Kicking the Tires
by Frank Petrie

When was the last time you found a really good radio station that you could leave your tuner parked on? Exactly. So what can you do? Start your own Internet station for one. "But, Frank, I've tried the broadcasting software out there and it's not exactly top-notch!" I anticipated that question. Let me introduce you to Nicecast from Rogue Amoeba (ya' have to love that name!).

"Nicecast is the easiest way to broadcast music from OS X. Broadcast to the world, or just across your house. Nicecast can help you create your own internet radio station or allow access to your iTunes Music Library from anywhere in the world!" Time to give her a spin.

THE GOOD

"Drag this file into your Applications folder." Once you have caught your breath after all that work, it's playtime. This application is customizable beyond your wildest dreams.

Input: iTunes and other sources will do and can be easily selected and modified. I found using iTunes to be the easiest. No fuss, no muss.

Fine-grained Quality Control   Built-In Streaming Server   Broadcast Archiving

Broadcast iTunes with 1 click   Realtime Audio Effects   Digital Voice Over

Output: Plug-ins, plug-ins, plug-ins. Nicecast comes with several billion (at least, it seems like several billion) plug-ins to customize your output in any manner you prefer. It also has an extremely modifiable pane to put them all in. Very, very impressive. You can also set the sound quality so that if you have listeners on dial-up, they won't be buffering the stream every thirty second. And, if that's not enough, you can configure it to access your iTunes from anywhere in the world. To be honest, I didn't get an opportunity to test this particular feature. But everything else they promised, they delivered on, so I'll take them at their word.

THE NOT REALLY BAD

Unless you have a static IP address, you can only broadcast over a LAN. To broadcast to your friends down the block and around the globe, you're going to need that static IP address. If you're on a connection like cable, you more than likely have your IP address dynamically assigned to you. That means that each time you log on, you are given a different address and that's not a bad thing; it provides you with additional security.

Unfortunately, it works against you if you're going to broadcast across the web. Each time you login, you would have to copy your newly assigned IP address and send it to whomever you want to be able to tune in to 'Radio Free You.' Not exactly a Macintosh experience. But the fault, if that's what you can call it, lies in the technology, not Nicecast.

The one thing that would be great is if you could use the Voice Over feature without having a song playing in the background. You can't talk over silence at this point. Hopefully, they will find a way around this in a future release.

THE UNFORTUNATE

Remember the RIAA going after all those Napster downloaders. Well, as a broadcaster (this applies to a WAN set up, not a LAN), you have your own legal headache. ASCAP, BMI and SESAC make sure that royalties are collected for everyone involved in each and every song that you broadcast. As of now, no one has written a law as to what rules you must follow as an IP station. So, if you broadcast over the web, you do so at your own peril. Or should I say 'at the whim of the big three.'

However, if you're part of a band or a musician who isn't signed up to one of these organizations and have original material, you can play your material to the entire planet with out any fear of repercussions. This is a new avenue to get your name out there.

NUTSHELL

Nicecast is a first-class OS X app that delivers on all of its promises and then some. Because of legalities, I can't legally recommend that you use it on a WAN. But let your best "Wolfman Jack' loose on a LAN if you can (yeah...I'm that old!). You won't be able to stop. I couldn't and I knew that no one was listening!

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Thank you.