



TAKE CONTROL OF

Apple Media Apps

Apple Music & Beyond

Manage your audio and video
content in Apple's Music,
Podcasts, TV, and Books apps

by **KIRK McELHEARN**

\$14.99

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Apple Media Apps*, version 1.1, published in October 2025 by alt concepts. This book was written by Kirk McElhearn and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book explains how to manage audio, video, podcasts, and audio-books on Apple devices: Mac, iPhone, iPad, HomePod, and Apple TV; store media in Apple's cloud; stream tunes from Apple Music; and sync content to your iPhone or iPad.

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Updates and More

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If you bought this ebook from the Take Control website, it has been added to your account, where you can download it in other formats and access any future updates.

What's New in Version 1.1

Version 1.1 of this book was released following the introduction of macOS 26 Tahoe, iOS 26, iPadOS 26, tvOS 26, and watchOS 26. As you can see, Apple has rationalized the version numbers of their operating systems, choosing to name them after the coming year, like car model years in the United States. This makes it easier to understand which version of Apple's operating system is current, and simplifies the way we discuss these operating systems.

This year brings a new interface style to Apple's operating systems. Liquid Glass affects many parts of every app, and, as Apple says, "This translucent material reflects and refracts its surroundings, while dynamically transforming to help bring greater focus to content, delivering a new level of vitality across controls, navigation, app icons, widgets, and more." Unfortunately, this also makes it difficult to work with some interface elements because they are blurry and hard to read. As such, I use the Reduce Transparency setting for all the screenshots in this book. You can enable this in Settings > Accessibility > Display (or Display & Text Size) on your various devices.

Apple has also moved around or changed a number of interface elements, notably on the Mac version of the Music app, where play controls and information about currently playing tracks have been moved from the top of the app to a floating bar at the bottom. This has been done in an attempt to align the way this app presents on Macs, iPhones, and iPads. This said, the *content* section of these apps—the main section where you see your music—hasn't changed at all.

Here are the new features I cover in this version of the book:

- **AutoMix:** This new feature goes beyond the existing crossfade feature, which smooths segues between tracks, and "dynamically transitions between Apple Music subscription content for a seamless listening experience." This only works when playing content from Apple Music, whereas Crossfade works with any music in your library. I discuss this in [Shuffle and Repeat Music on an iPhone](#).

- **Lyric translation and pronunciation:** You have long been able to view lyrics on your device for many tracks in the Apple Music library. You can now view translations and pronunciation for some music not in your language. See [View Lyric Translation or Pronunciation on Your iPhone or iPad](#).
- **Pinned Favorites:** You can now pin up to six playlists, albums, artists, or songs at the top of your Apple Music library. See [Pin Favorites to the Top of the Library](#).
- **Playlist Folders:** Long available for Mac, you can now organize your playlists in folders on your iPhone or iPad. See [Organize and Manage Playlists](#).
- **Home Screen widgets:** Some new widgets allow you to add your pinned favorites to the home screen of your iPhone or iPad. See [New Home Screen Widgets for iPhone and iPad](#).

What's Changed from a Previous Book

This is a new book that builds on ten revisions of *Take Control of macOS Media Apps*, which replaced *Take Control of iTunes 12: The FAQ* (and, before that, similar books on iTunes 10 and 11), and which expands coverage of Apple's media apps beyond Macs. This book covers using Apple media apps on all Apple devices. Here are the major changes in this book:

- **Addition of Apple media apps for iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, Apple TV, and HomePod:** This book has a new title; instead of the previous *macOS Media Apps*, it now covers *Apple Media Apps* on all platforms, with the exception of the Vision Pro. This has led to a reorganization of the book. New content about these apps can be found throughout the book.
- **A totally new organization:** With the inclusion of Apple's media apps on other platforms, I have reorganized the book entirely. Please read the [Introduction](#) to understand how to best approach this book according to the way you use Apple's media apps.

- **Some content moved to the Take Control Books website:**
As this book has grown in size over the years, it has started to become unwieldy. Several chapters of this book have been removed and placed on the Take Control Books website. These are [Sync Media to Your iPhone, iPad, or iPod](#); [Rip, Burn, and Print](#); and [Extend the Music and TV Apps with AppleScripts](#).
- **Apple Music Classical:** In early 2023, Apple released the Apple Music Classical app for iPhone and iPad. This app offers a different experience for Apple Music users who like classical music. I discuss this in [Use the Apple Music Classical App](#).

A Note on Terminology

Since I cover multiple Apple devices in this book, I no longer talk about iOS or iPadOS, but rather about iPhones and iPads, along with Apple Watches, Apple TVs, and HomePods. It's not so much the operating system that sets them apart, but the size of their display (or lack thereof, in the case of HomePods.) For the most part, functionality is the same across devices, and it's just the display size that is different. Apple has done a good job normalizing these apps across their various operating systems in recent years, so if you understand how to use these apps on one device, you can be confident that there aren't many differences on other devices. This is even more so with versions 26 of Apple's operating systems, which standardize terminology and interface elements.

I occasionally use the word *platforms* to describe the superset of these different devices, rather than talking about iOS, iPadOS, watchOS, tvOS, and audioOS (the operating system for Apple's HomePod, also called HomePod Software).

There are a few cases where I use the more global term *device*, and this is meant to include any device that can access Apple content. For example, if you sync your music library to the cloud, it is available on any Mac, iPhone, iPad, or Apple TV, or Apple Watch in the Music app; in iTunes on a Windows PC; in the Apple Music app on Android

devices; on supported TVs, gaming consoles, smart speakers, and set-top boxes; and even on the web, using Apple’s web player.

Compatibility

I discuss using Apple media apps on a variety of devices, as mentioned above. However, I don’t cover using Apple media apps on Windows or Android in this book.

I also no longer discuss iPods. The last iPod model, the iPod touch 7th generation, was discontinued in May 2022, and can only run iOS 15. You can still use older iPods with the Music app on a Mac and PC—you can even sync the very first iPod—but I no longer mention them in this book.

Adieu, iPod.

Introduction

Digital content has changed a lot since I first wrote *Take Control of iTunes* in 2010. Music moved from physical media to digital, and then shifted to streaming, and Apple has fragmented their digital content store. Apple's media apps reflect this, and there are four media apps, named for the types of content they manage: Music, Podcasts, TV, and Books.

More and more people listen to music, podcasts, and audiobooks, and watch movies and TV shows, on a variety of devices, from iPhone and iPad to Apple Watch and Apple TV. Previous books of mine on this topic mentioned these Apple devices only in passing, but in this book, I decided to extend coverage to Apple's media apps on *all the company's platforms*. For this reason, this book contains explanations of features for Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, Apple TV, and HomePod. And, for the most part, you can appreciate how Apple has made these features similar on different devices with different display sizes. The only Apple device I don't discuss is the Vision Pro; it's expensive and few people own this device.

Because of this new coverage, I have reorganized this book completely. If you have read any version of this book's predecessors, such as *Take Control of macOS Media Apps* or *Take Control of iTunes 12: The FAQ*, you'll see that the order in which I explain how to experience digital content has changed. Instead of starting by explaining how to play music in the Music app on a Mac, I begin by discussing Apple's streaming service, Apple Music. See [Quick Start](#) for a full overview of this book.

In preparing this book, we decided to remove three chapters that had been in *Take Control of macOS Media Apps* and make them available on the Take Control Books website. These are [Sync Media to Your iPhone, iPad, or iPod](#), which explains how to sync content to an iPhone, iPad, or, yes, even an iPod. [Rip, Burn, and Print](#) discusses the settings you use to rip CDs, how to burn CDs, and how to print out

your library. And [Extend the Music and TV Apps with AppleScripts](#) explains how you can use AppleScripts on your Mac to do some neat things with media files in the Music and TV apps.

Finally, this book has been around in various editions for 15 years and has accreted a lot of content, some of which is a bit archaic. This book had many references to the past, in order to provide continuity from iTunes to Apple's current suite of media apps. I've tried to cut out all this cruft and simplify the text. Concepts that were new a decade ago are now common, so I discuss them in less detail than in earlier books.

I've long been a serious music fan, and I've amassed a digital music library that contains more than 100,000 tracks, made up of thousands of CDs I've ripped and thousands of tracks I've purchased from the iTunes Store and other sources (along with way too many CDs).

I'm a big listener of classical music (more than half of my library), and one of my special loves is German art songs, or *lieder*. But I'm also a Deadhead (a fan of the Grateful Dead) and have hundreds of recordings of their live concerts. I like jazz, progressive rock, ambient music, vintage punk rock, and much more. I also regularly listen to audio-books and podcasts, and I enjoy listening to audio recordings of Shakespeare's plays. And I have a substantial video library, containing movies, TV shows, and music videos.

I currently own two Macs, an iPhone, an iPad, an Apple Watch, a number of HomePods, and an Apple TV. I also have several Sonos devices that I stream music to using AirPlay, as well as a surround sound system made up of Sonos devices in my TV room. Over time, I have confronted the many hurdles that make using digital content on these devices a challenge.

In this book, I share much of what I've learned about managing media on Apple devices. The wide range of music that I listen to and the variety of content in my music library have led me to discover the most practical and efficient solutions to the problems of ripping, tagging, organizing, managing, playing, and syncing a large media library.

If you've ever been frustrated while trying to efficiently manage media files on your Mac, and play media files on your iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, Apple TV, or HomePod, read on.

Compatibility: This book focuses on using Apple's media apps in macOS 26 Tahoe, iOS 26, iPadOS 26, watchOS 26, audioOS 26 (also known as HomePod software), and tvOS 26.

Quick Start

This Quick Start describes what you can learn in each chapter. You can go to the beginning of any chapter to view a list of that chapter's specific topics. Click (or tap!) any chapter title to jump to the content.

Play music:

- Explore the features in Apple Music, including on-demand streaming, music discovery, curated playlists, and recommendations, plus live radio stations. See [Discover Apple Music](#).
- Learn how to find and play music in [Search for Music on Apple Music](#) and [Play Music from Your Apple Music Library](#).
- There are a number of ways you can view your music library: by album, artist, genre, songs, and more. See [View the Contents of Your Music Library](#).
- Apple created a separate app designed for listening to classical music, which is available for iPhone and iPad. See [Use the Apple Music Classical App](#) to learn how to use this app.

Organize your files, create playlists, and tag your files:

- Tagging media files, or adding metadata to them, is the most important thing you can do to take control of your Music and TV libraries. I show you which tags you can change, how to change them for single and multiple items, and more. Read [Tag Your Music Files on a Mac](#).
- You can *pin* up to six of your favorite songs, albums, artists, or playlists to the top of your music library for quick access. See [Pin Favorites to the Top of the Library](#).
- Playlists let you organize your music so you can do more than play songs by album, or at random. See [Organize Your Music and Create Playlists](#).

- The various Mac media apps store files in different locations, and you may need to change the locations for some of these files if you have a large library. You can also share your Music and TV content over your home network. See [Manage and Share Media Files on a Mac](#).

Learn how to use the cloud and purchase content from Apple:

- You can store music you own and music you've added to your library from Apple Music in the cloud, and then access it on multiple devices. See [Store Your Music Library in the Cloud](#).
- You can use Apple's stores in their various apps to purchase music, videos, and more, and you can add content you own to the Music, TV, and Books apps. See [Buy and Rent Apple Media](#).

Enjoy audiobooks, movies, TV shows, and podcasts:

- You can store and play audiobooks in the Books app. See [Listen to Audiobooks](#).
- Movies and TV shows are handled by the TV app. Read about managing a video library and viewing videos on Apple devices. See [Watch Movies and TV Shows in the TV App](#).
- Podcasts also have their own app. See [Listen to and Watch Podcasts](#).

Use Apple media apps on other Apple devices:

- Apple media apps on an Apple Watch or Apple TV offer many of the same features as those on other Apple platforms. See [Use Apple Media Apps on an Apple Watch](#) and [Use Apple Media Apps on an Apple TV](#).

Listen to Apple Music

The world of music has changed in recent years. People are shifting from owning their music—buying CDs or downloads—to renting it. With Apple Music, you can now access over 100 million tracks for \$10.99 a month; other streaming services offer similar deals. While not every artist or label’s music can be streamed, you can access most of what you want to hear.

But is this the best way to spend your music budget? Some people—myself included—still buy CDs and still want to own music and listen on our own terms, and there’s still some music I like that isn’t available to stream.

In this chapter, I look at the Apple Music streaming service and explain how it works, how you play music, how you find music, how to help Apple Music recommend new music for you to discover, and how to work with an Apple Music library.

Note: Your *library* is your collection of music, videos, or audiobooks stored in one of Apple’s media apps. It can contain content purchased from Apple, music you’ve added from the Apple Music streaming service, content that you have downloaded from other services, and content you’ve ripped from CDs, DVDs, or Blu-ray discs.

The way you play music is similar, whether you choose what to play from the Apple Music Home screen, by browsing Apple Music content, or by selecting music from your library, regardless of platform. The main difference is the size of the display and the way the interface is organized.

It is very Apple-like to use the same name for both an app and a streaming service. In this chapter, I start by explaining how the streaming service works, then move on to discuss playing any music in your library, which can include CDs you’ve ripped and downloads you’ve purchased, as well as tracks from the Apple Music streaming

service. If you're not an Apple Music (streaming service) subscriber, and just want to play your own music, the process is nearly identical.

Discover Apple Music

Apple Music is Apple's streaming music service, which combines several features. If you're already a subscriber to Apple Music and know your way around, or don't want to subscribe to Apple Music, you can skip this section and jump ahead to [Play Music from Your Apple Music Library](#). If not, here's an overview of what Apple Music offers:

- **Music streaming:** You can stream more than 100 million tracks from the Apple Music Library. Much of the music that's for sale in the iTunes Store is available to stream, but not all. You can stream tracks on demand, such as a song or album, or you can stream playlists curated by Apple Music editors and contributors. See [Discover Music on Apple Music](#).
- **Cloud storage:** You can store up to 100,000 tracks in the cloud; this number includes tracks that Apple's cloud has matched, tracks that didn't match and that the Music app uploaded, and tracks you've added from Apple Music to your library. iTunes Store purchases don't count against this limit. If you have a music library on your Mac and enable cloud sync, the Music app checks each track in your library to see whether it can "match" a track that's already in the Apple Music Library. If a track doesn't match, it's uploaded. These tracks show in your library along with tracks you've purchased from the iTunes Store and those you've downloaded from Apple Music. See [Sync Your Music Library to the Cloud](#).
- **Music recommendations:** With 100 million tracks to choose from, you can have that kid-in-a-candy-store feeling where you want to stream everything but don't know where to start. Apple Music's Home screen can help you choose what to listen to. See [Personalize Apple Music](#).
- **Radio:** Apple Music offers three live streaming radio stations: Apple Music 1, Apple Music Hits, and Apple Music Country. There

View the Contents of Your Music Library

When you're trying to find something to listen to or watch, you need to choose the right way to view your content. In this chapter, I show you various ways to view your music.

Discover the Music App's Library

The Music app's library is designed so you can access your music in various ways. When you're looking for something to listen to, you may think of an artist, album, playlist, or song, and you need to be able to find the right music by any of those criteria.

The top-level view of the Music app's library shows the different categories the app uses to display music. You can see these by tapping Library in the tab bar on an iPhone, or by displaying the sidebar on an iPad or Mac. The Music sidebar (**Figure 45**) lets you view your music in different ways and navigate your music library.

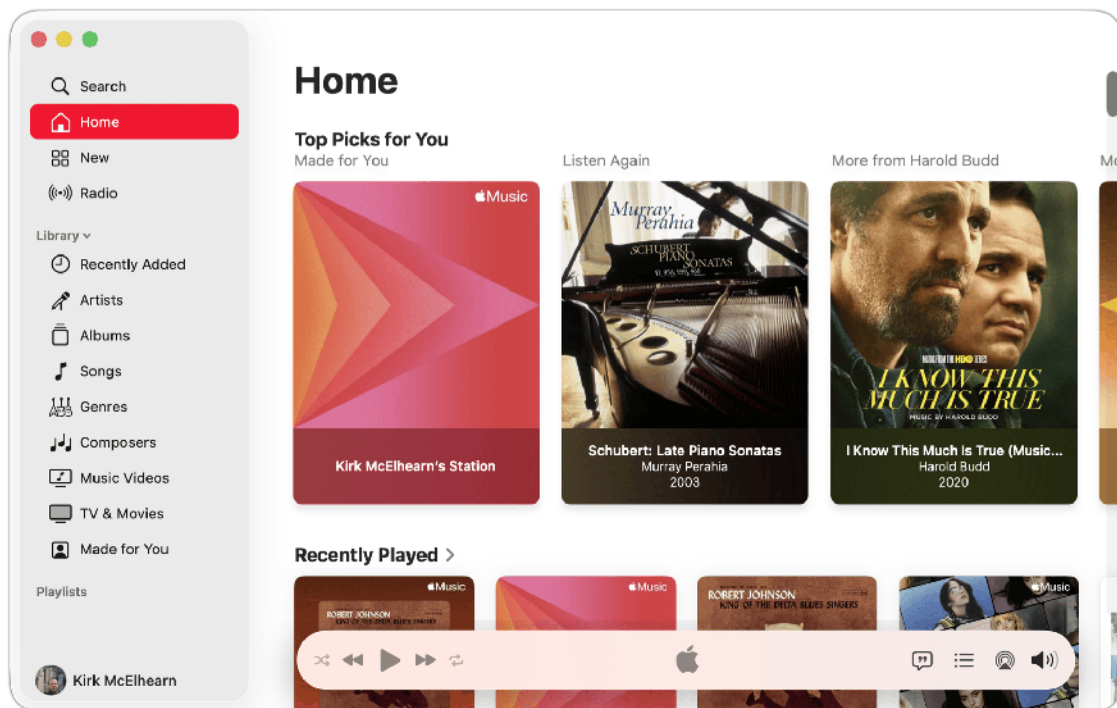


Figure 45: The Music app sidebar on a Mac.

On an iPad or Mac, the sidebar displays the many categories you can use to view your music. On an iPhone, tap Library at the bottom of the screen to view these categories.

Get to Know the Different Sections of the Music App's Library

The sidebar has four or five sections, by default, depending on how you interact with Apple's commercial offerings:

- **Home, New, and Radio:** I discuss the Home section in [Discover Music on Apple Music](#), I tell you how to browse the New section in [Browse Apple Music](#), and I explain how Radio works in [Listen to Apple Music Radio](#).
- **Search:** The search field is at the top of the sidebar on an iPad and on a Mac. On an iPhone, you access search by tapping the Search  icon at the bottom of the screen. I discuss searching your music library, Apple Music, and the iTunes Store in [Search for Music on Apple Music](#).

Organize Your Music and Create Playlists

You've got your favorite music in your library, but you'd like to organize it better. In this chapter, I show you how to make playlists, the key to setting up your listening sessions. I look at using tags to create smart playlists that fill automatically with your favorite tunes. And I cover some special topics that will help you with tasks like finding your media files on your disk, managing a large music library, and finding duplicates. (I discuss tags, or metadata about media files, in [Tag Your Music Files on a Mac](#).)

Understand Playlists

You can listen to your music by album, or by selecting song after song. You can play all the music by a specific artist, or you can shuffle your entire library. But the Music app reveals its biggest strength when you make playlists.

Let's distinguish between two types of playlists:

- **Standard:** Standard playlists are groups of songs that you organize manually. The key word here is *manually*: as you'll see ahead, smart playlists are *automatically* created from rules you select, but standard playlists require that you choose every track they contain and their play order.
- **Smart:** Smart playlists, which you can create only on a Mac, are dynamic. You choose rules and Music scans your library for files that match these rules, based on the tags your files contain. (Hence the importance of tagging your media correctly; see [Tag Your Music Files on a Mac](#).) In essence, the rules in a smart playlist tell Music to search your library for items that match them.

Create a Standard Playlist

You create a standard playlist on your Mac by choosing File > New > Playlist, or pressing ⌘-N. Music adds the playlist to the sidebar, and highlights its name. By default, Music names the new playlist *Playlist* (or, if that name exists, *Playlist 2*, and so on). Type a name for the playlist in the Playlist Title field, add a description, click the Plus  icon to add artwork if you want (you can do these later), then click Create to save the playlist (**Figure 61**).

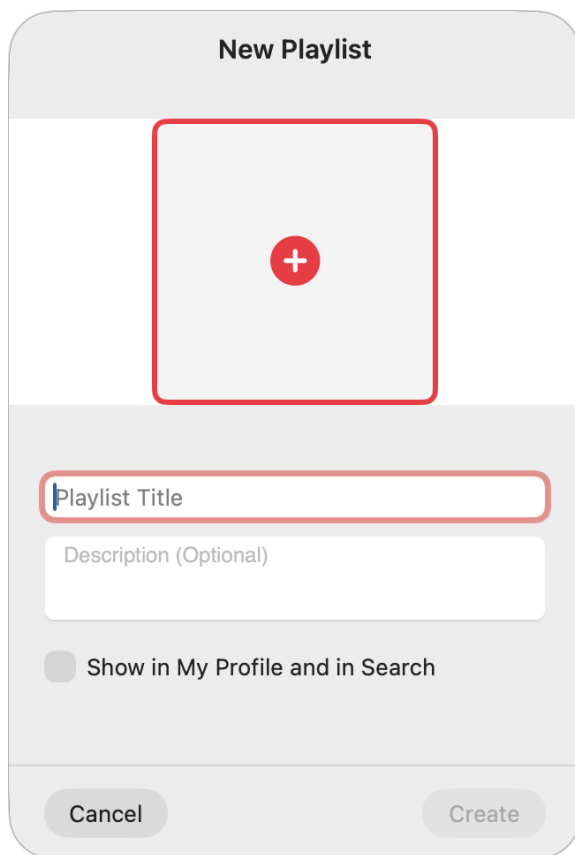


Figure 61: Here's a new playlist waiting to be filled with music.

On an iPhone or iPad, you create a standard playlist by going to Library > Playlists and tapping the Plus  Icon. The screen that displays is similar to that on a Mac (**Figure 62**).

Buy and Rent Apple Media

In the United States, Apple sells music in the Music app, movies and TV shows in the TV app, and ebooks and audiobooks in the Books app, and they offer movie rentals in the TV app. In other countries, the content available varies.

For a long time, Apple sold all this content in the iTunes Store. There are remnants of this store in various Apple apps: you can display iTunes Store in the Music app sidebar on a Mac, and there is an iTunes Store app you can download on an iPhone or iPad to purchase music. But, other than for music, media sale and rental options have been rolled into the Books and TV apps.

The examples I give show what happens in the United States. If you live elsewhere, the experience is largely the same, but some of the details may differ. I also explain how to move digital content you've purchased elsewhere into Music, in [Add Your Own Files to the Music App on a Mac](#).

About Your Apple Account

Your Apple Account serves many purposes. For example, it is the account you use to sign in to iCloud, which allows your Apple devices to sync files and other data across devices. You can also use that account to purchase or rent items from Apple's various media stores, as well as from the Mac App Store, iOS/iPadOS App Store, and other Apple services.

Note: In late 2024, Apple changed the name of your identifier for accessing Apple services from Apple ID to Apple Account.

You must be signed in to your Apple Account to use some of the features I describe in this book. In most cases, the Music, TV, Podcasts, or Books apps prompt you to sign in to your Apple Account when you

first try to access such features, but, if not, you can do so by choosing Account > Sign In in Music, TV, Podcasts, or Books.

For more on what your Apple Account is used for, see the Apple support document, [Manage and use your Apple Account](#).

Buy Music in the iTunes Store

When Apple split up iTunes into multiple apps, they changed the way users see the iTunes Store. If you have an Apple Music subscription, you do not see the iTunes Store in the app's sidebar by default. If you don't subscribe to Apple Music, you see the iTunes Store, but you also see the Apple Music section in the sidebar.

If you are an Apple Music user and do want to see the iTunes Store—many people both rent *and* buy music—go to Music > Settings, click General, and select iTunes Store in the Show section. Note that while you can browse the iTunes Store at any time, you must be signed in to your Apple Account to purchase or rent any content, or download any free content. See [About Your Apple Account](#) above for more on signing in to your Apple Account.

Note: On an iPhone or iPad, you can buy music in the iTunes Store app. If you don't have the iTunes Store app on your iPhone or iPad, you can [download it from the App Store](#). You cannot purchase music on an Apple TV.

Select iTunes Store in the sidebar to enter the store. You see what Apple is currently touting, with new music, discounted offers, per-orders, and more. You can navigate the store by genre (there are lots of navigation links in the right-hand sidebar), look at the top songs and albums (also in the right-hand sidebar), and browse in other ways. To learn more about an item, or to buy it, click it to open its page.

You can buy albums, and, in most cases, individual songs, though some songs are listed as *album only*, meaning you cannot buy them on their own.

Store Your Music Library in the Cloud

You can create your own music library on your Mac, iPhone, or iPad, and, when you do, it's a good idea to store it in the cloud so you can access it on other devices. If you only use an iPhone and/or iPad, then your library is automatically stored in Apple's cloud. If you have a library on a Mac, however, this may not be the case.

Note: Most of this chapter discusses how you store a library on a Mac, made up of downloads and CD rips, in the cloud.

With an iPhone or iPad, you can add only tracks from Apple Music and iTunes Store purchases to your cloud library; on a Mac, you can store other tracks, such as downloads purchased from other vendors or CDs you've ripped. If you don't subscribe to Apple Music, then that's the only way you can build a library to store in the cloud.

If you have a music library on a Mac, the Music app blurs the distinction between local files and those in the cloud, because it can upload your own music to the cloud to add to your Apple Music library. While you aren't *required* to use the cloud for your music library, it's a powerful tool that allows you to have a huge music library accessible on all your devices.

This chapter looks at the two ways you can store your music library on your Mac in the cloud, via Apple Music or iTunes Match. Both these options allow you to enable Sync Library, which lets you store up to 100,000 tracks that you can access from any Mac running the Music app, an iPhone or iPad, a Windows PC running iTunes, an Apple TV, or an Android device running the Apple Music app, or Apple Music on the web. You can even listen to Apple Music on a Google Nest device or an Amazon Alexa device, and other devices may support Apple Music as well; for example, Sonos devices support Apple Music, and other hi-fi streamers may offer access to Apple Music. In addition, the iTunes

Store keeps your purchased content in the cloud, so you can stream or re-download it at any time.

Manage Music and the Cloud

While you can certainly use the Music app without ever accessing the cloud, many of its features depend on Apple's data centers.

Here's a quick look at the current options for digital media:

- **Sync Library:** If you subscribe to Apple Music or iTunes Match, you can enable Sync Library, which commingles tracks from the following sources, making them available on all computers and mobile devices that are signed in to the same Apple Account. See [Sync Your Music Library to the Cloud](#).

Before you start iTunes Match or turn on Sync Library, read [Before You Enable Sync Library](#).

- **Apple Music:** This is the streaming arm of Apple's cloud music offering, which I discuss in depth in [Listen to Apple Music](#).
- **iTunes Match:** With iTunes Match, you enable Sync Library to store your Mac's music library in the cloud. The tunes that you store and access are only those from your library; you can't access the Apple Music Library. Since iTunes Match's cloud features are included in Apple Music, if you've subscribed to Apple Music, you won't see an iTunes Match option. See [Use iTunes Match](#) for more.
- **Automatic downloads from Apple's stores:** This feature lets you download new purchases to more than one computer or device automatically. See [Automatically Download Purchases to the Music App](#).
- **Re-downloads:** You can re-download any music you've purchased from the iTunes Store (assuming it's still available) at any time. See [Re-Download iTunes Store Content](#)

Manage and Share Media Files on a Mac

One of the advantages of apps such as Music, TV, Podcasts, and Books is that you don't need to think about files. When you add files to these apps' libraries, they are stored on your Mac in specific locations, but you rarely need to manipulate them. However, if you have a large media library, you may need to consider offloading your files from your Mac to an external drive.

In this chapter, I discuss how you can manage large media libraries on a Mac, and also how to share your music over a network to other devices in your home.

How the Media Apps Organize Files

When you add a file to Music, Books, or TV, the app stores a pointer to its location, so all you need to think about is whether you want to play the file and how you sync it to your mobile device (if you still sync music and don't use the cloud).

Music App File Organization

By default, Music stores your files in a Media folder. When you download files from the iTunes Store, they go there automatically; when you rip CDs the same thing occurs. When you add files to your music library from your drive, assuming you've left the "Copy files..." checkbox enabled (it's described just ahead), Music copies them from their original location, and you can delete the originals.

Where Are All Those Files?

Music and TV files are located as follows:

- ✦ Music stores its files in the Music subfolder of your home folder. The default location of your Media folder is `~/Music/Music/Media/`, where `~` is a shortcut for your home folder.
- ✦ The TV app stores file in `~/Movies/TV/Media`.

Each of the above folders contains several subfolders organizing your content. One important item in these folders is the *library file* (called Music Library or TV Library), which is a database of all the content in your library containing metadata (tags) about your files, such as their names and locations, but also information such as ratings or favorites. This file also contains the data necessary to display playlists that you've created. So if this file gets damaged or deleted, your music will still be on your Mac, but you lose all that extra data.

If you created an iTunes library before macOS 10.15 Catalina, your music and video files may be in the locations where iTunes originally stored them. You can find them, and other support files, in `~/Music/Music/iTunes Media`. Your library files, however, are stored in `~/Music/Music/` and `~/Movies/TV`.

For the other two media kinds—podcasts and audiobooks—the paths are a bit more complex. These folders are “hidden,” in the sense that you are not expected to access them.

Podcasts are stored in a cache folder in `~/Library/Group Containers/243LU875E5.groups.com.apple.podcasts`.

Ebooks and audiobooks are stored in a folder in your Library folder: `~/Library/Containers/com.apple.BKAgentService`.

One problem with audiobooks is the space they take up. If you have a large audiobook library, you may not have room on your startup drive. So you might want to remove as many audiobooks as possible and store them somewhere else, if you're not planning to listen to them soon.

If you have a large media library, you can store your media files on an external drive. The Music and TV apps each have a setting in Settings > Files that allow you to choose a location for their media folders. This means that you can store your music on one volume and your movies

Tag Your Music Files on a Mac

Tagging media files is the most important thing you can do to take control of your Music library. You could add all your music to your library and play it at random, but without correct tags, you'd never find what you want, and you wouldn't be able to make smart playlists.

In this chapter, I show you which tags you can change, how to change them for single and multiple items, and how to streamline tagging so you can easily organize your music library. Note that the information in this chapter also applies to video files in the TV app, but you cannot change tags for podcasts in the Podcasts app or for audiobooks in the Books app.

Note: You can modify and edit tags on media files only on a Mac.

Understand Tags

In order for the Music app to keep track of your media files, and for you to know which ones to play, every item in your Music library has tags. Tags are *metadata*—information about the files and their content—that helps Music sort tracks and keep albums together, and more.

Note: Tags are part of the ID3 specification for storing metadata in music files, and are also used in other types of files, such as videos and ebooks. ID3.org has information about the history of tags, and which tags are available for music files. Note that the Music app uses only some of the available ID3 tags, and other apps can add tags to music files that the Music app doesn't display.

At a minimum, for a song, you need tags specifying a song name, artist, and album name. But you can add other tags: composer, year, genre,

track number, disc number, and more. You can also add comments, lyrics, and album artwork.

To see tags for any item, select it and press ⌘-I. Here's a list of the main tags for music and videos, and what they commonly contain:

- **Title:** This could be a song name, the name of a movement in a symphony, a section of a movie soundtrack, and so on.
- **Artist:** This is the person or group who performed the music.
- **Album:** The name of the album on which the track appears.
- **Album Artist:** Say you have a record by U2 with a song featuring Luciano Pavarotti. The artist tag would mention both of these artists, but the Album Artist tag would contain only U2, because the song is on a U2 album. This tag helps you sort music correctly by album, yet list additional artists on specific tracks.
- **Composer:** This is the composer of the music, whether a classical composer or a songwriter.
- **Grouping:** Some music from the iTunes Store—usually classical music—has this tag. For example, an album that has three piano concertos by Mozart may have a single name for the album, but the individual works' names may be entered in the Grouping tag. You can sort files by grouping in Songs view, and you can use this tag with smart playlists.
- **Genre:** You can pick from a number of preset genres, or you can add your own by typing one in this field. I've found that the Genre tag is a great way to organize my music. Since it's easier to look at genres that contain less music, I've created plenty of nonstandard genres. For example, I have genres for Dylan (Bob Dylan and his recordings with The Band), Dead (The Grateful Dead and its members' solo recordings), Lieder (German art songs), and Chamber Music (string quartets, violin sonatas, and other works for small ensembles).

Use the Apple Music Classical App

In March 2023, Apple released an Apple Music Classical app. This app was designed to meet the needs of classical music listeners, who often search for works—such as symphonies, string quartets, or piano sonatas—rather than songs and albums. Classical music has different types of metadata than other types of music, making searching in the standard Music app limited.

Classical music listeners may want to find a specific work by a composer, performed by a specific orchestra, conductor, or soloist. The Music app can't handle that sort of search. This app segregates the classical music in the Apple Music catalog, and enables more powerful searches than in the Music app.

The Apple Music Classical app (**Figure 86**) is available on an iPhone and iPad: there's no Mac version, nor is there a section in the Music app that offers the same features. It resembles the Music app a lot, but there are some key differences. In this section, I discuss features of the Apple Music Classical app that differ from those in the Music app.

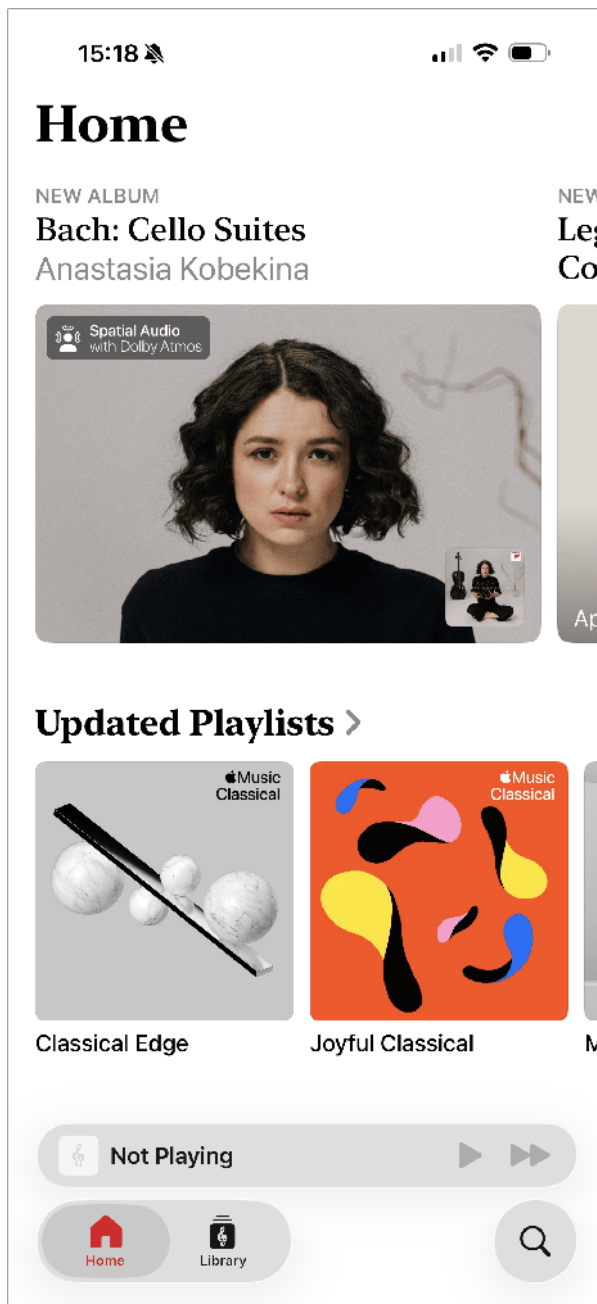


Figure 86: The Apple Music Classical app Home screen.

Here's an overview of the Apple Music Classical app's main screen:

- **Home screen:** As in the Music app, you see content related to your listening, such as Recently Played, New Releases, Music by Mood, and more. The Classical app differs in presenting new and featured releases at the top of the screen, which you can see on the New tab of the Music app, if you browse the Classical genre. You can find playlists by composer and artist, dedicated to periods and genres, and more.

Listen to Audiobooks

The Books app lets you listen to audiobooks, whether you've purchased them from Apple's Book Store or from [Audible](#), or ripped your own audiobook CDs.

Using the Books App for Ebooks

I don't discuss reading ebooks in the Books app because this process is fairly simple. Apple's Book Store works like their other content stores, the Library works like the library in the Music or TV app, and Collections are like playlists.

Play Audiobooks

Listening to an audiobook is similar to listening to music, with two small differences. The first is that when you listen to an audiobook, you want to pick it up again later where you last paused. The Books app manages this, so if you listen to a chapter on your Mac, you can come back the next day and immediately begin with the next chapter. It stores your precise location, so you can stop and restart your audiobook at any time.

Not only does Books remember where you stopped listening to an audiobook, but it also syncs this location to your mobile device. And when you listen on a mobile device, Music finds the last location there and syncs it back as well. So you can listen to an audiobook on an iPhone, then pick up it at your latest location on your Mac.

Note: As a longtime listener of audiobooks, I would recommend that, if you get your audiobooks from Audible, you use their app on an iPhone or iPad. You cannot add Audible audiobooks to Apple's Books app on mobile devices, only on a Mac. Apple's Books app is worth using for audiobooks on mobile devices only if you buy audiobooks from Apple.

Another specific feature of audiobooks is that many of them are *chaptered*, and when you play a chaptered audiobook, a Chapters menu appears at the far right of the Books app header. If you click the Table of Contents ☰ icon (see **Figure 93**), you can view your location in the book, and click a chapter to start playing at that location. The player bar shows the title and author of the book you're listening to, and its chapter, and, if you hover your pointer over that area, the amount of time elapsed and remaining in the current chapter.

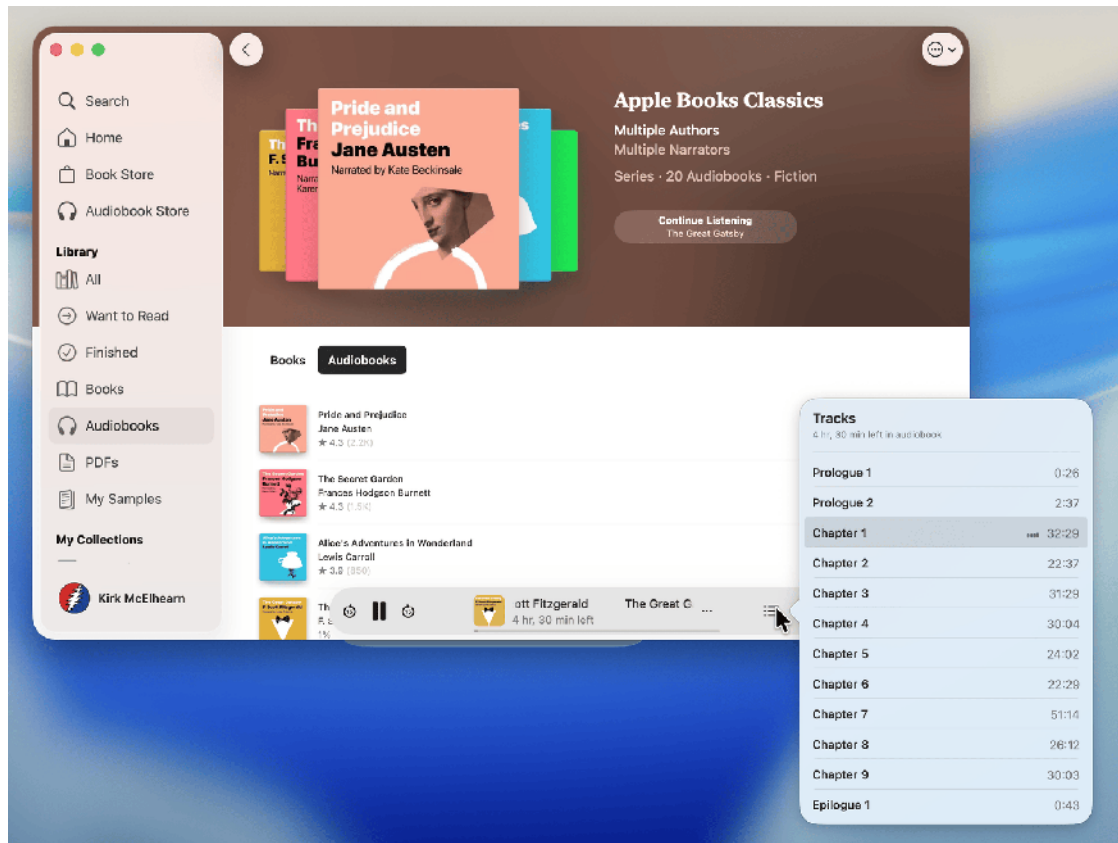


Figure 93: The Chapters menu in the Books app on a Mac lets you choose a location in an audiobook.

On an iPhone or iPad, play controls are on the play screen, similar to that of the Music app. If you click the Chapter Menu ☰ icon at the bottom of the screen, you can see chapters and choose which chapter to play (**Figure 94**).

Watch Movies and TV Shows in the TV App

The TV app, available on an iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple TV, manages movies and TV shows. You can use it to buy and rent movies, to buy TV shows, and to view video content from your own library that you manage on your Mac.

For many people, the TV app is nothing more than a conduit to access videos streamed from different services: Apple's TV Store offerings, as well as Apple TV original content, but also a number of channels accessible via the TV app, such as Starz, Paramount+, and AMC+, . The comparable TV app for Apple TV offers more content through apps that can be downloaded to that device.

As with Apple's other media apps, the TV app is similar on all devices, and offers almost all the same features. The main difference with the Mac version is that you can add your own videos to your library.

Note: In October 2025, Apple changed the name of their original content movie and TV series streaming service from Apple TV+ to simply Apple TV. So you can now watch Apple TV on the Apple TV app on an Apple TV connect to your TV. Huh.

Browse Content in the TV App

The TV app for Mac has five sections at the top of its sidebar: Search, Home, Apple TV, MLS, and Store. Below these sections is your Library, which stores content that you own or have rented (**Figure 96**).

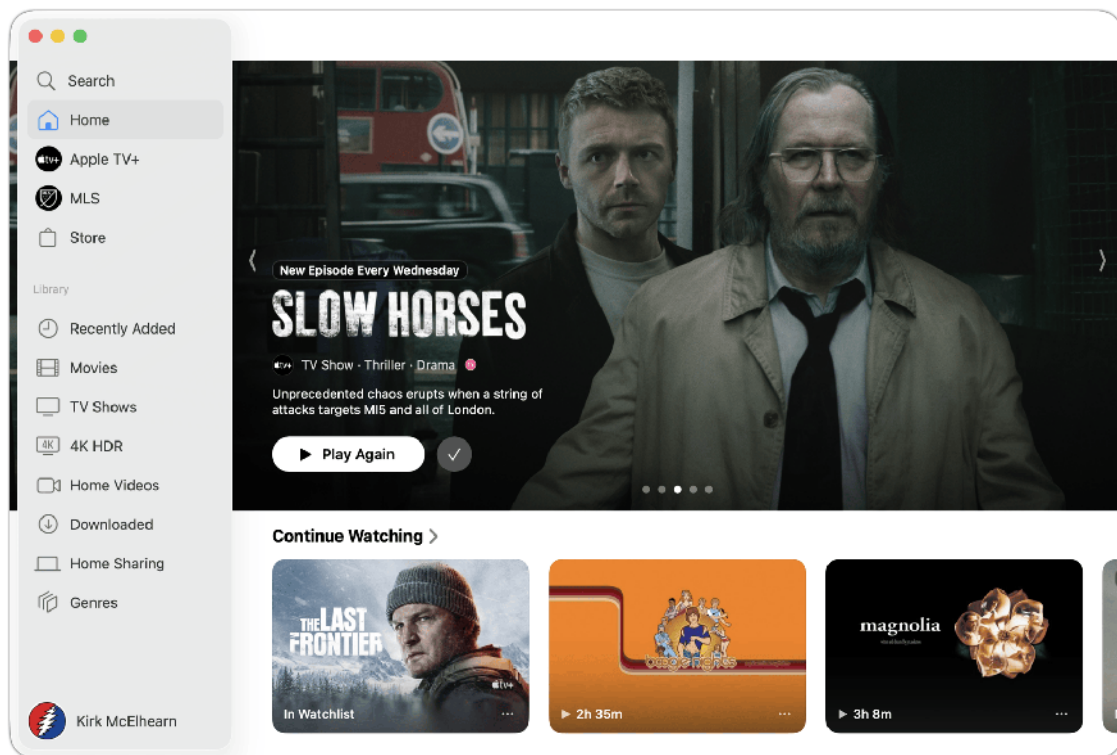


Figure 96: The Home section of the TV app on a Mac.

These tabs display at the top of the TV app on an iPad, and at the bottom of the app on an iPhone (with the exception of MLS), and present:

- **Search:** This allows you to search across Apple’s store, their Apple TV original content, and your own library. Search is similar to that in the Music app.
- **Home:** This tab shows a poster frame of a recent or upcoming Apple TV films or series, along with a watchlist below it, showing content that you have added to this list, such as films you want to watch. When you add a series to your watchlist it shows the latest episode that you have not yet watched.
- **Apple TV+:** This tab gives you quick access to the original content available from Apple TV. In September 2025, Apple announced that they changed the name of this service to Apple TV. But when this book was published in October 2025, the TV app still calls it Apple TV+. It will eventually change in the TV app.
- **MLS:** This section shows upcoming soccer matches in U.S. Major League Soccer. Some are free, but most are only available to sub-

Listen to and Watch Podcasts

Like music, books, and TV, podcasts have their own eponymous app, available for iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple TV. You can use it to follow your favorite podcasts and listen to individual podcast episodes.

Find Podcasts

To find podcasts to listen to, tap New on an iPhone or iPad, or click Browse in the sidebar on a Mac. You see an interface similar to that of the iTunes Store, with some featured podcasts at the top of the window and other popular podcasts below. Scroll down to the More to Discover section on a Mac, and tap or click a category to see what's available.

If you tap or click the Search  icon, you can browse categories or use the search field to find podcasts that match specific keywords.

You can tap or click Home to see your Up Next queue—new episodes of podcasts that you follow—along with radio shows from Apple Music, which you can follow in the Podcasts app, if you want to keep up to date on your favorite shows.

If aren't sure what to try, check out [The Next Track](#), shown in **Figure 99**, a podcast about music and technology. My co-host Doug Adams and I discuss various types of music, audio equipment, Apple's media apps, and more.

To view more information about the podcast, click its title or thumbnail.

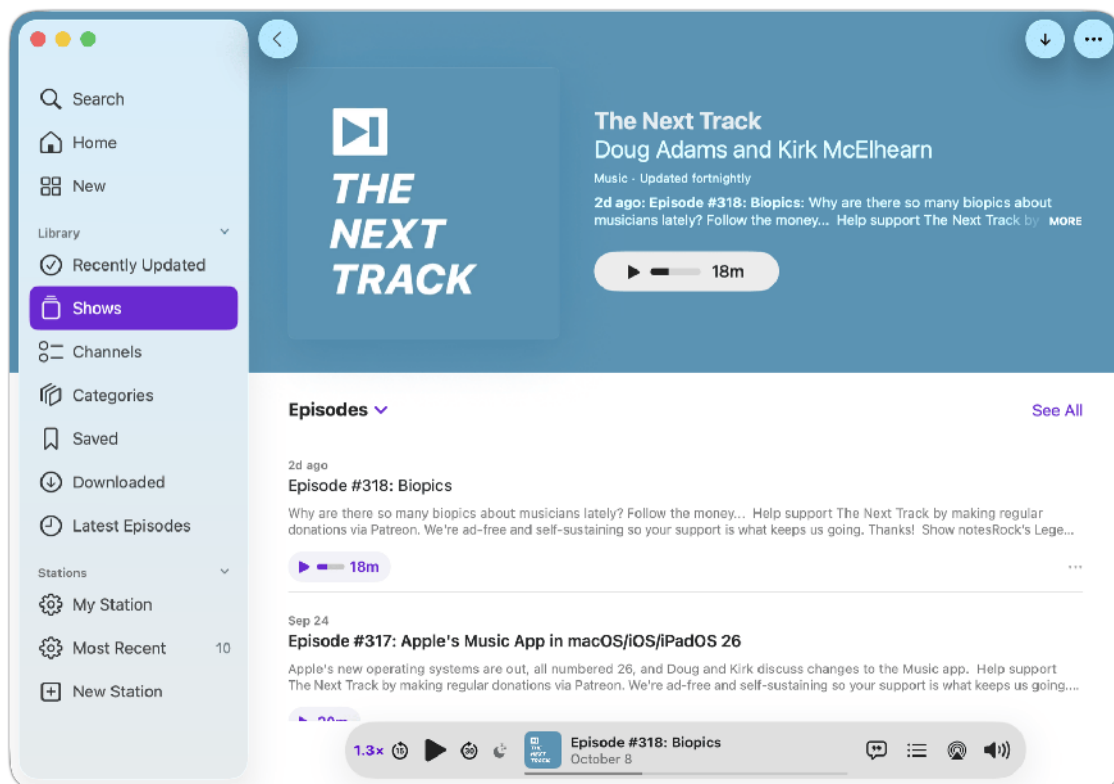


Figure 99: Find podcasts to listen to in the Podcasts app.

To stream an episode and listen to it immediately, tap or click the Play ► icon that displays in its description. If you tap or click the More ... icon at the right of an episode description, you can choose Go to Episode to see a full description of the episode along with show notes. And if you click the Playing Next ≡ icon next to that, you see what's coming up in your podcast queue (if anything).

You can adjust playback speed of a podcast on the player bar for any episode by clicking or tapping the Playback Speed 1x icon. By default, this is 1x, but you can choose from several speeds, as well as choosing Faster or Slower, which increments the speed by .1x each time you choose one of those options.

Use Apple Media Apps on an Apple Watch

An Apple Watch can play audio files, and, as such, has a version of the Music app that you can use to play music from Apple Music or your synced library. It also has an Audiobooks app and a Podcasts app, allowing you to access these types of media. And you can control music that is being played on an iPhone from an Apple Watch that is paired with it.

All these apps are simplified versions of their iPhone equivalents, as is expected from a device with a smaller screen, but they allow you to conveniently listen to music, podcasts, and audiobooks on the go. If your Apple Watch has a cellular contract, you can even stream music and podcasts without having your iPhone with you.

In this chapter, I discuss how to use Apple's media apps for Apple Watch. I only cover the basics here; for more on using an Apple Watch, see Jeff Carlson's [*Take Control of Apple Watch*](#).

Music for Apple Watch

While the Apple Watch version of the Music app is stripped down, you may be surprised at how complex it is. The Home section features a surprising amount of content. Music you've listened to recently, Made for You playlists, sections with music by mood, style, period, and more. It more or less mirrors the content you see in the Music app on your iPhone, just in miniature.

The Music app for Apple Watch features four top-level entries:

- **Home:** This is the equivalent of the Home tab in the iPhone app.
- **Radio:** This lets you listen to Apple Music radio stations.

- **Library:** Here, you can access your library; all of it. You can browse by Playlists, Artists, Albums, Songs, and Made for You content.
- **Search:** You can search for music in Apple Music and in your library.

Note that the Music app on your Apple Watch doesn't contain the New section of Apple Music, which allows you to browse the streaming services library in many ways.

After you tap one of these sections, you navigate by turning the watch's digital crown. You can tap through menus, and when you find something you want to play, tap it to start playing; you see play controls, similar to those on an iPhone (**Figure 103**). If you have an Apple Watch Series 10 or later, which has a more powerful speaker than previous models, you can listen to music on the watch, adjusting the volume with the digital crown.



Figure 103: Here's the Music app playback screen on an Apple Watch.

What you are most likely to do is stream music from your Apple Watch to Bluetooth headphones, such as any of Apple's AirPods. To do this, tap the More  icon and choose your AirPods or other headphones. You can also stream the music to other devices via AirPlay to any AirPlay-compatible speakers. This is useful, but only really practical if you don't have your iPhone handy, where it is much easier to find and control music.

Use Apple Media Apps on an Apple TV

It's probably no surprise that Apple has made their media apps on an Apple TV resemble those on an Mac, iPhone, or iPad, with the difference being that the larger display of a TV allows them to provide a more spacious experience. Most of how you play content is the same on an Apple TV as on other devices. See the chapters about using the Music, TV, and Podcast apps earlier in this book.

One thing to know about using an Apple TV is that it can access shared libraries, such as one on your Mac, which I discuss next.

Share a Media Library to an Apple TV

As you've seen throughout this book, most of Apple's media apps are designed to work with content in the cloud. Whether it is music, videos, podcasts, or books, all your purchased content is stored on Apple cloud servers. Because of this, you can access this content easily on other devices.

While you can sync music to the cloud (see [Store Your Music Library in the Cloud](#)), you can also have a local library in the music app that does not sync to the cloud, but that you can access on other devices in your home. The same is true for content in the TV app, such as DVDs that you've ripped.

In [Share Your Music and TV Libraries over a Network](#), I explained how you can share media from the Music and TV apps on your Mac to other devices on your local network. One of these devices is your Apple TV. After you've shared your media library on your Mac, go to the Apple TV and choose Settings > Users & Accounts > Home Sharing, and select the device you want to access.

In order to access the shared content, you open the Computers app, select the library, and then view its content (**Figure 108**).

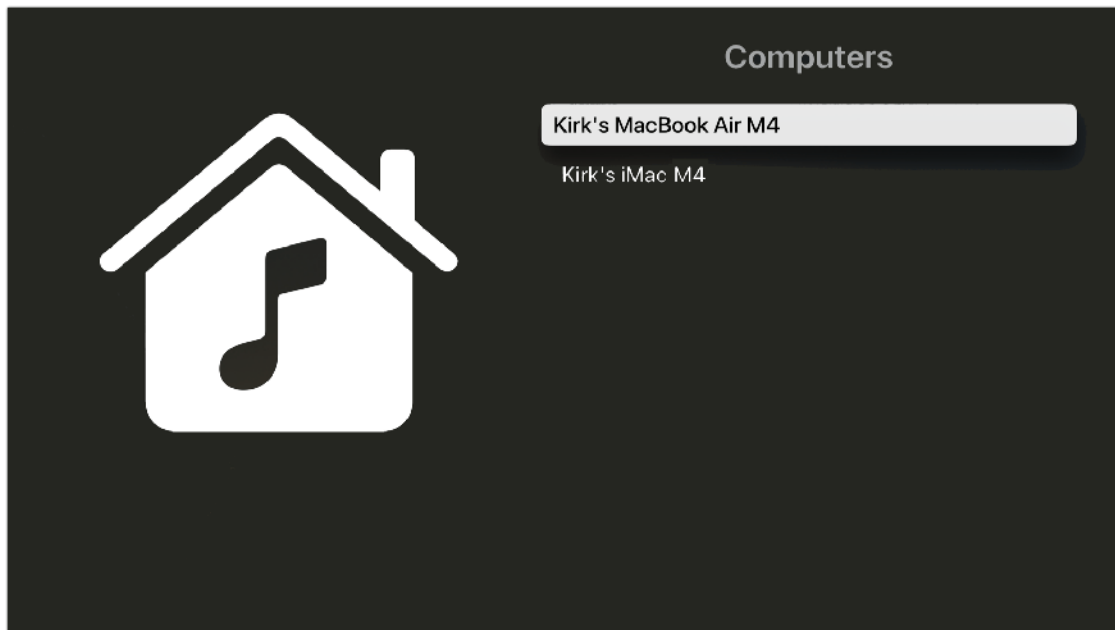


Figure 108: Browse shared libraries from the Computers app.

In my case, I have two shared libraries: my iMac contains a music library that is not synced to the cloud. My MacBook Air's content is all synced to the cloud. It would make more sense to access shared libraries from the appropriate apps: Music and TV. But Apple has separated these shared libraries, perhaps to avoid confusion when browsing these apps on an Apple TV.

Play Content from a Shared Library

When viewing a shared library, you see all its contents. You can use the remote to move through the tab bar at the top of the screen to access different types of content. As you can see in **Figure 109** below, a top tab bar lets you view Movies, TV Shows, Music, and Home Videos.

Learn More

Here's a list of some of the most useful websites for learning more about Apple's media management apps and mobile devices:

- **Kirkville:** This is [my personal website](#). I publish articles about using Apple's media apps, Macs, and mobile devices, as well as articles about my favorite music and more.
- **The Next Track:** I co-host [this podcast about how people listen to music today](#) with Doug Adams. We have been called “the Renaissance men of music,” and on The Next Track we discuss many kinds of music, audio equipment, and the apps we use to listen to music. (You can find links to my other podcasts in this [Shameless Plug](#).)
- **Apple's Music app support hub:** This portal provides information about [the Music app](#).
- **Audiophile Style:** Although audiophiles can be a bit obsessive, the [Audiophile Style website](#) offers useful information about setting up centralized media servers, playing high-resolution audio files, and using high-end audio equipment connected to a computer. There's also a very active forum where you can discuss using a computer as part of your audio system, and a lot of information on “immersive music,” or listening to Dolby Atmos recordings.

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About the Author

Kirk McElhearn writes about Apple hardware and software, books, music, and more. He contributes to TidBITS and other publications, and co-hosts several podcasts. Kirk has written and co-written more than two dozen books about using Macs, including [*Take Control of Audio Hijack*](#), [*Take Control of Scrivener 3*](#), and [*Take Control of LaunchBar*](#).

Kirk's website, [Kirkville](#), features articles on Macs, iPhones, iPads, audio and hi-fi, books, music, and more. A lapsed New Yorker, Kirk has lived in Europe for more than 40 years; he currently lives in a farmhouse near Stratford-upon-Avon, in the United Kingdom. You can email Kirk at kirk@kirkville.com or follow him on [Bluesky](#).

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This book has been around since 2010, in multiple forms, and Doug Adams has been a big help in understanding some of the intricacies of Apple's media apps, and his AppleScripts make the Music and TV apps much easier to use.

Over the years, I've worked with a number of fine editors, and it was again Joe Kissell's turn to shepherd this book to publication. With the many changes to the apps that this book covers, a new strategy was needed, and I thank Joe for helping shape this new edition.

A number of people have been of great help over the years, and through the various versions of this book. My son Perceval continues to provide me with many music recommendations so I keep up with the times. Andy Doe helped me understand some of the minute technical details of digital audio and the financial aspects of music streaming. Chris Connaker enlightened me about the nuances of high-resolution audio, audiophile hardware, and Dolby Atmos. Nick Flower of Hyperion Records gave me insight into issues around delivering digital music to customers from a record label's point of view. Jeff Robbin provided answers to some of my more obscure questions. Stéphane Sudre helped me figure out how to get graphics out of the Music and TV apps

to use as inline buttons in this book. And Gregorio Zanon provided useful information about the way iPhones and iPads function under the hood.

Finally, I'd like to thank the readers of my previous books about Apple's media apps, and of my website, [Kirkville](#). Through emails and questions, they have helped me understand what they need to know, and have pointed out the occasional typo that slipped past our ace proofreading team.

This book was written in Nisus Writer Pro on a 24-inch iMac, with the help of a 13-inch MacBook Air, an iPad Pro, an iPhone, several HomePods, a variety of Sonos gear, an Apple Watch, an Apple TV 4K, and some AirPods. It was produced under the influence of a wonderful selection of Japanese sencha, kabusecha, gyokuro, and matcha, as well as first flush Darjeelings. Titus the Cat and Rosalind the Cat provided company as I worked, in exchange for treats.

The stereo in my home office, where I do much of my music listening, consists of a Cambridge Audio CXA61 amplifier, Q Acoustics 3020i speakers on my desk, Kef Q350 speakers in the comfy listening area of my office, and a Cambridge Audio Minx X201 subwoofer. The cables and interconnects cost a few quid each. I have a stereo pair of 2nd-generation HomePods in my bedroom, a pair of HomePod minis in my kitchen, and a Sonos Arc, Sonos Sub Mini, and two Sonos Ones in my TV room.

The soundtrack for this book included music by Bob Dylan, Brian Eno, Franz Schubert, the Grateful Dead, Darkside, Miles Davis, The Clash, Brad Mehldau, The Durutti Column, Robert Johnson, John Cage, Philip Glass, Fontaines D.C., Harold Budd, King Crimson, Tobias Hume, Robert Fripp, and many others. It's a delight to be able to write about software that manages music while listening to so much great music.

About the Publisher

alt concepts, publisher of Take Control Books, is operated by [Joe Kissell](#) and Morgen Jahnke, who acquired the ebook series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.'s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst, in 2017. Joe brings his decades of experience as author of more than 60 books on tech topics (including many popular Take Control titles) to his role as Publisher. Morgen's professional background is in development work for nonprofit organizations, and she employs those skills as Director of Marketing and Publicity. Joe and Morgen live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, with their two children.

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