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"AAAAAHHH AAAAHHH
AAAAAHHH AAAAHHH
AAAHHBB GGG LL AAAAA"

—Steven Frank
www.stevenf.com

About This Particular Macintosh: About the **personal** computing experience.™

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for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

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About This Particular Macintosh has been free since 1995, and we intend to keep it that way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with *real* jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. Our aim is to produce a fiercely independent magazine, with multiple formats designed for easy reading rather than showing ads. The views expressed in these pages have always been our own, and to help prove it we do not accept direct sponsorships or advertising. We do, however, need to pay for our Web site and other expenses, so we rely on minimal advertising, sold indirectly via Google and Yahoo, as well as the support of ATPM readers who shop using our links[1].

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/about/support.shtml

Welcome

Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the February issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* This month, Punxsutawney Phil pokes his head out of the ground, and the world waits to hear if he sees his shadow. This issue, our editors poke their heads into the world of Macintosh computing to keep our readers out of the shadows and shed light on the many recent announcements that impact what we call the "personal computing experience."

What's In a Name?

At January's Macworld Expo, Apple CEO Steve Jobs announced that the Mac maker has undergone a name change. In brief, the company's name was shortened from Apple Computer to Apple. The name change reflects the company's success in markets outside of the personal computer industry such as digital music players and entertainment content distribution. It was also a nod or recognition toward the company's yet-to-be-released iPhone.

The iPhone brings with it another naming issue. Cisco Systems claims the rights in the US to the iPhone product name. Apple has virtually undisputed rights to the name outside the United States. Cisco makes claim to the name through acquisition. Apple makes claim to the name through approbation and appropriation. Approbation due to the iPod's popularity and consumer expectations for Apple to deliver successful "i" prefixed products. It's approbation because that's the name Apple wants to use for its cell phone product. Cisco and Apple are now legally jousting over the name, and a court may have to decide if public approbation in this instance is appropriate for appropriation. Perhaps adding Apple's shortened name as a prefix to its popular product prefix will resolve the issue.

Billion Dollar Baby

For the first fiscal quarter ended in December, Apple delivered to its shareholders a whopping billion dollar quarterly profit, setting a quarterly earnings record and moving the double-zero currency suffix one more digit to the right. Achieving a ten-digit quarterly net profit grabbed headlines but couldn't pull the company's share price to higher ground.

Buy On Rumor, Sell On Fact

The fact is Apple earned $1.0 billion dollars in the December quarter on revenue of $7.1 billion. The sale of 22 million iPods, a favorable income tax rate of about 32%, and average gross margins of 31.2% on products sold helped the results. During the quarterly period the company also sold 1.606 million Macintosh computers. Apple ended the quarter with a pick-up of $1.75 billion in cash, raising the height of the company's cash pile reach $11.9 billion.

Rumors of an Apple iPhone became fact at the January expo, sending Apple's share price to an all-time high in the days before the earnings release of $97.80 in regular trading. Although the results set company records, Apple management chose to provide guidance for the current fiscal quarter based on shipping products (the iPhone won't debut until later this year), sending the share price plummeting to its pre-expo trading range of $85 per share. AAPL ended January trading in New York at $85.73 per share. Euphoria that the iPhone rumor is now a future product reality wasn't enough to keep the share price climbing once the results for the December quarter became fact.

Shuffling Colors

No matter Apple's quarterly results were decidedly only one dense color (bold and black), the company decided to change the diminutive iPod shuffle away from its previously uniform shade of gray. The shuffle now comes in an assortment of five colors ranging from the original gray to pink. We'll see if the new Shuffles add a spectrum of success to this quarter's results.

Accentuate the Positive

Most everyone who surfs the Web or watches TV in the US has seen Apple's TV commercials personifying the Mac and the PC. Recently, Apple released similar commercials in Britain with different actors accentuating the benefits of the Mac. The actors come complete with British accents of their own and a slight change to the dialogue designed for the British market. Europe was a bright spot for Mac sales in the December quarter.

Apple TV

Apple's much-anticipated wireless set-top box is now shipping to consumers. Reports indicate the first manufacturing run of 100,000 units has already been sold, and the company could sell 1 million or more Apple TV units this year. Priced at $299, this Mac or PC peripheral may change the way we buy, store, and enjoy entertainment content.

Our February Issue

We're happy to say our February issue is also a shipping product. Each page of news, views, and reviews is designed with you, our readers in mind. No doubt our managing editor is busy unwrapping his new Apple TV in time to screen his home brew movies for families and friends before the Super Bowl. By next month, I'm sure he'll figure out a way for you to read our publication in Apple TV widescreen format. But please, screen it from a Mac.

Our February issue includes:

Bloggable: Holy Cow!

Several months ago, Wes Meltzer offered to eat his hat if he was wrong about the non-existence of the iPhone. At Macworld Expo San Francisco, Steve Jobs offered him a fork and knife. It exists, and the sheer "wow" factor made it the only topic of discussion in January. That, and much more, in this month's *Bloggable*.

Mac About Town: "A rose by any other name..."

Phones, TV interface devices, a name change...there are changes afoot, friends, and the question is, "When can I get my iPhone?" I mean, what does the future hold for those of us who are Mac users before we are iPod or iPhone or Apple TV users?

Apple Talk: Safari

Apple Computer is dead. Long live Apple, Inc.

Next Actions: A Survey of the GTD App Landscape

Newcomer Ed Eubanks, Jr. covers a mega-smorgasboard of GTD (Getting Things Done) applications.

Photoshop For the Curious: An Overview, Part 3

In the third and final part of this overview exploring the Photoshop interface, we'll peek into Photoshop's menu bar. This month also features Lee's first tutorial—creating better black and white photos.

How To: Demystifying the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)

"Contrary to my normal routine of research first, I went down to one of the local big box retailers to browse the UPS selection—after all, how complex could it be, right?"

Desktop Pictures: Little Leaf Sea

Reader David Kettlewell shares photos from the sunny, frosty forests of northern Sweden.

Cartoon: Cortland

Cortland has junior-high flashbacks after a night of swing dancing with Angie doesn't go like he planned. Meanwhile, the chameleonesque Agent Smith arrives in town, palming a familiar-looking comm device...

Review: Arctic Quest 1.0

Arctic Quest for Mac is a Tetris-like game that is pretty, but I'd rather just play Tetris.

Review: MoRU 1.3.4

Spotlight is nice but has a habit of displaying a haystack of results taken from a larger haystack. David B. Thompson takes a look at a utility that refines Spotlight searches and reduces the number of returned hits.

Review: NetworkLocation 1.1

NetworkLocation attempts to restore the classic Mac mentality of a location as a place and not just a network connection.

Review: Python XL System

Continuing ATPM*'s* frequent review of bag products, this month, Frank H. Wu looks at Booq's Python XL System.

Review: SWF Movie Player 2.0

Watch, save, and interact with Flash files—without Flash restrictions. SWF Movie Player brings user-friendly playback to Adobe's Flash.

Audio Hijack Pro 2.7[1]

Too bad that you just hit below the hardware threshold for recording on Audio Hijack Pro. If your hardware is only two generations old instead of three, there's no downside. I have a 1 GHz iBook G4 that it records just fine with. And it should be just fine on any hardware sold in the last three years, if you have enough RAM.

Audio Hijack doesn't do MP3s but iTunes does. It's very easy to record to AIFF, drop the file into iTunes, and select Convert to MP3 in the Advanced menu. (If you're running Tiger you can even create an Automator action for this.) Discard the AIFF to save space. It may be just a bit awkward, but it works for budget recording. I did that for a year before I finally ponied up the upgrade fee for the Pro edition.

Before they podcasted Science Friday, I grabbed the show every week. I still use it for New Dimensions online broadcasts, which happen at 10 PM Sunday night in Seattle. I listen to a lot of podcasts or time-shifted Internet broadcasts during my commute.

I'm glad I upgraded, though. There's a lot of functionality in Audio Hijack Pro for not a lot of cost. I've recorded with it too, both my own podcasts and presentations for our local MUG, though I normally use GarageBand for that.

—*Michael*

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I've been using Audio Hijack Pro for about a year now to record my favorite radio shows—Car Talk, Thistle and Shamrock, Hearts of Space, etc.—and I've found it to be relatively trouble free. I am currently running a shiny new 20″ Intel iMac, but I was running a 1 GHz iMac G4 previously without problem. The only glitch I have with the new iMac is that it doesn't automatically drop my recordings into iTunes unless iTunes is already open.

—*Larry Snyder*

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I have used Audio Hijack Pro for recording vinyl on my 700 MHz iBook G3. No problems with skipping at all; the only trouble I had was with the auto-split

on silence function. There's too much noise on my old records for it to function properly, and this can hardly be blamed to Audio Hijack Pro. I think it is a very good piece of software.

—*Ronald Lamars*

iTalk Pro[2]

I found your article helpful. I also find it problematic that iTalk Pro reverts to automatic every time it is unplugged. I also find the fluctuations in level in automatic mode a major problem for music recording. In addition I get a "clipping" sound in automatic mode that makes the recordings useless. In high mode I get a lot of distortion, but in low mode it seems OK. I'm using a Sony ECM-MS907 stereo mic with the iTalk Pro and an 80 GB iPod video. The Sony mic worked well with my MD recorder. I am wondering where I can find specs to match a mic with the recording capability of the iPod and the iTalk Pro. The mic I am using now does not seem to be a good match, or is it the iTalk Pro that is the culprit? I'm considering trying the Belkin or ExtremeMac product. Do you have any ideas for matching a mic for music recording with the iTalk Pro or the other devices?

—*Peter McEachern*

> Using an external mic is tricky, but not impossible. The thing to remember about the jack on the bottom of the iTalk Pro is that it's a line-level input. Microphones are generally a mic-level input, which are much lower voltage than line level. If you visit an audio shop that carries such mics, you can tell them you have a device with a 3.5mm stereo line-level input and you're wishing to check out microphones that can plug into this, and see what they offer.
>
> —*Lee Bennett*
>
> The basic issue here is whether the microphone outputs a high voltage level or low voltage level. Many, though certainly not all, mics with 3.5 mm jacks are high output, appropriate for use into a line level input such as the iTalk Pro's. Microphones with 1/4″ phono or XLR style connectors are almost always mic-level and require a mic-preamp to boost the signal to line level. They may also require "phantom" power which provides a power source for the mic along the actual audio cable. This is why you should

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not just slap an adapter on the end of a mic with the wrong size connector, and then plug it into the iTalk. Nothing bad will happen, but you will not get enough gain, and the resulting recording will be inaudible. My advice if you are unclear on all of this is to call up a place like Sweetwater Sound or a similar supplier and ask them for help.

—Evan Trent

Photoshop For the Curious[3]

I just stumbled across this article (via [the first one](#)[4]) looking for Photoshop related items.

Not knowing a thing about Photoshop, and just sort of teaching myself by stumbling around the buttons a bit, was probably not the best idea!

But thanks for these articles—I'll be back to check if there are any more in the future.

It's much appreciated, at least by me.

—Fran

Glad you liked what you saw. Presently, this series is planned as a monthly series with no specific end. . .just as long as I can keep coming up with topics to cover, and I have plenty to keep it going for at least this year. Feel free to hit the [subscribe](#)[5] link for notifications of each monthly issue, or to have the issue delivered as an e-mail attachment. You can also use the [RSS feed](#)[6] for new issue notifications.

—Lee Bennett

Outliner Writing Environments[7]

I'm discovering your new word processing review project late, the first day of 2007, but I want to express my appreciation for the project: much needed for someone to go into the matter with the degree of thoroughness (and length) that you have brought to outliners.

Like many others I've bought perhaps dozens of outliner/information manager applications, and (since they tend to be more expensive) maybe a score of word processor apps, all looking for that perfect one for me. Sadly, I came closest in that search with things that died with OS 9 or even earlier. Some of these had terrific features I haven't seen since.

Since your coverage has included some apps that aren't mainly outliners but rather information-managers, I will mention briefly some oldies that haven't been equalled: MailKeeper (from Nisus, OS 9 and before) a simple snippet- or article-keeper with a unique progressive multi-factor search/winnowing feature that was very fast, enabled instantaneous reviewing of information pieces or articles; Papyrus—the old bibliographic reference application, not the current office suite—which had a marvelous system of hierarchical, combinable keywords; three by five, an outliner with several interfaces including a corkboard like the new application Scrivener; and ThoughtPattern, another snippet-keeper which used a good keyword system.

With word processors, I would be very happy to have the advanced features found in the ancient Full-Write or WriteNow. They had more than one kind of marginal notes, outlining, footnotes—before Microsoft Word had such things—and since the demise of these old programs it has taken a very long time for marginalia, footnotes, and outlining to return to independent Mac word processors.

I used the old Nisus Writer until OS X; nothing has compared to it since then, in my opinion, though the most recent version of Nisus Express is doing very well. But will we ever see again features like Nisus's "Document as Graphic," which allowed you to insert, as a scalable graphic link, a picture of any page of another document—it could appear big enough to be read, and clicking on it opened the original, so it was better than just having a link to another document, and was a big help in reviewing various articles or pieces of writing, putting them all in one place for your consideration.

After Nisus, I used the Japanese word processor [Jedit](#)[8], which has "bookmarks" (like the old Nisus Writer's Markers) links that can be viewed in a separate window, making a Table of Contents or a list of-places to check, or high points, whatever; a Search All that shows all the instances found together in a window as clickable links, each with part of the sentence where it appears—in one document or many; rectangular and multi-selection; clean effective interface; the "remember an added tab for subsequent new lines" feature that Nisus Writer used to have"; a help doc in Jedit format, using the sidebar outline/table of contents feature, so you can get help without waiting for Apple Help, or Preview, to open; multiple

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[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.01/photoshop.shtml

[4] http://www.atpm.com/12.12/photoshop.shtml

[5] http://www.atpm.com/subscribe/

[6] http://www.atpm.com/rss/index.shtml

[7] http://www.atpm.com/12.11/atpo.shtml

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[8] http://www.artman21.net/product/JeditX/index_E.html

"Find & Select"—found items are selected as multiple discontinuous ranges at once; all in all it is pretty good for me, lacking only a few important features like marginalia and footnotes.

So, I do think you should include Jedit and Nisus Express in your survey, and (dark horse!) you might also look at the editor in CopyPaste. I think few notice that it even has one, they just use the multiple clipboards. It hides its light under a bushel, being called merely the "Clip Editor." In CopyPaste, select "CopyPaste X Help" from the Dock menu or the CopyPaste menu, and you will get Help in the form of a complex document in Clip Editor that will demonstrate its capabilities; of the features I look for, it has a sidebar "Navigation frame"/file browser which shows sections and paragraphs; discontinuous multi-selection; accepts graphics and media files; an advanced find that can search for sound-alikes, regard or disregard diacritical marks, and other keen things and also search multiple files, view all results, even collect each paragraph containing the search term from every document searched into one document, making a compilation for you (a feature the old Nisus Writer had in an even more advanced form).

I am eager to see the new series, and thanks for the advance listing of programs, because I found at least one there I had not seen before that looks interesting.

—*Cynthia Cheney*

Coping With Mac OS X's Font Rendering[9]

Just bought my first Mac, a MacBook. Have spent whole morning on support trying to explain that the letters are blurry, to no avail.

By the time the highest resolution is on, I can't read anything in 12pt.

Also, it is all fuzzy. Thanks for helping me not feel like it's just my 40-something eyes or that I'm losing it.

—*Rebecca S.*

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I have to say that I'm switching to Ubuntu Linux simply because (and only because) its font rendering is *far* superior. On a decent LCD, it's almost as good as reading a printed page.

—*Y M*

• • •

I'm a new Mac OS X user and, like others here, I've been struggling with the fonts. Sometimes I feel like I'm going blind looking at the thing. I did find a setting in my LCD that does make a difference. Not all monitors have this control so your mileage may vary. The control is called "phase," and tweaking it has gone a long way to sharpening the smaller fonts. In all, however, I'm pretty disappointed with font rendering in this OS. Fonts on my XP notebook are so sharp they're almost difficult to look at after "adjusting" to OS X.

—*Eric H*

• • •

I, too, am having real problems with OS X and font anti-aliasing.

I really notice it when I use the same program, on the same screen and at the same time, in XP and in OS X. I do this in Parallels on a MacBook, with the left half of the screen for OS X and the right for XP.

Using the browser Opera on both OS X and XP, text in OS X is almost illegible (especially e's). On XP with ClearType it is beautiful.

I find the same thing with Word documents. What gives, Apple? The font smoothing is OS X is absolutely terrible. Almost everything looks smudged. How can Apple have gotten it so wrong?

—*Alex Hamilton*

We'd love to hear your thoughts about our publication. We always welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and praise. Or, if you have an opinion or announcement about the Macintosh platform in general, that's OK too. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. All mail becomes the property of ATPM.

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[9]http://www.atpm.com/12.01/paradigm.shtml

Bloggable

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

Holy Cow!

It's here.

That's right, ladies and gentlemen: at Macworld Expo San Francisco, Steve Jobs stood before the audience and introduced the iPhone. But you probably already knew that. So I have something to apologize for: I'm sorry I doubted you, Steve, and if my hubris in all but guaranteeing[1] there would be no such device is what drove you to release it, I am doubly sorry.

I have actually taken up a fork and knife and have pierced my hat[2] in recognition.

Before you get giddy about the prospect of watching me eat my grimy white Northwestern baseball cap, let me just note that I am not going to videotape it. You're going to have to take my word that I sampled the taste of it, though I could not actually digest it and so I stopped after just a little bit.

The most tragic part is that I was prepared to write a column about MacHeist and MacZot, and then Jobs had to ruin my plan at MWSF. Thanks for nothing, Apple! I'm not even a Cingular customer!

If you somehow missed the announcement itself, or you want to read a little more useful information than the admittedly nifty demos on Apple's Web site, you should probably start with *Time's* primer on the iPhone[3] and move to Paul Boutin's awfully good *Slate* article about the device[4]. These are highly general articles, and can get you up to speed for the rest of this column.

I'll wait here.

Oh, you're back already? Well, hello again!

David Pogue, writing in the *New York Times,* had an excellent two-part FAQ he calls the "Ultimate iPhone Frequently Asked Questions," parts one[5] and two[6]. So far, I have yet to see anyone ask a question that David Pogue hasn't answered, other than,

maybe, "Can the iPhone help keep my parents from sleeping on my futon couch for two weeks whenever they come to town?" (I think the answer is yes.)

And now a moment of irreverence before we get to the serious analysis, from the Macalope[7]. Actually, it's pretty good analysis too, one of the reasons I always enjoy it/him.

Now, moving along. Our first stop is Bruce "Tog" Tognazzini's column, Ask Tog, in which he takes a look at the iPhone and concludes (surprisingly) that it's pretty impressive[8]:

> iPhone is revolutionary, not a big surprise coming from Steve Jobs. He knows how to gather a tiny team of brilliant young minds and work them half to death until they innovate beyond any reasonable expectations. He has the common sense to know what will ultimately find favor. And he has the hardened-steel man parts to take a chance and roll with it. What's a pity is that so few others in this industry share those triple strengths.
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> [. . .]
>
> I could go down through the other "innovations" in iPhone and slowly knock them off. Yes, it's the first cell phone with a visual display of voice-mail messages, so you can randomly move among voice-mails, etc., etc. However, such lists have been displayed, in an identical fashion, on enterprise-level voice-mail systems and, of course, such lists have been a standard feature in e-mail for decades.
>
> The origins of these bits and pieces, however, is not what's important about the iPhone. What's important is that, for the first time, so many great ideas and processes have been assembled in one device, iterated until they squeak, and made accessible to normal human beings. That's

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/11.01/bloggable.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/12.10/bloggable.shtml#and-not hing-left-to-bur
[3] http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1 575743,00.html
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[5] http://pogue.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/01/11/the-ulti mate-iphone-frequently-asked-questions/
[6] http://pogue.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/01/13/ultimate -iphone-faqs-list-part-2/

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[7] http://www.macalope.com/?p=140
[8] http://www.asktog.com/columns/070iPhoneFirstLook.h tml

the genius of Steve Jobs; that's the genius of Apple.

And Khoi Vinh, who is a serious design guru, seems very impressed by the fusion that Apple provides by putting the software in a box they control. It's an advantage, he says, that Palm had and squandered[9]. As the owner of a Windows Mobile Smartphone, which is Microsoft software in an HTC device, I can throw in my two bits here and say that he who controls the hardware and the software, on a closed platform, can provide a vastly better user experience. Vinh says:

> In Jobs' presentation, he repeated Alan Kay's advice that those who are serious about software should make their own hardware. Apple has benefitted from this wisdom for years, stubbornly remaining in the hardware business even as the market has, until recently, consistently urged the company to focus only on software.

> Few technology companies can claim to make "the whole widget," and Palm, like Apple, is one of those lucky few. Given their early lead in the portable devices market, Palm should have been able to parlay their hardware and software advantage into a truly innovative device long before now. Instead, they've been caught apparently sleeping by this iPhone, and Apple looks set to eat their lunch. Shares in the company were down almost six percent yesterday.

The real question, though, is, what will the rest of the industry do? If history (viz., the iPod) is any guide, they will completely misinterpret the success of the iPhone and start churning out look-alike devices while adding a thousand features. Sometimes, less really is more[10], as Thomas Fitzgerald notes:

> The electronics industry is obsessed with features, while Apple is accused of form over function, but Apple's supposedly "form over function" iPod has been a huge success. When the iPod was first released there were other MP3 players on the market. None were the size of the iPod or as easy to use, but manufacturers didn't think it would matter to consumers because the iPod was more expensive than their players, which offered pretty much the same basic functionality. I think part of the problem too, was that many early MP3 player manufacturers saw their products as computer accessories rather than an "appliance" type of pure consumer electronics product. It never seemed to occur to anyone other than Apple that the "user experience" was an important issue; after all if you could use a computer you could use an MP3 player. So why didn't anyone learn that lesson before it was too late? I believe it is because companies are so set in their ways that they simply failed to grasp the simple truth of why the iPod has been a runaway hit. The answer lies in a nursery rhyme that is taught to children the world over. "It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it."

And then, there's the really radical commentary. Dan Benjamin believes that, like the last paradigm-shattering Apple product, the Macintosh, Apple has removed the user-device interface limitations that have been holding back cell phones[11] with the iPhone's UI:

> Just like a calculator, their capabilities and limitations are determined by the way we're forced to interact with them.

> Apple has removed that limitation, tossed out the keypad and replaced it with something that can change on the fly, based on the task you want it to perform at any given moment. It makes for a device that's very cool and seems to have its own reality distortion field just like its creator. People seem spellbound by it.

> [...]

> Is the flexibility of this new type of interface worth giving up [the] muscle memory [of keys] for? Only time will tell, but I'll bet the answer is yes.

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[9]http://www.subtraction.com/archives/2007/0110_bad_for_palm.php

[10]http://www.thomas-fitzgerald.net/2007/01/17/reaction-to-the-iphone-reveals-how-the-electronics-industry-failed-to-beat-the-ipod/

[11]http://hivelogic.com/narrative/articles/regarding-the-iphone

Last but not least, Andy Ihnatko of the *Chicago Sun-Times* actually got his hands on an iPhone, and spent "about 45 minutes noodling around with the device." First of all: how is this fair? Am *I* not as important a Macintosh pundit as he is? (No comments from the peanut gallery.)

Second: damn.

Third: he seems awfully impressed by the phone, in general, including the soft keyboard, which is one of the things holding a lot of people back for the time being. He says that the keys are larger than Treo keys, because they're not limited by microscopic physical space, and this leads to a vastly better experience. Among other things[12], like a "beautiful freakin' display," and the usual impressive attention to detail that Apple gave the software interface. He says that the e-mail client, for instance, "make[s] you feel like you're using a powerful desktop application, not a cell phone that can kind of send e-mail and browse the Web (depending on how you define 'e-mail' and 'the Web')."

I've pooh-poohed the idea of an iPhone in the past, but Apple seems to have genuinely nailed the device. I think the various factors that caused me to dismiss it in the past, like the form factor of cell phones versus iPods, have been pretty conclusively resolved by making the entire device touch-sensitive; it's more like my iPAQ than either a conventional cell phone or iPod. And when I wrote that column, in 2003, Apple had yet to release a flash-based iPod at all; a 1.5-inch hard drive in a cell phone would have been preposterous.

At the same time I am skeptical, still, as technically impressive as the iPhone seems to be. It remains to be seen whether I'm really going to want to listen to music on the same device as I receive calls, since one of the selling points of using a standalone iPod is being freed from a lot of earthly distractions. Add to this my skepticism at fitting this into my jeans pockets, and I may have to wait a while.

I still regret signing a two-year contract for my current phone.

Original Sin

This column was originally supposed to be about MacZot[13] and MacHeist[14], the software discount programs for Mac shareware and payware. MacZot is a sort of discounted shareware clearinghouse, which regularly posts new software with a developer markdown, to get more product exposure. MacHeist was a one-time bust, a bundle of 10 pieces of software selling for $49, which was ostensibly a sort of combined discount program and charity give-away.

The problem is that the numbers don't seem to add up to benefit for developers, and some of them started noticing it. And I can see why.

When I was in college, which feels like a long time ago already but only ended seven months ago, I took courses on advertising and marketing. We talked about all of the various reasons to offer product discounts, and one of them is indeed to get better exposure. But, of course, I'm sometimes reminded of the old joke about the chapelier who sells his hats at a loss and intends to make it up in volume. Discounting is a whole different ballgame when it's physical goods. Software's per-unit production cost decreases with the more copies you sell, but that makes it much harder to set a value for it. And that's where the trouble lies.

Steve Harris started the fire, in November, when he observed that he hadn't increased his volume of regular-priced sales on KIT, a sort of Yojimbo[15]-alike, after offering a discount[16] via MacZot. What he had done is sold a lot of copies at a discount, which came with the same user- and technical-support costs as the regular-priced copies. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it didn't make financial sense, and it didn't get him the exposure he had hoped for with MacZot: the kind of user who frequents a Macintosh shareware-discount site is the kind of user who (a) probably already knows about your software and (b) is buying it at a discount because he or she knows about it but isn't willing to buy it at full price.

John Gruber (you knew he was coming sooner or later) saw the comment, and he made Harris' implication explicit. As he sees it, there's a very real floor on the cost of your software, and lowering its cost to or below that floor doesn't benefit you, because all it does is cut into your margins, without increasing your sales[17] to users who are paying full price. (See above.)

> No matter what this application does, no matter who the target audience is, there are some potential users in that audience who will want to use it but who will not

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[12]http://www.suntimes.com/technology/ihnatko/215441, CST-FIN-Andy18.article

[13]http://maczot.com/

[14]http://macheist.com/

[15]http://www.atpm.com/12.06/yojimbo.shtml

[16]http://reinventedsoftware.com/blog/2006/11/07/disco-inferno/

[17]http://daringfireball.net/2006/11/pinprick

want to pay for it. Most of these cheap-skates will not come right out and tell you this (i.e. that they don't want to pay anything for your software). If you charge $40 per license, they will say, "This is a great application, but it's too expensive. I'd buy it if it were $25."

But if you had set the price at $25, they'd tell you it should be $15. If you charged $15, they'd tell you it should be $10. If you charged $10, they'd tell you it should be free. And on that last point, the cheapskates would actually be right. $10 is not enough money to charge for professional quality software. If you, the developer, don't think it's worth ten bucks, you really should just release it as freeware. An excellent, popular piece of freeware might help you professionally even if it doesn't help you monetarily.

The point here is that you can't set a price low enough to please the cheapskates. If you can't create software that's worth at least $20, you're not going to make it as a full-time indie developer. And if you look at the indie Mac developers who have made it, you'll see that they typically charge at least $25 for their software.

A few weeks later came MacHeist, the heavily discounted bundle of software, and at that point the floodgates simply opened up, ensnaring almost every Mac-centric or Mac-relevant voice on the Internet. (Which is why, two months later, *I'm* writing about it.) A little more background was the clever Christmas-related peg for the promotion: they would donate 25 percent of the proceeds to charity. I laud them for that; it turns out that they raised $200,000 for charity.

But that isn't the whole megillah, literally. It isn't even the whole first verse.

Gus Mueller, who wrote the excellent VoodooPad, notes that he was offered $5,000 to include his application in the bundle, which is really not that many copies of VoodooPad at full price; his objection was that he got $5,000 whether MacHeist sold 100 copies or 100,000 copies. That's a raw deal[18] any way you

cut it, and it meant that the MacHeist guys were going to make out like bandits.

Gruber saw those numbers and wrote about how he simply couldn't believe it[19]:

> Mueller was right to ask for a percentage rather than a flat fee; the economics of paying the developers a flat fee in exchange for an unlimited number of licenses tilt grossly in the favor of the MacHeist team... [B]ecause these payments are for a flat fee, as sales goes up, additional profits all go to the MacHeist organizers.

He then crunched the numbers[20] after the promotion ended, too, and computed that MacHeist took in $760,000, paid $66,500 to software developers, and then ended up with its organizers pocketing a cool $463,500. That's 87.5 percent of the non-charity total, which would make even Drew Rosenhaus salivate in jealousy. (Note to Rosenhaus: try this with Terrell Owens. The ensuing fight might take you both out of the arena. We will be grateful.)

Paul Kafasis at Rogue Amoeba saw the same double-speak[21]:

> It's been argued that this can be good for developers by providing more exposure. Personally, I just can't see that, but maybe it's true. Declaring this "The Week of the Independent Mac Developer," however, has left a sour taste in my mouth. The people who stand to benefit directly here aren't the developers, but the people behind MacHeist. Urging people to buy this bundle to support the developer is disingenuous at best.

He adds, to this, that developers are really getting a one-two punch: they could very well undercut their full-price sales of their product, and they are saddled with ever-decreasing per-unit profits while the MacHeist organizers make a profit that increases at a linear rate.

That doesn't stop Uli Kusterer, for instance, from defending MacHeist. As he put it, maybe

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[18] http://www.gusmueller.com/blog/archives/2006/12/week_of_the_independent_mac_developer.html

[19] http://daringfireball.net/2006/12/iniquities_of_the_selfish

[20] http://daringfireball.net/2006/12/macheist_lousy_tshirt

[21] http://www.rogueamoeba.com/utm/posts/Article/Whose-Week-2006-12-12-12-00

the developers really did see[22] a publicity benefit. Kusterer is still skeptical, but he's willing to give MacHeist-participating developers the benefit of the doubt, something Gruber isn't:

> I think they were well aware of what they were doing, and considered it a good deal because they'd get what they expected out of it. Maybe they even made a tactical decision to take some damage for future benefits.

Not everyone was negative. Wil Shipley (to be fair, a participant) defends MacHeist as good publicity for developers *and* all of the bloggers and media outlets that have been gladly opining on it[23]—but my grandmother would call that a compliment with the back of your hand. (This is the usual knock on the press, and I think it's unfair.) Oh, and *CARS* proposes that the next MacHeist promotion be the "Week of Sweatshop Mac Developers[24]." *CARS* may be the Macintosh community's very own "Daily Show," proving truth through comedy, but this is also a genuine comedic gem:

> VoodooPad developer Gus Mueller said "For every dollar a developer makes on this deal, MacHeist makes 25. Also, part of the contract says they get to punch you in the groin. What's that about?"

How can I top that? Good night and good luck.

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[22]http://www.zathras.de/angelweb/blog-john-gruber-ma cheist-figures.htm

[23]http://wilshipley.com/blog/2006/12/marketing-irony .html

[24]http://www.crazyapplerumors.com/?p=742

Mac About Town

by Mike Chamberlain, mchamberlain@atpm.com

"A rose by any other name..."

Macworld Expo has come and gone. Did you hear that Apple has some new "iPhone" or something? Yeah, me too.

I have anticipated the iPhone eagerly, as I long ago tired of my Toshiba 9950 and Palm T3 combination. Watching Steve work his magic at the keynote was exciting, and I immediately posted my e-mail with Cingular. I will have to change carriers—but having no current obligation, at no cost. Now that a few days have passed, however, the concrete details are beginning to sink in, as are the questions.

I, for one, am unlikely to use an iPhone as a music device apart from playing with ring tones or background hold music (features that are not yet promised or certain). Further, I doubt that I will use the video iPod features. I would be most likely to use video while traveling, but that is also the time I need a phone charged and ready to go. Others have already noted that arriving at your destination with a low battery warning is a real problem. Don't get me wrong, the design is beautiful, but without an improved battery or other charging option, video is a non-starter for me. End result: I will keep my 4G iPod for the moment and look forward to getting a new video iPod sometime after the next revision.

The two devices that I want to merge are my phone and PDA, so it is those features that I have looked at most closely. Let's hasten to say that we don't know everything there is to know about the iPhone. Some of the features it will have were not demonstrated. Indeed, some of the icons on the device were merely placeholders representing software that was not yet ready for prime time or which had yet to be developed. That having been said, there is a minimal set of capabilities that I need. Calendar, to-do, address book, and note-taking constitute the basic set, and Apple surely has these in hand, but PDA users know that though these are the essential applications on their devices, they are not the ones that use the most battery power. I am an avid eBook reader because no matter where I am, I want a book with me. I also sync AvantGo for news—yes, I saw the *New York Times*, but if you're not in a WiFi area what will the data connection cost be on Cingular?

Prepare yourselves. These are the additional applications that one might have suspected from a host of third-party developers but which Apple will, evidently, shut out of the iPhone. We'll see. I'm still keeping my name on the list.

The other products that Apple rolled out at Macworld Expo were Apple TV and an improved AirPort Extreme Base Station. My immediate frustration with both was in realizing that my new MacBook Pro, being a Core Duo, was not going to be able to effectively utilize either product because it is incapable of supporting the 802.11n standard. It was a factor I had not considered when deciding to buy a late Core Duo this fall instead of waiting and getting a Core 2 Duo. Had I considered it, I think I would have done it differently.

Much of the initial buzz about Apple TV has been of the "it doesn't do enough" variety. This stems, it seems to me, from an expectation that Apple TV would be a media center. Visions of Front Row controlling the whole of an AV system danced in many heads. The more accurate view would be to see it as another input into the system rather than as a hub. If one thinks of it like a satellite or cable box and realizes that it brings media from another source into the mix, it is easier to understand what it does, and does not, do. In the end, the efficacy of Apple TV will depend on the amount of media each user stores on his computer (I'm sticking with feature-rich DVD's rather than downloads at the moment) and the physical reality of their individual AV components and architecture.

So, what haven't we mentioned? Oh, that's right—*computers*!—or, more specifically, the Mac. Of course Steve didn't mention the Mac much either and that, in combination with a change in the name of "Apple Computer Inc." to plain "Apple Inc.," garnered some attention. Was Apple recognizing that it had become a "media" company rather than a computer company? Did this shift signal the slow but inevitable slide away from producing computers? Was this the beginning of the end for Macs now that the OS is running on Intel chips and Apple has moved into a broader line of consumer electronics?

The short answer, of course, is that no one can know for certain. Steve Jobs himself can't forecast with absolute certainty where things will be in twenty years. However, the rush to worry about this seems a bit overwrought to me. In the first place, speaking of a computer company versus a media company misses the point. Central to both is a processor and the coding to make it functional. Apple brings to the market what no one else brings: a coherent, integrated, and user-friendly solution to the needs that it perceives. And who could argue that they have not done that with style and excellence? Attending to media market in a way that detracted from the Macintosh would be a senseless strategy, as it would destroy the core of the strength of Apple's efforts. Steve Jobs signaled as much in the keynote when he quoted Alan Kay saying, "People who are really serious about software should make their own hardware."

Sitting here typing on my fourteenth Apple, I can't imagine what #20 will look like, but I am confident that it will be there when I get there. . .and it will just work. I don't care what Steve calls it. A Mac by any other name. . ..

Best wishes—and call me in June!

Safari

The death of Apple Computer, Inc. could not have come at a more opportune time, although the skeptics who "predicted" it in the 1990s still had to eat crow for the past ten years, and the "death" we saw at Macworld Expo San Francisco made us about as upset as if Microsoft or Dell had gone under. Or, better yet, seeing a brand stinking (I mean spanking) new Zune being crushed by a speeding Tesla Roadster[1].

You do remember the Zune, don't you? You know, that "iPod Killa" thang that was being "launched" back in the fourth calendar quarter of 2006. Maybe it really did some killing after all, although it sure wasn't the iPod.

You want a real iPod Killer? I'll tell you what a real iPod Killer looks like: it looks just like that hot, shiny, new, super-fantastic Apple iPhone, that's what it looks like! My 5G iPod sure wouldn't mind being killed by that, and I certainly look forward to it. The only bad news to this whole thing? 2007 is gonna be one long year, folks. (Is it June yet?)

I'm not going to talk about the technical details of the iPhone here. We've got plenty of coverage all over cyberspace on that. What I do want to look at is how the entire consumer electronics and telecommunications product industries totally missed the mark. By a wide margin. Apparently, it really did have to fall onto Apple's shoulders to be the company to bring this kind of product to market. The iPhone is simply the sexiest, most advanced, most usable, and most powerful handheld communications and computing device ever created.

Even as I write this, I'm still bemused that it is Apple, and not Nokia, Motorola, or (let's not forget) Palm or RIM, coming out with this product. But then, I remember how clueless the industry can be.

Many years ago, when the original iMac first came out, I overheard someone who was ostensibly an "industry expert" remark that he was not impressed by "multicolored computers" and that he expected the iMac "fad" to disappear, pronto. (He wasn't talking to me. I was just sitting nearby and wouldn't have said anything anyway, considering I owned one of those early iMacs.) When the iMac turned out to

be a sustained success (much to the surprise and chagrin of these industry "experts"), PC vendors jumped on what they thought was the bandwagon of aesthetically-pleasing-computer-enclosures to put out surprisingly superficial decorative casing.

And that's where the problem lies.

Because these "experts" are not able to perceive the true innovating factor of breakthrough products, they can only guess at what they should be seeing, and therefore guess wrong. They superficially see only a colorful computer and conclude the secret sauce must be aesthetic appeal. Then when the new products launch they can't figure out why the iMacs are selling and theirs are not.

Exhibit B: the iPod. With the iPod, these blindsided industry insiders again can't figure out what the big deal is. So it's a handheld device that plays MP3 files and syncs with the personal computer. And no built-in radio reception. They figure they have an exact duplicate, or better, and ignore the new kid on the block. When the iPod became an "overnight" sensation, they looked at the design again, which, by then, had morphed into a colorful bouquet, and began offering music players with focus on form (but sorely still lacking in innovative function).

We see this same thing happen with the MacBook rip-offs. White, thin(ish) PC laptops that run Windows XP Home. Or widescreen 17″ PC laptops that have a silvery look. Or powerful desktop replacements with completely useless psychedelic lighting that glow like a pile of radioactive waste. To make these things "cuter," vendors add extra toppings to the OS in an attempt to cover up some of the Microsoft UI and stick their own branding into the box. Totally off base.

This lack of perception, this inability to discern the true value of a successful product (that is, raison d'être of the category breakthrough, the reason people buy the thing) is not limited to aping Apple products. Some of you might recall Sony's attempt to Clie the Palm PDA, which only turned out to be a "Cliche." If any of you have ever used those Clie devices, you'll remember many of them were loaded with Sony's "value-added" nightmare-ware, which

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[1] http://www.teslamotors.com

substituted the Palm OS applications menu with a funky jog-dial-scrolling carousel. And they thought that would be an improvement. Let's not get into the whole Memory Stick issue, which should be in the same chapter as DIVX (the disc sales strategy, not the codec) in a "stupid marketing strategies" textbook.

I can think of many other such examples, including the most obvious one: Windows copying the Macintosh user interface.

Now, in 2006 we had the Zune trying to copy not just the iPod but the entire iPod ecosystem. Unfortunately, the ecosystem reaches far beyond what the Zune team can ever deliver. This ain't the Xbox—which, essentially, took the very successful gaming franchise that had always existed for Windows and replicated it onto a self-contained Microsoft-branded PC. The iPod is a totally different animal and actually ties back to the Apple brand as the producer of machines (Macs) that create "cool" stuff. Macs, after all, have been associated for eons with such things as desktop publishing, video editing, and fashion design, so it should be no surprise that the iPod is a truly "hip" device. Trying to Astroturf Zune marketing just won't work because there is no way Microsoft, as a brand, is "hip."

(I don't see Intel trying to be hip, and Intel shouldn't bother anyway. It is doing very well reinventing itself recently as the quiet and professional producer of powerful engines. Even the logo had a makeover around the time of the Apple partnership. The new Intel of the 2000s is more of a "strong and silent type," as compared to the "bunnyman" brand of the 1990s.)

So, having seen examples of what I'm calling "clueless counterfeiting" throughout the history of the industry, I'm thinking the trend is just going to continue, with cell phone and PDA manufacturers trying to rip whatever they can off the iPhone "time-bomb" before it blows them clear out of the water. Macworld Expo basically gave the whole world a framework for the new smartphone. (Personally, I think we need a new "superphone" category.) With the iPhone, the so-called "iPod" halo effect just went supernova, and I think Macintosh uptake is going to accelerate even more when the new device hits general availability.

Apple's been paving the road map of the future and it's about darn time the company (and the folks behind it) got the recognition and reward it deserves. Many things we take for granted in computers today

were Apple innovations. It's really exciting to see the company's influence expand and renovate a wider landscape of things we use on a daily basis. HDTVs and maybe even wristwatches are going to be next.

January 9th, 2007 marked the event horizon of a new era of ultra-usability. I've written earlier that the Mac has finally won the computing wars. Now I'm convinced the consumer electronics, home entertainment, and telecommunications industries are also in for the mother of all battles.

Because Apple Computer is dead.

Long live Apple, Inc.

Author's Note: this article was written shortly after Apple's announcement. As it went to press, knock-offs such as the Prada Phone[2] from LG have already started to appear. It is important to keep in mind that the Apple iPhone may ultimately feature additional unrevealed functionality.

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[2]http://www.lgpradaphone.com

A Survey of the GTD App Landscape

The 2001 publication of David Allen's *Getting Things Done* stirred a revolution of organized, productive work environments for thousands. Allen's system, affectionately known as "GTD" to those in the know, provides a framework for managing tasks, projects, goals, and, indeed, much of one's life.

As the GTD system spread in usage and popularity, dozens of tools and writings arose as a part of the GTD sub-culture. Blogs such as 43Folders[1] and LifeHacker[2] devote a significant amount of attention to implementing the GTD system. Allen's own company Web site[3] is a haven for GTD users, complete with a members-only resource center (which you can join for a mere $40 per month).

The bottom line for GTD is fairly straightforward. How do you get things done? By determining what the next action is for any given task or project, and keeping your focus on that. If you're not familiar with GTD but you're interested in giving the system a try, I recommend that you read the book, or check out Merlin Mann's excellent primer, Getting Started with "Getting Things Done"[4].

Software Proliferation

Since 2005, a burgeoning market of software with the ostensible purpose of assisting with the GTD process has hit the Mac, and the computer world in general. There are stand-alone applications, plug-ins, widgets, templates, and Web sites which, in one way or another, play to the desire of the GTD-oriented Mac user for carrying out his organization in a digital manner. Many of these are free or low-cost, shareware solutions, but a larger commercial focus is arising as a serious market.

There are, of course, a number of other applications which are GTD-friendly, if not specifically designed to adhere to the canonical steps or stages of the GTD system. Such applications also range from the simplest widget to complex commercial applica-

tions, and obviously must include common task/to-do list programs as well as large project-management suites. These are often as good or better for certain GTD users, since every user will implement GTD to a different extent and, more importantly, in a different context. Further, we all have our own peculiar workflows, and GTD works best (that is, it is easiest to maintain and benefit from) when it fits into existing workflows as much as possible.

My goal here is to give an overview of the software tools available to GTD users, along with focused suggestions for doing GTD better on a Mac. Inspired by Ted Goranson's About This Particular Outliner[5] column, I hope to eventually offer something similar for GTD applications here in ATPM. If you haven't read it, you might find Ted's overview of task management history and theory[6] a very helpful read.

For now, I would like to start off by giving a "comprehensive" introduction of GTD tools. I'm shooting for an exhaustive list here, so if I've missed one that you like, feel free to mention it to me.

Web or Browser-Based Solutions

GTD TiddlyWiki

GTD TiddlyWiki[7] employs the flexibility of a wiki with the straightforward approach of GTD. Though it uses a browser, it installs locally—it doesn't require an Internet connection, though I suppose it could be installed on a server if you preferred that. Because it is a single, self-contained file, it would be easy enough to install onto a flash drive and take it with you if you needed portability. GTD TiddyWiki is searchable, has good print options

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[1] http://www.43folders.com/
[2] http://www.lifehacker.com/
[3] http://www.davidco.com/
[4] http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done/

[5] http://www.atpm.com/Back/atpo.shtml
[6] http://www.atpm.com/10.12/atpo.shtml
[7] http://shared.snapgrid.com/index.html

(including 3×5 index card), is customizable, and is open-source. It is currently at version 1.0.6, and has not been updated since September 2005.

MonkeyGTD and d3

Two other TiddlyWiki spin-offs that are worth mentioning are MonkeyGTD[8] and d3[9]. Both offer essentially the same features as the GTD TiddlyWiki, with the essential differences being layout and the advantages of a newer TiddlyWiki foundation (the latest revision of TiddlyWiki is 2.1.3, released in November 2006).

Park

If GTD TiddlyWiki is getting close to what you're looking for in a GTD solution, Park[10] might be the final answer. It takes the TiddlyWiki idea and localizes it, plus it adds on a few more features. Park is as much a note-taker as it is a task-planner—which, in GTD parlance, makes sense to a degree. The latest version of Park includes Spotlight support, which could be huge. Park is free, and is almost ready for

version 1.0, though it is currently in beta at version 0.9.

iCommit

iCommit[11] is another browser-based option, though this one does run online and cannot be locally installed. It is something like a wiki but without the hassle of setting up. It's gotten a lot of good reviews (see GTD wiz Merlin Mann's affirming words[12]) but has the downside of being "first-come, first-served" at the developer's private server. It is currently at version 1.9.0, and it is free if you can get it.

MyTicklerFile

MyTicklerFile[13] is specifically designed to work with GTD—though this one incorporates a broader concept in the GTD system. It has more explicit syncing with iCal (and 37Signals' Basecamp[14], by the way), and will e-mail your upcoming tasks to you weekly for a GTD-style "weekly review." With a "Dashboard" view (think of this as a snapshot of your projects and tasks), a Calendar view, a Single Day view, and a Project view, MyTicklerFile makes it pretty easy to get your tasks and projects organized and then work within them. It costs money for a subscription if you want to manage more than one project or the full set of tickler files: $9/month gets you 15 projects, 150 reminders, and an unlimited number of Ticklers, while $19/month doubles that. You can upgrade or downgrade your plan at any time.

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[11] http://die-bernhardts.macbay.de/GTDV2/
[12] http://www.43folders.com/2006/06/27/gtd-icommit/
[13] http://myticklerfile.com/
[14] http://www.basecamphq.com/

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[8] http://monkeygtd.tiddlyspot.com/
[9] http://www.dcubed.ca/
[10] http://www.coalmarch.com/products/park.php

GTDGmail

[GTDGmail](15) is a Firefox extension that brings GTD into integration with Gmail. It provides a pre-packaged set of labels for organization, and a faster method for applying them. It also includes a Review process, allows you to save specialized searches within Gmail (sort of like Finder's smart folders), has a quick-entry method for composing new tasks, and provides a printable format (3×5 index card). The current version, 1.31, is open-source, and obviously requires the (also open-source) Firefox browser to be installed.

30Boxes

[30Boxes](16) is an AJAX creation, which means that it is an active application that runs within your browser in the same way that Writely and other similar applications do. 30Boxes is lean and fast, which gives it an advantage over some AJAX apps. It has a calendar, task list, and limited Gmail interaction. It also has RSS and iCal feeds, SMS functions, and sharing with others. The interface is nice, with a familiar feel—it has an OS X-style "dock" on the side to navigate among sections. 30Boxes is in beta and is currently free.

Tasks

King Design's [Tasks](17) is not explicitly designed to be a GTD application. It is GTD-compatible, though, and a free level of service is available. It can work in collaboration with iCal, allowing you to keep a localized version of your projects on your Mac. It will also send you e-mail reminders of the tasks on your list for that day, and can help you track billable time if you need it to. To get permanent function of the regular version requires a paid subscription, or purchase of a server-installed setup. There is also Tasks Jr., a locally-hosted but browser-based system, and Tasks Pro, which is a multi-user, almost "enterprise" version. Tasks is a pretty good step in the right direction for a GTD setup, particularly given its multi-level options. Version 2.6.3 costs $30, while version 1.6.3 of Tasks Pro ranges from $125 to $500. Tasks Jr. is free.

Tasktoy

[Tasktoy](18) is a simple interface, but it lets you categorize by context or project. You can also attach notes to tasks. TaskToy is a similar concept to Tasks, with fewer features. Some of the good ideas this developer has include low-resistance task building—one or two clicks in most cases—and repeatable tasks that are easy to set up. He has also built in mobile device compatibility (though not with iSync, but through the mobile service provider's Internet access). TaskToy is not exactly GTD-specific, but it was designed to be GTD-friendly. It is free, and is currently a beta version, though it's simply a personal project of the developer, so it may never get out of beta.

Tracks

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[15] http://gtdgmail.com/
[16] http://www.30boxes.com/

[17] http://www.kingdesign.net/tasks/
[18] http://www.tasktoy.com/

Tracks[19] is another open-source, browser-based solution, though this one comes with a Web server that allows you to run it locally if you prefer—or have it hosted online through tracks.tra.in[20]. Tracks was built with Ruby on Rails, with an AJAX face—meaning it is fast, lean, and pretty. It also means it can be installed on just about any platform. Tracks doesn't exactly work with iCal, but it does offer calendaring functions—so maybe it could be an iCal replacement for some. It also has a multi-user component, so it represents a great opportunity for GTD implementation across a group or team. Tracks is open-source and currently at version 1.043.

Basecamp, Backpack, and Ta-Da Lists

37Signals' Basecamp[21] and Backpack[22] are both very capable project managers, and both have iCal integration. Even better, both have varying degrees of localization—Dashboard widgets at least, and PackRat works as a localized companion to Backpack. Some are convinced that Basecamp[23] or[24] Backpack[25] is the final answer for GTD applications. For a simpler scale, you might also check out 37Signals' Ta-Da Lists[26], a basic task list manager.

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[19]http://www.rousette.org.uk/projects/

[20]http://tracks.tra.in/login

[21]http://www.basecamphq.com/

[22]http://www.backpackit.com/

[23]http://www.hicksdesign.co.uk/journal/getting-hicks-done#content

[24]http://www.punkey.com/pivot/entry.php?id=6971

[25]http://patrickrhone.com/journal/archives/2006/06/189.html

[26]http://www.tadalist.com/

Sproutliner

Sproutliner[27] is a task list with some hierarchy and context management. There isn't much to Sproutliner, but if you want a straightforward online task list it may be satisfactory. It is open-source, and they say it is "beta" (but they also admit that this is as much compliance with trend as anything).

HiveMinder

HiveMinder[28] has the distinguishing feature of a "brain dump" feature, which is a one-click task creator. It also has RSS feeds, iCalendar feeds, and printing features. It is searchable, shareable, and has a Task Review. You can set it up to e-mail your tasks to you. HiveMinder is free, but ad-supported; they plan to offer a paid-for version in the future which will eliminate the ads.

Remember the Milk

Remember the Milk[29] offers as many input and output options as any online task manager available: you can receive tasks and reminders online, through e-mail, SMS, RSS feed, Web-enabled PDA or smartphone, and a wide array of instant messenger protocols. Create tasks through e-mail, even from a mobile phone. Create recurring tasks, use tags to organize tasks, and use the map feature to organize the execution of your tasks. Some have brainstormed

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[27]http://sproutliner.com/

[28]http://hiveminder.com/splash/

[29]http://www.rememberthemilk.com/

about [using Remember the Milk for GTD](#)[30]. Remember the Milk is free.

Gmail and Google Calendar

And then there are the more general-purpose online tools by our friends at Google, Gmail and Google Calendar. Gmail has been adapted into [a GTD system](#)[31] and even [improved upon](#)[32]. [Similar work has also been done](#)[33] with Google Calendar.

Local, Stand-Alone Applications

Thinking Rock

[Thinking Rock](#)[34] follows the GTD model closely, with a distinct operation for each of the three main steps (collect, process, review-plan-do). Thinking Rock has an interactive collection process, allowing you to enter all of the items manually instead of finding them for you, which is both blessing and bane—after all, manual entry of all of your projects is a lot of work, and is sometimes redundant. One big thing I like about Thinking Rock is that it is easy to enter lots of new tasks at once: the collection stage is as simple as typing a brief description, then tabbing or pressing Return a couple of times to a new line. It also has the nuance of being a Java application, making it very portable: you can install Thinking Rock onto a flash drive and use it on any computer, any platform. Because it's Java, it doesn't feel like a Mac application—but neither does it have the clunkiness or sluggish operation that many Java applications have. At version 1.2.3, Thinking Rock is established and bug-tested.

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[30] http://www.geektronica.com/2007-01-15-gtd-with-rtm
-getting-things-done-with-remember-the-milk

[31] http://saw.themurdaughs.com/gtd-with-gmail-whitepa
per/

[32] http://www.designpattern.org/wp/?p=56

[33] http://www.isaacbowman.com/gtd-with-googles-new-ca
lendar

[34] http://www.thinkingrock.com.au/

Midnight Inbox

Midnight Beep has been working hard over the past few months to get [Midnight Inbox](#)[35] out the door; it's currently at version 1.0.5, with a price at $35. Inbox is a top-to-bottom implementation of the GTD system. What is more, Inbox is a well-designed application with a beautiful Mac-like interface, and I've been assured that iCal integration is on the way. Inbox is sort of a "meta-application": it gathers events and tasks from iCal, messages from Mail, and other documents, bookmarks, notes, and other files and allows you to process them through the GTD model—collect, process, review-plan-do. It gathers them on its own, by the way—which is both blessing and bane; to build a project from scratch requires going through iCal, Mail, etc. You can monitor your progress, archive projects that are completed, and organize your work patterns. In a way, Inbox represents your personal [David Allen](#)[36] coaching you through your projects; there are a handful of nice features, like the processing timer, that help a serious GTDer keep focused. One thing Inbox gets right that the others sort of miss: GTD is more than mere task management, and Inbox's "meta" quality addresses this more thoroughly than any other available application. But this may be more function than you need in a task-management environment, and if so then Inbox may feel a bit over-done.

KinklessGTD

[KinklessGTD](#)[37] is one of the original GTD "apps," although it isn't itself an actual application. Rather, KinklessGTD (kGTD) is an elaborate template and AppleScript set built by Ethan Schoonover for OmniOutliner Pro. kGTD takes full advantage of the outliner's ability to make greatly detailed lists, and

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[35] http://www.midnightbeep.com/

[36] http://www.davidco.com/david_allen.php

[37] http://www.kinkless.com/

allows hierarchical project organization to flow. As with most GTD systems, kGTD allows you to view by Project, Context, or Next Actions. It syncs with iCal after some modest setup, and also can receive input through Quicksilver; thus, it also has an Inbox view that lets you organize those stray tasks that haven't yet been placed into a project or context. Through a bit of finagling and the help of Mail Act-On, it's possible to have kGTD indirectly sync with Mail; but more on this in another article.

kGTD has captured the love and affection of some big names, including Merlin Mann, who has written a number of posts on mastering the FU of kGTD[38], and inspired the Omni Group to begin building OmniFocus[39], which is due out sometime this year. Still, KinklessGTD is a little buggy, and it's unlikely that Ethan will build another version, since he is apparently working with Omni on OmniFocus. Thus, it may be that the current version, 0.83, is all we get—which will be plenty for some, but not for everyone. KinklessGTD is free under the GNU public license, though it requires purchase of OmniOutliner Pro[40] (no, it won't work with the free copy of OmniOutliner that came on your Mac), which costs $70.

Frictionless

If the name Frictionless[41] sounds like a play on the KinklessGTD name, you're spot-on. It was developed as a stand-alone rendition of Kinkless, with a goal to create the same basic tool-set of an outliner/task-planner. As such, the developer included the ability to import projects and tasks from Kinkless GTD. Frictionless is possibly the most thoroughly GTD of all of the GTD applications. It is fairly easy to collect and gather, and new tasks go immediately into a flat file of actions. These can be organized into subsets of each other, creating a hierarchy of projects and sub-projects. A lot of this can be done via keyboard or mouse, so that proficiency with the system could mean very fast organization of new projects.

A Next Actions window is ready to give context-specific counsel about tasks, and the This Week window allows for very easy weekly reviews. David Allen would be proud. Frictionless also has Quicksilver integration, which instantly moves it up a notch or two for many hardcore Mac users, and, frankly, for a lot of GTD Mac folk already adapted to Kinkless. And it has an AppleScript that allows an action to be created directly from Mail. Frictionless lacks the ability to sync with iCal, but this may be covered by the Quicksilver and Mail actions, and the developer promises that it is on the way.

When you open Frictionless, a lot of windows show up at once; no fewer than four windows have a regular function in the application. It's easy enough to Command-tilde through them, and each of them has a Command-# hotkey assigned. Still, it seems like a lot of windows to me, even though each has a specific and important function in the GTD system. While the application generally feels very Applicious, the large number of important windows makes Frictionless feel a little cluttered. The current (free) version is 0.8.4, and it hasn't been updated in a while; hopefully we'll see more from Frictionless very soon.

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[38] http://www.43folders.com/topics/kgtd/

[39] http://blog.omnigroup.com/2006/09/25/omnifocus-our-work-in-progress/

[40] http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnioutliner/pro/

[41] http://www.twinforces.com/Frictionless/Frictionless.html

Ready-Set-Do!

[Ready-Set-Do!](#)[42] is a fair departure from the rest of the GTD applications. Rather than function as a task manager per se, Ready-Set-Do! functions like a virtual version of the paper method of collecting, processing, and review-plan-doing. Ready-Set-Do! is an extensive set of AppleScripts that transforms your Mac's desktop into a GTD processing station. It integrates with iCal nicely, and allows a "whole system" approach that isn't possible with any of the other GTD applications—only Midnight Inbox comes close. For those who can handle a true paperless office, Ready-Set-Do! may be the one-stop solution. Currently in version 1.0, Ready-Set-Do! costs $20 for a single-user license.

Action Tracker

[Action Tracker](#)[43] isn't exactly a stand-alone application; instead, it is a FileMaker Pro document.

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[42]http://homepage.mac.com/toddvasquez/Ready-Set-Do!/
Personal93.html

[43]http://macproductive.com/actiontracker.html

But it is a well-designed GTD environment. Action Tracker is, like Inbox, more than simply a task manager; instead, it serves as an interface for your project management. In addition to a very complete task and project management element, it also organizes notes, contacts, and other files related to the project, and it can create iCal events as well. Jumping between entry mode and list-view mode is easy, and an added bonus is that it has a 3×5 card printout function—any item or list can be dumped onto an index card. Action Tracker 1.3.1 is free, and if you don't have a FileMaker Pro license, a runtime version is available.

Actiontastic

Though still in beta, [Actiontastic](#)[44] is a simple yet capable task manager, and an ultra-thin one at that. Actiontastic is, like many betas, a fairly bare-bones application that the developer wants to make something more of, though recent beta releases are considerably less "bare-bones." As it is, three tabs offer you views of the inbox, projects, or contexts. Creating a new item in the inbox allows you to enter a line of text, then select whether it is an action or a project; you may utilize the Inbox tab as a collection of sorts, and a "Process Inbox" engine will help you through the processing phase. There is also a Quicksilver plug-in, and Actiontastic will sync your tasks to iCal or an iPod. Future plans include printing/other export methods. The beta version is free, with a stated expiration date. It is currently at version 0.9b.

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[44]http://www.kaboomerang.com/blog/category/actiontastic/

EasyTask Manager

[OrionBelt's EasyTask Manager](#)[45] rounds out the list of explicitly GTD applications. EasyTask Manager is another stand-alone application that has some maturity, with version 1.7.6 available for $20. Easy-Task Manager is well-named: it manages only tasks, and it does so easily. It has a lot of heavy GTD influence, though (unlike Inbox and Frictionless) you could certainly use it if you weren't familiar with the GTD system. Tasks can be sorted by project or category, and they can be assigned due dates, priorities, and notes. It will sync with iCal, either by only importing tasks from iCal or by a bi-directional sync. A calendar function makes it easy to perform regular daily and weekly reviews, and heavy drag-and-drop ability makes for easy sorting and categorization in process stage.

Ghost Action

[Ghost Action](#)[46] from Ghost Park Software sports a simple, single-window interface with tabs for Contexts, Projects, and Actions. Ghost Action will sync with iCal and .Mac, and will also sync with a PDA or phone through iSync. Still in beta (1.0b13), the

developer is planning to include printing, a unified look (currently showing brushed metal), and a more general Inbox implementation.

Mori

Those looking for a note/document organizer as well as a GTD application might appreciate Hog Bay Software's [Mori](#)[47] along with the [mGTD plug-in](#)[48]. Mori is one of a handful of "digital notebook" applications, complete with Spotlight functionality, Apple-Scriptability, and a growing collection of plug-ins to make research, writing, or project management easier. The mGTD plug-in brings a thorough GTD system into Mori, though it does not sync with iCal. The mGTD plug-in (current version: 1.2 "pre-final") is free, but Mori (current version: 1.4) will cost you $40.

Life Balance

Llamagraphics has one of the most mature task-management applications, [Life Balance](#)[49]. Currently at version 3.2.9, Life Balance offers a sort of "meta-feedback" about your tasks: how much time are you

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[45]http://www.orionbelt.com/
[46]http://ghostparksoftware.com/

[47]http://www.hogbaysoftware.com/product/mori
[48]http://www.hogbaysoftware.com/node/1385
[49]http://www.llamagraphics.com/LB/LifeBalanceTop.htm
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spending in different areas of your life (i.e., work, family, hobbies, etc.), and are you keeping it balanced? Experienced GTD users might point out that this is a fairly high-level GTD checkpoint. Life Balance also has the benefit of being developed for Mac OS X, Windows, and the Palm OS, so you could conceivably have it with you in nearly any circumstance, even if your work computer is not a Mac—though this would not be a necessary benefit if Life Balance were not a completely closed environment, without iCal integration. Still, Life Balance is a popular and established option, if not explicitly designed for GTD. Life Balance for the Mac costs $65, or $80 if bundled with the Palm OS version.

ZooDo

ZooDo[50] is a basic task-creator for iCal. It is a stand-alone application, but it serves as the "collection bucket" of sorts. Certainly helpful in the gather/collect stage of planning, ZooDo is particularly friendly to those who prefer keyboard interaction to a mouse/keyboard combo. Some folks have brainstormed about how this makes GTD easier, particularly with regard to further integration with Backpack[51].

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[50]http://interfacethis.com/zoodo/
[51]http://factoryjoe.com/blog/2006/02/01/zoodo-for-gtd/

ToDo

ToDo[52] is a free, basic to-do list application. Designed to integrate into an existing workflow, ToDo is low-profile but still packs a fair amount of punch. Quicksilver users can utilize a ToDo plug-in to quickly enter new tasks, and limited integration with Address Book and iCal means that some redundancy is reduced. .Mac support means that you can sync ToDos on multiple Macs, and AppleScriptability allows creative integration with other applications. ToDo also supports file attachments, so if there is something pertinent to a particular task it can be linked. Categories of lists allow ToDo to serve particular contexts, and ToDo generally is GTD-friendly, but is not specifically aimed at GTD users.

High Priority

High Priority[53] is a system preference pane and creates a menu item in the menu bar. With High Priority, you can create and update your iCal tasks. High Priority is currently at version 1.11 and costs $6 for a personal license (family and business licenses are also available).

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[52]http://www.jimmcgowan.net/Site/ToDo.html
[53]http://www.kudurshian.net/highpriority/

iClock

Another utility similar to High Priority is Script Software's iClock[54], which actually brings a host of new services and functions with it. iClock doesn't have iCal interaction, but it does offer a menu bar-based method of managing task lists. iClock is at version 3.0.5 and costs $20.

To-Do X

To-Do X[55] is another stand-alone task manager, and while it will import tasks from iCal, it has no further interaction with it. To-Do X offers a number of good features for a task-manager, including categories (which could double as "contexts"), priorities, and attached notes. To-Do X also imports from the Classic OS Desk Accessory ToDo!. Version 2.1 costs $15.

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[54]http://www.scriptsoftware.com/iclock/iclockmac.php
[55]http://www.nomicro.com/Products/ToDo/

Stapler

Stapler[56] is a combination of a basic notepad and a to-do list manager. It is very simple in orientation: creation date, notes, and a check-box for completed items. Tasks can be color-coded based on a low-level preference setup. Stapler is not really designed for GTD, but it could work for the right user. €7.50 (about $9.70) gets you version 1.1.

What's Next

In the next few articles, I'll work through the "essential" features of a GTD application according to the canonical system, and consider which of these is redundant elsewhere (and therefore possibly optional). I'll talk about different workflows and how the varying GTD apps fit into them. And I'll discuss some of the larger-scale project managers, such as Jumsoft's Process2[57] and the OmniGroup's OmniPlan[58].

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[56]http://www.blue-tec.com/stapler/
[57]http://www.jumsoft.com/process/
[58]http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omniplan/

An Overview, Part 3

Palette Mania Redux

[Last month](#)[1], I revealed that I leave nearly all of Photoshop's palettes open on my office Macintosh and logically arranged on a secondary monitor. I had intended to show a screen shot of this arrangement, but I wrote last month's column while on Christmas holiday break and didn't have access to my office computer:

A sample arrangement of nearly all Photoshop's palettes.
([click to enlarge](#)[a])

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[a]http://www.atpm.com/13.02/images/ps-all-palettes-large.png

Don't take the above arrangement as a suggestion from me. Rather, it's simply a palette arrangement that works for my situation. If you have a secondary monitor and wish to have all the palettes open, you should definitely experiment and reposition to find what's best for you. Notice that I've still got some palette tabs grouped into one window, and that some of the vertical columns of palettes are attached together using the steps I described last month. For the record, the only reason my Actions palette is not attached to the Info palette is because the height of the Info palette increases when color samplers are set, and I don't want my Actions palette to shift downward when that happens.

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[1]http://www.atpm.com/13.01/photoshop.shtml

Moving along, it's now time to glance in each of the Photoshop menus and learn some of the tasks for which they're used. Bear in mind, menu items sometimes replicate features found in the palettes. In addition, right-clicking (or Control-clicking) areas within an image generally produces a contextual menu containing the most relevant menu functions. As you become more proficient with Photoshop, you'll find yourself pushing your mouse up to the menu bar less and less frequently.

Application Menu

The first menu is one with which you should already be accustomed. It's the Application menu, and it's where—like in any other application—you access the opening splash image, preferences, commands to hide or quit the application, etc.

Secret About Box

Since the very beginning, Photoshop has featured an easter egg known as the Secret About Box. Hold down the Command key while selecting About Photoshop… to access it. It generally always contains some sort of humor as well as the development code name of that particular version of Photoshop.

Adobe Space Monkey!

Preferences

A whole series of columns over several months could be devoted to Photoshop's preferences. Not to worry, though. It's not going to happen here—at least not soon.

Photoshop's default preferences are fine for most people, but you should definitely look through them all (note that there are nine different panels within the Preferences window) and adjust any that make sense to you. If you don't understand a preference, even after hovering your mouse for the tooltip, just leave it be.

If you'd like a little guidance, here are some settings I often recommend to people. Your mileage may vary:

- If you don't want your palettes going back to the default after you've carefully positioned them where you want them and saved them into a workspace, be sure to check the Save Palette Locations box in the General section.

- In the Display & Cursors section, try setting Painting Cursors to Normal Brush Tip with the Crosshair option checked, and set Other Cursors to Precise. The Standard setting just uses a representation of the selected tool's icon and is very unhelpful to me when editing my images.

- If you have a separate hard drive that's larger and/or faster, you can tell Photoshop to use it for temporary scratch space in the Plug-Ins & Scratch Disks section. This is great for laptop users who would rather let a faster external drive be the one to get Photoshop's heavy use instead of the slower internal laptop drive.

  For the benefit of those who don't know what scratch space is, Photoshop couldn't possibly do all it has to do just within the confines of available memory. To combat this, it writes data to temporary space on your hard drive, it does so *a lot*, and it's actually pretty good at managing it. But it works all the better when there's plenty of elbow room and it's on a fast hard drive.

File Menu

Most of Photoshop's File menu is just like any other application's, with items to open, close, save, print, and create new documents. Note that this month's article isn't going to elaborate on every single item in every single menu, but we'll go over a few items that can be fun to play with.

Automate

In the File menu, you'll find the Automate submenu. Adobe has provided a number of fun tools here. We'll look at some of them in greater detail in the future, but there are two that I use most frequently. The first is Web Photo Gallery..., which provides an interface for generating a self-contained folder with all the images and HTML files needed for a basic Web gallery. It nearly always takes me a bit of trial and error with the settings to get the gallery exactly how I want it, so I recommend first testing your settings with a folder of only about a dozen images. When you've got it right, then just run it again on a full folder of images.

My favorite item in the Automate menu is Photomerge..., which does exactly that—merges two or more photos into a single shot. I plan to devote a future month's column to Photomerge. For the time being, I'll say that, with practice, it works better than any merging function I've used that comes free with consumer digital cameras.

Edit Menu

Just as with the File menu, the Edit menu is one you find in almost any application and is where the Cut, Copy, Paste, and Undo commands live. Photoshop, however, beefs up these basic commands with functions to step forward and backward through an Undo history, as well as functions that perform copying and pasting as they would pertain to Photoshop's layers and selection areas.

The Edit menu is where Adobe has placed commands for Stroking (outlining) and Filling a selection with a color or pattern; Transforming an image by skewing, rotating, scaling, etc.; and working with advanced color profile settings.

The bottom of the Edit menu contains two very important features for customizing Photoshop. The Keyboard Shortcuts... item allows you to add, remove, and change keyboard shortcuts assigned to various menu functions. With the Menus... item, you can choose to hide functions found in the menu bar that you never use and just get in your way. You can also colorize them and change the order to help you find them.

Image Menu

The Image menu contains functions that generally affect your entire image—often, but not always, affecting all layers of the image.

Mode

The Mode submenu is where you choose whether you want to work in RGB (Red, Green, Blue) mode, CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black), Grayscale, and other color modes. Commercial printing presses generally prefer that photos are saved in CMYK format. Otherwise, you'll generally always want to be in RGB mode since some Photoshop functions are not available in CMYK mode. If you're working on images to put in a video (e.g. you're using iMovie), keep in mind that video is also RGB.

The Grayscale mode will convert your image to black and white (grayscale is a more accurate term since there is also a Bitmap mode, which truly is black and white—with no shades of gray). But before just selecting Grayscale mode, there are ways you can make your grayscale photos look much better—and that's this month's tutorial which I'll cover after this menu overview.

Adjustments

This powerful section of the menu bar is where you get to be the photo lab technician and tweak the color hues of your image. It's here that you'll find Photoshop's very basic Brightness/Contrast command, which works in a pinch, but in an upcoming column we'll look at the Levels and Curves tools that offer far better control than Brightness/Contrast.

Modifying the Entire Canvas Window

The Adjustments submenu is also where you can scale the size of your image, increase or decrease the size of the canvas window around your image, and rotate your image. Yet another topic for a future column is using the Image Size command—specifically regarding the Resolution setting and the difference between whether or not the Resample Image item is checked.

Layer Menu

The Layer menu contains, as you would probably guess, functions that affect individual layers of your image. As such, some of its functions are unavailable if your image is flattened into a single background layer. Other than creating, removing, and duplicating layers, most of the Layer menu functions can be a bit on the advanced side, and we'll cover them as needed.
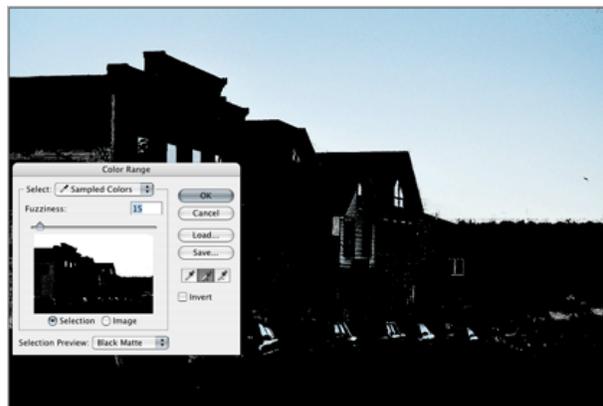
Select Menu

When you use the Marquee Selection Tool or the Magic Wand or in some way create a selection, the Select menu is where you'll find things that you can do to tweak your selection, as well as tools for making a new selection in ways you might not ever have thought of. Remember—this menu only deals with selections and not your actual image. In theory (and I say this because I welcome correction if I'm wrong), anything you do in the Select menu does not immediately change your image.

The first portion of the Select menu simply offers commands to select the entire image, deselect any current selection, reselect whatever was last selected, and completely inverse your selection.

The next portion helps control your selection when dealing with multiple layers.

Color Range... is a nifty selection tool that will create a selection based on colors in your image. Its tools allow you to isolate a single color, or to drag an eyedropper across a portion of your image to make a range of colors the selection.

For this image, I have activated the additive eyedropper (the one with the + symbol) and dragged it across the blue sky. As you can see, in addition to selecting the entire sky, the same blue shades were also found in the lower portion of the image. However, these erroneous and unwanted selections can easily be removed, leaving just the sky selected.

Next are several options for changing your current selection. Feather... softens/blurs the edges of your selection by a number of pixels you specify.

In the Modify submenu, Border changes your selection to only include an outline of the selection as many pixels wide as you specify. Smooth will reduce sharp angles in your selection within a threshold of a specified number of pixels. Expand and Contract

enlarge and reduce, respectively, your entire selection by a specified number of pixels.

The Grow command can be a little tricky to understand, but it's fairly simple once you get the hang of it. Suppose you've made a selection with the Magic Wand with a five-pixel tolerance. Using Grow will expand your selection an additional five pixels.

The Similar command is also fairly simple in its function. It expands your current selection to include other areas of the image with similarly colored pixels to what is already selected. Note that it selects noncontiguous pixels, which means you may have a selection over on the right side of your image and the Similar selection command could add an area over on the left side of the image to the total selection.

The Transform Selection command is essentially identical to the Transform command found in the Edit menu, except that it only affects your current selection.

Finally, the Load and Save Selection commands store and recall selections for later use. When you save a selection, a new channel is created to hold that selection and can be seen in the Channels palette.

Filter Menu

Photoshop's collection of filters is another area to which I'll devote a future column. Feel free to play with some of them. The function of many are pretty obvious from their names, such as Sharpen and Blur.

View Menu

The upper portion of the View menu involves advanced color management, so we'll skip that for now. The next section contains the Zoom In and Out commands along with a few default zoom levels.

The Screen Mode submenu is identical to the Viewing Mode selector I described in the Tool Palette overview[2] in December. I suppose I erred in calling it Viewing Mode when it is actually called Screen Mode.

The remainder of the View menu adjusts settings for alignment guides and grids, and for slices. Don't worry about guides and grids for now—and remember that we've already established that slices are one of Photoshop's advanced features and are used when preparing Web pages.

Window Menu

In a sense, we've already covered much of this menu last month because it mostly contains items for en-

abling or disabling Photoshop's palettes. This is also where you can save and recall custom workspaces, rearrange all currently open image windows, and quickly activate a specific image window.

Help Menu

Oh boy, do I really have to go here? Well, OK. Obviously, this is where you access Adobe's help engine for Photoshop. Take my advice. *Use it!* Even if you don't have an immediate problem with something, try picking a particular feature of Photoshop and reading the help documents about it. You'll be surprised what you learn.

Also in the Help menu are functions to handle your registration license and manage software updates.

Put 'em All Together

That wasn't so bad, was it? I do have to say, as someone who has used Photoshop since version 2.5, the placement and groupings of menu items has consistently improved with each major version of Photoshop. If you still don't like it, Adobe even now allows you to change the menus around however you see fit. There are even a couple of alternative menu bar sets already defined that you may wish to check out.

Better Grayscale Tutorial

OK, time to actually learn something practical. Years ago, a quarterly newsletter I design mostly contained only grayscale (black and white) photos. To convert a color photo, I would, as you' expect, head to the Image ▷ Mode ▷ Grayscale command. Then, I'd spend time playing with the tonal curves to increase contrast and make it look like a decent photo.

Today, the same newsletter I design is entirely in color and I don't often print grayscale photos any more. But, when I do, I've discovered some new steps to make them look a lot better than simply switching the color mode to grayscale.

We'll start with a standard digital photo. In this color version, the saturation has been increased slightly from the original.

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[2]http://www.atpm.com/12.12/photoshop.shtml

Yellowstone looks great in color, but let's get all Ansel Adams on these bison, shall we?

With the contrast bumped, our image starts to look better, but we've completely blown all the detail out of the band of cloud near the top of the image, and the shadowy portion of the grass in the foreground has gone black, having also lost all its detail.

This grayscale conversion isn't all that bad, but likewise isn't all that great.

In the past, I would've simply changed to grayscale mode, which produces a reasonable photo, but the contrast is generally not spectacular.

Sure, you could get out the Brightness/Contrast tool and increase the contrast. Let's see what happens.

We can achieve better grayscale results by simply adding one small step before switching to grayscale mode. Back at the original, newly opened color image, head to the Image ▷ Adjustments ▷ Channel Mixer command. Check the box at the bottom labeled Monochrome.

Boom (with apologies to Steve Jobs). Look at that sky. Look at the shadow detail in the grass at the bottom. Okay, okay, none of us are likely to become the next Ansel Adams, but this image now looks pretty darn good, if I do say so myself.

In the case of using the Channel Mixer to convert a color photo to grayscale, you can have your cake and eat it, too. In other words, you can quickly and easily apply impressive contrast while not completely blowing out detail in the brightest highlights and the darkest shadows.

After checking the Monochrome box, most photos will do great simply by leaving the Red slider at 100% and the Green and Blue sliders at zero. Tweak-

ing them by subtle amounts might achieve even better results. As always, your mileage may—and very likely will—vary significantly.

Once you're satisfied, *now* it's time to hit the Grayscale mode in the Image menu. Voila!

Next Month...

Here's your homework assignment. First, open copies (remember, always keep original versions of your images) of some of your favorite photos and experiment with the various options in the Image ▷ Adjustments submenu. Some will produce a control window with adjustments. Others will simply do the command with no interactivity. Make a prediction of what you think will happen before invoking each command, then take note of what actually happened.

Big reminder: besides any original, unaltered JPEGs from a digital camera, you should also save Photoshop .PSD files so as not to add additional compression to your work. Save flattened JPG copies from the Photoshop document as needed. Alternatively, you can save as TIFF, which also does not add compression artifacts and is more compatible with other graphic applications that won't open Photoshop files. The drawbacks are that layer support in TIFFs can be unpredictable, and that single-layer TIFFs are larger in file size than single-layer .PSD files.

Now that I've completed the introductory overview, it's getting to be about the right time to make sure your monitor is set to display colors reasonably accurately. While it's true that using a stick-on sensor that measures color output is the best way, such a device is really only needed when doing professional color output. For your purposes. Mac OS X's built-in tools for color calibration will suffice, and we'll learn how to do that next month. Once you're seeing your photos' colors more accurately, we'll be in good shape to also take a look at Photoshop's Levels control and learn why it should be your choice over the Brightness/Contrast control.

Demystifying the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)

What is an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), do you need one, and if so how do you decide what you need? At its most elemental level a UPS is simply a charged battery that delivers enough power to your computer, and other critical hardware such as a monitor, to save and close current files and properly shut down the operating system when the primary power source has failed, such as in a blackout. The answers to the second and third questions depend on how you use your Mac and on your hardware requirements, but there are some basic principles that will be covered in this article to hopefully get you on the right track. I will not be telling you which type of UPS, or even which UPS brand to buy. After reading this you should be somewhat more informed, or at least have a head start on where to go for additional research.

Do You Need One?

Have you ever been sitting in front of your monitor, immersed in whatever creative process you happen to subscribe to, and failed to save those ever-so-clever adjustments to a file when the lights went out? It feels like you can never quite get it back to the way it was, right? I bet you wish you had a UPS.

If your desktop Mac activities would involve the loss of irreplaceable mission critical information in a power outage, such as in any business environment, then you definitely need *at least* a UPS if not a UPS/back-up generator combination depending on the scale of your system or network. Even if you use your Mac at home for more recreational pursuits and already have a good (not cheap) surge protector, you may still suffer hardware damage or lose valuable files if power to the drive is interrupted while, say, updating your operating system or simply moving some family photos from your camera. If you have a laptop then you already have a built-in battery, but there are still many advantages to using a UPS, such as power conditioning[1].

Businessweek.com cites a 2004 survey[2] by Emerson Network Power that reports 75% of small business owners feel power outages are a threat to their venture, yet 62% still do not have a backup power supply. The same study also found that of the 80% who have experienced power outages, over 14% reported that their longest outage cost $5,000 or more.

While there are several preventive strategies for avoiding the problems brought about by power outages, such as regular data backups and generators, this article is about the immediate first line of defense provided by the UPS. I will describe my UPS experiences with desktop Macs, and then try to be informative, yet brief, about how to determine your requirements and choices in the market.

My UPS Experience, Or, Why I Ended Up Writing This Article For *ATPM*

After shelling out the big bucks for a G5 Quad Power Mac, I decided that a UPS was in order since I was starting to work from home on 3D graphics[3] and animations and didn't want to lose important file changes or renders in mid-run because of power failures. Contrary to my normal routine of research first, I went down to one of the local big box retailers to browse the UPS selection—after all, how complex could it be, right?
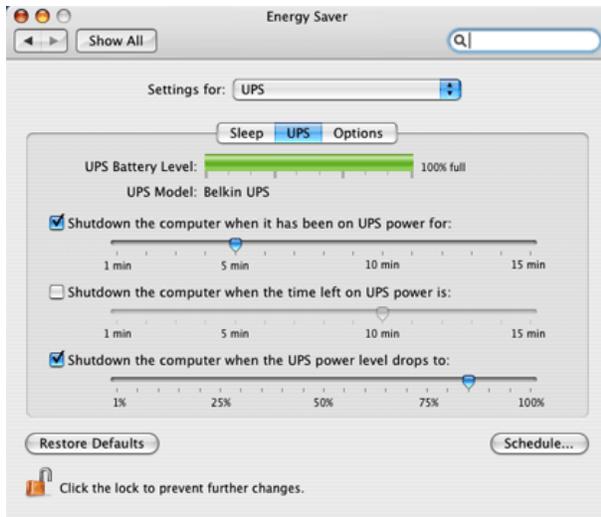
I read the box literature describing connected equipment warranties, VA capacity, output waveform, and backup capabilities etc., etc. In the end I picked up the largest one available in the store to give it a try, a Belkin Enterprise 1200VA (currently discontinued). In defense of my actions, this UPS was listed on the box as "ideal" for Power Mac G5 processors.

I quickly found out that I had some misconceptions about what this UPS could do for me and my G5 Quad. For instance, the purported battery power supply of up to 100 minutes for the 1200VA actu-

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_conditioner

[2] http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/jul2006/sb20060724_304827.htm?chan=search

[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.01/daz.shtml

ally provided less than 10 minutes for me with only a 19 inch LCD monitor as additional peripheral hardware. Obviously the Quad was no ordinary computer. I knew that, but just how much of a power-hungry beast it was surprised me. It became apparent after my post-purchase research that if I wanted a longer battery charge to finish off big renders then I would have to pay big bucks beyond my post-Quad budget and meager supplementary income from the graphics work.

The Mac OS X UPS settings, found in the Energy Saver pane in System Preferences.

However, I received a real shock (figuratively, not literally) when we had a power failure a few weeks later and the Quad was in sleep mode. I had the Mac OS X UPS settings, found in System Preferences ▷ Energy Saver ▷ Settings pop-up menu, set to shut down the computer after only a few minutes of battery power since I knew the 1200VA could not handle much more than that. But nothing happened! I checked to make sure the USB cord was connected to the UPS and computer, and it was, so I went to wake it manually to shut down properly. That's when all hell broke loose: all nine cooling fans went supernova, the red warning light came on inside the front grill for the power supply, and the monitor was black.

I had never experienced anything like this before, and in my adrenaline-enhanced state thought the Quad was going to blow something very expensive to replace. I quickly pushed and held down the main power switch for a hard shut down. There was nothing else to do. The same thing happened two other times during power failures. I did a bit of digging here and there, and I found that peak power requirements at startup, or waking, exceeded the capacity of my UPS. However, nobody could tell me how much power the Quad needed at these critical times, since all computer data I could find states normal operational requirements.

Flash forward to Fall 2006. I sold my G5 Quad (never could stomach the knowledge that the liquid cooling system sat above the power supply) and purchased a 2.66 GHz Mac Pro. Perhaps it was fate, as the power went off with the Mac Pro in sleep mode a few weeks later, so I got up to see what was going to happen this time. Again, the OS X UPS shutdown settings did not activate when in sleep mode, so I had to wake the unit to shut down properly. To my surprise it powered up normally, but I didn't have the monitor plugged into backup UPS power, so I had no screen, and subsequently plugging the monitor into backup power did not result in a video connection for whatever reason.

I was half-awake so I instinctively pushed the main power switch for a hard shut down, but failed to hold it down long enough this time, so it just went to sleep again. I can laugh now, but I wasn't very happy with myself at that moment, and instead of just trying a hard shut down from sleep I ended up waking the computer again. To my utter amazement, the Mac Pro woke from sleep a second time on UPS battery power with no problem! I had read that the power efficiency[4] of the Intel-chipped Macs was a vast improvement over the G5s, and here was first-hand proof.

Different Types of UPSs

There are a plethora of Web sites that provide detailed information and schematic diagrams of the various types of UPSs, so I will not go into too much detail. Readers requiring more information should consult the Pacific Gas and Electrical Company article[5], or the BC Hydro UPS Guide[6], as I found these very comprehensive and concise. PC Guide[7] provides an insightful table comparing the different types of UPS and other protection offerings versus some common power problems, and you should look at it if you are making a decision to buy a certain type of UPS. The

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[4] http://www.macworld.com/2006/08/reviews/macprorev/index.php

[5] http://www.pge.com/docs/pdfs/biz/power_quality/power_quality_notes/ups.pdf

[6] http://www.bchydro.com/rx_files/psbusiness/psbusiness23447.pdf

[7] http://www.pcguide.com/ref/power/ext/comp-c.html

Holy Grail of online UPS FAQ links can be found at JetCafe[8] and I highly recommend that you print this document and save it for reference.

While there is some variation within each type, in a nutshell, there are three varieties of UPSs: *Standby* (or *offline*), *Line Interactive*, and *Online*. Each contains a battery, an AC-DC battery charger or rectifier, and a DC-AC inverter to take battery power and provide it in a useful form for your computer.

A *Standby* UPS provides main AC power directly from the wall socket to the computer, but in the event of an outage a transfer switch activates the secondary battery circuit. This results in a 1 to 5 millisecond power interruption, which is at the tolerance limit of a typical computer power unit. These are the least expensive of the UPSs.

Line Interactive UPSs also rely on main AC power for the computer during normal operation, but have a bi-directional charger/inverter. When power fails, the bi-directional unit switches to inverter mode to provide battery power. Since the charger/inverter is functionally always on, switching times are minimized compared to standby UPSs. The efficiency of these units is between 90 to 96%.

Online UPSs convert all the main AC power to DC, and then convert it all back to AC power before it is supplied to your computer. Thus it is always in the same operating mode so there are no power interruptions. In this way they also effectively filter line noise and other power anomalies, but at a cost. Efficiency is reduced to 80 to 90% with heat as a bi-product. These units are typically the most expensive.

How to Calculate Your UPS Needs

I must first say that the following information is provided at your own risk, and geared to a North American audience with standard 120-volt AC current. If you live elsewhere, you should find out how your electricity is delivered to your computer and adjust accordingly. If after completing some of the calculations below you find you need a UPS bigger than say a 2,000 to 3,000VA, and you're not an electrical engineer, then I would get some professional advice.

Optimizing your UPS purchase to suit your needs and budget is not a simple process for the uninitiated. They are usually rated in volt-amperes (VA), but the manufacturer should also state a maximum wattage for connected hardware. While you may be tempted to get a grossly over-sized UPS relative to your needs,

be aware that these systems typically function most efficiently near their rated capacity. That said, an over-sized UPS *will* deliver longer battery power in the clinch of an outage, but you should really weigh the cost/benefit of a big UPS versus the simple purchase of a laptop, which will offer much longer work time on its battery during a power outage.

For those who want a simple just-tell-me-the-bottom-line answer for their UPS needs, American Power Conversion (APC) has a nifty UPS selector[9] that yields three product recommendations (all of them APC, of course) listing them as: best price, best value, and best performance. If nothing else it provides one with a rough idea of what VA range you need to be looking for.

Generally speaking, the VA output rating of the UPS should exceed the load by at least 50% to 100%, so how do you calculate your expected load? The link to BC Hydro's UPS Guide[10] contains a six-step worksheet using hardware wattage to help determine a UPS for your needs. Very briefly, you simply obtain the wattage of all devices to be connected, bearing in mind that printers are energy hogs and *should not* be operated on battery backup *ever*, and then compare this to the total wattage listed by the UPS manufacturer. This will get you into the ballpark area of your UPS needs.

However, the UPS VA rating is not the same as power drain, measured in watts, from the hardware. Some literature suggests a conservative factor of Watts $\times$ 1.6=VA, while others list VA $\times$ 0.85 to 0.7=Watts. There is no way to accurately know without actually measuring the draw of your hardware with an ammeter. So where does that leave the electronically challenged? As mentioned in the JetCafe[11] link, obtaining a UPS whose VA is equal or greater than the total electric load rating of all hardware will err on the side of caution, and be properly conservative.

An additional purchase consideration is that the batteries in a UPS have a limited life span, so you must expect to either replace the unit in a few years or plan ahead and purchase a UPS with the capability to replace the battery packs. Contrary to what you may read in some Belkin UPS reviews, I have discovered that the batteries in most of their models can be

[9]http://apc.com/tools/ups_selector/index.cfm
[10]http://www.bchydro.com/rx_files/psbusiness/psbusiness23447.pdf
[11]http://www.jetcafe.org/%7Enpc/doc/ups-faq.html

[8]http://www.jetcafe.org/%7Enpc/doc/ups-faq.html

replaced either at source[12] or that my 1200VA model can even use upgraded 1500VA replacement battery packs for the APC brand UPSs, though I would never recommend anyone to do this.

Third-party reviews of UPS backup software run the gamut, but the majority opinion from real folks using it is that most of it isn't that easy to use, so don't let it factor into your purchase decision too much. Think about it this way: get a good UPS that will give you plenty of time to save what you're working on before shutting down, and *never* walk away from your machine without saving. If your Mac is running something that cannot be stopped without loss, such as my 3D renders which must run to completion, then bite the bullet and either get a higher end backup power solution, or just re-render when the power is back on.

Use and Maintenance

As with any piece of equipment, read the manufacturer's manual before you start plugging things into your UPS. A typical UPS out of the box will require several hours to a day to charge the batteries. Give them the time for a full charge before you start using it. Extension cords are *not* recommended as they unnecessarily increase resistance, and while this sounds like a no-brainer, never put a surge protector[13] between a UPS and a computer. And again, don't plug a printer into the backup supply socket from a UPS since they draw too much power.

Dust-clogged UPS air ventilation slots and high(er) room temperatures can have an adverse effect on battery life. Another point from my list of personal misperceptions: the UPS's batteries are *not* like other rechargeable batteries since they do not have a "battery memory" or experience longer life if you discharge them regularly. In fact, they lose capacity with each deep draw on their reserves. And oh, one last thing: you should be aware that there is enough juice in one of these things to kill somebody, so don't fool around inside it if you don't know what you're doing, and if you're reading this then you don't know what you're doing.

Conclusion

Make your UPS purchase based on a conservative determination of VA requirements, or a total wattage calculation if have to, with more capacity thrown in to accommodate hardware upgrades within the next few years if it is within your current UPS budget. Take the unit home and see if you can wake your computer from sleep when it is on UPS battery power, since I think this is an important issue that I have not seen mentioned *anywhere* in the UPS literature. In addition, I have not found an answer to why the UPS shutdown settings in the Energy Saver pane of System Preferences in OS X are not activated when the computer is in sleep mode. If anyone has a solution, please let all of us know.

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[12]http://catalog.belkin.com/IWCatProductPage.process
?Merchant_Id=&Section_Id=2092&pcount=&Product_Id=2
48169

[13]http://www.jetcafe.org/%7Enpc/doc/ups-faq.html#02
08

Little Leaf Sea

This Month's Desktop Pictures[1]

These photos, from ATPM reader David Kettlewell[2], are from the sunny, frosty forests of northern Sweden, a place whose name translates as "Little Leaf Sea."

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[3].

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

Some browsers can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once.

iCab Use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path."

OmniWeb Choose "Save Linked ▷ Images..." from the File menu.

Safari Use this Automator workflow[4].

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, feel free to send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue. Have a regular print but no scanner? Don't worry. E-mail us, and we tell you where to send it so we can scan it for you. Note that we cannot return the original print, so send us a copy.

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x and 10.4.x

Choose "System Preferences..." from the Apple menu, click the "Desktop & Screen Saver" button, then choose the Desktop tab. In the left-side menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Select the Screen Saver tab which is also in the "Desktop & Screen Saver" System Preferences pane. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, click on the Pictures Folder in the list of screen savers. Otherwise, click Choose Folder to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

Choose "System Preferences..." from the Apple menu and click the Desktop button. With the pop-up menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences..." from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.0.x

Switch to the Finder. Choose "Preferences..." from the "Finder" menu. Click on the "Select Picture..." button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your `~/Library/Desktop Pictures` folder. Close the "Finder Preferences" window when you are done.
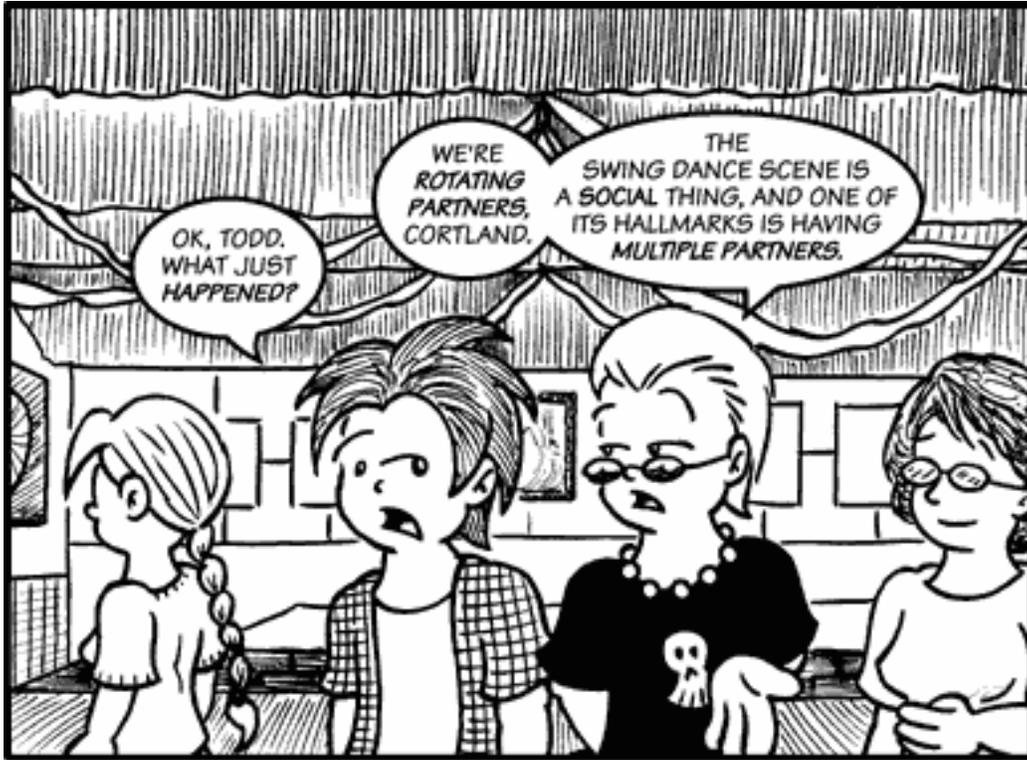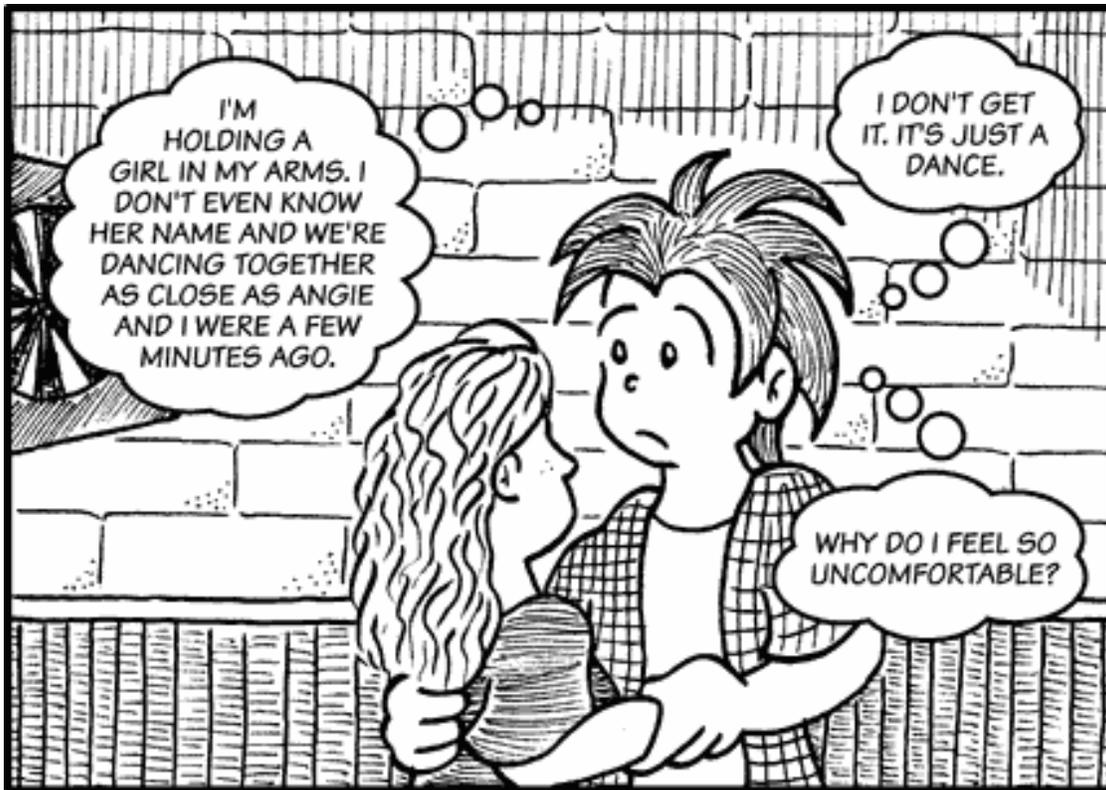
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[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.02/little-leaf-sea/
[2] http://www.new-renaissance.net
[3] http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml
[4] http://automator.us/examples-02.html

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Arctic Quest 1.0

Developer: Exclusive Games[1]
Price: $20
Requirements: 800 MHz Mac with Mac OS X 10.3.9, 32 MB of VRAM. Not Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (60 minutes, no bonuses)

OKAY

I love shape-puzzle games. I played the original Tetris[3] game for hours at a stretch on my Macintosh Classic[4] in the early 90s. Black-and-white, tiny screen, it didn't matter. So when any of these kind of games come across our review list, I ask for them.

I explored Arctic Quest site for Windows[5]. I played the online version a few times and thought it was cute. The islands are icy, and we have to complete the puzzles to melt them. There is a Snow King, but you don't battle him until many levels later, so I never met him. He has set up these challenging puzzles where you rotate objects to complete a shape. If you use all your large pieces too soon, you'll have to drop the extras in the ocean. If the ocean fills up, you lose. There is a fire on one end of the island, so you can melt some of the extra pieces to hold off losing. All very cute.

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[1]http://www.exclusivegames.com
[2]http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3]http://www.tetris.com/
[4]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macintosh_Classic
[5]http://www.alawar.com/games/arctic-quest/

The artwork is very pretty.

I downloaded the game from the Alawar site, and saw it was an .exe file, and wondered what was up. Then I looked at my Review Editor's information, and realized I had gone to the wrong site. Uh-oh, I thought. I am getting a game from someone other than the original developer. And this turned out to be true. The developer on the Macintosh Arctic Quest game is Exclusive Games, LLC. I went to their site and saw this message:

> Exclusive Games, LLC is the game development and publishing company. We specialize in 3D-games development for Windows, and recently has successfully started porting to Mac OS X platform.

I did not mind the two grammatical errors. They alerted me the text was written by someone for whom English is not the first language, and I am not elitist about this but curious about the company. Curiosity is fine, but I am wary of programs ported from Windows. They tend to have been written with Windows in mind, and thus tend to be smell funny once they are rewritten. Not every piece of software in the history of software has had this problem, but we all run into programs that run smoothly and those which do not. In my limited experience, software that began life on Windows just doesn't do all that well when someone tries to rewrite it for Macs.

So I was predisposed to find this software mediocre. I allowed for that. I liked the drawing, and I liked the music. I began the game, and played for a level or two, and then I got bored. The shapes were colorful and interesting, and varied with level. But I was bored. Maybe it was too soothing. Maybe the ice made me sleepy. Whatever the reason, I was not fired up about it, so I thought I would investigate the bonus material. I clicked on Register and the game croaked. The music kept playing, but the game went away. I thought maybe I could register from a fresh start-up of the game, but no matter how I tried to register (three different paths), it killed the game. The bonuses appear to be various critters: a snail that slows down time, etc. But I will never know for sure; I am going by the Help screen from Alawar's online game.

The game is generally sluggish to load. The cursor takes a few seconds too long to become functional. Possibly my Mac does not meet the system requirements, though I have doubts. I am sure my Intel-based Mac mini does meet the system requirements, so the crashing when I try to register is not because of anything systemic I can identify.

A download from Exclusive Games gets you 60 minutes of free trial, minus bonuses, so you have ample time to decide if you want to pay $20 for this game. I would not pay $5 for it, because I would rather play a 22-year-old Russian game of Tetris on a 7-inch black-and-white screen. That game had no fire and no ice. The music was cheesy. The blocks didn't change with level. But it did not crash, and it was never boring. It just played and played and played.

by David B. Thompson, dthompson@atpm.com

MoRU 1.3.4

Developer: Windstorm Software[1]
Price: $10
Requirements: Mac OS-X 10.4. Universal[2].
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

For those of you who follow such things, you know I moved early in January from Texas to Nevada. (If you didn't know, well, you know now!) So I needed a quick-and-dirty review for this month's issue of ATPM. The editors run a pretty tight ship.

To continue last month's theme, then, I still like small, efficient programs that do one task well. I'm also looking for ways to make the embedded components of Tiger work for me. One of those components is Spotlight, which has so much potential that I seem unable to tap. That's probably a personal lacking on my part, but I think that if I'm not seeing the big picture, then there's probably at least one other person who, like me, is also failing to see the full impact of the tool.

I came across a small application this month called MoRU (pronounced "moe rue"). It's an acronym for Most Recently Used. The tool is an interface into Spotlight and offers advanced searching of the OS X filesystem.
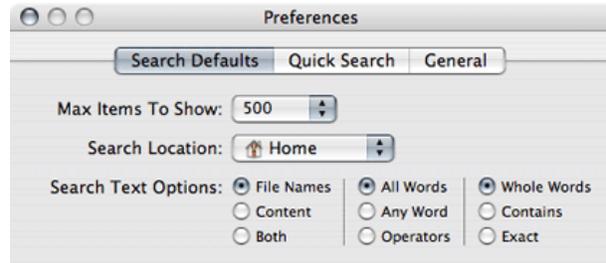
Installation and Use

As with most small programs, installation is straightforward. I downloaded the disk image, mounted it, copied MoRU to the Applications folder, and launched it by double-clicking its icon.
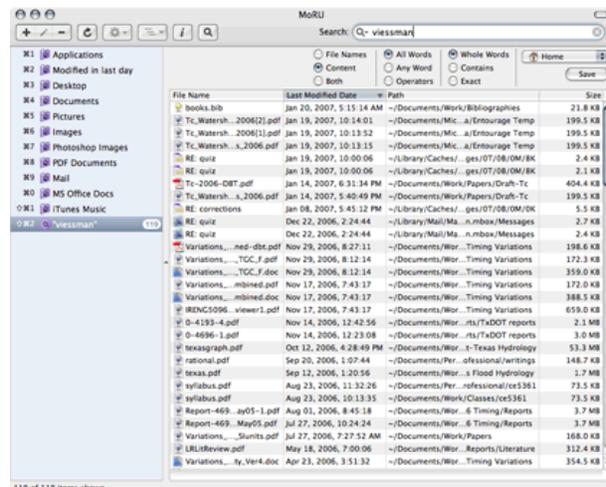
There are three entries on the Preferences list: Search Defaults, Quick Search, and General. Search Defaults lets you set a few things, such as the maximum number of hits, the search location, and some additional settings. The defaults work pretty well and they can be tweaked from the main window.

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[1]http://www.windstormsoftware.com/wssw/moru/index.html
[2]http://www.apple.com/universal/

The main program window has three panes: the left pane contains a list of default searches plus any new searches the user adds, the top pane offers a text-input field and a few radio buttons to control the search, and the bottom pane displays search results.
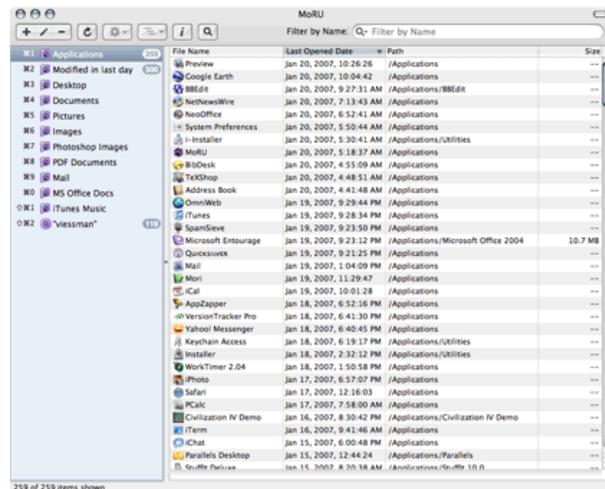
In the example shown above, I was searching for a bibliographic citation, *viessman*, that I suspected was in a file somewhere on my Mac. Because I expected the text to be inside a file and not a filename, I checked the button to search content. All words and whole words were the other two defaults, but I left them alone.

MoRU accessed the Spotlight database and extracted every file at or below the Home directory on my system for files that contained the word "viessman." There were 119 hits (displayed on the left pane next to the search). The entries were sorted in most-

recently-used order, and the top entry contained the text I was looking for. (It's a bibliography file used by my writing system, TeXShop.) There were a number of other interesting hits as well, but they were not the files I was looking for.

I could double-click on the entry and the bibliography manager (BibDesk) would open the file so I could find the entry.

MoRU comes with eleven standard searches, arrayed on the left pane of the main window. For example, I clicked on the "Applications" search. MoRU required about fifteen seconds to populate the results pane. (Part of that time was required to spin-up the disk in my MacBook Pro, which was asleep.) According to MoRU, I have 259 applications on my system. They are displayed in most-recently-used order. It's pretty easy to tell what I use most of the time on my system! (Pay no attention to that Civ IV demo! It's not mine, I swear! I only do work on my Mac!)
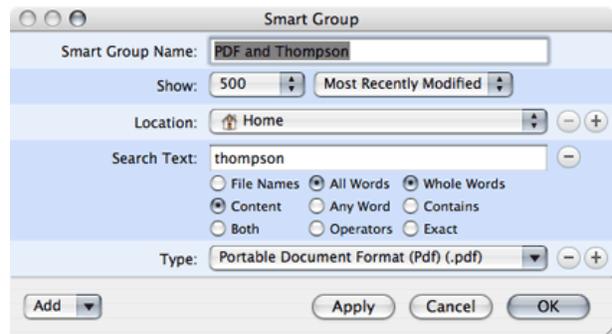

The entries on the results pane are double-clickable, meaning that applications can be launched from within MoRU. Although it isn't intended to be a Finder replacement, the program does provide access to applications if you want to use it that way.
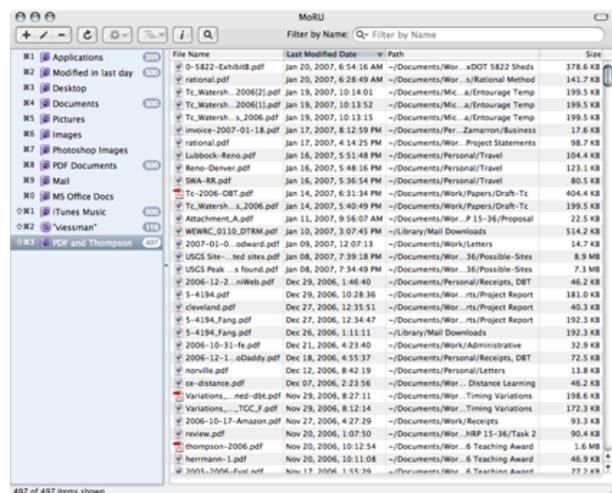
One of the powerful features of MoRU is the Smart Group. A Smart Group is a specialized search that groups files together based on specific attributes. In the figure below, the attributes chosen for the iTunes Music Smart Group is a location (/Volumes/Digital Music/Music/iTunes) and the Any Audio type file.

I set up a search for all PDF files that contained my last name. The Smart Group is shown below, followed by the results.

The search found 497 PDF files with my name inside. The most-recently used file was 0-5822-ExhibitB.pdf, which is a technical workplan for one of my research projects. I made that PDF this morning to mail to a graduate student. Spotlight indexed the file and MoRU found it for me.

Logical operators are available to extend the searching capability of MoRU. Complex searches with logical AND's and OR's are available. The

program contains a wealth of features for finding the files you want.

All that power comes with a learning curve. However, unlike some shareware programs, MoRU comes with an excellent help file that contains information useful to end users.

Conclusions

I have a lot of files on my MacBook Pro. My Documents directory contains more than 40,000 (10 GB) files. So, finding what I'm looking for, even with a sophisticated filing system, can be daunting. Spotlight helps, but returns a haystack from a larger haystack. MoRU helps more because it allows me to refine Spotlight searches and reduce the number of hits returned from the Spotlight indexes.

It will be interesting to see if MoRU holds up to the test of time. I'm going to register my copy and we'll see how frequently I use it. I suspect that it will remain one of those utilities that sits in my Applications directory until I'm really searching for something I need *now*, and then it will save my carcass when the pressure is on.

I think this is an excellent program, especially for users who, like me, have many files on their systems.

NetworkLocation 1.1

Developer: Centrix.ca[1]
Price: $15
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (five location changes per session).

Given the increasingly important role of notebook computers over the last few years, it's continually surprised me that Mac OS X's support for multiple locations has paled in comparison to the classic Mac's Location Manager. Under OS X, a location is simply a collection of network settings. The classic Location Manager, on the other hand, understood that a location was a *place*, not simply a network connection.
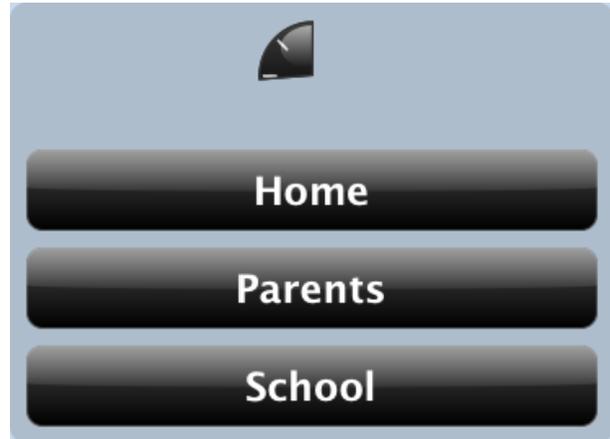
NetworkLocation, from Centrix.ca, attempts to bring back this missing functionality with an updated sense of style more fitting an Mac OS X application.

NetworkLocation's main interface, called the Chooser, appears as a floating panel in front of everything else displayed on the screen. Its appearance is customizable, as NetworkLocation includes six skins—five solid colors and one wood pattern. The Chooser easily allows you to select your location from the locations defined in the Network preference pane. You can configure the Chooser to automatically appear under two different circumstances—when joining an AirPort network or when waking your computer from sleep after a user-selectable period of time. The ability to display the Chooser on joining a new AirPort network appears to be limited to the built-in AirPort card. If you use a PC Card adapter for wireless networking (for instance, to use a newer network card than what's built-in to your computer), the Chooser does not automatically appear.

The Chooser can be dismissed by selecting a location, clicking outside the Chooser, pressing the Escape key, or waiting for the Chooser to timeout.

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[1] http://centrix.ca/NetworkLocation/
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
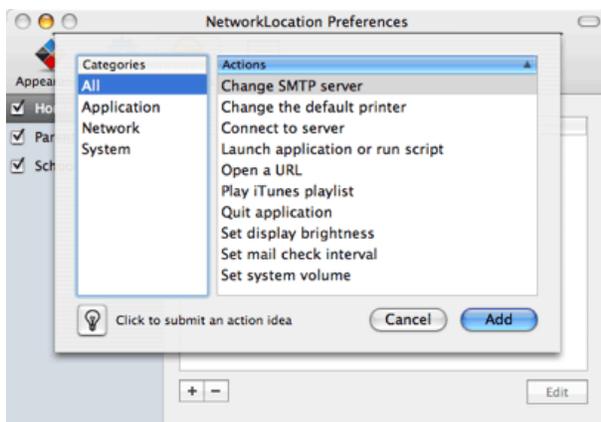

The NetworkLocation Chooser

Although the Chooser puts an attractive face on changing networks, the interface is not without its problems. If you dismiss the Chooser through any means other than clicking outside the Chooser, NetworkLocation remains the the frontmost application. This issue is compounded if you've decided not to show the NetworkLocation icon in the Dock. In this situation, the menu bar will indicate that some other application (like "Finder") is active, but said application will not respond to any keyboard commands. If you don't understand why this is happening, it can be frustrating.

As an alternative to the Chooser, NetworkLocation also offers a menu bar item. This menu gives you access to all your network locations, NetworkLocation's preferences, and the Chooser while also allowing you to quit the application. After you change locations, the menu can be a little slow to indicate the currently-selected location. I assume this is because it takes a short period of time for Mac OS X to change locations and NetworkLocation is probably querying the OS to determine the appropriate location.

NetworkLocation include ten built-in actions that you can use to construct what happens when you switch to a given location. These ten actions include the following:

- Changing Mail's SMTP server.

- Changing the default printer.

- Connecting to a server via the Finder.

- Launching an application or running a script.

- Opening a URL.

- Playing an iTunes playlist.

- Quitting an application.

- Setting the display brightness.

- Setting how often Mail checks for new mail.

- Setting the system volume.

Creating a new action for a location.

Most of the actions that change settings include the option to restore the previous setting when switching out of the location. This option is missing from the mail check interval action, however. Another such mismatch occurs between the launch application and quit application actions. The launch application action allows you to specify that an application or script should be run when leaving a location. The quit application action has no such option—you are limited to only quitting applications when entering a location.

I've also encountered some flakiness with the creation of action instances for locations. There's nothing that seems to adversely affect the NetworkLocation's operation, but the behavior certainly feels wrong. When you create a launch or quit action, the user interface allows you to save the action without selecting any application, which doesn't make any sense. However, the mail check and iTunes actions are more obviously broken—if you create the action

instance without changing the default selection ("5 minutes" for mail checking and "Library" for iTunes), you get an action instance that appears to do nothing when run.

Actually, my biggest issue with NetworkLocation is the included collection of actions. The ten built into the application are a mix of network- and place-specific action, which is a step in the right direction. However, I would like to see more place-specific actions in a future version of the application. For instance, I wanted to create an airplane location for when I was traveling. Those who travel know that flying means no radio transmission from laptops—meaning no AirPort and no Bluetooth. I tried writing an AppleScript for turning off AirPort, but even though I've had a bit of experience with AppleScripting, I was not successful. Somebody without AppleScript experience who just wanted their laptop to better handle different places would most likely be out of luck.

Other possible ideas for additional actions include control over power management options, configuration of popular non-Apple products (like Entourage or NetNewsWire), or fun things like changing the desktop picture or screen saver.

In its current state, NetworkLocation is a promising application. It offers much of the basic functionality that the users could be want for while looking good, but it does not provide a particularly wide range of options out of the box. Users comfortable with AppleScript can widely extend the NetworkLocation's functionality, but less experienced users will be stuck with the somewhat limited options. The small set of base functionality and combined with rough edges I've mentioned prevent me from heartily recommending NetworkLocation to everybody, but you should look into it if you have a laptop and find yourself regularly moving between different locations.

Python System

Developer: Booq[1]
Price: $270
Requirements: MacBook or MacBook Pro
Trial: None

ATPM RATINGS
VERY NICE

I remember when ballistic nylon was novel. I ordered a briefcase made of ballistic nylon made by a little shop in Vermont that advertised in the back of the *New Yorker* magazine. The proprietors were artisans who handmade their goods, and they even accommodated my special request for a set of straps that would allow me to wear the briefcase like a backpack so I could use it while riding a motorcycle.

Nowadays, ballistic nylon is common. The little shop in Vermont is no longer advertising in the back of the *New Yorker* magazine, and presumably it is out of business. Regular nylon is passed off as ballistic nylon, so even if the genuine material is still durable it doesn't have the same cachet anymore.

Yet there are companies that use ballistic nylon to produce superior products. Booq is one of them. I've acquired more laptop bags, cases, and sleeves than I can count, and there are only few companies that show the same quality as Booq. It is innovative, serious in commitment to top-notch design, and boasts very good customer service. It is a good fit, literally and figuratively, for Apple. Tumi was once great, but it seems to have remade itself as a company more concerned with fashion than design, changing shapes and colors every season. Brenthaven remains reliable, and its backpack offerings are excellent choices if the independent sleeve carrying option is not important and if the simpler design is appealing.

So I've liked Booq products since I began using the Vyper sleeve for a PowerBook. A search of the Web persuaded me there didn't seem to be anything better than the Booq Python backpack on the market. Like a kid studying the Sears "Wishbook" before Christmas, I looked at the Booq Web site obsessively before I finally decided for certain I wanted to order the Booq Python system.

When it arrived, I was not disappointed. The Python has two main compartments, plus a detachable daypack with its own removable carrying strap. The front compartment—i.e., that closest to the wearer's back—is thin and meant for the laptop to slide into. It holds a Booq-brand Vyper case[2], but it has enough tolerance to accept other cases. The middle compartment is more capacious. It has numerous internal pockets—the profusion of pockets distinguishes this backpack. I have never seen any bag of any nature with more pockets. It will take some time to figure out a system to ensure the optimal use of these spaces. The interior is lined in a thin nylon fabric. There also is a key clip dangling from the top of the middle compartment.

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[1] http://booqbags.com/s.nl/it.A/id.231/.f

[2] http://www.atpm.com/11.08/vyper.shtml

There are two side compartments, with a zip-up portion and a pocket. And there are two little compartments on the sides of the back, to the left and the right of the detachable daypack. There is an almost hidden pocket that is just big enough to hold a few magazines, hidden directly on the back, with a zipper on one side.

The backpack comes in multiple configurations. There are sizes to fit any Mac notebook. Another option is to order it as I did, in the system configuration. That package includes the backpack with the Vyper sleeve, plus the new Anaconda case for an iPod or similarly sized device. The laptop compartment is meant to take a sleeve of some sort. It might be possible to drop a naked laptop into it, but that doesn't seem to be the best practice on a regular basis. I've been using the backpack with my old Titanium PowerBook, while my MacBook Pro is in the shop. It works fine with a JR Hill leather sleeve over the Titanium PowerBook, and it'd likely work fine with any PowerBook or MacBook. The Vyper case, incidentally, is terrific even on its own. The iPod case attaches with Velcro on one of shoulder straps.

The construction is sturdy throughout. All the zippers are reinforced and have dual pulls. The detachable dayback and the middle compartment have a nicely done rubber-reinforced slit to allow cables to pass through, allowing you to have an iPod or other device inside the backpack and run headphones or other cords out. The middle compartment has an additional zip-open flap at the top to allow quick access without fully unzipping the sides. The straps are wide and modestly padded. There is a sternum strap and a waist strap, along with a carry handle covered with what seems to be leather-like material.

There are only two issues with the Booq system, one likely of general interest and one likely a personal concern.

The first issue is the padding level in the laptop carrying compartment. It may be my particular paranoia, but I prefer slightly more padding than is built into the bottom. (The Brenthaven sleeve system[3] seems superior at least in the last iteration that I owned.) Any problem is easily remedied, however, by inserting a thin strip of foam at the bottom of the area. I always save the high-quality foam that comes with products, and it was easy enough to rummage in the closet and find a piece to fit.

The second issue is the sheer bulk of the backpack and its detailing (a few plastic orange tabs with the Booq logo and a bit of orange piping). Carrying it around, I feel as if I look like a geek headed on a polar expedition. A person who has a job in a more formal setting may find this backpack isn't businesslike enough. Of course, almost any backpack makes me look like a student (for better or worse, time will cure this.)

Perhaps the best endorsement of the Booq backpack is from other observers. My nephew, who also has a couple of Apple machines of his own, looked at it with admiration during a recent family get-together. That is enough to demonstrate its functionality and stylishness. After all, it isn't easy to impress a nephew.

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[3]http://www.atpm.com/11.08/brenthaven.shtml

SWF Movie Player 2.0
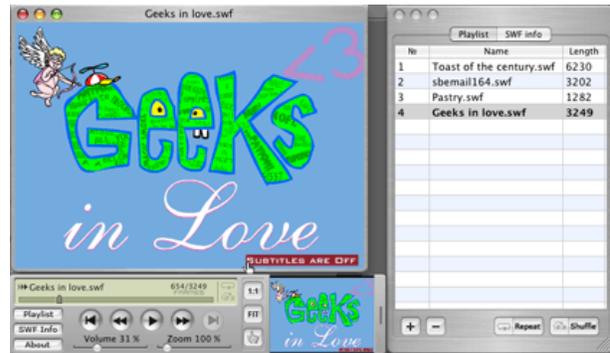
Developer: Eltima Software[1]
Price: $20
Requirements: 500 MHz Mac with Mac OS X 10.2.7, 128 MB of RAM. Universal[2].
Recommended: 1 GHz G4, 512 MB of RAM.
Trial: Feature-limited (free version[3])

As a popular, low-bandwidth movie format, Adobe's Flash[4] shows up everywhere on the Web. Typically, sites embed Flash files as ads or navigation. Creative types make Flash movies, games, or other interactive entertainment. SWF Movie Player helps you play back all of them, independent of your Web browser.

In simplest terms, the application gives you control where Web sites put restrictions. You usually can't save movies or shut off the ads without disabling Flash in some fashion. File saving, an important feature of the pro version, lets you make one download and then watch it over and over. You can frame-by-frame through the file, zoom in, and do many other things basic SWF players don't.

Installation and Getting Started

It's a simple matter to download the package and install SWF Movie Player into your Applications folder. Open it to see the Playlist, Viewer, and Movie Control windows.

[1] http://mac.eltima.com/swf-player-benefits.html
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3] http://mac.eltima.com/freeflashplayer.html
[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macromedia_Flash

The control windows in action.

If you don't already have a Flash file in mind, just search. "Funny flash movies" should turn up a bunch of Google hits. Established sites like Weebl and Bob[5], OddTodd[6], and Homestar Runner[7] are also excellent choices.

Playback Features

To view a file separately from the page, copy the page's URL. In SWF Movie Player, choose "Browse URL" from the File menu. Paste the URL, choose "Browse," and wait a bit. The application shows the SWF files found on your page and a preview window.
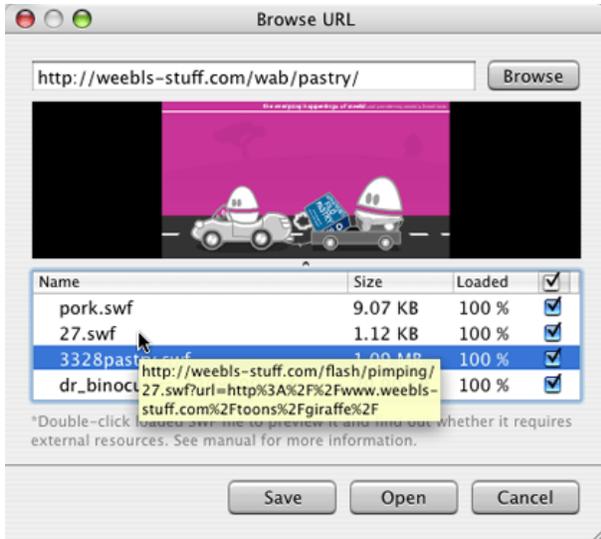
[5] http://www.weebls-stuff.com
[6] http://oddtodd.com
[7] http://www.homestarrunner.com

A closer look at the pie box.

Double-click a listed file to watch its preview. "Save" adds it to the current playlist and asks you where to save it. "Open" puts it in the player window.

Weebl brings pastry back.

The playback window resembles most movie players, with a progress bar that counts frames and VCR-style controls. Pause at any point to resize the window up to full-screen, pan around with the hand, or zoom in on details.

Zoom works very well in Flash, as details scale smoothly to any resolution. Slide the zoom bar on the controls and move the pane in the right-hand preview window.
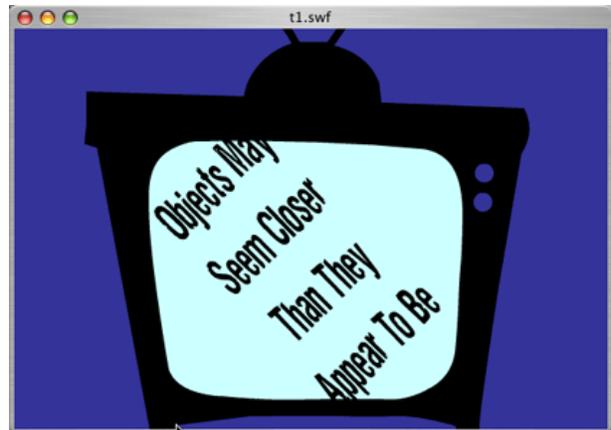
Drag along the playback bar to go frame-by-frame. Hollywood animators often hide things in single frames, and their Flash counterparts are no different. Think you saw something out of the corner of your eye? You probably did.

Frame-by-frame picks out an odd notice.

SWF Movie Player also supports interactivity, which many people use in their Flash movies or games. Use the mouse in the playback window to make choices or do anything else the file offers.

An interactive quiz from a Thugs on Film movie review.

Saving files

The player's pro version will save any file from the "Browse" window. This is especially useful for something with a limited Internet lifespan, like a news broadcast.

Will SWF Movie Player save files from YouTube and similar video sites? (YouTube uses a format related to Flash, called "FLV.") Supposedly you can. Check question #1 in the application's Help and follow the instructions. I say "supposedly" because my player would save, but not play, files from YouTube. It could be particular to my system, so your mileage may vary.

Annoyances

At a few points during (what seemed to me) normal use, small problems popped up. In one case, the controls window failed to redraw properly, leaving an empty space. Sometimes the "Browse" window took a long time to load files from a page, even compared to previous attempts on the same page. Other than trouble with FLV playback, the problems resolved after closing and reopening the player.

Summary

Watching Flash files away from a browser frees you from site ads and other visual clutter. Better still, the extra playback controls are leaps and bounds ahead of the typical Web experience. So is SWF Movie Player worth the registration fee? It depends significantly on the user. If you love to catalog favorite files, have a slow Internet connection, or otherwise want a local storehouse of files, it serves the purpose well.

While I like the file save option, frame-by-frame controls, and zoom window, occasional playback problems put speed bumps in my enjoyment. I'll pick and choose how I use it now and look forward to improved versions in the future.

Alternatives For SWF and FLV Download and Playback

Some people just want Flash file download and playback, without this application's extra features. For download, consider the Firefox extension VideoDownloader[8]. For FLV playback, try the Wimpy FLV Player[9]. Both are no-frills and free, so they don't have zoom, playlists, or other features of a more complete program like SWF Movie Player.

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[8]http://videodownloader.net
[9]http://www.wimpyplayer.com/products/wimpy_standalone_flv_player.html

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is *ATPM*?

About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or "e-zine." ATPM was created to celebrate the personal computing experience. For us this means the most personal of all personal computers—the Apple Macintosh. About This Particular Macintosh is intended to be about your Macintosh, our Macintoshes, and the creative, personal ideas and experiences of everyone who uses a Mac. We hope that we will continue to be faithful to our mission.

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

ATPM is looking to add more regular reviewers to our staff. Though all positions with *About This Particular Macintosh* are volunteer, reviewing is a great way to share your product knowledge and experience with fellow members of the Macintosh community. If you're interested, contact ATPM's Reviews Editor, Paul Fatula[1].

How Can I Subscribe to *ATPM*?

Visit the subscriptions page[2].

Which Format Is Best for Me?

- The **Online Webzine** edition is for people who want to view ATPM in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to ATPM back issues and other Web pages.

- The **Offline Webzine** is an HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a Mac OS X disk image. The graphics, content, and navigation elements are the same as with the Online Webzine, but you can view it without being connected to the Internet. It requires a Web browser.

- The **Print PDF** edition is saved in Adobe PDF format. It has a two-column layout with smaller text and higher-resolution graphics that are optimized for printing. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Apple's Preview or Adobe Reader on Macintosh or

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[1] mailto:reviews@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/subscribe

Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

- The **Screen PDF** edition is also saved in Adobe PDF format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen.

How Can I Submit Cover Art?

We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for ATPM, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to editor@atpm.com for more information.

How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

Got a comment about an article that you read in ATPM? Is there something you'd like us to write about in a future issue? We'd love to hear from you. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. We often publish the e-mail that comes our way.

Do You Answer Technical Support Questions?

Of course (although we cannot promise to answer every inquiry). E-mail our Help Department at help@atpm.com.

How Can I Contribute to *ATPM*?

There are several sections of ATPM to which readers frequently contribute:

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

This is one of our most successful spaces and one of our favorite places. We think of it as kind of the ATPM "guest room." This is where we will publish that sentimental Macintosh story that you promised yourself you would one day write. It's that special place in ATPM that's specifically designated for your stories. We'd really like to hear from you. Several

Segments contributors have gone on to become ATPM columnists. Send your stuff to editor@atpm.com.

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Technojargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how enthusiastic they are about recommending it to others. If you have a new piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review, contact our reviews editor at reviews@atpm.com for more information.

Shareware Reviews

Most of us have been there; we find that special piece of shareware that significantly improves the quality our Macintosh life and we wonder why the entire world hasn't heard about it. Now here's the chance to tell them! Simply let us know by writing up a short review for our shareware section. Send your reviews to reviews@atpm.com.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index[3] for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

ATPM uses the following ratings (in order from best to worst): Excellent, Very Nice, Good, Okay, Rotten. Products rated Good or better are ones that we recommend. Okay products get the job done. We recommend avoiding Rotten products.

Will You Review My Product?

If you or your company has a product that you'd like to see reviewed, send a copy our way. We're always looking for interesting pieces of software to try out. Contact reviews@atpm.com for shipping information. You can send press releases to news@atpm.com.

Where Can I Find Back Issues of *ATPM*?

Back issues[4] of ATPM, dating since April 1995, are available in DOCMaker stand-alone format and as PDF. In addition, all issues since ATPM 2.05 (May 1996) are available in HTML format.

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[3]http://www.atpm.com/reviews/
[4]http://www.atpm.com/Back/

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

We hope by now that you've found what you're looking for (We can't imagine there's something else about ATPM that you'd like to know.). But just in case you've read this far (We appreciate your tenacity.) and still haven't found that little piece of information about ATPM that you came here to find, please feel free to e-mail us at (You guessed it.) editor@atpm.com.