MacMP3 User Guide

March 2000

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Introduction

What is MacMP3?

MacMP3 is the World's #1 choice for ripping, encoding and decoding (playing) MP3 files on the Macintosh™. MacMP3 consists of a digital audio encoder, and an MP3, CD and NetAudio (streaming internet audio) player. The MacMP3 encoder can take audio tracks from compact discs, and convert and compress them into .mp3 files. The result is small, spectacular sounding audio files that can be easily played, stored and organized on your computer or network drive. The MacMP3 player supports the three most common and popular formats of audio today: Audio CD, MP3, and Network Streaming Audio.

What is MP3?

MP3 is a shortened name for MPEG layer 3, a file format which stores audio files on a computer in such a way that the file size is relatively small, while retaining near perfect sound quality. MPEG is the name of a working group established under the joint direction of the International Standards Organization/International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC), which has as its goal the creation of standards for digital video and audiophonic compression. More precisely, MPEG defines the syntax of audio and video format needing weak debits of data, as well as operations to be undertaken by decoders. It is customary to identify MPEG layer

3 files in DOS or Unix systems by shortening the acronym to a three letter suffix, e.g., ".mp3".

MPEG Layer 3 files can fit up to a minute of CD-quality (44.1 kHz, 16-bit stereo) audio in a single megabyte. For comparison, an audio CD can contain a maximum of 74 minutes of music. If you were to fill a 650 MB CD-R disc with MP3 files, it could contain more than ten hours of music.

The MP3 audio format has become the standard format for music and audio over the Internet for an important reason—it's smaller and it sounds better than other audio file formats.

What can MacMP3 do for me?

Until now, the complexity of MP3 software has prohibited many people from encoding and playing their own MP3 files. Encoding an MP3 file required using at least three or four different audio programs, one to rip the CD, one to convert the file format, another program to do the encoding, and yet another program to label it. MacMP3 makes it easy for you to put your music collection into your Macintosh.

There are a variety of reasons why this is convenient. First, files on your Mac are in many ways easier to organize than the load of CDs stacked in a case. For example, your Mac can automatically alphabetize your music for you in less than a second. Try doing that with the pile of CDs next your stereo! The MacMP3 player takes advantage of this fact and allows you to organize playlists of your favorite music so you can be your own disc-jockey.

It is possible to simply copy the entire audio from a CD onto your Macintosh; however, each compact disc would require almost 800 megabytes of disc space! With MP3, the files are dramatically compressed. Typically each megabyte of an MP3 file is equal to one minute of music, or several minutes of lower quality voice-only recordings, which sound like a telephone conversation. The

uncompressed version is nearly ten times larger than its compressed counterpart.

Another reason to encode your music is portability. For instance, a Zip® disc can now serve as your own recording medium. And it will hold almost 100 minutes of high quality music! (Standard-sized floppy disks are usually too small to be used for this purpose because they only hold about one minute of MP3 digitally encoded audio, though they can be used to transfer smaller samples such as sound effects.)

Finally, there are quite a few MP3 playing devices available now. The Diamond Rio, Nomad by Creative Labs, and Yepp by Samsung, are a few great examples of the myriad of nifty gadgetry which will let you take your MP3 files with you. These will NOT skip like portable CD players do because they have no moving parts. These devices have other advantages, such as the ability to edit, describe, and rename tracks.

Requirements

MacMP3 will run on any PowerPC-based Macintosh, running MacOS 8.1 or better. At least 8MB of RAM, an Apple CD-ROM Drive and an Internet Connection (for Streaming Audio and CDDB support) are also required. Best results are obtained on the latest of the G4 Macs from Apple.

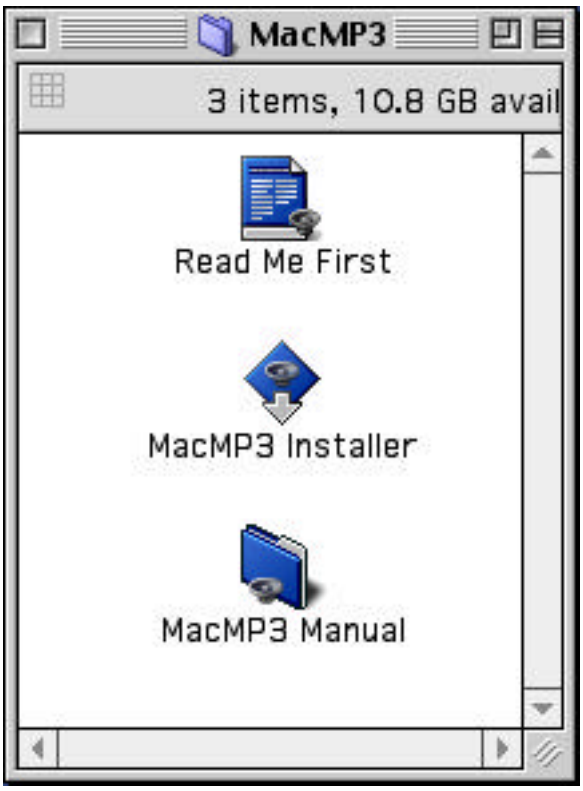
QuickTime settings requirements

Before using MacMP3, make sure the AutoPlay settings in the QuickTime Settings Control Panel have not been selected:

- From the Apple menu, select “Control Panel”.
- From the Control Panel, select “QuickTime Settings”.
- In the QuickTime Settings dialog, choose “AutoPlay” from the list.
- Make sure that “Enable Audio CD AutoPlay” and “Enable CD-ROM AutoPlay” are *not* selected.

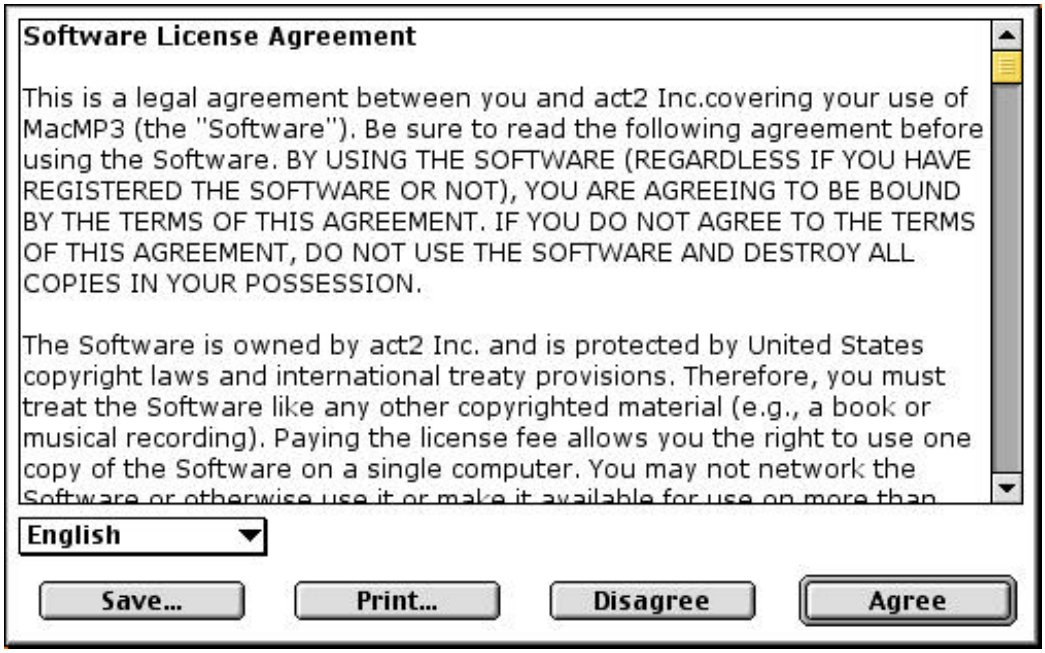
MacMP3 Installation

1. Double-click on the icon, MacMP3 Installer

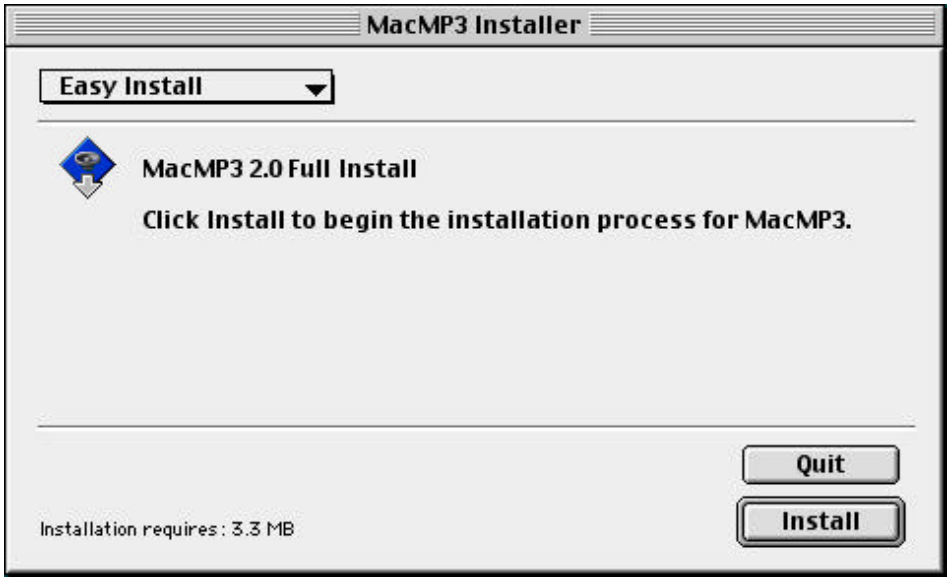


2. Click Continue

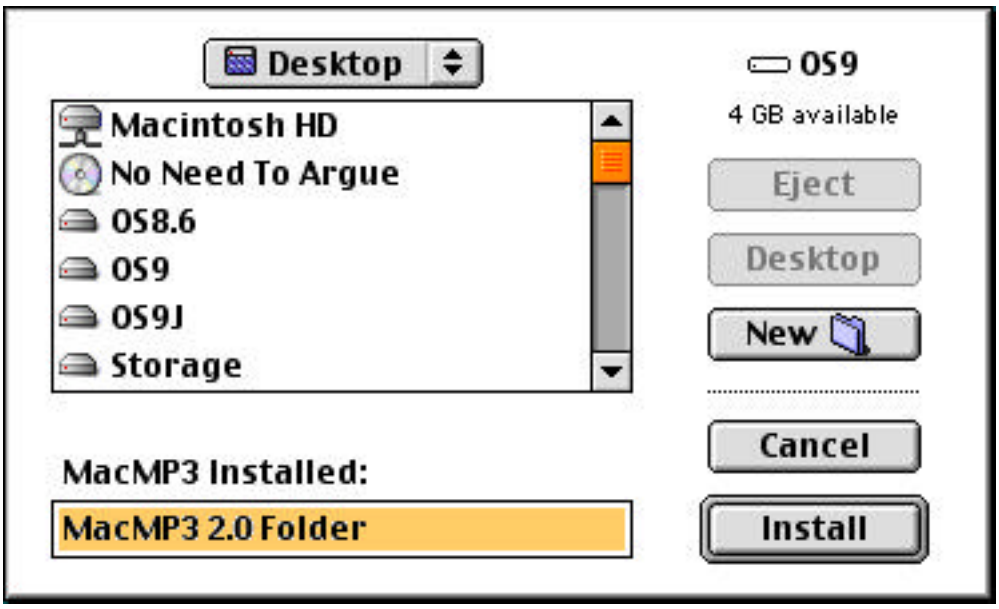
3. Read and agree to the Installation Agreement



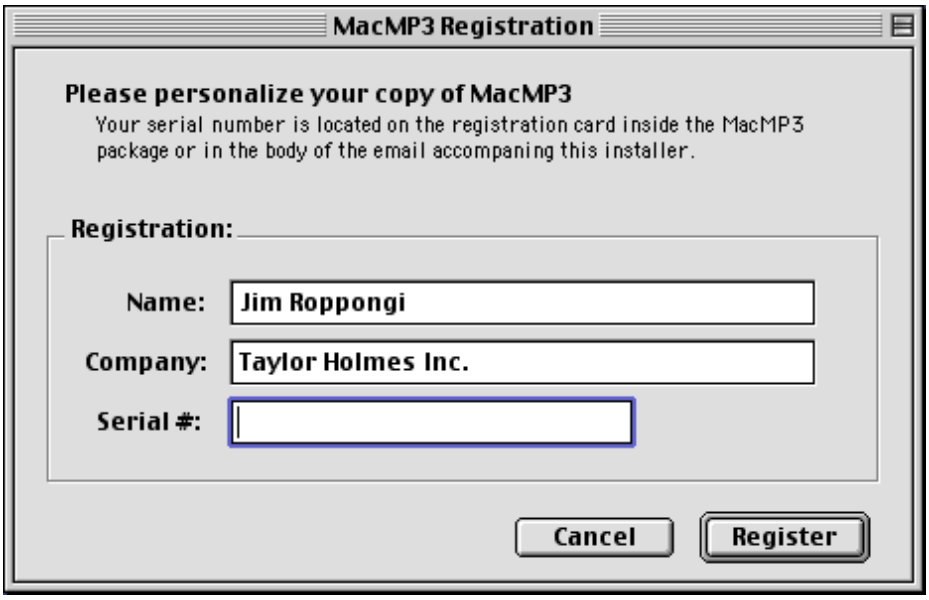
4. Click the Install button to begin the installation process. (“Advanced users may choose “Custom Install” to install only those MacMP3 components they wish to use.)



5. Select the location where you want MacMP3 to be installed.



6. Enter your serial number, click register and restart your computer to begin using MacMP3.



The MacMP3 Encoder

Insert an audio CD into your Mac's CD-ROM drive. An icon of your CD will appear on the desktop. There are two ways to make MP3 files of your CD's audio tracks: using the Encoding Window or dragging-and-dropping audio tracks to a folder on your Mac.

Using the Encoding Window

Double-click on the CD's icon and you can see what it contains. Then launch the MacMP3 Encoder by double clicking on its desktop alias, "*MacMP3 Encoder alias*." The Encoding Window provides you 4 easy-to-use buttons:

- Encode a CD
  let's you encode an entire CD to an MP3 file
- Encode a Track
  let's you encode a single CD music track to an MP3 file
- Encode a File
  let's you encode any AIFF or WAV file to an MP3 file

- Voice to .mp3
  let's you create an MP3 file from your own voice input

Selecting "Encode a CD"

Click once on the "Encode a CD" button. If this is the first time you've launched the Encoder, or if you have not checked "Don't ask for settings anymore," you will be prompted for Encoder Settings. For more information on these, please see the section of the manual entitled "Control Panel: Settings Tab."

After you select your settings, or choose to leave all as default, MacMP3 will immediately start encoding the first track of the CD to an MP3 file. You should notice that a new folder, with the same name as the CD/album you are encoding is created. MacMP3 will place your MP3 files inside that folder in the same order as the tracks appear on the original CD.

With the encoding process started, you will see the "MacMP3 Encoding" window. Click on the triangle just below the progress bar, at the bottom left of the window. You can view the bitrate and progressive size of the track currently being encoded. Clicking on the Edit button, at bottom right, will allow you to see the ID3 tags MacMP3 automatically downloaded for you using the CDDB feature. You can edit any of the information in those tags to help order and keep track of your MP3 files.

Selecting "Encode a Track"

Click once on the "Encode a Track" button. You will see the window "Encode CD Tracks." Then click on the tracks you wish to encode. You can select several tracks by holding down the Command key and then clicking on multiple tracks. (For more information about clicking, shift-clicking and the like, please see the Reference materials that came with your Macintosh.)

Again, if this is the first time you've used the Encoder, or if you did not previously check "Don't ask for settings anymore," you will be prompted for Encoder Settings.

With the encoding process started, you will see the "MacMP3 Encoding" window. Please refer to the section above to use the various settings in this window while MacMP3 is encoding.

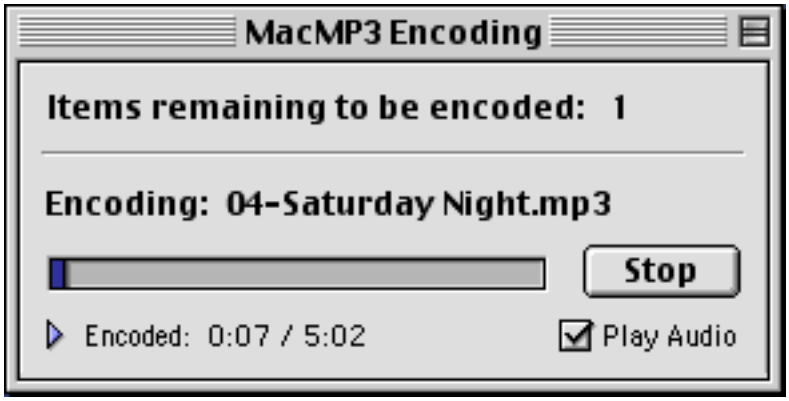
Selecting "Encode a File"

MacMP3 supports PCM AIFF files. Any other internal AIFF format may not be recognized. AIFF output is supported only when ripping and encoding tracks from a CD. AIFF files cannot be produced when encoding a WAV file from your hard drive.

Note that WAV or AIFF files with sample rates below 13 kHz will not produce high-quality MP3 files. MP3 Files produced below 13 kHz may be acceptable for speech recordings where high-quality is not necessary and disc space is at a premium.
Click on the "Encode a File" button. A dialogue box will appear. Using normal, Finder navigation, select an AIFF or WAV file. Again, either you'll see the settings window or MacMP3 will start encoding.

Time remaining and progress indicator

The Time Remaining field (see picture below) may not be 100% accurate when encoding WAV or AIFF files. However, it should serve as a reasonably reliable estimate. This may be a bigger issue when encoding long (45 minutes or more) audio tracks.



Selecting “Voice to .mp3"

MacMP3 even lets you make MP3s of your, individually recorded input. For example, if you have a microphone set up with your Mac, you can use MacMP3 to record your voice to an MP3 file. Since MP3’s are smaller and sound significantly better than many, alternate computer sound formats, MacMP3 is a great choice to record voice files.

Click on the “Voice to .mp3” button. A standard “save file” dialogue box will appear. Using normal Finder navigation, decide where you want MacMP3 to place your recording and give it a unique filename. Then a recording dialogue box will appear. Simply push “Record” to start recording and “Stop” to stop.

Many people use recorded MP3s to send personal voice-messages via Email. Make an Email, attach your voice message or other recording and send. The receiver of your Email will get a spectacular sounding voice message from you and in an MP3 file that is much, much smaller than previous alternatives!

Using Drag-and-Drop

Drag-and-drop a track from an audio CD

There are two ways to use drag-and-drop to encode audio CDs:

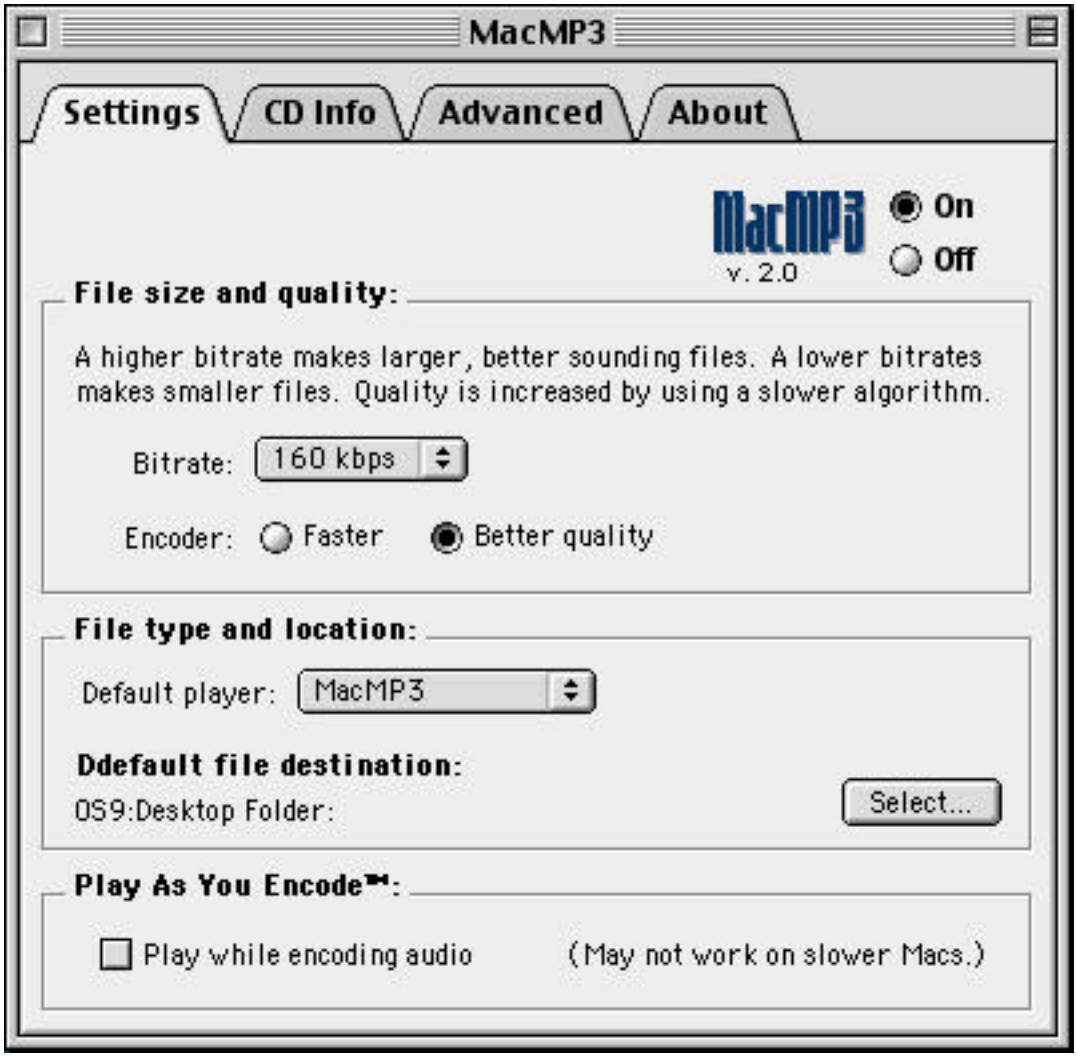
- by dragging-and-dropping selected audio tracks from the CD window onto the “Drop MacMP3™” desktop alias.

- by dragging-and-dropping a track, a group of tracks or the entire CD to any location on your hard drive. The location you drop the audio tracks to is where the encoded MP3 files are saved.

MacMP3 Settings

The Control Panel

The MacMP3 Control Panel: Settings Tab



1. Bitrate

When variable bitrate encoding is not selected, the bitrate selected in this menu sets the bitrate of the encoding in *kilobits per second* (kbps). Typical settings for encoding from a stereo 44.1 kHz audio sample (such as from an audio CD), is from 112-160 kbps. You are of course free to try other encoding rates, as you may find lower or higher settings either more appropriate or acceptable for certain types of music. Mono sound files typically sound fine at half the aforementioned bitrates.

2. Algorithm quality

Another important control panel setting is algorithm quality. You can have MacMP3 optimize your encoding for speed or for quality encoding. We recommend that you choose the “better quality” setting, especially if you have a nice speedy G3- or G4-based Macintosh, but the faster option remains for the impatient.

3. Default player

In the control panel you can choose a default MP3 player. The MacMP3 player is an excellent MP3 player providing .mp3, cd and streaming audio support. (see page 26, The MacMP3 Player)

4. Encoding Location

MacMP3 will create an MP3 file in the location that you drag the track on to. When using the “Drop MacMP3™” alias (whether with AIFF or WAV files, or tracks from a CD), the location of the encoded file is set in the “MacMP3 Settings” control panel.

Be sure that the folder you are dragging on to is located on a disc with sufficient space for the track. You can estimate that ten minutes of audio will take roughly ten megabytes of disc space. An entire CD can take up to eighty megabytes of hard drive space. Thus, on a hard drive with two gigabytes of available space, you

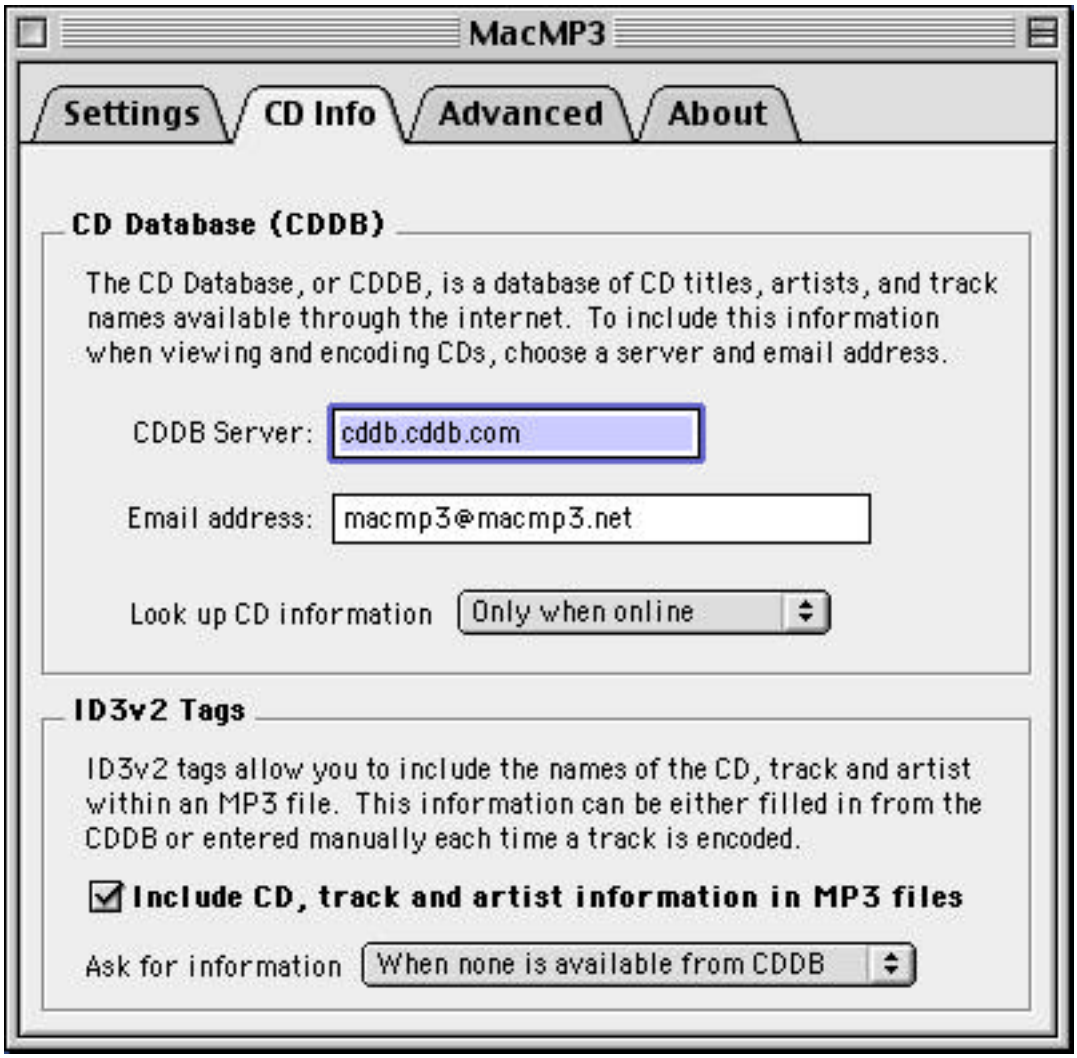
can store about thirty hour-long compact discs in MP3 format. With a few spare gigabytes of disc space, it should be easy for you to store most of your favorite music!

5. Play as you encode

Selecting this option allows you to play the file as you encode it, so you can enjoy your music while your computer works hard at converting and compressing it into MP3 format. There is also a check-box conveniently placed near the progress meter to switch this feature on or off during the encoding process (the progress meter window can be seen on page 19, under *CD Info*, *ID3v2 tags*).

Note that the sound being played is pre-encoded audio, so it will be heard at the full-uncompressed quality of the original track. Older, slower Macs may have trouble keeping up with the encoding, and so they will pause occasionally to let the encoding catch up. This is normal and will not harm the encoded file or introduce gaps into it.

The CD Info Tab



1. Compact Disc Data Base (CDDB) support

CDDB support will unobtrusively name your CD and the tracks on it. MacMP3 retrieves information for your CD-ROM from the Compact Disc database via the Internet.

The default settings should work fine for you, but if for whatever reason the CDDB information changes, you can find settings for the location of the CDDB server in the CD Info area of the MacMP3

settings control panel. If you find that the CDDB settings are not working, be sure to check for any updated server information from *www.cddb.org*.

If you are lucky enough to have a constant Internet connection, such as a cable modem or a T1 at an office network, then you should have your Mac automatically request CDDB information every time you insert a CD. If you connect to the Internet with a very slow modem or do not have an Internet connection, then you will want to turn this feature off. ID3v2 and CDDB features of this encoder are integrated, so track information will be inserted automatically into MP3 files. This integration can also be turned off, or enabled by selecting *Always* under the *Ask for information* popup menu.

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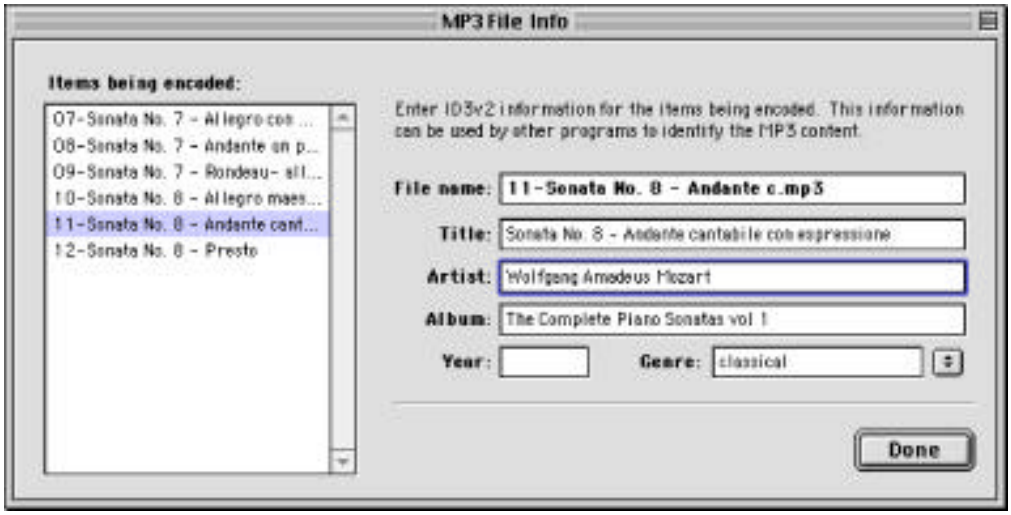
2. ID3v2 tags

What is an ID3v2 tag? This is a little bit of text placed at the beginning of an MP3 file so that MP3 players can display the artist, composer, song title, etc. while the file is being played. Not all players recognize the ID3v2 tag, and those that don't will simply ignore it; however, this will not affect the playback quality.

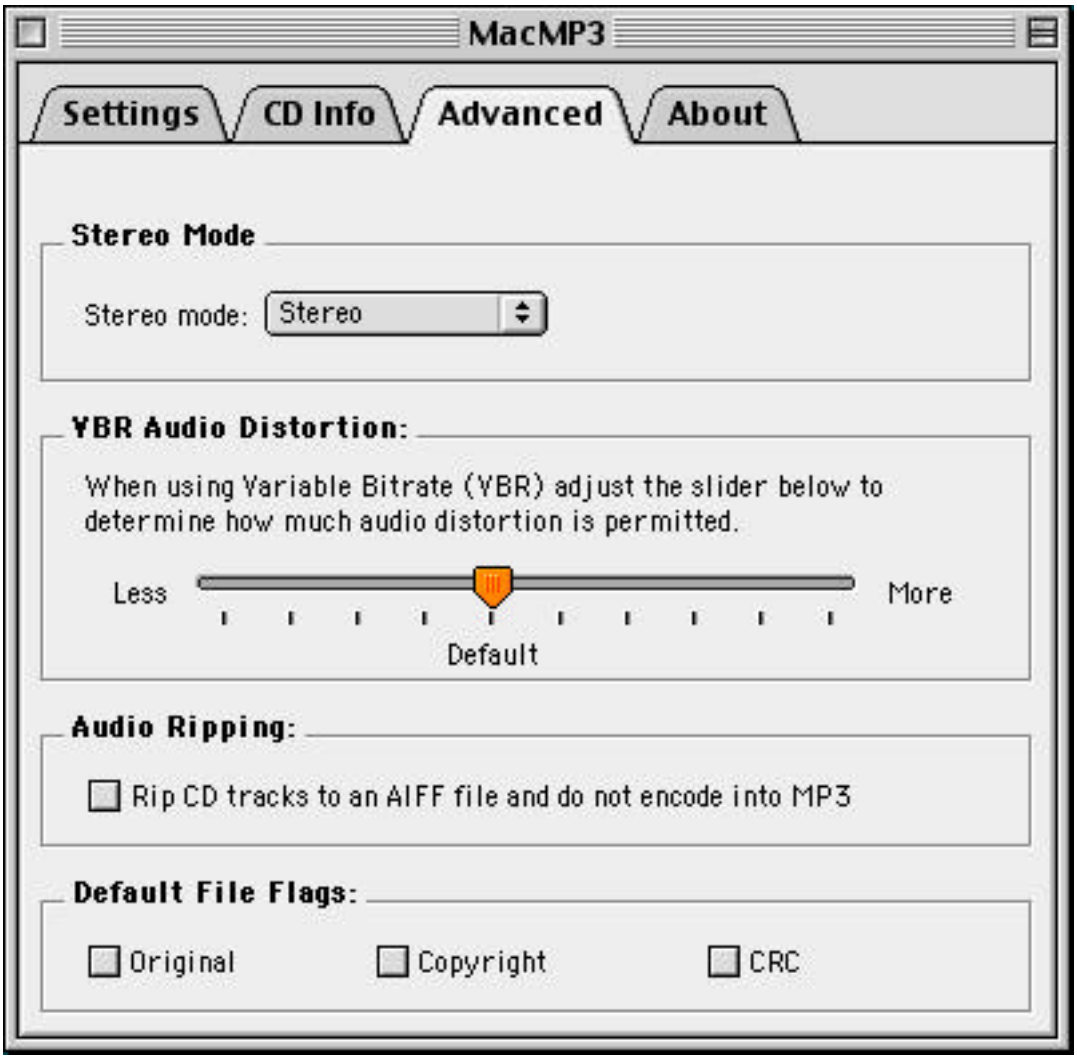
Fields which you can edit are: title, artist, album, year and genre. There is also room for comments to be added in addition to these standard fields.

The tag editing dialog (see page 20) gives you a list of the tracks being encoded as well as the ID3V2 fields.



You can also change the title of the track, as well as any other tag information as you are encoding. To get to the MP3 file editing dialog, click on the little blue arrow on the left side of the progress indicator box, and then click on the "Edit" button (see picture below).

The Advanced Options Tab



1. Variable bitrate (VBR) encoding

Variable Bitrate (VBR) allows the bitrate to change for further compression without (theoretically) any loss in the sound experienced. It is especially useful for voice recordings or music in which there are pauses or long stretches of very quiet music. To use VBR encoding, your source file or CD-ROM must have a sample

rate of at least 32 kHz. *(Note: all audio CD drives have a sample rate of 44.1 kHz)*

Note that VBR uses the bitrate in the settings as a *minimum* bitrate. This means that setting the bitrate to 256 will result in files *at least* twice the size of a 128 Kbps file. Secondly, the quality setting in VBR determines how strictly VBR "bumps up" its quality. That is, when set to best quality, VBR will analyze each frame and increase the bitrate until there is virtually *no* distortion. Conversely, with a poor quality setting, the VBR is more relaxed about this. So, for some purposes, you should probably drop the VBR setting back down to 128 or even less, but set the quality to be close to best for VBR. This will give better optimization for simple frames, but will make sure the quality remains very good.

2. Audio extraction, a.k.a. “ripping”

If the “Audio Ripping” feature is turned on, then instead of making MP3s from audio CD tracks, MacMP3 will instead save them as uncompressed AIFF files. *Warning: if you choose to rip files into AIFF format instead of encoding them to MP3, we suggest that you make sure you have a very large hard drive*. An average audio compact disc holds about 700 megabytes of data. You can run out of disc space very quickly this way!

Also note that ripping is *much* faster than encoding. If you play the file while you are ripping it, it will go much slower because it will stay at the pace of playing audio (1X) whereas turning off the option to play an audio file will allow you to rip at the maximum speed of your CDROM drive. (12X? 24X?)

3. Stereo Mode

This menu allows you to select what stereo or mono encoding method will be used during the MP3 encoding process. You can choose between mono, stereo, joint stereo and force stereo. A brief explanation of these settings begins on page 23:

Mono: Use this setting for mono sound files or to generate mono MP3 files that come from a stereo source.

Stereo: Takes the left and right channels of the original audio track and encodes them separately; e.g.: a 128 kbps Stereo encoding is actually *two* 64 kbps encodings (one for the left channel, one for the right) sandwiched together.

Joint-stereo: Rather than encoding the stereo channels separately, joint-stereo encoding tries to find the similarities and differences between the two channels. This method offers improved sound quality over the standard stereo encoding method.

Force stereo: Same as mono, except it makes sure the mono sound is going through both left and right channels.

4. Default File Flags

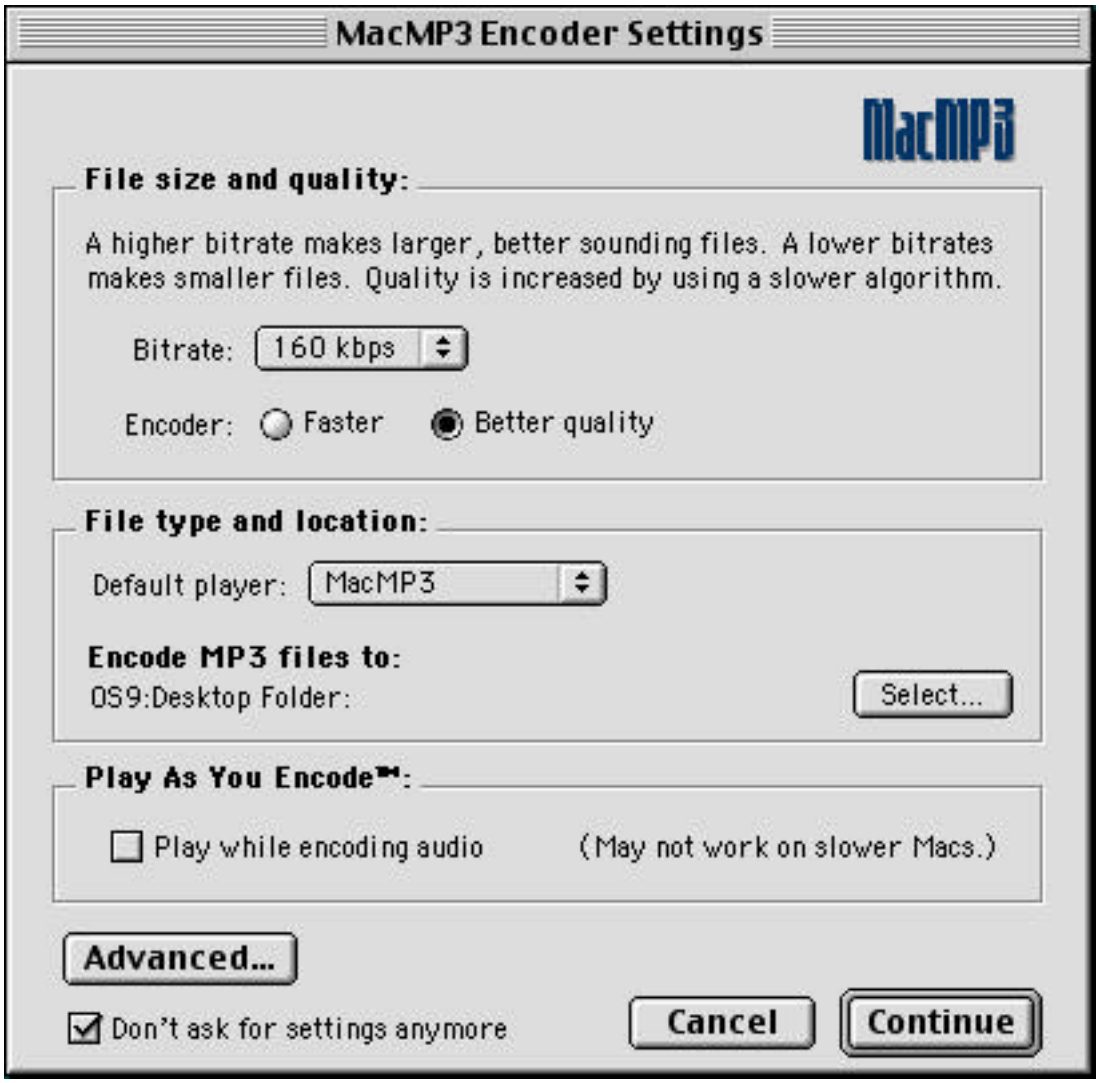
These are settings which mark certain properties on the MP3 file being encoded. A short explanation of each follows:

Original: Indicates that it is the first encoding, not a downsampled derivative.

Copyright: Indicates that the file is not to be copied indiscriminately. Some MP3 players will refuse to play MP3s which have the copyright flag turned on.

CRC: indicates that the MP3 file has a Cyclic Redundancy Check in it. Some MP3 decoders/players use this to make sure that the file or stream has not become corrupt while in transit over the Internet.

Differences in Settings Navigation



1. Settings

This is the same as the *settings tab* described in the *control panel* section except the advanced *finder integration toggle* is absent.

2. Advanced options

Clicking on this button will bring up the same information as shown in the *advanced options* tab as shown on page 21.

3. Hide settings

When this option is selected, the options window will not automatically come up whenever files have been selected for encoding. It will assume that you have already checked the encoding settings you want by way of the MacMP3 control panel. If you wish to bring up the settings in this manner again, simply hold down the option-key when using one of the drag-and-drop encoding methods described in *The MacMP3 Encoder* section on page 11.

The MacMP3 Player

Playing MP3 Files

The MacMP3 player supports the three most common and popular formats of audio today: Audio CD, MP3, and Network Streaming Audio. MacMP3 player uses a unique “mode” system to let you choose which type of audio you wish to listen to. This allows you to quickly switch between listening to CDs and listening to MP3s.

MP3 Mode - MP3 mode allows you to play and organize your MP3 file collection.

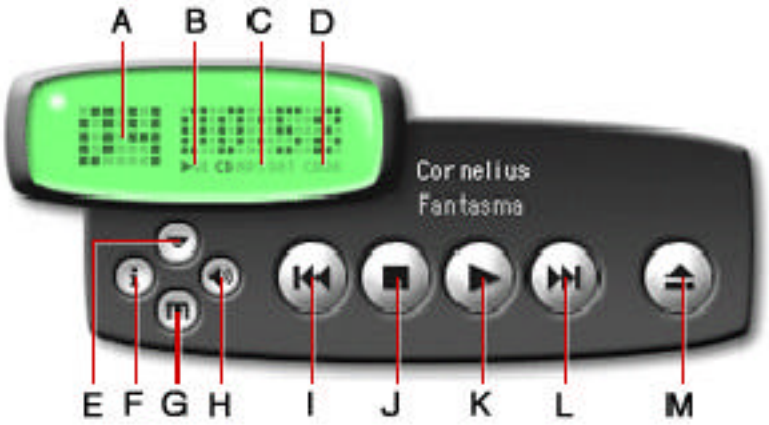
Net Mode – While in Net Mode, you can access the thousands of free Streaming Audio servers on the Internet. (Note: Requires an Internet connection)

CD Mode – In CD Mode, you can listen to tracks on an mounted audio CD just as you would the Apple CD Audio Player.

Face Plates

MacMP3's main look can be customized in a wide variety of ways using files called "faces". Each face, short for faceplate, is an entirely new look and feel for the MacMP3 player control window. The controls and buttons you see below should be easily recognizable no matter what face you end up using.

MacMP3 Interfaces



Controls and Buttons

A. Track/Time Display:
Displays the current track and the time into that track. You can click on the time display to switch between time elapsed and time remaining while listening to a song.

B. Play/Pause Indicator:
Works just like the controls on your car stereo. Push "Play" to begin listening to a track and "Pause" to suspend playing.

C. Mode Indicator:
This reflects the currently active mode: MP3, CD or Net.

D. CDDB Indicator:
Blinks when MacMP3 is retrieving CD info off of the Internet.

E. Pull down Menu Button
This button produces a useful menu. With CDs, for example, it displays all of the CD tracks allowing you to select a new one.

F. Information Button
This button opens up MacMP3's information window.

G. Mode Button
This button switches between MacMP3's three audio modes.

H. Volume Button
Pressing this button lets you set MacMP3's volume level.

I. Rewind/Track back
Click once to go back a track, click and hold to rewind.

J. Stop
Click to stop playing audio.

K. Play/Pause
Click to play. While playing, click again to pause.

L. Fast Forward/Track Forward
Click once to go to the next track, click and hold to fast forward.

M. Eject
When playing a CD, click to eject it. When playing MP3s, click to open a playlist.

Working with MP3 Files

Playing MP3 files with MacMP3

· Double-click on an MP3 file already associated with MacMP3.

· Drag and drop an MP3 onto the MacMP3 Player interface.

· Drag and drop an MP3 onto the MacMP3 Player icon.

· From the File menu select "Open MP3 file" and select a file from the Open/Save dialog box.

· Double-click on a MacMP3 Playlist.

Organizing MP3s into Playlists

A playlist is a collection of MP3 songs grouped together into an easily manageable list. A playlist can be used to create long running sets of MP3 files, limited only by your imagination. The MacMP3 playlist supports true hierarchy. You can create folders with the “New Folder” menu item and next items at your discretion and independently of the file hierarchy on disk. Re-arranging files is as easy as drag-and-drop.

To create and listen to a playlist:

1. Open the Window Menu and select Playlist Window.

2. Drag-and-drop MP3 files or folders/volumes filled with MP3s from the finder into the Playlist Window.

3. Click the Order sort button and move the items in your playlist up and down the list by dragging to organize it to your choosing.

4. Use the Mode button to set MacMP3 in MP3 mode.

5. Hit the Play button to begin playing the playlist.

Your playlist will begin playing from top to bottom according to the order. You can double-click a song in a playlist to start playing from that song. You may save your playlist by opening the File menu and selecting Save Playlist. If you forget to save your playlist, MacMP3 will remind you.

(NOTE: Be sure to place your playlists inside the "Playlists" folder, located inside the main MacMP3 folder. MacMP3 will then automatically build your lists into the Playlist pull-down menu. This makes it easier to switch between your favorite sets of songs without having to touch the Finder; simply select the one you want from the Playlist menu.)

Playing Audio CDs

To Play an Audio CD:

1. Insert a CD into your computer's CD-ROM drive.

2. Click the Mode button on the MacMP3 player until the CD indicator lights up. You're now in CD mode.

   From the CD mode you can:
   a) Use the play/pause button to start/pause your music.

   b) Click the fast forward/track forward button to go forward.

   c) Click the rewind/track back button to go back.

   d) Click the volume button to adjust the volume of the CD.

Be sure to use the pull-down button to see a list of the CD's tracks and to quickly switch to another track. *(Note: If the audio isn't playing properly, and you have more than one CD-ROM drive,*

make sure you have the right drive selected in the MacMP3 Player preferences. Also, make sure your volume isn't set to silence.)

Playing Network Audio

To listen to a network audio stream (Shoutcast, Icecast, etc.)

1. Click the Mode button until the NET indicator lights up. You're now in NET mode.

2. Click the play button.

3. Type in the streaming server's address. A streaming server address will look similar to: http://server.name.com:8000

You can also drag and drop from the Stream Guide Window, double-click on a Stream Guide entry, double-click a favorite you've created, or select a favorite from the pull-down menu.

Since the conditions of the Internet are unpredictable, sometimes your connection to a server may hang, or drop out. MacMP3 will display three different animations to give you visual feedback of your connection.

The three MacMP3 animations:

Connecting: MacMP3 is connecting to the server.

Streaming: MacMP3 is receiving audio from the server.

Broken: There is a problem with the connection.

Every MacMP3 Player interface will treat these animations differently, and each custom face will have three separate animations. *(Note: Most network streams require a great deal of bandwidth, i.e. a fast connection to the Internet. Still, choosing a streaming server with a low bitrate stream is your best choice. For*

a 56k modem, a stream with a bitrate no greater than 40k will work best. If you have a 56k modem, you may find the audio breaking up frequently. Unfortunately, there are no magic tricks to solve this problem other than upgrading to a faster connection.)

MacMP3 Player Menus

File Menu

- ***Open MP3 File***: This command will launch the "open" dialog and allow you to locate and select an MP3 file.

- ***Open Server***: Clicking on "Open Server" will bring up the "Connect to Server" dialog box. From here, you will need to type in the Network Audio Address of the server you wish to connect to.

- ***Open Playlist***: "Open Playlist" allows you to locate and select a desired MacMP3 playlist using the "open" dialog box.

- ***Add Files to Playlist***: While you're in MP3 mode, you can select additional MP3 files to add to the playlist.

- ***Close***: Selecting "Close" will allow you to close playlists, favorite server guides and the information window.

- ***Save Playlist***: This command saves the currently active playlist.

- ***Save Playlist as...***: This is handy for creating multiple playlists with similar content.

- ***Quit***: This shuts down the MacMP3 Player Application.

- ***Edit Menu***: Cut/Paste/Copy/Clear items from Playlists, Stream Guides, and your favorite server's window.

- ***Select All***: Saves all data in an active window.

- ***Preferences***: You can configure, customize and fine-tune the MacMP3 Player a number of ways via the MacMP3 Preferences Control Window. The window consists of four tabs: Appearance, General, Interface and Network.

Appearance Preferences

Face Browser

The face browser allows you to select a look for the MacMP3 player. Underneath the face browser is the face's description, which can be

configured by the face's author, and a URL that can give you more information about the face's author.

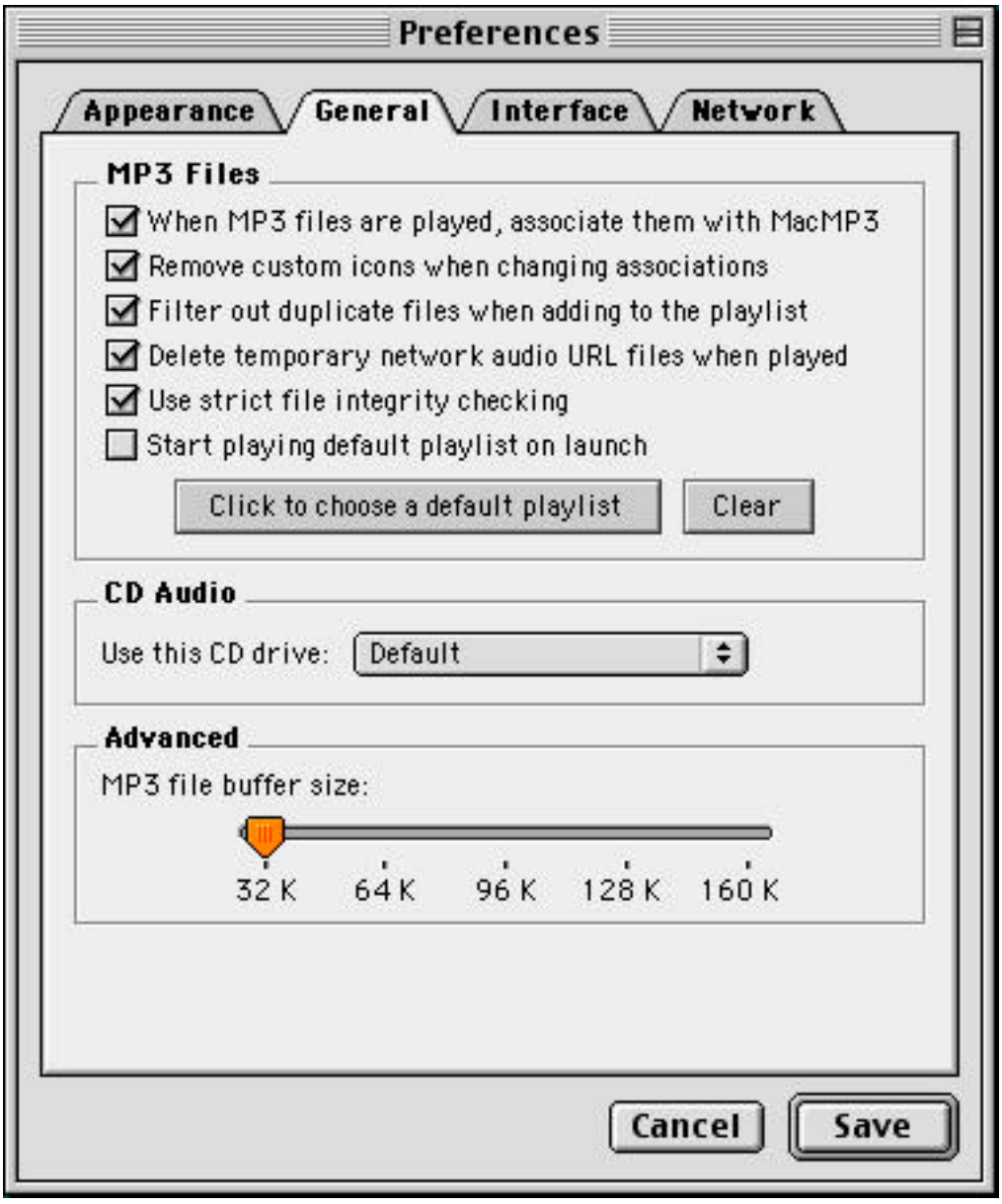
Using Alpha Channels

MacMP3 supports alpha channels, a method of giving graphics transparency. Alpha channels are what make the soft shadows in MacMP3 look great no matter what window is placed on top of it. One drawback is that alpha channels are complex to implement, and as a result can cause quick "flashes" when the MacMP3 interface is moved or brought to the foreground. If you don't like these flashes, you can turn off alpha channels.

Live Control Window Dragging

This allows you to drag the control window in real-time (ie; not as an outline) without flicker, even with translucency enabled. This option works better on faster machines.

General Preferences



This section contains a number of preferences related to MP3 file playing.

MacMP3 Files

- **When MP3 files are played, associate them with MacMP3.** This changes the creator of your MP3 files to MacMP3. It is then possible to double click a MP3 file and have it opened in MacMP3.
- **Remove custom icons when changing associations to remove any custom icons left behind by other players.**
- **Filter out duplicate files when adding to the playlist to prevent duplicate files from being added to your playlist.**
- **Delete temporary network audio URL files.** This cleans up Netscape/IE "URL" files usually left on the desktop.
- **Use strict file integrity checking.** MacMP3 may report that an MP3 file is corrupt; turning off this checkbox will make MacMP3 play virtually any MP3 file even if corrupt, but may cause side effects.
- **Start playing default playlist on launch in order to auto play the playlist chosen with the default button.**
- **Choose default playlist button.** Click to select a playlist you want MacMP3 to load by default.

CD Audio

Use this option if you have multiple CD drives (ex. an internal CD-ROM drive and an external CD-R drive). The pop-up menu will allow you to select the CD drive to use for CD audio playing.

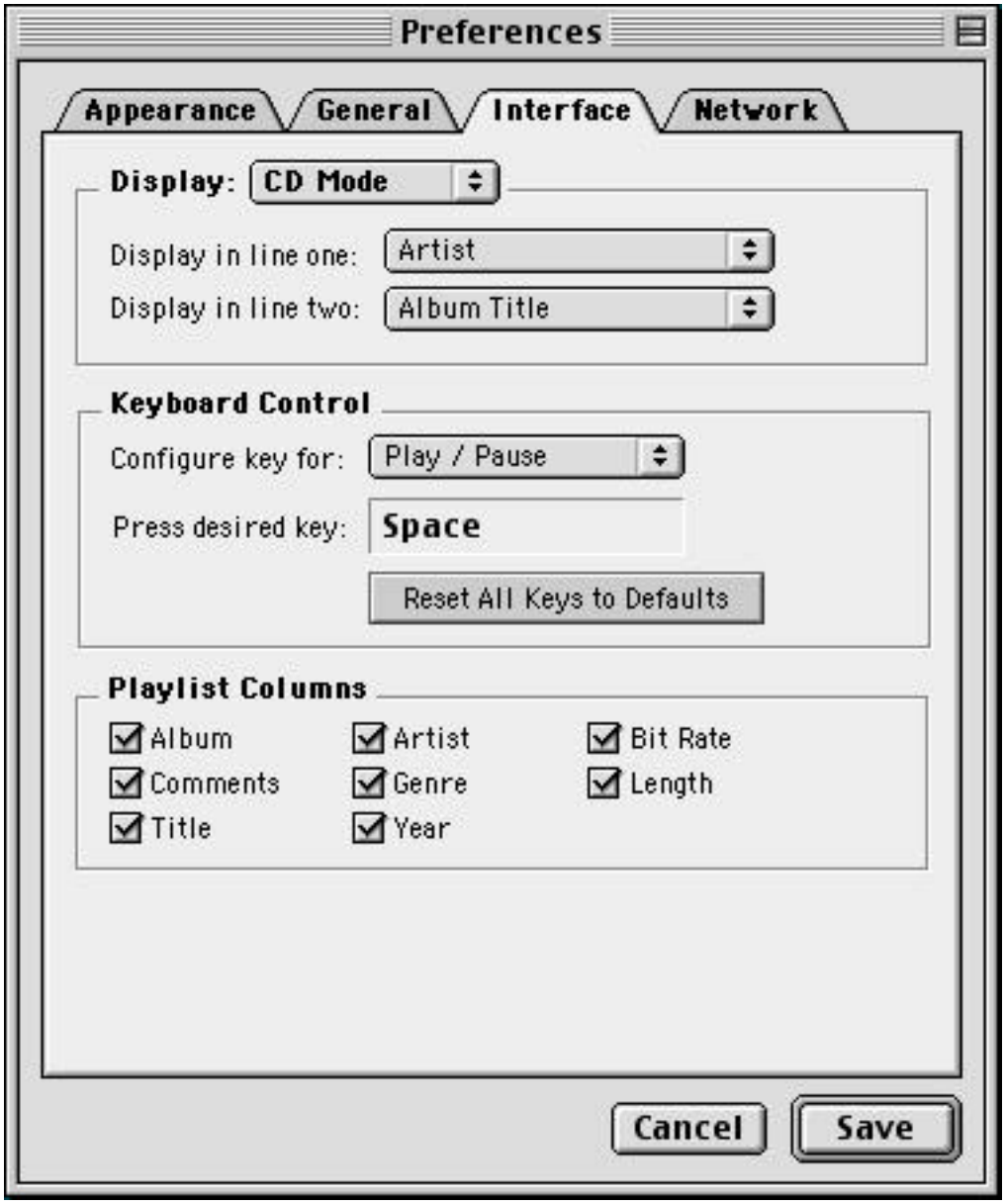
Advanced Settings

Audio playback buffer size:

MacMP3 stores a backlog (“buffer”) while playing MP3 audio. This helps prevent skips and breaks caused by network trouble or heavy hard-drive access. If you find audio skipping frequently, you can try adjusting this slider to compensate.

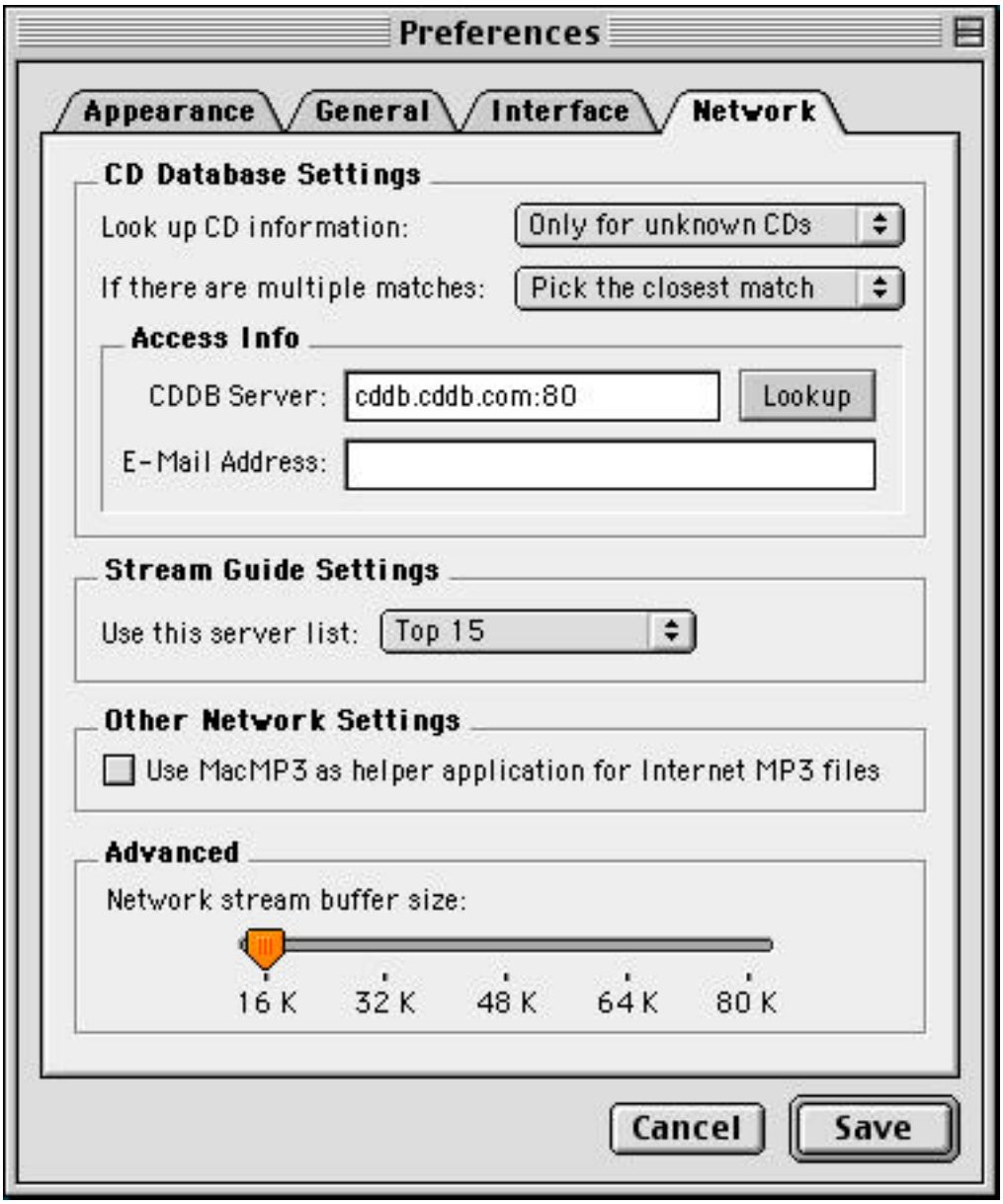
Increasing the buffer size means that MacMP3 will have more audio to play, even if the network connection or disk temporarily stalls. However, a larger buffer size means that network streams will take a longer time to start playing. Usually, Network streams play smoother with a smaller buffer size, because less data needs to be received before the next “packet” can start playing. Try it both ways if you’re having trouble, and see what works best.

Interface Preferences



The Interface Control panel allows you to customize the two lines of text that appear in the Control Window. This control panel also allows customization of Keyboard Controls and Playlist Columns.

Network Preferences



The Network Preferences gives you hands-on control over the Internet related settings inside MacMP3.

CD Database Settings

Look up CD information

When you insert a CD, MacMP3 can get the track and title information via the Internet. This pop-up menu controls when MacMP3 should perform this lookup. You may establish when you want to do the following:

- **Only for Unknown CDs**
  If the CD is not stored in the CD title storage cache file, then fetch the data from CDDB.
- **Always**
  Retrieve the data from CDDB no matter what.
- **Never**
  Do not try to fetch the data from CDDB. This is a good choice if you are not connected to the Internet.

  (Note: If there are multiple matches, it is possible that CDDB may have multiple guesses as per what CD you have inserted. When this happens, MacMP3 will do one of the following)

- **Pick the closest match**
- **Ask which one to use -** This will open a dialog box allowing you to pick the correct match, which will be stored in the CD Title Storage for future reference**.**

CDDB Server:

Allows you to type the name of a CDDB server. If you don't know the name of a server, click the Lookup button to retrieve a list of all available servers, and pick the one closest to you.

E-mail address:

CDDB needs your e-mail address in order to perform lookups. If you wish to remain anonymous, you can enter an imaginary address such as "macmp3@aol.com" in this text box.

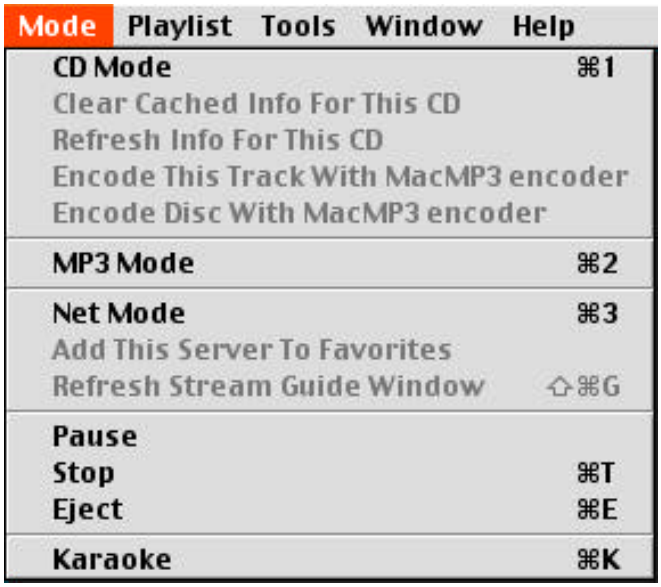
Stream Guide Settings

Use this server list:
There are five lists available that MacMP3 can download to fill out the Stream Guide window. Use this pop-up menu to select the list you want; obviously, the All Servers list will be quite long and may take a while to download. The lists update every five minutes on MacMP3 servers.

Other Network Settings

Use MacMP3 as helper application for Internet MP3 files:
This setting associates MacMP3 with .MP3, .M3U and .PLS files, allowing you to simply click a streaming server/MP3 link in your web browser to have it play in MacMP3. MacMP3 associates these file types using Internet Config and can be adjusted in your Internet control panel.

Mode Menu



- **CD Mode**
  Allows you to play audio CDs in their uncompressed format.

- **Clear cached info for this CD**
  This clears any data being stored in the Title Storage “cache” file located inside the System Folder.

- **Refresh info for this CD**
  Reconnects to the CDDB server and refreshes the ID3v2 tag info.

- **Encode this Track with MacMP3 Encoder**
  Launches the MacMP3 encoder and begins encoding track to the location specified inside the MacMP3 Settings Control Panel.

- **Encode Disc with MacMP3 Encoder**
  Launches the MacMP3 encoder, and begins encoding entire Compact Disc to the location specified inside the MacMP3 Settings Control Panel.

- **MP3 Mode**
  Toggles you into MP3 mode allowing you to play .MP3 files and MacMP3 playlists.

- **NET Mode**
  While in NET Mode, you can listen to Internet Streams (sometimes referred to as Internet Radio) by manually inputting the server information or via the Favorite Streams guide.

- **Add this Server to Favorites**
  Easily add currently playing server to favorites menu by selecting this menu.

- **Refresh Stream Guide Window**
  Reconnects to the MacMP3 server and refreshes the stream guide list.

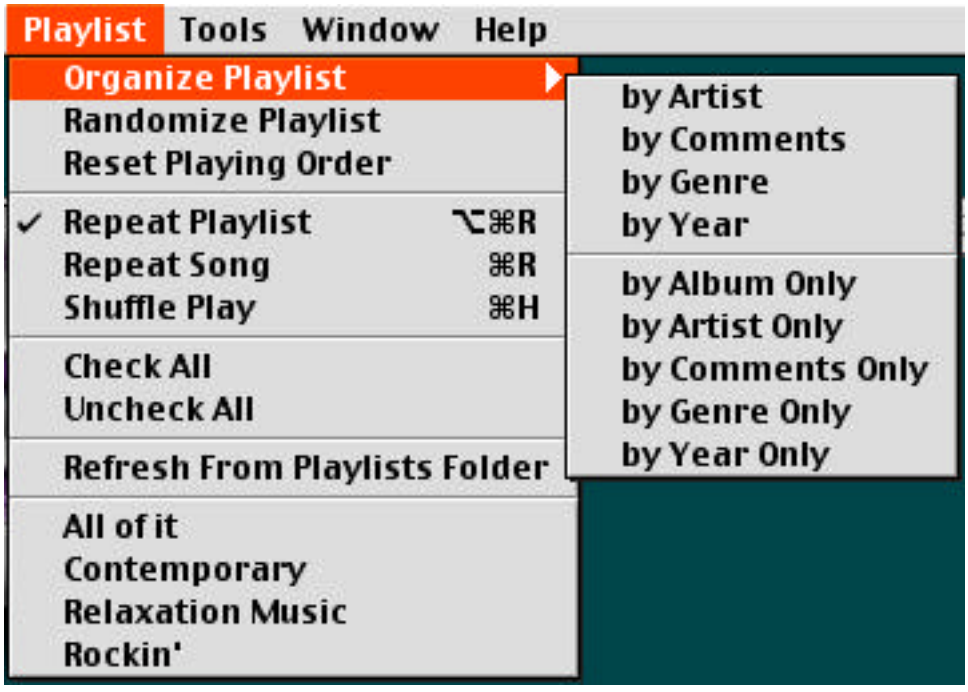
- **Pause**
  Pauses currently selected MP3 file, Playlist or selected stream.

- **Stop**
  Works the same as the “Stop” button on the player interface; selecting it causes currently playing MP3 tracks to stop playing.

- **Eject**
  When playing a CD, select to eject it. While playing MP3s, select to open a Playlist.

- **Karaoke**
  When selecting Karaoke mode, MacMP3 will reduce the vocals of your favorite mp3 and Net streams. Karaoke requires a stereo stream, and will produce a mono stream as output. Depending on how the original recording was created, vocals may be completely eliminated, or hardly affected. Try it with a variety of songs to get accustomed to its capabilities.

Playlist Menu



Organize Playlist

Selecting organize playlist will allow you to instantly created a sorted, organized playlist based on the artist title information stored in the ID3 tags of your MP3 files.

Playlist: How to?

How to randomize (shuffle) a playlist:
Open the Playlist Menu and choose Randomize Playlist

How to repeat (have it loop until you hit stop):
Open the Playlist menu and check Repeat Playlist.

How to repeat a song (have it loop until you hit stop):
Open the Playlist menu and check Repeat Song.

How to reset the order of a Playlist after randomizing:
Open the Playlist menu and check Reset Playlist.

Tools

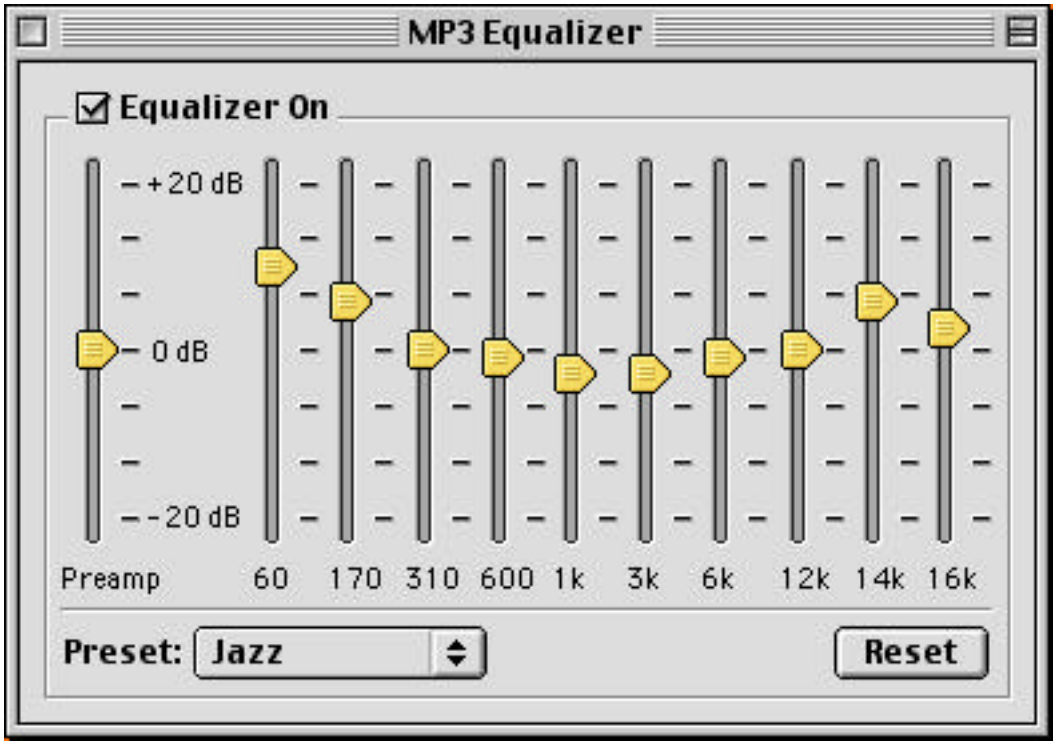
MP3 Info Editor

Major ID3 tags can be edited via the MP3 Info Editor. You can edit one file at a time, or apply changes to a batch of files. You can start the info editor with your current playlist selection, or drop MP3s on it from the playlist or Finder.

Alarm Clock

The MacMP3 Alarm Clock allows you to wake to your favortie MP3 songs. (NOTE: MacMP3 must be turned on in order for this function to work)

Equalizer Settings



MacMP3 comes with a nifty 10-band Graphic Equalizer with a number of presets optimized for different kinds of music. You can access the Equalizer Window through the Window Menu or through the pull down menu button. (*Note: the Equalizer does not support CD audio and will only work under MP3 mode)*

Getting Further Help

Online Help Files

Every copy of MacMP3 comes complete with this documentation in Adobe Acrobat format. The Adobe Acrobat reader is freely available from Adobe on the Internet at *www.adobe.com*.

All documentation for MacMP3 is also available online at *www.macmp3.net*. In addition, there is a list of frequently asked questions pertaining to MacMP3 on the MacMP3 web site.

Technical Support

You can obtain Technical Support for MacMP3 by accessing the *support* area of the MacMP3 Web site at *www.macmp3.net*. You can connect directly to the MacMP3 help pages from the MacMP3 web site as well.

From the *Help Yourself* page, you can search the FAQ knowledge base, read additional product documentation, and submit problem reports.

Submitting a Problem Report

All technical support questions must be submitted through a technical support problem report located on the MacMP3 web site. If you have not completed a problem report, you will be requested to fill out the problem report and call back so that our support staff will have necessary system and program configuration information to address your issue as quickly and precisely as possible.

What about undocumented features? Bugs? If you found a bug that we didn't, the first thing to do is go to the MacMP3 web site to check for an update. If you are using the most recent version, then check the MacMP3 version history.

Various Notes

Is MP3 legal?

Yes. MP3 is simply a file format; however, it can be used either legally or illegally. Using an MP3 is legal if the song's copyright holder has granted permission to download and play the song. In the United States, it is legal to make copies from a CD for personal use. However, it is a violation of copyright law to broadcast or trade MP3s that you have encoded from a CD without permission from the copyright holder, just as it is illegal to photocopy books or sheet music without the appropriate permissions.

During 1992 in the United States, the recording industry supported the enactment of the Audio Home Recording Act, which gave consumers freedom to engage in certain types of copying without fear of copyright liability as long as it is not done for commercial purposes. Computers and general-purpose computer peripheral devices are not covered by the Audio Home Recording Act, meaning that without permission by the artist or record company, copying the music in formats such as MP3 may be a copyright infringement. If you have more specific questions or concerns about what does and does not constitute a copyright violation, please consult an attorney familiar with copyright law. This manual and all documentation associated with MacMP3 should not be seen or interpreted as legal advice, and is not a substitute for legal advice.

Multitasking

At any time while you are encoding, you can run other programs on your Mac with no loss in compression or audio quality. Please be reasonable when multitasking. You can't expect to render complex 3D worlds, run intensive PhotoShop filters, and unstuff 100 meg downloads all at the same time! Encoding is highly processor-intensive, so expect your computer to behave as if it has somewhat

of a load on it while you are encoding. Increasing the RAM available to MacMP3 by getting info on the MacMP3 encoder application in the Extensions folder of your System folder might help the encoding, especially if you have a lot of applications running simultaneously. Note that speed decreases associated with encoding are intensified on older Macs and almost nonexistent on Apple's latest G4 processor-based machines.

Bitrate Optimization Tips

The default bitrate is 128 kbps. If you consider yourself an audiophile, we suggest you increase this to 256 kbps because we know it sounds better. Sure, your files will occupy a greater part of your hard drive, but the sound quality improvement is significant enough that you will most likely appreciate the difference. For audio tracks which are destined for web sites or ftp servers, sticking with 128 kbps is a good idea.

Variable bitrate (VBR) is another option that can help to reduce file sizes. This seems to work particularly well with classical and new age music, and not quite so well with rhythm & blues, rock & roll, country, or pop music. You are encouraged to encode files with both settings and to compare the two to see which you prefer or whether there is a noticeable difference.

Notes for iMac users

It is a good idea to turn off the SRS feature in your control panel, especially when playing MP3 files. This surround-sound mode will often distort MP3 playback. While SRS might be nice for playing CD audio directly, the general consensus is that it makes MP3 files sound muddy and flat.

In general, do not eject the CD-ROM during encoding. This will not harm the drive, but your encoding will not be completed.

PowerBook G3 DVD drives and audio extraction

Currently, the MacMP3 development team is working on solving an issue which involves PowerBook G3s with DVD drives. They are apparently unable to extract audio reliably.

Any application reading digital audio information from a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive on a 300 MHz PowerBook G3 Series (and most likely the 250 MHz model as well), can cause a small amount of data corruption to information read from the hard disk at the same time. Non-PowerBook Macs with DVD drives do not seem to be affected.

This is *not a problem with MacMP3*. We have been told that this corruption occurs with many other audio programs, including QuickTime 3 MoviePlayer, QuickTime 4 MoviePlayer, SoundApp, MacAmp 1.0 Preview, SoundJam, and AudioCatalyst.

Presently, we do not know the exact cause of the corruption. We are doing two things about it: first, we are attempting to debug the problem ourselves, and secondly, we are approaching Apple to resolve this issue. We will let you know when we have more detailed information. Until a solution is available, 300 MHz PowerBook G3 Series owners are urged to *exercise caution* when reading digital audio information from CD-ROM and DVD-ROM drives.

MP3 and MiniDiscs

The MiniDisc (MD) is a formidable alternative for digital portable music. Although not capable of storing audio compressed in the MP3 format, MiniDiscs use ATRAC, which compresses sound to only a fourth of the uncompressed size (CD or WAV). ATRAC uses techniques similar to that of MP3 to achieve this compression, and it is almost completely “lossless” (it gives better quality than MP3). To record MP3s to a MiniDisc you need a MiniDisc recorder (these

cost from $200 and up), a writable MiniDisc, costing less than $5, and a cable to connect your sound card to your MiniDisc. MiniDiscs record either digitally or using analog recording. Digital recording requires a digital optical port (TOSLINK) which Macs don’t have. A special TOSLINK cable is required for digital recording.

Some recent portable MiniDisc recorders have connections for standard SPDIF data transfers. As most of today’s computers do not have any sort of digital out port we will concentrate on analog recording.

For this type of recording you need a standard 3.5mm (1/8") stereo audio cable to connect your sound card to your MiniDisc. You should be able to get this in any type of computer store and it is not expensive. Connect the cable between the speaker out port at the back of your Mac and the Line In of your MiniDisc. Click the little speaker icon at the bottom right hand corner and set your sound card to maximum volume (Wave and 'Volume Control'). This is assuming that you have a standard Windows 9x setup, and the exact procedure may vary between systems. Now play the loudest MP3 that you want to record and set the recording volume level on your MiniDisc as loud as you dare. Look at the little meter on your MiniDisc that displays the volume of the sound currently being played. If the sound is too loud then it will end up in the area marked "OVER" or something similar. If that happens, then reduce the recording volume, as it will severely reduce the quality of your recording. It is not necessary to keep the volume all that close to the max, but if it is very low then the recording will have to be boosted by using a high volume setting on your MD when you play it and that too will reduce audio quality.

If everything works out, then just press the appropriate button on your MiniDisc to start recording, usually the same as the “play” button. After that, start playing the MP3s you want to record. It is a good idea to have a Playlist ready to go. A recordable MiniDisc will hold about 74 minutes, or 60 minutes depending on what type of disc you purchased. Try not to disturb your computer with extraneous processor or disc-intensive tasks such as launching

larger applications while recording, as it will be very annoying if your player skips when recording. With the correct buffer settings in your player you should be able to do almost anything while recording, but try avoiding connecting to the internet using a modem, as it is a sure source for skips.

If you are up for a challenge, then try using the "Synchro" mode of your recorder. This will make the MiniDisc assume that every time audio goes silent for at least 3 seconds, it is the end of a track. It is very handy, but will have trouble if there are some very silent parts in your songs, as the MiniDisc will pause until the next loud sound and not record the silent parts of it. If the Synchro mode does not detect the end of a song, then try inserting a silent MP3 or WAV that plays for three or four seconds between every song. A silent WAV file can be generated by the SoundEdit program. A one-second silent MP3 track is available at the MacMP3 web site for spacing MP3 files. You can insert several copies of this silent second between the tracks you wish to have recorded into your MiniDisc and they can be used to space the tracks, assuming your MiniDisc recorder has the Synchro function.

One final note about transferring your MP3 files to MiniDisc: the player (a.k.a. decoder) you use is crucial. We recommend that you use the highest quality encoder available to you for this purpose. There is indeed a difference in the sound of MP3 decoding engines used in the various players.

Tips on organizing the MP3 files on your Mac

Just as compact discs can get lost under the car seat and behind the stereo system in real life, it is easy for audio files to get lost on your hard drive. It is a good idea to keep your online music collection somewhat organized, just as it is to have it organized in real life. We recommend that you use folders to contain all the tracks on a single CD.

For example, a folder entitled *Mozart Symphonies 39 and 40* would contain eight tracks, one for each movement of the two

symphonies. This folder could be put in the *Complete Mozart* folder inside the *Classical Music* folder etc. Auto-naming by CDDB helps to keep the tracks in order by their number when listed alphabetically on your Mac. You can use the playlist feature in your MP3 player to order the files the way you want them to be played.

More about ID3v2 Tags

There are actually several kinds of ID tags. The most recent and most widely accepted form of ID3 tag is named ID3v2. You can find more information about the standard at *www.id3.org*. ID3v2 is often followed by its revision number, i.e. the current informal standard is ID3v2.3. MacMP3 is fully compatible with players which read for ID3v2.3 tags.

The latest version of the tag now includes encapsulated picture information. Though MacMP3 and the CDDB do not currently support this, you may routinely see a picture accompanying MP3 files in the future.

Some older players, especially those that are Direct Show-based (for example, an old version of the Microsoft Media), may not playback if the MP3 file contains an ID3v2 tag. Most if not all, MP3 players are now capable of reading ID3v2 tags, but many outdated players will have trouble opening and reading the file with newer tags. Turning off the ID3 tags might be a good idea if you have a wide audience, particularly if they may be using outdated Windows MP3 players.

If you want to edit ID3v2 tags after the track is encoded, we suggest a program called ID3Edit. It is written by Petr Stanicek and is available for free download at *www.welcome.to/mp3edit*.

Troubleshooting CDDB

Here is a list of things to check when the tracks aren't being named automatically for you:

- Are you connected to the net at the time that you insert a CD?

- Is the CDDB feature turned on in the MacMP3 Settings control panel?

- Do you have appropriate CDDB server and identifier settings?

- Are you behind a proxy, and if so, are the proxy settings in Internet Config appropriate?

Tip: Take a look at: *www.cddb.org* for details on good addresses to use for servers!

If you've tried all of these things, then send an email to *support@macmp3.net*. Mentioning that you read this section will not only make the MacMP3 technical support people happier, knowing that you've read the manual, but they'll respond much more quickly.

Downsampling

Once you have encoded an MP3 at a particular bitrate (e.g. 128 kbps), it is not currently possible to convert the MP3 to a lower bitrate using MacMP3. This process is known as "downsampling". You can expect, however, to see this feature added in a future release of MacMP3.

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