



# MAC FACTS

from

## Mac Help Desk

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(972) 783-9787 • (214) 249-9543 - *Pager*

e-mail address - [machelpdesk@comcast.net](mailto:machelpdesk@comcast.net)

Web site - <http://www.machelpdesk.com>

a Macintosh Solutions Provider company

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### *A Message from Dru*

I usually don't do big issues, but I've had a number of requests about transferring home movies or videos to DVDs. Jim Heid's informative article tells you 'How To'. See *For Your Information*.

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Happy Birthday to...Me! How old? Let's just say that I'm somewhere between 50 and death.

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A lot is going on in the Apple world. See *Newsline* for more info. And expect even more on the 28<sup>th</sup> when His Steveness addresses the Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC). It is expected that he will announce the newest version of the OS X saga, OS X.4 (codenamed *Tiger*).

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Got a favorite web site? Send them to me and I'll share them with the entire group. Here's one of mine - <http://go.to/funpic>

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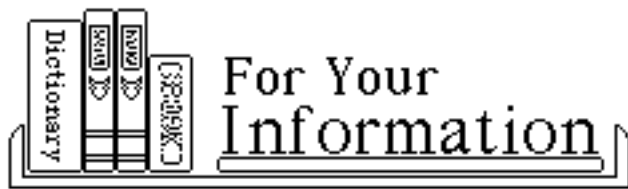
Just a Suggestion?!? - Now that the kids are out of school and every one can breath a sigh of relief...it might be a great time to get that Mac tuned-up, cleaned-up, upgraded, and all-around de-kidded prior to the beginning of the next school year. Hint, hint, hint.

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Unashamed plug - I mention the Apple Corps of Dallas (ACD) a lot here. Why? Because it's one of the best resources that you can find for all things Mac in the DFW area. The group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday every month at the Richardson Civic Center on Central Expressway and Arapaho. There's no admission fee and it only costs \$30 if you want to become a member. It'll be the best \$30 you've ever spent. (That crazy weekend your sophomore year doesn't count!) Go to <http://www.acd.org> for more info.

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Thanks to the Bergman's, Stewart's, Zarit's, and a host of others who stopped by to enjoy some great music from my band, LoveSong. Next public engagement is Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Coffee Haus in Plano ([www.planocoffee.com](http://www.planocoffee.com)). 8pm - 10pm, no cover!. Hope to see you there. [Who knows, even I might sing a song (yeah, right!)]☺



## **From VHS to DVD**

By Jim Heid

Somewhere in your house is a drawer full of videotapes - aging home movies shot with a big, bulky camcorder that may not even work anymore. You haven't watched these movies in years, but all this talk about the digital hub and iLife has got you thinking, "Why not transfer those old videos to the Mac and burn them to DVDs?"

Good thinking. Videotapes deteriorate over time. Heat, humidity and improper storage take their toll on tapes, decaying the magnetic particles that represent your child's first steps. By digitizing that old footage now, you can effectively stop the deterioration in its tracks.

Better still, if you own Apple's iLife suite and a SuperDrive-equipped Mac, you can use iMovie and iDVD to enhance and share your footage for all to enjoy. You can cut the scenes that seemed important then but are snooze-inducing now, add music and narration, create chapter markers to allow fast access to important scenes, and then burn it all to multiple DVDs, so that everyone in the family can have a copy.

Transferring old film and video to DVD can be a time-consuming process - but it's well worth the effort. This step-by-step guide will show you how to get set up and what to do with the movies once they're on your Mac.

### **Step One: Set Up Your Transfer Station**

Before you can transfer footage from an old videotape to your Mac, you'll have to convert the tape's analog signal into digital data that iMovie can use. Here's your equipment list:

#### **A Video Deck**

The first thing you need is a VCR or a camcorder that can play back your original tapes. If your VCR is showing its age - for example, if it suffers from poor playback or frequent tracking problems - consider springing for a new one. The improvement in video quality will be worth the investment. If possible, get a VCR that supports S-Video output; this option is more expensive, but it produces a sharper picture than the alternative, composite video.

If your tapes are in an obsolete format, such as Betamax, and if your old camcorder no longer works, you can try looking for a replacement on eBay. However, you'll get better results by sending your tapes to a professional transfer service. Have the tapes transferred to MiniDV format, and then use a MiniDV camcorder to import the footage into your Mac.

#### **Digitizing Hardware**

You also need a device that can convert the analog signal coming from your VCR or old camcorder into digital data. You have two options here: a MiniDV camcorder or an analog-to-DV converter box.

Most current MiniDV camcorders offer a pass-through mode, which converts incoming analog video into digital data, and then transfers that data to your Mac via a FireWire cable.

You'll probably have to adjust some menu settings to access your camcorder's pass-through mode. On many Canon camcorders, for example, you must open the VCR menu and turn on the AV-To-DV Out setting. In some cases, you may also have to remove the camcorder's MiniDV cassette. Check your camera's manual for specific instructions.

If your MiniDV camcorder doesn't provide a pass-through mode, you can still use it. Simply dub your old tapes onto the camcorder's MiniDV tape, and then import the MiniDV footage into your Mac. This process takes longer than just converting the data - you have to copy the entire tape before you can even begin importing footage - but it offers a significant advantage.

When you're done, you'll have a complete MiniDV backup of your original tape. And because you have a digital backup of your footage, you can be more selective when importing scenes from your movie. If you decide you want to add more footage later, you can simply import it from the MiniDV tape rather than reconnect your entire transfer station.

If you don't own a MiniDV camcorder, your second option is to purchase an analog-to-DV converter such as the US\$199 Datavideo DAG-100. This standalone device mimics a camcorder's pass-through mode but costs significantly less than a MiniDV camcorder.

### **An Extra Hard Drive**

The last thing you'll need is a place to store your digital data. Digital video inhales disk space at a rate of about 200 MB per minute. This means you'll need around 12 GB of space for every hour of footage you import. If you don't have that much space to spare, consider purchasing an additional hard drive.

My advice: think big. A 200-GB external FireWire hard drive costs less than \$300 and will give you enough room for hours of video. It also serves as an excellent archival medium for completed projects.

### **Step Two: Prepare for Import**

Videotape is a relatively fragile medium. Any irregularity in temperature or reel tension can cause playback problems or, worse, damage the tape. So before you press the play button on your VCR and begin importing footage, make sure your videotape is in the best possible condition.

### **Acclimate Your Tapes**

If you've stored your videotapes in an unusually hot or cold environment - such as an attic or an unheated closet - bring them into the room where you'll be working and let them sit for a few hours. Large swings in humidity or temperature can cause moisture to condense within a videocassette. And playing a tape in that state could damage it and your VCR.

Also avoid embarking on a video project if the weather is humid and the room you're working in isn't air-conditioned. In high humidity, videotape tends to adhere to a VCR's spinning heads. The extra friction can cause the tape and the heads to wear out prematurely.

### **Shuttle Your Tapes**

Once you've acclimated a tape, fast-forward it to the end and then rewind it to the beginning. This

process, called stacking, exercises the videocassette mechanism and restores tension on the tape reels, alleviating some of the problems with aging videotape.

### **Check Your Tracking**

You're likely to run into tracking problems when working with aging videotapes and VCRs. These picture and sound distortions occur when the VCR's heads fail to read the critical control track located along one edge of the tape. Before you begin importing video, play a few minutes of your tape and adjust your VCR's tracking feature to optimize playback quality.

### **Step Three: Import Your Video**

You're now ready to begin the transfer process. Open iMovie and create a new project for your imported footage. By default, iMovie stores projects in the Movies folder. If you want to save disk space by storing your footage on an external hard drive, then save your iMovie project on that drive. You can import all the footage into one iMovie project. But if your videotape contains a mishmash of events, creating separate projects for each type of footage may make more sense - separating your vacation footage from holiday gatherings, for example.

Switch to iMovie's Import mode by clicking on the camera icon located under the Monitor. When you're ready, press the play button on your VCR or camcorder. As the tape plays, you can watch the footage in the Monitor. When you come to a part you want to capture for your movie, click on iMovie's Import button or press the spacebar. Click on it a second time (or press the spacebar again) to stop importing.

### **Managing Your Space**

If some of the video footage is useless - for example, blurry images shot through a moving car's windshield - you can save disk space by not importing it. But don't be too selective. I recommend erring on the safe side by importing even those scenes that don't seem especially interesting. Times and people change - a scene that seems mundane today may be utterly priceless tomorrow. If you don't import it now, there's a good chance you never will.

### **Controlling Your Clips**

iMovie limits the file size of each individual clip to 2 GB - which translates to exactly 9 minutes and 28 seconds of footage. If you simply let your tape play while importing, iMovie will automatically create a new clip each time this limit is reached - regardless of whether that happens in the middle of a conversation or at a convenient scene break. You won't lose any footage when the new clip is made, but you'll need to piece the individual clips back together in iMovie's timeline to regain the scene's continuity.

You can make the editing process easier by deciding for yourself where each clip begins and ends. For example, you may prefer to put each scene in its own clip, even if it includes only a minute or two of footage. This approach lets you break up the action more naturally, so it's easier to reorganize your scenes later.

### **Dealing with Scan Lines**

As you import video into iMovie, you'll notice a thin band of scan lines at the very bottom of the video frame. Don't worry about it. Because TV sets crop off the outer edges of a video frame, these scan lines won't appear when you play your DVD back on a TV set.

They will be visible, however, if viewers watch your DVD on their computers. If you anticipate this

happening, you may want to consider cropping out those scan lines. Stupendous Software makes a free iMovie plug-in that crops your video frames. But be aware that when you apply cropping, iMovie must re-render every frame of the video. This process not only takes a lot of time but also doubles the amount of disk space required for your project.

#### **Step Four: Edit Your Movie**

Once you've imported all your clips, you can use iMovie's editing tools to slim down and enhance your original footage. This is your opportunity to go beyond simply preserving old footage, and to take a fresh look at the recorded events. With the help of titles, transitions, chapter markers, music, photos, and more, the possibilities for editing are almost limitless. Here are a few pointers to consider as you work:

#### **Limit Bad Video**

Analog video tends to contain a lot of noise - faint snowy fuzz that degrades picture quality. Video noise makes your movie look bad, and it encodes poorly - causing the footage on your finished DVD to look blocky. It's especially troublesome in low-light scenes, such as shots taken indoors or around a campfire.

When importing your video, use an S-Video cable and a VCR that's in good condition, to minimize these encoding artifacts. If your footage contains a lot of dark, noisy scenes, limit the length of video on a DVD to under one hour, so iDVD can encode the footage at a higher bit rate and minimize compression.

#### **Split Your Clips**

The first thing you'll want to do when editing is remove any bad footage - jerky camera movements, out-of-focus shots, and so on.

In iMovie 4, you can adjust the beginning or ending of a clip simply by dragging its edges inward. Later, if you decide you want to regain some of that footage, you can pull the edges of the clip outward to restore them.

To remove a bad shot from the *middle* of a clip - or to edit clips in earlier versions of iMovie - drag the clip to iMovie's timeline, position the playhead at the beginning of the offending shot, and then choose Split Video Clip At Playhead from the Edit menu. (This command is also useful for breaking up one long clip into several smaller ones.)

Next, move the playhead to the last frame you want to remove and choose the command again. You should now have a single clip that contains just the unwanted shot. To send it to the cutting room floor, select it and press the delete key. Deleted scenes remain in the Trash until you empty it. However, if you think you might need the cut scene later, switch back to the clip viewer (Command-E) and drag the scene to an empty spot in the Clips pane instead of deleting it.

#### **Add a Soundtrack**

Let's face it: most home videos sound as though they'd been recorded through a tin can. You can fix that by adding a new soundtrack that complements the action.

If your video's original sound consisted of nothing but wind and room noise, consider removing the sound completely and playing a song from your iTunes library instead. To mute an entire video track in iMovie, deselect the box to the right of the video track in iMovie's timeline. To mute or adjust the volume of individual clips, select the clips in the timeline and then reposition the volume

slider.

Narration and commentary add a wonderful historical perspective to your old home videos. To record narration, use iMovie's Audio pane. If your movie features kids who are teenagers today, for example, you might want to have them comment on the footage as it plays. Let them talk about their memories of the event and about what went on behind the scenes. You could also narrate the video yourself, talking about what it was like taking a couple of colicky kids on a cross-country road trip.

### **Sprinkle in Photos**

Do you have some old photos of the same event you captured on videotape? Why not add these shots to your video footage to help expand the narrative? To use old photos, scan them into your Mac, add them to iPhoto, and then import them into iMovie from the Photos pane. You can give your photos a sense of motion by using iMovie's Ken Burns effect, which mimics the documentary trick of slowly panning across a photo while zooming in or out.

Old photos can also provide a nice backdrop for iMovie titles or iDVD menus. If you have a lot of photos that complement the video, you might want to include them on the DVD as a slide show.

### **Add Titles and Transitions**

Titles and transitions give your movie professional polish and help ease viewers between disjointed scenes. If you come across dialogue that's hard to understand, create subtitles. To make sure your titles won't get cut off when played on a television, deselect the QT Margins option in iMovie's Titles pane.

### **Create Chapter Markers**

For videos that are more than a few minutes long, consider adding chapter markers via iMovie's iDVD pane. Later on, when you go to burn your DVD, iDVD will use these chapter markers to create a submenu that lets viewers quickly jump to specific scenes.

Add a chapter marker whenever a key scene begins. For a vacation video, you might add a marker at the beginning of each new destination. For a video that presents several years' worth of birthday parties, add a marker (and a title) at the beginning of each party. Your final DVD will be easier to navigate, and it will be more enjoyable to watch multiple times.

### **Save Some Stills**

Many of iDVD's menu themes contain drop zones - special areas into which you can drag photos or movies to customize your menu designs. If your video contains one particular scene that's representative of the entire movie - for example, a kid blowing out birthday candles - save a still from that scene to use in a drop zone.

To do so, position iMovie's playhead at the frame you'd like to save. Next, choose Save Frame As from the File menu and specify a name for the frame. Use the default JPEG format.

### **Save a Scene**

You can also place a snippet of video in an iDVD drop zone - to show the entire candle-blowing incident, for example. To use a scene from your movie in a drop zone, first save your finished iMovie project. Isolate the footage you want in its own clip, and then choose Share from the File menu. Click on the QuickTime button, and choose the Full Quality DV option. Be sure to turn on the Share Selected Clips Only option. Then click on Share and give the new movie a name.

Close the iMovie project without saving your changes. (This step preserves the clip in its original, unsplit form.) Once you're in iDVD, simply drag the short movie you just created into the drop zone.

### **Step Five: Create Your DVD**

When you're satisfied with your edited movies, you can transfer your finished video into iDVD, customize its menus, and then burn your finished project.

#### **Make the Move to iDVD**

If you have only one iMovie project to burn, you can import it into iDVD simply by clicking on the Create iDVD Project button in iMovie's iDVD pane. iDVD will launch and begin importing the movie. If the movie contains chapter markers, iDVD will also create a Scene Selection menu with buttons for each of the chapters.

To add more iMovie projects to your DVD, click on iDVD's Customize button. When the Customize drawer pops out from the left side of the window, click on the Media button and choose Movies from the pop-up menu. Find the movie you want to add, and then drag its thumbnail into your DVD's menu area. If you've stored your iMovie projects somewhere other than in your Movies folder - on an external hard drive, for example - you'll need to tell iDVD where to find them. Open iDVD's Movies preference pane and click on the Add button to specify the location of your files.

For best results, open your iDVD preference pane and choose the Best Quality option. iDVD lets you include as much as two hours of video on a disc. But you'll get the best image quality by limiting video to an hour or less.

#### **Customize Your Menus**

iDVD includes several predesigned templates - called themes - for your DVD menus. To add one of these to your project, click on the Customize button, select Theme from the Customize drawer, and then set the Theme pop-up menu to All. Choose a theme that best represents your subject. The Projector theme, for example, is great for old movies that you've transferred from film.

If your theme contains a drop zone, add the still image that you saved from iMovie. Simply drag the image's icon from the Finder into the drop zone.

You can also use an image as the background to your iDVD menu: just press the K key as you drag the image into the menu area.

#### **Preview and Burn**

When you've finished designing your DVD, click on iDVD's Preview button to test your disc. If everything checks out, double-click on the Burn button and insert a blank DVD-R.

Note that if your DVD project takes up 4 GB of disk space, you'll need at least 8 GB of free space (essentially, double the amount of your project) to burn the DVD. To gauge the size of your project, open the Status pane of iDVD's Customize drawer.

For reliable burns, don't use your Mac while a disc is burning. If you're burning on a PowerBook, plug the PowerBook into the wall so it won't run out of battery power.

When iDVD finishes encoding and burning your movies, it'll give you the option of burning

additional discs or closing the iDVD project. Even if you're burning a DVD only for yourself, I recommend making additional copies. Discs sometimes get lost and it'd be a shame to have to do all of this again.

### **Step Six: Archive Your Work**

Once you've finished burning your DVDs, you'll probably want to free up the hard-drive space that your project is taking up.

If you have an external FireWire hard drive, consider archiving your digital media on it. Drag the folders containing your iMovie and iDVD project files onto the hard drive, and then delete them from your system.

If you own a MiniDV camcorder, you can also use iMovie to export your edited movie back to a MiniDV tape. You won't be able to save your iDVD projects this way. But if you decide to burn additional discs later, you can reimport your completed movie into iMovie with no loss in picture quality. Another option-one that does let you save your iDVD projects-is the \$45 DV Backup, from coolatoola; it lets you back up any data to a compatible DV camcorder.

### **The Last Word**

Enhancing and sharing old video or film footage can be a lot of work, especially if you take the time to edit scenes and add additional elements. But it can also be a fun and rewarding exercise - a way to relive old memories and preserve them for the future. That's what I'd call a labor of love.



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## NEWSLINE

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### Apple Introduces New G5 Models

Apple today unveiled its new Power Mac G5 desktop line with every model featuring dual 64-bit PowerPC G5 processors. The top model, featuring two 2.5 GHz processors, the industry's fastest front-side bus running at 1.25 GHz per processor, and advanced liquid cooling starts at \$2,999. The entry model, featuring dual 1.8 GHz processors, starts at just \$1,999.

The Power Mac G5 line offers leading-edge expansion with dual 1.5 Gbps serial ATA interfaces, the industry's fastest PCI-X interface technology and AGP 8X Pro graphics. The Power Mac G5 comes standard with either the NVIDIA GeForceFX 5200 Ultra or the ATI Radeon 9600 XT graphics card; the ATI Radeon 9800 XT high-performance graphics card is available as a build-to-order option for incredible 3D design, visualization and gaming. All Power Mac G5 desktops deliver industry-leading connectivity and high-performance I/O, including Gigabit Ethernet, FireWire 800 and FireWire 400 ports, three USB 2.0 ports, optical digital audio input and output, built-in support for 54 Mbps AirPort Extreme wireless networking and an optional Bluetooth module. [...]

The dual 1.8 GHz and dual 2.0 GHz Power Mac G5 models are available now, and the dual 2.5 GHz Power Mac G5 model is expected to be available in July through the Apple Store, at Apple's retail stores and Apple Authorized Resellers. The single 1.25 GHz Power Mac G4, with suggested retail price of \$1,299 (US), will no longer be in production and is available for purchase while supplies last through the Apple Store.

All models included 8x SuperDrives and an AGP 8x Pro graphics slot with other specifications as follows:

#### \$1999 Power Mac G5

- Dual 1.8 GHz 64-bit PowerPC G5;
- 256MB 400 MHz 128-bit DDR SDRAM (4GB maximum);
- 80GB Serial ATA 7200 rpm hard drive;
- NVIDIA GeForceFX 5200 Ultra with 64MB DDR SDRAM;
- 3 PCI slots (64-bit, 33 MHz)

#### \$2499 Power Mac G5

- Dual 2.0 GHz 64-bit PowerPC G5;
- 512MB 400 MHz 128-bit DDR SDRAM (8GB maximum);
- 160GB Serial ATA 7200 rpm hard drive;
- NVIDIA GeForceFX 5200 Ultra with 64MB DDR SDRAM;
- 3 PCI-X slots (one 64-bit 133 MHz, two 64-bit 100 MHz)

#### \$2999 Power Mac G5 (due in July)

- Dual 2.5 GHz 64-bit PowerPC G5;
- 512MB 400 MHz 128-bit DDR SDRAM (8GB maximum);
- 160GB Serial ATA 7200 rpm hard drive;
- ATI RADEON 9600 XT with 128MB DDR SDRAM;
- 3 PCI-X slots (one 64-bit 133 MHz, two 64-bit 100 MHz)

All Power Mac G5 systems ship with iChat AV, Safari™, Sherlock®, Address Book, QuickTime®, iLife® (includes iTunes®, iPhoto™, iMovie®, iDVD™ and GarageBand™), iSync, iCal®, DVD Player, Classic environment, Art Directors Toolkit X, EarthLink Total Access 2004, GraphicConverter, Microsoft Internet Explorer, OmniGraffle, OmniOutliner, QuickBooks for Mac New User Edition, Xcode and Zinio Reader.



## Apple Unveils AirPort Express for Mac & PC Users

Apple® unveiled AirPort® Express, the world's first 802.11g mobile base station that can be plugged directly into the wall for wireless Internet connections and USB printing, or thrown into a laptop bag to bring wireless freedom to hotel rooms with broadband connections. AirPort Express also features analog and digital audio outputs that can be connected to a stereo and AirTunes music networking software which works seamlessly with iTunes®, giving users a simple and inexpensive way to wirelessly stream iTunes music on their Mac® or PC to any room in the house. AirPort Express features a single piece ultra-compact design weighing just 6.7 ounces, and will be available to Mac and PC users starting in July for just \$129.

“AirPort Express isn't just the world's first mobile 802.11g base station-with the addition of AirTunes users can now play their iTunes music on any stereo in their home-all without wires,” said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. “This innovative Apple product will appeal to both notebook users who want wireless freedom in their hotel rooms and to music lovers who want to listen to their iTunes music library on a stereo located anywhere in their home.”

Apple was the first company to offer consumers easy, affordable wireless networking and is now the first to offer a truly portable wireless base station compatible with industry standard 802.11g and 802.11b wireless devices. AirPort Express features an incredibly compact design with no power brick required, providing maximum portability so it can easily be taken on the road for wireless broadband access in hotel rooms. The AirPort Express mobile base station also includes a built-in combination digital and analog audio connector allowing users to connect AirPort Express

to a home stereo, powered analog speakers or the latest digital 5.1 surround sound systems.

AirTunes is Apple's breakthrough music networking technology which works seamlessly with iTunes running on either Macs or PCs to let users easily create a wireless music network in their home. iTunes 4.6 automatically detects remote speakers and displays them in a simple pop-up list for the user to select. Once the remote speakers are selected, AirTunes wirelessly streams the iTunes music from the computer to the AirPort Express base station. AirTunes music is encoded to protect it from theft while streaming across the wireless music network and uses Apple's lossless compression technology to insure no loss of sound quality. AirPort Express provides a range of up to 150 feet, and multiple AirPort Express base stations can be bridged together to send music to extended areas.

AirPort Express offers both Mac and PC users the ability to share a single DSL or cable broadband account with up to 10 simultaneous users and a single USB printer with multiple users. With its advanced security features, AirPort Express safeguards data on networked computers with support for WiFi Protected Access (WPA), 128-bit encryption and a built-in firewall.

### **Pricing & Availability**

AirPort Express can be ordered immediately through the Apple Store® ([www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)) and is expected to be available in July at Apple's retail stores and Apple Authorized Resellers for a suggested retail price of \$129 (US). AirTunes requires the next version of iTunes, iTunes 4.6, which is expected to be available later this week as a free download.



## **New Power Mac G5 models include "System Migration" feature**

The just-announced updated Power Mac G5 models are the first to include Apple's new "System Migration" feature. Apple's website states:

"Apple simplicity lets you add a Power Mac G5 to your creative studio without days of downtime configuring a new system. The new Mac OS X setup assistant helps you effortlessly move user accounts, system preferences, documents and applications from an old Mac to a new Power Mac G5 - and the transfer is FireWire fast."

This feature evidently works in the following manner:

- On first boot, you're given the opportunity to connect a FireWire cable between your new G5 and your old Mac.
- The Setup Assistant walks you through various types of files on your old Mac - user folders (and accounts), applications, system add-ons, etc. - and lets you choose whether or not to transfer them to your new G5.
- The Setup Assistant then proceeds to transfer the appropriate files and completes the setup process.

As moving from an old Mac to a new one has always been one of the biggest hassles involved in upgrading your computer system, we welcome the concept behind this new feature; we're anxious to see how well it performs in real-world use.



## **iTunes Music Store to the U.K. and Europe**

Apple launched its revolutionary iTunes Music Store in the UK, France and Germany giving music fans there the same large online catalogue, a la carte pricing, free previews, one-click



send them to me at [machelpdesk@comcast.net](mailto:machelpdesk@comcast.net) Feel free to share this newsletter with a friend. The newsletter archives are located at <http://www.machelpdesk.com/page6a.html>. Y'all come back now, y'hear.