



Rmug News

June 2006

This Month

RMUG Meeting, Saturday morning
June 10, 2006 9-11:30 a.m.

All Mac users, new & old are invited
to attend the next RMUG general meeting
at:

Yaks Koffee Shop
3274 Bechelli Lane
Redding, CA

Coffee and various eats are available
during our "Get Acquainted" time, 9am to
10am. There are classes for "Beginners"
and "Intermediate" from 9:15 to 10:00 am.

Topics this month will include
demonstrations of Akvis (photo
retouching) and NVU software along with
personal creativity comments, wisdom
and issues as well as the usual Q&A.

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Rmug Officers

Dale Josephson - President
Jim Pace - Vice President
Charlotte Ruskowitz - Treasurer
Jacquie Martin - Secretary
Pat Henderson - Librarian
Ken Lorenz - Editor
Barbara Benefield,
Louise Zegers,
- Hospitality

President's Letter

And the dark clouds parted from over the land and a booming voice was heard from above the mountains and it said "let them eat cake" and so it came to pass; Apple introduced everybody's entry level Intel Duo this month and it arrived in two colors.

The new MacBook may be the best laid out laptop I have ever seen. The Serial ATA (SATA) hard drive (HD) can be changed in five minutes and the same for the RAM. The 13 inch screen is a bit small and leaves a little to be desired, but like I said this is our entry into Intel Duo Macintosh. This little all white powerhouse (\$1,099) goes from 1.83GHz processor with 5,400 RPM 60GB SATA HD, 512MB RAM, and a combo drive on the low end to it's big shining black brother (\$2,595) with 2GHz processor 5,400RPM 120GB SATA HD, 2GB RAM and a SuperDrive with double layer read support. Both models include Airport Extreme cards and Bluetooth. If you want it in black and choose all other options to be the same, black is \$100 more than white. Go figure.

***** New Article *****

On Thursday June 22nd. Dale is going to hold two 3 1/2 hour classes on installing Windows XP and Bootcamp on Intel Duo Macintosh models. The focus of the introductory class will be installing and updating Windows XP, Anti-virus software, network setup, email configuration, QuickTime, iTunes, Acrobat Reader, FireFox (alternate web browser), Thunderbird (alternate email program) on Intel Duo Macintosh models including; Mac mini, MacBook, MacBook Pro and iMac. Only the Intel Macintosh models will support Windows XP. Enrollment is limited to those who own an Intel Macintosh. Required course materials include a legal copy of Windows XP SP2 and anti-virus software. You may make arrangements to have JETT Technologies procure Windows XP or Anti-virus software for you if you contact JETT (242-1800) at least 5 days before the start of class.

***** New Article *****

In the land of JETT we have had a very busy month indeed. A month ago I was worrying how to get a misbehaving FileMaker Pro Server 8 Advanced to stop corrupting it's served databases (DB). It turned out that the DB file itself was most of the problem, or so I hope as the

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RMUG Information

Why RMUG? The Redding Macintosh Users' Group was formed to help members and new users obtain maximum enjoyment and performance from their computers. This is accomplished through group activities and our direct affiliation with Apple™.

Resources: RMUG resources include monthly mailings from Apple™ and numerous outside vendors. We have a library of public domain programs, games and shareware software. We have videos and other computer-related guidebooks and information.

Meetings: RMUG meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 to 11:30 am – contact any club officer for meeting location. The meetings give members and visitors an opportunity to share information, opinions, personal experiences and techniques regarding Macintosh computer systems—hardware & software.

Membership Information: We invite you, as a guest, to attend our next monthly meeting. If you decide to join RMUG, your membership fee includes your whole family. We need your help as much as you need ours! Please participate!

Welcome To Our Meetings: Call the President, Dale Josephson at 242-1800 or contact other RMUG officers for help. Go to <http://rmug.org/membership.html> for numbers.

Membership Dues: \$24 / year. Includes newsletters, access to shareware, monthly workshops, troubleshooting help. Payment of dues can be made at the monthly meetings or send them to: *Charlotte Ruskowitz, 6538 Mossom Ln., Anderson CA 96007* . Please make check payable to: Redding Macintosh Users' Group.

PRESIDENTS LETTER CONTINUED:

corrupted DB has been running for two weeks now with no further crashes. I would not write about this problem other than in the hopes that someday someone will remember this little article and it will save them days or weeks of grief. What we did was change the name of the DB from SHS Photo Database to SHSPhotoDatabase. This helped a little, but did not solve our crashing issue. So next I opened the DB in FileMaker Pro 7 and used the "Recovered" command to see if we could weed out some corruption, but that still failed to help. So next I opened the DB again and did a "Save As", and in options I chose "Compacted" to see if there was a corrupted block that might just be removed during the save? This helped, but we were still crashing every couple of days. So, finally out of desperation Kate and I thought, "lets try these same procedures again except download the 30 day evaluation copy of FileMaker 8 (FM8) for Kate's laptop". After FM8 was installed on Kate's machine we opened the DB file and did a recover first thing. Next we did a "Save As" and used the "Compacted" option for smaller files. Then for grins we did a second "Save As" and chose the "Compacted" option again and yes, the file really did lose MBs of size during each save. After the second "Save As" the DB file has been running just fine ever since. I do encourage all the RMUG members to check out the Shasta Historical website at: <http://www.shastahistorical.org/>. If you want to search the DB click on the link on the left that says "Start Search". My favorite pictures can be found if you search for the following terms: Parkville, Samson and Streamliner.

***** New Article *****

Here at JETT we take reliability very seriously. We knew there was a problem brewing and that we needing a serious solution already. In January I installed a new server named Spamphibian on a 1.25GHz G4 Mirror Door with 1.5GB RAM, two new 80GB 7,200RPM HDs and an Asante 10/100/1,000 ethernet card. Everything ran fine for 3 months and then one day Spamphibian just quit. Lucky for

me Kevin spotted the outage and I took note that the Spamphibian Admin application said no data or CPU usage was occurring, but when I went to the server it's activity monitor said I was above 99% CPU usage? Hummm. I rebooted the Spamphibian server and all was well until last weekend when Spamphibian went down in a Kernel Panic. No one was at work to see the outage so it went on for a few hours until I caught the problem from home and rushed down to the office to straighten things out. Just three days later Spamphibian kernel panicked late at night again, and again I rushed down to the office to straighten things out again. That was this last Thursday morning at 3 a.m. Where were you at 3 a.m. Thursday morning? During the day Thursday I called Outspring (the manufacturers of Spamphibian) and they denied there was any problem with their Spamphibian application. Since Spamphibian is so important towards the delivery of mail I could not take the server down for lengthy diagnostics as that would stop mail delivery to jett.net. Therefore, I decided we needed a new Spamphibian server, and furthermore I decided to use my 1.5GHz G4 Mac mini that I had slightly upgraded by replacing the stock HD with a HITACHI Travelstar E7K60 60GB 7200 RPM 8MB Cache ATA-6 Notebook Hard Drive, and I had also replaced the 512MB memory chip with a 1GB memory chip. Next I re-formatted the HD on the Mac mini to get rid of any software or anything else and then installed and updated Tiger, added BBEdit Lite and nothing else before installing Spamphibian. So far my Mac mini server is faster than it's predecessor the Big Iron Buick Roadmaster Mirror Door G4 and it is so cute and tiny.

***** New Article *****

At last months RMUG meeting I was telling everyone about a project I am involved with, named iTools 8.2 as a possible replacement for WebSTAR 5.4.X. iTools is from a company named Tenion and so far I love their tech support. Like most server products iTools has a newsgroup that provides most of the support. I joined the news group and posted a question when I got stuck. After a couple of days when

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PRESIDENTS LETTER CONTINUED:

no one from the group had solved my problem, support from Tenion sent an email with a couple of suggestions and a phone number to call if the suggestions did not work out. Well, I tried the suggestions to no avail and then called Tech Support. A few minutes later one of the Tenion techies had logged into my test server and straightened out the problem. I now have an Apache server with PHP and MySQL up and running. I do wish we had more Apple UNIX geeks in RMUG and the Redding area in general. If we had more geeks I would not have to learn all of this PHP, MySQL and Apache stuff from books and the web. If there are any RMUG members who have secretly been wanting to play with PHP, MySQL and Apache please get ahold of me as I will share my toys if you would share in my learning curve. iTools & Apache might even end up being the home of RMUG someday as there are all kinds of neat features such as a Blogging server.

***** New Article *****

Speaking of a need for geeks-are there any budding web page builders wanting their first crack at a professional site out there? If so, I know of a small community newspaper that would accept a donation of your time. The newspaper does not make a profit, so asking for compensation more than experience is a strain on their budget. I am sure you could get a regular by-line inside the paper and some free advertising in exchange for your efforts should you decide to take on the responsibilities.

***** New Article *****

With as many projects as I am involved with there are still always more wanting my time. I have a new piece of software that I want to try for a number of reasons. Michael Peters gave me some RSS and Podcast creation software that was sent to RMUG for evaluation and I faithfully promised him a month ago I would give it a try and I have failed. It is not for a lack of effort but rather a lack of time. The software

is named FeedForAll and it comes from NotePage Inc. They have a wonderful web-site and I am sure I will have the software installed and tested before the next RMUG meeting, but as of Memorial Day, I am still busy putting out other fires and finishing multiple other projects.

dalej

Disk Warrior Review:

I won Disk Warrior at a recent RMUG meeting. I tried several times to use it and failed. Then I took it and my Mac to the Monday class but the problems with my Mac were too much for it. Actually it opened up a whole "pandoras box" of problems that were quite beyond my ability to fix. These were problems that needed to be fixed and I am thankful for Disk Warrior because it started the whole process in the right direction. I am also thankful to Michael and Dale for their help and direction.

Carol Cornutt

Storage:

As consumers fill gadgets to bursting with digital photos and music, storage is becoming a selling point for tech products.

Storage capacity used to be an obscure feature that interested only technophiles. But now - thanks in part to the growing popularity of digital music and video, photography and games - consumers are demanding it. And tech companies are responding:

- Samsung has unveiled a music-playing cellphone with 8 gigabytes (GB) of storage - enough to hold about 2,000 songs. The phone will be available in the second half of the year.
- Sony this month revealed that its long-delayed PlayStation 3 video game system will have 60 GB of built-in storage, enough to store about 13 DVD-quality movies. Each game disk will have an additional 50 GB - enough for games with eye-popping graphics...

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STORAGE CONTINUED:

"Storage is no longer in the background," says independent storage analyst Tom Coughlin. "It's not just nice to have; it's a must-have."

Two different coalitions of tech and entertainment companies are developing new types of DVDs that can hold far more data than today's. They're both expected to become widely available this summer, creating a war similar to the VHS-Betamax battles of the 1980s.

Speed, not storage, once was a huge problem for tech products. But now technology has improved so much that aggravating lags - such as programs that take forever to load on a PC - are no longer

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Secretarys Notes:

MINUTES - RMUG MEETING, MAY 13, 2006

The May meeting was held at the YAKS Koffee Shop. Twenty-seven members and guests attended.

Dale led the beginners class and Michael fielded questions from the intermediate group.

Newer computers do not have OS 9 operating systems. Michael showed Jimi a way of working around the lack of a native OS 9 operating system to open old OS 9 software program in her newer computer. She wanted to install Roxio Toast 5.2.1. Now it opens as Toast Titanium 5.2.1. See Michael if you need to know how to do this.

Reminder: Repair your permissions after updates, and at least once a month.

Michael likes iKlear wet polish and dry wipes to care for your computer screen. Go all over the screen in small circles with the wet wipe to clean, and then dry completely with dry wipe.

Please write reviews for new-to-you software.

The more reviews that appear in the newsletter, the more free new software we are likely to receive to review.

June 12th will be the last day for the Anderson Mac class before the summer recess. Also, there will be no class on Memorial Day.

Program: Storage and back-up strategies.

. For very short term storage, you can add sessions (perhaps of pictures) to a CD-RW. When it is full, transfer sessions to a CD-R or DVD.

. USB or Firewire Thumb Drives are also good for short term storage and to transport documents from one place to another.

. Backups on floppies and zip drives die after a few years.

. Big cartridge drives die in 3 – 5 years.

. CDs will last 8 – 10 years.

. DVDs will last 10 – 20 years.

. External hard drive is best.

. Carbon Copy Cloner is inexpensive shareware that you can use to copy your source drive to a target hard drive. Carbon Copy Cloner >File >Preferences >Check box, Make Disc Image Appear on Target Drive.

. Super Duper v2.1.1 also. This is a wildly acclaimed program that makes recovery painless, because it makes creating a fully bootable backup painless. It's incredibly clear, friendly interface is understandable, easy to use, and SuperDuper's built-in scheduler makes it easy to back up automatically. And it runs beautifully on both Intel and Power PC Macs! \$27.95

<http://www.shirt-pocket.com/SuperDuper/SuperDuperDescription.html>

. Replace Battery Back-ups ever 3 – 5 years.

Battery backup are large batteries you plug into the wall and then you plug your computer into the battery. This way when the power goes out, your

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SECRETARYS NOTES CONTINUED:

computer will stay on for at least 20 minutes giving you ample time to go shut it down properly. Dale's battery backups will keep his servers going for at least 1 hour. (Don't buy 'CyberPower' Battery Back-ups. They don't hold up.)

The important thing is to store a copy of your backed up material away from your premises and in a place with optimal temperature, never below freezing or over 110 degrees. Store in living quarters where temperature is controlled, not in garages. Put your back-ups in something like a tackle box that locks and store in a friend's closet several miles from where you live. If stored in your home or neighborhood, a fire could wipe out both your computer and your backed up files. A safe deposit box is another good place to store them.

Thank you, Dale, for going over storage strategies with us.

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be Saturday, June 10, 2006, at Yaks Koffee Shop. Michael will demo two more Akvis plug-ins and Dale will demo NVU web software.

The Board Meeting will be over lunch following the regular meeting. All are welcome to attend.

Jacquie Martin, Secretary

Raffle Prize Reviews:

I could not believe my luck at the last R.M.U.G. meeting. Since I am always harping on the winners to send in a review of the prize they win here are my reviews of the prizes I won last month!

Super Nisqually is one of my favorite games. The object is to move at least the number of blocks required for one level to move on to

the next level. There are 18 levels - you must complete all for a "win" (I still have not done that!). You start play by obliterating blocks by matching them in vertical or horizontal lines of three or more of the same color. Click on a block and then click on succeeding adjacent blocks to swap their positions. Click on the currently selected block to deselect it, or a non adjacent block to start working with that block. When three or more blocks in a row or column are the same color they disappear and any blocks above them will drop down as far as possible onto any blocks below. To move onto the next level you must remove the required number of blocks and you get a bonus if you do so before the clock runs down to zero. The number changes with each round and the difficulty arises because of the number, color and starting positions of the blocks! There are also "Black Blocks" these little buggers do not move and can make you more than a little kookie! That said... I really like this game.

Now if this review looks familiar it is VERY similar to the review I sent in back in February. Since I already own this game I passed it along to one of my nephews and he is excited to have a new game for his MAC! I am glad he is as frustrated as me by some of the "tricks" the game sends his way. I think he does better with them but then, he is better at games!

Flexible Mini Keyboard by AirTouch is as it proclaims on the box "virtually indestructible". I invited my nephews over this long weekend and had them give it a ride. They played nanosaur 1 & 2 and Bugdom . Cody even tried out Starwars Episode One Racer and he was so much better at it than me. One thing he did complain of was the two space "bar" keys. He kept hitting the second one on accident. The Mini part of the keyboard is just the missing number keypad found on the regular keyboards and I did not miss it at all. There is also no "APPLE" key, you just have to use the key to the right of the "windows" key. I like the keyboard for its "washability". I always have the nieces and nephews wash before they use the computer, but they always seem to get it dirty no matter how clean they are. The reason APPLE went to white Keyboards is for looks, but really I cannot keep them clean. Which is the reason I bought the Keyboard cover from iSkin

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**RAFFLE PRIZE REVIEWS
CONTINUED:**

(you saw it at the last R.M.U.G. meeting). Well, now I do not have to worry if they keep the cover on or not! The whole Keyboard is washable and I really like that!

The PPC MAC Mini - I was simply flabbergasted by this prize. In fact, I really did not even think of winning the thing! I just bought tickets to support my MUG. Now I have 5 computers in my home, the Mini would make 6. I use one for the kids, one for my work, my laptop for travel and classes when needed, and the other two are jukebox's. Now I did consider selling the Mini for some cash.

I am always short of that! Instead, I gave it to my sister who just graduated from Chico State. She graduated Summa Cum Laude (I hope I spelled that correctly). She also received a medal for having the highest grade point average for her major. She did say it was much too extravagant of a gift for me to give. I said she could buy me some food next time she went to Costco if she felt she had to

do something for me. I always need food too! The Mini is by far the fastest computer she has ever owned. I am sure she will like it very much. I will also get to "visit" the Mini if she ever needs help with it in the future!

Now if you want to know how easy it was to set up and all of the particulars... I did help Joe Zegers set up his Mini and it was pretty easy. Apple leads you through the set up. Since Joe did not have OSX on his older computer, we could not just transfer using Apple's set-up at the start. We did use the firewire target disk mode to transfer all of the information from his old computer, and just looked at the settings for his internet hook-up. It went very easy. The hardest part was the monitor. I did not know what to set the refresh rate at - I picked 60hz - not a good choice. If you're in a similar situation choose a faster rate like 75hz or 85hz. The newer monitors like those better. We downloaded new drivers for his printer from HP and it worked first time! Well, OK the first time we switched his sharing switch to his computer instead of Louise's computer!

I hope these reviews have been beneficial to you and maybe will help you with a purchase down the road. If you have other questions please feel free to e-mail rmug@rmug.org, ask at the next R.M.U.G. meeting you attend or contact an R.M.U.G. Officer from the membership page at rmug.org.

Michael John Peters

STORAGE CONTINUED:

the norm. That's prompted consumers to pay attention to other features, Coughlin says.

The cheaper and more plentiful storage gets, the more stuff consumers decide to store, says electronics analyst Ross Rubin at researcher NPD. In 1998, a digital music player with 32 megabytes (MB) of storage cost about \$200. Today, that can buy a 2-GB player - about 64 times as big.

Digital photos and music were first, but digital video won't be far behind, Rubin says. Already, young companies such as CinemaNow and Movielink let consumers download films from the Internet. Before long, "you could have a library of movies in your car that you could show to your

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STORAGE CONTINUED:

kids in the back seat," Rubin says.

That will force tech companies to spend more on storage in coming years, Coughlin says. Although prices are falling overall, more storage is going into each device. Already, about 50% of the manufacturing cost of a digital video recorder, such as a TiVo, is storage components, he says. "It's what people want," he says.

By Michelle Kessler, USA TODAY

RSS FEEDS:

Lets face it as much as we all rely on email communications it is not really a reliable technology.

Why Should I care about RSS Feeds
SPAM and viruses have wreaked havoc with a communication medium and reduced its value. Users have become admittedly paranoid about privacy issues and have begun "tuning out" and mentally filtering mail.

What this means is that vendors really ought to begin exploring alternatives means of communciation in order to be heard. One of these alternatives is RSS or Really Simple Syndication. While I'm not suggesting that you abandon email I think that many might want to consider RSS feeds as well. Because RSS Feeds are selected by the end user spam is not an issue. RSS is created using XML, a very basic markup language. One that does not contain the risks inherent to email. Endusers select the feeds they wish to view. Content providers select the feeds they wish to display.

By providing a RSS feed another site may pick up "news" about your software and post it. If email continues on a self destruct course RSS will become a new standard and an accepted viable alternative or more likely an email supplement. For now if you have a "technical" customer base RSS might be a "cool" thing to add.

What are RSS Feeds - In very simple non-technical terms RSS is an XML file containing a directory of web pages with related news or information. The RSS is contained in an XML file and referred to as a "feed". RSS format is very simple, in fact even I was able to create a feed with little effort. The XML file basically contains what would be commonly used as a title and description in an html document, along with the url of a web page containing the actual content.

Sample feeds can be seen at:

<http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com/feed.xml>

<http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com/marketing-feed.xml>

<http://www.notepage.net/feed.xml>

Once uploaded to a website the feed should be validated (to make sure you did not use any invalid characters). The feed can then be submitted to engines. Individuals can view your content in a reader. Individuals can also add news feed to their websites by using an aggregator and tapping the feed of news vendors or others.

For convenience I've created a webpage with RSS resources at:

<http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com/rss-feeds.html>

About the Author:

Sharon Housley manages marketing for NotePage, Inc.
<http://www.notepage.net> and FeedForAll
<http://www.feedforall.com> .

This technology seems like it would be a time saving application for those of us who like to check out a lot of different news locations. I am looking forward to Dales presentation on the software and may be interested in acquiring it for myself to assist in the assembly of the RMUG News.

Editor

Policies

This newsletter is published monthly for the Redding Macintosh Users' Group and is distributed to all club members.

No other individual, group or business may use any portion of this newsletter without prior written permission.

RMUG News welcomes articles and questions relating to Macintosh or Macintosh compatible computers. Articles should be pasted into the body of an eMail, or links to articles submitted. It is important that full credit be given to the author.

If you have a change of address or other questions, please notify the newsletter editor or other RMUG officer as soon as possible.

Deadline for submissions is the last Saturday of each month. E-mail or deliver all material to:

Ken Lorenz
E- mail submissions to:
krlore@cwnet.com

OR

rmug@rmug.org
(stuff files if possible)

Ad Rates

RMUG members are invited to place "Wanted", "For Sale" & "Trade" ads in the newsletter at no charge. Business cards or commercial accounts are welcome at the rates listed above. One of the best reasons for belonging to a user's group is to let other people know about your activities, as well as learning what other people are doing with their computers and software. Please give your business cards or ads to the newsletter editor.

<p>AD Rates</p> <p>\$4-business card \$6-quarter page \$9-half page \$15-full page</p>
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Advertisements in the RMUG newsletter will not influence reviews or critiques of hardware, software companies or stories.

RMUG does not endorse any specific dealer or product, but we do encourage the distribution of information which may assist club members in identifying best buys and services.

Editorial

What great member participation this month, way to go folks.

I have found this edition to be more of a challenge because I installed an updated version of the Stone Studio software last month. It does not play nicely with some of the applications on my machine. The app has been a little sluggish and buggy, double placing some things and omitting others (thus the three place placement of the memory article). It has also affected the operation of my mouse.

The more I have worked with it the better I am getting at making it do what I want it to do.

Last month the big issue was getting it to print. It is printing fine this month but placement and mousing are difficult. Maybe next month everything will go smoothly.

If something is working well for you maybe you should think long and hard about upgrading every time you are dunned to do so. At the very least you should read the release notes to see if the changes are something you would even be interested in. A little different set up this month with the addition of Jett's monthly class schedule in place of their ad on page ten. I think the classes are a great idea. It only takes one class to realize a lot more functionality and enjoyment out of our computers.

Ken



Jett's Mac Classes:

Kate is teaching all the following classes. Enrollment for each is \$25.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction to OSX - 1 1/2 hours class • A basic course introducing you to Mac OSX. Topics covered will be: file organization - your stuff belongs in your house, folders with icons on them - never move or rename them, the dock - its purpose and use, accessing the internet, sending and receiving email, the Address book, media sharing between iTunes, iPhoto, iMovie, iDVD and Pages.

Introduction to iTunes - 1 1/2 hour class • A basic course introducing you to iTunes. You will learn how to import music from commercial CDs, purchase music from the iTunes Music Store, download podcasts, organize your music in playlists, burn custom CDs of your playlists, move music to an iPod.

Introduction to iPhoto - 1 1/2 hour class • A basic course introducing you to iPhoto. You will learn how to import pictures from your digital camera and from a media card reader, organize your pictures in albums, scale and send pictures over email, simple image manipulation with brightness and contrast, export images for back up, create a slide show.

Introduction to iMovie - 1 1/2 hour class • A basic course introducing you to iMovie. You will learn how to import video footage from a digital camera and import still images from iPhoto to begin to build a movie project. You will then add transitions and titles. The feeling of movement in still images is done with the Ken Burns effect. Then import music from iTunes and learn to add voice overs.

Introduction to iDVD - 1 1/2 hour class • A basic course introducing you to iDVD. It is recommended that you attend the iMovie class before the iDVD class. In this class you will export your iMovie project into iDVD. You will add themes and chapter markers to personalize your project.

Introduction to Pages - 1 1/2 hour class • A basic course introducing you to Pages, page layout program. You will explore the various templates and themes for creating everything from newsletters to invitations to brochures. Again the iPhoto library is available to customize your projects.

June 13th 2PM • Basic OS-X

June 20th 2PM • iPhoto

June 27th 2PM • iDVD

June 15th 10AM • iTunes

June 22nd 10AM • iMovie

June 29th 10AM • Pages

iLife's New Avenue:

With the arrival of iLife '06, we've got a new avenue to play in. Welcome the Podcast, which can bring out the DJ in all of us. Both iMovie and GarageBand offer further tools to help the average Joe host his own show. I was most impressed with the large array of sound effects which iMovie offers, going far beyond Skywalker's bird chirps and raindrops. There are now short riffs for use in your Podcast (or movie- it is, after all, still iMovie), and a greater selection of sound effects. A few of my favorites? "Vintage News," "Antique Clock Strike," and the assorted "Aliens-Invading-the-Planet-We're-All-Gonna-Die" clips. Along with the Audio FX section in the Editing button, Podcasts are going to be a snap. iMovie also has a new interface, which, true to Mac fashion, is much cleaner than the previous one.

GarageBand also offers a few new toys, including a crazy amount of awesome new filters. It works much tighter with iMovie- so tight, that you can import an iMovie project into GarageBand to edit the audio and view the video along with it. There's also this nifty new feature called "Ducking," which allows you to select which tracks have audio preference over another. For example, if you have a vocal track set to a higher preference than a guitar track, when the vocals start the guitars will automatically be lowered in volume for the duration of that vocal track. This is great for an iMovie documentary if you have music in the background, then a narrator starts speaking. GarageBand will automatically lower the background music during the vocal clip, and after the narrator shuts up, GarageBand will bring the music back to its original volume.

So if you haven't messed around much with these programs, now's a great time to give it a try. And GarageBand's gender switching vocal filters are always good for a laugh.