

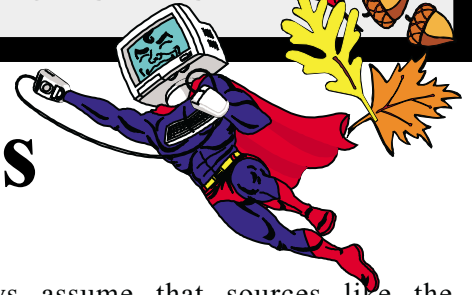
# MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

## September 2001 Newsletter



### Quips N' Tips

by Rick Howell



Every day, I am amazed at the power and knowledge mankind has created with the internet. So many people working together to share the common knowledge of the world is the concept that knowledge engineers only dream of. For the uninitiated, a knowledge engineer is a guy who goes into a company, interviews all the experts on operation of the company, and then builds a simulation of the company's operations, based on the information he gathers from the experts. For the simulation to be accurate, his information has to be accurate.....it's the old axiom....garbage in, garbage out. If the information he gets from the "experts" is inaccurate for whatever reason, chances are the simulation will not work. So, Rick, what has this got to do with the internet? Glad you asked.

The internet is a HUGE resource for information. If you want to know about something, chances are you can find more information than you can use on the internet. The only problem with that is just which of these gleanings to you use? For example, back in the 60's there was a popular recreational drug known as LSD. LSD was a powerful hallucinogenic drug which had different results on different people. Some users claimed to see spiders crawling all over the place, while others claimed the universe unfolded in front of them. Researchers saw LSD as a powerful mind-altering chemical which actually changed the chemistry of the brain for a period of time. This represents three different viewpoints. First, the guy who saw spiders might report that LSD is a drug which induces paranoia and preys on your primal fears. The second guy might claim that LSD is a mind-expanding drug which will make you see everything in a new light. The researcher is still dissecting the brains of the first two trying to figure out the effects of the drug on the brain. In any event, each of these three viewpoints is valid to some extent. So how do we qualify what we have quantified? That is the question that we all face on the internet. How do you know the data you are getting is good and from a reliable resource?

We can always assume that sources like the Encyclopedia Britannica are reliable. You might even assume that Microsoft Encarta is reasonably reliable as long as it doesn't disagree with Mr. Gates' philosophy. However, not only do we have to consider the source, but we also have to consider the time the facts were recorded. If we look at a world atlas from 1901, it is considerably different from a current world atlas. Many things can happen to change the facts, from opinionated writers to world politics, all of which can influence the results of our research on the internet. I think perhaps the best policy is to examine as many viewpoints as you can assimilate, and draw your own conclusion. In the case of exact facts and figures, go with the more reliable source.

Intel recently introduced their 2 GHz processor. All reports say it is a speed demon. Demand for rambus RAM has kept the prices a little higher than comparable SDRAM or DDR DRAM, and Intel's insistence on maintaining high prices on their latest processor keeps the system price way above the system price of a comparable AMD system. You just have to be the judge whether the Intel name is worth the difference. In the background, Intel has also demonstrated a 3.7 GHz processor to select manufacturers, but has not committed to a release date.

### MEETING NOTICE

by: *George Miner*

**When:** Tuesday, Sept. 11th, at 7:15 PM

**Where:** Old Bedford School (in 1800 block of Bedford Road)

**Program:** Our guest speaker for this month is **Mike Williams**, the Saturday afternoon host of *Cyberline* on radio station *KYNG 105.3* from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. Bring a friend and enjoy. All are welcome to join us at the I-HOP after the meeting.

With the new 80 gigabyte hard drives that are coming out, another question is being raised. What happens when we reach the physical limit of ATA specification drives? ATA hard drives have a physical limitation of 137 gigabytes. The way hard drive sizes have been increasing the past year, it won't be long before ATA drives are obsolete. SCSI drives are already available in higher capacities, but the cost is rather prohibitive. What's next is anybody's guess...possibly a cheaper SCSI drive targeted at the home network arena.

If you haven't already noticed, a lot

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# Crank It Up -- New Power for Cell Phones

By Graeme Wearden of ZDNet (UK) Sept. 6, 2001

A manual mobile phone charger will allow users to make calls even if the battery has run flat. The clockwork charger consists of a small hand crank attached to a dynamo. Turning the crank generates mechanical energy, which is converted to electrical energy within the charger and then stored on a small battery.

*Freeplay*, the company that designed the device, claims that turning the crank for 30 seconds will generate enough power for a six-minute phone call. It has teamed up with U.S. Mobile giant Motorola, who will help to market the charger, expected to retail at around \$30.

The charger has been designed to match Motorola's product range, but according to reports it should work with most mobile phones.

According to the *New Scientist*, a simpler version of the charger could be used in the developing world. Freeplay is the company that successfully turned the clockwork radio designed by British inventor Trevor Baylis into a commercially successful product.

There is one obvious problem with the handheld charger, though. Because turning the crank causes charge to be stored on its internal battery, the mobile phone must be plugged into the charger while the call takes place. It is not possible to recharge the phone's own internal battery.

Back in early 2000, Trevor Baylis claimed to be working on technology that would allow a user to charge a mobile phone by walking. One idea involved fitting piezoelectric materials into the sole of a shoe, which would spark electricity if they are bent or compressed. Another was to fit a dynamo into the shoe, which would spin every time the heel hit the ground. A start-up, The Electric Shoe Company, was set up to develop these ideas, but no products have come to market, yet.

An American company is also developing hand-powered charging devices. AlladinPower already sells a hand-powered charger for generators or batteries, and is planning to begin selling a foot-powered device that would recharge laptops, mobile phones and video cameras by October 2001.

## FOR SALE

### Iomega 100 mb zip drive!

Slightly used with all cables and installation disk. Price - \$40

For more information e-mail Geri at [combsg@swbell.net](mailto:combsg@swbell.net)

**Anniversary  
Party  
Coming Up  
Next Month**

**Stay Tuned  
for  
More Details!**



## Quips N' Tips

*Continued from Page 1*

of really cool computer equipment is coming on the market with the dot-com's demise. As computer businesses are folding up, their capital equipment is being sold at used computer stores and flea markets. It is a buyer's market for used computer equipment. At the last First Saturday Sidewalk Sale in Dallas, I braved the rain and found a great deal on a Hewlett-Packard 21-inch monitor. I have one exactly like it on my desk at work, and let me tell you, I paid a whole lot less for mine than my employer did. If you are looking for something specific and don't mind taking a chance on used equipment, there are some good deals to be had. Also, check the manufacture dates on the products you buy. Sometimes the used products are still under a manufacturer's warranty! Do the research. It pays!

See y'all at the meeting.

# Getting Started With Internet Music

**By Bruce Fries - Author of *The Mp3 and Internet Audio Handbook***

*(Editor's note: The following may seem a little dated for the pros in our group, but for any of our newer members it may prove to be very helpful and also provide hours of fun.)*

This article provides an overview of what you need to record and play music on your computer and how to get music from the Internet.

New audio compression technologies, such as Mp3, allow you to use your computer as a digital jukebox that can hold thousands of CD-quality songs. You can quickly find and play any song with a click of a mouse and never have to worry about tapes wearing out or records getting scratched. Instead of spending hours making tapes or programming a CD changer, you can compile customized playlists in minutes.

Audio compression also makes it practical to download music from the Internet, where you can access thousands of songs from artists all over the world. With Mp3, you can download a 4 minute song in less than 15 minutes (with a 33.6kbps modem), compared to more than 3 hours for the same song in CD audio format. Now you can sample a wide variety of music from the comfort of your home and find some great music from independent artists you might not otherwise be exposed to.

On the Internet you'll find music in the form of files that can be downloaded to your computer; music that you can listen to as it's "streamed" over the Internet (similar to the way you listen to AM and FM radio), and physical media, such as records, tapes and CDs, that you can purchase and have shipped to you.

Downloadable music is simply music in the form of a computer file (usually MP3 or WMA format) that you can download from a Web site to your computer. Downloadable music can be played on your computer, a portable digital audio player like the Rio 800, or newer CD players similar to the Rio Volt <http://www.riohome.com>

Streaming audio enables you to listen to digital music without having to wait for the entire file to download. Streaming audio is used by many online music stores to play short clips from songs so you can listen to samples before they send you the record or CD. To listen to streaming audio, you need a sound card and an internet connection.

## **Digital Audio Formats:**

Mp3 - standard format for compressing digital audio - squeezes audio files to about 1/10th of their original size.

RealAudio - first widely used system for streaming audio and video over the Internet. Proprietary format used by many

online music stores and Internet radio sites for sample clips of songs.

WAV - default format for digital audio on Windows. (Uncompressed and usually take up a lot of space - 10 MB/minute for CD quality audio.)

WMA - proprietary format developed by Microsoft. Supported by most full-featured player programs and many portable players.

Internet Radio - form of streaming audio, usually in Real Audio or Windows Media Audio format. MP3 can also be streamed, but it is more commonly used as a downloadable format. Spinner [www.spinner.com](http://www.spinner.com) provides a nice tuner interface with access to dozens of stations and programmable presets. Sites like <http://www.live365.com> and <http://www.radio.sonicnet.com> allow you to set up a personal radio station, which you customize by selecting the artists and the types of music you want to hear.

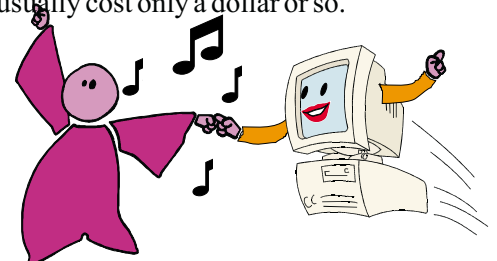
To listen to music on your PC, you need a sound card. To play Mp3 files you need at least a Pentium PC (133MHz or faster recommended) or a Power PC Macintosh. A CD Recordable (CR-R or CD-RW) drive is recommended for recording audio (Redbook format) or Mp3 (data format) Cds.

You will need plenty of RAM, lots of free disk space, and a modem to download songs or listen to music streamed over the Internet.

Software requirements to play Mp3 files include: a player program or a portable player that supports Mp3. The latest versions of the Windows and Mac operating systems come with built-in players, but you'll be better off using an all-in-one program like MusicMatch Jukebox <http://www.musicmatch.com> because it has more features and is easier to use.

## **Downloading Music**

To obtain songs in Mp3 format, you can download them from the Internet, create them from prerecorded music or obtain pre-made Mp3 Cds. Web sites like <http://www.mp3.com> <http://www.EMusic.com> and <http://www.napster.com> offer thousands of downloadable songs in Mp3 format. Many of these songs are free, and those that aren't usually cost only a dollar or so.



## THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

The Mid-Cities PC Users' Group is a not for-profit organization whose objectives are:

- \* to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience,
- \* education in the form of seminars and programs, and
- \* community as pertains to the computer industry.

Annual membership is \$24.00 per family with one vote per membership. Members are encouraged to notify the Membership Chairperson of any change of address as soon as possible to continue receiving their monthly newsletter. Please address any notifications to: Mid-Cities PC Users' Group: Attn. Membership Chair, P.O. Box 54141, Hurst, TX 76054

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## THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Article Style: Type all copy flush left without justification; use word wrap feature for your paragraphs. This includes headings, by-lines, and the first line of each paragraph. Place a credit by-line (author's name) between the title and first paragraph. Leave no blank lines between paragraphs. Use only one space between sentences.

File Formats: MS Word or Word Perfect is preferred. If formatting is crucial and you do not have access to the above programs, send a hard copy to show the layout.

Submitting Articles: You may use one of two methods. Uploading the article to Nancy Hester at [newsletter@mcpcug.org](mailto:newsletter@mcpcug.org) or you can hand them to her on diskette (3.5" preferred) during the general membership meetings .



Thanks a lot!

Deadline: The last Friday of the month prior to intended publication.

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