
BeechLog

The Magazine of Burnham Beeches Radio Club

April 1999 Issue



Back to the USA – Part 2

Monday

I woke up at about 6 am, my body clock is getting adjusted to the USA. Have to go to work today. I have a very non-linear sketch someone at work gave me, which shows where to get the best meal, and where to go to work. Of course, it is of no help, and as I found out later, quite wrong as far as work is concerned. I asked at the hotel front desk, who luckily had the correct directions. At this point my boss rings up, and he gives me instructions too! Again different! He ought to know, he comes here often enough. Anyway I had to ring up the company I was headed for, and their directions matched the hotels.

Off to breakfast, and tuck in to a hearty meal. I don't know whether I will get any

(Continued on page 2)

The New Committee

Hello members, At the last AGM a new committee was elected to carry the club through to the next century!

Dave G4XDU was elected Chair
Bryan G4CVF Secretary
Paul G6TSF Treasurer
Mike G4RAA member

As you can see only a rearrangement of the committee took place. There were a few typo errors on the accounts and these will be represented at the next meeting in April along with the minutes for those who did not attend.

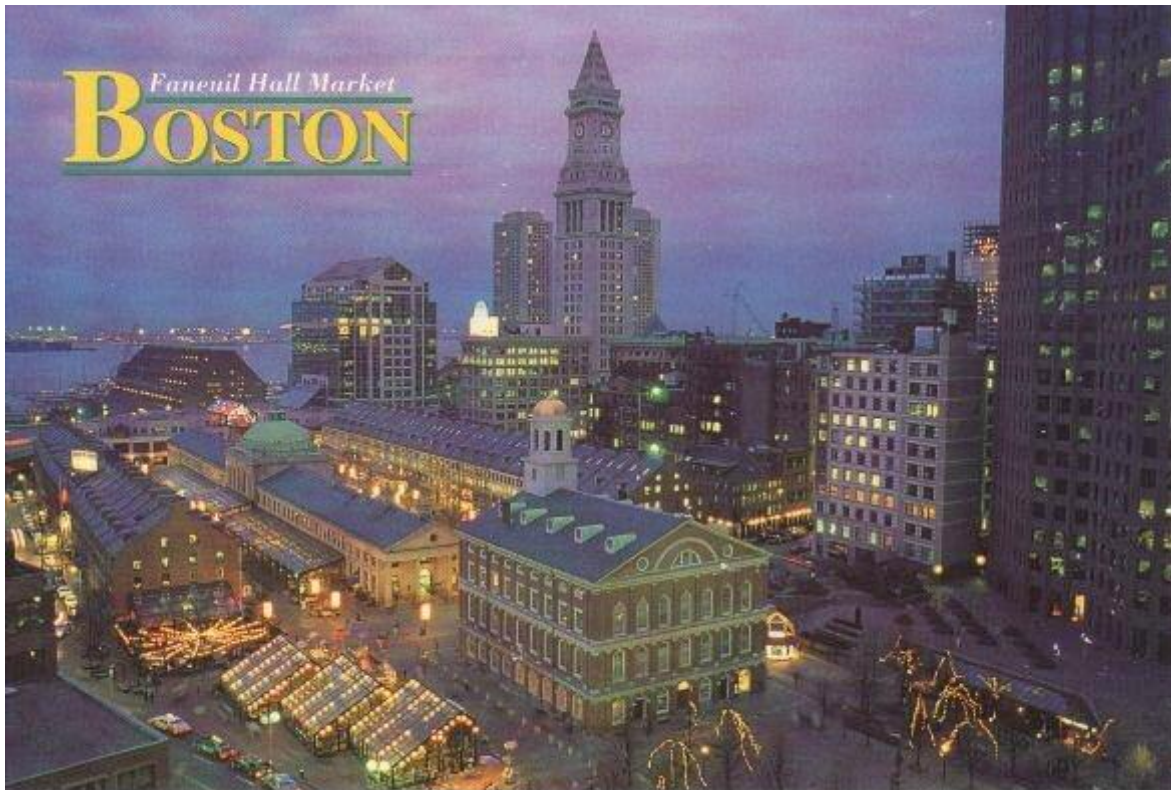
73 De Dave G4XDU Chair BBRC

In this issue

Back in the USA Part 2	1
The New Committee	1
The BBRC Listserver	4
Libel?	5
Novices	7
Music	

BeechLog is Copyright BBRC 1999

All the articles represent the opinions of the authors, not of the BBRC.



(Continued from page 1)

lunch, so take no chances and fill up in advance. Then off to challenge the Americans with my driving.

I found my destination quite easily, to my relief. They even had a spare office I could use! So first things first, can I plumb my laptop into their network? The company I am visiting is in fact my UK employers engineering centre, so it should be possible, especially as the Slough mail server is in fact located in the USA! Well I plugged in and booted up - no dice! I tried the IT helpline, who explained that in the US offices they used static IP settings, as against Slough where everything is server-assigned. So I copied the settings from an unused PC in the office, and lo and behold, it all came to life. All my Lotus Notes stuff, email, internet, etc. appeared as it does in Slough. Even the NT servers in my Slough lab were accessible. Some of this technology actually works!

I won't bore you with my day at work, not very exciting anyway. But the staff canteen is worthy of note, since the range of edibles was quite amazing. Eating must be very important to the Americans.

I also discovered that I was working with a ham, Tom, NZ1X (See, amateur radio does creep

into this account)! Anyway I did some work, and then faced the trip back to the hotel in the American rush hour, in the dark. I had earlier decided to familiarise myself with the car controls, but forgot. One curious thing about the cars over here, the lights are automatic too! So it was just a matter of getting the demisters and wipers working. The trip back was uneventful, suitable road signs eased my journey. Tomorrow might not be so easy, as I have to check out of this hotel, and check into another after work!

Tuesday

Up at 6.30 and down for a hearty breakfast. While eating it I hear someone say "Oh look, there's somebody I know". This girl comes bounding over. She is the type that frightens me, confident manner, long hair, healthy build, you know what I mean. Apparently she works at my UK office, and knows exactly what my job is. This is embarrassing, I haven't a clue who she is. After introducing me to her colleague, an American of similar scary type, they go back to their table.

For 3 nights at the Andover Marriott have cost me \$569, that's about £351. And another 3

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

nights to go!

Well work was, well, work. I spent about 2½ hours in a meeting, but there was a free lunch included. Nothing very exciting happened, but the day passed quickly, and soon it was time to leave and find the new hotel. Perhaps I should explain that the hotels were booked from the UK two days before I left. It just so happened that it was Thanksgiving so it proved difficult to find an hotel to accommodate me for the 6 nights. Either the Americans all book in at Thanksgiving, or they are too drunk to answer the phone!

The new hotel was about 6 miles down Route 133, which runs close to the office, so it was fairly easy to find the place. It didn't look like a conventional hotel, and after checking in I found out why. It was a sort of modern businessman's version of Bates Motel (actually a Residence Inn).

Each room was a complete flat with a kitchen, living room, bathroom and bedroom. Not only a kitchen sink, but a cooker, dishwasher, pots, pans and crockery, a grocery delivery service, etc., etc. It was pretty well appointed, nothing was missing.

The first thing I had to do was find the thermostat, which was set to 80 degrees! Then I had to think about eating. This place had no restaurant, but I passed several establishments on the way. Nothing exciting, the usual fast food places, and another called "99 Bar and Restaurant". I was recommended this by one of the engineers, as a good place for a meal and a couple of pints. There are supposed to be some other business type restaurants nearby, but when travelling on my own I prefer less formal places, where I can read the paper and listen to other people's conversations.

This place does do a free breakfast, probably a "continental" type, I suppose I will have to give up the eggs, bacon, sausages and chips.

Well I went to the "99" for dinner. It was just as described, and very popular too. I had to wait 15 minutes for a table, but it was worth it, I got a pretty good meal. They also did a "microbrew" ale, which was quite drinkable, although brewed to American taste. There was the usual sport on TV, Ice Hockey on this occasion. I could figure out what was going on, unlike their football which seems to consist of

some sort of civil war re-enactment.

Wednesday

Woke up at about 6 am, I think I got a good night's sleep. I went down to breakfast at about 7, where there was a sort of continental affair, with Danish pastries, muffins, bagels, etc. We get a free Boston Globe, a paper with numerous



sections. The front page was about the fall in standards of football umpiring. There was a bit by Salman Rushdie about Pinochet. There was also an article about etiquette. It seems business types are keen to do the right thing - like use a knife and fork, walk in different manners for different situations, and behave correctly at parties. I was quite surprised by all this, I thought Americans were classless and liberated.

I was joined at my table by two men who conversed in some language I have never heard before, probably Lithuanian or perhaps Sioux. There are a few people around here who wear ten gallon hats, who knows?

Anyway off to work. Halfway I suddenly doubt whether I am going the right way, but it all works out in the end. The night must have been cold, for there was ice on the windscreen, but there was a clear deep blue sky, and the temperature rose to over 60 degrees later on, not bad for December. On the way to work I passed several men directing the traffic. They had peaked caps, but not the usual police uniforms. Goodness knows who they were, perhaps the Sheriff's deputies? I am dreading meeting a school bus. I believe you are not allowed to pass these, even when they are

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

stopped and the road clear of other traffic. If they come in your direction, you have to back into the hedge, so I believe.

My day went quickly, although I spent a while sorting out problems back home. We had the weekly video meeting - normally I am at the UK end, so it was interesting to see them from this side of the pond.

In the afternoon free ice cream was announced. This is some sort of tradition, so I joined in. Basically several tables were filled with numerous large tubs of different flavours of ice cream. There was a huge container of whipped cream, and all sorts of nut and other mystery toppings. Long queues soon developed, and within 15 minutes it was all gone.

Looking at my email, I discovered that the office back home had been completely evacuated. It seems that a Mercedes at the front of the building had burst into flames. There was copious smoke, some of which was getting into the building, so they decided to get everyone out in case the car exploded, or the sprinkler system activated. Luckily neither happened. I had thoughts of all my equipment being sprayed with water, and what the consequences would be.

I phoned home before I left the office. My daughter was at school, acting in a play. The cat was upsetting the dog. The dog was annoying everyone, and small boys had been giving my wife abusive phone calls. My wife was fighting her new computer. Oh well.

Driving back, the Sheriffs deputies were out directing traffic. There was one just outside my hotel - he stopped the oncoming cars so I could turn left. At least I think he waved me across. Pretty dodgy job, standing in the middle of the unlit road.

Back at the hotel I see that they have put away all the crockery and cutlery that was on display yesterday. I guess they've sussed that I'm not going to be boiling up cabbages and the like.

Got to get some food soon, it's quarter past seven. I am not sure whether I should really eat, after all that free ice cream. Maybe I can get a modest dinner at "99".

Well I last out until 9 pm, then off to eat some blackened swordfish. Not bad. Then back to bed at 10.30.

Roger G0HZK

to be continued...

BBRC Listserver

Hello Guys and Girls!

The BBRC now has an experimental listserver operating on the internet. You can subscribe to this easily by logging onto the Club web site <http://come.to/bbrc> and entering your email address as required. The listserver is for members only and all messages sent will go to all those who subscribe. There is no limitation on content as on packet but I know I don't have to ask you to abide by the usual rules of the net. So if you have a problem, want to sell something or just impart a bit of info you can do so by joining the BBRC listserver. If you want further info then contact me at GB7XDU or email g4xdu@amsat.org.

I look forward to your messages.

73 De Dave G4XDU Chair BBRC

**BURNHAM BEECHES RADIO CLUB
ACCOUNTS MARCH 1998 TO FEBRUARY 1999**

	Expenditure		Income	
	1997/98 £	1998/99 £	1997/98 £	1998/99 £
Hall - Hire Fee	194.52	195.08	Brought Fwd	697.75
Insurance	119.52	119.52	97/98 Membership	204.00
RSGB affiliation	20.00	21.00	98 Mem	0.00
Licences G3/G6WIR	30.00	30.00	99 Mem	0.00
Beechlog costs	55.00	0.00	Surp Equip Sales	14.50
GB7WIR Radios	0.00	140.00	McMichael Income	300.00
Fibreglass Mast	0.00	57.00	B/S Acc Interest	18.48
DX-Picnic costs	120.00	130.00	C/Fund Donations	12.50
Jubilee BBQ Costs	85.00	0.00	DX-Picnic fees	80.00
Jubilee T/S Shirts	0.00	145.11	Xmas Do fees	80.00
GB6OS QSL Cards	0.00	77.00	Xmas Do Raffle	6.00
Xmas Do Costs	80.00	50.00	Tea Club Profit	12.20
			Jubilee T/S Shirts	0.00
			Beechlog Ads	5.00
Total Expenditure	704.04	964.71	Total Income	1430.43
			Less Expenditure	704.04
			Cash Available	726.39
				620.37

Libel ?

No doubt most of you lot reading this will have had some experience of Usenet, an internet news system. Recently there has been an event which has set many of the users into fevered discussion, that is that Demon Internet have been sued for refusing to remove a message with a libellous content. A Canadian had asked Demon to remove this message several times, but Demon took no action. As a result, a British judge has made a preliminary ruling against Demon.

This has stirred up a hornets nest, with reactions from "about time too" to "this is the end of freedom" from Usenet contributors. It will no doubt affect legislators too, for while the judges ruling was worded to avoid any precedent setting, it invites authority to consider such matters that so far they have chosen to ignore.

Anyone who has ventured onto Usenet will be well aware of the more extreme behaviour by some who inhabit these discussion groups. Even a days posting to uk.radio.amateur reveals a variety of provocative material, from

impersonation (very prevalent) to abusive trolls.

Some Usenet citizens have stated that they like the way it is, and do not mind reading libellous material about themselves. Others have opposite opinions, some who use the internet to make a living are worried that they may become the victims of untrue information which might cast a slight on their business's honesty. I think the latter view will be heard more often as the internet moves from being a technical plaything to something used by ordinary people. After all, we expect to be able to take action about those who abuse us in other public places.

One attraction of Usenet (and the internet generally) is the freedom to publish anything without any authorities being able to do much about it. At the moment this freedom comes without responsibility, that is, one can be malicious without having to account for any damage that might result. In fact the very nature of NNTP (the protocol used by Usenet) makes it difficult to remove or correct any damaging messages. There is an advantage to all this, indeed authorities can do just about nothing to limit the abilities of a suppressed population to

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

make public their plight. Women's groups in countries where they are violently suppressed have a platform to discuss their problem. The general ease at which anonymity can be achieved isolates them from being identified and "quietened". One does need to be discerning about what is read, any message can be misleading or completely incorrect. For example a posting in uk.radio.amateur told us that Serbia was the most racially tolerant country in Europe, and that ethnic minorities had more freedom there than elsewhere.

However the problems of Usenet are coming out into the open. Should someone masquerading as Fred post an untrue message describing Joe's past history of child abuse, those who know Joe would quickly be able to determine that the message was malicious and a fabrication. Now Joe runs Novice courses. Should parents of potential novice course candidates read it... It would be difficult for Joe to deny it, MRDA (Mandy Rice Davies Applies - "Well he would (deny it), wouldn't he"). I don't know what the answer is. ISPs may have to become more accountable for what is on their servers - indeed we have been all through this with packet BBSs!

Despite the general poor quality of information on uk.radio.amateur, some interesting stuff pops up now and then. On about the 1st of April, a message appeared purporting to be from someone who had applied for a US reciprocal licence. He quoted the letter he had allegedly received from the FCC, which told him that such a paper licence was no longer required, and that UK radio amateurs could now operate freely in the USA.

A few participants pondered about the date. Why hadn't the RSGB mentioned this. Why was there nothing on the FCC web site? However a trawl round the ARRL web site revealed this in their weekly newsletter:

FCC SAYS RECIPROCAL PERMITS NOW "PAPERLESS"

The FCC is advising applicants for reciprocal operating permits that an application is no longer required. Under new ULS rules that took effect February 12, the FCC Form 610A has passed into history. The new rules also will pave the way for US

hams to more easily operate in most of Europe. The FCC is expected to issue a Public Notice in the near future that will spell out the details.

Alien visitors to the US holding an amateur license issued by their home country may operate in the US without submitting any FCC paperwork--provided that a reciprocal operating agreement is in effect between the two countries. The only documentation required is proof of citizenship and an Amateur Radio license issued by the country of citizenship. These arrangements are similar to longstanding arrangements between the US and Canada.

The new rules move the US a step closer to participation in the licensing arrangements of CEPT, the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations. The US State Department applied for US participation in 1997, and the request was approved in early 1998. Completion of the final steps to make this a reality is understood to be imminent. These include formal US notification to the European Radiocommunications Office that it is prepared to carry out its responsibilities under CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01, and the issuance of a Public Notice in English, French and German.

Under the CEPT arrangements, a US Technician licensee will be recognized as holding the equivalent of a CEPT Class 2 (VHF-only) license. Holders of Tech Plus through Extra tickets will have the full HF and VHF privileges of a CEPT Class 1 license. Novice licensees will not be eligible.

Additionally, the ARRL has informed the US State Department that it plans to go forward in April with arrangements to issue International Amateur Radio Permits to US hams in accordance with the CITEL Amateur Convention, signed by several countries in the Americas. The League has offered its services to issue IARPs to US hams. An IARP is not a license, but it certifies the existence of a license.

The new rules will not change the procedures for US hams wishing to operate overseas in countries that are not CEPT members or CITEL Amateur Convention signatories.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Well it **is** true, folks! From reading letters other have received from the FCC, it looks like the new arrangement gives us more privileges than the 610-AL licence, like being able to operate in the US VHF and UHF bands. The ARRL has been longing for US CEPT TR61 participation, and it seems like this will happen very soon. Amidst all the gloom about diminishing bandwidth and interference, it is nice to see something beneficial take place. Next time (if there is a next time) I get sent to the US on short notice, I can pack my handheld and ribbon Slim Jim. Other more well heeled club members can pack their '706 and magic ATU.

Roger G0HZK

Novices

Have you worked any novices on two metres yet? I write this on the day their allocations were increased, and look forward to hearing them on two.

Of course there are some hams who do not welcome the changes - those known as the 'Old Gits' on Usenet, for example. There are so many hams who are apparently opposed to any change at all, I sometimes wonder how they cope with life outside ham radio.

Thinking back to when I took the RAE in Slough, things were different then! I knew a good many of those sitting the exam, and a good proportion worked in the electronics industry too. I was working for McMichael in Wexham Road, testing military RF equipment. I spent every weekday sitting in front of a bench containing all the latest RF test gear, with a well

stocked surplus component stores just down the corridor! If I had any problems with aerials, transmitters, etc., that I could not sort out myself, the floor above housed dozens of electronics design engineers.

Now this type of job has almost disappeared. I rarely build stuff now, since the stimulation of working in such an environment has disappeared. I did fit some chip resistors to a circuit board at work the other day, my colleagues looked at me with amazement. Either they were impressed by my dexterity, or they thought me crazy! I think I was crazy, since my 52 year old eyes had trouble with 1.5mm components!

People coming into ham radio these days are unlike those who joined 20 years ago, the industry that stimulated them having changed completely. It is a shame that the 'Old Gits' can't see this and welcome the newcomers to our world.

Roger G0HZK

Music

I wrote a while back about the how the music industry felt about the impact MP3 was going to have upon them. This is certainly an interesting situation, and quite a few things have happened since.

Unfortunately the industry still does not realise what is happening, i.e. the start of its elimination by musicians and consumers. I do not think these companies have cottoned on to what the internet is about, if they had, their web sites would be very different places. But I suppose they are moving a little, since they are suggesting a few alternatives to MP3 which might protect their livelihood.

One of these is Secure Digital Music Initiative, or SDMI, and another is Microsoft's Windows Media Technologies 4. The former is a forum the RIAA in the US has created which is trying to unite hardware and software interests in producing a common format. The Microsoft product is a SDMI conforming format which Sony have signed up to support. The idea of

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

SDMI is to prevent pirating by locking SDMI recordings to a users machine. Thus you can download music from the internet via some sort of secure server, but any copies you make will play only on your machine.

The link with Microsoft is interesting, possibly they aim to dominate the market by giving away their player, and licensing the recording technology. If this product becomes part of Windows, it will put everything else at a disadvantage.

However the public at present have MP3. This has a number of advantages to the consumer, notably no copy protection, and the technology is free. MP3 is not controlled by Microsoft, Sony Music or Disney or any other company aiming at market domination. If the current MP3 situation continues to snowball, it will be too late for anything else.

The reason formats like MP3 are catching on is due to the fact that file sizes are almost manageable by internet download. CD tracks can easily be copied to your PC, but use about 10 Mbytes per minute. MP3 reduces the file size by a factor of 10, i.e. a typical pop 'single' is about a 3 Mbytes download. A CD holds nominally 740 Mbytes of data. Thus you can fit 10 albums on a conventional CD, or much more on a hard disk.

This storage is no problem for a computer, but it's not so easy or cheap for a portable player. One hour of music requires about 60 Mbytes of storage, and a PC flash card or compact flash of sufficient capacity costs over £150. IBM are developing miniature hard disks, but they are still not with us.

However we have had a suitable technology for some years, the minidisk. This is a miniature recordable disk using the same technology as CD-RW. The disks hold 160 Mbytes, and cost about £2 each. They can be re-written a million times!

Minidisks were invented by Sony as an alternative to the compact cassette. Philips also produced a digital compact cassette, DCC, but dropped the products some time ago. However the minidisk seems to be catching on now, a look in Dixons today showed many recorders and players. Portable players are now less than £100.

The technology in these machines is very interesting. The Sony portable recorder illustrated is a typical machine. The disk in these machines does not seem to run continuously. There is a 45 second memory which makes it more or less immune to shock while playing or recording. Since these things use a data stream of about 300kbit/s I reckon they have about 2 Mbytes of RAM, presumably some sort of dual port device which can read data in and out simultaneously at different clock rates.

The power management of these machines is also quite amazing. My Sony runs off a single NimH battery, which delivers about 1.2 volts! This is pretty clever stuff! There is a screw-on battery pack to supplement the internal battery. This takes two AA cells - in parallel!

Minidisk music is less compressed than MP3, it uses about one quarter of the data rate of a conventional CD, compared with MP3's one tenth. The means used to achieve the lower data rates is however similar. However a minidisk



(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

could equally hold MP3 or any other music format. About 3 hours of MP3. The disks are very much cheaper than flash cards of similar capacity, but the mechanical complexity is very much greater, however at present minidisk playback hardware is cheaper than MP3 playback hardware (assuming you are not using a PC).

At the moment I don't know of any MP3 recorders. Of course there are 'rippers' and similar PC programs which convert CD tracks and WAV files to MP3. And then you can download MP3 and copy it to a flash card or directly onto an MP3 player. But there doesn't seem to be an equivalent to a cassette, DAT, or minidisk recorder. Since MP3 gained its popularity from computers and the internet, maybe a self-contained recorder is not seen as necessary.

The internet seems to be ideal for music distribution. A single web server can take the place of numerous record shops, and hold a far greater range of recordings. Those of us who enjoy music other than the quick selling pop stuff could really benefit from web distribution. I find it quite hard to get recordings of the type of music I enjoy, and I'm sure I am not alone.

However the likes of Sony Music and other big distributors must be frightened of how easy it would become for small music distributors to set up shop. Pop groups and classical orchestras could sell their own recordings via the web, completely bypassing the big companies. Countries with their own music tradition could compete on equal terms with the U.S. and European giants. Since only a small outlay is needed to set up an internet presence, we could have a variety of independent private distributors that are immune to the hostile activities of multinationals. Small sites can easily be linked, by 'web rings' or conventional hyperlinks, so that new companies can quickly

get good exposure to the music buying masses.

The only question is: how can music producers may money out of an easily duplicated music format? I think that by disposing of the current giants, who probably swallow up the majority of the price of CD's, music can be made very much cheaper. What proportion of a pop single goes to the musicians? I bet it's only a few pence. There is already one American company selling recordings at 99 cents a download.

Of course there will always be pirating. Every teenager has tapes made from someone else's CD. Most music systems make copying very easy, but still record distributors are able to sell CDs for £15. Presumably enough people buy recordings to make it possible to charge such prices. There will always be a premium for fashion products anyway. I think that the

distributors will have to be innovative in this market if they wish to avoid the inevitable.

One idea is to make the process of downloading the music totally painless. Some software product that integrates the whole process of payment, music download, storing, cataloguing, management, and playing. Like an on-screen Wurlitzer that always has the latest hits! The current methods are still too technical and



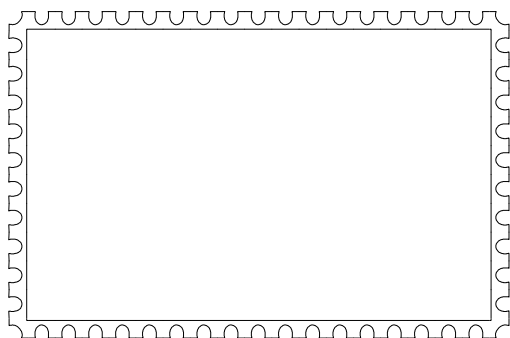
prone to error.

Whether the music publishers can grasp the nettle remains to be seen. As I write, the RIAA has lost its battle to have the Diamond Rio (an MP3 player) declared illegal by U.S. law. There are numerous other players just around the corner, as they have been waiting for the judges verdict. The RIAA is continuing its SDMI efforts, so it looks like in the short term there will be two systems - an SDMI system and MP3. Then there will be SDMI to MP3 converters, so the 'security' designed into SDMI will be lost.

I think the mainstream Japanese manufacturers will go for SDMI - It is hard to imagine Sony

(Continued on page 10)

BeechLog



PC Card flash disk

(Continued from page 9)

producing hardware which doesn't support Sony Music's World Domination attempt. But there is always a chance that they will be sidelined by emerging U.S. companies and their MP3 players. If we look at the history of 'protected' consumer products, the Achilles heel is revealed - the multinationals take too long to decide on standards. Even then they are frightened to introduce them, for the protection can usually be thwarted by the determined - look at DVD country codes, Playstation non-standard CDs, Minidisk copy protection.

However most potential buyers do not take the trouble to make copies. Microsoft still sells millions of copies of its programs, even though they are pirated in Hong Kong, China and India as soon as they are released. There are still plenty of record shops, despite the ease of copying these products.

Whatever happens, things will change in the music industry, sooner rather than later. And music distributors will have to decide whether they want to stay in business. Their present activity in trying to trample on the changes is doomed to failure.

Roger.

Editors plea...

May I make my usual plea for material for **BeechLog**? I am always short of articles to publish here, so please consider writing something. It need not be long or technical almost anything will do!

You know where to send it:

beechlog@cryogen.com

Sorry about this issue being 3 months late. I have been rather busy at work - doing 60 to 80 hours a week (no overtime!) so something had to give. Hopefully now I am back on more reasonable hours, and BeechLog will be back to normal.