Chapter 18

Ten Useful Web Sites

*1*f you're producing songs, you can find a handful of extremely useful sites on the Web for obtaining anything from cables to microphones and MIDI files to song lyrics. Here are a few of the best.

General Audio and Recording Sites

In no particular order, here are the URLs and brief descriptions of some non-Mac-specific Web sites that you may find useful.

Tab Robot

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www.tabrobot.com
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Tab Robot is a search engine for guitar tablature and chords for popular songs. You can search by band name or song name, and you'll get hits for most popular songs.
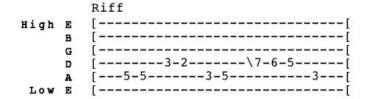
Tablature is a special form of musical notation that's used for guitar parts. It can be typed on a computer and is usually displayed in a monospaced font such as Courier. A guitar riff in tab notation is shown in Figure 18-1.

You read the tablature from left to right. The numbers tell you what fret to play, and the line that the number is on tells you which string to play it on.

There's no better way to learn a song than to have chords or tablature in front of you. If you want to learn new songs, start here.

Figure 18-1:
This is the tablature for a guitar riff that's played on the second and third strings from the top (for a right-handed guitarist).

```
                  Riff
High  E  [-------------------------------[
      B  [-------------------------------[
      G  [-------------------------------[
      D  [--------3-2-------\7-6-5------[
      A  [---5-5--------3-5----------3---[
Low   E  [-------------------------------[
```

MIDI Explorer

www.musicrobot.com

MIDI Explorer is to MIDI files what Tab Robot is to guitar tabs and chord charts: It's a search engine for MIDI files. You can search by artist or song, and you usually find at least one arrangement of most popular songs. After you've downloaded the MIDI files, you can listen to them using QuickTime Player or you can use Dent du Midi (discussed in the section about using Dent du Midi for GarageBand karaoke in Chapter 15) to turn them into files that you can import into GarageBand and modify to your heart's content. If you're trying to record a favorite song, the GarageBand karaoke trick may be the fastest way to get from blank screen to finished tune.

Mix

www.mixonline.com

This is the online home of *Mix* magazine, the magazine of "Professional Audio and Music Production." The site is chock-full of useful information, including reviews of products for your studio and tutorials on many aspects of recording. You find little (or no) GarageBand-specific information here, but the products and tutorials apply to GarageBand users as well as pros. Some of the articles may be too technical for some readers, but if you're interested in knowing more about how the pros do it and the tools that they use, *Mix* can give you the dish.

EQ

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www.eqmag.com
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EQ is "Defining the Future of Recording." It's got product reviews, newsletters, classified advertising, useful links, and forums for users, with more information for the semipro and prosumer than *Mix* does.

Electronic Musician

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www.emusician.com
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Electronic Musician magazine is slightly different from *Mix* or *EQ* — it's aimed at musicians who use computers for playing or recording. *Mix* and *EQ* are aimed squarely at audio producers, without regard for whether they play. Because of *Electronic Musician's* exclusive focus on computers and electronic devices, GarageBand users can find a lot of information here. For example, you're more likely to find information about plug-ins for GarageBand (and other Mac OS X Audio Units hosts) here than at most other sites. You can also find more information about instrument-related items — such as guitar simulators and effects, synthesizers and other keyboard instruments, and virtual instruments — on the *Electronic Musician* site than you do at most others.

If you're even half-serious about doing cool things with your Mac, you should definitely check out this site.

Sweetwater Sound

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www.sweetwater.com
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Sweetwater Sound is more than just an online audio dealer. Sweetwater Sound is also a huge state-of-the-art commercial recording studio. The salespeople put the gear into use in a real studio and can tell you whether something does or doesn't work. The site is chock-full of excellent information about the products it sells, and its product selection is second to none. The site offers downloadable gear guides and informative free e-newsletters, and it has a very reasonable return policy.

Sweetwater Sound is the first site that I go to when I'm shopping for something — and it's the site where I usually end up making my purchase.

Musician's Friend

`www.musiciansfriend.com`

If Sweetwater is number one, Musician's Friend is surely a strong number two. With a fantastic selection of instruments and recording gear, and lots of closeouts and other killer deals, this is another site that you should not miss if you're shopping for gear.

TIP

Look at both sites before you buy. One time I wanted an M-Audio Oxygen 8 keyboard. It was the same price at both sites, but Sweetwater was throwing in a carrying bag at no additional cost. I've seen the same thing happen with Musician's Friend, where it was bundling an item that Sweetwater wasn't.

TIP

It pays to visit at least two or three vendor sites before you reach for your wallet.

Mac- or GarageBand-Oriented Sites

The following sites are ones that focus on using a Mac to make music — or on GarageBand itself.

Apple GarageBand discussion board

`http://discussions.info.apple.com/webx/garageband/`

If you have a question about how to do something in GarageBand, this is the place to get an answer. It's a discussion board that's hosted by Apple and it's full of questions and answers by both Apple staffers and other GarageBand users like you and me. Here are some recent topics:

- ✔ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- ✔ GarageBand Compatibility List
- ✔ Creating loops with the Soundtrack Loop utility
- ✔ Recording multiple tracks in GarageBand
- ✔ Can you run GarageBand from a FireWire drive?
- ✔ Making new instruments
- ✔ Exporting tracks to Logic Pro or Logic Express

You can find hundreds of other GarageBand-related topics, and the boards seem to get a lot of traffic, so many questions are answered the same day that they're posted.

If you post a message, don't forget to come back to the site the next day (or every day for a few days) to read the replies and thank the helpful posters.

You may want to bookmark the page that contains your message so that you can find it quickly when you return.

OS X Audio

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www.osxaudio.com
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OS X Audio bills itself as "The Ultimate Mac OS X Audio Resource," and that's probably true. OS X Audio doesn't sell stuff — the main attraction is a near-encyclopedic listing of Mac OS X audio products broken into several dozen categories, including the following:

- Applications: Audio Utilities
- Applications: Audio/Sequencer
- Applications: Drivers
- Applications: Live Performance
- Applications: Midi Utilities
- Applications: Recorder/Editor
- Applications: Synth/Sampler
- Article: Audio Tips
- Hardware: Audio Interfaces
- Hardware: FireWire Audio
- Hardware: Input Devices
- Hardware: Keyboards
- Hardware: Midi Interfaces
- Hardware: USB Audio

For most products, you can find a list of features and the system requirements, at the very least. For some products, you'll find pages of info and comments from other users. You can also find an excellent discussion board that covers broader audio-related issues than the Apple board that I mentioned in the previous section.

If you want to know more about an audio product for OS X or if a product exists that does something in particular, this may be the best place to look for further information.

Mac Music

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www.macmusic.org
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This site's tag line is "Music, Audio & MIDI on Macintosh." It's not just for GarageBand; it covers all Mac audio and MIDI topics. It offers news, software downloads, classified advertisements, articles, links to thousands of other useful sites, and another lively set of discussion boards.

iCompositions

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www.icompositions.com
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This site's all about sharing your GarageBand-made music. "Share your Creations" is its tag line, and that's what it's all about here. The forums are filled with hard-core GarageBand music makers, and you can find thousands of GarageBand compositions to listen to or download. News, downloads, tutorials, and streaming audio make this one of the busiest and most interesting of the GarageBand-specific sites.

MacJams

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www.macjams.com
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This site's tag line reads "Mac music makers central. We be jammin'." From a feature standpoint, it's got the usual stuff — forums, a buyer's guide, a resource library, news, and lots of GarageBand compositions as well. If you're interested in how others are using GarageBand, visit MacJams often.

The Mac Observer's GarageBand Garage forum

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www.macobserver.com/forums/viewforum.php?f=37
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I write a column every other week for The MacObserver, and we've started our own discussion board forum for GarageBand users. We call it the GarageBand Garage, and I stop by as often as I can.

The forum is moderated by the extremely GarageBand-savvy Bryan Chaffin — who also happens to be this book's tech editor and an all-around great guy.

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