

Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

'I still like buying CDs,' says Hornby. 'But there are a lot of people who will never pay for music ever again. Why would you? I was talking to a 17-year-old recently, and he said he didn't think his little brother had even seen a CD. He didn't actually know that music came like that.'

Nick Hornby, quoted in "The day the music shop died"
John Harris, *The Observer*

With the swift passing of Guy Fakes Day, Christmas was upon us in the United Kingdom. We have known "how many shopping days it is until" and that we can get "three for the price of two" on all seasonal items for longer than I care to recall. Thanksgiving is a welcome buffer for us Americans; a holiday devoted to family, sharing, reflecting (and football), We gather together with friends and loved ones and give thanks for the gifts we have received . Here in the UK, the only major celebration after Remembrance Sunday this year was the State Opening of Parliament. That does not give one quite the same warm glow.

The magazines and the web sites have been full of the traditional message - "What to give for under £25, £50, £100, and "no limit". Authors have been recommending each others books and the town centres have been full of families dashing through the shops. But, gentle reader, I hear you ask, "What are the top technology gifts this year?" Clear a space where the people to whom you hint can see this page.

Number one on the muso's trendy list with a silver bullet is the Apple iPod. Now available to both Windows and Mac users, in sizes from gargantuan to immense, and , gift-givers take note, available in the online Apple Education store saving you approximately 9% on retail. You even may be able to obtain free shipping. For those of you who don't know, the iPod is a hard drive the size of a pack of cards capable of holding 5,000 to 20,000 of your favourite songs. Use iTunes, now a free download for both Mac and Windows users, to transfer your cds to your computer. Connect the iPod via FireWire or USB 2.0 and the little beauty will automatically download your music library. Plug in the headphones and give the scroll wheel a turn to access to your music library on the move. Copy your address book, play built in games, then turn on disk mode. Your iPod becomes a ten to forty gigabyte hard drive for your computer.

Number two technology toy is the now must have USB thumb drive. Think of an object the size of your thumb but containing storage from sixteen megabytes up to two hundred and fifty-six megabytes. No batteries. No wires. Creative have combined numbers one and two in the MuVo MP3 player - 128 MB of music (around sixty songs, more if recorded at a lower quality) attached to a controller and a socket for ear phones. Not quite the same hip factor but very cool nonetheless.

Fans of Lara Croft will remember number three - the Panasonic eWear SD multi-AV device - a MP3 player, audio recorder, video and still camera. A but the same size as an iPod but storing the files on removable secure memory cards. Also available with vide recording cable to record from a video or dvd.

Of course, you can still find shops featuring compact discs of your favourite composers and performers, but the savvy shopper will be taking advantage of Amazon and other online retailers to maximise the music dollar. Plenty of books (look at the starters from past Rick's Place on line for some of my suggestions) and of course food and drink favourites.

Then there are the more important gifts that you give and receive at many and various times during the year. Every day you prepare your lessons, motivate your singers and instrumentalists, support your colleagues and live life following a profession that constantly asks you to look within as well as without. The music we make is one of the best gifts we can both give and receive. So let me wish you the happiest of holiday seasons with the words of Christina G. Rosetti:

What can I give Him, Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him- Give my heart.

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