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About This Particular Macintosh: About the personal computing experience™

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Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the June edition of *About This Particular Macintosh!* It's the month for Dads and grads and enough Mac rumors to make you mad. Our editors are a surly bunch, and we'll give you more than just the latest hunch. We've packed this issue with plenty of news, and the time you spending reading you won't really lose. ATPM is an insightful magazine and the content on the pages leaves you plenty to glean about Macs and people and a unique way of life—the personal computing experience with a lot less strife. So it's on to this issue, and we have plenty in store that will help you to enjoy each issue each month all the more.

Intel Inside?

In the latter days of May, our friends on Wall Street heard a rumor Apple Computer was in talks with Intel about using the chipmaker's processors in Macintosh computers. This is a recurring rumor that finds itself on the Street and on the news rather frequently. Whether or not there's any truth to the rumor this time around is left to the imagination and investor speculation. The rumor sparked a rally in Apple's stock, moving the price back over $39 per share.

Apple's persistent processor challenges are well storied. Hampered by the lack of resources the company's original chip partner was applying to development, Apple moved from Motorola to IBM for development and production of the G5 processor. Despite the popularity of the iMac and G5 mini-tower, Big Blue has apparently fallen behind schedule in the production of faster G5 chips. Still, the OS and application development that would be needed to properly port OS X to the Intel chip family would be a time-consuming task.

Switch Which?

By most accounts, Apple's multi-million dollar Switch advertising campaign aimed at consumers had lackluster results. While the ads made somewhat of a cult figure out of a teenager with allergy issues, it didn't inspire a mass migration of consumers to the Macintosh way.

However, a subtle change is occurring in the IT world as more enterprise-level customers consider the Macintosh platform a viable alternative to the virus- and security-plagued Windows environment. This is happening without the advertising fanfare Apple used in its efforts to get consumers to switch. But in the long run, a gradual migration of IT customers to the Mac will lead to an increase in consumer sales. Switch which? It may be IT customers and not consumers who take the lead in pushing Macintosh market penetration.

See You See Me at WWDC?

Apple's annual conference for Macintosh developers opens less than a week from press time. The Mac maker has witnessed an increase in interest in the conference and overall conference attendance as Mac OS X continues to mature and the Macintosh continues its gains in market share. This year's conference offers a broad array of workshop and lab topics that evidences the growing number of Macintosh users in a variety of fields.

In recent years, WWDC has been used as a staging place for new Macintosh product announcements. A myriad of rumors surround this year's event, and the likelihood of a conference surprise. We'll cover the major conference announcements in our July issue.

iPod Power Continues to Flower

The popular Apple iPod is both a pop culture phenomenon and an extraordinarily successful product. The iPod has established its own industry for peripherals and accessories while raising the worldwide appeal of Apple branded products.

Now the iPod has fostered a new craze called "podcasting." Podcasting involves the downloading of pre-recorded content for playback at a preferred time. Apple is supporting this new market for content by making podcasts available via iTunes and the iTunes Music Store. Many suggest that podcasts may change the way radio reaches millions of listeners, much the same way the iPod changed the way consumers purchase and enjoy music.

Our June issue includes:

The Candy Apple: Age Has Its Advantages

Just because something is old does not mean it is worn out.

Bloggable: Upgrade Madness

If you've wondered why the user interface in Tiger is different, or how Spotlight works, you are not alone. This month's bottomless *Bloggable* is all over the 10.4 upgrade, from a 40,000-word review to a list of tweaks big and small, plus eight unrelated news items from May.

Pod People

The long happy life of a first-generation iPod.

TransPod FM Review[1]

Hi! I just ran across your review of the TransPod on the ATPM site, which I found through a Google search on simply "TransPod" (the sixth link, if you like knowing such things!). I wanted to say thanks first for the review with pictures. Everything I was reading before mentioned the two arms, but no one else so far has had pictures that show how it really works. My lighter outlet is so close to my gear shift that it's hard to put anything bulky down there, and having the extra arm to take the TransPod out of the way looks like it might just be the ticket (although I may have some of the same height problem you did with your Odyssey).

And double thanks for mentioning that you live in the DFW area *and* what frequency you've found has worked—so many people say in their reviews about how a metro area is bad, or even specifically that DFW is bad, but never give the full info on what *does* work! As you may have guessed, I'm in the DFW area also so this specific info is extremely helpful to me.

I just received my first iPod yesterday and I'm looking forward to getting it set up for use in my car for those 45-minute commutes to downtown…and from downtown. **:-)**

Thanks again!

—*Stephanie*

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Just bought a TransPod from Target. I had my doubts, but decided to give it a try. I was told by the sales clerk that I had 90 days to return the item for a full credit (with my receipt). So I bought it. And guess what? It works great! I am very pleased with this product. As for mounting, that's not a problem for my 2004 Explorer because I have a flat charger plug built into/near the cup holder. So, I just plugged the TransPod right in, inserted my iPod (it stands upright), tuned to channel 89.7, and wam—iPod heaven! I have loaded 900 songs so far and I have it on shuffle so I have commercial-free music without knowing what is coming next. Buy it, it works.

—*Huston*

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I looked at the TransPod and thought it was a bit large, with too many screws and arms. I bought the Belkin TuneBase and think it's perfect for almost any vehicle with a power plug in the front. It come with or without an FM transmitter. One feature I like is that when the car is turned off the plug is goes off and the iPod automatically pauses. I hit the Play button to get it going again. It has a plug, a stiff arm, and a small base for the iPod mini. That's it. Bend it easily to where you want it, and it stays there.

—*Bill Johnson*

The Apple Store SOHO—My Small Office/Home Office Away From Home in Manhattan[2]

What a great idea! I am going to try this at the San Francisco Apple Store. The only problem is that I no longer have any Apple hardware, well, save for an Apple IIe stashed away in my garage. I wonder what would happen when I show up at the Apple Store with my laptop running FreeBSD/Linux/WinXP. This one laptop is all the computer I need whenever I work away from home.

—*Steppenwolf105*

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I can totally identify with this. Owing to a recent dispute with PG&E (i.e. the power company here in northern California), I have no power at home, and I've fled from my cold, powerless home office to San Francisco's many cozy cafes that provide free WiFi. Good coffee, a fantastic work environment, and great people-watching to boot (better than a tropical fish tank, in my opinion).

The following are key elements of my road-warrior's arsenal:

- My trusty 12" PowerBook. I've been writing lots of code lately so I think I may upgrade to a 15" in the near future…
- Kensington's 70-watt interchangeable AC adapter[3] for PowerBooks and other gadgets. I didn't think it was possible to love a power brick. But I do. They got everything right. There I was in CompUSA ready to splurge on a spare official Apple power brick for my PowerBook (one to leave at home, and one to keep packed in my bag) for a mere…uh…seventy bucks?!? And then I saw the Kensington brick, sleeker, with interchangeable tips (including one for the iPod included at no extra charge), for the same price. Sold.

It's smaller and lighter than the Apple brick. One end has a small (three inches long or so) rugged dongle that ends with a standard 2-blade AC plug. The other end is where the long cord that runs to the PowerBook attaches. I haven't measured the cord, but it's at least six feet. It's

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1.   http://www.atpm.com/11.05/transpod.shtml

2.   http://www.atpm.com/11.05/segments.shtml
3.   http://www.kensington.com/html/6327.html

long. Spectacularly, usefully long. And it comes with a nice velcro tiewrap to boot. Prior to this, I had never gotten compliments on my power brick.

- Treo 600[1]. iSync to iApps, natch. I'm tempted to upgrade to a 650 for Bluetooth goodness and camera non-suckage, but thus far haven't given in to temptation. I charge it off via my PowerBook's USB ports using a retractable charge and sync cable from treocentral.com. One thing I love about the PowerBook is that it still powers the USB ports even when sleeping. I couldn't charge my Treo off my old iBook when it was in sleep mode.

- And the most excellent Incase Sling Pack[2] to carry it all…more compartments than you can shake a stick at. The original Incase Moya Pack kicked butt. I still have mine, but it's not as big as the Sling Pack. I don't like the new Moya Deluxe. It's big, but woefully undercompartmentalized.

—*Daniel C. Silverstein*

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I have to agree. I love the Apple Store in SOHO. It's my favorite. I went there on Easter Sunday to buy my G4 PowerBook, when low and behold the store was closed. Outside, there were all these people standing around with their laptops. It looked like a big sit-in, or a bunch of groupies waiting for the concert to begin.

I use Skype and love it. And you are right, all it's missing is a coffee bar.

I'll be there in the next couple of weeks to pick up my iPod.
—*LeneGirlNYC*

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Yes, the Apple Store is an oasis: a quick place to catch up on where to go, and a convenient place to peruse technology and get a little work done.
—*Stewart Ferrell*

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As an on-site consultant the Apple Store is a great resource to get equipment and software in a pinch. The other great thing is that in the summer it is a cool place to check your mail and collect your thoughts.
—*Georg Dauterman*

Frisky Freeware: Captain FTP[3]

If the effort that has gone into the looks of this program went into the functionality of it, things would be wonderful. It is unstable and loses track of transfers. Not reliable enough to be worth using, even free.
—*Michael McKee*

Buy a Mac mini or Upgrade Your Cube?[4]

I for one, am glad to hear you went for the upgrade as opposed to trashing your old Cube and buying new. In this disposable society it's good to read about people taking the time to make the old new again.
—*Paul Barker*

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Kudos to you for upgrading your Cube. I have a 733 MHz Quicksilver G4 (2001) that has gone under at least six upgrades and is still going strong. It now sports a DVR-108 SuperDrive, two USB 2.0 cards, a new video card, a 22" Studio Display, a new 1 GHz processor courtesy of OWC, four hard drives totalling 420 GB of hard drive space, and several other improvements I can't recall right now. I'm waiting for OWC to deliver my Tiger software so I'm running Panther for now.

As long as I can build in more processor speed and storage to this platform, I'm not buying a G5 anytime soon. My next upgrade will be a dual-1.4 GHz processor card.

Stand your ground. *Upgrade!*
—*Grover Watson*

I wouldn't be surprised if G5 upgrades eventually come along for Cubes and the like, given the potential market of current owners. And as mentioned above, saving the trouble of moving all your applications to a new machine is a big win! —*Matthew Glidden*

MacJournal 3.0.2 Review[5]

Well, webloggers and similar folks may have their critical observations about certain limits of MacJournal. But I don't care a damn about weblogging and all the rest. I use MacJournal simply as an electronic Moleskine, and for that purpose it's ideal. I like its nice clean interface, its full screen mode, the possibility to give the background whatever color you like. I love MacJournal, and I know many people do.
—*Paul van Heck*

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The product went from freeware to $25 mainly on the basis of nested folders and full-screen editing mode (which it shares with the much more expensive Ulysses). The auto-backup feature is also nice. I think the blogging support is ultimately the selling point for this application—if you don't need it, I would recommend something more powerful (Hog Bay NoteBook, OmniOutliner, Circus Ponies NoteTaker, etc.). A major limitation with MacJournal is the lack of documents—you have one file and must make-do with nested folders to separate the compartments of your life, though who wants their tech notes in the same file as their personal journal, DVD recommendations, and their to-do lists?
—*Jim S.*

1. http://store.treocentral.com/content/accessories/5-19--162.htm
2. http://www.goincase.com/prod_laptop/prod_lt_slingpk.php
3. http://www.atpm.com/11.05/frisky.shtml
4. http://www.atpm.com/11.05/cube.shtml
5. http://www.atpm.com/11.05/macjournal.shtml

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I liked MacJournal (I have version 2.4, I think), however I think that StickyBrain 3.x (They just released 3.5 a few days ago.) is a much better option. Now if MacJournal's blogging support was fully supported, then I think it would be a win/win solution. As it is, MacJournal is a distant second.

—*Ross Winn*

About This Particular Web Site[1]

Thanks for the great link about Peter's little electric van; it made me proud to be a human being for a hour or so!

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1. http://www.atpm.com/11.05/atpw.shtml

I don't "know" why, but I can suspect some reasons that this couldn't be easily scaled from a one-of to a small production facility. I don't know where one gets one of those little vans, but we do have some smaller vans in production in various places in the world.

—*John A. Davies*

I received an e-mail from a reader (Thanks, Johnny) linking me to a post on Neil Gaiman's Web site, which offers a letter found on another Web site claiming that Elena's Chernobyl story is false. No claims are made of the pictures being anything other than actual depictions of Chernobyl-area, so presumably it's agreed that they are authentic. (Another link claims that artifacts in a few of the pictures were positioned for the camera, but I think that's forgivable: she's a tourist, not an archeologist.)

My advice: take the story as fantasy mixed with reality, and enjoy the pictures.   —*Paul Fatula*

Age Has Its Advantages

I visited an old baseball park last month and will see another one this month. I got to thinking that just because stuff is old does not mean it is useless.

Last month, I saw RFK Stadium in Washington, DC, an arena built in the early 1960s and still doing just fine. I'd been excited about the move of Major League Baseball's Montréal Expos to the nation's capital, as they were drawing poorly in Montréal and needed a fresh start. DC had not had a major-league team in three decades and also needed a fresh start, although the Baltimore Orioles are just up the road. So it was a nice convergence of redemption.

The city must have been starved for baseball—attendance has been very nice thus far. It helps that the team flirts with a winning record. It drew more than 120,000 for a weekend series with the Cubs in May, and even midweek numbers are good. The game I saw, on a Wednesday, drew more than 29,000. Those numbers suggest to me that people are not just going to one game. They are going back. That must mean they think the experience is a good one. After my trip, I agree. I would go back, too, if I lived near there. The old place is pretty dark and dingy in the tunnels, but that is part of its charm.

I asked an usher what RFK had been used for before baseball returned. I thought it was an odd concert here or there, since the NFL Redskins moved to a suburb. He said no, they play major-league soccer there all the time. That explained why the place was in such good shape.

I have to say, though, that when the home crowd got excited and started stomping on the platforms, and the entire section shook, I wondered how stable the whole apparatus was. I remembered walking across beams to get to the seating and being able to see how little metal was holding it up. But then I decided they would not be in business if it was unsafe, and I enjoyed the shaking.

In June, I will see Yankee Stadium, if I can get tickets. That one is much older, which is why I want to see it. I appreciate well-made products and well-engineered structures. I like knowing that we can keep using stuff even after its anticipated end-of-life date. That's part of the reason why I have held on to my G3 tower for so long. It works, and it does what I need it to do. I do not need luxury boxes and fancy club seating. Sure, a laptop would take up less space, and be more portable, but maybe when I am traveling I should not be hauling around my computer anyway. Maybe the point of vacation traveling is to do unusual stuff, not to be online all the time like I am at home.

I shy away from going to movies when I am on vacation. I can go to a movie at home. The point of going somewhere else is to do stuff I can't do at home. Like visiting new ballparks—and old ones. They all have something to offer, even if they are not brand new. Especially if they are not brand new.

Onward.

Upgrade Madness

Big cats make big splashes. Anything big does, as a matter of fact. So it's no small wonder that Apple chose the names of large, swift cats to describe their OS X releases.

The latest one, Tiger, Mac OS X 10.4, is here, swiftly coming to dominate every printed word in the end of April and the beginning of May. Those of us fortunate to install soon after the release found ourselves an important source of knowledge for those who had not; and, as always, there's a certain degree of noblesse oblige from those with blogs to help out those in need of help.

In that vein of noblesse oblige, John Siracusa at *Ars Technica* wrote the longest review of an operating system I have ever seen, at 21 parts and more than 40,000 words. It's the magnum opus of the Tiger world, and is so comprehensive it devotes five parts wholly to metadata. After reviewing everything there is to review, including purely aesthetic tweaks, I'll give away his ending (since it's obvious by the time you get to part 6, anyway):

> Tiger is the best version of Mac OS X yet. It offers substantial improvements over Panther in all important areas. The performance improvements are immediately noticeable. Every major bundled application has been improved. There's an unprecedented number of substantial, totally new features and technologies: Spotlight, Core Image and Video, Quartz 2D Extreme, Dashboard, and Automator, just to name a few.
>
> […]
>
> Overall, Tiger is impressive. If this is what Apple can do with 18 months of development time instead of 12, I tremble to think what they could do with a full two years—let alone the length of time it took for Mac OS X 10.0 to first ship. The productivity of Apple's Mac OS X development team has increased tremendously since 10.0; they're now firing on all cylinders. While I dearly wish someone would steer them in the direction of the eternally neglected Finder, I can't help but be proud of the little OS team that could.

Now, Siracusa is a one-man team that could, who wrote enough words on Tiger to be paid $65,000 if he had a contract for typical, entry-level magazine writing, so he deserves a lot of respect, even when we disagree. No one would ever buy 40,000 words, but it should give you a sense of the thoroughness of the work.

In the same vein John Gruber, whose *Daring Fireball* is probably the most comprehensive Mac weblog anywhere, published an entire page of interesting discoveries from exploring, using, and reading about Tiger. He calls it "Tiger Details[1]," and I've found it exceedingly useful since my upgrade, from the esoteric (how the progress meter in the boot window works) to the very useful ("Extraneous Returns Stripped From Text Pasted Into Single-Line Fields[2]). If you're interested in the differences between Tiger and Panther, or just curious why something doesn't work or is mysteriously changed, this list is your best place to start. And, who knows, you might just find something that can change your entire experience.

Other interesting observations on the changes in Tiger, big and small alike, abound. For instance:

- iChat's Jabber support is very sub-par[3]. That's unfortunate, but, as Julian Missig notes, there are features missing, like new-user registration, and it abuses its extension for rich IMs and spams non-iChat clients. I hope Apple will repair this, because Jabber support could be a big deal.
- The Finder's file-searching "path" widget is useless[4]. I suppose I don't keep things in as many nested subfolders as some people, so it's not quite as useless. But Nicholas Riley's criticism sure rings true. He's right: it's a step back to System 6, for no good reason.
- The word "Macintosh" is mostly dead[5]. Almost everywhere, it's been replaced by the word "Mac." How fascinating. The places where it remains are: in the Finder's About box, and on the default name for a startup disk ("Macintosh HD").
- Read Me files are now localizable[6]. How insanely slick (though it's not actually an OS feature or new in Tiger). It's a .app file that calls "open" to launch the appropriate RTF file in Text Editor. Even the filenames are localizable

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1. http://daringfireball.net/misc/2005/04/tiger_details
2. http://daringfireball.net/misc/2005/04/tiger_details#singleline-paste
3. http://missig.org/julian/blog/2005/04/30/ichat-and-jabber/
4. http://njr.pycs.net/weblog/2005/04/29.html#P59
5. http://daringfireball.net/misc/2005/04/tiger_details#welcome
6. http://mjtsai.com/blog/2005/05/15/localized-read-me-files/

("Read Before You Install iTunes," or "Vor der Installation von iTunes lesen" in German.) From Michael Tsai, my boss here at ATPM.

- iTunes 4.8, rolled out around the same time as Tiger, [will now play videos using QuickTime](#)[1]. As [Engadget](#)[2] put it, "[B]egin speculation now."
- [Chris Adamson](#)[3], who blogs at O'Reilly Developer Weblogs, has both an excellent [list of Tiger gripes](#)[4] ("runaway CPU use" has bitten me too, for one thing) and a rumination on [how smart Smart Folders are](#)[5]. Sure, they have some weird behaviors, as Siracusa notes in The Review That Doesn't End, but so does the rest of the Finder. Even still, Chris has built an impressive UI, using only the Finder, around his editing workflow. Very smart.

If you've found some other interesting observations, please leave them in the comments. This page can serve as a container for all kinds of useful Tiger-related discoveries.

Now, to the rest of the month.

May Flowers Bring…Allergies?

- Apple is pulling John Wiley & Sons books, including über-columnist David Pogue's wildly popular *Macs for Dummies*, from Apple Store shelves in retaliation for [a potentially negative biography of Steve Jobs](#)[6]. This seems like chopping off your nose to spite your face, to me. Especially since it's still not clear how Jeffrey S. Young's biography, *iCon Steve Jobs: The Greatest Second Act in the History of Business*, will hurt Stevie J.'s reputation.
- File this in the "When you need to feel superior to Windows users (more than usual)" folder: Evan DiBiase, of *MacAndBack*, and his friend [Zach Paine](#)[7], observe that the latest Longhorn screenshots [look like KDE, not Mac OS X](#)[8]. Since Microsoft can't bother to design its own UI, it might as well rip off something better, not worse. (Step *away* from the flames, readers! It's a joke!)
- Since iPods don't cost enough already, in the Netherlands a copy-protection foundation, [Stichting de Thuiskopie](#)[9], this month proposed a levy of EUR3.28 per gigabyte (!!!) on [iPods and other music players](#)[10]. Outrage immediately ensued. *BoingBoing* headlined their article, "[Why Dutch iPod levy is](#)

[futile](#)[11]". *Engadget* says, "[Dutch iPod tax could squash digital audio player industry](#)[12]". *The Register* screams even louder, "[Dutch plans for iPod tax could kill MP3 industry](#)[13]." *The p2p Weblog* is more sober: "[Planned Dutch iPod tax will add \$235 to cost of iPods](#)[14]." Oh, *only* \$235? Gosh.

- Fellow ATPM contributor and accomplished writer Kirk McElhearn thinks [the Mac mini is a lemon](#)[15]. It won't drive a VGA monitor with enough gusto to make it worth your while, he says. The obvious, snide answer is, "You poor soul, you still *own* a VGA monitor?" But since it's marketed to Switchers, my not-very-funny attempts at humor fall flat. Sorry, guys. Better luck with DVI?
- In other iTunes-related news: [Apple has gained 58% of the flash market in six months](#)[16] (whoa!), [future-pundit Robert Cringely thinks Apple is going to license the iPod](#)[17], Miraz Jordan says [iTunes is taking over her computer](#)[18], Bill Gates insists [cell phones are going to beat portable audio players](#)[19], and Chris Adamson has found [much of the music he likes, for less, on the iTMS](#)[20].
- Is an open-source divorce brewing between Apple and KHTML developers? CNET [thinks so](#)[21]. Apple, [KDE devs complain](#)[22], isn't providing them with CVS or any other revision control, the code is often sloppy and difficult to understand, and it's not easy to merge Apple's changes anyway since many are WebCore-specific. *Ars Technica*'s [apple.ars](#)[23] says, "[It looks as though Apple and KDE may have come to a final fork in the road](#)[24]," and that the devs have a right to feel jilted—but that Apple has made a good-faith effort, and fulfills their requirements under the LGPL. Ben Goodger, lead engineer for Mozilla development, adds to the debate that [WebCore's renderer is vastly better than KHTML](#)[25] and waiting for perfect code from Apple is unreasonable.
- Have you ever wondered about certain very pedigreed Mac applications, and their back stories? I bet you have. Do you remember "[The True Story of Audion](#)[26]" from [Bloggable 10.12](#)[27]? Now comes "[A Short History](#)

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1. http://www.appleinsider.com/article.php?id=1062
2. http://www.engadget.com
3. http://www.macdevcenter.com/pub/au/1045
4. http://www.macdevcenter.com/pub/wlg/6998
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25. http://weblogs.mozillazine.org/ben/archives/008131.html
26. http://www.panic.com/extras/audionstory/

of DragThing[1]", without even the bittersweet coda of future development cut short. James Thomson, the author, has a good sense of humor about the age of his application, first published in 1994: he calls PCalc "the only software older than DragThing." Thanks, James!

And now, for your moment of memetic convergence Zen: John Gruber brings Microsoft-bashing and Adobe-bashing together in the same article[2]! (For those of you who didn't hear, Adobe bought Macromedia in April[3]. I did report, vaguely, on this in May[4].) Gruber writes, "But is it any surprise that a company that is run by jerks-wearing-suits is now targeting the jerks- wearing-suits software market?" Then, he footnotes a long block quote from an article about Apple's resurgence with a quote from a *Newsweek* article: "'Hmm, look who's running Microsoft now,' he says, referring to former Procter & Gamble marketer Steve Ballmer. 'A sales guy!' The smile gets broader. 'I wonder…' he says."

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27. http://www.atpm.com/10.12/bloggable.shtml
1. http://www.dragthing.com/english/tenyears.html
2. http://daringfireball.net/2005/04/fish_head

3. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/19/technology/
     19adobe.html?ex=1271563200&en=34129d0d26ce9424&ei=5090&partner=rssus
     erland&emc=rss
4. http://www.atpm.com/11.05/bloggable.shtml

Pod People

by Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com

I'd wanted an MP3 player for a long time, just so I could listen to music during my commute to and from work without having to lug around a Discman and a folder full of CDs. Trouble was, I definitely didn't want any of the MP3 players that actually existed in early 2001. They held far too little music on their removable media cards, and the cards were far too expensive for me to buy enough of them to let me carry around a reasonable amount of music. Every time a new MP3 player was announced I'd check out the specs hopefully: nope, not even close to what I was looking for.

Then, in October 2001, Apple announced the iPod. Finally, someone had gotten the MP3 player right. Small form-factor, huge capacity (5 GB!), simple interface. Expensive, and I'm not usually an early adopter, but I didn't care. The wait was over; I placed my order right away.

I saved the fancy cube-shaped packaging it came in, and named my iPod "Samphir," after a book of poetry by one of my favorite authors, John Cowper Powys. (I'd recently acquired a first edition, with jacket, in near-fine condition.) Samphir wasn't quite big enough for all of my MP3s, so I created playlists and decided what to leave out.

Earbuds

As the months went by, I decided I really wasn't impressed with the iPod's earbuds. I wanted something more comfortable and preferably noise-cancelling, since public transportation isn't exactly quiet. A bit of online research led me to Etymotic Research[1]. Their ER4 or ER6 earbuds seemed to be exactly what I wanted. The price didn't bother me as I knew I'd be giving them a lot of use.

I sent an e-mail off to HeadRoom[2] asking for buying advice, and was told that the less expensive ER6s would meet my needs just fine. Absurdly, it was much cheaper to order from HeadRoom in Montana than it was to order directly from the manufacturer a few towns away, so HeadRoom got my money. While I'm here, let me give them a plug: great company to do business with. I only wish they sold more products than just headphones, so I could order from them more often.

The ER6s were spectacular, and I began re-discovering my music, catching details I hadn't noticed in years of listening. I could enjoy my music on the train or bus without blasting it and without disturbing people sitting beside me: once on Amtrak I was listening late into the night and told the lady next to me to let me know if it was too loud. She replied saying she couldn't hear my music at all. Great sound for me, courtesy for everyone around me: it's win-win.

After about three years of use, my ER6 earbuds finally died: one earbud stopped putting out any sound at all. The folks at Etymotic were helpful, suggesting a few things I could try to get them working again and offering a repair (for about half the price of buying new), but the new ER6i earbuds, made specially for the iPod, caught my eye. They offered a little extra bass and, as I discovered once I bought them, a lot more comfort: I like the three-flanged eartips much better than the two-flanged ones that came with the original ER6s.

Music

Ever since I got Samphir, I've ripped new CDs to MP3 as soon as I got them. It seems kind of backwards buying CDs when I do almost all of my listening either through my Mac or on the iPod, especially with the introduction of the iTunes Music Store. But the problem is this: when you buy music online, it's not really yours. There are digital rights limitations on what you can do with it, how many computers you can play it on, etc. Even though I don't do anything that those limitations would likely get in the way of, I'm just more comfortable buying a physical object that I, not some DRM server, have control over.

As for downloading music, well: if the major labels don't want to let me listen to their music before buying it, that's OK by me. Epitonic[3] lets me (legally) download tracks from an enormous variety of artists and albums. I've discovered some amazing music there. (Cat Power, currently featured on their main page, is one of my favorite artists.)

More recently, I discovered a program called Indy[4] that lets me listen to MP3s by independent musicians of all genres. Best feature of the program: MP3s that I like are saved to my hard drive for future listening, and those I don't like aren't saved so no space is wasted. Indy seems to be just starting out, but I think it's got a lot of potential.

Future

More than three years after the iPod was first announced, there are a lot of cool third-party iPod accessories. Most of them require a more recent iPod than mine, so it seems I'm out of luck. Once in a while I'll get a press release for a clever new iPod gizmo that makes me think about retiring Samphir, and with over 20 GB of music on my computer now, a little

1. http://www.etymotic.com
2. http://www.headphone.com

3. http://www.epitonic.com
4. http://indy.tv

more capacity would be nice. But as long as Samphir's still working, I can't talk myself into the expense: I just don't feel the need to replace something that works so remarkably well.

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1.   mailto:editor@atpm.com

Mac mini—The Modular Tower of Power

I want a Mac mini, and I want it now! Why now? Because what I really want is a low-power, low-price modular workstation that can be deconstructed and reconstructed at will. I have come across an aftermarket peripheral that made me not only revise my ideas about the Mac mini, but also contact peripheral manufacturers about building new products based on the platform.

Micronet has just introduced its line of external hard drives designed specifically with the Mac mini in mind. The miniMates[1] range from 80 GB to 400 GB in storage capacity and sport an additional four USB and two FireWire ports. The beauty of these devices is in the design of their enclosures and how they mirror the Mac mini's physical design and footprint.

Why it took so long for a vendor to come out with such an enclosure for an external hard drive is beyond me. I would have thought that within the first month of the Mac mini's release a raft of storage-system vendors would have flooded the market with similar devices and at least one or two RAID systems for heavy-duty applications. The Mac mini does not get enough credit. It is more than adequate in its stock configurations to run business and consumer applications, and when the maximum RAM is added, it will be up to the user to determine its limitations.

A short time had passed since the introduction of the miniMate, and I started to receive notices about newer, faster, fully featured 8x DVD SuperDrive upgrades. An upgrade would mean replacing rather than adding a second drive. I did not like the sound of that. Rather than replace the existing SuperDrive, I contacted someone at MCE[2], who sent me a press release about its upgrade service and inquired as to whether or not MCE could design an enclosure matching the style and dimensions of the Mac mini and get the product on the market before the end of the year, hopefully sooner.

The MCE press representative was intrigued by my request, that a member of the public was suggesting a new design/product for the company. Apparently, it does not happen too often, and this is no doubt the reason that the peripheral marketplace is flooded with devices possessing very short life spans. He wrote me that he was going to share my concept with the appropriate people in engineering, but prior to doing so had some questions:

Before I do that, though, please help me understand why you would prefer to go the route you've indicated here versus, say, a Power Mac G5 or perhaps a refurbished Power Mac G4, which are designed with expandability in mind?

I responded (paraphrasing):

I want a modular workstation. I do not want a hulking Power Mac G5/G4 tower taking up so much physical space and not allowing for any true sense of portability. I am not a power user to the extent that I need and can make use of the raw processing speed of a Power Mac G5/G4 tower. I want a stackable system—where components can be easily swapped in and out—while still maintaining the sleek look and design of the overall system.

My ideal Mac mini configuration would have the most powerful processor, maximum amount of RAM, largest internal hard drive, and fastest SuperDrive, all from Apple. This would then be augmented with a 400 GB Micronet miniMate and an external 8x SuperDrive in an appropriate enclosure from whichever manufacturer gets one out there first, and then, of course, I would add Plasticsmith's mini Skirt[3] glo for visual effect. Plasticsmith recently announced the mini Shack[4], housing a seven-port USB 2.0 hub, which, in the case of my configuration, would be overkill.

As I await the external SuperDrive and its enclosure, I looked around my apartment and wondered what ports I would need on the Mac mini to make it the centerpiece of an audio/video entertainment center. To start, it would need to have optical audio in/out, HD (high definition) out, a game controller port, and support for the 7.1 audio format. It would be a challenge as Apple has not really focused on this area, and as such it will be up to the end user to make the necessary modifications to make this vision a reality.

Computers and technology are all about freedom and mobility today. The Mac mini, in the configuration outlined above, can be everything I need it to be. It should be up to me and not Apple as to how I decide to make use of technology. Vendors, instead of questioning the motivations of users,

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1. http://micronet.com/General/minimate.asp
2. http://www.mcetech.com
3. http://www.plasticsmith.com/miniskirt
4. http://www.plasticsmith.com/minishack

should be embracing them as opportunities to provide new products and services that are actually being requested by members of the public, the Macintosh user base.

Practically speaking, when a component becomes obsolete or simply stops working, it becomes a matter of upgrading or repairing. Work does not have to stop because the entire system has come to a halt and requires it be brought in for repair. I would like to think that by this time the concept of real-time backup and auto archiving has taken hold. And, when a new, more powerful Mac mini becomes available and I purchase one, it would be nice to think I could hold onto the original unit as a backup to be neatly slotted into the system, should the situation arise.

I envision the modular system much like the Lego building blocks of my youth. I can build the system up and take it down at will. Nothing in my design is fanciful; all of the parts and peripherals exist. Now that one company has started to design cases with the Mac mini in mind, the floodgates will be open. Recent history shows us that the peripherals market is strong, very strong, and now it is just a matter of making ones that make common sense. Enough of the frivolous hardware add-ons and countless iPod accessories; let's get back to concentrating on the computers themselves and where they can take us—and we them.

Tiger's New Stripes

When I ripped open the box two weeks ago, and found within it a new operating system, I wasn't expecting miracles. I've learned not to expect miracles from anybody anymore, reality distortion field be damned. But what I got from that little box, and a lot of messing around, were three big important changes, and a myriad of refinements to the rest of the system.

I began by doing what all the cool kids were doing before installing a new system: backing up my data. After a loss of a significant paper in college, I began to take backup with a degree of diligence that monks of the Benedictine Order would find to be acceptable. I made a complete copy of my home folder, wrote up a nice little text file with all of my serial numbers, and wiped my system. As Brent Simmons[1] says, "Doubt is a parasite that lives in computers," and the only infectious things allowed near my computer are those fun Internet memes about your favorite books or some musical trivia.

Spotlight

As I finished my installation, and restored my old home folder to its former glory, I was greeted with my first Tiger Surprise: Spotlight indexing. Spotlight, all by its lonesome, is reason enough to upgrade your system. Though I am a bit of a stickler for organization, frequently my files will end up a bit disorganized, and I can never quite remember where I put my notes from the last board meeting. Of course, in order to make it to the point where Spotlight is useful, you need to index everything, and I do mean everything, on your disk. This can take some time, and I wouldn't exactly plan to do anything, at all, while it's going on that first time.

If you're familiar with QuickSilver, the "Command-Space" reflex is ingrained into your workday; to get a document, to get an address or an e-mail, that simple command structure will begin to infect your day-to-day workflow. I've found myself using Spotlight almost as a QuickSilver-replacement: an application launcher, a document finder, and a collage creator. The Spotlight window will divide the results into a group of logical filesets, including e-mails, calendar events, contacts, PDFs, photos, movie, bookmarks, and other documents. This is a neat parlor trick, but it's got to have some substance in order to work: enter the right-hand panel, allowing you to sort by date, name, kind, or people, as well as to limit your results by specific dates.

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1. http://inessential.com/?comments=1&postid=3088

Dashboard

When I was done reorganizing my documents via Spotlight searches, I found myself playing with Apple's other hallmark feature of Tiger: Dashboard. Meant to act as occasional reference, I found myself playing more and more with this hidden layer of my new machine. Part desktop reference, part window on the world, Dashboard adds much to my day-to-day operations. Apple ships Dashboard with about a dozen or so generic widgets, including Weather, Flight Tracker, Calculator, and Calendar widgets. Essentially a Dashboard widget is a bundle of JavaScript, CSS, and HTML that combine together to provide a simple service to an end user, usually Web-based, and do so in an attractive and simple fashion.

Of course, the beauty of Dashboard widgets is that Apple has flung wide the doors to the API, allowing everyone to build their own widgets, and better yet, people have responded to Apple's call, making widgets by the dozen. Currently, on Apple's download directory for widgets, there are over 200 entries: everything from currency rate widgets to traffic widgets to e-mail checking widgets, and back again. I've picked up several that I've come to depend upon, including flores, a Gmail checker; Hula Girl, desktop candy; and Minesweeper, which is precisely as it sounds. Dashboard fills both frivolous wants and desperate needs, bridging the gap between useful and fun.

Automator

I'm not much of a programmer. I never have been. Loops, if/thens, cryptic abbreviations, and even more obscured commands leave me feeling dizzy. I've done some AppleScript, which is probably the most approachable language I've dealt with, but mainly it was for simple things like dialing a modem, or dealing with simple file tasks. With Automator, though, I felt right at home. The simple workflow interface allows you to create flowing groups of tasks that take simple objects and morph them through the workflow from one thing to another entirely.

Automator's workflow "puzzle pieces" take specific types of input and move them along a specified path. Sample workflows take unread mail messages from Mail and transmute them into an iPod Note for you to read on your commute, download linked photos from a Web page and add them to your iPhoto library, and batch-processing image. Fortunately for you, it's not just Apple's applications that are part of the Automator dance. Many developers took the

opportunity to update their programs with new actions, including blogging client ecto, popular text edit BBEdit, and RSS reader NetNewsWire just to name a few. In addition, it's possible for anyone to write their own workflow hooks, and Apple is maintaining a download directory of new workflows and new actions that can be used in concert to create more diverse actions. The future of Automator is pretty bright. As more and more applications get Automator hooks, as Apple diversifies the effects Automator can have, and as the platform becomes subject to O'Reillyan re-mixing, Automator has the most potential for cool of any new feature in OS X.

Some Sticking Points

Tiger isn't perfect. No operating system will ever be perfect. But there are some glaring problems in Tiger that may make you think twice before drinking the Kool-Aid and upgrading your system. First of all, the much-discussed Widget Vulnerability Problem. Essentially, widgets are small programs. They can do things like open Web pages and access shell scripts, and this clearly creates a trust problem for a lot of folks. How do you know a widget isn't malicious? This could be the same problem that has plagued the Windows world for a long time in the form of e-mail attachments. Apple has one small thing in their favor: Dashboard asks you to be sure before you run the widget for the first time, but, of course, most folks will still click through that unknowingly in order to get the pretty, shiny widget to work. The lesson? Education. Teach folks not to accept candy from strangers. This lesson, as outbreak after outbreak occurs on the Windows side, has proven to be fairly difficult.

Spotlight is slick, but it's not flawless. It doesn't handle exclusionary queries, which is something that any search engine ought to be able to do. In addition, it will not pattern match on anything near your spelling. If I want to launch FileMaker Pro, and I type FMP into the Spotlight bar, it will go looking for that acronym, instead of using the fuzzy logic that LaunchBar and QuickSilver have implemented to create keystrokes for applications. Of course, that Spotlight is an application launcher at all seems to be a mere throwaway gesture. Exclusionary queries, such as "get me all the documents that have the word 'Consulting' in them, but not the ones marked 'Special Projects'" don't work in Spotlight at all. Well, at least they don't work in a coherent and straight forward fashion. If you want to start doing real exclusionary queries, you have to learn the proper syntax which looks a bit like: `kMDItemAuthors == "Steve"wc && kMDItemContentType == "audio"wc` Your average user isn't going to want to set up queries like that just to move some documents around. Spotlight is not quite there yet, but the first attempt is pretty solid.

No, it's not perfect, and there are bugs here and there (most of them now squashed by 10.4.1) but Tiger is, overall, a damn fine OS, and something Apple ought to be proud of. Sure, the multi-connection video iChats only work if you've got a recent G5, and the changes to iSync aren't anything to write home about, but there's a lot out there to be enjoyed and explored. Do yourself a favor and upgrade. You'll thank Apple later.

Outlining and Styles

A long-time friend queried me recently about *ATPO* columns. Why, she wanted to know, with all my exposure to advanced user interface ideas (because of my career) and knowledge of experiments do I focus on something as mundane as outliners? Why not something snazzier and more hip?

It is exactly because outlining appears so ordinary; I believe outlining packs the most complexity of relationships in the most accessible of user interface notions. It is an ideal graphical superposition on (usually) the narrative text-based document model.

Although most uses of outlining today aren't revolutionizing the world, I think there are some revolutionary ideas just around the corner, and an outlining user interface will make them more realizable.

The use of text styles is another accessible idea—perhaps even more familiar—that can be used with outlining. This month we delve into the matter of styles and what they can do for us in the outlining world. "What's that?" I hear you thinking, because the last *ATPO* was the first in a series of promised columns on XML and workflows.

As it happens, that column generated the least interest of any *ATPO*, measured by direct mail to me. Worse, I got not a single message from an outline developer, something which is also a unique occurrence. I deduce that we may need to work up to XML marking and transfer standards over time, and I can think of no better way than to look at the possibility of styles. Perhaps we may even have to wait a bit until some of those really killer ideas appear and the world clamors for more than OPML. Meanwhile, I have reserved www.outliners.org for the time when we get a critical mass for a meaningful outliner exchange standard project.

Styles

So what about styles makes them worth a column?

Working with information is a matter of tags and relationships—and working with information is what outline use is all about.

Using a computer is a matter of leveraging user interface power that is unavailable in the non-computer world. Personal computers aren't about computation so much, rather—at least in the Web, e-mail, outlining, writing, text publishing, and project management worlds—all that computation is applied not to content as much as to supporting the user interface to help you create that content.

Outlining is of interest because it is—these days—a set of extremely accessible and flexible user interface conventions that have a whole lot of power. It just makes sense to have outlining as a foundation upon which other techniques (like hypertext and attribute tagging) are applied. Outlines are what in the old paradigm were "pages."

Styles in the old page system—the printed page—were limited by the technology available. And that technology was pretty limited if you think about it. Bold meant loud (usually), but was unavailable to typewriter users. Underlined meant a title of some kind. Quotation marks (more of a style denoter than punctuation) meant the actual words someone said. Annotations could be in parentheses, footnotes, endnotes, and sometimes sidenotes. Italics were used to denote another narrative or source, and bullets were used for lists.

Oh, and in 1901, the special style of using red ink to denote Jesus' words was introduced to Bible readers. That was it for styles, and still is in the Western paper world. Then along came the Mac. All of a sudden, a document could easily have any number of fonts. Styles were restricted to italic, bold, and the combination, plus underlining, but that alone was enough to distinguish the Mac from the typewriter.

But a very limiting notion was born: WYSIWYG, namely that the best way to work on screen was to construct a perfect image of the page you would presumably print. All the limits of the old style paradigm therefore applied to the screen; that is until the Web made links popular. So one more style was added to the vocabulary, the blue underlined link. It meant: "Click here and we'll take you somewhere else." The destination of the link was up you to infer from the context.

And Microsoft gave us the wiggly line under text to denote potential spelling or grammar errors. The important thing about this style is that it is screen-based and doesn't print.

But why should we be restricted by the old rules of paper for "documents" that are born and live on our screens? Why should we even be limited by the similar straightjacket of Web pages, at least as we normally think of them?

Styles for Simple Ease of Reading

Readers of *ATPO* may have noticed that many of the screenshots use "shadowed text," introduced system-wide in Panther. You may also have noticed that I use no pure blacks, but very near-blacks. And I have a serious campaign against

using any of the ordinary fonts. That's because I want the shortest distance between the ideas just on the other side of that plastic or glass and the inner reaches of my mind.

Fonts matter. Yes, readability is an obvious concern but it goes far deeper than that. Fonts have magical, not-fully-understood power to convey meaning apart from the words they carry. And surely different fonts assist in carrying different meanings.

Here's the thing: I have good ideas about how I want my published artifacts to look. But while they are in my sandbox, on my screen, I have a collection of quite different fonts I use for different types of notes, even in the same outline. It not only helps tag them but also helps convey the nature of each type of information more perfectly.

I literally spent several days going through my collection of 41,000 fonts last month because of Tiger, a new monitor, and the beginning of an important new project. Yes, it means that much to me in improved productivity, as much as the outlining tools themselves. My final choices this time were different than last. They are informed by some research done for fighter pilot cockpit displays, but mostly decided by intuition.

I believe you should consider an outliner (or outliner/utility combination) that gives you:

- named styles that can automatically convey both structural features (like header levels) and arbitrary text blocks in notes and headers
- similarly named styles that you can readily superimpose on any element
- the full power of Quartz rendering in these styles

You may not think you need this, but you'll want the ability to grow into them. Not all the *ATPO* power outliners give you this, and even fewer of the smaller ones do.

Styles for Narrative Emphasis

ALL CAPS is shouting, and bold or *italics* usually means emphasis. But your speech is much richer than this, and surely your thoughts are. What if I want a sarcastic, or funny, or questioning style?

Most things are narratives, at least most things in the outliner world, even lists. Storytelling is about nuance, and a powerful way to encode and convey nuance is through styles. I have my own personal vocabulary of such styles that don't come into play until the project gets close to being exposed to others. They finally get skimmed off when publishing because no one wants to learn a private system of writing.

But I have one, and you might benefit from one as well, depending on what you do and how good you want to be at it.

Styles for Linking, Annotation, Metadata, and Tagging

Here's where things get more unassailably useful.

Suppose you had a style that marked text as: "I think this is right but I'd better check it because if I'm wrong really bad things could happen." Or one that said: "This probably needs rework." Or one that said: "When I share this document, I don't yet want to share this bit."

If you use many of our *ATPO* power outliners, you can tag a section (or a cell) with these attributes, and others. Some power outliners will even collect these cells for you.

But what if you want to tag a part of a section? What if you want to see the broken bit in the context of the whole thing, one of the unique advantages of outlines? You'll want the text tagged, and you'll want that tag to be presented in a visible way.

Or better, suppose you use one of the power outliners that lets you link parts of your outline to other parts. You don't want to be limited to stupid HTML-like links, do you? You might have some links that say: "This link is to my notes that support this notion," or "Here is something that refutes what this text says and is worth considering," or "This clue is revisited at these later points in the mystery." This is not something you can do with attributes; the link has to take you somewhere. (That somewhere may be a dynamic list of shared attributes.)

I demand this. Links, styles, and outline hierarchies are the three ways we have to weave text. No outliner does this as well as I require, and each forces compromises on workarounds. You may find, as I do, that marking typed links in text with styles is a preferred strategy.

Styles For Derived Results

So, you might use styles to enhance general readability. You might use them to denote types of links and associated progress annotations or changes. Or you might use them to help convey the tone of a whole section or any emphasized parts far more effectively than a printed page might. All this would be in addition to any other tools, like mindmapping and such.

(Tinderbox uses the color of a note icon to denote age: it "yellows" as it gets older. That's a style.)

Or you might do them all. Here's yet another task. This is not such a big deal now, but we are entering a phase of development, which will see big improvements in consolidation strategies soon.

iLiner[1] already uses the oft-overlooked "summarize" service that OS X supports. In "snipping" information, you can have the service automatically condense it for you. DEVONthink[2] seems to be situated to do this by a proprietary and potentially better means derived from your intent in acquiring the information. But that's speculation on my part.

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1. http://www.mercury-soft.com/Top/newiLiner.html
2. http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonthink/overview.php

The point is that we may soon see "derived" text that isn't quite what the source created. It has been transformed by your services. The manner and degree of that transformation may usefully be conveyed, yes, by styles.

And incidentally, the eye is a marvelous machine that can discriminate among extremely subtle changes. We need not be talking about a Crayola explosion, especially if your eye is attuned.

Shall We Pursue This?

I'm not at all interested in discussing my own choices of tools and styles. But if there is interest in this, we'll spend the next *ATPO* reviewing which outliners support styles and how (and in the context of their linking and nesting tools). We may talk a bit about font design. And we may eventually get to tagging. After all, if you mark something with style (as well as other attribute tools), that tells you something about what you need in your XML exchange standard.

The ATPO Tracker

Spotlight

Most of the Mac news recently has concerned Tiger, and most of the buzz around Tiger is centered on Spotlight, the new Tiger metadata strategy. Most of the *ATPO* power outliners have announced the ability to reveal information to this service. What we've seen so far on all corners is pretty mundane, but I predict that this will be very big indeed.

My anticipation isn't based on what's advertised by Apple, that Spotlight will make it so easy to locate files you won't have to rely on order in storing then anymore. Apple presents a future of "smart folders" that collect aliases of files and URLs based on saved "search" attributes. That iTunes interface idea of smart playlists just seems to be taking over the world, doesn't it?

I expect that someone will create an outlining interface for Spotlight results combined with applied structure and actions. (Note that Spotlight is exclusively text-based; you cannot yet specify a search of images that says "find all the pictures that look like my seventh-grade teacher, Miss Dickerson.")

[Tinderbox](1) has long had the capability now supported by Spotlight, but limited to notes within the current Tinderbox file. It could find based on contents and metadata, make an alias (Tinderbox calls these "clones"), and change key attributes based on the results. Tinderbox's basic capability is stronger than Spotlight's except Spotlight can potentially touch everything reachable on the network and in the result trigger an AppleScript (and thereby any type of script or program).

But both Tinderbox's agents and Spotlight's smart folders are flat collection containers. That's boring and a heavy limitation. Some outline-savvy developer will catch on soon and give us Spotlight results in an outliner, perhaps something like [DEVONthink](2) and its relationship to [DEVONagent](3), but with more capability to automatically build hierarchies.

Circus Ponies NoteBook

Last *ATPO*, we noted that Circus Ponies NoteBook had been updated to version 2. Now, both AquaMinds [NoteTaker](4) and Circus Ponies have versions later than those discussed in the dedicated *ATPO* [column](5) of a year ago. These have evolved into two distinct products that resemble each other very little.

There are quite a few things new with NoteBook, a list which you can review on the site. However, there are only two that fundamentally matter to outlining. You may recall that in *ATPO*'s [list of outliner capabilities](6), NoteBook was the only outliner that supports what we called multi-levels. That's where you can have outlines, and outlines of those outlines.

In the NoteBook world, each page is an outline. These can be collected into sections and subsections as deep as you wish, and the index of those sections appears as a "contents" outline, for the whole notebook and subsets of the contents on a "divider" page between sections. Both the contents outline of pages and the outlines in pages behave and appear similarly. The former is hotlinked to the latter of course.

NoteBook uses the metaphor of a "notebook" with spiral binding, cover, tabs, and turning pages. Whatever the benefits, it has one huge disadvantage: you can have hundreds of pages of outlines and contents, but you can never see more than one at a time. Anyone who works with outlines appreciates the power of being able to rearrange things among different outlines, dragging and dropping promiscuously. We couldn't do this in NoteBook 1.x, but there was a promising feature: Control-clicking on the tab of a contents page gave a pop-up of the contents of that section. The pop-up mirrored that page in both structure and appearance and was a fast way to navigate. We thought it logical to use this as way to "springload" a page as a drag target. It was handy and fit the notebook metaphor well.

Version 2 adds two more navigation aids. A "Contents Card" is a drawer that slides out on the left and displays the structure of the main contents page. Clicking on a page or section on that card takes you there and saves the trip to the actual contents page. There's also a "path" in the new toolbar that optionally displays at the bottom of the notebook. Control-clicking on a node in the path gives you a pop-up hierarchical menu of the contents.

2. http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonthink/overview.php
3. http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonagent/overview.php
4. http://www.aquaminds.com/index.jsp
5. http://www.atpm.com/10.05/atpo.shtml
6. http://www.atpm.com/9.10/atpo.shtml

1. http://www.eastgate.com/Tinderbox/

All this is very cool. Now we have the same outline-of-outlines navigation four ways: the contents page, which is at the front of the book; the contents card, which pops out on the left; the pop-up outline on the right by Control-clicking a tab; and the contextual hierarchical menu on the bottom. Hooray for outline-of-outline navigation! The screenshot is a composite, showing all four navigation outlines at the same time.
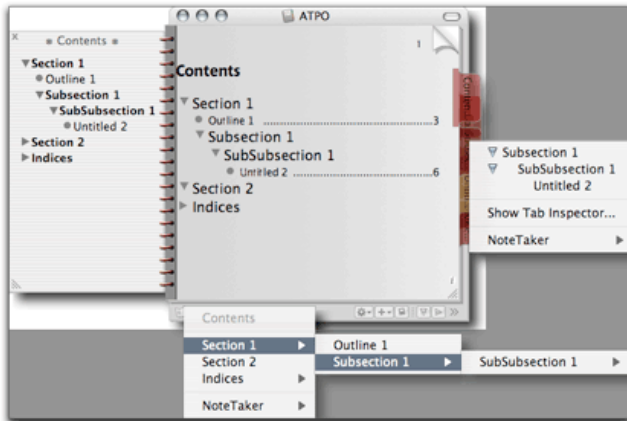
NoteBook Navigation

The bad news is that these four have four different outliner conventions: they look and behave differently. Only the contents page can be edited. None of these four cool things can be used as a springloaded trigger for dragging among pages; in other words, NoteBook can get you there fast, you just cannot carry anything with you.

We are still limited to cut and paste; dragging between pages of different notebooks (which *is* nice and a tolerable workaround, since you can drag a completed page or page bundle back); and dragging a structure to a page's tab and dropping it on the tab (or dropping on a header in the contents card)—the structure will appear at the bottom of that page.

(Alternatively, you can create a clipping service for a page if you know it will be a frequent destination, but hierarchy by this route is not preserved.)

The other new thing in NoteBook is links, which was a major outlining gap (together with clones) in version 1.x. NoteBook now allows links from cells (but not text blocks) to pages and cells. The link is denoted by a badge next to the cell, which is consistent with NoteBook's "sticker" strategy of graphically showing attributes. I like the implementation, which eschews dialogs. It isn't as cool as Tinderbox's one dragging motion, where you just drag the point of an arrow from one outline element to another; but Tinderbox has the advantage that you can actually have many copies of the outline open so you can actually see the origin and target at the same time.

NoteBook is stuck with that darn stack of outlines. And since it doesn't have a good drag strategy, you cannot drag your link pointer in one motion. Here's what you do: enter "link mode" by pressing Control-Option (or by a menu to which you could easily attach a shortcut) and start drawing your arrow from your cell. Then you leave link mode and navigate however you wish to the cell or page that's the target, enter link mode again, and complete your arrow. It is much like cutting and pasting.

The screenshot shows a small page with a few link badges, to and from.
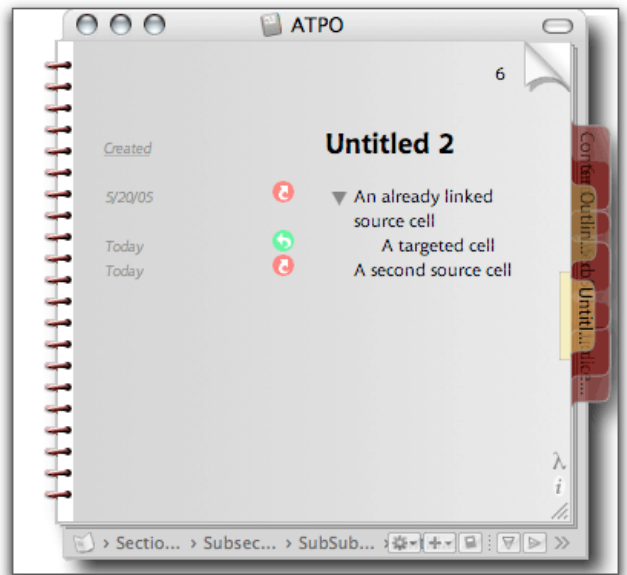
NoteBook Linking

Links can be characterized in a rudimentary way: you can mark them with one of seven marker colors. This is only a small step toward rich hypermedia, but it is more than any of the other power outliners support (other than Tinderbox). NoteBook uses this type attribute in its SuperFind: you can collect all sources or targets of any "color" link. It is a potentially powerful notion, the ability to cluster cells that have types of links in or out.

SuperFind is NoteBook's implementation of something like smart folders; the criteria you set are collected on a page. They are not quite clones, but links to the found cells.

As with all the *ATPO* power outliners, NoteBook is worth using. But I was hoping for more utilization of the outlining of outlines capability. Here's an example: suppose I had a notebook of ideas for books. Some ideas might occur in several books, with each potential book being outlined on one page. At some point, one of these outlines will be selected by me to become a real book project. At that point, I'll want every cell marked "section" to become a page in a new notebook. I'd be "promoting" an outline to a meta-outline.

Not this time.

AquaEmacs[1]

Previous columns have from time to time mentioned the open-source Emacs editor. Emacs is a very big deal: a milestone in the open-source movement and at one time (before the graphical user interface) the preferred environment for hackers. It still is going strong but is not much loved by the Mac community for a few good reasons. Most of these are related to the fact that the Emacs user interface is profoundly un-Mac-like. Things that are incredibly easy for Mac users like copying and dragging and generally mousing around require complex keyboard commands in Emacs.

Simple things like menus, windows, and preferences are handled differently. There's a clear and defensible logic in Emacs, but it is not one in any way similar to the Mac experience. The program's leaders haven't been interested in supporting Emacs on OS X, nor in exploring adaptations to make it more Mac-like.

But a community of volunteers has taken up the challenge, and you can now get a version of this free powerhouse that doesn't look alien and work unintuitively. We mention it here

because it has a simple outliner built-in, as we mentioned in the very first[2] *ATPO*. Just type Esc, then "x," then "outline-mode" (without the quotes), and then <return>.

Emacs Outliner
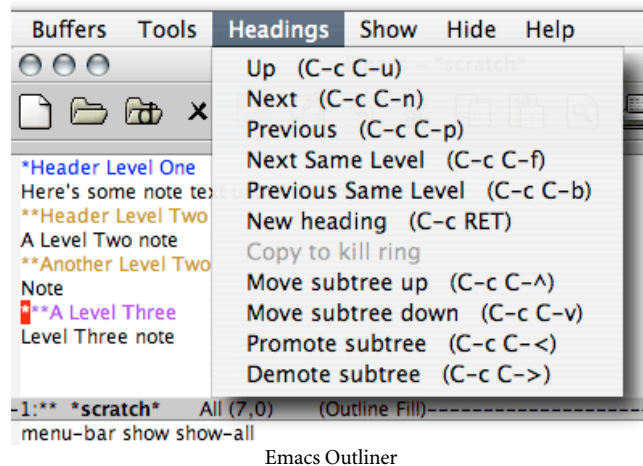
The outliner doesn't have graphical disclosure triangles, nor mouse grabbing and dragging of sections. But if you can tolerate working with keyboard or menus, you'll find it has more power in some ways than any of the *ATPO* power outliners. And it is free. The screenshot shows one of the three outlining menus, with the other two to the right.

You can find all sorts of useful features for writing and even a built-in psychiatrist.

No matter what the outcome of your evaluation, please thank the contributors. These folks do this for us for free and with other open-source developers raise the bar for everyone.

There is a huge amount of online documentation on Emacs. The best starting place is the Emacs home page[3].

• • •

ATPO will probably not appear every month in the future, as I am in the midst of a rather complex project that uses several of the applications *ATPO* discusses. As you can imagine, these take a lot of effort, but as long as there is interest, I'll keep producing them.

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1. http://www.wordtech-software.com/aquamacs.html

2. http://www.atpm.com/9.09/atpo.shtml
3. http://www.gnu.org/software/emacs/emacs.html

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4. http://www.sirius-beta.com/ALICE/

Part III, Appearance Themes

One of the big gripes regarding the user interface in Mac OS X is that with each OS release, Aqua has become inconsistent and too varied in its appearance. Panther gave us the much debated and despised brushed metal Finder; Tiger has adopted yet another variation of Aqua with a plasticized, unified toolbar in the System Preferences and Mail 2.0.

So what can users do to overcome these UI distractions? We can give Aqua a makeover using third-party appearance themes. The Macintosh theme community is blessed with a number of dedicated and outstanding artist/developers whose works allow us to change our user interface with the click of button!
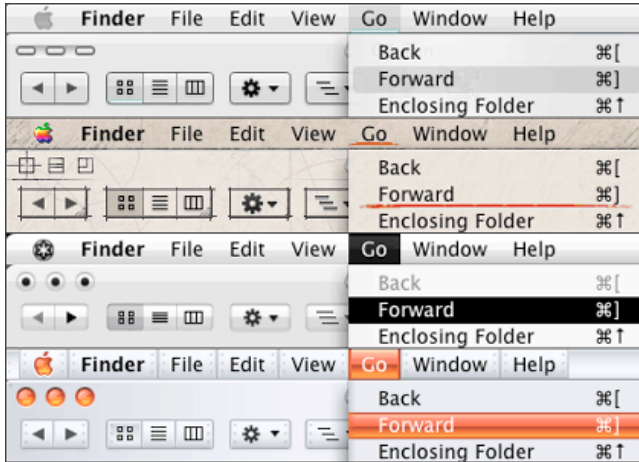
A nice selection of Themes: Siro 2.0, mes20050506, KaminoV2, Aluminum Alloy 1.7

Apple first introduced appearance themes in Mac OS 8.5, but never supported their use. The final candidate shipped with Apple Platinum; the Apple developed themes Hi-Tech, Gizmo, and Drawing Board were withheld from the general public. Lucky for us, creative third-party developers stepped up to the plate and gave us a variety of themes to toy with.

DSG Theme

As we stepped into Mac OS X, third-party developers were putting their modification skills to work as early as the public beta release, and they've been going strong ever since.

Switching out theme files early on required one to manually backup and copy the Extras.rsrc and Finder.rsrc, a simple task (if one knows where to look) and still my personal favorite method of test driving themes, even though it's been a long time since there's been an opportunity to do so. The easiest way to find the path for the Extras.rsrc and Finder.rsrc is to launch the Terminal and paste in the following command.

```
locate Extras.rsrc
```

You should see the following result, or one quite similar:

```
/System/Library/Frameworks/Carbon.framework/
Versions/A/Frameworks/    HIToolbox.framework/
Versions/A/Resources/Extras.rsrc
```

Copy and paste the results (without "Extras.rsrc" on the end) into the dialog box of the "Go to Folder…" command in the Go menu. The directory is owned by the system so you can't make any modifications to it without changing permissions.

Our recommendation is to just take a look around the folder, and don't mess around with the files unless you've backed them up and know what to do if something goes wrong.
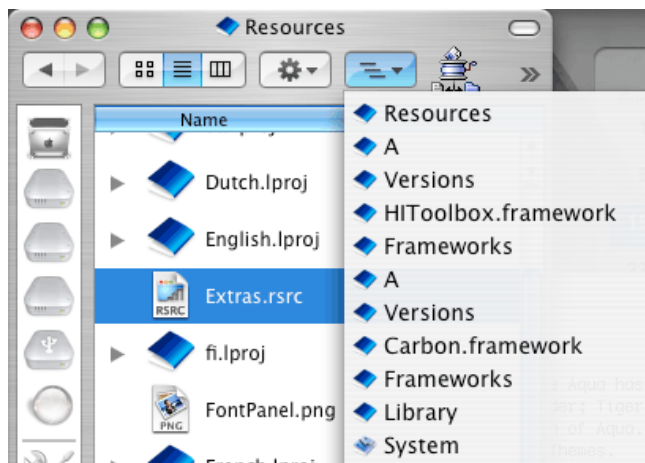

Locate the Extras.rsrc

Later on we were able to use third party applications that did the work of switching out system resources for us. Those programs did a nice job of making the switch, but they were also somewhat dangerous to use. Switching out system resources is an inherently risky task; the average user may not be aware of the pitfalls, such as using a theme file for an older OS release on a newer version—a recipe for disaster if there ever was one.

2003 ushered in the modern era of appearance themes when <u>Unsanity</u>[1] released <u>ShapeShifter</u>[2], a preference pane that applies themes by directing Mac OS X to load and overlay the graphics in theme files (guiKits) on top of the system resources. This revolutionary idea brought appearance themes to the masses and is by far the safest method to date for changing the Mac OS X user interface.

ShapeShifter lets you apply appearance themes, desktop pictures, and system icons as separate entities, so you can pick and choose what to use from any installed guiKit. And, if you've downloaded and purchased <u>Mighty Mouse</u>[3], you can also change the system cursors from within ShapeShifter!
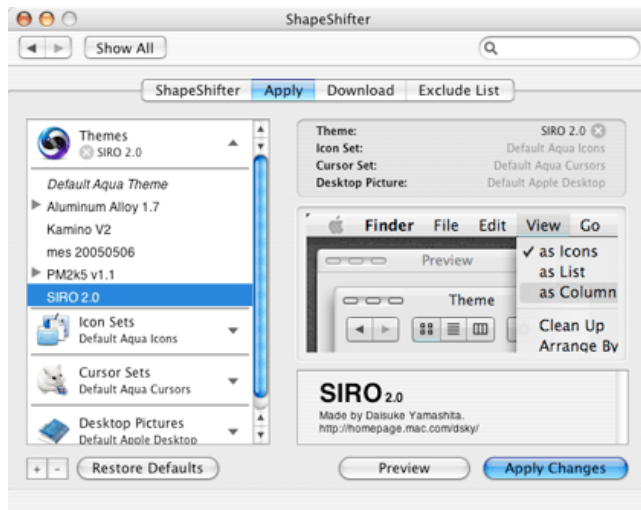
ShapeShifter

Where can you find appearance themes for Mac OS X and earlier? Stop by the ResExcellence <u>theme archive</u>[4] to get started—there are plenty of links to third-party theme developers that we encourage you to explore and enjoy! If you'd like to try your hand at creating themes, download a copy of <u>ThemePark</u>[5] by Jason Harris at <u>Geekspiff</u>[6].

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1. http://unsanity.com
2. http://unsanity.com/haxies/shapeshifter/

3. http://unsanity.com/haxies/mightymouse
4. http://www.resexcellence.com/themes/
5. http://www.geekspiff.com/software/themepark/
6. http://www.geekspiff.com

Widescreen in iDVD 5? Almost, Not Quite

The Setup

A big feature of iMovie 5 and iDVD 5 is the ability to work with and prepare 16:9 widescreen content. All's well until you actually burn your finished iDVD project. Pop the completed DVD into your player, and your pretty 16:9 picture suddenly has everyone looking like stick people, having stretched it (or squeezed it, depending on your point of view) to 4:3.

Did no one on Apple's iDVD development team take the time to actually *burn* a DVD from the beta versions of iDVD 5? The widescreen preview works just fine when you check your finished project within iDVD. The problem only happens when you either burn a project or save it to an image.

The Problem

The reason this bug is present is because iDVD incorrectly sets a single binary value to 1 instead of 0 in the .IFO and .BUP files that correspond to widescreen .VOB titles. If this value is set to 1, it instructs a DVD player to prohibit shifting to widescreen mode, even though another binary value that specifies the 16:9 format instead of 4:3 is properly set.

The Solution

The simple translation of how to fix it is to open the .IFO and .BUP files, change the value (you do it in hexadecimal[1], which means it changes from 4F to 4E), save, then burn to DVD.

The reality is, it's a bit trickier because you have to first copy iDVD's disk image to your hard drive, change the read-only permissions on both the files and the VIDEO_TS folder to permit writing, save the changes, then run the whole folder through DVD Imager[2] which saves a *new* disk image to burn that will be recognizable by DVD players.

The Elaboration

David C. Althoff Jr.[3]—someone who knows a lot more about this kind of stuff than I do—wrote a complete storyline on his examination of the issue. If you want to get straight to the instructions, they're at the very bottom of the page, but this "cookbook" is missing the part about changing the 4F to 4E that I described (and is mentioned up higher on Althoff's page). Althoff also doesn't specifically mention anywhere on the page that you'll need to change the permissions on the files and the enclosing folder before you can save your edited files. He only alludes to it.

In addition, the first step involving Anamorphiciser[4] can be skipped if your movies originated in iMovie 5. This step is only needed if you're taking 16:9 clips directly from a raw file into iDVD 5.

The Wait

So that you'll know how much time you'll be facing, I've just completed burning a DVD with a bit less than 90 minutes of widescreen content. My computer has been chomping on the various rendering, copying, importing, etc. tasks for nearly 15 hours. Perhaps just under an hour of this time could have been saved if I hadn't needed to re-import part of the video back into iMovie to correct my own goof, but the time also includes the conversion of two DivX AVI files to DV format, which then had to go through conversion once again as iMovie turned those DV files into something it could chew on.

But all this doesn't mean I've been busy for 15 hours to get the DVD made. The majority of it was simply unattended processing while I caught up on some movies and TV shows, paid some bills, and did a load of laundry. My actual babysitting time was no more than an hour—probably only about a half hour.

1. http://sourceforge.net/projects/hexedit/
2. http://lonestar.utsa.edu/llee/applescript/dvdimager.html
3. http://capital2.capital.edu/admin-staff/dalthoff/widescreen.html
4. http://homepage.mac.com/sith33/FileSharing34.html

So there you have it—whether you're converting HD DivX files ([ffmpegX](http://homepage.mac.com/major4/)[1] is a great tool for doing this task) or working with 16:9 content from your own DV camera—until Apple fixes this goof in iDVD 5, you now know what you'll be in for to get a true 16:9 picture to show up on your television.

1.   http://homepage.mac.com/major4/

How to Catch and Install a Tiger

You may or may not have noticed that I missed last month's column. With my original project idea in shambles and the deadline fast approaching I was completely at a loss for ideas.

While cruising several Mac forums in search of inspiration, I noticed that there was a lot of excitement about the anticipated release of Mac OS X 10.4 (a.k.a "Tiger"). The excitement was almost palpable. Sometimes, it almost reminded me of proud parents anticipating the birth of their next child.

Here and there, scattered among all the excitement, were questions about upgrading to Tiger. Most of the questions seem to revolve around how to upgrade as painlessly as possible. For what it's worth, here's my take on some things to consider if you haven't already upgraded.

Can I Unleash the Tiger?

By the time you read this Tiger will have been available for about a month. In fact, Apple has already released an update to Tiger[1]. The release of the update doesn't change the fundamental question, "Can I upgrade to Tiger?'.

Before you attempt to unleash the Tiger, make sure your current system meets the minimum hardware requirements[2]. In fact, it's probably a good idea to have a system with a little more power than the minimum requirements. There's a difference between running an OS and running it well. My recently departed Blue and White G3. for example, ran Jaguar but there were times I wished it had run a little better.

Suppose your system doesn't meet the minimum requirements. Is it worth making the necessary upgrades? Think about this carefully. Every hardware upgrade has a cost and a benefit. The cost is in time and money needed to locate, purchase, and install the necessary upgrades. The benefit is that the upgrade may not only allow you to run the new OS but also allow you to run programs that are incompatible with your current system configuration.

Should I Unleash the Tiger Now, or Later?

Now that you know whether you can upgrade to Tiger the question is whether to take the plunge now or later. Notice I didn't say the question was whether you should upgrade. Eventually updates become a necessity. When was the last time you saw new software for System 7?

Those of you who are happy with your current OS may decide to take a wait-and-see attitude. Those of you who are not happy with your system may choose to upgrade. In the end, I decided to upgrade now. Here are some steps to follow for a relatively painless upgrade. These steps assume that you have at least the minimum hardware.

Phase One involves examining the software that you already own for potential problems. Even with software as solid as OS X, each upgrade brings the possibility of problems. This can be especially true for utility software.

In the process of examining your software you may find it helpful to decide what software is mission critical. This is software you must have working immediately to keep your life running smoothly. I'll leave it to you to decide what software falls in that category

The second category is software that is not exactly mission critical but that is important to you. In other words, you can wait a few weeks or longer for updates to this software. You need to have Tiger compatibility, but it's not a top priority.

In the last group of software I included things that I could do without. In other words, if this software were never made Tiger-compatible it wouldn't bother you that much.

Gather the Necessary Information

Now that you have organized your software by degree of importance, where do you turn for compatibility information? How do you know whether your critical applications have been updated?

One of my favorite places to look is MacFixIt[3]. Each time there has been a major update to OS X the fine folks at this site have kept a kind of running tab of any compatibility issues reported by fellow Mac users. In addition to the initial report explaining a problem, new information is posted as it becomes available. There is one caveat. For some of the more useful content you must be a subscriber.

If all you want to know is whether your favorite application has been upgraded, check out VersionTracker. A recent search for Tiger compatibility resulted in a list of more than 500 titles that had been updated. Another excellent list of updated software[4] is at *Macintouch*.

The manufacturer's Web site is a good place to start. In fact, if you want to know their future upgrade plans sometimes this is the best place to go. Don't let the number of updates

1. http://www.apple.com/downloads/macosx/apple/macosxupdate1041.html
2. http://www.apple.com/macosx/upgrade/requirements.html
3. http://www.macfixit.com
4. http://www.macintouch.com/tigercompat.html

available give you the wrong impression about Tiger's stability. While some updates were necessary to fix compatibility issues, many seem to have been done to take advantage of Tiger's new features.

Phase Two involves taking the plunge. If you have gotten this far I hope you find the following hints helpful.

First of all, before you do anything else, back up your data. Most OS updates don't eat your data, but I have encountered situations where my own mistakes caused a loss of data. If you lose data it's not my fault.

If you have the extra drive space, consider creating a bootable copy of your existing OS on another drive or drive partition. This way you can keep the old OS around until you are certain everything is functioning well. Apple's Disk Utility can be used for this purpose by using the Restore option.

When you boot from the Tiger installation DVD, run Disk Utility and verify the drive that you are going to install Tiger onto. Don't go any further until you resolve any problems that are identified. If you are not going to erase the drive, be sure to verify permissions.

Before you run the installer, keep in mind that some users are finding that disconnecting any unnecessary devices is a good idea. This seems to be particularly true for external FireWire drives. This is not something new to Tiger. Other users have reported similar problems with previous updates.

This is also a good time to make sure that Apple programs such as Mail and iTunes are in their default locations. These programs often do not update properly if they have been moved.

I usually take the occasion of a major upgrade to do such things as completely erase the drive first or modify the partition scheme. This is usually not necessary, but it is a convenient time to perform such tasks. Before you do anything like that remember to back up your data.

The next step is to run the installer and decide the type of installation that you wish to perform. Depending upon the speed of your system, type of installation, and options you choose this may take some time, so be patient.

I had a backup of my Panther installation on another drive, so I chose to start from scratch and then migrate my home folder and applications using the Migration Assistant. The first time I ran the program, it hung. The second time everything went perfectly.

No matter which update type you choose, run Repair Permissions when you are finished. This seems to resolve a lot of issues and is not something that is new to Tiger.

Final Thought

Using the procedure that I have described, my upgrade to Tiger has been relatively painless. While I haven't tested all of my software yet, most of it works fine using the Migration Assistant. I did have to remove some software that shipped with a USB drive enclosure because the extensions it installs cause Tiger to hang on shutdown. I haven't even checked for an update because that software isn't very important to me.

I'm also downloading an update for Microsoft Office X that I had never installed. Under Tiger, the keyboard stopped working in Word even though it works in other Office programs.I haven't seen other reports of this exact problem so I think the update will fix it.
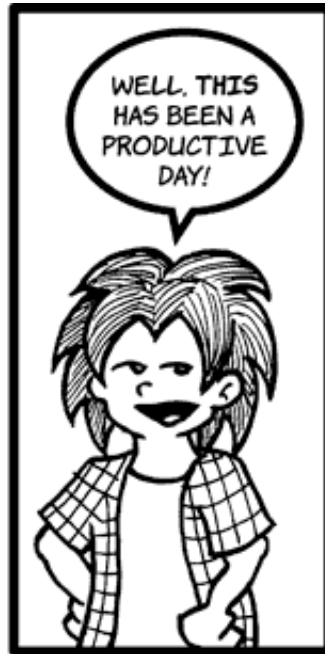
Until next time. The door to the lab is open. Enter if you must.
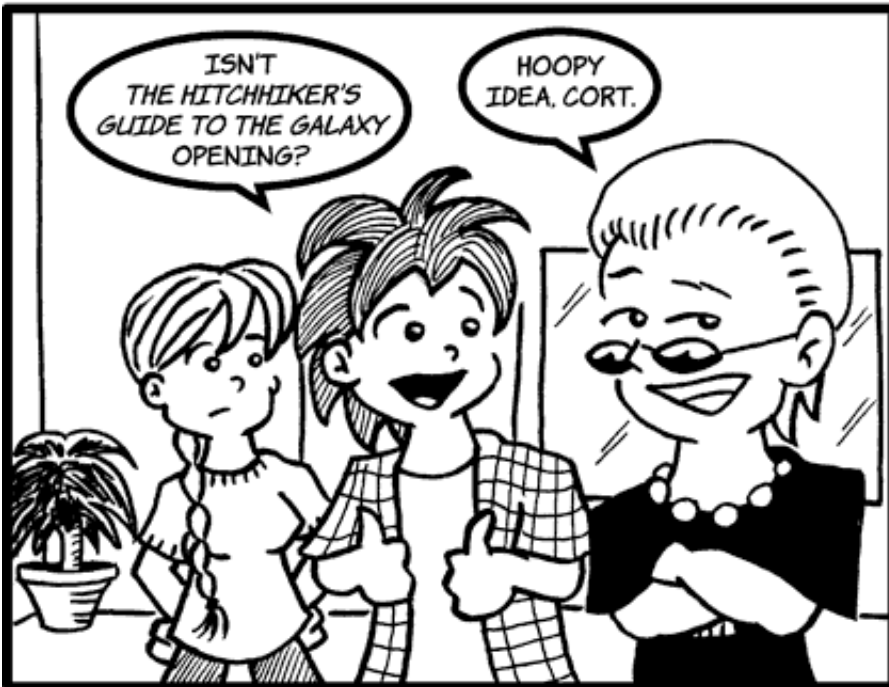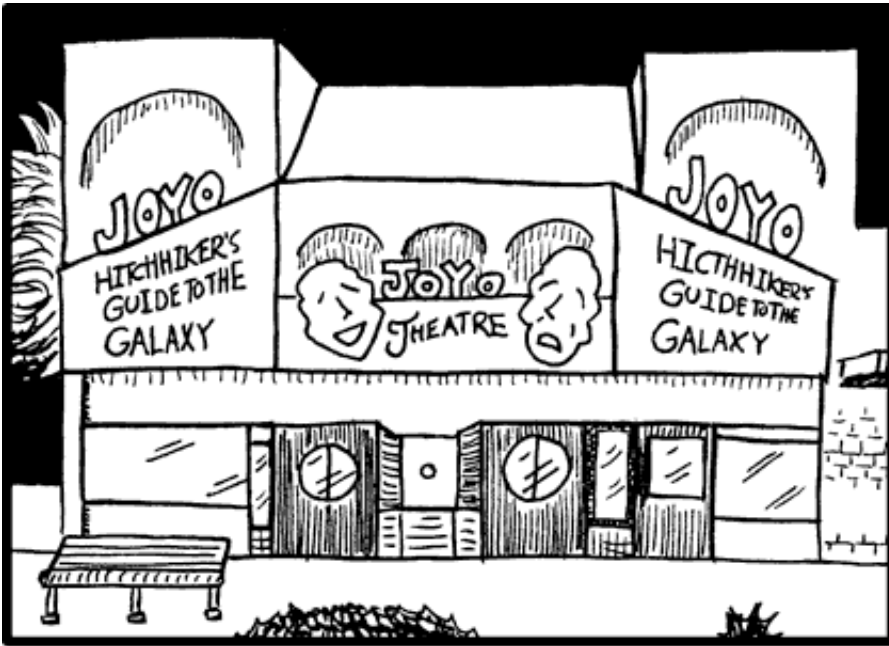
36

37

43

48

Extras: Desktop Pictures
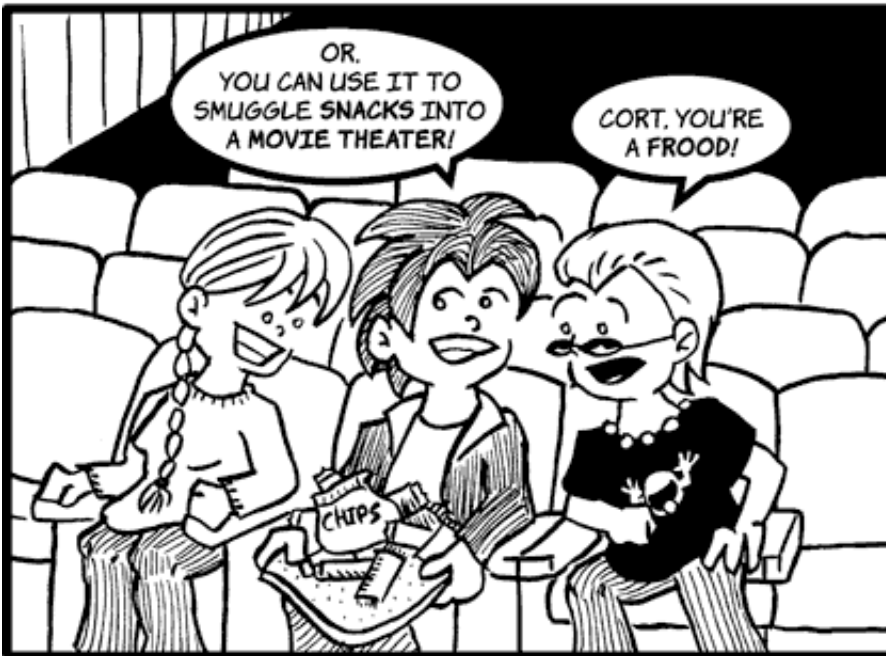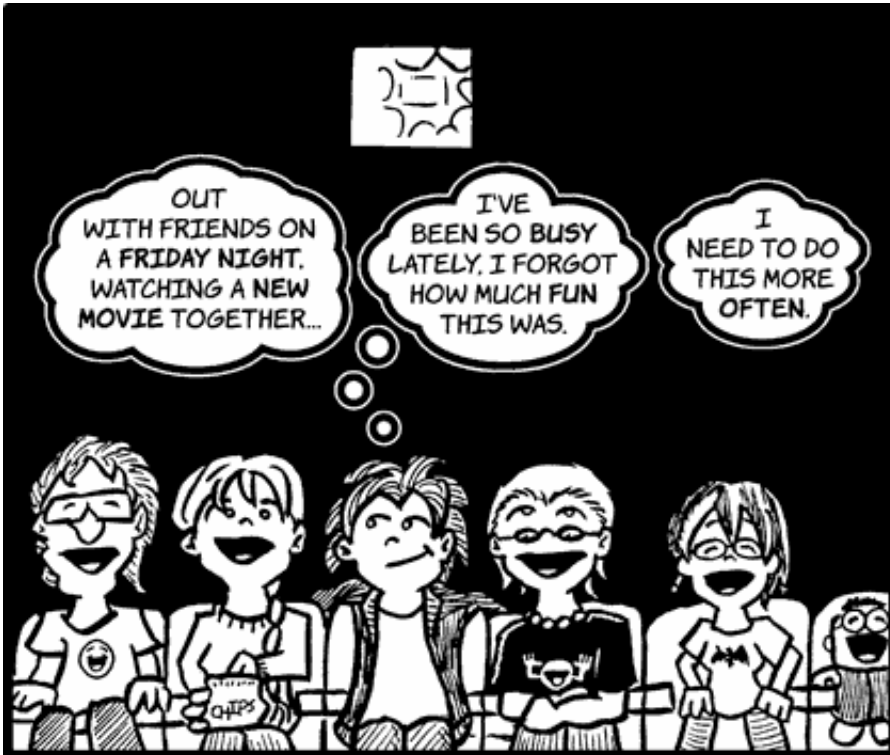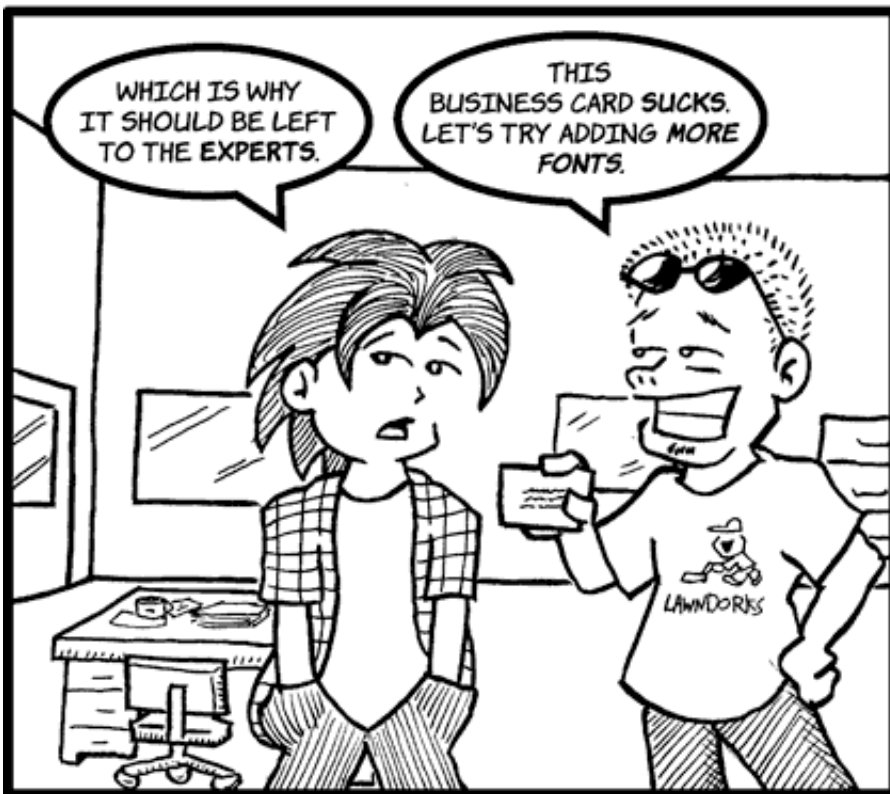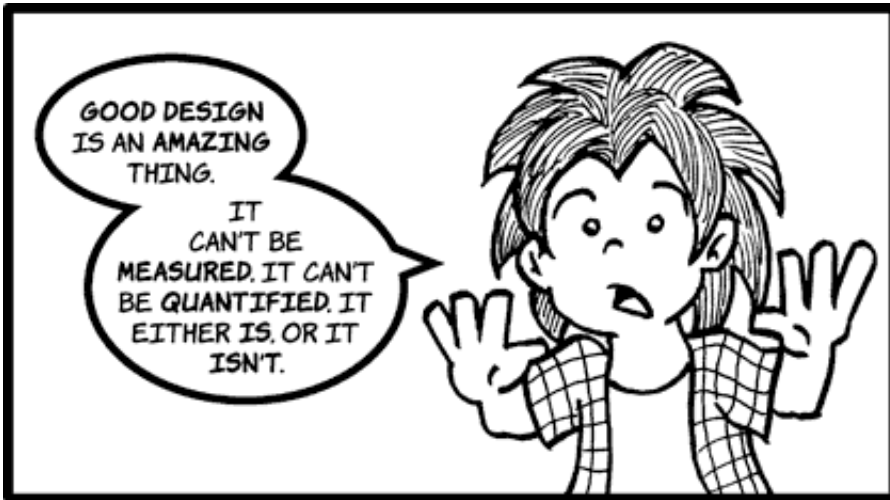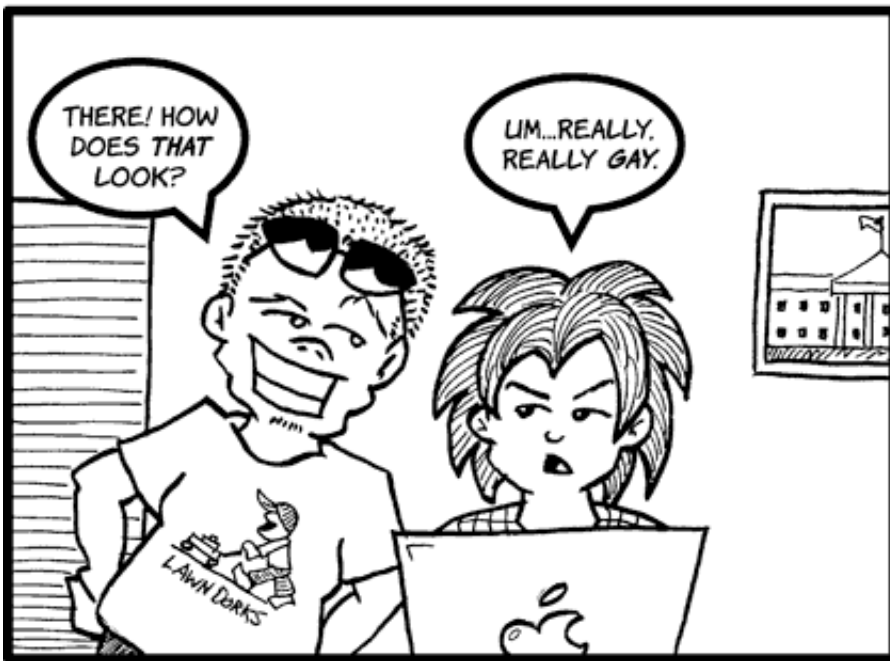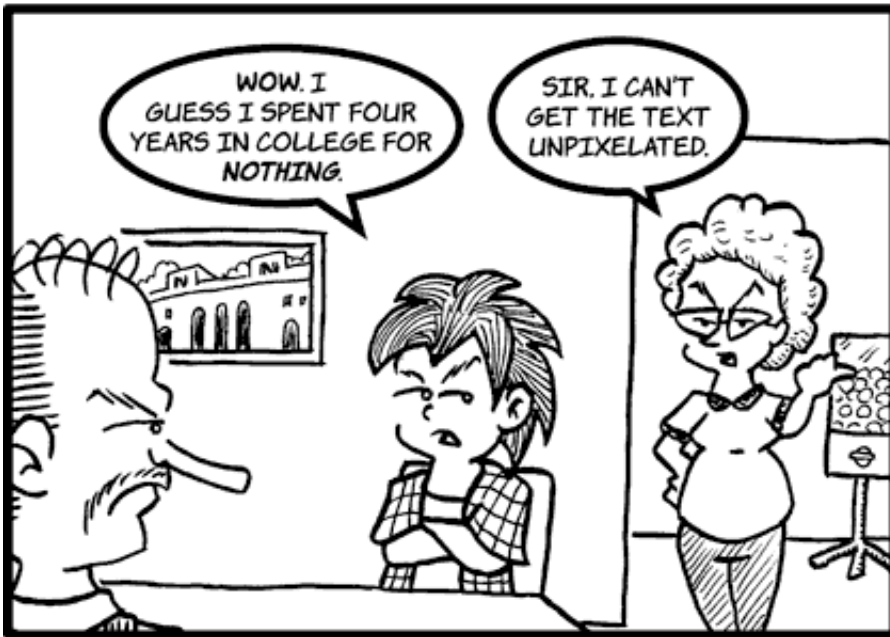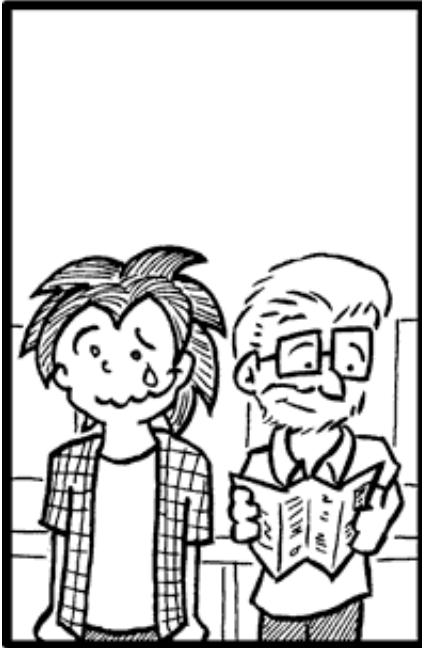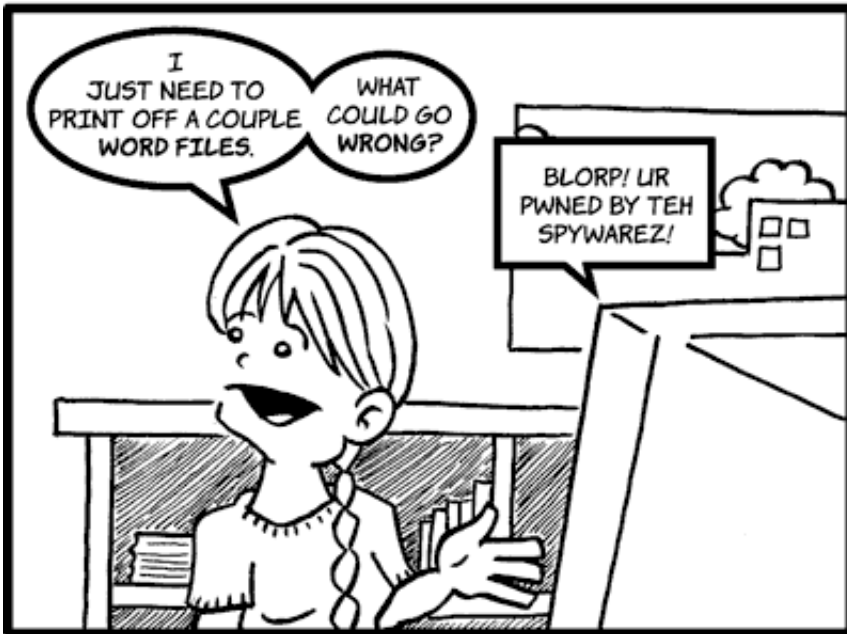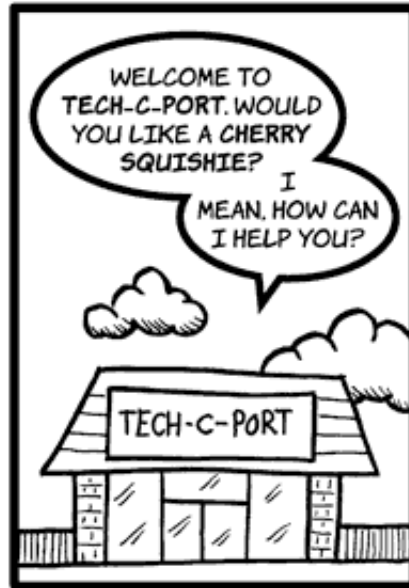
Moraine State Park

Moraine State Park[1]

This month's desktop pictures were taken in April at Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park[2] (Butler County, PA). The photographer is Dan Klein[3], a college student at Slippery Rock University[4]. The beauty of these photographs can be attributed to the wonderful weather and the sheer tranquility of nature.

A Sony CD Mavica CD300[5] was used to capture the photos and post-processing was done with Adobe Photoshop on an iBook G4.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[6].

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

iCab and Interarchy (formerly Anarchie) can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once. Use the "Web > Download Entire Site" command in the File menu, giving it the URL to the pictures page above. In iCab, use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path."

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x

Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu, click the Desktop & Screen Saver button, then choose the Desktop tab. In the left-side menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Select the Screen Saver tab which is also in the Desktop & Screen Saver System Preferences pane. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, click on the Pictures Folder in the list of screen savers. Otherwise, click Choose Folder to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu and click the Desktop button. With the popup menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.0.x

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

Mac OS 8.5–9.x

Go to the Appearance control panel. Click on the "Desktop" tab at the top of the window. Press the "Place Picture..." button in the bottom right corner, then select the desired image. By default, it will show you the images in the "Desktop Pictures" subfolder of your "Appearance" folder in the System Folder, however you can select images from anywhere on your hard disk.

After you select the desired image file and press "Choose," a preview will appear in the Appearance window. The "Position Automatically" selection is usually fine. You can play with the settings to see if you like the others better. You will see the result in the little preview screen.

Once you are satisfied with the selection, click on "Set Desktop" in the lower right corner of the window. That's it! Should you ever want to get rid of it, just go to the desktop settings again and press "Remove Picture."

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1. http://www.atpm.com/11.06/moraine/
2. http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/moraine.aspx
3. http://www.danklein.net
4. http://www.sru.edu
5. http://www.google.com/search?q=Sony+CD+Mavica+CD-300
6. http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

Go to the "Desktop Patterns" control panel. Click on "Desktop Pictures" in the list on the left of the window, and follow steps similar to the ones above.

Random Desktop Pictures

If you drag a folder of pictures onto the miniature desktop in the Appearance or Desktop Pictures control panel, your Mac will choose one from the folder at random when it starts up.
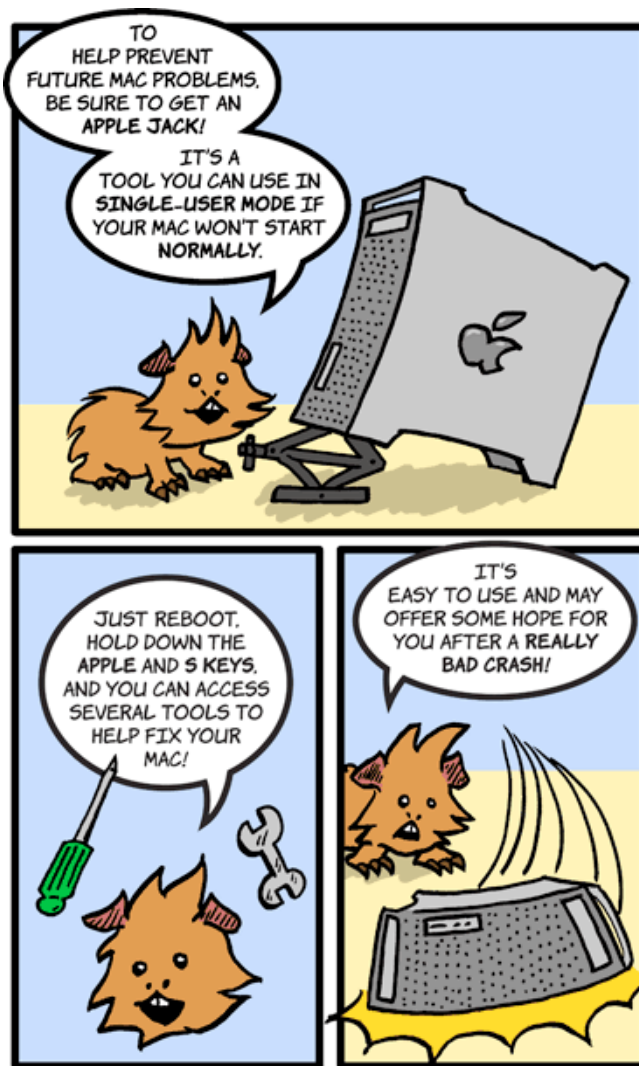
DeskPicture

An alternative to Mac OS's Appearance control panel is Pierce Software's DeskPicture, reviewed[1] in issue 5.10 and available for download[2].

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1. http://www.atpm.com/5.10/roundup.shtml
2. http://www.peircesw.com/DeskPicture.html

AppleJack[a]

a.   http://applejack.sourceforge.net

Review: AppleScript: The Missing Manual (book)

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Although I've been writing small AppleScripts for over 10 years, I've never taken the time to actually pick up a book on the subject. For the longest time, the language has been lauded (and criticized) for its easy-to-read English-like syntax. The ease of reading existing scripts and adapting the principles to my own needs kept me from realizing how little I actually knew about the world of AppleScript; the shortcomings of my knowledge finally dawned on me when I figured out what that "<Inheritance>" notation in program dictionaries meant. That's why I jumped at the chance to review *AppleScript: The Missing Manual*.
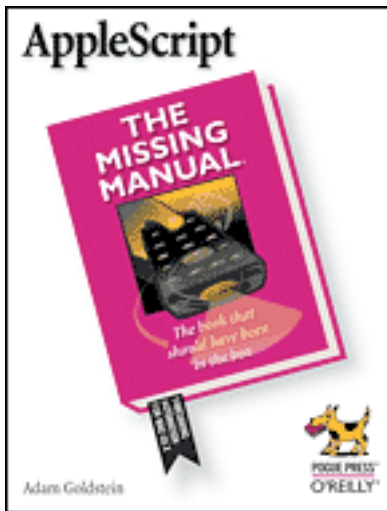
Adam Goldstein's entry into the world of AppleScript tomes is remarkably complete, given its publication date (February, 2005). Before even getting into the programming aspects of AppleScript, this Missing Manual provides you with certain prerequisites for a successful scripting experience. The Script menu is examined in some depth, as are the scripts that Apple includes in this menu.

You're also exposed to the Script Editor in some depth, which is good, since you'll be spending a decent amount of time in it while you're reading this book. At first glance, Script Editor seems like a fairly simple application, hardly worth a whole chapter. However, Goldstein manages to point out a few features of this application that I did not previously know about. Simply learning about the existence of Script Editor's Navigation Bar was almost enough to make me put the book down and declare victory. Then I realized I still had nearly 300 more pages to scour for even more information.

Scripting Basics

After explaining some of the mechanics of creating and using AppleScripts, *AppleScript: The Missing Manual* covers the basic components of scripting. Chapters four, five, and six deal with managing text, files, and lists, respectively, providing the some of the pieces needed to understand the more complicated scripts later in the book.

The chapter on text manipulation does a good job of showing the strengths of AppleScript in general and *AppleScript: The Missing Manual* in particular. It begins by covering some of the text features built into AppleScript—things like creating strings in code, storing strings in variables, combining strings, and displaying strings in dialog boxes. Although there's a fair amount you can do with this information, AppleScript allows you to use you text within other programs. As such, several pages are devoted to dealing with text in TextEdit, Apple's word processor that is included with every copy of OS X.

Even though the price is right for TextEdit, many people prefer using a more powerful alternative, like Microsoft Word. In recognition of this fact, this chapter also adapts some scripts for use with Word and discusses some of the differences between writing scripts for Word and TextEdit.

When I finished reading these chapters, I was a little disappointed because I hadn't read anything about records. Records are clusters of information, sort of like lists, except that the record entries are named (among other things, of course). My concerns were unfounded, as records were covered in a later chapter on databases.

Between explaining the concepts of lists and records, *AppleScript: The Missing Manual* discusses the scriptability of several popular applications. The applications discussed in

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these chapters cover a broad range of uses and prices. From free applications like iTunes and Mail to hundred dollar-plus powerhouses like Photoshop and FileMaker Pro, this book covers techniques and sample scripts for dealing with graphics, sounds, movies, and network applications.

Some of the scripts presented in these chapters simply replicate existing functionality in programs, while others expose functionality than normally would not be available in the application. For example, there is one script that simply applies a pre-existing Photoshop action to the active image and another script that lets you set a rating for the currently playing song in iTunes. Although these are simple tasks inside of their respective applications, these scripts definitely have value. The aforementioned Photoshop AppleScript is later used as a component of a more complex AppleScript that performs a series of image manipulations. The iTunes song rating script is an example of taking functionality from a program and accessing it from outside said program—using this AppleScript, you could modify your song ratings from the Script menu instead of bringing iTunes forward or activating iTunes's Dock menu.

An example of a script that exposes functionality not usually available within the application is an iPhoto AppleScript for making an album of all pictures with given dimensions. Ironically, the book cites this script as an example of something that could easily be done in iPhoto through the use of a Smart Album and encourages you to use this script as a starting point for other scripts. As far as I can tell, though, there's no way to create a Smart Album based on image dimensions.

This section also covers some more advanced AppleScript topics that you apply to the relevant programs. For instance, some of the Power User Clinics in these sections cover running JavaScript code in Safari via AppleScript and adding new functionality to Address Book through AppleScript plug-ins.

Advanced Topics

At the end of the chapters on basic scripting, you will be able to do many things with AppleScript. Over the years, though, the AppleScript environment has grown beyond these basics. The next section in the book covers many of the advancements

Two of the chapters deal with different ways you can use your AppleScripts. Goldstein covers folder actions from the enabling of folder monitoring through attaching your own scripts to folders. He also tackles the integration of AppleScript and Unix, both by running AppleScripts through either the command line or cron, and running Unix commands in the context of an AppleScript.

The other three chapters deal with ways to write AppleScripts. The plusses and minuses of GUI Scripting are discussed, as is the way you can control a program through its user interface elements. Debugging techniques are explained to help you figure out why your AppleScripts don't behave like you expect. Finally, you can learn about using AppleScript Studio to create more complex AppleScript-based programs using Xcode and Interface Builder, two of Apple's free developer tools.

Slightly Dated

The only real shortcoming I can find in *AppleScript: The Missing Manual* is that its information is already slightly dated. Since the book was published in February, it doesn't contain any of the AppleScript changes introduced in Tiger. In my mind, the most noticeable difference is Script Editor's new dictionary viewer; the new viewer offers far more options than the two-pane viewer shown in the book and used, I believe, in every previous version of AppleScript.

Had this book been published after the release of Tiger, I think that using AppleScript in conjunction with Automator actions would be a candidate for inclusion in the advanced topics section.

Even without this newer information, *AppleScript: The Missing Manual* does an excellent job of introducing the reader to the world of AppleScript while delving into a number of in-depth features. Whether you've never used AppleScript and want to start or you've been using AppleScript for some time and are ready to learn more, this is one Missing Manual you should add to your collection.

Review: iceKey

by Michael Tsai, mtsai@atpm.com

Readers of my recent reviews know that I like keyboards with mechanical keyswitches, but that few such keyboards are available to Mac users today. My USB keyboard of choice has long been the MicroConnectors "flavored" keyboard, but it's louder than I'd like, is designed to match Mac styling from the late 90s, and has been discontinued. The Tactile Pro[2] has good key action, but I found it annoyingly loud, and wasn't quite happy with its looks or the feel of its keys. The StudioBoard[3] types well, but I also found it loud, and I didn't like its non-standard key layout. Also, both the Tactile Pro and the StudioBoard cost $80 or more. A good keyboard is certainly worth that expense, but it does seem like a hefty premium over Apple's own standard keyboard, which costs just $29.

Several ATPM readers came to the rescue and suggested that I try Macally's iceKey. I had tried many of Macally's keyboards when I first got a USB Mac, and this had convinced me that Macally and I had totally different ideas about how a keyboard should feel. I'd been pretty much ignoring Macally's input devices ever since, so without this push I probably would not have tried the iceKey—and I would have missed out on a great keyboard.

The iceKey is a low-profile keyboard with laptop-style scissor-action keys. The default angle is nearly flat, and there are also risers that can slant the back up to the height of a normal keyboard. Since the front of the keyboard is lower than normal, this makes for what feels like a slightly greater than normal slant when the risers are in use. I found this uncomfortable, but then I've always preferred my keyboard to be flat; I think the iceKey's default incline is excellent.

I like the keyboard's understated flat-white styling, although I could do without the glowing green light that indicates that it's receiving power. Each side of the keyboard has a horizontal USB port, and a lengthy solid-white cable connects it to the Mac.

The top row of function keys are half-size, yet the keyboard as a whole is deeper than most other USB keyboards. It should easily fit on most desks, though, and it's much smaller than Apple's old extended keyboards.

The keys are arranged in a standard US layout. Unlike some other keyboards, the iceKey requires a driver[4] (which is still in beta, but which gave me no problems) in order to use the volume and Eject keys. As with Apple's newer keyboards, there is no power key, although you can restart, sleep, or shut down your Mac by holding down the Control key and pressing Eject.

The layout of the modifier keys on the right side of the main part of the keyboard is odd. The right Command and Control keys are narrower than the left, while the right

2. http://www.atpm.com/10.09/tactile.shtml
3. http://www.atpm.com/11.01/studioboard.shtml

1. http://www.macally.com/spec/usb/input_device/icekey.html

4. http://www.macally.com/techsupport/drivers.html

Option key is wider. In the corner between the right Control and Shift keys is an extra *blank* key that has no apparent function. These oddities didn't seem to affect my typing.

The iceKey does not use standard mechanical keyswitches like the Tactile Pro, nor does it use membranes like most other USB keyboards. Instead, it has mechanical scissor keys like on a laptop keyboard. This works surprisingly well.

The keys *are* mechanical, so the action is good. You can feel them click down, and they spring back up nicely. The travel is much shorter than with most non-laptop keyboards. This felt odd at first, but it really grew on me. Now it feels like I'm typing faster, and that my fingers are moving less. Because of the laptop-style mechanism, the keys are quiet, though not silent.

The similarity to a laptop keyboard may make it easier to switch back and forth between a desktop Mac and a portable, but this is not a laptop keyboard. There's no fn key. The keyboard doesn't bend and buckle as you type. Though the keys require less pressure than on the Tactile Pro and StudioBoard, they're comfortably stiffer than on a laptop. This, along with the more spacious layout, makes the iceKey less tiring to type on than a laptop because you don't have to worry about accidentally pressing keys. The keys also feel more springy and solid than on a laptop. They press down squarely even if you hit them off-center, and my finger never catches the corner of an adjacent key on the way up, as sometimes happens on my iBook.

Never having been a fan of laptop keyboards, I didn't expect to like the iceKey—yet I do. After several months of use, I now prefer it to my trusty MicroConnectors keyboard. I like the look, the price, the action, and the quiet. This is my new favorite keyboard.

Review: iLugger

by Frank H. Wu, frankhwu@starpower.net

Developer: LTA Projects[1]
Price: $119
Requirements: iMac G5 (17-inch or 20-inch)
Trial: None

"Do you always carry around a computer that big?" That is the question the iLugger case is likely to elicit. More accurately, that is what people ask once you pull the contents out of the iLugger case and it is apparent you are about to set up an iMac G5 on the table alongside their laptops. Introduced by a company that manufactures parachutes, the iLugger case is meant to make an iMac G5—either 17-inch or 20-inch—just barely portable.

I used the iLugger case to transport my iMac G5 to a coffee shop the other day, for instance. Although virtually everyone there was working away on a laptop, and more than a few PowerBooks were in sight, with all the patrons enjoying the free wireless hotspot, everyone else's screen was dwarfed by the iMac G5's all-in-one unit. When I powered up, I made the statement that I aspire to be an über- geek. It isn't clear whether gawkers were expressing ridicule, envy, or perhaps both.

The iLugger case does exactly as advertised. It allows a user to "lug" an iMac G5 easily enough that it can be used on a daily basis. It's addictive. To always have a full-size Mac makes it difficult to accept the rest of the line-up, however sleek its industrial design also might be.

For those who remember the Osborne and other early efforts to make computers that could be brought from office to home, or between meetings, the iLugger may seem like a throwback. While it undoubtedly will seem primitive once we realize sci-fi dreams of roll-up screens and laser-projected keyboards, for the time being it is a tremendous convenience.

The iLugger case is made of cordura nylon and constructed carefully. The manufacturer apparently builds airships (a.k.a. blimps or zeppelins) and advertising balloons. A leather version is being offered, too. It's a simple square case, which loads from the top and closes by zipper, with foam padding throughout (a more firm piece on the screen side), and two u-shaped flaps of nylon covered foam that protect the screen and into which the keyboard, mouse, and power cord can be fitted. It does not have any extraneous pockets. There is a shoulder strap that adjusts and can be detached. There also is a handle.

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1. http://www.ilugger.com

Once you learn which side is the front and which side is the back, it takes all of two seconds to pull the iLugger over the iMac. The front and back look similar, except for a small lip in the former that makes space for the foot of the base. So it requires attention to subtlety to use properly. The fit is appropriately snug for the 20-inch.

The iLugger does take some care to unload, though. There is a risk that a hasty effort will lead to a damaging drop of the iMac. The iLugger must be turned upside down, with the carrying strap tucked out of the way, and then the base should be resting squarely on the table before the iLugger is lifted off in a smooth motion.

There are minor flaws to the design. The strap is not padded sufficiently for the weight being carried, and, worse, the strap itself tends to become folded, increasing the pressure of a 25-pound weight. The interior lining starts to fray immediately, where the edge of the base contacts it, and it obviously will eventually be torn by the metal foot. The sides of the Apple keyboard also are scuffed by contact with the metal foot. It isn't possible to squeeze the keyboard down far enough to avoid that.

The iMac G5 also presents a minor problem with airport security, through no fault of the designers of the iLugger. By now airport screeners are accustomed to laptop computers or even an LCD projector, but they are quite surprised to see a desktop computer on the conveyer belt. It is possible to ask to have the iMac G5 hand-checked or to explain what it is, because it is too big for the plastic tray that is run through the x-ray machine, and, besides, the screen and the base would be vulnerable if it were placed on the conveyor belt naked.

"Stop carrying that thing; you'll break it." That is what my wife said after a week. That is my greatest worry with the iLugger. I wonder whether the iMac G5 is built to withstand the abuse of constant movement; never mind the iLugger, which is plenty sturdy. The power cord, for example, will suffer much more wear and tear from being unplugged from the machine than if the iMac remained stationery. The base also is subject to greater stresses as it's carried about.

Quibbles aside, the iLugger case is a must-have accessory. With its introduction, the iMac G5 is two accessories away from true portability. All it would take are a hardshell cover to protect the screen (it could be a plastic front with a fabric slip-on back, or a plastic piece that clipped on) and a battery pack. Even once the PowerBook G5 is introduced, anyone who needs the visual real estate provided by an iMac G5 might still be tempted to have it handy.

Review: NetNewsWire 2.0

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

In the roughly two years since we reviewed NetNewsWire 1.0.1[2], the world of syndication has grown far beyond the simple distribution of weblog content. Major news organization like the *New York Times* and the *BBC* have embraced syndication as a new way to bring readers to their Web sites. Podcasting, where pre-recorded audio shows are distributed via RSS feeds, is becoming immensely popular. New formats, like Atom, are being developed and used to distribute content.

Furthermore, the Mac's little corner of the syndication world is getting a bit crowded. Wes Meltzer recently reviewed PulpFiction[3], Freshly Squeezed Software's entry in the news aggregator market. Of course, no discussion of syndication on the Mac would be complete without mentioning Safari's built-in syndication support that debuted in Mac OS X 10.4.

With the way syndication has evolved in the past few years, NetNewsWire 1.0 was beginning to look a little dated. However, the folks from Ranchero Software were not sitting on their hands while the world was moving forward—and if there were any doubts about this fact, the release of NetNewsWire 2.0 should put them to rest, once and for all.
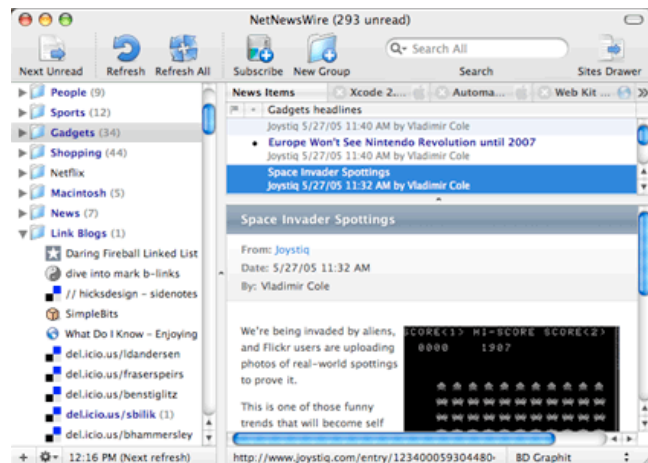
NetNewsWire's Main Window

The NetNewsWire Interface

With this release, the NetNewsWire user interface has become much more focused on the news reading experience. As a result, users now have a greater deal of control over how they can view their feeds.

NetNewsWire supports three different views for following your feeds—the Traditional three-pane view, a Widescreen view for displaying the headlines next to the story content, and a Combined view for displaying the headlines and content together. The latter two views were introduced in NetNewsWire 1.0 releases that followed our review.
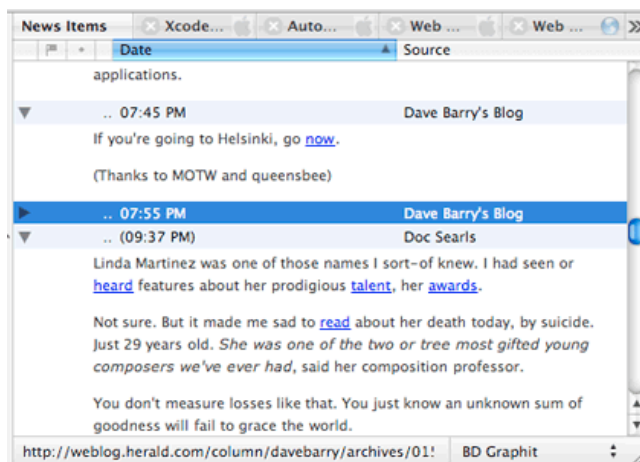
NetNewsWire's Combined View

The Traditional and Widescreen views gain some new options as well—you can elect to display a summary (really, the first few words of the article) and dateline below the individual headlines. These can enable you to quickly scan

2. http://www.atpm.com/9.04/netnewswire.shtml
3. http://www.atpm.com/10.12/pulpfiction.shtml

1. http://ranchero.com/netnewswire/

down you headline list and figure out when and where an article is from, as opposed to reading across multiple columns for each individual headline.

NetNewsWire's Widescreen view with the new summary and dateline display.

Personally, I still prefer the Traditional view. It feels faster than the Combined view while providing more horizontal space for headlines and content than the Widescreen view. If I had a larger screen, I might be more inclined to use the Widescreen view.

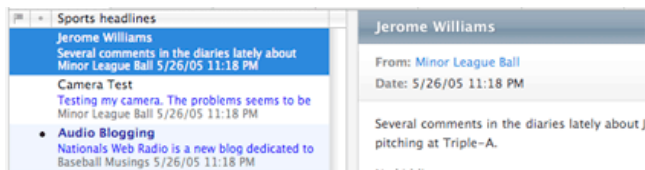The layout of the headlines and content isn't the only change to the news reading experience. NetNewsWire's support for stylesheets has improved substantially. Instead of simply controlling the appearance of article text, stylesheets can now control the appearance of the entire description pane. The 26 stylesheets included with NetNewsWire cover a range of appearances. Some simply change the text or background colors, some re-arrange the position of certain elements within the description pane, and some modify every aspect of an article's appearance.

Stylesheets can control almost every aspect of an article's appearance.

Most of bundled stylesheets are fairly decent. I tend to use a simpler one so I can focus on the content of my articles, but I can appreciate some of the more artistic stylesheets. However, there were a few stylesheets that made me cringe when I saw how they looked.
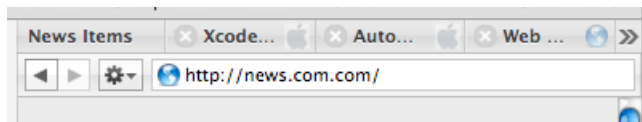
Integrated Web Browsing

I never really thought I'd like a Web browser integrated into my news aggregator. I'm happy with Safari as my main Web browser. My feeling on the subject of integrated versus external browser was "Let the aggregator developer focus on the aggregator and the Web browser developer focus on the Web browser."

Then I started using NetNewsWire's integrated Web browser. I've changed my mind. I like the idea of an integrated Web browser.

What makes NetNewsWire integrated browser so nice is that it is truly integrated into the program. Web pages are loaded as tabs in the main window, so it feels like the Web page is a part of the NetNewsWire environment instead of something fundamentally different.

Tabs for the integrated browser line up next to the tab for your news items.

If you encounter a page in NetNewsWire's Web browser that includes a feed, you'll see a blue "+FEED" button appear in right side of the status bar. Clicking this button will let you easily add the feed to your subscriptions.

One of my favorite features of the integrated Web browser is that the tabs are persistent. If you close the main window, the tabs don't go away. If you quit NetNewsWire, the tabs don't go away. I've had a collection of 11 tabs loaded for about 2 weeks because I want to read some technical articles but haven't had the chance. If I tried the same thing in Safari, I would have lost those pages long ago.

It's Your Data, So Hold Onto It

As I used NetNewsWire 1.0 for longer periods of time, I found myself growing frustrated with the fact that old posts simply disappeared from the application when they were pushed off the end of the feed. For feeds with a high posting frequency, articles might not stay around for more than a day. Whenever I'd try to search for an article I'd previously seen, I'd have to cross my fingers and hope it hadn't vanished.

NetNewsWire 2.0 addresses this issues through the addition of persistence and flagged items.

Persistence is pretty much what you would expect, given its name. Articles don't just disappear when they are removed from their original feed.

When I saw that persistence was one of NetNewsWire's new features, I was hoping it would be permanent. That way, articles could only be deleted if I wanted to delete them. That's not what we've gotten, though. NetNewsWire lets you choose the minimum number of days you'd like to keep your downloaded articles, and there's no way to delete an individual item from NetNewsWire.

If you're not a total pack rat, but simply want to keep selected articles around for posterity, then you want to flag an item. When you flag an item, it remains in NetNewsWire at least until you remove the flag.

You can flag items so that they're easier to find in the future. If you enable the Flagged Items subscription, all of your flagged items will be accessible from the top of your subscription list. So, even if you have persistence active, flagging items can still prove useful.

Now that you can keep all this wonderful data, it might get difficult to remember where you read that interesting article on Google Maps. Fortunately, searching has been completely overhauled in the newest version of NetNewsWire. Instead of searching all articles, the Find command now searches the active pane for the desired text. This means you can now search your headline list, your subscription list, the current article, or the Sites Drawer.

Article searching is now handled through a search field in the toolbar, similar to iTunes. When NetNewsWire finishes churning through all your articles, the matches are displayed in the headline list, along with a relevancy rating.

NetNewsWire has a revamped search interface in version 2.0.
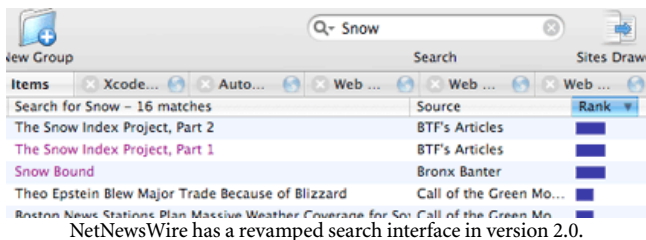
The time needed to search for your term seems to depend on the number of articles stored in NetNewsWire. Using my "save everything" approach, searching can take some time. If you have a rough idea of where your desired article will be located, you can select the feeds or groups in the subscription list and choose to search only the selected subscriptions. This can cut down on the search time significantly.

Gone, But Not Forgotten

During the course of focusing NetNewsWire around the news reading experience, two of NetNewsWire 1.0's features were removed from 2.0: the Notepad and the Weblog Editor.

These features were removed for wildly different reasons. Since you can now flag items or keep articles around after they've been removed from their feed, you no longer need a place to jot down the interesting bits for later. With this functionality no longer necessary, the Notepad didn't have enough other features to compete with standalone outliners. To be fair, the Notepad hasn't actually been removed; it's just been disabled. If you want to regain access to it, you should consult NetNewsWire's help.

Whereas the Notepad was removed due to a lack of usefulness, the Weblog Editor was removed in order to make it more useful—Ranchero Software spun this feature off into its own program, [MarsEdit](#)[1]. Those who purchased

NetNewsWire 1.0 largely for the Weblog Editor should not be concerned, as both NetNewsWire 2.0 and MarsEdit 1.0 are free upgrades for registered users of NetNewsWire 1.0.

With the removal of NetNewsWire's Weblog Editor, the Post to Weblog feature has actually become more useful. This feature now supports the [External Weblog Editor Interface](#)[2], so it can work with any weblog editor that supports this interface. In addition to MarsEdit, I know that both [ecto](#)[3] and [Cocoalicious](#)[4] support this feature, and I would not be surprised to learn of other such applications.

For the Post to Weblog feature to work, you need to specify your preferred weblog editor in the Weblog Editor Preferences. Unfortunately, there's no quick way to switch between different weblog editors—if you have different weblog editors for different posting environments, you'll have to switch the preferences by hand.

More, More, More

Although the most common sources of syndicated feeds are likely Web sites mirroring their content into RSS or Atom files, there's nothing that says you can't get your feeds from other sources. NetNewsWire understands this and supports a number of different subscription types.

Search Engine subscriptions allow you to create a feed containing search results for a given query. Four of the five available search engines seem fairly specified, but you can obviously search pretty much the whole Web using the Yahoo option.

Some Web sites use tags to categorize content according to any criteria. NetNewsWire lets you subscribe to feeds for specific tags from [Flickr](#)[5] (shared photos), [del.icio.us](#)[6] (shared bookmarks), and [Technorati](#)[7] (pretty much anything). You can also subscribe to two types of files stored on your local computers, pre-existing feeds and scripts that generates feeds.

NetNewsWire supports another type of subscription as well—Smart Lists. Similar to iTunes' Smart Playlists, Smart Lists let you create containers that display all articles which meet the specified criteria. When creating a Smart List, there are 17 different criteria you can search against. Like iTunes, you can specify that an article must match all or any of the search criteria and you can specify a maximum number of articles that can appear in the Smart List.

1.   http://www.atpm.com/11.01/marsedit.shtml

2.   http://ranchero.com/netnewswire/developers/externalinterface.php
3.   http://ecto.kung-foo.tv
4.   http://www.scifihifi.com/cocoalicious
5.   http://flickr.com
6.   http://del.icio.us
7.   http://www.technorati.com

Another type of feed that has recently become popular is podcasts. In reality, there's nothing inherently special about a podcast feed. It is just a normal RSS feed with an audio file as an enclosure. NetNewsWire now handles podcasts, as well as subscriptions with other types of enclosures.

Enclosure: cnMay25.mp3 (audio/mpeg) 11.8 MB – not downloaded
(Download to iTunes) (Download) (Copy URL)

NetNewsWire now includes support for podcasts and other enclosures.
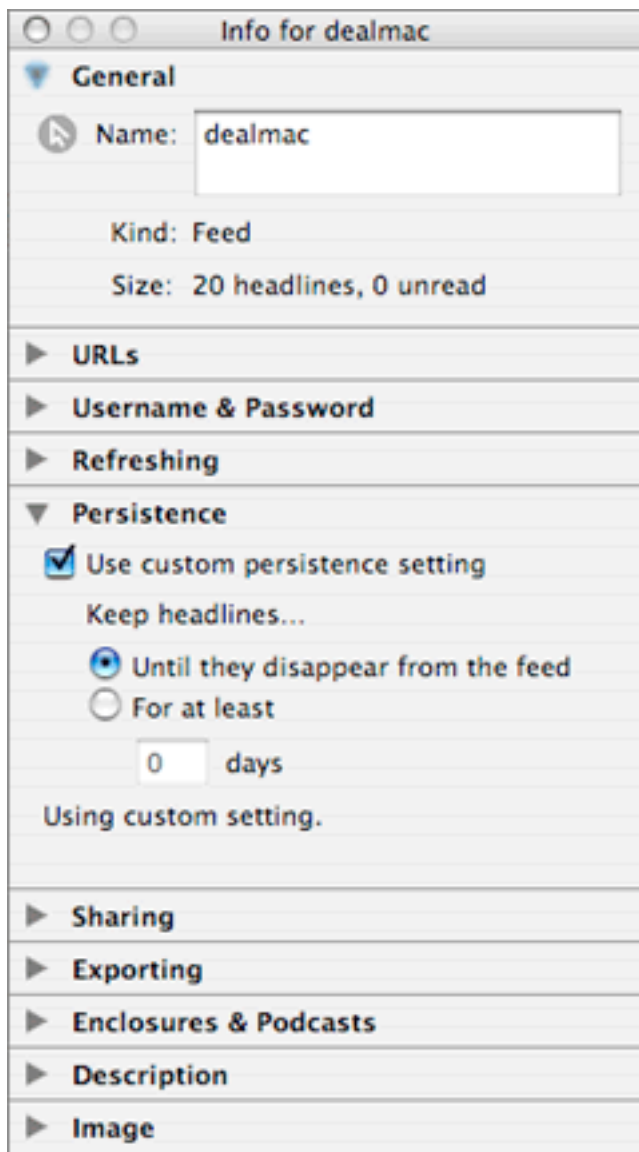
When you view an article with an enclosure, a notification is displayed at the bottom of the article. You're given the option of downloading the enclosure directly into iTunes (if NetNewsWire thinks the enclosure is an audio file), downloading the file to your downloads folder, or simply copying the URL. NetNewsWire keeps track of whether you have downloaded the file.

Of course, you can also control how enclosures are treated in the Downloading Preferences. If you're feeling brave, you can elect to have all enclosures or all audio files automatically downloaded. You can also control how audio enclosures are added to iTunes—whether they belong in a playlist or whether they need a genre set.

Once you've got all your feeds, you may come to the conclusion that all feeds are not created equal. For instance, I want to keep my downloaded Daring Fireball[1] posts pretty much forever. On the other hand, there's no need to keep old dealmac[2] entries around once the deals have expired.

I could flag every single *Daring Fireball* article, but that would get tedious and dilute the meaning of flagged articles. Instead, NetNewsWire allows you to customize most every setting for individual feeds. For my example above, I set the

dealmac feed to delete articles when they are removed from the feed. I have all my *Daring Fireball* postings saved for posterity and most of my stale deals purged.

Info for dealmac

▼ General
Name: dealmac
Kind: Feed
Size: 20 headlines, 0 unread
▶ URLs
▶ Username & Password
▶ Refreshing
▼ Persistence
☑ Use custom persistence setting
Keep headlines...
◉ Until they disappear from the feed
◯ For at least
0   days
Using custom setting.
▶ Sharing
▶ Exporting
▶ Enclosures & Podcasts
▶ Description
▶ Image

NetNewsWire lets you customize most settings on a feed-by-feed basis.

The one thing I found odd about customized settings was that you couldn't specify a genre for podcasts. I think this would be something that's a prime candidate for customization—my Baseball Prospectus Radio[3] podcast certainly feels like it belongs in a different genre than my Wizards of Technology[4] podcast.

1. http://daringfireball.net
2. http://dealmac.com
3. http://baseballprospectus.com/radio/
4. http://www.wizardsoftechnology.com/?q=node/view/113

No Computer Is an Island

NetNewsWire now includes several features designed for moving beyond the case of your computer—Sharing, Syncing, and Bloglines integration.

Sharing is another idea that NetNewsWire inherits from iTunes. Anybody running the current version of NetNewsWire can share subscriptions on the local network and browse others' shared subscriptions. Additionally, you can publish your e-mail address and Web site along with your subscriptions so people can get in touch with you. Sharing must be enabled in the Sharing Preferences, but you can individually choose which feeds you want to share.

Syncing is another feature I never thought I'd use. I have a laptop, and my copy of NetNewsWire is always with me; why would I ever sync it with another computer? Of course, my motherboard decided it needed to be replaced, so I now had a very good reason to use syncing.

Before I shipped my computer back to Apple, I activated Syncing and synced my subscription list, news item status, and browser tabs. The next day, I installed NetNewsWire on another computer and synced everything down from the server. When the process was complete, I had a near-perfect copy of my usual NetNewsWire environment. I actually ended up using two different Macs while my computer was in the shop, so I ended up syncing three different computers and everything just worked.

Syncing requires either a .Mac account or an FTP server to store your data online. I hit one problem configuring syncing when I tried initially pulling the sync data down from the server. My subscription list just would not download. Eventually, I discovered that I hadn't enabled the "Synchronize subscription list" checkbox in the Syncing Preferences. I had assumed this feature was enabled because the associated radio buttons were both active.

Bloglines integration is somewhat similar to syncing, except that you use [Bloglines](http://bloglines.com)[1] to manage your subscriptions. When you create a Bloglines subscription in NetNewsWire, you select which of your Bloglines feeds you want to download. When you download a Bloglines feed, any unread items from your Bloglines account are downloaded and marked read.

Unlike NetNewsWire's own syncing protocol, the Bloglines integration does not allow you to manage your feeds using NetNewsWire. You can certainly choose not to include certain Bloglines feeds in your NetNewsWire subscriptions, but you cannot add or remove feeds from your Bloglines account. However, Bloglines integration is available on desktop news aggregators other than NetNewsWire (not to mention the Bloglines Web site), so you could monitor your subscriptions from pretty much any Internet connection.

Growing Up

NetNewsWire really helped create the news aggregator market on the Mac, and it jumped out to an early lead over its competition. With all the changes happening in the world of syndication, though, it began to look a bit dated when compared to some of its newer counterparts.

When it comes to NetNewsWire 2.0, "dated" is a term that in no way applies. "Must-have" features like support for podcasting and Atom feeds are finally available. Interface refinements have made it easier to customize the application's appearance to your liking. Support for a variety of Special Subscriptions enabled new ways of pulling information off the Internet.

The original NetNewsWire changed the way I viewed the Web. Version 2.0 isn't quite that earth-shattering, but it is still a top-notch upgrade.

1.   http://bloglines.com

# Review: Shoebox Pro 1.2

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

My current method of cataloging photos isn't perfect, but it works. This method is nothing more than keeping an iView Media[2] catalog on my hard drive for each archived CD of photos. Every batch of photos for an event are placed in a folder that is named something descriptive of that event. Inside that folder, I always place an empty folder indicating who the photographer was. This list of folder event names is copied and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet with a neighboring column indicating which CD the folder is located on. I can then sort the list alphabetically and/or search it to find an event, determine the correct CD, and retrieve the photos.

Simple, but it could be better. Thus, when the ATPM reviews editor indicated that Shoebox was on tap for review, I was quick to sing out my interest.

Kavasoft introduces Shoebox as "the world's smartest photo organizer." Its list of features had me convinced that it could easily replace my tried-and-true archiving methods—features like thumbnail viewing, category sorting, folder browsing, photo rating, lossless image rotation, and camera card importing. Best of all, I liked that Shoebox doesn't maintain its own iPhoto-like database. This is the number one reason I've never had much use for iPhoto. I simply do not like the idea of my original photos being

"taken" somewhere, even if I am able to retrieve them at any time. Moreover, I don't like the idea of having any number of space-wasting thumbnails saved within that database.
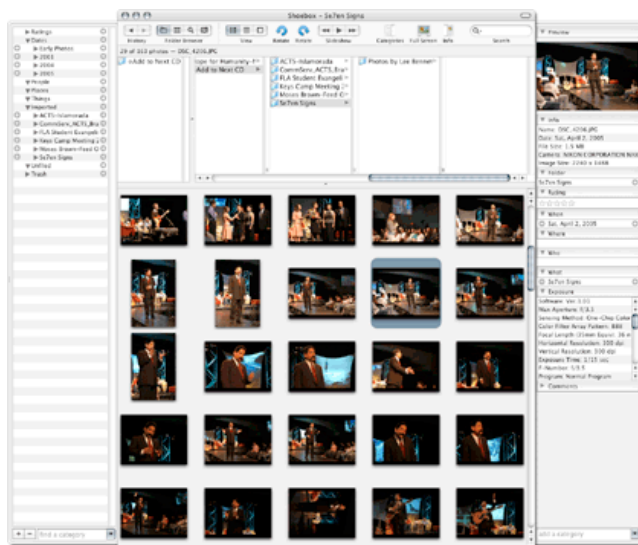
Shoebox provides a wide variety of methods to both find and display your photos.

The best way to get a sense of how Shoebox works is to imagine iPhoto, Image Capture, and a slimmed-down version of the Finder all wrapped together, and throw in some additional features for good measure. The problem, however, is that doing this sort of combination does not automatically make for a great application. I was expecting an application that would feel more like iView Media Pro. What I found was an application that felt like iPhoto on steroids. In any case, how many professional photographers do you know who keep their work in shoeboxes?

Don't get me wrong, though. People who currently use iPhoto and are ready for an application that will take their photo management to the next level could very easily make the transition to Shoebox. They would certainly see it as an improvement. Its features also include an iPhoto import function, though I was unable to test it because I do not use

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2.   http://www.iview-multimedia.com

1.   http://www.kavasoft.com/Shoebox/

iPhoto. Indeed, my photo cataloging needs were beyond iPhoto's capabilities long before iPhoto was even a gleam in His Steveness' eye.

Because I do not use iPhoto—and perhaps because of my ambitious expectations for Shoebox that were based on its product information—I was underwhelmed by Shoebox's operation. To be honest, I was feeling a tad guilty for wanting to poorly rate Shoebox just because it wasn't what I thought it was. But, I *did* read Kavasoft's marketing and, as already mentioned, I *did* base my initial opinions on what I read.

So, I began importing and cataloging my most recent photos that haven't yet been archived to CD. That's when I began to realize that Shoebox—specifically, the unrestricted Pro version—needed some improvement, even for someone just looking for the next level beyond iPhoto.

By the way, the only difference between the Express and Pro versions is the number of catalogs, photos per slideshow, and photos per catalog you're allowed. You get two, 1,000, and 10,000, respectively, with Express. The Pro version has no limits.

Right off the bat, I want to say that Shoebox "unexpectedly quit" on me three times while writing this review. I have no idea why. In all three cases, I was simply navigating my photos in Folder Browser mode.

Once I got past the crashes, I tallied the reasons Shoebox doesn't cut it as a professional photo management application—reasons that may also be minor annoyances to iPhoto refugees. I was able to summarize those reasons into four main areas.

First, why are there no bona-fide fields to input the name of a photographer, cut-lines, copyright data, etc.? The Info pane reveals only a photo's EXIF data and user-editable fields for "Where," "Who," and "What." A photo management application should have more fields or at least the ability to

manually create them. There are a lot of standardized data fields in the IPTC specification[1], and Shoebox essentially ignores them.
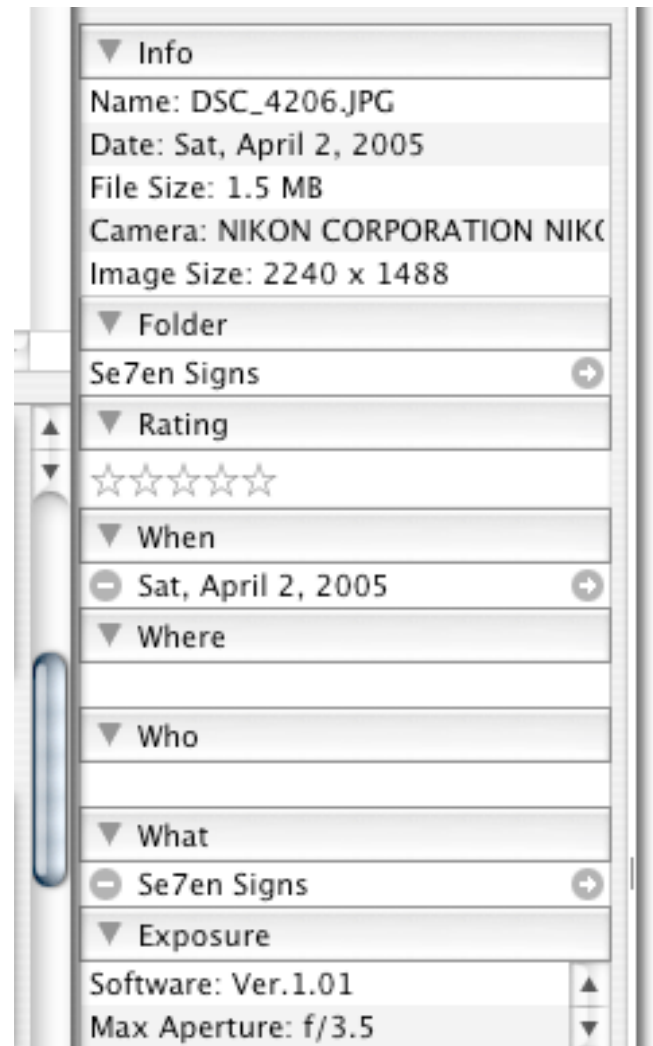
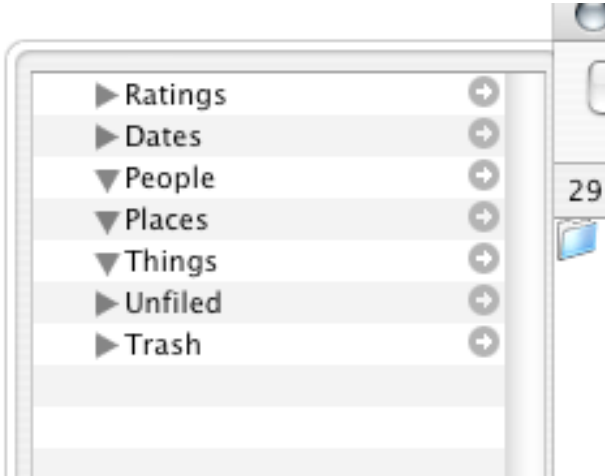
Kavasoft's interpretation of annotations is EXIF[a] information, four of the five W's, and whatever can be crammed into a Comments field.

a. http://www.digicamhelp.com/what-is-exif/

1. http://www.iptc.org/pages/about_main.php

Second, why does Kavasoft believe that six—and only six—master categories are sufficient?

Ratings, Dates, People, Places, Things, and Unfiled. Want more? Tough!

If you think about it, three of them aren't really categories, so you're only left with just People, Places, and Things. Someone please tell me if I'm being unreasonable on this point, but I see no excuse for being limited to these primary categories, and I see no purpose to not allow the creation of additional primary categories.
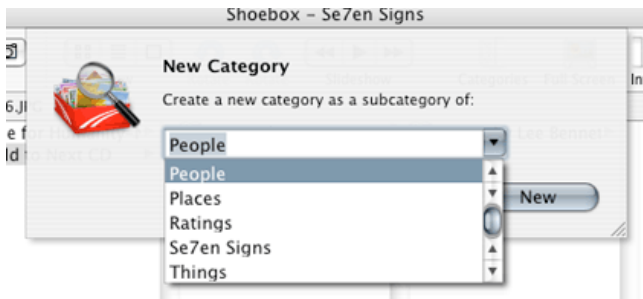

Any attempt to create a new category is futile. Shoebox only allows the creation of subcategories within the predefined, and uneditable, primary categories or a previously created subcategory.

The third point touches on the other main reason I don't use iPhoto—archiving, or the lack thereof. What Shoebox could use (and iPhoto could, too, for that matter) is an intelligent way to move collections of photos to a CD or DVD and still maintain thumbnail and category indexes of them even though they're no longer tying up space on the hard drive.

Face it, virtually no one's main hard drive is going to have enough room for years of photos. There should be a better implementation of archiving them to external media. Ideally, it would include the ability to request a particular disc to be inserted when a thumbnail is double-clicked, accessing the high-resolution copy. Admittedly, iView Media Pro also does not have a true external media archiving solution, but at least it indicates the name of the CD that needs to be mounted to access images that were indexed from my archive CDs.

My last point touches on Shoebox's method of storing catalog data. A picture should explain it all:
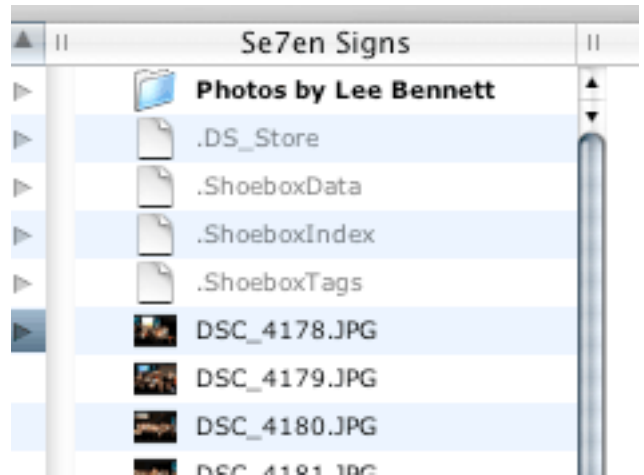
Shhhhh, you're not supposed to see those!

But if a picture doesn't tell all, I'll spell it out for you. I do *not* want a photo catalog application to be spewing invisible files all over my hard drive. Shoebox places these three files in *every* folder of photos it touches. No, they're not very big, but that's beside the point. It's clutter. It's bad enough that the OS X Finder leaves .DS_Store files in every directory. Why can't there be a central cache of Shoebox index files in a single location?

To be fair, there actually is a menu function to delete these hidden files, but using that command only deletes the hidden files recursively within a folder you select, and it only deletes the .ShoeboxIndex and .ShoeboxTags files. The .ShoeboxData files remain.

The verdict is, Shoebox has plenty of potential, but has some growing up to do. Additionally, either Kavasoft's marketing should better-reflect the type of user who'll benefit from using Shoebox, or the Pro version should be enhanced sufficiently to warrant calling it "Pro."

Review: Unreal Tournament 2004

by Marcus J. Albers, mjalbers@mchsi.com

Developer: Epic Games
Publisher: MacSoft[1]
Price: $40
Requirements: 933 MHz G4 or G5, 256 MB RAM, 32 MB AGP video card, DVD drive, 6 GB hard disk space, Mac OS X 10.2.8.
Recommended: Internet or LAN connection for online play.
Trial: Feature-limited (demo[2])

Anyone who has been around the computer-game scene for any amount of time knows the lineage of the first-person shooter (FPS). From its humble beginnings with Wolfenstein 3D, to the next evolution, Doom, and on to the wildly successful Quake series, the FPS has come along way. Somewhere around the time of the first Quake game, a development house called Epic Games started working on what would become the competitor to Id's FPS juggernaut. The Unreal engine was born and with it a fresh take on what was quickly becoming a saturated market. As impressive as the single-player game was in Unreal, online-multi-player games were quickly becoming "all the rage."

From the multi-player game in Unreal came the next evolution of the Unreal series, Unreal Tournament. Employing unique and varied maps, a variety of weapons, an impressive graphics engine, and an online experience not seen before, the original Unreal Tournament became an instant success. In fact, Unreal Tournament can still be played extensively online and is now being developed further by a volunteer group of coders to keep it up-to-date with modern hardware and operating systems. Modders, that is, people who develop modifications for games, still develop for the original Unreal Tournament on a regular basis.

It would be a number of years before the next game in the series would be released. Unreal Tournament 2003 was a quantum leap ahead of the original, both in terms of graphics and depth. The maps were much more detailed and complex, the weapons were bigger and badder, and the graphics engine was phenomenal, requiring the latest gaming rigs to get the best performance. As good as UT2003 was, it wasn't everything the original development team had envisioned. Thus was born Unreal Tournament 2004.

Using a modified version of the UT2003 engine, Unreal Tournament 2004 is an impressive-looking game. Maps vary anywhere from the bright, oppressive wastes of a desert arena to the dark, dingy surroundings of a bombed-out city, with some forest and lush vegetation thrown in for good measure. Any landscape you can imagine, the Unreal engine seems to be capable of it. The weapon effects are impressive, with bright beams and realistic smoke trails coming from the missile weapons. The ultimate weapon, the Redeemer, returns, just as devastating as before. Another new weapon found in some of the game modes is the Target Painter. This gun allows you to "laze" a target and call in a bomber, which in turn carpet bombs the area. Make sure you are far enough away from your target, as the bombs will do just as much damage to you as your enemy.

In line with the graphics, the sound is also just as excellent. The explosions and weapon sounds are fantastic when played through a good sound system. Stereo effects come in handy when trying to figure out where you are getting shot from in a fire fight. New to UT2004 is voice-chat. Much like the communicator option with Microsoft's Xbox Live service, voice-chat allows you to talk to teammates and trash-talk opponents without touching the keyboard. Although I don't

1.   http://www.macsoftgames.com/products/ut2k4/MacSoft-UT2K4.html
2.   http://www.macsoftgames.com/products/ut2k4/demo-pop.html

have an ideal set-up for such communication, I can say that the speech is recognizable and seems to be heard with little latency.

But what are excellent graphics and superior sound without game play to match? Game play is the real focus of these games, and it is obvious when playing UT2004. Controlling your warrior is quick and responsive, with default controls set up in a natural fashion and very easy to learn. The single-player game involves climbing the gaming ladder, managing your team, trading players, and making money to upgrade your team and equipment. The management section alone is quite involved and will keep fans busy for hours.

But let's face it, if you are playing UT2004, more than likely you want to kick the ever-living stuffing out of something. The instant- action modes are enough to keep you playing for hours and hours. There are a number of different modes available this time around: Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Bombing Run, Capture the Flag, Assault, Double Domination, Mutant, Last Man Standing, Invasion, and Onslaught.

The Deathmatch modes are pretty much standard fare, although the one- on-one deathmatches, carried over from UT2003, are unique, mano-a-mano matches. Not necessarily a lot of fun against the computer, but a unique experience against another human being.

Capture the Flag "captures" the spirit of team play. But if you want true team play, check out the brand new Onslaught mode.

Onslaught takes advantage of the newest, coolest feature of UT2004: vehicles. Playing on expanded maps, you become part of a team trying to dominate the map before the other team. To do so, you must activate power nodes placed around the map. The nodes are connected by node lines, which control the order in which they can be activated. Your goal is

to activate the nodes leading to your opponent's base and take out their power core. To help you to dominate the map, you have access to a number of vehicles.

They range from single-person buggies and hovercraft to multi-person tanks and the ultimate weapon, the Behemoth. This monster vehicle, included on a number of the Onslaught maps, is a sinful pleasure to take around the map. The driver controls the vehicle and a massive gun while four of your friends can load up with you and take control of the four corner guns, making the Behemoth an unstoppable game winner. Unfortunately, there are a couple of shortfalls to this mode. The massive size of the maps, while great for zooming around in vehicles, are slow to traverse if you find yourself vehicle-less and quite often make you wait at a spawn point for a vehicle to re-spawn just to get somewhere. Once you jump into a vehicle, you will quickly realize the other shortcoming of the Onslaught mode: the vehicle control. While not insurmountable, it definitely takes some getting used to. For a quick lesson in correct vehicle control, take a look at a little game I like to call Halo.

All of these modes are excellent when playing against the computer AI bots, but to get the actual experience of a game like this, especially in Onslaught mode, you need to jump online and play against actual humans. An extensive server browser built into the game gives you access to hundreds of possible matches. It's enough to keep you playing until the wee hours of the morning.

With the recent announcement of the next Unreal Tournament, it's nice to take a look at where we've been to see how far we've come. And, if the title is any indication (Unreal

Tournament 2007), you'll have plenty of time to fill. I can't think of any better way to fill it than with many, many Onslaught matches with Unreal Tournament 2004.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is ATPM?

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

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

We currently need several Contributing Editors. Please contact us[1] if you're interested.

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Visit the subscriptions page[2].

Which Format Is Best for Me?

The Online Webzine edition is for people who want to view AT℗M in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to AT℗M back issues and other Web pages. You can use Sherlock to search[3] all of the online issues at once.

The Offline Webzine is a HTML version of AT℗M that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a StuffIt archive to reduce file size. The graphics, content, and navigation elements are the same as with the Online Webzine, but you can view it without being connected to the Internet. It requires a Web browser.

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

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What Are Some Tips for Viewing PDFs?

- You can download[4] Adobe Acrobat Reader for free. If you have a Power Macintosh, Acrobat Reader 5 has better quality and performance. AT℗M is also compatible with Acrobat Reader 3, for those with 680x0 Macs.
- You can zoom the PDF to full window width and scroll through articles simply by single-clicking anywhere in the article text (except underlined links).
- You can quickly navigate between articles using the bookmarks pane at the left of the main viewing window.
- For best results on small screens, be sure to hide the bookmarks pane; that way you'll be able to see the entire page width at 100%.
- Try turning Font Smoothing on and off in Acrobat Reader's preferences to see which setting you prefer.
- All blue-underlined links are clickable. Links to external Web sites are reproduced in footnotes at the bottoms of pages, in case you are reading from a printed copy.
- You can hold down option while hovering over a link to see where it will lead.
- For best results, turn off Acrobat's "Fit to Page" option before printing.

Why Are Some Links Double-Underlined?

In the PDF editions of AT℗M, links that are double-underlined lead to other pages in the same PDF. Links that are single-underlined will open in your Web browser.

What If I Get Errors Decoding ATPM?

AT℗M and MacFixIt readers have reported problems decoding MacBinary files using early versions of StuffIt Expander 5.x. If you encounter problems decoding AT℗M, we recommend upgrading to StuffIt Expander 5.1.4 or later[5].

How Can I Submit Cover Art?

We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for AT℗M, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming

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1. editor@atpm.com
2. http://www.atpm.com/subscribe
3. http://www.atpm.com/search

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5. http://www.aladdinsys.com/expander/index.html

issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to editor@atpm.com for more information.

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How Can I Contribute to ATPM?

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

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

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

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how enthusiastic they are about recommending it to others. If you have a new piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review, contact our reviews editor at reviews@atpm.com for more information.

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Most of us have been there; we find that special piece of shareware that significantly improves the quality our Macintosh life and we wonder why the entire world hasn't heard about it. Now here's the chance to tell them! Simply let us know by writing up a short review for our shareware section. Send your reviews to reviews@atpm.com.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

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Where Can I Find Back Issues of ATPM?

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What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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

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1. http://www.atpm.com/reviews
2. http://www.atpm.com/Back/
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