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[News](#)

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[Letter / Petition](#)

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[Links and Graphics](#)

[Other](#)

News

28 Feb 2003 - MIDI on OS X

Many are still wondering about compatibility of OMS with Mac OS X. While it reportedly does run, at least minimally, in the Classic environment, there are reasons why this may be an unsatisfactory solution:

- OMS drivers often accessed hardware directly, and this is generally not supported by the Classic environment. Serial drivers may conceivably work, but we have no information about. USB drivers may also work, but it's our belief that they will make the USB hardware unavailable to native OS X MIDI applications. OMS drivers for PCI hardware are very unlikely to work in Classic.
- The quality of the timing services in Classic is probably not sufficient for professional applications.

Resources:

- [for Opcode users](#)
- [audio and MIDI on Mac OS X](#)

17 Feb 2002 - MIDI on OS X

I was forwarded something from Macintosh:

Date: Thu, 14 Feb 2002 13:56:09 -0500
Subject: Re: OMS and OS X

I just went to a DigiDesign Seminar last night that introduced their ProToolsHD rigs and addressed the issue of OS X and OMS. Development for OS X is proceeding furiously and should be ready by the fall. What was interesting is why the fall. It seems that all the sound applications' developers, including DigiDesign, are waiting for the next version of OS X -10.2 or 10.3 or 10.2.3(they were unsure) which will implement Apple's built in midi recognizer thus eliminating the device support drivers now supplied by OMS or FreeMidi etc. It will, naturally, require a USB or Firewire midi interface box but no extra software. The OS X environment will be exceptionally robust with this feature and its natural propensity for near 0 latency response.

It's worth noting that what is referred to here as being in the future actually exists in a usable form in MacOS X 10.1. See this Apple [article about NAMM 2002](#).

Roland, MOTU, and MIDIMan and perhaps others I neglect to mention are now all shipping OS X-compatible MIDI drivers. I believe Ableton's Live is now shipping with OS X MIDI support, and probably others I'm not aware of yet.

9 Apr 2001 - OMS update / MIDI on OS X

A lot of people are wondering what's happening with OMS and MIDI on OS X. Here are some frequently-asked questions and answers:

Q: Is OMS compatible with Mac OS 9.x?

A: Yes, to the best of our knowledge, and contrary to some persistent rumor-mongering. All of the significant problems we're aware of have been due to bugs in other developers' OMS drivers.

Q: Is OMS compatible with Mac OS X?

A: Some parts of it appear to run in the Classic environment, but in general, the Classic environment is not well-suited for MIDI; not all hardware is accessible from it. OMS is not accessible from native OS X applications.

Q: Has Gibson shown any signs of being interested in finding new caretakers for OMS, Vision and Opcode's other intellectual property?

A: To our knowledge, no.

Q: What's Apple doing for MIDI on Mac OS X?

A: Apple is providing a new MIDI Services API, unrelated to OMS and QuickTime. It has a new MIDI driver plugin model and new OMS-like programming interfaces (API's) for applications to talk to MIDI hardware. There aren't any user-visible MIDI features; Apple just provides system support for hardware makers to write drivers and applications to access them.

Programmers who have used OMS before find that the new system shares some of OMS's concepts, many of which were in turn based on Apple's old MIDI Manager. MIDI Services supports efficient MIDI I/O with precise timestamping and scheduling, but it does not have some of OMS's higher-level functionality such as studio and patch name management, and musical timing services.

Q: Are MIDI Services part of Carbon? Are they accessible from Classic?

A: No.

Q: So what should developers who wish to support both Mac OS 9 and Mac OS X do?

A: Use OMS on 9, and MIDI Services on X. Many developers are already familiar with the issues involved in writing code to run on multiple platforms and should be able to create abstractions to facilitate portability.

Q: How can developers learn more about Apple's MIDI Services?

A: The application interfaces are in the CoreMIDI framework (docs in MIDIServices.h) and the driver plugin interface is in the CoreMIDIServer framework (docs in MIDIDriver.h). Sample code and a bit of additional documentation is in /Developer/Examples/CoreAudio/MIDI.

26 Feb 2000: [Post-NAMM 2000 report](#)

30 Jan 2000: [NAMM 2000 Media Kit](#)

Background

In 1998 Gibson acquired Opcode Systems, at the time a prominent developer of MIDI hardware and software, primarily for the Mac OS platform. Keyboard Magazine's recent 25th anniversary issue recently included Opcode's OMS and Studio Vision among "25 Technology Milestones."

In 1999 things went badly at Opcode. Some accounts of these events:

- [Harmony Central, Nov 1, 1999](#)
[the news breaks]
- [Opcode and Gibson](#)
[an insider's account]
- [David Leishman / MacCentral, Nov 5, 1999](#)
- [David Leishman / MacCentral, Nov 12, 1999](#)
- [David Leishman / MacCentral, Nov 19, 1999](#)
- [David Leishman / MacCentral, Nov 26, 1999](#)
[Gibson didn't want to comment after all]
- [David Leishman / MacCentral, Nov 27, 1999](#)
[the Apple rumor is not true, to our knowledge]
- [David Leishman / MacCentral, Dec 3, 1999](#)

This site does not take any position on the accuracy or fairness of the information presented in the above articles. Gibson's public comments on the situation have been very limited. We present the above information not to point blame for the current state of affairs, but so that those interested in the future of music on the Macintosh can better understand the situation and motivation behind this letter.

An Open Letter To Henry Juskiewicz, CEO, Gibson Guitar Corporation

Dear Mr. Juskiewicz,

In 1990, Opcode created OMS, the Open Music System. It was a layer of software designed to let software applications communicate with different MIDI interfaces in a consistent way. Opcode released the OMS specifications to the industry shortly thereafter, and since then, many, many, other software companies have built OMS compatibility into their applications. It has become the de facto standard for MIDI on the Macintosh platform. Apple's QuickTime even has an option to play through OMS.

For some time, Opcode believed that as the creator of the OMS spec, it gained some competitive advantage from OMS. This was true during OMS's early years as Opcode's products of that time featured an unprecedented level of integration and consistency, partially due to OMS. Opcode did gain a lot of intangible goodwill by opening OMS to the industry, marshalling significant support for OMS amongst its competitors, including practically every significant Macintosh MIDI software developer. Over time, however, OMS also became a significant maintenance cost from which Opcode derived no direct income, while its competitors gained.

OMS is an ideal candidate for the open source model of software development. It is a valuable resource used by many companies. OMS is a "rising tide that lifts all boats," one of the things that makes the Macintosh a great platform for music software. OMS is a sufficiently important resource that it could only benefit from having all of the best programmers in the industry able to scrutinize the code and make contributions, from bug fixes to new features. This benefits everyone who uses OMS.

The success of Linux and Red Hat Software have proven the viability of the open source model of software development. For more information about the open source movement, please visit

<http://www.opensource.org/>

If it is not updated for MacOS X, due next year, OMS (or something like it) will have to be reinvented from scratch, at considerable expense. Gibson can only cause needless duplicated effort and create ill will in the Macintosh community by keeping OMS closed. In its current state, OMS's code is practically worthless without a redesign for OS X that must begin very soon if it is to be completed in time.

Gibson can gain substantial goodwill at zero cost by making OMS open source. This would entail releasing the source code to the public domain under a license such as the GNU Public License (library version), or assigning the copyright to an entity who will commit to keeping OMS free. Such a demonstration of concern for the industry as a whole could only increase the credibility of Gibson's efforts to encourage industry adoption of GMICS as a standard.

For GMICS to gain acceptance and become a industry standard like OMS has, Gibson will need industry partners such as Apple and other music equipment manufacturers to accept GMICS. These companies will no doubt be looking at how Gibson handles OMS as an indicator of how Gibson deals with industry standards. This is even more important in the sense that OMS is already an established standard, and so it would seem that killing an existing standard for no apparent reason would not be the message Gibson would want to send to the industry and users when Gibson wishes to promote a new standard.

We urge you to please keep the "Open" in OMS's name from becoming a misnomer. Please release the OMS source code so that it may be maintained as a resource that is much more valuable to the industry as a whole than to any one company.

Some possible caretakers for OMS include the MIDI Manufacturers Association, Apple Computer, and myself, the original designer and author (while employed at Opcode).

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing your thoughts about this.

Doug Wyatt
Ithaca, NY
November 1999

4856 more people have signed this letter:

228 developer signatures

4628 user signatures

1051 signatures were verified via email as of December 1, 1999, when we stopped using email verifications.

Please add your signature here by filling out the form below. [the petition is no longer online]

Links and graphics

[these seem to have all blown away]

Other

Disclaimer: I, Doug Wyatt, the author of the above letter, and the maintainer of this site, am speaking for myself and not my employer, or any past employers (all interested observers of this situation).

Thanks to Lisa Haller for writing the Media Kit and news updates.

Thanks to R Pickett for DNS and Apache redirection for the saveoms.org domain.

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