

Mods from Modesto Or, Confessions of a Mod Junkie

By Darla Pearce

In the beginning, there were two file formats for Mac music: Midi and digitized sound. Then along came the Sound-Trecker and revolutionized music, at least for me. I still remember the day I found a copy of this little jukebox type player on America Online sometime around 1989. It came with a couple of Mods and I opened the program and clicked on. To my amazement, All The Fine Young Cannibals (FYC) started playing. Astonished, I sat back with a big grin on my face.

From another part of the house, my youngest daughter, Jen, heard the music and came dancing out. It was irresistible. I clicked on the "repeat" loop and for as long as the song played, she danced. Much to my delight, I found this to be a great way to wear out children without the expense of going to a local park or Disneyland. Call it a bonus. When friends dropped by, I had to demonstrate this new feature. It puzzled them when I'd turn on the Sound-Trecker jukebox say "countdown." Sure enough within moments, Jen came dancing out like a moth drawn to the flame. This was my introduction to 'mods' and Frank Seide's great mod player, Sound-Trecker.

Mods originated on the Amiga as text files that contain note data and small sampled instrument sounds. The result is rich, live-sounding music that uses far less disk space than digitized sounds. 'Midi's' are smaller yet, but require a lot of external equipment. A two-minute Mod uses 98K of memory which would translate into 2600K as a sound. The beauty is, that you can play them in the background (a real bonus to liven up a game of solitaire or that letter you've been dreading to write). Who could ask for more?

The most immediate problem was how to find new mods, very few were posted in The OneNet Los Altos Mac Music Library. The second thing I discovered is, how easy it is to access the hundreds of Mods for the IBM PC and translate them for use with the Mac. If you know how to use ResEdit or have a file "type" changing utility, it's a breeze. But of course, I didn't want to advertise the ease of doing the conversions. This intimidated many Mac people, leaving the field completely open. I was able to grab up the new mods off America Online, translate them and post them on OneNet, as if some sort of miraculous conversion was required. In this manner, I managed to accumulate virtually hundreds of them. To this day the quest goes on. I'm always on the lookout for a new Mod. Okay, call me a "Mod junkie."

With the arrival of the Player Pro, Mac folks now have the capability to make their own mods. But so far, the response from the Mac community leaves a lot to be desired. Some of the most trashy noises have emerged as "Mods." It is truly disappointing that no one seems to be as skillful on the Mac side at creating them. (Let's face it, the Amiga and IBM folks have been doing it a lot longer.) The challenge is waiting deliciously, for all our budding musicians. Player Pro's

\$25 shareware fee may be hindering some genuine talent from taking a crack at it (although I feel this utility is worth every penny). So, for now, we are still dependent on the other side of the boards for the best mods.

If you are new to Mods and would like to see what it's all about, there is a copy of Sound-Trecker V2.0 and Player Pro V4.10 Demo posted on OneNet. If you have any special requests for a certain type Mod, drop me a note. I think I just might have it around here somewhere.