike the OS X Public Beta! See CCC News September 2000 for more details). However, I had major problems installing the Mac OS 9.1 upgrade on the G4 tower (needed to run older software with OS X) due to an incompatible SCSI device: my beloved *Alps 2010* printer.

To those of you who remember the System 6 to System 7 transition, the OS X upgrade will be familiar. Things look and behave differently than in OS 9. It has taken two weeks to get over reflexively trying to do things the System 7–OS 9 way and begin to reflexively do them the OS X way. Old habits die hard! But now that I am used to them, the new ways have a lot to like. One example: the Dock replaces the Launcher and the Application menu. I can now see every open application and minimized window. Nothing can hide from me. And, I have instant access to my most used applications and documents. Using a neat shareware utility called *Docking Manuevers*, I have the Dock pinned to the right edge of the screen next to my hard drive icons. It is easy to access everything as I only have to go to one place on screen. New users are the most advantaged by these new fangled ways. We old timers will learn (!) to adjust.

Older software like *Netscape*, *Ready, Set, Go!* and *Filemaker Pro* all run perfectly and are even a little bit faster. I still can't print, however, until I replace the old Alps (SOB!) or Hewlett Packard provides a network driver for my twelve year old *Deskwriter C* (fat chance!). Sadly, the *Alps 2010* will be retired for a new inkjet printer.

Very sad news reached me April 3th. *ComputerWare*, the world's largest Macintosh-only retail store chain, died. Ten stores closed, gone forever. Employees were given their last paychecks and sent home just before the stores were to open for the day. Even the store managers were caught completely by surprise. The person recording the goodbye answering machine message had tears in their voice.

ComputerWare began life seventeen years ago in a tiny storefront in Palo Alto. This was a store opened by Mac enthusiasts, for Mac enthusiasts. It was a place to buy and a place to troubleshoot, socialize and trade stories. *ComputerWare's* employees were renown for their technical knowledge and no-pressure selling style. The company slogan was: "*We Live Mac. We eat Mac. We sleep Mac. We dream Mac. All we do is Mac.*" and as long as that was true they were a success. Over that seventeen years, *ComputerWare* grew to ten stores ringing the San Francisco Bay. Since 1997, they had been classified as an Apple Specialist, the highest award Apple can bestow on a retailer. They weathered Apple's ups and downs and continued to grow. But, things change.

The founders long gone, *ComputerWare's* ownership was in flux. The old customer focus was changed to a bottom-line focus. Managers were pressured to get more out of less. Good employees quit (myself among them), staff was cut, services and inventories were cut. Soon, the attitude and service that made *ComputerWare* unique was gone and customers discovered that they could just as easily be poorly served at *CompUSA* or online, for less money. It happened little by little, but the *ComputerWare* I knew and admired was gone long before the doors were locked for the last time.

iTunes

Who would have thought that playing music on your computer would be the thing that drove the computer industry in the early 2000s? I sure didn't (nobody else did either until it was too obvious to ignore).

Of course we have been listening to music CDs on our Macs as long as CDROM drives have existed, and musicians have been recording and editing their music on Macs for as long as Macs have existed. But what changed everything were two inventions and our opportunistic nature.

Invention number one was the CD recorder (or burner). This device allowed a computer user to copy music CDs and (more importantly) to compile custom CDs.

Invention number two was the MP3 standard. This set the rules for taking music and compressing it into computer documents that were a fraction of the size of the original recording. With MP3 you could conveniently send music files over the internet in minutes instead of hours and you could store thousands of musical pieces on your hard drive, CDROMs and

specialized MP3 players (sort of like digital portable tape players) and still have room for your other applications and files. This led to *Napster* and all of that excitement.

MP3s are a very nice and convenient way to store music. However, to listen to the result you need special software that can understand the MP3 format. Several companies have produced such software. I think Apple makes the best one. They call their MP3 software *iTunes* and, glory be, they give it away for free! <http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/index.html>

iTunes performs four functions. It stores, plays and organizes MP3s. It records the music on CDROM disks. It provides convenient access to MP3 streams on the internet (MP3 streams are like internet radio stations. Go to <http://www.live365.com> for an example) and for you ex-hippies out there, a psychedelic light show to accompany the music as it plays. It does all of these things really well at a very high quality level and is very easy to use.

To use *iTunes* you must have a USB capable Mac (almost any Mac made since July 1998), Mac OS 9.0.4 or above and several hundred megs of hard drive space if you want to store a lot of tunes.

Mr. Curt Gets a Vacation

First one in 3 years. I'll be gone May 25 through June 4 to celebrate my niece's college graduation and my Dad's 78th birthday. I'll be checking email, so don't be shy about sending some (I don't want to go cold turkey, you know). Thanks!

April Tip

Last month we discussed changing your web browser software's home page. In doing so, we left out you AOL users! Here's how AOL folks do this trick:

- 1) Open America Online.
- 2) On the Button Bar, click My AOL.
- 3) From the menu that appears, choose Preferences.
- 4) The Preferences window opens, choose the WWW icon from the left side of the window.
- 5) Note that the right side of the window is now labelled Web Preferences.
- 6) Change the address shown as Home Page to whatever address you want to use. Just type the address in.
- 7) Click the OK button and you are done.

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