

“MOD” Music

As many know (but I will give a slight introduction) the .mod music played a big part of the Amiga history and was used in video games in the 90’s for their ability to carry a sound sample and stretch into a respectable song while using very little memory compared to regular recordings.

I’ve been a big fan of the .mod files since the ModPlayer that was developed for the Newton MessagePad in the late 90’s. Since that time I have “tracked” the Mod scene and happy to say it is still very active. The information below is to bring to your awareness gigs and gigs of mods for probably months of enjoyment if played end to end.

...Greg Goodwin

<http://modarchive.org/index.php>
News

2013 Additions Torrent now available Saturday 8th March 2014

A torrent of all of the additions from 2013 has been generously generated by jantore and seeded ready for your leeching! <http://modarchive.org/index.php>

2013 Additions Direct Link

http://tracker.modarchive.org/torrents/modarchive_2013_additions.torrent

Torrent	Size
modarchive_2007_official_snapshot_120000_modules	29.03GiB
TMA-waveworld.zip	1.35GiB
modarchive_2007_official_snapshot_addendum1	479.69MiB
modarchive_2008_additions	1.39GiB
woollyss-chiptune-samples.zip	71.1MiB
modarchive_2009_additions	1.44GiB
modarchive_2010_additions	920.61MiB
Kiarchive.zip	557.03MiB
modarchive_2011_additions	955.43MiB
modarchive_2012_additions	967.05MiB
modarchive_2013_additions	990.41MiB

The Computer Mouse Still Roars

I said goodbye to my mouse last month. It was time to advance, I thought, to a higher plane of input, a trackpad that works like a tablet’s screen. Instead of point and click, I’d swipe and flick.

A few weeks in, I was missing my mouse. Moving a folder across a 27-inch iMac screen with the trackpad was like lugging a grand piano across the Sahara—I had to keep taking breaks along the way, as I ran out of pad.

This can’t be progress. Determined, I rustled up a dozen of the latest input devices, regular mice and trackpads, but also vertical mice, pen and knob-shaped mice, a touch-screen stylus, even a controller that lets you wave your hands around without touching anything, a la “Minority Report.”

What I discovered: Thirty years after the Macintosh took the mouse mainstream, I couldn’t find anything more precise or comfortable for operating a computer. More important, I found the mouse has managed to reinvent itself over the years—it’s like the Madonna of PC peripherals.

One reinvention stood out during my testing, a mouse whose unconventional look belied its natural grip: the Sculpt Ergonomic Mouse by Microsoft. Other standouts I tested were Apple’s Magic Mouse, the Penlic Mouse and Logitech’s Ultrathin Touch Mouse.

Picking a control device is kind of like choosing shoes—some go for Air Jordans, others for Christian Louboutin heels. Everyone has their own size and physical fit—sometimes even a medical need. (My right-handed

editor swears by a trackball mouse in his left hand.)

Though PC sales have declined in recent years, mouse unit sales slipped only 3% in the past 12 months, according to industry research firm NPD. In other words, a good chunk of laptop buyers are adding mice to their productivity ensembles.

To test my efficiency using a mouse and other input devices, I used a program scientists developed to study the speed-accuracy trade-offs in human muscle movements, called Fitts's Law. My scores, based on clicking scattered dots on a screen, were at times nearly twice as fast with a mouse as with a trackpad. Most hands are more relaxed on a mouse, so starting and stopping are easier, say the ergonomists.

(You can try it for yourself with different kinds of devices—and wade through a tutorial about Fitts' Law (<http://bit.ly/MNwPgT>). Skip to Step 20 for the test itself.)

Of course, for flipping pages or pinching to zoom, finger gestures on a touch screen or trackpad are the more efficient way.

Both Apple and Microsoft have integrated finger gestures into their latest computer operating systems. Apple sells iMacs with a trackpad option. Microsoft built the latest Windows version in the hope that users touch the screen itself.

A touch-screen monitor on a desktop or laptop sounds good, but it invites what some call “gorilla-arm” fatigue. After forcing myself to use only the touch screen on a Windows 8.1 laptop, I found myself propping it up at an angle in my lap so my hands could rest on the side. (Microsoft says the touch screen is meant to supplement, not replace, other inputs.)

Then there is a problem of universality: Designers haven't yet

come up with a common language for touch on computers. In Windows 8.1, a swipe from the left lets you switch between apps, while on a Mac trackpad, three fingers, moving in the same direction, open a widget dashboard. And neither movement is particularly intuitive.

The emerging world of touchless computing confuses things more. The Leap Motion, which tracks the movement of hands, lets you do cool tricks. But every compatible program comes with its own set of new moves you have to learn. And the accuracy of floating fingers is low. Leap Motion says its device isn't a replacement for the mouse, just an accessory for software that benefits from 3-D controls.

Mouse designers have made leaps in ergonomics. Many are now more vertical, better mimicking the posture of a hand in its natural resting state. “Your fingers are curled into your palm, but not all evenly,” says Edie Adams, an ergonomist at Microsoft.

My favorite mouse was one she worked on, Microsoft's wireless Sculpt Ergonomic Mouse (\$60 or less). It looks like a plum, with an overly ripe area where you rest your thumb. It is comfortable enough to use for hours, the mouse equivalent of orthopedic shoes. And props to Microsoft for apparently getting it to run on one pair of AA batteries for a whole year. I'll even use it on my Mac.

The runner-up was the even more vertical \$90 Penlic. That familiar pen shape gave me a sense of control I wasn't expecting.

Today's mice also do a better job at adding features through gestures, so they don't get overloaded with extra buttons. Apple's \$70 Magic Mouse may be less comfortable to hold over extended periods than the ergonomic options, but it does the best job of integrating touch commands on its smooth, flat surface—such as swiping

with two fingers to advance through pages or browse photos. Logitech's \$70 Ultrathin Touch Mouse puts similar gesture functionality into a body small enough to travel with a laptop.

The idea shouldn't be to try to “out-mouse the mouse” with new kinds of inputs, says Josh Clark, a computer interface designer and founder of the firm Global Moxie. Rather, we're moving to a world of technology and input devices designed to fit specific times and places: touch screens on the go, voice activation for TVs, hand gestures to browse a store display with products.

I spend a growing part of my day with smartphones and tablets, but like many professionals, when I need to get work done, I'm still sitting in a chair facing a big computer screen. And there, the mouse remains king.

...By Geoffrey A. Fowler
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
<<http://on.wsj.com/Mnwjfl>>

Cyberspace is Filling Up

From The Sunday Times
April 26, 2009

Internet users will face regular “brownouts” that will freeze their computers as capacity runs out in cyberspace, according to research to be published later this year.

Experts predict that consumer demand, already growing at 60 per cent a year, will start to exceed supply from as early as next year because of more people working online and the soaring popularity of bandwidth-hungry websites such as YouTube and services such as the BBC's iPlayer.

It will initially lead to computers being disrupted and going offline for several minutes at a time. From 2012, however, PCs and laptops are likely to operate at a much reduced speed, rendering the Internet an “unreliable toy.”

When Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the British scientist, wrote the code that transformed a private computer network into the world wide web in 1989, the Internet appeared to be a limitless resource. However, a report being compiled by Nemertes Research, a respected American think-tank, will warn that the web has reached a critical point and that even the recession has failed to stave off impending problems.

“With more people working or looking for work from home, or using their PCs more for cheap entertainment, demand could double in 2009,” said Ted Ritter, a Nemertes analyst. “At best, we see the [economic] slowdown delaying the fractures for maybe a year.”

In America, telecoms companies are spending £40 billion a year upgrading cables and supercomputers to increase capacity, while in Britain proposals to replace copper cabling across part of the network with fiberoptic wires would cost at least £5 billion.

Yet sites such as YouTube, the video-sharing service launched in 2005, which has exploded in popularity, can throw the most ambitious plans into disarray.

The amount of traffic generated each month by YouTube is now equivalent to the amount of traffic generated across the entire Internet in all of 2000.

The extent of its popularity is indicated by the 100 million people who have logged on to the site to see the talent show contestant Susan Boyle in the past three weeks.

Another so-called “net bomb” being studied by Nemertes is BBC iPlayer, which allows viewers to watch high-definition television on their computers. In February there were more than 35 million requests for shows and iPlayer now accounts for 5 per cent of all UK internet traffic.

Analysts express such traffic in exabytes — a quintillion (or a million trillion) bytes or units of computer data. One exabyte is equivalent to 50,000 years’ worth of DVD-quality data.

Monthly traffic across the Internet is running at about eight exabytes. A recent study by the University of Minnesota estimated that traffic was growing by at least 60 per cent a year, although that did not take into account plans for greater Internet access in China and India.

While the net itself will ultimately survive, Ritter said that waves of disruption would begin to emerge next year, when computers would jitter and freeze. This would be followed by “brownouts” — a

combination of temporary freezing and computers being reduced to a slow speed.

Ritter's report will warn that an unreliable Internet is merely a toy. “For business purposes, such as delivering medical records between hospitals in real time, it’s useless,” he said.

“Today people know how home computers slow down when the kids get back from school and start playing games, but by 2012 that traffic jam could last all day long.”

Engineers are already preparing for the worst. While some are planning a lightning-fast parallel network called “the grid,” others are building “caches,” private computer stations where popular entertainments are stored on local PCs rather than sent through the global backbone.

Telephone companies want to recoup escalating costs by increasing prices for “net hogs” who use more than their share of capacity.

...John Harlow
<<http://bit.ly/1d09mzN>>

April Calendar

April 7 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library
910 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

April 7 — Board of Director’s Meeting
Approximately 9:15 PM — Location TBD

April 28 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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