

# Kicking the Tires

by Frank Petrie



## *Review*

Product: **Radio365**

Company: Live365, Inc. < <http://www.live365.com> >

Requirements: OS X.2 or greater

Price: Standard Membership/Free; Preferred membership/\$3.65 per month

Test Rig: iBook G4/933/640 MB RAM

Review Date: 20 February 2004

To date, the greatest benefactor of the digital revolution is, without question, music. It's also spawned the greatest delivery systems from iTunes down for music purchase. But suppose you just want to listen to internet radio stations?

Well, iTunes has an extremely anemic selection of a few (though some of the best ones). But the PC world has been able to enjoy a multi-tiered service called 'Live 365. com' which let's you listen to hundreds of thousands of international stations, among other goodies we'll get into later. Now, Apple users, it's your turn!

"With Radio365, you can...

- Enjoy 20,000 stations from 200 countries.
- Search stations by artist, track or album.
- Hear CD-quality audio on hundreds of available stations!
- Click from any playlist track to the iTunes Music Store!
- Get a 100-hour free trial."

Sounds to good to be true. But then again, so does the iTunes Music Store but it's here! Lace up your Chuck Taylor's and let's get going.

## THE GOOD

Where to begin? "Drag application ..." Now, go nuts! The UI is brushed aluminum and has two drawers; one for track and station information and the other for holding your favorite station presets.

The 'Track Info' tab also gives you the album art and buttons that will either take you directly to Amazon ('Order CD') or the iTunes Music store ('Buy Download'), enabling you to immediately purchase that particular track or CD!

The 'Station Info' tab provides you with an email link, a web link and a brief description of the station's content. It also includes the station's geographic location. In the bottom drawer, are your presets along with a browse menu to allow you to sift through the thousands of stations by genre.

The main pane has the same look of the iTunes window but about eight times bigger. Here you find a list of the last several songs played (how many depends on the size you've made the pane), song names with the album that they came from and their length and a simple thumbs up/thumbs down rating option! And if you want a friend to check out a particular station, there's a button that will let you send them an email!

The quality of the sound is great. Some stations are just OK but that's due to a low bit rate, What's amazing is that the "CD" quality stations are only 64 kbps! 365 has created a technology which is called "MP3Pro." How it functions and what are the underpinnings are beyond me but I can't argue with the results!

And they have all the support you'll need

365Radio is a subscription service. It has two payment tiers for listeners; free if you want to put up with ads or preferred membership. Preferred membership brings "Better Sound of Hi-Fi Stations; NO Pre-Roll Audio Ads; NO In-Stream Audio Ads; NO Banner Ads; NO Sponsor Buttons."

What? You don't wanna listen, you wanna be the DJ? Lucky you. You can also pick from amateur and pro broadcast packages and spread your music or message to the world. But that would take a whole other article. Check the website for details.



There is amazing interoperability with their website. You can access your presets through their website. And for support, there is an online chat area and forums which can be accessed from either the site or your player. And for all of the features available on the site, again - check the website for details!

## THE BAD

You're allowed to vote on the songs. Even though Radio365 plays up that you don't have to listen to the limited playlists that commercial radio plays, I can't see how the benefit of being able to rate a song would lead to anything else but limited playlists, as well on Radio365. But, then again, maybe I am misconstruing its use.

## THE UGLY

Some of the retro stations (but that's my \$.02).

## THE CLOSE

This is a logical step done precisely the way it should be done. Even on the dumbed down trial player, the quality on the higher end stations is incredible and the some of the lower bit rate stations don't sound bad either.

This is the first app that I would truly call a third party addition that is a necessary addition to Apple's iLife suite (the radio function in iTunes doesn't hold a candle to this). If Apple were smart, they would cut a deal with these folks and roll it into iTunes. So, if you're tethered to your desk all day and have grown bored of listening to your personal music collection for the fifth time, here's your answer.

Oh, and definitely turn ALL of your friends onto this. They will be indebted to you forever for the heads up. (Now, let me get a paper towel to clean up all this drool.)

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