

# Review: Plug-in software that fine tunes iTunes

March 25 2009, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer



This undated screen grab provided by TuneUp shows a software program that cleans up and fills the gaps in digital music collections. Drawing upon a database of 90 million songs, TuneUp can pore through thousands of songs in iTunes within a few minutes to identify problems and offer solutions. It works on both Apple Inc.'s Macs and computers running Microsoft Corp.'s Windows. (AP Photo/TuneUp)

(AP) -- I generally like the way Apple Inc.'s iTunes orchestrates my music collection, but sometimes it hits a wrong chord on the older and more eclectic CDs transferred to my computer.

That's why hundreds of songs in my [iTunes](#) library are missing the proper album artwork or have been lumped into loosely defined categories that don't truly describe the [music genre](#).

For instance, iTunes' automated identification system believes that some songs by the B-52s, the Jimi Hendrix Experience and the Byrds all belong in the generic rock section. But these birds don't really flock together, do they?

If you're picky about music descriptions and want to find album artwork that iTunes doesn't have, it might be time to get a little help from a [software program](#) promising to fill the gaps in [digital music](#) collections.

I turned to TuneUp, a plug-in application that competes against a similar program called FixTunes.

Drawing upon a database of 90 million songs, TuneUp can pore through thousands of tracks in iTunes within a few minutes to identify problems and offer solutions. It works on Macs and computers running Windows.

Unfortunately, the help isn't free: TuneUp charges \$20 for a one-year subscription to its service or \$30 for lifetime access. That's an increase from a recent one-time fee of \$20 or a one-year subscription of \$12, an indication that demand for TuneUp may be rising.

The product probably is probably worth the money for people like me who already had large CD collections before buying their first iPod. Once I got a portable player, all those CDs had to be ripped on to a computer.

When trying to identify an incoming CD transfer, iTunes relies on a database from Gracenote - the same source that steers TuneUp. But TuneUp has access to a much larger and more sophisticated database than iTunes does, enabling the service to do a deeper analysis of each song. And TuneUp has built up its own digital warehouse of album covers, allowing it to find artwork that iTunes doesn't.

The artwork feature is by far the coolest thing about TuneUp. The software found new images for 346 songs, or about 7 percent of my iTunes library.

I was particularly pleased to fetch missing artwork for albums like "Blind Faith," "Soul Hits of the 70s: Didn't It Blow Your Mind," "Bruce Springsteen: The Classic Interviews," and "The Beavis and Butthead Experience," as well as soundtracks like "Swingers," "National Lampoon's Animal House," and "The Sopranos." (Who wouldn't want Tony's menacing scowl on their iPod?)

Although it improved upon what I had, TuneUp still couldn't get some things right. For some reason, it determined that the Bill Withers song "Lean on Me" should be associated with the album artwork tied to a 1985 single called "Oh Yeah!" (I ripped the Withers song from part of the "Soul Hits of the 70s" collection).

And, like iTunes, the program couldn't figure out that I had imported most of my vast Led Zeppelin collection from the group's epic box set. TuneUp, like iTunes, wanted to do things like stamp the cover from Led Zeppelin IV (yes, the one with "Stairway to Heaven") on songs from disc four of the box set.

TuneUp also did a nice job of putting more accurate labels on different types of music. For instance, the B-52s were sorted into a more appropriate "New Wave" category, Hendrix's sonic sounds were placed

in "Acid Rock and British Blues" and The Byrds were pegged as "Classic Folk Rock."

I still found reason to nitpick with some of TuneUp's definitions. For instance, I liked the way TuneUp classified The Rolling Stones' 1972 classic album "Exile on Main Street" as "Blues, Boogie and Southern Rock," but does the group's "Bridges to Babylon" really belong in the same category as "Exile"? Bridges sounds more like "A Bigger Bang," which TuneUp defined as "AOR (shorthand for Album Oriented Rock) Classic Rock."

While it tidies up your music, TuneUp also can help you find videos, concert tickets and merchandise for any artist in your library. When I was playing "Magnificent" from U2's latest album, TuneUp quickly linked to a recent video of the band performing the same song on David Letterman's show. And when I was listening to The Beatles, the software alerted me to a tribute band's upcoming show in San Francisco.

But TuneUp also made some puzzling suggestions. When I was listening to Bob Dylan's "Tangled Up in Blue," the software recommended buying Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit In The Sky" and Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation."

I couldn't but thinking that if this was really smart software it would have already realized I had those songs in my iTunes library.

*©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*

Citation: Review: Plug-in software that fine tunes iTunes (2009, March 25) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-plugin-in-software-fine-tunes-itunes.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.