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

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Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the April issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We know already that over the 15 years ATPM has been in continuous monthly publication there's never been a month quite like this one. It's the month the Apple iPad is first released, and this product will revolutionize the ways in which we access and consume digital content. We begin this month's issue with a look at how the iPad will change what we call "the personal computing experience."

The Medium Is the Message

Those of us who are veterans of high school and college journalism or media classes are familiar with the name of Marshall McLuhan. His scholarly work on new media made him an icon of the electronic media industry in the late 1950s and 1960s. His famous phrase "the medium is the message" applies as much to the iPad today as it applied in his era to the mass adoption of the TV as a source for news and entertainment. The iPad is an immersive experience that will extend the reach of the iPhone OS ecosystem to millions of new users. The iPad is not an outsized iPod touch anymore than a home theatre system is an outsized boom box. The only thing that might be outsized about the iPad is the anticipated sales performance. The iPad is a home theatre packed in a mobile form factor.

Would You Like an Order of Bento With That iPad?

The name bento originates from a Japanese-style take out lunch packed in a box-like container. It's no wonder Apple's FileMaker subsidiary uses the name Bento for its lunch-sized database product. FileMaker's Bento is designed for personal use and is offered at a fraction of the cost of FileMaker Pro, the subsidiary's flagship database product. A version of Bento is available for the iPhone and the iPad.

Moving from outsized to lunch size, the iPad is designed for the consumption of digital content. Unlike netbooks, the underpowered laptops with cramped keyboards and poor quality screens that have become popular due only to price, the iPad doesn't need a full-blown version of a desktop OS to make it work. The iPad uses a custom SoC or System on Chip developed by Apple and dubbed the "A4" to deliver stunning graphics, impressive performance, and long battery life while using the iPhone OS and taking advantage of the over 150,000 apps already available. The iPad isn't designed to run Photoshop anymore than netbooks are designed for post-production work on feature films. But if it's a choice between an iPad and a netbook for watching movies or viewing your favorite photos, it's the difference between a mobile theatre experience and watching a small screen portable TV.

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Over the past 25 years, few new products have captured the imagination of consumers prior to commercial release as the iPad. The good news is that you won't need a printed

newspaper to read all about it. Newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* will come to an iPad near you. Newspaper and magazine publishers are pushing hard to deliver iPad versions of their content as soon after the iPad's official release as possible. No more soggy newspapers that missed delivery to the doorstep, and no more ripped magazines shoved in the mailbox. iPad subscriptions to your favorite newspapers and magazines will be delivered to your screen at a fraction of the newsstand price.

Concurrent with the release of the iPad, iTunes will open its own bookstore for the sale of books to owners of the device. The iPad may be the perfect device for catching up on all of your spring and summer reading without guilt about the number of trees destroyed to supply one with the pleasure. Books offered through the iBooks store will be sold at prices below the cost of the same titles in paper print.

The iPad Will iWork

Among the iPhone OS apps that will debut with the iPad are components of Apple's iWork productivity suite. Both Pages and Numbers will be available in lunch-size versions for the tablet device for use at work and at home. We expect developers of other productivity-related solutions to follow with custom iPad solutions soon after the April 3rd product release. With the optional iPad keyboard and dock, Apple's latest creation will be at home at both home and the office.

Working the Numbers

At press time, Apple's share price (ticker symbol: AAPL) was trading just above $235 per share. In an advisory issued by Morgan Stanley analyst Katy Huberty, it's expected that each million units of iPads sold will add $.25 of earnings to each Apple share. It's possible that Apple could ship 8 million to 10 million iPads this calendar year. The only real constraint on sales might be product supply. Apple is currently trading at a trailing 12-month price-earnings multiple of about 22. Multiplying 22 times $2.00 in earnings per share equals $44 in additional value added to the share price from iPad sales this calendar year alone. At today's closing price, the iPad might move Apple's share price about 18% higher by late January of next year.

It's an outsized gain from a handheld device. An investor holding 15 shares of Apple stock might see enough of a gain in the share price over the next nine months from iPad sales alone to buy an iPad with a few of the optional trimmings or purchase several week's worth of a daily bento lunch.

Working the News

The editors of ATPM are hard at work throughout the month to craft our unique brand of news and reviews. For 15 years we have chronicled what we call "the personal computing experience," and we look forward to covering the release of the iPad and reporting on the ways it will revolutionize how we access and consume digital content in the months and years to come.

Our April issue includes:

Bloggable: Melts in Your Hand
Wes Meltzer shares more blogosphere punditry about the iPad.

MacMuser: CoPilot Live's Wheels Within Wheels
Mark Tennent shares his experience with the iPhone GPS app, CoPilot Live, and also wants to know where his memory stick icon is.

MacMuser: Losers and Winners
Mark Tennent looks at Apple's history and the progression of winners and losers from its founding in 1976 to this month's release of the iPad.

Apple Talk: Flat Line
You can tell Angus Wong is excited about the iPad. His celebratory response was to purchase a Sony Reader Pocket Edition. In this month's *Apple Talk* he explains why.

Next Actions: Inbox Overload
Ed Eubanks Jr. applies the GTD concept to the phenomenon of an individual owning more and more inboxes.

Desktop Pictures: Sunsets
Reader Richard Barrett shares some sunset and sunrise photos taken in Costa Rica, Hawaii, London, and Florida.

Out at Five
Matt Johnson's new series, *Out at Five,* looks at the workplace and its boundaries from all angles, revolving around many of the same characters from his former series, *Cortland.*

Qaptain Qwerty
Qaptain Qwerty offers tips for playing Avernum, a game reviewed elsewhere in this issue of ATPM.

Review: Avernum 6 v.1.0.2
For fans of the adventure game genre, Avernum 6 can provide hours of exciting entertainment.

Review: Commuter
A solid case that seems very protective while staying light and slender, but with a flaw we've seen before.

Review: Defender
Need to protect your iPhone on the job site or while engaged in extreme sports? Here's a case for you.

Burn Down the Mission

You're not wrong in saying that the iPhone and iPad will appeal to casual tech users. The iPad is perfect for someone like me, a senior exec who travels. I give occasional presentations, and while there are always some tweaks, I don't really need the power of a laptop to make text changes to a Keynote presentation. If extensive changes are needed, they can e-mail it to me or I can download the latest version. If I can surf and read e-mail *and* load a Keynote application, I'm set. The rest is just a great bonus: e-reader, movies, music, and apps. It looks pretty perfect; I'll be buying two.

—jbelkin

BusyCal 1.2

BusyCal needs a Contact component ASAP! Their version of "Address Book Pro."

—Charles

• • •

The killer feature for me is modeless editing of event info. Why Apple insists on modal editing in both iCal and Address Book is absolutely beyond me. That alone makes iCal a horrible, horrible, awful, horrible user experience. But there are many other tweaks that make BusyCal so superior that it is *easily* worth the cash.

—Spiny Norman

Making Your Mac as Smart as Its Owner

Excellent!

Thank you very much. I agree about the easy way to add metadata. I think I'll look at trying Automator or a script to facilitate that until Steve and company decide to make it an official "feature." Thank you again.

Terrific writing! If I had a "Thumbs Up" I'd send it to you.

—Bob Browning

> Thanks for the positive feedback. There might be some room for a future follow-up article if I can fine enough creative uses for these features.
>   I'm also wondering about using Automator for this task. I hadn't thought of Apple-Script for this. My skills in that area leave a lot to be desired. Keep us posted with any

solutions you concoct, and I will do likewise. Surely there must be something out there to handle this task.

—*Sylvester Roque*

My First Mac

My first "home computer" was also a TRS-80, although I never was lucky enough to get an Apple II. I stuck with the Tandy and later got an Atari 800 instead. Skipped the 8-bit Apples and went straight to Mac. (You can read my Mac journey in a past issue of ATPM.)

I don't think the CP/M card gave you 80 columns on the Apple, although I could be mistaken. I'm guessing the card put a Z80 CPU in your Apple to run CP/M. Ironically, the Z80 is the same chip for our TRS-80s!

If you're missing typing in programs (Love those Hex listings! Not!) all you need to do is just pick up any modern computer language book (say, Objective-C) and type in all that text! You don't even have to worry about renumbering line numbers any more!

(You know, writing about this stuff is supposed to make me sound old, but I feel just the same. Computers and geek stuff is still cool, and I still love video games. The games just seem to get better and better! And the computers seem to cost around the same except you get more! Weird!)

—*Angus Wong*

Photoshop: A Tutorial on Resolution

Hey there, this is excellent. Very good explanation and comments. You were very thorough and helped me out a lot! Thank you so much.

—*Stephanie D-H*

FileMaking: Incremental Progress

I have been using FileMaker Pro Advanced (8.5) Mac for about six months, having come from Microsoft's Access.

I originally purchased the Missing Manual for FileMaker Pro and, using that and the File-Maker Help menu, I have learnt enough to create several FileMaker databases. However, when I found the archive of your series on FileMaker, it enabled me to go back to basics to learn the correct way to design and implement them.

This series is so carefully structured and simple to follow that I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

—*Glo Brown*

Datahand Professional II

Just thought I'd post to say the Datahands are still working great. I've sent them in for repairs on several occasions, and while shipping is expensive from Canada, they are always

fast and courteous. They're somewhat fragile, and I'm somewhat abusive, so issues have been my fault.

Here's a shot of the latest datahand workstation. The Datahands are stuck to the La-Z-Boy via double-sided carpet tape, and an extender cable is used to connect the two sides. With the 1080p projector and nice sound I've been able to keep cranking out the code.

Recommended for heavy typists, of course.

(Saw Contact in HD last night. There are brief glimpses of a set of Datahands in the circular pod with Jodie Foster.)

—Andrew Taylor

Crabble iPhone Stand

I bought one recently, and I think it's great. I wonder how long the hinge will last, but at this price if it's replaced every 18 months I won't complain.

Highly recommended.

—guppy

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Melts in Your Hand

Perhaps you haven't heard that April 3—just two short days after you'll get this issue of ATPM—is the launch date of the iPad.

I'll let you go order one. Or two.

[Cue hold music, playing Kenny G's "Classics in the Key of G."]

OK, now you've gotten that out of your system. In honor of this month's big announcement, we're having an iPad-alooza at *Bloggable:* two fun segments on the iPad, plus the iPhone vs. Nexus One and Droid.

How Slavishly Should iPad Software Mimic Real-World Objects?

The iPad is a lot bigger than an iPhone—it's larger than the palm of your hand. That puts it in the same general category as a lot of other physical objects for which there are clear physical analogues: books, magazines, e-readers (e.g., Kindle).

Because there are so many physical analogues, a lot of people, which includes developers, have varying expectations of how closely the software interfaces on the Kindle should hew to real-world objects. Should a book application involve physically turning the page? (Apple's answer: at least in demos, yes.) Would the pages of a magazine application be laid out like text on a computer screen, flowing in one long, dynamically resizing column, or would it be laid out with the same care and static physical form as a printed magazine page?

We could dig deeply into our Rudolf Arnheim, Jakob Nielsen, and Edward Tufte books all day to look for the answers, but to the developers of iPad applications this is a problem with a little urgency.

Marco Arment is a terrific developer whose Instapaper is a life-saver for anyone who reads on the train or keeps three computers like me. He's been working on an iPad version of Instapaper, and he started a lively debate over just how much software interfaces should hew to their real-world counterparts.

He observes that he didn't want to try too hard to preserve real-world fidelity to books when he was writing Instapaper, which includes pagination of text—that he didn't add pagination because books have it, he did it because it seemed clearly superior to scrolling.

And Arment also cites the difference between the Calculator application that comes included with your Mac, which is basically identical to a physical calculator, and a Mac OS X

calculator called Soulver, which is more like a Unix command-line than a physical calculator with buttons.

(For what it's worth, I'm a religious PCalc user, which *is* a conventional calculator but supports RPN just like my grandfather's old HP.)

So this is all to drive home the point that, sometimes, software tries too hard to be like real-world hardware.

Arment is at his best with a pithy quote:

> Nobody should need to perform a full-width swipe gesture and wait two seconds for their fake page to turn in their fake book.

That's the jumping-off point for Chris Clark, an interface designer for Black Pixel. He writes at *Release Candidate One*:

> iPad apps have a high visual fidelity to real-world objects but retain the sensible interaction design one would expect from Apple. iBooks doesn't force you to swipe its pages side-to-side; you tap on a page to advance to the next one, and the page-turning animation is done in a fraction of a second.

I agree with Clark that the key isn't whether a user interface is loyal to the original, physical object or not, so long as it's useful. Here I return to PCalc—I think it's a superior calculator to any software calculator, and I'm not enough of a mathematician to adopt a command-line interface for math. And yet it's still laid out like a physical calculator.

But Clark and Arment may be oversimplifying the case a bit, argues Neven Mrgan, a designer at Panic. Apple's forte is creating interfaces that rely on real-world knowledge without being too slavishly devoted to the original. His example is the OS X scroll bar, which looks like an icicle mounted in a sliding channel. Mrgan has a nice equation:

> Familiar + satisfying + fun vs. limiting + illegible + awkward

And he says, "The left side giveth value, and the right side taketh away. Neither one delivers a deadly blow."

Mrgan hits the nail on the head of Apple's apps, and what he says other developers should strive for: "[a]pps should mimic the warmth of real-world objects, not their literal design."

Speaking of Physical Objects...

The guys at Omni Group have been busy getting their software ready for the iPad. Because iPad developers weren't given advance copies of the iPad to test their software on, they've been going old-school with their prototypes: making mock iPads out of stuff.

For their OmniGraphSketcher application for iPad, they've hacked up a bunch of ways of prototyping this: cutting custom graph paper down to size using a table saw, and even a 3D printer-made model their CEO put together.

It's quite impressive—they have paper cutouts of all of their user interface elements, dialogs, pop-up menus, etc., and the writer (Linda Sharps) recounts a hilarious encounter with one of the developers in trying to use the "fauxPad":

> Robin: "So let's say you want to turn this point from a circle into a square. What would you do?"
>
> Me: "Buhhhhh. Dur. I touch it?"
>
> Robin (soothingly): "Okay. You see a little blue circle around the element. Then what do you do?"
>
> Me: "Uhhhhhrrrr. I'd...maybe I'd press real hard. Like this." *smoosh*
>
> Robin: "Um...well, okay. You get a dialogue that says 'copy'."
>
> Me: "OH GOD NO THAT'S WRONG ISN'T IT MY HEAD MY HEAD MY HEEAAAD."
>
> Robin (brisk clap): "Okay then! What say we try this again later."

Go to the link. Seriously. You have to see these photos. It's incredible the lengths some people go to—and yet, at the same time, it's admirable in Omni Group's devotion to getting it right.

More on Companions to the iPhone

We've been down this road before: comparisons of the iPhone to its competitors. But two terrific tech writers, Jason Snell of *Macworld* and Harry McCracken of *Technologizer,* take a stab at comparing the iPhone to the mobile OS that Steve Jobs says is the greatest competitor of them all: Android.

Snell thinks there are good lessons for the iPhone from Google's Nexus One, the Android phone sold by Google for T-Mobile's network, and McCracken compares the iPhone to the Droid, which is Motorola's offering for Verizon. To start off, Snell suggests the highlights of what Apple can learn from Google:

Higher screen resolution The Nexus One's screen is 480×800, vs. the iPhone's 320×480, and "it shows, most especially in the playback of videos and photos and in the Nexus One's crisp text."

More flexible Home screen "You can choose which apps show up on the home screens; to bring up a scrollable list of every application on your phone, you tap the application button at the bottom center of the screen...the Nexus One lets you save shortcuts to important contacts, phone numbers, map directions, and even items from third-party apps."

Better notification "To see your notifications, you can pull down the menu bar at the top of the screen. It's easy to see all the notifications at a glance, and you can tap on one to go to the relevant application."

Combined inbox For those of us who read both personal and work e-mail on the iPhone, this one's a big one. Snell: "The main screen of the built-in Mail program lists all your e-mail accounts and, above it, a combined inbox (along with options to view starred mail and any drafts you might have). It's not perfect—some indication of which mail came from which account might be a nice feature—but it's much more convenient than doing the iPhone tap dance."

Multitasking, a.k.a. background applications "Android lets apps run in the background. If you aren't paying attention, you wouldn't notice most of the time. Using the Nexus One, I never ran into a situation where I needed to find and quit apps in order to speed things up. . .if I want to drain my battery listening to Pandora, or receiving notifications every time anyone mentions me on Twitter, I'd like to be able to make that decision [on my iPhone]."

Snell also lists some places where there's not a clear better or worse, like the Nexus One's removable battery, having a camera with flash, and the App Store:

> [If] the App Store is a bit like a rigorously managed chain retailer—Target or Walmart, let's say, though I'm sure Apple would prefer I liken it to Nordstrom— then the Android Market is a bit like an open-air bazaar. There are featured apps, yes, but once you start searching things get really weird, really fast. I kept running into apps that demanded that my phone be "rooted," the Android equivalent of jailbreaking. Other apps required specific phone models (Droid, for example) or specific versions of the Android software. Real geeks won't care about any of that, maybe, but it's a terrible experience for regular consumers.

> Sometimes I wonder if Android Market is actually a victim of the App Store backlash. Quite honestly, I think Android would better serve its users if it began to follow Apple's approach, rigorously testing apps and approving only a tiny fraction for the Market, as well as providing some very specific filters so that users of a non-rooted Nexus One don't run into search results full of apps requiring a rooted Droid.

(I would add here that I think the right model for Google is Ubuntu, the popular Linux distribution. It's possible to install any application you want, but there's also an application that only searches into a database of tested, approved software.)

All in all, it's a good read and a good analysis. I disagree with Snell on a few things— for instance, if I were the guy responsible for sorting out multitasking, I disagree strongly with Snell's vision. I would allow only one background application, and it would have to

draw an icon in the menu bar like the iTunes and phone applications, and be accessible via double-tapping the menu bar or something equivalent.

But reasonable people can disagree. I think Snell has great food for thought here.

McCracken tried the same thing but switched to a Droid for a month—to use Verizon's superior network—and lists the ten things he likes best and least about it. He calls it "The Good, the Bad and the Bizarre."

He lives in San Francisco, so I can see wanting to get away from AT&T like the Black Plague. But just as Snell found, he says there are upsides and downsides to life with a better network and a much less polished mobile OS.

Big pluses to McCracken: Verizon network, multitasking for IM and Slacker (or Pandora), having a back button, and the aforementioned status notifications. He also points out one terrific feature, and I'm not sure if it's an Android feature or specific to the Droid: Facebook integration into the OS. He writes:

> You can choose to have the Droid sync all your Facebook friends into its Contacts list. You get access to phone numbers and e-mail addresses from Facebook, and when a Facebook friend calls you, you see his or her photo as the phone rings. The intermingling of Droid and Facebook info seems to work perfectly; if I go back to the iPhone, this is the single OS feature I'll miss most.

Big minuses: strange click behaviors, low-quality third-party apps, lame hardware keyboard. Oh, and:

> I can live with an OS that's not as elegant as Apple's...but there are times when I wonder if anyone at Google, Motorola, or Verizon has even used the Droid. If you're in portrait mode and go to the setting that lets you adjust screen brightness, the necessary slider appears to be missing—until you notice a sliver of a scroll bar on the right side of the dialog. Who ever heard of a dialog box that scrolls?

We're with you, Harry.

What's Left When You Divide Three and Two?

- A debate from *Technologizer* on the future of Windows between a bunch of tech journalists, technology futurists, and former Microsoft employees. It's a good read: Kara Swisher, Ed Baig, Robert Scoble, and Richard Brodie, et al., who are all at the vanguard of technology revolutions. They may disagree on the specifics, but they all think that Windows—real Windows, not Windows Mobile—needs to play more of a role in our personal lives. And almost all of them think Microsoft needs to keep up the Windows-for-every-platform strategy MS is starting to cook up.

- Speaking of Windows Mobile, the new Windows Phone 7 will not support copy and paste. Do you remember all of the Sturm und Drang before the iPhone had copy and paste? I have to say, I only use copy-paste on my iPhone once or twice a *week,* so I could get by without it. But it's especially funny to see the tables turned. (As a former Windows Mobile 5.5 user, I prefer the iPhone's copy-paste implementation. . .it was always hard to trigger the paste in WinMo.)

CoPilot Live's Wheels Within Wheels

Dawn and I are the only Mac users in the office. We struggle with Windows, trying not to fight it. Instead, we attempt to engage with a different operating system. After all, its interface was ripped off from Apple many years ago, so it can't be that different? Can it?

Nevertheless we both spent a frustrating hour trying to find the memory stick she had just plugged into the USB port. There in front of us is the desktop with icons for the main hard drive and networked servers, so where is her memory stick? Surely it should mount automatically and appear as an icon on the desktop, just a double-click away?

We gave up going round in circles and asked Debbie, our office administrator, to show us. She went straight to the Control Panels and clicked on something (My Computer?). Up popped a window for the memory stick. This was obviously one part of the Mac OS that Microsoft forgot to copy. Or is it just that Mac users have different expectations?

CoPilot Just Got Better…for Free

CoPilot Live for the iPhone has had me going round in circles recently, just past my old clients at Parexcel, circling the series of roundabouts in Uxbridge. Luckily, the street names are clearly marked–otherwise, Debbie and I would have been heading off for goodness knows where. We were en route to see the new Lotus Notes database we shall be using shortly. As Debbie is currently in New Zealand and I am off to France, April 1st as the start date is looking like a joke.

Most, if not all, satellite navigation devices can get caught out by fast changes of directions. Our Garmin does, just as regularly as our daughter's TomTom. We once circled the Saga building in Folkestone half a dozen times as the Garmin tried to get its bearings. CoPilot Live, on the other hand, has become our first-choice sat-nav, especially after it was updated in the past few days. The iPhone's assisted GPS means it can find your location quickly by using cellphone information, even indoors.

If you have an iPhone, this is one of the best value for money applications available at the iTunes Store. It is every bit as good as a dedicated sat-nav and a lot cheaper and easier to carry outside of a vehicle. The improved iPod and weather screens mean you don't need other single-use applications. Updates are free as well, so it makes sense to get the whole new CoPilot Live rather than update a map or speed camera database on your dedicated sat-nav.

Keeping Streets Ahead

The new and improved Live elements to Copilot are especially worth the money. Live Traffic information is the only extra Copilot charges for, and that is at a reasonable $30 or

thereabouts per year. Apple's iPhone interface is streets ahead of any other touch-screen sat-nav device, and CoPilot Live makes good use of it.

My only complaint is that you can't buy individual maps. When I bought CoPilot Live, I accidentally clicked on the UK and Ireland version, costing $40, instead of the Europe version. This leaves me the choice of buying a whole new version of CoPilot for Europe, costing $75, or just France maps at $38 to add to my existing CoPilot Live. Choosing just France will be as costly as buying the whole of Europe but will be missing all the rest of the maps.

Oh well!

Losers and Winners

That Apple Computer, what a bunch of losers! Hold on, this is written with the best of intentions, so hear me out.

Back in 1976 Steve Jobs, Ron Wayne, and Steve Wozniak had a moment of brilliance and created Apple Computer. Within a year, their turnover was $174,000, and they asked a venture capitalist, Mike Markkula, to help them. The next year they made $2.7 million. $7.8 million followed in 1978. Meanwhile Ron, for whatever reason, became Apple's first loser as he sold his shares back to Steve Jobs for $800—a decision he would probably prefer not to talk about.

Apple may have captured the computer market, but in the process it lost Steve Jobs when John Sculley, whom he had lured from being Vice President for Pepsi Cola, led a boardroom coup that ousted him. Jobs left Apple to start NeXT and developed an innovative operating system and hardware combination.

Meanwhile back at Apple, things went mad. They had three incompatible computer systems, the Macintosh, the Lisa, and the Apple II. The Mac won, and the others were dumped—some literally into landfill. Apple then captured the desktop publishing market due to PageMaker and Apple's PostScript laser printer. At the same time, it lost the most important legal battle of its life and ceded the GUI operating system to Microsoft and others.

A decade of turmoil nearly finished the company. The old Macintosh operating system lost its lead and was overtaken, in some areas, by IBM's OS/2 and Sun's Unix. Apple joined with IBM and Motorola to try to create hardware and software far ahead of Microsoft and the PC, which had become a threat to them all.

Runner Up

CEOs came and went and one, Mike Spindler, even tried to hive Apple off to IBM, Sun, or Philips. Luckily, he lost to new CEO Gil Amelio, who arrived with a track record of getting to the heart of a problem.

He cut costs, workforce, product lines, and ties with IBM and Motorola. Instead he tried to buy BeOS, an off-the-shelf operating system from ex-Apple employee Jean-Louis Gassée. Another loser because he asked $75 million more than Apple would pay. Instead Amelio bought NeXT, which came with Steve Jobs.

Jobs had learned a lesson or two while away from Apple. He ousted Amelio, who lost in another boardroom coup. He made a deal with Bill Gates. Microsoft agreed to continue

developing Internet Explorer and Office for the Mac, as well as buy $150 million of non-voting Apple stock.

While Steve Jobs was missing from Apple, it did have some successes: the first PowerBook in 1991 set the form factor for laptops and sold a billion dollars worth in its first year. The world's first PDA, Newton, was developed by Apple in 1989 but never became a commercial success and was left to wither away over the next ten years.

However, two Newton employees formed Pixo and wrote the operating system used on the iPod. Newton's handwriting recognition was also rolled into Mac OS X as Inkwell, which appears in System Preferences if a graphics tablet is connected.

Turnaround

The millennium has stemmed the losing streak from Apple, which instead has grabbed the music downloading and digital audio player markets with the iTunes Store and the iPod line. As well as setting up online sales, Apple opened retail stores around the world before moving into the cell phone market and arguably capturing the sales of smart phones with the iPhone.

The jury is still out on the iPad, and until we can get to hold and use one, we won't know whether it is for us or not. One thing is for sure: Apple could be on the verge of creating a whole new business. The iPad could be just the device to make the world move away from printed media and into electronic publishing.

Dennis Publishing has made inroads into this with the amazing iMotor magazine, which has music, video and other attractions, as well as the text and photographs of printed media. Waitrose, Marks and Spencer, Virgin, BBC, and others have made special issues of their magazines and catalogues. Currently these need Flash, which means Apple could become a loser again if the Ceros system for online electronic publishing becomes the norm.

On the other hand, the iPad could release us from the tyranny of the telly. In the future, we will choose to watch and read electronic publications which also include TV shows and active links to subjects they cover. Watching the 'Pad won't be a strictly linear process, as it is with TV, moving from Star Trek to Clarkson to CSI. Instead we'll stay with Coast or one of Attenborough's wildlife extravaganzas and be exploring a dimension of the show we want to know more about.

We'll be able to pick and choose from film, TV, news, books, and magazines and display them all on one flat panel. Our current laptops cover this to a certain extent, but they get hot and noisy and are hampered by small screens and short battery life. The iPad could be just what we need.

Flat Line

To celebrate the announcement of the iPad, I went out and got a Sony Reader Pocket Edition. No kidding. I know I often write with sarcasm to make fun of, say, Microsoft, but this time I'm serious. I went and got the Sony Reader primarily because of two things: E Ink, and library books.

Now, before you go all Windows on me, let me say that there's nothing mutually exclusive about owning an E Ink reader and an iPad. But anyway, more about that later. First, let's talk about the Sony Reader I got.

For those of you who haven't yet seen an E Ink reader up close and personal, I urge you to. You can probably find a real demo unit at your local electronics retailer. (I've seen some here in the States at Target and Office Depot.) I say "real demo unit" because some of them have a faux plastic screen that simulates E Ink, but the point is for you to see E Ink in action. Preferably under sunlight.

By the way, I type E Ink with capitals because that's actually a product brand name, from the self-named company (E Ink Corporation) and, while we're being specific, I'm actually talking about Vizplex, which is the same E Ink display used by most e-readers, including Amazon's updated Kindle devices. E Ink Corporation says "Vizplex is the latest generation of E Ink's microencapsulated ink imaging film."

(Incidentally, I'm not writing this article as a review of e-readers. I'm primarily using these examples to talk about the general state of the industry, as you'll see.)

So, to understand how compelling E Ink is, you have to see it in person. But even if you don't, you'll have to just accept the popular opinion that it makes text super readable. After all, it's the killer feature for these e-readers. Everything else pretty much sucks about all the readers, except for the E Ink part. If it weren't for E Ink I wouldn't even bother thinking about any of these gizmos. Ironically, the iPad doesn't use E Ink, so that's why I say there could be an opportunity for the market to have owners of both categories of products (i.e., iPad and an e-reader of your choice).

Reading e-books is nothing new to the world, or to me. I've been reading e-books since the days of Palm OS, and I've read a ton of them over the years. Whenever I talk to anyone about this, I often hear comments about how hard it is to read on the tiny screens. Yup, that's true, but it still didn't prevent me from consuming probably a hundred e-books to date (maybe more) on tiny screens.

On the iPhone, I've used the Kindle application to buy and read books, but Amazon's Kindle policy has drawbacks. First, you have to pay Amazon to convert your own files

(such as text or PDF), which is not only a hassle and costs extra money for a fairly trivial task (for the modern computing age) but also is a deal breaker for business confidential stuff. So, strike one for Kindle.

Strike two comes from not being able to read borrowed library books. Yup, for those of you who have access to a public library, many of them are offering DRM-protected book loans. (If your library doesn't have this, or you find the selection meager, I encourage you to hound your library officials to get with the Internet age.)

So I have three sources of reading material now: purchased from Amazon for the Kindle platform (currently, just the Kindle application on my iPhone), my own text and PDF files, and borrowed library books (that automatically expire when the rental period is up). The library selection is relatively limited, but there are still some good books I can borrow. Where justified, I'd buy Kindle books. And when I do get an iPad, I'll hopefully be able to use the Kindle application on the iPad and view the books in full page format (despite not having E Ink).

This full page thing is not trivial either. A number of books are poorly formatted for the smaller readers (such as mine), and to see WYSIWYG means the font size is almost too small to read. If you increase the font size, the Sony Reader sometimes doesn't even bother rendering the stylized fonts (even if it was only italics), so a word could be missing. Doh!

So this is where I get into the nitty gritty of the Sony platform. I write about it to illustrate how hugely different the paradigm is between Sony, a mega consumer electronics company, and Apple, another mega consumer electronics company, and state yet again how I think Apple really is just going to steamroll over these laggards. (Am I sounding like I regret my Sony Reader purchase? That's not at all the case. I'll explain that also, in just a moment.)

The Sony device is nice to hold. It looks fairly cool. It's not a touch screen. To get a touch screen, I need to shell out more for the, ah, "Touch Edition." No thanks. You see, my strategy was to spend as little money as possible to get an E Ink reader, so I can have my library books and my personal documents, and have money left over to put toward the budget for an iPad. That was the rationale all along. Kindle? I'd love a Kindle DX, but the file conversion thing and the disconnect from the library content were deal breakers.

So with the Sony Reader Pocket Edition, I have a nice-looking gizmo that I can load primarily text-based content (images are unwieldy on the small screen) and carry around town fairly easily. I can read in bed before going to sleep, or during the daytime at a coffee shop, even under direct sunlight.

Unfortunately (and here's where it's interesting), you'd think that a company with the resources of Sony could refine the product before release. Maybe work out the bugs. Well, no. Sony took a page (pun intended) right out of Microsoft's playbook and released a buggy, sluggish, immature product to the market. Again, don't forget: I bought the thing only because I found it a cheap deal to get an E Ink reader. I didn't pay suggested retail price. I bought it at huge discount at Office Depot. Even the "cover with light" that I bought was

heavily discounted. So, I feel I got a remarkable deal. Would I have bought it without the discount? No way. I'd just have waited to get an iPad and sucked it up not having E Ink, and hope I don't miss it (but I would have).

So my whole point for this article is that, even today, even right this moment, with the industry knowing how powerful Apple is, how well it can make products and, most importantly, how well it can sell products, you still have companies such as Sony creating half-assed offerings for the market. It's crazy.

I'm not just saying there are features I would like on my Sony Reader. I'm saying there are bugs! That poor font rendering (actually, not rendering at all) is already a huge gotcha. Another problem is that the desktop sync software (runs on both Windows and Mac) is also buggy. (It reminds me of the bad days of Palm with the lousy Mac version of Palm Desktop).

The sync software usually works, but sometimes doesn't, and I am not even sure how to uninstall and reinstall it (or if that even helps). It's nothing we've not seen before, especially when using Windows, but Sony can do better. Sony should have learned many lessons from the Palm days (when it tried to wallpaper over the Palm OS with its own user interface, to sell its Clie devices), so I don't give them a break at all now, seeing as it had a decade to refine its R&D philosophy.

So to wrap up, you've got companies such as Amazon and Sony who really can do much, much better, and they still either deliberately cripple their devices (like the Kindle) so you have to jump hoops to do something (convert basic files) or they are basically lazy and offer the market a buggy product like the Sony Reader. Heck, I even had problems browsing Sony's bookstore. Sony likes to plaster its branding over everything—such as integrating the bookstore into the desktop software, pasting crap over the Palm interface, and loading horrid add-ons to its Vaio series of Windows PCs. It's just sad that it's not doing a good job.

Of course, the iPad is much more than just an e-reader, which is why I'm going to get one. But just for the e-books aspect, you can already see how far behind these other industry players are. And let's not even bother talking about the slew of Windows-based tablets that are, supposedly, coming out. It's almost sickening how everyone waits for Apple to announce something (iPhone, iPad) and then copies it (and not even doing a good job either). Don't these guys feel embarrassed? I do, for them.

As a tech industry observer, I'm really disappointed that quarter after quarter, it's almost always only Apple that's innovating. This is bad for the industry. Apple product (and stock) owners are happy, of course, but in the greater scheme of things, I'd love for more solid competition to appear. Right now, I don't see very much of it, and it makes me afraid for Apple. One day, it might get complacent, just the same way Microsoft did.

Microsoft used to make great products, back in the 1970s. Its BASIC language implementation was sort of an industry standard. Then, after DOS, it got rather lazy when the cash

started to roll in. I guess you can say the same thing about Sony and even Research In Motion. And, of course, Palm. Apple's always innovated, since the days of the garage, all the way to iPad and the monumental A4 chip. It's amazing, but it's also sad.

The only thing I've seen that has been somewhat impressive, in the computing arena of late, is the upcoming Ubuntu version code named Lucid Lynx. It's version 10.04 of Ubuntu Linux, and something in my gut tells me that's actually gearing up to be a more significant threat to Apple than any of these other half-assed distractions going on in the world.

In a way, I think it's probably a good thing.

Next Actions
by Ed Eubanks Jr.

Inbox Overload

I talked about <u>what to do with a full inbox</u> early on, and <u>how to automate inbox processing</u> a year ago. But how about the ever-increasing number of inboxes that many of us have?

As Meghan Walker recently remarked at *GTD Times*, the list of digital inboxes seems to be growing ever-longer. Meghan <u>lists them</u>:

- Email
- Text Messages
- Instant Messages
- Blog Comments: your own blog, blogs you contribute to, or posts you are monitoring
- Twitter: people you are following, @replies, direct messages
- Yammer: Yammer is a private version of Twitter, often used inside companies. ([Walker's] company is experimenting with this right now.)
- Social Bookmarking: e.g. Delicious
- RSS Feeds
- LinkedIn: Updates, Answers, Group discussions
- Facebook: Friends you are following, Comments, Messages
- Discussion Boards and Forums
- Google Wave: My brain is melting. . .
- Google Buzz: My head has exploded.

[Meghan Walker, <u>Inbox Creep</u>, *GTD Times* March 21, 2010.]

In addition to Meghan's helpful strategies, I wanted to look briefly at a couple of solutions for managing these (or some of these) rabbit-like multiplying inboxes. And I'll bet there will be plenty of commenters who can suggest even more solutions (bring it on!).

Work the System

Many of the digital inboxes listed above have built-in methods for making all of this at least a little bit easier. Some of the many examples include:

- Many blogs allow comments—and even comments for particular posts—to be followed via RSS and/or e-mail notification. If you comment on blogs, get in the habit of turning these on when you post your comments, then forget about it. You'll be reminded if you need to be looped back into the conversation.

- Social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook all have at least some notification settings, whereby you will receive an e-mail if you get a direct message, a comment on your wall, or some such. Some networks have a robust set of options here. Poke around in the settings of your social networks and see how much you can get sent to your inbox, in order to reduce the number of times you must sign in just to check another inbox.

- Some social networks have other ways of reducing the number of inboxes, or at least including them into already-existing ones. For example, if you find that you chat frequently through Facebook's chat client—and you use instant messaging through other services, such as MobileMe/AIM—here's a simple way to set up iChat or Adium to handle Facebook chat as well. Also, it's possible to set up your Twitter feed to automatically post to your LinkedIn or Facebook status, and vice-versa.

The bottom line: while there are many social networks, and the number doesn't seem to be shrinking, there is more overlap and openness between them than there used to be. Think outside the box a bit for how your social networks might bump against one another, then see if you can find an existing solution to make it happen (or develop it yourself, and become the latest entrepreneur to make a small fortune on social networking!).

Get Your Social On

If you find that multiple social networks compete for your attention, perhaps a tool like Socialite would serve you well.

Socialite is able to consolidate feeds from Twitter, Facebook, Digg, and Flickr all into one single reader. You can also include RSS feeds via Google Reader or use Socialite as your primary feed reader. You can post to these also through Socialite, add comments, respond, etc. Socialite therefore culls down several inboxes, at least in terms of how they are accessed and managed.

Socialite is well-done and includes a number of helpful side-features (like a "profile peeker," which lets you glimpse Twitter profiles without leaving the main screen). It's $20 from Realmac Software, the same folks who make RapidWeaver and LittleSnapper.

If Socialite isn't quite what you need—maybe it's a little overkill for your social network usage—then TweetDeck's features might hit the spot. TweetDeck is another Twitter client (one of many); but unlike most, TweetDeck can also access Facebook, once again allowing consolidation of two (or more, if you have multiple Twitter accounts) inboxes into a single one. Well, not quite a single one in this case—TweetDeck's system let's you view them side-by-side, but in separate windows/boxes.

Maybe it isn't receiving the feeds from social networks but posting to them that frequently encroaches on your time. In that case, check out Ping.fm, a free service that allows you to post to multiple social networks at once. Ping's system supports every social network I've ever heard of, and a bunch that I hadn't. It also has a great mobile/iPhone Web app.

Many Mailboxes. . .

I'm one of those who uses multiple e-mail accounts. I use them to manage how I receive e-mail and who gets what level of access; I also prefer to use an e-mail address with a domain related to the context of the message (@eubanksconsulting, when corresponding with a consulting client, etc.). With multiple accounts, e-mail can easily become an inbox nightmare.

I've read about, and worked with, people who used many accounts and spread them all about—they used Entourage for one account, Mail for another, a Web interface for a third, etc. This only seems to multiply the nightmare scenario, in my view. When my consulting clients are inclined toward this approach, I quickly explain to them the likely loss of productivity (and sanity) that will result from it—not to mention the frustration of trying to find messages ("which account did I send that one from?"), archiving, and even decreased processing efficiency from having multiple applications open for the same function.

This is unnecessary. Mail and Entourage (and for that matter, any number of other e-mail clients) can handle multiple e-mail accounts capably and make it possible to receive, process, respond to, and archive all e-mails from multiple accounts at the same time in the same place. Look for a future *Next Actions* to deal with some serious e-mail-fu.

About the List

The only new addition this time is TeuxDeux which, besides having a name that requires mis-pronunciation for it to work (it should be pronounced "tuh-duh"), is a simple but nicely-designed online task management Web app.

One more thing worth mentioning here: the folks who developed Tasks for iPhone (and iPod tou have created a sync utility for their application called TasksSync. TasksSync is available for Mac OS X and Windows, and will sync Tasks with iCal—perfect for folks who are content with iCal on their desktop (or laptop) but have longed for a solution to sync with their iPhones.

I always welcome any feedback on my list or suggestions for additions. I don't always add every suggestion, but I'll look at them and evaluate whether they fit with my goals for this column.

Locally Installed GTD Applications

EasyTask Manager

Developer: Orionbelt.com
Current Version: 2.1
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: Yes
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: App (free); Web App (free)
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Windows version available; automatic advance of uncompleted due tasks to today.
News: None

Frictionless

Developer: Twin Forces
Current Version: 2.0d18
Price: Free, open-source
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5

Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Quick-entry box; fuzzy repeated actions.
News: None

Ghost Action

Developer: Ghost Park Software
Current Version: 1.3.2
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: Sort of—a non-syncing application ($10)
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 only
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: .Mac syncing (without iCal running); PDA/iPod syncing; two-way iCal syncing.
News: Version 1.3.2 improved Snow Leopard compatibility.

iCog

Developer: HensPace
Current Version: 1.90
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No

Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Unknown
Required Applications: Python 2.4 or later
Distinguishing Features: Compatible with any OS running Python (including Windows); very simple text-only utility.
News: None

mGTD

Developer: Jeff Fisher
Current Version: 1.3
Price: Free
Development Status: Pre-final
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: None (Mori template)
Required Applications: Mori 1.6.11
Distinguishing Features: Expands Mori (digital notebook) functions to include GTD principles.
News: None

Midnight Inbox

Developer: Midnight Beep Softworks
Current Version: 1.4.4

Price: $35
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: App coming soon
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Action timer; quick-note and quick-action hot keys; Mail compatible; automatic data collection.
News: None

OmniFocus

Developer: Omni Group
Current Version: 1.7.5
Price: $80
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: App ($20)
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.8
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Mail compatible and Spotlight compatible; simple interface with powerful view features.
News: A new Web site (or at least, a reorganization of the old one) certainly makes things easier to find, and more information available about OmniFocus. Also, Omni Group has promised to port *all* of their applications to the iPad, starting with OmniGraffle and OmniFocus—good news if you're a user of OmniFocus and planning to buy an iPad in a couple of days (or ever).

Pluto menubar

Developer: MOApp Software Manufactory
Current Version: 5.1.1
Price: €16 (about $24)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
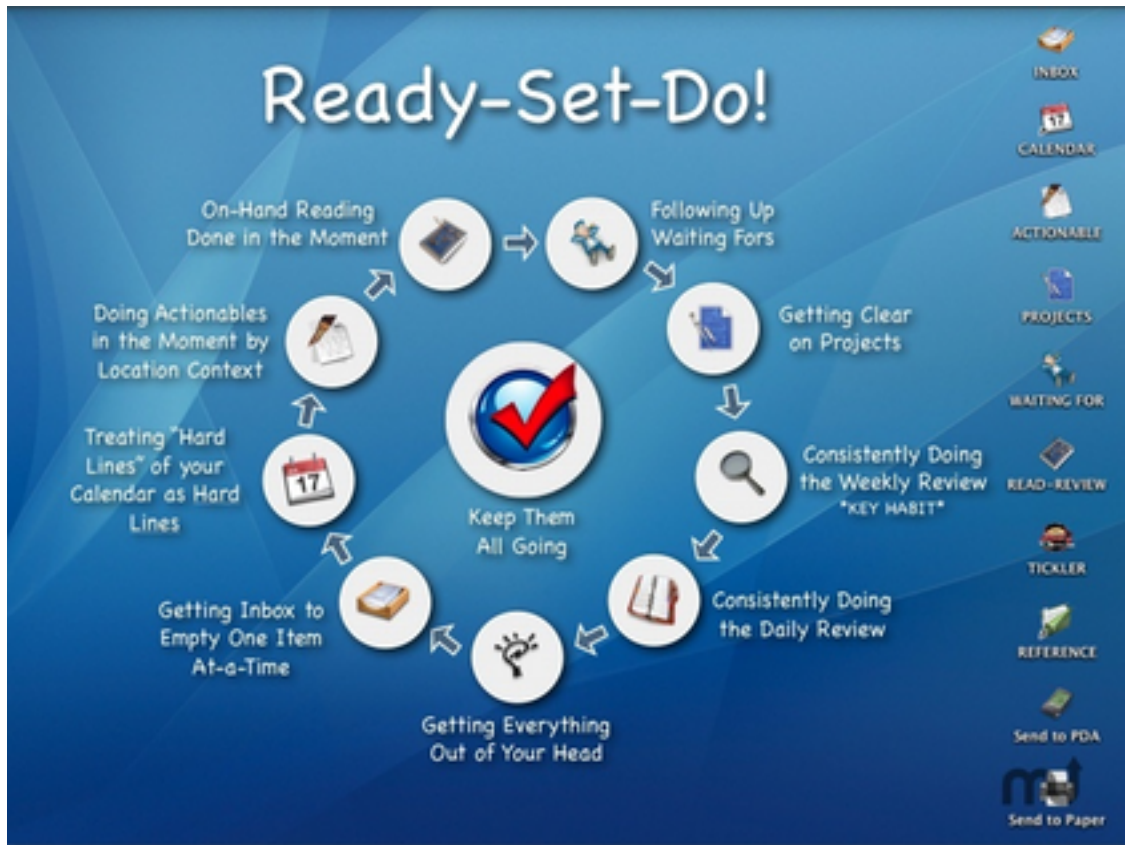**Web-app Sync:** No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: This is a menu-bar application, but don't be fooled—it is a very fully featured GTD tool. There is a lot to see here, and you won't find any of the standard features you're looking for missing. Note the full-screen editing, searching, tags, contacts, and priorities.
News: None

Developer: Todd Vasquez
Current Version: 1.4.4
Price: $30
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
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; productivity scoring; help with files and tasks related to meetings; multiple language support.
News: Thanks to Todd Vasquez who chimed in with a comment on the last list to mention some lesser-known features, and a new graphic.

TaskPaper

Developer: Hog Bay Software
Current Version: 2.2.1
Price: $19
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: New version addresses some bug fixes, as well as adding several commands—mostly improving navigation and handling of tasks.

The Hit List

Developer: Potion Factory
Current Version: 0.9.3.18
Price: $50 (pre-order)
Development Status: Beta
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No

iPhone Presence: No (but indicated as "coming")

OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5

Required Applications: None

Distinguishing Features: List view and "card" view; task timer; system-wide quick-entry; tabs allow good project management; AppleScript support; tags and prioritization of tasks.

News: As a commenter mentioned in the last column, development here has been slow-to-nonexistent in recent months. Although I just added it to the list a couple of months ago, it is worth noting that nothing has been done with The Hit List publicly for a year or more. It still looks promising, and for all we know the developer could announce a completed version in a week (though that would indicate less-than-optimal market savvy). Still, proceed with this caveat if you decide to dive into The Hit List.

Things

Developer: Cultured Code

Current Version: 1.3.1

Price: $50

Development Status: Release

iCal Sync: Yes

QuickSilver Plug-in: No

Web-app Sync: No

Print Lists: Yes

iPhone Presence: App ($10)

OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.11

Required Applications: None

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

News: A semi-major update came with 1.3.1 (from 1.2.x), which brings support for what the Things folks call "mixed projects"—task items of various types (both scheduled and unscheduled/"someday" tasks, for example). Also some bug fixes and under-the-hood improvements.

Thinking Rock

Developer: Avente Pty Ltd
Current Version: 2.2.1
Price: Free, open-source
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Cross-platform compatibility through Java; interactive collection and processing; can be run off of a flash drive.
News: Version 3 is now available for *purchase* for $40. Learn more about the difference in the versions [here](#). The Thinking Rock folks have also upgraded their Web site, and it's now much easier to find your way around.

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
iPhone Presence: None

OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.9

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)

iPhone Presence: None

OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5

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

Chandler

Developer: The Chandler Project

Current Version: 1.0.3

Price: Open Source

Development Status: Release

iCal Sync: Yes

QuickSilver Plug-in: No

Web-app Sync: Yes

Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)

iPhone Presence: None

OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3

Distinguishing Features: A good integrated calendar makes this one a fairly full-orbed PIM.

News: None

Check Off

Developer: Second Gear
Current Version: 4.1.1
Price: $13
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5.2
Distinguishing Features: A menu-bar utility that manages basic task lists; syncs with iPods; a .Mac Backup QuickPick is provided.
News: Latest version brings better accessibility support, improved stability, and some bug fixes.

Dejumble

Developer: Thinking Code Software, Inc.
Current Version: 1.3
Price: $19
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
iPhone Presence: App ($8)
OS Requirements: Unknown (would assume 10.4 or later, due to presence of Spotlight functions)
Distinguishing Features: A simple yet powerful menu bar–style task list manager, with tags, groups, notes, and a handful of other options.
News: None

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
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.1
Distinguishing Features: A neat basic list-management application. A Windows version
is also available.
News: None

DoIt

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
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Distinguishing Features: .Mac support and AppleScriptability. Also supports file at-
tachments and categories for lists. Skins are available for customization.
News: None

FlexCal

Developer: flexgames
Current Version: 1.14
Price: Free/Donationware
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
iPhone Presence: None

OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5

Distinguishing Features: A task and event creator for iCal—something of a collection bucket for GTD users.

News: Recent update brings 64-bit support and some minor fixes.

Hot Plan

Developer: Intuiware
Current Version: 1.4.3
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.9
Distinguishing Features: Tracks a substantial amount of information about a given task, including completion status, priority, and time remaining; supports tagging, color coding, and locking of tasks. Also allows collection of URLs and files.
News: Bug fixes and Snow Leopard compatibility fixes in the recent minor update.

iClock Pro

Developer: Script Software
Current Version: 1.1
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
OS Requirements: Unknown
Distinguishing Features: Offers a menu bar–based method of managing task lists; includes .Mac syncing.
News: Version 1.1 brings bug fixes for installation and, curiously, version-numbering schemes.

Life Balance

Developer: Llamagraphics
Current Version: 5.1.1
Price: $65 ($80 bundled with Palm version)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
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

NoteBook

Developer: Circus Ponies
Current Version: 3.0
Price: $50 (academic and family pack pricing available)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.11
Distinguishing Features: Highly customizable system with project management built-in; also works well for heavy day-to-day GTD use.
News: None

Organized

Developer: iSlayer
Current Version: 1.11
Price: Donationware
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No

iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Distinguishing Features: Dashboard widget with calendar events, tasks, notes, and world clock.
News: None

Qu-s

Developer: Urban Design Limited
Current Version: 1.5
Price: $17
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Distinguishing Features: Allows lists (and other things) to be created as an editable part of the desktop. Good for simple lists.
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
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Distinguishing Features: 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

TaskMate

Developer: Ryan Conway
Current Version: 1.2.1
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Distinguishing Features: Ultra-simple task list: remaining tasks in a simple list; completed tasks in a drawer (which can be hidden). Tasks are just single-line descriptions with a check box. Could be right for the super-simplified life.
News: None

Today

Developer: Second Gear
Current Version: 2.1
Price: $22
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Distinguishing Features: A window interface for quick reference and entry to iCal events and tasks. Allows global shortcuts for viewing and creation of new tasks and events.
News: Version 2.1 added support for Mac OS X 10.5 (a new one for me—adding backward-compatibility is a good idea, but not something I've seen frequently in the software world!). It also fixed a handful of bugs and improved the user-interface.

ToDo X

Developer: Omicron Software Systems, Inc.

Current Version: 2.3
Price: $15
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Import from iCal only
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2
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)
iPhone Presence: None
OS Requirements: Unknown
Distinguishing Features: A basic task creator for iCal, serving as a collection bucket.
News: None

Browser and Web-based GTD Applications

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.

43 Actions

Price: Free (donations get extra features)

Description: Specifically designed as an iPhone Web app, it's light and lean for EDGE network optimization. Submit inbox items via e-mail, Twitter (with donation), Jott (with donation), and the usual features.

GTDAgenda

Price: Free

Description: Another Web version of a GTD tool, with the standard features. Plus, addition of Goals, checklists for recurring tasks, schedule management, and an iCal-compatible calendar. A mobile version is also available.

GTDInbox

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. Works well in conjunction with RememberTheMilk. Current version, 2.0.8.4, is open source; requires Firefox.

GTD-PHP

Price: Free

Description: A PHP solution designed to be locally installed. A simple tabbed interface for the 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 it 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; easy to collect and process quickly; iPhone-ready.

SimpleGTD

Price: Free

Description: Tabs for next actions, contexts, projects, and done actions; drag-and-drop organization; easy undoing of tasks.

Task Writer

Price: Free

Description: Easy keyboard navigation, good use of calendaring for tasks, and a useful set of attributes for tasks, as well as the ability to auto-hide unneeded list views, help Task Writer to stand out a bit.

Toodledo

Price: Free

Description: Has a Firefox plug-in 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. iPhone-optimized.

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. An iPhone-specific version is available. A premium (paid) version also includes security encryption, collaboration, file attachments, and calendaring.

Other Browser/Web-based Task Managers

- Backpack

- Basecamp

- CoMindWork

- HiTask

- Hiveminder

- Joe's Goals

- Mojonote

- Remember the Milk

- Scrybe

- Sproutliner

- [Task Freak!](#)

- [Tasks](#)

- [Tasktoy](#)

- [TeuxDeux](#)

- [Todoist](#)

- [Tweeto](#)

- [Zenlists](#)

- [ZenPages](#)

GTD and Task Management Wikis

- [D3](#)

- [GTDTiddlyWiki](#)

- [MonkeyGTD](#)

- [Pimki](#)

iPhone Applications (not Web Apps)

- [Actions](#)

- [Chores](#)

- [Dejumble](#)

- [DoBot ToDos](#)

- [EasyTask Manager](#)

- [Firetask](#)

- [Life Balance](#)

- [Lists by MobilityWare](#)

- [Lists by Tynsoe.org](#)

- [Matalot by dPompa](#)

- [My Lists](#)

- [OmniFocus](#)

- [Outliner by CarbonFin](#)

- [Tanjas Checklist](#)

- [Tasks](#)

- [Things](#)

- [ToDo by Appigo](#)

- [To Do by Erica Sadun](#)

- [To-Do List by Concrete Software](#)

- [To-Do Lists by Tapku](#)

- [ToodleDo](#)

- [Zenbe Lists](#)

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Sunsets

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures

ATPM reader Richard Barrett shares some sunset and sunrise photos that he took in Costa Rica, Hawaii, London, and Florida.

View Pictures

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, please send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue.

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.

Safari Use this Automator workflow.

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.

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.6.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.
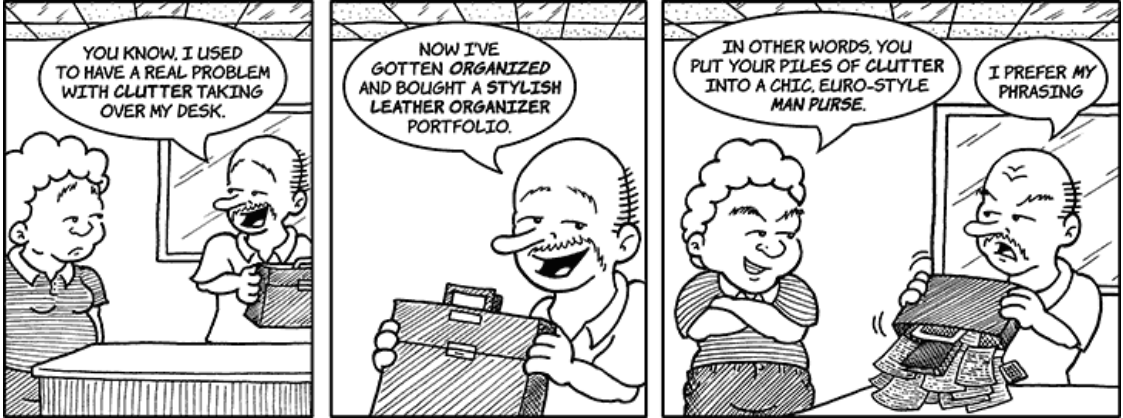
Mac OS X 10.0.x

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
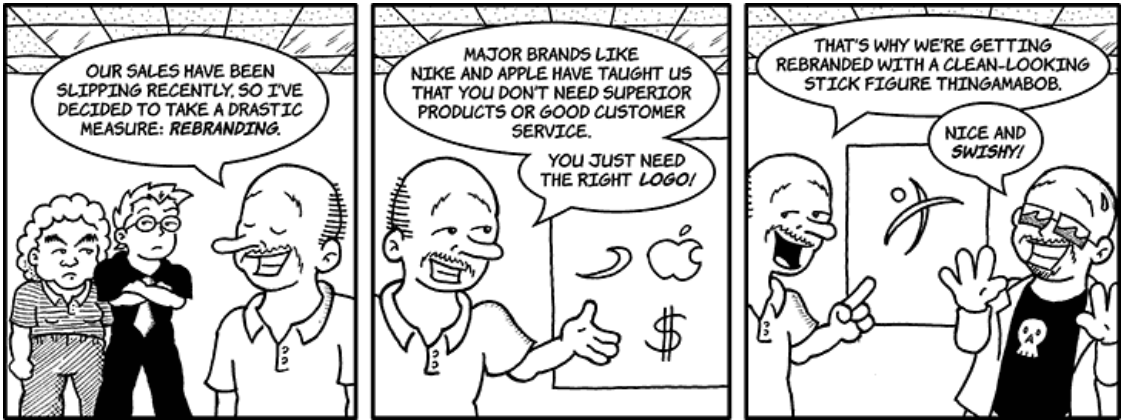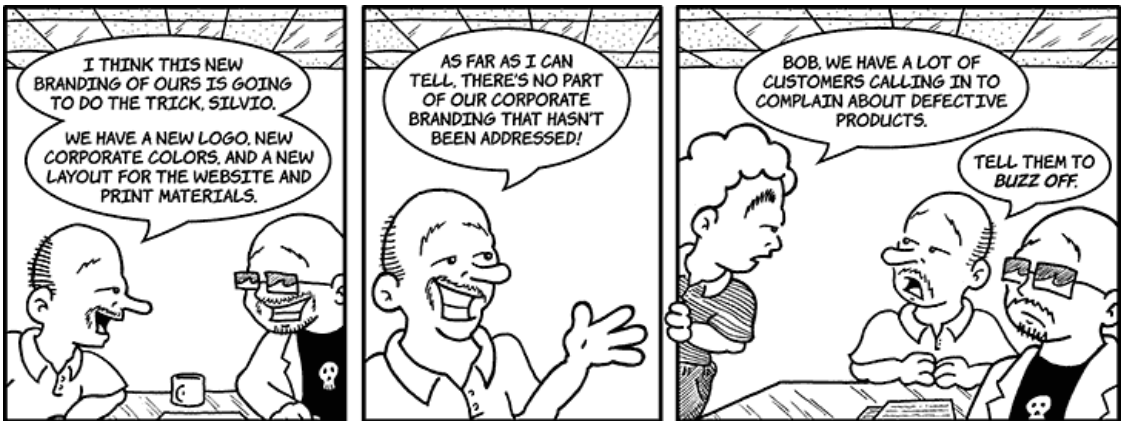
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Bob's Organizer

He's Going Super Saiyan!
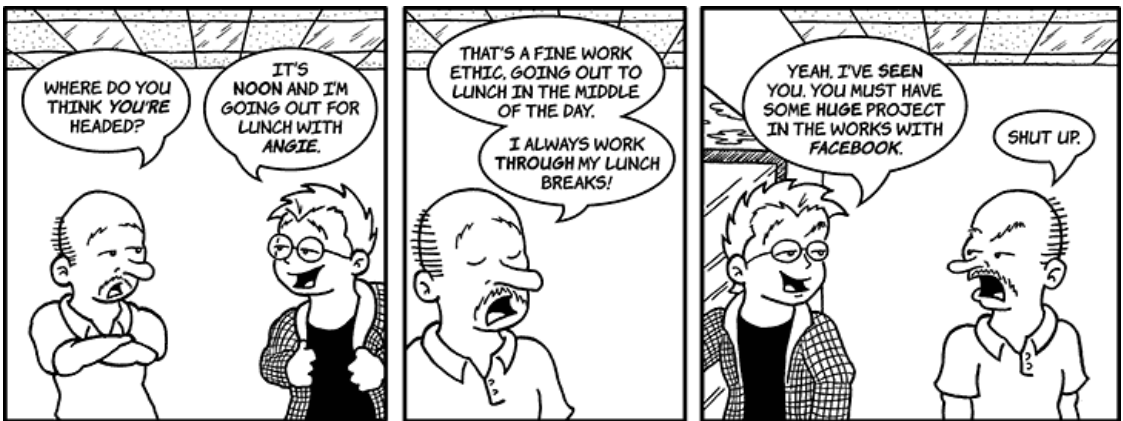
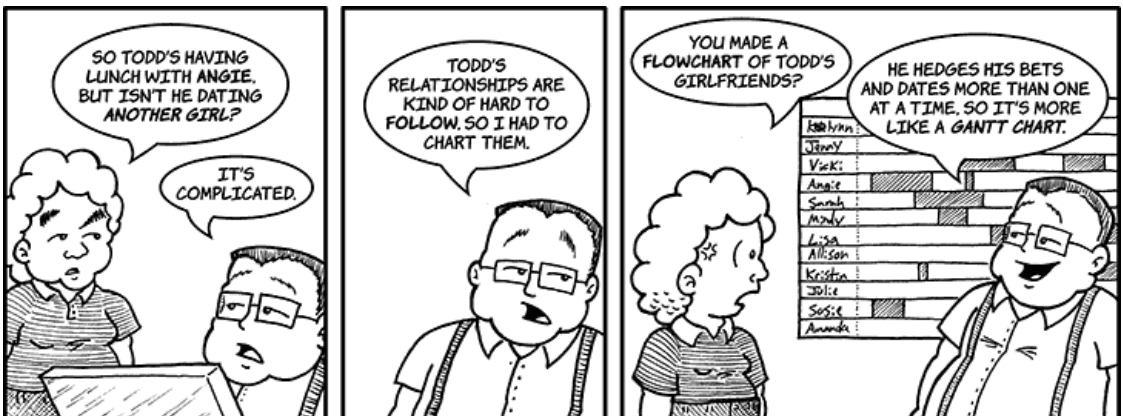# Rebranding

Missing Component

Meeting E-mail

Spit Take
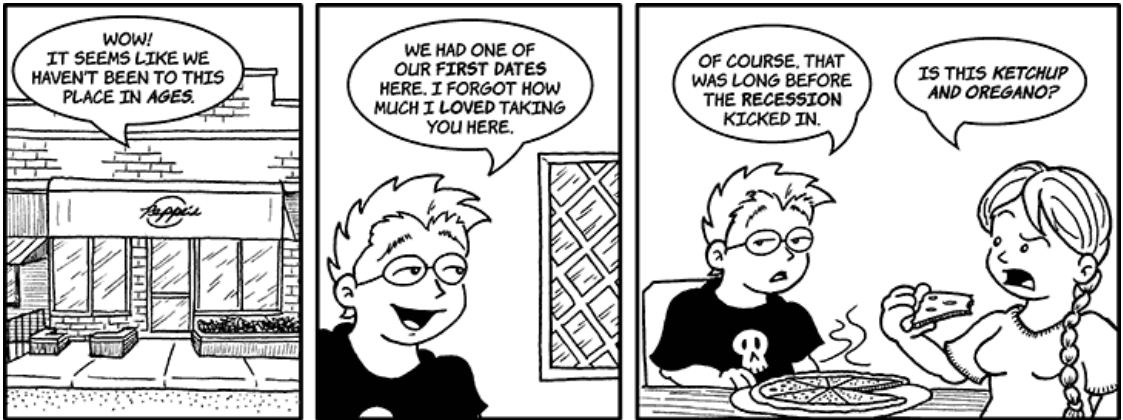

Panel 1:
I SEE BOB IS STILL TRYING TO USE *FACEBOOK*.

UH-HUH.

Panel 2:
SOMEONE REALLY OUGHT TO TELL HIM POSTING A MESSAGE ON SOMEONE'S *WALL* ISN'T THE SAME AS SENDING A *PRIVATE MESSAGE*.

OH?

Panel 3:
YOUR "NOOKIE MONSTER" IS HOLDING ON LINE THREE.

Out to Lunch

Panel 1:
WHERE DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* HEADED?

IT'S NOON AND I'M GOING OUT FOR LUNCH WITH ANGIE.

Panel 2:
THAT'S A FINE WORK ETHIC. GOING OUT TO LUNCH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY.

I ALWAYS WORK THROUGH MY LUNCH BREAKS!

Panel 3:
YEAH. I'VE SEEN YOU. YOU MUST HAVE SOME *HUGE* PROJECT IN THE WORKS WITH FACEBOOK.

SHUT UP.

Charting Relationships

Panel 1:
SO TODD'S HAVING LUNCH WITH ANGIE. BUT ISN'T HE DATING ANOTHER GIRL?

IT'S COMPLICATED.

Panel 2:
TODD'S RELATIONSHIPS ARE KIND OF HARD TO FOLLOW, SO I HAD TO CHART THEM.

Panel 3:
YOU MADE A FLOWCHART OF TODD'S GIRLFRIENDS?

HE HEDGES HIS BETS AND DATES MORE THAN ONE AT A TIME, SO IT'S MORE LIKE A *GANTT CHART*.

Pizza Time

Qaptain Qwerty

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

Avernum 6 v.1.0.2

Function: Roam RPG world, restore peace.
Developer: Spiderweb Software
Price: $28
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9. Universal.
Trial: Feature-limited (10% of world, cheat codes disabled).

For me, computer gaming is limited to only two genres: shoot 'em up, where you mow down almost anything in your way; and puzzle, be it hidden object types or word games. Playing on the computer means quick actions with the fingers or lazily matching three or more items in a row. When I play computer games, I do not want to have to memorize too many details about the games. Therefore, the game genre of adventure or role playing game never attracts me—it is just too much work to have to remember who is carrying what or has what powers. Still, from time to time I want to expand my horizon and do something out of my comfort zone. When I learned about Avernum 6, the latest in a series of adventure games from SpiderWeb Software, I took the chance.

Let's Go on an Adventure

Avernum is a huge underground world that was once used as a penal colony by the Empire. Over time, the colony gained independence and other settlers moved in. Avernum had its share of prosperous, peaceful times and was also ravaged by wars with other species.

The latest catastrophe involves a disease that destroys the mushroom used as the main diet of people and beasts alike. Amid the catastrophe, you, represented by four lowly guards at a food depot, get ordered to various tasks, such as the ridding of rats in the bowel of the depot and hunting goblins in an abandoned mine.

Along the way, you gain magical powers, learn how to teleport, and more. One thing leads to another, and before you know it you are on your way to solving the big mystery of how the mushroom disease came about. If you choose to, that is, as there are many side stories you can pursue. The place is big, and there are many things to do; you can easily spend hours with the game.

You Are in Control

While your characters in the game have orders to carry out and are not always in control of their destinies, you have much control over the game and can adjust it in many ways to suit your taste. At the start, you can choose from Casual, Normal, Hard, and Torment. Next,

you decide the humanoid species for your four characters, choosing from human, slithzerikai (lizard-like), or nephil (cat-like). On the same screen, you can also select the characters' appearances through their sex, clothes, build, skin color, and more. Finally, you can even adjust the characters' traits: Ambidextrous, Deadeye, and Nimble Fingers.

There are many choices of images to select for your four characters.

As you roam about minding your adventure, there are many items to pick up along the way, some of obvious value and others not so obvious. Swords and other weapons are no-brainers, and I personally like to outfit my gang to wield weapons in both hands.

Medicine and energy potions are useful for healing your travelers after a gruesome fight. Other items, such as bars of iron and jewelry, make good bartering materials. I still don't know what a piece of trash can be used for, but Avernum is a big world. Maybe I will come across someone or get into a situation where the piece of trash can be useful.

It is entirely up to you who gets what. You can make one character too powerful while the others lack sufficient protection; but, of course, the team will fail if one character expires. By interacting and learning from certain characters, you can improve your adventurers' magic or battle skills.

Pick up stuff as you roam about to outfit your characters with weapons and protection.

Use coins, interact with other characters, etc., to improve your various skills.

Mouse or Keyboard

As a decent typist, I love Avernum's keyboard support. Most of the many icons and buttons on the screen have keyboard equivalents. You can try to memorize a handful for tasks you perform often, but you can also press the Tab key to show all the available shortcuts. Dialogs can be dismissed with either the Esc or Enter key. Series of questions can be posed by pressing the numbers matching the questions.

However, when it comes to moving the characters, I find using the mouse to be more natural. The direction keys actually work in reference with the isometric 3D landscape, whereby up means north, left points west, down is south, and right is east. However, you can easily be confused into thinking the keys work from the character's perspective, e.g., turning left would be done by pressing the left arrow. Therefore, my preference is to use the mouse—just point and click the location you want the quartet of warriors and wizards to go, and they get there in a hurry.

Typists should love Avernum's extensive support for keyboard shortcuts. Pressing Tab reveals them all.

Sound and Vision

At number six in the series, the latest Avernum has support not only for the latest hardware. Older machines can use the options for thousands of colors and minimal graphics, while newer Macs can use full color and graphics. I would not want to miss the graphics. While the landscape is not very organic and somewhat fits too nicely into the 3D grid, it is still very nice. You have forests, wasteland, bodies of water, and man-made structures such as buildings and mines, all drawn with lots of details. I like the sound effects even more,

though. You have a choice of No Sound, Quiet, or Normal. I always use Normal. As you roam about the vast cave, you can hear the wind howling and dripping water for a very chilling effect.

Help Is Everywhere

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by all that needs to be done and remembered. It is just the nature of the game genre. Luckily, Avernum offers many forms of help. The Journal is the most obvious one. As you are assigned tasks, they are entered in the Journal so you can go back to it whenever you forget what it is you are supposed to do. As you talk to the characters in the game, you can also save the conversation in the Journal.

You have the big map of the entire Avernum to give you a sense of where you are; there is also a small map overlaid on the game screen. On the small map are stars to indicate people you should meet or places you should visit. You also have online help as well as a PDF version. If you do not like reading documentation, you can try to use the forum on Spiderweb Software's Web site. Lastly, Spiderweb Software offers a hint book for $10.

There is much to do, and you must talk to other characters to get answers or directions.

The Journal automatically saves your mission instructions, but you can also take notes as you interact with other characters.

Draconian Measure...Not!

The registration process for Avernum could use some help itself. When you get the demo you are assigned a registration code. When registering the software, you get a key code to let the program know that you have registered.

All is well until another account on the same computer launches the game. Alas, that account gets a different registration code, not one that matches the key code you already have. You can contact Spirderweb Software for a new key code, but it's an extra step, even if it takes a few hours to complete.

I regularly buy software online via demos and already find it annoying enough that I usually have to register the software for different accounts on the same computer. Only Snapz Pro X and one other piece of software offer to register the software for all accounts on the same machine. Avernum goes the other way and makes things a little bit worse.

Conclusion

Although I found myself spending a few nights staying up late wandering Avernum and trying to complete some tasks, I still do not like the game genre itself. It is too much work and not relaxing. However, I am sure any fan of RPGs will like Avernum. It is a vast world with many characters to interact with, whether to engage in battle or to get help.

There are plenty of things to find to equip your characters with, and they can also improve their skills through learning or trading. If you want, you can carry out side tasks while you try to perform your duties.

The graphics are good, though perhaps a bit too dark and eerie, especially with the background sounds. The registration process should be simpler. It may feel like reading a complex novel at times, but there are many forms of help at your disposal to figure things out. If there is one adventure game I want to play, it has to be Avernum 6.

Commuter

Function: Case for iPhone 3G/3GS.
Developer: OtterBox
Price: $35
Requirements: iPhone 3G/3GS.
Trial: None

OtterBox has been building rugged cases for years, so it seems only natural that it would have a variety of options for the iPhone. Probably the most attractive of its several iPhone case offerings is the Commuter, a rubber-and-plastic case that provides better protection than most soft cases while remaining reasonably slender.

OtterBox's Commuter requires some assembly.

The Commuter case is composed of three pieces: an inner silicone-rubber layer, a hard plastic shell, and a thin clear screen protector. The inner rubber layer is available only in

black, but the plastic shell comes in seven different colors (including black). This makes for some amusing combinations—the white shell lets the iPhone do its best imitation of a Gateway product, while the yellow or green would be very much at home on an endcap display next to the DeWalt or Hitachi power tools at a big-box hardware chain. (The green might be equally appealing to hardcore Kawasaki—the motorsport company, not the former Apple evangelist—fans.)

The Commuter looks similar to many other cases fully assembled.

Assembling the case takes a bit of finesse, as the plastic shell isn't particularly flexible and the thin rubber strip above the dock connector tends to stick out a bit. (You can coax it into place with a fingernail.) Put the silicone liner on first, then slide the bottom of the shell in place before snapping the top on. This way, you'll likely avoid fingernail gymnastics.

This flexible cover does a great job of keeping gunk out of the dock connector.

Protection against drops and bumps seems quite good. The silicone layer is reasonably thick without being bulky, and it covers almost everything other than the screen, home button, and silent slider. Everything, that is, except a nickel-size area of the back case centered on the Apple logo. OtterBox, like ZoFunk, seems to think that customers who are willing to spend $35 on a protective case to prevent scratches and other damage are also too narcissistic to cover up the Apple logo. Well, news flash, guys: some of us actually care about *protecting the phone* and don't give a rat's nether regions about showing off the logo on the back. Form should follow function.

Hello? McFly? Some of us buy cases to protect our phones, not to show off the Apple logo. I can show that off *without* a case.

Exposing a lot of sticky silicone rubber on a case can be a recipe for trouble. The ZoFunk Grip Sleeve, to cite one example, is nearly impossible to remove from a jeans pocket without turning the pocket inside out. OtterBox's own [Defender](#) occasionally gets caught on pockets in even loose-fitting jackets, but the Commuter's design seems to strike a nice balance between tacky and Teflon by covering up much of the rubber with textured plastic. It's also much slimmer than the bulky Defender.

One of the best aspects of the Commuter is that it adds little bulk to the phone while still providing a great deal of protection.

OtterBox includes a clear screen protector, too, which is a nice touch. You will need to replace it, at a cost of about $10 or so, when the adhesive starts to wear out and dust gets in around the edges, but that goes for pretty much any of the adhesive screen protectors out there, and not everyone includes screen protection with cases that otherwise provide none.

As with the cover over the dock connector, this tight-fitting flap over the headphone jack keeps dust and dirt from fouling up the jack.

Another nice touch is the tight-fitting flaps over the headphone port and dock connector. The latter, in particular, can be kind of tricky to hold out of the way as you're plugging in a USB cable, but it's very nice to have protection there. Most other cases either don't provide any protection at all for the dock connector or block it entirely so you're left removing the iPhone from its case to sync or charge it.

The truest test of a case, to my mind, is whether I keep coming back to it after using other cases. The Commuter is one of only two I've put back on my iPhone after taking it off to test others. If OtterBox would make the back of the case solid, without that silly logo hole, this might be my favorite iPhone case yet. Heck, it might be anyway.

Accessory Review

Defender

Function: Rugged case for iPhone 3G/3GS.
Developer: OtterBox
Price: $50
Requirements: iPhone 3G/3GS. (An iPhone 2G version is also available, but there are no iPod touch–compatible models.)
Trial: None

I was sitting in our break room recently, listening to co-workers discuss the relative merits of their iPhone cases. Judging from some of the complaints I heard from them about how easy it is to drop, damage, abuse, and otherwise maltreat a cell phone—at one point, the phrase "I drop mine every day" passed someone's lips—a lot more people ought to be buying cases like the OtterBox Defender.

The Defender in black-on-black, the most attractive color combination to my eye. You can see one of the "blobs" just above the Calendar and Calculator application icons in the top row.

About the only thing the Defender won't, er, defend against is a direct fall into standing water. It's basically impossible to engineer a watertight case for a telephone in which you can still use the phone, and to ask a $50 consumer-grade device to do that is completely unfair. So don't expect the Defender or any other case to save your iPhone from a thorough dunking in a pool, a lake, your favorite trout stream, the ocean, etc.

With that caveat out of the way, how well does the Defender work as a case, and how well does it protect against other assorted traumas of the non-liquid variety?

The Defender is a big, rugged case, with emphasis on "big" and "rugged." The iPhone is already a reasonably large phone, as mobile phones go, but the Defender is simply huge. It feels like it nearly doubles the size and weight of the iPhone. With overall dimensions of 123.70 mm × 70.36 mm × 20.32 mm, according to OtterBox, versus 115.5 mm × 62.1 mm × 12.3 mm for an iPhone 3GS, the Defender actually *does* roughly double the thickness

of a bare iPhone and adds nearly a centimeter in the other two dimensions. And at just over 62 grams, it adds nearly 50 percent to the weight of an iPhone. This is not a case you install and then forget that it's there.

This is the Defender in its holster without an iPhone installed. OtterBox—and common sense—suggests facing the screen inward when using the belt holster, the opposite of this photo.

Here, you can see the Defender clipping into the belt holster in the "proper" (screen-inward) configuration. The holster's belt clip rotates to a variety of positions.

Perhaps that's why OtterBox thoughtfully includes a rugged plastic belt holster with the Defender. Though using it makes you look like a construction worker—an image helped even more by the available high-visibility bumblebee-yellow version of the case, if that's your thing—the holster is an easier way to carry a Defender-encased iPhone than trying to cram that monstrosity into a pocket. I usually carry my phone in the breast pocket of a shirt or a fleece jacket, and most of my shirt pockets just barely accommodate the Defender's bulk.

The OtterBox Defender consists of three layers of protection: a screen protector integrated into a polycarbonate case (right) and a silicone skin for the polycarbonate case (left). It's very rugged but also very bulky.

The Defender's construction is excellent protection against shock, impact, and scratches. It consists of a black polycarbonate "skeleton" case that by itself is more protective than most cases. The skeleton includes a clear, and reasonably thick, screen protector. The whole thing is then wrapped in an impact-absorbing silicone skin, available in black, white, pink, or the aforementioned yellow. The skin provides flaps or protected windows over all of the iPhone's external openings, including the headphone port, the dock connector, the camera lens, and the silence switch.

The Defender scoffs at dropping an iPhone on its corner. Note the thick silicone plugs covering the headphone jack and silence switch as well.

That silicone skin is great for impact protection, but it's a little sticky. Combined with the Defender's bulk, that makes removing the case from a jeans pocket—or even smaller shirt pockets—a real trick. It does cover up most of the seams in the polycarbonate case, and while OtterBox makes no claims that it's watertight, and in fact *disclaims* any protection against water, I'd put money on the Defender in a dunk or spill test against any other iPhone case I've seen.

The holster's belt clip rotates 360 degrees so you're sure to find a position that fits on the Batbelt.

A drop or two might make it to the surface of the phone, but unless the phone is immersed for several seconds, there seems to be a reasonable level of protection against the "Oh crap!" variety of accidents that seem to befall lots of people. You know, like spilling a Coke on the desk and phone, or dropping your iPhone into a cup of coffee. This actually happened to a co-worker recently, resulting in the death of his un-cased iPhone (consider this a public service announcement not to telecommunicate near an open container of liquid). Cheap insurance and all that, especially since AT&T, at least, won't sell you insurance on an iPhone.

A thick silicone plug protects the dock connector, although the speaker and microphone are (logically, since otherwise it would get awfully quiet) still exposed.

The screen protector can be somewhat distracting in daily use. It does a fairly good job of getting out of the way, though touchscreen accuracy is noticeably reduced (especially in the corners), but the biggest drawback I found was its tendency to stick to the screen of my iPhone 3G in random areas. This creates blob-like darker spots on the screen that are very distracting, especially when viewing photos or video, though they don't seem to affect the touchscreen at all.

The polycarbonate inner case fits together like a clamshell over the iPhone.

Perhaps someday, someone will be able to explain to me why OtterBox and other case manufacturers think that people willing to spend $50 on a case whose primary raison d'être is *protection* are willing to compromise that protection to show off the Apple logo on the back of the phone. Until then, I'll continue to criticize this silly practice. At least the Defender, unlike OtterBox's slimmer [Commuter](#), has clear plastic over the gaping hole in

the back of the case, so your precious Apple logo won't get all scratched up while you're showing off the logo (that's sarcasm) to the inside of your index finger (that's not—hold your iPhone in your hand like you're talking on the phone and look at where the Apple logo is).

Why on earth is there a nickel-sized hole cut out of the back of this otherwise extraordinarily protective case? Anyone?

Fifty bucks is kind of a lot of money to be spending on an iPhone case, even for one as protective as the Defender. While I commend OtterBox for developing such a protective case that manages to retain the functionality of the phone, their insistence on compromising that protection with a big hole in the back is puzzling. The extreme bulk of the Defender makes it somewhat unwieldy, at least for my use, and OtterBox makes cases that are very nearly as protective without being so awkward. If you're one of the few who really *needs* a case like this, it's a fantastic thing to have, but for everyone else, better solutions are out there.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is *ATPM*?

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

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

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

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

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We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a

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

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

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

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

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how strongly we recommend it. Please contact our reviews editor, before you begin writing, if you have a piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review.

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

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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