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

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

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the July issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* It's time for fun in the sun, vacations, the new "staycations," and leisure time with friends and family. It's a season of sightseeing, picture taking, video capturing, barbecuing, and potato salad.

This month, the editors of ATPM are serving up our own kind of summertime salad. We're slicing and dicing all of the latest Apple news, blending in our unique style of product reviews, and serving it up cold.

Snow Leopard

At June's WWDC conference, Apple announced details about the next Mac OS X road trip for users. Mac OS X 10.6 (marketed as Snow Leopard) will carry less baggage via a smaller memory footprint but is also leaving PowerPC users back at the station. It's the end of the line for Macs using pre-Intel chips.

This iteration of Apple's Unix-based OS is the next step in Apple's transition to a true 64-bit OS. Snow Leopard is designed to take advantage of the power of graphics chips on the board to quicken processing functions, and through a technology Apple calls Grand Central Dispatch, applications and system processes can make more efficient use of modern chips with multiple cores.

To entice users to to take the ride, Apple is releasing Snow Leopard in the fall at the price of $29 for a single-user license and $49 for a family pack.

Name That iPhone

Is the new iPhone a 3G S, 3GS, or 3Gs? Product references and even Apple's own press releases have offered different spelling of the product's name. But no matter how one references it, the new phone's name also spells success. With over one million units shipped (including pre-orders) in the first three days of commercial release, the 3GS continues to find favor with consumers. In the US market, demand remains high for the latest version of Apple's smartphone, and analysts are expecting impressive handset sales numbers from Apple for the June quarter. In mid-July, during AT&T's quarterly conference call with analysts, we may hear clues concerning the number of new iPhone activations and the pace of sell-through of the new phones to end users.

Are Reports of the Pre's Success Pre-Mature?

The iPhone faces increasing competition as more handset makers focus on the consumer market for smartphone sales. Once a market almost exclusively for business customers, the success of the iPhone has opened the consumer market for increasing smartphone sales.

Jon Rubinstein, one of the masterminds behind the success of Apple's iPod line of digital devices, is now Chairman and CEO of Palm, Inc., maker of the Pre smartphone. The Pre was released shortly before the 3GS iPhone, and the company reported at least modest sales success.

But the Pre was launched against a backdrop of declining smartphone sales for Palm and the overwhelming success of the iPhone, which has been siphoning customers away from Sprint and other domestic cell service providers to AT&T.

The Pre will undoubtedly cannibalize sales of other Palm smartphones, and the company's financial reports suggest a hefty R&D commitment in developing the Pre and the Palm webOS that is used by the phone. Based on Linux, the Palm webOS is yet another mobile operating system entry into an increasingly crowded market.

No matter the hype, the Pre's sales number indicate it's not the supposed "iPhone killer" some had hoped it would become, and perhaps the best the Pre can offer relative to the iPhone is a slowing of the rate of migration from other cell service carriers to AT&T as consumers continue to embrace the iPhone in big numbers.

Serial Indispensability

For years, journalists, stock market analysts, and even many Apple fans have claimed that Steve Jobs is somehow indispensable to Apple's continuing success. There's no doubt the company's co-founder and CEO has had a heavy hand in the resurgence of the Macintosh platform and the development of the iPod and the iPhone.

Over the past several months, Mr. Jobs has faced serious health issues and most recently underwent a liver transplant to save his life. In January, Mr. Jobs announced a six-month leave of absence to deal with his serious health issues, leaving Apple's COO Tim Cook to lead the company's day-to-day operations and temporarily assume many of CEO's executive roles. During the CEO's leave of absence, Apple released an update to the popular iPhone, new versions of Apple's laptops, and announced the release date for Snow Leopard.

Remarking on Apple's continuing success during the CEO's leave, some analysts and journalists are making a rather ironic and somewhat perverse claim: it's not Steve Jobs who is now indispensable at Apple, but COO Time Cook. I'm using this space to remind everyone the only ones who are indispensable to Apple's success are the millions of consumers who buy and use Apple products. It's time those of us who make smart choices in personal digital gear got some respect.

The MacBook Pro

The release of the 3GS iPhone and the iPhone OS 3.0 overshadowed a marketing change in Apple's laptop line. The former 13″ aluminum MacBook has now joined the MacBook Pro line in its latest update. The MacBook moniker is now reserved only for a 13″ laptop in a white, polycarbonate enclosure.

No Change in Our Name, Our Publication Remains the Same

ATPM has been chronicling the personal computing experience since 1995. In our many years of publication, and contrary to recent norms, our name has remained the same and our focus has not changed. We celebrate the digital lifestyle and highlight the interplay between people and their personal technology products. Spring, summer, winter, fall, we cover it all with you in mind.

Our July issue includes:

Bloggable: Secrecy Boils Over

Wes Meltzer ponders how one person's health can fuel so much discussion in the blogosphere.

MacMuser: iPine

No, Mark Tennent isn't talking about some new app involving trees. He just wants the new iPhone. But, does he want the contract that comes with it?

MacMuser: Suggestions Requested for Router Replacement

Mark Tennent solicits reader opinion for a new router.

Segments: Small Macs: The Next Generation

What's it like to skip Mac generations entirely? We examine a jump from 1999's retro-small Mac Cube to the aptly named 2009 Mac mini.

Desktop Pictures: Florida Flora

Delwin Finch, a friend of ATPM Web editor Lee Bennett, has a growing passion for macro photography and offered some of his floral shots for this month's desktop photos.

Out at Five

Cartoonist Matt Johnson returns to ATPM with his new series, *Out at Five*.

Qaptain Qwerty: The Angst of Internet Oh-Nine

Retweet about karma catharsis and friend rejection.

Review: Ballistix AURA Pro-Tour

Lee Bennett enlists the help of pro photographer Ben Tanner to review this backpack from Slappa especially suited for camera gear.

Review: PopChar X 4.2

Type olé or ä, and more, easily with PopChar, at a price.

Review: Prizmo 1.0.1

Prizmo simplifies the process of digitizing the paper in your life without tying you to a scanner.

Review: Take Control of Syncing Data in Leopard

A fine book for getting started in syncing and working with devices, *Take Control of Syncing Data in Leopard* doesn't quite deliver on its title.

E-Mail

Controlling Your Mac[1]

You could also use the program Synergy (or SynergyKM[2] for Mac). It's totally cross-platform and works on multiple systems with multiple monitors. I use it on a three-workstation six-monitor setup at work, and the only issue is that it sometimes takes a while to resolve the computer name and restart the connection after restarting the computers.

—*Alex*

Switching to ADSL2+[3]

Wow. And I felt like the poor relation here in Denver, CO, with my ancient Motorola Surfboard modem hooked to my AirPort Extreme wireless 'n' router fighting for my 5.3 mbps download speed. I admire your persistence.

Hang in there.

—*G. Watson*

Sitting on the Font Fence[4]

Very interesting article. I used Font Reserve from the beginning and loved it. I then had to switch over to Suitcase, and then Suicase Fusion. It works, but not as smooth as with the experience I had with Font Reserve.

—*Peter Teubner*

Coping With Mac OS X's Font Rendering[5]

I do like ClearType for its pixel matching sharpness, but I don't like it doing it through RGB sub-pixels. I really hate small characters looking purple and green on Windows, much more than a little fuzziness on Mac OS X. Adobe Flash has even worse sub-pixel rendering then ClearType. So, please, Microsoft, give us a ClearType that ignores RGB pixel rendering, but focusses on pixel mapping.

Some here suggest that colour fringing is caused by bad monitor setup. That is nonsense. I think a bad-VGA cable and some blurring because of scaling hides the colour fringing instead of strengthening it. Colour fringing is very good seen on the best IPS and PVA panels at good DVI connections and decent calibration. Maybe sub-pixel rendering looks fine on a cramped 1,920×1,200 17-inch TN laptop screen, but on a huge quality screen, it looks psychadelic.

Oh, and even worse are ClearType sub-pixel rendered texts that are not black on white but in two different colours.

—*Blanka Jansen*

• • •

This article is the first result on Google for *fonts ugly mac*. In my case, I was trying to figure out why Georgia was looking off balance. This was exactly what I was looking for, thank you. Also, Firebug[6] is a tool worth noting (it works on Firefox on Mac now), as clicking "inspect" will display the particulars—font family, size, line-height, word-spacing, etc. of anything you hover over or click on.

—*Adam Gerow*

Posterino 1.5.1[7]

I have used Posterino for a couple of years now. Although it is definitely a specialty item, it really makes lovely posters that are great for memories and for making really special gifts on occasions like graduations, anniversaries, birthdays, etc. I think it worth the cost as it is reliable, stable, easy to use, and the results are terrific.

—*David R. Levine*

Apple Keyboard[8]

Looks like Apple listened. The new MacBook Pro does have a similar keyboard. Ye!

—*Abhishek Nandakumar*

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

[1] http://www.atpm.com/15.06/controlling.shtml
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[6] http://getfirebug.com
[7] http://www.atpm.com/15.06/posterino.shtml
[8] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/apple-keyboard.shtml

Bloggable

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

Secrecy Boils Over

Critics of Apple's tight-lipped secrecy policies paint a portrait of a company that treats its inner workings like nuclear secrets. To these critics, like the industry analysts whose "analysis" usually reads like Sovietologists during the Cold War, the company's policy on publicly available information is an unreasonable attempt to control public knowledge and potentially harm shareholders' interests.

I've always been reasonably supportive of these efforts. They're a great way to get a lot of attention without having to lavish liquor and food on tech reporters and opinion-makers, and Apple clearly has no interest in going the Hollywood route. The alternative approaches seem to be either (a) chaos or (b) just seeding your press releases out into the ether. During my abortive attempt at tech reporting for an actual publication as an intern, I would receive as much as a couple hundred press releases a day, and I assume real tech reporters receive even more, so (b) is obviously not a viable option for Apple. *(P.S. If you sell Outlook plugins, you're probably better off relying on word of mouth.)* And (a) results mostly in the Microsoft dual approaches, either weird coordinated parties all around the US (cf. Windows 95 release) or major fanfare for weird, semi-vaporware projects (cf. Microsoft Surface).

But those of you who've been following the news know that Steve Jobs has been on sick leave since January. Jobs was treated for pancreatic cancer five years ago, and had the tumor removed surgically, but the *Wall Street Journal* reported in mid-June that he had received a liver transplant[1] sometime in April. The *Journal's* report speculated that the pancreatic cancer metastasized to his liver, which is apparently fairly common for pancreatic cancer patients.

The *Journal's* story was a major scoop, following on the heels of months of speculation about Jobs' health. It was also curiously timed, released like a lead balloon late on a Friday night during the week of the iPhone 3GS release. And John Gruber notes that the *WSJ* had no sources[2] for their story, which is astonishingly unusual. This newspaper would source me if I said my mother loved me. ("Meltzer's mother confirmed to the *Journal* that she did, indeed, love her son.")

Although a lot of news organizations—e.g., the San Jose Mercury News[3], Bloomberg[4]—wrote through the story, I have not seen anyone who claimed that they had verified the story on their own. Gruber quotes CNBC's story as "verifying" the account, but "two sources confirmed" is only a little better than "according to the *Wall Street Journal*" if you're looking for facts.

(Gruber must have better news alerts than I do, because he linked last week to a press release from Methodist Hospital in Tennessee confirming[5] that Jobs had received a liver transplant.)

My first thought when I read the *WSJ* story was pretty much what I wrote in February[6], again:

> As long as he doesn't have his finger on The Button, why should I really care whether he's healthy or sick?

That, and "I'm glad to hear that Steve is recovering. If he really did have a liver transplant two months ago, he must be doing well. Thank goodness for his family and friends."

But that's not how everyone sees things, I guess.

Let's set aside the usual, snide commentary that insinuates that everyone rich or famous who gets a transplant jumps the line. If you're an analyst or a blogger whose big issue is Apple's secrecy or some kind of weird hatred of Steve Jobs, then every story about Apple looks like a nail. I'm willing to buy that there's debate whether Jobs was legally obligated to disclose his medical issues. At the same time, I would

[1] http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124546193182433491.html

[2] http://daringfireball.net/2009/06/wsj_steve_jobs_liver_transplant

[3] http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_12653039?nclick_check=1

[4] http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aLFLSWRd27ro

[5] http://www.methodisthealth.org/static/methodist/doc/Jobs-media-statement.pdf

[6] http://www.atpm.com/15.02/bloggable.shtml

think that Jobs going on medical leave (whether under the Family and Medical Leave Act or some other provision doesn't matter) and giving over control of the company to COO Tim Cook should insulate Jobs.

But the odd tone of *anger* and *disbelief* I heard on the subject from all corners of the Internet is just mind-boggling. To some people, the desire for privacy by Steve Jobs, the person, while on medical leave is outweighed by...the fact that Apple, the company, has a penchant for secrecy. We all have a bad habit of playing the "Steve Jobs = Apple" game, but it's become clear since his bout of ill health in 2004 that Apple is no more the corporate embodiment of Steve Jobs than the United States is the embodiment of its president.

Sticking to the legal merits, Warren Buffett told CNBC he didn't think that CEOs of large-cap companies really deserved any privacy:

> Certainly Steve Jobs is important to Apple. So it's a material fact. Whether he is facing serious surgery or not is a material fact. Whether I'm facing serious surgery is a material fact. Whether (General Electric CEO) Jeff Immelt is, I mean, so I think that's important to get out. They're going to find out about it anyway so I don't see a big privacy issue or anything of the sort. (CNBC[7])

I've culled just a collection of snippets from people who seem disinterested in his actual health, and disinterested in the fact that Steve wasn't even technically on duty when it became clear he needed a new liver. To them, this is all about the usual "Apple obsessed with secrecy" game:

> It's the latest fib that he and Apple have told concerning his health: the company didn't disclose that he had had pancreatic cancer in 2004...Jobs's case is different. How? Because Jobs represents most of Apple's value. Without his return in the mid-1990s, the company would have gone bust by 2000. (TechWire[8])

> Looks like Apple Chief Executive Steve Jobs' reality distortion field is portable, because it now appears to have made a trip with Jobs to Memphis, Tenn...[W]e got false information, that Jobs was never a patient. (Forbes[9])

> If Mr. Jobs had retired from Apple—or had taken an open-ended leave—then I would say yes, it's his business and not his investors'. But he didn't do that. He took a six-month leave, which ends on Monday. Already, he is reportedly back at work. But what does that mean? Is he fully back in the saddle? Is he part time? Is he involved only in big strategic decisions? Is he back to his old micromanaging self? Have we now reached the point, in other words, where his health is impinging on his ability to run Apple? That's the real question, isn't it? *Are Mr. Jobs's health problems affecting his work?*...Up to now, those directors have put Mr. Jobs's obsession with privacy ahead of the interest of the Apple shareholders they are supposed to be representing. (Joe Nocera, The New York Times[10]) (emph. Nocera's)

> Like a hung computer operating system, Apple's board is neglecting pressing information-retrieval work. Data on the effectiveness of liver transplants for Jobs' condition is, at once, scant and unpromising. Yet some specific information about Jobs' condition would be useful in evaluating his prognosis...[O]bviously Jobs is recovering nicely if he's going back to work next week, right? Perhaps, but it's not clear how hard he'll be able to work; recall that Jobs may be working part-time, per a *Journal* report earlier this week. Or he might not. He might be already back to week, per an anonymous (read: probably spoon-fed by Apple) report from CNBC's Jim Goldman. Or he might not be returning until June 30. (Gawker[11])

When the *Industry Standard* is the voice of reason, it gives you pause:

[7] http://www.cnbc.com/id/31526815/page/3/

[8] http://www.yourtechstuff.com/techwire/2009/06/steve-jobs-does-not-have-a-right-to-medical-privacy.ht ml

[9] http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/24/hospital-lies-about-jobs-technology-forbes.html

[10] http://executivesuite.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/steve-jobs-and-apple-here-we-go-again/

[11] http://gawker.com/5302079/apples-frozen-board-needs-a-reboot

> Anyone who reads the tech press knows there has been constant, merciless speculation about Jobs' health for months, justified to some extent by the sense that Apple's well-being is closely tied to his. . .Still, Apple appears to have continued on a steady course in Jobs' absence, which may help prepare and reassure investors for whenever he decides to scale back or leave. (The Industry Standard[12])

John Gruber speculated that, given the timing of the story, the reporting from the *Journal* was a leak from Jobs himself. I'm not so sure about that, but anything's possible.

The thing that bothered me about all of this is that, reading these articles and blog posts, I got the distinct sense that this wasn't *really* about Steve Jobs' health. Stories about Apple seem to bring out the intensely personal in people. I felt like what I was really reading about was yet another story about Apple and secrecy.

Leaving the Heat on Too High

I have to be mindful that, if I'm accusing someone else of overstating Steve Jobs' illness into what's really a play on Apple, I am not throwing rocks from a glass house.

But what really prompted my frustration at the whole situation was following this story from January—in which, as you'll recall, Jobs was assailed pretty much from the same *l'État c'est moi* view on Apple that we're facing now. As *Macworld's* Dan Miller wrote at the time[13], "[C]overage of Steve Jobs' health woes has hit some surprising new lows in journalistic IQ."

In January, all that this was was an unexplained pancreatic disorder of some kind. Apparently his health deteriorated pretty rapidly; his last public appearance, in the fall, had him looking thin but healthy. Pancreatic cancer metastasizing to the liver can certainly spread very quickly. Even then, this was some kind of a crisis in the media.

Now it's become transformed somehow into a major legal battle over the fate of Apple. *The New York Times*, which got beaten by the *Journal* on the original story, followed up in Tuesday's Times with a bonanza about Apple's secrecy that is excruciatingly bitter. It reads like one of the reporters, Brad Stone or Ashlee Vance, has a bone to pick[14] with Apple:

> Few companies, indeed, are more secretive than Apple, or as punitive to those who dare violate the company's rules on keeping tight control over information. Employees have been fired for leaking news tidbits to outsiders, and the company has been known to spread disinformation about product plans to its own workers.
>
> "They make everyone super, super paranoid about security," said Mark Hamblin, who worked on the touch-screen technology for the iPhone and left Apple last year. "I have never seen anything else like it at another company."
>
> But even by Apple's standards, its handling of news about the health of its chief executive and co-founder, Steven P. Jobs, who has battled pancreatic cancer and recently had a liver transplant while on a leave of absence, is unparalleled.
>
> [. . .]
>
> "They don't communicate. It's a total black box," said Gene Munster, an analyst at Piper Jaffray who has covered Apple for the last five years.

With any other company, this wouldn't be news. Frankly I'm not sure any other company could sustain the level of secrecy that Apple feels that it needs to sustain a competitive advantage.

But nowhere in the article, except by implication, does anyone ever say that what they do violates any laws or regulations.

As I've said before, I'm of two minds on secrecy. I don't like not having information any sooner than anyone else, but at the same time, from Apple's perspective it's probably cheaper to get publicity with surprise than buying it any other way.

Just for repetition's sake I'll quote myself, again:

> I just don't think [Jobs' health is] germane. Frankly, he's only a public figure up to a point, and as long as he doesn't have his finger on The Button, why should I really care whether he's healthy

[12] http://www.thestandard.com/news/2009/06/20/report-steve-jobs-had-liver-transplant-still-returning-mo nth

[13] http://www.macworld.com/article/138279/2009/01/jobshealth_media.html

[14] http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/technology/23apple.html

or sick? *(Wes' note from June: Or anyone else! Remember, he was on leave, and not acting in command from his hospital bed.)*

Odds and Ends

- You may have heard of this newfangled "iPhone" thing. Apparently Apple released another one, and from what I hear, it's a goodie. Reviews from: David Pogue[15]; *Ars Technica's* Jacqui Cheng[16]; Coding Horror[17]; Andy Ihnatko[18]; PC World[19]; Ed Baig[20]; Macworld[21]; and Stephen Fry[22].

- There's a lot of chatter on the iPhone 3GS front about AT&T and upgrades. Americans don't really understand the way carrier-subsidized cell phone sales work (Pogue has a good explainer[23]), so many[24] people[25] are[26] wailing[27] endlessly[28] about[29] how[30] unfair[31] it was that AT&T was charging more than $200. Initially AT&T was insisting on full price for anyone not upgrade-eligible, but they've relaxed their rules about upgrade eligibility. Anyone not eligible can pay the $199 or $299 price *plus* a $200 early upgrade fee. (Seth Weintraub of *Computerworld* defends AT&T[32]—I wouldn't want his inbox.)

- This was originally going to be my whole column, but it got sandwiched, unfortunately, by Jobs news. Apparently Palm's been advertising that you can sync the new Pre with iTunes. Directly, not via a conduit the way they supported Palm Desktop-iSync synchronization. Jon Lech Johansen suspected that Palm is spoofing[33] an iPod model's USB vendor and device IDs, and got it confirmed[34] via an anonymous tip. Apple issued a support document shot across the bow, warning Palm and Pre customers that they don't support this, and it may stop working[35] in newer versions of iTunes. I'll circle back to this next month, perhaps. We have a lot more to discuss about the Pre.

- Steve Cuozzo at the *New York Post* somehow got hold of the numbers on how much Apple sells each year at its Fifth Avenue store in Manhattan. The answer: $440 million[36]. A year. That's just mind-boggling.

- A primer on the unusual way in which documents are created on a Mac, and how you can remedy the situation ("Open the application you intend to create a blank document in, and then hit 'New Document' there"). Some very interesting suggestions[37], like having a locked folder of blank file templates that you drag to wherever you want the new document—Apple should take this guy up on it.

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[15] http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/18/technology/personaltech/18pogue.html
[16] http://arstechnica.com/apple/reviews/2009/06/iphone-3g-s-review.ars
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[20] http://www.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/edwardbaig/2009-06-17-iphone-3gs_N.htm
[21] http://www.macworld.com/article/141281/2009/06/iphone3gs_review.html
[22] http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/jun/19/stephen-fry-iphone-3gs-review
[23] http://pogue.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/how-much-it-costs-to-upgrade-to-an-iphone-3g-s/
[24] http://www.rustyjtrump.com/post/120096090/bullshit-at-t
[25] http://www.intomobile.com/2009/06/09/give-me-my-iphone-3g-s-upgrade-now.html
[26] http://twitition.com/f96aq
[27] http://discussions.apple.com/message.jspa?messageID=9587131#9587131
[28] http://37prime.wordpress.com/2009/06/10/who-sets-the-iphone-3g-s-upgrade-pricing-apple-or-att/
[29] http://hathology.com/apple-att-screw-up-with-iphone-3gs-upgrade-pricing/
[30] http://ipod.about.com/b/2009/06/08/att-hoses-existing-customers.htm
[31] http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/06/08/why-the-iphone-3g-s-may-be-a-suckers-bet-right-now/
[32] http://blogs.computerworld.com/defending_at_ts_iphone_3gs_upgrade_pricing
[33] http://nanocr.eu/2009/05/28/syncing-music-and-video-to-the-palm-pre/
[34] http://nanocr.eu/2009/06/04/palm-pre-usb-hack-confirmed/
[35] http://support.apple.com/kb/HT3642
[36] http://www.nypost.com/seven/06022009/business/space_race_on_fifth_avenue_172089.htm
[37] http://ignorethecode.net/blog/2009/05/31/creating-new-documents/

MacMuser

by Mark Tennent, http://www.tennent.co.uk

iPine

The new iPhone[1] is all I want. Perhaps a little smaller would make it better for my needs, but I want a pocket computer/camera/organiser/phone. What I don't want is the expensive contract.

I use a mobile phone as often as I want, talk for as long as I like, and telephone anywhere I fancy. Friends and contacts in France, Canada, the USA, Australia. . .they are all in my phonebook. Sometimes I use the Internet on my 3G phone and never worry about download costs, especially if it's to get a new application, or just to check Google.

My total annual mobile phone bill is around 50 pounds. Factor in the cost of the phone and extra RAM to reach double at 100 pounds. That's the equivalent of about 80 pounds a month. Why would I spend over four times as much for a monthly contract, as well as paying hundreds for a handset?

Apple and O2 are missing a trick here. Whenever surveys come out, I usually find myself somewhere between Mr. Average and the window seat on the Clapham Omnibus[2]. I would be happy to pay for the handset and my actual use of airtime. Even their highly expensive "Pay as You Go" solutions have airtime that expires each month.

[1] http://www.apple.com/iphone/

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_man_on_the_Clapham_omnibus

Fonts Update

Meanwhile, Linotype FontExplorer X Pro has been updated and fixes the bug we found[3] in the last version. It is now our chosen font handler over and above Suitcase Fusion 2, which really ought to have plug-ins for earlier versions of QuarkXPress and Adobe Creative Studio.

Copyright © 2009 Mark Tennent[4].

[3] http://www.atpm.com/15.06/macmuser-fonts.shtml

[4] http://www.tennent.co.uk

MacMuser

by Mark Tennent, http://www.tennent.co.uk

Suggestions Requested for Router Replacement

According to behavioural scientists, it takes three days for people to settle down after a major event. As we have just returned from beautiful Brittany, three days is a gross underestimation. It takes us about six months or until the next holiday.

What a beautiful part of the world is Brittany, with long, white sandy beaches and rocky coves rivalling the best in the world. The English Channel turns deep blue, and everywhere are the fruits of the sea with oysters and shellfish so fresh and cheap you just have to gorge yourself. (Didn't notice any "other" benefits of eating oysters.)

What do we come back to? More of the same sums it up. Our new Netgear router[1], a DGN2000 to replace the brand new Netgear DG834G[2] we bought a few weeks ago, is doing the same as the last one: the wireless networks become hit and miss. This time we have found the problem if not the solution. Often we open our laptops and find the networks are there but won't let us on unless we reboot the router, and then only sometimes.

The router can run up to four separate wireless networks at one time. We have to run two of them because of recent changes in wifi data encryption so that our old iBook, which cannot connect using WPA2-PSK, has its own WEP network. Meanwhile our newer MacBook gets up to "n" speeds and uses WPA2-PSK.

Reading the on-screen messages and using sniffers, the networks lose their "identity"; their names vanish leaving a blank where the broadcast name should be. Other times, the WPA2 networks starts demanding a WEP password.

The DG834G just wasn't up to managing a network with four or more computers—even two were pushing its capabilities. If one Mac was sending or receiving via FTP, it hogged the whole bandwidth no matter what we did to the router's QoS settings. Similarly with transferring files across the network. Our Linksys WAG54GS[3] isn't compatible with BT's C21 MSLAMs at our local exchange, and our DLink 604+[4] is ADSL1/802.11b slow. Both routers, on the other hand, have excellent wireless routers that gave zero difficulties for years.

All suggestions for a replacement router requested.

Copyright © 2009 Mark Tennent[5].

[1] http://www.netgear.com/Products/RoutersandGateways/WirelessNRoutersandGateways/DGN2000.aspx

[2] http://www.netgear.com/Products/RoutersandGateways/WirelessGRouters/DG834G.aspx

[3] http://www.linksysbycisco.com/US/en/support/WAG54GS

[4] http://www.dlink.com/products/?sec=1&pid=62

[5] http://www.tennent.co.uk

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

by Matthew Glidden, mglidden@atpm.com

Small Macs: The Next Generation

A scant 60 days ago, I purchased the 2009 Mac mini from Amazon.com for $594. Thanks to advice from Stephen Foskett's blog[1], a mere $120 more pimped the base model to 4 GB RAM and a 320 GB, 7200 RPM internal disk. As reviewed therein, this improves Xbench video and disk performance significantly in several areas. Another post examines replacing the DVD drive with RAID-0 disks[2], something that didn't interest me but that would be quite a change in base storage.

Garden gnomes agree, this redefines "low-profile."

At a $600 price point, the Mini's target audience covers a wide range. Some come over from Windows, while others step off their older iMacs and add a monitor to the Mini's tiny desktop footprint. For the past decade, I've been in the cost-conscious crowd and followed the cheap geek's plan for delayed obsolescence.

1. Buy a Mac Cube for $1,400 in 1999.
2. Make incremental improvements every couple of years.
3. Repeat step 2.

By January 2009, my Mac neared upgrade exhaustion, and I needed new base hardware. Even maxed RAM, a twice-bumped CPU, and a hand-crafted SuperDrive cradle couldn't get around the three-headed hydra of iPhone, USB 2.0, and wireless everything. While usable, no amount of "I'm so retro" posturing made the 20th Century Cube faster or more reliable. The 2009 Mini encompassed all of these needs and tossed in a handful of bonus goodies. FTW[3], as they say.

Factor One: iPhones and iPods

Both iPod listeners and iPhone callers agree: sliced bread didn't see it coming. Note to 2007 version of me: in two years, you're going to need 32 GB of touchable music and applications like lungs crave air. Economics being what they are, moving one's coding skills to the App Store sounds like an excellent opportunity for fame and fortune. While a PowerPC workaround exists[4], iPhone development is targeted at Intel-based systems. I walked the extra mile before buying a Mini, but after swearing at the uncooperative SDK installer for a few hours, my Cube-based coding aspirations departed. More power to the folks who make the whole thing work, but I needed a less troublesome process.

Factor 2.0: USB

The (aging) site CubeOwner.com[5] includes a peripherals forum with a dozen different takes on the question, "How do I add USB 2.0?" Very short story, you can't. My Cube runs fine with 1.1-friendly devices, but today's market hungers for far more bandwidth than it can offer. Apple's recent iPod and iPhone models can work over 1.1—despite "requiring" 2.0—but will take all night to copy over a large amount of tunes. Also, sticking to an older format means more than just slow performance. Over time, odd—in a bad way—quirks accreted like barnacles.

[1] http://blog.fosketts.net/2009/03/17/upgrades-give-mac-mini-attitude/

[2] http://blog.fosketts.net/2009/03/23/super-mac-mini/

[3] http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=ftw

[4] http://apokalypsesoftware.com/blog/2009/03/23/130/

[5] http://www.cubeowner.com/

I took two of these—why does my head still hurt?

To cherry-pick a major pre-upgrade annoyance, consider the (otherwise excellent) Cube's USB-powered speakers[6]. They typically output at a tidy 10-watts-per-channel, which sounds nice until you start doing CPU intensive work. Now you've got a struggle for control and—spoiler alert—the processor's going to win. Like a bike chain slipping gears, the Mac would suddenly drop down to a "normal" 2.5 watts. Volume lowered significantly, jittered, and often cut out altogether. Ten years of this will get to you! As an upgrade bonus, these "eyeball" speakers still work with the Mini, but sans playback weirdness.

Factor 3: Wireless Everything

2009's Mac mini supports 801.11n wireless, Bluetooth, and encryption methods better than 128-bit WEP. Even with Mac OS X 10.5.7 installed, the Cube balked one way or another at each of these. A USB Bluetooth 1.1 adapter caused occasional kernel panics. My AirPort card eventually burned out and needed replacement. Every other neighborhood network switched to WPA (or better) security, making my WEP-only signal the low-hanging fruit for snoopers. That reason's borne from anxiety more than necessity, but it reflects a hazard of lagging overall PC progress.

[6] http://cubeowner.com/kbase_2/index.php?page=index_v2&id=44&c=3

Inside the belly of the Mini.

Your Mac's motherboard can handle only so much data at once, and component upgrades eventually expose other, non-replaceable parts. Even with a souped-up 256 MB video card, the Cube stuttered during online video playback. One can accuse bloat in Apple's QuickTime and browser software, but that's a fancy way of saying "I don't know what the real problem is." The Internet's not much without reliable video and audio, so this grew into a persuasive upgrade argument over the last couple of years.

Mac minis support the final piece of "everything," Bluetooth, out of the box. Of my five USB devices currently attached, four of them (keyboard[7], mouse[8], printer[9], and speakers[10]) could go wireless. I routinely use a Skype headset that synched poorly with the Cube, but now it works like a champ. This feature's more convenience than utility, but it definitely causes fewer problems on the newer machine.

Bottom Line It for Me

For most of the 2000s, Apple made jumping to new hardware an interesting idea, but avoidable. Mac OS X upgrades came though regularly, worked without complaint, and rarely felt like a hassle. That changed slowly but surely since the introduction of Intel Macs. PowerPC models remain OK for light-duty use, and many will hang on for some time to come, but folks looking ahead to Snow Leopard[11] (a.k.a., Mac OS

[7] http://www.apple.com/keyboard/

[8] http://www.apple.com/mightymouse/

[9] http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?path=Mac/10.5/en/9030.html

[10] http://reviews.cnet.com/bluetooth-speakers/

[11] http://theappleblog.com/2009/06/10/apple-officially-puts-powerpc-behind-them-with-snow-leopard/

X 10.6) and above-average performance see the final curtain close at hand. The Mac mini offers a low-cost way to get the latest Apple offers, whether through Amazon, the Apple Store[12] itself, or another reseller. My upgrade's been a breath of fresh air and something I'd do again, given the option. Now there's just the matter of finding a charitable home[13] for my trusty, ever-stylish Cube.

Copyright © 2009 Matthew Glidden, mglidden@atpm.com. The Segments *section is open to anyone. If you have something interesting to say about life with your Mac, write us. Photos appear courtesy of Apple.*

[12] `http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/specialdeals?mco=MjE0NDk5NA`

[13] `http://www.cristina.org/welcome.html`

Desktop Pictures

by Delwin Finch, http://likethebirds.com

Florida Flora

We need new desktop pictures each month. Write[1] to us!

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

This month's photos are macro floral shots taken by Delwin Finch in his yard and at various parks around central Florida. You can view more of his floral macros on his Flickr account[3].

View Pictures[a]

[a] http://www.atpm.com/15.07/florida-flora/

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[4].

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

Safari Use this Automator workflow[5].

iCab Use the Download command to "Download all linked files in same folder" and configure the limits to download only the linked images.

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

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

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

[1] mailto:editor@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/15.07/florida-flora/
[3] http://www.flickr.com/photos/likethebirds/sets/72157614560024971/
[4] http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml
[5] http://automator.us/examples-02.html

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.

Out at Five

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

After a couple years of drawing Cortland[1], I decided to put my flannel-wearing hero to rest[2] once and for all and start fresh. Well, I'm starting mostly fresh. Some of these characters will look vaguely familiar, but the storyline is all new. Well, it starts mostly where *Cortland* left off, but there's no real connection between the two. No sir. So sit back, relax, and enjoy it as you would any other gag panel strip, because that's what I was shooting for in the first place.

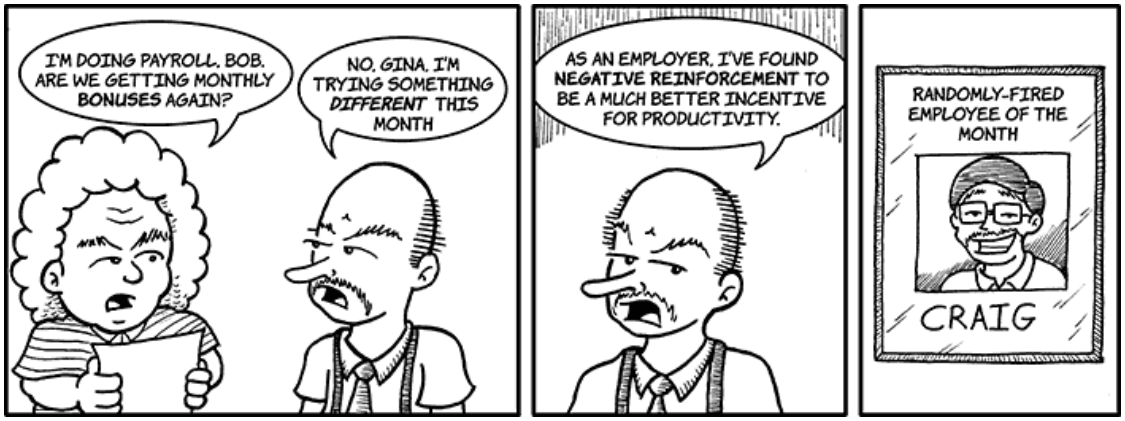
A New Beginning

Free at Last

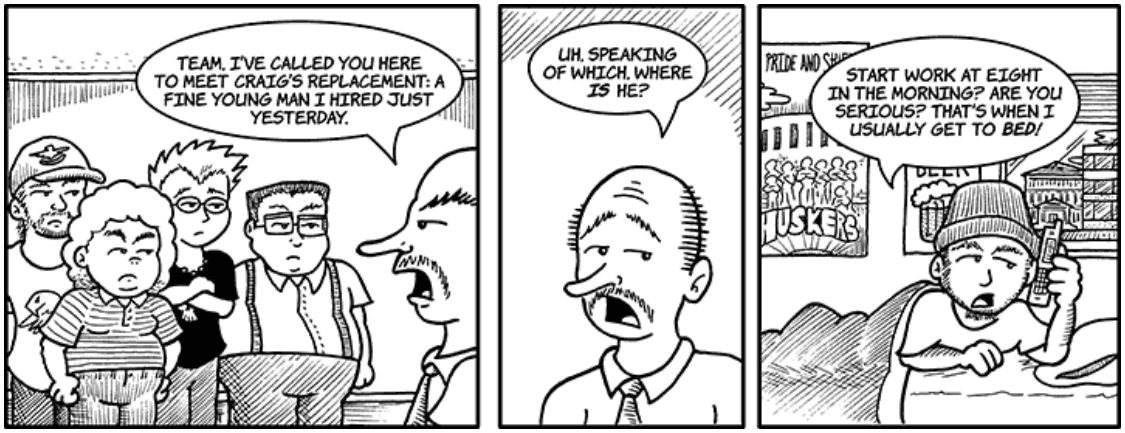
[1] http://www.atpm.com/Back/cartoons.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/14.11/cartoon.shtml

Keeping Up

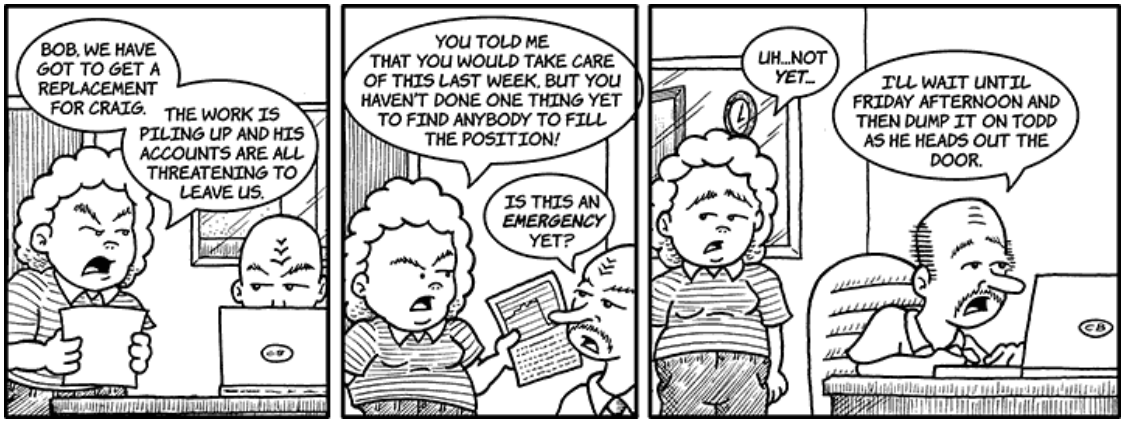
Employee of the Month



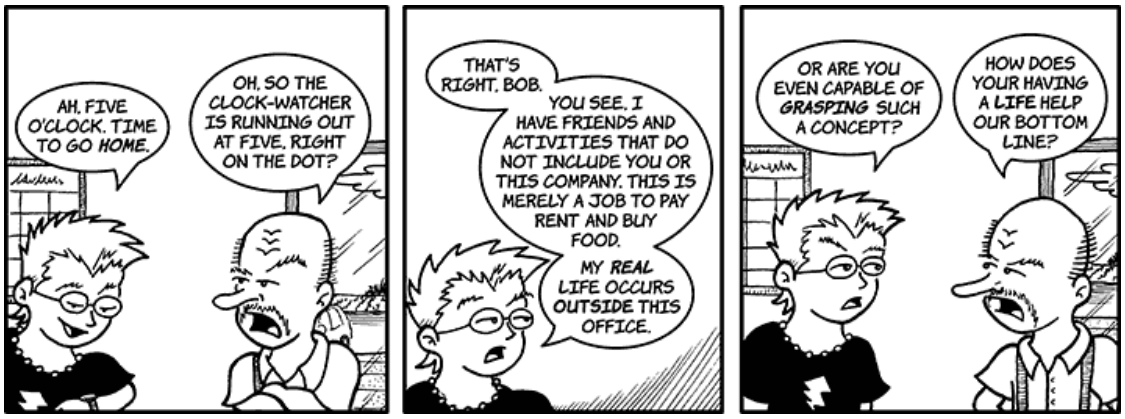
Where's the New Guy



No Hurry



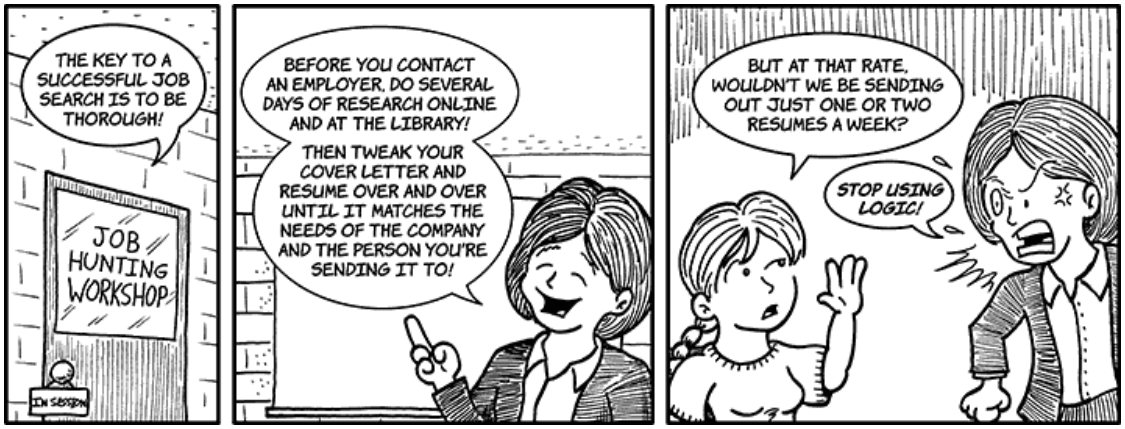
Clockwatcher



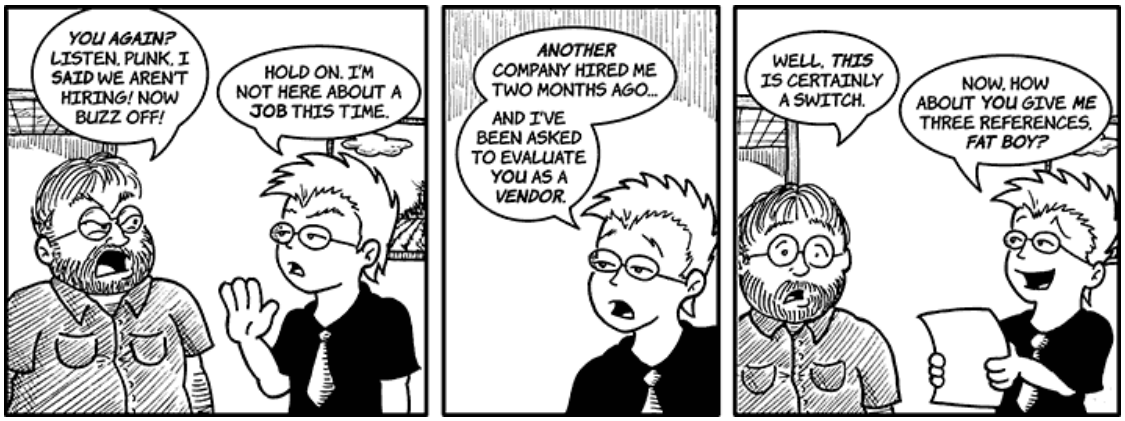
Keeping Your Friends

Meeting Stand-in

A Thorough Job Search

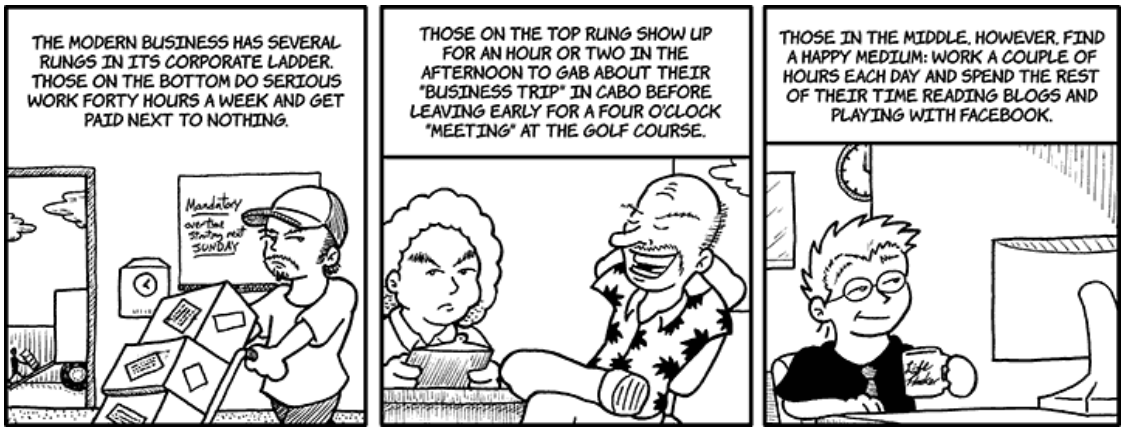


Switcheroo



Cleaning House

The Happy Medium



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Qaptain Qwerty

by Linus Ly, http://qaptainqwerty.blogspot.com

The Angst of Internet Oh-Nine

Copyright © 2009 Linus Ly[1].

[1] http://qaptainqwerty.blogspot.com/

Accessory Review

by Lee Bennett and Ben Tanner

Ballistix AURA Pro-Tour

Developer: Slappa[1]
Price: $117
Requirements: Laptop
Trial: None

In May, I reviewed[2] a tote and laptop sleeve from Slappa which, in spite of a few shortcomings, is a bag that matches my gear-carrying needs. When Slappa sent these items, the AURA Pro-Tour backpack was also included, and it didn't take me long to recognize that I couldn't give the Pro-Tour a proper review since it is ideally suited for someone who carries a lot of photo equipment in addition to a laptop computer.

Fortunately, I have a friend who not only is a professional photographer, but was also packing for a photo trip to Montana when I called to ask for his help. He was debating over which of his bags to take in order to travel as lightly as possible. Ben was excited when I showed him the product Web page for this backpack and thought this was the perfect item for his gear.

Pro photographer Ben Tanner wearing the Ballistix AURA Pro-Tour backpack during a photo trip to Montana.

The AURA Pro-Tour is made of water- and tear-resistant ballistic nylon and is available in black or a stylish brown, which Ben stated he liked a lot. The primary compartment holds a removable padded gear bag with customizable dividers. The dividers can be arranged to accommodate most any small- to medium-sized equipment and hold the items securely in place.

The removable gear bag's dividers are customizable to fit any size camera equipment.

Once the gear bag is configured as desired and the equipment is placed within, the entire bag slides snugly into the top of the backpack. One advantage to the removable gear bag is that a companion can

[1] http://www.slappa.com/aura-pro-tour-laptop-backpack-brown

[2] http://www.atpm.com/15.05/ballistix-ptac-laptop-cases.shtml

pull it out for quick access to equipment without the wearer having to remove the backpack.

Adjacent to the compartment that holds the gear bag is a slot that holds up to a 15.4″ laptop computer. Then, there is a liberal number of additional compartments and pockets on the front and sides of the backpack.

Ben packed the following items into the gear bag and other compartments of the backpack:

- Apple iBook
- GPS
- Leica binoculars
- Leica table-top tripod
- Various chargers
- Leica M6
- Leica M8
- Six different lenses at varying sizes
- Film
- SD cards
- Camera sensor cleaner
- Camera level
- Travel info literature

Even with this amount of gear, there was room to spare in the 1,700 cubic inches of capacity.

The AURA Pro-Tour held everything Ben needed for his Montana photo trip with room to spare.

Though we give this bag a rating of Excellent, Ben felt there were a few areas that would make the bag even more suited to his needs. His preference is for zippers instead of the hook-and-loop fasteners used on many of the pockets, and he felt accessing the compartments and pockets would be easier if the design were such that the backpack could stand upright on its own, as it has a tendency of rolling over to lie flat on the back when full of gear.

Ben noted that the removable gear bag was ideal for his Leica M series cameras, which are known for their precision construction in spite of their small size. More commonly used are DSLR type cameras, such as the Nikon D700, which would also be at home in the gear bag. Ben feels that two standard DSLRs and perhaps three lenses would fit well. However, the bulky, high-end DSLRs, such as the Nikon D3X, would be something of a challenge to fit. The body of a D3X could lie flat in the gear bag, but it wouldn't leave much room for additional gear.

While the AURA Pro-Tour isn't going to replace dedicated cases designed to transport high end photography equipment, any intermediate and professional photographer should appreciate this backpack for a short photo excursion and its ability to contain an impressive amount of gear in a bag that is comfortable to wear and fits most any overhead aircraft storage bin.

Ben is a big fan of the Leica M series cameras, and he is happy for any opportunity to take them on outdoor photo excursions. He feels the AURA Pro-Tour backpack is well-suited as a permanent transportation method of his frequent photo trips.

Just for enjoyment, here are a couple photos from Ben's recent trip to Montana:

Copyright © 2009 Lee Bennett[3] and Ben Tanner[4]. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.

[3] mailto:lbennett@atpm.com
[4] http://www.bentannerphotography.com

Software Review

by Linus Ly, lly@atpm.com

PopChar X 4.2

Developer: Ergonis Software[1]
Price: €30
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (some characters not available).

PopChar is a little program that, when activated, presents a table of characters ready for inserting into whatever you are working in. It has been around seemingly forever and has evolved with the Mac, from the days of black-and-white Macs to Mac OS X, then again from PowerPC to Intel. It started out as freeware but now costs €30. It now has many more features, but is PopChar X a must-have utility for everyone?

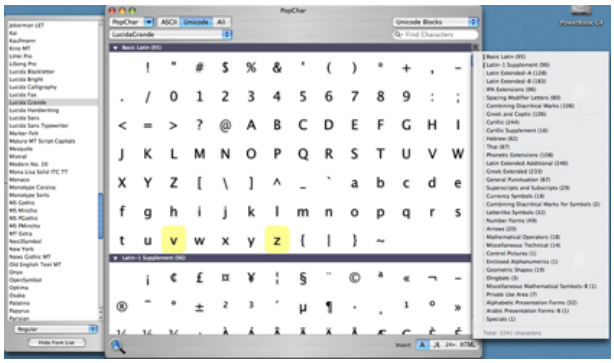
Installation

PopChar X's installation involves the typical mounting of the disk image and dragging the application into the Applications folder. A nice extra touch PopChar has is that the first you launch it, it adds itself to the list of login items so that the next time you login it is ready for use. Unregistered, PopChar makes some characters ghosted and thus not selectable. Enter the license and you'll have PopChar at the ready for all your needs, whether it is a u with umlaut (ü) or "olé." PopChar's license entitles the user two years of free upgrades.

Usage

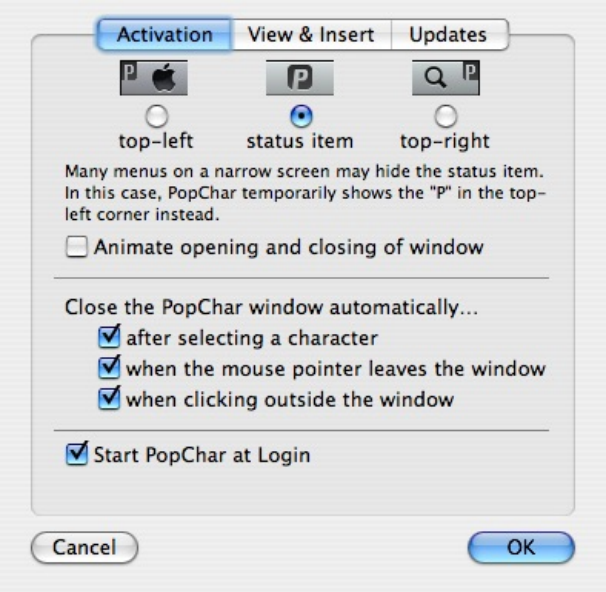
Pretend that you run the fictitious ATPM Mac Users Group and that you manage to invite Raphaël Sebbe of Creaceed, Jorge Llubiá of LateNiteSoft, and Günther Blaschek of PopChar fame to a meeting. Besides being Mac software developers, all three people have a non-standard letter in their names. You want to be culturally-sensitive and not Anglicize or Americanize the names, so you need to enter them complete with a diaeresis or acute mark. You can get away with using the built-in Character Palette, but you may find the task smoother if it is done via PopChar X.

One major annoyance I find with Character Palette is that it is obtrusive. You cannot just insert a character and get back to your application. Instead, you have to mouse over to Character Palette's close gadget to get it out of sight. You can enable Minimize on Application Switch, but that's exactly what happens. Character Palette would only minimize when you use Command-Tab key, not when you click in the application you were working on when you had a need to insert a character. On the other hand, with PopChar, you can get back to your application unobstructed simply by using Command-Tab, mouse click, or even after one character was inserted. Why, even the Esc key dismisses the PopChar window.



The PopChar interface with slide-out font list on the left, character categories on the right, and highlighted recently used characters.

[1] http://www.macility.com/products/popcharx
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/



The PopChar window can quickly get out of your way in many ways, even with the Esc key (not shown as an option).

Another issue I have with Character Palette is that the characters are too sub-categorized. You first have to know which language a certain character is in, e.g. Japanese or Chinese. Even when you choose All Characters, the list of languages actually expands to include even more language groups, like South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. Even when you select Roman, you still have to think ahead which category the character you need is in—Math, Punctuation, Crosses, etc.

Not so with PopChar because all the characters available are in one window. The characters are subcategorized, although by default they are all shown. You can hide them by using the twistie gadget. The process of entering symbols is a visual one, so it is helpful that we can browse through PopChar's offerings without having to know which category the characters belong to. PopChar makes the visual experience even more readily available by maintaining a Recent Characters list. It also offers the option of highlighting up to 30 recently used characters. What's more, PopChar has its own subcategories like Punctuation and Currency Symbols, but they are tucked away in a drawer, as an option and not as the only way to find characters.

Character Palette Today, Tomorrow Font Book

As PopChar shows characters for a given typeface, in some ways it can serve as a replacement for Font Book. I am fond of dingbat typefaces, like Wingdings or Webdings. One dingbat character may not equal a thousand words, but they are fun to use nonetheless. Unfortunately, it is hard to remember which key produces which picture. I know I once setup a spreadsheet just for the purpose, but I now have no idea where the sheet is. Font Book shows the typefaces in alphabetical order and perhaps some other order, but there is no way to insert characters via Font Book. With PopChar, you see what the characters look like and are just one click away from inserting them.

If I want to insert Moof, I would just click it, no need to know that z is its corresponding key in the Cairo font.

PopChar has a few other useful features not found elsewhere with the built-in applications. Instead of inserting the actual characters, you have the option of inserting the HTML code corresponding to the character, e.g. `ê` for a small e with circumflex. For those of us with bad eyesight, PopChar provides the option of different font sizes for the displayed characters. If that is not enough, you can enable the magnifying glass so that as you hover over a character it is enlarged.

I can hardly find any problems with PopChar. You would think for such a simple, single-purpose ap-

plication the documentation would consist of a Web page or two. In reality, PopChar comes with a 16-page PDF document that covers every aspect of the program. The only bug I've found with PopChar is the label for the Hide/Show Font List menu item. By default the font list is not displayed, but the first time you see the option is labeled as Hide Font. After the menu item is selected, it is correctly shown as Hide Font List.

The only extra feature I wish PopChar would have is a way to bring up the PopChar window via a hotkey. It is a very minor gripe because to choose a character you would need to use a mouse anyway, so reaching for the mouse to click PopChar's hotspot is not much of an issue.

The only real turnoff, I think, is PopChar's price. In my mind, small programs like PopChar should cost about $30. At €30, PopChar instead comes out around $40. Perhaps it is Ergonis' way of encouraging people to buy the Macility Productivity Suite, which contains PopChar X, Typinator (enter repetitive text and graphics), and KeyCue (improve visibility and usability of shortcut keys). As is the usual case with bundled software, instead of €70 you pay €45. I hope the marketing strategy works for Ergonis; otherwise a fine piece of software will not be used just because it costs a little more.

Conclusion

If your Mac computing involves much typing of special characters such as vowels with diacritical marks or symbols, the work is easier if you have PopChar. You can effectively retire the built-in Character Palette, which gets in the way because its window does not come and go as easily as PopChar's. You can also use PopChar to view fonts, especially dingbats, and then insert the various pictures as needed. The software is bug-free, and documentation is comprehensive. If you can overlook the relatively higher price PopChar commands, it is indeed a Very Nice tool to add to your kit.

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Software Review

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Prizmo 1.0.1

Developer: Creaceed[1]
Price: $40
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5.6. G5 processor. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (images are marked unregistered).

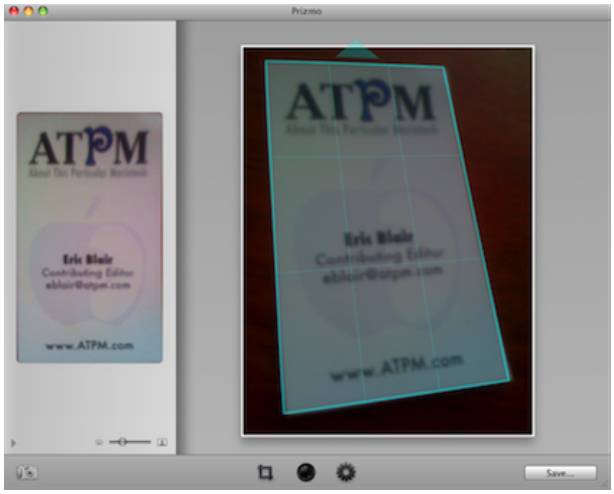
If you are a serious aficionado of the paperless office, then you probably already own a scanner to digitize the receipts, memos, and other detritus that finds its way to your desk. If you only deal with the occasional document or have limited space, though, a dedicated scanner might be overkill. On the flip side, most of us have easy access to some type of digital camera, ranging from a serious DSLR setup, down to the camera on the back of your iPhone. Snapping a shot of your receipt is a quick way to get it into digital form, but the results can be less than satisfactory—the image might not be perfectly straight, the document might not be completely flat, or there could be some lens distortion.

While it's possible to address these issues in an image editor, the process can be time-consuming, since a general-purpose editor isn't necessarily optimized toward these tasks. Prizmo, from Creaceed, bills itself as a solution to this problem: "how to scan without a scanner."

"Scanning"

Clearly, you're not scanning anything without a scanner. Prizmo, however, provides a focused tool set for quickly eliminating many of the issues you see when photographing a document. The interface allows you to quickly select what should be a rectangular portion of the image, be it a receipt, document, business card, or whatever. The selected portion of your image is de-skewed and displayed on the left of the Prizmo interface. To de-skew the image, you need to provide the dimensions of the original document. I wasn't crazy about this requirement, since it sent me scurrying for a ruler, but I can't really think of another way for Prizmo to know the original dimensions.

Some presets are included for common document sizes, but it doesn't appear that you can save a custom size. Additionally, you can get fairly decent results if you're good at eyeballing such measurements. Since you can see the results of your entered dimensions, you can tweak the values until the resulting image looks at least close to correct.



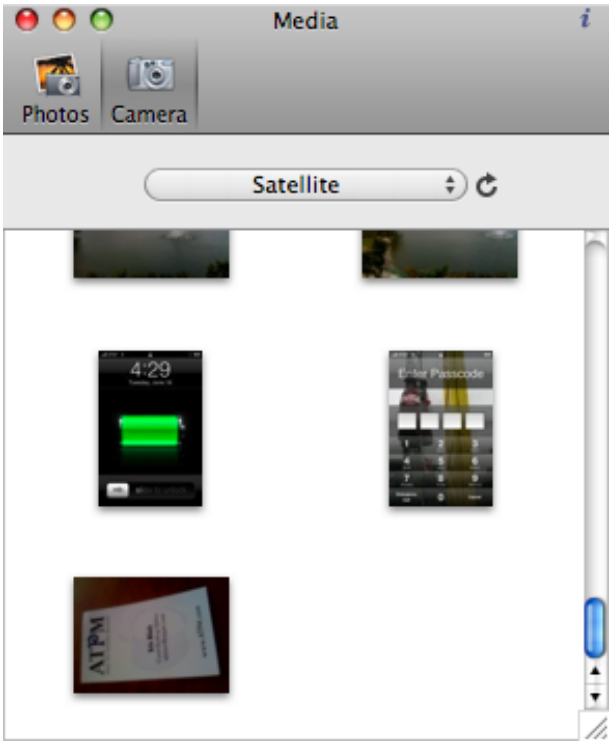
The other camera-related issue Prizmo helps to solve is lens distortion. Prizmo has two different methods for correcting this distortion. The first involves the built-in calibration tool. Prizmo displays a test pattern, then you take several pictures of it from various angles. The calibration tool analyzes the results and determines the corrections necessary for your camera/lens combination. The second method uses an online database of user-contributed corrections. Prizmo can check your camera model against its database and return five presets for your camera. This approach works best when you have a popular camera.

Additionally, Prizmo provides some basic image processing for adjusting the image. There are basic sliders for adjusting contrast, brightness, saturation, and sharpness, along with presets for black and white, grayscale, and boosted colors. If you find yourself frequently using a particular set of adjustments, you can save these as a custom preset. This ability, however, makes it even odder to me that you cannot save custom document dimensions.

[1] http://www.creaceed.com/prizmo/
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/

Image Acquisition

As you might expect, Prizmo can acquire images from most of the standard sources—you can open files saved to a disk or drag in images from files, iPhoto, Safari, or pretty much any standard source. However, Prizmo can also read images directly from your camera. I found this latter option particularly useful when capturing a number of diagrams—I was able to snap pictures of the diagrams, plug in the camera, and process the images, one at a time, in Prizmo. The import support is fairly similar to iPhoto. Thus, when using an iPhone, you can only import pictures from your Camera Roll.



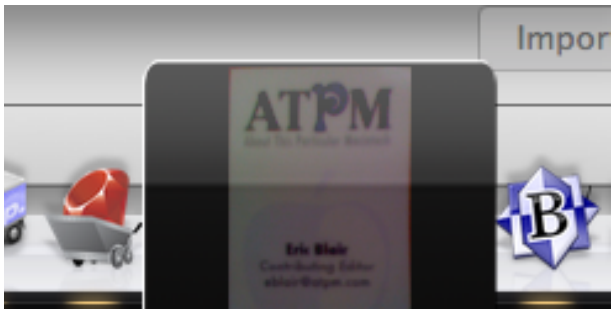
Importing images directly from an iPhone.

Prizmo doesn't erase any images from your camera, so you'll probably end up using your camera to delete the pictures when you're done. In this case, the functionality of your camera may influence how you use Prizmo's camera import functionality—if your camera has poor support for batch delete, you may want to start with the camera memory empty.

The only potential glitch with the camera import process is that the display of the camera contents is not live. There's a small refresh button located next to the camera pop-up menu. What confused me was the button's placement. The proximity to the camera list made me think that the button would check for new cameras.

Image Output

I was a bit disappointed with Prizmo's support for outputting images. You can save images to the normal file formats, print images, or drag the processed images into another application. When dragging an image, you're presented with a fairly large thumbnail surrounded by a square border. The size of the thumbnail complicates dragging to the Dock, since the thumbnail can cover multiple application icons, depending on the Dock's configuration.



Dragging to the Dock can be complicated by the thumbnail size.

Since Prizmo bills itself as being able to "scan without a scanner," I had somewhat higher expectations in this regard. Most scanning software I've seen includes the ability to automatically route the image to another application, which Prizmo is lacking. Perhaps I'm being a bit harsh, since you can probably accomplish most of what you want via drag and drop, but I was surprised that there was no way for me to automatically send my processed receipts to the EagleFiler library I use to track such things.

Additionally, Prizmo doesn't support AppleScript, so users or third-party developers cannot write their own Prizmo connections that way.

Conclusion

Over the past few years, digital cameras have become fairly ubiquitous while entry-level scanners have significantly dropped in price. At $40, buying Prizmo on price alone may not make sense, since you may be able to pick up a low-end scanner for just $10 more. However, the Prizmo-digital camera combination will take up significantly less space and offers the additional freedom of being able to capture images without your computer and process them without being tied to the desk with your scanner. If I needed to

scan every piece of paper that came across my desk (for, say, tax purposes), I'd probably invest in a dedicated system like Neat Receipts[3], but Prizmo definitely simplifies working with the occasional paper that I need to e-mail or otherwise digitally archive.

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[3] http://www.neatco.com/products/neatreceipts-for-mac

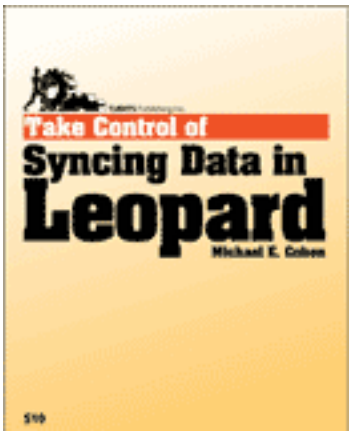
Book Review

by Ed Eubanks Jr.

Take Control of Syncing Data in Leopard

Author: Michael E. Cohen
Publisher: Take Control Books[1]
Price: $10 (ebook); $22 (printed book)
Requirements: Any PDF reader (ebook).
Trial: 23-page sample[2]

Like many, I use more than one Mac in my work/home mix. Syncing, therefore, is a topic of great interest to me. I've done a fair amount of trial (and much error) in attempts to set up more comprehensive—and therefore more elaborate—syncing systems. This has been an off-and-on work in progress for five or six years for me; still, I don't yet have a system in place that I am fully satisfied with. *Take Control of Syncing Data in Leopard* (hereafter, *Take Control*) looked like a great volume to help me along the way.



Uh-oh

Right away, I found disappointment: the opening paragraph of the introduction disclaims that, in fact, this book barely addresses some aspects of syncing, such as files. (In fairness, the author does acknowledge that the companion volume for Tiger *did* address syncing files; this is cold comfort for me, a Leopard user who is reading *this* volume.) His reason, he argues, is that he wants to address the syncing of data that are not discrete files—such as the contents of various databases common to Mac OS X: Address Book, iCal, iTunes, iPhoto, as well as other types of data like bookmarks, preferences. etc.

But this means that the scope of what is considered "syncing" is too limited. There are many, many other forms of data that aren't addressed, either. After all, pretty much all of the stuff you interact with on your Mac is either system, applications, files, or *other data*—and this last category includes a very large collection of "stuff" that is excluded in the book. Frankly, the data addressed in this book is essentially iLife content—so a more appropriate title would have been *Take Control of Syncing iLife Data in Leopard.*

Further, this book doesn't offer a lot of help syncing between Macs. There is some of that in there—sure, you can use MobileMe to accomplish this, especially with many of the types of data addressed here. But by and large, this book focuses on syncing with secondary devices: phones, iPods, handhelds. This can be great, especially if you don't have a "just works" iPhone or if you're looking for some basic help understanding how to sync your iPhone more effectively. But for folks looking for multiple-Mac syncing, *Take Control* will not be the bible you are looking for.

Pros

Given all of that, why does *Take Control* merit a "Good" rating in ATPM? There is a lot to commend this book/ebook. Cohen does a very good job of explaining syncing in theoretical terms. If you're confused about how syncing really works (in an under-the-hood way), the difference between a backup and a sync, or what the difference between a slow sync and a trickle sync are, this book will be a very big help. Cohen's explanations are clear and concise.

Likewise, there is abundant help for working with iTunes + another device. *Take Control* covers syncing devices with iTunes extensively. If you have an iPod, iPhone, or Apple TV, you will almost certainly learn something about syncing them from the chapters devoted to iTunes syncing, regardless of whether

[1] http://www.takecontrolbooks.com/leopard-syncing
[2] http://www.takecontrolbooks.com/samples/TCoSyncingLeopardSample-1.0.pdf

you are an advanced user or not. Cohen even addresses Push Syncing here, which is a technology that Apple is continuing to aggressively innovate with, so this material will be increasingly useful in weeks and months to come.

Apple's MobileMe is addressed thoroughly. *Take Control* has a very comprehensive look at how MobileMe can help a user sync data between devices. As a MobileMe subscriber, I'm always interested in learning how my subscription dollar can go further; Cohen taught me a few things, and will probably teach you a few things as well. For example, Cohen explains how "automatic" syncing works, and why it is different from push technology. He does a good job of explaining the ins and outs of what the service can really do, what happens when you invoke different actions (such as resetting sync data), and how to make the most of it.

There is also some good help with Exchange and other Microsoft nuances. Cohen offers a good bit of help in troubleshooting quirks when trying to sync data with Microsoft Exchange—or at least in understanding why the syncing is so difficult. He clearly has some insight into making this work, or work better, and his advice appears sound and straightforward. (I don't use or have access to an Exchange server in order to test it—but I did ask a friend who has administered an Exchange server to take a look, and he said there was a lot of helpful information here.)

Good advice about strategy and troubleshooting are offered as well. At the end of the book, there are a few sections on how to get started with syncing, and some rubrics for troubleshooting. These are very helpful—mostly because they offer a mainly-theoretical approach to the ideas they address. Folks who are just beginning to dip their toes into the waters of syncing will find help here, as will those who are troubleshooting problems the first time (or for the first few times). In fact, this section might make the whole book worth the purchase-price—for the ebook version, at least.

Finally, as with all Take Control books, the ebook version is "updatable." There's an active URL embedded into the PDF, which allows the owner to access any updated content—a service that Take Control Ebooks and Tidbits Publishing are doggedly committed to, meaning my book won't become useless in a few months when technology matures a bit. For example, as Apple's Push Syncing technology becomes more advanced and more prominent in the coming months (it has just arrived as a part of iPhone OS 3.0, *and* it is promised as a big part of Snow Leopard), I expect that I'll be able to download an updated copy of *Take Control* to learn better how to take advantage of it (since the original version had a section devoted to Push Syncing). Anyone who still has a how-to book from the System 6 days recognizes how valuable this is.

Wrap-up

Take Control of Syncing Data in Leopard doesn't quite live up to its title. It's a good book that is well-written, and it offers a lot of help for those looking to sync iLife data; those who have a third-party phone, handheld, or other device they need help syncing with their Mac; and those who need help with understanding the basics of syncing, especially when it comes to working with iTunes and a secondary device (like an iPod, iPhone, or Apple TV).

If that is you, then this book is for you. If you don't fit into one of those categories, you might save your money. The same amount of time spent reading the book could return as much help with a search engine.

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