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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!* This month marks the 35th anniversary of Apple's humble beginnings in a Silicon Valley residential garage. Happy anniversary to the fools who dared to dream they would one day change the world.

Don't Be Fooled Again

It was on April Fool's Day 1976 that Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak started Apple. It might have been deemed a foolish endeavor at the time for two college drop outs to take on the biggest computer company in the world by developing a personal computer for everyday users. It's only fitting that this calendar year Apple will surpass IBM in revenue after already becoming the highest valued technology company in the land.

It was 15 years ago that this author was told by a well-meaning stockbroker that he had to "face the music" and accept that the Apple story was over. The broker said the market was just waiting for the highest bidder to pick up the pieces of what was left of Apple. Continuing to hope Apple had a future as an independent company was considered foolish.

About four years ago, the CEO of another large technology company laughed in response to a question about the introduction of the iPhone and claimed it wouldn't appeal to business customers because it didn't have a physical keyboard. He also claimed a branded product called the Zune was quite competitive with the iPod in the high end of the digital music player market. Last month, Microsoft announced that the company would no longer release new Zune hardware devices due to lackluster sales. In the third calendar quarter, the iPhone maker surpassed Microsoft in quarterly revenue. Perhaps Apple's decision to release the iPhone was quite as foolish as some at the time suggested.

A year ago, when Apple released the iPad, some thought the idea of a tablet product was foolish. After all, the iPad lacked a stylus and didn't come equipped with a physical keyboard. Last month, buyers around the world lined up for a chance to buy the iPad 2. The original iPad soon after introduction became Apple's hottest selling new product in the company's storied history.

Over the past 35 years, Apple product enthusiasts have been called many things, from fools to fanboys to fanatics. In the end, none of us have been branded a fool for desiring better products, better solutions, and remaining consistent in our purchase decisions. The editors of ATPM look forward to what "foolishness" Apple will dream up next.

Our April Issue

Thank you for joining us this month and every month for our unique blend of foolish news, views, and product reviews. With hundreds of millions of Apple product users around the world, we know we stand in good company.

Our April issue includes:

Bloggable

A monthly summary of Wes Meltzer's blogosphere news, originating from his Pinboard feed. This month: iPad 2, AT&T and T-Mobile, patent-infringement charges, Google refusing to release Honeycomb's source code, IE6, ZFS, and more.

MacMuser: Help

Mark Tennent reminisces about software manuals.

MacMuser: Presenting the iPad 2...for Me...?

Mark Tennent muses about Mac OS X Lion and the iPad 2.

The iPad Chronicles: My Work PC Has Become a Fork

Robert Paul Leitao's work PC has become a casualty of the iPad.

Next Actions: Master List, April 2011

Ed Eubanks Jr. updates his master list of Mac and iOS software for Getting Things Done (GTD).

Desktop Pictures: Star Wars Celebration V

Star Wars fans, if you missed the Celebration V convention in Orlando this past August, we have some desktop pictures from the event for your enjoyment.

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: iMac (21.5-inch Core i5)

Wes Meltzer upgrades from a MacBook to a new iMac.

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13-inch MacBook Air

I no longer use my iPad or 27-inch iMac after buying a loaded 13-inch Air. The Air and my iPhone do everything I need. I didn't expect that to happen; it just did. It's actually a relief to have my large files on an external drive. The 15-inch MacBook Pro seems huge and heavy now, and I can't imagine going back.

—*Terry*

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I bought the 11-inch MacBook Air to use as a writing tool. It is unquestionably the best writing computer I've ever owned. I rarely use my 15-inch MacBook Pro. (I'm thinking of selling it.) The Air joins my iPod and iMac as the workhorses around the house. In the field, the 11-inch MacBook Air does it all. Best computer I've ever owned.

—*Richard Taylor*

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Nice article. I use the 13-inch MacBook Air for my daily personal use. No need to use launchers other than Command-Spacebar. I'm convinced that Lion will make it even easier to do everything on a limited size screen.

—*Ronald*

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iOS actually does grant pairing of Apple's standard Bluetooth keyboard, although the benefits derived from such a union differ little from that of using a dedicated iPad keyboard dock. Having the same drawbacks that you've outlined. Nice review.

—*Lynn Singleton*

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I own the previous 15-inch top-line MacBook Pro and the 11-inch Air with larger 128GB SSD but the standard 2GB RAM.

I thought I would miss a lot moving to the 11-inch Air and that it would, as many reviews suggest, be an "second computer" with the 15-inch remaining the workhorse. Honestly, I almost never use the 15-inch anymore, despite its big and fast hard drive, 8 GB of RAM, and its gorgeous high-res anti-glare display.

The Air isn't fast, but it feels like it is. The screen isn't large, but it doesn't look tiny in use. Actually, the only thing I really find myself missing is the backlit keyboard, which in itself may be enough for me to upgrade to a future Air if so equipped.

Even with the pokey 1.4 GHz Core 2 Duo, 720p video plays back beautifully and high-end games play (in Boot Camp) at medium settings (Mass Effect 2, DragonAge Origins). No, it isn't powerful enough for large video edits or game play on a high-resolution monitor or at high settings, not that it has enough hard drive space for those games anyway, but for an ultraportable, there is nothing better. Strangely, the Air has convinced me that my MacBook Pro, when I replace it, will be replaced by a cheaper PC desktop just for games, with the Air remaining my primary laptop for both travel and regular use.

—Andrew

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I purchased the original MacBook Air and have since passed it down to my wife. I have been using a 17-inch MacBook Pro and with a new job comes the need for mobility. So I just got the new MacBook Air. The only thing I see right now that gave me pause is that the stroke on the keyboard is a bit less than on other Apple keyboards. I am already more comfortable just in the commute.

I am using the iPad for personal stuff. It is *fast* for news reading and some sharing stuff. Different use cases.

Silent operation standby and battery life are what make the pair of the MacBook air and iPad a great set of work tools.

—Bob Fairbairn

Shock of the New

These companies that are building tablet computers are a lot like the dog chasing the rubber ball in the park. Apple gives the ball a good hard throw, and they take off chasing it with all the speed they can muster. I was in Thailand last October, and visited a place called IT CITY. Cell phones, cameras, Appliances, TVs, a ton of computers, and yes, an Apple licensed reseller. Some guy was selling an Apple iPad clone running Windows Vista. It was a total piece of junk and definitely not worth $300 USD. Apple leads, the dogs follow.

—Grover Watson

Caliander 1.0.2

I can see why Caliander does not suit the reviewer, but my take is that it is an extremely useful extension of iCal, just not for the sort of uses the reviewer has in mind. It gives a much more spacious look onto the long view than iCal (or BusyCal) can manage, so comparing it to a congested day view in iCal gives a somewhat misleading impression of what Caliander is really for. The reference to Gantt charts is much nearer the mark: Caliander does essentially present the iCal database as a simple Gantt chart, where the horizontal axis is the only reliable measure of time. And what Caliander may miss by not having dependancies etc., it gains in simplicity and a tight integration with the rest of the calendar data.

I too use BusyCal every day, and I would not dream of using Caliander to look at my daily—or even weekly—schedule. What I do find it very useful for is roughing out time blocks three, four, or five months into the future (using a calendar that I don't have showing in iCal/BusyCal); this is something that it can do very well, but which is simply not practical in the other apps.

Seen in this light, I believe that the aesthetic objections also lose weight. I would like to see more options to customise the text that is displayed alongside the bars, but as a fellow admirer of the principles of Edward Tufte, my feeling is that the overall design is actually pretty good.

—Nicholas Sloan

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I tried it for a couple of days. I then erased it. I didn't like the display.

—David Johnson

• • •

Downloaded the demo. Actually like it a bit. And I'd buy it if I could.

But I don't want to buy my apps from my computer OS vendor [the Mac App Store].

—Chucky

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Bloggable

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

Still All About the iPad, Version 2 Release Edition

Engadget: We Live in Apple's "Post-PC" World

Josh Topolsky, who just left *Engadget,* wrote (a week earlier) a nice opinion piece about what the "post-PC" world means for users, and why Apple is at the forefront. The big difference, he argues, is something that Apple's been doing for a long time with their mobile devices: not playing the specs game. Everyone other than Apple advertises their computers (and phones, but that's another issue) on specs, and you buy a computer based on what's faster, has more RAM, etc., for roughly the same price. With the iPad, the only spec Apple advertises is the storage—and the ads don't mention it. Apple is saying that the other tablet vendors are still selling PCs—whether with Android or Windows 7—and Apple is selling something else, a "post-PC" device. They want you to consider whether you still need a PC at all, or whether a tablet is really the appropriate device for home use for the proverbial casual computer user. It's an interesting read.

Battle Over the Meaning of "Post-PC"

Steve Ballmer and Steve Jobs disagree about whether a tablet is fundamentally different from a PC; guess which side Microsoft is on. (They know what side their bread is buttered on!) Horace Dediu takes a good look at the argument over what a "post-PC" device is, starting with the first "post-mainframe" computers and working his way up to the present. He argues that the tablet, which depends on PCs for data backup but don't have keyboards or mouses, represents a generational shift along the lines of previous shifts: "[T]he definition of a new generation of computing is that the new products rely on new input / output methods and allow a new population of non-expert users to use the product more cheaply and simply."

Gruber: What Are the Next Steps for Apple After The iPad 2?

John Gruber, everyone's favorite (or favorite-to-hate) Mac pundit, on where the next six months lead us. He was dead-on about the release schedule for the iPad 2, and about the iPad 2 being relatively unambitious (thinner, more RAM, camera), more like an iPhone 3G-to-3GS release. So where does that leave us? He speculates that in the fall, Apple will release a higher-end model, or an HD edition of the iPad 2.

Horace Dediu: Why Operators Will Find It Hard to Sell Tablets

Great insight from the mobile analyst on why he thinks cell operators will find it difficult to sell tablets. It's a good point: the iPhone is by definition a phone, and at its price point, it's one that's designed for carriers and Apple to skim the cream off the user base. The iPhone scarcely functions without a cell radio; it seems to me that the iPod touch is primarily marketed at people who want an iOS device for video and audio, not data. But the iPad doesn't require data service at all, here more a laptop than a phone. The carriers

will only be able to market tablets as big phones without voice service—as conduits for their data service—which is not so far a winning proposition. I think we're seeing this with the lackluster sales of Samsung's Galaxy Tab.

Andy Ihnatko on the State of the Tablet Marketplace, Post–iPad 2

The *Sun-Times* be-hatted tech columnist, Andy Ihnatko, takes a look at the iPad 2 and what its release means for the rest of the tablet market. The short version is, "I can't come up with any reasonable scenario in which I'd recommend anything other than an iPad." His list of the fundamental truths of the tablet market starts with, "You can't compete with Apple by trying to copy the iPad," and makes a fantastic analogy of vendors using Android to a house analogy. (I love these physical analogies: he says that this is like Google giving you a house that meets code, and then you have to turn it into a comfortable, livable home. Good luck; have you seen Acer's and Samsung's UI work elsewhere?)

So Let's Review the iPad 2

Pogue Reviews the iPad 2: Apple Appeals to Heart, Not to Brain

David Pogue makes a really solid point in his review of the iPad 2: the iPad itself is superfluous to the tech ecosystem. It doesn't fill any obvious need. But, then again, so did the original Mac (my point, not his) and the instinctual appeal of interacting with the Internet with your fingers, somewhere between "The Jetsons" and "Minority Report," is something that a lot of critics of the iPad seem to be missing.

Ars Finds the iPad 2 Makes Big Performance Gains, Likes the Smart Cover, Dislikes the Cameras

Jacqui Cheng at *Ars Technica,* one of my favorite reviewers, got her hands on an iPad 2 for a review. She used the same benchmark device as the original iPad (16GB WiFi-only—what, budget cuts at *Ars?*) and found that it's a *lot* faster than the original iPad (almost 100% faster and a 500%-900% improvement in graphics performance measured by frames per second). It also has a flat back, something I don't think I realized, and roughly the same battery life as the original. On the other hand, she was pretty unimpressed by the rear-facing camera, which is apparently shooting at 1024×768 (0.7MP) rather than the high-res 2592×1936 (5MP) of the iPhone 4. So, don't expect shooting your family trip to the Grand Canyon with the iPad. And real GPS—not geolocation by known wireless signals—is for 3G-only models. Anyway, it's a solid review.

Andy Ihnatko: the iPad 2 Isn't Revolutionary, It's Just a Great Update

Another of our favorite critics, Andy Ihnatko, was impressed by the iPad 2. As a lot of reviewers have pointed out, the iPad 2 is mainly an incremental update to the original iPad, not a revolutionary set of changes. Ihnatko says, in effect, So what? Or, to quote him directly, "The iPad 2 is the same iPad. It's just better in every conceivable way." He also makes a point more eloquently than I've seen from most reviewers and commentators, that the iPad 2 and some of the accoutrements around it (like GarageBand and iMovie) are designed to make the consumer wonder whether they need a laptop at all, or if the laptop is just the last manifestation of a highly portable computer. I agree with him here:

I recently replaced my MacBook with an iMac, and for the cases when I used to carry around a full-scale Mac, now I just take my iPad. (Of course, when work intervenes, the work MacBook Pro calls, at least until Adobe releases Illustrator and InDesign for iPad.)

David Worthington's 60-Year-Old Mom Reviews the iPad

I thought this was a fun piece, so you're getting the benefit of it, too: David Worthington of *Technologizer* interviewed his mom about her iPad. It's her first computer, but she sounds like she picked up on it really fast. Hard to imagine that you could be using a computer for the first time in 2011, but a lot of people are, and I suspect their experiences are a lot like Mrs. Worthington. I'd also guess that a lot of people with relatively limited computer experience and expertise, like my own mom and grandparents (who are a generation younger and older, respectively), would find iOS a lot less intimidating than a desktop computer…that's the point Horace Dediu is making about what "post-PC" means and the further democratization of computers. The elites fought democratization at every step—look at the sneering way the technorati still refer to Macs, even now that the underlying core is Unix! But people who aren't computer-savvy don't care about those arguments.

Ars Technica on the Motorola Xoom

Ryan Paul at *Ars* got his hands on a Motorola Xoom tablet to try it out first hand. That, of course, is the big rival to the iPad. It sounds like he liked the hardware a lot, but that the software is holding the device back. (Boy, *that* doesn't sound like Motorola, does it?) Paul sounds particularly frustrated by the e-mail client, which is stock Android and has a bunch of IMAP issues, and the Android Web browser, which doesn't use Chrome's WebKit or inherit its HTML5/CSS3 supports. (Worth note: Google clearly does not care about non-Gmail mail. Whatever you will say about Apple and iOS, Mail's support for IMAP, Exchange, Gmail, and Yahoo are mostly top-notch.) He also notes that it has a proprietary power adapter. Haven't we seen this story before? Can all of you device manufacturers please get together and pledge to support Micro-USB or whatever?

And Speaking of Apple, Can You Hear Me Now?

AT&T to Buy T-Mobile for $39B; Apparently This Ends iPhone Speculation

I've often wondered when, if ever, T-Mobile was going to get the iPhone. (Short answer: only if they ever managed to build up a marquee customer base.) But today it sounds like Deutsche Telekom wants to get out of the American mobile market entirely. They're selling to AT&T. That's a *lot* of extra spectrum, guys: the two companies use virtually identical bands (850MHz and 1900MHz) and T-Mobile has been losing customers and, therefore, really underutilizing its spectrum. There's some antitrust issues here, but if you've ever wondered *when is AT&T going to stop dropping my calls,* the answer could be *soon.*

CIO Magazine Analyzes USAA's Mobile-Banking App

Mobile check deposit is something that you see in commercials (like those dreadful Chase ads with the newlyweds), but I have to say that it seemed a bit silly for most customers. It seems like you're never far from a bank branch. But USAA, which caters to military personnel and their families, has only one physical bank branch, in San Antonio, and

members scattered to the four corners of the Earth. You might say they have rather more need of a mobile infrastructure. (They pioneered a program allowing you to scan checks using your home computer for deposit.) Turns out, according to *CIO* magazine, this was a great idea: they've processed 3 million checks for $2 billion via mobile devices, beginning with the iPhone in 2009. The future is now!

Trade Commission Rules for Apple on Patent-Infringement Charges

The International Trade Commission ruled on Friday in favor of Apple in the complex patent dispute that the company is engaged in with Nokia. I wrote about this a few months back: it's this *extremely* complex interwoven Web regarding patents for GSM and UMTS data transmission standards on Nokia's part, and Apple's counter-charges of infringement for other technologies. Jacqui Cheng, writing for *Ars,* suggests that the ITC may simply rule (eventually) that there was no infringement at all—on either Apple's or Nokia's parts. Good thing, because the penalty would be a blockade of import of those companies' manufactured goods into the US.

Google Not Releasing Source Code for Android Honeycomb

BusinessWeek is reporting that Google is refusing to release the source code to Android's Honeycomb release, "at least for the foreseeable future." They say it's not "ready" to be released and altered. I say that's a crock; for one thing, it goes against the entire concept of open source. What's the point of calling something "open" if that means "only when we say it's available"? Either a project is open source—which means that you can build it yourself—or it is not. I'm not saying that Android *should* be open source, because that's a silly argument when still 95% of PCs and more than 50% of phones run proprietary OSes. But Google can't call Android open source and then stop providing the source, without undercutting their own argument that "open" is better. (I am not convinced of this. There are some things for which open source is great; where would we be without Apache or BSD? On the other hand, companies have to make money somehow, and we can't all make our money on ads.)

Other Odds and Ends

IE6 Countdown

How old is IE 6? It was released in 2001! A decade ago! I remember wondering, at the time, if Microsoft would ever release IE 6 for the Mac! Yet even today, in February 2011, 12% of the world's Internet users (including 35% in China) are still using IE 6. Even Microsoft is trying to shame its IE 6 users to upgrade, with "IE 6 Countdown." Of course, we hope they upgrade to versions 8 or 9 (or, better still, Firefox or Chrome). But even IE 7 would be an improvement; and ditching IE 6 would vastly improve universal Web standards support, even though there are a bunch of CSS flaws in IE 7.

ZFS Is Still Coming to Mac OS X, Ars Says

Ars Technica has a Q&A with a former Apple filesystem engineer, Don Brady, who started his own company in order to continue the commitment of bringing ZFS to Mac OS X someday. I think this is exciting news: the innovation curve of HFS has slowed down a

great deal. (Can you believe it was only with 10.6 that Apple stopped supporting write access for HFS volumes? All the way through Mac OS 10.5, you could still write to a 3.5″ floppy disk last formatted in 1985! At least theoretically.) Brady talks a good deal about the project, Z-410, and the upsides of ZFS, as well as the challenges of getting the filesystem ported to Mac OS X. Pretty cool stuff!

What Can Microsoft Learn from OS X 10.7? Paul Thurrott Tells Us

Have you ever wondered, what will Paul Thurrott tell us that Microsoft could learn from Apple, rather than the other way around? Well, gentle reader, today is that day! Thurrott, he of the *SuperSite for Windows* and *Windows Weekly* and *WinInfo,* has seen the other side! Here's a few highlights: only one product (no "Windows 7 Edition for X, Y, Z and Q functions, but not F, G, or R"); more touch interface-friendly controls; and the integrated App Store. Of course he also has a list of things Apple could learn to use from Microsoft…and I must say, some of them are kind of funny. ("Full screen excluding menu bar!" Uh…) Anyway, a good, fun read, full of plenty of laughter and Schadenfreude.

Chris Espinosa Tells Us About Employee No. 8

Chris Espinosa, who has been an Apple employee for 34 years, tells the story of how he became Employee No. 8, as well as the behind-the-scenes HR policy that explains why, even now, he doesn't outrank Steve Jobs. Who spent 12 years at NeXT.

Confessions of an Apple Store Employee

We get a peek inside Apple's highly secretive retail operation, thanks to the guys at *Popular Mechanics* and an anonymous Apple Store staffer. (Full disclosure: I was an editorial intern at *PM,* many moons ago.) It's fascinating what a culture it is. But from the customer's perspective, this sounds like the best retail experience: sales staff don't get commission, but they do have performance-based pay; they're obligated to treat customers well; and they don't get any inside information on future hardware. Listen, if you've been a Mac user since before the Apple Stores, you know that in the old days you could have a great experience with your retailer. (The Mac Store in Portland, for instance.) But it could also be dreadful, like the dusty corner of a CompUSA. Apple Store staff are expected to be knowledgeable and helpful, and they're not privy to inside information. The anonymous staff member doesn't make it sound like fun, but from the customer's perspective, that's beside the point.

After Earthquake in Japan, Apple Store Offers Power, Shelter to Residents

The guys at the Apple Stores in Japan really went the extra mile to help people out: giving access to their computers, providing people with free WiFi, and even bringing out the Dock Connector chargers for iPhones and iPads to let people juice up. Even after they closed the store, people were crowded around the front windows to use the WiFi. That's character, folks, and not every company shows that kind of generosity toward its customers (and to its employees, as an update to the blog post points out).

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Help

There were three of them, we were young, and they looked oh-so-sexy in their silvery gray jackets. We became intimate immediately and slept together every night, and I devoted all my attention to them equally. It was exhausting—especially when my wife joined in and made it a ménage à trois.

That was the way we learned QuarkXPress 3, taking the ring-binder manuals to bed with us. What mattered if occasionally we bashed our heads when we fell asleep while reading, the binders slipping from our grasp to fall heavily on the nearest skull?

It was the same with Freehand, which came in a box the size of a breeze block and almost as heavy. The manuals inside became essential reading, and we even tried putting them under our pillows in the hope the skills would slide into our brains by some form of crazy osmosis. We still turn to them today if we need to write PostScript fills or remember how to use some long-forgotten process. With Illustrator and Photoshop, their manuals may be half a dozen versions out of date, but most instructions stay the same.

Some applications that were—hem hem—given to us for free, had to be learned by trial and error and using the built-in help files. We created our accounts package like that in FileMaker, adapting and anglicizing one of the built-in templates, then learning how to extend it to a full accounts suite. With InDesign 2, we worked with the help file open in the background and referred to it every now and again. Naturally, our days of borrowing software are long over. We now have legal copies.

Come forward some years to find that today's software has enhanced abilities, achieving so much more than its forebears. But you get the feeling the help available has shrunk by inverse proportions. Many need online access to help forums rather than letting you quickly look in a help file. What there is built into the software is out of date or leaves you with the sense that you missed something important even after rereading it for the tenth time. Worse still, you can't have the help file open and work in the application at the same time.

Presumably, the technical writers who used to create help manuals have gone the way of hot metal typesetters and letterpress.

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Presenting the iPad 2...for Me...?

For anyone whose birthday is at the end of March, we live in interesting times. Maybe the old Chinese curse is wrong, but from where I stand, hands-out waiting for my presents, there is just so much going on for a Mac-oholic.

For a start, it is rumoured that Jonathan Ive may be about to depart from Apple to return to the bosom of his family in Somerset. Not that this by itself is anything too exciting, but I am waiting for my next cell phone and tablet to be designed. I hope he has completed his work on the projects; otherwise I shall have to knock them off my list.

Second is the newly released developers' version of Lion, the Mac OS X which is about to come. Again it's only rumours plus a sneaky look at a copy; there are going to be some big surprises when the finalised version is available in the wild. Sadly, not soon enough for it to be listed in my birthday prezzie must-have's.

Anyone who relies on PowerPC applications will lose the most until their software is updated because Rosetta, Apple's PowerPC emulator for Intel Macs, is not included. Many heavyweight programs, such as Adobe's applications earlier than CS 3 and Freehand, are still PowerPC-only. Not forgetting that some peripheral products, scanners, cameras, and the like may also become "obsolete." I don't think I should put those on my birthday list yet until I know which to ask for.

Then Apple held a special event and introduced the iPad 2. All my hours of list-making go out the window. I decided the iPad 2 is *the* tablet for me. Super-skinny; good price for the WiFi version; I just have to have one. The iPhone 4 will also be able to act as a WiFi point to share its mobile data allowance with the iPad. That means an upgrade to my iPhone 3GS. Perhaps I will have to hold out until my contract expires in October and hope the iPhone 5 is out by then.

Time to adjust that birthday list. Cross out exercise machinery. Why did I think I'd use a rowing machine? The new cooking pots, they can go too, as can the LCD TV for the bedroom (I can buy that for myself). But what about a new Apple Magic Trackpad or Mouse?

Using a scroll wheel or nipple became painful ever since I broke my right index finger putting the last log on the fire on my birthday last year. The drive back from Rouen was...eventful, with broken index finger bandaged bright white and sticking up vertically from the steering wheel. Oncoming motorists obviously thought Rosbif was giving them the finger and reacted accordingly.

Maybe I'd better get the trackpad for myself.

Now, if I crossed off the chainsaw helmet, safety gloves and collapsible saw horse, track day, helicopter lessons, and Rolex watch—the latter included just to give them something to aim at and never expected—does that leave my loved ones enough to get me an iPad 2, I wonder?

I suppose I'll just have to wait and see.

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The iPad Chronicles

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

My Work PC Has Become a Fork

In what's now called the post-PC era, I view my work PC as a utensil similar to a fork. Like most kitchen utensils, a fork sits in a drawer until selected for limited-use tasks. The difference here is that the Windows PC that adorns my work desk won't fit inside a drawer and it can't be cleaned quite as easily. But it has now been relegated to limited and specific-use purposes.

My work PC has become a casualty of the iPad. I've foregone any effort to try to make Outlook work as a productivity solution and rely on OmniFocus, iCal, and Apple's Address Book to maintain my schedule, manage projects and tasks, and keep my contact register up-to-date. In addition to using my iPhone for personal communication, it has become a "pocket iPad" for personal and business productivity. Alas, my work PC has two functions: business e-mail during business hours and one regular work task for which a conventional desktop or portable PC is still required.

Last week I purchased through the App Store the Mac version of OmniFocus for my iMac at home. It syncs with the iPad and iPhone versions of the product through MobileMe, and it adds my project due dates into iCal. I now keep one calendar for all of my activities and commitments (personal and business), and it's constantly updated on all of my Apple devices.

Although the iPad 2 was introduced last week, for my uses the original iPad works just fine. There are plenty of uses remaining to be explored, and none of those uses at this time requires a camera nor a faster processor. I've been pleasantly surprised how many workday tasks can be accomplished more quickly, more easily, and more productively on an iPad versus a conventional PC.

It's not that the iPad is a replacement PC. It's that the need for conventional PCs is being eliminated quickly. The conventional PC is becoming irrelevant through a process of consumer and enterprise selection. I just wish my workday fork could be cleaned of its issues and digital debris as quickly as the kitchen variety can be put through a dishwasher.

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Next Actions

by Ed Eubanks Jr.

Master List, April 2011

About the List

I mentioned last time that I would be taking a hard stand against the "gossamer-ware" that crowds up the list. I've addressed it to a large degree, and you'll see a number of candidates for elimination in the next iteration of the list. (Folks curious about older packages can always check the archives.) I also cleaned up the Web sites/browser-based packages list a bit.

Meanwhile, two new applications have been added: Pagico and Wunderlist. Thanks to those who suggested these—both look promising.

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: 2.6.1
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) (January 2011)
iPad Presence: App (free), Web app (free) (March 2011)
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

Ghost Action

Developer: Ghost Park Software
Current Version: 1.3.2 (last update: 2009)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

iKog

Developer: HensPace
Current Version: 1.90 (last update: 2008)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

mGTD

Developer: Jeff Fisher
Current Version: 1.3 (last update: 2008)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Midnight Inbox

Developer: Midnight Beep Softworks
Current Version: 1.4.4 (last update: 2009?)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

OmniFocus

Developer: Omni Group
Current Version: 1.8.2
Price: $80
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: App ($20)
iPad Presence: None
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: None

Pagico

Developer: Pagico Software
Current Version: 4.3
Price: $20, “Planner” and “People” editions; $50, “Professional” edition
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: via export
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
iPad Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3 and higher
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Has CRM (Customer Relationship Management) features combined, lending greater power for workplace task management; cross-platform; synchronization between multiple computers via Dropbox.
News: None

Pluto menubar

Developer: MOApp Software Manufactory
Current Version: 5.1.1 (no longer available)
On the Block: We’re no longer tracking this one.

Ready, Set, Do!

Developer: Todd Vasquez
Current Version: 1.4.5
Price: $30
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
iPad 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: None

TaskPaper

Developer: Hog Bay Software
Current Version: 2.2.1
Price: $30
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No

Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: App ($10)
iPad Presence: App ($10)
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Simple text-based system; no-frills; intentionally designed as an alternative to more fully featured systems.
News: None

The Hit List

Developer: Potion Factory
Current Version: 0.9.3.25 (beta) (last substantive update: August 2010)
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")
iPad Presence: None
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: None
On the Block: This one is vulnerable to a cut, soon in the future.

Things

Developer: Cultured Code
Current Version: 1.4.5
Price: $50
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: App ($10)
iPad Presence: App ($20)
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Some minor enhancements and bug fixes in the latest version.

Thinking Rock

Developer: Avente Pty Ltd
Current Version: 3.1.2
Price: $40/first year; $10/annual subscription (Note: version 2.x is also available for free)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
iPad 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: None

What To Do

Developer: Objective Satisfaction
Current Version: 1.3.2 (last update: 2008?)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Locally Installed General Task Managers

Anxiety

Developer: Tom Stoelwinder, Model Concept
Current Version: 1.0 (last update: 2007?)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Chandler

Developer: The Chandler Project
Current Version: 1.0.3 (last update: 2009)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Check Off

Developer: Chrome Dome Software
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
iPad 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: Check Off was recently purchased from Second Gear. Chrome Dome Software will be retaining many of the features of Check Off, adding some more, and apparently repackaging it in a new (differently titled?) product. This doesn't affect Second Gear's Today application (see below).

Dejumble

Developer: Thinking Code Software, Inc.
Current Version: 2.0.2 (beta)
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
iPhone Presence: App ($8)
iPad Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.6.6
Distinguishing Features: A simple yet powerful menu bar–style task list manager, with tags, groups, notes, and a handful of other options.
News: Recent update includes Spotlight integration, appearance/interface changes, and some fixes.

Docket

Developer: Surprise Software
Current Version: 1.3 (last update: unknown)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

DoIt

Developer: Jim McGowan
Current Version: 2.6 (last update: unknown)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

FlexCal

Developer: flexgames
Current Version: 1.16
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
iPad 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: None

Hot Plan

Developer: Intuiware
Current Version: 1.5.3
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
iPhone Presence: None
iPad Presence: None
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5.8
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: Still no word on any updates; this one may be defunct.

iClock Pro

Developer: Script Software
Current Version: 1.1.1
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
iPhone Presence: None
iPad Presence: None
OS Requirements: Unknown
Distinguishing Features: Offers a menu bar–based method of managing task lists; includes .Mac syncing.
News: None

Life Balance

Developer: Llamagraphics
Current Version: 5.3
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)
iPhone Presence: App ($20)
iPad Presence: None
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: 3.0.6
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
iPhone Presence: None
iPad Presence: App
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: Many bug fixes, a few minor improvements.

Organized

Developer: iSlayer
Current Version: 1.11 (last update: unknown)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Qu-s

Developer: Urban Design Limited
Current Version: 1.53 (last update: 2009?)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Stapler

Developer: The Blue Technologies Group
Current Version: 1.1 (last update: unknown)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

TaskMate

Developer: Ryan Conway
Current Version: 1.2.1 (last update: unknown)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Today

Developer: Second Gear
Current Version: 2.5.2
Price: $25
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
iPhone Presence: None
iPad 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: Compatibility update for Mac App Store sales.

ToDo X

Developer: Omicron Software Systems, Inc.
Current Version: 2.3 (last update: unknown)
On the Block: We're no longer tracking this one.

Wunderlist

Developer: 6Wunderkinder
Current Version: 1.1.1
Price: free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: Yes
Print Lists: Yes

iPhone Presence: App
iPad Presence: App
OS Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5
Distinguishing Features: Lots of shortcuts and helpers to gather and share data.
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.

ActiveInbox

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.

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.

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, iPad.

SimpleGTD

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

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, iPhone and iPad apps available.

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 1.7.3.

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
- ZenBe

GTD and Task Management Wikis

- D3

- GTDTiddlyWiki
- MonkeyGTD
- Pimki

iPhone Applications (not Web Apps)

- 2 Minute Timer
- 2Do
- Actions
- Checklist Wrangler
- Chores
- Dejumble
- DoBot ToDos
- EasyTask Manager
- Firetask
- Habits
- Life Balance
- Lists by MobilityWare
- Lists by Tynsoe.org
- Matalot by dPompa
- My Lists
- OmniFocus
- Outliner by CarbonFin
- Sciral Consistency
- 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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Desktop Pictures

Christopher Turner, cturner@atpm.com

Star Wars Celebration V

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures

Our own Christopher Turner, along with his son Davis, was able to take in a day at the *Star Wars* Celebration V, the official convention for *Star Wars* fans. Held in Orlando, Florida in August 2010, the convention featured several actors from the movie, plenty of fans in authentic costumes, and even the creator himself, George Lucas.

Among the shots shared here are working droids, crafted by builders from around the world; everyone's favorite bounty hunter; a full-size interior of part of the Millennium Falcon; and the life-size, first-of-its-kind TIE Interceptor, hangared in the convention center thanks to Stefan Cembolista and the Belgian *Star Wars* prop crew.

May the Force be with you!

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 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

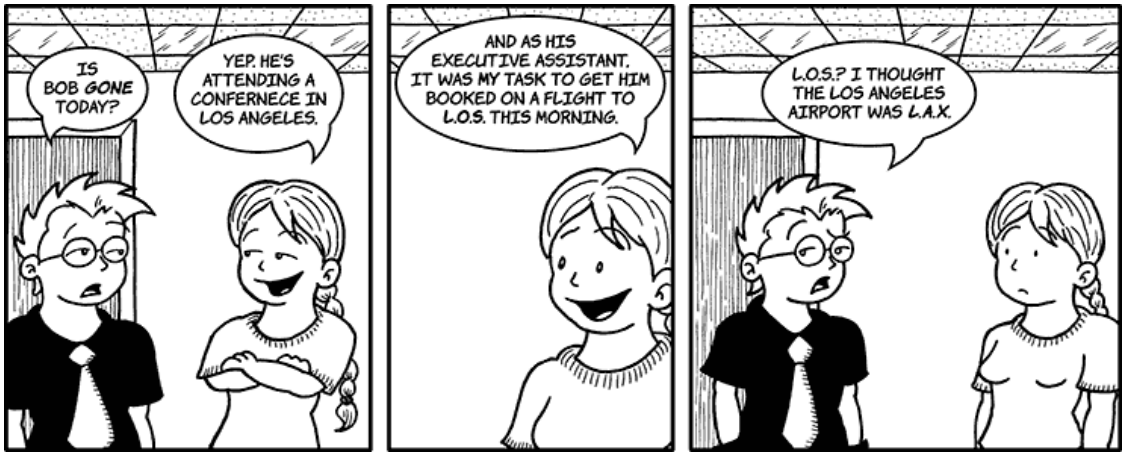
Switch to the Finder. Choose "Preferences..." from the "Finder" menu. Click on the "Select Picture..." button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your `~/Library/Desktop Pictures` folder. Close the "Finder Preferences" window when you are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

Out at Five

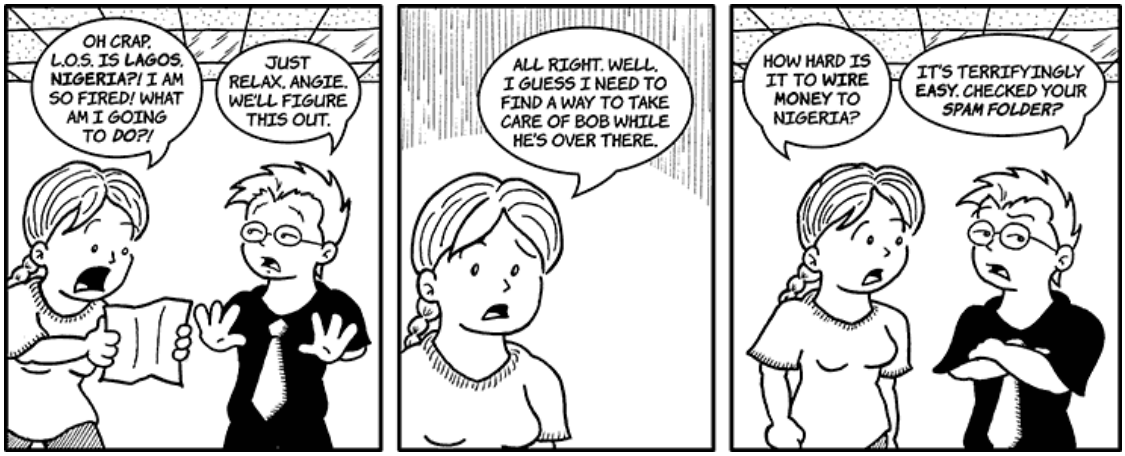
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Bob's Conference

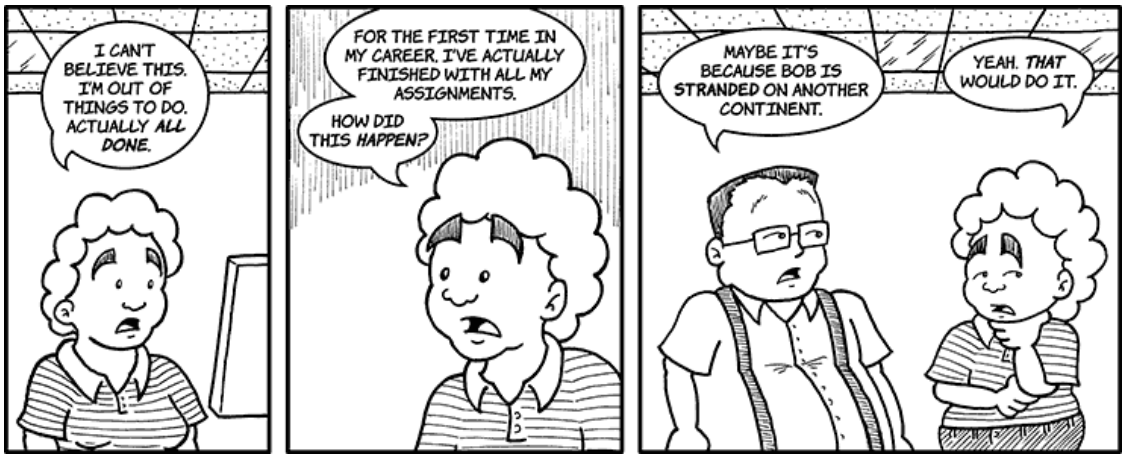
Travel Plans



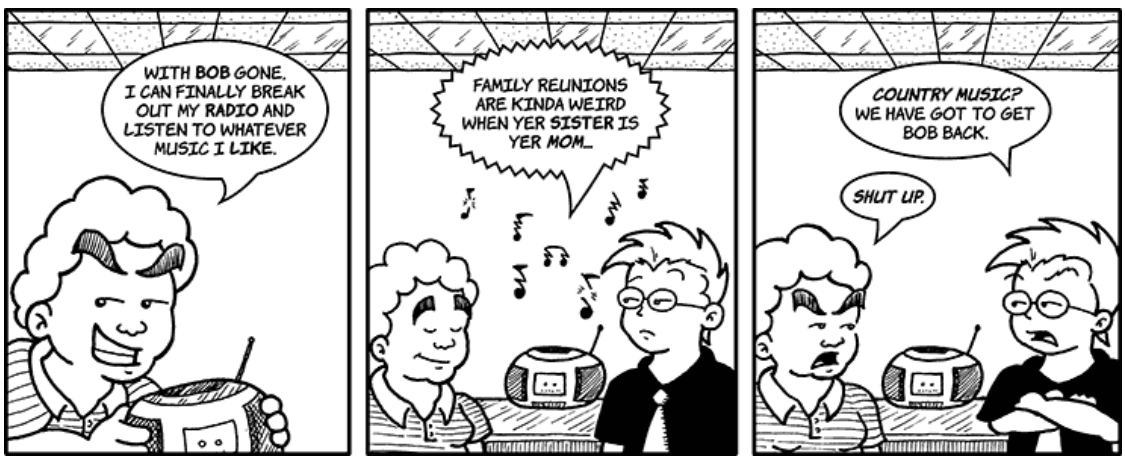
Nigerian Trip



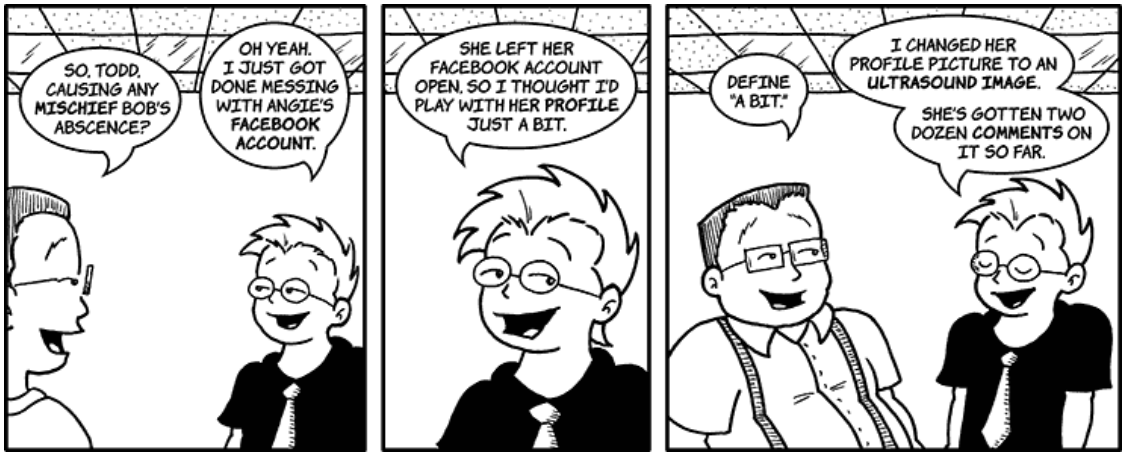
All Done



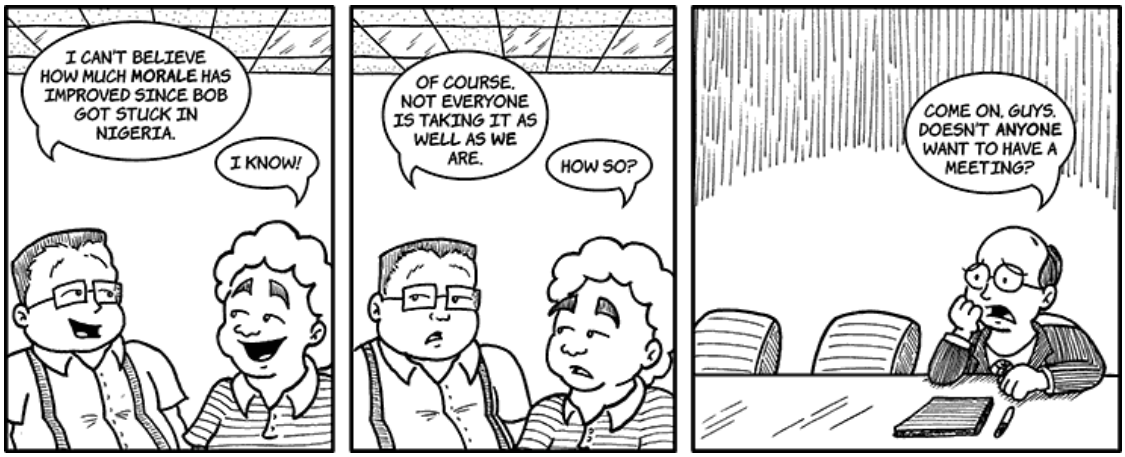
Radio



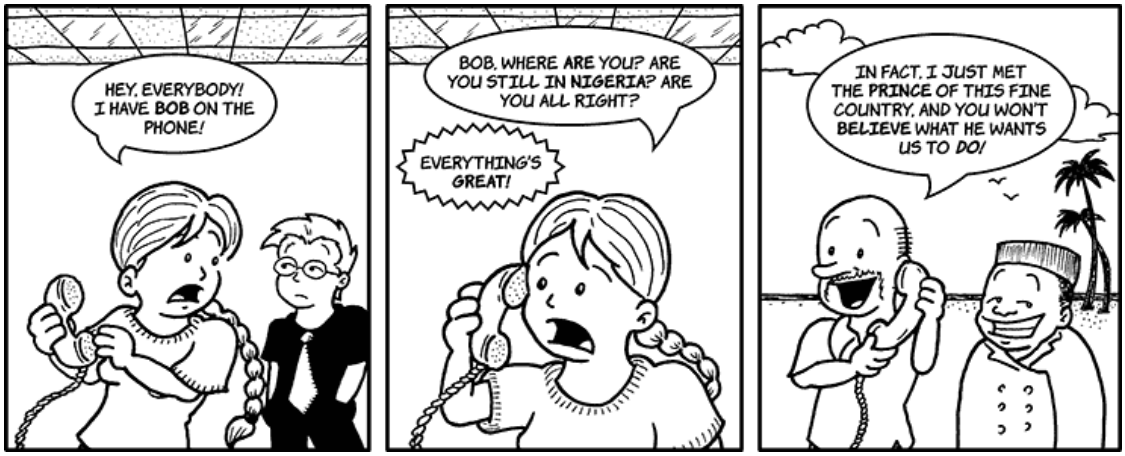
Angie's Facebook



Adapting



Call From Bob



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by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

iMac (21.5-inch Core i5)

Function: All-in-one desktop computer.
Developer: Apple
Price: $1,699 (new, with upgrade to 3.6GHz Core i5); $1,499 (new, standard 3.2GHz Core i3); $1,399 (refurbished, approximately, subject to availability); USB keyboard and corded mouse available as free upgrades; upgrades to RAM, hard drive, etc., available at additional cost.
Requirements: None
Trial: None

My reaction to the very first iMac—can you believe it's been 13 years?—was that it looked like a toy, not a Serious Computer. I mean, it came in Bondi blue, not beige or black. It had only USB, no serial or parallel ports. Its internal components were going to be a bear to replace, too. But I think the thing that really condemned the original iMac in the eyes of the technorati was the color.

(I eventually found out firsthand how hard that was, when my high school newspaper's computer lab ordered more RAM for upgrades. There are still scars on my left hand from where I cut myself on the plastic cases.)

Now, I've owned some silly-colored things in my time, like a green car and a burnt-orange mountain bike, but my electronics are all white, black, or metal.

Today's iMac is a far cry from that original model. It's almost strange to call it by the same name as that fluorescent-colored, plastic-bodied model with the 15-inch curved CRT; or, for that matter, the design that looked so much like Pixar's Luxo Jr., although Steve Jobs says it's based on a sunflower.

In January, I ordered a refurbished model: 21.5-inch display with a 3.6GHz Intel Core i5 inside. That's two cores, each of which runs at 3.6GHz, in case you've ever wondered how these multi-core machines stack up. Not too shabby at all as an upgrade from an early Core 2 Duo white MacBook.

Now, I could go on and on about how wondrous the computer's performance is and fill a whole review that way. And it really is remarkable: programs launch three times as fast, and even the slowest-launching applications like Word or InDesign take only a few seconds, as opposed to the better part of a minute. I love watching MenuMeters in the menu bar, because even an extremely CPU- and RAM-intensive task like rendering the OpenStreetMap road grid for the state of Florida in QGIS only takes about 25% of total CPU.

But we're talking about an iMac here, and I'm sure that if you do really computing-intensive tasks, you're using a Mac Pro.

The thing that is most remarkable about the iMac is that it is though a computer has been reduced down, through simmering or alchemy, from a large desktop tower all the way down to a thin sliver behind the monitor. (This is the remaining part of a longer, much more complex cooking analogy, involving raw tomatoes and marinara sauce, which I have chosen to spare my readers.)

When my little MacBook became too feeble for what I was asking of it, I decided the time had come to put it out to pasture. A colleague had shown interest in buying a used computer; his personal-computing needs, mainly checking e-mail and Web browsing while traveling, were much better suited to a four-year-old computer than to my own computing habits.

So I told him I'd sell him my MacBook, as soon as I identified a replacement.

Then it became time to figure out what to replace the MacBook with. My MacBook almost never went anywhere—my company issued me a MacBook Pro not long after I bought the MacBook—and I already have the EeePC I wrote about in ATPM 16.09, and an iPad. So I didn't particularly need a laptop. At the same time, I certainly didn't need a Mac Pro; besides, that would have just moved the clutter off my desk and under it, rather than eliminating it.

And therein lies your answer. There's no other computer that does quite so good a job at eliminating wires as the iMac. It comes with a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse, and if I weren't such a data nut, with scanner and three external hard drives and a USB-connected, GPS-enabled sports wrist watch and heart-rate monitor, the only cord extending from my iMac might've been the AC power.

That takes us back to the aforementioned cooking metaphor. Each generation of the iMac was smaller and more minimal than its predecessor, but this one is like the final batch of marinara sauce that's left behind after cooking all those tomatoes: it's only slightly larger than the standalone 20-inch Cinema Display I used to have on my desk, and yet it houses a full computer. If you'd never seen an iMac before, you might think the rest of the computer were somewhere else, and that this *was* just the monitor.

So let's talk about the iMac in the more specific ways that computer reviews tend to elicit.

- The screen is absolutely amazing. I had always been ambivalent about glossy screens, but even at 50% brightness, it's so bright and clear that the gloss is almost invisible. I don't do color-corrected work at home or sit with a window to my back, or anything like that. Everything looks fantastic. At work, where I just got the color recalibrated against the new lights we had installed, I have a matte screen. I can only imagine how awesome the 27-inch model would be.

- The iMac scored 245 on Xbench and 5949 on Geekbench, which isn't bad since I did *not* do a clean installation as some recommend. My MacBook scored only 95 on Xbench (and I forgot to run Geekbench before I sold it).

- The computer comes with a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse. Because I ordered a refurb, I was not offered the choice to trade the keyboard out with a USB model, whereas new-computer buyers have the choice. I am not sure I would've at the time, in any event. However, I can tell you now that the Bluetooth keyboard sucks: it is slightly too narrow for my hands to fit comfortably on it, and I find the extreme low profile off-putting. On the other hand I absolutely love that it's wireless. I would love a full-sized Bluetooth keyboard.

- There are three USB ports and two FireWire 800 ports. I wish one of those FireWire 800 ports were a FireWire 400 port, since I had to buy a cable with FireWire 800 on one end and FireWire 400 on the other; and it's my understanding that if I buy any new FireWire 800 devices they'll need to be plugged directly into the other FireWire 800 port, bypassing the FireWire 400 devices. More cables.

- Also, three USB ports is not nearly enough when you have a wireless keyboard, i.e., no daisy-chaining. I would have preferred four. Or eight. Or 12, or 350. Has anyone ever said, "This computer has too damn many USB ports"?

- Hard drive performance is OK, but nothing to write home about. It's what dragged down the Xbench scores, in particular. I don't know why it's so bad, because it's a

7200RPM drive, but I assume it probably (again) has to do with my home directory being copied many times over from computer to computer. For me this is not a crisis, but if you do things that are disk-intensive, consider yourself forewarned.

Bottom line: you will not regret having this device on your desk. I know I don't.

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