

Making iTunes Jump Through Hoops

by Phil Russell

There are always hidden shortcuts in any Macintosh application. iTunes is no exception. Here are just a few of the many keyboard shortcuts.

Try the Smart Playlist item under the File menu in iTunes. There are 21 ways in which you can configure a Smart Playlist (Fig. 1.).



Fig. 1. Ways to configure a playlist

One configuration which interests me is a list of my most frequently played songs -- a sort of Top 20 Countdown. Go to the File menu and Select New Smart Playlist. In the Match the following conditions, select Play Count, select greater than and type in the number of plays which will qualify. Limit to 20 or any other number you wish, and set selected by to most often played. Check Live updating. Click OK (Fig. 2.).

You may also want to use the My Rating choice to display only your top rated songs.



Fig. 2. Play Count Smart Playlist

Did you ever find an album at the iTunes Music Store you wanted to alert a friend to? Grab the album cover and drag it into your message. For example, the Annie Lennox album Bare appears like this in the email message:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewAlbum?playlistId=1588163>

Learn to play with the status display in iTunes. Click on the top line to change from Artist to Song Title to Album. Click the bottom line to switch from Elapsed Time to Remaining Time to Total Time (Fig. 3.).



Fig. 3. Using the iTunes status bar

The default for iTunes places an alias of any song on your hard drive which you add to iTunes Library. I prefer to have iTunes place a copy of the song in iTunes. To do this go to the iTunes menu and select Preferences. In the Advanced pane checkmark Copy files to iTunes Music folder when adding to library (Fig. 4.).

Of course if you do not want two copies of the song on your hard drive, then trash the copy of the song which is outside of the iTunes Music folder.



Fig. 4. Copying songs into iTunes

Command + up arrow in iTunes raises the volume. Of course Command + down arrow lowers the volume. Just keep the keys pressed until the volume reaches a satisfactory level. Command + Option + down arrow mutes iTunes. Of course Apple keyboards also provide volume up, down and mute keys in the upper right corner.

The Vizualizer provides a psychedelic display while your music plays. Access it by using either the H or the ? keys (Fig. 5.). Press the key again to swap H and ? information. Press B to see the Apple logo, and press D to get back to default display. Command + F fills the screen with Vizualizer.

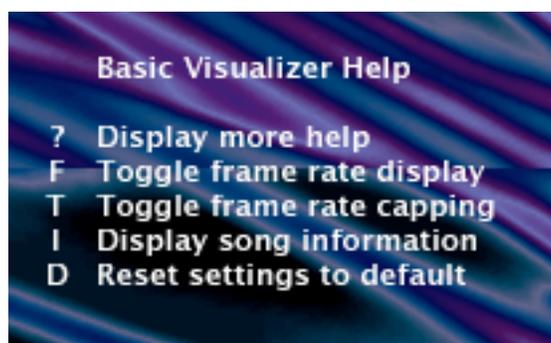


Fig. 5. Vizualizer help

You can see Vizualizer options by clicking the Options button at upper right of the screen when Vizualizer is running (Fig. 6.).

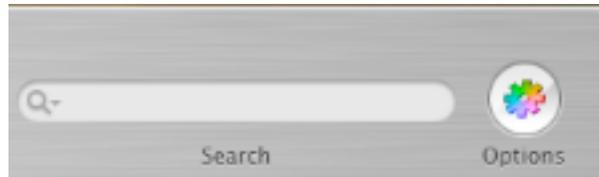


Fig. 6. Vizualizer Options

There is only one option I like. It is the Always display song info choice (Fig. 7.). This option keeps the song title displayed at lower left of the Vizualizer window in an MTV-type block.



Fig. 7. Keep song title displayed

When Vizualizer is open, you can change the color combinations by pressing the Z key repeatedly. The color combination name will appear in the upper right of the Vizualizer window (Fig. 8.). z

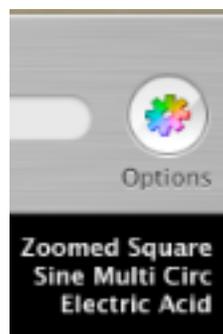


Fig. 8. Color combinations

There is a shortcut for creating playlists. It is the plus sign at lower left of the iTunes window (Fig. 9.). Hold down the Option key to create a Smart Playlist.



Fig. 9. Create playlist shortcut

Do you have any songs which have applause before or after the actual song? You can adjust where a song starts and stops playing. Watch the status bar and note down how many seconds into the file the actual song starts. Also note at what point the song ends and applause starts. With the song selected, press Command + I. Select the Options pane and type in the Start and Stop times you noted. In Fig. 10 below, eliminating four seconds of dead air at the beginning of You Know You Wrong by Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, and setting 3:46 as the Stop Time to eliminate applause and Jay Leno thanking the band at the end of the recording.



Fig. 10. Changing Start/Stop times

When you have iTunes minimized to the Dock, it is handy to control iTunes from the Dock. Control Click on iTunes in the Dock. A menu appears (Fig. 11.). Remember, it is the iTunes icon you Control Click on, as shown in Fig. 11, not the iTunes document icon.

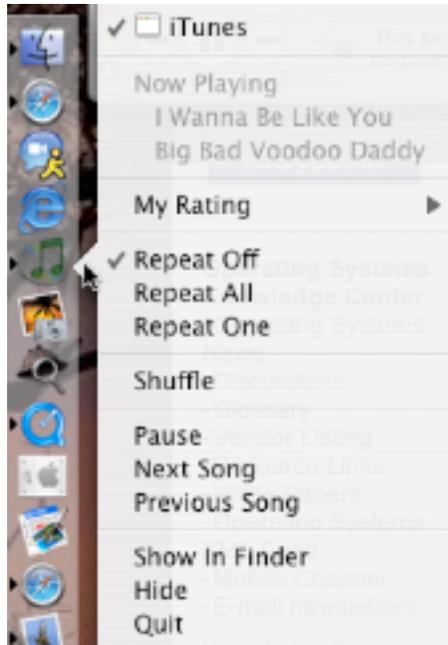


Fig. 11. Controlling iTunes from the Dock

Avoid a wide complicated window. With no song selected, press Command + J (Edit menu, View Options). Uncheck anything you do not need to see in the iTunes window. Fig. 12, below, shows a possible set of options you might wish to see.



Fig. 12. iTunes View Options

You can change the order of songs, but only in a playlist. First, turn off Shuffle in the Controls menu. Once in a playlist, click the header area over the numbers at the left of the

playlist window. Now you can drag songs up and down to reorder the playlist. In Fig. 13, below, I am dragging Never Loved a Man into the number 2 song slot above Do Right Woman.

▲	Song Name	Time	Artist
1	✓ Respect	2:27	Aretha Franklin
2	✓ I Never Loved A Man (The...)	2:44	Aretha Franklin
3	✓ Do Right Woman, Do Righ...	3:16	Aretha Franklin
4	✓ Dr. Feelgood (Love Is a Se...	3:20	Aretha Franklin
5	✓ Save Me	2:19	Aretha Franklin

Fig. 13. Changing playlist order

The column headers can be dragged around to suit you. All except the Song Name column. Below in Fig. 14 I am moving the Time header between the Album and Genre headers.

	Song Name	Artist ▲	Album	Time	Genre
1	✓ Dream On	Aerosmith	Aerosmith's Gre...	4:27	Rock
2	✓ Same Old Song And Dance	Aerosmith	Aerosmith's Gre...	3:04	Rock
3	✓ Sweet Emotion	Aerosmith	Aerosmith's Gre...	3:14	Rock

Fig. 14. Moving column headers around

Command + L highlights the song currently playing. With a song selected, Command + R opens the folder within iTunes Music folder to highlight the original song file.

If the text in your song list is too small, go to the iTunes menu, select Preferences... and open the General pane. Under Song Text, change to Large (Fig. 15.).

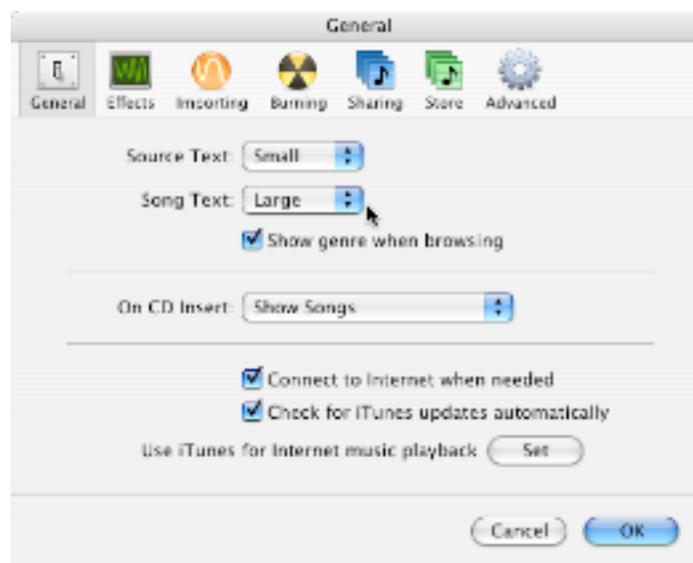


Fig. 15. Increasing Song Text font size

One of the best tricks in iTunes is the ability to choose any number of songs, put them in a huge playlist. Now click Shuffle in the Controls menu. Click on the playlist, click Burn, and your Mac will ask for a blank CD. When it is full, the CD will eject and you will be asked for another blank CD until all your songs are recorded.

Show Browser (Command + B) shows the browser. Anyone who has a useful way to use browser, please email me at phil@cmug.com. I have no idea how to make good use of it.

If you have a dial-up connection, be sure you make this change. Go to the iTunes menu, select Preferences... and go to the Store pane. Checkmark Load complete preview before playing (Fig. 16.). If you don't do this, the 30 second previews in iTunes Music Store will skip and start and not play smoothly beginning to end.



Fig. 16. Loading complete preview

I like to import the contents of a CD directly into a playlist instead of into the Library. Create a playlist and name it. Drag the songs from the CD onto that playlist. This is particularly helpful if someone sends you CDs with songs named Track 01, Track 02, etc.

Dragging two or more CDs full of Track 01, Track 02 files into the Library will make life difficult for you. If you dragged the CD files into a playlist, now you can select all (Command + A) and at least type in an Artist and Album name to keep that group of Track 01, Track 02 files identified.

Double click on the number of a playlist instead of the playlist name to open it in a separate window. You can open as many playlists in separate windows as you wish.

Do your songs play at all different volumes? Select All in the Library, then go to iTunes menu and select Preferences.... Open the Effects pane and checkmark the Sound Check box. If you select less than the entire Library, only selected songs are adjusted. It will take several minutes if you have a large Library. Mine is 7,548 songs and took about five minutes or more.

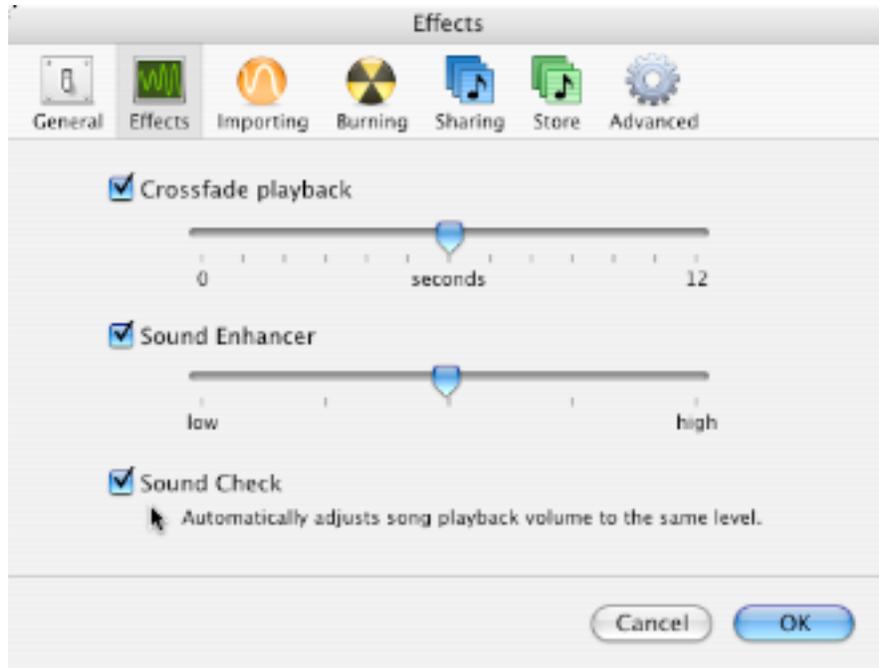


Fig. 17. Adjusting volume to same level

You are in System Preferences. Press D and then the Spacebar. The Date & Time pane opens automatically. If there is more than one Preference starting with a letter, the Preference pane with the earliest second letter opens and so forth. So typing DEF opens Default Folder X and DES opens Desktop & Screen Saver.

This is a real time saver, and keeps your hands on the keyboard.

I cannot list all of the neat shortcuts there are in iTunes here. Go to the menus and try everything. There are more goodies hidden there.