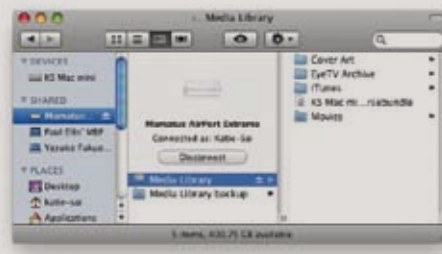


The Academy of Plumbing 36 Sound & Vision Part 2

Part 2...and rightly so, because thus far, increasing our Media Centre, we've rigged the Mac mini and telly but haven't yet mentioned data storage and backup or even thought about recording live TV, transferring VHS, camcorder or audio tapes, Skype, or setting up a client file server. We haven't even figured out the best way to enjoy our luxurious media library's contents, either. Never mind: read on.

DATA STORAGE

I needed a low-cost non-RAID two-drive enclosure that would take a pair of 1.5TB hard drives, one for data, the other its backup. Eventually I found the £90 MacPower Taurus RAID II. It's fan-cooled and therefore too noisy for my silent living room so I've attached it to the Airport Extreme in the hall cupboard and share it on my network as an AirDisk. The Mac mini is set up to mount it automatically at login.



Networked via Ethernet, data reads at around 15MB/sec and writes at around 8MB/sec, perfectly adequate for my current uses. If I require higher performance I'll attach the Taurus directly to the Mac mini with a 10m FireWire 800 cable. My iTunes Music

Folder resides on this disk, iTunes having been told where the folder is and its music library Consolidated to it.



I back up the Media Library disk daily with Chronosync. I also use it as the Mac mini's Time Machine backup destination. Using Time Machine Editor I've set Time Machine to back up once daily at 9am so that the backup process doesn't interfere with media playback.

RECORDING TV

I have a FreeSat dish. I wanted to be able to record live TV and therefore needed a Mac-compatible DVB-S satellite tuner. The obvious one to get is Elgato's EyeTV Sat, which will also record pay-to-view satellite transmissions apart from Sky, which isn't officially supported. If you get decent FreeView reception, Elgato do a range of tuners to suit. To record HDTV directly from a Sky or Virgin box you'll need a Hauppauge HD PVR but it might overstress the Mac mini. I've included a link to setup instructions. Whichever hardware you use, Elgato EyeTV is the

software of choice.

I haven't yet properly set up TV recording. I tried, with a Terratec Cinergy S USB tuner, but the unit didn't work so I had to send it back. By Part 3 I'll be an old hand and will relate the experience.

RECORDING VIDEO

Elgato's Video Capture hardware and software combination is specifically designed for this purpose. Beware, though: grotty VHS pictures are almost unwatchable on an HDTV screen. Archiving VHS to disk is strictly for unique material. Anything you have on VHS that is also available on DVD will look infinitely better sourced from that. Camcorder material is best imported over FireWire or USB with iMovie.

RECORDING SOUND

The Griffin iMic is excellent for recording analogue audio from vinyl record decks, audio cassettes and similar. Two of the most straightforward audio recording and editing applications are Audio Hijack Pro and Amadeus Pro. I use my Apple iSight camera's microphone for Skype and iChat. Soundsource affords the easiest way to change audio input source and output destinations.

THE CLIENT FILE SERVER

If you have a fast broadband connection, a fixed IP address from your ISP, and your Internet router supports uPnP or NAT/PMP, life is easy. Go to 123-reg.co.uk, get yourself a suitable domain name (such as joesmudgerclients.co.uk) and point it at your external IP address. Get a copy of Lighthouse, set it to launch on start-up

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By Paul Ellis

and automatically run its HTTP profile. Then turn on Web Sharing in System Preferences/Sharing.

In the Finder, go to [your hard



disk name]/Library/WebServer/Documents, create a folder in there called clients and make an alias to it on your desktop. Anything you drop into this folder will be available for web download. If it's a web gallery in a folder called "fabwebgallery", it'll be at <http://www.joesmudgerclients.co.uk/clients/fabwebgallery/>. Piece of cake. Just don't use any spaces or clever characters in your folder and file names.

If you need to password-protect your web galleries, Apache Protect will do that. Papyrus is elegant for web file sharing, allowing clients to upload as well as download and good for everything except pre-built web galleries. You can run both Web Sharing and Papyrus simultaneously if you wish.

If you don't have a fixed IP address or your router is the execrable BT

Business Hub which doesn't do uPnP, life becomes more tedious but not impossibly so. Call the Plumber.

CONTROLLING THE MONSTER

Turn on the Mac mini's Screen Sharing or Remote Management in System Preferences/Sharing and you'll be able to remote-control it from any other Leopard Mac on your network. To control it from afar, get a MobileMe account and use Back To My Mac. For media playback, use Apple Front Row controlled by an Apple Remote or your iPhone (search the iTunes App Store for Remote Control).

Front Row and the Apple DVD Player do a far better job of upscaling DVDs to HDTV resolution than the fancy Sony DVD player my Mac mini sits upon. With Flip4Mac WMV and Perian installed, Front Row can play movie files from almost any source.

iTunes itself is an excellent music player, especially if you like to watch hippy visuals while you listen. The BBC iPlayer works beautifully from within Safari or Firefox. Use iPlayer Downloader to download iPlayer material for later viewing. RipIt is the most straightforward software I've yet found for transferring your DVDs to hard disk. Skype and iChat both work properly if their audio inputs and outputs are set up correctly. Use iGlasses to optimise your webcam picture.

In Part 3: practical help in organising your media, finding and adding cover

art, and getting rid of adverts from live TV recordings. See you then.

LINKS

- MacPower Taurus RAID II: <http://tinyurl.com/mkenxf>
- Lindy 10m FireWire 800 cable: <http://tinyurl.com/lu9bg7>
- Chronosync: <http://tinyurl.com/82bmfm>
- Time Machine Editor: <http://tinyurl.com/yomuqc>
- Elgato tuners & EyeTV: <http://www.elgato.com/>
- Recording from Sky or Virgin: <http://tinyurl.com/mssv5c>
- Hauppauge HD PVR: <http://tinyurl.com/m4vw6v>
- Griffin iMic: <http://tinyurl.com/ojb6gk>
- SoundSource & Audio Hijack Pro: <http://www.rogueamoeba.com/>
- Amadeus Pro: <http://tinyurl.com/6zza59>
- Domain names: <http://www.123-reg.co.uk>,
- Lighthouse: <http://tinyurl.com/yo9hl8>
- Apache Protect: <http://tinyurl.com/lyy75r>
- Papaya: <http://tinyurl.com/4s9gy6>
- MobileMe: <http://www.me.com>
- Flip4Mac WMV: <http://tinyurl.com/5jphmn>
- Perian: <http://www.perian.org/>
- BBC iPlayer: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/>
- iPlayer Downloader: <http://tinyurl.com/ayct4o>
- RipIt: <http://ripitapp.com/>
- Skype: <http://tinyurl.com/68umdl>
- iGlasses: <http://tinyurl.com/6ko82>

PDFs of this and all my other Image articles are available to download at www.thedigitalplumber.co.uk, each with live weblinks for your browsing pleasure. Go and get 'em.

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