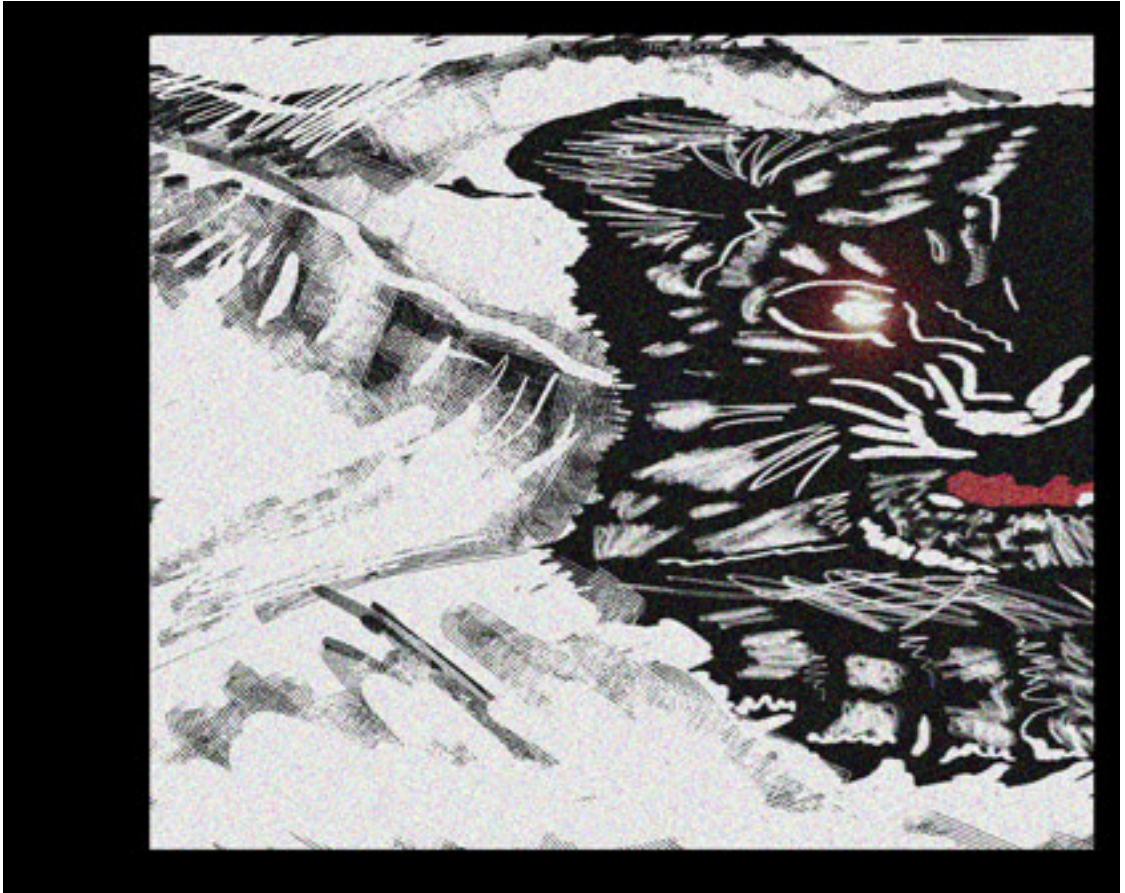


# ATPM

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# Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, [rleitao@atpm.com](mailto:rleitao@atpm.com)

Welcome to the July issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We begin this issue with focus on the pending release of iPhone 2.0 and the iPhone 3G. These two items, one a software and service solution and the other a hardware handset, were points of attention for the keynote address by Apple CEO Steve Jobs at the annual conference for Apple developers. The 2008 WWDC conference was held last month at the Moscone Center in San Francisco, CA. We mention the location of the conference as an aside. From the convention center in Northern California, what was said during the keynote address was seen and heard around the world.

## MobileMe, Mobile You!

Evidencing how much the personal computing world has changed and will continue to change, Apple formally introduced at WWDC its enhanced cloud computing solution called MobileMe. This is the latest iteration of a service that had its humble beginnings as iTools several years ago. iTools was introduced in 2000 as a free service for Mac owners. In 2002 it was rebranded as .Mac with an annual subscription cost. Taking the existing .Mac service a few steps beyond today's model, Apple is rebranding the service again as MobileMe. Most notably, MobileMe provides Web services for iPhone and iPod touch owners while enhancing the MobileMe functionality for users of Windows-based PCs.

MobileMe debuts on July 11, 2008. Subscribers to Apple's .Mac service will be automatically upgraded to MobileMe at no additional cost. The annual subscription fee will not change from .Mac's \$99 per year. A Family pack is available for an annual subscription fee of \$149. Following the transition from .Mac to MobileMe, previous .Mac subscribers will retain use of their mac.com e-mail addresses. Presumably mac.com e-mail addresses will no longer be available following the introduction of MobileMe. Those desiring a mac.com address might wish to consider subscribing to .Mac in the final days before MobileMe's commercial debut.

## iPhone 2.0

If there's one point of confusion among members of the public concerning Apple's new iPhone, it is misunderstanding that iPhone 2.0 and the iPhone 3G are somehow the same. Indeed, owners of currently available iPhone handsets will have access to virtually all of the software and service upgrades to be packaged and released as iPhone 2.0 when the 3G iPhone is introduced later this month. The obvious differences (among a small number of items) between today's handset the 3G models are the retail cost to the consumer, the handset's size and weight, and the 3G and GPS capabilities. However, integration with MobileMe, all of the "push" features, as well as applications from third parties that will soon debut in the iPhone's application store will be available to owners of current iPhone handsets.

The retail price of the iPhone to consumers is being significantly reduced not because Apple is charging less, but because AT&T will significantly subsidize the cost for consumers over the life of the service contract. iPhone 3G owners will pay more per month for unlimited data service than what's charged to current iPhone users. Apple and AT&T have revamped the revenue-sharing formula between the companies for the 3G handsets. In other words, buyers of the 3G handset will pay more despite the lower initial retail cost for the handset when combined with 3G services over a two-year contract period than current iPhone handset owners will pay under the original arrangement.

## **iPhone 3G**

It's almost here: a new iPhone with 3G capabilities. Few times in this writer's recollection has a specific feature been so vocally and insistently demanded by potential customers of an Apple product. Outside the US, the cellular service and usage environment can be vastly different than the one we experience in the States. The new iPhone will be global in reach, and for millions of potential customers it will become not only their cell phone but also their primary personal computer in a diminutive size.

Service agreements with carriers in dozen of countries and regions have been signed by Apple. The new iPhone will be released to the world in quantities measured in millions of units, and soon after release it will be heralded as the most popular smart phone used by consumers around the world.

There's one aspect of the iPhone that has garnered little attention outside the community of venture capitalists and software developers. The iPhone at its core is a Mac and shares in essence the same operating system with the iMac and other Macintosh products. Software engineers developing for the iPhone can easily apply similar resources to develop software products for the Mac. The hundreds of millions of dollars being invested by third parties in iPhone software and service solutions is a boon to the Macintosh platform as well as the iPhone. Development activity for the Mac and the iPhone may soon be measured in billions of dollars as the iPhone eventually reaches tens of millions of units sold and as the Mac continues to gain ground in the home and the workplace. This brings us...

## **Back to the Mac**

It's the Macintosh that drives Apple's revenue and earnings, and it's the Mac that continues to push innovation in the PC space. While June's developer conference focused primarily on the iPhone, Snow Leopard, Apple's next upgrade for Mac OS X, was formally announced. To be released about a year from now, Mac OS X 10.6 will pack substantial under-the-hood performance enhancements as well incorporate the release of QuickTime X. You'll be hearing more about this cool-named cat in future issues of ATPM. Meanwhile, while the weather warms, please enjoy our July release.

Our July issue includes:

## **MacMuser: Me Too**

Mark Tennent gets in touch with his inner “me” as he ponders the news from this year’s WWDC event.

## **Next Actions: iPhone Task Management a Go-go**

Along with his updated master list of GTD applications, Ed Eubanks Jr. discusses GTD on smart phones—the iPhone in particular.

## **Photoshop For the Curious: Screen Replacements—When Reality Isn’t Real Enough**

In this month’s *Photoshop For the Curious*, find out how to make the image on a computer monitor or television pop and not appear burned out when the monitor is photographed.

## **How To: Live Well With a NAS Drive**

Sylvester Roque returns with ideas on real-world use of a NAS drive.

## **Desktop Pictures: Vehicular Graphics**

Reader Harry Torres provides this month’s desktop pictures featuring stylized renderings of vehicles.

## **Cartoon: Cortland**

Cortland’s foes celebrate his vanquishment, and reminisce on how they got to that point. . .

## **Review: EyeTV 3.0.2**

Paul Fatula reviews Elgato’s EyeTV 3.0.2 TV tuner program, with an eye to deciding whether ther ther ther ther ther ther <force restart> owners of an earlier version are well-advised up upgrade.

## **Review: iPhone Superguide**

*Macworld’s* iPhone Superguide is a one-stop shop for a wide range of iPhone information, both for new owners and the user who obtained an iPhone the first day of its release.

## **Review: Spell-Jam**

M-O-N-O-T-O-N-O-U-S.

## **Review: Wii Transfer 2.5.2**

Accessing music, movies, and pictures in your computer library from a Nintendo Wii console using that nifty Wii Remote could be a lot of fun. Lee Bennett takes a look at whether Wii Transfer is up to the challenge.





## Apple Versus Dell

The “Dell Way” is shorthand for execution, execution, execution. “Go do it” is another one of these Dell-isms that suffuse right through the organization.

The net result is that Dell will reward short-termism at the expense of an overall plan.

When Michael Dell came back to run the company, I remember scoffing at his statement of intent, which was, basically, to be better at what they were already doing. As you rightly say, you can only trim so much fat before hitting muscle 'n bone.

The number of times I heard references to the one good idea he had—way back, 20 years ago—suggests that he has no clue other than to keep doing what he knows: assemble commodity PCs.

In that sense, Dell is not in the same market as Apple, meaning they're not really competitors any longer.

—*ex-Deller*

## SpacePig

Version 1.0.3 of SpacePig permits registered owners of the game to play the full registered version when not connected to the internet. So now you can enjoy SpacePig on the road (albeit without the music).

—*Paul Fatula*

## How To: Find the Right NAS Drive

I'd like to reiterate the comment made about file names. I bought a NAS drive believing I'd be able to use it to back up a small network of Macs. It networked OK if a little clunkily, but unfortunately the many and varied problems with historic file names I encountered meant that the drive was virtually unusable.

If you are starting out from scratch, clearly you can decide to follow the basic file naming rules that most drives will recognise. But if you already have a ton of stuff on your hard drive, named the Mac way, i.e. any way you please, you will find your backup falls over at the first hurdle.

In a fit of total frustration—and lack of the knowledge to do otherwise—I ended up reformatting my drive and now use it as a rather expensive stand-alone.

Be warned!

—*John Birdsall*



There's a [great program](#) that can fix all those un-Windows-able names called A Better Finder Rename. It's can even do batch renames.

—*Aaron Pressman*

## **Mac to My Back**

Thanks for the reminder about this important component of the .Mac service. When needed for troubleshooting or accessing remote files, it sure is a handy feature.

I'm looking forward to the anticipated enhancements in .Mac as Apple further integrates the functionality of its different digital devices through this annual subscription service.

Last week one of my associates used Back to My Mac to access a Mac at a remote location to troubleshoot its wireless network. It saved travel time and the need to try and walk someone through the fixes over the phone.

That one incident made the year's subscription cost of .Mac more than worthwhile.

—*Robert Paul Leitao*

Although I run an FTP server in-house (with the excellent CrushFTP 4) I still need the public folder in my iDisk. My ADSL line can send at a maximum 90kps (860kbps) so downloading from me is a slow experience.

It's easier for me to upload to iDisk for people to collect from there. But I wish Apple would let us use FTP rather than WebDAV, which slows to a trickle if you aren't careful.

—*Mark Tennent*



It's amazing how Apple takes things that only über-geeks can do and makes it to where *anyone* can do it. Truly stealing fire from the gods.

—*Gerald*

## **Photoshop For the Curious**

I just wanted to say, thank you for this site. I am an infant with Photoshop, but I believe that with this detailed and easy-to-understand Web site I will be able to create a master piece and delicate it to you my friend.

—*Anne from Australia*

## **Time Capsule (1 TB)**

I like Time Capsule. My experiences have been a bit different than the ones detailed in this review.

I've been using it as a wireless backup for five Macs in my home, and although a few early glitches occurred, it's now working quite well and provides peace of mind our Macs are backed up each hour.

As mentioned above, as a wireless router the Time Capsule is top-notch. Migrating my household's AirPort gear to 802.11n has provided a noticeable increase in wireless networking speed and range. Time Capsule is an 802.11n AirPort device.

Anyone buying a Time Capsule should do the first backup on each Mac via an Ethernet cable rather than wirelessly. It saves time, and it saves hassles.

Most of my early problems were solved by connecting to the Time Capsule on each Mac via of the Finder's "Go" menu before commencing the first backup. Making the connection to Time Capsule's hard drive before the backup began via of Time Machine reduced issues to almost nil.

The `.sparsebundle` format used by Apple for Time Machine backups can create issues if backups are not done regularly. Time Machine is not designed to be used only sporadically or infrequently. Time Capsule is the not the culprit in many of the cases when backups go awry.

While I don't suggest Time Capsule is "perfect," I do believe it accomplishes its assigned tasks and makes backing up a household full of Macs much easier and more practical.

—*Robert Paul Leitao*



I had some of the same problems as this reviewer. I've had my 1 TB Time Capsule for almost three months. About three weeks into using the Time Capsule, the disk image would not mount no matter what I did. It was frustrating to have to delete the backup and spend an entire day with my MacBook tethered by Ethernet to complete the new backup. Also, I have not been able to use the 7.3.1 firmware update because it would make the connection spotty. I'm using the 7.3 version just fine. I don't know if the latest Mac OS X 10.5.3 update fixed this issue, but I'm not going to gamble another day of backing up to find out.

—*Michael Moon*



Two days after I bought a 1 TB Time Capsule, my new MacBook hard drive died. I biked down to the Apple Store, had them replace the drive (free, of course, under warranty), biked back home, asked Time Capsule to restore the drive, went off dinner and a play, and when I came back five or so hours later, all 100 GB (from a 160 GB hard drive) had been restored. Whew! My last CD backup had been a week earlier, so saving me that week of work alone was worth the price of Time Capsule.

So far, for me, Time Capsule has done exactly what I expected when I bought it: automatically wirelessly and reliably backing up my MacBook and my wife's PowerBook, plus taking over as our AirPort router, allowing us to use our old AirPort Express to beam music from our computers to our stereo using AirTunes.

—bc



I purchased a 500 GB Time Capsule about a month ago, with the hopes that it would live up to its hype. To this day, the Time Capsule will not stay mounted as an external drive. Backups are working, but I would also like to use this for iTunes and iPhoto sources to save room on my main MacBook drive. All software is up to date, by the way. False advertising by Apple, as far as I can tell.

—Rex Handle

## **Outliner User Interfaces**

I appreciated Ted's response back in 2004, but yes, we're all stuck with the same problem.

I'm still using Shadow Plan on my Palm OS 4.1 Clie SJ30 in my botany/restoration field work.

Everything I use seems to need an outliner view that would work seamlessly to exchange files.

I want to be able to view my Firefox bookmark collection in outline view, and organize them.

I want to make the labels I create for my botany field work photographs usable in outline form (with links to the images).

Etcetera, etcetera.

Is this just a way of thinking about/viewing/organizing the world that's done by only relatively few people?

I recall reading about the "House of Memory" method of recalling information (imagine a large house/castle, imagine each room holds some of what you want, imagine each room has places for storing each idea. . .)—from before the invention of movable type.

That was an outline format.

Where'd it go?

—*Hank Roberts*



I'm desperate! I just bought a MacBook Pro with Leopard on it only to discover that AppleWorks doesn't work!

I have done everything that I have read on the Web. My dictionaries aren't being recognized.

I have literally thousands of outlines with custom formatting. I am cringing at the thought of having to convert all of those files and losing the hours of labor it took to create them.

What software would you recommend?

—*Ray*

Gosh, I wish I had a magic bullet. I just don't know what to do with this.

If it were me, I think I would do something expensive, like going to Classic, jumping from what you have to FrameMaker+SGML, which I think can be done. Then once in SGML/XML, using their export tool to target whatever new outliner you prefer.

Write us and tell us what you did.

—*Ted Goranson*

## **Wings3D 0.98.34**

Cool, but please tell how you did all the apple things. I'd especially like to know about the chrome one.

—*ilikepie*

My Apple-logo-style 3D apple took very little time to create from the spherical primitive that you see in the first figure in the review. I subdivided the mesh to get a finer structure, then gradually reduced/increased the diameters to get an overall apple shape. I had a silhouette of the logo in the background to assist in the shaping. Then (I think) I created the top and bottom dimples with the Wings3D magnet tool, although there are lots of other mesh manipulation tools that will get you there. Just try them all!

The UV mapping was pretty simple as well. The leaf had its own UV map cut along the edge, and then I simply superimposed a leaf image onto the map in an image processor.

For the 3D apple, I cut along the edge of the “bite” and mapped that separated, then cut along the back side of apple (away from view) to create a flat map and hide the resulting ugly texture seam (I didn’t making seamless textures, though you can easily). The textures are any images you can find; I found pictures of tiger and leopard fur online and scaled appropriately by trial and error. Getting the right look with texture maps is fussy and can’t be explained easily. You just have to be patient and persevere.

Russell Brown has a [good tutorial](#) that shows how you can skin a 3D model right inside Adobe CS3 Extended. Just scroll down about half way in the list.

The chrome texture was a freebie I found on the Web, somewhere, and in fact I also used it to create the chromed man on the June 2008 [cover](#) of ATPM. There are numerous Web sites that offer free 3D textures, so happy hunting!

—Chris Dudar

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## Me Too

The only problem with Apple is that they just can't do tacky. What was the first thing that came to mind when they announced mac.com's name change to "MobileMe" Mini-Me of course. Unless they were thinking of the Britpop one-hit-wonders Me Me Me or the iTunes track of the same name sporting an "Explicit" warning tag.

Where did Apple get this title from? Steve Jobs was quoted in *Business Week* May 2005:

It's really hard to design products by focus groups. A lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them.

This time a little focusing might have gone a long way. It must have seemed a good idea for customers to have an e-mail address of [yourname@me.com](mailto:yourname@me.com). Thankfully, the old [yourname@mac.com](mailto:yourname@mac.com) addresses will still work.

## Get a Good Licking

Jobs also commented on a NeXT programmer's work in 2000: "You've baked a really lovely cake, but then you've used dog shit for frosting." Er...yes. One hopes he also remembers his comment of the same year "We made the buttons on the screen look so good you'll want to lick them."

iDisk's 20 GB of online storage will be nice to have, as long as the upload speed picks up from the dribble its WebDAV front end currently offers even via dedicated applications such as [Transmit](#), [Goliath](#), or [Cyberduck](#). As it is, we seldom need more than a few gigabytes storage, and uploading is often a painful, all-weekend experience. Most frustrating is when a 700 MB file's upload times out after 699 MB has reached Cupertino (or wherever they go to).

## Gimme Gimme

As for the rest of the 2008 WWDC, it was all a bit of an anti-climax. No details on Snow Leopard yet, so no excuse to get a new Intel-powered Mac, either. iPhone 3G looks lustworthy, but who wants to get locked into a two-year contract? Apparently the new iPhone will fight phone unlockers with contracts activated before the iPhones leave the shop. Unless, that is, the EC Competition Czars can "do something" about it.

Many of us want the device but have no need for hundreds of minutes a month airtime. That's more than we use all year, but it doesn't mean we wouldn't like an iPhone. Come on Steve, let us have them, too.





# Next Actions

by Ed Eubanks, Jr.

## iPhone Task Management a Go-go

Ubiquitous capture is an important principle for GTD; if you're going to truly keep your mind empty, you can't expect to house tasks and ideas *only* on your computer—unless you literally stay in front of it all the time. The PDA began to sing its swan song when the iPod emerged in popularity, and I know only two people who only carry a plain PDA anymore. The more retro among us will swear by their [Hipster PDA](#), but most of the rest of us want something that will give at least partial synchronization with our Macs.

Smartphones obviously emerged as useful options, and many Mac users found a functional, if not perfect, option with Palm devices such as the Treo line. BlackBerrys are also viable options, of course, but BlackBerrys can be difficult to configure, and Palm stopped supporting their devices as synced with Mac OS X 10.5.

Meanwhile, the iPhone is the Mac lover's dream device and is only getting better. While some Mac users have decided they are happy with their Palms and BlackBerrys, most either have migrated to the iPhone or, I suspect, plan or hope to do so.

### It's Coming

With the announcement of the iPhone Software Development Kit (SDK) at January's Macworld, rumors, announcements, and wish lists began to emerge all over the Web about which task management utilities would be introduced for the iPhone. Frankly, I was astonished (and disappointed) that the original iPhone didn't have task management functions, and equally surprised that an OS update released with OS X 10.5 "Leopard" (which itself introduced some new features for task management, as I mentioned [in my last full column](#)) didn't include task management for iPhone, either.

Having trumpeted all of the features and tweaks for iPhone OS 2.0 (also announced at Macworld in January), Apple still had not announced plans for native task management on iPhone. Well, I take that back: if you dig down into your iPhone Mail folders and mailboxes, you'll find a folder labeled "Apple Mail To-do," which allows you to *view* tasks created/synced with Mail on your desktop, but you *cannot* edit them or create new ones. What is more, while these tasks do sync through IMAP, tasks created in Mail are stored "On My Mac" by default, and you have to force them into an IMAP account by dragging and dropping. Doing so will cause Mail to create the missing folders on the server to accommodate tasks, so it's possible to exercise rudimentary task tracking on your iPhone this way—but it is far from adequate, and far from elegant.

In other words, Apple's native solution is, at best, a task *tracking* solution, not a task management solution. So most of us have turned our hopes to third-party developers for a

robust solution, in much the same way that many find iCal a useful piece of the puzzle but not a complete solution for task management on their Macs.

And the rumors and announcements have not disappointed. Developers who are active in developing task management applications for the Mac have openly discussed plans for their iPhone applications as well. This is especially true in the GTD-specific application world, likely because universal capture is essential in the GTD system, while it's somewhat more optional in other methods. EasyTask Manager, Ghost Action, iGTD, Midnight Inbox, OmniFocus, and Things all apparently will have iPhone applications.

## Already Possible

Of course, GTD on the iPhone is already readily available. No, not by jailbreaking or otherwise hacking your iPhone, but through Web applications. So many developers (and others) scoffed at Apple's announcement of the first iPhone SDK, which was basically "whatever you already do for Web 2.0 will work on iPhone." Yet the creative Web applications offered by so many developers has left me wondering why, in many cases, I would want a locally installed iPhone application (taking up a precious portion of my 8 GB) when I can have effectively the same functions in a Web application. Perhaps the starkest example of this is NewsGator, which is already so close to the function announced for the iPhone version of NetNewsWire that I doubt I'll install the latter, as I don't frequently need to operate in an "offline" status. But I digress.

Of the GTD applications out there, currently only ActionTastic and EasyTask Manager have their own Web-based versions. (Actually, ActionTastic just has the intentions of one.) But the developer of Frictionless has announced his intentions to support sync with ToodleDo, and TaskPaper supports working with [Tasko](#), which I'll add to the list next month. The advantage of these options, of course, is that they open the door for non-iPhone users to be GTD-compliant as well.

Moreover, many of the Web-based applications mentioned below have an iPhone-specific page that is formatted for optimal viewing in Mobile Safari. Most of the rest at least have a "mobile" version that is likewise quite iPhone-friendly. So some have already had a virtually seamless solution in place: they simply use a Web application on both the desktop and the iPhone (perhaps using a site-specific browser such as [Fluid](#) to give the Web application a more localized feel and function). In fact, if such a system is adequate for your needs, then I commend them to you. It would be a shame for someone to feel that he or she *must* switch to an iPhone application from a Web application simply because such will soon be available.

## What Will We See?

So it may not be necessary for some, but for those of us who are eagerly anticipating the OS update primarily because of our task management needs, what will we see in these iPhone applications that the developers are promising?

The Omni Group has done the best job of building the buzz around theirs, much as they did with OmniFocus itself. Shortly after the SDK was announced, they promised an OmniFocus

companion application for iPhone and have since promised that it will be available within a day of the launch of the App Store. Meanwhile, the Omni Group has built [a preview page](#), where you may glimpse screenshots, and [scored an award](#) from Apple as “Best iPhone Productivity Application” at this year’s Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC).

Unfortunately, the Omni Group is the only developer to have this sort of transparency. While that is typical for them—they usually are more forthcoming about their projects in development than most—I can’t help wondering if it is because they are the only ones with something truly ready, or nearly so, for release. (Ironically, it seems like so many of these companies focused on creating GTD applications can’t quite seem to get it done.)

So we’ll have to base our guesses on the OmniFocus for iPhone example. That said, I think it’s safe to say that we can extrapolate some reasonable guesses of what such applications would have to offer, anyway—even without the example of OmniFocus for iPhone.

It seems obvious to me that every iPhone task manager will need to sync with iCal, if not with a desktop version of itself. Tasks must include context, due date, and probably priority (though that is not an essentially GTD concept). The better ones will have the capacity to view by context or due date, or both. It will be easy to create new tasks as well as view existing ones, without much navigation. The interface will conform with the rest of the iPhone conventions, using many of the paradigms that Apple has already established for multi-touch interfaces. And smart developers will make it possible to sync through a dock or cable *and* through a wireless connection (and optimally through the EDGE/3G connection as well as WiFi). Great GTD applications for iPhone will be perfectly adequate and fully functional on their own but will connect with a desktop application as well.

I think it will be tempting to add in other stuff: tags, perhaps, or an attempt at integrating with contacts or calendars in a more complicated fashion. I think these would be mistakes: they will clutter the interface and not add substantially useful tools or features. As great as it is, the iPhone is not a computer replacement; it is a companion device (for now, at least!). Give me something that captures well and lets me check off what I’ve completed; I’ll handle the more complex stuff on my Mac.

If you’ve taken a peek, you’ll note that all that I’ve listed above is exhibited in the OmniFocus for iPhone previews. This is right; the Omni Group is a capable bunch of smart developers who understand what Apple does, so it’s not a stretch to imagine that they will get it right on their iPhone application, too. The Omni Group has also promised a “location-aware” feature, wherein you can view contexts based on your iPhone’s ability to pinpoint your location. This is an intriguing feature, but mostly fluff: it’s dumbing down instead of simplifying, and that’s rarely helpful. Plus, it will only really work for folks who buy the GPS-enabled iPhones, since the cell-tower triangulation is modestly accurate, at best.

The iPhone side of the GTD equation will explode in the next few weeks, and it will be exciting to watch. More so, it will be exciting to see how our productivity stands to increase further with its advent.

## Master List

Anxiety and DeJumble are new additions to the list this month. As I mentioned last month, I removed Vortex from the list, as it is no longer available.

As you know, I strive every time I edit to be comprehensive in this list; I'm sure that I have missed one or two, perhaps even your favorite. I welcome feedback on the list and invite you to alert me to those applications that deserve a spot on it.

## Locally Installed GTD Applications

### Action Tracker



**Developer:** Mac Productive

**Current Version:** 1.3.1

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** FileMaker Pro (free Runtime version available)

**Distinguishing Features:** Also organizes notes, contacts, and other information related to projects.

**News:** None

### ActionTastic



**Developer:** Jon Crosby

**Current Version:** 0.9.3

**Price:** Free, open-source

**Development Status:** Beta

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** Yes

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Processing engine; iPod sync; Mail and MailTags compatibility.

**News:** None

### **EasyTask Manager**



**Developer:** Orionbelt.com

**Current Version:** 2.0

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** Yes

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Windows version available; automatic advance of uncompleted due tasks to “today.”

**News:** Version 2.0 recently released, with iPhone Web-app interface fully implemented (and an iPhone app promised with the coming firmware update).

### **Frictionless**



**Developer:** Twin Forces

**Current Version:** 2.0d15

**Price:** Free, open-source  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** No  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes  
**Web-app Sync:** No  
**Print Lists:** Yes  
**Required Applications:** None  
**Distinguishing Features:** Quick-entry box; fuzzy repeated actions.  
**News:** 2.0d15+ released with Leopard compatibility.

### [Ghost Action](#)



**Developer:** Ghost Park Software  
**Current Version:** 1.1  
**Price:** \$20  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** Yes  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No  
**Web-app Sync:** No  
**Print Lists:** Yes  
**Required Applications:** None  
**Distinguishing Features:** .Mac syncing (without iCal running); PDA/iPod syncing.  
**News:** None

### [iGTD](#)



**Developer:** Bartek  
**Current Version:** 1.4.5.6  
**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Compatible with Address Book, Mail, iSync, and MailTags, as well as Web browser support, Path Finder, Yojimbo, MacJournal, and others; quick-entry feature; simple yet powerful interface.

**News:** Unfortunately, it looks like no news is good news here. iGTD has been one of the most popular (and powerful) GTD applications around, and many feel it is/was the only one that could truly take on OmniFocus (and lately, Things) as a serious competitor. But development has clearly stalled, and posts in the forums and other issues suggest that the developer has abandoned the project, either by force or a sudden change of heart and mode of operation. I'm not ready to call this one dead, but I think many of the forum posters are right that this is a crucial time to be active in development for the sake of survival as a GTD app.

## [iCog](#)



**Developer:** HensPace

**Current Version:** 1.88

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** Python 2.4 or later

**Distinguishing Features:** Compatible with any OS running Python (including Windows); very simple text-only utility.

**News:** None

## [Kinkless GTD](#)



**Developer:** Ethan Schoonover

**Current Version:** 0.83

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Beta

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** OmniOutliner Pro 3.6 or later

**Distinguishing Features:** Nothing fancy, but a simple list management tool.

**News:** Given the stagnant status of kGTD and the fact that the developer now works for the Omni Group on the OmniFocus team, I will discontinue tracking/monitoring this application after this issue.

## [mGTD](#)



**Developer:** Apokalypse Software Corp.

**Current Version:** 1.2

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** “Pre-final”

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** Mori 1.4

**Distinguishing Features:** Expands Mori (digital notebook) functions to include GTD principles.

**News:** None

## [Midnight Inbox](#)





**Developer:** Midnight Beep Softworks

**Current Version:** 1.3.1

**Price:** \$35

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Action timer; quick-note and quick-action hot keys; Mail compatible; “automatic” data collection.

**News:** The Midnight Beep team has announced that a version that lands between 1.x and 2.0 will be released in the near future.

## [OmniFocus](#)



**Developer:** Omni Group

**Current Version:** 1.0.2

**Price:** \$80

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

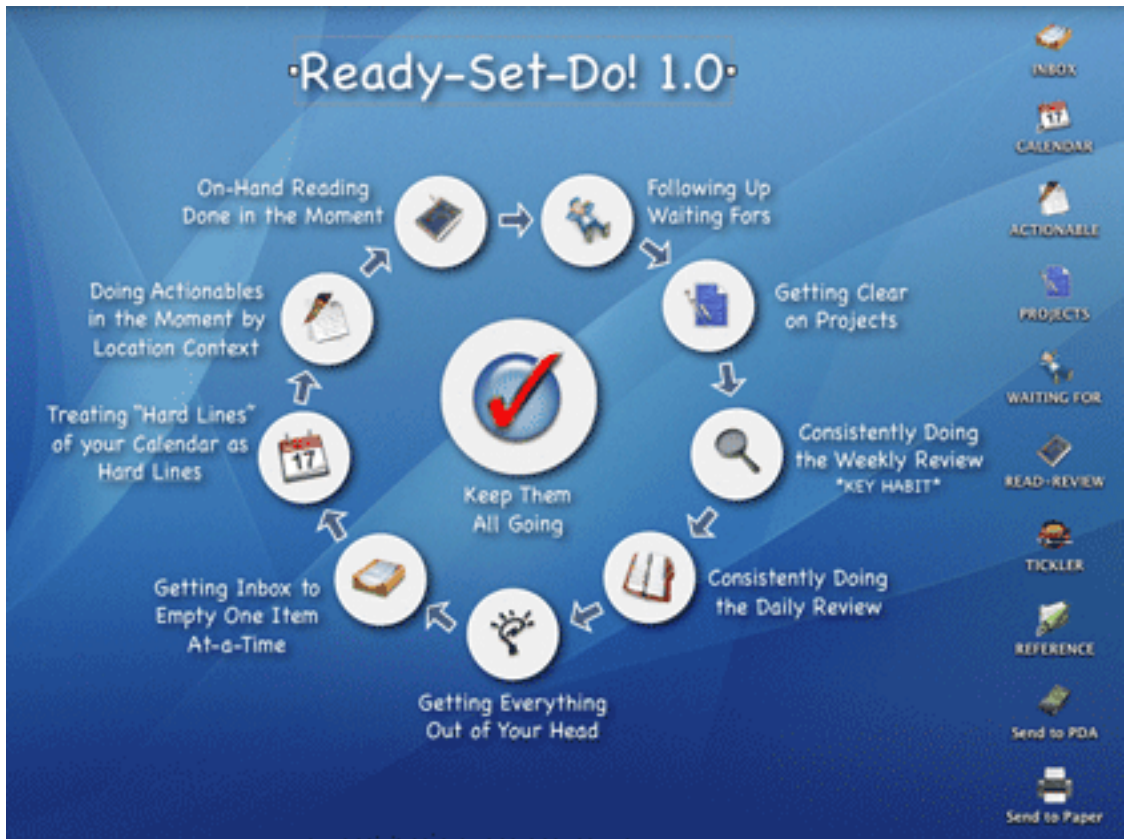
**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Mail- and Spotlight-compatible; simple interface with powerful view features.

**News:** OmniFocus for iPhone won an Apple Design Award at this year’s WWDC. Also, get a peek at the award winner at the [OmniFocus for iPhone preview page](#).

## Ready, Set, Do!



**Developer:** Todd Vasquez

**Current Version:** 1.3

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** A very different approach using a set of AppleScript routines to impose organization and communication across a computer's entire file system; multiple language support.

**News:** Version 1.3 is a recent release, with a small hoard of new, useful [features](#).



**Developer:** Hog Bay Software

**Current Version:** 1.0.3 (26)

**Price:** \$19

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Simple, text-based system; no-frills, intentionally designed as an alternative to more fully featured systems.

**News:** None

## Things



**Developer:** Cultured Code

**Current Version:** 0.9.3

**Price:** \$50 (pre-release price of \$40 with sign up for newsletter)

**Development Status:** Alpha

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Features *will* include: iCal sync; repeating tasks; Mail compatibility; network and multi-computer operation; and import/export options.

**News:** System-wide task list compatibility is now active, as are dock badges, and a “canceled” feature for tasks. Discussion about a coming iPhone app is also beginning on the Things Web site.

## Thinking Rock



**Developer:** Avente Pty Ltd

**Current Version:** 2.0.1

**Price:** Free, open-source

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Cross-platform compatibility through Java; interactive collection and processing.

**News:** Lots of new changes are found in the [2.0.1 update](#).

## What To Do



**Developer:** Objective Satisfaction

**Current Version:** 1.3.2

**Price:** \$29

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Drag-and-drop intensive for easy reorganization; .Mac syncing for multiple computers; XML export.

**News:** None

## Locally Installed General Task Managers

### Anxiety

**Developer:** Tom Stoelwinder, Model Concept

**Current Version:** 1.0

**Price:** Free/Donationware

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**Distinguishing Features:** A menu-bar utility that gives a HUD-like interface to iCal tasks; sorts by calendar; Mac OS X 10.5 only.

**News:** None

### Check Off

**Developer:** Second Gear

**Current Version:** 3.8

**Price:** Free/Donationware

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Distinguishing Features:** A menu-bar utility that manages basic task lists; syncs with iPods; a .Mac Backup QuickPick is provided.

**News:** None

### Dejumble

**Developer:** Thinking Code Software, Inc.

**Current Version:** 1.2.b1

**Price:** \$19

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**Distinguishing Features:** A simple yet powerful menu-bar style task list manager, with tags, groups, notes, and a handful of other options.

**News:** New beta release of version 1.2 is an upgrade from the last release (1.1.1).

### **Docket**

**Developer:** Surprise Software

**Current Version:** 1.3

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**Distinguishing Features:** A neat basic list management application. A Windows version is also available.

**News:** None

### **Dolt**

**Developer:** Jim McGowan

**Current Version:** 2.6

**Price:** Donationware

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**Distinguishing Features:** .Mac support and AppleScriptability. Also supports file attachments and categories for lists.

**News:** None

### **High Priority**

**Developer:** Aram Kudurshian

**Current Version:** 1.11 (Mac OS X 10.4 only)

**Price:** \$6 (personal); \$12 (family); \$60 (business)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**Distinguishing Features:** A system preference pane, creates a menu in the menu bar that lets you create and update your iCal tasks.

**News:** None

## ***Hot Plan***

**Developer:** Intuiware

**Current Version:** 1.4.1

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**Distinguishing Features:** Tracks a substantial amount of information about a given task, including completion status, priority, time remaining; supports tagging, color-coding, and locking of tasks. Also allows collection of URLs and files.

**News:** None

## ***iClock***

**Developer:** Script Software

**Current Version:** 3.0.5

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**Distinguishing Features:** Offers a menu bar-based method of managing task lists; includes .Mac syncing.

**News:** None

## *Life Balance*

**Developer:** Llamagraphics

**Current Version:** 4.0.5

**Price:** \$65 (\$80 when bundled with Palm version)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**Distinguishing Features:** Gives “meta-feedback” about tasks: how much time are you spending in different areas of your life (i.e., work, family, hobbies, etc.), and are you keeping it balanced? Palm and Windows versions available.

**News:** None

## *MultitaskingAssistant*

**Developer:** Green Cog Software

**Current Version:** 1.0

**Price:** Donationware

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**Distinguishing Features:** Perhaps especially helpful for repetitive and redundant tasks.

**News:** None

## *Stapler*

**Developer:** The Blue Technologies Group

**Current Version:** 1.1

**Price:** €7.50 (about \$10)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes



**Distinguishing Features:** Is a combination notepad and to-do list manager, with creation date, notes, and a check-box for completed items. Tasks can be color-coded based on a low-level preference set-up.

**News:** None

### [ToDo X](#)

**Developer:** Omicron Software Systems, Inc.

**Current Version:** 2.2

**Price:** \$15

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Import from iCal only

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**Distinguishing Features:** Offers categories, priorities, and attached notes.

**News:** None

### [ZooDo](#)

**Developer:** InterfaceThis

**Current Version:** 1.0

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**Distinguishing Features:** A basic task creator for iCal, serving as a “collection bucket.”

**News:** None

## **Browser and Web-based GTD Apps**

### [30 Boxes](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Lean and fast, including a calendar, task list, and limited Gmail interaction. Also RSS and iCal feeds, SMS, and sharing. Nice interface, too.

### [GTDGMail](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** A Firefox extension for GTD integration with Gmail. Prepackaged labels, a Review process, specialized searches within Gmail, quick-entry for tasks, and printable. Current version, 2.0.8.2, is open-source; requires Firefox.

### [GTD-PHP](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** A PHP solution designed to be locally installed. A simple tabbed interface, capture, and process stages; weekly review. Currently at version 0.8.

### [Neptune](#)

**Price:** \$10/year

**Description:** Includes a collection “inbox” and context or project task viewing panes, as well as inactive projects and tasks. Daily e-mail reminders of tasks; new tasks can be added by e-mail; data export.

### [Next Action](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Uses Google Gears and Firefox; has a lean, basic interface with multiple-list management capability. Works with or without a network connection.

### [Nexty](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** PHP-based, so installs locally and runs in your browser; supports contexts and reminders.

### [Nozbe](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Has markers for which action will be next and a time estimation for tasks. Contexts are visible and identifiable. And it is easy to collect and process quickly.

### [SimpleGTD](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Tabs for next actions, contexts, projects, and done actions; drag-and-drop organization; easy “un-doing” of tasks.

### [Toodledo](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Has a Firefox plugin and a Google gadget for easy collection; also supports e-mail, voice mail, and traditional entry for collection. Includes a good overview of GTD in co-operation with its tools, as well.

### [Tracks](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** A Web server that runs locally, or hosted through tracks.tra.in. Fast, lean, and pretty, it offers calendaring and a multi-user component. Currently at version 1.6.

### [Vitalist](#)

**Price:** \$5/month (premium)

**Description:** Is a wide-scale GTD system: collection, project management, recurring actions, and tickler files. Includes a mobile edition, iCal and RSS feeds, and e-mail and SMS reminders. A “premium” (paid) version also includes security encryption, collaboration, file attachments, and calendaring.

## Other Browser/Web-based Task Managers

- [Backpack](#)
- [Basecamp](#)
- [HiTask](#)
- [Hiveminder](#)
- [Joe’s Goals](#)
- [Mojonote](#)
- [Remember the Milk](#)
- [Scrybe](#)
- [Sproutliner](#)
- [Task Freak!](#)
- [Tasks](#)
- [Tasktoy](#)
- [Todoist](#)
- [Tweeto](#)
- [Zenlists](#)

## GTD and Task Management Wikis

- [D3](#)
- [GTDTiddlyWiki](#)
- [MonkeyGTD](#)
- [Pimki](#)

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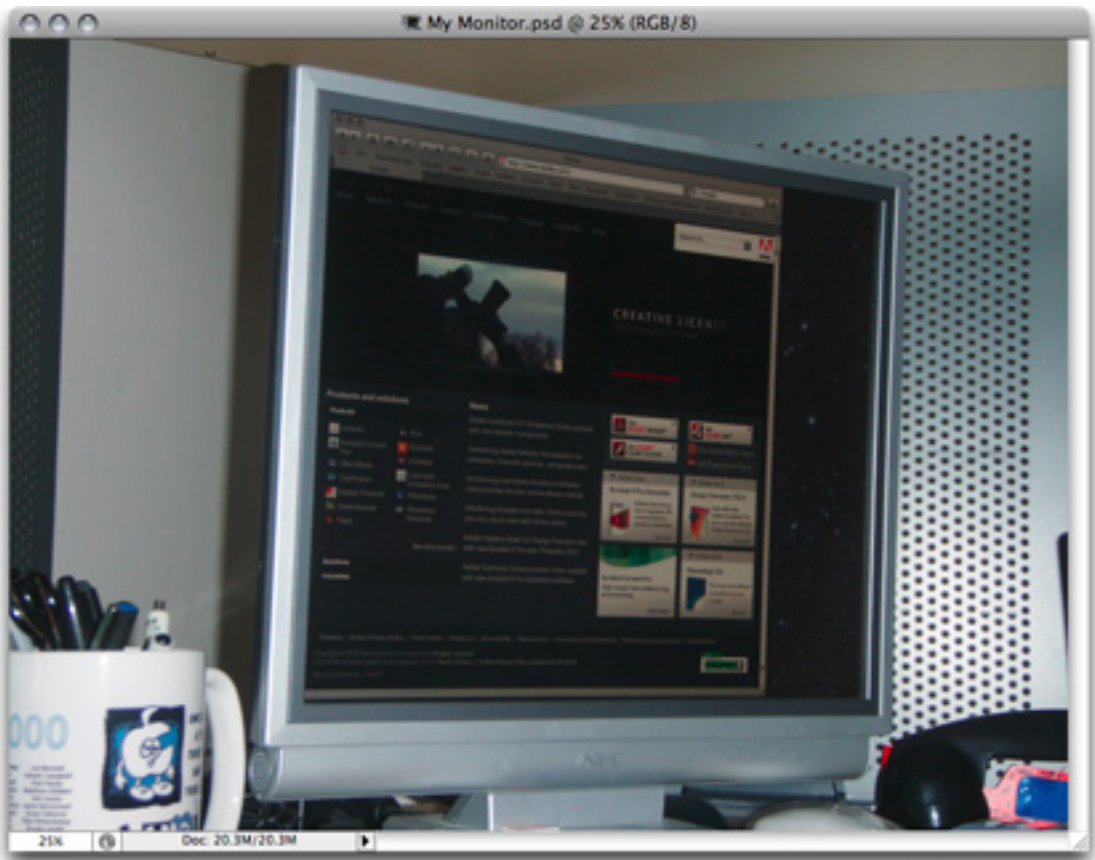


## Screen Replacements—When Reality Isn't Real Enough

This month's topic comes as a result of a magazine cover photo I recently had to clean up. The story was about a Christian man who ministers to others through his MySpace page, so the cover photo was a shot in an office with a laptop computer next to him, turned so that his MySpace page was visible on the screen.

After a bit of time adjusting the lighting in the room, everything was looking good, except the laptop's screen. The screen was glossy, so ghostly reflections in the room obscured most of the Web page. I had to convince the photographer not to worry about it and not spend more time readjusting lights to minimize reflections. I saw this as an easy Photoshop fix.

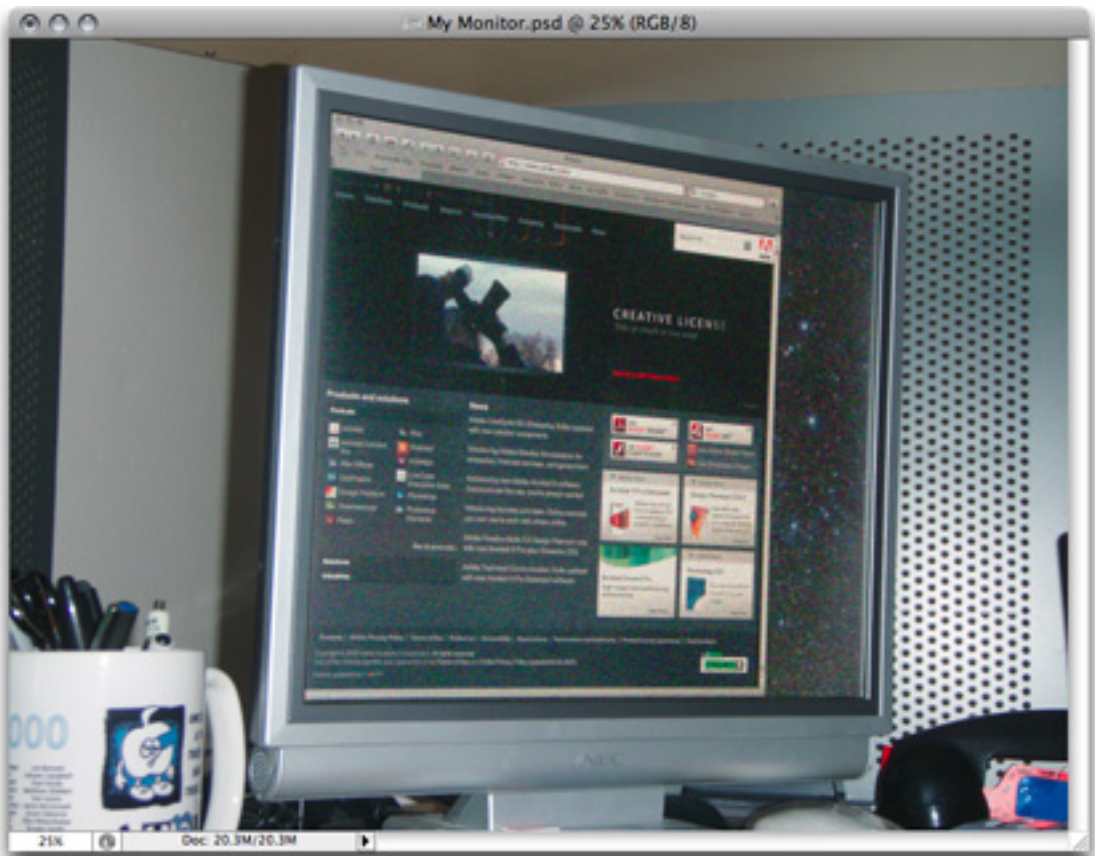
Even without a professional lighting setup at a professional shoot, the basic flash in cameras can still ruin the image that is displayed on a monitor.



In this photo, my camera flash has lit the surroundings to a level that is brighter than the monitor display. As such, the exposure of the monitor screen is too dark.

Personally, I use displays with a matte finish because I don't like the reflections produced by glossy monitors. Yet, if I had taken the above photograph head-on, the camera flash still would have been blatantly visible. I'm using an oblique angle photo for this tutorial not only to eliminate that flash glare, but also for another reason that I will share in a moment.

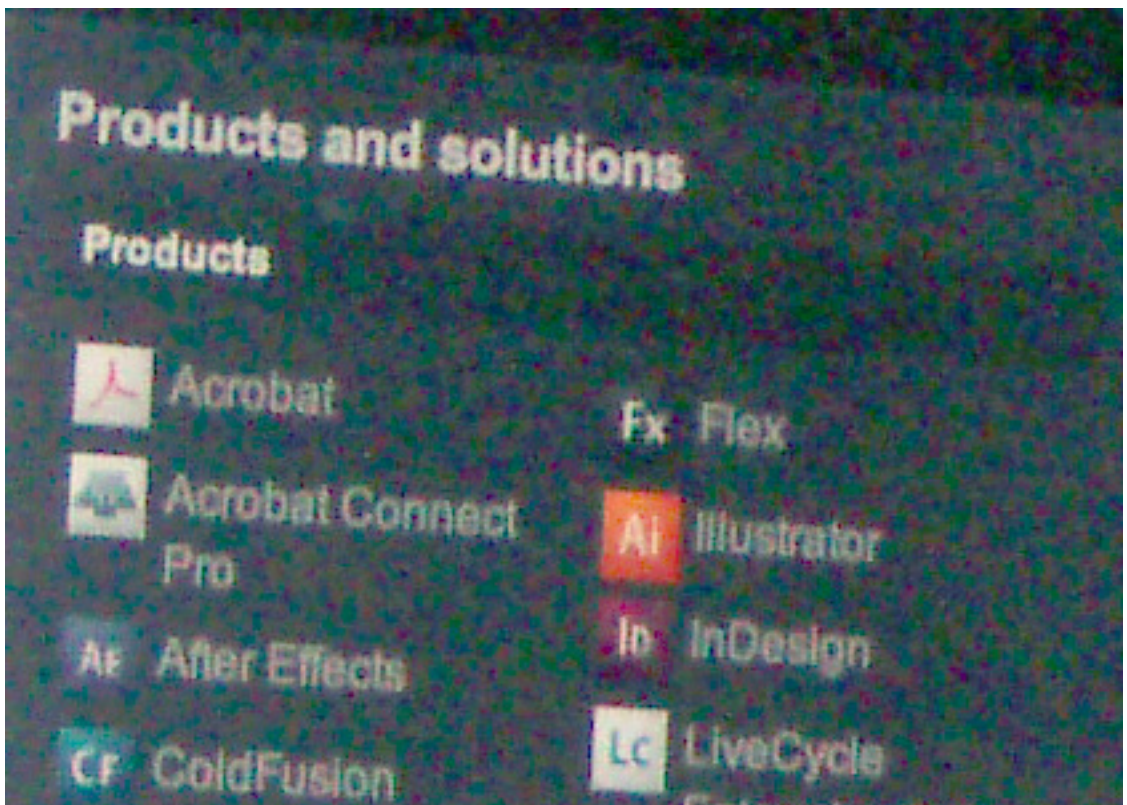
To fix this photo, I might have been inclined to select the screen area and try to lighten it. Let's see what happens.



The screen is brighter, but is also obscured by a lot of noise artifacts.

By the time the isolated screen area is lightened to a reasonable level, an unacceptable amount of grainy noise is visible.



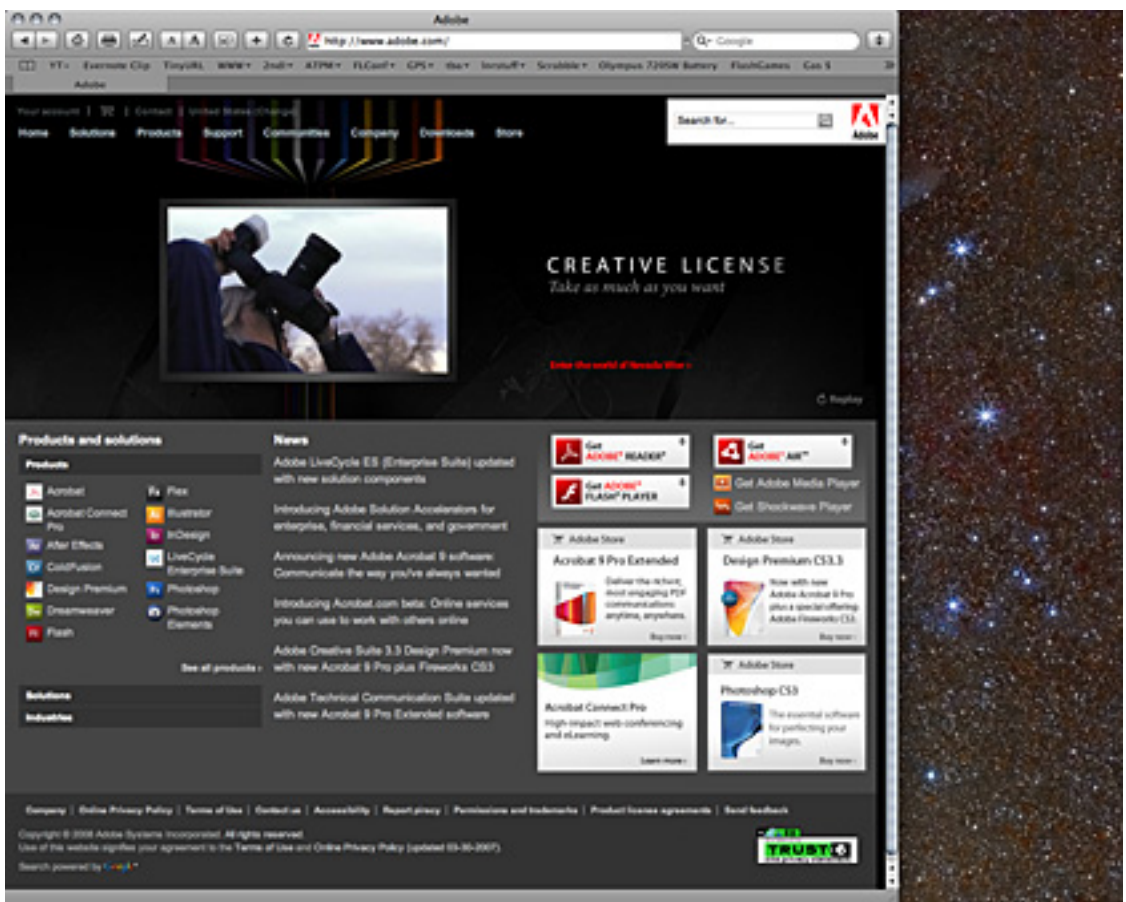


This close-up of the above image shows the grain noise that was enhanced when the entire monitor screen was lightened.

One of the primary goals when working in Photoshop is to always obtain the most original version of an image as possible. I already know that the original digital image from a camera is far better quality than what I would get if the image were printed and then scanned. So, instead of using a “picture of a picture” for the monitor screen, why not go to the source and add in an original screen capture?

First, I’ll obviously need to get that screen capture. The utility built into the operating system for doing this is quite adequate. Programs such as [Snapz Pro X](#) are fine, but not required, especially since I’m after the entire screen in this case, not just a portion of it.

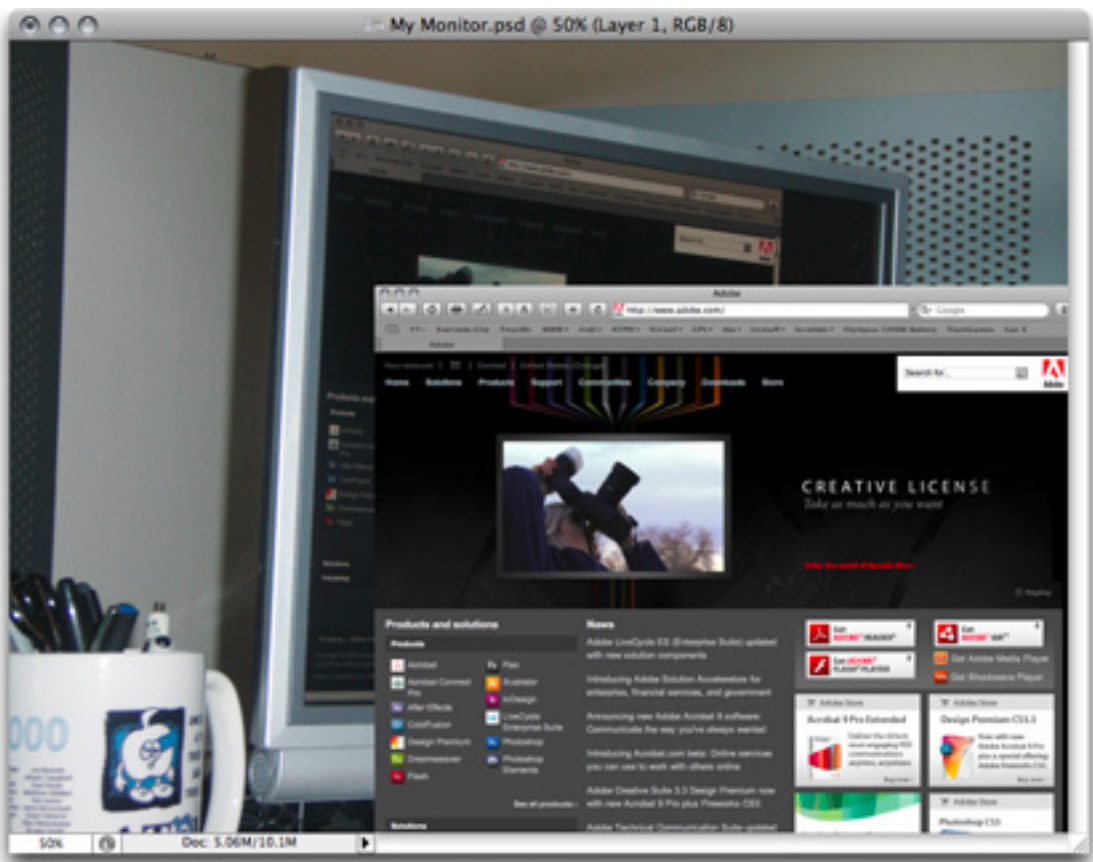




My clean screenshot.

Yes, my desktop wallpaper is a rather grainy-looking star field. But, looking at the Web browser, I see that everything is clean and solid. I can even make out a subtle texture in the background of the black portion of the upper half of the page that couldn't be seen at all in the first photo.

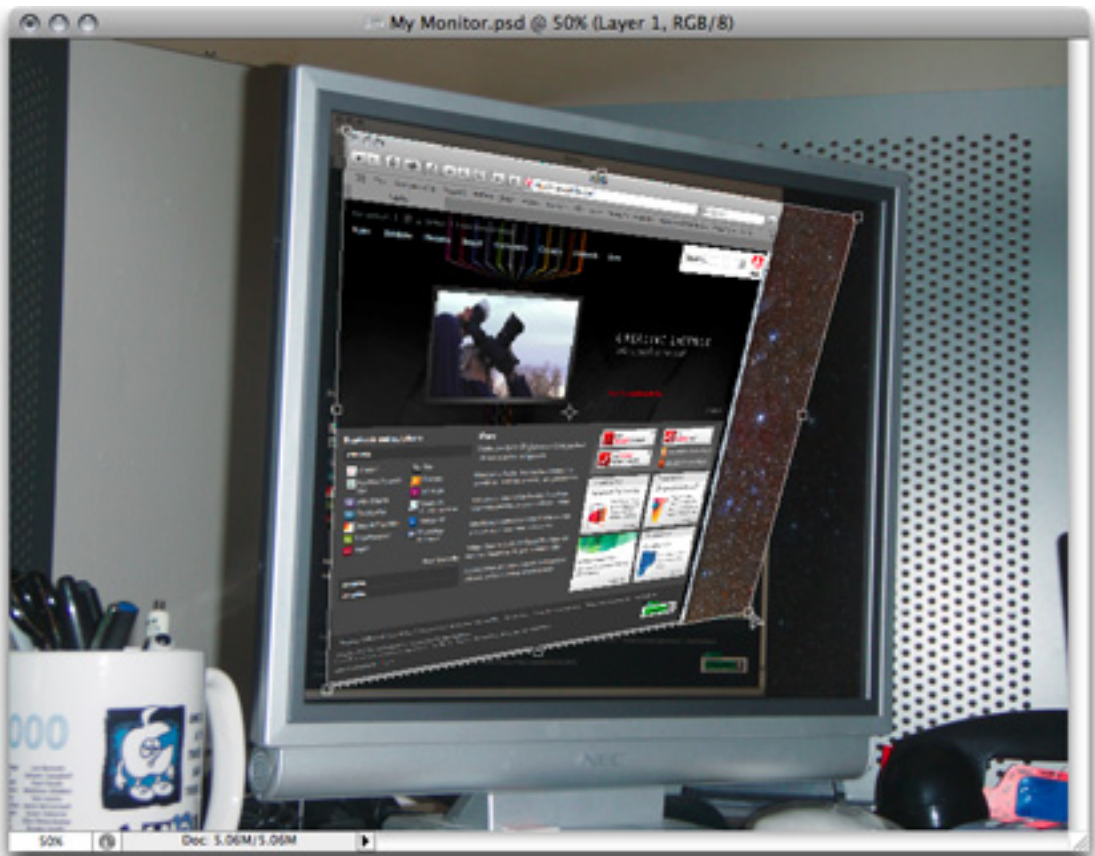
To introduce the screenshot (seen in the above image) to my photo, it must first be added to the original photo as a new layer. This can be accomplished by using the Move tool to drag the screenshot image from its window, then dropping it on the original photo.



The screenshot has been added on top of the original photo on a separate layer.

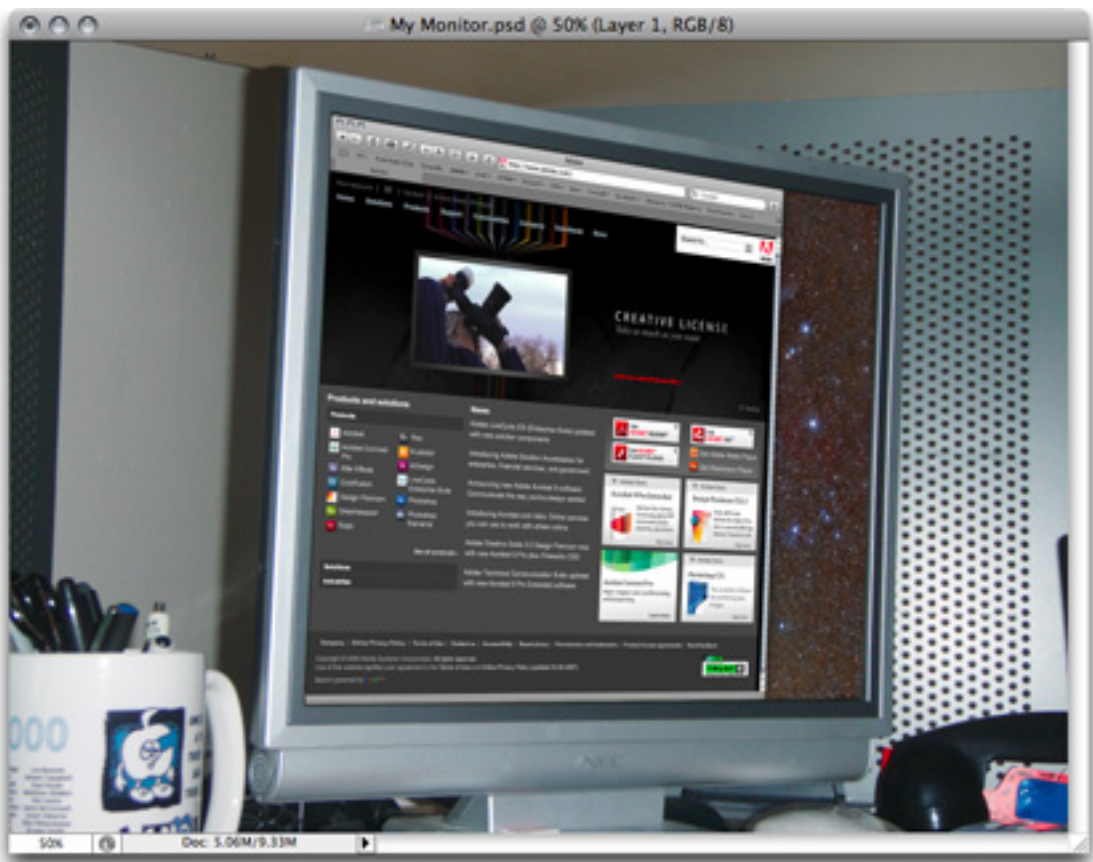
I said that there was a reason my example photo was shot at an oblique angle. It's time to find out why. I must stretch the screenshot in such a way that it matches the angle of the monitor. Just three steps are needed to do this:

1. Make sure the layer containing the screenshot is targeted and active.
2. Select the Distort command from the Edit > Transform menu.
3. Drag the corners of the outline that now appears around the screenshot to move them into place.



The Transform tool in Distort mode moves individual corners while leaving the rest in place.

The photo is now starting to look a lot better, but something still isn't quite right. The screen area now looks *too real*. My goal is to simulate reality, not hyper-reality.



My screenshot is lined up, but its quality is so much cleaner than the rest of the photo, it still looks like it's pasted in place.

## Homework Assignment

Here's where I turn this tutorial into a homework assignment. There are probably countless ways to “dirty-up” the screenshot so that it appears better integrated into the photo. Here are some possible techniques. Keep in mind that using more than one may be the best treatment:

1. Re-introduce a very small amount of grain noise via the Filter menu to help match the noise that is present in the surrounding photo. Zoom in close and compare the added noise to the original photo's noise.
2. Blur the screenshot layer a small amount. Part of the reason the screenshot looks pasted in is because screenshots are always as perfectly focused as possible. It may have to be slightly blurred (e.g. perhaps only a Gaussian Blur setting of 0.5) to match the original photo.

3. Eliminate what I call “super white” and “super black.” I use these terms in reference to any areas that have a complete absence of color and are made up of 100% solid white or solid black pixels.

Generally, the only time solid white appears in a photo is when a spot is overexposed and blown out. A properly exposed photo should always have some detail in the highlights in the form of pixels that are varying shades of light color, even if those shades are only 3–4% less bright than “super white.” Consequently, a white object in a good photograph is actually going to be comprised of various pixels that are slightly darker than 100% white.

Likewise, solid black will generally not appear in photographs because areas will either have caught the faintest amount of ambient light, or the grain pattern caused by film grain or a digital imaging sensor will produce random noise patterns of near-black colors.

To eliminate these two “super colors,” open the Levels palette, raise the shadows value (the right-hand setting in the Output Levels section), and reduce the highlights value (the right-hand setting). Raise the shadows by only 5 or 10 points should suffice, while lowering highlights may require a bit more—approximately 10 or 20 points. While adjusting, compare the changes to the original photo to decide on a proper amount.

4. Re-introduce some of the reflections that may be visible in the original photo.

Admittedly, a bit of advance planning may be required to hold original reflections in a glossy screen. During the photo shoot I described at the beginning of this article, the bright lights were creating very distinct reflections of the man in the laptop’s glossy monitor. I liked that reflection, though I wanted to tone it down considerably. Since I knew I would be replacing the laptop screen’s image in Photoshop, I told the photographer to just leave the screen off so that it was dark except for where the man’s reflection was visible.





My publication cover photo, shot with the screen turned off, revealing a reflection of the man's arm. (Photo used by permission: Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.)

After I put the screenshot in place, I lowered the layer's opacity to somewhere around 80–85% in the Layers palette. Because the screen was turned off in the original photo, I didn't have to worry about any of the computer graphics showing through the overlaid screenshot

with reduced opacity. The man’s arm reflection, however, would show through—which is exactly what I wanted.

Reducing the opacity also served to diminish the aforementioned “super whites” and “super blacks.” I finished by adding a very subtle Gaussian Blur and a small hint of grain noise, and the publication editor was extremely pleased with the result.



The same photo as above with the screenshot put in place. This small version does not show the reflection of the man's arm very well, but it is more visible in the full-size photo that will appear on the publication cover. (Photo used by permission: Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.)





This is the final result of the photo showing my computer monitor at home, used for this tutorial.  
[View at full size.](#)

Here's a link to download the [final, full-size result](#) of my photo used in this tutorial that can be studied.

Try the above techniques for finishing off the addition of screenshots into photos, and stop being afraid to shoot a photo with a visible computer or television screen.

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# How To

by Sylvester Roque, [sroque@atpm.com](mailto:sroque@atpm.com)

## Live Well With a NAS Drive

[Last month](#), I talked about some of the potential problems that I discovered while purchasing a network attached storage drive. Unfortunately, that drive is currently about to be returned to the manufacturer for repair or replacement, but that's a story for another day. This month, I thought I would give you some idea where it fits in our current network, what my plans were for the drive, and some of the steps I had taken to integrate the drive into our network prior to its demise.

### Our Current Network Setup

Our small home network currently consists primarily of a dual 2 GHz G5, quad core 2.66 GHz Mac Pro, Gateway desktop running Windows Vista, and a Series 2 TiVo. We also have two aging clamshell iBooks that need network access from time to time, but this is becoming a rare event. The TiVo and both iBooks access the network wirelessly courtesy of the Belkin router that ties everything together. Each desktop unit and the router support gigabit Ethernet, so moving files from one computer to another proceeds at a reasonable pace. Choosing compatible file formats is relatively easy because most of our Mac software has the corresponding piece of software installed on the PC.

Our present configuration meets our needs fairly well. It distributes our broadband connection to the devices that need it and handles file transfers well. We are not passing data between systems often enough to seriously stress bandwidth, so that is not an issue. I don't spend much time doing network maintenance, but when I do I use one of the Macs. I try to touch my wife's Windows machine as little as possible, and she likes it that way.

### Everything Works, Why Purchase a Network Storage Device?

My main reason for purchasing network attached storage was to provide a central location for shared files. Keeping track of the most recent versions of a document was bad enough, but sharing media added another issue. My current iTunes music folder contains over 8,000 items and weighs in at just over 73 GB. Without centralized storage, keeping that folder up-to-date on all machines would require moving an external hard drive from one machine to another as needed, copying the folder to each machine via the network, or leaving one machine on with sharing enabled for iTunes music. I had [set up an iTunes music server](#) before—why not just continue that arrangement?

Continuing with my current iTunes server did not address several other needs for centralized storage. First of all, we had a number of cross-platform files such as Photoshop brushes and textures that were useless within iTunes. Secondly, an iTunes server would not have addressed the TiVo files archived until I have time to watch them, photos waiting to be

restored, or files for a few other projects that I don't need to access every day. Throw in temporary space needed for a few videos waiting to be converted from VHS to DVD, and things had really gotten out of hand.

In addition to the advantages of centralized storage, adding a NAS drive to our network had two additional benefits. If I needed to, I could set it up as an FTP server to provide access to files while traveling. Since the unit I chose also had a built-in print server, I could disconnect the AirPort base station. It was only on the network because our Belkin router didn't provide print server capabilities.

## How It All Works

Prior to purchasing, I knew that the unit I purchased supported the Samba protocol, which should make it possible for both platforms to see the drive and move files to and from it easily. Unfortunately, the initial setup procedure did not go as easily for me as I had hoped. The directions for setting up the device on a Mac were not 100 percent accurate. It took a while to solve this problem. You may be wondering by now why I didn't just boot the Gateway and run the setup from Windows. First of all, my wife keeps the Windows box pretty busy, and second, it happens to be in an area of the house that can be difficult for me to access. Besides, there's a reason she prefers that I not touch that machine. It has something to do with my breaking the DVD drive shortly after we got the previous machine. I still haven't fully convinced her that happened by accident.

I had the option of setting up this particular drive as a [RAID](#) system but didn't at the time. I have never set up a RAID before. It was going to take me some time to figure that out, and I had several projects that needed the space now. Besides, one of my hard drives was making a rather ominous noise. Once I got the Mac to see the device the setup procedure was pretty straightforward. I set up separate shares that appear as drives on the desktop. One share holds the iTunes collection and media files that are ready for playback, one share holds works in progress, and one holds some of my wife's projects that I don't need to access. The device is capable of handling storage for multiple users, each with their own passwords and public folders.

Each of our desktops have Windows file sharing enabled so they see the drive as a series of Windows shares that I can mount on the desktop using the "Connect to Server" command in the Finder. When prompted, I select the device in the dialog that appears. Next, I select the desired share. If you have set one, you will be prompted for the user name and password. Once the share is mounted, you can create an alias for it and place the alias somewhere convenient. From then on, mounting the share is as simple as double-clicking the alias. Using this method I wasn't asked for the password each time.

Initially, I had the iTunes and "works in progress" shares set to mount automatically as part of my login items. The problem with this arrangement is that the Finder insists on opening the share with a window open whether you want it that way or not. I did not need the window on the iTunes share open. It just had to be available in order for me to play music. Fortunately, there is a simple workaround assuming that you are running either Tiger or

Leopard. Create a simple workflow within Automator that mounts the share, and it will mount without opening a window. If you tend to always have the same shares mounted, one workflow can open all of them. Once it was working properly, I saved the workflow as an application and added that to my login items.

I did not have an opportunity to load the Photoshop textures and brushes before I started having problems with my drive. All of the programs that I normally use for media editing and playback see the drive as they would any other hard drive, so I didn't have to make a lot of changes. I opened iTunes' preferences and set the location for the music folder to the share that holds that folder. Of course, iTunes will not be able to find the music if I forget to mount that share. I could simply close iTunes, mount the music share, and relaunch iTunes, but there is a more permanent solution. Let's solve that problem by mounting the share as part of my login items. I think I'm also going to create an Automator workflow that checks for the appropriate share before launching iTunes. I suspect that the entire process could be created in AppleScript if you don't have Tiger or Leopard, but I am much more fluent in Automator than I am in AppleScript.

There are only two real changes I've had to make to use the drive successfully. First, I have to pay a bit more attention to filenames. Since I formatted the drive using the ext3 filesystem, there are certain characters the Mac supports in filenames that the drive apparently does not support. Second, I've noticed that saving directly to the drive is a bit slow. I often find it faster to save the file to my internal drive and then move the file over to the storage area. Although I have been doing this by hand until now, when I get the drive back I think I'll set up a folder action that moves the files to the appropriate areas on the network drive. At this point, I am not sure whether these problems would be resolved by using a different drive format, and how much may be a function of that specific drive.

You may be wondering why I have not included the workflows in this article. At this point, I haven't tested them enough to unleash them on an unsuspecting world. They don't do anything harmful but haven't been extensively tested for reliability. I also didn't include steps to automate the mounting process in Windows. I'll leave that to someone who enjoys that side of Windows a bit more than I do.

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# Desktop Pictures

by Harry Torres

## Vehicular Graphics

We need new desktop pictures each month. [Write](#) to us!

### This Month's Desktop Pictures

This month's desktop pictures were contributed by ATPM reader [Harry Torres](#).



[View Pictures](#)

### Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures [archives](#).

### 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](#).

### 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](mailto: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 through 10.5.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.

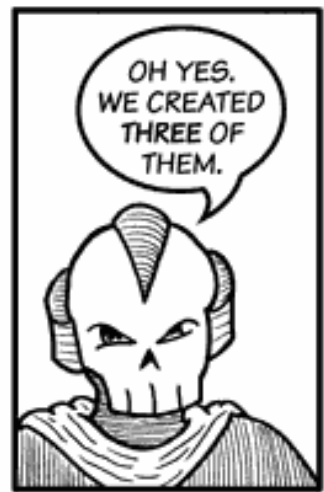
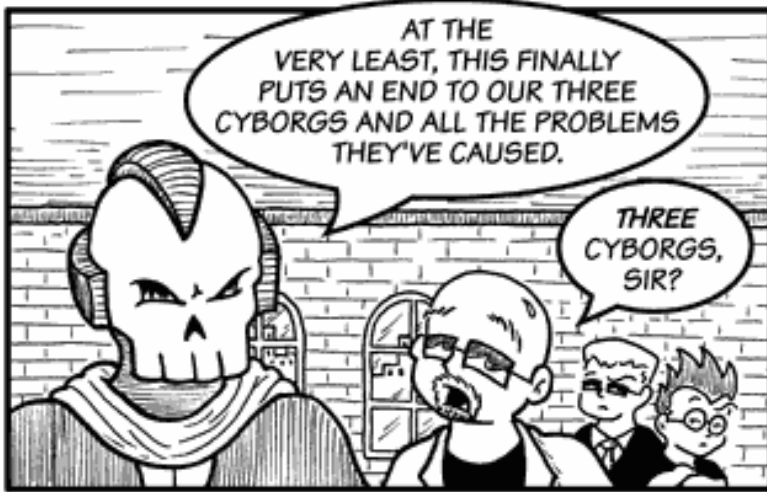




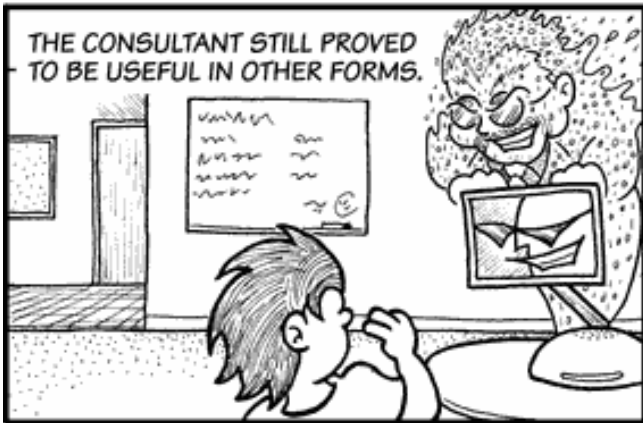
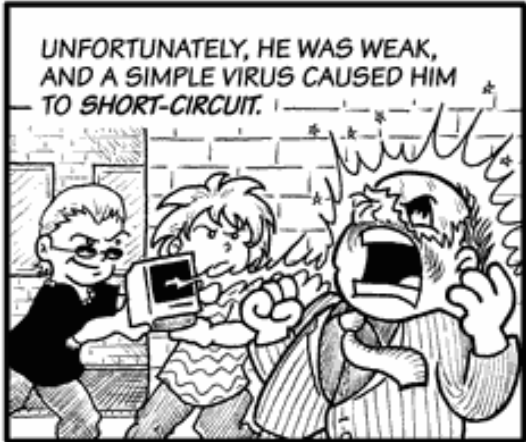
# Cortland

by Matt Johnson, [mjohnson@atpm.com](mailto:mjohnson@atpm.com)









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# Software Review

by Paul Fatula, [pfatula@atpm.com](mailto:pfatula@atpm.com)

## EyeTV 3.0.2 (3953)

**Developer:** [Elgato Systems](#)

**Price:** \$80; \$40 (upgrade)

**Requirements:** Compatible TV tuner peripheral (see Web page for list). Mac OS X 10.4. [Universal](#).

**Trial:** Time-limited (one hour)

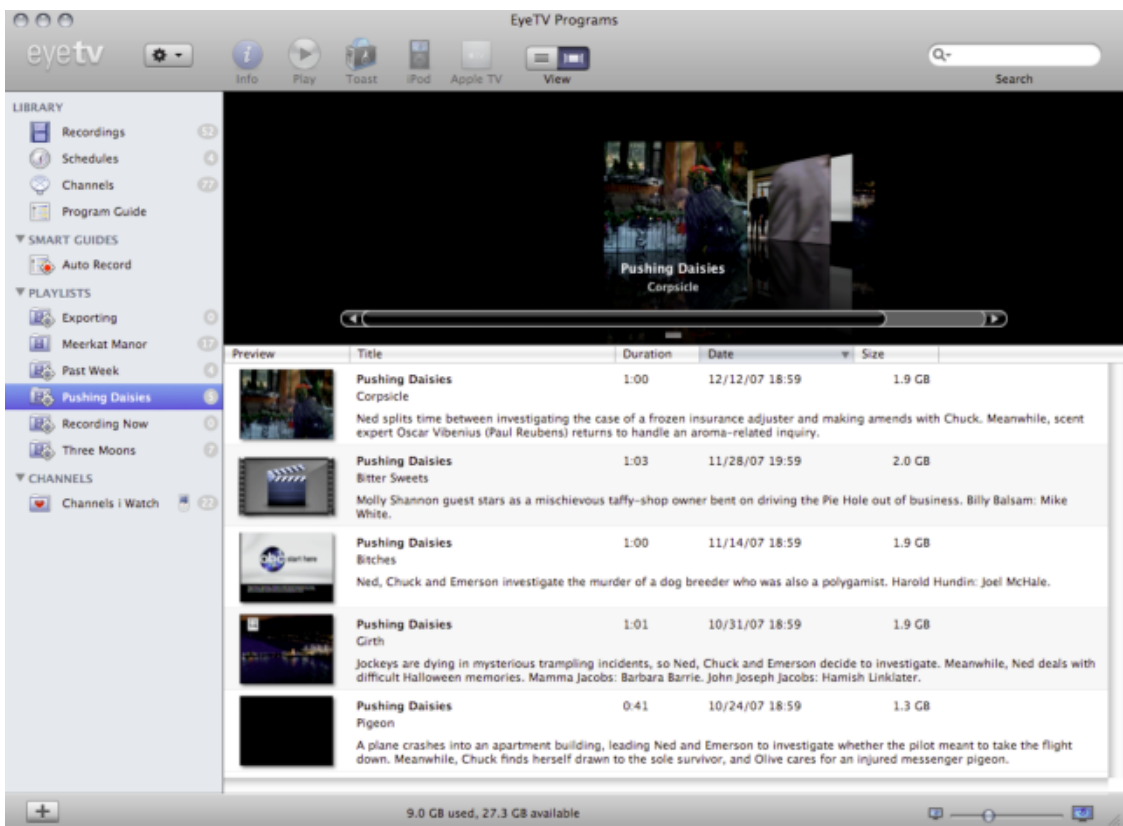


About two years ago, I reviewed EyeTV as part of my [review of Elgato's EyeTV 250](#) peripheral. Since that time, the EyeTV software has gone through a number of minor updates and one major update, to version 3.0. The new version brings with it a number of changes, including some very useful features and some unfortunate new problems.

In this review, I'm going to focus on the question of whether it's worth it for an owner of a previous version of EyeTV to upgrade to the new version. Readers who don't already have the EyeTV software will find that it comes with Elgato's TV tuners; it isn't necessary to purchase it separately.

### Interface Changes

You can't have a major upgrade without some sort of facelift to the interface. EyeTV's Program Guide gets some minor improvements. The sidebar on the left of the window is now organized by category, separating Library, Smart Guides, Playlists, and Channels into separate sections. While items can be moved around within their section, the sections themselves unfortunately cannot be reordered. Also, copying some of Apple's latest eye candy, EyeTV has added a Cover Flow-like option for flipping through the contents of playlists. But list view gives more information about more programs at a time, so I don't see the appeal of using Cover Flow here.



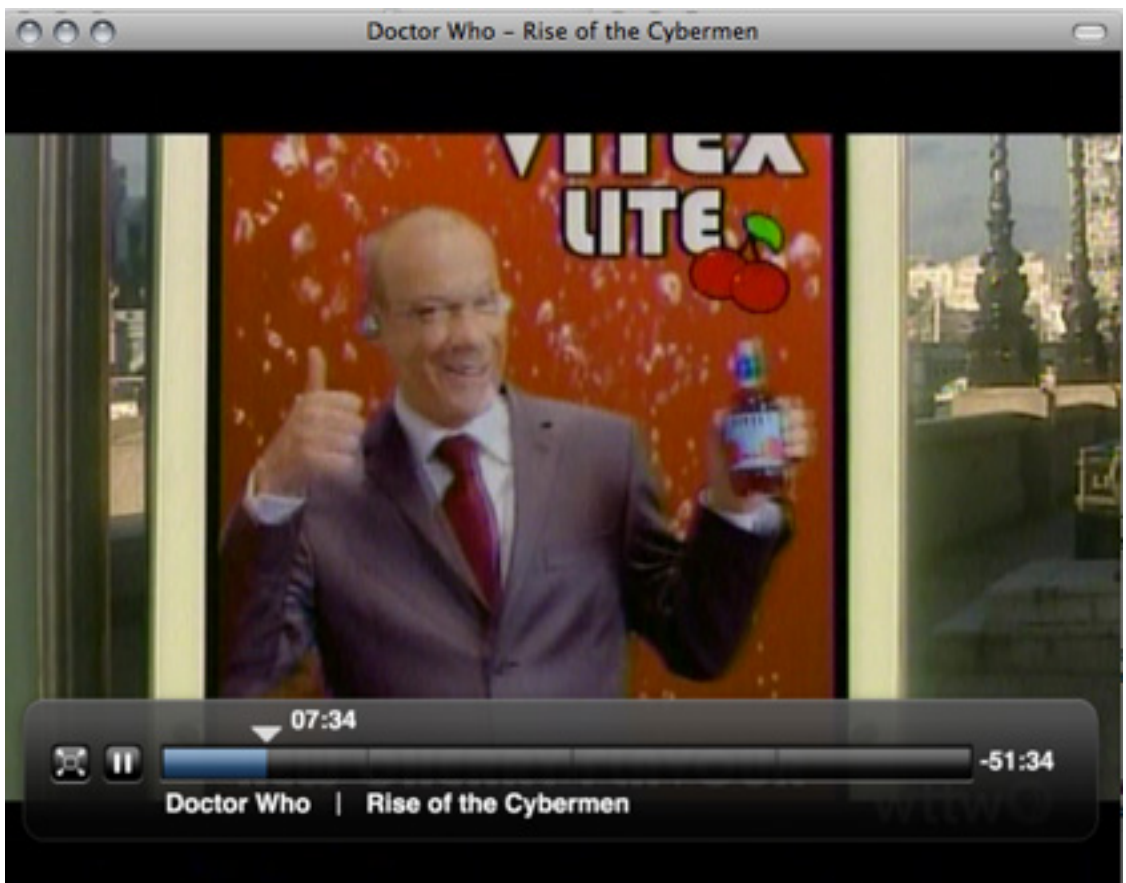
## The Program Guide

The editing window—used primarily for cutting commercials out of recorded programs to save hard drive space—has also been changed, but entirely for the worse. The editing controls now cover up the lower fifth or so of the screen, hiding from view part of the recording you're working with. I can't imagine Elgato's rationale for this change: why would it be desirable to have part of the screen obscured while editing?



The Editing Window

The program-viewing window has gotten a very nice improvement. When skipping forward or back, or when hovering the mouse over the lower part of the screen, a display comes up showing how far into the recording you are. You can click in the program's time line to jump directly to that point in the program.



The Playback Window

## New Features

EyeTV 3 adds several new features, by far my favorite of which is Smart Guides. Smart Guides let you tell EyeTV to automatically watch the schedule for programs you like, and add them to the recording schedule without the need for any user action. It's incredibly useful for shows which are not shown in a regular timeslot, or for making sure you don't miss the return of a series that's on hiatus. Automatically-recorded programs can be optionally added to the playlist of your choice, to help keep things organized. Though I haven't tried it, they can also be exported to an iPod or Apple TV. The only problem I've had with Smart Guides is that it's easy to end up with multiple recordings of the same program. It'd be nice if Smart Guides were smart enough to not record something if it's already been recorded.

Smart Playlists are another new and worthwhile feature. You can tell a playlist to populate itself with all the episodes of a particular show, all recordings made in the past week, all recordings with a particular actor, etc. There are lots of options to choose from.

EyeTV also now responds to Apple's remote control. Well, as best it can. It only works if EyeTV is the frontmost application, and its functionality is limited by Apple's incompre-

hensible stinginess with buttons. For example, there is no way to turn off your EyeTV with the Apple remote: you must get up off of your comfy sofa and walk all the way across the room to the computer. Similarly, it is possible to mute EyeTV with Apple's remote control, but you have to navigate to a submenu to do so.

With only one Mac on my local network, I haven't been able to evaluate EyeTV 3's new ability to share recording libraries with other local Macs. Each Mac needs to have EyeTV 3 installed in order to take advantage of this feature, but Elgato's software license allows you to install EyeTV 3 on multiple computers, so long as it is only used with one TV-tuning peripheral. I was surprised when I learned that: it's unusually consumer-friendly.

## Old Problems

It's a shame, but a lot of things that annoyed me in EyeTV 2.5 haven't been fixed in EyeTV 3.0. New features are great, but I wish Elgato had spent more time making old features work right.

First up, something that happens to me quite often: I'm recording a program and watching it at the same time. At some point during the program, I pause it while I go away and do something else; as expected, it keeps recording. I return a few minutes later and resume viewing. Here's the problem: when the program is done recording—even if I'm not done watching it—the viewing window jumps forward to whatever the channel is showing at that time. So I have to close the TV window, open the recording, and navigate my way back to the part I'd been in the middle of watching. I don't understand why EyeTV can't keep showing the recording I'm watching.

Similarly, but in some ways worse: if you're watching a show that you're not recording and you're a few minutes behind realtime, and EyeTV starts recording another program, you immediately jump to the program being recorded and have no way to watch the ending of the program you were watching. Mind you, EyeTV did record the program you were watching; it was cached, and if EyeTV hadn't started recording something else, there wouldn't be a problem. I don't see any reason why EyeTV shouldn't be able to keep playing the cached portion of the program I was watching. (It is possible to watch one recording while recording a different program.)

Another annoyance I was disappointed to find hasn't been fixed has to do with Channels Playlists: if you add a new channel to a playlist, it appears at the bottom of the playlist, and there is no way to move it into numerical order. If you want to keep your channels in order, you have to create a new channels playlist from scratch whenever you want to add a new channel (or delete one you no longer want).

## Crashes

EyeTV 3.0.2 has crashed my computer, forcing a restart, a few times in the two months I've been using it. What happens is, the screen freezes and the last second or so of sound repeats in a continuous loop. When that happens, the computer becomes completely unresponsive to keyboard and mouse, leaving me no choice but to force a restart. Because of this, I've

become extra-careful about saving documents I'm working on before starting up EyeTV. And if I want to have some background noise while I'm working, I'm likely to use my real TV instead of EyeTV, just to be safe.

In addition, editing recordings in EyeTV 3 usually crashes the program. While editing a program, EyeTV will likely at some point stop responding to my mouse, I'll see the spinning rainbow-colored ball, and then EyeTV will unexpectedly quit. The recording I was trying to edit is not damaged when EyeTV reopens, but that's not much comfort. I haven't found other reports of this problem online, so maybe there's something peculiar about my system that I haven't been able to think of. But whatever the cause, it never happened in EyeTV 2.5. In fact, that's become my workaround: if I want to edit a recording, I fire up the old version of EyeTV, where the editing interface is better anyway.

## Conclusion

It's unfortunate that there isn't a trial version of EyeTV 3. If there were, I would suggest that you try it; if you didn't experience the crashing problems that I've had, upgrading would be an easy decision. Smart Guides and Smart Playlists are well-done features that are worth paying for, and the new editing window, though unfortunate, is not a show-stopper. Trying before you buy not being an option, however, I can't recommend paying for an update that crashes my computer, however desirable the new features are. I sincerely hope that Elgato will fix the crashes I've experienced.

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# Book Review

by Christopher Turner, [cturner@atpm.com](mailto:cturner@atpm.com)

## iPhone Superguide

**Publisher:** [Macworld](#)

**Price:** \$13 (PDF); \$25 (printed book); \$15 (CD-ROM)

**Trial:** [Sample PDF](#)



The iPhone has now seen a year on the market, and Apple continues to sell about a million iPhones each quarter, give or take a few hundred thousand.

This means there are more and more folks who may be encountering Apple's way of doing things for the first time. While I have found the iPhone to be very easy to use and to figure out, Apple has provided minimal documentation of their unique communication device for those who may not feel the same way as I.

Into this void steps the *Macworld iPhone Superguide*, aimed at iPhone users on the Mac as well as Windows. The contributors have put together an easy-to-read, nicely formatted tome, which covers everything you need to know about your iPhone. From walking you through the basics and the layout of the hardware, to activation, personalizing the settings to suit your tastes, and setting up local wireless networks for speedy non-phone functions, the *Superguide* has you covered. The writers also take time to offer hints and tips, such as how to conserve battery life, setting up secure e-mail, and finding free wifi hotspots.

### Talking, Texting, and Typing

The iPhone, as its name implies, is a communication device first, and after covering all the basics, the *Macworld* writers delve in to those communication aspects: calls, e-mails, and text messages. A crucial part of all three of those is easy access to the contacts most important to you, and the *Superguide* devotes a section to importing contacts, whether from Mac OS X's Address Book or Windows's Outlook. Readers are walked through managing multiple calls, including the awesome "Merge Calls" function, as well as checking voice mail, which, thanks to Visual Voice-mail, is no longer a chore.

Equal attention is paid to setting up e-mail accounts and preferences, and managing messages. Since this is the one area of iPhone usage where you're likely to use the virtual keyboard the most, an entire page is devoted to "Typing Tips." Early adopters of the iPhone know most, if not all, of these, but they're welcome information for new users. When discussing text messages, the writers take a moment to also discuss instant messaging on the iPhone, which thus far has meant the use of IM Web services.

### Surfing, Searching, and...Other Stuff

While the iPhone may be a communication device foremost, it's also a mobile Web browsing platform, and the *Superguide* devotes a fair amount of space to this particular function. The



authors discuss navigating Web pages, working with multiple Web pages (the maximum Safari allows is eight), sharing URLs, bookmarks, and checking RSS feeds. There are several tip sidebars, including one which gives the neophyte iPhone user an explanation of EDGE versus WiFi.

One key aspect of Internet usage is search, whether that be on Google, or Wikipedia. iPhone users are never more than a few finger taps away from whatever information these two, and many other, sites may provide. Another area of search where the iPhone excels is with regard to location, thanks to the pre-installed Google Maps application. Search for donut shops or seafood restaurants while on the go in a new city, or simply get directions from your residence to another location in your own town; the *Superguide* dissects it all when it comes to how to go about doing it with your iPhone.

Getting map directions and updating your Twitter account aren't the only things your iPhone is capable of, and an entire chapter of the *Superguide* is devoted to all the other applications: Calendar, Notes, Stocks (handy to see how Apple's stock tanks after announcing its best quarter ever, even though this "doesn't meet analysts' expectations"), Weather, Clocks, and, yes, Calculator. (You, too, now have your very own tip calculator at hand when you own an iPhone. Just remember that it *does other things!*)

## Watching, Listening, and Looking

The third table leg of the iPhone is the capabilities of the device it calls brother: the iPod. From watching videos and listening to music on the go, to shopping on the iTunes Store, the writers offer up their tips and how-tos on getting the most of these experiences on your iPhone. Multimedia navigation on the iPhone, and its near-twin, the iPod touch, is very different than on previous iPhones, and readers are offered plenty of data in this regard, with handy screenshots to boot.

The iPhone makes a much better portable movie viewer, in my humble opinion, than the iPod, thanks to the former's widescreen mode when turned on its side. Just as it does with the music offerings, the *Superguide* offers tips and tricks to optimize one's video experience on the iPhone. But the *Macworld* writers don't stop at talking about just *watching* video on the iPhone; they devote an entire section to converting and getting video *onto* the iPhone. A very handy reference for new users, which happens to mention two applications I find indispensable for getting video into my iPhone, [HandBrake](#) and [Mac The Ripper](#). (Windows users aren't left out in the cold; the *Superguide* has tips for those running Microsoft's operating system.)

Like many mobile phones sold, the iPhone has a built-in camera. While the iPhone camera is nothing to write home about, the iPhone's abilities to deal with photos just might be. For as the *Superguide* goes in to detail on, one is not constrained to dealing with photos solely shot with the iPhone camera. You can sync albums from iPhoto or Aperture, or from My Pictures in Windows, and carry around your favorites or the entire series from your last family vacation. A photo of your family in your wallet? With your iPhone and the *Superguide's* tips, you can do much better than that.

## Managing, Syncing, and Accessorizing

With all of the multimedia capabilities of the iPhone, you may be thinking that managing all of that can be a chore, and you wouldn't be wrong. iTunes is the home base for syncing music, movies, calendars, e-mail, and photos with the iPhone, and a chapter of the *Superguide* is dutifully devoted to syncing duties.

Finally, the authors devote the latter portion of the *Superguide* to getting more out of the iPhone experience through accessories. Important things belong in a case. You have a skull for your brain, and you should have a case for your iPhone; thus, the first chapter of this section is devoted to the myriad ways one is able to carry their iPhone around. Next up would be a discussion of what would be just as important an accessory: headphones. Whether those be earbuds of some sort for both ears, or a Bluetooth headset for just one, *Macworld's* writers show off some of the more popular offerings.

Many of us use our mobile phones in the car, and the iPhone is no exception to that. The *Superguide* offers up a trove of hardware, from docks to chargers to transmitters, for one to use in an automobile in conjunction with the iPhone. (I'm still waiting for a [DLO TransPod](#) that has integrated speakerphone capabilities.) Then there's the time when you want to plug your iPhone in to a speaker system at home or the office; *Macworld* has you covered in this area as well, with a well-rounded selection.

We don't often think of software as an accessory, but the *Superguide* offers a nice list of Web applications that may complement your everyday iPhone-using life. For instance, during baseball season, I enjoy using [Pickleview](#) to keep up with game scores. I think everyone can use [Gas.app](#) to find the cheapest gas prices around, but some time between the *Superguide's* publication and now, that domain became defunct. Nevertheless, there are many different Web applications out there, and the *Macworld* writers offer a smattering to whet your appetite.

## Troubleshooting and Frequent Questioning

The *Superguide* wraps up with a section on troubleshooting problems with your iPhone, hopefully getting it back up and running without having to make a trip to the nearest Apple Store. There's also a Frequently Asked Questions section, which many readers may skip to first when they get the *Superguide*, as it may scratch the iPhone information itch they have.

The *Macworld iPhone Superguide* is a great way for new iPhone owners to year-long users to get the most out of their iPhone experience. I had an iPhone on the first day they were available, and I've learned quite a few tidbits thanks to the *Superguide*—[Hotspotr.com](#); avoiding creating twin e-mail accounts, that is, accounts with the same name (a lot of my personal e-mail addresses are the same, only the @domain changes); and the link preview function—to name a few. With the iPhone 3G, along with the iPhone 2.0 software and the iPhone App Store, just days away from release, you can expect an updated *Superguide* down the road, and if this initial release is any indication, you won't be disappointed with its content.

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# Software Review

by Linus Ly, [lly@atpm.com](mailto:lly@atpm.com)

## Merriam-Webster Spell-Jam

**Developer:** [Macgamestore.com](http://Macgamestore.com)

**Price:** \$20

**Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.3.9. [Universal](#).

**Trial:** Time-limited (one hour)



In pre-K, my son Justin won first place in a spelling bee contest. It was just pre-K, but I still had hopes that someday he would win the National Bee. However, as he grows older, he is more interested in arcade games and does not bother with word games. When Spell-Jam became available for the Mac, I bought it soon afterward. I thought a computer game like Spell-Jam might get him more interested in word games.

### Let Us Spell

Spell-Jam has three modes of play. In Practice mode, you are drilled on a set of 25 words, three times over. With the Competition mode, you compete against the computer or other human players. For a slight variation of the spelling contest, you can use the Game Show mode, where things are reminiscent of Who Want To Be A Millionaire. You cannot call a friend, but you can opt to pass, pick one out of four answers, ask for the first letter of the word, etc. In all modes, you have three levels of difficulty—Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced—but in Practice you also have the Most Misspelled Words level. Also available in all modes are hints and such to help the player. You can ask for a repeat of the word, its definition, a sample usage, and origin. For me, word repeat is the most useful, as the words are sometimes not clear. I think the words should be enunciated more. You interact with the game via the keyboard, on-screen or physical. In Competition mode, you have no option to correct any mistyping, so trim those fat fingers before you play Spell-Jam.



Spell-Jam has three mode of play—Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced.

Spelling bees are usually associated with kids, so Spell-Jam is full of cute animations to keep its intended young audience interested. The contestants wave to the audience, vow to get the wrong word next time, jump for joy, and so on. In Competition mode, players do not walk the length of the runway to the podium. Instead, they are whisked through some underground tunnel from seating position to appear at the podium. Unfortunately, the canned animations were not enough to keep Justin interested. I ended up doing the review without his able assistance. After a while, the novelty wore off, and I really wanted to have a way to turn off animations altogether.

I've never competed in a spelling bee before, so I cannot attest to the proper difficulty levels used in Spell-Jam. However, I regularly play crossword puzzles and Scrabbles, so my vocabulary is probably better than average. I think Spell-Jam's levels are appropriate, although I wish there were support custom levels. Spelling bees are usually made for teenagers, so even the Easy level is too difficult for seven-year-old Justin. What's more, I have a niece and a nephew whose vocabularies are poor. With custom levels, I could prepare for them the easiest words appropriate to what they learn in school. All the words and their associated spellings are already in the program, so it should not be hard to present them for selection in building a custom list.



Another wish I have with Spell-Jam, definitely a wish wish, is that responses be said instead of typed. Perhaps Spell-Jam can be taught to recognize the letters of the English alphabet. English or US accent, Canadian Z or not. The program could certainly use the Mac's standard speech recognition feature to learn the alphabet. Spell-Jam being available for both Windows and Mac is probably part of the problem. While all Mac have built-in audio recording capability, the same thing cannot be said for Windows. Still, with the keyboard as the only input method, the best spellers playing Spell-Jam would also need to be decent typists.

Wish list aside, I do have some serious issues with Spell-Jam's Practice mode. 25 words three times over is too much to ask of a young speller. The words are even presented in the same order! The drill would be less tedious if there were fewer words, and if only misspelled words are used in the second and third rounds. Some mini-games, like crossword or word search, would help, too. Practice mode is where most players probably want to start with. With it being so monotonous, the game as a whole is a big turnoff. As a matter of fact, even with the Game Show mode the whole game is still too monotonous.



Aw shucks, do I hafta go through the same words again and again?

## Conclusion

If you plan to use Spell-Jam to get a few studious spellers prepared for a real bee, Spell-Jam can be a helpful tool. It helps if they type well; otherwise their typing skill will affect their spelling prowess. Without a way to customize the words list, less skillful spellers will find the game too hard even with the Easy level. Given the young audience for the game, more variety to the game would make it less monotonous.

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# Software Review

by Lee Bennett, [lbennett@atpm.com](mailto:lbennett@atpm.com)

## Wii Transfer 2.5.2

**Developer:** [Riverfold Software](#)

**Price:** \$19

**Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4, Nintendo Wii console with Internet Channel installed. [Universal](#).

**Trial:** Feature-limited (Sound in movies not converted; does not support playlists, shuffle, or playing more than one song at a time; slide show images are watermarked.)



I am always on the lookout for new ways to access the media library on my computer through my home entertainment system in the living room. Since I recently acquired a Nintendo Wii console, Riverfold Software's Wii Transfer fueled my anticipation of navigating my media library with the same ease and fun as in other games on the Wii.

Wii Transfer acts as a gateway application on a computer that enables a Wii console to browse and play designated media. The application does this by acting as a Web server, so the Opera browser-powered Wii Internet Channel is required. Early on, the Internet Channel was offered for free. Now that the introductory period has ended, it costs 500 Wii points to download. (Wii points are purchased 1,000 at a time for \$10.)

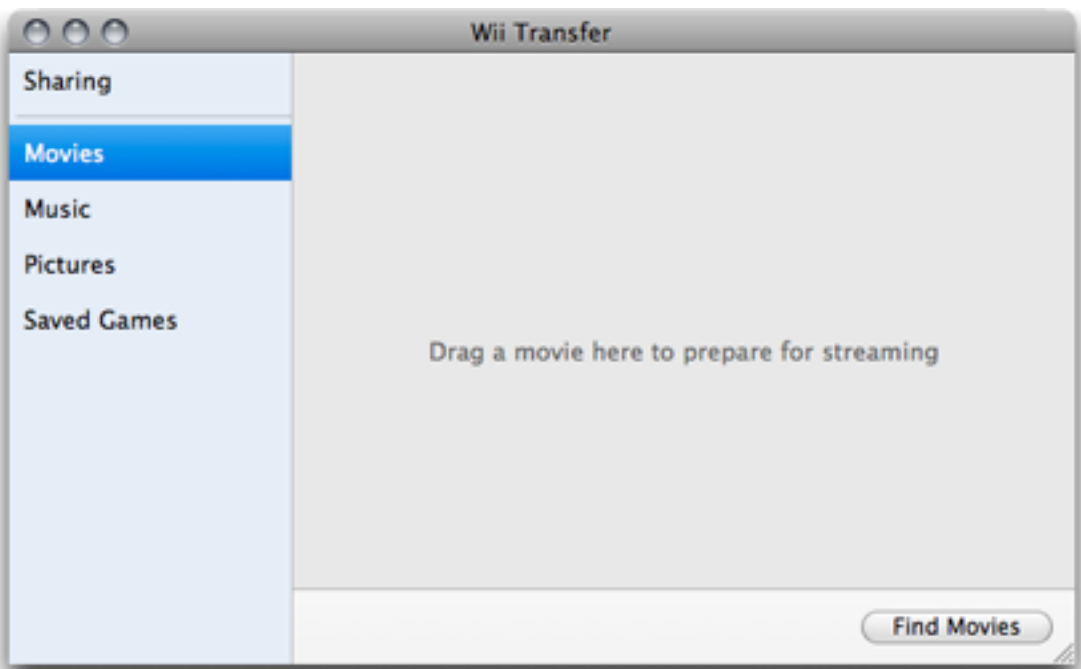
### Setting Up Wii Transfer

There are four categories of media managed by Wii Transfer.

#### ***Movies***

The Movies category turns most of the Wii Transfer application window into a large, blank area in which to drag movies that will be viewed on a Wii console.



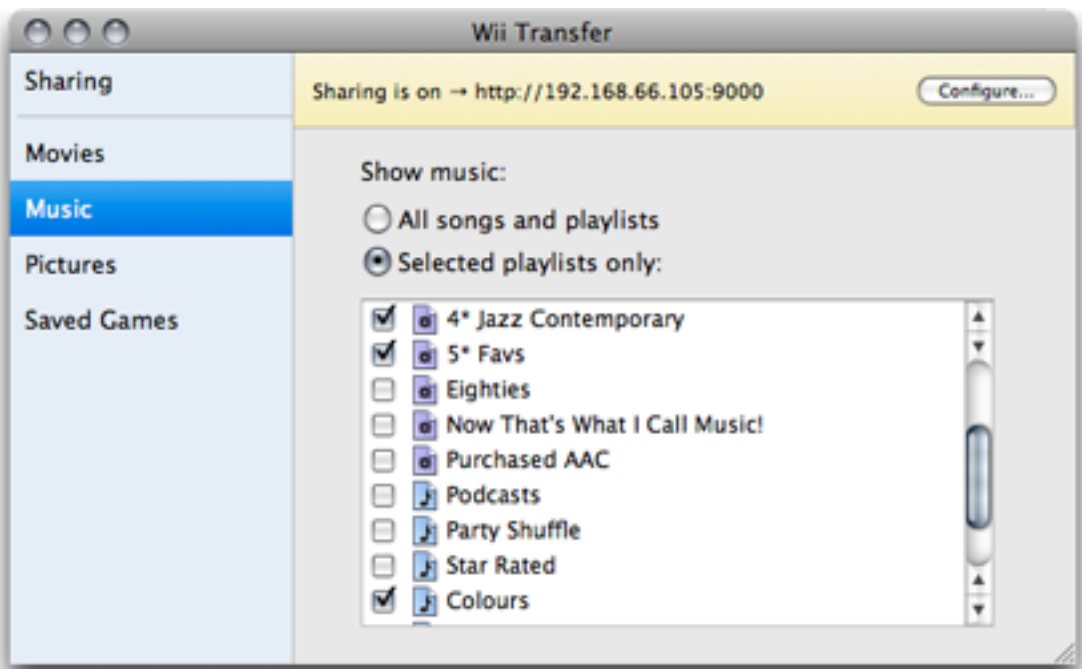


Movies must be converted before they can be viewed on a Wii.

Wii Transfer converts all movies to Flash format for compatibility on the Wii Internet Channel. Once converted, they are retained in the Wii Transfer cache, up to a maximum number defined in the preferences.

### **Music**

The Music category offers the choice of allowing the entire iTunes library to be accessible on the Wii console or only selected playlists.

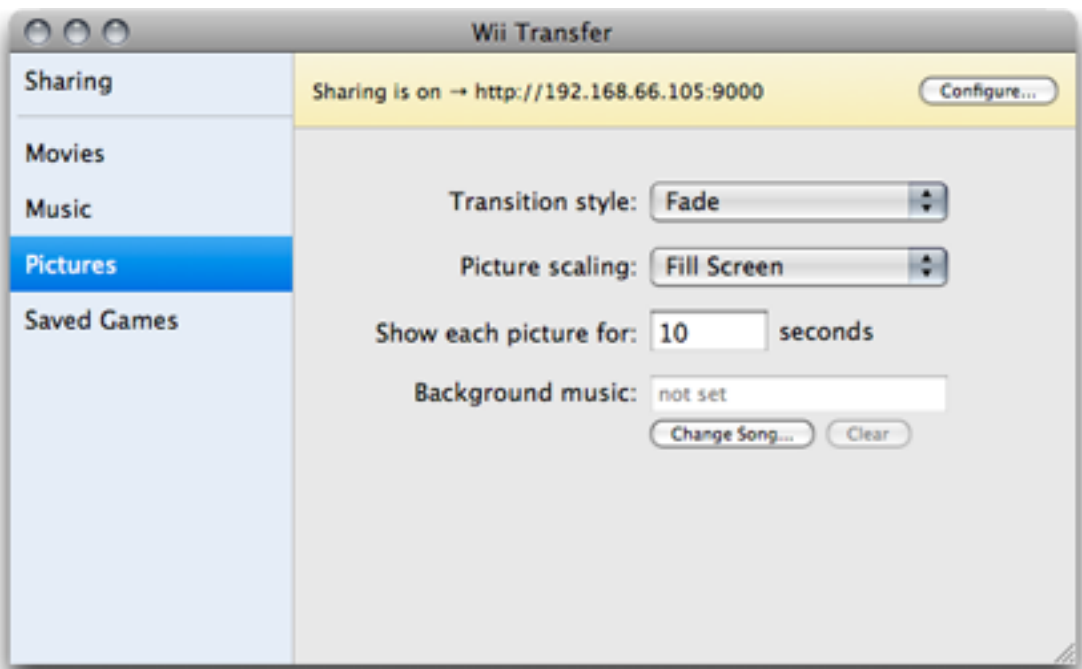


Defining playlists to be accessed on the Wii.

As with practically every other non-Apple utility of this nature, protected AACs purchased from the iTunes Music Store are not compatible with Wii Transfer—nor are purchased movies—due to the Digital Rights Management restrictions.

### ***Pictures***

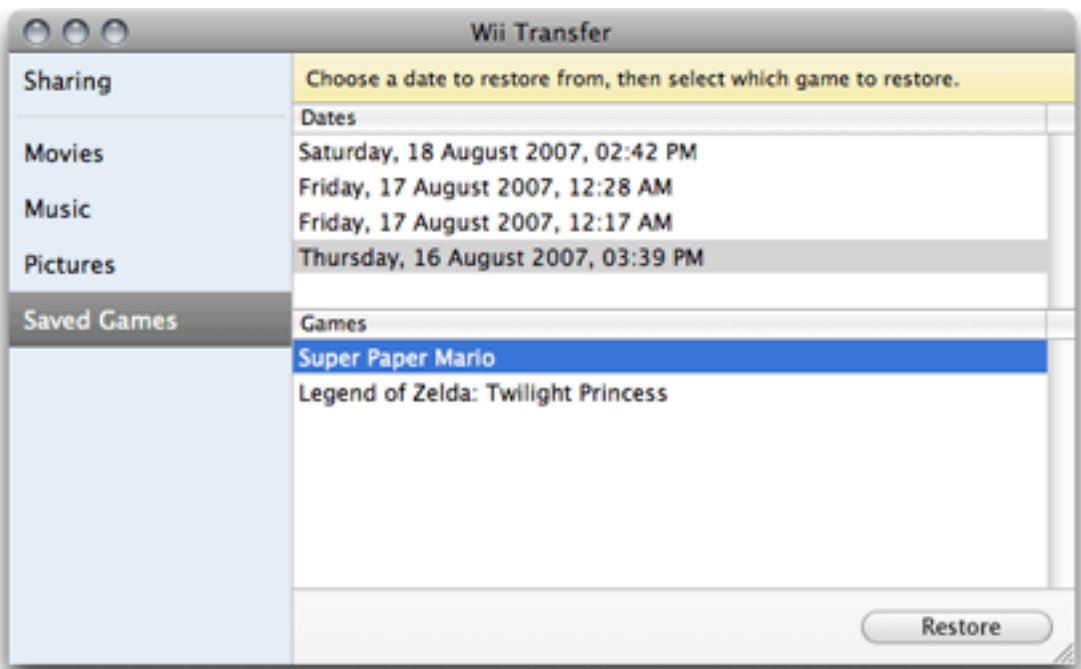
The Pictures category is used to set up a slide show to be viewed on a Wii. A non-protected song in the iTunes library can be set as background music.



Default slide show settings. A half dozen transition styles are available.

### ***Saved Games***

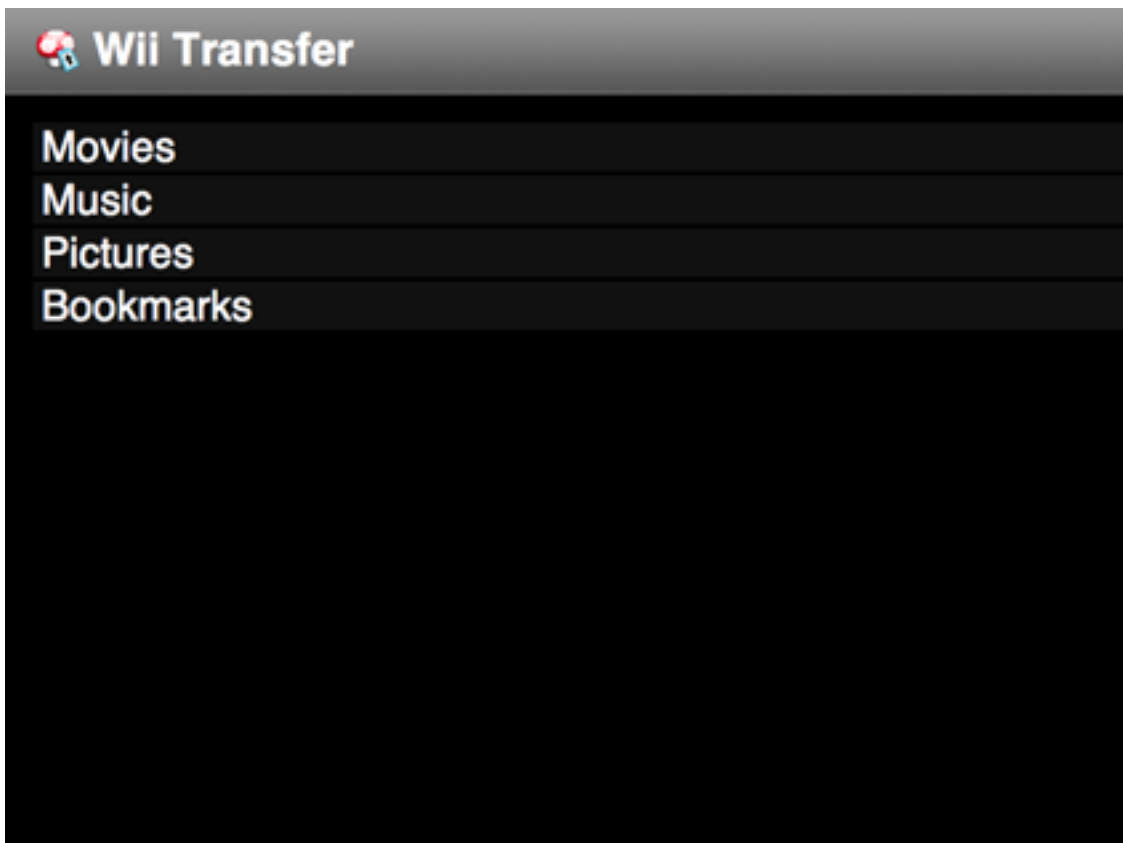
The Saved Games category allows a host computer to serve as a repository of game-save data stored on an SD memory card. This function does not require the Wii Internet Channel, as it manages game save data directly from a memory card connected to the computer.



Using Wii Transfer to manage saved games.

## Accessing Media on the Wii

Once Wii Transfer is running and configured, the Internet Channel on a Wii console can connect to the host computer by loading its local IP address followed by a definable port number, such as `http://192.168.1.100:9000`. Alternatively, an easier-to-remember Web address on the `wiitransfer.com` domain can be registered.



The home screen viewed from a Wii console. The menu includes access to Web site bookmarks currently saved in the computer's Web browsers.

Considering that the menu navigation interface is simply a series of Web pages and not dependent upon any locked-in Wii console interface, I was somewhat disappointed that a means to back up to the previous menu is not provided. Selecting a menu choice is really no problem, but to go back one level, I must activate the Wii Internet Channel's navigation bar. I generally keep this bar hidden because it uses up a lot of screen space.

### ***Music***

As seen in the screenshot above, there are no backwards navigation controls—only a single icon in the upper left corner which, when clicked, leads back to the top-level menu.

## 4\* Jazz Contemporary

*Play All*

*Shuffle*

Native Tongue (New At Two)

Winterflame

Find Your Way Back

Gathering of the Tribes

The Greywolf Hunts Again

Anejo de Cabo

Just One World

Center of Courage (E-Lizabeth's Song)

Acoustic Planet

Arabesque

Corso Delle Gondole

Navigating a music playlist.

A more significant problem with displaying a playlist is that only song titles are listed with no reference to albums or artists. Maybe I'm not typical, but if I'm skipping through a playlist, I recollect albums and artists much more easily than track titles.

Also, with no other navigation controls, a user must manually scroll down to reach the end—very time-consuming for long playlists.

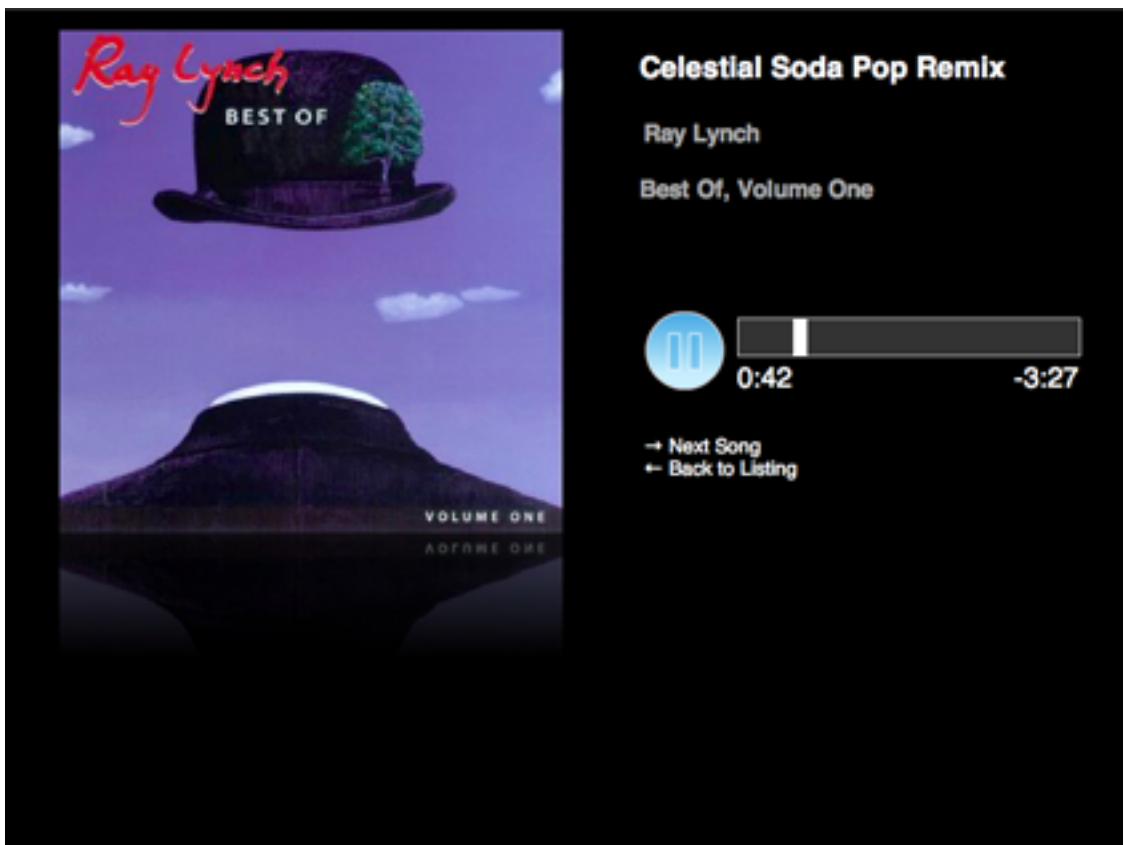
Fortunately, there is a Search function, but this isn't of much help if, for example, I am thinking of an album name and only remember that it started with the letter Y.

The Internet Channel on a Wii console can immediately play fixed-rate MP3 audio files without conversion (Riverfold states that variable-rate MP3s will not play properly), but AAC files cannot be played until Wii Transfer converts them to MP3. This is done automatically and on the fly but requires several seconds to complete. Converted songs are held in a cache of a definable number of songs. Alternatively, there is a preference option to ignore AAC files and only display MP3s when browsing music on the Wii console.

## Preparing AAC music file (Celestial Soda Pop Remix)



Each AAC file that is played must first be converted to MP3. The process takes 5–10 seconds, depending on the size of the audio file.



Once an audio file is playing, album art, if any, is displayed along with information about the track, a pause button, and a clickable playhead indicator. There is a link to advance to the next track, but not to access the previously played track.

## ***Movies***

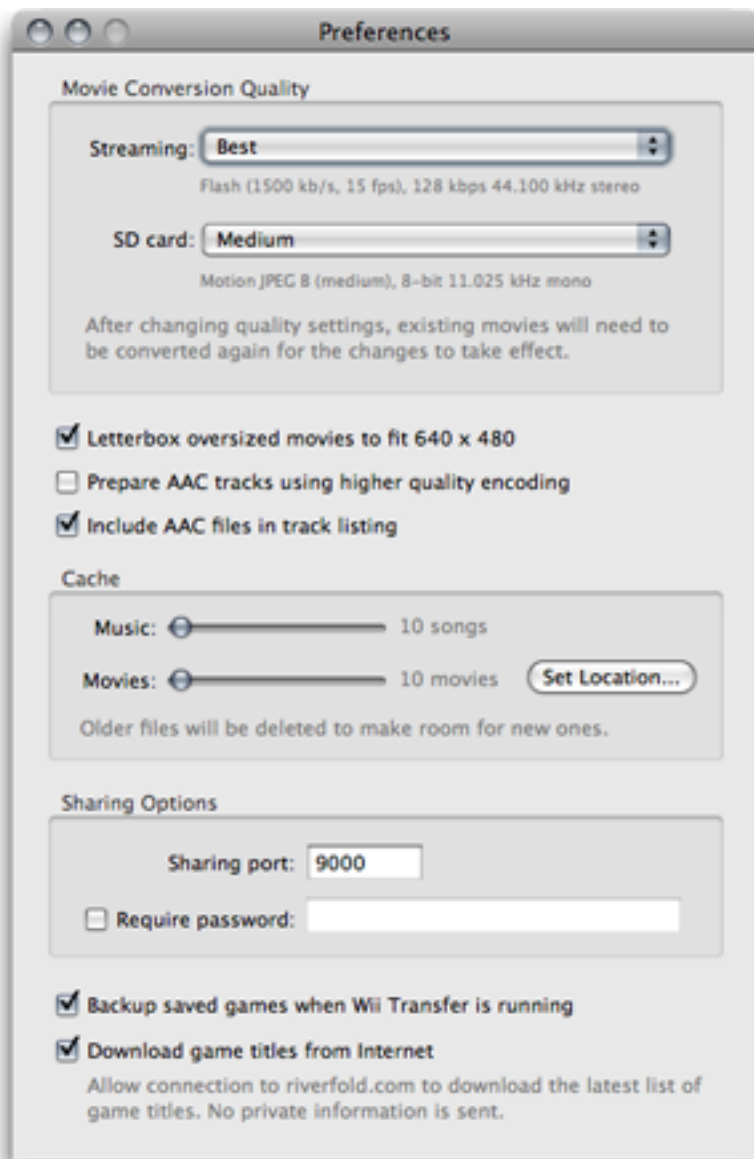
As mentioned earlier, all movie files, provided they aren't protected purchases, must be converted by Wii Transfer to Flash format before they can be played on a Wii console. If the movie is already in an iTunes library, it can be selected from a listing in Wii Transfer. Otherwise, any other movie file can be dragged into the Wii Transfer window for conversion. The process can take a while for longer videos, and it can only be done in the Wii Transfer application—not while browsing on the Wii console.





Movie playback is very basic with a generic Flash video-style playhead at the bottom.

The quality at which movies are converted is set in the Wii Transfer preferences. As far as I'm concerned, anything less than the Best quality setting is unacceptable. Even the highest setting only offers 15 frames per second, which appears to stutter in comparison to the 30 frames per second that is normal for broadcast television.



Options in the Wii Transfer preferences include movie conversion quality and the number of items to be retained in the cache.

## **Pictures**

From what I can tell, an auto-advancing slide show is the only option for viewing pictures with Wii Transfer. There is no means for browsing photos manually, instead.

The slide show settings include the option to select a song to play as background music while the pictures are showing—but only one song, which is sure to get old when used for longer slide shows. There is no means to choose all the songs of an artist, album, or playlist for multiple background music songs.

## Conclusion

Wii Transfer serves as an adequate utility if the primary goal is to manage backups of saved game data on a computer. The \$19 price tag might be small change compared to the cost of a Wii console, making Wii Transfer an inexpensive solution for accessing media. Various dedicated [hardware items](#) do the job better, but generally come with a price tag in excess of \$100. For those who own one, an [iPhone-optimized utility](#) is probably the most ideal solution.

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