

# ATPM

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

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## Artwork & Design

Layout and Design	<a href="#">Michael Tsai</a>
Web Design	<a href="#">Simon Griffiee</a>
Cartoonists	<a href="#">Matt Johnson</a> , <a href="#">Linus Ly</a>
Blue Apple Icons	Mark Robinson
Other Art	RD Novo
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## Contributors

Jay Feuillet, Matt Johnson, Robert Paul Leitao, Linus Ly, Wes Meltzer, Sylvester Roque, Mark Tennent, Macintosh users like you\*.

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# Welcome

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

Welcome to the January issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* The editors of ATPM look forward to 2011 as we continue our chronicle of what we call the “personal computing experience” in each monthly issue.

## A New Year, a New Set of Numbers

On January 18th, Apple will release financial reports for the three-month period ended on or around Christmas Day. It's expected that Apple will announce quarterly revenue exceeding \$25 billion for the first time in the company's history. In the fiscal quarter that ended last September, Apple surpassed Microsoft in revenue, and the maker of Macs, iPhones, and iPads is well on its way to over \$100 billion in revenue in the fiscal year ending next September. For readers who have been with ATPM since [its beginnings](#), it's been a long and scenic ride from the bottom to the top.

## Newfound Nemeses

Throughout Apple's history, nemeses have come and gone, gone and come, and have gone again. For those who remember Apple's earliest days, IBM was the company's original arch rival. Through a strange twist of fate, IBM became Apple's chip maker for Mac prior to the Intel transition. In calendar year 2011, Apple may rival even Big Blue in revenue.

The ascent of the Macintosh changed the world of personal computing. Microsoft, one of Apple's biggest developers, became the company's chief rival in the development of operating systems. Mimicking much of the Mac's “look and feel,” Microsoft created an operating system and software empire that nearly put Apple out of business. Today, Microsoft has its own new nemesis named Google that is battling with Microsoft on almost every product front. This calendar year, while Apple rivals IBM in revenue, the company will surpass the Windows maker in profits.

In the 1990s, the mass adoption of the Windows operating system for PCs spawned a number of hardware rivals for Apple. Once the world's leading maker of PCs, Dell has fallen quickly from the precipice of global success. Through acquisition, Dell has moved aggressively into enterprises services, while Apple increases the Mac's share of the most lucrative segments of the PC market. In 2011, Apple will regain even more the market share it left behind 16 years ago during what can only be described as Apple's tumultuous times.

While Google squares off with Microsoft and the search giant releases a PC operating system of its own, the Android vs. iPhone contest provides for an interesting sideshow of its own. Apple doesn't really lose if Google's Android OS wins new fans. The two companies take different approaches to the smartphone market, and each is pursuing success in its own way. The more things change, the more things that will change. Competition and rivalries, old

and new again, will continue to change the digital lifestyle products we choose and use each day.

## **There's a Mac App for That**

On January 6th, Apple will unveil the new [Mac App Store](#). The [iTunes App Store](#) for iOS-based devices offers hundreds of thousands of apps for the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. The convenience of online purchases of thousands of apps for the Mac is now only a few days away. The Mac App Store will provide Mac owners with instant access to software tools and resources that will enhance and extend the user experience.

While the iPhone and the iPad garner much attention, the resurgence in Mac sales is often overlooked. In Apple's most recent fiscal year ended in September, Macintosh unit sales increased 30%. In 2011, there's plenty more in store for Apple's line of personal computers.

## **ATPM Wants You!**

The editorial staff of ATPM is comprised of talented writers who started their relationship with our publication as readers of our monthly issues. When we say that we "celebrate the personal computing experience," we mean it. If you've ever had the urge to share your personal computing experiences with a large and influential readership, please contact us at [editor@atpm.com](mailto:editor@atpm.com).

Please join us each month of the new year for our unique blend of views, news, and product reviews.

Our January issue includes:

### **[Bloggable](#)**

A monthly summary of Wes Meltzer's blogosphere news, originating from his Pinboard feed.

### **[MacMuser: A Tale of Two XPs](#)**

Mark Tennent laments how LogMeIn causes him to "go to work" without going to work, then makes an argument for an Apple netbook.

### **[How To: Making the Most of What's Already on Your Mac](#)**

Before buying new software for your Mac, why not first check out the marvelous things that are already there? In the first part of a series aimed mainly at new Mac users, let's take a look at some of the useful things you can do with just the software that's already on your Mac.

### **[Desktop Pictures: Flowers of Life](#)**

Reader Jay Feuillet shares this month's desktop pictures featuring flowers at a park in South 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*.

## **Review: Posterino 2.0.4**

Posterino 2 brings along a few more templates and features; should you upgrade?

## **Review: Simplenote and Notational Velocity 2.0b3**

Wes Meltzer has found a combo of Macintosh, iPhone, and Web applications that caters to his obsessive note-taking tendencies.

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## ShareTool 2.1.2

So, I guess everyone leaves their machines up and running at all times? Sounds like a good use of electricity.

—*Mike Deme*

Not everyone. Certainly this software isn't suited for those who don't wish (or need) to leave a computer on at home. In my case, I run a photo album Web server, and I've calculated that I spend less per month in electricity on this machine than I would spend for hosting service elsewhere with 100+ gigabytes of storage.

Naturally, your (and everyone else's) mileage may vary.

—*Lee Bennett*

## Sophisticated Follower of Invasion

There are two unsatisfactory things I found:

1. I had a kernel panic (i.e., the Mac shut itself down) which I suspect is due to Sophos or some interaction with Sophos. I have not had a kernel panic from OS X for many years.
2. When a file is detected as having a virus, Sophos signals a fatal error to whatever accessed it. So I was copying a folder full of files and one of the files had a virus. The whole copy was killed. Usually, there is just a message about the error and it asks whether to stop or to continue.

—*David*

## Here There Be Dragons

As far as I can remember, Write was not the parent project of Word. They were parallel projects. There was a time where coexisted Word for DOS, Word for Mac, Works (whose word processing module became, with some features more, Write), and later Word for Windows, that also replaced the old, trusty Word 5.1 for Mac with the unusable Word 6 that you describe in “The Bad...”

—*Paolo Tramannoni*

## OmniFocus, TaskPaper, and Things

Great article. I've used all three and prefer TaskPaper over the other two. As stated, the strengths of OmniFocus and Things are also their weakness. It just takes too long to get information in/out of them. TaskPaper is flexible and fast!

In addition, TaskPaper now has both iPhone and iPad apps with full synchronization between the three using SimpleText. I believe that SimpleText will be replaced with DropBox for syncing in a future release.

—*Chip*

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



## Going Mobile: the Cell Phone Grows Up

### [\*Consumer Reports Annual Survey Pans AT&T's Service\*](#)

In their upcoming issue, *CR's* annual survey absolutely pans AT&T. I'm not surprised, and I doubt you are, either, if you own an iPhone. Even still: they got a "Worse" grade in every category except one, worst out of the four major carriers and US Cellular. (Why *CR* isn't using the same scale they always use, with the red doughnut as "Excellent" and the black circle as "Poor," is a mystery to me.)

### [\*50 Percent of Smartphones Sold in China Last Quarter Are Android Phones\*](#)

Via Horace Dediu, John Paczkowski reports that 50 percent of phones sold in China last quarter run Android. It looks like the iPhone is running pretty hard in China as well; both were only just introduced to the market this year. This growth is literally coming out of nowhere. Previously, most smartphones in China were either Symbian or Windows Mobile. That's bad news for Nokia—and probably Microsoft, although I don't know what their plans are for a Chinese-language Windows Phone 7. (I bet it took a lot of work to equip Windows Mobile for hanzi.)

### [\*Life With Google Voice on the iPhone\*](#)

Nate Peretic of Full Stop Interactive has a nice write-up on what life with Google Voice is like on the iPhone, both in the past and the present. He's putting his money where his mouth is by canceling his AT&T text plan and telling his contacts to call that number rather than his iPhone's primary service number. He points out a few flaws, and a few upsides, to boot. It's worth reading if you've considered the switch.

### [\*How Mobile OS Use Shakes Out Globally\*](#)

A really interesting graphical and analytical look at how different the six continents and some various countries are in their mobile-OS usage. For instance, Symbian is still dominant in the developing world, but the developed world is almost totally beholden to the combination of iOS, BlackBerry, and Android.

### [\*Jamie Thomson's Windows Phone 7 Review\*](#)

Is Windows Phone 7 all that it's cracked up to be? I've been following these reviews anxiously, and this one's about as good an encapsulation as I've read. Short version: great for e-mail, not so great for media consumption, blisteringly difficult-to-comprehend UI decisions.

### [\*The Guardian's Charles Arthur Reviews Windows Phone 7\*](#)

Charles Arthur gets his hand on a Windows Phone 7 phone from O2, the UK network. He takes a bit broader view than a lot of reviewers, but even he hits some roadblocks.

Conclusion: promising but needs polish. My favorite line is, “On the yardstick where the iPhone’s devilish detail makes it Satan, the HTC HD7/WP7 combo is a priest who has taken to drink, wine, women, song and has started exploring the filthier parts of the Internet.” Arthur also points out what I think is the strongest indictment of Windows Phone 7 yet: the home screen is surprisingly unlike anything else, but it’s also very low on information density, showing only eight tiles at a time, and with only a very few applications supporting status indicators. The main list of applications is virtually unusable, like a Start Menu gone horrendously awry. Doesn’t sound fun to me.

### ***[In Motorola Suit, Apple Amends Complaint, Raises Infringement Charges to 24](#)***

In the already amusingly complex Apple-Motorola dispute, which spans at least three states, five lawsuits, and (previously) 30 total patents, Apple is trying to make things more dramatic. Motorola originally sued Apple, in Illinois and Florida, a detail a lot of people seem to be forgetting, and alleges that Apple is infringing on 18 patents of theirs. They’ve since withdrawn the lawsuit in Illinois, where they’re headquartered, and moved the suit as a counter-claim to Apple’s lawsuit in Wisconsin. (Anyone know *why* all the action is in Wisconsin? I’m dying to know.) So Apple, which originally filed a legal counter-maneuver in Wisconsin alleging Motorola’s infringement on 12 patents, has now thrown in 12 patents they are claiming against HTC in a pending case. For a total of 24. For good measure, Motorola had *already* asked that the claims against HTC be thrown out. In Delaware. I’m thinking someone is going to settle before this ever gets un-confusing-ed by a judge.

### ***[The Guys at Whereoscope Compare Android vs. iOS From the Developer’s Eye](#)***

Mick and James, the guys at Whereoscope, makers of kid-tracking software (for one’s *own* children, you gutter-minds), got into developing because of the iPhone. Now they wanted to get into actually making an Android application. On the dislike list: having to explain how navigation on an Android device works to new users. On the like list: great documentation; ease of deploying software for testing. It’s a good read, especially for someone like me who is emphatically not a developer.

### ***[DF on the Difference Between the Android and iOS App Universes](#)***

John Gruber takes a really interesting exploration (partially rowing back a previous article) all about the difference between the Android and iOS application universes. What’s for sale in the Android world is fascinating, because so much of it sounds foreign. He quotes Mark Pilgrim saying, “OTHER THAN widgets, navigation, voice search, inter-application communication, and tethering, what have the Romans ever done for us?” Yet those are things that iPhone users expect *Apple* to do. Here Gruber makes a really interesting argument: the best apps for iOS could exist on Android but don’t, because developers either aren’t interested or can’t make money on them. But the best-rated Android applications are apps you can’t do for iOS, like home screen plug-ins and alternate software keyboards. In that regard, Android is a lot like Windows Mobile was. The best WinMo software was always home screen managers and e-mail enhancements and the like. I can’t remember a non-e-mail “killer app” for Windows Mobile.

## **Business Insider Predicts Apple Will Sell 10 Million Verizon iPhones in 2011**

*Business Insider* is predicting, based on some AT&T statistics, that Verizon will sell 10 million iPhones in 2011, once they get that deal done. As someone who just bought an iPhone 4, I'm a little irritated that I'll have to wait. But hopefully by 2012 Apple will have Verizon LTE support. I predict Verizon will sell a *lot* of iPhones to disgruntled AT&T users, in addition to all the new iPhone buyers who might have otherwise bought an Android or Windows Mobile device. (Is Verizon still selling the Palm Pre?)

## **iPhone and Android Users Use More Data Than Other Smartphone OS Users**

Here's a shocker: a UK consulting firm found that iPhone and Android users consume more data than BlackBerry or Symbian users. (Imagine that! You mean having a Web browser that doesn't suck might play a role?) More interesting still is that they found that iPad users only use about as much data as iPhone users, and that iPhone users use more voice minutes than Android users. As far as voice goes, I'm thinking there's an age and gender gap. My mom, whom loyal readers will recognize as my lowest barrier for technology, is a fairly savvy iPhone user. If I presented her with an Android phone, I think she'd have a heart attack—task management? Home screen add-on modules? But it seems almost axiomatic in cell phones today that the younger and/or more male your demographic skews, the less phone call-oriented they are.

## **Why One Big-Time BlackBerry Fan Bought a Droid**

*Engadget* editor Joanna Stern penned an editorial about how, when she lost her BlackBerry Curve a little while ago, she bought a Droid rather than a new BB. As Stern points out, RIM's OS for phones is stagnant, and the strategy they're pursuing is a long-run one at a time and in an industry when Keynes' famous dictum never seemed more prescient. In a year, much less in the long run, RIM would be dead if Wall Street IT departments were to turn elsewhere. And here's a question she doesn't ask but I will: what's the upside for RIM of pursuing a tablet? It's a market that's totally incongruous with their current corporate-e-mail power-user base. Anyway, food for thought, especially if you're a BlackBerry user.

## **AT&T Plans to Buy up Wireless Spectrum Blocks for LTE 4G Service**

*Ars Technica* is reporting that AT&T will be buying \$2 billion of wireless spectrum licenses from Qualcomm to upgrade its wireless network. Qualcomm is shutting down its Flo TV service—that didn't last long—and AT&T says the wireless spectrum space, 12 MHz of which is in the low-700MHz neighborhood in the Northeast and California and another 6 MHz chunk around the country, should make a sizable difference for customers in those areas dealing with craptacular AT&T service. AT&T is planning to use it for its own LTE service. Alas, if you own an iPhone, you will need a new one for this.

## **AT&T Embraces Carrier Billing for Android Customers**

And the thumbscrews tighten down on Android users with AT&T service. Right now, the Android Marketplace allows you to buy apps via credit card, but AT&T customers will be able to also bill it to their accounts. I wonder how long it'll be before the carriers insist on exclusive control of application sales.

### **How Do You Improve a Device? Ignore Early Adopters**

Horace Dediu points out that, for a lot of platforms, following the advice of early adopters is a bad idea. RIM's most loyal users didn't care about rich Web browsing; Palm users didn't care about having a phone built into a PDA. And a lot of Apple users were skeptical about the iPhone. (Guilty as charged. I had a Palm and I had an iPod, and I never thought either of those would work with a phone built into them.) It's a really interesting point: don't follow your most loyal users, because that's not where the growth is.

### **Yea and Nay on Google Nexus S: Wired (Yea)**

*Wired's* Matthew Honan takes one of two views of the Google Nexus S, which is made by Samsung (notably *not* HTC). Unlike the nay review that follows, Honan is genuinely impressed by the hardware. He also points out what I think is the hardest mark against virtually all Android devices: because it's a Google-branded handset, the Android install is pure. It's like installing Windows from the disk, I think, rather than getting whatever crap Dell decides you're going to have to waste your time uninstalling. He is also very impressed by the Google Voice experience...which I have to say, *does* sound awesome.

### **Yea and Nay on Google Nexus S: Sixarm's Joel Parker Henderson (Nay)**

Joel Parker Henderson of SixArm, in the second of our opposing Nexus S reviews, absolutely hated the Nexus S. For instance, he thinks the Samsung body feels cheap (I owned a Samsung phone and would believe *that*) in comparison to other Android devices, like Motorola's Droid. Also, Google or Samsung rearranged the hardware buttons (!) and possibly least fun of all, it doesn't have its own GPU, so the graphics are "jittery and staccato." That's usually bad. Anyway, I was really surprised at how negative he was after reading *Wired's* review.

## **On Tablets, "Fixing" the iPad, and the Samsung Galaxy Tab's 7-Inch Form Factor**

### **Paul Thurrott's Prescriptions for "Fixing" (Read "Improving") the iPad**

Paul Thurrott is not, apparently, a fan of the iPad. Raise your hand if this surprises you. Nevertheless, he's offering some help to Apple as to how they can "improve" the device, most notably a smaller form factor and lower prices. I suppose the one could follow the other, but I just bought (slash was given) an iPad, and I think the incredible realism of holding the Web in your hands has merit. Can't do that on a device just two-thirds the size. Anyway, worth reading.

### **The Next Web Pans the Samsung Galaxy Tab**

Boris at *The Next Web* basically pans the Galaxy Tab in comparison to the iPad. He recites a litany: the OS just doesn't adapt to the larger form factor, the hardware is needlessly confusing, it's not *enough* smaller for the difference in form factor to make a big difference, and over all lacks the spit and polish Apple tends to put into things. I handled one for the first time the other day and I was inclined to agree with this assessment.

### **Samsung's Galaxy Tab Is iPad's First Real Rival—WSJ.com**

In the *WSJ*, Uncle Walt points out (last month, I know) that the principal advantage to the Samsung Galaxy Tab over the iPad is that it can be held in one hand. (That 7-inch diagonal

screen results in a tablet that is roughly half the size of the iPad, a deceptive figure.) On the other hand, if the Android UI elements don't properly scale up from smartphone-sized, I'd just as soon use a smartphone.

### **Gizmodo Calls the Samsung Galaxy Tab a “Pocketable Train Wreck”**

Matt Buchanan, writing for *Gizmodo*, called the Galaxy Tab a “pocketable train wreck.” He points out:

[T]he Galaxy Tab is small enough that apps simply blown up a little bit still fundamentally work. Which means, conversely, that there's almost no added benefit to using the Tab over a phone. It's not big enough. Web browsing doesn't have greater fidelity.

That hits the nail on the head in a way I haven't read previously. The size and resolution increases aren't significant enough (same total resolution as the iPhone 4, about double the physical size) to really add anything to the experience.

### **Horace Dediu on the Prospect of Murdoch's Tablet-Only Newspaper**

Rupert Murdoch is reputed to be developing a tablet-only, initially iPad-only, newspaper. Note that this is *not* going to be a niche publication like *Politico* or an RSS-gathering operation; it's intended to be a real newsroom. Dediu points out that, as advertising revenue continues to shift online, the massive cost of operating a newspaper printing plant will grow to ever-larger proportions of newspapers' budgets. Maybe a clean break—unlike newspapers' checkered Web site pasts—is what's needed. Dediu asks if Murdoch could turn out to be the newspaper world's Orson Welles.

### **Can a Tablet-Only Newspaper Work? Frédéric Filloux Takes a Hard Look**

It's easy for the commentariat to say, “Advertising dollars will follow eyeballs from print to online.” But that hasn't turned out in practice—for starters, the single biggest reason most people buy or subscribe to the Sunday newspaper is the circulars and coupons—so Rupert Murdoch is going to try to push it along. Frédéric Filloux asks, what is it going to take? Dediu quoted Murdoch as saying he would charge \$1/week, but Filloux goes with \$99/year as a base, figures a 100-person newsroom, and totals it all up to a break-even point of just 150,000 subscribers. That's about the circulation of the *Columbus Dispatch*, the 50th-largest newspaper in America. For reference, *USA Today*, the second-largest newspaper and only truly “national” newspaper, circulates 1.8 million in print and, if my estimates are correct, has about 450 journalists. So Murdoch, controversial but a maestro of the numbers, may have unlocked the key to making the economics work.

### **Acer CEO Predicts His Company Will Be the Market Leader in Tablets in 2–3 Years**

Gianfranco Lanci, the CEO of Acer, is going out on a limb and predicting that his company will be leading the market in tablets in 2–3 years. His strategy—a smart one for a competitor coming from behind—is to offer three tablets in two sizes running two OSes. Soon the world will have a 10.1-inch Acer tablet with Windows, a 10.1-inch with Android, and a 7-inch with Android. Whew! Let's check back in 2–3 years and see if he was right.

## Where the Chrome Meets the Road

### ***Marco Arment: Chrome OS' Biggest Hurdle Is IT Departments' Conservatism***

Marco Arment makes a really interesting point about the Chrome OS and Google. The companies that are best-equipped to take advantage of Chrome OS are organizations with profoundly conservative IT departments, really, really big companies like national banks and state government offices. And their principal criteria are long-term support and broad compatibility. Which is why, Arment points out, so many banks are still using Windows 2000, which was still officially supported until July. I agree with Arment, and I'd add that you're more likely to see banks worldwide—under new financial pressure, you may have heard—adopting a Linux like Ubuntu or Red Hat and buying third-party support contracts than you are to see them picking up anything from Google, even at a price point of free. At least Ubuntu guarantees desktop LTS (upgrades, etc.) for three years. What's Google's offer?

### ***Google's ChromeOS Means Losing Control of Data, Warns GNU Founder Richard Stallman***

Richard M. Stallman, the man who founded the Free Software Foundation and created the GNU project of Unix software, etc., etc., is highly critical of “cloud computing.” He says, probably justifiably, that losing control of your data is a convenience cost that isn't worth it—it's no longer on your own computer, now it's on a server that you don't control. And marketers love it because it's a term, not because it's so revolutionary. But, like any good RMS observation, it quickly descends into a rant about government and corporate control of your data. Yes, it's true, if you hold the data on your hard drive, you're in a better position to resist a data search without a warrant. But most of us don't have a data pipeline broad enough and consistent enough to access that data outside our houses, and I think mobile computing shouldn't be restricted to people with fiber at their homes. Does that outweigh some lost privacy cost?

### ***Andy Ihnatko Gives the Google Cr-48 a Test Drive***

The *Chicago Sun-Times*' crack tech columnist takes Google's Chrome OS laptop prototype, the Cr-48, for a test drive. I found his observations really interesting: Ihnatko says the experience is really seamless, where Chrome is the entire interface, and the idea of not having to worry about file synchronization across computers—because everything is stored in a Web application—is an appealing one. Richard M. Stallman notwithstanding. But Ihnatko points out that there are also downsides to a completely browser-based interface. For instance, there's no apparent file browser of any kind, even if you insert an SD card into the built-in reader. Also, the Cr-48 is virtually useless if you don't have Internet access, impressive even by the standards of the average netbook.

### ***Ars Technica Takes a Little More Technical Look at The Cr-48***

Ryan Paul at *Ars Technica* takes a little geekier look at Google's Cr-48 prototype. He points out—how interesting!—that the only way to get a command line is via a Web browser tab, and that without toggling a special “jailbreak” switch underneath the battery, about all you can do via the CLI is SSH. He also discovers that almost the entire filesystem is read-only,



other than `/home`. I've read about a lot of strange things done with Unix—actually iOS' file structure under the hood is one of the more fascinating—but using it in this way is surely unprecedented for a non-dumb terminal workstation. I thought the Fn-key selection was really fascinating and a little Android-influenced, too, by adding a Search button and a Switch Window button. I'm also intrigued by the hardware issues he describes, because that's something that beguiles Unix users everywhere. Curious to see if Google takes the kind of extreme hardware-attention orientation that Apple does.

### **[Another Cr-48 Test Drive: Macworld](#)**

Joel Mathis from *Macworld* takes the Google Cr-48 Chrome OS prototype notebook out for a spin. As he points out, there are some really interesting things, but at least right now, many users don't do quite enough computing in the now-infamous *cloud* to really sever ties with the hard drive-based community. (There's no offline editing mode yet.) He also wonders about the point of the Chrome Web Store, which mostly offers bookmarks to Web sites. Somehow that sounds surprisingly familiar, and unfulfilling, like Google missed the memo about the original iPhone OS release. Anyway, it's a really interesting and user-oriented review.

### **[What It Means to Be a "Cloud-Based OS"](#)**

Paul Buchheit—Google's 23rd employee, also an ex-Facebook employee—takes the opportunity to make some really interesting observations about what it means to be a "cloud-based OS." The broadest possible take-away (all I really have space for, given the length of his essay) is that it's not clear what the market for the Chrome OS is; more specifically, what's the point of an OS that can't run native software? Android and iOS support native applications and also have cloud-based applications (which is to say that they store all your data remotely). In a world where computing power is astonishingly cheap, i.e., in which my microwave has a CPU that is a descendant of the Motorola 68030, it's unclear why users benefit from switching to a purely Web-based OS model. Faster JavaScript execution?

## **Odds and Ends**

### **[Macworld: What Not to Do When Designing Your iOS App](#)**

Mike Keller at *Macworld* gives us a Hall of Shame of what not to do when making your own iOS application, starting with the Netflix application. It *is* pretty bad, I have to say.

### **[Ars: Apple May Switch From NVIDIA to Intel's Integrated GPUs on 13-inch MacBooks](#)**

The guys at *Ars* look at what it would mean for Apple to switch from an NVIDIA graphics card with its own GPU to an onboard GPU from Intel. Apparently Intel should be able to satisfy most of Apple's needs, including the very conservative power supply of the 13" MacBook.

### **[Alexandra Samuel Ponders What Delicious' Fate Means For Web 2.0](#)**

I know this is a little far afield, but coming on the heels of this month's *Wired's* cover story about machine intelligence, Alexandra Samuel writes in the *Harvard Business Review*

about what Yahoo either canceling or selling Delicious means for Web 2.0. She points out that the value in Delicious isn't in subscription charges, for instance, or advertising. It's a way to obtain more information about the Web, its sub-networks, and its component pages. Yahoo could theoretically have used Delicious to one-up Google by outsourcing intelligence gathering; one thing they *did* do was get us to connect with each other through them. Yahoo is basically offering to flush all that value down the drain.

*Copyright © 2011 Wes Meltzer, [wmeltzer@atpm.com](mailto:wmeltzer@atpm.com). You can follow Bloggable in real time on [Pinboard](#).*



## A Tale of Two XPs

I didn't think of it at the time, but I'm the one who ends up suffering and it's all the fault of the excellent [LogMeIn](#).

Wednesday night, leaving work and as an afterthought I left my computer on and put all calls through to my cellphone. That evening, more snow fell in our area than in all the years since 1963 put together. Here on the coast, even the influence of the ocean a couple of hundred metres away wasn't enough to melt the snow. Which, when I ventured out to clear the wild bird feeders, was up to my knees. Also up trouser legs and down inside shoes.

Thursday and Friday, I was able to operate a complete service: telephone calls were answered, e-mails replied to, and bids put in for potential profit earning placements. Then, late afternoon, the calls started to arrive from work colleagues: "Are you going to work tomorrow?"

"Well actually, I have been at work all day."

Idiot! While they lounged around, had extra time in bed, watched old movies and made snowmen, I was holding the office together. We all get paid, even those who did bugger-all. To make matters worse, they aren't going in today, so I am still the only one at work.

To repeat it again, it's all the fault of LogMeIn. Even the free version sets up a secure, encrypted VPN, and running Windows XP from my Mac Pro is a sight to behold. The visual appearance of Lotus Notes is far superior on a 23-inch Apple Studio Display than the clunky Dell 17-inch screen it's normally displayed on. Colours are glorious rather than muddy, and because Windows XP is running on a true Windows machine, my work Dell Optiplex, there are no driver problems to contend with.

### XP Expedited

This is completely the reverse of my partner's new Mac OS X netbook. Also a Dell, a tiny Inspiron 910 with an Intel 1.6 GHz Atom Diamondville. This little subnotebook has a sticker saying it is designed to run Windows XP, when in reality it has Mac OS X 10.6.5. Dell designed it as a competitor for the Eee; with Mac OS X (installed courtesy of [these instructions](#)) it becomes far more.

My initial thoughts mirrored Steve Jobs' in that the 9-inch screen is too small, the trackpad doesn't like large fingers, and the processor is too limited. But after the little chap has been here for a day or two, we have started to quite like the form factor.

Last night, we were able to watch live TV, screen-shared from a Mac Pro running Elgato's EyeTV, transmitted across a 802.11g wireless network. Even though the Inspiron uses Intel's integrated video, it ran the stream without any hang-ups. We found the same when playing compressed videos.

Maybe Apple has missed a trick and should make a netbook. No matter, the Inspiron is a nice little computer and feels solidly-built apart from the awful trackpad. It is certainly much cheaper than any netbook Apple would release and, with the lid closed, almost pocket-sized. As a step-up from an iPhone, or more accurately a step across, Dell's hackintosh has become a point of arguments over who uses it first.

I just can't decide whether I need one, just like I need an iPad and I need an Aston Martin DB9. . .

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# How To

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

## Making the Most of What's Already on Your Mac

Before buying new software for your Mac, why not first check out the marvelous things that are already there? In the first part of a series aimed mainly at new Mac users, let's take a look at some of the useful things you can do with just the software that's already on your Mac.

By the time you read this, the new year will have already started, and I'll probably have already broken a resolution or two. Like many of us, you've probably spread a little more holiday cheer than your budget would like. As a result, you don't have a lot of spare cash around to buy software for that shiny new Mac. Don't worry about that. You might not find as much pre-installed software on your Mac as you would on some Windows machines, but the software that's there is actually useful. You won't find any useless bloatware here.

### Where Did I Put That File?

We've all had it happen at one time or another. You wrote something brilliant last week but can't remember where it's saved on your hard drive. Spotlight is just the thing for you. You may not have noticed the small magnifying glass icon in the upper-right corner of your Mac's screen. That's the starting point for Apple's Spotlight program, and it's been there all along waiting for a chance to shine.

Spotlight allows users to search for and locate applications, documents of various types, and System Preferences panes. With the exception of some system files, if a file is on your Mac and you don't know where, this is probably the easiest way to find it. Spotlight made its [first appearance](#) with Mac OS X 10.4, but it reminds me of another Apple search tool called [Sherlock](#), which was introduced in Mac OS 8.5.

At its heart, using Spotlight is as simple as clicking the magnifying glass and entering a search query into the text box that appears. The results of the search query are updated in real time as you type. I don't use Spotlight as much as some of my friends do, but I still find this aspect of Spotlight amazing. When you see your file in the list, select it and the file opens. This is a quick way to open a file or launch an application.

You may have noticed by now that your Mac has a Dictionary application. Perhaps you have even opened it to look up a word. That method works well, but why not avoid the step of manually opening the Dictionary? Enter the word you want to define in Spotlight and select it from the list of results. In no time at all, the Dictionary opens to your selected word.

How about surprising your friends by performing [Boolean searches](#) or [basic calculations](#)? Double-check the calculations, though; there may be a bug or two in this feature.

## Let's Get Organized

Spotlight is great for finding misplaced files, but what if you have folders for several ongoing projects and need the same file in multiple folders? Putting copies of the file in each folder would mean that you have to update the copies each time the original file changes. Instead of assigning project files to different folders, why not assign each project its own smart folder and have your Mac gather the relevant files for you?

I have written about smart folders before as one of the gems included in Mac OS X. I view smart folders as an extension of the Spotlight search functions. In essence, saved search criteria that are displayed as folders. When you open a smart folder, the view shows you all files that match that folder's search criteria. Making the best possible use of this feature may require taking a few extra moments to tag files with appropriate search keywords. Find out more about smart folders in one of my previous articles about [smart features commonly found on Macs](#).

## Let Me Have a Quick Look at That

I don't use every built-in feature of Mac OS X every day, but there are some that I use so often I don't think of them as separate features until someone points out that they haven't always been there. For me, Quick Look is in that category of indispensable features. I use it almost daily and have since its [introduction as part of Leopard in 2007](#). Why is Quick Look so useful to me?

I have a number of files on my Mac with filenames that give me no clue whatsoever to their content. Some were named "Untitled" by default, and I didn't rename them when they were created. Those are probably from my video capture card, and I have at least three of these at the moment. Other files were given names that made sense at the time but aren't very helpful two or three years later. In either case, Quick Look comes to the rescue.

Quick Look does exactly what its name implies: it presents you with a quick preview of a file's content without having to open a larger application. Using this feature couldn't be simpler: from the Finder, click once on a file to select it, then tap the Spacebar once. Quick Look will attempt to display a preview of the file's content. It recognizes a wide variety of graphics formats, PDFs, text files, and Microsoft Office documents, among other things. When it comes to media files such as movies or audio, if QuickTime can play it, Quick Look can preview it for you complete with sound.

The last feature of Quick Look is a real treat. Suppose you've just received a file from a colleague and don't have the right application to open it? Give Quick Look a try; it might be able to come to the rescue. If you are consistently finding a file type that Quick Look can't open, search the Internet. There are plug-ins available that allow it to recognize even more filetypes.

## Does Your Dashboard Need a Widget or Two?

Until recently, I've gotten away from widgets a bit, but I think I am going to go back to using them more often. "What are widgets?" you say and, more importantly, "Why would you want them?" Widgets are essentially mini applications that add additional functionality to Mac OS X. No matter whether you want to check the weather or time, monitor your Mac's stats, track packages, or follow the sport of curling, [there are widgets for that](#), and more besides.

If you want a good idea of the size and versatility of these programs, take a look at the [top fifty Dashboard widgets](#). Not only will you find a wide variety of programs, but you'll also find that many of them are tiny in comparison to full-blown applications. On the day that I searched, the smallest widget called Boredom took up 36K of space, while at the high end, Age of Curling took up 10.7 MB. The savings in size seems to be due in part to the fact that these mini applications do one or two things rather than trying to do everything.

Mac OS X ships with some widgets pre-installed and waiting to be used. Accessing pre-installed widgets, adding new widgets, or deleting ones you no longer need is all done through Dashboard. You can open Dashboard by launching it from your Applications folder, but I find it easier to launch from the Dock: look for an icon that resembles a tachometer.

Clicking the Dashboard's icon causes your screen to darken slightly and several applications to open on top of anything already on the desktop. In a typical installation, you will see a clock, calendar, weather widget, and basic calculator. The clock is generally set to the same city you used to designate your time zone when you set up the Mac, so it's probably set correctly.

The weather widget, on the other hand, seems to default to Cupertino, California. While it might be nice to know the weather in Cupertino, it's probably more beneficial to know the weather in your location. Changing the location is as simple as clicking the tiny "i" in the lower right corner of the Weather widget. When it flips, you can enter a new location as well as decide whether you want temperatures displayed in Fahrenheit or Celsius. I use this widget on my desktop all the time, and the temperature and conditions it reports match what is reported in other sources.

If the handful of widgets I've discussed so far were all there was to Dashboard, I wouldn't be getting very excited. Depending upon which version of the OS you are running and on whether other widgets are installed, there may be others not showing on your screen. Click the tachometer to see if more widgets are present. When the screen darkens and the widgets appear, click the "+" in the lower left corner of the screen. If more widgets are installed, they will appear at the bottom of the screen. Use the small arrows on screen, if necessary, to scroll through the list. Activating one of these widgets is as simple as double-clicking it. When Dashboard is in this mode, deactivating most widgets is as simple as clicking the small "x" that appears on each widget.

If you've gone through the list of widgets already on your system and still can't find what you need, don't despair. A wealth of new widgets is just a download away. The best place

to start looking is probably [Apple's widget site](#). If the perfect widget still eludes you and you decide to try your favorite search engine, specify "OS X widgets"; otherwise you may end up with a long list of [Konfabulator/Yahoo widgets](#). In keeping with the spirit of this article, many Dashboard widgets are free. Of those widgets currently listed in the top fifty on Apple's site two were shareware, two were demos, and the remaining forty-six were freeware.

## Final Thoughts

This is the first in what I hope will be an ongoing series of articles that describe useful features built into Mac OS X and the software that ships with new Macs. This month has barely scratched the surface of the built-in features. I haven't even touched on Spaces, Exposé, and a host of others.

I would also like to include future how-to articles covering projects that can be completed using the software that ships with a Mac—and perhaps the occasional bit of freeware. I don't have anything against software developers; I'm simply trying to illustrate what can be done with the pre-installed software. In order to do this well, I'll need input from our readers. If you have a project idea that can be completed using pre-installed software or a minimal amount of freeware, let us know. I need all the ideas I can get. Be sure to leave your name that so we can give appropriate credit. Just to get you thinking a bit, here's an overview of my friend Tricia's [Grandma Videos](#). Just a little food for thought till next month.

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# Desktop Pictures

by Jay Feuillet, <http://JayFeuillet.com>

## Flowers of Life

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

### This Month's Desktop Pictures

This month's desktop pictures were submitted by ATPM reader Jay Feuillet. He used a Nikon E2500 to take photos of native flowers in a park in South 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](mailto: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** Create a workflow in Automator with these three actions:

1. Get Current Webpage from Safari.
2. Get Image URLs from Webpage. Get URLs of images linked from these webpages.
3. Download URLs.

**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**

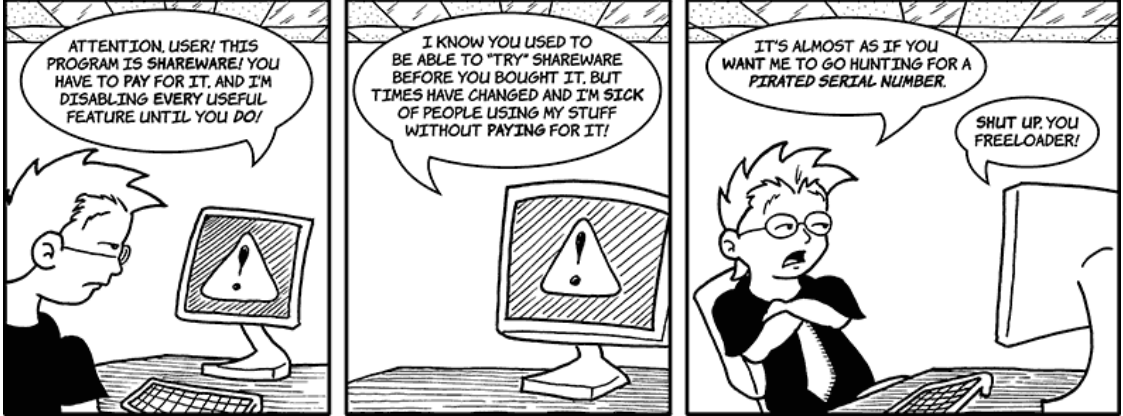
Switch to the Finder. Choose “Preferences...” from the “Finder” menu. Click on the “Select Picture...” button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your ~/Library/Desktop Pictures folder. Close the “Finder Preferences” window when you are done.



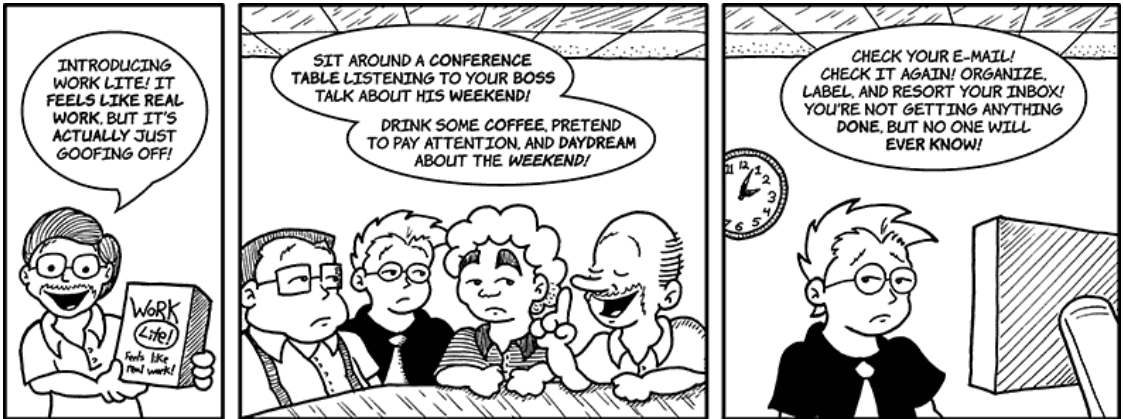
# Out at Five

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

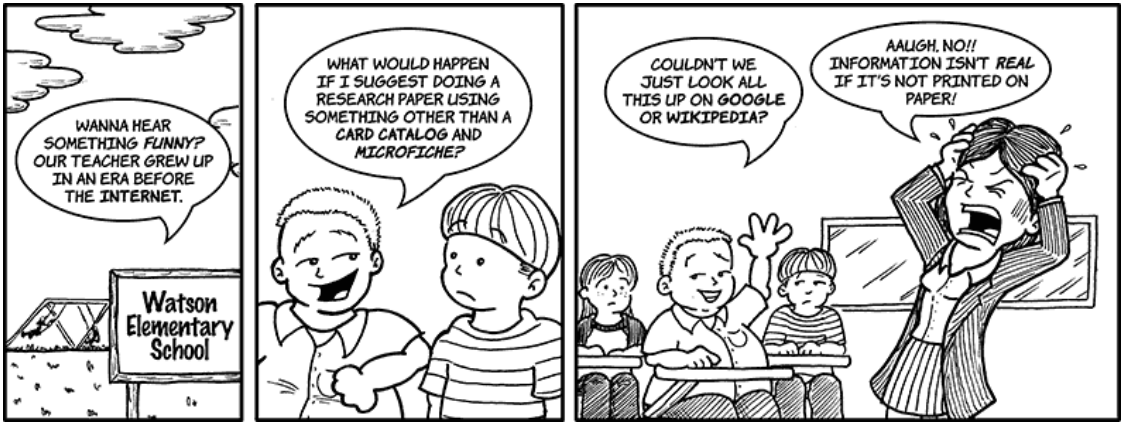
## Nagware



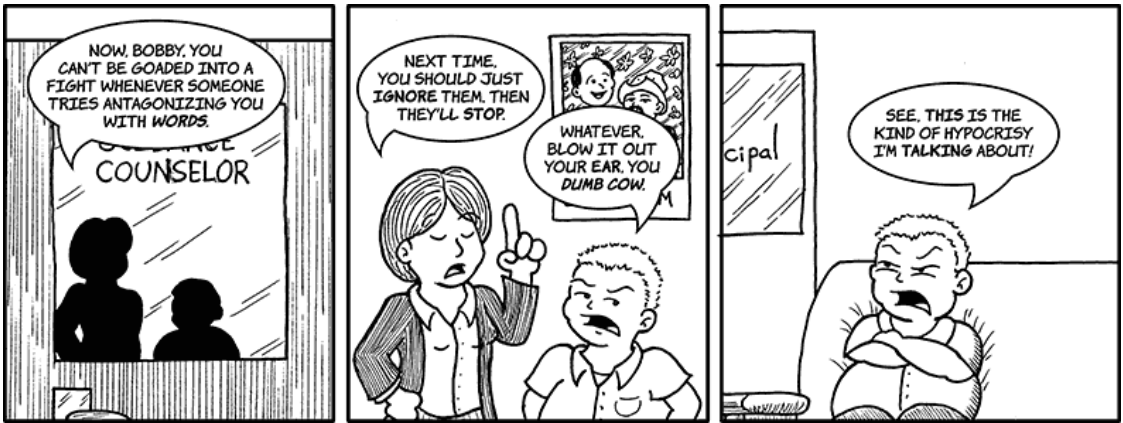
## Work Lite



# Before the Internet



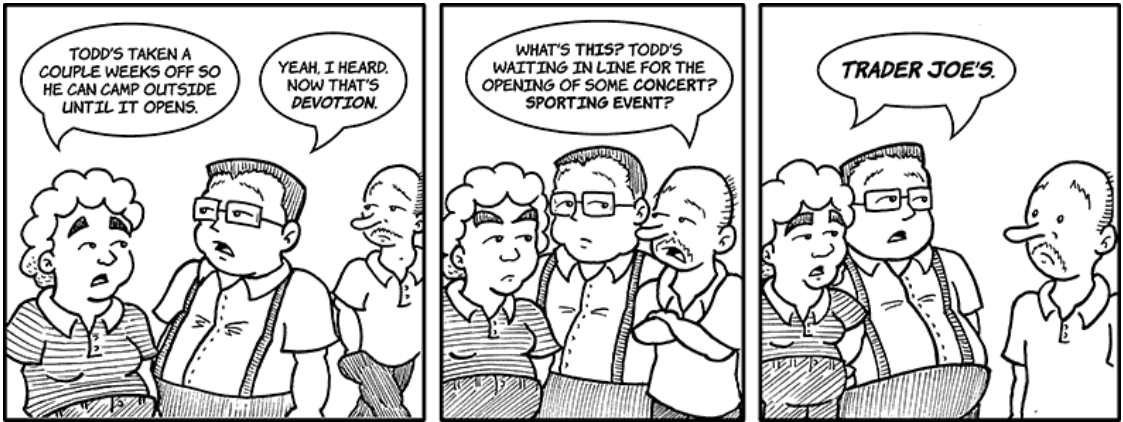
# Only Words



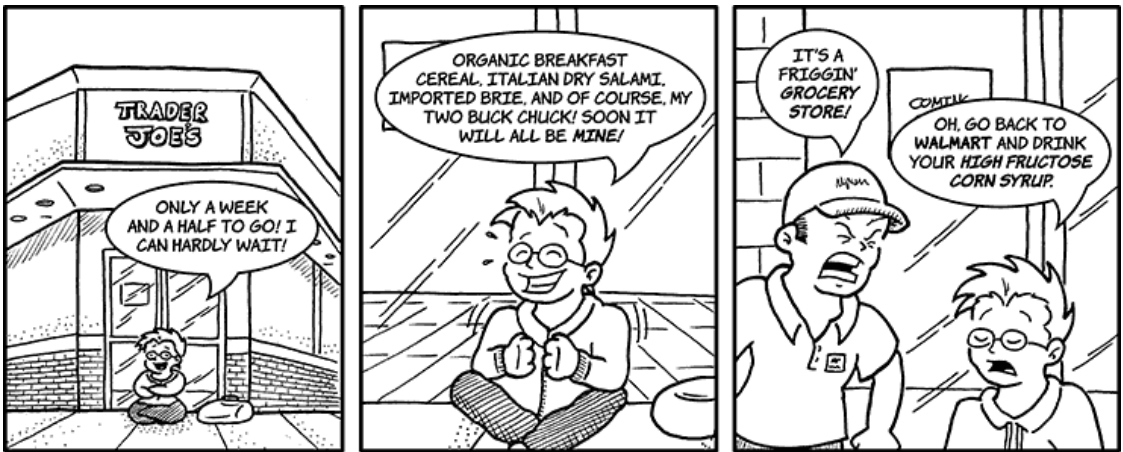
# Gesundheit



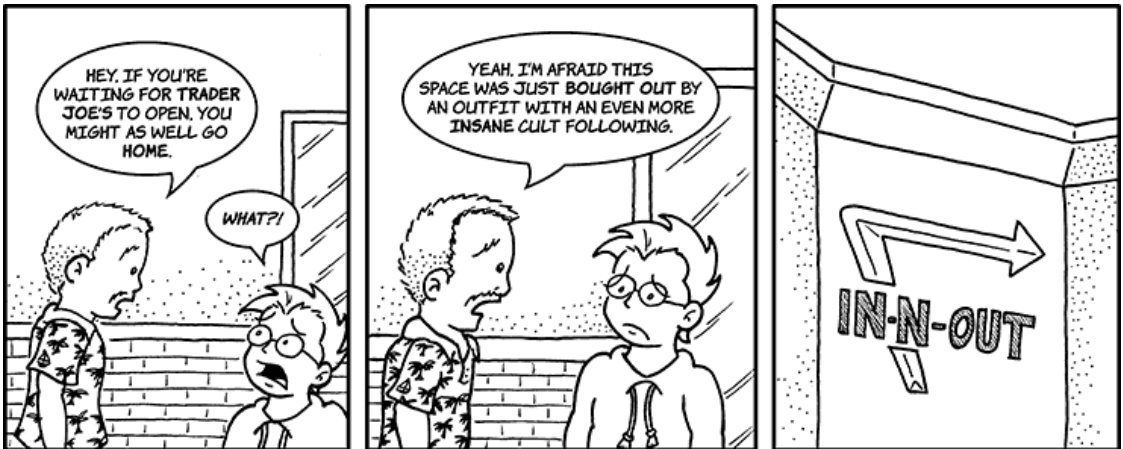
## Eager Anticipation



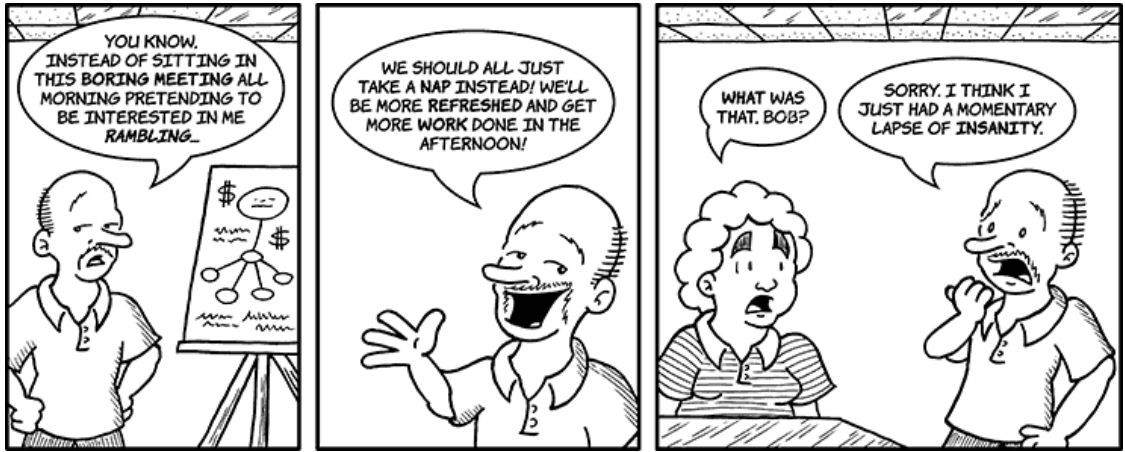
## Trader Joe's



## Disappointment



# Say What?



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# Software Review

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

## Posterino 2.0.4

**Function:** Makes collages from your photo collection.

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

**Price:** \$25; \$15 (upgrade)

**Requirements:** Mac OS 10.6.

**Trial:** Feature-limited (watermark when exporting)



Posterino lets you turn your photo collection into posters and collages. I [reviewed version 1.5.1](#) of Posterino in the June 2009 issue of ATPM. It was recently upgraded to version 2. What are the new features in Posterino 2? Is it worth the upgrade?

### Installation

Posterino installation is the typical download-mount-drag-and-drop no-brainer process. However, if you have an older version, I suggest renaming it to avoid overwriting it with the new version. Unregistered, Posterino watermarks the two words “Posterino Demo” on your creations when you export them.

### Usage

Posterino lets you create a variety of posters, from simple ones the size of a school notebook showing a photo of each season, to wall-sized ones featuring every piece of outdated hardware you ever owned. You are presented a few templates to choose from, then Posterino loads photos from iPhoto, the Finder’s Pictures folder, etc. for you to fill the template. You can add text and rotate/position/resize the photos. You can export the result to disk or iPhoto, or share with the Internet via Flickr or e-mail. For me, the ability to make themed “posters” showing a large quantity of photos is Posterino’s strong point. Imagine showing your collection of Apple hardware, all the faces of people who attended your high school’s Silver Reunion, or places you visited in the past decade, all on a big poster. Quantity can produce quality.

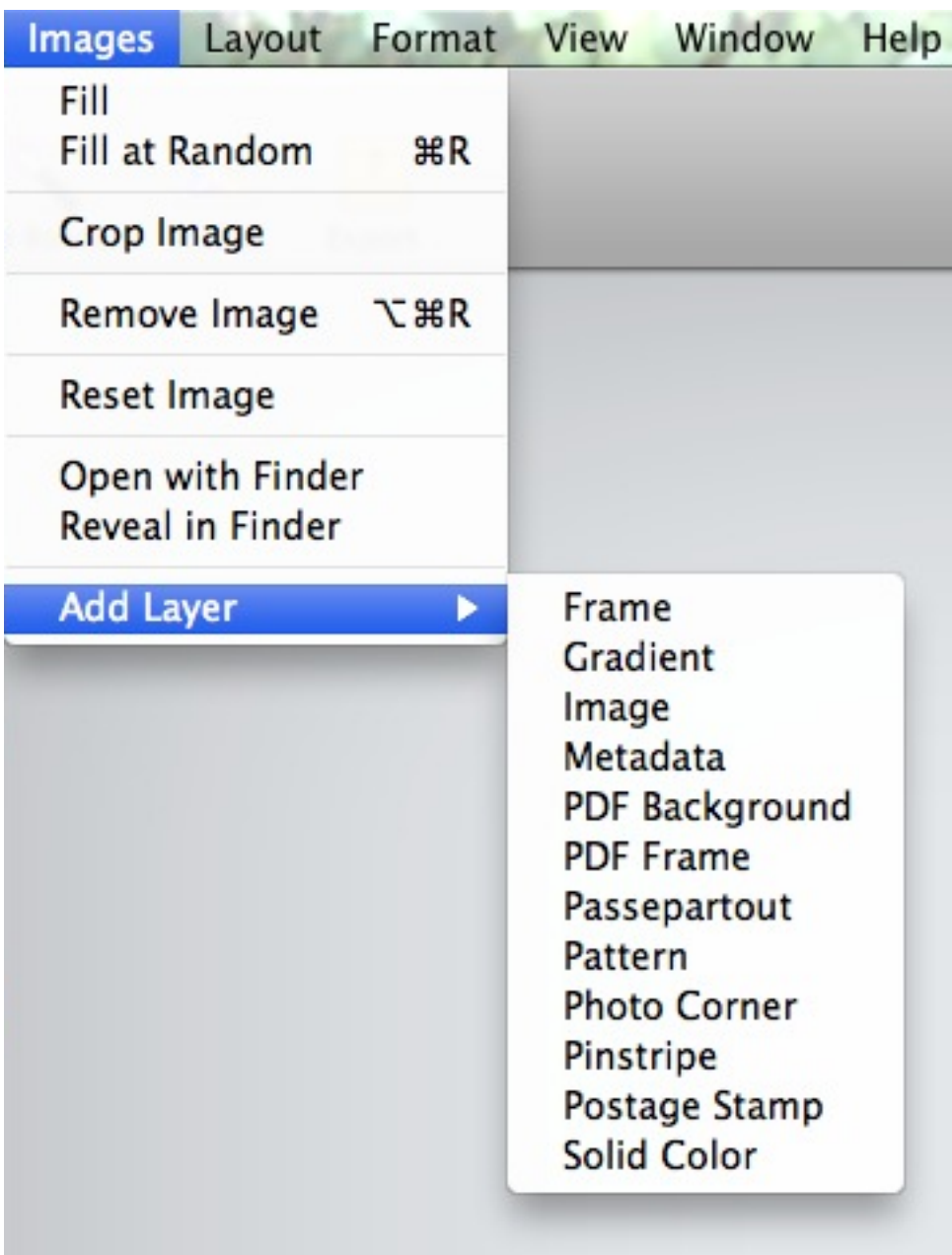
### Upgrade

Posterino 2 brings along a few new templates, too few for my expectation of a version jump. The Life Poster template is renamed to simply Posterinos and the Postcards are now called E-Cards. Some of the new templates make use of angling the photos, and that fooled me into thinking angle adjustment was a new feature in Posterino 2. What is indeed new is the ability to apply filters and frames to the photos. Filters and frames are usually referred to as layers.

As the Pop and Western templates show, you can change the color values of all the photos to make them look overexposed or time-worn. With other layers, you can change the contrast or sharpness of the photos, or turn them black and white. The collection of layers known as frames embellishes the borders or frames the photos in use. You have photo corners, passe-partout (sort of 3D-ish), shadow (with the shadow barely noticeable if left with default settings), and thin. My favorite layer is the Metadata, in which you can overlay date, time, name, or comment (from iPhoto), with choices of location and text color. I love to keep my photos descriptive, and the Metadata layer provides a quick way to include my descriptive words in the poster. With photos imported from the Finder, I couldn't get Spotlight comments to show, but the other metadata displayed properly.

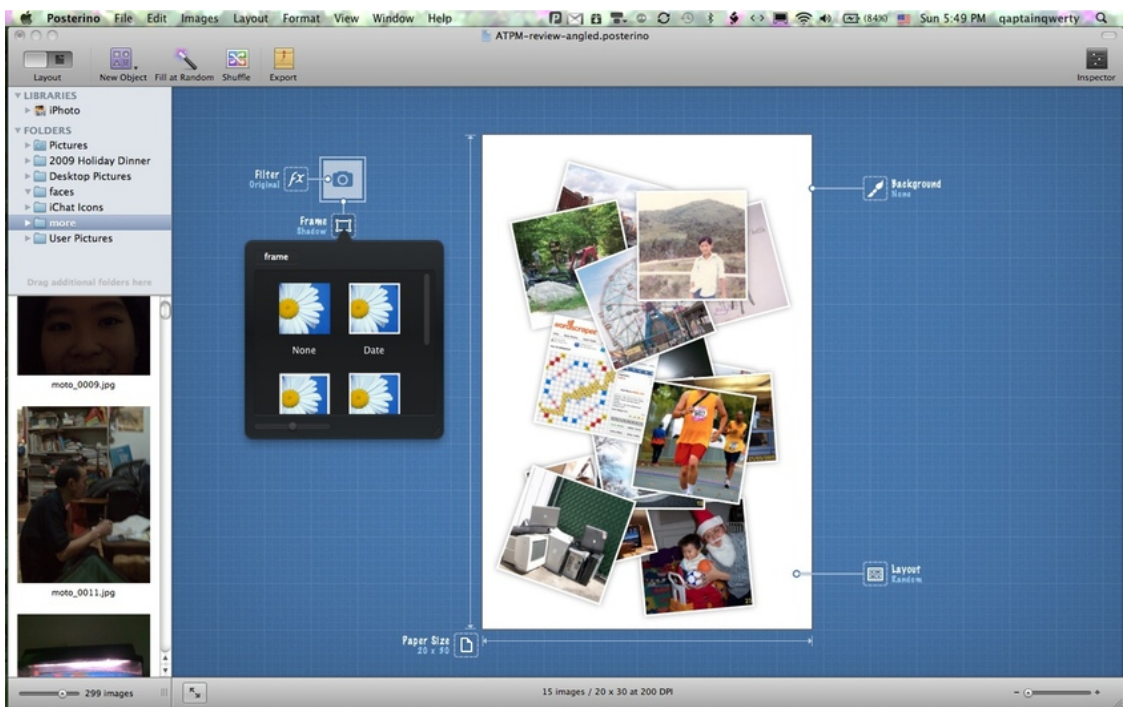
There are three different ways to add layers, and each way gives you a different level of control, and, I must add, a different level of usefulness. The simplest way is via the drop-down menu from the top, Images ▸ Add Layers. Layers like Photo Corners and Postage Stamp work fine when added this way, but for others you don't see any effects at all.





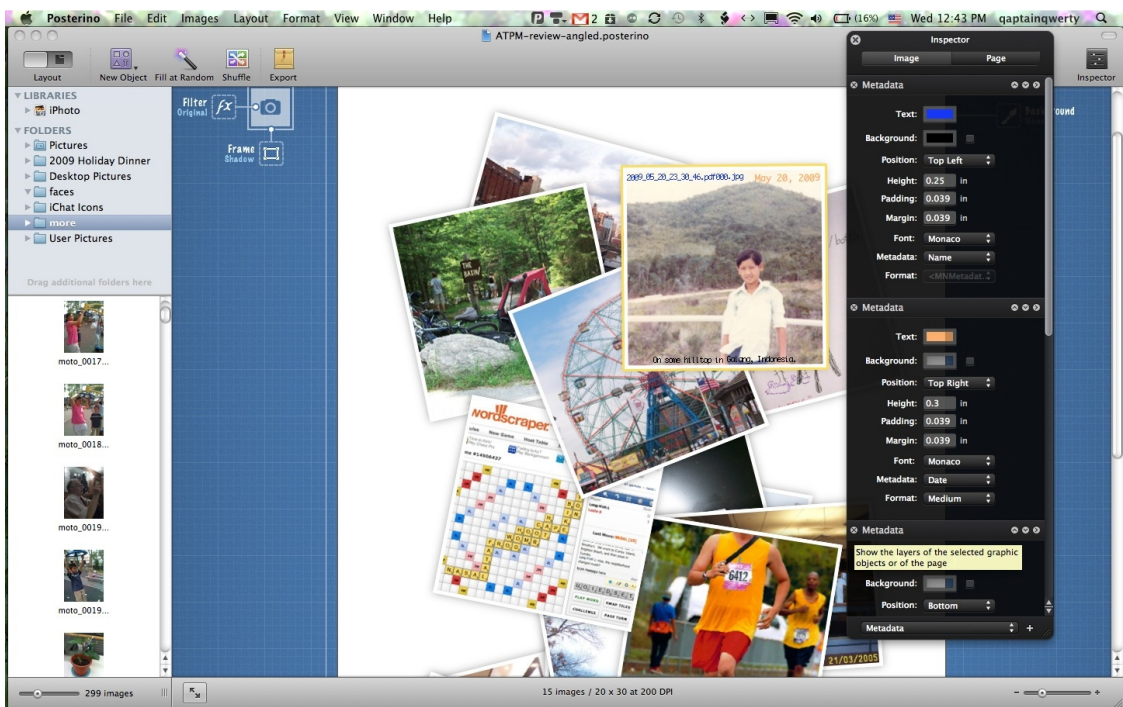
Add layers to your images quickly, but you don't always see what the change is.

The next way to use layers is by going into Layout mode, via **View > Show Layout**. Here, layers are broken down into two categories, Filter and Frames, as shown in the upper right of the screen. Again, not all layers' effect can be seen as they are applied, but at least you now have an idea of what they do, like the Date layer or the Vintage layer. Strangely, in Layout mode you can apply one frame and one filter at a time. What's more, you can only apply the layers to all the photos, i.e., you cannot apply one layer to only one individual photo.



In Layout mode, the layers are a bit clearer, but now only one layer can be used at a time.

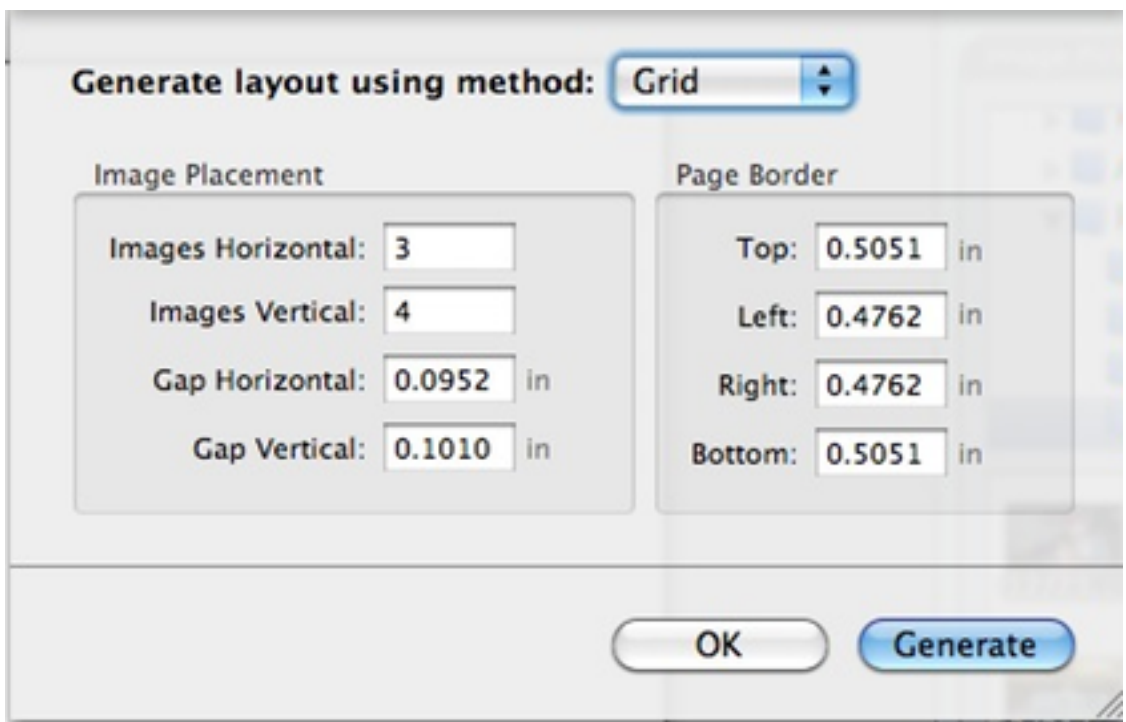
Last, we have the Inspector, a floating window from which you have 100% control of the many settings the layers have. I found the simple Shadow Frame in the layout to be inadequate, too light, and too close to the photo so the shadow is barely noticeable. With the Inspector, not only I can adjust the shadow's offset, but I can also adjust its angle and color. Likewise, with the Metadata layer, I no longer have to be limited to the date metadata, as in Layout mode, but I can make use of comment, name, and time as well. You also finally have all the layers made available to you, even though they are not stored where you may expect it. For example, the Vintage layer is really a setting of the Image layer.



The floating Inspector window is where you can fine-tune your layers. Here I went overboard and added three Metadata layers.

Other new features found in Posterino 2 include working in full-screen so you can avoid being distracted; sorting of images by date, name, or rating; and, in the Layout mode, changing the grid of images on the fly. Export options now include making the current poster a Desktop image.

Sometimes upgrades make the product less useful. Gone from Posterino is the ability to generate your own grid. In 1.x, selecting Poster > Layout Generator presents a window where you can type in exactly what you want. With Posterino 2, the only way to specify the grid is to go into Layout mode and slowly walk through the prefabricated ones. I recently made a poster showing about 150 faces and quickly did so by specifying a 10 by 15 grid with the older Posterino. It is nice that the upgrade provides the ready-made grids, but it should leave alone the ability to generate grids. Similarly, Show Grid and Snap To Grid are no longer available.

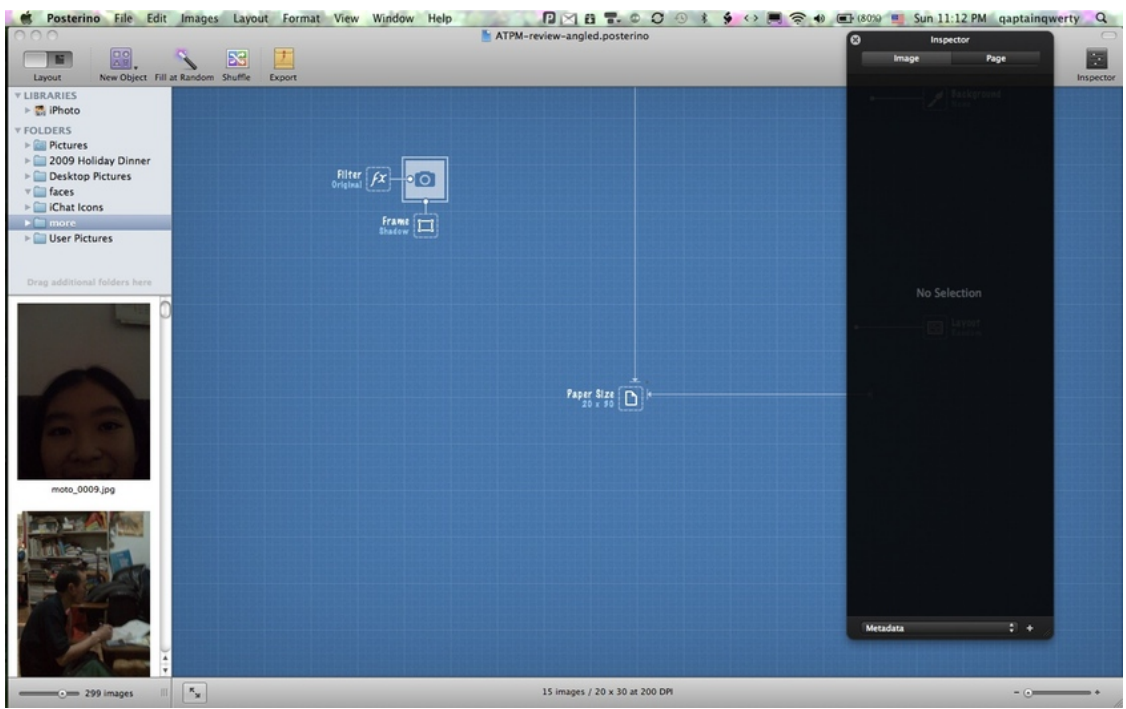


You can no longer specify your own grid.

Still found in Posterino 2 is the detailed Apple Help from version 1.x. Try to find more info on what the layers do, and all you get is where to find them on the menu. A screencast on Zykloid's Web site covers some basic stuff, but the layers deserve a whole new chapter in the documentation. It would be nice if Zykloid set up a forum for Posterino users to exchange ideas and help each other.

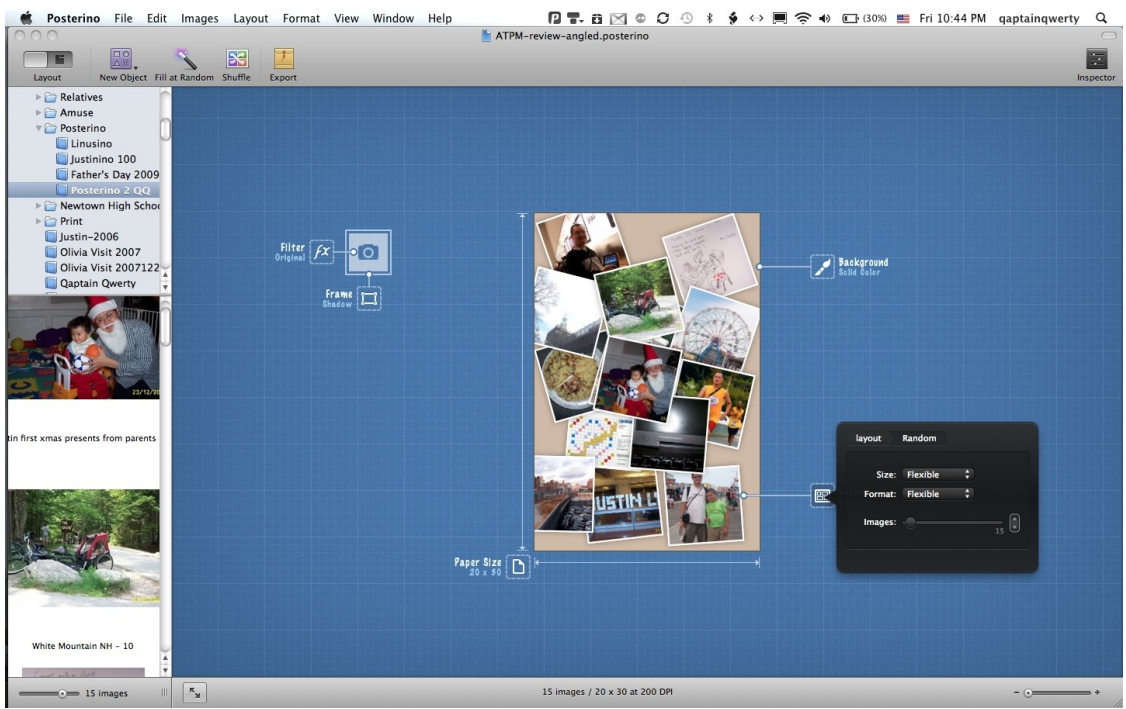
## Some Bugs

While checking out the various features of Posterino 2, I came across a few bugs. Nothing serious, at most mildly annoying. The first one to come to mind is that the Revert function does not work. Say you start working on an existing poster and get too gung-ho with tweaking the layers through the Inspector. Instead of clicking Undo several times, or quitting without saving, you figure it would be more gracious to select File ▸ Revert. Don't do it, because it does not work. You will end up with something like the next screenshot. You are at maximum zoom but yet the poster appears to be zoomed in. All your photos are gone, but worry not; just quit Posterino 2 and re-launch it. Note that simply closing the document and re-opening will not do. You have to re-launch Posterino.



Relax, your handiwork was not destroyed. Just re-start Posterino, and the poster will come back intact.

Another bug, perhaps more of a design error, is that the Background and Layout gadgets in Layout mode do not play well with zooming. When clicked on, those gadgets show their offering in a window that opens to the right of the images. Viewed normally, the Layout screen has plenty of room around it for the gadgets to spread their windows. Zoomed in a few levels, though, and the gadgets' windows would be cut off.



In Layout mode, the gadgets show their options in pop-up windows, such as the Layout gadget's Grid shown here.



While the poster is zoomed in, the gadgets would still open their windows the same way and get obstructed.

## Upgrade?

Originally, I was not impressed with the number of layers available. For a version jump from 1.x to 2, I expected to be awed with a long list of effects. Discovering the Inspector window satisfied me somewhat, but then it raised the question of why not make the Inspector the only way to use layers. It is confusing not to see any changes once you applied a layer. Then there is the issue with the pop-up gadgets not showing their windows properly when zoomed in. Personally, I will avoid the Layout mode altogether.

With Facebook being so popular, I am surprised that Posterino 2 does not have an export option for that social network. I suppose you could upload to Flickr and make use of some Flickr application within Facebook to pull the poster in. Still, I prefer to post directly to Facebook. It would be wonderful if there were an option to export a poster as a movie with Ken Burns effect, i.e. with the camera zoomed in on the individual photos then panned around slowly.

Despite my complaints, I still think Posterino 2 is a worthwhile upgrade. The layers, few as they are, will come in handy, especially if you stick with the Inspector view. I will definitely make much use of the Metadata layer to better add captions to my photos. Randomly filling the big posters is nice, but being able to sort the photos by name or date is a big plus.

## Conclusion

I liked Posterino 1.x very much and looked forward to also giving 2.x a Very Nice rating. Unfortunately, the way to get to the new layer feature is bumpy, and the lack of documentation does not help. Other new features make the upgrade worthwhile, but for the overall product I can only put it at Good.

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# Software Review

by Wes Meltzer, [wmeltzer@atpm.com](mailto:wmeltzer@atpm.com)

## Simplenote and Notational Velocity 2.0b3

### Simplenote

**Function:** Web service providing synchronized text editing for iPhone, Web-based, and third-party clients.

**Developer:** [Simperium](#)

**Price:** free for 10 backup versions and standard support; \$12 per year for Simplenote Premium; for iPhone OS, free download from App Store; \$4.99 in-app purchase on iPhone OS to remove ads

**Requirements:** iPhone OS 3.0.

**Trial:** Feature-limited (see above)



### Notational Velocity

**Function:** Simple text editing and note-taking synchronized using Simplenote API.

**Developer:** [Zachary Schneirov](#)

**Price:** free (and BSD open-source)

**Requirements:** Mac OS 10.4. [Universal](#).



I take a lot of notes every day. It doesn't really matter what it is. But, if you must know, I'll write down just about anything: "loaf of bread," "Thursday is hot dog day," "project launches Friday Dec 3."

Yes, I'm that hip, on-the-go cool dude you see in commercials who's always got his iPhone or BlackBerry on him as part of The Look. (OK, no, I'm really not. Surely you jest! But I *am* that guy who always has his smartphone. You could humor me about the rest.)

On the other hand, a wall of sticky notes is neither decor nor an organizational scheme. I'm no neat freak, but the old adage that an orderly desk leads to an orderly mind rings true enough.

So over the years I've already tried every solution I could think of to organize my volume of note-taking; some of those notes are important, and some of them really aren't. (What's the consequence of not buying bread? You eat something other than a sandwich for lunch.)

When I was in college I almost always had my laptop with me, so I used a combination of BBEdit, Quicksilver, and .Mac, and a notebook when I didn't have my computer with me. But out in the working world, I'm trying to avoid carrying a laptop at all times. Then,



for a time, I used Stikkit, a Web-based note-taking and calendar application that worked primarily on the principles of forwarding e-mail and natural-language parsing. That was great until one of the keys broke on my old Windows Mobile smartphone.

One might say I've been in the wilderness a bit.

But over the last few months, I've hit on another similar combination: Simplenote on my iPhone, which syncs notes in the cloud and has a Web application, combined with Notational Velocity, a simple note-taking application, on the Mac.

This article could, with your help, inaugurate a series of reviews on emergent software: new applications, APIs, scripts, or services that have the potential to organize or rationalize your life. Let's call it Web Test Drive. At the same time, I don't want to make a list of betas or new releases. There are already dozens of online publications—from *Macworld* to VersionTracker—cataloguing that, thank you very much.

Let's look at some background first.

## **What Are You Trying to Accomplish, Wes?**

As I said before, I'm a compulsive note-taker. At work I have accumulated 11 sequentially numbered steno pads, each filled in chronological order, with notes on every meeting or project, sketches, deadlines, and virtually everything that happens each day. At home, there are always stickies and index cards all over my desk, plus iCal reminders for recurring actions like paying bills.

But as the number of notebooks has steadily increased at work in the last year, and my desk, lately, has been turning canary yellow, I began to find that I can't find some things—increasingly, *anything*—anymore. And Stikkit is dead.

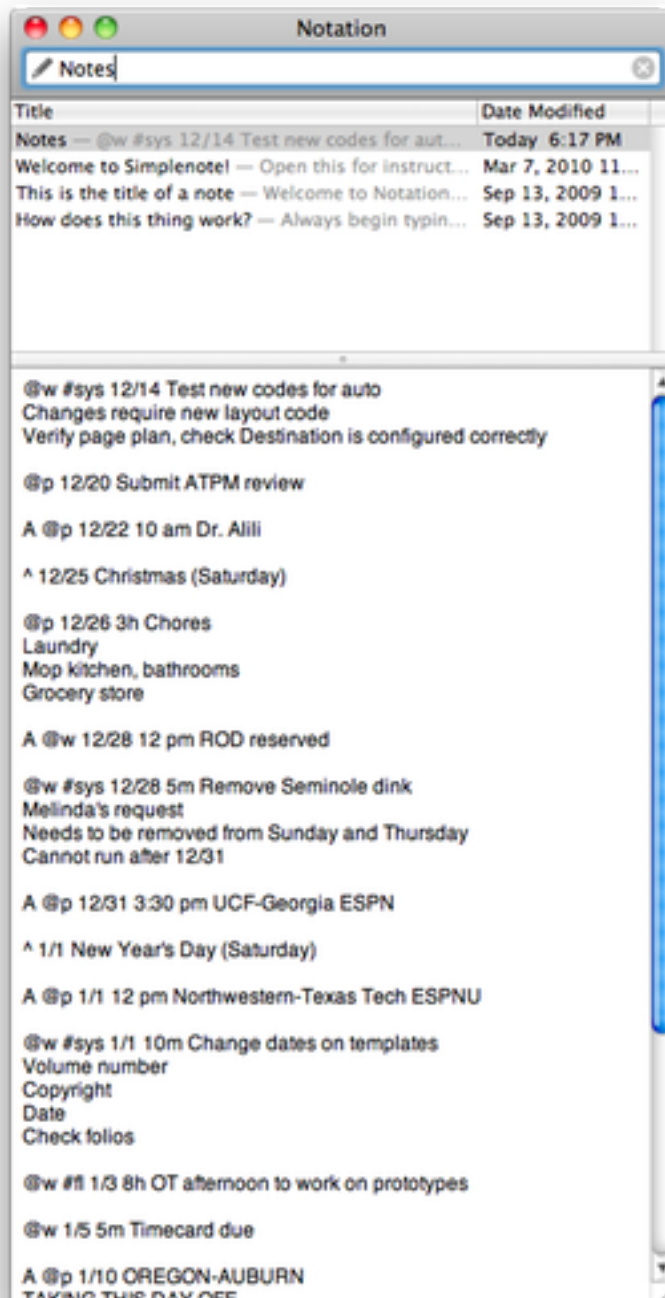
I needed to get organized; and I needed something that would allow me to take notes wherever I was, but wouldn't require paging back through three steno pads to find my notes.

Enter Simplenote.

The service offers a free iPhone application and syncing with its Web servers, as well as a Web application to edit the notes when you're not on your iPhone. You can register after you download the iPhone application, or at [the Web site](#).

Here's the killer feature: Simplenote can also sync with your desktop via a terrific, simple note-taking application called Notational Velocity.

So *that's* where I'm going with this. My notes are always with me, regardless of where I am, with this combination of software. Terrific!



Notational Velocity

## What Do You Do?

Whenever I have something that I want to make note of, I type it into Simplenote in what is basically a scratch file, borrowing heavily from [getting-things-done](#) (GTD) methodology. The scratch file is my inbox, based on the principle that each block is a note, however many lines, followed by white space. Notes are generally coded by context, date or deadline (if

applicable), and estimated time. Other metadata (projects, etc.) haven't generally tended to be useful to me—but your mileage may vary.

So a typical entry looks like this:

```
@w 11/1 30 Follow-up auto section meeting TBD
Need to discuss prototypes, branding
Bring full-size proofs
```

Or:

```
@p By Weds 5m Need more milk
```

Some entries aren't to-do items per se, they're just notes:

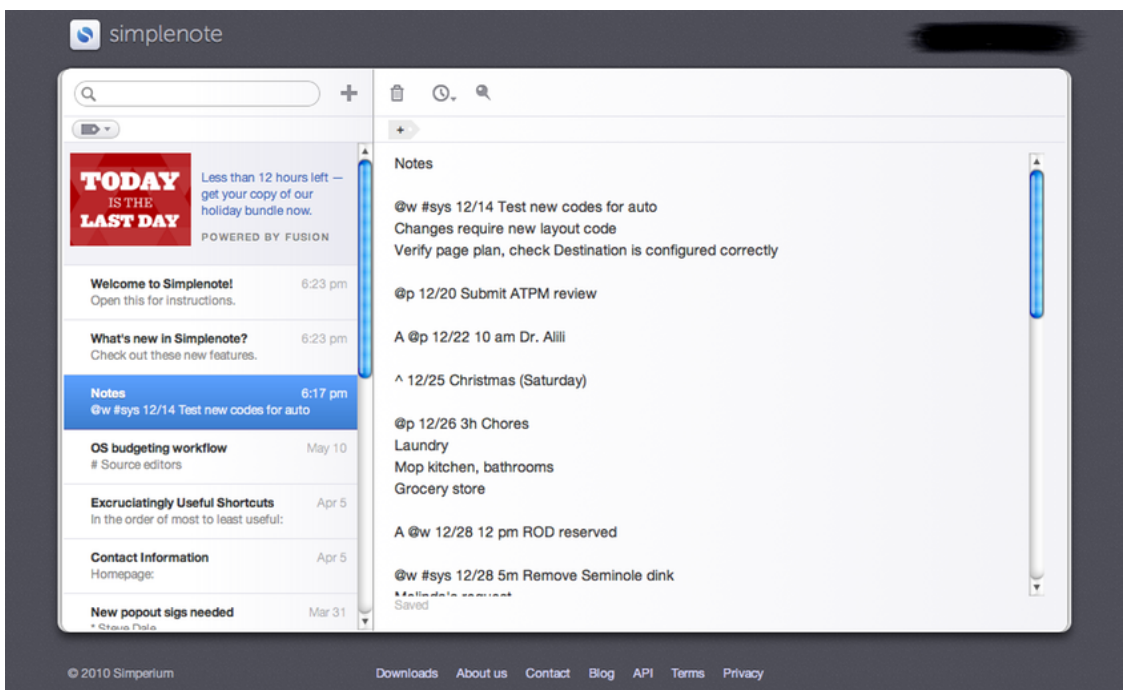
```
@w Late shift Friday
```

And some aren't really clear in their intent, or, worse, totally inscrutable. I must've just thought they were important enough to write down at the time.

```
@p Yellow notes 30m
```

This is one of my favorites! I don't know what this meant, but I keep it as a reminder not to take myself too seriously. It feels a little Seinfeld-ian, like the illegible note Jerry scrawls in the middle of the night. Everyone has a different interpretation on it (“Cleveland 117, San Antonio 109”), but it turns out to be “Like flaming globes, Sigmund.”

I'm not so compulsive to worry about delimiting these fields. If you're the kind of person who wants to keep tabs on performance or track completed/expired items, you might want to throw in some commas and make it CSV format for Excel later. I think it would just depress me to do that.



Simplenote Web Site

## What Happens Next?

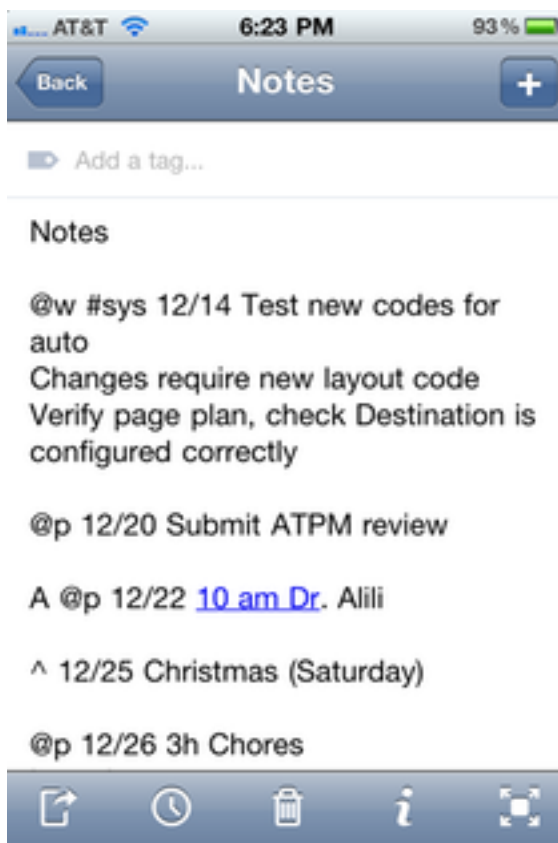
Here's what's so slick about this. In the past, I would've had to settle on one location to keep this, one computer where it would reside. I've tried e-mail drafts, too. I've even carried around a little notebook and transcribed the items back onto my computer later. (*That* doesn't work.)

But with Simplenote, that's all in the past.

Simplenote and Notational Velocity save files automatically and resynchronize with the server whenever a file is modified. Notational Velocity, which is designed to have the simplest possible interface, doesn't even have a Save command. And on saving, the file is synchronized into the proverbial cloud, i.e., onto Simplenote's servers.

Better still, the ability to enter notes on the desktop or on my iPhone means that I almost always have a convenient mode of entry. The computer's faster, but my iPhone is omnipresent.

So if I'm at home and wake up in the middle of the night and remember something I'd forgotten but need to do tomorrow (this happens to me all the time), I grab my iPhone from the charger and tap it in. Then I can go back to sleep, satisfied that I don't have to worry about it. GTD's David Allen would be proud.



Simplenote for iPhone

Best of all, if I show up at the grocery store and think, “Do I still need pasta or did I get some the last time I was here?” I just look it up. (Hey, pasta’s non-perishable. You can never have too much of it in the pantry.)

Wherever I am, my notes are. It’s revolutionary.

## What’s the Coding For?

If you’re a real purist—or maybe just self-employed—perhaps you don’t need to code your notes. I tend to page through looking for items that match what I’m capable of doing, when I have some downtime, and from there to when something is due or how long it’ll take.

Someday there will be a better Simplenote or Notational Velocity, one that supports some decent regular expressions or scripting. Then I’ll be able to filter only entries that match what I’m looking for. For now, scanning works.

I think you’ll find it difficult to find anything if you don’t apply some kind of metadata. I’m a firm believer.

## What About Other Kinds of Notes?

I'm definitely underutilizing my note-taking software. Some people create a new note for everything no matter how big or small (this might be the straight GTD model; it was certainly Stikkit's). For the big stuff, like meeting notes, I still tend to write them out and transcribe the relevant action items later; I find it's distracting to tap up notes on my phone during a meeting.

But, of course, this is just a guide to how I think you can save some time and effort and get note-taking synchronized across all your devices.

## Could I Lose My Notes?

Simplenote's business model—or lack thereof—worries me a bit. The primary copy of your notes is stored in the cloud, but Simplenote is not exactly Google. The application is supported by ads, but I don't think data storage is so cheap that the ads will pay for it in the long run. Worse, Simplenote charges Web-only users a one-time \$3 fee. In the near term, I'm not too concerned; I have a local backup in Notational Velocity. But I worry this isn't sustainable.

Better would be the ability to synchronize with .Mac or a WebDAV server. It would be nice, too, to be able to apply metadata at a file level. If so, I might reconsider my approach to keeping all my notes in one file.

I'd just as soon pay for the application if I could choose where my files were going to reside.

All in all, I tell people they should be wary of storing their files in a location that is out of their control. You never know what's going to happen. But in this instance, it's synced to your computer via Notational Velocity. So you have a local copy.

## How You Can Help Me

Do you know a new piece of software, a Web service with an API, or a new tool that has made your life easier? Let's give it a test drive! Contact me at [wmeltzer@atpm.com](mailto:wmeltzer@atpm.com).

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# 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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## How Can I Submit Cover Art?

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Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for ATPM, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to [editor@atpm.com](mailto:editor@atpm.com) for more information.

## How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

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

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### ***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](mailto:editor@atpm.com).

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## Where Can I Find Back Issues of *ATPM*?

[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](mailto:editor@atpm.com).

