

macCompanion

May 2006
Volume 4 Issue 5



Cover by Robert Pritchett

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Thanks to Daniel Counsell of Realmac Software Development (<http://www.realmacsoftware.com>) who graced these pages and our website with newer rating stars.

Our special thanks to all those who have allowed us to review their products!
And to our readers, who make this effort possible.

Letter From the CEO

Getting Serious About Business

by Robert Pritchett

We keep exploring opportunities for eCommerce to help offset what it costs to provide *macCompanion* freely to you on a monthly basis. We have had some success with Google Ads and our links to Amazon.com, as well as links in our Bazaar to LinkShare affiliates.

This past month MPN, LLC was blessed with being accepted into Apple Online Sales program for Businesses. It took about 2 months of processing and hoop-jumping to get approval to become an Apple Business Agent. I'll be sent one of those little Apple Product Professional pins for also having jumped through the online education hoops from Apple. We can now "sell" Apple products on our site to businesses, now that we are registered as an "Apple Product Professional". Why bother? That just jives with our real company name – Macintosh Professional Network, LLC and helps round out our "All Things Macintosh" banner.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover that a few other *macCompanion* Staff also have gone through the online Apple Sales Training education before I did. On the list of over 1,851 participants, I'm sitting around 17 as far as having the most points gained in getting trained this season.

We can give businesses a 5% discount on purchases if they go to our Bazaar and take advantage of the coupons posted there. For us to get credit for the sale and help pay for the overhead associated with publishing *macCompanion*, it is important to use the Agent ID # AA071624 when going onto the [Apple Business Agent Store](http://store.apple.com/AppleStore/WebObjects/BizAgent?qprm=126559) <http://store.apple.com/AppleStore/WebObjects/BizAgent?qprm=126559> link on our website.

The "Apple" Experience

One thing that struck me while going through Apple's online training, is that Apple emphasizes the experiential aspects of computing and focuses on "pain points" and how Apple can fill the needs of overcoming those bad experiences by delivering an integrated support and element solution to the prospective customers, whatever career environment they may be in today.

I really wish you could listen to the video presentations, the documentation the sales staff are supposed to learn from on each Apple-based product, whether hardware or software. Apple does a great job "selling solutions" to Apple Sales.

The key to the "Apple Experience" is how the parts and pieces all fit into a clean integration. It isn't the "one trick pony" stuff competitors push, whether hardware or software. Apple "controls" the computing environment by providing soup-to-nuts solutions to *all* aspects of computing.

Let's offer a metaphor that I used years ago while being a missionary for the religious organization I am blessed to be a part of;

Many computer environments are like pianos that consist of either black keys or white keys or perhaps only use one part of the keyboard because the other parts are not available to them.

Apple is the [concert piano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Piano) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Piano of computing. It offers the whole keyboard. It is up to us to learn how to play that piano, so we can go beyond playing the [Chop Waltz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopsticks_%28music%29) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopsticks_%28music%29 and perform works by [Mozart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozart) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozart>, [Chopin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopin) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopin> or [DeBussy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Debussy) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Debussy.

Of course, if you go to the left side of our website at <http://www.maccompanion.com>, you will also be able to go to the Apple store through our website, if you are an individual and not a business and when you purchase products, we get something like 2% of each purchase.

Other eCommerce Efforts

Also on our website, we “sell” mineral supplements that make water wetter and help deacidize the human body called *Extreme X20* and *X20 Blast* from [Xooma Worldwide](http://www.xoomaworldwide.com/macCompanion) <http://www.xoomaworldwide.com/macCompanion>. I’ve been using *Extreme X20* for about a month now. These are cold-water teabag sachets that contain around 70 minerals that help neutralize bad stuff that accumulates in the human body. Ever heard of [acidosis](#)?

We just started another experiment in online Ecommerce with the [Ominex Experience](#) <http://www.betterthanstaples.com>. You can register on our site to obtain anywhere from 100,000 office products for businesses, breakroom foodstuffs, educational institutions, janitorial services and even governments, with free shipping over \$50 USD per order. They can also get online printing services. Pricing is claimed to be better than from brick store environments and includes original rebates, offers and give-aways direct from manufacturers. No-obligation registration is free on our website. All credit cards are accepted on this Ominex secure site.

Exposure Activities

Besides participation with Tim Verpoorten on the highly popular [Mac ReviewCast](http://www.macreviewcast.com) <http://www.macreviewcast.com> and the 1-year anniversary that occurred in April where we helped give away lots of prizes in celebration of that milestone, we have also been raising our visibility by being interviewed by Tim Robertson and Chad Perry on MyMac.com at <http://www.mymac.com/showarticle.php?id=2319>.

Daphne Kalfon, our Music specialist for *macCompanion*, was also interviewed on MyMac.com at <http://www.mymac.com/showarticle.php?id=2329>.

Why do *macCompanion* as a monthly magazine?

Tim and Chad are much further along the Mac Evangelist evolutionary scale with *MyMac.com* than we are here at *macCompanion*. They did the “magazine route” and gave it up, because by the time a magazine gets published it is quickly out of date and in many ways, becomes irrelevant by the time it reaches readers. They suffered through the “3-day-a-month storm” for years, as it takes so much time to gather content, format it in readable form, post and publish it – and I was almost swayed by their strong suggestion to “just drop it” and go all-electronic and only post articles online, as those article get submitted by our staff. Than I read comments from readers about how *MacWorld* and *MacAddict* were getting less and less significant even as more and more folks were joining the Mac Community and didn’t think they were getting what they paid for.

<http://www.thinksecret.com/news/0604magazines.html>
<http://arstechnica.com/journals/apple.ars/2006/4/17/3622>
<http://www.mcelhearn.com/article.php?story=20060418102551586>

Well, I had to think more than twice about this. Yes, it takes lots of effort to get interesting content out to you, the reader. No, this isn’t just a “hobby” (thus the eCommerce activities). Yes, podcasting and vidcasting are a lot more enjoyable to do than publishing a monthly magazine. Yes, many of our current staff and former staff members have spun off in those directions and are being successful there. Yes, we would like to be able to pay our all-volunteer columnists and reviewers. Each technology has its own challenges.

Effective content is what matters

What I think sets us apart from the plethora of Mac-focused information online (see <http://www.macsurfer.com>) is that we don’t just put the blinders on and only do Mac-based stuff. We realized early-on that like us, the majority of readers also use non-Mac systems and we do reviews that show apps that work on both Mac and non-Mac platforms. We do book reviews that are related to the industry and not just for the Mac. We tend to be inclusive and not exclusive, which probably tends to turn off the so-called “Mac Zealots”, but is embraced by the majority Mac environment that has to live and co-exist in a non-Mac world. We “get it”. And Apple “gets it” too, now that they have allowed non-Mac environments to co-exist on the new Mactel systems in real-time and not just in a Microsoft-only *Virtual PC* environment for the masses.

I think what really convinced me that we are going the right direction with *macCompanion* and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, is what one commentor said about magazines. He called such reading activity as “on-the-pot training”. I love that kind of “bathroom humor”!

You can download our PDF, print it out and read it away from the computer screen. That kind of flexibility is what we provide as we continue to learn and earn, along with you.

Keep telling your family, friends and associates about us here at *macCompanion*. We’d like to get readership up beyond 3 million page views per month. We’d like to be able to say, “Billions served”. Your word-of-mouth efforts makes that happen more effectively than any other kind of advertising could do. Keep spreading the word!

So we are moving from hobby-mode to serious business and want to help reduce your headaches by helping you use the aspirin of the Internet – Apple.

According to Hoyle...

Cross-Platform Software Development from a Macintosh Perspective: Basic Compilers (Part i)

by Jonathan Hoyle

jhoyle at maccompanion.com *macCompanion* May 2006

We have been covering cross-platform software development options for these past 8 months:

- **Intro:** http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/september2005/Columns/According_to_Hoyle_1.htm
- **Qt:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/october2005/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **wxWidgets:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/november2005/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **CPLAT:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/december2005/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **REALbasic:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/january2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **Runtime Revolution:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/february2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **•AMPC:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/march2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **Java compilers:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/april2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>

Last month, we reviewed the state of Java compilers. In this month's column, we review the state of Basic compilers for the Macintosh.

Disclaimer: "BASIC" vs. "Basic"

Before I receive an inordinate number of emails on this point, let me say that I am intentionally spelling the programming language *Basic* without all caps. According to an older convention, programming languages which are acronyms or abbreviated merges are supposed to be written completely capitalized, whereas names which are not are just initial capped. For this reason, *Pascal* and *Java* are not fully capitalized, whereas *FORTTRAN* (FORMula TRANslation) and *COBOL* (COMmon Business Oriented Language) are supposed to be. However, in this day and age, all capitalized words are eyesores and appear as shouting to those using a computer. Furthermore, it is not a convention universally held; for example, when was the last time you capitalized SCUBA (Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus) or LASER (Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation)? It is also a bit silly to argue that *Basic* is a real acronym: it supposedly stands for *Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code*, yet clearly (as with so many other "acronyms"), the acronym was chosen first, and words are found to retrofit in to make the acronym look good. (After all, shouldn't the language have been called *BAPSIC*?)

I will use the convention of capitalizing only the first letter of a programming language name, which is pronounced as a word, but I will all-cap a language name if it is pronounced by reading its letters. So *APL* (A Programming Language) and *PHP* (PHP Hypertext Protocol) remain in all caps, but *Prolog* (PROgramming in LOGic) and *Lisp* (LIST Processing) will not. I will, however, honor the spellings of actual product names, which have their own rules about spelling, which we see with: *FutureBASIC*, *Visual Basic* and *REALbasic*.

A History of Basic on the Macintosh

Before embarking on a list of Basic development tools and reviewing them, it is particularly valuable to briefly cover the history of Basic implementations on the Macintosh. A historical background will give the reader a bit of insight as to how and why the Basic language tools are in the state they are today. Furthermore, it is a very revealing look at how Mac users of the past were treated and mistreated. The story of *MacBasic* in particular is a powerful one, and it should give you a better appreciation of how these tools came to be (or in this case, didn't).

The Fascinating Story of MacBasic

When Apple engineers were designing the Macintosh, they wanted an implementation of the Basic programming language which was powerful yet easy to use. They wanted to truly empower the Mac user, not just give him the same old console-like Basic, such as Microsoft's implementation on the Apple II. The company's guru of Basic programming in 1984, Donn Denman, poured his heart and soul into the project, creating *MacBasic*, an advanced, object oriented version of Basic, one which could even control many aspects of the Macintosh GUI. It was a revolutionary feat of engineering and received rave reviews from all who saw the demos. By the spring of 1985, beta testers were using it heavily, and it was highly anticipated by all for a summer release. Unfortunately for Apple, Microsoft CEO Bill Gates happened to witness one of these demos.

By this point in time, Microsoft had already ported their mediocre console-like Basic interpreter to the Macintosh. As a product, *MS BASIC* couldn't hold a candle to *MacBasic*, and Gates knew it. He was determined to stop *MacBasic* from shipping. Even as early as 1985, Bill Gates knew that he could leverage one monopoly to help create another. As it happened, the Apple II's Basic (built into the computer's ROM) was written by Microsoft and its license agreement with Apple was up for renewal that coming September. So Gates blackmailed Apple: If Apple doesn't kill the *MacBasic* project, Microsoft would refuse to renew its Basic license for Apple II.

Now at the time, the Macintosh was still a very young product, and the vast majority of Apple's revenue was still coming from Apple II sales. Although everyone knew that the Macintosh would eventually overtake the Apple II in sales, the company in 1985 still relied very heavily on the health of its older Apple II line. Apple President John Sculley, knowing that he could ill afford to jeopardize the Apple II community, capitulated to the demands. In exchange for Microsoft renewing the Apple II Basic lease, Sculley was forced to sell *MacBasic* to Microsoft for...(get this)...\$1.

That day, Denman was told by Apple management that the *MacBasic* project was being terminated immediately, and that he had to destroy all existing copies, the source code and any documentation. They refused to give him an explanation, despite his desperate pleas to know why. The stunned Denman watched as several years of his painstaking work got deleted. Heart-broken, he left the building on an emotional and ill-advised ride on his motorcycle. On his way home, he was involved in an accident, which totaled his bike (fortunately, Denman survived with only minor injuries).

Apple attempted to retrieve all the remaining copies of *MacBasic* it had distributed to beta testers, but when word got out what was happening, the beta testers refused to turn in their disks. The *MacBasic* beta became widely pirated and circulated amongst developers, and it remained in use for some time. Surprisingly, the two planned books on *MacBasic* continued into publication, and, despite all else, sold well.

As for Microsoft, the unimpeded *MS BASIC* became the dominant seller of Basic on the Macintosh for the next several years. With *MacBasic* now the legal property of Microsoft, many of its ideas and unique features were cannibalized to be used for the creation of *Visual Basic* years later. But that is a story for another time.

The Basic Wars

In the early years, the Macintosh was the battleground of several Basic development tools, all vying for users on the new computer. In addition to *MS BASIC*, there was *True BASIC* by Kemeny & Kurtz (the inventors of the language), *Z Basic* from Zedcor, *Softworks BASIC*, and *PCMacBASIC* from Pterodactyl. Each of these products were cross-platform right from the start, with support for DOS, Apple II, Atari ST or Amiga by at least one of them. *True BASIC* was the most similar between platforms and was an excellent learning tool, but was interpreted not compiled. Reviewers favored *Z Basic*, with its fast execution speed and compilation time. *MS BASIC* and *Z Basic* were best for application development, as they gave Toolbox access to the developer.

As there were far more Basic products than Mac developers to support them, the Basic Wars were fought passionately by the aforementioned vendors. *Softworks BASIC* and *PCMacBASIC* were the earliest casualties. *MS BASIC* held the marketshare lead. Although not as polished as Microsoft's product, Zedcor's *Z Basic* became the darling amongst serious developers, whilst *True BASIC* held the schools and still eeked out an existence in the user market. This tenuous equilibrium continued through the introduction of the Mac Plus, the Mac II, the extended Mac II line and onward. With Apple's delivery of *HyperCard* however, many potential Basic programmers defected for this simple, easy-to-use utility. A crisis was headed for Basic tool developers, and only one company would come out ahead.

QuickBASIC for the Macintosh

As the 1980's drew to a close, Microsoft was about to take a commanding lead, turning the Basic Wars to a Basic Massacre. Leveraging some of the powerful features of the now defunct *MacBasic*, Microsoft evolved its Basic into *Microsoft QuickBASIC for the Macintosh*. *QuickBASIC* became the premiere platform for Basic developers. It shared little in common with the PC version, so it was only nominally cross-platform. However, building utilities easily and quickly was its greatest strength, as it was a very intuitive environment to work with. Microsoft was able to make inroads across the board, causing *True BASIC* to shrivel down to only the educational market. *Z Basic* managed to survive but with a vastly reduced marketshare. By System 7's introduction, the only Basic anyone was talking about was *MS QuickBASIC*.

However, after having taken such great pains to eliminate the competition on the Mac, Microsoft did not seem interested in supporting the user base that they had fought so hard to win. *Microsoft QuickBASIC* received only the barest incremental upgrades, with no new features or capabilities added. It was almost as if running out the competition was an end in itself, as Microsoft ended all further development on this product. Whereas the PC version of *QuickBASIC* would be evolved into *Visual Basic for Windows*, the Macintosh version lay stagnant. The last update released by Microsoft was in April 1992 with version 1.00e for System 7 compatibility (yet never becoming 32-bit clean).

Back to the FutureBASIC

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. Apparently, Macintosh Basic marketplace feels the same way. The void left by Microsoft in the early '90s opened the door for one company to step in and give the user base a product that they yearned for. And that company was Zedcor.

Z Basic had always been the most efficient and optimal Basic, but Zedcor took this product to all new levels of capability as *FutureBASIC*. Dropping compatibility with other platforms and concentrating on the Mac only, Zedcor was committed to create a Basic that would be embraced by the entire Mac development community. Where *QuickBASIC* was a great environment for Basic programmers, *FutureBASIC* was designed for general software development as well as handle old style Basic coding. To allow for an easier transition, Zedcor even created a *QuickBASIC* conversion utility. Though not as fully featured as Microsoft's *Visual Basic* on Windows, *FutureBASIC* represented the best Basic development environment available on the Macintosh, up to that time.

The Macintosh was in quite a volatile state in the mid-1990's with the introduction of the PowerPC. Software developers were scrambling to access newer tools which took advantage of this new chip. Zedcor's early enthusiasm began to wane, so Andy Garipey and Chris Stasny (the original implementers of *Z Basic*) left and took *FutureBASIC* with them and produced *FutureBASIC II*. *FB II*, now sold by Staz Software, continued to make improvements. The next version, written as *FutureBASIC^3*, was PowerPC-native.

Although *FutureBASIC* commanded the lead in marketshare through most of the 1990's, it was not the only Basic tool available. Mainstay introduced one called *VIP BASIC*, which became somewhat popular in the mid-90's. Unfortunately, it was not a native code compiler, nor did it support FPUs. It created large executables due to the attached runtime, and never acquired sufficient mindshare. Its last version was 2.5 in 1997. One which did receive some notoriety was *Visual MacStandard Basic* (first by ZCurve, later by Squirrel Software) primarily due to its incredibly low price of \$29. Being introduced just around the time *VIP BASIC* was becoming desupported, *Visual MacStandard Basic* offered full PowerPC and 68K compilation, a GUI builder, and integration with C/C++ code. Unfortunately, it was still quite buggy and wasn't fully robust. And after what came next, *VMSB* would not last beyond 2001.

REALbasic Takes the Stage

Prior to the introduction of Windows 95, the Basic programming language was not taken seriously by many. Some viewed Basic as an introductory language only, designed for hobbyists and students only, not for serious software developers. One of the more mean-spirited quotes came from the Turing Award winning computer scientist Edsger Dijkstra, who made the public statement: "*It is practically impossible to teach good programming to students that have had a prior exposure to Basic: as potential programmers, they are mentally mutilated beyond hope of regeneration.*"

This unfair characterization was largely alleviated when Microsoft introduced *Visual Basic for Windows*. VB is one of the most powerful easy to use integrated development environment for any programming language. With the advent of *Visual Basic*, the Basic programming language finally started receiving the respect it deserved. Unfortunately for Mac users, Microsoft had no intention of porting VB to the Macintosh as it had with QB. Even with Steve Jobs' triumphant return to Apple in 1997, the situation remained unchanged, as Microsoft held all the power in their relationship. For example, one of Jobs' first major decisions after his return was to capitulate to yet another of Bill Gates' monopolistic demands: either make *Internet Explorer* the default browser on the Macintosh, or Microsoft will kill *Office for the Mac*.

What Apple could not do, Andrew Barry could. Andrew created a shareware product in 1997, then called *CrossBasic*, which was a fully object oriented language that would create 68K or PowerPC apps, but also had the ability to compile to Java applets. Furthermore, it had a very RAD-style GUI builder which made it easy to design applications visually. This was the first product on the Macintosh that was functionally comparable to *Microsoft Visual Basic for Windows*. When Geoff Perlman discovered and used *CrossBasic*, he was so impressed that he approached Andrew with the intent to commercialize the product. Renamed *REALbasic*, it has taken on the Mac development community by storm, as no previous Basic implementation has. Although it no longer compiles to Java bytecode, today it is hosted on (and compiles to) Mac OS Classic, Mac OS X, Windows and Linux. It can truly be thought of as a cross-platform version of *Visual Basic*.

Next Month

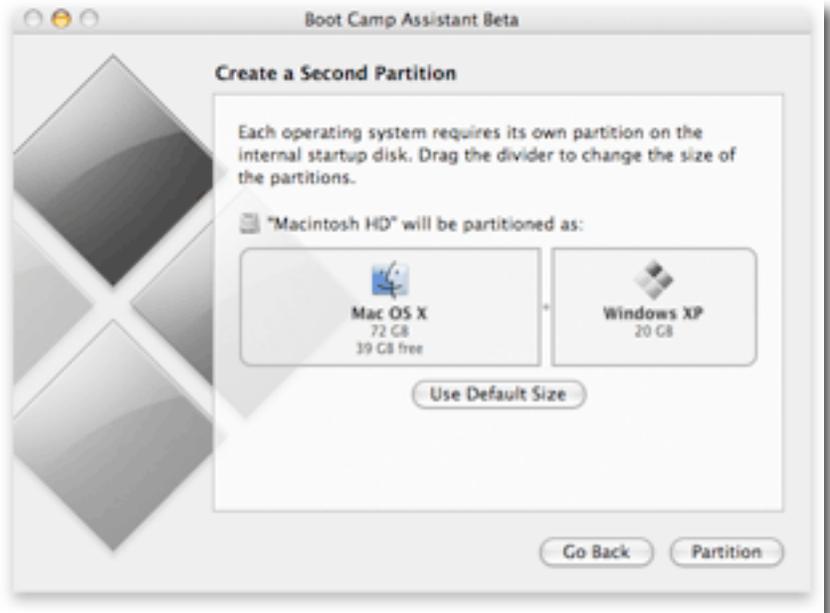
Having seen how Basic has evolved from the past, we will review the current state of Basic compilers as they exist today on the Macintosh. Since we already reviewed *REALbasic* in a previous article, we will look at the remaining alternatives and look at their relative strengths and weaknesses. These include: *FutureBASIC 4*, *True BASIC*, *Chipmunk Basic* and others. Stay tuned!

Analysis: If 'Leopard' will run Windows XP natively, will Linux be next?

by Neo (Jack Purcher) Contributing editor, Macsimum News © 2004 Macsimum News

http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/analysis_if_leopard_will_run_windows_xp_natively_will_linux_be_next

The buzz surrounding Apple's [Boot Camp](#) (the graphic is courtesy of Apple Computer) is hot not only within the Mac community but in the analyst community as well. [Shaw Wu](#), an analyst with American Technology Research, said it best by stating that "A key reason why Apple hasn't gotten more 'switchers' is likely due to a lack of strong Windows compatibility," and that **"We believe this is a big deal and potentially could be a significant game-changer."** Yet Roger Kay, president of Endpoint Technologies Associates Inc. saw it completely different when he stated that "They've filled a hole here, but it's more of an experimental thing. **I don't think it'll change the game that much.**" Ahhh, the political games have already begun, but be rest assured that **Apple's strategic moves have only begun!**



Will Apple open the Linux door?

Apple's next iteration of OS X, code named "Leopard," will be front and center at this year's Apple World Wide developer conference in August. Even so, Apple has already strategically reserved one of their future OS iteration brands to be none other than "Lynx." At first glance, it's simply Apple carrying through with yet another cat themed brand in a long list of them including Tiger, Cheetah and so forth. However, if you parse 'Lynx' just a little differently, you get Lyn-X. Yes, all of sudden, a simple trademark can be seen in a whole new light, especially because "Leopard" is now known to be gunning for Window XP users who are fed up waiting for Vista (or Bull: Longhorn). Yes Apple, seize the moment! Secondly, Apple may very well have to parse 'Lynx' to something like Lyn-X because [LynxOS](#) <http://www.linuxworks.com/rtos/rtos.php> already exists with the very same theme in mind: Lynx for Linux.

So is it really that much of a stretch to think of Apple's "Lynx" opening the door to run Linux natively? I don't think so – due in part to the fact that Apple's Safari browser derived from a Linux project. Secondly, back in 2003 the German [sueddeutsche.de](#) reported that the exiting CEO of SuSE Linux Richard Seibts stated that he "could imagine well that the comfortable **operating surface of the Apple computers becomes thereby the standard of all Linux systems.**" Forgive the Google translation (of that time), but you get the gist of it. SuSE Linux's CEO didn't pull that idea out of a magician's hat.

And for context, it was revealed only months later that in early 2004 the KDE Project had released a significant update to its K Desktop Environment software that included refinements to the Konqueror Web browser **derived from collaboration with Apple's Safari browser team.**

<http://news.zdnet.co.uk/software/linuxunix/0.39020390.39145507.00.htm> So if anything, the existing CEO let something out the bag that he shouldn't have, being that it was never picked up by the press in North America.

So why would Apple even want to venture into supporting Linux on OS X “Lynx?” Well, you only have to look back to a few reports that surfaced in December 2005 to put this into focus. The first report by *NewsForge* <http://business.newsforge.com/article.pl?sid=05/11/30/2041244&tid=138&tid=3> stated that the Japanese government was considering providing official development assistance to Vietnam for the popularization of open source software as a spin-off **from a recently formed pact between Japan, China, and South Korea to promote greater use of Linux and other open source software.** And the second report surfaced on *Computerworld* <http://www.computerworld.com.sg/ShowPage.aspx?pagetype=2&articleid=3215&pubid=3&issueid=78> which presented the following:

“More and more countries are embracing the collaborative model of open source on a national level to fend off caged IT models. The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore’s (IDA) Technology Group has positioned Linux as a medium term technology bet, which means one to three years to mass adoption.

An alliance dedicated to accelerating the growth and adoption of commercially supported open source systems in Singapore, the Singapore Open Source Alliance (SOSA), has also been formed. SOSA is a consortium of leading global and local IT vendors, with **founding members like Apple, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Intel, Novell, Oracle, Red Hat, Resolvo Systems and Sun Microsystems.**”

Now do you get the picture? Yes, of course. Apple is a founding member of a group that is the strongest supporters of Linux – and Apple has a master plan to address the coming mass adoption of Linux outside of North America over the next 2 to 3 years.

Hmm, Apple’s **Fast User Switching** <http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/fastuserswitching/> could come in handy here as well now couldn’t it? For IT administrators, the Fast User Switching cube could be marketed to enable them to quickly switch from OS X to UNIX, Windows or Linux as required with ease. Although only time will tell if that feature tweak will every come to market, the move to Support Linux natively on OS X, is definitely on Apple’s roadmap.

Safari for Windows



In a recent Macsimum News report titled “**Apple, AJAX and ‘Share with .Mac’**” for small business,’ http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/apple_ajax_and_share_with_mac_for_small_business/ I pointed to the fact that Steve Jobs began a **new kind of count** at this year’s MacWorld: A Dashboard Widget count. The reason that I call it a new kind of count is because there’s a history behind Apple’s strategic accounting methodology. It began with both Steve Jobs and Frank Casanova strategically promoting **their QuickTime count** years ago that extended right through a series of Keynote updates which ended last year when QuickTime reached the one billion user mark. I think it’s safe to say that Apple was gunning for a few Window users, right? Yes of course.

The question becomes very simple. Why is Apple starting a Dashboard Widget count, of all things? Well it’s very simple really. Apple’s strategy, in my view, is to take Dashboard and eventually merge it with their Safari browser to create an Internet platform that won’t only run widgets but internet web services like iTunes and eventually all manner of web-centric applications like iPhoto for consumers and iWork-like applications for the enterprise.



If you're thinking that this is far fetched, then think again. In my February report I presented the following:

Yes, and then we have collaborative **real-time Dashboards** like the one from [NetSuite](http://www.netsuite.com/portal/resource/interactive_dash_main.shtml) http://www.netsuite.com/portal/resource/interactive_dash_main.shtml that provide users with business intelligence across all areas of their company, **from accounting and sales, to fulfillment and support. NetSuite's Dashboard is AJAX-powered.** In 2004, NetSuite, Inc. became the first application service provider to offer native Apple Safari Web browser support. http://www.netsuite.com.au/site/pr/040701_applesupport.htm **Yes, real-time dashboards can run a lot more than just little widgets that we're seeing today.**

A little further on I pointed to an [Apple patent](#) that presented the fact that "A problem with the Internet is that the whole page needs to be resent from the server to the client with the changed or new data. This is slow and cumbersome."

http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/apple_files_patent_for_method_of Updating_syncing_info_between_client_server

So to get a better idea of what this could actually look like in the real world, you could take a look at [OpenLaszlo's dashboard](#) video presentation

http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/apple_files_patent_for_method_of Updating_syncing_info_between_client_server that discusses the features of their real-time dashboard – which anyone could understand.

You could then take a look at OpenLaszlo's web page listing [demos for widget/apps](#) <http://www.openlaszlo.org/demos> for weather, a world clock, calendar and Amazon Store – and easily identify that Apple's [Dashboard](#) <http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/dashboard/> and [Expose](#) <http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/expose/> cover the very same territory. The one exception today of course, is that both Dashboard and Expose are geared and restricted to Apple's Desktop OS. But that won't always be the case. Apple could easily incorporate these features into Safari and power it via Xserves, just as Apple does today with iTunes serving Window users.

Everything that OpenLaszlo's dashboard demo presents today could easily be applied to a future version of Apple's Dashboard and Expose on the next iteration of the Safari browser. Who knows, perhaps this is one of the many surprises in store for the market upon Leopard's arrival. When you think of it, OpenLaszlo's limited listing for widget/apps is already dwarfed beside that of Apple's offerings.

For the record, a note in OpenLaszlo's [FAQ](http://www.openlaszlo.org/faq) <http://www.openlaszlo.org/faq> states that the OpenLaszlo platform consists of three main components and that you could "Deploy from any browser in SOLO mode, or deploy them from any J2EE application server or Java servlet container running under Linux, UNIX, Windows or **Mac OS X.**"

So whether it's the little OpenLaszlo startup or Google "Schmoogle" getting all of the attention for their great strides in creating an internet productivity platform – it's Apple that will strike hard and lead this pack because no one, and I mean no one, has the depth of iApplications nor the level of cool integration that Apple could offer consumers and the enterprise.



This isn't an afterthought of Apple's like it was for Microsoft who thinks they've seen the light about AJAX. No, no, no. Apple boldly forecasted this back in January 2001 when Steve Jobs stated that "We've all been blinded into thinking that the browser controls the Internet," he added. "But that's not true. **We believe that the next wave of the Internet will be client applications that work intimately with the Internet, but not necessarily with a Web browser. You can think of iTunes the same way, allowing access to Internet content through a specialized interface rather than a browser.**

So although we see Apple's Safari as just a web browser today, it won't be limited to that of just browsing. Psychologically users are used to the browser experience, and that's the Trojan horse. When it's time for Apple to strike – Apple will execute their plans for the Next Wave of the Internet, via Safari for Windows. Apple has already proven itself to the market that the Next Wave of the Internet has arrived, and that the leader of that Next Wave is none other than Apple. Taking Safari to the next level – is a no-brainer folks. Apple forecasted what they'd create "client applications that [would] work intimately with the Internet," and they're not about to stop at iTunes!

The bottom line

So the bottom line to all of this is that if Wall Street and the media thought that yesterday's announcement of Boot Camp was "game changing," then baby—**You Ain't Seen Nothing yet!" as the Bachman Turner Overdrive song goes (now available on iTunes!).**

If there was ever a time for Apple to strike the market with a vengeance, then it's now, this year, while Microsoft is stumbling shamelessly with their Vista OS release. Not only could Apple surprise us with releasing Leopard on Conroe based iMacs, but they could also strike a mighty blow with a free downloadable version of their next iteration of Safari for Window users, delivering the world's first true internet platform for the masses.

With that in mind, Apple's future moves to support Linux natively on OS X via "Lynx" will drive this revolution even farther than the eye could see – and all indications point to this eventuality.

Yes, now that Apple's switch to Intel is quickly falling into place, Apple could now begin to resume their leadership in this revolution called The Next Wave of the Internet – **and show the market what game-changing really means!**

Cheers!

[Neo at macsimumnews.com](http://Neoatmacsimumnews.com)

Ivory Tower

April was a busy month for Apple!

by Ted Bade

Wow, this has been a busy month, Apple announced another exceptional financial quarter; two easy- to-use solutions arrived for running Windows on an Intel Mac (and one was from Apple!) and iPods and the iTunes still managed to dominate the music scene.

Windows on Mac - I won't go into a lot of detail on this (but do see my article on the subject, later in this issue), but it is exciting. In my opinion, this option gives a user the ability to run those one or two special apps that somehow never make it to the Macintosh. Both solutions are better than buying additional hardware or dealing with the speed hits of emulation.

I feel that this option being available might get many fence-sitters to finally buy the Mac they really want! You know the ones I mean, those people who would like to buy a Mac but have one or two Windows applications they "just have to use" and so they don't. Now you can tell them, buy a Mac, and install Windows for that application. But run in the safe, secure, and easy to use Mac OS environment the rest of the time!

The solutions really work. As I am writing this, my Mac Mini is transferring a couple of TV shows from my Tivo that I really want to save to DVD. When the file is transferred, I will use a DVD burning software package for Windows to burn a DVD. I have done this already and it works! I have been storing one of these shows for well over a year waiting for the Tivo people to release a Mac OS version to let me do this. I decided to wait no more and set up a Dual Core Mac Mini to do this for me.

One might also wonder what is the fate of emulation software packages like VirtualPC. Microsoft purchased this package from its creator a couple of years ago and at that time people were afraid of how Microsoft might affect the software. But now the issue is moot. Why choose emulation if you can run directly in hardware? However, an article in Macworld indicates that Microsoft hasn't yet decided on the fate of VirtualPC;
http://news.yahoo.com/s/macworld/20060407/tc_macworld/vpc20060407

Microsoft might just create their own virtualization solution and package it with a copy of Windows and a better price than you could buy a similar package. For instance, Parallels Mac OS Workstation will cost \$50 USD when released, add to that cost \$200 for XP and the cost of running Windows on your Intel Mac is significant. Microsoft sells VirtualPC with a version of XP for \$150 as a stand-alone package. If they carried this price model to a virtualization package, they could be a very competitive solution.

Another aspect of this feature is that it just might put Apple in direct competition with other PC vendors. Think about it. Apple makes terrific computers. They use top of the line hardware and are known for their lack of problems, not to mention Apple's customer service is always rated very high by its users.

Up until the Intel Macs, if you bought an Apple, you could only use Mac OS X. Now, you could buy a Mac and use it solely for Windows. Personally, I wouldn't want to do that, but there are people who need to use a lot of Windows-based software, but would like to run a few Mac Apps as well. It's an interesting concept.

Oh Baloney, you just want more money - Apparently Mac OS users have not been buying much in the way of anti-virus software. Could it be because they don't see a need for software to remove something that doesn't exist?

Recently an executive of a security company spoke about how Mac users pose a threat to Windows users. How is this you ask? By being immune to these types of problems, they don't keep anti-virus software on their computers and so they pass along malicious software to their PC pals. I guess that makes us immune carriers;
<http://www.itwire.com.au/content/view/3864/0>

What I really think is happening here is that the anti-virus software companies want to expand sales into the Mac market. While the information about this is true, I don't think Mac OS X users should run out and get anti-virus software to help protect their friends. I think they should tell their friends to complain to their software giants and get them to resolve the malicious software issue. Let them pay the Windows tax, the cost of buying and updating their virus software. They, not you the dedicated Mac user, choose to run Windows. ;-)

Apple had a good second quarter financially - Once again they beat the market predictions. In a nutshell, Apple posted revenue of \$4.36 billion and a net quarterly profit of \$410 million,. Compare this to the same quarter a year ago. These results compare to revenue of \$3.24 billion and a net profit of \$290 million. Apple shipped 1,112,000 Macs computers and 8,526,000 iPods, representing 4 percent growth in Macs and 61 percent growth in iPods over the year-ago quarter.

While this is all good news, that was truly a meager increase in Mac sales. Come on people, get out there and buy a few Macs!

Speaking about iPods - We know that Apple holds the majority of the digital Music player market. I found an article on the Mac News Network site; <http://www.macnn.com/articles/06/04/20/apples.music.business/> that pointed out that Apple's share of the digital player market rose to 78% of the market (up from 71% previously), and their share of legal music downloads rose to 87%! (This information was garnered from the financial conference call Apple held.)

Also according to this article, Apple indicated they have expanded their content to include 2.9M music tracks, 60K podcasts, 9K music videos, and 70 television shows. Quite a lot of content!

According to another article there <http://www.macnn.com/articles/06/04/25/ipod.gaining.market.share/>, the iPod is flourishing on lists for portable MP3 players at Amazon.com as it holds all ten spots in the top 10! I guess the iPod is popular.

So, Apple, what is next?



Mac Security 101

<http://www.applemacpunk.com>
applemacpunk at cox.net

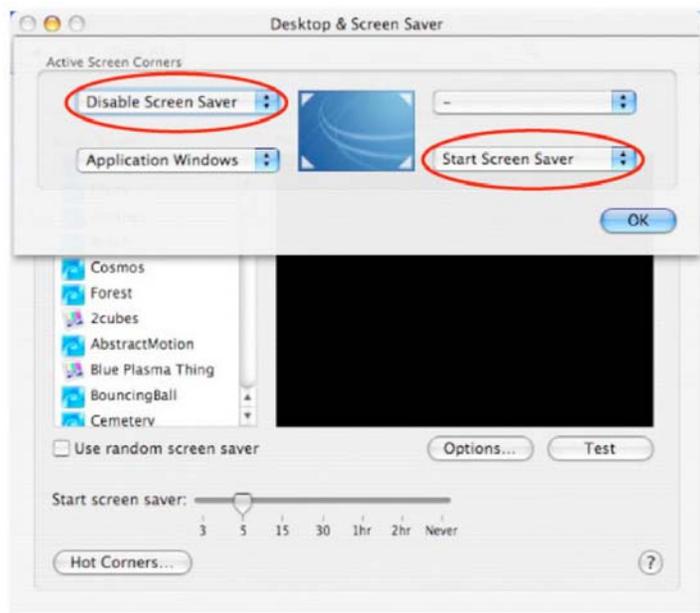
Don't Forget The Screen Saver: Security Where You Least Expect It

by Kale Feelhaver aka: Applemacpunk

Most Mac users are surprised to find that the screen saver is considered a security tool. In reality, the screen saver is a highly effective security tool which can be easily configured to help harden Mac OS X. Building upon last month's article (Security 101: Secure Building Blocks), this article will take a look at how to configure your screen saver to increase security on your Mac.

Scenario... you're at a coffee shop using the free Wi-Fi. You see a friend of your across the room. You get up to go talk to him, and leave your laptop sitting on the table. You're not worried about it, because you can see it from where you are at. You're talking to your friend for several minutes, and then you decide to go get another cup of coffee. You turn your back on your laptop while you walk through the line. Keep in mind it is still logged in and on the Internet. During this time anyone could walk by and surf explicit URLs, steal your saved passwords (how many of you save passwords in your browser?), or physically carry the laptop off and proceed to steal your data in a less public place. They could do all this without ever having to enter a password. A screen saver could've been configured to automatically lock your screen after several minutes. It can also be configured to lock the screen on command.

To configure your screen saver, launch *System Preferences*, click the *Desktop & Screen Saver* pane, select the *Screen Saver* button, and click the *Hot Corners* button. Set one corner for *Start Screen Saver* and another for *Disable Screen Saver*. Then choose a reasonable amount of time before the screen saver starts (i.e.: 10 minutes). After you have done this, click the back button to return to *System Preferences* and click the *Security* pane. Make sure *Require password to wake this computer from sleep or screen saver* is checked, along with *Disable automatic login*.

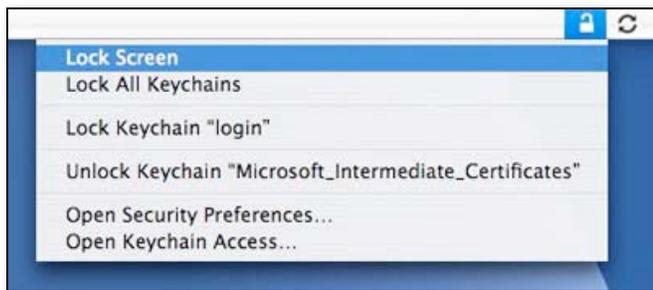


Setting hot corners allows you to invoke the screen saver immediately, or override it if needed. The *Require password to wake this computer from sleep or screen saver* box will lock the computer any time the screen saver starts. This is a very strong security feature. If you leave your Mac unattended, it will automatically lock when the screen saver starts. If you want to lock your computer immediately, you can simply pull the mouse into the hot corner and invoke the screen saver. If you are using your Mac for a presentation, or other event when you don't want it to lock, simply drag the mouse into the hot corner, which you set to disable the screen saver.

Disabling automatic login will override the automatic login feature, even if someone turns it on in the Accounts pane. This is extremely handy for a laptop Mac. In the above coffee shop scenario, let's pretend like the user had done all of the above except disabling automatic login. The bad guy grabs the laptop, runs out of the coffee shop and takes it to his lair. At this point he notices that you locked the screen. He proceeds to pull out the battery, powering the laptop off. Then he replaces the battery and powers the laptop back on. If you have automatic login enabled, he now has access to your data. The bottom line here is to always, always, always, always, always disable automatic login, unless the machine has a special restricted account intended for that purpose (i.e.: kiosk computer).

Maybe you don't want to mess with the hot corners, but you want an easy way to invoke your screen saver. Launch *Keychain Access* (/Applications/Utilities/Keychain Access.app) and choose *Preferences* from the *Keychain Access* menu. Check the *Show Status in Menu Bar* box, and a new lock icon will appear in your menu bar. Now to lock your screen quickly, simply choose *Lock Screen* from the lock menu. The screen saver will engage immediately, and the screen will lock. To disengage the screen saver, you will need the account password.

The screen saver is a useful security tool for laptops, desktops, business computers and home computers alike. Let's revisit our coffee shop scenario after applying the changes to your screen saver. You see your buddy across the room, you choose *Lock Screen* from your handy lock menu, and walk across the room to engage in conversation. Meanwhile, the bad guy moves stealthily across the room spying for an unlocked laptop. He sees your Mac running the screen saver and wonders if you were smart enough to require a password to unlock the screen saver. He walks by and casually bumps your keyboard to check. Immediately, he is greeted with a logon box. As he moves closer to the door, he spies an unattended Dell running Windows XP. "I'll just grab that Dell," he thinks to himself, "I don't really understand Macs anyway."



Mac Mini Core Duo, Newer Technology miniStack v2, and Elgato EyeTV EZ

an informational article by Chris Hamady ©2006 C. Hamady
Originally published on 4-2-06 <http://homepage.mac.com/chamady/MacMiniReview/>

Note: The information in this article is for educational use only. Anything that YOU do to any computer(s) will be done at YOUR OWN RISK, and the author will not be held responsible.

Specifications

Newer Technology miniStack External HD

500 Gigabyte 7200 RPM drive
Firewire/USB 2.0
1x USB 2.0 uplink port
3x USB 2.0 ports
3x Firewire 400 ports

Elgato EyeTV EZ

Terratec USB 2.0 TV tuner
EyeTV 2.1 software
Coaxial cable port
USB 2.0 port and cable
S-video, composite video input
Composite audio input
Remote control

Microsoft Wireless Multimedia Keyboard and Mouse

The Components

Ever since the day that Steve Jobs demonstrated the Apple media center software, [Front Row](#) <http://www.apple.com/imac/frontrow.html>, I have been looking forward to replacing my television's DVD and VCR player with an all in one media center device from [Apple](#) <http://www.apple.com/>. On the very day that Apple announced their media center [Mac Mini](#) <http://www.apple.com/macmini/>, I ordered one from the online Apple store. It arrived a couple of weeks later. Having installed numerous Mac Minis for schools and families, the only difference that I could find in the packaging was the inclusion of the Front Row remote control.

My plan was to put all of my music, photos, DVDs and home movies onto this thing. If I was going to do that, I would need a large amount of storage space. I checked around the web and decided to go with the [Newer Technology miniStack](#) <http://eshop.macsales.com/shop/ministack/> with 500 gigabytes of storage.

The miniStack was designed to perfection. It was created to be the identical form factor of a Mac Mini. You place the miniStack in your entertainment system, and then place the Mac Mini on top of it. This photo will give you an idea of the true size of the miniStack.



Next, I had to decide on a TV tuner/PVR (personal video recorder). I drove up to Ann Arbor and stopped in at the Apple Store in the CompUSA. All they carried was some



manufacturer that I had never heard of before, and the Miglia Evolution TV. The Apple sales rep couldn't tell me what software the tuners shipped with, and he wouldn't let me open the boxes to find out. Having just read that Elgato recently released a universal binary version of their EyeTV software, I left without purchasing a tuner from CompUSA.

I drove back home and started researching the [Elgato](http://www.elgato.com/) devices <http://www.elgato.com/>. The EyeTV EZ tuner works with analog cable or antennas, and also digital cable. Unlike the EyeTV 200, the EyeTV EZ does not do any hardware video encoding. It sends the video uncompressed to the computer in the YUV format. The EyeTV software then uses the computer's processor(s) to encode the video to either mpeg-2 or mpeg-1, depending upon the speed and power of your Macintosh. While the EyeTV 200 would have given me slightly better picture quality due to its ability to do hardware encoding to either mpeg-2 or mpeg-4, the price difference was rather significant (EyeTV EZ- \$149.00/EyeTV 200- \$349.00), and I was primarily purchasing this device to time-shift television shows. I wasn't so concerned with pristine picture quality. In the end, I went with the EyeTV EZ purchased from [Other World Computing](http://www.macsales.com/). UPDATE- Elgato recently announced an EyeTV 250 with hardware encoding that will sell for \$199.00 <http://www.macsales.com/>.



I opened up the box and found a very small tuner appropriately colored white and silver. My only beef with its appearance is the cheesy looking BRIGHT orange logo and writing on the top of the tuner. There was also a USB 2.0 cable included to connect the tuner to the computer, a remote control, software CD, and a proprietary connector that plugs into the front of the tuner allowing a user to record from video devices using an S-video cable or composite audio/video.



At the rear of the tuner are the plugs for the USB 2.0 connection and also the coaxial cable connection.

Setup

Setting up the Mac mini was truly an easy experience. I connected the Mac Mini to my Sony television using the [DVI-S-video adapter](http://store.apple.com/1-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppleStore?productLearnMore=M9267G%2FA) <http://store.apple.com/1-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppleStore?productLearnMore=M9267G%2FA> and pressed the power button. I would have liked to have connected the Mac Mini to my television via component video cables, but as of this date, I can't seem to locate a confirmed DVI to component video adapter that will work with my setup. If anyone knows of such a solution, please email me at chamady@mac.com.

A few moments after turning on the computer, I was happy to see the familiar Apple logo on my television's screen as Mac OS X began to boot for the first time. After going through the typical OS X setup process, I copied my iTunes and iPhoto libraries from my dual processor G4 to the miniStack and changed the iTunes preferences to look there for the iTunes library. One important item to note: the Mac Mini is CRAZY FAST. In almost every task it is much faster than my dual processor G4 1.33 GHz, and even seems faster than the 20 inch iMac G5 2.1 GHz that I use at work.

Setup- audio

I connected the Mac Mini audio output to the audio inputs of my Sony TV using a cable with an 1/8 inch mini plug at one end (connected to the Mini), the other end (connected to the television) via red and white RCA composite connectors. I used a second composite audio cable to connect the television's audio output to my Denon surround sound receiver. I used this configuration for two reasons.

First, I've had my receiver since 1997. While the audio quality is very good, the receiver lacks modern connections like optical inputs that support Dolby 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound (optical audio supports multi-channel surround sound and has much less noise in the signal when compared to analog). Secondly, by connecting the audio receiver to the television's audio output rather than the Mac Mini's, users can also take advantage of the audio system while watching regular television broadcasts (using cable TV directly and foregoing the Mac Mini and Elgato EyeTV EZ).

If you are interested in connecting your Mac Mini to a surround sound receiver with an optical input, you will need a toslink audio cable and adapter. You can buy one here:

[Belkin PureAV Digital Optical Audio Cable with Mini-Toslink Adapter](http://store.apple.com/I-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppStore?productLearnMore=TA968LL%2FA) (Apple Store)
<http://store.apple.com/I-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppStore?productLearnMore=TA968LL%2FA>

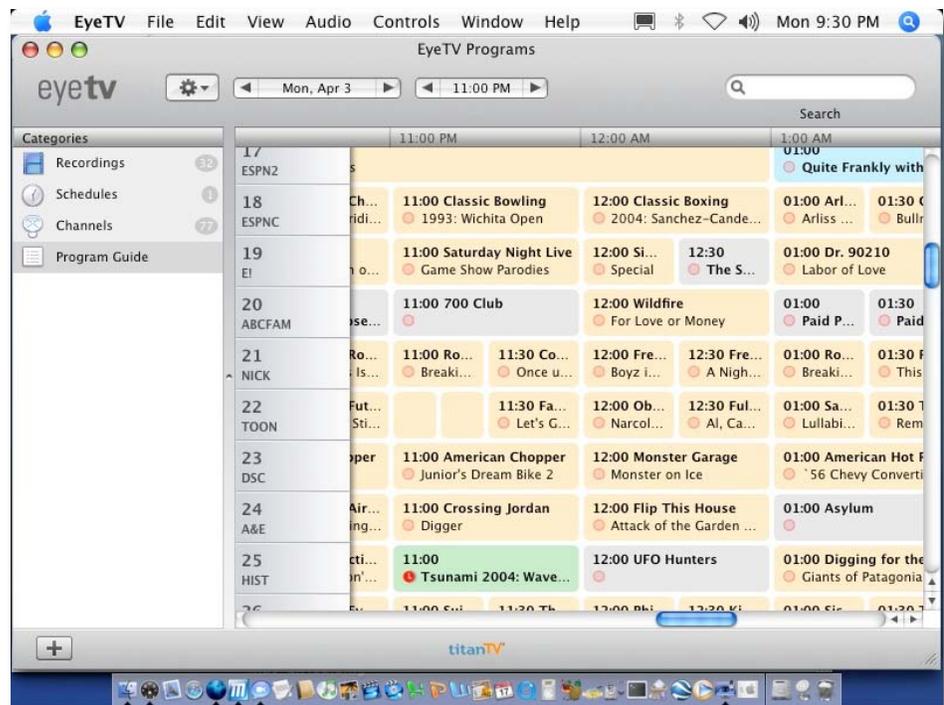
More information on this topic can be found on EveryMac.com and Macintouch.com

PVR

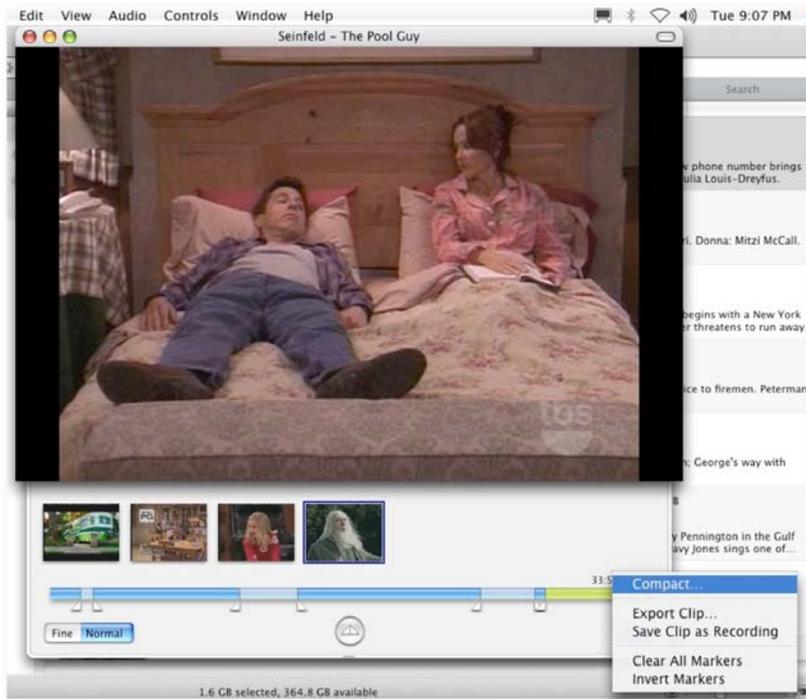
I connected the EyeTV to the Mac Mini using the USB cable, and went to elgato.com to download the latest EyeTV software. It was at this point that I experienced my first and only hurdle. It seems that the software that was included with my EyeTV EZ was not only a MUCH older version than what was currently available, but the included license code would not work with the latest universal binary build.

I installed the software found on the included CD, set it to use the miniStack as its storage drive, and faxed my invoice to Elgato to request a free upgrade. The included software was functional, but I found that recording content at medium quality was eating up a very large portion of the dual core processor cycles due to the fact that it was working through the Rosetta PPC emulation environment. The next day, I received an email from Elgato tech support with a download link to the latest build, as well as a new registration code for the universal binary. Unlike the older version of the EyeTV software, the universal binary used much less of the available processor to record at even the highest possible quality. Click <http://homepage.mac.com/chamady/MacMiniReview/elgatoexample.mov> to see an example capture that was encoded using H.264 at 29.97 frames per second. I'm pretty much blown away by the quality of the recorded video.

Part of the install process included setting up a [Titan TV](http://TitanTV.com) account. The Elgato software uses Titan TV to list the available programs of your cable provider, as well as allows you to schedule recordings remotely. Once you log into the Titan TV website and select a program to record, the EyeTV software installed on your computer will automatically check the website to see if you have scheduled a recording. If you have, the show will be recorded, even though the recording was scheduled remotely while away from the home.



When I am at home, I have the ability to navigate through a grid of available programs, and the ability to schedule a recording with one click of the mouse. In the picture below, the program with the bright red dot is scheduled to be recorded.



The included remote allows you to begin recording a program with the press of the record button.

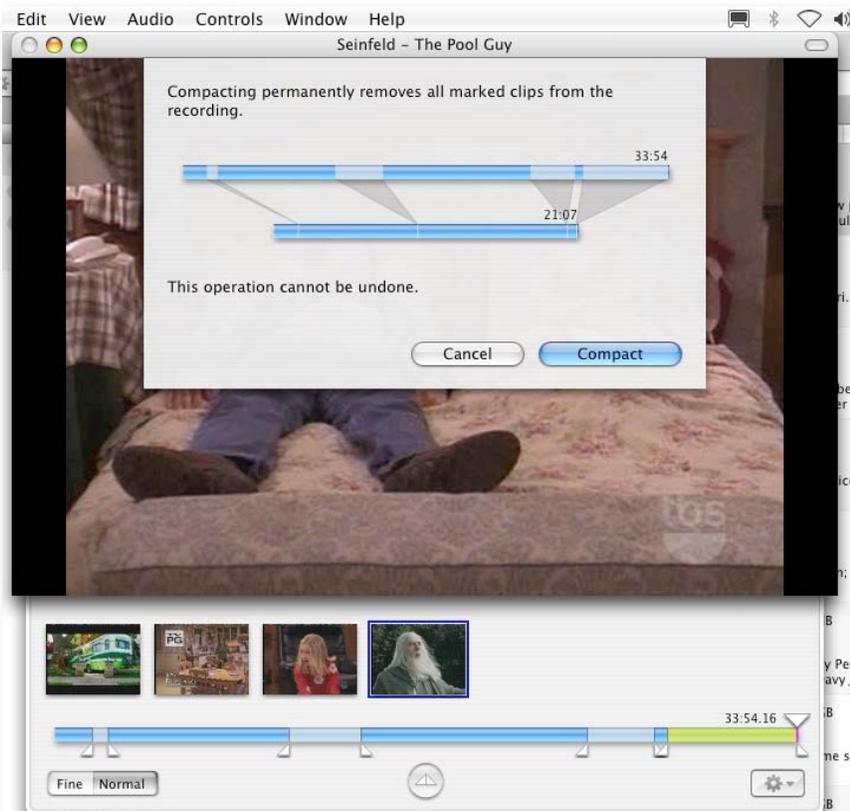


Once your show is recorded, you can remove any commercials using the editing tools built into the software. They aren't exactly Mac-intuitive, however. Rather than selecting a region and pressing the delete key, you select a number of regions to delete and then choose some unusual command called, "Compact."

It works as advertised. After you have your shows edited commercial-free, you can export to video iPod with the click of a single button. You can also pause live television. While the program is playing, simply press the record button, and then the pause button. Pressing the pause button a second time will begin to play the program from the point where you left off.

DVDs

In order to rip all of my DVDs into iTunes for use in Front Row, I used [HandBrake](#). HandBrake will take your DVDs and convert them to video files using either mpeg4 or H.264 codecs. Using the default settings in HandBrake (which I recommend) a typical DVD will take up between 500 to 1000 MB of hard drive space.



You can find HandBrake here:

<http://handbrake.m0k.org>

Ripping your DVDs using the default settings will result in a file that can be played back in full screen on your television, as well as on a video iPod. The quality is very good on the TV, but not perfect. If you want better quality, you might try experimenting with ripping using the H.264 codec.

After you rip your DVD, simply drag the resulting video file to iTunes. Once iTunes adds your video file to the iTunes library, that video will appear in Front Row under the "Movies" heading, as well as be available for transfer to a video iPod.

Final

Here is a picture of the final setup including a wireless Microsoft keyboard and mouse. While I'm not a big fan of most Microsoft software products, they make pretty good hardware.

CONCLUSION

Having used this setup now for the past 3 weeks, I have to say that I am completely and utterly blown away by every aspect of this experience. The only thing that I would change about this setup would be to have the EyeTV portion of this package fully integrated into Front Row. Here's a prediction- I'm guessing that Apple will purchase Elgato in the near future and do just that. Having Tivo-like integration in their "media center" experience would completely finish off this product.

In closing, I would have to say that the best part of this project was being able to enjoy this entire experience in the world of Macintosh true plug and play. At no point during the project did any of the components not function as expected. This is why I use my Macintosh computers to their fullest, and I rarely turn on my Windows PC anymore. Time is precious. Apple is concerned with improving my quality of life. I appreciate that, and I applaud it.



If I had to rate this experience, it would be as follows:

Apple Mac Mini Core Duo	10
Newer Technology miniStack	10
Elgato EyeTV EZ	10
Other World Computing	10
Performance	10
Overall satisfaction	10

UPDATE: Windows XP

I wasn't sure that I should put this into my review or not, but I had the feeling that there might be a few people who wondered if I had tried to install Windows XP on my Intel Mac Mini. Today my OEM copy of Windows XP Professional arrived from <http://www.newegg.com>. It cost \$139.00. I downloaded [Boot Camp](http://www.apple.com/macintosh/bootcamp/) <http://www.apple.com/macintosh/bootcamp/> and the required [firmware update](http://www.apple.com/support/downloads/macminiearly2006firmwareupdate101.html) <http://www.apple.com/support/downloads/macminiearly2006firmwareupdate101.html>. I updated the firmware, and created the Windows driver disk using Boot Camp. When I tried to create my Windows partition, Boot Camp told me that I needed to boot my computer off of my original OS X system CD and repair some directory errors. I did as instructed, but when I tried to reboot the computer off of the Windows XP install CD, no video showed up on the television via the S-video adapter. I ran upstairs, grabbed an old PC monitor, and connected it to the Mini. I forced it to restart again and was greeted with the Windows Setup screen. After Windows finished its installation process, I inserted Apple's Windows driver CD into the Mini, installed the Windows drivers, and set a static IP address. I rebooted the computer connected once again to the television via the S-video adapter. It detected the TV and booted up properly in Windows XP.

Long story short, my daughter sat next to me for nearly an hour playing Thomas the Tank Engine on the Mac Mini in Windows XP. Before I let her play, however, I patched my Windows install, turned on auto-updates, and downloaded and installed:

[Firefox](http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/) <http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/>
[AVG anti-virus](http://www.grisoft.com/doc/1) <http://www.grisoft.com/doc/1>
[Spybot Search and Destroy](http://www.safer-networking.org/) <http://www.safer-networking.org/>

I also turned on terminal services in the system control panel so that I could connect to the Mini remotely from my laptop if I needed to. Microsoft provides the free [Remote Desktop](http://www.microsoft.com/mac/otherproducts/otherproducts.aspx?pid=remotedesktopclient) client application <http://www.microsoft.com/mac/otherproducts/otherproducts.aspx?pid=remotedesktopclient> via their [Mactopia](http://www.microsoft.com/mac/) website <http://www.microsoft.com/mac/>. The startup disk control panels in each OS provide you with an easy way of choosing the OS you would like to boot into. Long story longer, Windows runs on this Macintosh with less trouble than I have seen from traditional Wintel vendors.

Other Reviews

[Giga Designs Dual Processor 1.33 GHz G4 Upgrade](http://homepage.mac.com/chamady/DP133Review/) <http://homepage.mac.com/chamady/DP133Review/>

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Apple and the Press Revisited

by Gene Steinberg

One thing is certain and that is that Apple maintains tight-fisted control over information about the company. When it comes to new products, the entire marketing process from press release, to contacts with media and ads, is carefully orchestrated. And the results have usually been highly successful. Product announcements that would be routine at other companies garner big headlines in major online and print publications around the world.

In this environment, members of the press are treated equally, but some are treated more equally than others. This means that a precious few favored reporters, generally from such publications as The Wall Street Journal and Time magazine, will get stories about new products and review samples ahead of the rest of the pack. It's not so much a case of discrimination, but wanting to get the maximum impact as the marketing machine spins into action.

Of course, Apple doesn't always control when those publications appear in print with their news about the product in question. When the so-called flower pot iPod appeared, for example, its release had to be moved up one day to coincide with Time's Monday publishing schedule. This may not be such a big issue, except for the fact that the usual Tuesday morning keynote at a certain Macworld Expo had to be rescheduled to Monday. I imagine that hotel and plane schedules were seriously disrupted as a result, but remember this is Steve Jobs and Apple.

In such a heavily-controlled environment, Apple grudgingly tolerates reports that speculate about its new products. In fact, when Steve Jobs demonstrated the GarageBand component of iLife '06 in otherwise somewhat tepid performance during the Macworld Expo keynote in January, he created his own Podcast containing some "silly" Apple rumors. He was making fun of something that often vexes the company and has brought out the legal eagles on a number of occasions.

Several Mac sites have been honored with cease and desist letters from Apple's legal department when they publish the wrong photos or other information that discloses information that's too close to the truth about a new product. As part of a lawsuit against unknown defendants bearing the collective name of "John Doe," they even subpoenaed records from several sites that present rumors about future products, which has caused a furor that has not died down.

Suddenly sites formerly known only to rabid readers of Mac-related information, such as AppleInsider, PowerPage and Think Secret, garnered worldwide attention. As a result, Harvard undergraduate Nick Ciarelli, known to fans of Think Secret as Nick de Plume, suddenly found his real identity and his photo published around the world. All this for allegedly publishing what Apple regarded as "trade secrets" about new products.

Now the real goal of Apple's legal quest was the identity or identities of the people who supplied the information, and it has resulted in major legal skirmishes. A lower court's ruling that these sites have to produce e-mail records that may disclose the names of people who broke Apple's confidentiality agreements is under appeal right now, and the matter may drag on for months or years before it is finally settled.

There are several issues, one of which is whether the online writers in question are really journalists, or live in another realm known these days as bloggers. That issue, however, has begun to fall by the wayside, as even the anchors of network TV's nightly newscasts are now encouraged to present their reviews online. The remaining issue is how far a company can go to unearth information about leaks of what it claims are trade secrets.

The product in question, given the code-name "Asteroid," was supposedly a breakout box for Apple's GarageBand, which would allow you to connect different instruments and other gear, using a Mac's FireWire port. One of the stories even presented supposed illustrations of Asteroid, even bearing a telltale confidential-type label, which indicates that the source of the information may well have been someone who does or at least did work at Apple.

One of the key questions is whether Apple is asking those sites to serve as its investigative arm in finding the snitch. The company claimed that some 25 employees were under the microscope, but stopped short of deposing them under oath or giving them lie detector tests to discover the truth. Understand that lie detector test results are not admissible in court, and some people boast they can defeat such examinations. Even if not totally reliable, however, perhaps they would have helped Apple hone in on potentially deceptive personnel, and, in presenting the incriminating evidence, would have gotten some confessions. It would have been strictly an in-house inquiry, and the outside world wouldn't be involved.

During that session before an appellate court earlier this month, Apple claimed they'd act the same even if the story had appeared in a major publication, such as, perhaps, The New York Times. Maybe, but I rather think that the Times, despite its lapses in recent years, would not have reproduced the actual plans for the proposed product, a product that, to date, has not even been released.

That indeed may have been the straw that broke the camel's back. Regardless, I feel some sympathy for both sides. In today's competitive environment, premature disclosure of a new product or service could unleash a rash of low-cost knock-off products before Apple can get the real thing out. That could hurt its bottom line. At the same time, reporters have a right to report the news. But they shouldn't be encouraging company employees to break the law and deliver secret information about new products.

There is an exception, of course, and that's the whistle blower who reveals the truth about something that can affect our health and welfare. However, a connection device for music recording software doesn't fit into that category except, perhaps in the unlikely event that it would, under some circumstances, emit a foul odor that can make people sick. But in the real world, nothing of that sort is happening at Apple and it is entitled to protect its information.

Just as much as reporters have the right to attempt to find out what it might be developing. But they still have to be careful about how they receive the information and take a little care about how it is published.



Mac ReviewCast

<http://www.surfbits.com>

Freeware of the month

by Tim Verpoorten

This month was a bundle of activity for us at the MacReviewCast.com and Surfbits.com. It was our one-year anniversary for the podcast and we've added several new editors at Surfbits.com, but I found time to bring you a plethora of great Mac Freeware. Of course, you know it's easy to do when you have an OS with the great developers that the Mac does. So without further delay, let's look at the freeware I found this month that I wanted to share with you.

DashSaver

<http://highearthorbit.com/software/dashsaver>

I'm going to tell you the two things I never use on my Mac, a screensaver and Dashboard. Now if Dashboard was a little handier to use and take advantage of, maybe I'd be interested. Screensavers are just for looks since there is no real need for them. But what if a screensaver would utilize the widgets in dashboard? That's where Dashsaver comes in; DashSaver is a screensaver that resides in the iDesktop & ScreenSaver preference pane. When DashSaver is selected as a user's screensaver, the dashboard is displayed and the users desktop is hidden. Do you find you are under-utilizing one of the best new features in Mac OS X Tiger, the Dashboard? Then this is a great little app for you. It's not always convenient to bring up the Dashboard just to see the weather or some RSS feeds. However, imagine your computer showing you that information after you leave and come back? As you sit back down you can quickly glance over a wealth of information and tools before getting back to work. This app may be handy enough to make me start using both screensavers and Dashboard.

Virtue

<http://virtuedesktops.sourceforge.net/>

I've talked about several virtual desktops in the past, here's another one that has a lot of options you can play with and a great looking GUI. Plus it's based on the DesktopManager application that I think so highly of. Virtue is a virtual desktop manager for Mac OS. It offers features, eye candy and configurable options that no other desktop manager on the mac has added yet, and is under active development. As you may, or may not already know, a virtual desktop creates several screens which each act as a different desktop. In other words you can have a desktop with your email and chat on it, then another with Photoshop, and another with your browser windows, the options are endless.

If you use a lot of applications at a time, or like to keep windows opened and buried 3 apps deep, then a virtual desktop manager is just what you need. As the old saying goes, try it, you'll like it.

Pinki

<http://www.mkd.cc/pinki>

Pinki is a menu bar item that creates permanent Mac OS X icon thumbnails for image files based on their image content. Just highlight an image file and from the Pinki menu icon, choose create thumbnails, and the selected files will now have permanent icon thumbnails that never have to be re-processed. Pinki can also remove custom thumbnails (restoring icons to their generic state) as well as save thumbnails as separate .icns files. Pinki will make thumbnails for JPG, GIFs, PNGs, TIFs, PDFs, PSD, QuickTime images, Apple icon images, windows bitmaps and more. So if you want your image icons to be the image themselves rather than generic icons, this app is what you need.

Pic-a-POD

<http://www.troz.net/Pic-a-POD>

Here's another handy little utility. I love to change my desktop backgrounds. I don't know why, but the backgrounds on a Mac just seem to look so much nicer and I found a few spots to get good backgrounds. With Pic-a-POD I never have to worry about it again. The application downloads the picture of the day from 4 different websites, Natl. Geographic, Astronomy, Earth Science, and Wikipedia. You can schedule the time or day for downloading and even when and where the application will change your desktop background to one of the daily pictures. It comes with a picture previewer and browser to scan through all the downloads and themes allow you to select a color scheme or even design you own. If you like backgrounds, this app is a perfect fit for you.

Easy DMG

<http://www.blackbirdblog.it/progetti/easy-dmg>

This is a simple drag and drop .dmg creator. Just drag files or folders onto EasyDMG and an image file is created with the same contents. There are several other methods to create dmg files, but this is simple and goof-proof.

PDFLab

<http://www.iconus.ch/fabien/pdflab/#intro>

PDFLab lets you split and join PDF documents as well as insert images and blank pages. You will also be able to easily create PDF documents out of several images. Its usage is really simple. You add your files in a list, select the pages you wish to include, order them the way you want and create a new PDF document. PDFlab also ships with tools that let you quickly split a document into many documents, (one document per page or one document for odd pages and one for even pages), encrypt or decrypt a document, add a watermark, interleave several documents. If you play around with PDFs, editing them, creating them or even breaking large ones down to smaller sized PDFs, this is a great program to have in your arsenal.

AbiWord

<http://www.abiword.com>

AbiWord is a free word processing program similar to Microsoft Word. It is suitable for typing papers, letters, reports, memos, and more. AbiWord is rapidly becoming a state of the art Word Processor, with lots of features useful for your daily work, personal needs, or for just some good old typing fun. Enjoy your favorite Word Processor on the operating system you like to use - be it Windows, Linux, QNX, FreeBSD or Solaris, and of course OSX.

AbiWord has been designed to integrate perfectly with the operating system it runs on. It will take advantage of the functionality provided by the system, such as image loading or printing capabilities. What use is a Word Processor when you can't share your documents with your friends? AbiWord is able to read and write all industry standard document types, such as OpenOffice.org documents, Microsoft Word documents, WordPerfect documents, Rich Text Format documents, HTML web pages and many more. Give your document that professional, scientific or fun-to-read look using AbiWord's advanced document layout options. Use tables, bullets, lists, images, footnotes, endnotes and styles to enhance the way your document looks. Since not everyone in the world speaks the same language, AbiWord comes in many different languages. AbiWord is available in most common and many not-so-common languages.

Make sure your document contains none of those nasty spelling errors by using AbiWord's built-in spelling checker. Dictionaries exist for over 30 languages. AbiWord supports right-to-left, left-to-right, and mixed-mode text. This means that in addition to supporting European languages, AbiWord supports languages like Hebrew and Arabic as well. I could on and on about the features in AbiWord, but the best thing for you to do is download it for yourself, the price is right.

Next we look at another powerhouse freeware application that's really a suite of apps.

SeaMonkey

<http://www.mozilla.org>

Web-browser, advanced e-mail and newsgroup client, IRC chat client, and HTML editing made simple -- all your Internet needs in one application. The SeaMonkey project is a community effort to deliver production-quality releases of code derived from the application formerly known as "Mozilla Application Suite". The main focus of the Mozilla Foundation is on Mozilla Firefox and Mozilla Thunderbird, Seamonkey volunteers work to ensure that you can have "everything but the kitchen sink" and have it stable enough for corporate use. The features of Seamonkey are too numerous to mention here, but remember, it's from Mozilla.org, so you know it's a quality suite of applications.

Now we're going to change gears and talk about Tetris. When the original Tetris came out back about 1988, it was an immediate hit. Since that time there has been tons of imitations, but few that made you want to switch from the original. Now there's an alternative.

Quinn

<http://www.stud.tu-ilmeneau.de/~siha-in/quinn.html>

Quinn is an implementation of the popular arcade game Tetris, written specifically for Mac OS X. It features a neat user interface, perfectly integrated with Aqua, and a smooth look and feel for best user enjoyment. The goal was not to reinvent Tetris with yet another modification of the rules, but to stick close to the original implementation. Still there's everything one might expect including a personal high score for each player, configurable keys, and network play with Bonjour support. It's just plain beautiful, it's just plain Mac.

Next let's talk about several freeware utilities that I found, they are small programs that do just one thing, but do it very well.

DVFileDateCM

<http://www.trixsoftware.com/DVFileDateCM.html>

DVFileDateCM is a contextual menu plugin that allows you to quickly and easily see the recording date and time of a DV file from the Finder. No need to open any other app. Just a click on the menu. In a matter of seconds see the Video's Name, length, time and date created. Control-clicking on multiple DV files brings up one submenu item allowing a copy to clipboard of information for all DV files selected.

Speak To Me

<http://iumnevermind.spymac.com/>

This is a great little AppleScript application. Just type what you want for your computer to say, and then select the voice for it to say it in, and hit speak. It's simple, free and fun. Saves you from opening larger and slower apps. Just type and your Mac talks.

ClipEdit

<http://www.everydaysoftware.net/clipedit/index.html>

ClipEdit is a small application that allows you to create and edit text and picture clippings. Yes, you heard correctly, edit clippings! ClipEdit also exports any internet address to an internet clipping. Picture clippings can be zoomed and cropped and text clippings can be edited like a normal text file. If you use clippings frequently you'll wonder how you lived without ClipEdit for so long. Being written in Cocoa, ClipEdit allows you to style & edit text with all the features you'd expect in a complete text editor. ClipEdit also allows you to import and export text and image files. ClipEdit is able to print text and picture clippings. It also features graphic import and export features, for easy conversion of any picture clipping you may have. Drag and drop friendly, ClipEdit makes adding text to clippings a snap.

Picture Switcher

<http://homepage.mac.com/darkshadow02/apps.htm#picswitch>

Picture Switcher is a background application that will put a menu on the right side of your menu bar to switch desktop pictures. It has most of the options of the Desktop preference Pane, and does not need the Finder to be running to work. Fast and simple to use, that's what makes it so much fun to use.

Whatsize

<http://www.id-design.com/software/whatsize/index.php>

WhatSize is a simple tool that allows the user to quickly measure the size in bytes of a given folder and all subfolders and files within it. You would be surprised at how many useless files might be laying around on your hard disks. The files and folders are automatically sorted by size, with the biggest sizes first.

While the app is measuring a folder the user can browse the files within that folder and immediately see the size in bytes. Hidden files, cache files, directories will all show up with their corresponding size. This application is similar to NeXTSTEP, DarkForest.

Once the measuring of a folder has ended the user can also view the information by filtering for particular file sizes or types. The user can also move unwanted files and folder in the corresponding Trash bin similar to the Finder's Delete button.

Next, you all know that I think AdiumX multi-client chat program is a great solution for Mac users chat needs, now you can take it along with you.

Portable Adium

<http://www.freemug.org/portableapps/adium>

Portable Adium is the multiprotocol Adium instant messaging client that can connect to AIM, MSN, Jabber, Yahoo, and more, packaged as portable application so you can carry around with you on any portable device, USB thumb drive, iPod, portable hard drive, memory card, other portable device (also on your internal hard disk) as long as it has 24 MB of free space and use on any Mac OS X computer, taking your contact list, emoticons, message stiles, plugins, scripts, sound and users with you. No matter where you are, you can get to your chat clients and keep in contact with your friends and business partners.

Snail Mail

<http://nixanz.com/products/snailmail/>

Snail Mail is an envelope addressing and printing application which interacts directly with the Address Book database in Mac OS X 10.2 or higher. Its primary function is to quickly address and print single or multiple envelopes based on entries in the Mac OS X Address Book database. Batches of envelopes can be based on Address Book groups, or ad-hoc lists of addresses. Snail Mail can print barcodes for more efficient mail handling. Snail Mail can also be used to print address lists which the Address Book cannot do in Mac OS X 10.2.x.

Journler

<http://journler.phildow.net>

Sleek, simple and powerful, Journler is a daily notebook designed to help you organize your thoughts. Read more. From AppleScript support to audio and video recording, from smart folders and wikistyle linking to iPhoto, iTunes, email and Address Book integration, Journler is a professional application for creative thinkers and writers.

Journler's extensive support for document and entry linking as well as its ability to import many different kinds of data also makes the program an excellent information manager, especially when you need to add notes and comments to that information. This application is similar to several shareware programs for the Mac, but with one added benefit, it's free.

PocketMac for Blackberry

<http://www.pocketmac.net/products/pmblackberry/index.html>

Now you can dependably and stably sync your BlackBerry device with your Mac. PocketMac For BlackBerry is the first program to allow Mac users to sync their crucial data between their BlackBerry device and Entourage, Address Book, iCal, Now Contact, Now Up-To-Date, and even Stickies. And it's fully integrated with iSync as well! Best of all, thanks to Research In Motion® (RIM®) (designer and manufacturer of the BlackBerry device) licensing

PocketMac for BlackBerry, it's free for all BlackBerry users! If you have a BlackBerry and a Mac, PocketMac For BlackBerry is the perfect tool for you!

Earthview

<http://earthview.ione.ch/index.html>

EarthView is a small application that displays the current day/night cycle of the earth using OpenGL. It uses textures made from satellite images for the day and the night side to make it look realistic.

The view location (i.e. the angle from which the earth is seen) can be customized either using a preferences dialog or by command-dragging the earth. The floating window, which displays the earth, can also be made translucent and the brightness of the night side can be changed.

Couppa

<http://www.nathanatos.com/software>

Are you a tea drinker? If so, this app may be just what you needed. Cuppa is a small application for Mac OS X to time your cup of tea as it steeps. Tired of leaving your tea too long, to become bitter and cold, or drinking it too soon and not appreciating its full potential? Then this utility is for you! Use it from the Dock: just right-click or control-click on Cuppa's icon and select the beverage you are brewing. Or select a beverage from the Beverages menu.

Cuppa will begin timing the brew, and you'll see a teabag appear in the cup and gradually darken as the tea steeps. When the tea is done Cuppa will attempt to get your attention by various configurable means. You can also enable a countdown timer that's displayed in the dock icon.

Reel Bean

<http://js8media.com/reelbean>

ReelBean is a media exporter and player, offering many features that are only available in QuickTime Player to users of the Pro version. A key feature of ReelBean is the ability to convert your movies from many different formats to the video iPod format.

ReelBean offers support for exporting your movies to many of the most popular formats. As well as using ReelBean to convert your existing movies for the video iPod, you can export movies to many other common formats including AVI, MPEG-4, high definition MPEG-4 (H.264), 3GPP (for movies on mobile phones), digital video stream, image sequences and QuickTime movies.

ReelBean also allows you to play streaming media delivered over the Internet. Streams could come from a live source (e.g. a webcast, audio feed, video camera or streaming server.)

ReelBean offers other pro-like features such as displaying detailed movie information and properties panels, as well as the ability to select and edit parts of your movies and save them to new files.

ReelBean runs on Mac OS X 10.4 (Tiger) and is available now during the trial period as a full-featured free download, and the full version will be available for \$10. SO download it now while it's free.

Gimp

<http://gimp-app.sourceforge.net>

The GIMP is the GNU Image Manipulation Program. It is used to edit and manipulate images. It can load and save a variety of image formats and can be used to convert between formats. GIMP can also be used as a paint program. It features a set of drawing and painting tools such as airbrush, clone, pencil, and paint brush. Painting and drawing tools can be applied to an image with a variety of paint modes. It also offers an extensive array of selection tools like rectangle, ellipse, fuzzy select, Bezier select, intelligent scissors, and select by color. GIMP offers a variety of plugins that perform a variety of image manipulations. Examples include bumpmap, edge detect, Gaussian blur, and many others. In addition, GIMP has several scripting extensions, which allow for advanced non-interactive processing and creation of images. To put it in simple terms, Gimp is a freeware Photoshop type program. If you need a free solution to your graphic needs, look no further than Gimp.

I also wanted to remind you of a great backup solution that's free and has been updated last week, I mentioned it before, but it's just so easy to use and handy, I want you all to download it and try it out for yourself, it's called;

BackityMac

<http://www.whimsplucky.com/whimsplucky/Software/FCE42CDC-64CD-4A4D-93BD-F5999A31046F.html>

Have you ever wanted an easy way to backup all the important files in your home folder? Let's say you just want to backup your Apple Mail database file, now all you have to do is click the "Apple Mail" checkbox and click "Backup". Supported files include:

- * Apple Mail Files
- * iCal Calendars
- * Safari, Firefox, Camino bookmarks
- * iWeb website files
- * Full home folder backup
- * MS Entourage Files
- * Address Book database
- * iPhoto and iTunes Libraries
- * Home Documents folder

This new version added an important feature, CD/DVD burning. This includes burning an image to CD, DVD and Dual-layer DVD. Images that are bigger than the inserted media will be segmented and spanned across multiple discs, images that fit on the inserted media will be burnt straight to disc. Also, Backing up a home folder now requires an administrator password, and they added ability to cancel operations using command+period.

Shadowkiller

<http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/shadowkiller>

This is from the great Mac developers at Unsanity. ShadowKiller removes window and menu shadows in Mac OS X. This changes the look of Mac OS X completely, and speeds up its operation for slower Macs (such as G3). ShadowKiller will toggle all shadows when the application is launched, and immediately quit - for smoothest possible integration with Login items and less clicking around! ShadowKiller is now a Universal application, working natively on both PowerPC and Intel based Macintoshes.

ScreenCleaner Pro

<http://www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/freebies/>

Over time, your LCD or CRT monitor will gradually fade in brightness and contrast. This fading is inevitable, because the backlights for LCD screens eventually fade, and the photo-reactive substrate on CRT monitors eventually degrades.

ScreenCleaner Pro rectifies this situation by altering the gamma of your monitor to compensate for monitor degradation, so it will look as good as new. Don't toss out that old monitor, just run ScreenCleaner Pro on it, and watch your old monitor gain a new life.

Simply let ScreenCleaner Pro run in the background, and it will automatically analyze your monitor's gamma curve and relative luminescence. After enough calibration data has been collected, ScreenCleaner Pro will adjust your monitor to like-new condition.

The analyzation/calibration process can take up to 10 minutes, but you can work normally while ScreenCleaner Pro is analyzing your monitor; simply let it run in the background.

Civil Netizen

<http://www.civilnetizen.com/>

Civil Netizen is an innovative file transfer program designed to simplify the way you send and receive your digital content with 100% privacy. No longer will you have to deal with the hassle of setting up FTP servers, shared drives, hosting accounts, large email attachments, or 3rd party websites. Built on the Mozilla Firefox platform and secured with 128-bit AES encryption, Civil Netizen offers you the peace of mind that your personal content will securely arrive at your intended destination. With Civil Netizen, the power to move your large digital parcels is in your hands!

Just pack your parcel content by drag and Drop, folders, files, anything. Then send a pickup slip as text or via IM to another Civil Netizen user (Windows or Mac), they can then pickup the parcel by pasting your pickup slip into Civil Netizen. They unpack the parcel content on their end and you can track the parcel to know when it gets picked up.

iWebsites

<http://mistergregg.com/cocoadrillossoftware/iWebSites/iWebSites%20Home.html>

When Apple introduced its clever iLife web design software, iWeb, they left out one important feature: the ability to load and save multiple web sites. There isn't even an open menu item under the File Menu! You can create multiple sites that are somewhat independent of each other, but they still exist as one file (iDomains.sites) and cannot be separately uploaded onto different web servers or into different .Mac accounts.

iWebSites rectifies this by manipulating the files in the directory where iWeb keeps its website files, and allows users to have multiple websites that are completely independent of each other. iWebSites creates new sites, duplicates sites you already have, sets the default site for iWeb, and allows you to delete sites. Hopefully, Apple will include this feature in subsequent releases of iWeb, but until then please enjoy this little application, iWebsites.

MultiAlarm

<http://semaja2.net/>

Have you ever left your iBook/PowerBook on your desk at work, or at home on the kitchen table, and walked away and turn around to see someone taking your iBook/PowerBook and using it? Well, this application will annoy those that do and alert you. When activated simply move the iBook/PowerBook away from the axis it was on when it was activated, and your iBook/PowerBook will now sound a alarm and flash your screen. I bet your family or co-workers only do that once.

In the same vein,

Wimp

<http://www.greenkeepersoftware.com/wimp/en/index.html>

Have you ever planned on accessing a remote computer only to find that the IP address had changed since you last checked it? Let a Wimp rescue you! Wimp is a very simple program, which helps you keep tabs on your computer's IP address. Wimp runs a small program in the background, which sends an e-mail to the address of your choice whenever the IP address changes.

Though not the original intention, Wimp can also act as a very crude theft recovery mechanism. If installed on a computer that is stolen, Wimp will continue to e-mail you with an IP address whenever the thief connects your computer to the internet. Presumably, law enforcement agencies can then use this information to get the precise location of your computer.

Here's an entertaining little program called;

Fish

<http://oriol.mine.nu/software/fish/>

Fish is an aquarium simulator. It allows you to add fish to an underwater environment and customize them. Fish show complex behavior. You can feed them, see their evolution as they grow, use different cameras to track them, and save different aquariums for later use. Fish can also be shared with others over the local network using Rendezvous.

Don't worry about your fish; they are saved when you leave the application...

Let's look at a few more free utilities;

Time Out!

<http://www.dejal.com/timeout/>

It is very easy to fall into bad habits when using a computer for hours on end. You care about what you are doing, so you can sometimes push yourself too far, or burn yourself out. The human body isn't built to sit in one position for endless hours, gripping a mouse or typing on the keyboard. Dejal's Time Out! is here to help. It will gently remind you to take a break on a regular basis.

Time Out! has two kinds of breaks: a "Normal" break, typically for 10 minutes after 50 minutes of work, so you can move about and relax, plus a "Micro" break: a very brief pause of typically 10 seconds every 10 minutes, so you can remember not to tense up over long periods. You can disable either kind of break if desired, and the breaks are automatically paused when you go away from your computer, and can be reset when you come back.

More Internet

<http://www.monkeyfood.com/software/moreInternet/>

More Internet is a System Preferences pane that uses Internet Config to allow you to choose which applications are set as helpers for internet protocols (i.e. which application will be chosen to handle which URL.)

Apple's own Internet Preference Pane only allows you to set Mail and Web applications - More Internet allows you to change (or add/remove) any of the internet protocols.

iPhoto Batch Enhancer

http://www.feroxsoft.de/ibe/index_en.html

iPhoto Batch Enhancer is a tool to make using iPhoto a little bit simpler. All you do is choose the photos you want to make changes to, then tell iPhoto Batch enhancer what changes you want it to make and all the photos are enhanced at once.

Finally I wanted to mention a utility called;

Namely

<http://amarsagoo.info/namely/index.shtml>

Namely is possibly the fastest way to open applications. And unlike some other launchers, it doesn't require any learning. You simply activate it using your preferred keyboard shortcut, start typing part of an application's name and see a list of matches as you type. Most of the time, one or two letters are enough. In fact, Namely learns your habits and makes your most-used apps even quicker to access over time. It's basically Spotlight for applications, only much faster, and highly addictive. If you feel that Quicksilver or Launchbar is more than you need, give Namely a try.

That's it for this month. Do you think I'll find any freeware left to talk about next month? I think so.



Macsimum News

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No one making money on digital music? Give me a break

by Dennis Sellers

It's ironic seeing Apple as the 800-pound gorilla these days. Not in computer sales, alas, but in the digital music biz. In fact, some folks are saying that Jobs & Company are the reason that no one is making money in the downloadable tunes industry.

In a [column](http://www.thestreet.com/yahoo/tech/gamesandgadgets/10279448.html) for the *The Street*, <http://www.thestreet.com/yahoo/tech/gamesandgadgets/10279448.html> senior writer Troy Wolverton posits this question: the online music business is booming, but is anybody making real money at it? Competition, marketing expenses, a faulty business model, slow-changing consumer attitudes and the use by some companies of music as a lure to sell other goods and services have all conspired to keep the business largely in the red, he says. And that's not likely to change due to Apple's dominance of the digital music market, Wolverton says.

"It's a long-haul business right now," Aram Sinnreich, managing partner of Radar Research, a Los Angeles-based consulting firm, told *The Street*. "It will be at least three years before anyone can make a serious profit selling digital music," largely because of the hold that Apple has on the market. And even then, Sinnreich says, making money will require some serious changes in the way consumers are buying online music.

"Nobody will ever make money from selling 99-cent downloads" as Apple does through iTunes, he says. "There's not a margin in it."

Regardless, companies are certainly seeing huge growth in digital music sales, as Wolverton notes. The Recording Industry Association of America, for instance, estimates that the U.S. retail market for digital downloaded songs and albums grew to \$503.6 million in 2005 from \$183.4 million in 2004. The RIAA estimated that U.S. consumers spent another \$421.6 million on ring tones and other mobile music content last year and some \$149.2 million on music subscription services. This boom has contrasted sharply with the overall music industry, where retail sales fell about 0.6% last year to \$12.27 billion.

Many analysts see subscription services as the long-term future for the business, because they offer greater margins and recurring revenue. Chris Gorog, Napster's CEO, estimates that the margins for subscription services are "four times" greater than those for individual downloads. But the iPod's success is holding back subscription services "to a tremendous degree at this point," Sinnreich told Wolverton.

As I've mentioned before, I personally don't think subscription services will work in the long run. In the U.S. (and I can't speak for other parts of the world), we're used to "owning" our music. That's a paradigm that won't change any time soon. Let me explain what I mean by "own." I realize that the songs on the varied albums in my collection (which range from the Statler Brothers to Elton John to Green Day) were created and truly belong to those artists, I own the physical media on which I purchased those albums and the rights to play the music on them. That is, the CDs are mine, as are any songs I buy at the iTunes Music Store. Since I own them, in this aspect, I can listen to the music on any device I wish: my iPod, my Mac, a CD player, etc. Though the music subscription approach has grown somewhat in recent years, most music fans have chosen to buy songs by the track or the album.

And, like it or not, Apple is selling LOTS of songs and albums via the iTunes Music Store. As CEO Steve Jobs noted in celebrating the fact that the iTMS had sold a [billion songs](#): “I hope that every customer, artist and music company executive takes a moment today to reflect on what we’ve achieved together during the past three years. Over one billion songs have now been legally purchased and downloaded around the globe, representing a major force against music piracy and the future of music distribution as we move away from CDs to the Internet.”
http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/itunes_music_store_sells_one_billion_songs/

I don’t expect CDs to disappear anytime soon, but digital music is obviously booming. A billion songs sold and no one is making money? C’mon, that’s hard to believe. Maybe some parties aren’t making as much money as they’d like, but if songs are selling and piracy is indeed being diluted, then it’s a win-win situation for everyone.

Thoughts? Write me at [daseller at earthlink.net](mailto:daseller@earthlink.net)



Music and the Mac

<http://www.ilovemymacthesong.com/> Copyright ©2006 Daphna

How to get Hooked

by Daphne Kalfon

Okay, I knew that would get your attention :) So far in this column we've talked about music creation techniques, file swapping, audio effects plug-ins, virtual instrument plug-ins, lyric writing and most recently, the basics of film scoring, all of which I have framed around Apple's GarageBand.

What is at the core of all this however, is the music. It doesn't matter how many tips, tricks and techniques you know, how adept you are at sound editing and audio effects manipulation or how knowledgeable you are about lyric writing or film scoring, if your music doesn't do anything for the listener. The music, in the end, is what makes the headlines, and nothing can or will make up for a weak song, or a weak piece of music. This is very important to keep in mind if your main intent is to communicate something meaningful to your listeners. Whatever you learn about the internal workings of music itself will carry you further than anything else in your music-making journey.

I touched on this very topic - on the importance of a certain basic understanding of music - during my interview of April 19th on the MyMac.com podcast with Tim Robertson and Chad Perry. Be sure to tune in if you get a chance. I think we all had a good time!

So this month's installment will focus on the most important element of all in the art of music creation: the music! And more specifically, on the core element of any song - its hook.

If you're not familiar with the term "hook", here is a brief explanation. "Hook" is a term widely used in the commercial songwriting world. More often than not, it is what is still left playing in your head after the song is over, and this can happen sometimes even in cases where you didn't even like the song in the first place. It is very annoying when the latter happens of course, but as I'm sure we've all had that experience at one time or another, you now know what a hook is! It's that part of the song that stays with you, that grabs you and won't let go.

While I'm at it, I should also mention the word "riff" which is closely related; a riff is a short repeated phrase, frequently played over changing chords or harmonies or used as a background to a solo improvisation. Sometimes just the riff of a song, if catchy enough, will become the song's trademark.

I guess the best example of a hook would be commercial jingles. They are designed specifically to stick in your head and stay there, whether you want them to or not, and anytime you even just hear the hook, without necessarily seeing anything, you immediately think of the product behind it. If that happens, then the jingle writer has done his or her job.

There are different kinds of hooks, to be sure. The most commonly known and used hook is simply the chorus of any song. The chorus is the part of the song that contains its main message; it is usually the climax to the song, the payoff. A good chorus is one that is totally and instantly understandable, simple, easily remembered and that touches the heart and feet. The hook is usually comprised of the title of the song, both of which will invariably be somewhere in the chorus, sometimes in the first line of the chorus, sometimes in the last line.

As I mentioned in January's column on lyric writing, variety is key. As important as it is that your lyrics have changes in density, meter, and rhyme scheme, the same holds true for the music: changes in the music's intensity, volume and texture will help people to better absorb your message and most importantly, to remember it. Instead of simply repeating your chorus over and over again, try techniques such as duplicating, alternating, contrasting and developing your melodic ideas. These are compositional techniques that can greatly add to the staying power of any chorus or hook.

Then there is the hook that is purely instrumental; by that I mean that there are no words attached to it, as there are in my first example. These instrumental hooks may not even have any connection to the main vocal melody, but rather stand apart on their own. If these are well constructed and placed strategically in the song, they can make just as much of an impact on the listener as any chorus.

Of course having both types of hook in a song will give the song just that much more impact and staying power.

Then there is the case where the lyrics of the song are so communicative and powerful that long after the song is over, you may have forgotten what the melody was, but some of the lyrics are still playing over and over in your mind. This is known as the story line hook. This may be more common in country songs because that genre places a heavy emphasis on storytelling style lyrics. In my short experience of studying country music, I quickly came to realize just how difficult it can be to do that kind of writing well, and just as quickly I developed a newfound respect for that genre.

Moving on, there is something called the production hook. This refers to the things that you put into your song: the sounds you use, the instruments you use and their various combinations. Between real instrument sounds, electronic sounds of all kinds, sound effects, and sounds you can simply record yourself and modify as you like, there is an infinite variety of sonic combinations possible.

It is important to be aware that certain kinds of sounds can evoke particular emotional responses in the listener, so be sure to use sounds and sound combinations as another artistic tool in your music creation process along with lyrics and melody, to create the mood and emotional feeling you are after. The most powerful hook in this category could be the sound that no one has heard before, something new that you've created yourself and that is also a good fit in the song that you are writing.

With easy access for most of us these days to the recording technology available, production is something to which one must give serious consideration in the whole songwriting process. As I mentioned earlier however, it is equally important not to make this particular item of the process - production - your entire focal point, because this will not and cannot, by itself, create a memorable song or piece of music that people will want to listen to again and again.

If you're feeling really ambitious, you can make up your own songwriting assignments to help you work on honing your hooks (sorry, I just couldn't resist). For example, you could study the hit songs of one of your favourite artists, and then based on what you have learned about the stylistics particular to those songs, try to write that artist's next "hit single". As you study the songs, keep in mind all the factors that I mentioned earlier that make up a hook, be it the chorus, an instrumental hook, the lyrics, a riff, whatever, and try to incorporate those things into the songs that you will write.

To be clear, I am not saying to simply copy what you hear, or plagiarize, as that could get you into very muddy waters, but instead, to incorporate those elements that you learn work well in a song, and adopt them in your own songwriting process. If you make this a regular exercise, you may well find yourself on your way to not only writing better songs, but to an endless new source of ideas for your own songwriting.

If you would like to learn more about this, much of the information in this column was gleaned from John Braheny's book "The Craft and Business of Songwriting" and is available at bookstores everywhere.

To visit **John's website**; www.johnbraheny.com

Musings From Mars

<http://www.musingsfrommars.org>

Web-Based Collaborative Editing: Twiki, Tiddly, or TikiWiki?

by Leland Scott

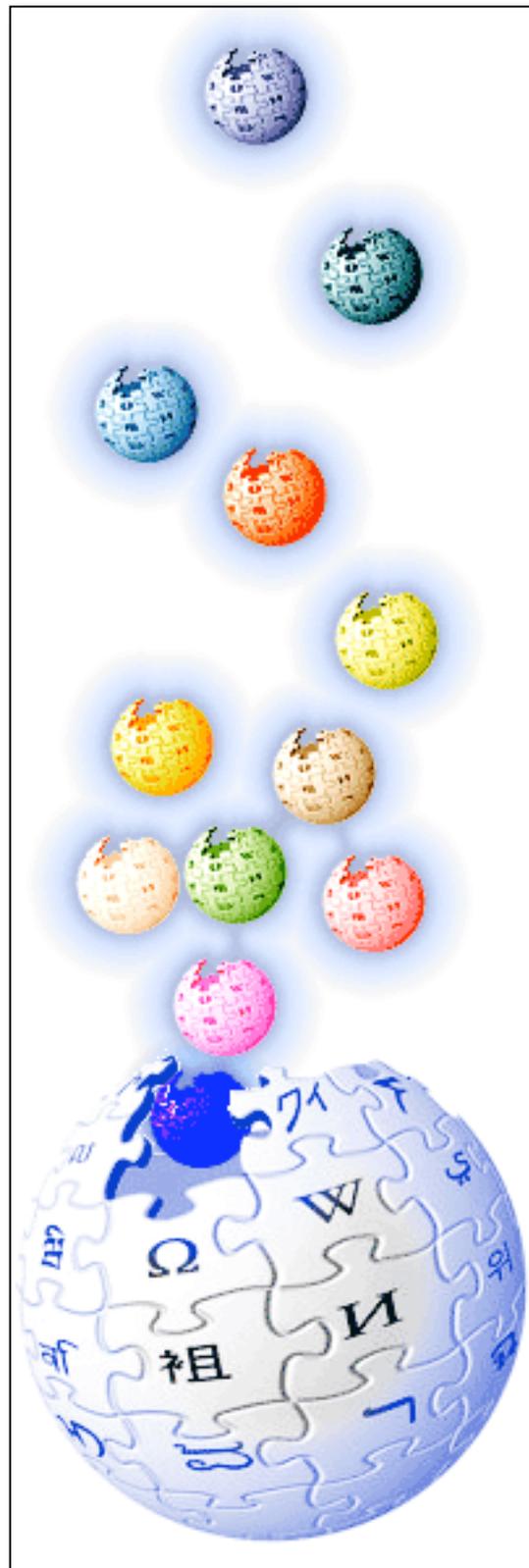
I spent a few weeks in December 2005 investigating the universe of wiki software, and confirmed what I already suspected: It's a very big universe with many wikis! It would be impossible to explore them all, so I first tried to come up with a short list of wiki engines to focus on. Fortunately, there are a number of excellent sites that attempt to provide matrices of wiki software functions and abilities. Here are a few I used and recommend:

- Good reviews of wiki software at **onLamp.com**, a site devoted to open-source LAMP products.
- This is a very thorough “**choice tree**” for wikis.
- **Splitbrain**, which makes **Dokuwiki**, has a **good comparison page on wikis**.
- Best of all, don't miss the new **Wiki Matrix** website, which evolved from a static HTML table matrix last fall.

After studying these various resources, I was able to narrow the list of wikis down to the following:

- **MediaWiki** (my default choice)
- **PMWiki**
- **UseModWiki**
- **phpWiki**
- **Dokuwiki**
- **TikiWiki**.

MediaWiki was the default choice, since I assumed it was probably the best of the lot, given its starring role in powering **Wikipedia** and just about every other high-profile wiki you encounter on the web. After a painless default installation of MediaWiki, I had the usual MediaWiki shell and did a few quick walk-throughs of the structure just to make sure all the plumbing was in place. It seemed to be, so I proceeded to install a few of the others from my short list.



In fairly quick succession, I installed Dokuwiki, PMwiki, and Tikiwiki, reviewed their documentation and capabilities, and did some basic configurations. They all seemed to be reasonably good, but none was noticeably superior, at first glance, to my initial configuration of MediaWiki. It seemed to make sense to stick with MediaWiki, given its large market share and equally large mind-share.

So, over a period of about 2 days, I began trying to configure MediaWiki to do some things beyond its default behavior—things I knew would be needed to provide a useful wiki for my target, non-technical clientele.

What a mess! I had spent 2 solid days without accomplishing much of anything toward setting up the desired wiki, which by the way was intended for use by a Federal organization that was interested in testing the use of wikis for developing and maintaining standard operating procedures for its divisions and branches.

Here is a summary of the problems I encountered with MediaWiki:

1. Basic help on structured wiki markup was not available from within the software. In fact, no help files were loaded by default. Users are expected to create their own help pages.
2. Basic help on structured wiki markup was not available from within the software. In fact, no help files were loaded by default. Users are expected to create their own help pages.
3. The software's documentation is terrible. The main problem is that there are so many sources of information, you get conflicting instructions. Many of the conflicts have to do with the various versions of mediawiki (1.3, 1.4, 1.5, etc).
4. Creating simple navigation is quite difficult. One approach to navigation is to use "sub-pages," but then forming links is tricky, and the page names include their parents by default. In other words, the relationships are discovered strictly by naming. Using piping, it's possible to make the link text look OK, but the titles on the pages are another issue.
5. MediaWiki includes no basic, web-based administration tools at all. In fact, there's no detection of sysadmin capability at all in the interface. To change the links in the Navigation box, for example, it turns out (after hours of hunting) that you are supposed to change the text in a page called Special:Allmessages. Not exactly intuitive, and it's set up by default so as to be editable by anyone.
6. Another useful navigation feature—breadcrumbs—don't exist, and they can't be created without custom coding. (There's an extension for this, but it only works in an older version of MediaWiki.)
7. Skinning is also very difficult compared with the other wiki software I had looked at.
8. A basic requirement for this project that I understood was not natively wiki-like was the need for some basic authentication and the ability to write-protect certain parts of the wiki tree for different groups. MediaWiki has a plugin for authentication, but it turns out that anyone who has administrator privileges can edit any part of the tree, and that wasn't going to be sufficient in my security-conscious Federal agency.

After this experience, I decided to return to the drawing board, and take a second look at the short list packages. I also added a new one: **Twiki**. It's written in Perl and uses flat files, but appears to be much more "mature" than some of the others.

In general, my impression after working with these various software packages is that wiki software is not nearly as "mature" as blog software. I was looking for an open-source wiki that would be as powerful as **WordPress** is in the blog world, while also being as easy to design, configure and administer as WordPress.

Twiki wasn't much better, and neither was **MoinMoin**, which I also ended up checking out (even though MoinMoin is written in Python, and I had no Python programmers to call on). Despite much positive press, MoinMoin has the same deficiencies as other wiki software. And what are those?

Basically, wikis were developed for use by programmers as a way of sharing information on software projects. They developed around a culture of highly sophisticated hacker-types who didn't need a lot of hand-holding when it came to navigation. The main concern was to allow rapid development of pages on a new topic, with automatic links to pages that hadn't yet been written (but which needed to be written). Wikis were designed to grow organically, as one writer filled in the blanks in another's page by adding information to it through hyperlinks, or as multiple writers contributed to fleshing out the details on a particular topic. In both cases, the result was to produce a decentralized information resource that relied primarily on search for finding things.

On Wikipedia today, it's become clear to those "in charge" that strong editorial oversight is needed to keep a wiki useful. For one thing, wikis don't automatically understand synonymous terms. One person may write a page that has a link to a new page called "WikiSystems", and another may already have filled in a page called "WikiSoftware." Unless someone were watching "from above," you could end up with two pages that covered pretty much the same ground.

Also, notice the terms "WikiSystems" and "WikiSoftware." In wikis, the default way of linking is to write new pages in what is known as "camel case." Two words "munged" together, each having an initial cap. Wiki software is designed to recognize camel-cased terms and to automatically hyperlink them. Again, this is useful in its original conception, but it's not particularly intuitive for a nontechnical user base such as you would find in most business or government organizations.

Another shortcoming that many wikis don't handle well is authentication. Most wikis are designed to allow content editing by anyone. Most also allow administrators to restrict editing to registered users only. However, the ability to restrict access to certain pages to only certain people is not a native ability in most wiki systems. Before I get around to describing the software I ultimately selected, I want to include my impressions of a few commercial software packages that have developed in the last year in an attempt to feed the growing market for wikis in corporate Intranets. One of the most well-known is Jotspot, an outsourced wiki system that can be purchased for a monthly fee. **Jotspot** is probably the most advanced wiki of this type, although since December there have been a fairly large number of newer entrants to the field, and it's possible that Jotspot has some good competitors by now. Jotspot is actually more of a full-blown Intranet than a wiki. Indeed, it shares this characteristic with Twiki, which branches out way beyond the central wiki functionality. Besides being a wiki, Jotspot (and Twiki) comes with a large number of plug-in applications that can be used for various Intranet functions (e.g., Project Management, Bug Reporting, Company Directory, Knowledge Base, Call Log Management, Blogging, Group Calendaring, Meeting Management, Polls and surveys, Personal to-do lists, etc.) The hosted version has a reasonable price tag, maxing out at \$199 a month for unlimited users.

Jotspot also has an enterprise version for companies that want to host the software themselves. I set up a test wiki at Jotspot, and although it definitely has a lot to offer, it also isn't nearly as configurable as one of the open-source packages. In addition, I felt certain I could find a perfectly good wiki package for my target organization without investing a lot of money.

Another impressive, hosted wiki-like system is **Backpack**, and I also set up a test there. However, Backpack is designed to work best as a personal wiki, rather than for collaboration. The same company also makes a web application called **Basecamp** that looks like an ideal solution for project management uses, but is not designed for documentation or knowledge management—the two main uses that this pilot wiki would be put to.

And if anyone was interested in a personal wiki, I don't think you could do much better than **Tiddlywiki**, an amazing, rich-web interface "wiki on a stick" that literally packs all of its information into a single portable file. It works an amazing amount of magic that could possibly be useful collaboratively, but that is designed to work best for individuals.

Finally, I looked at Projectforum, a commercial package that the customer was interested in. It turns out that **Projectforum** is not a wiki system, actually. Rather, it's a discussion forum package (there are hundreds—possibly thousands—of such packages) that is trying to leverage the buzz around the term "wiki" and RSS.

JotSpot Wiki hosting		
Try any plan free for 30 days		
	Company	Workgroup
Maximum users	Unlimited users	Unlimited users
Maximum pages	Unlimited pages	1000 pages
Monthly price	\$199 ⁹⁵	\$69 ⁹⁵
	+ sign up	+ sign up
	Unlimited pages. Enough for an entire company.	Unlimited users. Limitless possibilities.
Per user access control	✓	✓
Secure data encryption (AES-256 bit SSL)	✓	✓
Domain mapping (use your own domain)	✓	Available for \$50 / year
Attachment size limit	10MB	10MB
Included Support (additional plans available)	Standard Plan	Standard Plan

The critical difference is that a wiki is primarily a content management system, not a system for user discussions. MediaWiki uses the term “collaborative editing,” because wikis typically have built-in discussion forums for each piece of content that gets added to the wiki. For example, if I post a Standard Operating Procedure on designing a website, readers would have the ability to create a discussion about that SOP. Also very important is the ability for users to interlink content into a growing content tree, producing in the end a very useful knowledge-base of information on a given topic.

Projectforum doesn't have those features, and is missing other standard wiki features as well. As its name implies, Projectforum is actually designed for project management rather than content/document management, and it excels at the collaborative discussion part of project management. In that sense, it is similar to Basecamp.

So after this market review, I had almost concluded that no wiki was really yet up to the challenge I was hoping to put it to, when I decided to try a relatively new, little known package called **Wiclear**. After reading through the website documentation, I tried to quell my growing excitement, because on paper at least, Wiclear was designed to overcome all of the shortcomings that were so obvious in all the wikis I'd tried.

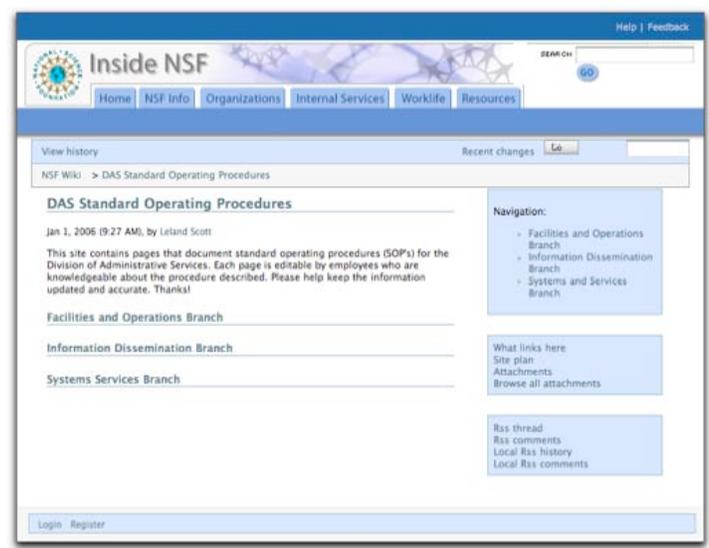
Developed by a French programmer and modeled after a French blog system called **Dotclear**, Wiclear shares with nearly all other wikis the virtue of being open-source. Meaning, I can freely download the source code and install it. Wiclear is written using PHP, an increasingly popular web programming language, and the open source database MySQL. Since I happen to have some expertise in both, I felt comfortable with the prospect of possibly having to tweak the system to my requirements.

Indeed, after only 3 hours of work, I was able to configure Wiclear with all the basic requirements:

- Apply a customized style sheet
- Customize the section navigation
- Customize the page elements
- Customize the heading
- Set up test users
- Enter test content
- Set up appropriate help documentation for a wiki-nubi.

Compared with my experience with the other wiki software—in particular, with MediaWiki, Wiclear was very easy to work with. Furthermore, Wiclear had the following required features, some—but not all—of which were available in one or more of the other wiki systems.

- Browser-driven installation.
- Web administration interface.
- Easy templating.
- Hierarchical page structure enforcing parent-child relationships between pages.
- Individual page access controls through use of industry-standard ACL's (access control lists); the system provides an easy web-based interface for setting per-page permissions.
- An automatically generated “site plan”—site map—for navigation.
- Automatically generated “breadcrumbs”.
- Automatically generated “sub-page navigation” (showing all child pages to the current one).



- Registered users can add comments about any page, whether they are the author or not. (This feature is configurable and is in fact a standard feature of most wiki systems.)
- Users can attach external files to individual pages (a relatively rare wiki feature, but one that I was sure would be “oohed and aahed” at by my customer base.
- Enables user self-registration, and provides flexible User/group management tools.
- Provides a “Post New Content” feature that’s unique in wiki’s, but extremely useful for adding new content to the tree.
- Usual features that made wikis so popular for collaborative editing in the first place:
 - Page history
 - Comparisons with and rollback to earlier pages
 - Subscriptions by email
 - RSS feeds
 - List of recently changed pages
 - Search
 - “What links here” feature
 - Simple editing system for easy content entry (with optional HTML entry), as well as an optional preview capability

Further, if my customers were ever to require the ability to support multiple languages, they could turn on one of Wiclear’s most impressive features: built-in multilingual support.

Wiclear has a clear, well documented code base, and with my knowledge of PHP and MySQL—plus HTML, CSS, and JavaScript—I was quickly able to add a few custom features that I thought my customers would appreciate. The first was a simple WYSIWYG HTML editor that would give our writers the comfort of having Word-like editing tools in place. For this, I chose **Dojo**’s excellent **DHTML, rich-text editor**, which is one of the few that supports Safari on the Mac as well as all the other usual suspects (Mozilla/Firefox and IE). The Dojo editor is a breeze to set up, and works beautifully. It doesn’t “do tables,” but my pitch to users is to keep the text structure simple, so hopefully nothing more complicated than headings and nested lists will be needed.

The second tweak that might be of interest to readers was a default setting to automatically subscribe an author to the page he/she has written. This ensures that anyone who authors a page gets notified whenever it has been changed. (You cannot opt out of this feature, but you can always unsubscribe.) I hope this will take care of the worry over unauthorized edits, since it will be hard to not know when “your” page has changed, and quite easy to go in and fix any errors.

The author of Wiclear has steadily continued to improve the product. There have been 3 new releases since I installed Wiclear in late November 2005. In fact, the author has incorporated at least one of the features I requested after my initial configuration—namely, the ability to define a “root” page that could be ACL-protected against accidental damage. This was kind of important to give my customers the necessary comfort level to know that their part of the tree wouldn’t be uprooted someday, either advertently or inadvertently. I actually hand-coded the hack into Wiclear at the time, but the software’s author had finished integrating that function by January.

So far, I’m very pleased with my choice, and still relieved that I didn’t have to back out of the idea of testing the wiki waters for collaborative editing. Next comes the more difficult part—convincing users that this is a tool that can work for them rather than simply another complication to their working lives. Fortunately, there are several forward-thinking groups in the agency that are anxious to try the wiki out. I was delighted to set up the first group with their own branch of the wiki tree, and look forward to getting their feedback.

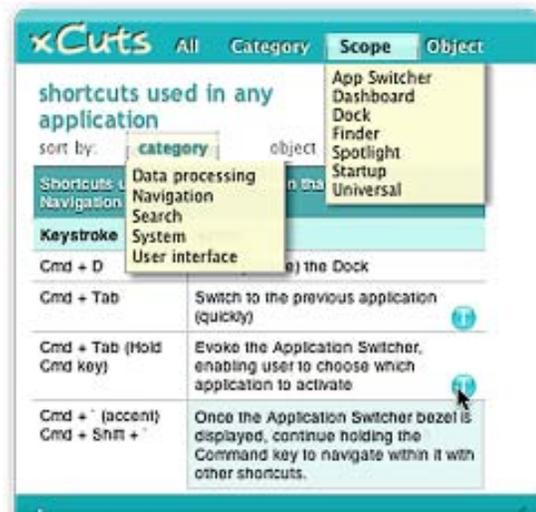
In a dumbed-down form appropriate for non-geeks, Wikis have great potential to be a key knowledge-management solution for a lot of content management problems in an organization. I think with Wiclear I’ve set up a foundation that won’t scare people away without even giving it a try, and that, in my organization, would be called a victory!

xCuts Dashboard Widget: Tripping the Light Script.aculo.us

by Leland Scott

I've been writing **for some time now** about the kinship between Apple's **Dashboard Widgets** and web pages. I've recently written **a time or two** about Ajax and the various wonderful dynamic HTML (DHTML) JavaScript libraries that are now available to web developers. And when I first starting compiling the lists of available Ajax/DHTML JavaScript libraries, I was planning to grade Apple's Widgets library along with all the rest. In explaining why I didn't, here's what I wrote last month about Widgets and DHTML pages:

*It's interesting that 2 months after an Adaptive Path essay coined the term "Ajax," Apple released Mac OS X 10.4 "Tiger", with its amazing and powerful dashboard widgets system. Within a couple of months, there were over 1,000 widgets available on the web, and these little babies were capable of completely replacing (almost all for free!) a number of system utilities, menubar items, and whole applications on the Mac. I'm tempted to think that awareness of Apple's widgets helped promote awareness of, and interest in, what could be accomplished with rich Ajax/DHTML toolkits. After all, widgets are simply little Ajax/DHTML programs running in a special layer of Mac OS X called the Dashboard... They use exactly the same technologies as all of the Ajax/DHTML libraries, and in fact you can run them inside of Safari outside of the Dashboard.**



And so, it was fitting that when I finally found time to work on **xCuts**, a widget I'd been planning to build since last summer, I decided to use one of the leading Ajax/DHTML toolkits rather than Apple's own, for most of the widget's functionality. Having done most of my recent DHTML web work with **Prototype** and its light-hearted, freewheeling sidekick, **Script.aculo.us**, I naturally turned to those libraries to help me out.

Whenever I use script.aculo.us, I invariably get carried away and overdo the cool effects. (Witness this website!) But I do only use the effects when you're supposed to—namely, as a visual cue to the user that some page content has changed. Without this visual cue, content can change so fast and smoothly on an Ajax page that users may not realize anything has happened... especially if they're expecting the link they clicked to cause a page refresh that never comes. As an example, consider **this link**, which replaces this paragraph with different text stored on the server.

See what I mean? Even though your eyes were actually on the content that changed, the difference was so subtle you might have missed it. Now take a look at the lists of articles and news items in my navigation panels in the sidebar. Without Ajax, one list would give way to another so similar-looking that you might not notice. On the other hand, if you add an effect or two to the change, it's impossible to miss. For example, **try this link**, which replaces this paragraph with another one from the server.

Now, having said all that, my primary failing is in going overboard with the effects. Rather than one simple yellow-fade, I prefer a yellow-fade combined with a slide-down, or perhaps a slide-down combined with a scale-up. But hey—don't blame me! Blame that elvin genius Thomas Fuchs, who keeps thinking these things up. Why, just this week he published **an article explaining how to do custom effects**, as if the ones that come with script.aculo.us aren't enough! If you've looked at this library, you know that what I'm saying is true. In addition to some powerful **Core Effects** (opacity, scale, moveby, highlight, and parallel), script.aculo.us comes with a series of **Combination Effects**, which are built using the core ones. In fact, it's the "Parallel" core effect that makes this magic possible, allowing a developer to mix and match the core effects as much as their time and imaginations permit.*

But that's not all! I haven't even mentioned the possibility of using Callbacks, Transitions, and Effect Queues to fine-tune your effects... As much as I'd like to, I don't have time right now to go into a full tutorial on the script.aculo.us effects, but fortunately, the [script.aculo.us wiki](http://script.aculo.us/wiki) is bursting with useful demos, reference documentation, and sample code to study. I usually start at the wiki's **All Pages** view, which links to pages describing all the script.aculo.us functions, most of the relevant prototype functions, and all the demos and other documentation as well.

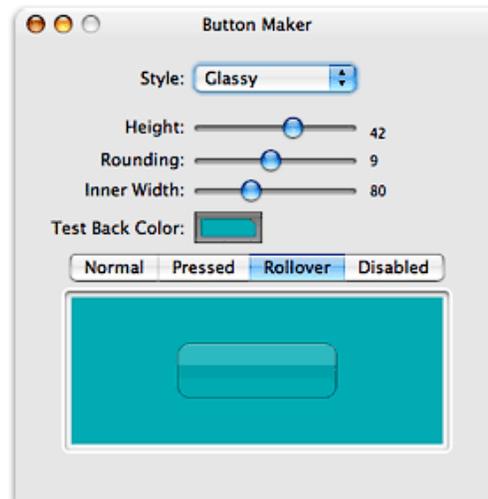
So I approached building the new xCuts widget as if it were basically a little web page that uses prototype and script.aculo.us to work its Ajax magic.*** Besides the animation, effects, and basic Ajax server calls, the widget incorporates the very popular live search form, which is my first implementation. It was actually surprisingly easy to build using prototype's `Ajax.Update` function. Speaking of the search, the input element implements **Apple's HTML extensions**, which were actually developed as part of Dashboard but can be used on any website as well. Using them, you can surprise Safari-toting visitors to your website with nice, rounded search forms... you know, the ones with the little magnifying glass filling one end and the spiffy focus, blur, and clear bits Mac OS X users have come to expect from native Cocoa apps. Though they are non-standard, these extensions do no harm to other browsers and merely enhance the web experience for WebKit users.

In addition, at the last minute I found the great **DOMinclude** library from Chris Heilmann, which came in handy to add the "i" supplemental information about certain shortcuts. Here's a case where DHTML (Chris would prefer we start referring to it as DOM scripting, and he has a point, but habits are hard to break...) can come to the rescue: How can you present a lot of information on a keyboard shortcut in a compact space? There are always trade-offs in such a design, but I try to focus the user's attention on the primary bits of info and provide secondary info in an opt-in format of some kind that doesn't detract from the presentation or otherwise draw too much attention to itself. As I saw it, I had three options:

1. *Squeeze the "other info" data column in either a third column of the lists, or as a second paragraph in the second column.* The first option ended up squeezing the first two columns too much, which seemed silly since only a few shortcuts need the third column. The second option mingles the "other" info column with the "action" column, which may not be appropriate in many cases. It also makes the whole list longer than necessary.
2. *Use DHTML to slide in the "other info" data as a new row, just beneath the row for its shortcut.* This would have been an effective choice, but was going to take a bit more custom programming and would have caused the whole column to shift up or down a lot, which seemed a bit ungainly.
3. *Use traditional DHTML tooltips.* Searching for a tooltip I liked is what led me to Chris Heilmann's elegant solution. Before finding it, I was spending way too much time considering all the permutations of possible scripts, time that also involved learning how the script's code was implemented and ensuring it was compatible with the other JavaScript functions in the widget. I ultimately bookmarked a **handful of "tooltip" scripts** that made the final running, but decided **DOMinclude** was perfect for my needs here. Besides its unobtrusive JavaScript foundation, I like the way it emulates the visual appearance of Apple's Dictionary **service**.

Another spoonful of "syntactical sugar" I threw into the pot was Justin Palmer's CSS **event:Selector** script. On Mars, I have been using **Behaviour.js** to enable unobtrusive, CSS-event-driven JavaScript functions, but then a month ago a leaner, more powerful script appeared that immediately synched with my brain. As Palmer says, `event:Selectors` are better integrated with Prototype, so the corresponding event rules require fewer "words." In addition, they are more flexible, and presumably faster as well. So, I decided to try his script out in building xCuts rather than Behaviour, and I have to say it has an excellent aftertaste! As soon as time permits, I'll rewrite the CSS Behaviour-style rules on Mars as `event:Selector` rules. The transition is easy, since, as Justin notes in his blog article, "Behaviour was the inspiration for `event:Selectors`," and as such it adopts a similar syntax.

For convenience, I did use the Apple libraries for the flip animation and for the scrollbar and drag animations. Of those, the only one you really need the Apple libraries for is the flip animation, although the JavaScript **cube animation script** that Kava.net published recently could possibly be a replacement if you're willing to accept a more jaggedy visual. Another area that prototype and script.aculo.us aren't particularly strong in is scrollbars... they have no native function for them. On Mars, I've cobbled together a thin scrollbar for the navigation "panes", but I went with a native OS scroll function in the "News Article" window that materializes in the middle of the page because it allows mousewheel scrolling and is much simpler to implement. I could do that with a Dashboard widget, too, but in this case native scrollbars can kind of ruin the look.

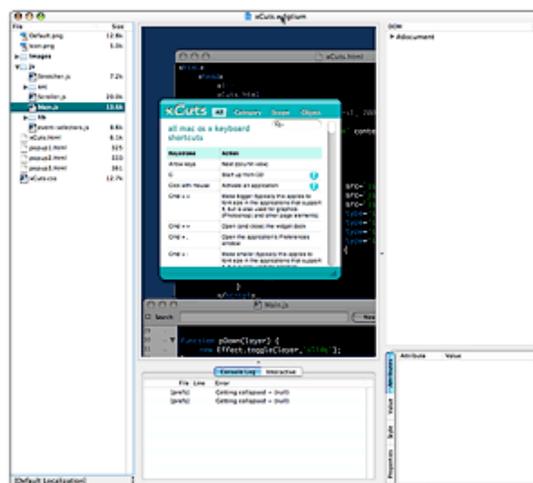


One small note is that as I got the widget built out I wanted users to be able to copy and paste from it if they chose. Looking around, I noticed that nearly all Dashboard widgets only had text-selectable sections in form fields. That's because the onmousedown function that lets you drag widgets around the Dashboard also prevent the widget from understand a "copy" style mouse drag. I finally found one or two widgets that overcame this, and a quick visit to the Apple Dashboard docs revealed that the proprietary CSS code that implements the drag function is DOM-element-specific. In other words, though most developers seem to go with the default example code Apple provides, which applies the "-apple-dashboard-region" style to the whole face of the widget, you can instead restrict the region to whatever parts of the widget you want to be draggable. Cool.

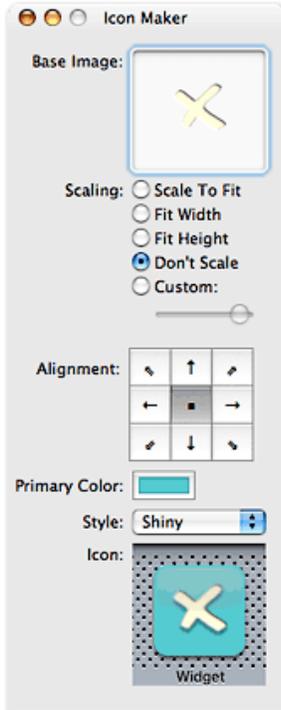
For a back end, I had originally hoped to use **Core Data**, but I just didn't have the time to learn how to access Core Data with JavaScript, and Apple doesn't provide any roadmaps. Core Data would be ideal for this, but instead I fell back on existing skills and just set up a MySQL table and wrote a PHP page to access and format the data. Because of this, you won't be able to use the widget when you're disconnected from the Web. I still hope to transition it to Core Data in a future update, mostly for the learning experience. On the other hand, with the database maintained remotely, I can easily continue to update the data source without having to publish new versions of the widget. Particularly in the first few months—when I have a lot of data I still want to add—that's probably a good thing!

So... what did I use to build this widget? Gather round, and I'll share this secret with you. Shhhh!! Here it is: Find a widget you like, and use its code as a starting point.

As I pointed out last summer, one of the best things about building widgets is also one of the best things about building web sites: It's all open-source code, and most developers release under free and open licenses that don't make you feel like you're stealing if you borrow a function here or there. That was certainly the case with one of my favorite widgets, **SeeSS**, a great CSS reference widget. Besides being at my fingertips when needed, I love this widget because it curls up into a tiny ball when you're done, taking very little screen space. I also admire its overall layout and the fact that you can resize it as needed. By the time I was done, there really wasn't very much of SeeSS left, but it was a great way to jump-start my work and gave me a nice framework to build from.



Tools? Definitely **Widgetarium** from Gandreas Software. I used this program for my first widget last July, and it has grown seriously more powerful since then. First of all, Widgetarium is great because you can start a project by choosing “File/New Project from Widget...”, after which you simply browse to any widget on your system, and select Open. Widgetarium automatically builds a new project for you from the components of that widget, including all image files, scripts, other source code, and—most conveniently—the XML .plist files without which the widget won’t work in Dashboard. After that, you can start tinkering with the code as you please without, of course, affecting the original widget.

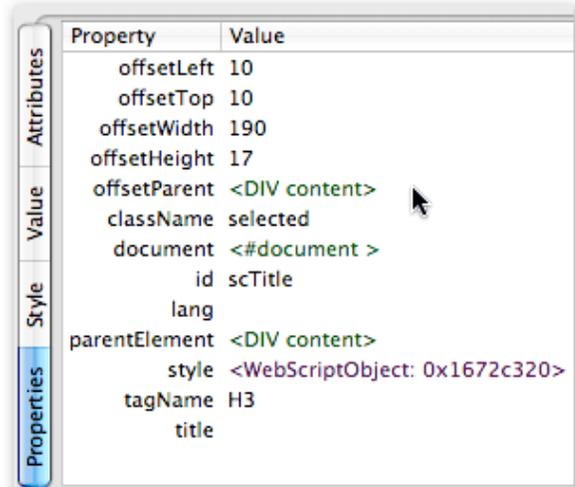


Next, this tool still has that nice transparent window in which the widget builds, so you can stop and restart it all without leaving Widgetarium. As before, it has nice graphics tools for building pieces of the widget, but now you have five tools instead of one. Besides the basic Panel Maker, you get a Button Maker, an Icon Maker, a “Roundie” Maker, and a slicing tool that lets you chop a panel into smaller pieces. I still export all the pieces to Photoshop for fine-tuning, and use Photoshop for the overall graphic design of the widget, but unless you’re extremely picky, the graphics tools in Widgetarium will give you a nice jump start on assembling the images you need. (You know, I’m seriously thinking of testing out other graphics editors since Adobe’s taking so long to get Photoshop Intel-ready. Anybody else thinking along those lines?)

New to Widgetarium is a truly useful JavaScript debugger, which has the usual stop/breakpoint features that let you step through the JavaScript code one function at a time. While doing this, the debugger provides a wealth of information on the variables and the DOM environment you’re working in. In fact, if anything the wealth is a little too much, and without a search feature it can be hard to find the variable you’re looking for. Still, this is a big improvement. In addition, there’s a console panel under the widget area that provides useful error messages, and you can toggle between that and a panel that lets you actually enter an interactive JavaScript session with your widget... testing different DOM calls, CSS properties, and so on, as part of debugging.

Just as useful is the DOM tree Widgetarium provides. Here, once you navigate down to a particular node, you get 4 panes of info about the node:

1. *Attributes*: The node’s ID and all other attributes (like attached events) visible in the HTML source code
2. *Value*: Only for text nodes, this contains the displayed text
3. *Style*: The node’s CSS style as defined in the project’s style sheet(s), and
4. *Properties*: I invariably find this the most interesting pane. Here you’ll find the node’s offsetParent, its parentElement, and its top and left offset measures (see screenshot).



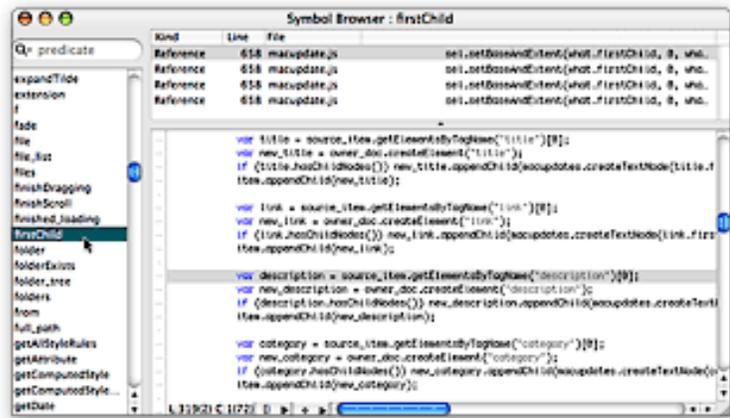
If you’re developing JavaScript in Firefox, you can get this information in Mozilla’s DOM Inspector, but frankly Widgetarium’s interface is a heckuva lot more useful. What you get in the DOM Inspector is the same kind of thing that Widgetarium’s Debug window provides: Anything and everything, and good luck focusing on what you’re trying to find.

Even better than Widgetarium is the WebKit team's **Web Inspector**, which presents the DOM and its nodes and styles in an incredibly compact, useful interface. The only problem with Web Inspector is that it isn't finished. For now, it provides the Attributes, Value, and Style information you get from the other tools (including the "computed" style that's so important in debugging), but not the Properties information. Web Inspector has two panes that stand empty as "Not finished" for now: Metrics, and Properties. I can't wait to get them! Just like Mozilla's Inspector, WebKit's highlights the elements you select as you navigate, but Web Inspector has a far superior search interface. If you're used to the Mozilla DOM Inspector search tool, you'll be blown away by what you can do in Web Inspector.

Which brings me back to Widgetarium. One of the most glaring weaknesses—which I've pointed out to the developer, and he's working on it—is the inability to search in either the DOM tree or the JavaScript debugger. This means, for example, that each time you want to find a node in the tree you have to manually traverse its parent nodes. Not a problem once, but unfortunately Widgetarium crashes often enough that you find yourself doing this walk away too often.

In my use, one of the things that crashed Widgetarium most reliably was trying to use the powerful "Symbol Browser." How I wish I could have made use of this little nubby, but alas Widgetarium crashed every time I tried. I

know it works with other widgets (the screenshot is from the MacUpdate widget), and I can see it would be very useful. What Symbol Browser does is the sort of thing you can do in TextMate and Eclipse in searching across your code base: Namely, Widgetarium compiles a list of all the functions, variables, properties, and methods used in your code, and you can find instances of whatever you're looking for across all your files. If, like me, you have multiple, interrelated JavaScript files, this could be a real timesaver! The tool not only shows you the lines of code in a search-list format, but also brings up the full source code in a third pane when you select a given line. (Note: Click on the Symbol Browser thumbnail graphic to see the full screenshot.)



All of the Widgetarium editing screens have four useful features in common:

- A pulldown menu showing all the JavaScript functions (or CSS styles, or HTML elements, etc.) defined in the file, which you can use for quick navigation
- A pulldown showing various options for auto-indent, code-folding, syntax-coloring, line-numbering, and so on.
- A quick "go to line number" search, and
- The ability to split panes—as many times as you could possibly want! There are times I'd like to be able to bring another file into one of the split panes, but that wasn't possible



The editing environment in Widgetarium is good, but not great. To improve it, my primary suggestion to the developer is to implement a single tabbed window. I find navigating among four or five open source code windows a bit tedious, especially after getting used to tabbed editing in BBEdit, TextMate, Eclipse, etc. Still, I no longer find myself using Widgetarium for some things and BBEdit for others, like I did last year.

There are many more useful features to Widgetarium, which I don't have time to go into detail about but want to just mention here to whet your appetite (assuming you have one by now):

- Customizable syntax coloring
- Customizable key bindings
- Built-in lint and syntax checkers
- Incremental search option (should be the default, actually)
- Screenshot export options
- Image files viewer
- Top-notch documentation
- Full suite of embedded JavaScript and Dashboard reference material from Apple, the w3c, and elsewhere,
- Built-in extensions for working with audio, speech, AppleScripts, data from Spotlight, the Mac OS X clipboard, the file system, and more.

If it sounds like I'm a Widgetarium fan, you're right... I am. And if the developer continues to improve this tool, pretty soon I won't have any quibbles with it at all! At \$50, I'm more than glad I shelled out the bucks last summer.

It's hard to believe I could have so much to say about this simple little widget. As usual, I meant to sit down for an hour and found myself writing for four instead... All without even talking about the widget's functionality! I guess you'll have to figure that out for yourself! I hope you find it useful and enjoyable, and please let me know if you think of a good idea for improving it.

But most of all, have some fun building your own Ajax/DHTML widget!****

* Yes, I know that widgets can incorporate many native Mac OS X technologies that web pages can't—like AppleScript, Core Data, file system calls, Core Image, and so on—and some of them do. But they don't *have* to, and most of them don't.

** And of course, down below, holding the whole structure firmly in place, is prototype.js, which provides the foundation that makes extending and combining JavaScript functions possible.

*** Both libraries were updated to new versions during development, but xCuts 1.0 is behind one or two releases (it uses prototype 1.5.0_pre0 and script.aculo.us so the 1.5.3). I'll be updating xCuts soon to bring it up to the latest (prototype 1.5.0_rc0 and script.aculo.us 1.6.1).

**** If you want to build for Windows or for a browser other than Safari, check out Yahoo's free **Widget Engine**, or Opera's spanking new **Widgets** API, which you can check out in the Opera 9 public beta.



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Cubicle City - Down With the Status Quo!

by Christopher Duncan

A great deal of what does and does not happen in the typical workplace has very little to do with whether or not a proposal is a good idea. It's not that influential people are opposed to building a better mouse trap. The problem lies in the fact that, for a number of reasons, people are more concerned with maintaining the status quo than they are with achieving excellence.

In fairness to those who dig in their heels and hold the line, it should be pointed out that many a new idea may sound good at a high level, but was not examined in sufficient detail prior to being proposed. Because of this, the ardent supporter may not realize that there are unforeseen consequences that could actually do more harm than good. Consequently, the first and most important consideration when you're reaching for greatness is to think your plans through in great detail before proposing them to others. Still, this alone is not enough to eliminate resistance.

More and more, we've become a risk averse society. This is due in part to the fact that it's easier to establish blame and find a scapegoat than it is to actually solve a problem. However, a side effect of this is that people have become afraid to try anything new or out of the ordinary, lest it fail and they find themselves the focus of the blame game. This leads them to resist any new idea for which they could be held accountable.

Another common reason for opposition to new ideas has its roots in peer pressure. Whether you're a manager, or a worker without explicit authority, your new way of doing things might well make a significant contribution to the quality or productivity of your group. It might also require a bit more work, or a greater attention to detail.

Just because you realize that the success of the company creates greater opportunities for you personally, it's unrealistic to expect this perspective from everyone. A great many people are simply lazy. They've found a rut in which they can sit and do the bare minimum required for their paycheck. Imagine their dismay when someone like you comes along and starts improving the quality of your work. It's only a matter of time before someone comes up and asks why their efforts aren't up to par with yours. This not only makes them look bad by comparison, they now have to work harder.

The desire to avoid peer pressure extends beyond the everyday worker. It applies to managers and even entire departments. If one group has made significant improvements, others may be afraid of comparing unfavorably. Consequently, opposition to your new idea might have its beginnings in a distant corner of your company.

Before you can lead your people to excellence, you must understand and then eliminate the attraction of the status quo. No business is ever secure in the marketplace, and companies who go under put a lot of people out of work.

Look for examples in your industry, or one close enough for people to relate to, where a business failed due to lack of innovation, quality and productivity. Then draw a line not only from the collapse of a company to the end of an individual's paycheck, but also in the opposite direction. Poor, struggling companies simply don't have many resources to share with their people in terms of salaries and other perks. Rich and successful companies do.

Whether you're leading from the front by authority or the middle by example, you'll see a significant change in how quickly people embrace new ideas once they understand how it affects them personally. Once you've learned to generate this enthusiasm, go forth and tear down the status quo in favor of higher productivity and better mouse traps, until the pursuit of excellence itself becomes the standard by which your people live.

Author and speaker Christopher Duncan is President of Practical Strategy Consulting. For booking information, articles, upcoming events and all of the weekly Reality Check series, visit www.PracticalStrategyConsulting.com. Copyright © 2005 Christopher Duncan. All rights reserved.



Ten Reasons Why...

by Ian "isnoop" Anthony
<http://isnoop.net/blog/>

Ten Reasons Why I Hate My MacBook Pro

With the release of [Apple's Boot Camp](http://www.apple.com/macosx/bootcamp/) I decided that now was the time to upgrade my laptop. My old machine was a very sturdy Dell Inspiron 5150 with a 3.06 GHz processor that turns three years old in a couple months. While the old computer was still very capable, it was time for me to upgrade.

Now that I've had my MacBook Pro for a week, I have accumulated a healthy list of gripes presented here in no particular order. Please note that I refer to Windows XP several times in this list. This is not to say that one or the other is a [superior OS](http://xvsexp.com/). This list is simply ten reasons why I hate my very shiny, fancy, and sexy new MacBook Pro.

#10 Stripped Down Keyboard

The MacBook Pro has a 78 key keyboard. The Eject button is the only one that doesn't appear on my laptop keyboard (CD eject is handled by a fn-key combo).

Compared to the Dell, it is missing the following keys: Delete (the delete key is backspace), insert, home, end, page up, page down, and pause.

Granted that the functionality of these keys can be emulated with key-combos from within OSX, but they require special handling if I am going to dual boot into any other OS (which is a main reason why I bought this laptop).

#9 Function Keys are not System Level

On a PC laptop, most of the function keys are system level. When I press the key combination to change screen brightness, toggle wireless, or turn on numlock, it just works no matter what OS I'm running or where I am at in the boot process.

For that matter, I sure do wish the backlit keyboard was system level as well, but I'll cut them some slack on that one (even though, again, this is a main reason why I bought this laptop).

#8 Minimize vs. Hide

When I click the yellow minimize button on any given window, it shrinks to the tray (with a fancy "genie" effect) just as I would expect. However, if I have minimized the last visible window for an app such as TextEdit, I also expect focus to leave that application and move to the next window in Command+Tab.

The problem of not moving to the next app upon minimize is compounded by the fact that when you Command+Tab back to the program, the windows are still hidden in the tray.

Hiding windows with Command+H accomplishes almost exactly what I'd like, but I've noticed that a few apps don't behave like they should with this action. I'd probably be able to ignore this if they'd just make the minimize button perform this action and make the key combination hide windows away so they don't return when you cycle back to the app.

#7 It Does Too Crash

"Lesson 1: It doesn't crash." <http://www.apple.com/switch/>

Au contraire! I'm very familiar with Windows crashes, but I've been keeping track and this new laptop has crashed requiring a hard restart five out of seven days since I got it. My Dell laptop, whether running XP or FreeBSD would crash on a bi-weekly basis. Tops.

I'll grant you that I am a power user and that I may do more demanding things with my computers, but I don't feel that resuming a computer from sleep or losing network connectivity during various actions should warrant a full-on hang.

#6 The Title Bar Hates Me

In Windows, double-clicking the title bar toggles the window between maximized and a smaller state. In other window systems, this same action rolls the window up into the title bar. It is still under your mouse and able to be double-clicked again as soon as you realize what you did.

In OSX, double-clicking the title bar triggers the dreaded minimize feature where the only sure-fire way I've seen of bringing it back requires mousing down to the taskbar and fetching it. For a Windows user, it's like shock therapy to perform the exact opposite of the expected action when a user double-clicks the title bar.

While I'm on the topic of the title bar, I sure do wish that I could define more visual distinction between the window in focus and all of the others. There are several subtle clues if you take time to look for them, but the average switcher is used to a complete shift in the title bar appearance for any out of focus window.

The close/minimize/resize buttons on each window aren't visible in all circumstances, so I can't reliably tell at a glance which window will respond if I start mashing my fingers on the keyboard.

#5 Backwards Compatibility

To be honest, I am ignorant about a lot of Mac software history. I haven't had an Apple since my Apple IIc and a Mac Classic or two. All I know is that when I want to run an application I found on the Internet, I can't always do it because it's not Intel compatible.

It just doesn't work.

Most of the software worth installing is written by developers who have revisited their apps and built a universal binary over the past few months, but there are some apps that I've found that don't have any competitors and haven't seen any updates in nearly a year.

One of Microsoft's biggest boons and limitations is their backwards compatibility. I can make good arguments on both sides all day long, but the net for this topic is that non-backwards compatibility is a pain point for early adopters.

#4 No Reinventing the Wheel

My early impression of finding and installing Mac software is that not many people have taken to re-inventing the wheel yet. I realize this has a lot to do with the size of the userbase, but I'm disappointed by the lack of programs that try to beat what Apple ships by default.

For example, I can name a handful of different [Windows SSH clients](http://freessh.org/windows.html) <http://freessh.org/windows.html>. Because OSX has a client built in, I believe developers are disinclined to write better [versions](#).

#3 Installing Apps

Windows installers may have their flaws, but at least the typical install process is fairly simple: • Download the .exe • Execute it • Answer a few questions • Delete the installer • You're done!

When I entered the widget-loving phase of the switch, I downloaded over two dozen of the little buggers. Some arrived in .dmg format, others arrived in some compressed form. A couple arrived as .dmg.tar.gz. The install process went like this: • Download the .dmg.tar.gz • Double-click the file to un-gzip it • Double-click the new .dmg.tar file to un-tar it • Double-click the new .dmg file to mount the image • If the file inside the image is an app, drag it into your Applications menu • If it is an installer, execute it and answer a few questions • Drag all four of the files and mount points created into the trash. • You're done!

There are several advantages to the OSX way of installing apps, but you can see how an install can get out of hand pretty quickly.

#2 Only One Window Resize Region

In most window managers, any resizable window has eight regions to grab; each of the sides and corners. OSX only allows the lower-right corner to resize a window. If you have a small window in the lower-right area of your screen and you want to make it bigger, you must first drag it out of the corner. This obvious omission is quite surprising to me, coming from a company who so emphasizes ease of use and a smooth user experience.

#1 No Maximize

All of the Mac users I know will go on and on about screen real estate and how a properly designed app shouldn't take up the whole screen. However, when I want an application to take up the whole screen, I shouldn't be forced to drag the window to the top-left of the screen (see above) and then drag it to be full screen.

I choose full-screen because it blocks out all other applications and distractions. I choose it because if I wanted my apps to be smaller, I would have bought a smaller computer. I choose it because it makes me feel happy. Please don't make me hunt for it.

Conclusion

I spent well over two grand to join the cult. Now that I'm in, I see that the punch is all diet and they don't have any black Nikes in size 15.

Ten Reasons Why I Love My MacBook Pro

#10 Darwin

It cannot be understated how important this was to me. I envied every Mac user who had a FreeBSD system under the hood because I know how powerful it is. As it turns out, FreeBSD is also my server OS of choice, so I feel even more at home in the OSX terminal than I do in DOS.

#9 Intel

Making the Intel switch was a brilliant move on Apple's part. I believe that this change has initiated an impressive wave of prior wafflers, hesitant switchers, and organizations who will finally feel comfortable buying hardware that will still run Windows if necessary.

For this reason, I think my Apple shares have a really bright future.

#8 Built-In Software

My Windows disc came with a calculator and WordPad. Oh, and MSpaint. Hmm, I can't think of anything else of use that shipped on the Windows CD. Wait, Explorer. Does that count?

I scrapped Safari for Firefox almost right away, but let's see some of the goodies that Apple provided that I use each day: • Dashboard • iTunes • Calendar • OmniOutliner • Spotlight

Again, this is just the daily use apps. There are probably more, and there are at least a couple dozen more very thoughtful programs that I'll get around to using over time. I suppose Windows has Defrag. Yeah, I'll give them that.

#7 Backlit Keyboard

Two days after Boot Camp was released, I drove down to the Apple store and spent two hours of quality time with a MacBook Pro. Before this point, I had no idea the laptops were shipping with a backlit keyboard. As small as this may be to some people, this is one of the things that pushed me over the edge at decision time.

#6 OMG So Sexy

It's hard to argue that the MacBook Pro isn't a well crafted and beautiful machine. With few exceptions, I believe that Apple manages to hit the sweet spot where form and function peak.

This machine manages to be brighter, longer lasting, faster, lighter, and thinner than my old Dell. In fact, it beats even the new Dell machine I was considering on every physical characteristic. Fully configured, it didn't cost much more, either.

The aluminum case is a stroke of genius. Of course laptops are going to run hot as long as they have today's Intel processors in them. Only the smart laptop manufacturers make the entire laptop body a metal heatsink as opposed to a plastic insulator.

#5 Battery Life

The MacBook Pro users I interviewed before making my purchase indicated that I should expect 2.5 to 3 hours of battery life. Using the computer in a seminar, I made it through three hours of off-and-on note taking (with OmniOutliner Professional) and the system estimated I had another 2.5 left to go. This is proper power management. Heck, I left this computer sitting on the counter without power for three hours last night while we went to a movie. When I came back, the battery had only drained a few percent.

My old Dell machine would reliably gobble up a battery in 1.5 to 2.5 hours, no matter how much or little I was using it.

#4 Front Row

Where have you been all of my life?

The days of hunting for a site and selecting a player type and buffering and waiting and buffering just to watch a stinking movie preview are over. I've never used Windows Media Center, but I never imagined that having a remote and turning your computer into your personal theater could be so sweet.

I need to do now is plug my DVI cable into my TV and an audio cable to the sound system and I can show my wife movie previews just like they were on Tivo. I can play my iTunes library around the house without having to wear my iPod.

Now I just need to hang tight until the day Apple announces a version of the Mac Mini with a built in TV tuner and DVR software. That's the day I'll kick my Tivo to the curb.

#3 Security

I really do appreciate that OSX hasn't had the virus exposure Windows has. I love that I can download and install any application I please with minimal concern for what it might do to harm my computer.

This isn't to say that I'm going commando with my MacBook Pro. I am pleased to see the Mac community at large slowly coming to terms with the fact that they aren't 100% immune to attacks. With increasing marketshare comes increasing scrutiny, and I for one have more [clam](http://www.clamxav.com/) in my system than [Ivar himself](http://ivars.net/)!

#2 The Little Things

MagSafe power connector, ambient light-aware keyboard and screen brightness, dedicated CD eject key, and an audio out jack that glows red when it's disabled. How about all of the tools you need to get started developing your own OSX apps right on the install DVD? These are a few of the little things that add up to a much greater experience.

I believe people have written entire books about the thoughtful little things that Apple includes in their products. Suffice it to say that they don't go unnoticed by me.

#1 The Big Picture

The bottom line is that you are not your OS. I'm dropping Windows on my personal laptop and my work desktop (for [DesktopBSD](http://www.desktopbsd.net/), no less) simply because I can. The applications I need most are available online or are portable to other systems, so I'm cutting the strings.

My new MacBook pro allows me to do all that while still maintaining a bridge back to the old system if I ever need it.

Conclusion

Apparently my last article struck a nerve with several people. Enough so to warrant an inbox full of flames and a couple small DOS attacks. I'd like to thank those who saw it for what it was: a rant against the things I'm having a hard time adjusting to along with a few genuine issues that I hope will change over time. For the rest of you, please look forward to my next Apple post tentatively titled "Jobs, save me from your followers!"

Several of the issues I mentioned in **Ten Reasons Why I Hate My MacBook Pro** are still concerns to me, but many people have correctly pointed out that several of these things may be remedied over time. A couple of them have already been solved by helpful commenters with solutions on hand. The rest are things that I will just have to get used to because my MacBook Pro is here to stay.



<http://www.applemacpunk.com>
applemacpunk at cox.net

A Visit from The Woz

by Kale Feelhaver aka: Applemacpunk

I attended an IT trade show recently. The 3-day trade show was decent (nothing compared to Macworld San Francisco) but on the evening of the second day, there was a special event that made it all worthwhile. A local Technical Institute was sponsoring a dinner, and the guest speaker was Steve Wozniak. There were hundreds of people at the dinner, and the school rented a grand ballroom to host it. Tickets for the dinner were \$90 each. The food was good, but not worth anywhere near \$90. However, the experience of meeting Steve Wozniak was priceless.

I attended the trade show by myself, so I was afraid I would also be attending the dinner by myself. I was hoping I could find another Apple addict to sit with. As the crowd started gathering, I was looking around to try to spot someone I knew, when I saw a man wearing a necktie with jeans, carrying an Apple IIGS. I instantly knew he was a Mac user. I walked over and made a comment about his vintage Apple. Immediately, we engaged in conversation and started swapping Mac stories. It was reminiscent of a Macworld conference, which both of us had attended. The dinner had assigned seating, and in true Mac irony... I was seated only 1 seat away from the fella I just met. There were 8 people per table, and our table was the absolute furthest one from the stage. Seated at my table were: Me, the guy with the Apple IIGS, a female school teacher (huge Mac geek), another guy who had an Apple IIE, and 4 businessmen who said they were all avid PC users, but appreciated everything Apple did for computing.

After dinner, Steve Wozniak took the stage. The four Mac geeks at my table gave him a standing ovation as he took the stage. Keep in mind we are the very back table in the room. Woz looked up and said, "Oh, so they put the Mac users in the back of the room." The crowd cracked up. Wozniak proceed to talk for over an hour about the early days at Apple, his relationship with Steve Jobs, and his days before Apple. It was absolutely the most interesting presentation I've ever heard. The entire room was mesmerized as he spoke.

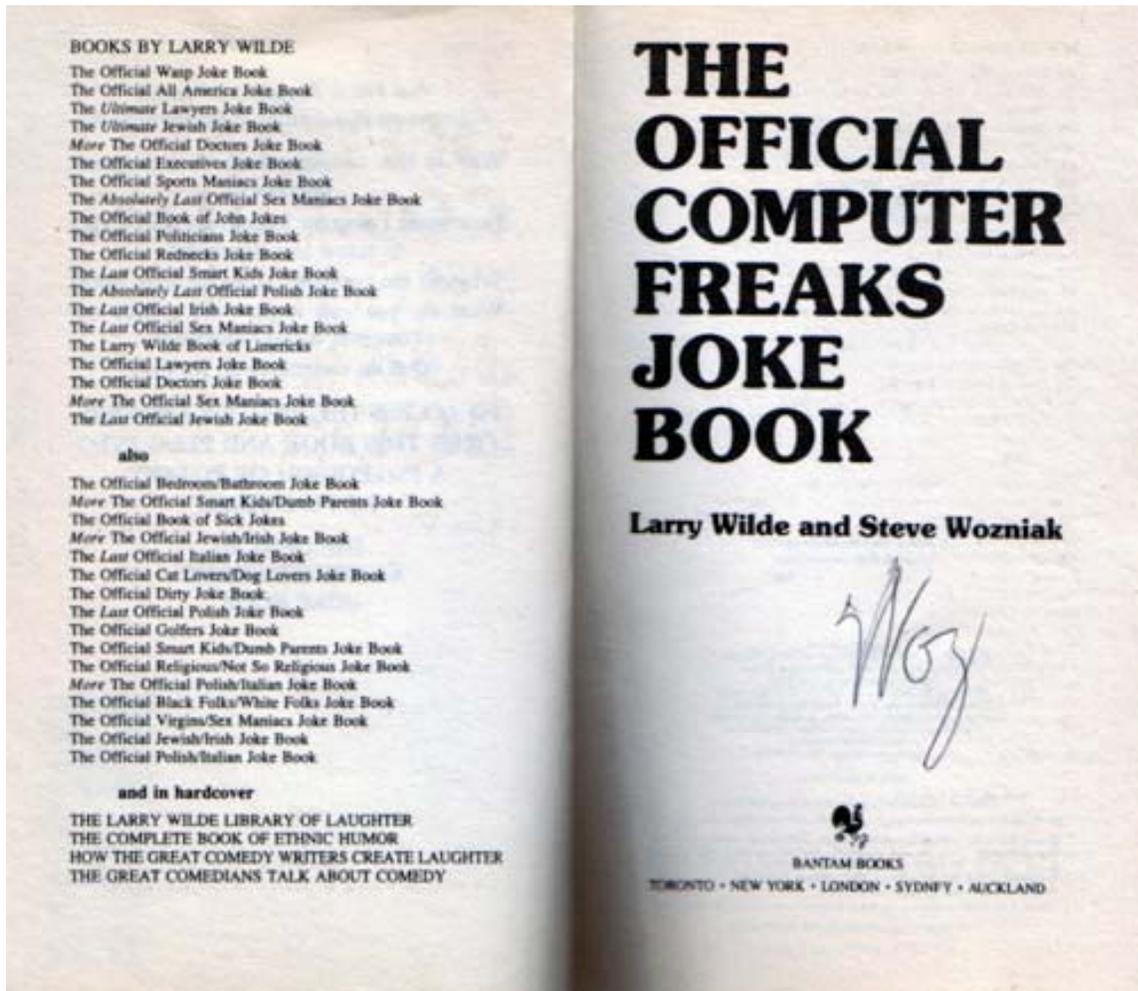
Wozniak talked about the day he became a licensed Ham Radio operator at age 10. He said he wanted to be licensed in something, and he found out there was no minimum age to be a Ham Radio operator. He also talked about the day he went to work with his dad and had his first vision of a computer when he saw an old gear-driven machine that was engineered to save time. He said he looked at it and saw a skeleton of a computer. By age 13 Woz had programmed his first game, Tic Tac Toe. He threw in some more humor when he said, "If I could play any one of you at Tic Tac Toe right now... I bet there's a good chance I could beat ya. I'm good at it." Again the crowd laughed hysterically. Woz talked about how he used to sneak in to college libraries so he could find the computer manuals and "steal" the forms out of them. He would fill out the forms to get more manuals and have them shipped to his home address. Then he would study the manual, memorize the computer, and redesign it with fewer chips. If the "experts" did it in 20 chips he'd do it in 15. If they did it in 8 chips he'd do it in 5. Keep in mind; he did all this before he was even old enough to drive a car.

When Woz went to college (the first time) he tested into advanced placement computer science his first year. He was so far ahead of the rest of the class (and the teacher) that he would come in on the weekends and write programs for hours on end. This was back in the days of punch card programming. He wrote so many programs, that he used up all the punch cards on the campus. He ended up running the department 5 times over its annual budget in his first quarter. Needless to say, he wasn't a student there very long. The school kicked him out for reckless use of materials. Think about how stupid they feel now.

Woz also talked about some of the early days when he and Jobs were inseparable. Some of his biggest laughs came when he would talk about his inventions and Jobs reactions. He talked about his TV jammer (a device designed to interrupt TV signals) and how Steve Jobs would say, “Woz, this is great... let’s sell it.” Or when he made his first blue box (a device designed to make free phone calls), and Jobs said, “Woz... we should sell this.” When Woz made his first computer... there was Jobs... “Hey Woz... we need to sell this.” His presentation was funny, emotional, amazing, and inspiring all at once. The most amazing thing however, is what happened after the presentation, after his standing ovation.



When the event ended, a handful of Mac geeks ran across the room to meet the Woz. He politely stood up, and took time to chat with each person one-on-one. He signed people’s computers, books, posters, and even posed for pictures. Woz signed my copy of his rare 1988 joke book, and I gave him an Applemacpunk business card. He put the card in his wallet and told me he’d be sure to check out the site later that night. The schoolteacher that sat next to me during dinner had him sign an old Apple Educational poster that featured Woz and his son. The other two Apple addicts at the table had him sign their vintage computers.



Steve Wozniak has achieved a notoriety that no one will ever duplicate. He is truly the first computer geek. A trailblazer and a genius, Woz's inventions will stand in the history books for centuries to come. He is not only a technological visionary, but an incredibly humble man who took the time to chat with every one of his fans and make sure they would always remember that night as the night they met a legend. Woz is truly a class act.

Books

Dreamweaver 8: The Missing Manual

reviewed by Eddie Hargreaves



Author: David Sawyer McFarland

<http://www.sawmac.com/>

O'Reilly

<http://www.oreilly.com/>

Missing Manual Series

Booksite: <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/dreamweaver8tmm/>

\$45 USD, \$63 CDN, £32 GBP, €39.50 Euro

Published: December 2005

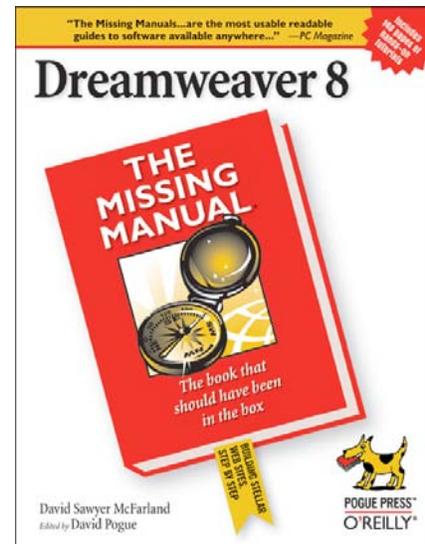
Pages: 952

ISBN: 0596100566

Requirements: Basic computer knowledge.

Strengths: Well-written, organized; Hands-On Tutorials; Power Users' Clinics; Mac version treated equally; Unbiased.

Weaknesses: Big and long.



The titles in the Missing Manuals series from Pogue Press are each billed as "the book that should have been in the box." But if that were the case with *Dreamweaver 8: The Missing Manual*, the box would weigh an additional three pounds. At more than 900 pages long, DW8:TMM is not a quick read. But that's only fitting for the most advanced, long-running web design and development program.

The book is not written solely for novices nor solely for advanced users, so there's something for anyone who uses Dreamweaver. It begins with an introduction to the program's interface and the basics of creating a web page. It continues by explaining more complicated features like tables, layers, and Cascading Style Sheets. It describes how to add interactivity using forms and JavaScript, manage an entire site, and concludes with an introduction to dynamic database-driven Web sites.

Anyone new to Dreamweaver will find the book easy to read thanks to the crisp, clean writing style. In addition, it doesn't make assumptions about knowledge the reader has or doesn't have. Readers of the previous volume obviously won't find as much new information and will probably want to skip a few chapters outright. But there are still a lot of handy tips scattered throughout the entire book that are set apart visually and easy to spot when casually thumbing through. Between the Power Users' Clinic and Workaround Workshop boxes and the Notes and Tips set-asides, there is a lot of useful information revealed quickly and easily, including undocumented keyboard shortcuts.

Reading and doing are two different things, so it's also welcome to have hands-on tutorials that directly follow the various chapters. Using files downloadable from McFarland's web site, the book walks you through specific examples of how to use the concepts it just explained.

Some application-based books focus exclusively on the Windows version, using screenshots that could confuse Mac users or referring only to Windows keyboard shortcuts (Control-S, Alt-F4). DW8:TMM uses screenshots from both Windows XP and Mac OS X and shows web pages in multiple browsers (Firefox, Internet Explorer, even Netscape in Classic Mac OS). It also gives the two different shortcuts and explains any differences the Windows and Mac versions may have (which are minimal).

Finally, McFarland is not a Macromedia or Adobe employee, so the book is not a cheerleading tool. If there is an aspect of the program that is difficult or confusing, he won't ignore it, and will often explain a way around it. But that also makes any praise he gives to the program that much more genuine. Similarly, when other books are recommended that cover more specialized topics, they aren't always O'Reilly books, adding a level of editorial integrity.

Dreamweaver 8 is a large, complicated program with many capabilities and quirks. McFarland's Missing Manual explains all of them* and is perfect for anyone new to the program who may be intimidated by the application's long history and enormous feature set. Longtime users should also find plenty to help them expand their skillset, especially if they've yet to implement CSS.

*A chapter on frames that appeared in previous versions of the book has been removed, but is available online.

Intermediate Perl

reviewed by Jonathan Hoyle

Authors: Randal L. Schwartz, brian de Foy, Tom Phoenix
O'Reilly

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/intermediateperl/index.html>

Published: March 8, 2006

\$39.95 USD, \$56 CAD, £28.50 GBP, €34 Euro

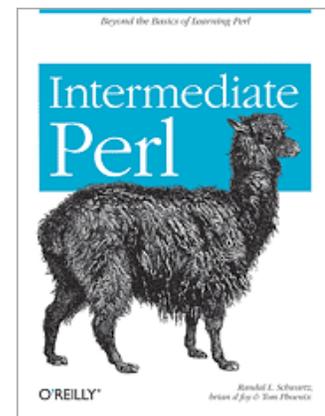
Pages: 278

ISBN: 0596102062

Audience: Intermediate Perl programmers.

Strengths: Nice bite-size chapters, which can be read nearly independently.

Weakness: Very few charts or graphics.



As one might tell by the fact that the same llama graces the cover, *Intermediate Perl* is a retitled 2nd edition of longer named *Learning Perl Objects, References & Modules* from 2003. Randal Schwartz and Tom Phoenix are back again, with the added brian de foy (yes, he spells his name in lowercase letters). In this 2nd edition, chapter organization has been modified slightly, but it is substantially a replacement of the former title.

Intermediate Perl is a follow-on to *Learning Perl*, also known as *the llama book*, a classic introduction to the Perl language. *Intermediate Perl* carries the reader forward with more advanced topics, particularly useful for web developers wishing to become more proficient in their programming. After a brief introduction in the opening chapter, things kick off quickly with Chapter 2's *Intermediate Foundations*, one of the new chapters added for this edition. It is a very nice quick overview of list operators, filtering with `grep`, using maps to handle lists, and the very powerful `eval()` function. (For those coming to Perl from compiled languages like C++, `eval()` will be quite the surprising power feature.) Chapter 3's *Using Modules* is expanded from the first edition, covering the various interfaces, CPAN (the Comprehensive Perl Archive Network), path settings, and the always tricky module dependencies.

Chapters 4 and 5 are excellent reviews of the concept of references and scoping, their relationship in arrays, nested data structures and anonymous hashes. This is an example where the more advanced nature of the material comes in view: whereas the beginner will not care about reference counting, simply relying on its working, the intermediate programmer will find he needs to understand it properly to do his job. The next chapters cover complex data structures, subroutines and filehandles, all things familiar to programmers of other languages, but useful for those needing to understand their implementation in Perl.

The book becomes very interesting beginning with Chapter 9's Practical Reference Tricks and Chapter 10's Building Larger Programs, as sorting, recursion and namespace collisions are addressed. The next four chapter are essentially an introduction to object oriented Perl, the power of coding this way, and the cleanness and reusability of such code. Chapter 15 and 16's Exporting and Distribution chapters are arguably advanced, not intermediate, but they do flow nicely from the previous material. Chapter 17's *Essentially Testing* and Chapter 18's *Advanced Testing* (the latter being a new chapter with this edition) brings home the point that testing is an integral part of development. Most programming books today treat testing as a separate concept, or roll it into debugging, but the authors here do a good job defining what good testing is and is not. The book concludes with Chapter 19's *Contributing to CPAN*, a call to programmers to remember to give back to the Perl community.

Overall, this is an excellent read, and a perfect companion for those who crave more after *Learning Perl*. *Intermediate Perl* nicely flows into another O'Reilly publication *Perl Best Practices*, which is also a recommended read for intermediate programmers.

Hardware

HOBOWare Pendant Temperature/Light Data Logger and Pendant Optic USB Base Station & Coupler

reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Onset Computer Corporation
470 MacArthur Blvd.
Bourne, MA 02532
PO Box 3450 Pocasset,
MA 02559-3450
1-800-564-4377
508-759-9500

<http://www.onsetcomp.com>

http://www.onsetcomp.com/Products/temperature_logger_guide.html

Product Page:

http://www.onsetcomp.com/Products/Product_Pages/pendant/pendant_data_logger.html

Released: February 2006.

Requirements: Mac OS® X versions 10.3.x or 10.4.3 or later; Java Runtime Environment (JRE) version 1.4.2 or 1.5 ; 256 MB system RAM (512 MB recommended); 7 MB free disk space; USB port required for U-series loggers, or a USB port on a Keyspan USB Server (part number US-4A) connected through Ethernet; Serial port or USB Serial Adapter for HOBOWare Weather Station, Micro Station or FlexSmart Logger; 1024 x 768 (minimum) display resolution.

Microsoft Windows XP Professional or Home Edition, or Windows 2000 Professional, or Windows 2000 Server; Java Runtime Environment (JRE) version 1.4.2 or 1.5; 256 MB system RAM (512 MB recommended); 3.5 MB free disk space after installing the Java Runtime Environment; USB port required for U-series loggers, or a USB port on a Keyspan USB Server (part number US-4A) connected through Ethernet; Serial port or USB Serial Adapter (part # CABLE-USB232) for HOBOWare Weather Station, HOBOWare Micro Station, and HOBOWare FlexSmart Logger; 800 x 600 (minimum) display resolution, 256 colors (1024 x 768 or greater recommended).

Pendant Data logger - \$39 or \$49 USD (8K or 64K memory), Pendant Optical USB Base Station & Coupler - \$59 USD. HOBOWare software Mac or Win, \$95 USD each.

https://www.onsetcomp.com/Commerce_Pages/product.cml

Strengths: Offers the Mac scientific community the same data-logging opportunities that were available in Windows-only environments.



Weaknesses: Installation requires shutdown and reboot. Ditto with the upgrade to 2.1.2. Don't reverse the devices in the coupler. They won't read or write if you do (they use the same key slots.)

Applications: <http://www.onsetcomp.com/Applications/applications.html>
http://www.hobohelp.com/applications/4095_applications.html

FAQs: http://www.onsetcomp.com/MiscInfo/whats_a_data_logger.html

Software:

http://www.onsetcomp.com/Products/Product_Pages/hoboware/hoboware_software.html

Specs:

http://www.onsetcomp.com/Products/Product_Pages/pendant/pendant_logger_specs.html

HOBOHelp: <http://www.hobohelp.com/>

On land, in sea, underground and even in space, the HOBO data loggers have been literally everywhere since 1981, monitoring data for use in improving conditions based on temperature, light and other changing conditions. Now these units are readable on Macs with the latest rev of the HOBOWare® software.

What got me interested in their products was their announcement of their weather station for Macs. What was sent to me was the Pendant temp/light and Pendant Optical USB Base Station & Coupler. The Base Station looks similar to the Pendant with the Coupler removed. The Coupler uses infrared technology so that the business-end of the pendants can be used in close proximity. Data can transfer from field units to the station units and information can then be transferred to the HOBOWare software to create charts and export information (or import) from other sources) for evaluation and human readout.

The pendant data-loggers either come with 8K or 64K of memory and depending on how often samples are taken, the replaceable batteries can last up to a year or longer. The units are gasketed so they can withstand water intrusion up to 30 meters (100 feet) under water. Data transfer is done through the use of infrared technology from one device to another.

OnSet Computer Corporation has been running energy-awareness contests through <http://www.iscienceproject.com/> and have been loaning energy-monitoring equipment to teachers at <http://www.iscienceproject.com/contest/instantloaner.html> as a way to get HOBO data loggers into the hands of students. By the way, NASA has been using these things to monitor conditions around astronauts for years as well.

I received CDs with each device, but I upgraded to version 2.1.2 online for this review.

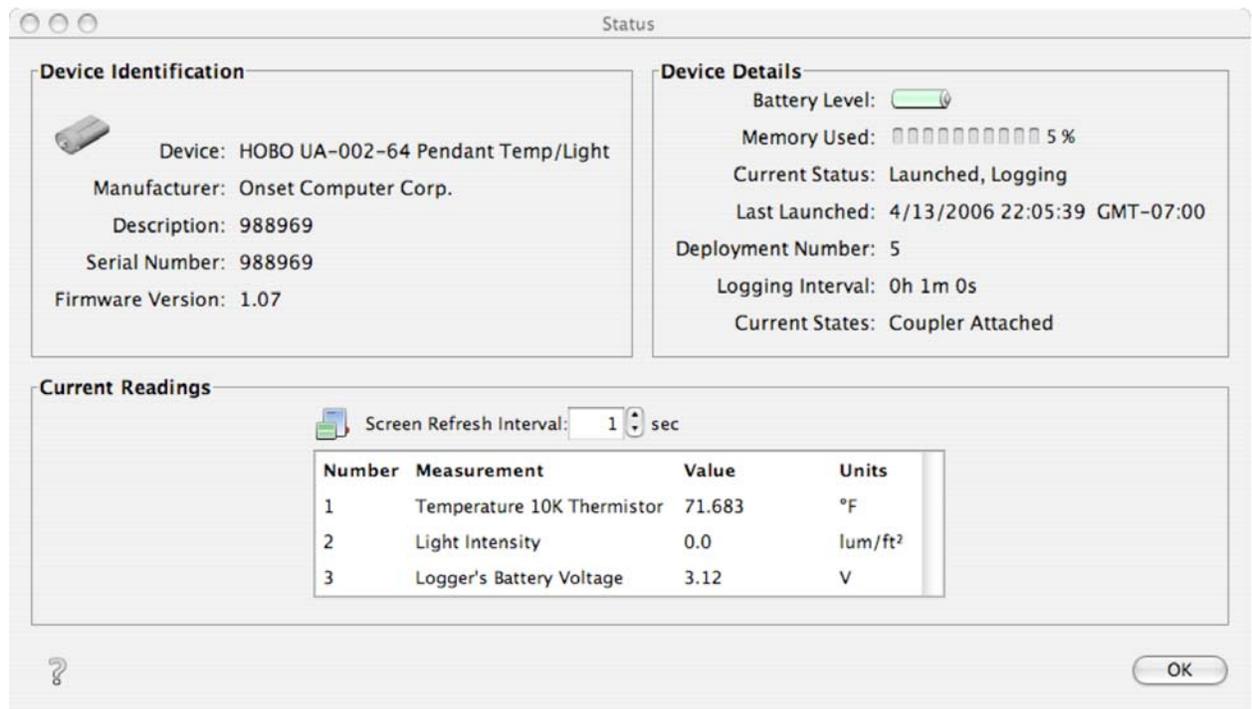
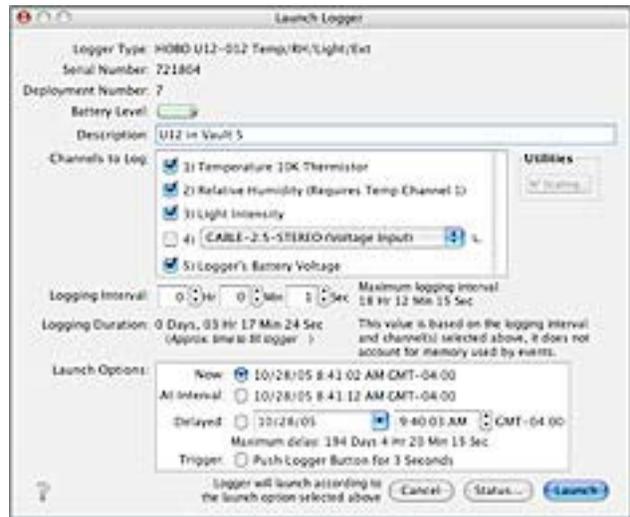
What would you do with a data logger anyway? I've linked to the applications section above so you can go there and see for yourself how these have been used to justify fixing or replacing equipment that has been found to be faulty or to prove that something needs to be done to resolve an issue that surfaced when the data logger was used. Such as HVAC systems, refrigeration units, vending machines, or for checking either lighting or other temperature conditions.



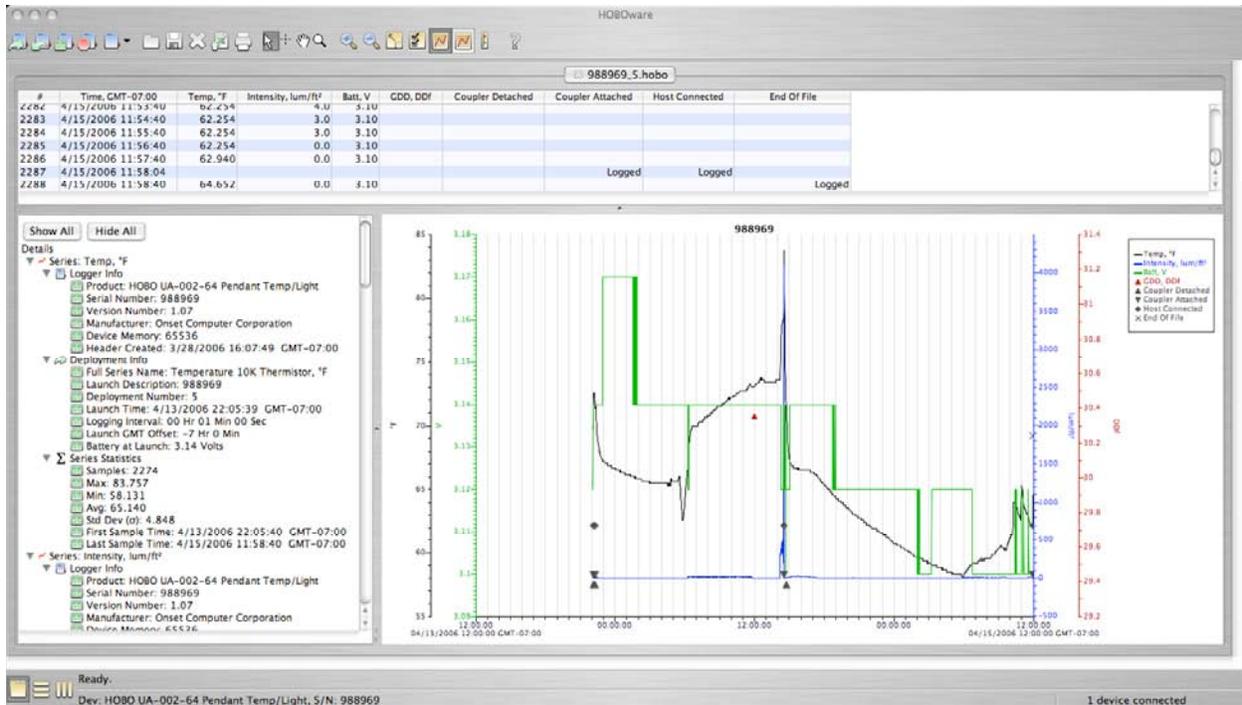
Setup was easy enough, but I found that if I inadvertently switched the coupler end-to-end, the base station could not read the data logger, so pay attention to the labels and the arrows, since the plastic ridge that acts as a key is identical for either device.

I also found that the check for updates function in the HOBOWare software didn't function immediately (it took a while), so to check for updates, I went to my browser and went to the website from there instead of from inside the software app.

In order to check out the Pendant or any other device that is used with the HOBOWare software, a Status screen looks like this;



I ran the Pendant temp/light as I went from home to office and back for a couple of days and this is the readout I got;



There is a “Growing Degree Days Assistant” that contracts the size of the plot over time. Can you imagine this dragged out over a 1-year period?

Now because these units are waterproofed, they can be outdoors. They also have desiccant inside in case any moisture gets through the plastic see-through containers.

Data files can be saved and used in projects, tweaked and adjusted for presentations.

And the Help function works as expected in Mac OS X as a tab at the top of the screen when in HOBOWare. I don't see a Ubinary version yet, but I expect as Mactels get more used, the folks at OnSet Computer Corporation won't be far behind.

What I'd really like is to get my hands on one of their 15-channel weather stations with plug-and-play modules that do everything from soil moisture, leaf wetness and rainfall to barometric pressure, winds speed and direction, photosynthetic light (PAR) and solar radiation, but we are looking at quite a bit of money to get one of those. The agricultural industry is where those would make the most sense.

Waterfield Designs' Apple iPod Hi-Fi Protective Case: A Case of Yet Another Inflated Price Tag

reviewed by Mike Swope

WATERFIELD

Waterfield Designs

<http://www.sfbags.com>

Released: April 2006

\$149 USD

Dimensions: 19.5" x 8.0" x 8.0"

Target Audience: Owners of iPods and Apple's Hi-Fi Speaker System who wish to make the system mobile.

Strengths: Impact resistant plastic front. Strong ballistic nylon. Five pockets to carry Hi-Fi system, iPod and accessories such as cables. Slit to connect power cord and audio input to Hi-Fi System. Shoulder straps with metal hardware.

Weaknesses: Expensive at 43% of the cost of the iPod Hi-Fi Speaker System. Arguably thin padding will not make purchasers confident in the protection the case offers.



Apple's iPod has become today's *Walkman*, but better because people can now take ALL their music with them on their iPods. Apple's Hi-Fi System introduced earlier this year is another expensive accessory for the iPod, replacing what were once home stereo systems. Now comes the accessories for the accessory, in this case, a high-priced protective case to make Apple's iPod Hi-Fi System a mobile stereo system. Unfortunately, this case features arguably inadequate protection and a bloated, nearly explosive price tag.

I think Waterfield Designs has completely misinterpreted market research, or neglected to conduct any. Though Apple's products command a premium price, the Waterfield Designs iPod Hi-Fi System Case takes this premium price to a new, gut-wrenching high. Priced at 43% of the iPod Hi-Fi System's price, this is an expensive bag for which I had high expectations. Perhaps this is the cause for my real disappointment: my expectations fell a long, long way once I received the bag. At first, I thought the price was a typo in my editor's message. But when the case arrived with media information, the pricing was the same.

Though abundant in pockets to carry most users' iPod accessories, the iPod Hi-Fi Case is little better than a padded backpack, and even this is arguable (I'm arguing with myself over this comparison still). Most of the case's padding is less than 1/4" thick and in the double-flap, bottom and sides. The back has some padding, but not nearly the padding as the other four sides. The double-flap also features an impact resistant slice of plastic to protect the speaker grill of the iPod Hi-Fi System while in transport. Though the bag is described as play-through, this does not mean that the Hi-Fi System will play through the bag when it is closed. It plays through only when the bag is opened and the speakers are exposed through the oval opening in the front.

I've tried to imagine this product on retail shelves, and compared it to the price tags of other padded bags, such as laptop bags that protect a much more expensive item. An average padded laptop bag runs about \$50 (I use one daily). I therefore find it hard to justify that Waterfield Design's iPod Hi-Fi Case *costs three times as much*, but with considerably less protective padding. Laptop bags are designed to fit laptops comfortably. The Hi-Fi Case is made to fit the iPod Hi-Fi system comfortably. Both have more than a handful of pockets for convenience. Both are made of similar materials. I just can't deduce \$100 of additional value in the Hi-Fi Case. Perhaps I just don't get it. (If I don't, and you do, let my editor know.)

If you're a lucky owner of an Apple iPod and an iPod Hi-Fi System, this bag will certainly help you take your system with you, if you have money to spend and can't help spending it. On the other hand, if price is a primary concern, your money is better spent on something else, such as 149 more iTunes tracks you can enjoy everywhere.

Mike Swope - <http://www.maccompanion.com/info/aboutus.html#mikeswope>

[Editor: I received an excellent padded \$25 USD shoulder strap from Westfield that had metal hooks (okay, carabineers) instead of plastic that my wife uses to carry her teaching materials. She loves it!]

THE NIGHT OWL REVIEW: XEROX PHASER 8550DP

by Gene Steinberg <http://www.macnightowl.com> Copyright © 2006 Making The Impossible, Inc



Night Owl Rating: 

It's rare that I review a product twice, and that the review is based on two different samples of a product. But I felt that Xerox and its solid ink printing process deserve special treatment, particularly in an industry with so many me-too designs. I've evaluated a huge range of printers over the years for various publications, and, in the end, often found it difficult to tell one from the other except for the most minor elements.

Among dozens and dozens of inkjet and laser models, the Xerox Phaser 8500 and 8550 printers promise to bridge the gap between laser and inkjet in an affordable line that's perfectly suited for the small to medium-sized business. I've already given an extensive first look at an 8500/DN, one of the cheaper versions, and, since then, I've stepped up to the 8550/DP, which, while nearly identical from the outside, offers speedier printing and superior output quality at its High Resolution/Photo print mode.

While preparing for this extended examination, I reviewed some of the published reports about the product, and ended up finding one, from [InfoWorld http://www.infoworld.com/article/05/11/23/48TCprinters8550_1.html](http://www.infoworld.com/article/05/11/23/48TCprinters8550_1.html), which managed to get most of the figures right, but just about everything wrong. I'll cover that, however, in a separate article in this issue.

On the surface, the 8550/DP closely resembles a typical color laser. At the same time, it's shorter and a little longer than most, but you have to open it up to see that this is a different animal entirely. At \$1,149, after rebate, it is priced in the same range as many popular models from HP, Lexmark and others and you're apt to evaluate it in the same breath. The features are similar too, with rated print speeds of up to 30 pages per minute, up to 2400 dpi resolution, and built in networking and two-sided printing. Unlike some of the competition, the main paper tray actually stores a full package of paper, with a rated capacity of 525 pages. Two costlier versions come with extra paper trays, more memory and an internal hard drive. If you want to save a few hundred dollars, you may want to consider the 8500/DN, which offers print speeds of up to 24 pages per minute, and lacks the higher print resolution for photos and high quality graphics.

But when you add up the cost of consumables over time, you might prefer to stick with the 8550/DP, which will eventually become cheaper to operate for reasons I'll explain shortly.

Xerox, like Apple, understands that a smooth out-of-box experience can enhance the value of a computer peripheral. After taking the hefty beast, which weighs over 60 pounds, out of its shipping carton, I had it running its extended warm-up mode in just a few minutes. The latest Macs include drivers for the 8500 and 8550 series, so I was able to set it up on an Intel-based iMac in about a minute. Xerox's own software package includes a XSupportCentre utility that lets you monitor printer settings and status on a Web-based interface, so you'll get onscreen messages of the printer needs ink, paper or special maintenance.

Unlike many printers out there, I was also able to configure it with relative ease under Windows XP, as installed on the iMac with both Boot Camp and Parallels Workstation. If you've ever tried to configure a networkable printer on a Windows box, you know that's no mean achievement. The standard hookup scheme is Ethernet, but there is a USB 2.0 port for installations where you just want a personal printer in a single computer setup.

When you first open the printer to install consumables, you know you've got something quite different. Instead of ink cartridges or toner, both the 8500 and 8550 series use solid ink, tiny wax-like sticks that are easily inserted into receptacles uniquely shaped for each color. You don't have to wait for a for the ink to be nearly spent before replacing it either, as you can add several sticks to the ink loader and have the extra supplies in readiness when needed. If the colors are used up, it'll automatically switch to black and white mode. That way you can keep on printing until you have a chance to replenish the color supplies.

Upon first starting the printer, you have to wait about 15 minutes for the ink sticks to melt and for various startup and setup processes to complete. Once the printer is ready for output, it'll output several pages showing status messages and helpful instructions. Xerox recommends that the unit should always be left on, because a fair amount of ink is used in the warm-up process. However, there is a low-power idle mode for when the printer isn't in use. The unit automatically configures its idle periods over the first few weeks of operation by calculating your usage pattern. Smart!

Once the first pages emerged, I knew I had something different. The 8500/DN delivers the first page of most documents in about six seconds; the 8550/DP does it about a second faster. Except for complicated graphics, print speeds are quite consistent, although you'll sometimes encounter or pause of five or six seconds for some sort of internal processing or resetting.

The 8550/DP has four print modes, trading off quality for speed. Unlike many models, Xerox manages to come amazingly close to its speed ratings. The 30 pages per minute Fast Color mode delivers adequate text with serviceable graphics, and its great for proofing or just printing pages from a Web site that you want to keep around for research. The default print setting is Enhanced, which rates at 16 pages per minute, and it offers the best combination of speed and text and graphics quality. The High Resolution/Photo setting is the one that gets you 2400 dpi effective resolution, and at a rated speed of 10 pages per minute, gives you near photo-quality prints.

A solid ink printer uses a simple, relatively straight paper path, and the printing process is similar to offset, where a single roller receives the image, which is then transferred to paper. Since you don't have to deal with multiple banks of toner cartridges, registration of color documents is essentially perfect. Print quality is extremely close to that of a laser printer, and you have to look real close to see just a slight spread of ink from tiny characters. This is something you won't notice when you examine the output from any normal distance. Color photos and graphics are sharp and bright, and only a color inkjet will deliver superior results. Black and white photo can be a little grainy, but are still quite acceptable. If you don't intend to print photos on glossy paper, however, you'll be extremely pleased. But don't forget that inkjets, which excel at photos, generally require expensive paper and consume large quantities of ink to do their best. Costs for page will be a lot less if you stick with a solid ink printer for most of your work.

According to Xerox, the 8500 and 8550 printers are often bought by real estate agents. Their superior text and photo quality is great for displaying home listings and they are also cherished for in-house business reports.

Any four-color printer isn't exactly cheap to operate, but solid ink rates at the lower end of the cost scale when it comes to consumables. You can purchase single sticks, which are each rated at 1,000 copies. But you'll do best with three-packs for colors and six-packs for black. Periodic maintenance requires emptying a waste tray at the side of the printer and replacing a special maintenance kit that contains a roller that keeps the surface of the imaging drum clean and oiled.

The standard maintenance kit is rated for up to 10,000 copies. There is an optional version for the 8550 series that costs about 50% extra, but yields up to 30,000 copies. Here's where the more expensive model might end up being cheaper, if you find yourself printing thousands and thousands of copies per month.

Yes, it all adds up, but if you evaluate the price of keeping a color laser well fed, you'll find these solid ink printers relatively economical to operate.

In addition to stellar print quality, the 8550/DP has been thoroughly reliable during my extensive tests. I've outputted thousands and thousands of copies, and it never missed a beat. Envelopes come through the multifunction tray clear and crisp, and all the pages sport a waxy sheen that gives them the look of class.

If you're in the market for a color laser for your home or office, take pause. For many of you, a Xerox Phaser 8500 or 8550 is a much better solution and I will be extremely reluctant to return this product when the review product concludes.

ANATOMY OF A BAD PRINTER REVIEW

Reviewing computers and electronics gear is both subjective and objective, and opinions to a product may vary all over the place. So I am decidedly reluctant to criticize someone else's reaction to a product. I wouldn't be so egocentric as to say that my views are necessarily to be taken with greater authority than anyone else's.

However, I've already weighed in on that strange review of a Xerox Phaser 8550/DX, which is identical to the 8550/DP I've reviewed for this issue, except for packaging it with two extra paper trays, extra memory and a 20GB hard drive.

Now that I've had plenty of face time with the 8550/DP, it has only made me more concerned about InfoWorld's review and their inability to make corrections when confronted with incontrovertible facts. In any case, I'm going to examine the key anomalies and deliver my comments. I'm doing my best here to stick with the facts, taking the article at face value as much as possible.

- **Grayscale photos are rendered in "a pinkish color composite."** Maybe this is peculiar to the unit they tested. I couldn't find any symptom of this sort on either the 8500/DN or 8550/DP. When I asked one of InfoWorld's reviewers about this, she said it wasn't "pinkish" but "greenish," which made the comment even stranger. One owner of one of these printers has suggested some sort of misconfiguration in the print driver, but I wasn't able to see it with the default settings.
- **The printer "paused frequently to adjust itself."** This implies a period of long duration, such as you occasionally encounter with an inkjet printer. In fact, this alleged "pause" only happens periodically, and then it's of brief duration, probably a few seconds at most.
- **Update: "The smell of melting ink can be unpleasant."** Maybe in their environment, but I can't smell a thing in my home office even when my nose is placed near the printer, and I've been able to detect the odor emitted by printer toner. Mrs. Steinberg, who boasts a superior ability to sense strange odors, couldn't smell the melting ink either. In fairness to everyone, some of our readers do smell the odor, particularly during the warm-up cycle, but find it pleasant, like crayons. But the flavor of incense would be nice.
- **"Despite a 30-ppm-rated engine, the Phaser 8550/DX's fastest time when printing 10 copies of a 10-page, plain-text Word document was a paltry 15.4 ppm."** All right, InfoWorld is accusing Xerox of misrepresenting its test results. However, one of the authors of this review admits the test was not done in the speediest or Fast Color mode, but in the Enhanced mode, which is rated at 16 pages per minute. Under those circumstances, a 15.4 result is not "paltry" at all, but extremely close to Xerox's claim. There's nothing to indicate that the unit was ever tested at its speediest setting.
- **"You can't write over the output with a ballpoint pen."** This is partly true. However, it works just fine if that ballpoint uses gel ink.
- **"Consumables costs are high."** InfoWorld rates the costs of consumables over 50,000 copies. When you

compare it with a previous survey of color lasers, where printer costs were examined for an estimated 100,000 copies, and account for the differences, the Xerox solid ink printers actually rate at the lower end of the scale. When I asked the InfoWorld writer to explain this contradiction, she claimed the magazine had changed its method of calculating costs of operation, but I could never get her to explain what those changes were. I spent a little time examining the price of consumables of the Xerox against several popular color lasers, and the Xerox was more than competitive.

I do not pretend to understand why the obvious flaws in the article aren't being acknowledged, even after I spent an extended amount of time documenting them. The fact that I didn't see the review until several months after it was published, however, no doubt influenced the decision, since it's probably just yesterday's news. But it makes me concerned over the accuracy of other product reviews by the same authors.

No, folks, I am not free of errors, but I strive to correct them when I can, and that's the advantage of Web-based publishing. Too bad others don't look at the situation in the same way.

myNOTES 1.1.1 — A note-taking program that lets you create, manage retrieve and print notes and clippings of all kinds

reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

Developer: Andrei Kozlov, Mishimo Software

mynotes@mishimo.com
<http://www.mishimo.com/>

Shareware \$13 USD File Size: ca. 1.1 MB

Version Posted: 09 Jan 2006

Trial Version Available, which is limited to 6 note deep groups.

The product Help system is excellent.

Requirements: G4 or better, Mac OS X 10.3 or later.

Strength: This is a great note-taking product. It is easy to use, flexible, elegant and stable that takes advantage of the Panther and Tiger operating system's native software.

Weakness: None that I could find but I was unable to test of its features because I don't use Apple's mail or Address book nor do I chat, no not never. [The world needs Philistines – doc.]

Audience: All user levels.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.6.

Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.

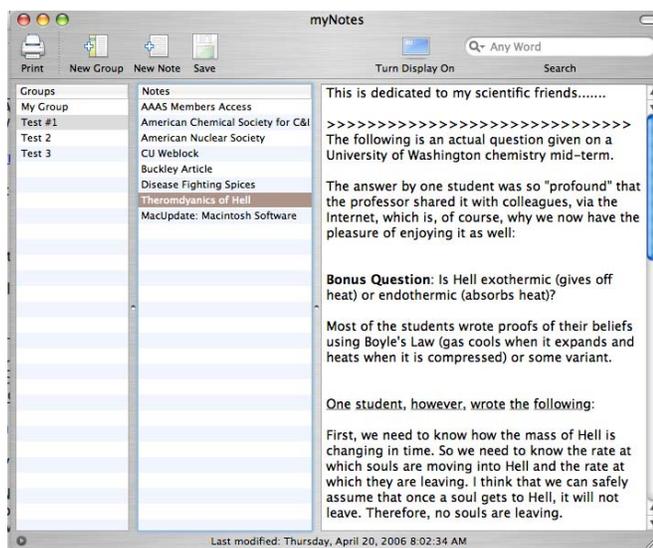


Introduction

I love note-taking software, some of which I've reviewed previously for macCompanion. Although I am using DEVONnote as my principal note collection and organizing software, I was intrigued by the developer description of this package, on the MacUpdate site. "myNotes is the note taking program with groundbreaking ease of use and innovative printing capabilities. Its simple and customizable interface lets you focus on notes, ideas or your diary, while printable themes let you print it with different styles. myNotes includes themes from basic Black and White to an outstanding Sakura theme." Read on about what I found."

Using the Product/Features

Installation, a drag and drop to your application folder is fool proof. All work is done in the three-pane man window. To test the product I both added the types of files that the software supports (PDFs, images {jpg, tiff, and gif...} , text, RTF and MS Word documents, and some of the many notes I've added to DEVONnote to the software. Everything I tried worked just fine. Searching for information in my notes was also easy. All embedded links, worked fine when importing test or RTF based documents. On the rare occasion that a link didn't take, the linking tools solved that problem [Font > Link].



The developer notes that, “With myNotes you can instantly look up your buddies by first or last name and send them an e-mail, start a chat session and open a homepage with just one click! In addition you can search your contacts by zip code, city, state, country and a company name.” I for the most part agree — see the conclusions to this review for more. I further agree with the developer that the software is a well-implemented tool for keeping track of small bits of information - from your ideas and to-do lists to anything interesting you discover online.

The product is stable; four plus hours of testing and no freezes or crashes. The developer has effectively implemented Auto-Saving and Backup so you never lose your work, nice belt and suspenders use. Now why doesn't MS Word do this in a better fashion? However, based on their latest new announcements, they don't do the new Windows replacement OS very well either.

Key Features and my Two Cents (...Some Andrei Kozlov doesn't highlight.)

Apple's Address Book Integration – Not tested, I use a FileMaker Pro database for contact information.

Customizable Document Work Area (background picture and transparency)

Instant search/filtering – This works well, perhaps not instant, for my large test data set, but very fast.

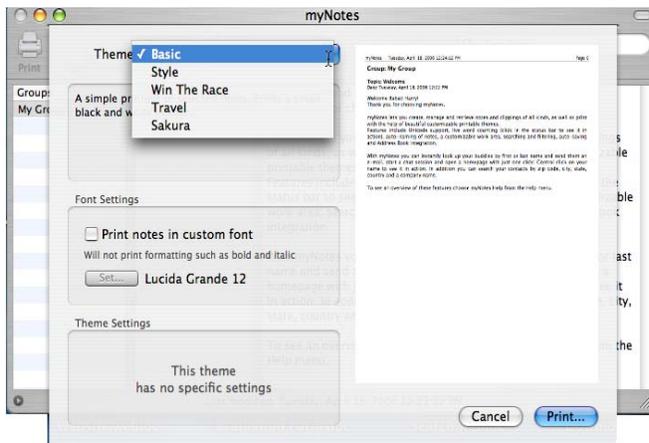
Live Word and Characters Counting – You all know I'm verbose, but its nice to be reminded when I have too much of the blarney stone in my writing.

Import And Export of Rich and Plain Text – Works like a charm keeping active links well, active.

Drag and Drop Fully Enabled - Just what you'd expect from a well crafted to Apple's Macintosh programming conventions, piece of software. – doc's software features premise, if it doesn't drop and drag, dump the program!

Full Unicode and Text Encodings Support – The feature allows you to Write and search in any language. I had no need for this feature so did not test it.

Customized Printing Formats (themes) - Make stunning prints with 5 customizable themes, plain or fancy to suit your needs or moods. My only concern with printing was that I could not find anyway to add white space around the edges o the printed notes to allow wider margins — but I did not look very hard.



Print Dialog



Printable Themes

Live Email and Internet Links – A must feature of any word or text processing associated program these days. Of course, its too bad that other note and ToDo programs I've test make creating live links so difficult; kudos to the developer.

Deals Well, with PDF Files – Drag a PDF (e.g., an illustrated recipe) into a new note and there you’ll be, its part of your specified note group set. I was not able to determine whether a PDF with imbedded active links transferred that ability to myNotes, but I’ll keep checking, but far no luck. Active Links in MSW documents did transfer to myNOTES

Using the myNotes from the Dock – From the application’s Icon stored in the dock you can easily create new groups and documents, a nice feature

Backups — myNotes keeps the last 10 backups created, check this out in *~/Library/Application Support/myNotes/Backup*.

A Few Gripes

Flat Groups — The product only allows groups that can only contain one layer of notes. I prefer, indeed require, a deeper hierarchy of notes. I need, at each level (folder) whose contents are another folder or two *and* some notes at each deeper level. This, from my person use, is the only significant weakness in this otherwise great product.

Auto Naming of Notes — According to the publisher, if tired of inventing names for notes, let myNOTES do it for you! No way, grabbing the first 20 or 30 characters in a note comes nowhere close to giving the note a unique and functional name. I turned this feature off in the preferences after a few minutes use.

More Tool Bar Icons — An paraphrased from a Version Tracker review, A few additional toolbar icons would also be welcome: Link, delete, text attributes, and color. However, this was not a big deal once you figured out the logical menus. A highlighting capability is also very desirable. (In part from Bud Simrin)



Deinstalling Information Needed — The help file does not contain information on how to remove the application and its associated files. Since the installed files include both the data (notes-groups) files and the preference file, removal may not be obvious to a new Macintosh user.

Conclusions

myNotes is a note taking program that lets you create, manage and retrieve notes and clippings of all kinds, as well as print with the help of beautiful printable themes. Its simple and easily customizable interface lets you focus on your notes, ideas or your review inputs or love letters.

For those of you who are comfortable with its flat (one layer file) interface and have not yet committed to putting large amounts of information into another note keeping program, grab a copy and try it. You’ll find it well worth a few minutes of testing. It also has the best printing features in any product I’ve yet tested.

That said, there are some limitations to this review. Since I don’t chat, and don’t use Apples mail and address programs, my experience with this product will differ significantly from yours. Never the less, based on Internet reviews by others, I am convinced that the items I did not test, will work as well as those I did. I rate this product **4.5 macCs**

DiscBlaze 6.1.5 — A Disc Burning Alternative to Apple's Offerings

reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

<p>Developer: Radical Breeze webmaster@radicalbreeze.com http://www.radicalbreeze.com/blaze/index.shtml</p> <p>Shareware \$30 USD File Size: ca. 600 KB Version Posted: 19th April 2006.</p> <p>Try to Buy: You can download a fully functional free trial version (limited to 5 burns) prior to registration.</p> <p>Requirements: G4 or better, Mac OS X 10.4 or later (PPC or Intel), an OS X compatible CD or DVD burner. (If your CD/DVD burner works with iTunes or the Finder it will work with DiscBlaze.) The product is Universal Binary compliant.</p> <p>Strength: Rewritten in Apple's Cocoa application development environment for OS X Tiger, DiscBlaze 6.0 features a more new user-friendly redesigned user interface. On top of that, the software is fast and flexible and the new interface is easier to use than the old.</p> <p>Weakness: It isn't Toast, but I'm not paying Roxio's price either. In addition, the interface for making copies of CDs was awkward and time consuming.</p> <p>Audience: All levels of user with simple media burning needs</p>	
	
<p>The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.6.</p>	
<p>Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.</p>	

Introduction

Since I burn many data CDs and DVD's and make many audio samples with material I my extensive music collection, I am always in the lookout for tools for burning these archive volumes. May of our readers also are concerned about cost, so therefore a product that would meet their needs at a price lower then that for the genre leader would save them some money. I use Roxio's Toast <http://www.roxio.com/en/products/toast/index.jhtml>, a \$79 dollar product, having gotten my fist copy with my LaCie Burner – I'm used to it and am willing to afford the upgrades. [It's an old dog, new tricks thing!]

Mike Swope of *macCompanion* last reviewed in an article entitled "DiscBlaze 3.02: Shareware Data CD/DVD & Audio CD Burning Software for Mac OS X Jaguar and Panther" in March 2004, Volume 2 Issue 3. At that time, Mike gave DiscBlaze a 4.0 macC's. Let me quote briefly from Mike's Review.

"Since the introduction of CD/DVD burning in the Mac OS Finder, it might be thought that disk burning applications are slowly being forgotten. But as we've seen with the continued popularity and development of Roxio® Toast®, long the defacto standard for burning CDs and DVDs on Macintosh, there is still room for improvement in disk-burning tools. Some shareware developers, despite Toast's dominance, believe they too can improve upon the process of disk burning and create better value. Radical Breeze Software is one such developer."

I recommend that readers check out Mike's review, since many of the items about DiscBlaze he discusses are still relevant, despite the fact that the developer has done much to enhance the product, again a sort of race with Toast Titanium, now version 7.0.2. The article also serves as a great way for a user new to burning CDs and DVDs to get oriented to the process.

Since it's been a long time, from a Macintosh OS and competitive products perspective, between version 3.0.2 to 6.1.5, I decided to do a quick check to see how well the software fared with the Tiger OS X operating system. I know that there is still another competitive product out there; Dragon Burn a \$49 product from NTI which is more highly oriented toward video and live audio recording than DiscBlaze.

http://www.ntius.com/default.asp?p=dragonburn/dburn4_main but that's for another review.

[Note, whenever possible, I don't use iTunes, so have no concerns about the interoperability of DiscBlaze with Apple's music software. Neither do I use the Macintosh OS X burn from the desktop feature. I don't do video either, so burning home or downloaded movies are not my thing.]

Using the Product/Features

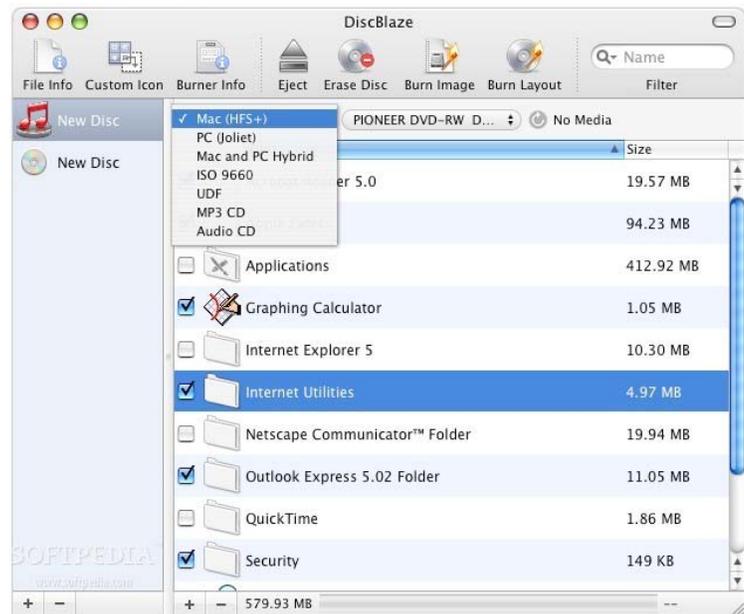
Like all good software, installation is a breeze. Having used other Radical Breeze software products, the product follows most Macintosh conventions and its interface will be familiar to anyone who's burned CDs and DVDs. [In my experience, but not directly for this product, Radical Breeze both listens to user problems when they occur and responds to them! — Are you listening Microsoft?]

Although I've played with the software for a few days, I did not put it through its complete paces. I found that all but one of my critical burning tasks, worked well with DiscBlaze. My *burning* needs are straight forward, and I commonly use Toast in meeting those needs. In particular, the interface for making backups of folders and files only, was close enough to what I was familiar with that I had virtually no learning curve.

However, burning back up copies of CDs turned out to be a significant problem. I could easily create disk images from the finder or by using DiscBlaze, to make fill with audio tracks for my samplers. For this I used audio tracks ripped from CDs. However, in DiscBlaze, that had to be done by dragging, into the main DiscBlaze window, the tracks one tune at a time. True even when I wanted more than one track from a CD.

The product's instructions say... Just insert a blank disc (choose Ignore if OS X asks you what to do with it), and then drag files or folders into the DiscBlaze window to add them to the disc. Well some times.

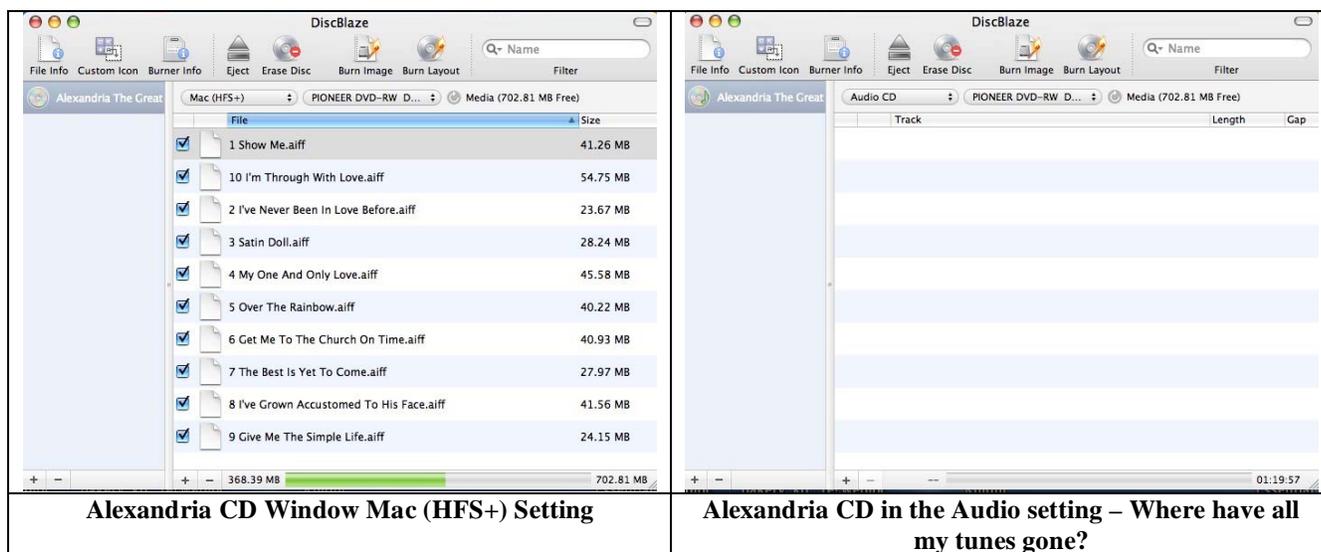
Data Disks — DiscBlaze lets you select from four data disc formats -- Mac, PC, Mac And PC Hybrid, and ISO 9660. For data CDs or DVDs, if you select the appropriate format from a pop-up menu you will burn the disk to that format. (No help is provided for the newbie on this selection task). If you select the Hybrid format and then select an item in the window and click on the File Info button, you can choose whether to make the item visible on a Mac, a PC, or both. In other words, you can create CDs that show up one way on one platform, and another way on the other.



To make the instructions work for data, I had to reset my computer so that Toast was not the default application when a blank CD was installed. [Preferences > CDs and DVDs. — Either iTunes or DiscBlaze as the default application would do.] That took a few times around, and several useless disk burns, to figure out. There was nothing in the minimal help files to point out this potential problem. [More about the help files later] Most Macintosh users have iTunes set up as the default, err, by default.

Burn-Baby Burn, Perhaps — If you want to burn music CDs and DVDs you choose between mp3 and standard audio {AIFF formatted.} The range in quality is too large, an in between point is needed to add choice between large files and audio quality.

Back to burning a copy of my CD for backup purposes — When trying to burn a copy of a CD I first expect to choose whether the product is a data CD or an Audio CD (or DVD). Then I expect to be able to drag that disc, either audio or data, to the main window of an application (e.g., Toast) and see the content displayed, ready for me to either burn or rearrange. This does not happen in DiscBlaze! There is no way to set the output type prior to adding the CD to the right hand window. Since the default setting for the program is Mac (HFS+), prior to you changing the product's preference pane. In that setting of course, I can see all the tracks but any burn made in that setting will not play on a CD player. However, you knew that, didn't you?



Okay, moving to Audio selection on the pull down menu, I get a blank contents window. All the tracks have disappeared. I could not figure out how to add, all at once, the contents of the Audio CD into the left hand side of the application window. What did work was grabbing the tracks one at a time and dragging them each to the contents window (right side of screen). Excuse the pun — what a drag! Had I selected mp3 from the pull down menu I would have gotten all the tracks to appear at once, but mp3s are too low in sound quality.

To make a long story short, after I slept on it, I tried once again to do a three step audio CD duplication, nope — didn't work. [Select Audio, Select Tracks at once, burn the backup CD.]

Well, now to the features that are advertised on the developer's web site – A few observations for this mini-review.

And the Vendor Notes:

- Burn CDs and DVDs with a variety of options. Multiple sessions, test burns and more. Create and re-use disc layouts. — This worked fine for data CDs and one data DVD
- Use custom icons for Mac (HFS+) discs — I hate the generic look, and sung available clipart, custom icons worked well for me.
- Get information on the type of media your drive supports. — Yes that worked but since I have an internal and external firewire burner, I could not tell which was which from within DiscBlaze.

- Burn and create new disc images in a variety of industry standard formats (.dmg's, .cdr's and .iso's). – Okay, that's fine for data archive media.
- Erase and re-use your CD-RW discs – I don't use CD-RW disks, but the feature worked the one time I tried it.
- Set details on individual files including Hybrid (PC and Macintosh) options, enabled status and comments. – I didn't chase this.
- Burn data CD's and DVD's in HFS+, Joliet, ISO-9660 and UDF formats. – I didn't test this feature.
- Burn Audio CD's and assign each track a custom pre-gaps. — I had enough troubles trying to duplicate audio CDs that gaps were the last thing on my mind.

A Few More Gripes

Lack of Detailed Help Files – neither the product help feature or the publishers web site had information that would have helped me to figure out how to duplicate audio CDs. Indeed, when I tried to update the help files, I was passed to a screen that required me to provide the details for my internal modem. Hmmm, I use a high-speed Internet cable connection that is always on. Somehow, the software neither recognized the available connection, not allowed me to manually enter it.

Audio Track Information — The screen containing audio information contains file size, not time. That might work for data, but not audio, Let's get real folks! Music tracks are measured in time, not MB.

Conclusions

After reading both Mike Swope's review and the information provided on the Radical Breeze website, I expect a good if not great product. Not another Toast, but a product that most of us could easily use to duplicate audio CDs, create audio samples, and make archive data files of either CD or DVD media. To say the least, I was disappointed. Working with data was straightforward, but audio, to say the least was a drag.

If any of you readers have the secret short-cut to making a copy of an audio CD in three steps (select output format, add content and burn.) let me know, and I can get it to work, I'll post an addendum to this review. Meanwhile the Toast is burning and I love it. With regret, I must rate this product **3.0 macCs**.

DropDMG 2.7.6 — The easiest way to create Mac OS X disk images

reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

<p>Developer: Michael Tsai dropdmg@c-command.com http://c-command.com/dropdmg/ Shareware \$15 USD File Size: ca. 1.9 MB Free Trial: fully-featured (30 days)</p> <p>Version Posted: 28 Mar 2006</p> <p>Blog Based help is also provided at http://c-command.com/blog/category/dropdmg/</p> <p>Uninstaller: provided</p> <p>Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3 or 10.4, not yet Universal Binary (e.g., Intel Macintosh)</p> <p>Strength: Easy to use product to Create and convert .dmg disk images As well, as Zip and StuffIt archives. It has intuitive preferences that allow great flexibility when creating custom disk images for a variety of uses (e.g., dmg files.).</p> <p>Weakness: Nothing significant, that's a great for a product way to be.</p> <p>Audience: All user levels – the software grows with you.</p>	
<p>The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.6.</p>	
<p>Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.</p>	

Introduction

Although I send out lots of data to clients and friends, in the past I've always packaged this material (e.g., MS word files, PDFs, graphics) in a folder that I zipped. Although zipped folder approach worked, and still works, there was little I could do to (a) customize or personalize the package and (b) assure all the pieces stayed together as an integral *collection*.

Thus when I read about DropDMG, I jumped at the opportunity to test it. Like other of my shareware reviews, I borrow a lot of details from the publisher's web page – it save time spent trying to paraphrase that material, but my finding are the result of testing.

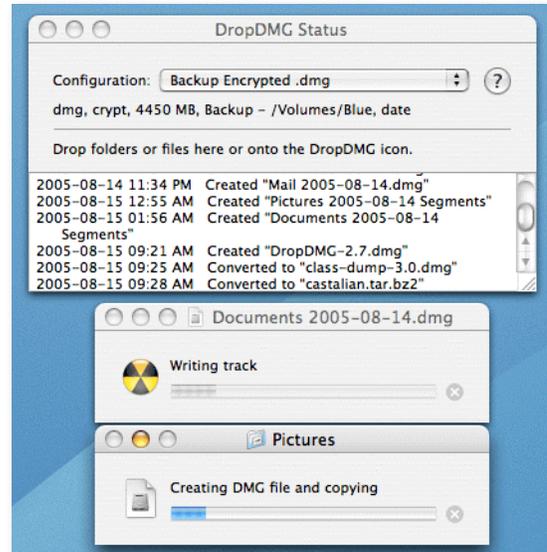
DropDMG is the easiest way to create Mac OS X disk images. Just drag and drop a folder or file, and the software will create an image in `\".dmg\"`, `\".img\"`, or `\".smi\"` format—or a Tar, Zip, or StuffIt X archive. Users should note that some of the stuffed archive file formats are platform specific, something I did not find in the DropDMG manual. Indeed, the Macintosh operating system, especially Tiger is considerably better at accessing formats shunned by PC's. Like don't send a DMG or a StuffIt X archive to you Wintel using friends.

Alternatively, you can drag an existing image or archive file onto DropDMG to easily convert it to any of the other supported formats. DropDMG supports encryption, segmented images, and custom icons, and it can create images with rich-text license agreements in multiple languages. There are many timesaving features such as temporary preferences when you hold down Option, remembering recent folders, configurations to keep track of popular combinations of settings, and the ability to create more than one image or archive at a time.

Using the Product

Drag the DropDMG application icon into your Applications folder and then double-click it. To install the DropDMG command-line tool, choose Install “DropDMG” Tool from the DropDMG menu. To install the DropDMG command-line tool, choose Install “DropDMG” Tool from the DropDMG menu. DropDMG will ask for an administrator password, as it needs to copy the DropDMG file to the protected /usr/bin folder. The DropDMG service in the [Application > Services menu] will become available the next time you log in.

The after setting the preferences, you do want the software to do exactly what you prefer, don't you? Then the product is ready to use. Simply drag and drop the files you want convert to a disk image to the DropDMG and the software does the rest. Drag and drop one or more files or folders onto the DropDMG icon, either in the Finder or in the Dock, or onto the top portion of the status window. What DropDMG do it's thing. [There's not enough time to get a of coffee, sorry. Hold down the Option key to choose a different configuration or options than the ones currently selected.



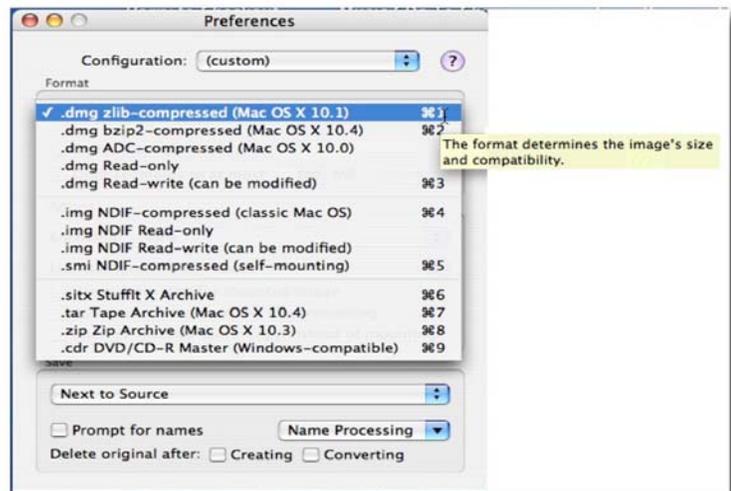
I've detailed, below, some of your options.

I verified, as the manual explains, that DropDMG tries to determine what you want it to do based on the files or folders that you give it.

For example, suppose that you've set the preferences to create .dmg disk images.

If you give DropDMG a folder, it will create an image of the folder.

If you give it a .zip, .tar, .gz, or StuffIt archive, it will convert the archive into a .dmg disk image.

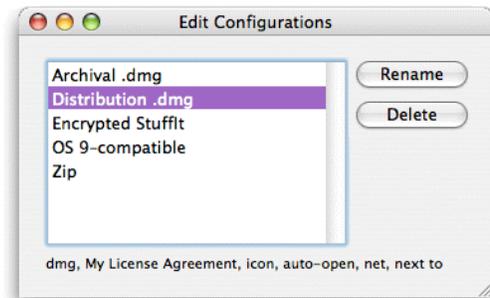


If you give it an image in another format, DropDMG will convert it to .dmg format, using the options specified in the preferences.

If you give DropDMG a file, that's not an archive or image, DropDMG will create a new image containing just that file.

When asked to create an image from a volume, DropDMG creates a special “device image” that is an exact copy of the volume, not just its constituent files. If the volume was bootable, the image may be burned to CD or DVD and the resulting disc will also be bootable.

To group multiple items into a single image or archive, move them into a new folder, and then drop it on the application icon.



You can also lock in the sets of preferences you use for a specified variety of tasks by using the software's configurations features.

Conversion can also be used to add or remove license agreements or encryption from a set of files, or to segment or join an existing image. When given multiple files or folders, DropDMG creates a separate image or archive for each, but even this has a workaround allowing the creation of just a single archive.

DMG Content Planning— Now, there is a minor detail associated with using this product. There always is, isn't there? — You must think! I use a pad and paper to outline (plan), on what files you want to convert to a disk image. Otherwise, GIGO and you have to do the task again. However, that's what you get paid big bucks for, isn't it.

Documentation — The full DropDMG documentation is available in PDF and HTML formats. To view it, double-click the DropDMG application icon and then look in DropDMG's Help menu. You can also, as I did, download it from the developer's site. The 40 Page manual, although only needed occasionally by most users, is a bit terse in style but is well organized and easy to follow. One doesn't need purple prose to understand a users manual, so this, Michael, is not a ding.

To use the software's more sophisticated functions, I recommend reading the manual. Otherwise you can get started the Macintosh way, install it and start to use it. Reading the manual will help explain somewhat arcane information such as *all the options are available from Automator, AppleScript, and from the DropDMG command-line tool*. In addition Michael offers a number of ways to backup and restore backup data that provided sound advice on using this essential function. *The DropDMG manual actually links to the Apple help files when dealing with the maccentric items.*

Features — What Can You Do With DropDMG?

I've listed the features most important to me along with a few comments, in italics, on each I cared about, for your consideration. A few of these were mentioned in passing in the preceding sections, but tell me—tell me again is good practice. Specify as many—or as few—options as you want. DropDMG's *Preferences* window gives you lots of controls, but you don't always have to use them. Save a few named *configurations*; to allow switching between different sets of preferences, you can instantly recall different combinations of options you've previously created.

Make Backups (You know you should.) — Before backing up files to another hard disk or to removable media, you can use DropDMG to bundle them into a disk image. The disk image compresses the files to save space; lets you check their integrity with a checksum, and can (optionally) encrypt the files to protect your off-site backup from prying eyes.

— For backing up files, scattered around your hard disk, associated with a project, this is a great way to organize and keep that data together.

Use DropDMG To Burn Data Backups To Disc — If your folder is too large to fit on one CD or DVD, DropDMG can segment the image to span multiple discs.

— Although Macintosh OS X Tiger, Toast (Déjà vu) and a number of backup utilities allow backup to CD/DVD media, the process is well implemented in DropDMG. I still prefer a large partitioned external hard drive for backups since burning DVDs take more time than I have patience.

Prepare Mac OS X Software for Distribution — Apple recommends that developers use disk images to distribute their software. DropDMG makes it easy to create disk images that auto-open, have license agreements, custom icons, and that are Internet-enabled (so the image unpacks automatically when downloaded with Safari).

Compress Files Before Sharing Them — With support for a variety of image and archive formats (and encodings for sending files over networks), DropDMG makes it easy to archive and compress files before sending them via e-mail, uploading them to a server, or saving them to removable media. In many cases, the images DropDMG creates are smaller than those created by Apple's Disk Utility, while still being fully compatible. It's also easy to convert between any of the formats DropDMG supports.

– The compression size wars go on between the Apple compression scheme, those of Allume Systems the developer of DropStuff or other shareware contenders. Since my main purpose of compressing files is to get them past the size limit barriers for email or other Internet transactions, the small differences in compressed size do not matter. Nevertheless, the feature works, so processing more can be done from within the DropDMG application.

I Took a 22.4 MB file of illustrated and unillustrated recipes in PDF and MS Word format and used a variety of preference alternative to compress them.

File Type	Compression Mode	Results and Notes
Original Recipes	None	22.5 MB
Trial 1 DropDMG	.DMG	18.5 MB [Fast]
Trial 2 Drop DMG	.Zip	18.5 MB [Fast]
Trial 3 OS X Tiger	.Zip	18.6 MB [Fast]
Trial 4 DropStuff	.Zip	18.5 MB [Fast]
Trial 5 DropDMG	.Tar	22.2 MB [Slower]
Trial 6 DropDMG	.cdr	25.9 MB [Slower]
Trial 7 DropDMG	StuffIt X Archive	18.2 MB [Slow]

Share Files so That Others Can More Easily Read Them — Disk images provide maximum compatibility: earlier versions of Mac OS X don't support Mac-savvy Zip and Tar archives, and Mac OS X 10.4 doesn't have built-in support StuffIt archives. Only disk images preserve Mac metadata and long filenames and are compatible with all versions of Mac OS X. Of course, if your audience prefers archives, DropDMG makes it easy to create them, as well.

– I did not test this feature.

Encrypt Files That You Want To Keep Private — I did not test this feature since I'm the only person using my system.

Create A Device Image That Records the Exact Contents of a Data CD or DVD — You can then burn backup copies of the disc, or double-click the image it to access its contents as though the disc were still in your drive.

– This is another DropDMG convenience that works quite well, although it is not unique to DropDMG. Comparing the use of DropDMG against Toast Titanium 7.0.2, the choice is yours; both create exact content images wonderfully well.

A Single Gripe But Not With Paul Tsai

After drafting out my review, I searched the Internet to find pearls of wisdom I might have missed. I ran across the following. *Paul Collins noted in the September 2005 [MacInTouch](#) that DropDMG is a great alternative to StuffIt. Paul mentioned that he'd used it for 5 months with no problems.*

Now, using DropDMG as I substitute for StuffIt or StuffIt Deluxe or even in part for Apple's Disk Utility troubles me. It's an apples and oranges thing. Suffice it to say that if you have the Allume utilities installed, particularly version 9.x, DropDMG can gain additional features/functions from those software packages. I quote from the DropDMG manual

“If StuffIt Expander 9.0.1 or later is installed, DropDMG will be able to convert StuffIt archives to other formats. The developer recommends that you turn off the StuffIt Expander preference *Continue to expand (if possible)*. If StuffIt Deluxe 5.0, 7.0 or later (9.0.1 recommended) is installed, DropDMG will also be able to convert disk images and other kinds of archives to StuffIt X format. In addition, StuffIt Deluxe allows DropDMG to convert more than one StuffIt archive at a time and to convert StuffIt archives without opening the StuffIt Expander application.” There’s more read the manual or detailed help files.

Picky, picky doc_Babad

Conclusions

DropDMG is a great program, abounding in features. Its simplicity is excellent. Having worked with the product for a few days, I’m likely to keep on using it, and using it and...

In summary, DropDMG can create/convert Mac OS X disk images via drag and drop (".dmg", ".img", or ".smi"). It also supports encryption, segmented images, and custom icons. You can use it to create images with rich-text license agreements in multiple languages. The software offers Panther .Zip, StuffIt X, .cdr, file support as well as supporting Apple’s system services, custom mount points, more options and other enhancements for those who are control oriented. I will not replace other the Allume “stuffit” applications I use with DropDMG but am likely to make less use of them and Apple’s archiving tools. Viva DropDMG

I rate this product **4.5 macCs**

About the Developer:

Michael Tsai is a Macintosh software developer who has authored several useful utilities, including DropDMG, BBAutoComplete (for BBEedit) and SpamSieve. Michael is also the editor and publisher of the monthly Mac eZine ATPM About This Particular Macintosh, and he writes an interesting Mac-oriented weblog. Michael, I couldn’t find a picture of you on the Internet.

[I will be reviewing SpamSieve in a future issue of macC doc_Babad].

Fidget Menu 1.5.9 (A re-review) — A menu bar item you can configure and personalize

reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

<p>Developer/Publisher: April Gendill FOR neXtSoft http://www.fornextsoft.com/index.php?page=fidget</p> <p>Shareware \$15 USD File Size: ca. 357 KB Version Posted: September 19, 2005</p> <p>Support: eMail only from within a window on the neXtSoft website.</p> <p>Uninstaller: not provided but move to trash and delete. plst files works.</p> <p>Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later, Tiger Compatible</p> <p>Strength: Fidget Menu is an easy to use and very powerful launcher menu that runs on the right side of the menu bar. It can also be configured to run from the Dock</p> <p>Weakness: The lack of a manual, the software's inability to display multiple embedded folders make this product less useful than it should be.</p> <p>Audience: All user levels.</p>	<p>"Fidget"</p>  
<p>The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.6.</p>	
<p>Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.</p>	

Introduction

Although the dock provided in Apple's OS X operating system is a powerful and flexible tool for organizing your work, if you are anything like my, your dock is saturated with both applications and folders and documents, often nested folders. Over the last two years, I've reviewed a variety of dock enhancement tools, some of them of very good quality. Those included *dockDoubler X* <http://www.daniele.ch/downloads.html> created by Daniele Kraehenbuehl, *DockSwap* <http://www.pidog.com/OSX/> from piDog Software, and *SwitchDock* <http://www.limit-point.com/darkcloud/switchdockabout.html> from Limit Point Software. No, I've not abandoned Apple's dock, but have added other tools to work around its limitations.

For whatever reason, I've discovered that using a menu bar focused organizational tool is more my way of working on my Macintosh. It's more comfortable for me, when dealing with the continuously changing bits and pieces with which I work (applications, documents, project stuff groupings.) It seems I prefer finding things by reaching up to a menu bar item rather than dropping down to the dock. Therefore, whenever I come across a *menu bar* oriented organizational tool, I like to check it out.

Just for the record, I'm presently actively using both Unsanity's FruitMenu 3.4.3 <http://www.unsanity.com/haxies/fruitmenu/> and X-Menu, created by Christian Gruenberg and distributed by Devon Technologies. <http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/freeware/index.html>. This review serves to introduce you to another tool that you might find useful in getting you stuff together, at least for a while. Having reviewed Fidget Menu 1.3.4 for macC in the June 2005 Issue; I thought I'd re-review the current version and search out its abilities and weaknesses and the software's compatibility with the Tiger OS.

Using the Product/Features

Installation was a simple drop and drag. A double click on the application, entering my password and I was good to go. The Icon for Fidget Menu appeared in my menu bar.

The developer described her product as:

“Fidget Menu is an all purpose launcher. Start Applications, open URLs, or open documents from this Status Menu item. Fidget Menu runs on the right side of your menu bar, giving you quick access to anything you need. Fidget Menu comes with a number of preconfigured items like System preferences and a Sleep command. Uniquely, Fidget Menu offers POP email monitoring with several options for what to do when new mail arrives. ”

Read more at <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/june2005/Shareware/FidgetMenu1.htm>.

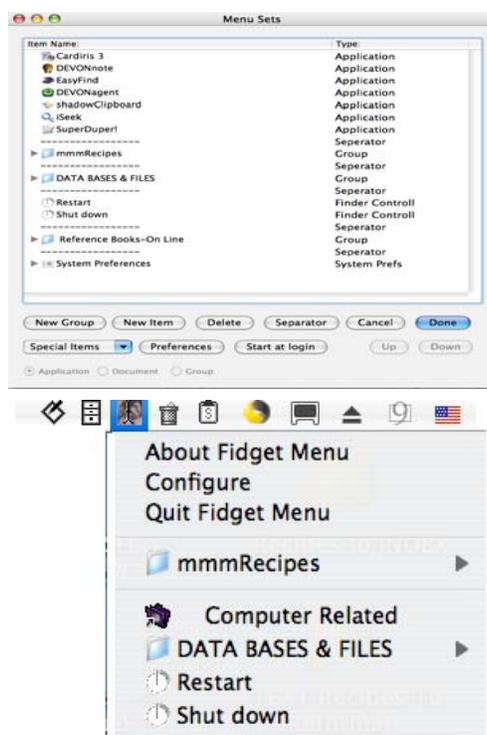
In addition to featured mention in my June review, the software’s configurable menubar item features Finder controls such as restart, shutdown, logout, start classic and sleep and can contain access to your system preferences.

In order to use the Fidget Menu software one needs to configure the application using the configure item in the pull down menu installed by the application. So I opened the configure window and started to drop and drag items of interest into it. All went well with respect to my adding applications to the window.

Rather than reiterate the information I’d provided in my earlier review, I chose to try to configure Fidget Menu in a manner comparable to that in my easy access list folder in X-Menu. The pull down menu contains an eclectic assortment of application alias’, and aliases to a set of hierarchical folders that I access almost daily.



My X-Menus Listing



What I, in part, tried to add to Fidget Menu – Top
What I actually got - Bottom

Then it was time to start adding at first, the alias of the folder I wanted to be able to quickly access. However, that didn't work. I could figure out how to get the alias into the configure window; drop and drag did not work. None of my attempts to use aliases rather than the actual application, document or folder was successful.

Then I dragged the icon of the folder I wanted into the window from the finder. Nothing. Okay, I then created a *new group*, and named it *Reference Books Online [RBOL]*. I found the original folder for *Reference Books Online* and dragged its contents in the item in the Fidget Menu Window. [Note this folder only contains one another nested folder.] Nothing, nix, niechevo! Pulling down the Fidget menu-menu and there was no RBOL item list under the menu bar.

Let's, Harry I sez, try an alternate approach! *Remember there is no manual or help file or menu for this software!* I then used the pull down menu *Configure > Special Item > Group* from Folder and found the folder RBOL by chasing it in the new item finder window, did indeed introduce the desired folder into the Fidget menu *configure window*. Just for good luck, I also added via the special Item menu my *mmmRecipes* folder, *Data Bases & Files* folder, and my *Computer Related* folders. I was on a run. Okay, That step done. So let's see how this all worked (as illustrated above.) Much to my amazement and chagrin, thee *Computer Related* items folder did not appear in the Fidget Menu-pull down menu. The other folders I *planted* did,

However, I soon discovered one additional limitation of the product. The product is limited to only one level deep for nested folders. I've set up, in the Finder, my *Data Bases & Files* folder as a nested set of folders For example: *Harry's Documents > Data Bases & Files > Tax Papers > Taxes 2005 > Consulting Files*. All I could get to open in the finder was my Tax papers folder. Digging deeper required a standard finder borrowing down process. I could not do this from Fidget Menu

Overall, working with the program by trial and error was time consuming, for the most part, because intuitive finder-like drop and drag actions did not accomplish what I thought they should. Also, in many cases my dragging a folder to the configure window, converted it to a 'static' document which of course was not what I needed.

Problems Summary

I do not know whether the results I obtained when testing the product in June of '05 were due to a change in my OS from Panther to tiger, but my notes from that time don't indicate the problems I found in this more in-depth review. In addition, my file organizational and launch activated access needs were simpler a year ago.

No Manual or Formal Help — The lack of documentations makes using the software's features a trial and error process. Despite reviews posted on the MacUpdate and Version Tracker sites, access to the product's features is limited without such documentation.

Drag and Drop for Deep Hieratically Organized Folders — nested folders, often 2-4 levels deep, organize much of what I do. In addition to difficulties adding such folders to the Fidget Menu-Menu Bar pull down menu, there was no way to get to the lowest tier document from Fidget Menu.

Documents and Folder who's Titles Contain a Period — In order to get a more orderly listing of folder in a window, I use either a space in front of the folder name (to bring that item to the top of my list). Alternately, I place a z. with a few spaces afterward before the folder's name, which pushes that item to the bottom of the window in *name* view. Alas when adding folders Fidget Menu, I ended up with along list of folder named z. [Removing the period would solve the problem of getting a correct file or folder name but...].



As far as recognizing the items (document or folders) I drove to the top of the list by using a space in front of their names, I could not get the software to recognize the change. The files/folders listed in the Fidget Menu window did not reflect the change I made in the Finder, no not even rebooting the finder or restarting my computer made a difference.

Conclusions

To reiterate, Fidget Menu is a small and easy to use menu bar addition that allows you to quickly choose and launch applications, open individual documents or one stored in a simple nested folder. By adding your favorite URLs, you can go to web sites, even from within an application. All of this works wonderfully as long as your hierarchy is only one level deep

Having worked with a wide variety of products that serve as launch applications since June of 2005, I was amazed on how my perspective of launchers has changed. In addition, I have gotten involved in a greater variety of projects, almost all of which need to be organized by “sub-folders” making my hard disk multi-layered with respect to folder structure and more complex. There any menu bar launcher I use must be easily reconfigured, at times to lead me, for example, *only* to a lower level nested folder in which I’m actively working. From week to week, I reconfigure my present ‘launcher’ to reflect my work priorities — it must be simple and fast.

On reconsideration and more detailed testing, I now rate this product **3.0 macCs**

Software

Comparing Business Card Design Software

by Joe Kissell joe@tidbits.com with a PS by Harry {doc} Babad

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Business Card Composer (now v 3.2)

BeLight Software

Support@belightsoft.com

<http://www.belightsoft.com/products/composer/>

Commercial Software

Download: \$35 USD File Size: ca. 17.7 MB

Boxed Edition: \$40 USD + S&H

Academic Pricing Available

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later; Universal Binary compliant.

Audience: All user levels.



SOHO Business Cards (now v. 1.6)

Chronos, LC

http://www.chronosnet.com/Products/sohobc_product.html

Support: Free online knowledgebase and Technical support Forums; otherwise support is on a paid basis

Commercial Software

Download: \$30 USD; File Size: ca. 17.6 MB

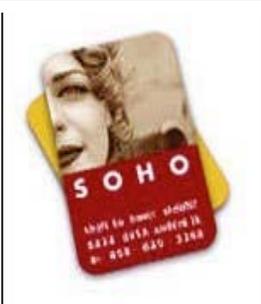
Boxed Edition: \$30 USD + S&H (Apparently)

Academic Pricing May be Available

File Size: ca. 17.6 MB

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later; Universal Binary compliant.

Audience: All user levels.



Introduction

When I began my duties as TidBITS Senior Editor recently, one of my first official functions was to order some business cards for myself. Although I could simply have plugged my contact info into the existing TidBITS business card template, Adam and Tonya wanted to come up with a new design that incorporated information for both TidBITS and Take Control. So they sent me the graphics and suggested that I see what I could come up with in each of two business card design applications: Business Card Composer from BeLight Software and SOHO Business Cards from Chronos.

Designing business cards is not exactly rocket science. I've done it before - without the benefit of any special software - and I fully expected that either of these two applications would make it a completely painless and speedy process. While I found a lot to like about both packages, though, I found them to be surprisingly different. I also discovered that first impressions can be deceiving; SOHO Business Cards, the more polished-looking program, was in fact much less capable of producing good results easily.

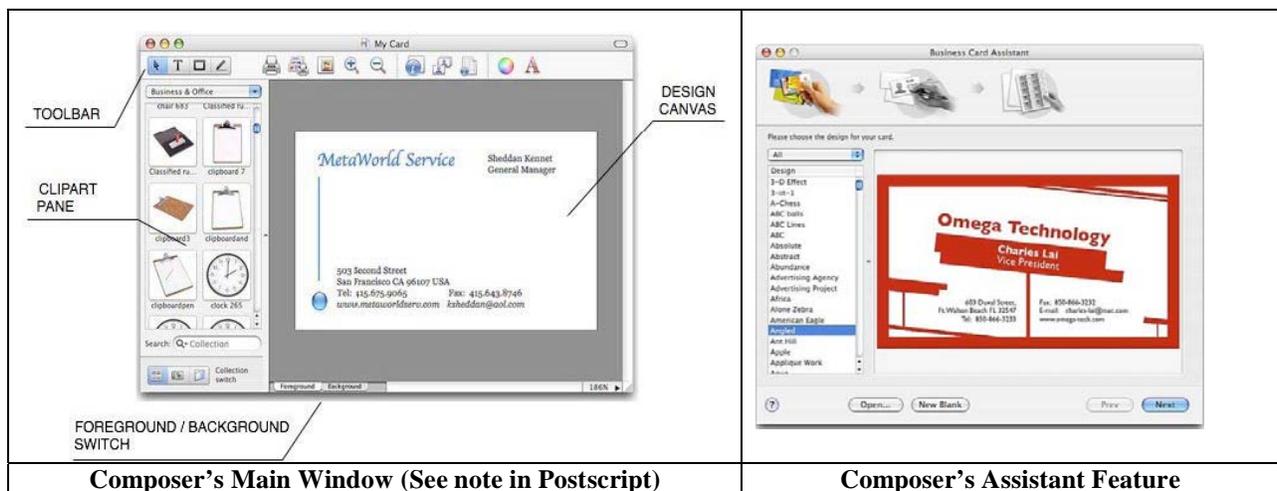
****Business Card Basics****

Both Business Card Composer and SOHO Business Cards start with roughly the same fundamental model: choose a design from one of their many premade templates, and then tweak the colors, graphics, fonts, masks, and other elements to your liking. (You can opt to start with a blank card, too, if none of the existing designs meets your needs.) Tools are also included for drawing lines and shapes, for aligning elements, and for moving them forward or backward with respect to other elements. The applications automatically fill in fields such as name, address, phone number, and email address from a contact you select in Address Book. When you're happy with the final design, you can print it to business card blanks you can buy for your own printer (both programs support a wide variety of brands and styles), or create a PDF that you can send to a commercial print shop.

Business Card Composer includes about 420 designs; SOHO Business Cards comes with more than 800 (for each of several card sizes). Both applications also include libraries of clip art that can be used for backgrounds, logos, and ornamentation. On the whole, I found the premade designs and artwork in both packages to be attractive and useful, a few lemons notwithstanding - though Business Card Composer's designs struck me as more creative and visually appealing, even if there were fewer of them. In my case, however, because I was starting with my own logos and had fairly specific ideas about what I wanted, I decided to start with a blank card in both programs, and then return to the templates later on to design cards for my own company, alt concepts, inc. <http://alt.cc/>

****Business Card Composer****

The design process in Business Card Composer was straightforward, albeit with a few quirks. For example, one of the first things I wanted to do was resize a graphic I'd dragged in. I assumed that, as in virtually every other application, holding down Shift while resizing would maintain the graphic's original proportions. But no: As I discovered by trial and error, the proportions are kept the same by default, and pressing Shift turns off that constraint!



Similarly, a few features I expected to see were bafflingly missing. You can align elements with each other horizontally but not vertically. Although alignment guides appear as you move objects on the canvas, the alignment applies only to the edges of an element's containing box; in the case of a text block, baseline alignment would have been much more useful. Similarly, I could find no way to put text in small capitals. (SOHO Business Cards suffered from neither of these limitations.)

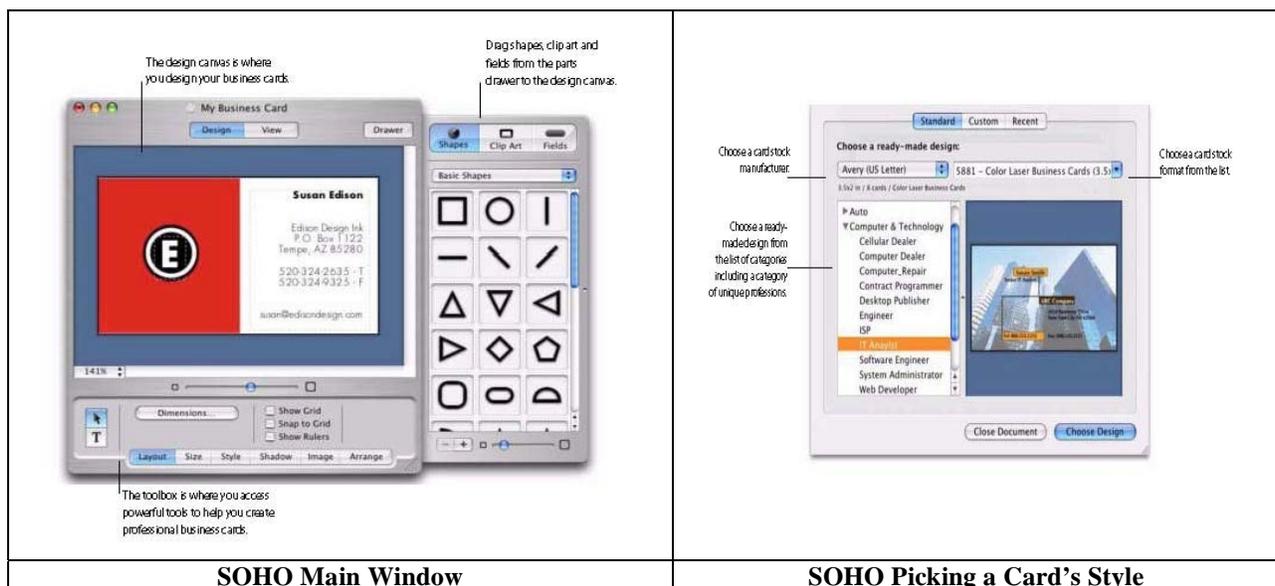
Despite these quibbles, Business Card Composer was generally quite solid. It helpfully separates your canvas into a background layer, for elements common to multiple cards, and a foreground layer, for information specific to each person. In addition, you can have a single file that holds designs for both the front and back of a card (which we decided to use for TidBITS and Take Control); you can switch sides with a single click.

To add Address Book data, you choose a contact and design your card with actual data from that person's record (all of which is editable). If you then want to use the same design for another person's card, you can select a new Address Book record with a couple of clicks. You should be aware, though, that if you edit a piece of data (say, a phone number) for a contact, switch to another contact, and then switch back, your edit will be lost. Business Card Composer's Address Book fields work best when Address Book contains exactly the information you want on the cards; otherwise, your best bet is to add custom text manually.

After working up some sample double-sided TidBITS/Take Control cards from scratch, I looked for a design that might work well for my own company. After finding one I liked, I plugged in my contact information, changed a couple of colors, and was ready to print within about five minutes. In short, the happier you are with an existing design and the less fiddling you need to do, the easier the program will seem.

SOHO Business Cards

I thought I would like SOHO Business Cards better, because it has a slicker interface and comes with a much larger library of graphics, fonts, and templates. But, as I used it, I discovered that its frustrations outnumbered its benefits.



For example, I quickly found it infuriating that in the Design pane - where you can resize and reposition elements - you can only see blocks representing where text from my Address Book will be placed, but not the actual text itself. You have to switch to the (non-editable) Preview pane to see what your design will look like with its text. Because the Design view gives you little sense of how the final block will look when filled with contact data, the design process becomes one of incessantly switching panes, a real annoyance.

SOHO Business Cards has a special Fields palette that's designed to give you extra control over layout and typography. You can specify, for example, what happens if the text in an address field is too wide: the box can expand to the left or right, or the text can shrink to fit the block. The latter choice sounded like just what I needed, because one of the lines in my address is much longer than the others. But to my dismay, I found that when I switched to the Preview pane, only that one line of my address had shrunk; the rest stayed at their full size.

In fact, SOHO Business Cards' fundamental reliance on so-called smart fields to hold and format Address Book data is misguided. The idea is that you choose a smart field with exactly the combination of Address Book data you want, set up its characteristics, and then watch as it automagically reformats itself to display the data of each new contact. Unfortunately, SOHO Business Cards provides no convenient way of printing cards for multiple contacts at one time; you must manually select the Address Book contact used to insert data into any given card design.

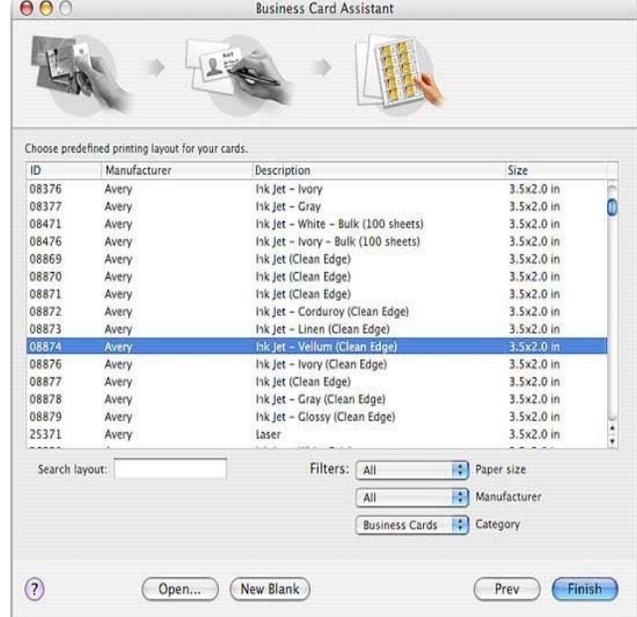
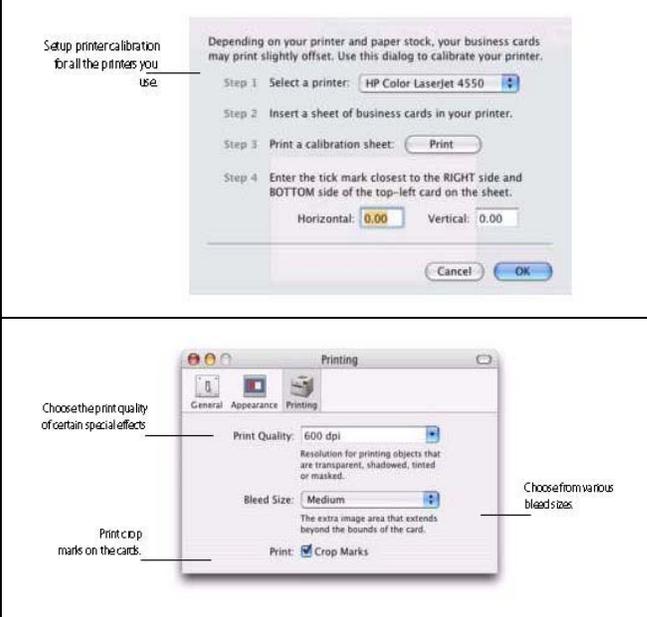
Furthermore, you can't edit data inserted from Address Book; if something is not quite right, you must either change the data in Address Book itself or manually insert a custom text field. In other words, in one respect SOHO Business Cards' design is optimized for constantly changing data, but in another respect, it assumes you're working with just one set of data. Those two design imperatives are very much in conflict.

On the bright side, SOHO Business Cards does have the full range of horizontal and vertical alignment options I expect from a good graphics application, making layout of graphical elements a breeze. It offers extensive typographical control (unlike Business Card Composer) and lets you adjust attributes like drop shadows, transparency, and rotation of any element with great ease. Unlike Business Card Composer, which lets you adjust the zoom level of the canvas only to a handful of preset magnifications, SOHO Business Cards has a slider that instantly zooms to any arbitrary size.

In the end, however, it took too much effort to get the result I wanted. Furthermore, SOHO Business Cards doesn't support double-sided cards directly, so each side had to be a separate file. And although many of the templates provided were quite handsome, none of them was a good fit for my own company's cards.

****Printing****

Since my printer - an aging inkjet on its last leg - can no longer be coaxed into producing crisp text, professional printing was the only option I considered. Both SOHO Business Cards and Business Card Composer use the same technique: choose File > Print Online (SOHO Business Cards) or File > Order Cards Online (Business Card Composer) and you'll be taken to a Web page with instructions to save your file as a PDF and send it to any of several recommended print shops. That process worked, but I still had to visit each of the printers' sites, evaluate their options and prices, and then manually send in a file. I had been hoping for more of a seamless printing process such as the one iPhoto uses for making photo albums and prints online, but no such luck.

 <p>Business Card Assistant</p> <p>Choose predefined printing layout for your cards.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>ID</th> <th>Manufacturer</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Size</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>08376</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Ivory</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08377</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Gray</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08471</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - White - Bulk (100 sheets)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08476</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Ivory - Bulk (100 sheets)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08869</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08870</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08871</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08872</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Corduroy (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08873</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Linen (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08874</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Vellum (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08876</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Ivory (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08877</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08878</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Gray (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>08879</td><td>Avery</td><td>hk Jet - Glossy (Clean Edge)</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> <tr><td>25371</td><td>Avery</td><td>Laser</td><td>3.5x2.0 in</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Search layout: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Filters: All Paper size All Manufacturer Business Cards Category</p> <p>Buttons: Open..., New Blank, Prev, Finish</p>	ID	Manufacturer	Description	Size	08376	Avery	hk Jet - Ivory	3.5x2.0 in	08377	Avery	hk Jet - Gray	3.5x2.0 in	08471	Avery	hk Jet - White - Bulk (100 sheets)	3.5x2.0 in	08476	Avery	hk Jet - Ivory - Bulk (100 sheets)	3.5x2.0 in	08869	Avery	hk Jet (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08870	Avery	hk Jet (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08871	Avery	hk Jet (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08872	Avery	hk Jet - Corduroy (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08873	Avery	hk Jet - Linen (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08874	Avery	hk Jet - Vellum (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08876	Avery	hk Jet - Ivory (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08877	Avery	hk Jet (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08878	Avery	hk Jet - Gray (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	08879	Avery	hk Jet - Glossy (Clean Edge)	3.5x2.0 in	25371	Avery	Laser	3.5x2.0 in	 <p>Setup printer calibration for all the printers you use.</p> <p>Depending on your printer and paper stock, your business cards may print slightly offset. Use this dialog to calibrate your printer.</p> <p>Step 1 Select a printer: HP Color Laserjet 4550</p> <p>Step 2 Insert a sheet of business cards in your printer.</p> <p>Step 3 Print a calibration sheet: Print</p> <p>Step 4 Enter the tick mark closest to the RIGHT side and BOTTOM side of the top-left card on the sheet.</p> <p>Horizontal: 0.00 Vertical: 0.00</p> <p>Buttons: Cancel, OK</p> <p>Choose the print quality of certain special effects</p> <p>Print crop marks on the cards.</p> <p>Choose from various bleed sizes.</p> <p>Printing dialog box showing: Print Quality: 600 dpi, Bleed Size: Medium, Crop Marks checked.</p>
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<p>Composer Print Interface</p>	<p>SOHO Printer Calibration and Tools</p>																																																																
<p>If you have a printer that works for you – This is what the interface looks like</p>																																																																	

****Kissell's Final Thoughts****

If you're prepared to be happy with one of the applications' built-in designs, and if the information you want on your business card is identical to your Address Book card for yourself, either application should get the job done. But if you want to color outside the boxes, Business Card Composer will make your job far easier. Business Card Composer costs \$40 for the boxed edition; the downloadable edition, which I tested, includes fewer graphics and templates, sells for \$35 and is a 17.7 MB download. SOHO Business Cards costs \$30, and is a 17.7 MB download.

Postscript from doc_Babad

Note: Although Business Card Composer has the capability to do the front and back sides for a card, I was unable in the time available to find an illustration that showed the Front/Back button (in addition to the Foreground and Background buttons).

Check out the review of in MacKiev's PrintShop 2's business card creation features in which, in part, I've made comparisons to what Joe Kissell has written.

Carrara™ Pro 5.1: The Complete 3D Animation and Design Solution

reviewed by Robert Pritchett



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<http://www.eovia.com>

Product Link: <http://www.eovia.com/products/carrara5/carrara.asp>

Released: April 3, 2006

\$550 USD, €550, Upgrade, \$170, €170

Requirements: Mac OS X or Wintel platform; 128MB RAM; 320 MB Hard Drive space, 24-bit display card, CD-ROM drive. A 2nd monitor would be nice...

Trial Download: <http://www.eovia.com/resources/download.asp>

Features: http://www.eovia.com/products/carrara5/carrara_keyfeatures.asp

Training: http://www.eovia.com/products/carrara_addons/training_cd.asp

Hall of Fame: <http://www.eovia3d.net/fame/fame.php>

Add-Ons: http://www.eovia.com/products/carrara_addons/carrara_addons.asp

Strengths: Cross-platform 3D animation and design.

Weaknesses: None Found.

Other Reviews:

<http://www.simplytheweb.com/alexfenyvesi/carrara5pro.htm>

<http://www.bitwisemag.com/copy/reviews/software/graphics/carrara/carrara5.html>

We should speak too lightly of *Carrara™5 Pro* by Eovia – and I mean that literally. This latest version can take digital drawing and make it look very realistic. The last time we did a Carrara Pro review was December 2004

<http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/december2004/software/CarraraStudio4.html>

Since then, Eovia has included an excellent guided tour that quickly gets one up to speed on the improvements to the program. No audio though. However, in the box there are two CDs. One is the installer disc and the other is an application disc that has a bunch of other items that enhance the app and show what can be done with it.



While doing this review the US division of Eovia was acquired by DAZ Productions, Inc. and the app was also updated to version 5.1. Obviously, DAZ has great expectations in rounding out their offerings with the inclusion of Carrara Pro as part of their family. They, like us look to Eovia to continue to provide an app that is affordable, yet easy-to-use. By the way, do you remember Bryce? Now you know who DAZ is. <http://www.daz3d.com/> They also were able to gain Hexagon (a 3D polygonal modeler) from Eovia Europe SA, which, by the way, stays independent of DAZ.

Back to the box version, besides the 2 discs, there is a difficult-to-loose card that has the serial number on it and another tri-fold card that is a quick guide to all the tools and keyboard shortcuts for both Macs and Windows systems. There is also a card that invites to get a free pass to <http://www.lynda.com/freepass/eovia> to begin looking at 9 hours of training and another card that presents the add-ons and other excellent Eovia products.

If you have done any 3D work at all, you are going to so like the modelers (Spline, Vertex and Surface, text and formula, environment and shape tools), 3D manipulators, alignment tools, Boolean operations, collision detection and grid projections as well as twist, bend explode, dissolve, spin and other modifiers, special effects such as terrain modeling with real-time filters and shaders, a sky editor, atmosphere and volumetric effects, lens glare, motion blur, depth of field. There are also animation tools such as Bezier, linear, noise, motion path animation, bones and constraints, morph targets, physics animation and an advance particle generator.

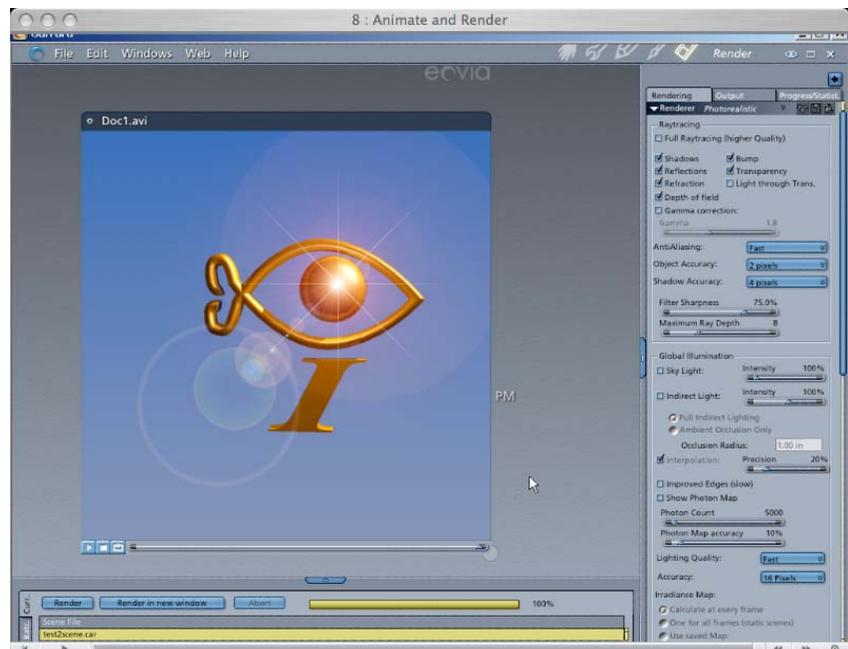
Along with Carrara Pro comes the Carrara RenderNode for photo-realism that includes such things as global illumination, caustics, skylighting, ambient occlusion, subsurface scattering, displacement mapping as well as non-photorealistic, network and batch rendering.

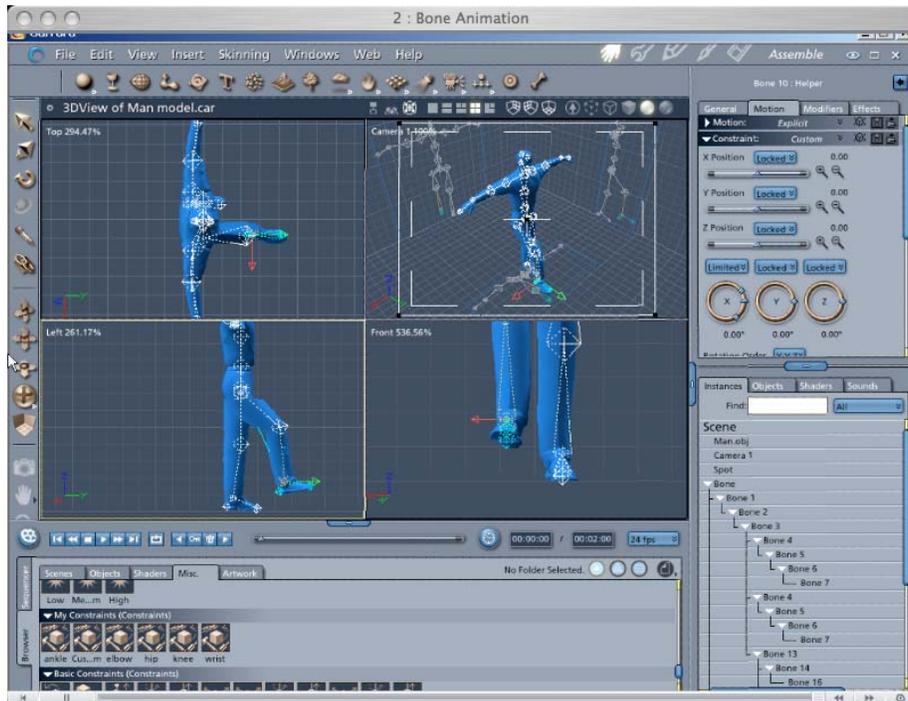
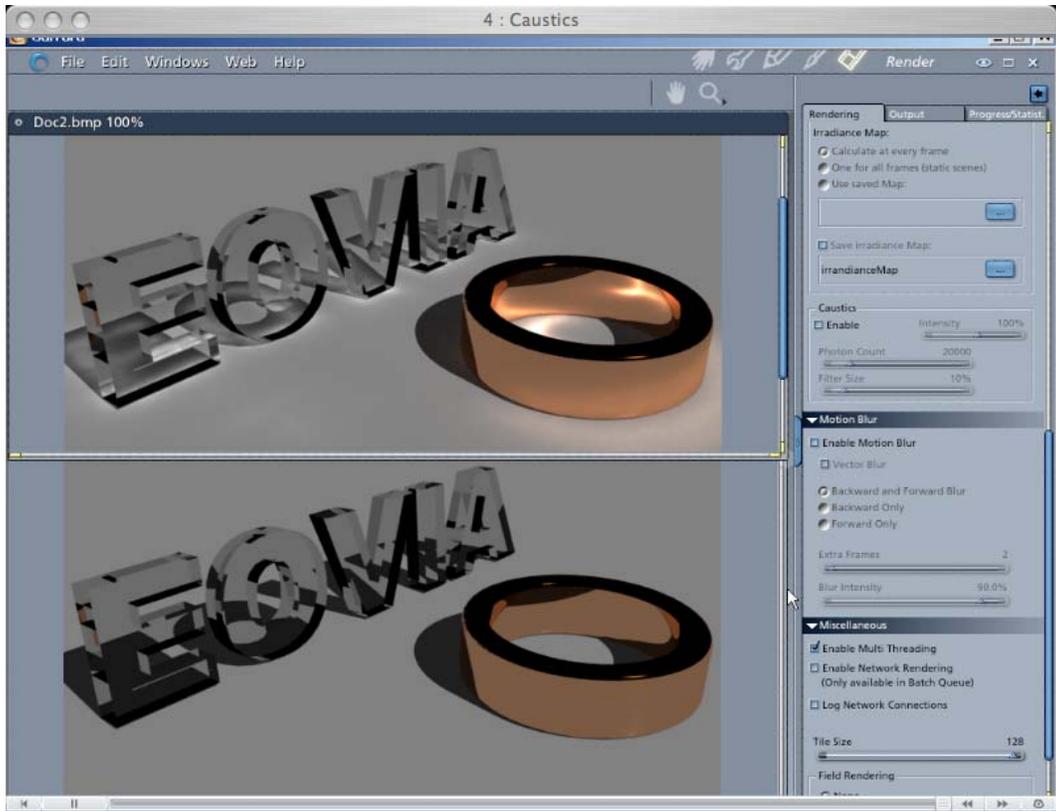
The plug-ins are extra cost items such as a building modeler known as ArchiTools (\$89), a 3D vector and flash renderer called VectorStyle 2 ((\$99), a dynamic poser TransPoser 2 (\$99), Eovia Grid (\$159) that offers another 25 nodes for up to 25 Carrara collaborators in a network and there are also other 3rd-party apps.

Other Eovia products on that card are Hexagon (\$169), Carrara 3D Basics 2 (\$99) that teaches 3D and Amapi Pro 7.5 (\$329) for drawing in 3D space and doing conceptual design work.

I highly recommend looking at the reviews linked above. The one from Bitwise mag has lots of pictures, but really the best tutorial is from Eovia on how this 3D app that cost so much less than other comparable apps does so much more than they do. It takes a fish, a ball and an "I" and walks through stick modeling all the way through animated rotating text that looks like a TV station logo announcement with light flash and everything. Eye-O-via, get it? Took me a while to figure that one out and get the subtle humor. I'm sure the instructor had a lot of fun generating it.

See Carrara Pro isn't just about 3D, it is about animation that makes sense, making the unreal seem real.







Is this way cool or what?

Yes, this is a QuickTime video created by Joe Grover:



<http://www.macompanion.com/archives/May2006/Software/DiamondsGlobal.mpg>

Creating Business Cards with PrintShop 2

reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

<p>MacKiev printshop@mackiev.com http://www.mackiev.com/print_shop.html</p> <p>Commercial Product \$60 USD, upgrade from version 1.x is \$40 USD</p> <p>Requirements: Mac OS X 10 .2 or later (including Mac OS X 10 .4 “Tiger”); G3-350 MHz processor or faster; 192 MB RAM (256 MB recommended); 490 MB hard disk space (1 .3 GB for full installation); 800 x 600 screen resolution; thousands of colors (1024 x 768 recommended), CD-ROM drive. Now universal Binary Compliant</p> <p>Audience: All but the most exacting users interested in business card creation.</p> <p>Strength: A flexible product that makes business card creation easy for the novice and allows a more sophisticated user lost of room to design attractive cards. In addition, of course there are 19 other kinds of projects ranging from Calendars and booklets to envelopes and greeting cards that you can create with PrintShop 2, that are not available in a business card only software package.</p> <p>Weakness: Lack a few of the bells and whistles of the more focused single-function Business Card Composer [BeLight Software, http://www.belightsoft.com/products/composer/]</p> <p>This article based in part on information provided by Ted Bade in his macC The Print Shop review February 2006. http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/february2006/Software/printshop.htm</p>	 
<p>The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.6 with an hp Color LaserJet 3500 printer.</p>	
<p>Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.</p>	

Introduction

I have been along time user of the Print Shop family of products starting with Broderbund’s underwhelming and un-Macintosh like Print Shop Deluxe CD Ensemble 1.x, and through their uninspiring The PrintShop for the Mac. No it’s not a typo, the name, err, changed. My primary use of the product, since in those days the clip art was just too cutesy, was to create business cards. Oh final bit of trivia, when the product changed from the ‘classic’ versions to that compatible with OS X all previously designed cards were junk; there was no translation program so I needed to start from scratch. Alas, the clip art I used for several logos where among the clips so I had to make due with scans of lower resolution to resurrect them. That’s yesterday, how about today.

In this macC issue, we’ve included a fine article by Joe Kissell, of TidBITS fame, on Comparing Business Card Design Software. In that article, Joe reviews Business Card Composer v 3.2 and SOHO Business Cards v. 1.6. My review is aimed at supplementing Joe’s review by sharing the business card making features of PrintShop 2; a vast improvement over the versions of Print Shop (err. PrintShop, I’ve previously used).

If you want to know more about the capabilities of the complete program check out Ted Bade’s fine review of The Print Shop, now a mackiev.com product, in the February 2006 Issue of macCompanion [Ted gave the product a **4 macC** rating.] Now Ted has lots to share about the program’s overall features, making me want to use some of them in the future, but creating business cards was not a subject he focused on. *Of course, with a due credit, I have either lifted or paraphrased Ted’s material where it was appropriate.*

Using the Product/Features

I'm not going to go into detail on the cards I created with PrintShop 2 for this review, except to share that I took a dozen different cards I collected at a meeting in march, in a divers set of styles, and replicated the essential features of their layouts with ease. Obviously, I did not have the corporate logo of the folks whose cards I gathered, but I could add clips to the logo locations on the test card as needed.

When you first run PrintShop, you are presented with a "Project Manager" which is your doorway to putting together a project. As you can see in Ted's article, there are 20 starting points for various PrintShop projects, including a blank, start from scratch-no limitations one; a place that you can create whatever suits your needs. Warning, do not get lost, or let your curiosity lead you astray. Go straight to business cards [Setup Assistant > Stationary > Business Cards]



Business Cards

Selecting any Business Cards brings your through a series of questions designed to build the foundations of your project. For business cards, you get to choose between using a Quick Start Layout, having the program *Help you Design*, or *Starting from Scratch*. Surprise, surprise — this is what you would get when selecting any other project, but we love consistent interfaces in our software. So your first step is to decide how much help you want with the project. I recommend you either start from scratch or use "Help me Design.

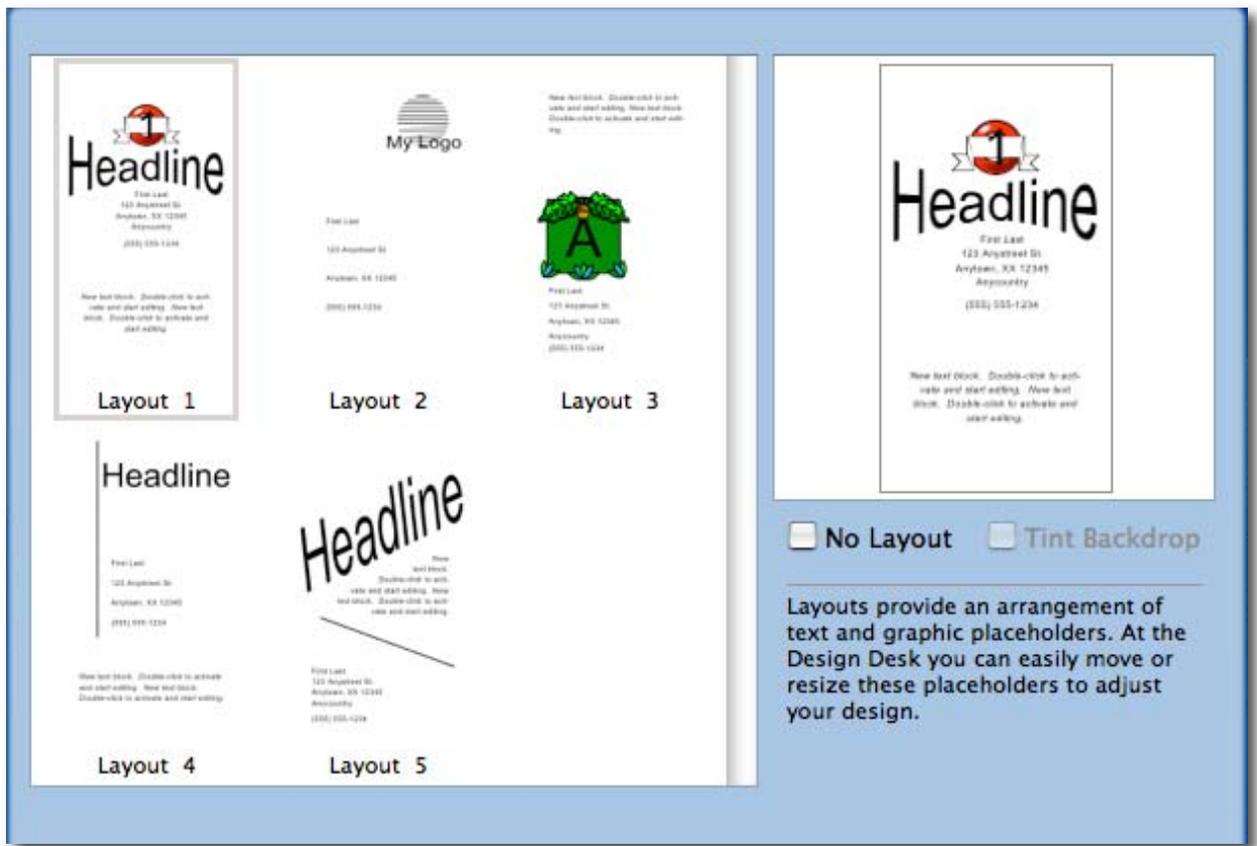
The "Start from Scratch" option exists that leaves you to your own devices with a blank layout. The result will be more professional, unless you are a real design klutz. As Ted noted, "remember, using a canned greeting card (or whatever) is no worse then buying one from a store ;-). The recipient need not know it was a canned card! They will think you created it yourself.

"No matter what type of project you build or how much help you ask for, you will make use of the extensive library of graphics and clip art that comes with the PrintShop package. There is a lot of stuff to choose from on the CD. You might even spend more time looking for just the right piece of clip art you will in creating the rest of the project. The Print Shop package could really use a booklet showing thumbnails of all the graphics."

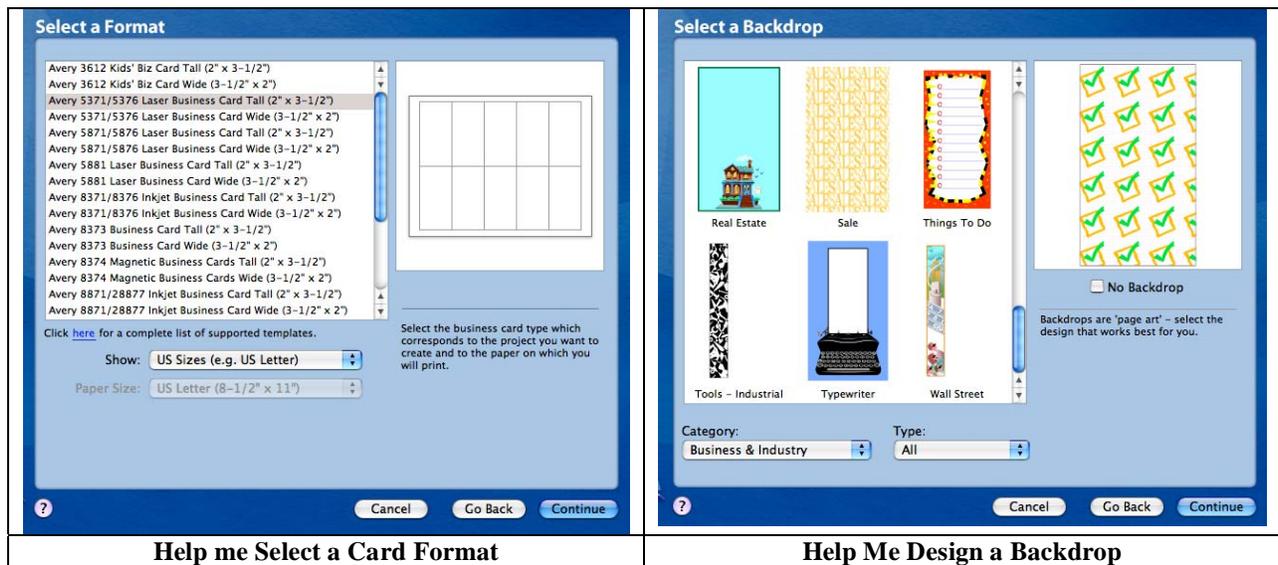
Since I own several massive collections of clip art and have a fast Internet connection the choosing of graphic content can be lengthy when either picky (I am) or a perfectionist (I'm not.)

Now, back to business cards. After you decide whether you should design a portrait or landscape style card, there are two elements in a card you need to consider. That's aside from the, from a design basis, *trivial* information about you and your business that you need to include to make it useful such as your contact information. [Did I say that?]

The first is the card layout. PrintShop 2 provides you with a good but not comprehensive, set of tools for business card design. This includes the selection of alternative templates that serve as good designs for the layout of a card as well as allowing creating background effects for your card.



Selecting the format of a card to suit commercial card stock and choosing a background for your card is easy.



The second resource you need is obtained from available graphics collection. Clip art, you know, is used for either the card's background, if desired, and selecting any logo [small image] that represents you or your business.

In general, you can check out the clipart provided by the developer, do a Google images search, or use a purchased clip art collection. My favorite, Print Explosion by Nova Development www.hemera.com/; is my collection of choice. However, I also own cutesier The Big Box of Art by Hemera www.hemera.com/. This collection may not still be available since it was not listed on the Hemera web site. Alternatively, for folks with well-focused image demands, you can check out the more serious web based collections to find and pay for just the image you want. PhotoShop 2's integration with Apple's address book is excellent and should you need it for backgrounds, so is its iLife integration.

Design 101 - Remember Babad's third law: In search of excellence you can do better than you really need taking just a bit more time, or spend days searching for perfection. It's a Zen thing that business school majors study under fancier names. The illustration below fails the squint rule. [Did I have to squint at the card to get the contact information?]

Several Minor Gripes

Template for Card Layouts — I would have preferred a few more than 10 business card layout templates to chose from, although I did duplicate manually most the test cards I tried to create.

I hate clutter. Look at the worst business card I've ever considered using.

I also found the background's provided (e.g., page art) useless, for the most part since they often detracted from the card's clarity and readability. Admittedly, you could use the controls provided and decrease the opacity of the background making it less offensive, but as an avid fan of Robin Williams' design teachings,



Entourage Integration — Integration with the address book function of Microsoft's Entourage would be nice for those folks who prefer it to Apple's mail and address book programs.

Conclusions

Buying PrintShop 2 solely for creating business cards is not a good buying decision. However, if you can use even two or three of the 19 other project capabilities in this excellent graphics program, then also use it for creating your business cards. Indeed, prepare an integrated set of stationary, envelopes and cards for your business – its fat and easy.

I agree with Ted Bade "people often don't take PrintShop as a serious adult program because it supplies much in the way of lower end and/or "kiddy-ish" graphics, which are incorporated in its examples. This doesn't mean that better images cannot be used with the program or that it cannot be used for more "serious" projects." As noted earlier in this review, for projects such as business cards, and greeting cards I usually chose from a broader selection of graphics, but the enhanced clip art collection provided by MacKiev might suit you just fine.

Overall, I found that creating business cards that met my esthetic needs with the product was easier to do than using the more sophisticated Business Card Composer, but should my needs become more demanding I would for such a project, switch to the later. [Note, since Joe Kissell rated BCC at 4 macC's, in all fairness I could not give the single use score for PrintShop 2 a higher rating. doc_Babad. Nevertheless, I do like PrintShop 2 better than SOHO Business Cards, which I also own and have fooled with.

For business card creation, I rate this product **3.5 macCs**.

Popcorn2 – Your movies on DVD, PSP and iPod

reviewed by Robert Pritchett

	
<p>Sonic Solutions - Headquarters 101 Rowland Way Novato, CA 94945 (415) 893-8000 http://www.roxio.com/en/products/popcorn/index.jhtml</p> <p>Released: April 12, 2006 \$50 USD, Upgrade from Popcorn 1, \$30 USD</p> <p>Requirements: Macintosh computer with Intel or PowerPC processor; G4 or faster; Mac OS X v10.4 or later; QuickTime 7 or later; iTunes 6 or later; Up to 15 GB of temporary free hard disk space may be need during usage.</p> <p>Optional: DVD burner and recordable media; iPod with video capabilities, PSP, or other portable DivX, MPEG4 or H.264 video player.</p> <p>Strengths: Compression, expanded format coverage, Universal Binary coding.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Does not copy encrypted or protected DVDs.</p>	
	

Well, we reviewed Roxio's Titanium back in January and Popcorn was a part of that. Since then, Roxio has released a Ubinary version named *Popcorn2* and not *Popcorn, the Sequel*.

Earlier purchasers can follow an upgrade path, even if it is only a \$20 USD difference. And there are also French, German and Japanese versions available.

So what makes Popcorn2 so special? After all, CDs and DVDs can be imaged and burned under Mac OS X Tiger with no problems whatsoever.

For \$50 USD, there has to be more, right? Well, yes, there is. And it all is about compression technology. You want to burn a 9 GB dual-layer DVD to a standard 4.7 GB DVD, you can. If you want to just copy audio, or a given language or just the movie, you can. And you aren't limited by the DVD technology, whether Dolby, NTSC, PAL or widescreen or pan/scan aspect ratios.

But there is more. Transfers can also be moved from the Mac to either iPods, or Sony's PSP or even to mobile vid-phones.

That almost makes this app not just a Ubinary app, but a universal app. There isn't a whole lot left as far as formats go that this doesn't cover, right? It goes beyond what QuickTime supports.

I'm guessing that Roxio listened to customers and met the challenge. There is a *Mount It* menu now that goes into the *Finder* menu for loading DVD disc images as virtual drives and screen shots can be captured during playback. And there are a bunch of options for copying, including capture of bonus information on DVDs and even subtitles.

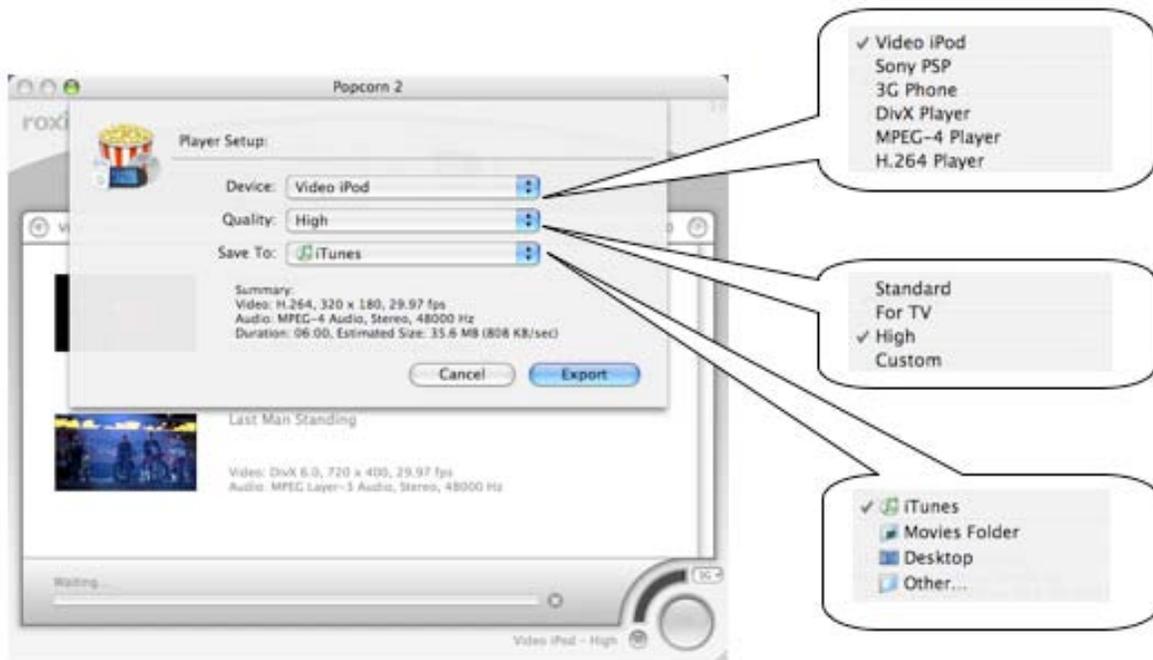
Below is Roxio's own comparison chart:

Comparisons												
Product	\$	Inputs						Outputs				
		DV D	MPEG 1	MPEG 2	MPEG 4	DivX	MOV	DVD	DivX	PSP	iPod	Phone
Popcorn 2	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Backup												
FastDVDCopy	100	✓							✓			
DVD2One	50	✓							✓			
DVDRemaster	50	✓							✓			
Conversion												
QuickTime Pro	30		✓		✓		✓				✓	✓
iPSP	20	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		
Podner	10		✓		✓		✓				✓	
iSquint	0		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	

Curiously, not listed on this chart are other formats that Popcorn2 supports, such as Disk Image and VIDEO_TS folder for input, MPEG4, H.264 for output, single and multiple movies and extras, or DVD formats such as Multi-channel Dolby® Digital audio, Multi-language audio, NTSC and PAL video and 16:9 widescreen and 4:3 fullscreen aspect ratios.

And if you haven't seen what Popcorn2 looks like, check these next diagrams out:





Interested? I thought you might be.

Windows on an Intel Macintosh - some thoughts and a first look

by Ted Bade

Most dedicated Mac users have at one time or another wanted to run a program that is only available for Windows. It might be a silly game, a utility program that would appeal only to some people, or piece of specialty software. It's not that we are dissatisfied with what is available for Mac OS X, but there is a special little need, interest, or curiosity.

Up until Apple released the Intel-based Macs, there were very limited options. You could purchase a Windows-based machine and use it for those special needs, but that solution was for people willing to part with the cash for the hardware and who had a place to put it. Emulation programs, such as Virtual PC were another solution. They are a lot cheaper than hardware, but you always get a speed hit with emulation. Programs run dreadfully slow; don't even try to play a game in emulation! But it was good enough for many purposes.

When Apple announced the Intel-based Macs, many people realized that getting Windows and thus Windows-based applications to run on these new machines was a possibility. A person with an Intel Mac would have the best of both worlds. You could live and work in the safe and easy to use Macintosh environment, with the ability to run those specialty apps when needed. But because this wasn't emulation, but actual hardware, you don't get the emulation speed hit. Also, since you were going to buy a new Mac anyway, there is no cost of extra hardware to consider. What could be a better solution?

There are a lot of things that make Windows a less-than-optimal OS for computers. That's why I use a Mac. One of the more significant items is all the malicious software that is rampant on the Internet. I don't recall the exact number, but I hear a PC (running Windows) connected to the Internet has only to wait a matter of hours before some form of malicious software finds its way onto it. Mac users are complacent about these things, because none affect the Macintosh at this time and many Mac users feel that Mac OS X is significantly safer in these regards than Windows.

This means Mac users who consider using some form of Windows on their Intel Macs need to educate themselves on dealing with malicious software. Since the PC side and the Mac side share the same hardware, it is conceivable that malicious software could damage the Mac side along with the PC side. I have thought a lot about this and have come up with a couple of ideas I think will help reduce the problems.

First of all, unless what you need to run on the Windows side requires using the Internet, turn it off in Windows. If you need to download a file or a piece of software, do it using your Mac OS X programs, then transfer the file over. Also, don't use the Windows side for email or significant web usage. Software is often transferred via email attachments and is known to use your address book to pass itself along to your friends. The virus cannot use an address book that is empty.

If you want to add programs to your PC side that will help with malicious software, consider checking out what your ISP offers. Many large ISPs offer a version of protective software to their Windows-based customers for free. If you are only using the Windows side casually on the Internet, these products may do very well for you.

Getting Windows to run on an Intel-based Mac should be a no-brainer, correct? The processor is already supported. However, there is one major problem and this is why you need a solution to run Windows (or some other foreign OS), on your Mac. It all has to do with how your Mac communicates with its hardware.

If you are familiar with computers, you have probably heard the term *BIOS*. This is the name of the chip that interfaces hardware to the CPU. Intel developed a newer more efficient type of chip called EFI (<http://www.intel.com/technology/efi/>). Apple, of course, embraced this new technology when they decided to use Intel chips. Microsoft Windows expects to see a BIOS chip, and won't work unless there is one. Originally, Microsoft's new OS, called Vista, was going to use the EFI chips, but they decided to stick with BIOS at the last minute. As it is so eloquently said on the Apple website about the BIOS:

EFI and BIOS

Macs use an ultra-modern industry standard technology called EFI to handle booting. Sadly, Windows XP, and even the upcoming Vista, are **stuck in the 1980s with old-fashioned BIOS**. But with Boot Camp, the Mac can operate smoothly in both centuries. (<http://www.apple.com/macosx/bootcamp/>)

So before you can get any version of Windows to run on an Intel Mac, you need to solve this issue. Right after the release of the Intel Macs a contest was created to get someone to figure out how to do this. The first solution to doing this was a bit involved and required significant knowledge on the part of the user. But it worked. A few “How To” web sites were created to help. <http://www.macworld.com/2006/03/firstlooks/xpmini/index.php> Another site has a video on how to do it: <http://features.uneasysilence.com/mactel/>

Another solution is a software package named *Wine*. This package was produced originally for the Linux community to allow them to run applications that required Windows on their Intel Linux machines. There is a group of people modifying this package to work on Intel Macs under Mac OS X. I took a look at where it stands and it is really still in development. If you are willing to deal with early versions, you can play with what they have so far, but I don't think it really works yet. Check out the Darwine (Darwin Wine) web site: <http://darwine.opendarwin.org/> I think this solution would be really cool, when it's finished.

Boot Camp

Then one day we woke up and noticed that Apple was announcing a product called *Boot Camp*. This gem of a product lets you partition your Intel Mac's hard drive and install Windows XP (Service Pack 2 or later) on the other partition. Your Mac works like two machines, one that is Windows and one that is Mac OS X. You don't run both at the same time, but choose which one to boot when you start your computer.

I was impressed on how easy it was to install *Boot Camp*. Apple's manual was easy to understand and the process is simple enough that just about any user could figure it out. First you partition your hard drive (so much for Mac, so much for Windows). *Boot Camp* software makes this easy, You use a slider to divide the total capacity of your hard drive. What is significant about this is that you don't have to reformat the drive to do it. You can simply partition off any unused part of your hard drive for use as a Windows partition.

Next you burn a CD/DVD containing the drivers to let Windows use your Macintosh hardware features like the CD/DVD drive, Airport, Bluetooth, and so on. Insert an empty disk into the Mac, click the burn button in the *Boot Camp* software, and the disk pops out.

The next part is the hardest. From *Boot Camp*, you get your Mac to boot into the Windows partition. It's up to you to have a valid CD/DVD version of Windows XP Service Pack 2 to install the system. Why is this hard? Well it meant that I had to part with money to buy a copy of XP. Ugh! After that, installing XP is a long drawn out process that took well over 1/2 hour. You need to stick around to click on all the little windows that come up asking you silly questions. And, of course, you need to enter a valid Key for XP.

Once you finish the installation, the computer reboots and you are running XP on Apple hardware! Stick in the CD you burned earlier with *Boot Camp* and it installs the hardware drivers you need. It also installs a “StartUp Disk” control panel in Windows that acts like the Mac OS X Preference Pane of the same name. When you are in Windows (or Mac OS X for that matter), run this utility and you can immediately reboot your computer into the other OS. People who were around during the transition from Mac OS 9 to X will remember using this utility a lot while adjusting to Mac OS X.

When you boot your Mac, you can hold down the *Option* key. After a moment you are shown a screen that displays two hard drive icons, one labeled *Mac OS X* and the other *Windows*. Use the arrow key to select which one you want to boot into.

When you partition the hard drive, you need to choose between Fat or NTFS. Since Mac OS X recognizes Fat format, this is a better choice if you plan to move files from the Mac side to the Win side, (or the other way around), since the Fat partition will appear on your Mac's desktop. Simply drag files or applications onto the Windows partition, and install them next time you boot into that side. I would create a directory specifically for dumping files into.

The disadvantage of *Boot Camp* is that you choose to run either Mac OS X or Windows. You can't run a Windows application in the background while your work on something using Mac OS X. The advantage of *Boot Camp* is that all the hardware resources of your Mac are available for whichever side you use. Which means it is better for memory or power hungry applications.

Parallels Workstation

Another ready to go solution is called *Parallels Workstation* for Mac OS X (<http://www.parallels.com/en/products/workstation/mac/0>). This application uses a process called *Virtualization* that allows your Macintosh to run more than one virtual machine along with Mac OS X. Obviously this solution would tax your Mac's RAM and resources. However, it means that you can run a Windows Application at the same time as a Mac OS X application.

I tried out this solution as well. Right now you can download the beta version of this program for free and try it out. Installation and use of this program are no where as slick as *Boot Camp*, but it does work. It's like *VirtualPC* but without the emulation speed hit. Another big, big advantage of this *Parallels Workstation* is you are not limited to only Windows XP. This program will let you install and run any version of Windows as well as other non-Microsoft Intel-based OSs, such as FreeBSD, Solaris, OS/2, eComStation, or MS-DOS.

At the time of this review, the manual has a lot to be desired and is a bit difficult to use. It isn't incorrect, it's just not very clear and somewhat difficult to follow. But I expect this will be corrected as they continue to develop the beta.

To install this solution, you first run the *Parallels Workstation* software to create a virtual space to install the "Guest OS" into. (They coined that term and I think it is an excellent way of referring to the other OS you are using). Once this is done, you insert the CD to install the OS of choice. You can even install from a CD image rather than a real CD. I had a CD and had a bit of difficulty getting the program to let me change to using a hardware CD, then getting it to recognize the CD. It did eventually. The installation process is lengthy, and in one instance, my Mini screen went blank, either it was a crash or the screen saver came on and crashed the installation. Whatever happened, with the screen dark, I pressed the keyboard to turn the display back on and the Mac rebooted. Since I couldn't see the screen, I have no idea what happened.

Once the installation is done, this program is pretty cool. You run the *Parallels* program, then choose which Virtual Machine (VM) you are going to run. If you have the resources, you can run more than one Virtual Machine at the same time!

You can run your Virtual Machine in a window or full screen. The VM interface includes controls for the VM, allowing you to stop the OS, restart the VM, control how it boots and uses various pieces of hardware. I plan to do a full review of this package when the final version is released. I am sure that most of the bugs will be worked out by then. They are constantly updating this product. For instance, it now uses the cube effect (like that of fast user switching) to switch between your guest OS and Mac OS.

As I write this article, rumors are flying on the Internet concerning what solution Apple will provide with Mac OS X 10.5 when it is released. Obviously there is the *Boot Camp* solution, which is quite elegant. Rumors say that Apple is considering either a Virtual Machine solution (similar to the *Parallels Workstation* or a solution similar to *Darwine*, which simply allows a Mac user to run a Windows application without having to install Windows.

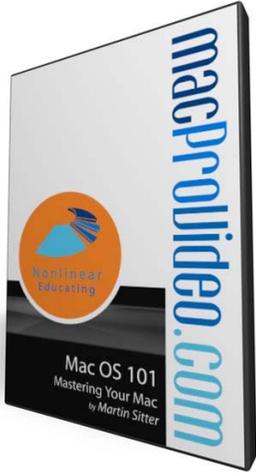
For the time being, there are two real solutions. Which would be best for you? It all depends upon how you plan to use your Windows side. If you need horsepower and RAM, then the *Boot Camp* solution is the best. All the resources of your Macintosh are dedicated to running Windows and its application. A more casual user, who isn't running processor or RAM intensive applications would do very well with the *Parallels Workstation* Virtual Machine solution. While you share your Macs' resources between all your applications (including a significant amount given to running Windows), you can easily flip between applications, even being able to cut and paste from one environment to the other. Either solution is an excellent choice.

I hope this information has been useful to you. If you manage to try either or both yourself, please drop me a note with your experiences or concerns or visit the *macCompanion Forum* with your comments. This is a whole new realm for Mac users and we can all gain by sharing our experiences.

Training

Mac OS 101 – Mastering Your Mac

reviewed by Robert Pritchett

 <p>Presenter: Martin Sitter http://www.macprovideo.com/trainer/martinsitter#bio macProVideo.com PO Box 93598 Vancouver, BC V6E 4L7 FAX: 778-786-1331 info@macProVideo.com http://www.macprovideo.com/ Product site: http://www.macprovideo.com/tutorial/MacOs101 Released: April 24, 2006 \$40 USD 351 MB download or DVD for \$10 USD more plus shipping. Runtime: 170 minutes.</p> <p>Strengths: Shows how to quickly come up to speed using Mac OS X.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Sound volume setting seems low for default?</p> <p>Reviewed on an iMac G5 running Mac OS X 10.4.6</p>	 
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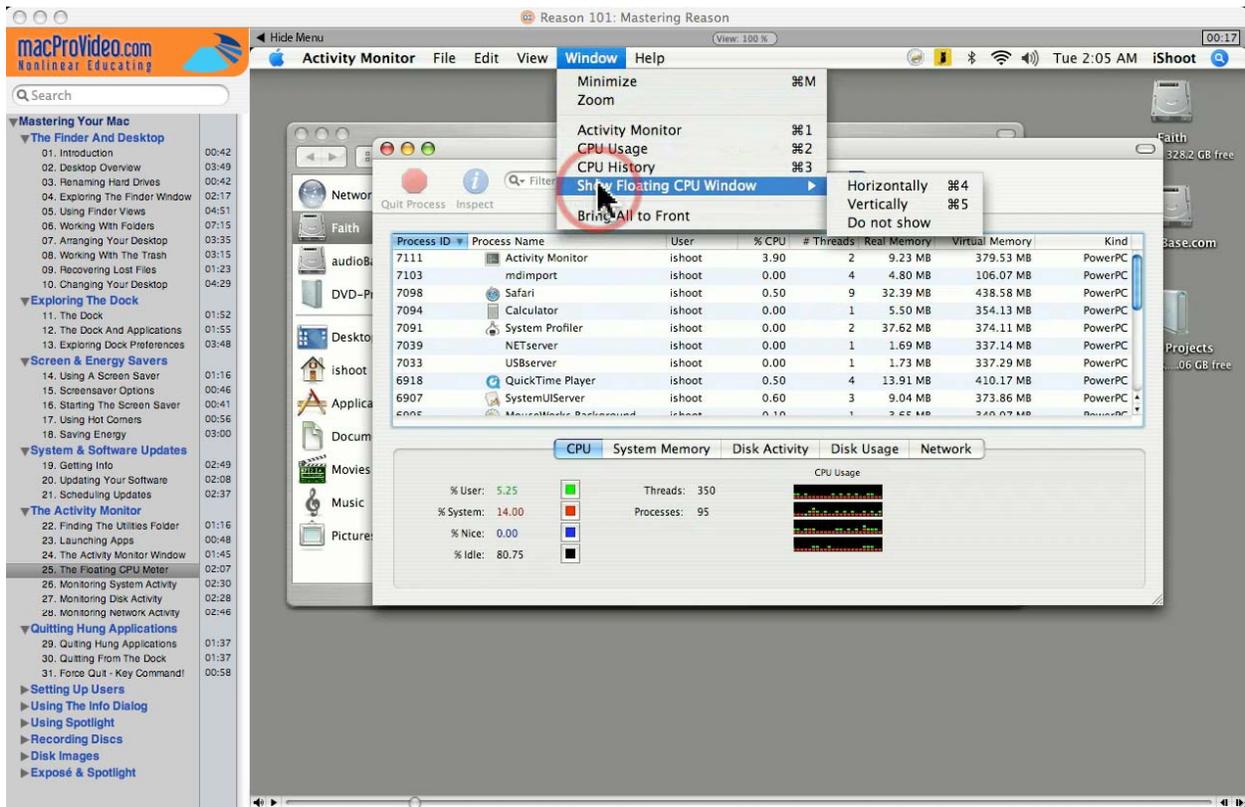
Martin Sitter has produced 12 chapters in this Mac OS 101 training video on tips and tricks for getting up to speed quickly with Mac OS X from mac Pro Video dot com. Nothing beats a professionally done training program that makes the Mac even more of a companion than it already is.

The first thing I did when beginning this training app was think that my parents would really enjoy this, since dad tends to be a bit of a computer phob and is much more comfortable with musical instruments, pencil and paper than a keyboard and mouse. And Martin Sitter does a grand job showing keyboard shortcuts in case the mouse ever decided to “go south”.

Martin has an easy-to-listen-to voice with the slight Canadian accent, and he does a great job as he discusses his discoveries with Mac OS X. On my system I did have to turn up the volume a little to hear his voice better and the version I got of the program showed *Reason 101: Mastering Reason* at the top of the screen. I didn’t notice it until I was all the way through with the program. It just started and ran smoothly through all the lessons.

A file gets loaded onto the desktop named *N.E.D.* and it is the process for opening the *MacOS 101* program. N.E.D. stands for Nonlinear Educating Device - The Friendly Video Player as a public beta that works just fine on my Mac. Once there, sections on the Finder and Desktop, Dock, screen and energy savers, system and software updates, Activity Monitor, quitting hung apps, setting up Users, using the Info dialog, using Spotlight, recording Discs and Disk Images, Exposé and Spotlight. Each one opens up further into chapters, Each of those have almost the same flavor as the *MacBreak* videos that Leo LaPorte has been trying to get online at <http://macbreak.com/>. Okay, maybe not, but the video presentations are top-notch!

I think I learned the most from the Exposé and Spotlight chapters, but I also learned about the disc burning information as well – and martin is correct about a few things; Apple does indeed have functions that rival 3rd-party apps.



One thing that Martin uses is that huge circle surrounding the cursor so there is no ambiguity at all as to where the demo presentation cursor is located while watching the video presentations.

I'm looking forward to the other training packages that mac Pro Video dot com has put together. I suspect they are as good or perhaps even better than this one.

I gave this a 5 because, like the Mac, the training just works. And Martin fixed the banner heading so it reads **Mac OS101:Mastering Your Mac** now.

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Mac OS X v10.4 Tiger

Tiger offers the amazing Spotlight search technology, handy Dashboard widgets and hundreds more features. Tiger also includes the following

Apple Store for Businesses

<http://store.apple.com/AppleStore/WebObjects/BizAgent?qprm=126559>

The screenshot shows the Apple Store Business Agent website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Apple logo and links for Store, iPod + iTunes, .Mac, QuickTime, Support, and Mac OS X. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Your Account, View Cart, Saved Carts, Order Status, and Customer Service. The main content area is titled "Business Agent Store" and features a large promotional banner for a "Multipicture deal." The banner states: "For a limited time, save up to \$300 instantly on Final Cut Studio when you buy a qualifying Mac." A green badge indicates "Save up to \$300". To the right of the text is an image of the Final Cut Studio software box. Below the banner, there are several product categories with images and labels: "New Macs featuring Intel processors" (Mac mini, iMac, MacBook Pro), "Macs with PowerPC processors" (iBook G4, PowerBook G4, Power Mac G5), "Essentials" (Mice & Keyboards, Wireless, iSight, Cinema Displays), "Servers & Storage" (Xserve, Xserve RAID), and "iPods". On the left side, there is a vertical navigation menu with sections: "New Macs (Intel)", "Macs with PowerPC", "Mac Accessories", "Servers", "iPod", "iPod Accessories", "Special Deals", "Business Financing", and "Volume Licensing". On the right side, there is a "Welcome" section with links to sign in or create an account, followed by "New to the Store", "Business Services", "Work Essentials", "Pro Video/Film", "Pro Design", "Pro Photo", "Pro Audio", "Buying Guides", and a "Looking for a great deal?" section with a red "SAVE" tag and a link to special deals.

Lionhead Studios Limited and Feral Interactive - Black & White 2

<http://www.feralinteractive.com/>



Prepare for the second coming - Black & White 2 is heading for the Mac

Feral interactive is enraptured to announce that Lionhead's latest release, Black & White 2, is bound for the the Mac.

From the creative mind of god game developer Peter Molyneux and RTS-creator Ron Miller, Black & White 2 is the sequel to the critically acclaimed hit Black & White. In this game that mixes up strategy and sim genres, you reprise your role as a powerful deity in search of a following and return to the once idyllic world of Eden. The land, however, has transformed itself. The inhabitants of this breathtaking 3D world have lost their innocence and developed new weapons and technology.

Will you be an evil or benevolent deity? That's the choice you must make upon entering a warring world in Black & White 2. Every decision you take will have an impact. Each action and inaction prompts obvious changes to buildings, flora and fauna, all morphing to reflect your personality. Like its wildly successful predecessor, Black & White, the sequel is all about moral choices.

With the help of your gigantic Creature that you raise from infancy, you must earn the respect and worship of the natives. How you choose to do that, whether through nurturing them or terrorizing them, is up to you. Will your sovereignty herald peaceful coexistence, or domination and conquest?

Check <http://www.FeralInteractive.com> for more information on Black & White 2 for Mac OS X in the coming weeks and months.

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Lionhead Studios Limited and Feral Interactive –The Movies

<http://www.feralinteractive.com/>



Lights down, roll camera and get into the action - This summer the Movies is coming to a Mac near you!

Feral Interactive proudly presents a Macintosh release of a Lionhead Studios game, based on an original concept by Peter Molyneux.

The Movies™ is a game that enables you to build and control your very own Hollywood motion picture studio. Starting at the dawn of the silver screen, you compete with other budding movie moguls to create a string of box office smashes and rule the industry.

All the things you have ever heard about Tinseltown - from starlet scandals to box-office records, from greenlighting a script to making the final cut - are all right here. A unique mix of strategy and artistry, The Movies™ demands that you do it all, from developing a slate of films to formulating a release strategy, you must manage the introduction of new technology, turn talent spotter and make unknowns into stars and then manage their ballooning egos.

Amazingly, it also lets you get behind the camera as a Director to create your own blockbusters, 'B' Movies or arthouse epics.

Movie mogul, talent agent or film director. You can be one or you can be all three. That's the magic of The Movies™.

David Stephen of Feral Interactive said:

"It's a delight and an honour to announce that we will be bringing the glamour of The Movies™ to the Mac, the world's best personal computer. At this time I would just like to thank my agent, my mother and my therapist for their unfailing support during this process."

Peter Molyneux of Lionhead Studios said:

"We are absolutely thrilled and delighted that the Movies will be coming to a Mac near you soon. The glamorous and artistic nature of The Movies means the Mac makes a perfect home for this game. For this we'd like to thank Feral, without whom this would not be possible."

The Movies will be opening on the Mac this Summer as a Universal Application. Check <http://www.FeralInteractive.com> for more information on The Movies, a Universal Application for Mac OS X, in the coming weeks and months.

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Make X2O your daily source for hydration and refreshment!

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Xtreme X2O is the ultimate way to hydrate your body. Take a few minutes and read through this page to discover the incredible benefits of Xooma's Xtreme X2O.

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healthy never tasted this good

XTREME X2O

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Transform your water! Make X2O your daily source for hydration and refreshment!

It's as easy as 1-2-3!
Step 1: Drop an X2O sachet ("teabag") in 16-24 ounces of purified or bottled water.
Step 2: Shake for 10-15 seconds
Step 3: Allow 5 minutes for X2O to transform your water before drinking.

Hydrate, Mineralize, & Revitalize with X2O!

Hydrate: X2O sachets actually make water "wetter" by lowering the surface tension of water molecules. This dramatically increases your water's ability to hydrate your body at the cellular level.

pH Defined: pH simply means potential hydrogen. Every one-point decrease on the pH scale is 10 times more acidic. For example, a drop from 7.0 to 2.0 is 100,000 times more acidic for your body!

Mineralize: Every Sachet of X2O contains calcium, magnesium, and over 70 trace minerals. These essential minerals (electrolytes) become ionic in water allowing them to be absorbed quickly and easily by your body.

X2O is delivered in a pure ionic form, which means it is immediately bioavailable to the body. X2O may also help your body to:

- Assimilate vitamins and minerals from the foods you eat and the supplements you take
- Combat arthritis and heart disease
- Cleanse the kidneys, intestines, and liver
- Protect your body from free radical cell damage
- Increase muscle and joint mobility
- Increase your oxygen levels
- Control digestive problems
- Regulate blood sugar
- Manage blood pressure
- Neutralize harmful acids that lead to illness
- Help in fighting the battle against cancer and other diseases

Revitalize: Alkalinity = good health. X2O transforms your water into a powerful alkaline beverage, which fights against the physical stress caused by today's fast-paced lifestyles.

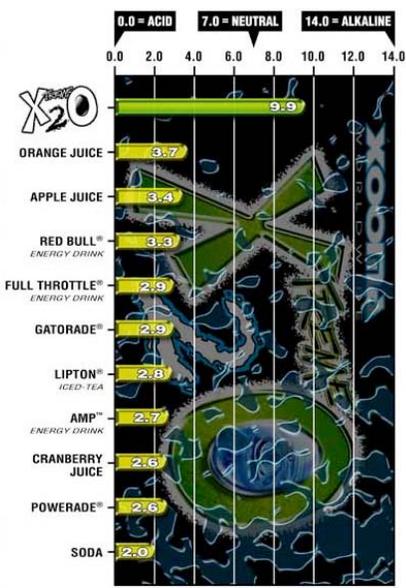
It takes 32 glasses of alkaline water to neutralize the acid from one 12 oz. soda. Each time you drink acidic soda, coffee, tea, and energy drinks your body uses its own buffers (from bone and vital) to raise the body's alkalinity to maintain your healthy blood pH level of 7.35-7.45. [Click here to see how!](#)

The Facts:

"More than 1 in 5 Americans unknowingly drink tap water polluted with feces, radiation or other contaminants. Nearly 1,000 deaths each year and at least 400,000 cases of waterborne illness may be attributed to contaminated water."
 -The New York Times - June 2, 1995
 Clean your water with X2O - [Click here to see how!](#)

ORP Testing:

Xooma X2O has also been tested by an independent laboratory located in the NASA Langley Research Center. The degree of "negativity" of an ORP reading is an indicator of how bioavailable and bioabsorbable a product will be in your body. The lower the test reading, the more ions are available for your body's metabolic functions. X2O is the only product of it's kind to register "minus" readings on the ORP meter; a huge benefit over the other products tested.



	0.0 = ACID	7.0 = NEUTRAL	14.0 = ALKALINE
X2O	9.9		
ORANGE JUICE	3.7		
APPLE JUICE	3.4		
RED BULL® ENERGY DRINK	3.3		
FULL THROTTLE® ENERGY DRINK	2.9		
GATORADE®	2.9		
LIPTON® ICED-TEA	2.8		
AMP® ENERGY DRINK	2.7		
CRANBERRY JUICE	2.6		
POWERADE®	2.6		
SODA	2.0		

pH LEVELS

macCompanion Media Kit

We are the Macintosh® Professional Network (MPN), Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). MPN, LLC continues to evolve, ever since its creation in 1996 as a way to reach out to those who use computers for a living in an effort to make their lives easier and their work both enjoyable and profitable.

Besides consulting efforts, we also provide monthly book, hardware and software reviews at [macCompanion](#). We offer ways and means for folks to get comfortable using the Macintosh™ created by the Apple® Corporation in the multibillion-dollar computer industry. We know that bad software doesn't live long in the Mac™ environment. On the other hand, good computer equipment and software becomes great as the word spreads, and we are very good at helping to spread it. Our suggestions over the years have also helped improve many successful products in use today. Through kind and gentle efforts, we have been able to help many people move to better tools-of-the-trade so they can be more productive in their work.

Besides our website, we also create *macCompanion* as a freely available PDF-based monthly. It averages about 100 pages per month. July 2004 is the first-year anniversary of this labor of love. The *macCompanion* staff is an all-volunteer team of writers and reviewers from many parts of the globe, and they also have a great wealth of knowledge and experience in their backgrounds. That base of talent also continues to keep growing as the Macintosh Professional Network expands.

Statistical Analysis

We are very excited about our site statistics! The multilingual-capable [macCompanion](#) website is close to 2 million page views a month and readership continues to increase rapidly through our "whisper campaign".

We continue to get greater visibility every day. Many of the various 35 computer operating systems (with many moving towards the Mac® OS X™ environment), 115 online search engines, 269 countries and domains and 319 online robots have discovered us – and continue to do so. So far, over 201 other websites have also linked to us. Many of our readers have made our site one of their favorites. While nearly 70% of our readership stops by for a quick visit via RSS feeds, over 23% spend between 1/2 to 1 hours at a time going through over 250 different pages on our site (mostly archives). Many of those who quickly drop by, come to get the monthly PDFed issue of *macCompanion*. Over 35GB of bandwidth was used in December 2005 alone for download purposes. Previous months have averaged around 20GB. Trend analysis indicates that will continue to increase as folks decide to "Move to the Mac".

Advertising with *macCompanion*

We have four advertising options you may choose from, and multiple months will receive a 20% discount for both website and PDF-based ads. All advertising must be paid in advance. We accept credit card payments via PayPal, checks, money orders by regular mail and cash in US currency by hand.

Site Ad Rate

We offer site ads for a fixed-budget price of only \$100 per month on our site. Following the KISS principle, we accept banner ads in only one size at this time - 468x60 pixels (per the [Interactive Advertising Bureau](#) standards for a Full Banner Ad Interactive Marketing Unit.) The ad will be rotated through with other ads, and there is no limit to how many you want to include.

The billing cycle begins based on the first day the ad placed on the site and is renewable on a monthly basis. This can begin immediately or at any time.

PDF Ad Rates

The published monthly version of *macCompanion* has a closing date of the 25th of each month for ads. Our target date for distribution begins the 5th of each month. Placement of the ads will be at our discretion, but we do listen to your suggestions.

Each ad will require a site link so our readers can click on the PDF ad and go to your site. Ads need to be submitted as PDFs with at least 300 DPI resolution.

(If you want us to create those ads for you, the cost is \$100 per hour, with a minimum 2-hour base fee. You will then need to send us proofs, etc. in JPEG or GIF formats.)

Rate Table

Page Size: 8 1/2" x 11" No bleed				
Style	Rate	Size Fractional	Size Decimal	Size Centimeter
1/16th Page	\$40 USD	1 5/8 x 2 1/4 in	1.625 x 2.25 in	4.1 x 5.7 cm
1/8th Page Horizontal	\$50 USD	3 1/2 x 2 1/4 in	3.5 x 2.25 in	8.9 x 5.7 cm
1/8th Page Vertical	\$50 USD	2 1/4 x 3 1/2 in	2.25 x 3.5 in	5.7 x 8.9 cm
1/4th Page Vertical	\$60 USD	3 1/2 x 4 3/4 in	3.5 x 4.75 in	8.9 x 12.1 cm
1/2 Page Horizontal	\$100 USD	7 1/4 x 4 3/4 in	7.25 x 4.75 in	18.4 x 12.1 cm
1/3rd Page Horizontal	\$70 USD	7 1/4 x 3 1/4 in	7.25 x 3.25 in	18.4 x 8.3 cm
1/3rd Page Vertical	\$70 USD	2 1/4 x 9 7/8 in	2.25 x 9.875 in	5.7 x 25.1 cm
2/3rd Page Horizontal	\$150 USD	7 1/4 x 6 1/4 in	7.25 x 6.25 in	18.4 x 15.9 cm
2/3rd Page Vertical	\$150 USD	4 3/4 x 9 7/8 in	4.75 x 9.875 in	12.1 x 25.1 cm
Full Page	\$250 USD	7 1/4 x 9 7/8 in	7.25 x 9.875 in	18.4 x 25.1 cm



Affiliations

We do affiliations, and work with those who have made arrangements with online affiliate systems, or we deal directly with you if you have created code, and have a contract we can sign. Check out the Bazaar on our website at <http://www.macompanion.com/bazaar/bazaarindex.html>

Sponsorships

We also accept sponsorships. Please let us know if you would like to sponsor *macCompanion*!

If you are as excited about our *macCompanion* readership as we are, please download the contractual terms and conditions documentation that are online in PDF format, or we can send them to you as an attachment. We'd enjoy having an ongoing working relationship with you too.

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Well that's it for this issue. Please come back again next month!