

(Approx. 1048 words)

Playlists – Tips on how to build one, or many.

By Phil Sorrentino, Member of The Computer Club, Florida

September 2014

<http://sccccomputerclub.org>

[Philsorr.wordpress.com](http://Philsorr.wordpress.com)

philsorr (at) yahoo.com

Playlists are pretty basic. They are just a group of the tunes that you would like to listen to, in a sequenced list. (Yes, I know you can check “shuffle” and get them played in a random sequence.) And, the mechanics of creating the playlist are pretty straightforward because the music player guides you through the process; and after all, it is just a list of tune titles. The real difficulty, in my experience, has been to decide what to include in a particular playlist. Here is where a well-organized music collection really helps. But how many of us have a really well organized music collection? Well, maybe there are more of you than I thought; but there is still the problem of remembering titles, and in my case, remembering the artist. It is not much of a problem for the very well-known titles and/or artists like the Beatles, Simon & Garfunkle, Frank Sinatra, Chicago, or Neil Diamond, but how about the tune “Always something there to remind me”, by... Do you remember the group? It was “Naked Eyes”. Well, I guess you have a better memory than I thought. But for those of you who sometimes have a lapse of memory, here are a few things to do to help the memory situation.

The first tool you need a memory jogger. I have found that music playing on the radio is a good memory jogger, so you have to know of a station that plays the type of music you enjoy. (Alternately, a friend might be a good memory jogger, but then, they may also share your problem.) It would be nice to have your memory jogged while you are sitting right in front of your computer where you could immediately research the tune, but it seems that most of the time, when you hear a song you want to put on a playlist, you are in the car. So for this situation, you need the ability to record the title and/or artist if (by some stroke of luck) you remember them while hearing the tune. But since you may not remember the title or artist, the next best thing is the station you were listening to, and the time you heard the tune. The time will be used with the second tool.

The second tool is the radio station’s website. Many stations will refer to their website in between commercials, and it is usually their call letters, dot com. The page on the website that you will want will typically be called something like “Last Song Played”, or “Recent Tracks”. This page will usually give a listing of the songs that were played at a particular time on a particular day. Some may only have a simple music list indexed by time, but some have fairly elaborate lists with navigation capabilities, and even a minimal archive, like what was played yesterday. So now with the memory jogger and the ability to get the tune’s name and artist, all you need is the MP3 file for that tune. If it is in your music collection, you are ready to go to the player and put the tune into the playlist. If you don’t own the tune, you can typically purchase it from iTunes (“iTunes songs are available at one of three price points. In the U.S. the pricing is 0.69 USD,

0.99 USD, or 1.29 USD each. Other countries have similar song price points.”), or you can still buy a CD with the tune on it, and about fifteen or so other tunes (some you might like and some, not so much). Most music players will accept MP3 music files. iTunes can provide the tune in MP3 format; however, if you buy the CD, you will have to “rip” the tune from the CD. Ripping tunes from CDs that you own is legal, and can be done with Windows Media Player. Ripping a CD typically produces MP3 files for each of the tunes on the CD.

(Music on a CD is typically not used in a music player, because it is formatted as a WAV music file. WAV files are typically 10 times the size of MP3 files. WAV files are perfect replications of the original music, whereas MP3 files are slightly limited. The MP3 files are typically termed “CD quality” but I suspect a very educated ear might be able to hear a difference. However, I know I cannot hear the difference. I spent 10 years riding the New York City subways.)

So now that you have a tune that you want to include in a playlist, which playlist is appropriate? Creating appropriate playlists is even more difficult than deciding on a useful picture folder organization. At least with pictures you can quickly decide on “chronological” or “event” folders. But with music it seems less obvious. Should you put tunes in a list based on artist, genre, time period, or emotion type (love, happy, sad, lonesome, or uplifting). The emotion playlists can be very effective. Actually, many if not all of these groupings seem good to me and I have used many of them. I have playlists for each artist I enjoy, one for happy times, one for Rock & Roll, one for Pre-Rock & Roll, one for Country, one for Folksongs, one for Fun songs, one for Love songs, one for The Big Band Era, many for Specific Holidays, one for Upbeat songs, and many for Special times. I don’t feel you have to limit the number of playlists, and I find that many songs end up in multiple playlists.

Just as an example of this “name that tune” technique, for those of you in the Tampa, FL area, try the radio station WDUV (it says it plays lite favorites), 105.5 on the FM dial. It may or may not play music to your liking, but it will illustrate the technique. Their website is at [www.wduv.com](http://www.wduv.com) and the recently played tunes list is called “Last Songs Played”. By the way, you can also stream audio from the website, but that will have to be the subject of a future article.