

Help, I need somebody ... (not just anybody, a firewire expert)

My fault. There I go getting all upbeat for a whole month and then I have the misfortune to enter the world of 'Computer Music'. I play in a band. Many gentlemen of my age do the same and are proud of it. Kids finally leave and that battered Strat is lovingly removed from its case in the attic, a few hesitant chords, then such hair as is left is tied in a rather threadbare ponytail, amp plugged in, Hendrix poster back up on the wall and bingo, its 1970 on the Isle of Wight again. In my case, this happened a few years ago and with a few like-minded friends we formed the 'Juniper Hill Blues Band'. We've had great fun, played a few festivals like the positively wonderful Burnley International Blues Festival and even produced a CD. Spurred on by blind ambition, we recorded our second CD in July and this is where it all ran aground on the sandbanks of software quality.

I decided that in this digital age, I would take along a 160Gb disc to the recording session so I could take all the tracks away with me and mix them at home using Logic Pro on a fairly pokey dual G5 Apple Mac. I had assumed that after 15 years, they might have got some of the bugs out of computer music recording systems. Pah. My son told me what Firewire bits to buy and off I went. I imported the tracks without a problem, battled my way past the unbelievably convoluted Logic interface and then tried to record an audio track. After 198 seconds exactly, it said 'Disc too slow - 10004'. How useful - at least it didn't say 'please wait'. It does this every time. If I unclick the "Use larger buffer", it fails after 99 seconds. Every time. In other words, its a show-stopper. I reported it to the Apple 'Black-Hole' support service, but they've all died. I looked on the web and found hundreds of complaints dating back to 2003. It is apparently a problem with Apple's Firewire audio drivers. Why they are unable to fix this beats me. Somebody explained to me that discs have to be fast for audio streaming. Fortunately I know. Twenty years ago I was successfully streaming data from tapes to discs far closer to the limits than this in the geophysical industry. The interesting thing about this is I can do absolutely nothing about it. Apple's support has congealed and there is no work-around, (actually I found my own by binning the Firewire and using a USB interface instead). Of course, nobody tells you this and most people are groping in the dark and have been for years. Astonishing.

In other words, the computer music industry has evolved into producing enormous, labyrinthine applications with completely opaque interfaces, (the Logic documentation is 15 cm thick), with fatal bugs at the very heart of the system which appear to have been there for years. Yes, the functionality is amazing and yes when it works, its even more amazing but when it doesn't and you can do nothing about it, its a nightmare. Meanwhile thousands of users are floundering around trying this, that and the other trying to get round it.

Hands up if this in any way sounds familiar ?

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