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PART I

The Real World According to iPod

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iPod Startup

The Skim

Importing Files into iTunes ►

Organizing Your Music into Playlists ►

Updating Your iPod

I will start not at the beginning, but *before* the beginning. First, because there's a lot more parking available, but mostly to make sure that as you make your way through this book and rush off to apply what you've learned, you're not stymied by fundamentals. Yes, I'm the sort of geek who believes that converting a DVD into a movie file is enormously entertaining merely as an intellectual exercise, and I have a very firm opinion on whether Batman could beat Captain America in a hand-to-hand situation, but market research strongly suggests that most of you want to actually *play* the thing on your iPod.

Herewith I present the Basic Rules of the iPod on loading files into iTunes and your iPod. To assume full Jedi mastery of the iPod and iTunes, I suggest you speak with your guidance counselor regarding a two-year degree program at an area junior college, or simply explore iTunes' Help menu.

The basic path from having a file on your hard drive to having a *thing* on your iPod that you can click and enjoy in your car, on the beach, or during a dull bit of a wedding service goes like this:

- You import the file into iTunes, which adds the file to your computer's ever-expanding catalog of music and video.

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Creating playlists isn't absolutely necessary; your iPod does a fine job of letting you idly browse your content by artist, album title, etc. But as advanced as its technology is, your iPod has no way of knowing that the songs you're browsing in this specific order constitute the ultimate make-out mix tape.

- You organize your content in playlists.
- Your iPod is updated with fresh content when you hook it up to your computer. iTunes can update the iPod automatically at the very moment it realizes that the iPod has been plugged in. Or, if you're a control freak, the sort of universally-disliked office manager who won't let an employee take a freakin' pad of sticky notes out of the supply cabinet without filling out a form, you can explicitly tell iTunes to update the iPod right *now*.

IMPORTING FILES INTO ITUNES

iTunes isn't a simple music player that just plays a file off your hard drive and then forgets that it ever existed. No, iTunes is grabby and ambitious: It's a Media Content Library Management System. When you import a music or video file into iTunes, all sorts of information about it are added to a master database so that you can locate one song among thousands in an instant (A seven-minute version of "Anarchy in the U.K." recorded by Buddy Ebsen) and unless you've explicitly told iTunes not to do so — aack, those control freak issues yet again — iTunes will also copy the file into its own special

music directory so your collection is kept nice and tidy and all in the same place.

There are two ways to add files to your iTunes library:

Method the First: The Add To Library Command

This method is easy, if you like using menus.

1. Choose File ➤ Select Add To Library ➤

In the Windows edition of iTunes, there are two Add To Library menus. Add To Library allows you to select one specific file. Add To Library Folder allows you to select a folder; you select Add Folder, iTunes will search through the contents of a selected folder and automatically add any music or video files that it's capable of playing.

In the Macintosh version of iTunes, a single command handles both tasks.

Either way, you'll find yourself looking at your computer's standard file/folder browser.

2. Select a music or video file, or a folder containing music and videos.
3. Click the highlighted button. On a

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The music directory is just a plain old folder on your hard drive. The idea is that if you don't want to mess around inside the Home ➤ Library ➤ iTunes folder or the My Documents ➤ My Music ➤ iTunes folder (depending on whether you have a Mac or a PC, naturally), you'll just move the Wendy O. Williams version of "Rat Love" where iTunes can't find it.



Figure 1-1
A new playlist takes its first breath.

it'll be Choose. If you're selecting a file on a PC, it'll be OK, or Open if you're using the Add Folder command.

iTunes will percolate for a minute. When it's done, all the selected files that iTunes knows how to deal with will appear in the iTunes library.

Method the Second: Just Drag It

This method is easy if you like working with your hands instead of menus: If you're in Windows Explorer or the Mac Finder and you can see the name or icon of the files you want to import, you can just drag the files straight into iTunes without any further ado.

Drag them into the iTunes window, or drag them into iTunes' desktop icon or its tile in the Windows taskbar or the Macintosh

Dock. However you do it, if the music or video is in a format iTunes thinks it understands, a plus sign (+) will appear next to your mouse pointer when you enter iTunes' airspace. Release, and iTunes will take it from there.

ORGANIZING YOUR MUSIC INTO PLAYLISTS

A playlist is a simple concept: It's just a list of songs you've selected and arranged in the order you'd like to hear them. You can make as many playlists as you want, tailored to nearly any situation: music for your workouts, music to put on when a blind date heads for extra innings, or the perfect soundtrack for piloting your souped-up Dodge Charger down rural back roads at breakneck speeds with Boss Hogg in close pursuit. Play-



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You're not limited to just folders. If someone hands you a CD or a DVD filled with MP3 files, for instance, you can use your computer's file/folder browser to select the entire volume.

lists also help you to manage the problem of having more music and video on your computer than you have space for on your iPod. I mean, the whole goal of this book is to help you stuff that device until it's ready to explode and rely on playlists to make sure that iTunes doesn't simply choose ten hours of doo-wop music to tide you over during a trans-Atlantic flight.

iTunes offers two different flavors of playlists. There's the plain-vanilla variety, through which you manually pick and choose specific bits of music and video. And there're Smart Playlists, which are way more powerful. Smart Playlists allow you to describe the *sort* of music you'd like to hear: "Twenty rock songs, but nothing I've listened to in the past month," for example. And then iTunes works out the specifics on its own.

Plain Old Playlists

You can create a new playlist either by choosing File ⇨ New Playlist or by clicking the plus (+) button at the bottom of the iTunes browser window. Either way, an untitled playlist will appear in iTunes' list of music sources (see Figure 1-1).

The default playlist name, Untitled Playlist, is highlighted and awaits your creative genius. Type in something memorable. "Just

Drive" is my usual playlist of stuff I want to hear in the car.

And that's really all there is to it. Any song I drag into Just Drive will be added to the playlist. To wit:

1. Click Library in the iTunes window's Source list. A list of all the music and video in your iTunes library appears.
2. Select one or more items from your library.
3. Drag the selected items to the playlist's name.

Incidentally, when you copy items into a playlist, the only thing you're actually copying is the items' information. All the actual music and video files remain in your iTunes library, which means that any music track or video can be in many playlists at the same time. I mean, what sort of life would it be if you could only enjoy "The Cockroach" or "Ate Cincinnati" in one playlist?

If you click the playlist's name, iTunes' browser window will show you a list of the playlist's tracks. You can change the



➤TIP

You can automatically create a new playlist from a group of selected tracks in one of two ways. On a Mac, you can simply drag the group into any empty spot in the Sources section of the iTunes window. If you're not dragging 'em into an existing playlist, iTunes assumes that you want to make a new one with the items inside the new playlist. In Windows, select a group of items and choose File ⇨ New Playlist from Selection.

order of those items by just dragging them around, and you can remove items by selecting them and hitting the Backspace or Delete key on your keyboard.

Smart Playlists

Some apps have certain features that are so good they make me want to stick five bucks in an envelope and mail it to the company. iTunes' Smart Playlists is definitely one of those features.

Smart Playlists let you create a playlist without being specific about its contents. You describe the *sort* of content you want, and iTunes makes the selections for you. iTunes stores a lot of information about all the items in its library — including how frequently and recently you've been playing that stuff — which means that it's easy to get iTunes to make some fairly sophisticated choices on your behalf.

For instance: I buy lots of music through the iTunes Music Store, representing all kinds of artists and genres. And every morning when I take my hour-long constitutional — I'd like to call it a *morning jog* but that would imply an ability to run faster than the average man can walk on his hands — I want to listen to my freshest music.

I could either religiously move tracks in and out of a manual playlist or I could just define a Smart Playlist by choosing File ⇨ New Smart Playlist (see Figure 1-2):

Each line represents a different “rule” to apply when iTunes chooses songs for this



Figure 1-2
A Smart Playlist for my morning constitutional

playlist; to add a new one, I click the plus (+) button at the end of any rule. This Smart Playlist says:

- Choose only “protected” songs — copy-protected songs are songs purchased through the iTunes store.
- Don't choose spoken-word recordings or books-on-tape. Neither my metabolism nor my enthusiasm for exercise are great enough to keep my legs moving during 45 minutes of Alan Greenspan's memoirs.
- For that matter, don't select any music over six minutes long, either.
- If I've played this song any time in the last three days, don't bother playing it again.

Below the list of rules, you specify how many songs you'd like, and how you'd like iTunes to make the selection. One hour will do me just fine, although you can alternatively tell iTunes to limit by number of songs or the amount of space the collection will take up. I've also told it to select the newest songs.

Alternatively, I could also ask iTunes to pick songs at random, songs I haven't heard

recently, or select from an abundance of other options.

Once I click OK, the new playlist will be automatically populated with items that match the rules I laid out.

One of the (many) terrific features of Smart Playlists is that the list is “live.” If I buy new music, the Smart Playlist will automatically add them to the playlist, kicking out older songs to make room. And remember, both iTunes and your iPod keep track of what songs and videos you’ve been watching.

When I get home from my constitutional and plug my iPod into the computer, iTunes immediately knows which songs I’ve heard since the last time the iPod was connected. Songs that no longer pass the “Last Played is not in the last 3 days” test are automatically removed from the playlist and replaced.



➤TIP

Let’s revisit that “My iPod is no longer big enough to store all my music and videos” problem. I have a 30-gigabyte iPod and about 80 gigabytes of music. So, I’ve set up a collection of individual Smart Playlists that automatically fill the iPod with content from this library, with each genre of music chosen in different proportions. “Five gigabytes of Rock, chosen at random”; “3 gigabytes of Country”; “5 gigs of Classical.” Result: I always have a broad swatch of my 10,000-track iTunes library represented. And by telling the playlists to favor music I haven’t heard recently, it’s always fresh stuff.

UPDATING YOUR IPOD

When you connect your iPod to your computer, it automatically appears in iTunes’ list of music sources. What happens after that depends on the iPod options you’ve set. You can open the iPod Options window by either clicking the iPod button at the bottom of the iTunes window or right-clicking the iPod’s name and selecting iPod Options from the contextual pop-up menu. Mac users who don’t own a two-button mouse can reveal the contextual menu by holding down the Control key while clicking the iPod’s name. You wind up with a window like the one you see in Figure 1-3.

iTunes can update the iPod’s contents automatically every time you plug it in, as follows:

- If you click Automatically Update All Songs and Playlists, iTunes will always attempt to mirror the entire contents of your iTunes library onto your iPod. If there isn’t enough space on your iPod for that stuff, iTunes will warn you and then (at your discretion) try to fit in as much as possible.
- The Automatically Update Selected Playlists Only option does what it says. Instead of trying to cram *everything* in there, it’ll just update the songs and videos that are in the playlists you’ve checked. Plain playlists, smart playlists — it’s all the same.
- The Manually Manage Songs and Playlists option means that iTunes will leave the task of updating your iPod completely up to you. The iPod will behave exactly like an iTunes playlist: Drag tracks and playlist to add them, select them and press Backspace (Windows) or Delete (Macintosh)

to remove them. You're a control freak, and you'll never change. The iPod is cool with that. The iPod doesn't judge people. Why can't we all be more like the iPod? And if I want to parade around in my Spider-Man costume, that's my business, isn't it?

There's another tweak to all this: the Only Update Checked Songs checkbox. Each track of video in every iTunes window has a checkbox next to it. With this option enabled, any item that *does not* have its checkbox checked would *not* be synched to your iPod, which makes it easy to *point and shoot* certain items that you never want to hear in the car.

Automatic updates only take place when you plug in your iPod. You can also tell iPod to update this iPod *right freakin' now* by selecting Update Songs from the iPod's contextual menu. You use this contextual menu option if you've selected Manually Manage Songs and Playlists in the iPod Options window (remember, the Manual option means that iTunes will never update the iPod on its own), or if you've added new



Figure 1-3
The iPod Options window

items or playlist to your iTunes library since plugging in your iPod. Automatic updates only take place when the iPod is first plugged in.

All these options are fine and dandy, but there's no dancing around the fact that there's nothing on your iPod yet and at the moment you have a \$200 device that tells you the time and plays "Breakout," which just doesn't seem right. Let us now step forward toward the goal of converting every last scrap of media into iPod-studly formats and loading that thing up until it reaches its Mr. Creosote Point. (That means it's time to go to the Chapter 2.)



➤TIP

Automatically Update Selected Playlists Only is by far the most useful way to manage your iPod's content. You get the convenience of an update that happens automatically as soon as you plug your iPod into a dock or a cable, with the power and control of playlists.