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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 February issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* As Apple closes in on new stock market trading highs, we open our latest issue with a brief look at the state of the Macintosh and its maker.

All-Time Highs

Did we mention this already? Good. It's important to mention it again. After years of being known as the "beleaguered" computer company, Apple Computer set a new stock market closing high in January. Apple finished trading on January 31st at \$76.80, eclipsing its previous all-time closing high set in March 2000. On the last day of January, Apple also reached an all-time trading high of \$77.89 in intra-day activity.

It's been a long way back for the Mac maker, after suffering through many years of a depressed stock price following a missed sales and earning target in September 2000. The earnings warning cut the stock's trading price by more than half in two days of frantic selling.

Apple's trading price at this time values the company at about \$30 billion, a five-fold increase in shareholder value from just two years ago. Today's value also means the company has surpassed the performance attained by the three major stock market indexes in terms of share price performance since the day Apple Computer's shares first became available for sale to the public.

All-Time Highs, But Why the Rise?

We're glad you asked that question. What has moved Apple's share price into record territory? Simple. The success of the iPod, the release of the iPod shuffle, and analyst expectations of strong Mac mini sales have propelled Apple's stock price to new highs.

Stock market analysts build models for performance based on product sales projections. When Apple missed its lofty projections in September 2000, analysts quickly slashed their expectations leading to a sharp falloff in the share price. Conversely, the hot-selling iPod and analyst projections for sales of the iPod, the iPod shuffle, and the low-price Mac mini have led to an increase in analyst projections for Apple's revenue and earnings, leading to new all-time highs for the company's share price.

Still the iPod?

Yep. Still the iPod. Here's an overview of Apple's most recent quarterly results. For the three-month period ending December 25, 2004, Apple reported the following:

Net sales of \$3.49 billion and net income of \$295 million, resulting in earnings of \$.70 per fully diluted shares. This compares to earnings per share of \$.17 in the prior year period. The company ended the quarter with roughly \$6.45 billion in cash and equivalents.

During the quarter, Apple sold 1.046 million Macintosh computers and an astounding 4.58 million iPod digital music players. In the year-ago period, Apple sold 733 thousand iPods, representing a 525% increase in unit sales year-over year. Yep. It's still the iPod that's driving Apple's stock price higher (with a little help from the little Mac mini). Analysts expect Apple's fashionable entry into the low-cost PC market to win new customers for Apple and increase the number of Macintosh users.

Mini Mac, Mini Price

At a starting price of \$499, the Mac mini offers customers the least expensive Macintosh computer ever produced. At just 6.25 inches square, it's also the smallest Macintosh ever released. Designed to appeal to iPod owners who want a lower cost barrier to entry to the Macintosh platform, analysts are expecting big sales from the small PC.

Shuffle It All Along

In addition to introducing a smaller, lower-cost Macintosh, Apple has also announced a lower-priced iPod product. Called the iPod shuffle, it provides up to a gigabyte of song storage on a flash memory drive. Priced at \$99 and \$149, the iPod shuffle should move millions more iPod units while enticing consumers to buy a lot more songs.

The release of the iPod shuffle is timed in part for the new Pepsi song give-away campaign. Last year's Pepsi song give-away might be classified as a qualified failure. A year later, with several million more iPods in the hands of consumers, the 2005 Pepsi campaign should be much more successful. It's difficult for many consumers to get excited about a free song when the price of entry for the portable digital music player to use with the free music starts at \$249 and \$299. At \$99 for an iPod shuffle, watch for millions more of the bottle caps to be redeemed free songs this year compared to the results of last year's campaign.

Will iWork Help You Work?

While Apple has recently released new versions of iLife and a new version of Final Cut Express called Final Cut Express HD, the most talked about new software product from Apple is called iWork '05. The software offering includes a word processing product called Pages and Keynote 2, an updated

version of Apple's popular presentation software. iWork '05 integrates seamlessly with the components of Apple's iLife '05 suite.

Marketed effectively, iWork '05 may lessen the perceived need for Mac buyers to purchase Microsoft's Office product for productivity tasks.

Now We Get to Work

Our February issue provides many exciting articles and columns as we continue of mission to chronicle the personal computing experience. Our February issue includes:

The Candy Apple: Healthy Skepticism Has Its Place

Ellyn Ritterskamp explores urban myths and legends.

Bloggable: A Life In Miniature

"When the rumors came true and Steve Jobs announced the Mac mini...there was a tidal wave of positive response, and a bunch of 'gotchas,' too."

The Desktop Muse: Convergence

"Two developments [from Apple] together will allow musicians and music lovers of every budget to join in on the jam."

Pod People

Christopher Turner kicks off a new column for *ATPM*, focusing on everyone's favorite digital music player, the iPod, and how individuals use it in their day-to-day lives.

About This Particular Outliner: Task Management and Outlining, Part 2

This month's column continues Ted Goranson's look at Task Management and Outlining.

Customizing The Mac OS X User Interface: Icons

Apple's Mac OS user interface is legendary and unrivaled by any other operating system for ease of use and good looks, but there comes a time when the default icons get a little long in the tooth.

How To: What to Do With Older Macs, Part 2

"Last month, I talked about some ways to get rid of an older Mac...but [what if] you have decided to keep yours a bit longer?"

Cartoon: Cortland

NeoCort returns and we learn some shocking news.

Cartoon: iTrolls

The iTrolls encounter Green-eyed McDell and the iPod shuffle.

Desktop Pictures: Nature

Reader Mark Montgomery offers this month's desktop photos, which speak volumes about the unPhotoshopped quality of the Canon 10D.

Frisky Freeware

Frisky the Freeware Guinea Pig checks out Adium.

Review: Desktop Poet 1.0

"Desktop Poet is a truly awe-inspiring way to procrastinate."

Review: FriendlyNET FR1104-G Wireless Firewall Router

The perfect wireless router for mixed OS 9/OS X networks.

Review: radioSHARK

This would-be TiVo for broadcast radio comes up short in the software department, but gains an addict anyway.



E-Mail

We Are Resolute¹

Thanks Ellyn. Just what I needed to start a new year. I've called my cat to get at those "dust bunnies." Happy and Healthy New Year to all.

—*Conrad Beauregard*

Renaming Picture Files

I am one of those people who laboriously rename pictures one-by-one because I wish to retain the camera sequence number. For example, DSC01234.jpg gets changed to S01234MyPicture.jpg. I can name several pictures with the same name because the camera number is unique. The S stands for Sony (I also have a Nikon). I have not seen any renaming programs that allow a template. It would be nice to tell the program that I wish to keep the S and the 5 numbers and add something to the end. Are you aware of anything like that?

—*Al MacDiarmid*

Check out [A Better Finder Rename](#)² and [GraphicConverter](#)³. —*Michael Tsai*

Delicious Library⁴

I've been using DVDAttache 2.3.5 for tracking our DVD collection and find it very easy and useful. It too is freeware. I love the look of Delicious Library, but I don't think I'd be willing to pay \$40 for it.

—*Craig Parks*

I can see that DVDAttache is a fantastic alternative for many people. I truly liked its approach, but I believe I'm still going to stick with DVDManager.

DVDAttache's interface is slightly clunky because it's done in Java. To clarify, the actual layout is very nice. It's just certain behaviors (open/save dialog boxes, for example) that just don't feel right. This isn't the developer's fault—it's something that's just inherent in Java applications. I'm completely in favor of Java-developed applications because they can be ported to any platform that supports Java, but I prefer to only use Java applications when there's not a good OS X-native alternative.

I also really like DVDAttache's approach for HTML output, but it doesn't meet my wish of an at-a-glance listing that DVDManager gives me. If I ever want a full-page interface with all details for each DVD, this looks like it would be a good choice. So far, though, DVDManager's HTML output is the only one I've seen that I can relatively easily integrate into my blog design. —*Lee Bennett*

1. <http://www.atpm.com/11.01/candy.shtml>
2. <http://www.publicspace.net/ABetterFinderRename/>
3. <http://www.lemkesoft.de/en/graphcon.htm>
4. <http://www.atpm.com/11.01/delicious-library.shtml>

...

Aside what was said above on DVDManager and DVDAttache, it's worth mentioning that both of them successfully connect to a range of DVD info servers, and in my tests successfully found almost 90% of the DVD I tried.

Delicious Library, while announcing this in the future (among many other features), entirely depends on the single Amazon US service and won't find any non-US DVD. It's just unusable for a European.

I'm presently hesitating between DVDManager and the (more complete but more complex) [DVDTheque](#)⁵.

—*Hervé Sainct*

IOGEAR and Dr. Bott KVMs⁶

Thanks for a fascinating article about Dr. Bott's KVM. It's just what I need to save my knees as I grovel under the desk! But, after checking up on KeyTweak, I found that it wouldn't work with Windows 98 SE.

Have you any suggestions for an alternative key remapper?

—*Mike Roberts*

You might be interested in [AppleK Pro](#)⁷. Sorry about that *huge* omission! —*David Zatz*

Outliners⁸

What a wealth of resources we have in these programs and in this series of articles! Allow me to add a note of caution, however.

I've been an Apple user since the beginning, and I have data dating back to around 1980 that I wish to preserve. I've used countless methods for organizing the data. Those of you who recall the program VisiCalc might also recall VisiDex (short for VISible INDEX). Sure wish I could read those files now. Of course I jumped on the program MORE and developed extensive outline material in that format. Fortunately, OmniOutliner was able to make that data available again. HyperCard was among my favorite organizing tools for a time. I can still access my 'stacks' if I'm willing to load an older OS on my computer, but future Macs may be unable to do that. FullWrite was a wonderfully full-featured word processing program, and it helped create beautifully formatted documents that I can no longer read. The General Manager was a fabulous hierarchical database program (Apple II) that I became addicted to, but...I mention these

5. http://jlruggeri.free.fr/index_en.html
6. <http://www.atpm.com/10.11/kvm.shtml>
7. <http://www.trinityworks.co.jp/US/software/AppleKPro/index.php>
8. <http://www.atpm.com/11.01/atpo.shtml>

programs because they were very popular and represented the pinnacle of their genre at the time. And now they are gone. And with them went all the precious data that they helped to generate.

We are not alone in this. Government agencies around the world have immense volumes of data that they can no longer access and that they can't share with other computer systems, even in the same branch of government sometimes. The problem is that every program and every computer tends to create its own proprietary method of formatting data.

And so my warning is that before you commit yourself to thousands of hours with an exciting new program to organize your life, consider what will happen when the program is no longer available. Consider what will happen when you want to upgrade to OS XI, and the program won't run under it and won't be upgraded.

One thing to look for is a commitment by the developer of the software to release the source code to the public domain should development ever be stopped. There is then the possibility that someone will take up the cause and continue development, thus keeping your data and investment alive. Another thing to look for is the availability of a standard format for accessing your data. Can it be exported to RTF, HTML, XML, tab-delimited, or other useful forms? Often a program offers many ways to import data, but few ways to export data. They want to lock you into using their system.

I have a current investment in OmniOutliner and Circus Ponies Notebook, but I'm reconsidering the outliner in Word with the thought that Microsoft might be a better long-term gamble than some of the other outline publishers discussed here. Certain types of data can best be handled in a program like FileMaker, which gives much control over the input and the presentation of information, and also seems to have a good future.

May the future be kind to you and the fruits of your labor.
—Tom Swell

I wish to join the many who are very thankful for this outstanding series. Keep up the good work!

Would like some input on my own situation. I write a lot, fiction and non-fiction, both based on huge amounts of research.

For a period I stuck with Tinderbox, but it was not strong enough as a writing tool. Along came Tao, which really made my heart beat faster. But it lacks support for filtering, it seems. It is able to hide items, but that is not enough. I need to be able to hide and show items at wish, based on metadata such as labels.

Two-pane editing is also very important to me; I outline and comment to the left and write the full manuscript text to the right. Tao does this beautifully, and it lets me zoom the note window, but it does not allow me to print and manipulate *only* the notes (my manuscript). Or am I wrong?

Support for large amounts of data, like DEVONthink has, would also be nice, but that application is again too weak in the writing/outlining department.

Good support, like Tinderbox has, is also important to me. Tao has none.

So, the requirements are: filtering, two-pane editing, support for huge amounts of data, power outlining, a very clean interface (Tao, again, excels here).

Advice, please?
—Oystein Kydland

[A great many ATPO readers are in your shoes. The capabilities we want are spread out over several applications.](#)

[An upcoming column will deal with combining applications. If anyone has any ideas along these lines, please send them to me.](#) —Ted Goranson

[StudioBoard Mechanical Keyboard](#)¹

Nice review of a necessary component, Michael. Especially since I'm always spilling various kinds of edibles and drinkables on my keyboard. (Apple's products seem to be very forgiving in that regard, by the way.)

One must wonder why the Micro Connectors unit is no more.
—Ed Williams

Michael, the Return key layout matches my Apple Pro keyboard layout here in the UK—but I can certainly see the differences to the US layout.

While it would make the keyboard a more attractive proposition here, Kensington's European site doesn't yet feature the StudioBoard...

—Karen Hughes

I'm still using our Micro Connectors keyboard. I still like it as much as I did before. I guess the only way to find another will be through exhaustive searches online, online auctions or yard sales, the way I found ours. I don't hate the new Apple Pro keyboard that my wife has with her Cube, but I'd take the Micro Connectors over it any day. By the way, I did a search and thenerds.net still has them in Blueberry, Strawberry, and Grape. They're not cheap, but they are available.

—Craig Parks

1. <http://www.atpm.com/11.01/studioboard.shtml>

I suggest you try [MacAlly iceKey](#)¹. I have had mine for a couple years and I love it. It has low-profile keys like a laptop keyboard and mechanical key switches.

—*Ron Alcasid*

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

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Healthy Skepticism Has Its Place

This exchange took place in early January on a message board I frequent (some words altered, and names changed):

Statler: I just got an e-mail tsunami picture purporting to be of the wave hitting a city in Indonesia and am curious if it's legit. Has anybody seen footage on TV of the wave hitting the shore? I guess maybe in some places, there was enough advance warning to get a helicopter up, and shoot the photo.

Waldorf: I've seen video footage, but not what I'd call a definitive tsunami video, so I guess the picture could be real. I would love to see it.

Kermit: Just be sure to check snopes.com first. There are some fakes going around:

Statler: This is [the one I got](#)¹. I'll let my friend know it's a fake.

I was astounded at the speed of the response, that several people in the group quickly ran to look at the Snopes site. I had heard of Snopes but never visited it. I decided it was time.

I followed the link to the tsunami photo, where I read the explanation of four factors that convinced the Web site authors this picture was faked. I'll let you read it yourself, as they are rather protective of their copyrighted material, which includes everything on the site. They are happy for you to link to their material but do not want you quoting it elsewhere. That seems fair to me.

The "they" I am talking about are Barbara and David P. Mikkelson. They are the site operators and do nearly all the research. I began with the [What's New page](#)² and had plenty of fun. There are both photos and stories, which are updated frequently. Some photos have a "disturbing image warning," which I trusted, and did not open. There was a precious series of pictures of a black bear with a white albino [cub](#)³, which I bet will remain available for a while. The research looks

pretty thorough, explaining why it might be that the cub is white, and citing a newspaper article from several months ago that validates the story of a white cub in this particular region.

Most pages follow this format: the photo or tale comes first, then the analysis, then the citations of sources used to back up the analysis. The [FAQ page](#)⁴ explains that the authors do not make any claim to being totally correct all the time. They are claiming they will research the myths and legends, and will report their findings. That's my interpretation of what they said—remember I do not want to infringe on that copyright. The FAQ page is really a very good place to start, and from there you should try the link for their [glossary](#)⁵, where they explain the distinction between myths and legends. And other stuff. The answer to the most important question—what the heck are snopes?—is on the FAQ page.

I have been thinking lately about Web resources, and how some of them that seem reliable are not always. I have decided that if we approach such sources with the idea that once in a while they will be in error, we can live with the 98% success rate they have got going. Several such sites are free, like [Wikipedia](#)⁶, which lists itself as a "free-content encyclopedia that anyone can edit." Since that's on the front page, I guess you have fair warning. If you followed a link to an inside page, though, and you didn't know it was open entry, you might rely on the information and be disappointed.

I absolutely love the notion of a community of learners who share what they know. I am a smidge leery of somebody using this site as a sole reference. Think of it as a supplement, like that vitamin tablet you take in the morning. As for Snopes, remember they are not necessarily 100% right (I do not know of an instance where they were wrong, but I have only been a fan for a few weeks), but they are very thorough and very entertaining.

Onward.

1. <http://www.snopes.com/photos/natural/tsunami2.asp>
2. <http://www.snopes.com/info/whatsnew.asp>
3. <http://www.snopes.com/photos/animals/whitecub.asp>

4. <http://www.snopes.com/info/faq.asp>
5. <http://www.snopes.com/info/glossary.asp>
6. <http://www.wikipedia.com>



A Life In Miniature

Small is the new black—er, brushed metal.

That's about the only conclusion one can take away from Macworld San Francisco, where Steve Jobs unveiled the Mac mini and the iPod shuffle, devices which take two of Apple's three product categories (desktops and iPod) and make them substantially smaller.

Predictably, they're a big hit. In fact, they're so big that I'm running a special addendum on the [Bloggable: The Companion Blog](#)¹ about all the non-Mac mini-, non-iPod shuffle-related news. [Check it out!](#)²

Much Ado About the Mini

The opening montage of this giant wave of publicity was *Think Secret's* [inside scoop](#)³: Apple was on the verge of releasing a new Mac, listed at \$500, headless, with pretty bare-bones specs. The idea was to get Windows-using iPod owners in the door, according to Nick Ciarelli, alias Nick dePlume (more next month on that), who runs *Think Secret*.

Of course, the question was, could anyone confirm besides Ciarelli? *Gizmodo* [demurred](#)⁴, and even *The New York Times* [caught the rumor bug](#)⁵ (a little late). Kirk McPike had a fantastic analysis explaining [the value of a \\$500 Mac](#)⁶ in terms of filling an open spot in the Apple product lineup.

When the rumors came true and Steve Jobs announced the Mac mini—and Steve can't have been pleased that the regular mills had already broken the story—there was a tidal wave of positive response, and a bunch of 'gotchas,' too.

Gizmodo's [round-up](#)⁷ is absolutely the best place to start for Mac mini news and reaction. They've got 12 major reaction bits from the morning of Jobs' MWSF keynote, including [their own](#)⁸.

If you haven't already had enough Mac mini news now that you've read *Gizmodo's* comprehensive look, we'll move on to Sandy McMurray and his remark that Apple releasing low-cost products is [exactly what everyone wanted to hear](#)⁹. He calls the Mac mini craze like it is: a meme. Even the

Washington Post is [in on it](#)¹⁰, and the *New York Times* ran an [editorial](#)¹¹ all about Apple's newly revitalized product lines! Must have been some slow day at the *Times'* editorial board meeting. And, gosh, [John Dvorak](#)¹² and [Paul Thurrott](#)¹³ both liked it, too. The world is now ending. (At least Rob Enderle [dislikes it](#)¹⁴. Thanks, [AtAT](#)¹⁵.)

To corroborate Steve's initial remarks, *MacInTouch* [liked it](#)¹⁶, and *MacCentral* still says [it's cheaper than a PC](#)¹⁷.

It has escaped no one, anywhere, who has a blog and wants to write commentary, that Apple's product lineup now has a "[sweet spot](#)¹⁸", thanks to Paul Nixon, where it can draw in Windows users due to a combination of the iPod's ease of use, good design, and low cost. Because that's clearly the point of the Mac mini.

Or is it? While John Gruber [thinks so](#)¹⁹, Bill Palmer is [apoplectic with disappointment](#)²⁰ and insists all Apple can do to fix the mini is to, umm, [change just about everything](#)²¹ about the it. Well!

And then, there are those who see something entirely different from the mini. That's always the case with Apple products. Take the folk at *The Unofficial Apple Weblog*, who brainstormed [new and creative](#)²² ideas. The Mac-as-PVR people are jumping for joy, like [at Engadget](#)²³ (including a [how-to guide](#)²⁴) and [Boris Mann](#)²⁵.

Wherefore Art Thou Stick of Gum?

In case you have been *truly* living under a rock, you have heard of the iPod shuffle too. It's Apple's new gumstick-sized, white-on-green Doublemint marketed iPod for people who need even less space and size than the iPod mini can offer. It's

1. <http://bloggable.ideasalon.org>
2. <http://bloggable.ideasalon.org/2005/02/01/00.00.01/>
3. <http://thinksecret.com/news/0412expo2.html>
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9. http://www.corante.com/apple/archives/2005/01/12/its_working.php

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15. <http://www.appleturns.com/scene/?id=5135>
16. <http://www.macintouch.com/macmini/review.html>
17. <http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/editors/2005/01/miniapplesandoranges/>
18. <http://www.nixlog.com/apple/>
19. <http://daringfireball.net/2005/01/small Cheap no display>
20. <http://www.billpalmer.net/2005/01/apple-can-take-its-idiot-box-and-stick.html>
21. <http://www.billpalmer.net/2005/01/open-letter-to-apple-heres-what-you.html>
22. <http://apple.Weblogsinc.com/entry/1234000750027575/>
23. <http://www.engadget.com/entry/1234000460028138/>
24. <http://www.engadget.com/entry/123400057028826/>
25. <http://www.bmannconsulting.com/node/1413>

kinda cute. And it's more the right size for my mom, who cannot possibly have stored more than 10 albums on her iPod in the last two years.

Thanks to Engadget, *Bloggable's* coverage is much-enriched. Try [the initial announcement response](#)¹ and a very cool iPod shuffle-as-porn "[unpacking](#)²" item.

Julio Ojeda-Zapata, who by day plays a tech writer for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, says he is skeptical about the lack of a screen on the iPod shuffle. "But, um, isn't a mediocre screen [better than none at all](#)³?" he asks.

Someone got smart at *AppleMatters* and posted a [dissection](#)⁴ of the iPod mini, against a green tile background so painstakingly clinical it *looks* like a hospital. With little flashes of red, you almost expect blood.

What with the fuss over the shuffle, it's no surprise that they're all sold out—and that it's listed as the no. 1 and 2 top products for early adopters on Amazon, thanks to [AtAT again](#)⁵. (Jack Miller notes that, in addition, Dell's [smack talk](#)⁶

about the iPod brand generally is failing, since, after all, [his example is the Walkman](#)⁷, an incredibly successful product. Oh, come now, guys.)

For more of your iPod fix, early in the month Scott Rosenberg called Apple's DRM "[fascism](#)⁸," something that I think might be...just a tad too far. Sandy McMurray [calls him on it](#)⁹, but he's got a good analysis, too: the reason the DRM is so complex to circumvent is because the music industry and users disagree on what rights they get when they buy the music. And in a related vein, the president of Sony's video game division admitted recently that it was their insistence on DRM (and, frankly, their lame-o ATRAC format) that [cost them the digital audio market](#)¹⁰. Imagine that. Somebody at Sony finally woke up and smelled the coffee. The rest of the company can't follow along soon enough.

And that's about it for the month, as far as the Mac mini and the iPod shuffle are concerned. Don't forget to check the [addendum](#)¹¹ for all the rest of January!

1. <http://www.engadget.com/entry/1234000410026986/>
2. <http://www.engadget.com/entry/1234000177027029/>
3. http://yourtech.typepad.com/main/2005/01/apple_infonugge.html
4. <http://www.applematters.com/shufflepopup0.htm>
5. <http://www.appleturns.com/scene?id=5144>
6. <http://hardware.silicon.com/desktops/0,39024645,39127101,00.htm>

7. <http://www.appleturns.com/scene?id=5141>
8. <http://blogs.salon.com/0000014/2005/01/09.html>
9. http://www.corante.com/apple/archives/2005/01/10/the_drm_problem.php
10. http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=528&e=1&u=/ap/20050120/ap_on_hi_te/japan_sony
11. <http://bloggable.ideasalon.org/2005/02/01/00.00.01/>

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Convergence

Every January brings an important convergence of events for those of us who consider the Mac our Muse: Macworld San Francisco and the NAMM Convention in Los Angeles. Each January, Apple sets the tone for the year at these two conventions. Two years ago, we saw a plethora of products newly upgraded to OS X. Last year, we witnessed the birth of GarageBand. This year, Apple unveiled its most affordable computer and music player to date, and added GarageBand intergration to Logic Express and Logic Pro in order to complete their digital music upgrade path. These two developments together will allow musicians and music lovers of every budget to join in on the jam.

Make It Smaller and Cheaper, But Every Bit as Cool

The two big new product announcements this year were the iPod Shuffle, and the Mac Mini. Both products expand an existing market downward in price range. The original iMac (which debuted in 1998) all but single handedly brought Apple back from the brink. After the novelty wore off, though, the demand grew for a more affordable entry level computer (the so-called "headless iMac). Apple took its time and did it right. The Mini is the right price (\$499) and it stands out from the boring black boxes by being both smaller and sexier.

Apple's other headline grabber was the iPod, which pretty much created the market for digital music players and then proceeded to dominate that market. But what about those people who don't need thousands of songs on hand? How about a couple of hundred? Apple answered that need with the Shuffle. Again, though, instead of just reducing disk space and making a cheaper iPod, Apple shrank the Shuffle down to the size of a pack of gum. I remember the first time I saw the original iPod and how small it seemed. (I also thought my cell phone was small until I saw a *really* small cell phone.) Now the iPod almost looks big in comparison.

A Solution for Every Price Range

So let's say you're a musician looking to get started in digital music (or a music lover wanting to play around and maybe write a song or two), but you're on a tight budget. Thanks to Apple you can now build a fully functional Mac digital music studio for under \$1000:

Mac Mini*	\$499
CRT or LCD Monitor	\$0-\$699**
M-Audio Keystation 49e (MIDI Keyboard)	\$99***
M-Audio Nova Microphone	\$100***
M-Audio StudioPro 4s Speakers	\$149***
Griffin iMic (USB Audio Interface)	\$40
Griffin GarageBand Mic Cable	\$25
Total	\$912-\$1,611

* Includes GarageBand, iTunes, and a CD Burner

** Price range from low (existing CRT) to high (17" Studio Display)

*** Price through the Apple Store

Now you have everything needed to create your own music and put it on CD. Add an iPod Shuffle for another \$99 and you can take your tunes with you.

Upward Mobility

The basic studio listed above is great for beginners, but what about experienced digital musicians with a bigger budget? Well, that's what's so great about Apple's completed upgrade path. For example, GarageBand (\$79 with iLife 5 or free with a Mac Mini) to Logic Express (\$299) to Logic Pro (\$999 or \$699 upgrade from Logic Express). Apple touted the new interrelationship between these products at NAMM, and I think it's a great idea. My only complaint is the lack of upgrade pricing options at the low end. For example, I own iLife 4. In order to get the GarageBand upgrade, however, I need to pay for the full iLife 5 package. By the same token, if I get iLife 5 (to upgrade GarageBand) and in a few months I want to move up to Logic Express (and given the newly touted relationship between the two applications, I'd be highly motivated to do so) I'll still have to pay full price. I

remember when existing software owners received a discount on upgrades, but, at least at the low end of the price scale, those days appear to be over.

Not Perfect, But Well Above Average

Such complaints, though, are minor in the face of Apple's continuing commitment to digital music creation. Now all I need is a way to record CD-quality live audio on an iPod. Maybe next year...please.

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Pod People

by Christopher Turner, cturner@atpm.com

While the name of our publication is *About This Particular Macintosh*, the iPod¹ has become such an integrated part of the Macintosh—nay, the entire digital lifestyle—that we thought a column devoted to everyone's favorite little digital music player would be a good idea. We hope to have various staff members contribute each month, then look beyond to our readership, to tell us about their iPods and how they use them.

Seeing as it was my idea, I thought it only fair that I write the first column. My wife purchased an original 5 GB iPod for me for my birthday in 2001, just a couple of months after they were first introduced. My iPod went back and forth with me to work, it provided music for me when I was at my desk, and it was a constant companion on road trips.

As happened to many digital music lovers, however, my music collection rapidly outgrew the capacity of my iPod. In December of 2003, my lovely bride bestowed another iPod on me for my birthday. This time it was a third-generation (3G) 40 GB model, which is the iPod I still use, though I am quite envious of the fourth-generation, click-wheel models.

I have varied tastes when it comes to music. Throughout middle school and high school, I was in the school band, so I developed a love for the classics. I grew up listening to the classic country sounds of Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, and others, as well as folk singers like John Denver and Neil Diamond. Their current musical counterparts have found their way on to my playlists as well. The rebellious teenage streak had me listening to many different kinds of rock and alternative music, but I never really got in to what's become known as "bubble-gum pop." These days, I'm very much into contemporary Christian music, and its myriad formats.

I update my iPod manually through iTunes, but make good use of playlists to suit my varying musical interests. I even have a playlist devoted solely to podcasts, the new do-it-yourself talk phenomenon that's taken the digital music world by storm.

My 3G iPod is more than just my digital music player, though. It acts as my read-only PDA as well, thanks to the integration with Mac OS X's [Address Book](#)² and [iCal](#)³. I also utilize extensively the notes capability of my iPod. I use BBEdit to generate the various text notes, which reside in their own folder, "iPod Notes" in my Documents folder on my Mac. Through [iSync](#)⁴ and [.Mac](#)⁵, my iPod stays in sync

with my Power Mac G4 Cube, PowerBook, and Sony Ericsson mobile phone. Seeing as how I have about 16 GB still free on my 40 GB iPod, I also use it as an external hard drive for data transfer. I don't make it a habit to rely on my iPod as a backup device—I have small FireWire hard drives for that purpose—but it's nice to know it's available, should I need it, and I have needed it in the past.

While my iPod came with a belt-clip carrying case from Apple, I felt it needed more sturdy protection when venturing forth from its nesting place next to the Cube. My case of choice is the [Contour Showcase](#)⁶, reviewed in these very pages last January by Eric Blair. On my hip, in the car, pretty much anywhere except when it's in its dock or on my arm, my iPod rides in the Showcase. When I hit the gym, I carry the iPod in the DLO Neoprene Action Jacket with a velcro-closed armband. I purchased mine from [Everything iPod](#)⁷, but they don't seem to offer this model any more, and there is no information on cases available at the [Digital Lifestyle Outfitter](#)⁸ Web site.

While the earbuds that came with the iPod are fine for working out, I like to use more conventional cans (viz: headphones) at other times. I have a pair of [Aiwa noise-reducing headphones](#)⁹ that cost me \$50 at [Best Buy](#)¹⁰. They offer 70% noise reduction, not total noise cancellation, like the Bose QuietComfort cans I'm sure Lee Bennett will discuss in his *Pod People* column. Of course, the Aiwas cost 1/6th the price of the Bose cans, and unless you're an audiophile who must have total silence outside of his headset, noise-reducing headphones such as these will do just fine. My cans proved so popular around the office that three of my coworkers ended up buying them for their own use.

Finally, I have a Sony cassette adapter for use while driving. I've tried FM transmitters in the past, but the sound from the cassette adapter is much cleaner. I also live in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, and let me tell you, finding a free FM frequency can be really tough! The only time I wish I had a FM transmitter was when we rented a car on vacation, and it didn't have a cassette deck. You should consider having both in your iPod toolkit.

During my days of employment with a major telecommunications company, I had a Palm Tungsten T2. The only thing I miss about it is the ease of input and search,

1. <http://www.apple.com/ipod/>
2. <http://www.apple.com/macosex/features/addressbook/>
3. <http://www.apple.com/ical/>
4. <http://www.apple.com/isync/>

5. <http://www.mac.com>
6. <http://atpm.com/10.01/showcase.shtml>
7. <http://www.everythingipod.com>
8. <http://www.dlodirect.com>
9. <http://www.us.aiwa.com/default.asp?page=products&action=viewProduct&prod=17>
10. <http://www.bestbuy.com>

especially in notes. Otherwise, my iPod serves me quite well as a personal digital assistant. Of course, it does what it does best more often than any other task: delivering my music wherever I happen to be.

How do you use your iPod?

Copyright © 2005 Christopher Turner, cturner@atpm.com. Managing Editor Christopher Turner is totally into the digital nomad lifestyle, even though he spends the bulk of his time at home. With his trusty PowerBook and iPod, he's available for Macintosh-related work in and around DFW. If you would like to write a Pod People column, please contact the [editors](#)¹.



1. <mailto:editor@atpm.com>

About This Particular Outliner

by Ted Goranson, tgoranson@atpm.com

Task Management and Outlining, Part 2

This month, we continue our look at outliner support for task management. [Previously](#)¹ we sketched some of the relevant history and noted a few ideas around the topic. Task management is one of those few application areas that is individually defined: there are lots of ways of slicing and servicing the problem—and that makes it worth *ATPO* attention. After all, the idea behind this column is to think about different methods so you can select or design your own.

Some Task Management Systems

This may be the most controversial of *ATPO* columns. Judging from my mail, people are even more religious about this than writing and information storage, the other two big outliner domains. Some mail seems downright fundamentalist.

So let's deal with the currently popular scripture right now. [David Allen](#)² consults on task management for corporations and has written a book, [Getting Things Done](#)³, that has been mentioned many times in outliner discussions. He also sells an Outlook “add in” that supports his method (Outlook is the Windows equivalent of Entourage in Microsoft's Office suite).

Allen's method is concise, fairly simple, and apparently complete. It is the little sister to perhaps a dozen such methods that I know, developed individually by the big consulting firms and originally hosted within [Lotus](#)⁴. The latest generation of these methods are now appearing in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Product Data Management (PDM) frameworks as those frameworks displace older Lotus and similar coordination methods in the big corporations.

Allen's stuff differentiates itself from these larger systems by connecting more to Microsoft desktop software and a retail marketing strategy.

I do not want to recommend it because our scope here is flexible task management for individuals and small enterprises. Allen's target is executives in larger enterprises, so he has a focus on delegation and audit-ability: tools to tell the boss what you did. It is also unfriendly to integration with writing projects using the same tool, a peculiar strength of outlining. It lacks an emphasis on continually redefining the

problem; this is largely because it presumes tasks come from external sources rather than being synthesized and re-imagined internally.

I presume that most *ATPO* readers will have a combination of tasks: some may come from outside and be situated in an enterprise, but many Mac users are creative types who set their own goals. It's not enough to simply capture these, you need to be able to adeptly and introspectively redefine them as you learn and change. Often the larger goal itself changes (when you're not in a big company). And all this might be mixed in with personal tasks, infrastructure tasks, and non-task reminders (like your girlfriend's birthday).

Though I'm not recommending Allen's specific system, you may want to study it to glean the principles you would like to use. My impression of the outliner users that quote *GTD* is that they have done just that: adapted some of the principles rather than the method itself:

- Keep the lowest level of granularity tasks that you can do in one cycle. Allen believes this to be 20 minutes, but my own experience differs.
- Track everything.
- Set up periodic reminders based on your own level of task recall. Most users interpret this to be daily for fine-grained tasks and monthly for coarse granularity, producing the magic number of 43 ticklers (31 days plus 12 months).

The goals in designing your own system are simplicity, consistency, and integration with tools that work the way you think. Meanwhile, you may want to look at how the *Getting Things Done* method has been employed with *ATPO*-mentioned outliners. Discussion on this is usually in blogs so I won't link directly to them here, but try Google on “Getting Things Done” (or “GTD”) plus Tinderbox, Hog Bay Notebook, OmniOutliner, VoodooPad, Circus Ponies NoteBook, or NoteTaker. You'll be surprised how many relevant and interesting hits you get.

Matt Vance has [summarized the method](#)⁵ if you want a simple outline of the official elements. There are lots of other sites with more generic and possibly more useful information. Of them, [43 Folders](#)⁶ may be the best.

1. <http://www.atpm.com/10.12/atpo.shtml>

2. <http://www.davidco.com>

3. <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0142000280/aboutthisparticu>

4. <http://www-306.ibm.com/software/lotus/>

5. <http://www.minezone.org/wiki/MVance/GettingThingsDone>

6. <http://www.43folders.com>

Why Outlining?

What's so special about the outlining paradigm in this space anyway? After all, database facilities are richer and more flexible. But the game is to use the lightest-weight coherent collection of modeling, visualization, and manipulation tools that does the job. It has to be lightweight and easy to use, lest the task of managing tasks overwhelms.

“Modeling” includes capturing the task and related information and dependencies.

“Visualization” is the process of “seeing” and understanding where you stand and what you have to-do.

“Manipulation” is all the stuff you do to perform (possibly with audit-ability), redefine, delegate, discard, and so on.

Perhaps no other application category follows the hacker's law of complexity as this one: the more power, the higher the learning bump, and the more effort goes into everyday operation. My own approach to software generally is to always start with the most capable (and difficult to learn) application in a class, even if my needs are slight. That gives me room to grow; after all, most of us really don't know how we *would* work if constraints that seem permanent and natural are removed.

But this one category (and perhaps passive applications like RSS newsreaders) is different for most people. Most of us seek out task managers because we aren't as good at managing our time as we'd like. In that case, the theory of minimum effort comes into play: that means most of you won't want the baggage and trouble of a heavy application.

I need to mention a particular effect with this type of software. My research group was interested at one time in “around-the-world” engineering. In retrospect, it was based on a stupid assumption, but the idea resulted from many enterprises having people all over the globe. What if you ran an engineering project with three teams so that your US-based engineers would work on a problem all day long (8 hours) then pass it to a Japanese team who would give it another 8 hours, and then to a European team, and back to the Americans?

We actually did this on a large scale and got amazing improvements in speed and quality, greater than an order of magnitude by both measures. It turns out that the improvements didn't come at all from the extra resources applied or any particular method, but from the enforced communication. We forced everyone to model their tasks clearly enough for someone across the globe to understand well enough to pick up the work.

As it turned out, forcing people to think about what they do and why they do it was where the improvements came from; that plus the fact that people liked to wrap up small pieces before going home because finishing the work was easier than communicating what needed to be done. The extra people, as it turned out, were actually a drag. It worked better if the second and third shifts did nothing or were placebo humans.

The point here is that the task managers can help in managing tasks, for sure. But they are probably more useful in forcing you to be explicit about what you are doing and what the consequences of your plan will be.

Simple outliners have only one way of showing relationships, by tucking things under other things. The basic hook of outlining is that it is extremely simple to make relationships, and move around various levels of detail. On this basic notion, different implementors add all sorts of helpful extras which we'll look at in a moment.

I think the best way to proceed in this column is to start with the simplest implementations and work through to the more capable and/or specialized tools. Therefore, I've broken this survey into three parts:

- Task management using ordinary outliners.
- Lightweight dedicated “to-do” list managers (that leverage outlining).
- Full-featured task managers. We are lucky this column was delayed six weeks because in that time, some very interesting new entries in this category have been released.

Ordinary Outliners for Task Management

You know why concrete is the most widely used building material in the industrial world? Because it tolerates abuse by the people pouring it, because it can be so amazingly flexible in how it can be used (ships *and* bridges, imagine!), and because it is soulless. It takes on the character of what the user chooses it to be. Such also are outliners, and *any* outliner can be a serviceable task manager.

Even the most primitive outliners—any outliner on the *ATPO* tracker list—can be used to arrange a to-do list. The beauty of outlining is that you can focus on any detail and use the same view to see the elements of the whole project. Many outliners allow you to use checkboxes as labels so you can check off items as they are completed.

You might wonder why anyone would do such a thing (have checkboxes). Once a task is done, you no longer need to be reminded of it and can delete it. But lots of good research shows that many folks are better off keeping the dross of completed items; you can maintain enthusiasm for attacking small tasks if you can see that they amount to significant progress over time and that progress is shown as checked off items in the larger structure.

There's quite a science behind this simple notion of breaking tasks into subtasks. Most folks don't get much into it; after all, the best way to think about things is usually how they occur to you. But if you are interested in diving in, that science is maintained by the Work Breakdown Structure community. Like so much in this area, it was originally developed by the US military but since has become adopted

and greatly refined in the civil sector. You can check the [Project Management Institute](http://www.pmi.org/info/PP_CompletedProjectsWBS.asp)¹ for some details on this—or even the official [Department of Defense standard](http://www.acq.osd.mil/pm/newpolicy/wbs/mil_hdbk_881/mil_hdbk_881.htm)².

That defense standard has been sullied in dozens of ways; for instance, when I was in the defense sector, I saw contractor software that broke subtasks down so that they could be distributed among key congressional districts (to ensure funding, you see). But some elements of this are worth looking at: all the subtasks at a certain level should be of the same size; all the subtasks should be dependent only on siblings; (if you are collaborating) all subtasks need to have the property of being exhaustively definable (though they rarely are) and definitively completable—meaning there is no ambiguity over when it the task is performed. Each task must include the link to another task if one is required; for instance, if a task is to make a part that someone else will use, the task must consist of making the part as well as ensuring that the next guy gets it.

Particular Outliners

Enough about that. Most *ATPO* readers already use one or more outliners, including at least one we call a power outliner. If that is true, there's good reason to integrate your task management needs into one of these. Obviously, the learning time is greatly reduced, but the greater benefit is likely from integration of the tasks (the work) and meta-tasks (the task manager).

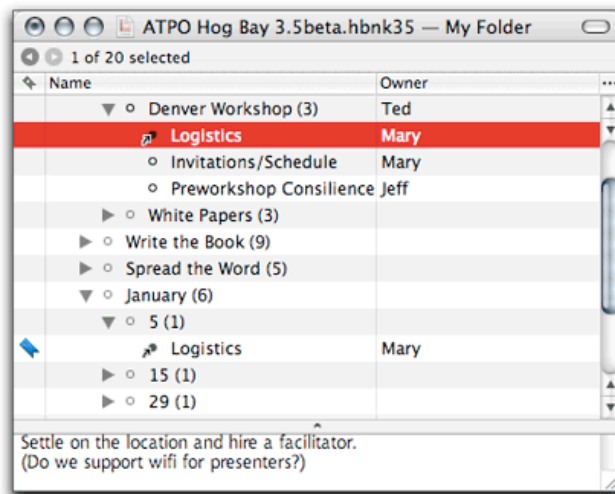
By this I mean that if you use an outliner, chances are you use it to do work, probably some of the work that the to-do list tracks. Integrating these is not just a matter of economy; there are many cases where integration is beneficial. For instance, if you are writing a report and that report requires some research or preparation, you can in the same environment have an area that lists the work to be done, contains the notes and resources used in the work, and contains the writing you are doing to write the report. All of these can link to the others in appropriate and useful ways.

Many of the power outliners have features that support task tracking. I'll mention a few here briefly. I'm sure that enthusiasts of various techniques will chime in with all the stuff I'm not mentioning (and correct me where I goof). These are listed in increasing cost. I'm just touching on special capabilities of interest to task management. We've dealt with their full outlining characteristics before. As I say, I'm hoping that the brevity of the overview will be supplemented by readers who are enthusiasts of one product or another.

Hog Bay Notebook³ (\$20)

There's no question that of the power outliners, Hog Bay provides the most capable outliner at the lowest cost. Among these features is the clone, which allows you to enter a task in two areas: according to the work breakdown and according to the date. These clones aren't automatic or rule-based like you can get elsewhere so you'll have to arrange things manually. Alternatively, you can use note-to-note links for much the same functionality.

The screenshot shows the version 3.5 beta which adds columns, but doesn't yet have the good style support version 3 does.



Hog Bay Notebook

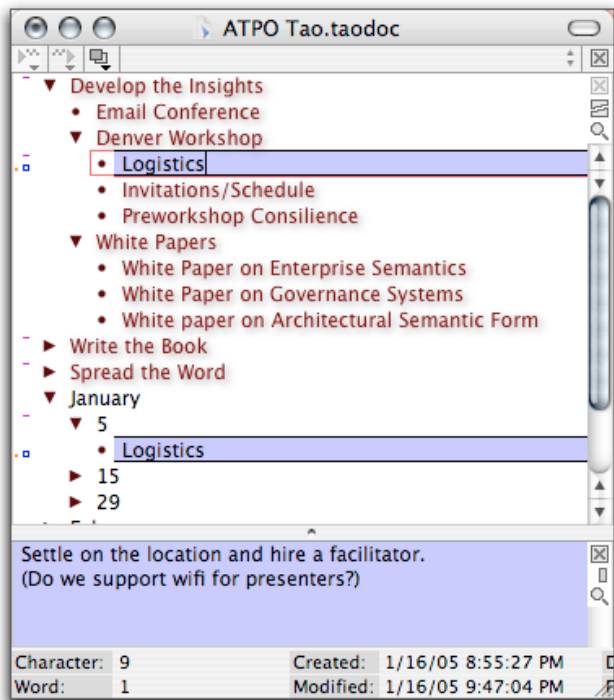
1. http://www.pmi.org/info/PP_CompletedProjectsWBS.asp

2. http://www.acq.osd.mil/pm/newpolicy/wbs/mil_hdbk_881/mil_hdbk_881.htm

3. http://www.hogbaysoftware.com/products/hog_bay_notebook.php

Tao¹ (\$30)

Tao is turning into something quite refined so far as outlining functionality. In terms of task management—as with Hog Bay—it also supports clones and links (and bookmarks and tags).

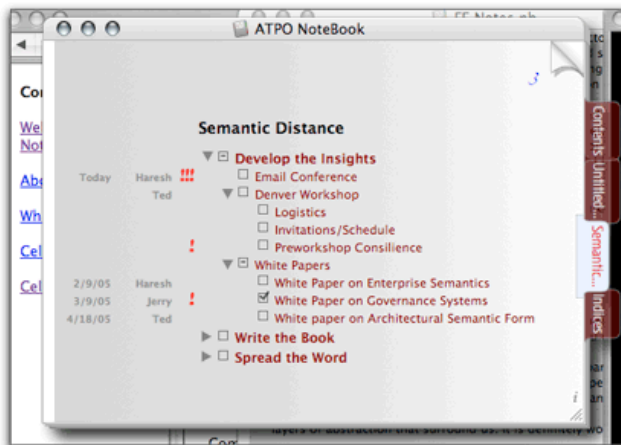


TAO

Circus Ponies NoteBook² (\$50)

Together with several outliners, NoteBook supports special columns for task management. The screenshot shows due date, keywords (here used to assign people), and priority (the one, two, or three explanation marks). I've also shown checkboxes, which as you see have intelligence, like OmniOutliner's (if some but not all subtasks are checked, the parent's box has a dash).

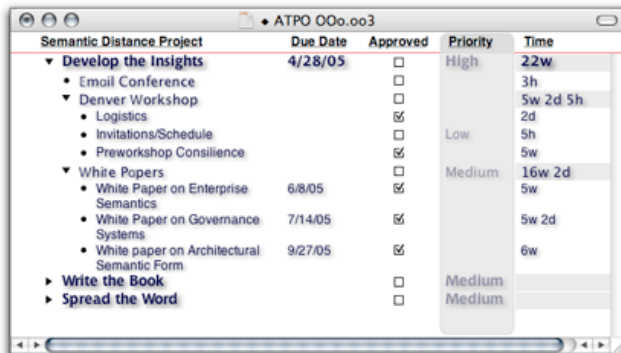
NoteBook can do sophisticated sorts on all these columns at once, and has a "superfind" that can be used to effectively build a clone outline as a report of tasks however you want them presented (like by day).



NoteBook

OmniOutliner Pro³ (\$70, with a junior version for \$40)

If you use OmniOutliner Pro, you can take advantage of its use of task-friendly columns in addition to the many other features. You can sort on these columns so that high priority or immediately pending tasks are collected. The screenshot shows a few of the possible column types, including the duration column that automatically sums the time requirements of subtasks. OmniOutliner doesn't yet support clones and internal links, but almost any effect you need can be produced via its complete AppleScript support over column values.



OmniOutliner

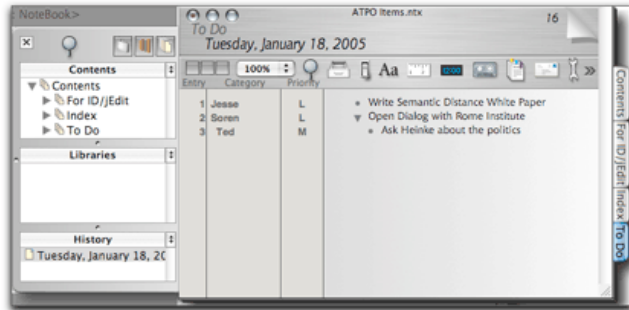
AquaMinds NoteTaker⁴ (\$70)

Superficially, NoteTaker looks like NoteBook, but the support for tasks is different. NoteTaker supports item-to-item links (even among notebooks) which some people use to link tasks and days. NoteTaker isn't set up for general task management. Instead, it has a nice to-do list function. You create special to-

1. <http://blue-beach-systems.com/Products/Software/TAO/>
2. <http://www.circusponies.com>

3. <http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnioutliner/pro/>
4. <http://www.aquaminds.com>

do pages, one for each day you wish. To-do items are listed and prioritized. Items that are not checked as done are carried over to the next day and added to items on that page. You can tag items with keywords (here assignees) and gather by keyword.

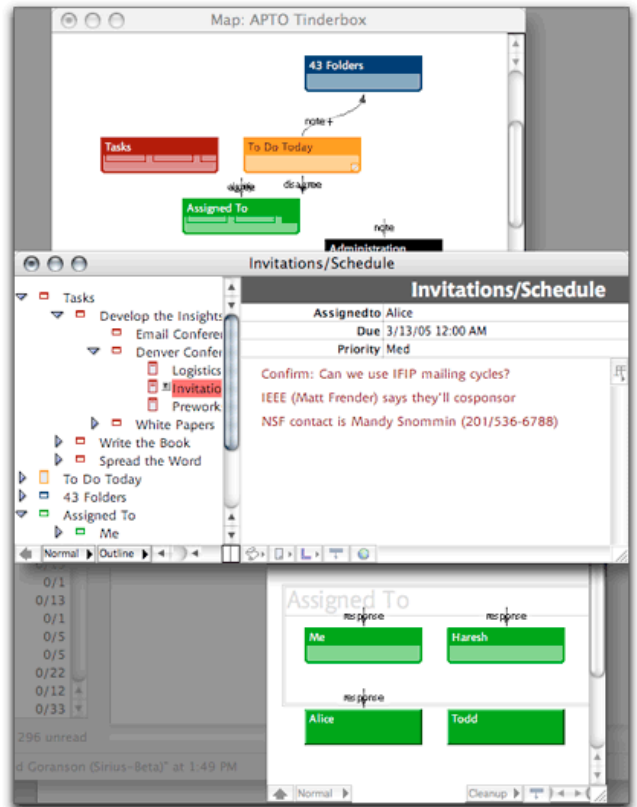


NoteTaker

[Tinderbox¹](http://www.eastgate.com/Tinderbox/) (\$165)

Tinderbox has rule-based clones. The rules can evaluate over links (which are typed), text, and the unlimited attributes (which are also typed, but there is no “duration” type). It is the only outliner with this capability so far. (I’m advised that we may soon have this elsewhere.) So it is the most capable in bending to a system which tracks tasks.

The common approach is to capture tasks as with other outliners. But you need not mechanically copy or sort them into to-do lists, assignments, resources, priorities, and so on. All that can be done by automatically creating and sorting clones.



Tinderbox

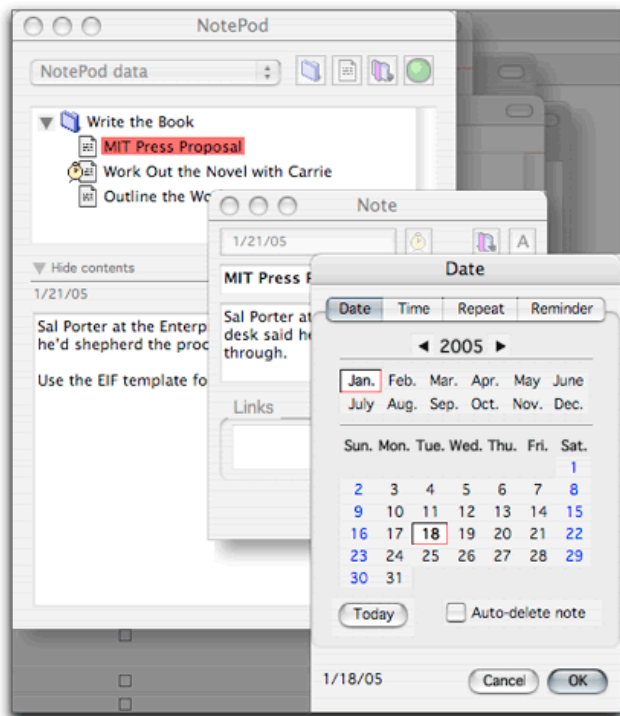
Lightweight Outlining To-Do List Managers

Typical *ATPO* users are also characterized by their use of several outliners when a targeted application does the job best. There are lots of to-do list managers, many more than we can consider in one sitting, but we’ll only look at the few that also leverage outlining.

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

NotePod¹ (\$15)

NotePod is a simple to-do list manager with a very nice alarm mechanism. Each note has an area for text and a separate area for links. Some *ATPO* readers use this to link to relevant documents of other, task-heavy outliners associated with the work.

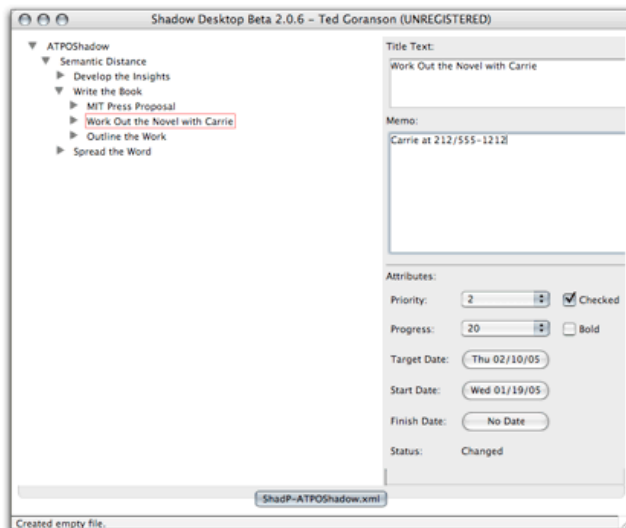


NotePod

Shadow Plan² (probably \$23)

ShadowPlan is a mature and widely used to-do list manager centered on the Palm. It also has a popular Windows desktop version. There is a free Mac OS X, beta which is similar to the Windows version. The attributes (visible in a separate pane, unlike the columns used by most others in this section) are: category, tag (same as "mark"), priority, progress, target date, start date, and finish date. Not all of these are accessible in the Mac beta. It has checkboxes and direct links to Palm databases, including the Palm contact database, but of course those don't work on the desktop.

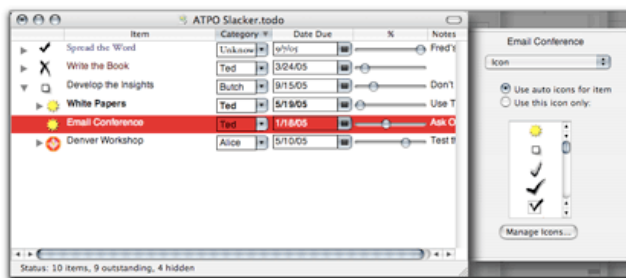
The whole thing is geared to an enhanced experience on the Palm. You can filter any of these attributes. The native format is XML.



Shadow Plan

Slacker³ (\$25)

Slacker uses outlining but has poor outline manipulation controls; for instance, you cannot demote a task after it is created. Its columns are untyped categories (which the user defines), due date, and percent completed. A drawer holds an inspector that displays and sets the values of each column. The screenshot uses categories to assign tasks to people. Alarms (several handy types) can be set for upcoming tasks, and tied to the various icons.



Slacker

Process⁴ (\$25)

Process is new and a sweet piece of work. I wouldn't recommend it over many others for general outlining, but it has a succinct optimized design for task management. As an outliner, it supports labels and columns. It does not have named styles, scripting, internal links, or clones. Keyboard

1. <http://personalpages.tds.net/~graffix/software/notepod/index.html>
2. <http://www.codejedi.com/shadowplan/>

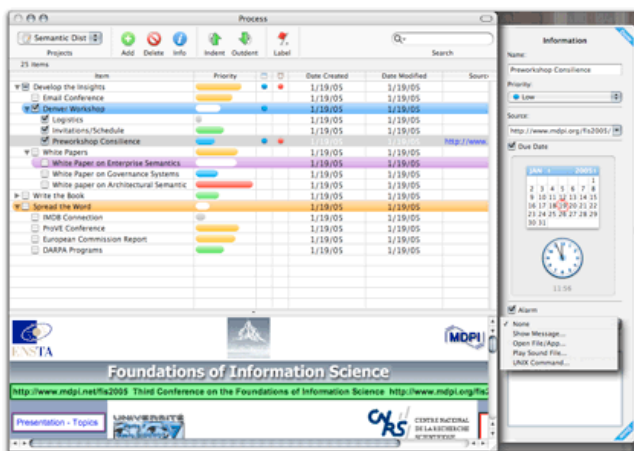
3. <http://www.mindlube.com/products/slacker/index.html>
4. <http://www.jumsoft.com/process/>

control of outline functions is scanty. You can see it as a two-pane outliner with columns for task support and a task property inspector in a drawer.

There are two things that make this application stand out. The first is that in addition to OPML and OmniOutliner import and export, you can export to your iPod. The second: as with any two-pane outliner, you have a notes pane where you can enter text and drag images. But with Process, you can choose instead to display certain files by reference. It's a good idea. With an ordinary power outliner, you can enter a link to a file which when clicked opens the file in its own application. Or with some you can display the contents of a file or Web page.

In this case, you can display them (but only one) in context with the task. It is a clever and potentially useful idea. However, only certain files can be viewed, those that can be "previewed" in the Finder: RTE, images, Web pages and PDFs. That leaves out Word, Keynote, OmniGraffle and so on, a host of stuff that you might actually use.

But it is cool if you can stick to images, PDFs, URLs, and RTFs in your projects. If the text file is RTE, you can edit it directly in the note field. The screenshot shows an associated Web page.

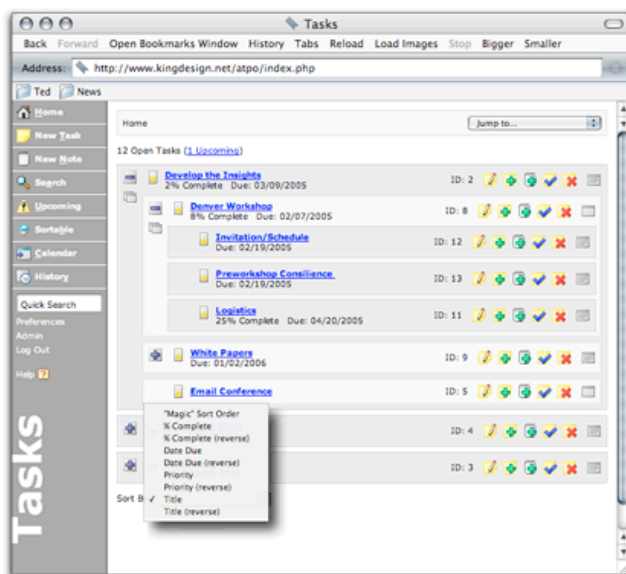


Process

What we're surveying here is the version called Tasks, the little brother of [Tasks Pro](#)³, the professional version that handles enterprise collaboration. Tasks is for Web-based personal task management. Alarms in this case are e-mail messages, and progress can be routed to a task blog. You can link to files on your machine, and links to URLs are natural of course.

It doesn't support categories or attributes, so the sorts are less varied than others in this category. I'm willing to guess that most *ATPO* readers haven't tried this. You owe it to yourself to check it out; this business of Web outlining and a relationship with the blogosphere may take some time to sink in, but I'm willing to bet task management is the wedge that makes it happen.

The screenshots don't really do it justice because the magic is in the blogging interface (with b2, Blogger, DruPal, Moveable Type, or WordPress). We're going to come back to Tasks and TasksPro in an upcoming column that takes a deeper look at the Frontier/WebOutliner space.



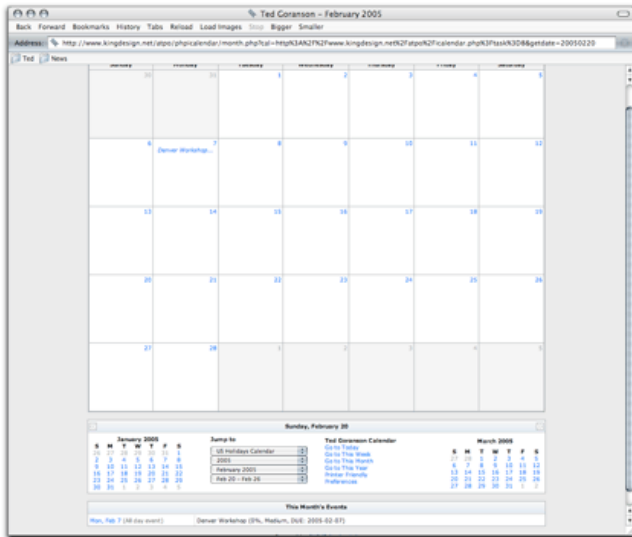
Tasks Main

Tasks¹ (\$30)

This isn't a Mac application at all; instead, it is a browser-based application. It behaves much like the others in this group except the information is stored on a server, and of course the interface isn't Aqua. The \$30 version is the "personal" edition; there are free and enterprise editions as well. It is implemented in open source [PHP](#)² and can be installed on pretty much any machine and operating system, possibly that obsolete Mac you put [Yellow Dog Linux](#) on.

1. <http://www.alexking.org/index.php?content=software/tasks/content.php>
 2. <http://www.php.net>

3. <http://www.taskspro.com>



Tasks Calendar

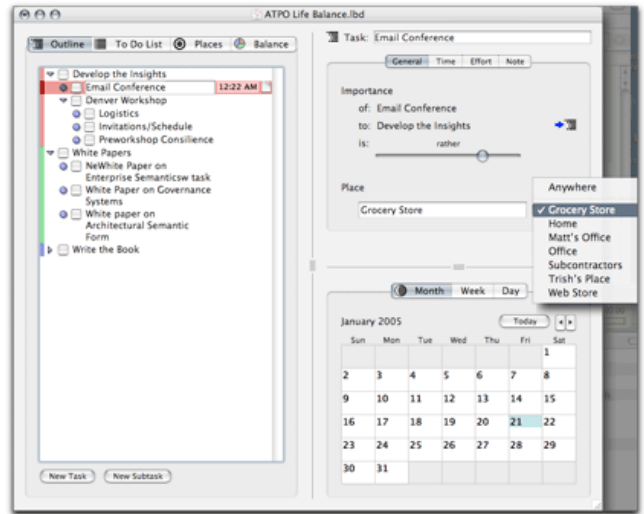
Life Balance¹ (\$65 without Palm, \$80 with)

The final “lightweight” task manager adds something unique to the mix. The unavoidable fact is that most of us with to-do lists use them to help us manage paying work. If they are set up properly, they make that work run more smoothly but at a cost. Work tasks will now have order while the rest of your personal life goes to hell.

Also, when you have a list that puts a couple items at the top, you work those items only. If you are not careful in how you structure things (and who is?), you’ll always be spending big chunks of time on tasks that might better have been done a little at a time over months. Life Balance (which has a Palm version) addresses these problems.

The Life Balance window is clear in its design. You enter tasks and subtasks in the left under “outline” view. The inspector on the right (and the calendar below) are used to assign attributes. You have some expected attributes: due date, lead time, amount of effort, and note. And you have some rather unexpected ones too: whether subtasks should be done in order, how much lead time is needed, importance of the subtask to its parent, and the notion of “place.” You define places, which can have subplaces! Places are where tasks are performed and could include home, shops, office, subcontractors, and so on. Places themselves have details, like when they are open, so that a task doesn’t appear on your sorted to-do list if the place (say a shop or the office) is closed.

The to-do list panel is more sophisticated than a usual sort. You set a preference determining how strongly the application “encourages” you to balance your tasks. That balance is factored into the to-do list sort algorithm. A pie chart report lets you know how balanced you have been.



Life Balance

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Next month, we’ll finish up with “Full Featured Task Managers.”

The ATPO Tracker

The outlining world has been active.

NoteTaker²

AquaMinds has released a long-awaited update to its notebook application. A [previous column](#)³ looked at NoteTaker and its sibling Circus Ponies [NoteBook](#)⁴. At that time, NoteTaker didn’t particularly break from the pack of heavy-duty outliners, though it offered many features. You may recall I noted it leans more toward a freeform database than a traditional outliner.

Since then, NoteTaker’s AppleScript support has matured. This is one of ATPO’s most valued commitments because it is one way for power users to expand the reach of the application. Now with this release, they’ve added something that no other power outliner has yet: a plug-in API.

You’ll recall that NoteTaker doesn’t differentiate between headers and notes like most of the other guys: the application just has one kind of citizen, which can be used either way. Previously, the content of these “entries” was limited to what AquaMinds supported: text, the normal lineup of Mac multimedia, Web pages (via WebKit), spoken notes, and freehand sketches (created elsewhere). With this plug-in

1. <http://www.llamagraphics.com/LB/LifeBalanceTop.html>

2. <http://www.aquaminds.com>

3. <http://www.atpm.com/10.05/atpo.shtml>

4. <http://www.circusponies.com>

architecture, third parties can write Java applets (possibly for sale) that allow creation of anything, and the result will appear as an entry. Entries can be static (like a freehand sketch) or computed, drawing information from elsewhere in the notebook or in accessible files.

Included with the new release are four example plug-ins: a freehand drawing tool, a map creation tool that visually displays the structure of a notebook or part of one, a tool that queries a database and reports the result as an entry, and a demo calculator that operates on children entries.

So far, the tools seem rudimentary—we couldn't download them for evaluation—but the potential is clear: we now have our first outliner-defined open platform for content. One can easily imagine immediately useful things like tables that have content collected from notebooks and applet linkages to full-blown applications like OmniGraffle, FileMaker, and Keynote.

Also, with this upgrade Notetaker addresses a few user interface problems (drag and spring-loaded stuff) whose omission bothered us. And the XLST export mechanism is now mature. (We'll do a column on XLST export.)

[OmniOutliner¹](#)

The Omni Group has finally released OmniOutliner Pro 3, which many of us have seen through a lengthy public beta period. As with [OmniGraffle²](#), they've chosen to split the product into a "pro" and non-pro version for \$70 and \$40 respectively.

They've added a few features that improve the outlining experience: folded editing (where only the first line of a note is displayed); inline display where notes appear under their headers instead of one at a time in a separate pane (which remains an option); a clipping service like many of their competitors; a "section" drawer that allows quick navigation; and voice notes. These are notable. Clones and internal links will come eventually, they promise.

But that's not the earth-shattering news. They've greatly improved their AppleScript support to the point that it saturates just about the whole application. And they've added an XSLT transformation capability; that pretty much means that if your target is an XML format or has similar structure, your OmniOutliner can get there. In effect, this means that OmniOutliner Pro, combined with the already extraordinary column support, is the other open platform in the outlining world.

But what gets *my* toes curled is all of this in the context of their new support for styles. *ATPO* likes structure. Outlining is one way of structuring; columns provide others and styles—especially named styles—yet another. Links and clones would be others. OmniOutliner now support styles associated with outline levels, like the old MORE did eons

1. <http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnioutliner/>
2. <http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/>

ago and OmniOutliner 2 did, but in a more controlled way. And it has named styles, and partial styles like "bold and redden this," that can be applied wherever you like. Styles can be collected in recallable templates. Great. Scripts and XSLT operators can see the styles.

All this is wrapped in the Omni Group's usual attention to user interface design. I think these guys are the leaders in Mac user interface expertise: their applications just feel more Mac-like than Apple's. In this case, there's all sorts of new user feedback: outline manipulation is, after all, a tactile experience. Like your first dip into Aqua, some of the indicators may seem garish at first, but the impression passes.

An upcoming *ATPO* will feature OmniOutliner Pro and others (like Tao) in an examination of styles and workflow. We showed a screenshot of the OmniOutliner Pro in the task manager discussion above.

[Flow³](#)

[SubEthaEdit⁴](#) impressed us all when it appeared. It combined a capable text editor with Apple's Rendezvous to allow collaborative development of documents. It surely seemed whizz-bang. But many collaborative situations involve lots of collaborative documents and different types of documents, as well as documents associated with managing the collaborations. Near-time Flow moved to address this problem using similar technologies with more structure.

It isn't an outliner yet, but it did appear on the *ATPO* radar in its [first incarnation⁵](#) because it supported folding—and in an unrelated area—indented lists. It might cooperate with many of your favorite outliners because it accepts OPML as input, but only as RSS feeds. *ATPO* keeps an eye on it because it is manifest destiny that it develop outliner capabilities some time, and meanwhile, it is so frippin' ambitious.

The original user interface made sense but was clumsy in operation. At one point they added blogging, both as a source and result, and *ATPO* remarked that all of a sudden a whole new set of possibilities appeared: true, edited collaborative blogs.

Now there is a new version that refines the user interface, so it both makes sense and works. But you'll need to view the included video tutorials to find your way around it. We won't show a screenshot because the explanation of it would be too long.

[TextMate⁶](#)

We've remarked before about outlining becoming a part of advanced text editors for coders, like with [jEdit⁷](#). Recently, MacroMates released version 1 of a new text editor aimed to compete squarely with [BBEdit⁸](#).

3. <http://www.near-time.com/PRODUCTS/flow.htm>

4. <http://www.codingmonkeys.de/subethaedit/>

5. <http://www.atpm.com/10.08/atpo.shtml>

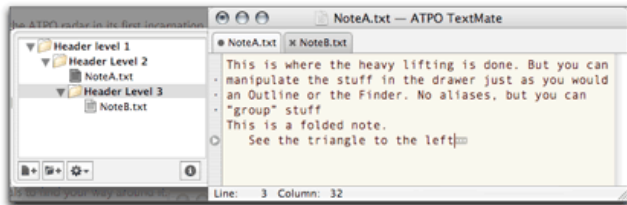
6. <http://macromates.com>

7. <http://www.jedit.org>

8. <http://www.barebones.com/products/bbedit/index.shtml>

There are lots of editing features to compare between the two, but that's beside the point here. TextMate is a Cocoa application that partially integrates with the Finder. You can start a project and add notes that literally become documents in the Finder, but which are manipulable in a drawer just like an outliner. TextMate "folders" do not appear in the Finder. This is a step toward the "Finder Integration" I've been touting for some time. If you want lightweight outlining but need a heavier editor than even the power outliners provide, check this out.

TextMate also supports folding of outlines within the document. It is not quite full outlining, but it is handy as heck and goes pretty far toward outlines within the outline.



TextMate

Many of the *ATPO* outliners are Cocoa applications: Circus Ponies NoteBook; Curio; Deep Notes; DEVONthink; Hog Bay; MyMIND; NoteTaker; OmniOutliner; SH-Out; Tao; VooDooPad. Any of these can employ [TextExtras](#)¹ and other services which extend the editor. TextExtras is free and includes an outliner indentation management tool.

[Inspiration](#)²

The venerable Inspiration has a free update to 7.6, which adds Palm synchronization plus interactive whiteboard and tablet integration.

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In the queue for future *ATPO* columns are: a comparison of TAO and OmniOutliner Pro 3 as an excuse to explore the role of styles in outlining; an exploration of workflows (primarily outliners to publishing applications and formats) as an excuse to explore XML and XLST; and some introduction to AppleScripting outliners, including non-scriptable outliners. Stay tuned and send help.

1. <http://www.lorax.com/FreeStuff/TextExtras.html>
2. <http://www.inspiration.com/productinfo/inspiration/index.cfm>

Copyright © 2005 Ted Goranson, tgoranson@atpm.com. Ted Goranson has been thirty years in the visualization and model abstraction field. He is slowly beginning a [new user interface project](#)³.



3. <http://www.sirius-beta.com/ALICE/>

Customizing The Mac OS X User Interface

by Scott Chitwood, <http://www.ResExcellence.com>

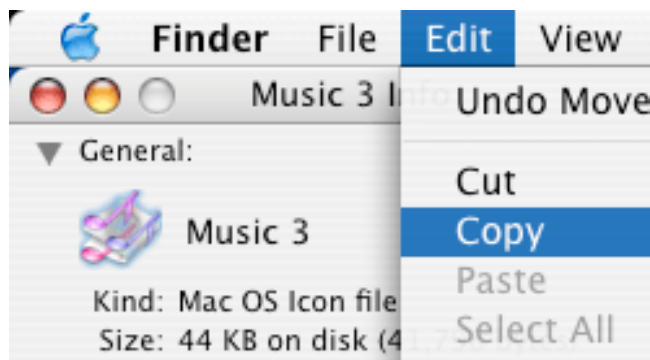
Part I: Icons

The heart of any Macintosh user interface customization begins with a personalized selection of icons that suit the taste and needs of the individual user. There are several approaches you can take for changing icons, and there's a huge talent pool of icon artists whose works offer an amazing array of icon styles to choose from.

Before we get started you'll need to download some icons; [The Iconfactory](http://www.iconfactory.com)¹, [ResExcellence](http://www.ResExcellence.com)², [widget:widget](http://www.widgetwidget.com)³, and [InterfaceLift.com](http://www.interfacelift.com)⁴ are all great places to browse for icons.

Using Copy and Paste in the Mac OS X Finder is your first option for changing Apple's default icons to something more personal. This method allows you to paste a custom icon over any existing folder that you've created in your Home folder, i.e., a Pacman icon on your games folder, or maybe Mario! Here's how it's done.

Highlight a custom icon, then in the File menu choose Get Info. Click on the icon pictured in the window, then select Copy in the Edit menu. Close the info window. Repeat the procedure for your target icon, selecting Paste from the Edit menu. That's it!

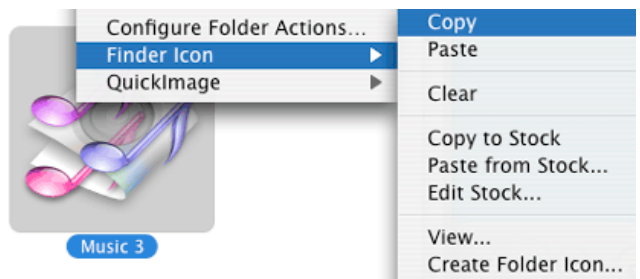


Get Info Window

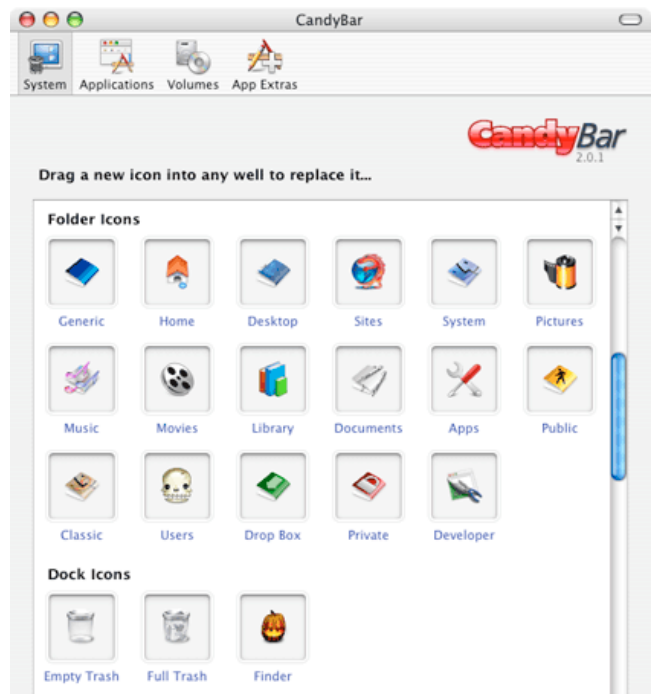
If you decide that you'd like to revert to Apple's default icon, you can do that at any time by choosing Cut from the Edit menu. You couldn't dream of a simpler method of restoration!

You can also change application icons using the same method, and a few of the default icons in your Home folder, too!

If you'd like to automate the process via a contextual menu item, grab a copy of Hideki Itoh's freeware [FinderIconCM](http://www.picture.com/macosx.php)⁵. You'll be copying and pasting in a flash! An added feature of FinderIcon is its storage well, which holds up to 80 frequently used custom icons that are ready to paste at the click of a mouse.



FinderIconCM



CandyBar

As long as we're on the subject of Itoh, let's take a quick side trip and look at another of his freeware tools, [QuickImage CM](http://www.picture.com/macosx.php)⁶. This handy contextual menu item gives you the power

1. <http://www.iconfactory.com>
2. <http://www.ResExcellence.com>
3. <http://www.widgetwidget.com>
4. <http://www.interfacelift.com/icons-mac/>

5. <http://www.picture.com/macosx.php>

to add thumbnail icons to your photos or other image files in a snap! QuickImage also has commands for viewing image files and converting them to formats such as JPEG, PNG, PSD, TIFF, PICT, and BMP.

But what if you want to use custom icons for the Finder, Trash, regular folders, and other system elements? You'll need some assistance from a third-party application to accomplish

6. <http://www.pixtute.com/macosex.php>

that trick! [CandyBar](#)¹ from Panic and The Iconfactory is the best and most flexible solution you'll find. For \$13 you'll get a fantastic amount of control over your system, disk, and application icons.

Of course, the most important thing to remember about using custom icons is to have fun!

1. http://www.iconfactory.com/cb_home.asp

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What to Do With Older Macs, Part 2

Last month, I talked about some ways to [get rid of an older Mac](#)¹ that is no longer your primary machine. Recycling, donating to charity, or passing them on to relatives are all good things to do with older Macs. But maybe you have decided to keep yours a bit longer. If so, this month's column is for you.

If you are looking for case mods, or directions for creating an aquarium from an all-in-one unit, that's not what this is about. I'm talking about relatively simple projects that can extend the useful life of an older Mac. If this sounds like it's for you, read on.

I realize that faster processors and a more stable multi-user operating system might lead some people, particularly home users, to conclude that they have no need for multiple Macs in the same household. Maybe, after reading this article, you will conclude that there's a place for older Macs in your computing family. Here are some of the ideas that have occurred to me.

Create a "Banger"

If you've just gotten a new Mac, you might be afraid of some younger users touching the system. Setting up multiple user accounts might keep little ones from deleting important information, but it won't prevent keyboard and other hardware damage from spills. This might be just the thing for older systems. Little ones can bang away to their hearts' content without fear of damaging your new machine.

Even if the children in your home are a little older and you aren't worried about physical damage, older machines are still useful. OS X does a pretty good job of running older software under Classic, but some software actually runs better on older machines. Several years ago, for example, I owned a game that did not play well on an LC II. The machine was just too slow. On a 300 MHz Blue and White G3, the game was a little too fast. A machine somewhere in the middle would have been just right for the game, but too slow to be useful as my primary machine. There's a lot of good software out there that should run well on older machines.

Create an Education Station

As the kids get a little older and more comfortable with computers, an extra computer may become an important part of doing homework. It doesn't take the most recent, ultra-powerful, word processor to crank out a book report.

Older software often works well for this type of task. Depending upon the age of your children and their level of computer skill you could either use software you already own or purchase a title specifically crafted with children in mind.

When you are setting up an education station, don't limit yourself to just word processing. I can think of many instances where a young student might need to do Web-based research or run some educational software. There is an additional benefit. You will be exposing your children to positive uses of technology. Some states have included exposure to technology as a component of their educational curriculum. These standards often begin in elementary school and require gradually exposing students to increasingly more sophisticated uses of technology.

Get Dedicated

Do you often find that your creative projects that require high-powered processing are interrupted because someone else needs to check e-mail, surf the Web, or chat with friends? If so, set up an older machine dedicated to those tasks. If you don't need the latest e-mail, Web, or chat features an older machine might be a perfect fit. Whether it's DVD burning, scanning, or playing back music, almost any basic task that you do frequently is a good candidate for a dedicated setup. This can be especially helpful if the task requires making frequent changes to the system configuration.

With a little more horsepower and a little thought, you can also do some more creative things. Several months ago, when my VCR stopped working suddenly, I seriously considered using [Eye TV](#)² to turn a Mac into a hard drive-based video recording system. At that time, I didn't have a machine that I could dedicate to that purpose so I didn't give it a try, but given that I wanted to archive some things to DVD it would have been a good idea.

It's Your Serve

Believe it or not, there are many instances where home users might want to set up a server. Given all the possible hardware and software combinations we can't touch on all the specifics here, but it's not that difficult. If you happen to be running OS X you may already have all the server software you need without adding OS X Server. Here are some server ideas to consider.

1. <http://www.atpm.com/11.01/howto.shtml>

2. <http://www.elgato.com>

Setup a Backup Server

If you have multiple machines around, such basic tasks as backups may not get performed regularly. This is the perfect task for a backup server. Once you get the system networked and appropriate software installed, you're ready to go. In this case, you are not terribly concerned about the speed of the server because most modern software permits scheduling the backup at times that are convenient for you. Even if you have large enough volumes of data to require backing up a different system each night, at least you have a reliable system that preserves your data.

Setup a File Server

Several years ago, I set up a home network with multiple Macs and a Windows 98 machine. One Mac was set up as a file server. With file sharing turned on, this arrangement permitted us to put much of our data files on one machine and access that data from any of the other machines. This was really helpful for files that tended to be large and common to both platforms, such as JPEGs. Since this was done under OS 9, we did have to use PCMacLan to allow the machines to "see" each other. Although two machines couldn't access the same file simultaneously, at least we had a consistent storage space. We didn't have to search multiple machines to find the most recent version of a file.

Server as Digital Hub

With a reasonably modern Mac, you could set up a media server that passes multimedia content to either other Macs or to a connected stereo. With a little more work, you could set up a server that allows family from across the country or the world to access the pictures or video that you took on your last vacation.

Setup an Emergency System

Let's face it: even our beloved Macs foul up once in a while. In those cases an "emergency" system might be a good idea. Take an older system and load it with "mission critical" software. If your primary system goes down, you have the option of repairing the primary system immediately or working from the backup system until it's convenient to troubleshoot your primary system.

If you have a notebook that supports FireWire target disk mode, you have a great option for repairing damaged systems. Think of it as a sort of computer medical bag. Load the laptop with appropriate utilities and keep them up-to-date. The next time there's a problem, connect the machines with a FireWire cable and turn on the laptop. Turn on the "damaged" system, holding down the T key to put it in target disk mode. With a little luck, the damaged hard drive will appear on the desktop.

Getting Started

Hopefully this has given you a few ideas. Even a cursory Web search will yield a wide variety of options and possible projects. Here are some things to consider for any project that is going to use an older Mac.

Make a serious assessment of the hardware and software available to you. Make sure that you are aware of any problems the system might have. You want this to work reliably. No one wants a high-maintenance setup.

Don't skip on the advance preparation. Find out the system requirements for software that you are planning to use. Make sure that your older Mac exceeds these requirements. If one of the pieces of software you want to run pushes the limit of the target system, you're likely to be frustrated by a lack of performance each time you try the task you are trying to complete.

Consider loading a clean copy of the OS with just the components needed for the tasks at hand. The more software you load, the more likely it is that software incompatibilities will arise. Test everything and make sure it's stable.

If you are setting up a server to be accessed by people outside of your home, talk to your Internet Service Provider. Some Internet providers have policies that only permit you to run a server with certain types of accounts.

If you're going to set up a server, especially a backup server, consider using external hard drives. Should your trusty server finally be declared unfit for continued use, unplug the drives and connect them to a newer machine.

•••

Hopefully these suggestions will stimulate some thought and creativity. Until next time, the door to the lab is open. Enter at your own risk.

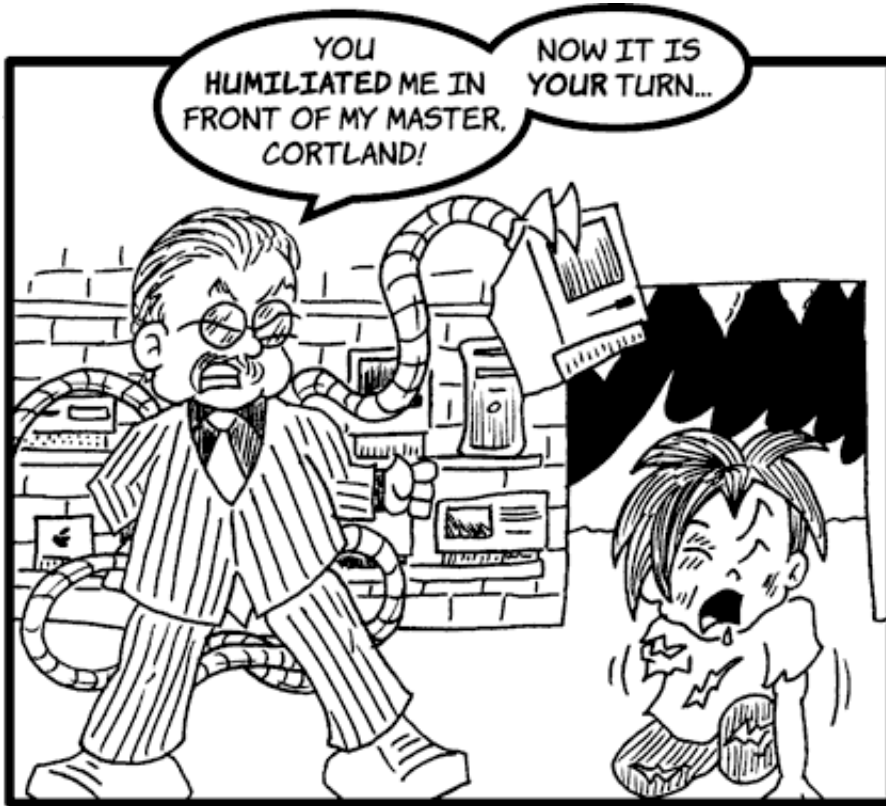


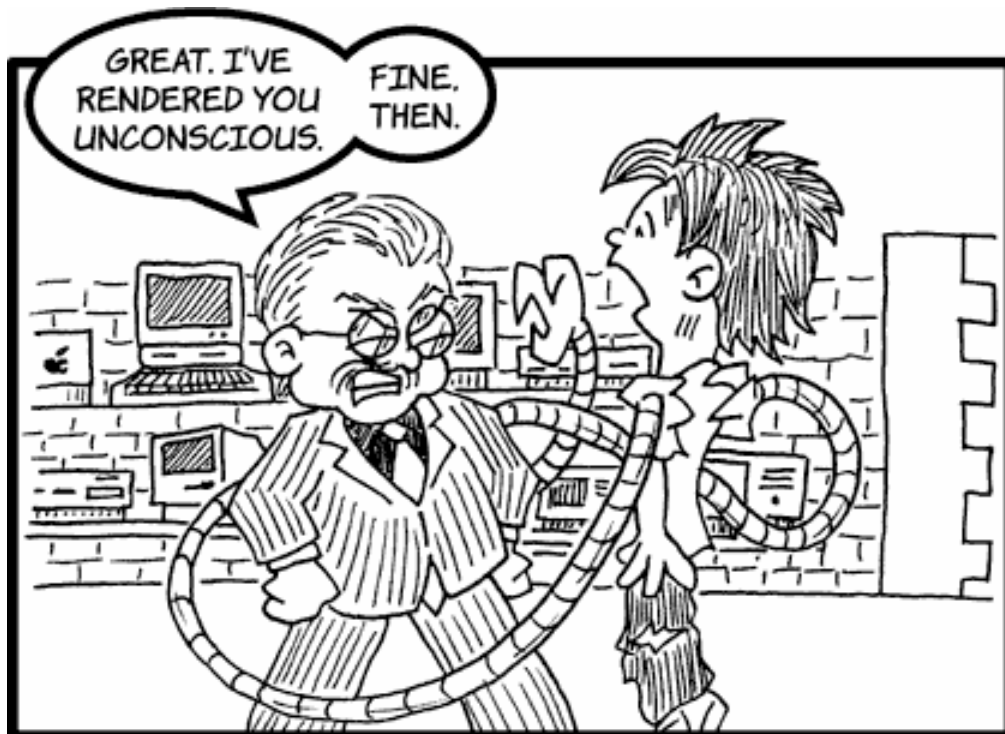
Cartoon: Cortland

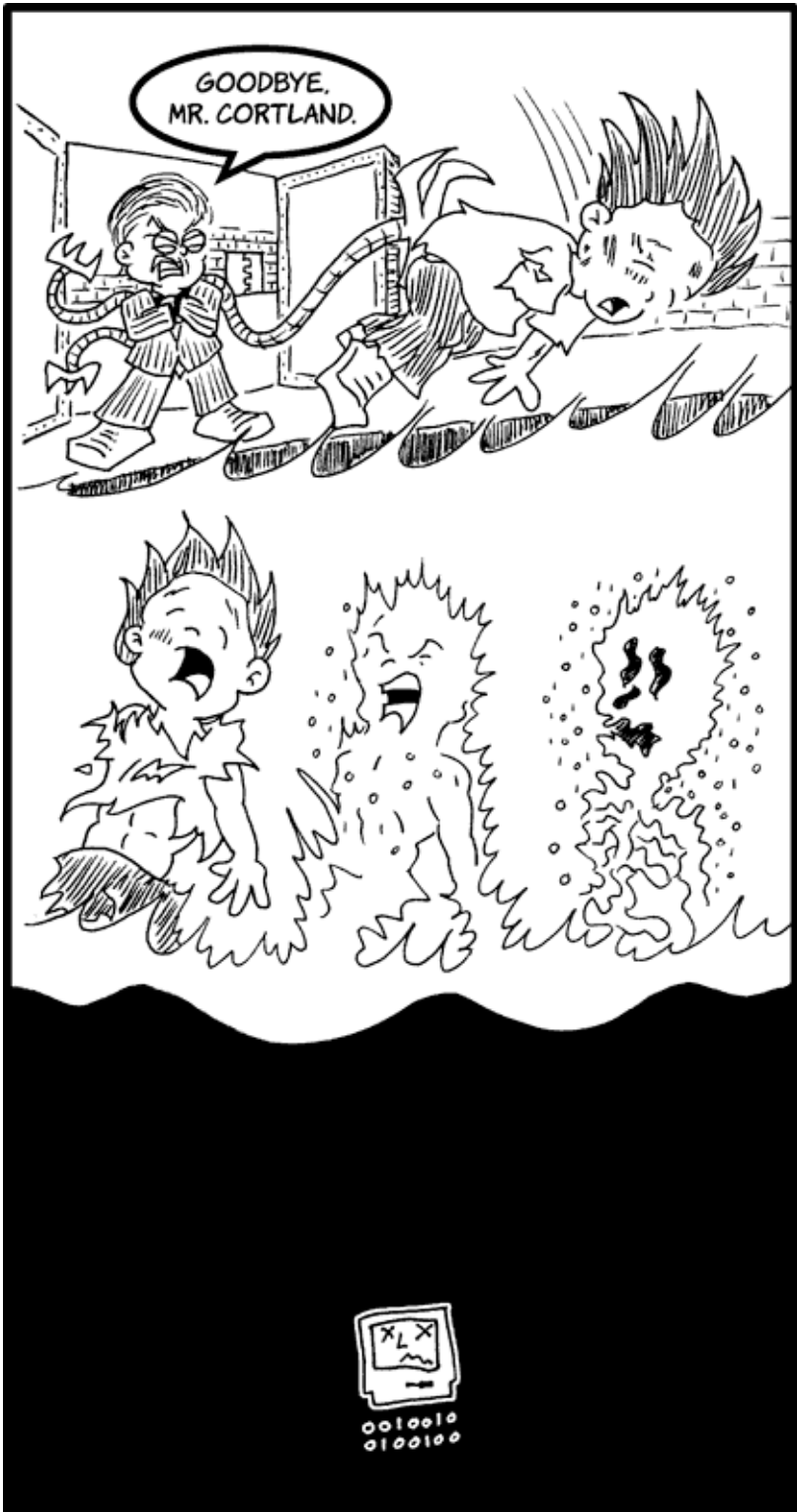
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

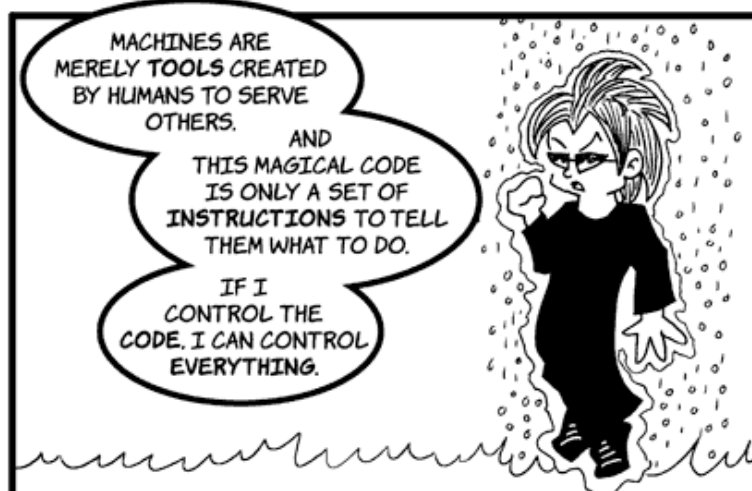
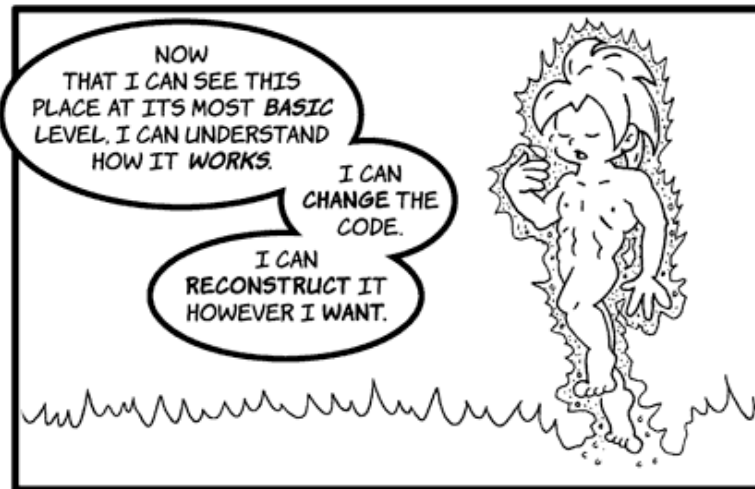
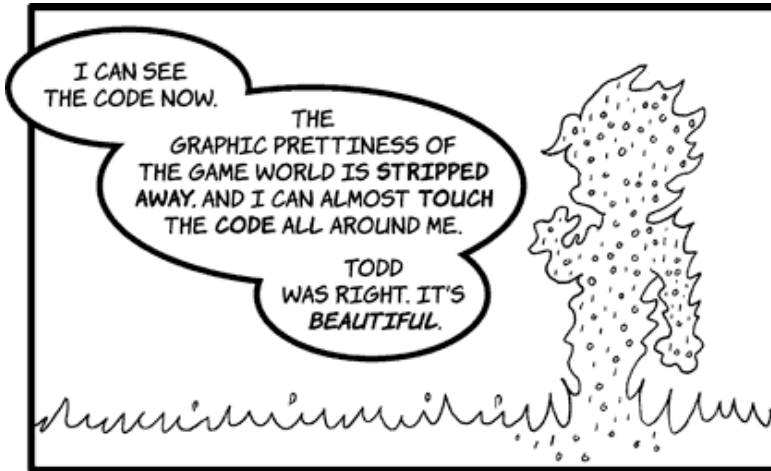




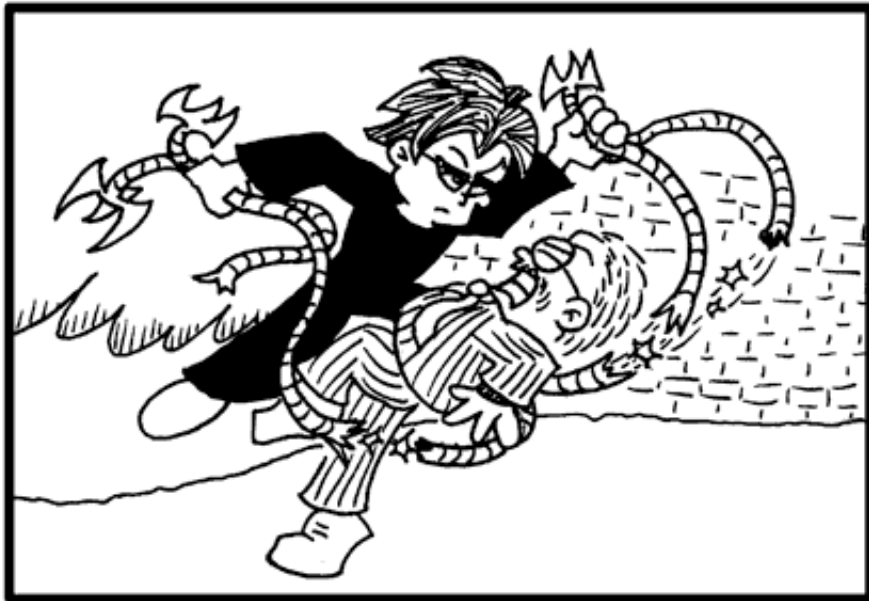
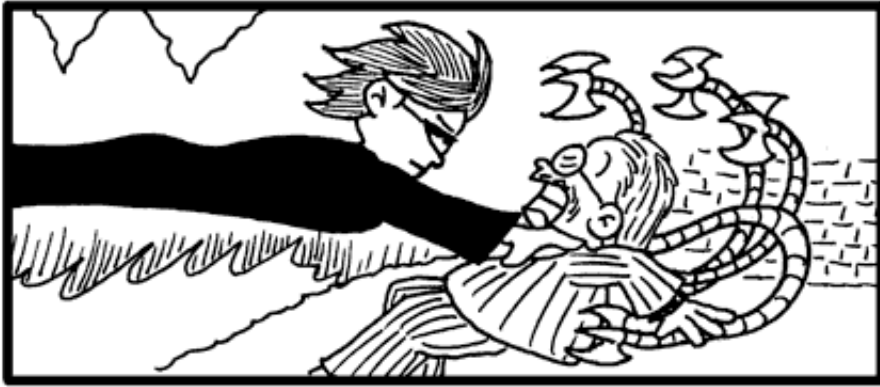
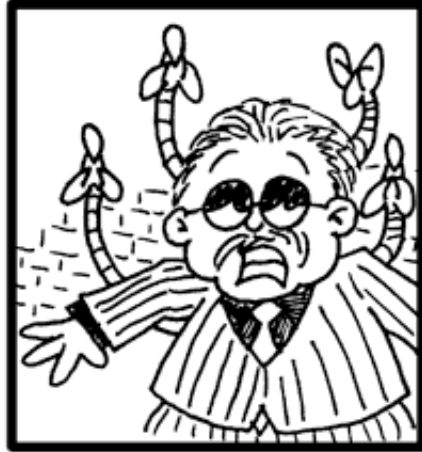


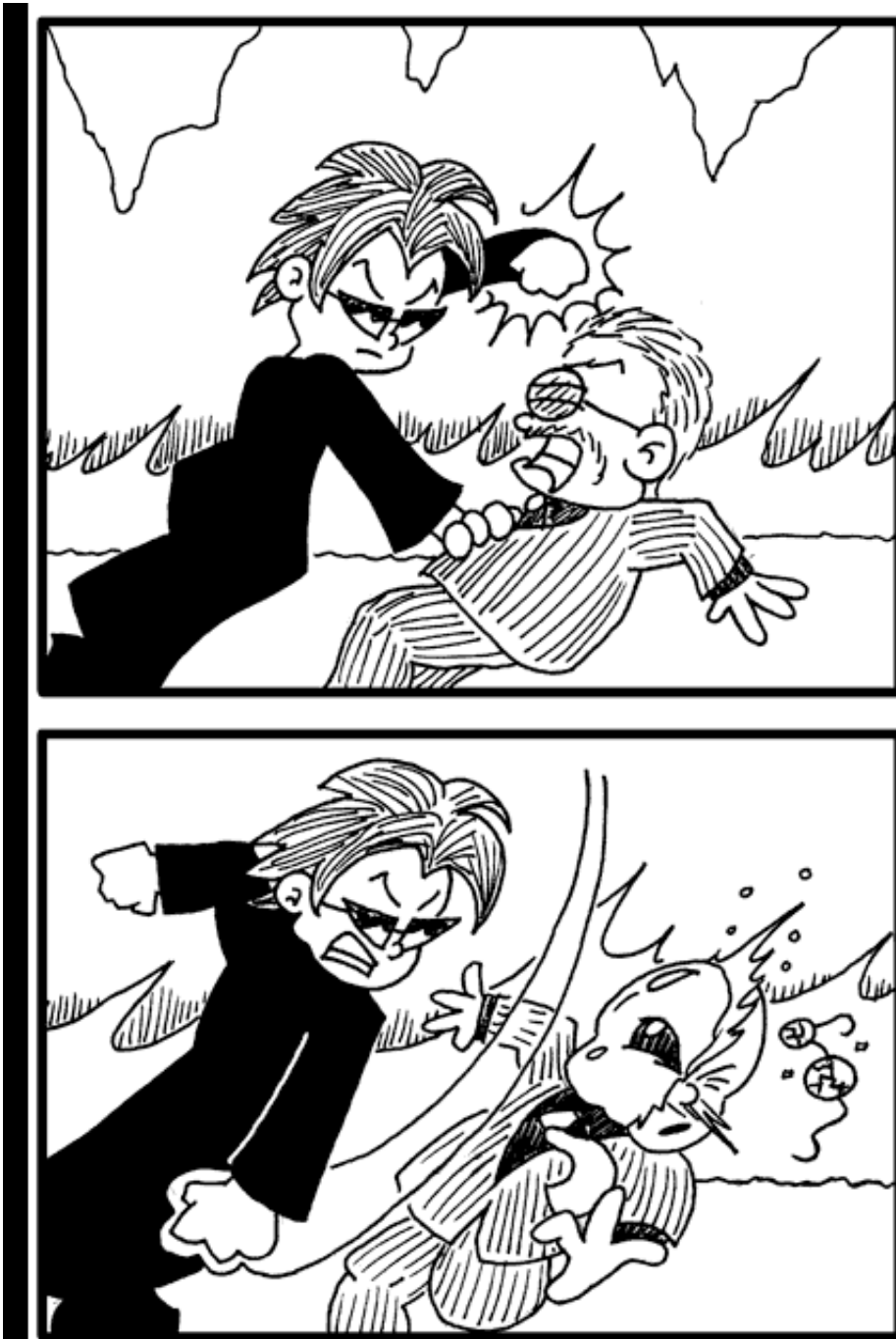


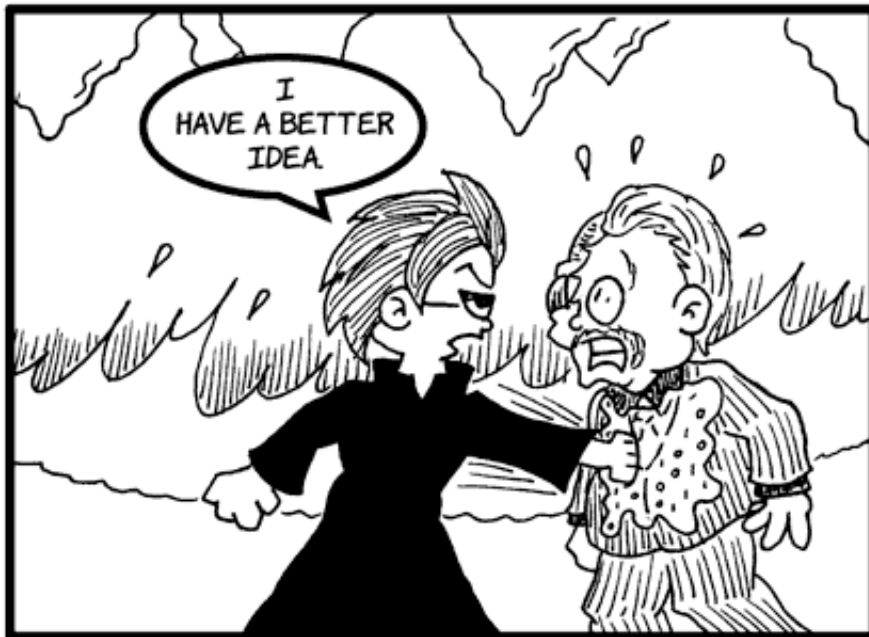
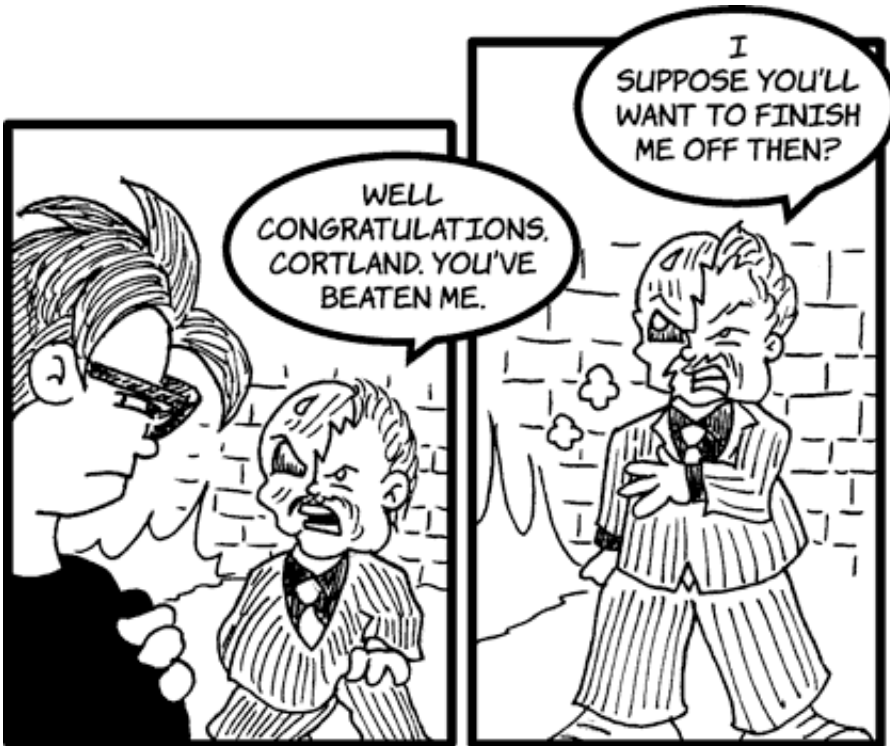


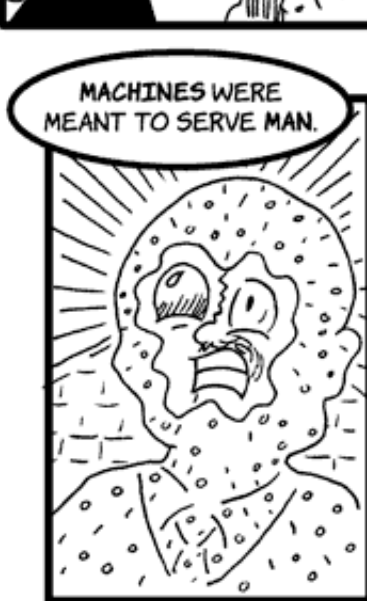
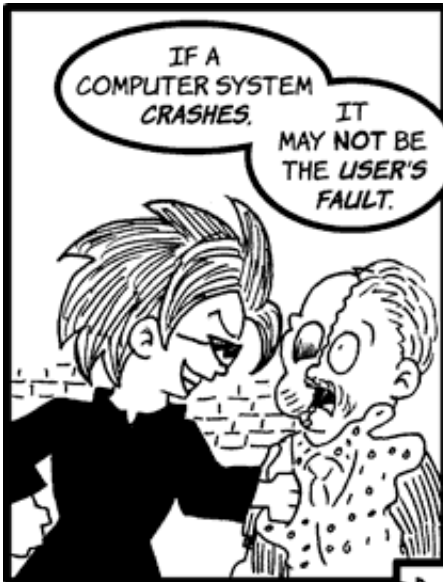


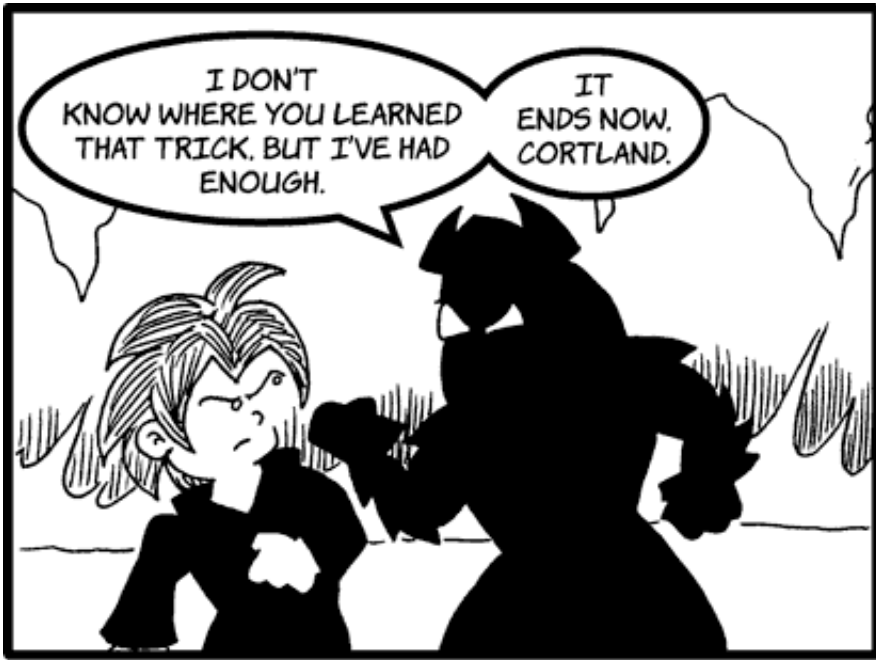


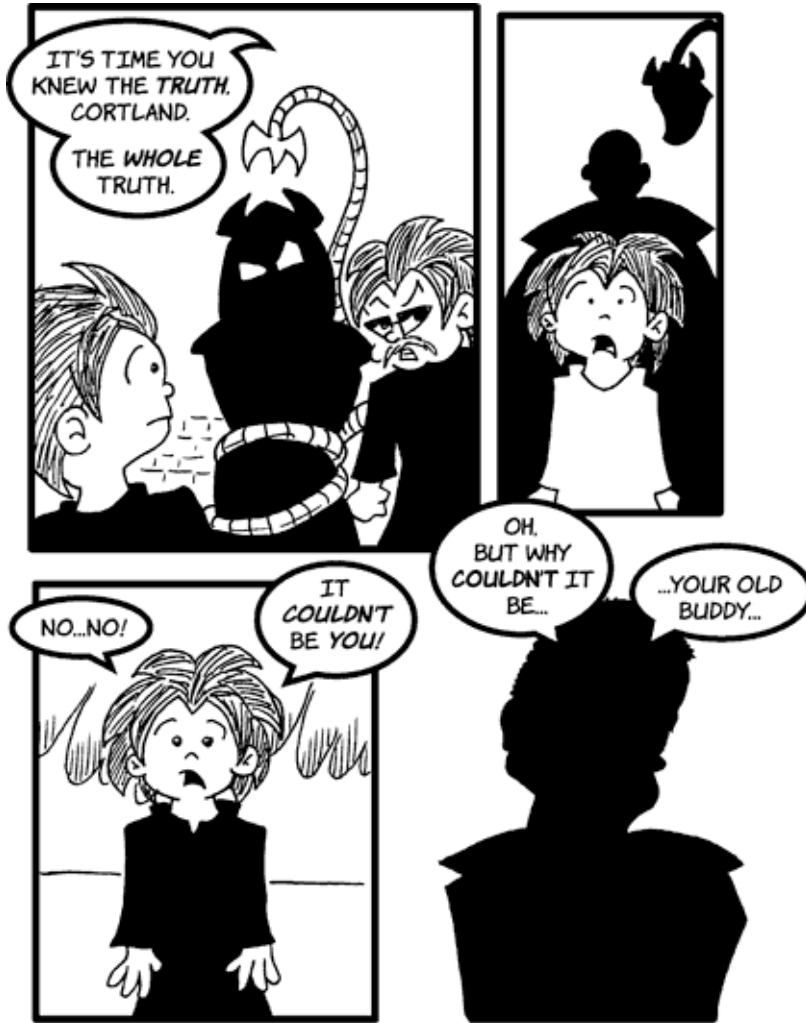


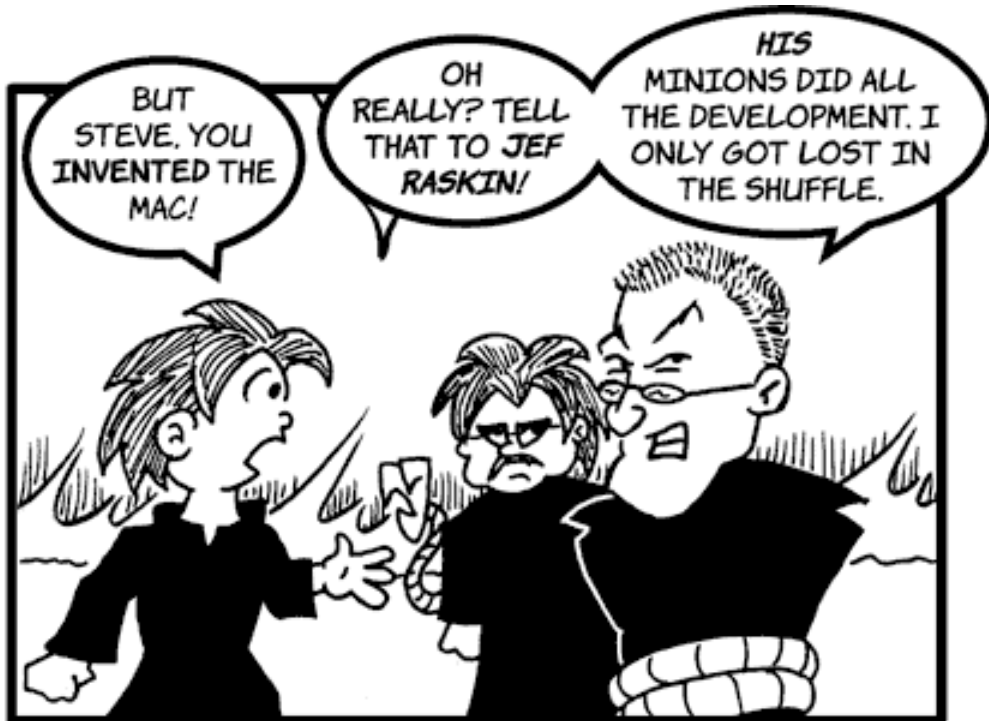


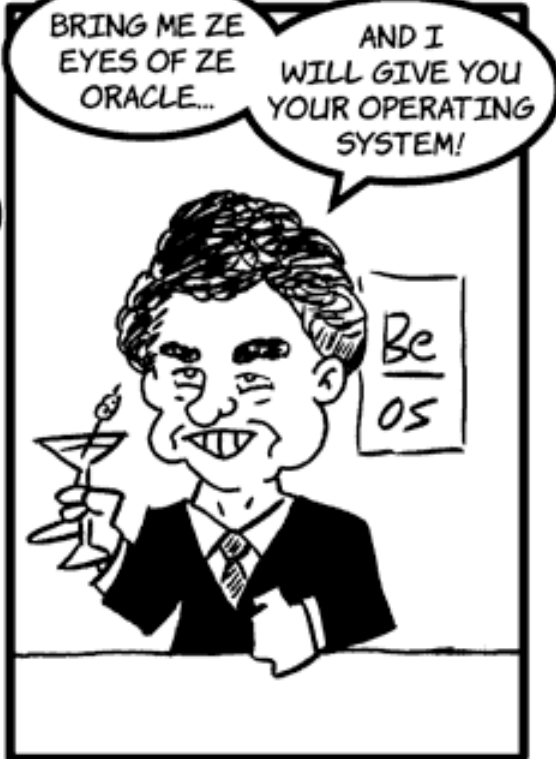


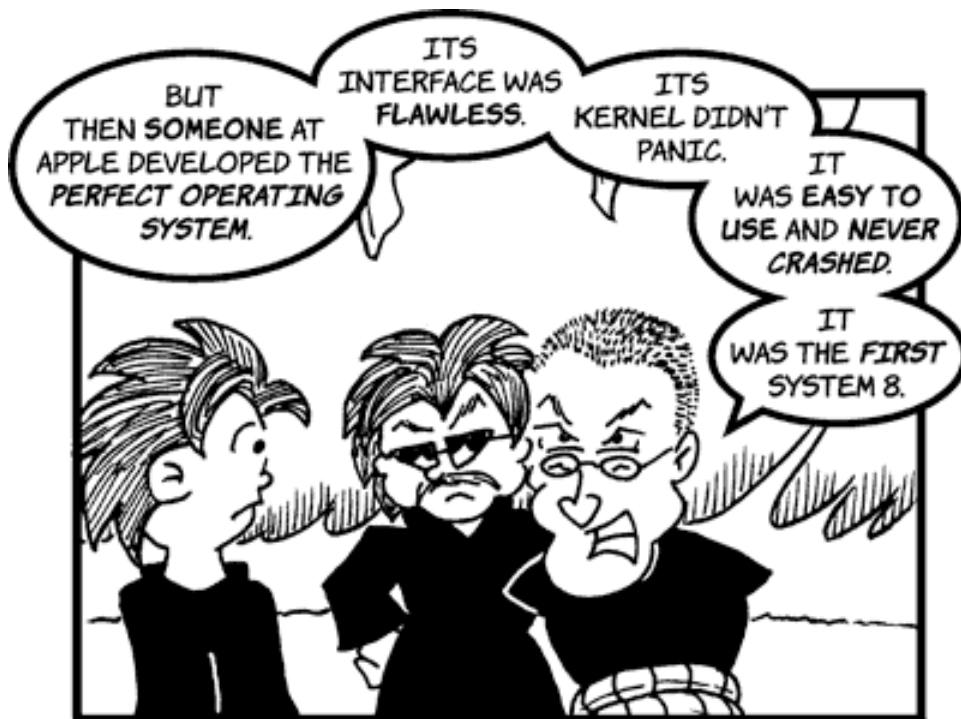


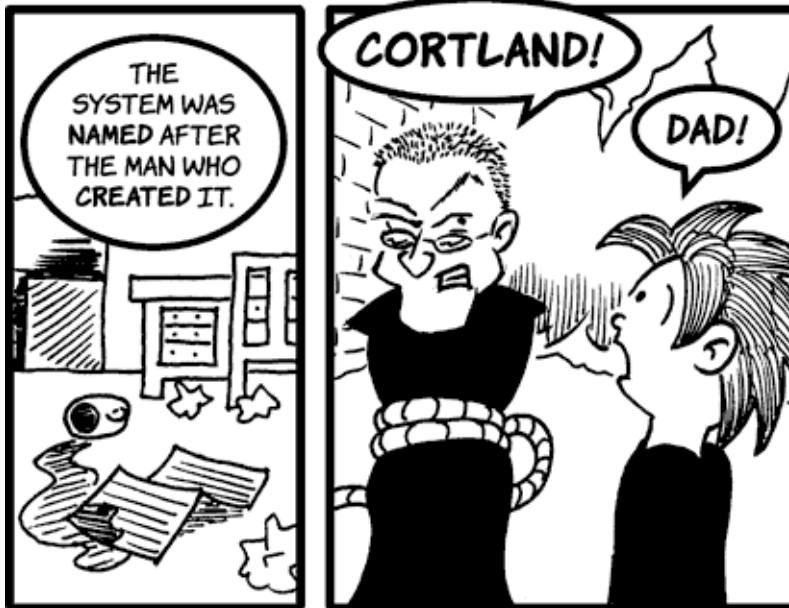
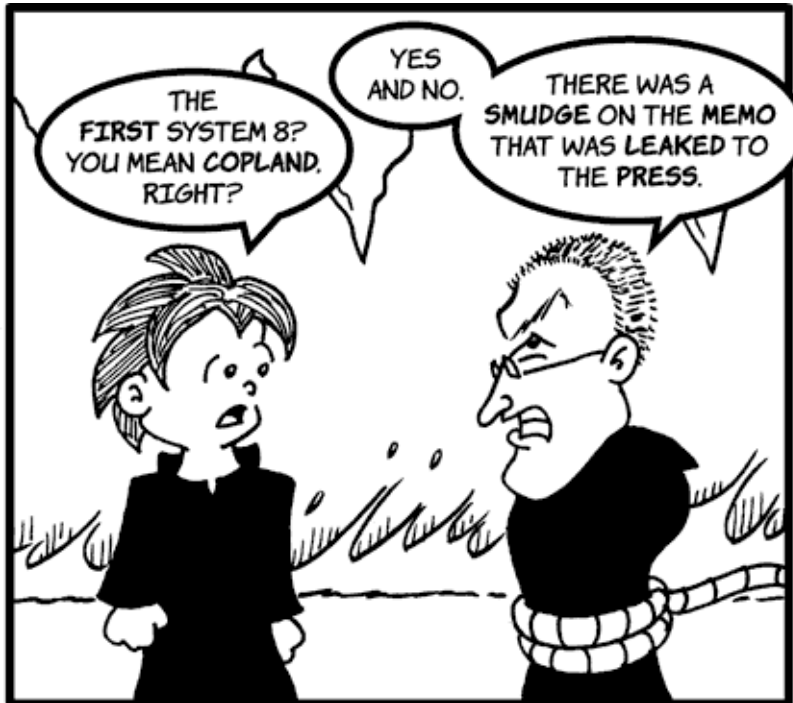










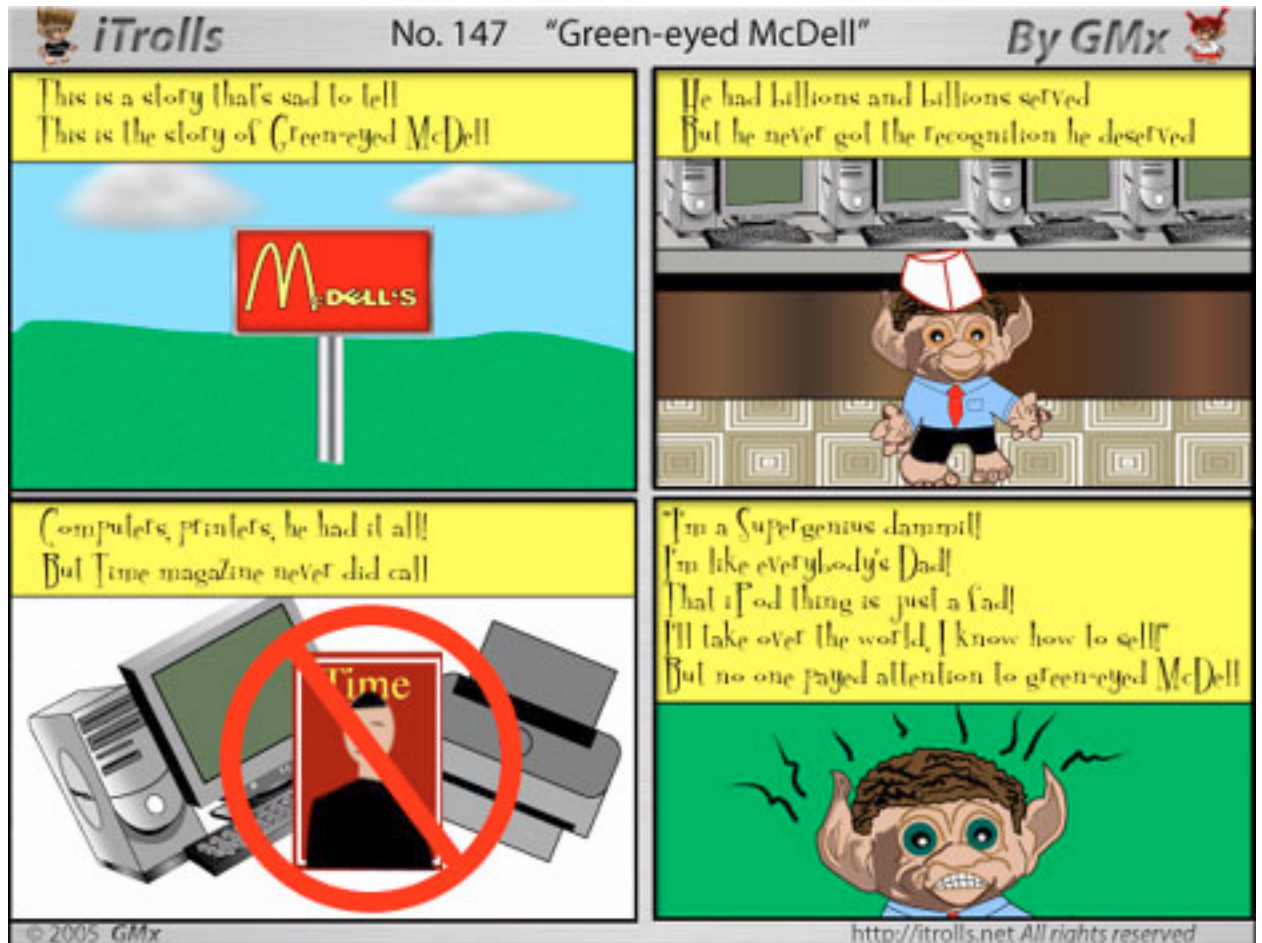


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Cartoon: iTrolls

by GMx, <http://homepage.mac.com/gregmx>





The iPod Shuffle

When me and my friends go out on the town
We can't sit still and we can't sit down
We don't like to fight and we don't like to scuffle
But we dance all night doing the iPod shuffle

(Need Mo'! Need Mo'!) Need Mo'! Need Mo'!
(Well, nyuck, nyuck, nyuck, nyuck!)
Well, nyuck, nyuck, nyuck, nyuck!
(La da dee, la da dee) La da dee, la da dee
(Woo woo woo woo!) Woo woo woo woo!
Well, we never miss a chance
We get up and dance and do the iPod shuffle

(Music-"The Curly Shuffle" ©Jump In The Saddle)



Nature

Nature¹

This month, ATPM reader Mark Montgomery contributes [nature photos](#)² that he took with a Canon 10D digital, using a standard length lens. The photos have not been adjusted in Photoshop at all; what you see is what you get.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the [desktop pictures archives](#)³.

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.”

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.

1. <http://www.atpm.com/11.02/nature/>

2. <http://www.atpm.com/11.02/nature/>

3. <http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml>

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

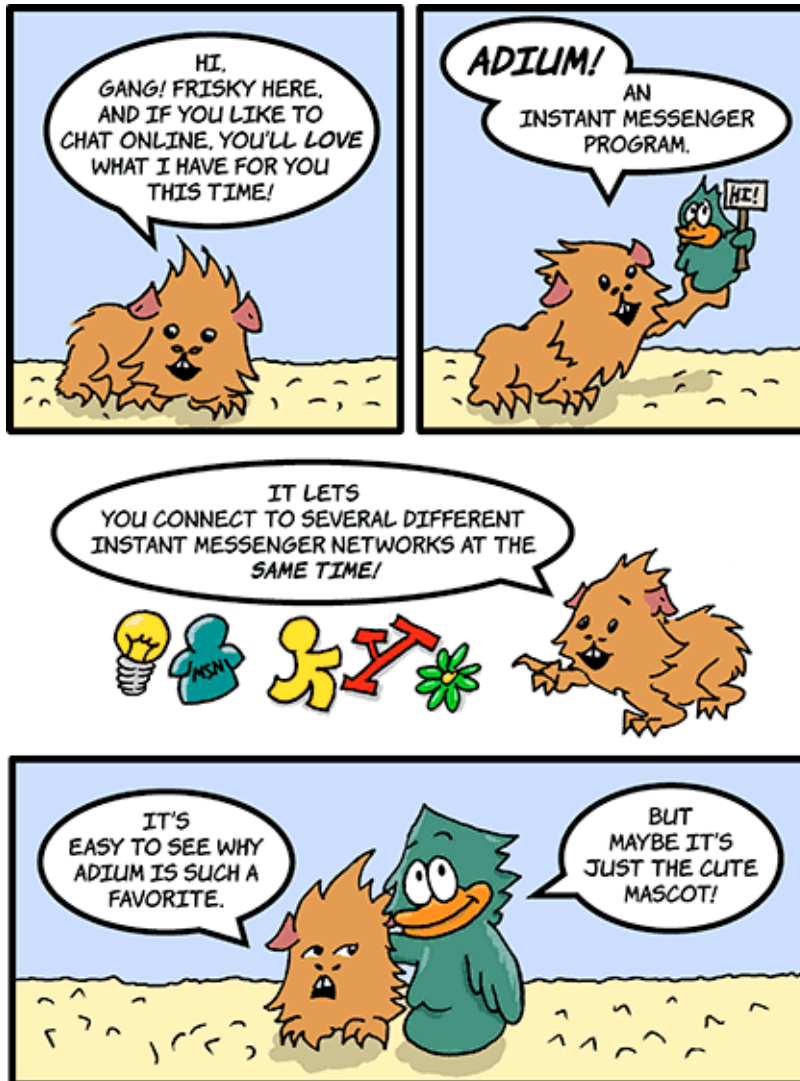
An alternative to Mac OS's Appearance control panel is Pierce Software's DeskPicture, [reviewed](#)¹ in issue 5.10 and available for [download](#)².



1. <http://www.atpm.com/5.10/roundup.shtml>
2. <http://www.peircsw.com/DeskPicture.html>

Frisky Freeware

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com



[Adium^a](http://www.adiumx.com)

a. <http://www.adiumx.com>

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Review: Desktop Poet 1.0

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

Developer: [Mariner Software](http://www.marinersoftware.com)¹
Price: \$25 (boxed); \$15 (download)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2
Trial: Fully-featured (7 days)



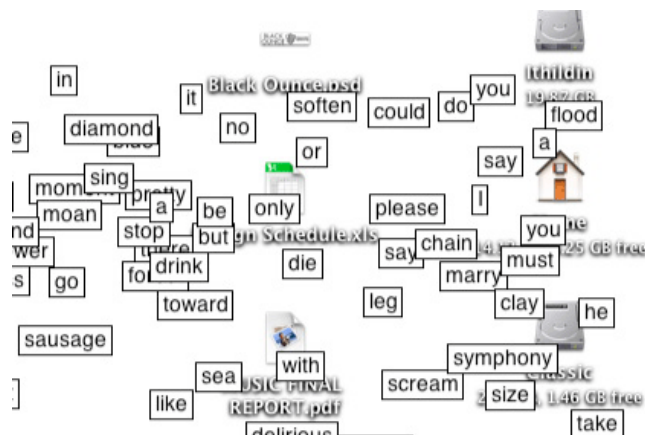
as young child excellent gift
words fun make arrange most cool
enormous silly through morning manipulate
whisper luscious diamond beat poems
smell gorgeous waste time
thanks mariner software

Mariner Software recently released a piece of software, Desktop Poet, which does exactly that, but on your computer screen. I thought it was pretty slick, and occasionally, it kept me from accomplishing any school work (or, say, my column and this review). If you take nothing else away from my review, think of this: Desktop Poet is a truly awe-inspiring way to procrastinate.

What was most impressive was that you could swap word sets, just like using a real magnetic poetry kit. Mariner has a variety of them available for download on its Web site, with 100, 200 and 300 ordinary words, or “celebrities,” “politics,” “Potter,” “science,” and “Trekkies” sets. Best of all, there’s no more hunting for a plural-article tile, since with a simple Control-click you can select a bunch of variations on whatever the tile is showing: “whisper’s,” “whispers,” “whisperings,” etc., contained on “whisper.” It was fantastic!

As far as normal use goes, Desktop Poet is pretty basic. Depending on your preference, it can be either a normal window, or floating on top of all your windows—I don’t recommend this—or just above the desktop level. The latter

is what I preferred, since it seemed to interfere least with my workflow. Although, it was tricky from time to time clicking on the desktop to select things.

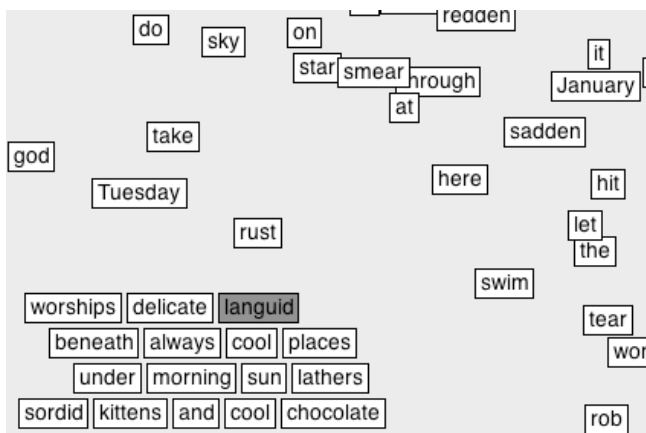


Desktop Poet, on my computer, just above the desktop itself.

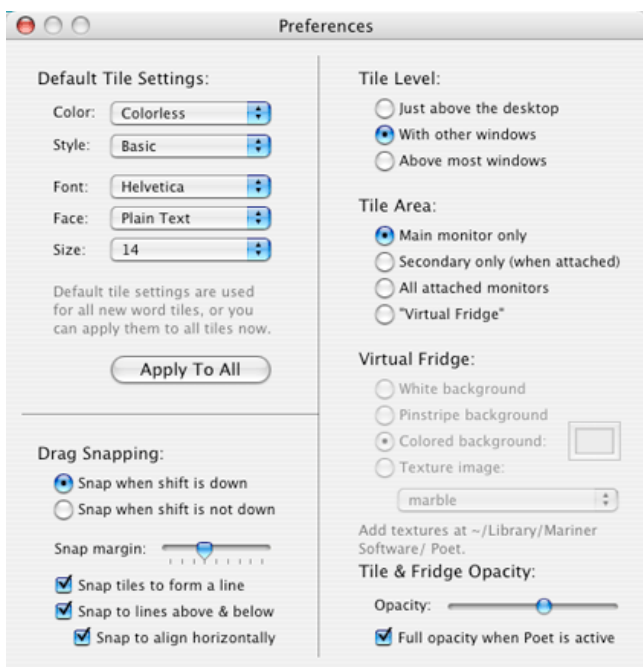
Should you prefer having the tiles on window level, I highly recommend the Virtual Fridge mode, which has the potential to be one of the application’s major selling points, if a few of its flaws can be resolved. The Virtual Fridge is a “magnetic” window, kind of like a fridge, or the large black board, for you to put your marvelous poetry on. You’ll want to set the opacity down when focus is on other applications, so you can use your computer, unless you want the magnetic poetry as

1. <http://www.marinersoftware.com/sitepage.php?page=74>

an interactive desktop wallpaper. (I found this annoying, but mainly because it switched focus. I wished I could do something like that *at* desktop level.)



Desktop Poet's useful Virtual Fridge mode.



Desktop Poet's preferences for window level. I highly recommend using it just above the desktop.

And that's precisely the problem with Desktop Poet. It feels like it would have been better to implement Virtual Fridge mode as a below-desktop-level interactive solution, and make it into a *de facto* desktop application. If you can [use the screen saver engine as your desktop background](#)¹, I see no reason I shouldn't be able to use a magnetic-poetry application as my desktop background.

But, since Tiger is coming, I'd like to tell Mariner Software: re-release your application as a Dashboard widget, when the time comes! Wouldn't that be the best of all worlds? No more distractions or relaunching, and so much more satisfying than procrastinating on a paper or by checking everyone's AIM profiles. You never know, you could find that you're wasting your time on dual journalism and history degrees and should become a poet. (Or not. See above.)

Oh, and charge less. Please. I'm hesitant to spend \$15 on anything fun, since it's \$15 less from a future purchase of Adobe software for any work that pays the bills.

If Mariner can work out a new interface, though, it might just be worth it. It takes the last tiny bits of effort out of writing poetry. You could be the next e.e. cummings and just not know it!

1. <http://freshlysqueezedsoftware.com/products/freeware/>



Review: FriendlyNET FR1104-G Wireless Firewall Router

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

Developer: [Asanté](#)¹

Price: \$40 and up; rebates may be available

Requirements: DSL or cable modem with Ethernet connection, Ethernet (for wired use), 802.11b or 802.11g card (for wireless use)

Trial: None



With the proliferation of both broadband access and multi-computer households in the US, the small-office/home-office (SOHO) router market has exploded in the last two years. As the adoption of 802.11 wireless standards—first b, known in the Mac market as “AirPort”; then g, known in the Mac market as “AirPort Extreme”—grew wider and wider, people began switching to wireless in droves for its added convenience, leading to the practice of [wardriving](#)². But I digress.



The Asanté FriendlyNET FR1104-G wireless router is the long-time Mac-friendly company’s most modern entry in the highly competitive SOHO router market. Featuring four 10/100Base-T Ethernet ports and 802.11g wireless access, the FR1104-G, like most of its competition, will allow a cable or DSL connection to be shared among multiple computers with minimal fuss.

Setup is simple in the extreme: the user needs only to remove the router from the box, attach the removable (and therefore upgradeable) antenna, plug in the AC adapter, and attach the included Ethernet cable to the broadband modem’s Ethernet jack. The router’s own OS must then be configured via your Web browser. A configuration wizard is provided, and will serve most users just fine.

More advanced users will appreciate the great depth of configurability available. The router software allows for a plethora of configuration changes to suit nearly any network setup. Foremost in most users’ minds should be the security

settings, and the FR1104-G supports WEP (64/128/256-bit keys), WPA, 802.1x RADIUS authentication, and non-broadcast of the SSID. MAC address filtering is available on both wired and wireless connections to prevent unauthorized users (read: your friendly neighborhood wardrivers) from connecting. A dedicated firewall is also provided, and its software can defend against denial-of-service attacks, provide bi-directional packet filtering, and perform extensive domain and URL filtering and logging. Other standard SOHO router features such as NAT, VPN pass-through, dynamic DNS configuration, a routing table, end-user firmware upgrades, system backups, wake-on-LAN, and remote administration are all provided.

For Mac users, especially those with a mixed network of OS X and OS 9 clients and/or older printers, finding a wireless router that passes AppleTalk packets is very important, and the FR1104-G is one of the few on the market that will route AppleTalk from the wired to the wireless side and vice versa. The FR1104-G’s upgradeable antenna is also a very nice feature; though its wireless reception is on par with most other SOHO routers, if you find yourself in a situation where reception is poor, the standard RP-SMA antenna connector allows for an easy upgrade.

My only complaint about this otherwise outstanding device—and the reason it fails to get an Excellent rating—is that almost every single configuration change requires the router to be rebooted. You can put off rebooting until you’re done configuring, which is nice, but in both Netgear and Linksys equipment I’ve used, reboots after configuration changes were the exception rather than the rule.

A word of advice: make sure to check for a firmware update on [Asanté’s support page](#)³ right away. There are a lot of routers in the retail channel with the older G1.0 firmware, and AppleTalk support (according to Asanté) requires G1.1

2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wardriving>

1. <http://www.asante.com/products/routers/FR1104-G/index.html>

3. http://www.asante.com/support/downProd_FR1104_G.html

or later. Use the cross-platform Web-based installer to upgrade to G1.2; the Mac-based installer only goes up to G1.1 at this time.

If you have any reason to use AppleTalk on your network and you want a wireless router, the Asanté FR1104-G is the product you want. It's reliable, easy to configure, and (mostly) very Mac-like. It's also one of the least expensive upgrade paths for users who want the extra speed of 802.11g.

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Review: radioSHARK

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

Developer: [Griffin Technology](#)¹

Price: \$70

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2.8, USB port

Recommended: G4

Trial: None



I'm a sucker for good industrial design, and Griffin's products are typically top-notch in this area. The radioSHARK, a USB-powered AM/FM radio tuner with time-shifting and scheduled recording capabilities, is no exception. This shark fin-shaped slab of glossy white plastic looks great with its blue LED-illuminated "airwave" motif and polished chrome base.



Unfortunately, function follows form here. It isn't that the device's appearance particularly impedes its function. Nor did Griffin "pull an Apple" and build a radio-reception device with the antenna inside a metal shell (TiBook, anyone?). Rather, the radioSHARK's reception simply doesn't stack up, for whatever reason, even with the USB extension cable-cum-antenna in place. I know it might be anathema to the designers, but adding a telescoping FM antenna like that found on most boom boxes would be a welcome improvement.

AM reception, unfortunately, is even worse. My house is less than five miles line-of-sight from the transmitter of a major AM station, and the radioSHARK barely picks it up. Every other radio in the house picks it up with no static at all. This makes the device essentially useless for AM radio.

There is a combination antenna/headphone jack just above the USB cable on the back of the device. Strangely, the manual bears no mention of this whatsoever, though it is now mentioned on the [radioSHARK support page](#)². Plugging a pair of headphones into this jack, as Griffin suggests, does indeed improve FM reception, but does nothing for AM. Memo to Griffin: re-work the AM antenna design entirely, and include an external FM antenna with the device. I've had Walkmans that got better reception without any antenna at all.

Its software, like its radio reception, leaves something to be desired. Griffin's interpretation of the Mac OS X brushed-metal look—perhaps they're trying for the high-end audio gear appearance?—is reminiscent of an ugly WinAMP skin from the late 1990s. The window widgets and buttons are non-standard and visually jarring, and the Presets and Preferences windows are standard Mac OS X brushed metal, making the aesthetic deficiencies of the main window even more glaringly obvious.

The interface itself is simple enough, but there are some puzzling omissions. There's no capability to skip to the previous preset (you can skip forward through the preset list using the tab key), nor is there any way to jump immediately to a given preset, as there is on most digitally tuned radios. A means of manual frequency entry (perhaps a "Go To Station" menu item) would also be welcome, as would a "New Preset" shortcut. There is no integrated Help, though a brief printed manual is included in the box and duplicated in PDF form on the software CD.

To be fair, this version of the software (1.0.3) is a *drastic* improvement over the original; be sure to run Check for Update in the application menu to get the latest version, if you haven't already. One eminently useful feature added by the newer software releases is LED control; you can now choose to leave the radioSHARK in "night-light" mode, where it will light up a bedroom quite nicely, or you can turn the internal LED off so that you can actually sleep.

1. <http://griffintechology.com/products/radioshark/>

2. <http://www.griffintechology.com/support/radioshark/index.php>

The software works fairly well aside from the aforementioned quibbles. The time-shifting features are invaluable, and after one afternoon, I was already addicted. Like TiVo, the radioSHARK will change the way you listen to radio. Scheduled recording is also a great feature, and works wonderfully as long as your computer is already on and awake. The software cannot boot your computer for you, nor can it wake the machine from sleep. People who are in the habit of putting the computer to sleep when they're away will need to break this habit if they want to record anything while they're away.

You can choose to record—either on impulse or scheduled ahead of time—in AIFF or AAC format, and if you select AAC, you can choose bitrate and quality. Time-shifting eats about 10 MB of disk space for each minute in the time-shift buffer, while AAC recording consumes about one-tenth of that (about 1 MB/minute). A quick time-shifting tip: if you want to dump the time-shifting buffer, just turn it off (Command-T) and immediately turn it back on. Hopefully a “dump buffer” option will be forthcoming in a later software release.

Unlike TiVo, the radioSHARK software lacks a “recommended viewing” feature, nor can it display (or even get) a station's programming schedule. This is due in large part to the lack of a centralized repository of programming

information, an invaluable resource that radioSHARK's television-based counterparts such as EyeTV have available to them. (A subscription-based service called [RadioTime](#)¹ supports the radioSHARK, but was not tested for this review.) The radioSHARK also lacks the ability to record one program while listening to another; it can only record the active station.

I would be more willing to forgive some of the shortcomings of the software if I didn't wonder this: why spend so much time creating—and then *implementing!*—custom window themes when they end up being nothing more than an ugly knockoff of brushed metal? That time could have been spent making the software much more capable, and, as a nice side benefit, it would have been far more attractive and conformant to Apple's Human Interface Guidelines.

The bottom line, though, is this: the radioSHARK is a really useful product despite its problems. If Griffin heeds critics' suggestions and makes some thoughtful changes to the software and hardware, this is going to be killer. If they don't, it will forever remain a quirky niche product, and one of the greater “might-have-beens” of the Mac hardware market.

1. <http://www.radiotime.com>



FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is ATPM?

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

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The [Online Webzine](#) edition is for people who want to view ATPM in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to ATPM 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 ATPM 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.



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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. ATPM 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 ATPM, 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?

ATPM and MacFixIt readers have reported problems decoding MacBinary files using early versions of Stuffit Expander 5.x. If you encounter problems decoding ATPM, we recommend upgrading to [Stuffit Expander 5.1.4 or later](#)⁵.

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

1. editor@atpm.com

2. <http://www.atpm.com/subscribe>

3. <http://www.atpm.com/search>

4. <http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>

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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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.

Shareware Reviews

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?

Check our [reviews index](#)¹ for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

ATPM uses the following ratings (in order from best to worst): Excellent, Very Nice, Good, Okay, Rotten.

Will You Review My Product?

If you or your company has a product that you'd like to see reviewed, send a copy our way. We're always looking for interesting pieces of software to try out. Contact reviews@atpm.com for shipping information. You can send press releases to news@atpm.com.

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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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