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

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Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

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Welcome

Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the March issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* In just a few days, the US will return to daylight saving time. Moving the clock forward a few weeks earlier is designed to increase consumer spending because consumers apparently spend more when there's more evening light. This month, we save your time by shedding more light on the state of the Mac and the iPod.

Crash

February came to close with a crash on Wall Street. The major market indexes suffered their worst one-day decline since the unfortunate events of 9/11. Apple fell victim to the bear romp on the Street, with its share price falling inline with the broader market. The sell-off created a buying opportunity for Apple watchers convinced the company's shares were oversold. It provided a "daylight opening" for investors interested in long-term gains from a short-term drop in price.

Boom

That's the state of the iPod economy. Following an amazing holiday season, the diminutive and ubiquitous digital music player continues to fly off store shelves like water droplets flow over Niagra Falls. Expectations for iPod sales this quarter are reaching 12 million units thanks in part to the colorful iPod shuffle. In a way, they are selling like candy. Really. iPod vending machines are now appearing in retail stores and at airports around the country. The vending machines save time and give the iPod's future more daylight.

Bust

It's what Apple competitor Dell realized on the first day of March. The company released preliminary financial reports indicating a significant fall off in revenue and earnings in its most recent fiscal quarter. Last year, Dell lost the PC sales crown to resurgent HP and, following the recent departure of Dell CEO Kevin Rollins, founder Michael Dell moved back into the executive top spot.

Some journalists are comparing the return of Michael Dell at Dell to the return of Steve Jobs to Apple. There's one big difference: Michael Dell never left the company. He was the company's chairman through the Rollins years, and his office at Dell was next to that of the ousted CEO. Only time will tell if Mr. Dell is willing to make the hard decisions needed to help the beleaguered PC maker. So far the talk from Texas isn't convincing the market that Dell's founder has a real plan to turn the company's fortunes around. All the daylight provided by the change in time will be needed by Dell to search for the best road to recovery.

Stay Tuned For Apple TV

In late February, Apple announced a delay in the initial shipments of the much-anticipated Apple TV. The set-top box will debut in mid-March as opposed to late February. Buyers shouldn't have to stay tuned for Apple TV much longer. Apple's latest foray into consumer electronics will most likely ship in volume before the end of the quarter.

Hello

Viewers who tuned into February's Academy Awards broadcast were greeted with a friendly "hello" by Apple's latest television advertisement and its first for the forthcoming iPhone. The ad featured brief clips from memorable TV and movies moments as actors and actresses reached for the phone to simply say "Hello."

Apple introduced the Macintosh in 1984 with ads that featured the same word pleasantly printed on the computer's screen. Apple introduced the iMac in 1998 with the words "Hello again." A few critics of the new Apple ad pointed out that nothing was written into the ad about what Apple was selling. They needed a gentle reminder this time that Apple is selling not a Macintosh, but a phone. Hello?

iTunes at the Movies

Each month movie fans are finding more of their all-time favorite flicks available for purchase through Apple's iTunes movie store. Now with over 400 titles, the movie store is the perfect complement to the Apple TV set-top box. The movies are arriving before the box makes its debut, making for ample content to fuel Apple TV sales. The iTunes movie store not only enhances Apple's clout in the entertainment content distribution business, but it also leverages the investment millions of households have made in home theatre equipment. In other words, Apple is exploiting the investments that tens of millions of consumers have already made. Stayed tuned. There's more to this move than movies.

Tune in to ATPM

Each month our editors work through the light and the night to bring you the best news, views, and reviews in an easy to read monthly format. Please stay tuned to ATPM each month as we celebrate and chronicle the "personal computing experience." Our March issue includes:

Apple Talk: Massively Useful

This month, Angus decides to Think Different and reward Microsoft for its recent marketing efforts.

Bloggable: Mr. Jobs, Tear Down This Wall

When Steve Jobs says something, the media pays attention. So when he published an open letter calling for an end to music DRM on Apple's Web site, linked from the front page, it set tongues a-wagging and pens a-scratching all around the world. Don't you want to know how Jon Lech Johansen, Cory Doctorow, Rob Glaser, *The Economist*, and *The New York*

Times, et al., reacted to this news? Wes Meltzer pored over news reports and blog entries to compile the choicest bits for you, plus a lot of sticky notes in Redmond, in this month's *Bloggable*.

MacMuser: 2-up in Publishing

Mark Tennent talks about two recent events that have significance for the publishing world.

Photoshop For the Curious: Color Calibration Capers

What good is Photoshop to you if it's showing a purple sky that's supposed to be blue or green hair that's supposed to be blonde?

Web Accessibility: The Flip Side of the Coin

In the free-flowing time-space continuum that is ordinary life we all benefit from accessible Web sites. What's more, with features built into the Mac operating system, we can bend sites to our will. At warp factor eight we can go for white text on a black background, zoom in, and even have the computer read a site aloud. Engage!

Desktop Pictures: Tasmania

Reader Le Anne Browne provides this month's desktop photos from the island of Tasmania.

Cartoon: Cortland

Strange things are afoot for Cortland at the swing dance–hosting lodge, which appears to be more than meets the eye.

Cartoon: Qaptain Qwerty

The Art of Extortion.

Review: Art Text 1.0.6

With Art Text, there really are many ways to spice up plain text.

Review: ScanSnap S500m

A look at the Fujitsu ScanSnap S500m document scanner, a powerful and easy-to-use tool that might just make the paperless office a reality.

Review: Smack Mahjong 1.0

Once our Reviews Editor helped me figure out how to see the game to play it, it worked fine. Standard Mahjong tiles game, with one tile set kids or beginners might like.

Review: TuneView

Imagine attaching your iPod's audio and video output to a home entertainment system. Now imagine leaving the iPod there, but being able to take the screen and controls with you wherever you sit. Keyspan's TuneView is the closest you'll come to this feat.

E-Mail

A Survey of the GTD App Landscape

Great stuff! I am using this article to update my own list of GTD applications which happens to be divided into offline and online categories as well. I found quite a few on here (mostly new or in beta) that I didn't think to include yet. Thanks for your time to write so many useful short reviews of these great GTD products. I'll keep an eye on future articles on here with more in-depth info about these GTD apps!

As some of you may know I am trying to compile the Ultimate GTD Index.

For people who are only looking for a simple list of hyperlinks to GTD apps (but *no* reviews, yet) check out the GTD Index. It will also keep you informed about the latest posts on many GTD blogs out there!

Because as has been remarked above, the GTD landscape is growing every day and it becomes harder and harder for GTD enthusiasts/professionals to keep track of all the relevant and interesting information about GTD.

—*gtdfrk*

MoRU 1.3.4

Just to mention—two other similar apps are Meta and HoudahSpot.

MoRU seems pretty capable though (trying it out now), and is the cheapest—the others are $20 each. The pre-built search templates in Moru seem pretty useful, and not just a gimmick (Office files, iTunes music, etc.)

—*Steve Lang*

• • •

The thing I most like about MoRU is that you can perform tasks against the search result. Spotlight searches provide the result, but you can't do anything from the Spotlight window—it is a read-only function. MoRU, I can delete, move files, rename, etc.

So, all the power of Spotlight, *plus* the ability to actually do some file maintenance with the results.

—*Kirk Rheinlander*

Prada Phone

I love this site, I really do. But I thought this would be the last of places to continue saying "ZOMG THE PRADA FONE IS A RIPOFF IPHONE."

It's not. It existed before the iPhone was announced. Please.

—*Alex H*

> Because it's really impossible for anyone (even the insiders at companies) to determine when exactly a product is prototyped, announced, or redesigned, it is really only practical to go by the official public announcement dates.
>
> It is arguable that the Prada Phone existed before the iPhone announcement, but did the iPhone exist before the Prada Phone? We do know Apple worked on it for at least two years and that it's possible LG and Prada made modifications to their phone after seeing the announced iPhone look and feel. Or someone can argue that perhaps Apple modeled the iPhone after LG's phone. We really can't known for certain.
>
> I am sure Microsoft can/might argue that many OS X innovations had existed in Vista before, even though Vista only shipped recently.
>
> Either way, the important issue is not whether a phone rips off the iPhone, but whether another company can produce a phone *better* than the iPhone (or better than whatever it is Apple will show the world in June).
>
> —*Angus Wong*

"A rose by any other name. . ."

I use my iPod almost daily. I've been looking forward to a new iPod with a bigger screen and at least 40GB of on board storage. I just signed up for two more years with Verizon and got a new V3M Razor for my primary line and moved my LG VX7000 to my wife's line. We have been Verizon customers for over ten years now, and I'm not switching to get a piece of hardware that has redundant features I don't want.

I'll probably just go buy a 80GB iPod and wait out this madness. It looks so good but I refuse to pay a $175 cancellation fee and then pay $1,200 for being an early adopter. I've got an 22″ Cinema Display I paid $2,500 for when they hit the market. Less than a year later, Apple cut the price by half and phased them out.

Once burned, twice shy. I don't think Steve Jobs is thinking about the tens of thousands of hard-working, loyal Apple Customers when he tells you that you *will* buy a two-year deal from Cingular and $500-$600 for his newest gadgets.

Some of us save all year for that new Mac Pro desktop or MacBook for our small businesses and don't own $1,000 cell phones. I think the little guy is out of luck this go-around. You remember him? He bought over 70 million iPods from you.

—*Grover Watson*

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

Apple Talk

by Angus Wong, atkw@anguswong.net

Massively Useful

Microsoft has been getting the PC industry (that is, the personal computer industry) very excited about its new Vista thang. Redmond has been insanely successful at stirring up awareness ("I waited half a decade for this?!") and it's great to see yet another home run after the Zune (you forgot about Zune again?!).

What I don't get though is how Microsoft benefits from more Apple users. But whatever it's all about, those Redmond boys are just working like madmen to increase iPod and Macintosh market share. Crazy guys, ya just gotta love 'em. I suspect it might have something to do with that nasty anti-trust case that says Microsoft is not allowed to directly fund Apple marketing efforts, so this might be the next best way it can be done. Sure is some thinking outside the box. Now I finally understand why the Zune is an iPod killer because it's an iPod *killer app*!

Anyway, because of all this, and despite me often making fun of Microsoft, I figured I should give them a break and support their efforts, and so went out and got a brand spankin' new 17″ MacBook Pro.

OK, technically I didn't go out at all. I clickity-clicked my Kensington Expert Mouse and ordered from the Apple Store. I must have toyed with the configuration a hundred times over the past two years, restraining myself and saving up cash, while Apple kept patiently blasting Wall Street estimates.

Prior to my new 17″, I had been chugging along with a 12″ 1 GHz iBook G4 and was aching to see how quickly iMovie HD would import my most recent HDV camcorder videos. But, first things first, I made a little QuickTime slideshow (iPhoto was *fast*!) and Pandoed it to my buddies. Two of them decided to get a new Mac also.

Next up: Parallels.

Being able to safely quarantine Windows in its little private hell within OS X, at native speeds, just rocks. Parallels is pretty much everything SoftWindows and Virtual PC wanted to be. I even wrote an article about it. In comparison with Boot Camp, if you're not doing 3D games, Parallels lets you be more productive by running another system concurrently with OS X. The latest version supports seamless drag-and-drop between the Windows and OS X desktops and so, for most things, Parallels is probably the better approach. I've not yet tried VMWare's offering but have already paid for and am happy with Parallels. Things can only get better from here, and I look forward to further innovations in virtualization for OS X.

Speaking of the letter "X," this new laptop makes for my tenth Macintosh. I started with a Mac SE in college, used a MacPlus in one of my first jobs, then bought a Mac IIsi, a Mac 6100 AV, a PowerBook 180c, a PowerBook 520c, used a IIcx at another job, bought myself the original iMac when it came out (replacing the puck mouse within a week), a PowerBook G3 "Pismo," a second-hand iBook G3, and then the iBook G4. That's approximately ten Macs I've bought in two decades, or a Mac every couple of years. Crazy? Not as crazy as putting up with Windows nightmares. If time is money, my Macs have already paid for themselves in the time I've saved from agonizing over Windows. God knows I already suffer enough with the Windows machines I am often forced to use and, bless Clarus, that I came back in from the cold.

A Mac running OS X is a massively useful machine. You really can't say the same for any other computer out there because none of them have been designed to be so seamlessly easy to use for such a wide variety of tasks. Just iLife alone can streamline management of our personal digital content in enormously simpler ways compared to even the best Google applications on Windows (e.g., Picasa). But it's obviously not just the software. Because Apple is playing with a full deck of cards (the complete hardware/software solution) it can be intelligently mindful of the past and the future, so much so that even an aging G3 Mac is able to run enough OS X to deliver basic computing needs, while more recent Macs can look forward to the quantum leap that will soon be Leopard.

The iPod is also massively useful. Often pigeon-holed into the "MP3 player" category by clueless analysts the iPod plays more than just songs and videos. You can store data on it as a portable hard disk, listen to podcasts (as a source of a completely new channel of information), play games, view your calendar and contacts, and expand its functionality with a huge array of third-party add-on attachments. I actually hardly use my iPod for MP3s; I mostly use it for listening to and watching news podcasts on a daily basis and sharing family photos and movies at gatherings.

As much as I want Linux to succeed (in the spirit of true competition driving innovation and cross-pollination between Apple and open source efforts), it's just not there yet. Desktop Linux is getting better every year for end-users, but if you just need something done, in a matter of minutes, not hours, it is very likely that booting up OS X will save the day so you can get on with living your life. Mucking around on the computer to troubleshoot something, or because of inefficient workflow caused by nascent design, can insidiously burn up our free time.

So am I more productive with my new Intel Mac? Well, where I previously had to put up with Windows PCs for certain business tasks, I am now able to completely do away with physical Windows machines (and tempting though it may be, I won't likely go as far as throwing them out the window). This saves me a lot of time and physical space. Forget the KVM switch; I now just instantiate a Windows VM whenever I absolutely, positively have to put up with Windows for a certain task. In fact, it's great to be using OS X while Windows boots in a hidden window. And, whenever that dog-slow gordian knot of programming decides to spin wheels for unfathomable reasons, I just leave it in the background to work

out its frustrations while I keep on being productive with a real operating system. The other big bonus is that I can copy the entire VM file onto a backup drive or network volume and enjoy the peace of mind that I can reload my entire VM environment if I ever need to "undo" something, or if the VM ever crashed or got nuked by a virus. As for gaming, because Boot Camp is still the best optimized solution when it comes to raw graphics performance, my Mac can deliver the hit I need to satiate a gaming itch.

I could go on and on about how useful my new Mac is (such as watching DVDs in bed on the widescreen LCD; having enough screen estate to do a decent iMovie editing job; reading or editing PDF, text or Web pages in full page view or even 2-up mode) but all I really want to say is that I am truly looking forward to the iPhone being so massively useful that it will finally deliver the convergence vision the whole telecommunications industry has been yapping about for ten years.

What we need are digital tools that enhance our lives instead of detract from them. That, perhaps, is the core difference between Apple and the wannabes.

Copyright © 2007 Angus Wong. *Angus is a long-time Apple user and technology business professional. His Macintosh e-mail client can most likely be reached at atkw@anguswong.net*

Mr. Jobs, Tear Down This Wall

No businessman manages his pulpit as well as Steve Jobs has, at least not since Lee Iacocca. When the be-turtlenecked one speaks, we listen. This is not true of RealNetworks CEO Rob Glaser, for instance. Jobs has the pulpit at least twice each year, and he makes the most of it.

So this time, the earth-toned prophet got our attention by turning his all-powerful media prowess to digital rights management. In an open letter, the "old media" equivalent of a blog entry, he goes on the attack against the Recording Industry Association of America and the Big Four record labels for their insistence on DRM technologies to restrict the rights of users to the music that they own. Jobs' "Thoughts on Music" is, somewhat unexpectedly, neither a jeremiad nor a mushy bromide—it is a well-reasoned and eloquent discussion of the current state of affairs, and an appeal to change the status quo. The first thing I thought while reading it was that it was as much an essay in the Montaigne mold as anything else, equal parts musing, complaint, and persuasion.

It becomes clear, as you read these "thoughts," that Jobs has the Seinfeldian "hand" in the relationship between the music labels and Apple. After all, there are three forms of playback for recorded music—radio, CDs, and digitally compressed music files—and of these, the iPod is nearly the entire third category on its own. Jobs says that it was the major record labels, not Apple, that insisted on FairPlay, the DRM that accompanies the iTunes Music Store; and that the price of that is the lock-in of the current state of affairs. You can't take your iTMS tracks with you, nor can you play tracks you purchase on any other DRM'ed music site on your iPod (or using iTunes). The record labels have attempted to regain their "hand" by encouraging Apple to open FairPlay to other vendors, but he categorically rejects this with the (probably true) assertion that licensing would just make it all the more likely that FairPlay would be cracked. So Apple has sat, alone, at the top of the DRM heap.

Any ordinary CEO would use this to make the most of their monopoly lock-in. It's not hard to imagine Steve Ballmer looking at this and saying, "Gosh, we need to sell more tracks from the Microft Windows Live and Recorded Music Subscription and Single-Song Music Store for Mobile Players!" (That sounds eerily like a real Microsoft product name.) But Jobs is no ordinary CEO.

He says that the recording industry is actively encouraging the single largest distribution channel for unencrypted, non-DRM-controlled music: CDs. For all their rhetoric about how DRM is designed to protect copyright holders from infringement, Jobs says, they're

actively spreading around unencrypted music. That's done wonders for music. Why can't we have the same situation with digital music?

Don't take my word for it, though. Read the letter. Trust me.

Well, predictably just about everyone on the face of the Earth has an opinion on everything Steve Jobs does. But there are some genuinely interesting and persuasive things to hear about his "Thoughts on Music," so this month is going to be a broadly based round-up of everything credible and interesting I can get my hands on, in response.

Preaching to the Heavenly Chorus

Opposing DRM is a cottage industry on the Internet, and a handful of Web celebrities cut their teeth in the salad days of DRM—Jon Lech Johansen of DeCSS fame, for instance, or Lawrence Lessig, the lead attorney in Eldred v. Ashcroft. I sometimes have to remind myself that this all took place a very long time ago, at least in Internet time, the opposite of geological time.

Both Johansen and Lessig, not surprisingly, posted their reactions to Jobs' letter. They make a good place to start because they've got a clear personal stake in the battle. For them, Jobs is preaching to the choir.

Lessig wrote a brief post welcoming Jobs to the battle, and noting that with Apple's support, the anti-DRM fight would be much easier. But he says we should ask Jobs to walk the walk:

> But then here's a simple next step: There are artists on iTunes whose creative work is Creative Commons licensed. Colin Mutchler is one. When his stuff first went into iTunes, he requested the DRM be turned off. The request was refused. But if no-DRM is Apple's preferred policy, then let them begin here.

Johansen was less charitable. He says that Jobs' claim that Apple would like to sell music without DRM "flies in the face of reality," and that they should put their money where their mouth is. He adds:

> It should not take Apple's iTunes team more than 2–3 days to implement a solution for not wrapping content with FairPlay when the content owner does not mandate DRM. This could be done in a completely transparent way and would not be confusing to the users.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation agreed, and took the most positive route of all of the anti-DRM activists. "We agree wholeheartedly with Jobs," they said in a press release on their Web site, "since EFF has been making exactly the same points for several years now. As a first step in putting his music store where his mouth is, we urge him to take immediate steps to remove the DRM on the independent label content in the iTunes Store. Why wait for the major record labels?" They encourage consumers to take Jobs' remarks to heart,

and point them to their anti-PERFORM Act campaign to help out. I will neither endorse nor attack the project, but I think their heart is in the right place, as usual.

Another important anti-DRM Web celebrity is Cory Doctorow, of *Boing Boing* fame. He wrote a column for *Information Week* last June, arguing that FairPlay is a regime that hurts consumers, the music industry—and Apple, in a way, by making it the only player in the game with any leverage. It's a long article, but Doctorow makes the persuasive point that the limited restrictions Apple places on the playback of FairPlay music are only there because they were the bargaining chips Jobs needed to get the record labels to agree to a digital music distribution regime. So what's wrong with this? Well, it's still bad for consumers, although it's possible it's better for consumers than the alternative (no practical legal channel for digital music distribution).

> Worse still: Apple's competition-proof music makes switching away from its product expensive for Apple's customers. The world of consumer electronics changes quickly and you'd have to be a fool to believe that no one will ever make a superior portable music player to the iPod. iPods and other walkmans have a low price-point and turn over often—it's no coincidence that Apple's iPods are made out of materials that scratch if your breathe on them and look like they've been through a rock-tumbler after a couple weeks in your pocket—which means that you're likely to be in the market for a new one every year or two.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Steve Jobs really doesn't care how many CPUs you play an iTune on, or whether you burn a playlist seven or 10 times. He wants you to get locked into iPods, not fall prey to some pie-in-the-sky pipe-dream where "consumers" pay for "features" like pausing a track or playing it in a different country. Steve Jobs's crippleware exists only to lure the entertainment industry in, not to control you in any meaningful way.

He wrote a *Boing Boing* post, not long after the Jobs letter went up, telling him that if Apple does indeed go through with this, he will be at the vanguard of a coming wave, saying:

> I look forward to the day when the iTunes Music Store catalog shows a little warning icon next to those few holdout tracks sold with DRM, a skull-and-crossbones to tell you that you're about to buy some poisonous bits.

It's no "I have a dream," but it's something.

In Limbo: the Media

Jobs' big public attack on the record industry attracted the attention of another group, this time mostly disinterested in the outcome: the print media. In many ways, they have

the greatest stake of all in reporting on what Jobs says, because it's their job to make sure that there's news in the newspaper every morning. And Jobs is, as always, a gold mine of endless news-story opportunities.

One of the most important things about this media coverage is that, unlike a lot of bloggers, in the wider world it is not a given that music without DRM is better. It is to this crowd, not to the huddled, unwashed masses of bloggers yearning to breathe free, that Jobs is addressing his broadside against DRM.

The *New York Times* pounced first, not surprisingly for the "paper of record," and in addition to their always-strong news coverage, reporter John Markoff did a nice job of contextualizing the story better than anyone else in the media. He writes that Jobs is on the attack at a moment of weakness for the music industry:

> Mr. Jobs's move comes as the music industry appears to be facing a crisis. Sales of its mainstay product—the album—continue to sink, and sales of digital music, including individual songs, have not increased fast enough to offset the decline.
>
> With a paucity of hit releases to start the year, industrywide album sales are already down more than 15 percent from last year, the worst January performance since computerized sales tracking began in 1991.
>
> At a forum in France last month, Rob Glaser, chief executive of RealNetworks, which operates the Rhapsody digital music service, predicted the widespread availability of unrestricted digital music within a few years. He said it was "an idea in ascendance and whose time has come."
>
> But Mr. Jobs is clearly the most powerful voice raised so far in support of a change. With the clout built on his company's market share for both players and music, he has already prevailed against the labels in disputes over pricing.

Remember when I mentioned Glaser? That's right, I heard crickets chirping, too.

Adding to this, the *Economist* became the most important mainstream publication I have seen to endorse selling music without DRM—due to the influence of one Steve Jobs, whose photo accompanied the article. (I'm not a subscriber, because it's $150 a year, so I can't say whether the editorial made it into print. I sure hope so. Readers of the *Economist* are highly influential.) They believe that a DRM-free music distribution system would allow Apple to do what it does best, and compete on merit rather than on lock-in, and benefit consumers, competitors, and the free market. Unsurprisingly, they view his greed as a benefit.

I am not a libertarian, but their logic here is hard to dispute. It's a gem:

> Apple can afford to embrace open competition in music players and online stores. Consumers would gravitate to the best player and the best store, and at the

> moment that still means Apple's... [S]crapping DRM would probably increase online-music sales by reducing confusion and incompatibility. With the leading online store, Apple would benefit most. Mr Jobs's argument, in short, is transparently self-serving. It also happens to be right.

But this "transparently self-serving" impetus is not universally recognized as good. Charlie Demerjian at the *Inquirer*, the Web equivalent of a newspaper, sees Jobs' shift to embracing free-as-in-speech music as the height of hypocrisy. "So what does [Apple] do [under threat of European litigation]?" Demerjian asks. "[I]t is trying to abolish all DRM so it can keep iTunes and the iPods closed. If there is DRM, it has to open it all up." It's not clear to me how Demerjian reaches this conclusion—MP3s without DRM are freely distributable—but that's an exercise for my readers.

Adam Engst, of *TidBITS*, also wrote a fantastic recap of Jobs' argument, along with his own analysis, called, "Why This Letter, and Why Now?" Engst is skeptical, as Demerjian was, but he presents an excellently well-reasoned argument and lays out the entire story. Engst recognizes that, cynical or not, Jobs' move has the potential to benefit all consumers. He says:

> I don't think Apple fears competition at all, and may even welcome it as an encouragement to innovation... In essence, Apple is saying to Norway and the other European countries [who want Apple to open FairPlay], "Look, this DRM wasn't our idea, and without it, we couldn't maintain the licenses that enable us to be in business. But we'd happily drop the DRM if we could; go talk to the music companies about that."

Well, after all this, the CEO of Macrovision—which sells DRM technology for video, not audio, but the point stands—felt the obligation to respond. I didn't see this reported on anywhere else but the *Guardian's* technology blog, so I'm going to give them credit for it. What was his response? Uh: DRM's not bad! And we'll take it off your hands for you, if you want. But Jack Schofield, the blogger in residence, notes that Jobs isn't handing over control of FairPlay anytime soon, because he's a control freak. Does it surprise anyone that he would rather have completely unlocked music, where the user experience is as seamless as possible, than risk compromising the user experience of his DRM? "I'm certain that Apple's fans will argue that the sheer superiority of its offerings would enable Apple to maintain or even increase market share even if it stopped artificially restricting competition—and of course I believe them," Schofield writes. "Is he going to open up or not?" I think that's a false choice—Jobs might just get his wish and unload DRM—but it's a fair point.

Macworld gets the kicker for its excellent acknowledgment of the current reality. "[The music industry fears] file-sharing, of course—piracy. But that's silly, because piracy is well-established by this point; we've had almost a solid decade of high-volume media piracy," they write. "And for every pirate site or technology that's destroyed by a phalanx of intellectual-property lawyers, two more sprout up in its place. Steve Jobs had the right

idea when he announced the iTunes Store in 2003: Apple was not there to eradicate piracy, but to compete with it." *Macworld's* Dan Moren, I think, shows that he gets it here. Apple customers don't buy music from the iTunes Music Store because they have to—they could get the music on CD, or pirate it. They buy from Apple because of high quality customer service and brand loyalty, *Macworld* says. "[P]eople are not going to flock to the Zune just because DRM is unlocked."

That is a recognition I didn't expect to see, ever, from a print publication.

Back Here on Earth: the Bloggers

Not surprisingly, four of the best tech bloggers out there posted terrific analyses of the situation and read the tea leaves of Jobs' letter to see what the future held. It's here, I think, that bloggers shine, because they aren't responsible for the evenhandedness that hamstrings most print publications. (I've been edited before; I know what that means. The iPod may be far and away the best MP3 player on the market, but not giving some kind of credit, unearned or otherwise, to the competition means your editor will just call you up late at night and make you fix it.)

Jeff Jarvis starts us out with a terrific forward-looking glance. This may be, he seems to say, a turning point for consumers' rights to use their own property. "Companies will no longer be able to make a living by stopping us from doing what we want to do," he says. "You have to find the ways to make money enabling us to do what we want to do. It's obvious. It's reality." This is the message that Google and YouTube get, and Sony (can you say ATRAC?) and the record companies don't.

Erick Schonfeld of *Business 2.0* says that Steve Jobs is using this to turn consumers who want DRM-free music against a mutual target. "Perhaps iTunes is getting to that point of critical mass where consumers are starting to complain. DRM is something that was conceived by lawyers, not by people who love to make great products for consumers," Schonfeld writes. "It's time to kill the DRM... [Jobs is saying] 'But don't blame me. Blame the record companies.'"

Amen.

Free Culture @ NYU sees echoes of another big Net debate, the Google-vs.-China production that has been going on for some time now. Like Apple, the question is whether Google is responsible for agreeing to censor its content. "Why blame Google when China's the real evil?" they ask. "Some information is better than none, and DRM'd music is better than no music. Except that in a world void of DRM, there still is music—on CDs, on p2p networks, and the Web." The question, then, is how much to hold Apple responsible. They hold them more responsible than I do:

> They could have dug in their heals [sic] and kept selling iPods without a music store, and the music industry could have figured out all these painful lessons on their own. Now Apple is an accomplice and has cried wolf: why should the

music industry listen to a company that has been profitably going along with their plan for so long?

But, having said that, Apple is still the least of all of the various evils, and, as I said before, Apple has the Seinfeldian "hand." *Free Culture* says, "Apple needs to offer them an ultimatum: no more DRM by 2008 and we'll make sure you're handsomely rewarded in the form of much more business."

And, of course, there's John Gruber, who I resolved that I will not blockquote endlessly in order to write my columns. I'd hate for you, dear readers, to think that I'm some sort of hack who uses well-known and prolific columnists to boot-strap my own writing. But he has a fantastic, sardonic line-by-line "analysis" of Jobs' letter; an essay on some of the criticisms of Jobs' letter, in which he refutes the idea that the possible cynicism of this move is a bad thing in and of itself; and a hilarious "translation" of Macrovision CEO Fred Amoroso's response, the same one Schofield noted.

Now, what's going to happen? I have no idea, guys. I'm rooting for the end of DRM regimes, personally, but I don't have a crystal ball. The better question is, what do you think is going to happen?

Send me an e-mail. Post a comment. I'd love to know.

Quick Hits

- Why aren't there any design leaders in the PC world? The problem, Jeff Atwood sees, is that the titular head of the PC world—Microsoft—exercises little or no taste over their own products. Apple may not stick to standards, he says, but at least they go out of their way to pay attention to aesthetics. The absence of anyone at the head of the crowd in the PC world leads to some actively horrifying designs. I use a Mac and a PC at work, and I always dread going back to the PC.

- Remember the Month of Apple Bugs? What a fizzle **that** was. Ooof. Tales of Being TJ noticed, and he says that we didn't learn anything meaningful from MOAB at all, except that Macs are pretty secure. Glenn Fleishman writes in *TidBITS* that, in the end, "MoAB revealed one of the best aspects of the larger Mac developer community: generosity." The Macalope noticed all this, and he nails it on the head: "Being a hacker is never having to say you're sorry."

- Boy, wasn't the release of Windows Vista a bummer? Nothing really revolutionary, almost nothing you can't already have on your Mac, and it took six years. When even *Time* magazine notices this in its new-release review, called "Why Nobody Cares," you're in hot water, Redmond. Julio Ojeda-Zapata calls it as it is, a "shameless Mac OS X imitator," and Dave Winer muses on what it was like when Microsoft competed on being smarter rather than being a monopoly. Remember, kids: Just Say No to Vista.

- Do you have a lot of sticky notes lying around? And Excel? Microsoft may have flopped with Vista, but its Macintosh Business Unit is doing a terrific job of providing better Microsoft applications for the Mac than even Windows users get. And, as a birthday gift, a bunch of Microsoft geeks put up giant, sticky-note versions of the Office:mac icons. Wow.

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2-up in Publishing

Two events occurred this week that have significance for the publishing world. First, the world's oldest newspaper has turned totally digital; and second, Microsoft's attempt to fast track their Office Open XML document format has hit the buffers.

Post-och Inrikes Tidningar comes from the land of ice and snow, with the midnight sun where hot metal used to flow, but no more for this Stockholm newspaper. Set up in 1645 by Queen Kristina, according to the Guardian it has turned into a Web-only publication listing legal announcements by corporations, courts, and government agencies. The download comes as a PDF with more dieresis than a coach full of tourists and it all looks Greek, er...Swedish to me.

I have been "blogging" since the early 1990s when we were making electronic publications, first in proprietary software before moving to the cross-platform Adobe PDF format. By the end of the 1990s these were multi-media, full-color magazines available online and the cover CDs of printed publications. When the dot-com bubble burst and advertising revenues declined, we didn't care because we had no advertisers, but the printed mags did and grew noticeably thinner, some to bulimia and eventual starvation. It seemed then that print's days were numbered, and with virtual publications such as the one you are reading now, major publishers are keeping a foot in both camps. The *The Times* of London has just spent a billion million making its own Web site worse than it used to be, and for some reason the *The Guardian* is still trying to get people to pay for their online content.

When Microsoft generously announced the intention of fast tracking their new Office Open XML document format for ISO approval, I for one was pretty downhearted because this is the default format for Office 2007. Especially as they simultaneously announced there wouldn't be an early translator for Macs, nor for earlier versions of Office come to that. I had visions of returning Word files as unreadable and trying to get computing dimwits to understand I don't care what formatting they put in their masterpieces; I strip it all out and start with plain old ASCII to design their latest blockbuster.

Thankfully, 19 of the world's governments agreed with me and have put up strenuous objections to Office Open XML. For many, the existing XML-based and ISO-approved OpenDocument Format (ODF) is enough, and they have moved to non-proprietary formats and OpenOffice software. Adobe, who has always called PDF an "open" standard, has also applied for ISO approval. Their free Mars plug-in creates XML-tagged PDFs which for my use seems the best of both worlds. In addition, Microsoft has reluctantly agreed to offer an ODF translator as part of Office 2007 (no guessing whether it will actually work).

The UK government supported the British Educational Communications and Technological Agency, Becta, in researching open source compared with proprietary solutions and found that not only was there no gain to be made in moving to Office 2007 but also interoperability issues are most prevalent between versions of Microsoft Office applications. This is the same organisation who were pilloried by MPs in November for having outdated purchasing frameworks that denied schools the benefits of open source software. Universities and colleges are not bound by Becta rules, as a result the Open University won a Mellon Technological Collaboration Award for its work with the open source Moodle course management system.

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Photoshop For the Curious

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Color Calibration Capers

Previously on *Photoshop For the Curious*

If you're just joining us for this series, we've completed a three-part overview to become familiar with Photoshop's tools, palettes, and menus. Last month, I shared a quick and easy procedure for creating more dramatic grayscale images. There was a very good reason for offering that tip before any others that are to come. That tip doesn't hinge on your monitor being adjusted for improved color accuracy. That's what we'll cover this month.

Home Run, or Grand Slam?

To be fair, the steps for improving the color accuracy of your monitor are mostly done outside of the Photoshop application. But because being at least in the ballpark of correct color is so important to your work in Photoshop, it's logical to devote some time to performing a basic color calibration.

I can't stress enough that the following procedure *is not* intended to make your monitor perfectly match real life colors. Even if you used a professional tool such as the Eye-One to obtain a grand slam of color accuracy, monitors can only be made very close to accurate color—never 100% accurate. It's just not possible.

Suffice to say that the calibration procedure we'll be doing here isn't even as accurate as using an on-screen sensor, but should still be something of a home run and get you close enough so that if you get back a photo from your digital camera that has an unpleasant color cast and you perform steps to fix the color, taking the fixed photo to a lab to get a print made should produce a respectable photo. This, of course, assumes the lab you use keeps its equipment reasonably calibrated.

Here Comes the Science

This next section is an explanation of why printed paper can't represent as many colors as you see in real life. If you wish, you can safely skip down to the next subhead if you're the type of person who only wants the "how" and has little use for the "why."

The "why" question is: why is it not possible for a monitor to exactly match real color. More importantly, why is it even harder to match color in prints and, especially, commercial offset printing?

A lengthy sidebar article could ensue to answer this question, so I'll leave you to some creative Wikipedia searching if you want to know more. Instead, take a look at this visual representation of color reproduction.

Suppose the large, multi-color triangular area represents all colors the human eye can see. Within those colors, there is a subset of colors, represented by the solid-line triangle, that your computer monitor can display. You'll notice that the points of this triangle reach furthest into the red, green, and blue colors. Computer monitors blend varying shades (from dark to light) of these three colors to simulate all other colors. Thus, a monitor can display red, green, and blue colors closer to real life than any other color.

When we start dealing with photos printed on paper, however, things get trickier. In the same color space figure, you'll see a dashed line labeled CMYK. This area represents the colors that can generally be reproduced on paper. The letters stand for Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Key. These are the four colors of ink traditionally used in offset printing.

"Key," you ask? Well, many people just figure the K from the last letter of Black was used to avoid CMYB and people thinking it was Blue—and that is partially true. But the Black plate is also known as the Key plate since most of an image's detail is generally represented there.

Back to the color space figure, you'll note there are a few shades that can be printed which are outside the range of a computer monitor, but most of the more vibrant shades in the red, green, and blue areas fall well outside of the CMYK color space. Consequently, photo labs and especially commercial presses can't print all the colors your monitor can display, and neither can get anywhere close to reproducing all the colors the human eye is capable of seeing.

This is why calibration is so important. The few colors which *can* be represented on paper should be as close as possible to what they are supposed to be.

If you're having a bit of cognitive dissonance over the fact that a print from a photo lab can represent more colors than something printed on a commercial press, you're right. Photo finishing equipment uses technology that can represent many more colors than a press. But the cost of doing so is significantly higher, as is the time required. It's a cost-effective technology for just a few photos to put in your album, but a commercial press is designed to print thousands. . .nay, *millions* of impressions at high speed. Even a much smaller job would require an insanely higher amount of money and an equally insane number of days to accomplish.

Whither Windows?

Getting back to the calibration, I must say that I'm sorry (well, maybe I am, maybe I'm not) that this procedure is likely to only apply to Macintosh users. We'll be looking at color controls that are part of Mac OS X and I frankly have no idea of the Windows equivalent. At one time, Adobe shipped a utility called Adobe Gamma with the Windows version of Photoshop which essentially accomplished what I'm about to describe here. Whether Adobe Gamma is still bundled with Photoshop for Windows, I cannot say.

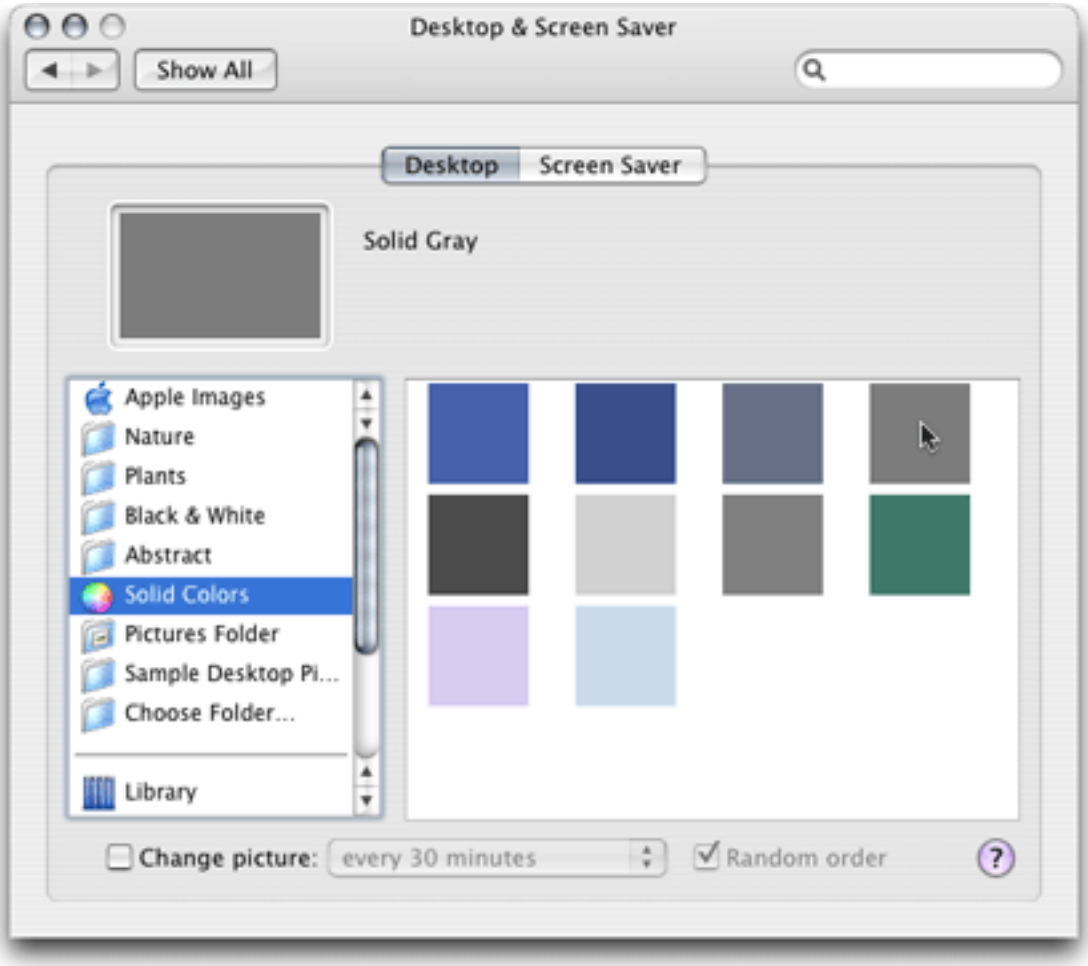
Dude, You're Getting Profiled

So here we go. Open your System Preferences from the Apple menu and select the Displays preference pane. If you have multiple monitors, you'll see a preference pane appear on each monitor. The preferences for the primary monitor will have a tab named Arrangement, and all of them will have Display and Color. It's the Color tab we're interested in, and you'll want to do these steps for every monitor you want to calibrate.

In the Color tab, you should see a list of predefined profiles from which you could choose. Most (or all) of them will disappear if the "...this display only" checkbox is enabled. All these profiles contain instructions on how to represent various hues on your screen, based on the final intent and the type of display being used.

Start With a Clean Work Area

For our needs, we can ignore all those predefined profiles. We're going to create a custom profile specifically tailored for your monitor. To prepare for this, you'll want to do two things. First, you'll want to clear your screen of any erroneous windows and colors that could fool your eye. Close all windows on the display except for the System Preferences window. I might even suggest that you temporarily put all icons that are on your desktop inside a temporary folder—especially if any of the icons are designed with bold color patterns. Next, switch over to the Desktop & Screen Saver preferences. In the Desktop tab, select Solid Colors, then pick the medium solid gray color.



The solid color options Apple provides for background images aren't just for satisfying people who are boring!

Not too bright, not too dark. Neutral. You want your eye to focus on the calibration tools we'll be using in a moment—not some distracting background such as EarthDesk, which I like to run on my desktop. In fact, you should be using this neutral gray background when adjusting an image in Photoshop, as well. Fortunately, however, you don't have to change your wallpaper image to accomplish this. In Photoshop, simply hit the middle Screen Mode icon (toward the bottom of the tool palette) and you'll get a temporary blank gray background for the active image.

Lay Off the Brightness

Back over at the Displays preferences, under the Display tab, you'll need to make a decision about the Brightness control. If you have a MacBook or MacBook Pro—and especially if you have an older PowerBook—you likely need to set the Brightness as high as it can go. Remember that LCD displays become gradually dimmer over time, and I'm not aware of any laptop LCD display that's as bright as a desktop LCD. For comparison, the brand-new 23″ Apple Cinema Display I have at my office was initially so bright, I almost felt like I

needed sunglasses to look at it. Since I work on photos for commercial offset printing, I have my monitor professionally calibrated with an Eye-One device. The first thing we did before running the final calibration was slide the Brightness control down. It ended up being less than a third of full intensity! A new machine typically defaults to about a 60% setting. For most people, this is OK, but you can lower it a bit more if you're squinting when looking at your monitor.

Time to Calibrate

Now, we're ready to create a profile. In the Color tab, click the Calibrate button and Apple's Display Calibrator Assistant will launch. You'll probably notice your screen's color and/or brightness shift a little bit. Don't be scared. The Display Calibrator Assistant is simply resetting to defaults in preparation for the calibration. Something else to not be scared of—see that Expert Mode checkbox? Turn it on. Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere. Let's be experts together, shall we?

On the next page, depending on what monitor you have, you may see a Display Adjustment screen with advice on setting the brightness and contrast of your monitor. You can use this to help set the proper brightness if you're not satisfied with the adjustment we covered earlier. Just use your monitor's brightness controls and adjust them as described in the Display Adjustment screen.

When you click Continue, you'll find three boxes. The middle contains an Apple logo surrounded by narrow horizontal bars that seem almost to blend into gray. This is what you're using to examine the calibration of your monitor.

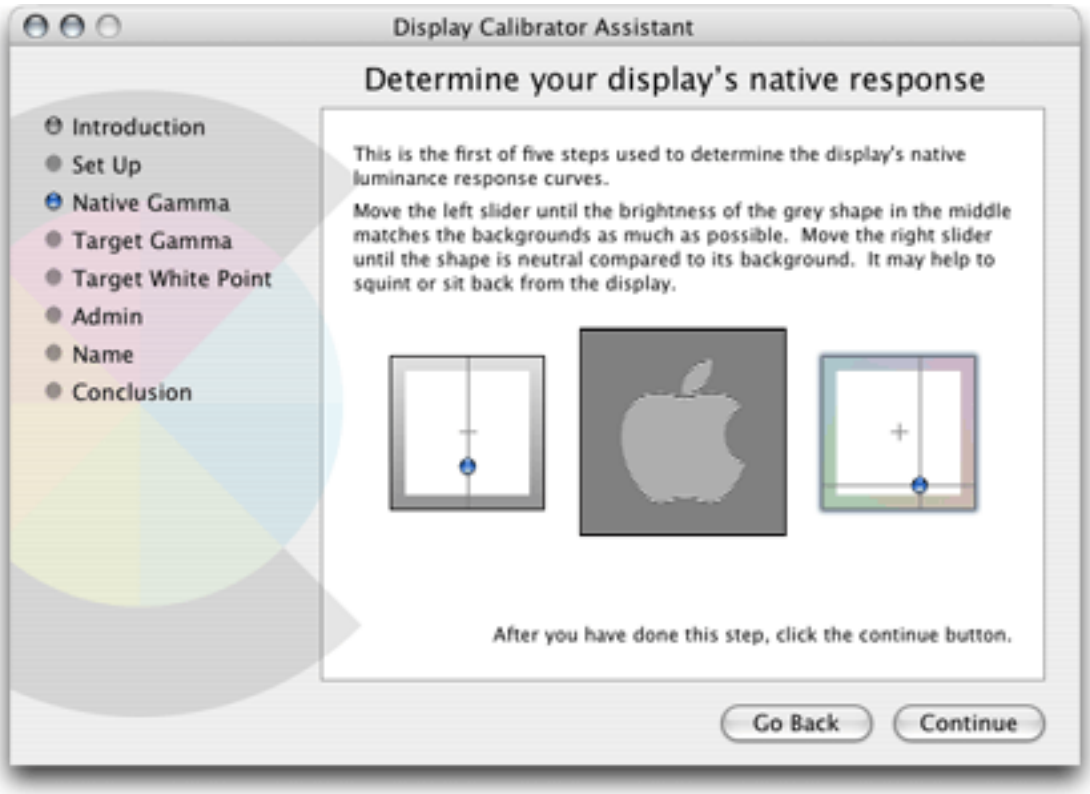
It is *very important* from this point on that you sit at a distance you plan to be sitting most every time you use your computer, as well as have the angle of your display tilted to what you'll most often use. Also important is the ambient lighting in your room. The amount of light around you that you see with your peripheral vision affects how you see the object you're staring straight at. This is why we changed the background image to a neutral gray. Obviously I can't tell you to paint your walls and desk gray, but I can tell you to adjust your room lighting to a comfortable level that you plan on using most often. It's OK (and preferred) if it's bright enough for reading a book from the same seat where you use your computer.

Slide to Perfection

The additional two boxes on either side of the Apple logo are the adjustment controls. That "Expert" box we checked earlier just means that we're going to have a few more of these adjustment sliders with which to contend. That's all.

For each calibration step, you'll start with the box on the left to reach a reasonably close adjustment, then switch to the box on the right to fine-tune your setting. While adjusting the sliders, you'll be staring at the Apple logo and moving the sliders until the logo appears to blend into the background, becoming nearly invisible. Note that the left slider only goes up and down. The right slider moves up, down, left and right. You'll also note that the right slider affects not only lighter and darker shades, but also color hues. Be sure to

start with both slider knobs in the middle. Don't be worried if you have to move them a considerable distance away from the middle to find the correct adjustment—especially on older monitors.



Obviously, my settings are not going to look calibrated on your monitor, but you can see that, on my older G4 PowerBook, I have to start with settings that are significantly off from the default center position.

Rinse and Repeat

You'll do these steps and click the Continue button several times, each adjusting different tones that monitors are capable of displaying.

Alpha, Beta, Gamma

Once you've finished, you'll see a screen asking you to select a target gamma of the monitor you're using. In this screen, you'll probably find it already set for the Mac Standard of 1.8. Macs have long used 1.8 as the target gamma because the native gamma of Apple's older monitors was 1.8. Virtually all monitors these days have a native gamma between 2.0 and 2.2. Yes, a setting of 2.2 is going to seem a bit dark and/or high contrast if you've used Macs for years. Buck up as best you can and go with the 2.2. Try 2.0 if you just absolutely cannot stand 2.2. Also, leave the native gamma checkbox off.

White or Off-white?

Finally, you'll select a target white point. This step is akin to setting the white balance on a video camera. Unless you know of a good reason to do otherwise (and I doubt you do),

just enable the checkbox to use native white point which should set it for approximately 6500 degrees.

After a few years, any monitor will start to discolor a little bit. Lowering the white point setting a little can compensate. The native white point checkbox must be off in order to adjust the slider.

The thing that surprises many people is that a well-calibrated monitor actually appears to have a slight reddish tinge to it. You'll find that reducing the target white point will add the reddish tinge back in. Before I started having my office computer calibrated, I noticed that a photo which looked great on my screen would come out with a red cast at a commercial offset printer. I suppose it's just the nature of the beast that is commercial printing. The red tinge of a calibrated monitor offsets the red cast that appears on press. I've been told that a similar situation exists for most photo finishing labs.

Having said that, don't just go arbitrarily reducing the white point setting unless you can measure your monitor's white point. If you have no means to measure, you might try opening a digital photo that you know produced good color in a print at a lab. If you look at it now and it seems to have more of a blueish tinge, you could try lowering the white point setting until the photo seems more like what you'd expect. Just don't go overboard. Your eyes *can* deceive you. If you do make an adjustment here, it shouldn't be more than 100–200 degrees. If you're just not sure, leave the white point at 6500.

Finishing and Saving the New Color Profile

Once these settings are done, you'll see an option to allow other users who might log into your Mac to use your calibration setting. That's up to you. Once you've chosen, you'll then save your profile. It will probably start out as the name of your display with the word "Calibrated" on the end. This is fine. Unless you want to get creative, you can accept the default name and click Done. Then you'll see a scary-looking screen with a bunch of numerical calibration settings. Take a deep breath, click the Done button again, and it'll go away.

That's it! Now be honest, that didn't hurt so bad, did it? You're even already getting used to that 2.2 gamma, aren't you? If you have a second monitor that you want to calibrate, go ahead and repeat these steps using the Calibrate button you'll find under the Color tab in the Displays preference window associated with that monitor. Best of all, these steps are not permanent. If you feel you completely loused up the settings, just go back and click the profile that was selected before you did the calibration, and you'll be back to where you were. You can then start over and try the calibration again.

Mature Monitors

I think this is the third time I've mentioned this fact, and it can never be said too much—monitors don't retain their color accuracy forever. If you're truly anal about wanting to stay reasonably accurate with color, but don't want to make the jump to using an Eye-One sensor, you should go through the above calibration steps perhaps once a month or every

other month. Otherwise, once or twice a year is probably fine. Just don't set it and forget it.

Next Month...

Yes, yes, I know, I did it again. I've learned my lesson. I will stop trying to be so ambitious about the topics I plan to cover in the following month's column. I said in February that we'd look at the Levels control. Well, what happened is that I decided I want to include a small bit on the Curves control as well as Levels (yes, they're very much related). Doing both of those, combined with the length of this tutorial on basic calibration, was simply turning into an enormous article.

So I'm putting on the brakes here to give you your next homework assignment and to resolve to be more careful about what I promise for next month. Therefore, next month will cover the Levels and Curves controls. If anything else is also covered, that'll just be a nice bonus, right?

Here's your homework assignment. Now that your monitors probably look a whole lot different than they did before you started reading this column, open some original/unaltered digital photos and study them on your newly calibrated monitor. You could even open the Color tab of the Displays preference pane and flip back and forth between the default profile (the one without the "Calibrated" word at the end) and your new profile. You should observe that the colors are truer and contrast is better. Note that I didn't say the colors will be more vibrant—only that they should be truer, or more natural. The fact is, more natural-looking color *does not* typically equal more vibrant-looking color.

With the calibration finished, if you feel your photos don't have that same vibrancy they did before, remember that we didn't change your photos at all—only how your monitor displays them. You're now seeing them more in line of the way they really are, and the way you're more likely to see them if you take them to a lab to have prints made. If you think they need more snap, we'll soon learn how to get into the Saturation controls in Photoshop and give the color a little boost.

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Web Accessibility

by Miraz Jordan, http://mactips.info

The Flip Side of the Coin

One view of Web accessibility is that it's about making Web sites accessible to the disabled. Those with a bit more finesse in their understanding may reword that to making Web sites more accessible to "people with disabilities".

In either case, though, it creates a duality: on the one hand, there are those who are not disabled, for whom any Web site will (at least theoretically) work just fine, while on the other, there are people with disabilities, who require some kind of special concessions to be able to use the Web.

The problem with that whole supposition is that disability is gone today and here tomorrow: our "abilities" may be fleeting, sporadic, temporary, and erratic.

Who Has Disabilities?

I don't count myself as a person with a disability, and I'd guess many of the readers of *About This Particular Macintosh* would feel the same way about themselves.

Yet I've been wearing lenses to correct my vision for the last 40 years: I'm near-sighted. Without my glasses I wouldn't have a hope of reading these words on my computer screen as I type them.

Nearly everyone I know wears glasses or contact lenses. I can't think of any of them who would describe themselves as a person with a disability.

More Pixels, More Problems

About a year ago, I switched from using a PowerBook to using a MacBook Pro. The screen on the new machine is pretty much the same size as that on the old machine, but it crams in more pixels. Photos are gorgeous, but the first thing I noticed was that I couldn't read anything! I had to go into the settings on every piece of software and enlarge the standard font size.

I bought the new machine at a time when I was working very hard and intensively, with long hours of looking at the screen. I soon realised that the increased font size was helping, but in the early morning and late at night, when my eyes were tired, I still couldn't see well. For some portions of some days I needed to increase the font size or zoom level even further.

Is Middle Age a Disability?

Last week I turned 52. After about the age of 40 most people start to find their eyes aren't as quick to focus; they're not so instantly adaptable. It shows up as needing to hold a

bottle farther away to read the small print on the label, bumping up the font size to read an e-mail, or having trouble with pale type on a textured background on a Web page.

Last night I started reading a new paperback book. I just about stopped before reading a word as it seemed to have been printed in 5-point type! Well, OK, maybe it's actually 10- or 11-point type, but I can tell you that it's darned small. I don't need those large-print books you find on the special shelves in the library, just a more accessible size, or a friendlier, more open and distinct font face.

Dead Trees vs. the Living Screen

Of course, the problem with a book is that some designer somewhere has chosen a font face and size that will serve the printed book well. Perhaps it fits more words on a page, so the publisher can save a few dollars in printing and shipping costs. Perhaps the designer was a keen-eyed person who thought this particular font somehow reflected the tone and content of the book.

Once it's on paper, though, it's fixed: small print is and remains small print.

If only I were reading that book on a screen (ideally an electronic book—small, light and easy to hold, with storage for hundreds of books, a wireless interface for finding and downloading similar books, or works by the same author, for looking up a dictionary or translating a word) with a simple and instant method for changing font family, font size, contrast.

Software bestows flexibility: the reader can zoom, change fonts and font sizes, make a screen darker or brighter, even have the text read aloud.

Just How I Like It

Which brings us back to Web sites. While a book is black and white, static, the result of decisions made long ago, a Web site can and should be a dynamic, living thing. Users with tired eyes, or a painful mousing wrist, or who have trouble with language have the whole power of the computer and the Web at their disposal to assist them. They can interact with a Web site and adapt it to meet their needs.

A well-designed Web site will assist them in that adaptation. A Web site churned out with poorly researched software by a user with no understanding of good practice will hinder it.

So, What Can We Mac Users Do?

Fancy adapting someone else's site to your own needs? Here's what your modern Mac can do (some actions may require the latest operating system, a certain model of Mac, or certain functions to be activated). Another article in this series will look specifically at what your browser software can do.

System Preference: Displays

Choose System Preferences ▷ Displays and change the resolution of your screen. If it's normally 1024×768, for example, and you choose 800×600 then everything on screen will appear to get bigger (and possibly fuzzier), including text.

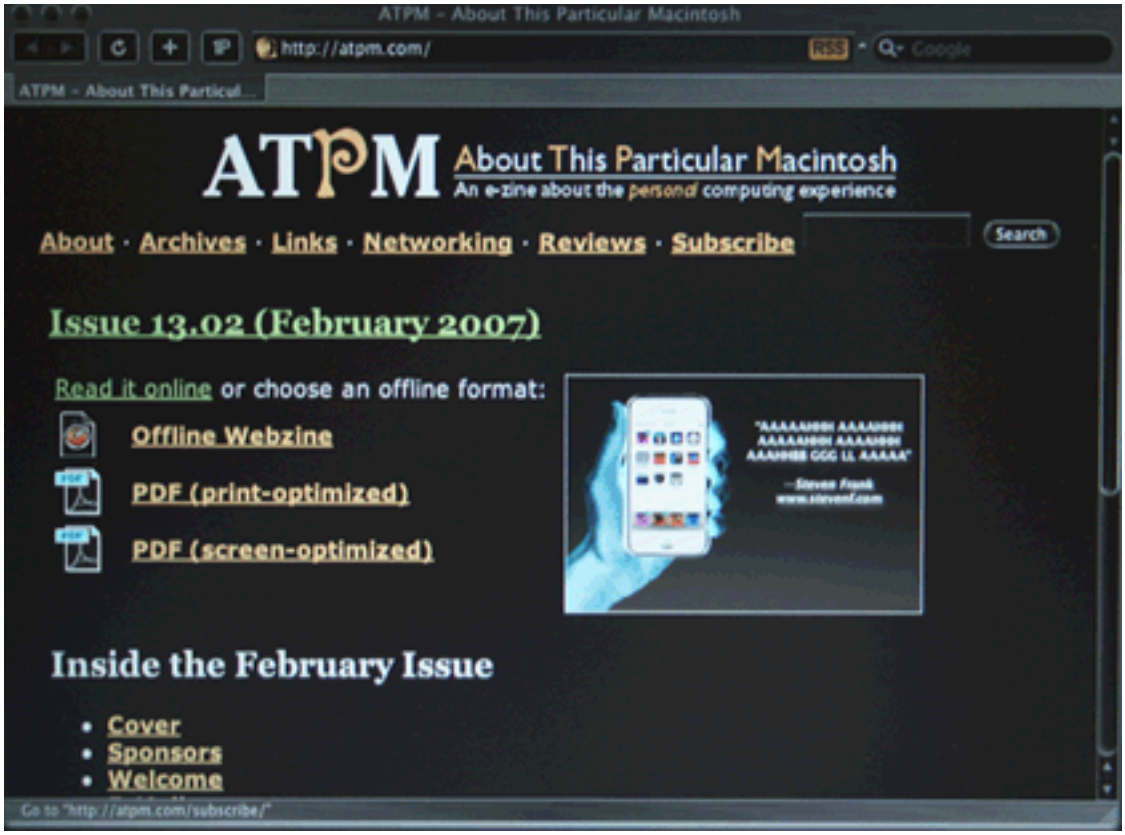
Personally, I hate this solution. I want to make use of every pixel I have as it increases overall definition and crispness. It also allows me to have various windows open side-by-side, or at least overlapping, with each showing useful amounts of information.

This suggestion has gone down well though with some clients, who were having problems in general with reading text on screen, not just on Web pages.

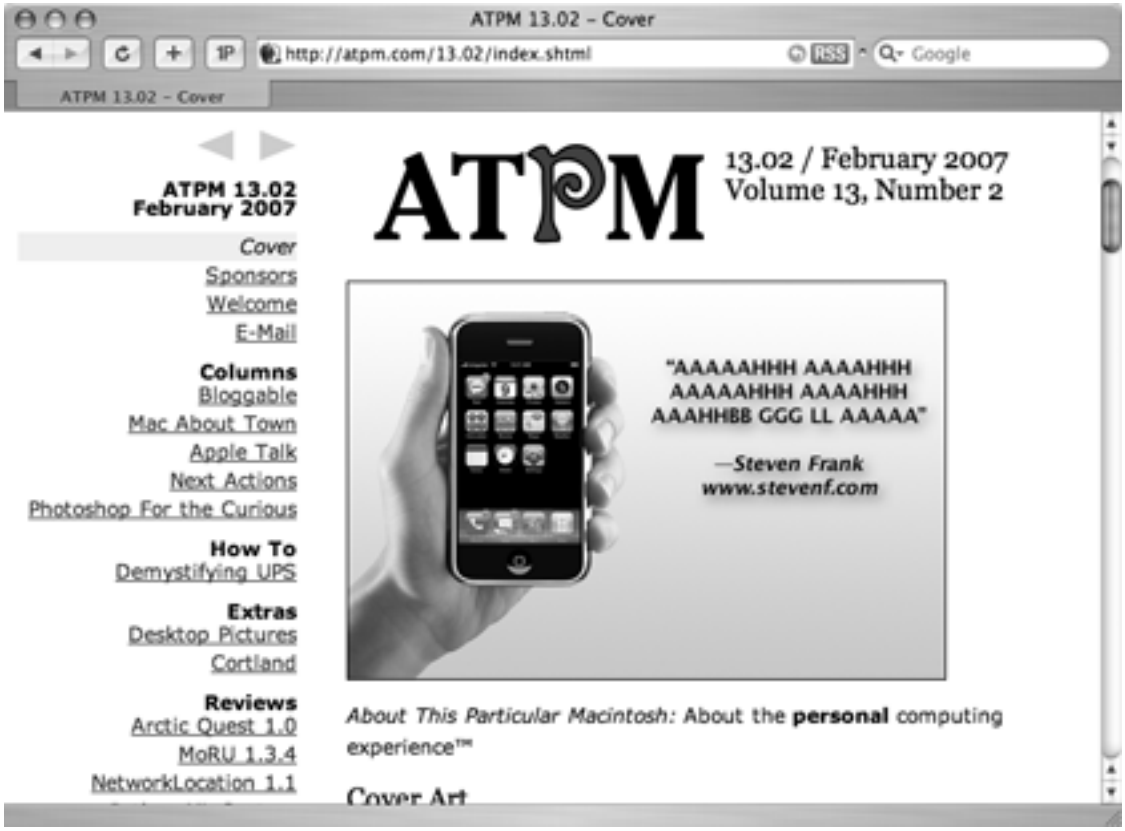
Black, White, and Gray

Now things start to get really interesting! Select System Preferences ▷ Universal Access ▷ Seeing, and experiment with the Display controls. White on Black, Grayscale, and Enhanced Contrast all have a huge effect on how the screen appears. All the settings provide useful functionality for certain users.

The ATPM Web site as it normally appears on my screen. At my normal screen resolution of 1440×900 my chosen browser window size fills about a quarter of my screen. At 800×600 it fills the entire screen. In these screenshots you may notice a button labelled 1P. It belongs to a utility called 1Password that makes it easy to fill in forms.



White on black: wow! Some people find it easier to read white text on a black background.



Grayscale takes out the colors. Some people surf Web sites with devices that use a grayscale screen. They find it tough to fill in a form when a site says something like: "Compulsory fields are marked in red."

Instant Zoom

Zoom can give instant relief for the tiny print you sometimes find on a Web site. Turn it on and then zoom in on part of a Web page. Text and images are both zoomed.

I zoomed in to take this screenshot. This screenshot captures the same area of the screen as the first three, but you can see that it is filled by just a few items from the Web page menu.

Adventures With VoiceOver

VoiceOver is a real live screenreader. Note that it's seen considerable improvements as the operating system has developed. To use it, you'll need to be running Mac OS X 10.4 or later.

A screenreader is handy for some people, and an absolute necessity for others. If you've never tried one out before then you're in for a real education. It reads out what's on screen, can tell you where your cursor is, what's under the mouse, what you're typing—in fact, everything you need to know to operate your Mac with your eyes closed (or without a monitor).

Sidenote: if you also have one hand tied behind your back, then be sure to visit the System Preferences ▷ Universal Access ▷ Keyboard. That's where you can set preferences to allow you to operate a keyboard with one hand only.

In System Preferences ▷ Universal Access ▷ Seeing, turn on VoiceOver, then click to Open VoiceOver Utility. Visit each tab of VoiceOver Utility to see just what settings you can turn on and off. Try making VoiceOver very verbose, then visit the VoiceOver help menu to find out how to navigate and work with a Web page.

Tip: use the Help Index and choose the Web sites topic.

Link Lists

For example, with pretty well everything turned on in the VoiceOver Utility, I opened Safari and visited http://www.cricketchiangmai.com. I have no connection with the site, and in fact have never visited it before; I found it through a Google search.

After the page had loaded, I typed Control-Option–Down Arrow until the highlight moved to the page content. Note: in working with VoiceOver while writing this article, I found that sometimes I needed to move the highlight, while other times it seemed to already be in the page.

Then I typed Control-Option-U. A special VoiceOver Link Chooser window appeared, containing a list of all links on the page. Quite often when using Web sites we land on some kind of intro page and know we need to click a link to locate specific information (imagine visiting the Apple home page to find information about an iPod). Calling up a list of only links speeds this process, allowing us to avoid all the "blurb" on the page.

Using the down arrow I browsed the links, pressed Enter to select, then Control-Option-Space to activate one.

This 2.4 MB movie shows me briefly using the above Cricket site, using VoiceOver to call up a list of links, follow one, call up, and scan another list of links.

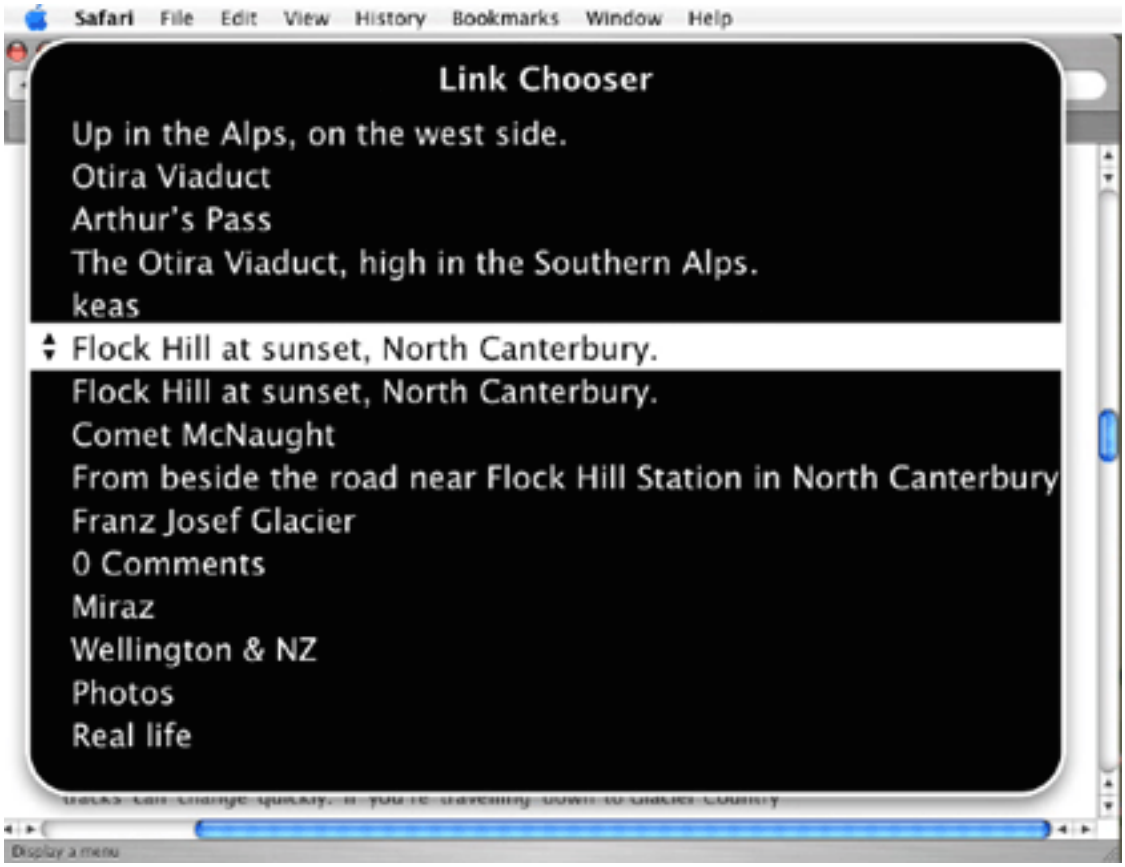
Who Fudged My Link?

The brief movie I made of my quick visit to the cricket site shows a couple of accessibility problems right away: several links leading to different content all use the same, meaningless, text: "Read more." The Link Chooser takes those links out of their written context, where they followed an initial paragraph of explanation. Listed here, on their own, they convey no useful information.

Another problem is the use of initials. I have no idea what CMSCA means, nor can I guess.

A third major problem is that none of the major images use alternate text. In my Link Chooser they show up as image 1, image 2, and so on. If they had alternate text then that would be displayed in the Link Chooser.

VoiceOver has many settings and preferences, and many possibilities in its use. As a powerful application in its own right there is no way I can do it justice in a couple of paragraphs within one article, but my point has been made: software allows us to interact in diverse ways with a Web site. If the site is well-made then our interaction should be successful, but if it doesn't embrace even very simple accessibility techniques, such as alternate text for images, then it can create needless barriers.



Most of the Links in this Link Chooser list are images. The alternate text is displayed.

It's All Mutable

This article began by pointing out that a distinction between "the able" and "the disabled" is artificial: we live in a world where people's abilities vary in many dimensions and across time. I may have perfect vision, or corrected almost-perfect vision one day, tired eyes or broken glasses the next. My computer screen may have low or high resolution. It may be in a dark room, or under the glare of the sun. I may be too busy to watch the screen and choose to have the computer read the screen aloud to me. I may be legally blind and not look at a screen at all.

A broken wrist may make typing tricky, or I may be unable to move my limbs because of paralysis.

VoiceOver and the other System Preferences mentioned are examples of how a computer can interact with a Web site and make it look very different from how the site's creator had imagined. In articles to come I'll look at how we can use Web browser software to shape a Web site to our own needs or wishes.

Copyright © 2007 Miraz Jordan, http://mactips.info. Miraz is a co-author of the recently published book: WordPress 2: Visual Quickstart Guide, and member of the Webstock organising team.

Desktop Pictures

Tasmania

This Month's Desktop Pictures

These photos, from ATPM reader Le Anne Brown, are of landscapes of the island of Tasmania.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

Some browsers can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once.

iCab Use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path."

OmniWeb Choose "Save Linked ▷ Images..." from the File menu.

Safari Use this Automator workflow.

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 and 10.4.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.0.x

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

Cortland

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

PARDON ME, BUT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DANCE?
WHY, CERTAINLY. LET'S GO.
GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

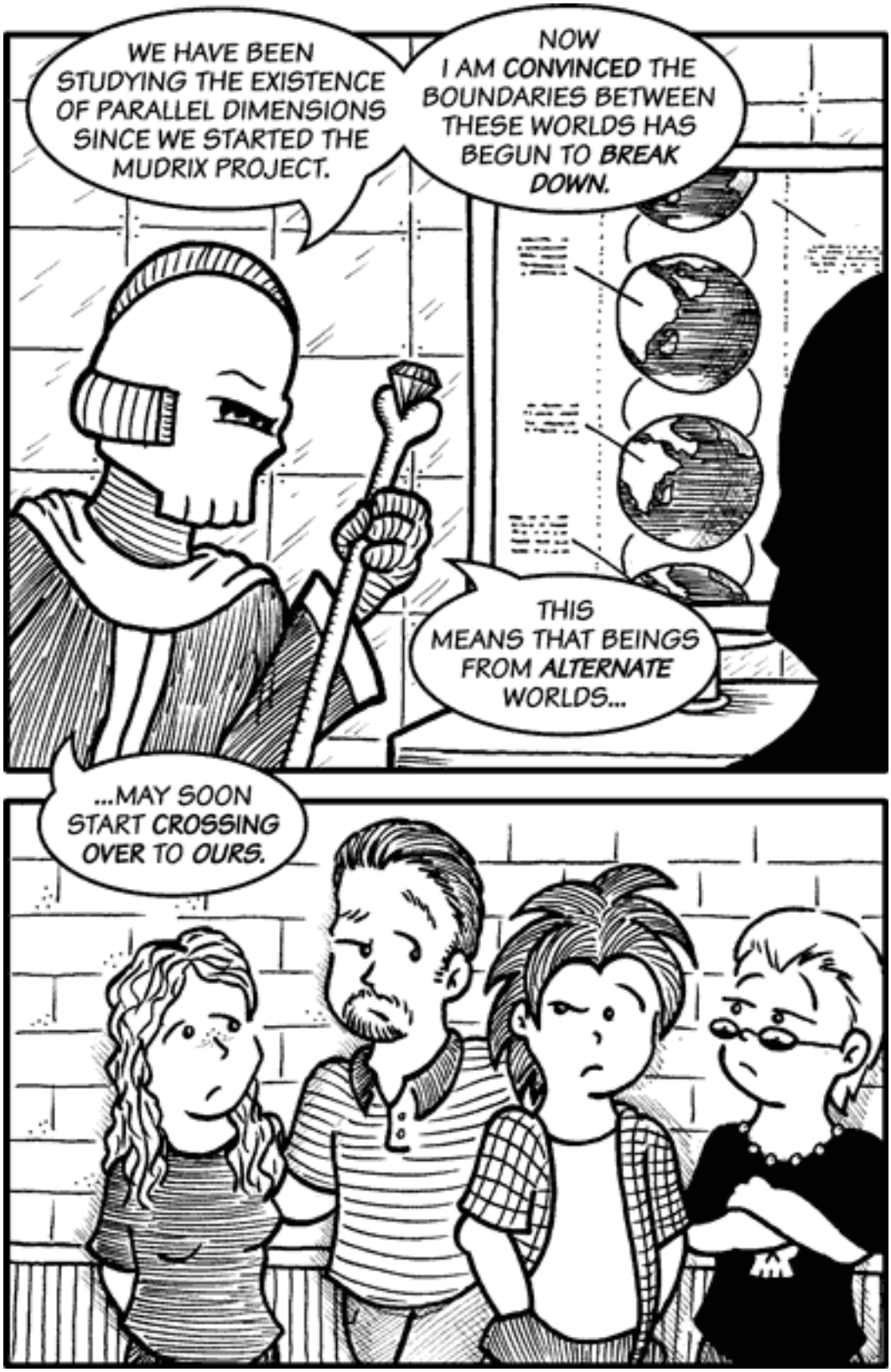
OH GEEZ, THAT LOOKS PAINFUL!
THAT ARM'S GONNA BREAK IF I DON'T STOP THIS.

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LEAD FROM THE BODY, NOT THE ARM!
I THOUGHT I WAS!

SIR, I HAVE LEARNED SOMETHING THAT MAY DELAY OUR OPERATION SLIGHTLY.
BUT DON'T WORRY. I HAVE THE SITUATION COMPLETELY UNDER CONTROL.

HI! WANNA DANCE?

BEGGING YOUR PARDON SIR, BUT WHAT'S THIS SUDDEN INTEREST YOU HAVE IN THE EVENTS AT THE OMAHA EAGLE'S LODGE?
SIMPLE, GENTLEMEN. MY SOURCES TELL ME THAT THE BARRIER BETWEEN DIMENSIONS HAS STARTED TO WEAKEN...
JEDI
...AND THIS SIMPLE DANCE HALL HAS BECOME A GATEWAY...
...TO OTHER WORLDS.


WE HAVE BEEN STUDYING THE EXISTENCE OF PARALLEL DIMENSIONS SINCE WE STARTED THE MUDRIX PROJECT.
NOW I AM CONVINCED THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THESE WORLDS HAS BEGUN TO BREAK DOWN.
THIS MEANS THAT BEINGS FROM ALTERNATE WORLDS...
...MAY SOON START CROSSING OVER TO OURS.

WHO WAS THAT GUY? HE SEEMED KIND OF FAMILIAR.
DUNNO. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM HERE BEFORE, BUT WE GET NEW PEOPLE EVERY WEEK.
MAYBE I MET HIM BEFORE AND JUST FORGOT.
I ALWAYS SEEM TO OVERLOOK THESE REALLY IMPORTANT DETAILS.
OH, HEY! THERE'S LISA! COME ON, I WANT TO INTRODUCE HER TO YOU.

SORRY, TODD, I'LL MEET YOUR GIRLFRIEND LATER.
AW, IT'LL TAKE JUST A SEC. YOU AND LISA HAVE A LOT IN COMMON.
I NEED TO FIND ANGIE.

WHY YES, I AM A MAC-USER.

HEY, YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD AT THIS.
HAVE YOU LEARNED ANY TRICKS YET?
OH, MAYBE JUST A COUPLE.
HOW ABOUT AN AERIAL?
WHOA! NO BACK LEADING!

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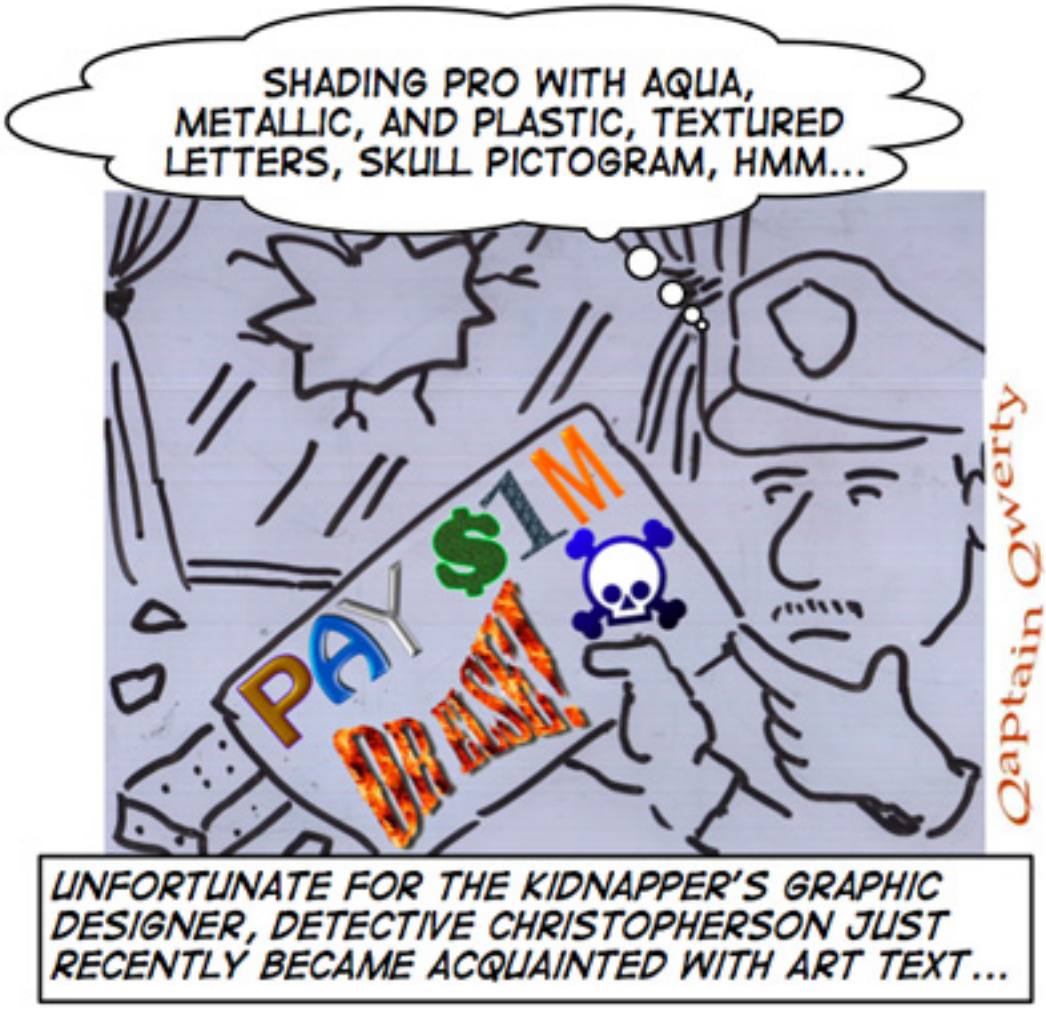
Qaptain Qwerty

by Linus Ly, http://www.flickr.com/photos/qaptainqwerty/



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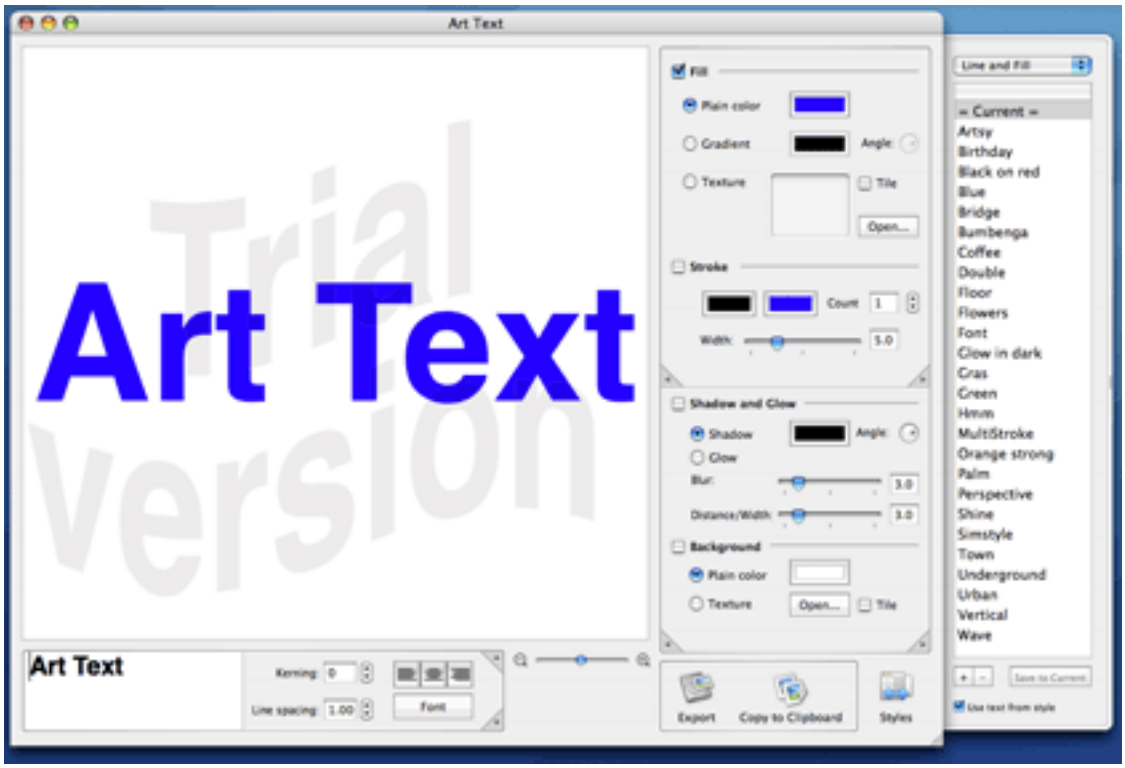
Software Review

by Linus Ly, http://www.flickr.com/photos/qaptainqwerty/

Art Text 1.0.6

Developer: BeLight Software
Price: $30
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal.
Trial: Fully-featured (completed projects are overlaid with the words "Trial Version")

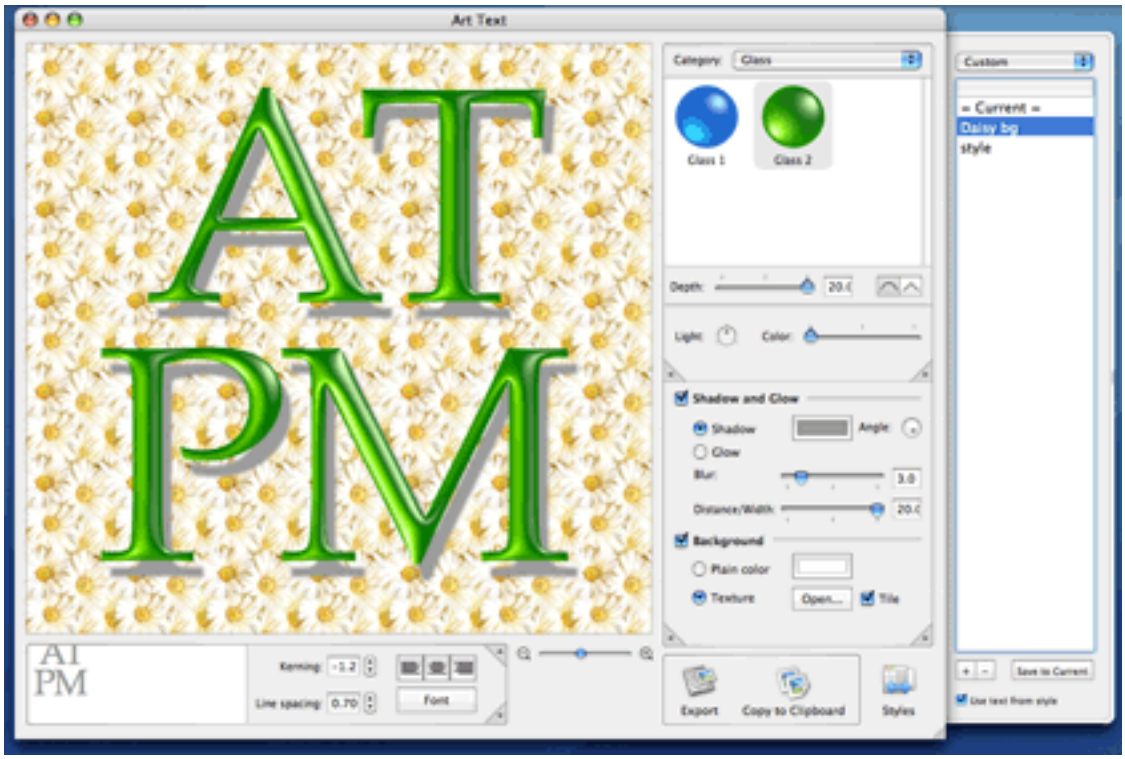
Text art, or the result of manipulating text objects to make them look fancy, has been around in other software packages. Microsoft Word has WordArt, Photoshop can warp text, and other large software packages usually have the ability to process text built-in. Art Text from BeLight Soft, on the other hand, is a standalone text processing program.



Welcome to Art Text

The Art Text initial screen has the phrase Art Text already typed out for you. Naturally, you would want to change it to your own text. The text isn't limited to one line, as you

can type a Return. From there, you can adjust the text object's skin or its outline in the Fill and Stroke panel, or its Shadow and Glow, in the panel by the same name. In the same area with Shadow and Glow, you can also add an image to the text object's background, with the option to tile the image. Wherever you see tiny pairs of arrows in the lower corners of a panel, you can flip the panel on its vertical or horizontal axis by clicking on either of the pair of arrows. The Fill and Stroke panel makes room for Shading Pro, while Shadow and Glow becomes Transform. With Shading Pro, you can add a sense of depth to the two-dimensional text. The Transform panel includes effects such as the familiar Wave, Ring, and more than ten other effects that are best seen to appreciate. Naturally, Art Text supports the use of different typefaces, but it also includes over 300 vector graphic symbols, such as recycle, crescent moon, skull and bones, many mammals, flowers, and trees, and even Batman!



Green glass, shadow, kerning, line spacing, background. . .there are many parameters to tinker with.

With the various parameters provided by the different panels, there really is much you can do to spice up your otherwise plain-looking text. In the above picture, I tried out different typefaces, then adjusted kerning to bring the A and the T closer together, changed the line spacing, used the green glass shading with maximum depth, threw in a shadow, and last but not least added a flowery tiled background, using a texture file of my own. However, should you feel a dearth of creativity, you can pull out the Styles drawer on the right side. With Styles, you can make your text objects a wood background, go vertical, recede into the background, etc. Styles are really just templates of what can be done with Art Text,

something you could do yourself, but perhaps only after much experimentation. Exceptions are those that are textured to have the look of wood, brick, or flower.

The Art Text program is visible on your hard drive as an application package, or a single file with everything contained inside, not counting the Read Me file. I was really curious as to which file the textures come from and peeked inside the package by holding down the Control key clicking the package, and choosing Show Package Contents. Alas, there were no individual GIF or JPEG files anywhere inside the package. Style files themselves are XML files, which are basically text files. This lack of readily available textures is one of the down sides of Art Text. Should you ever wish to use one of the textures that are shown in one of the Styles, you must use that Style and adjust all the other parameters to suit your design. You cannot make the design first and apply the texture afterward. If you don't happen to have a collection of texture files, clicking the Texture button in Art Text wouldn't get you anywhere. Since much of Art Text is about canned or pre-set parameters, I think it makes perfect sense for it to have a set of textures built-in, so the joy of exploring it can be better appreciated.

One of the Styles was called Vertical because the text ran up and down instead of across the page. I tried to create the effect myself and concluded that the only way the text could be made vertical was by using the Frame Transform, which was basically a rectangle. I had to pull on the rectangle's four control points located at the corners until the vertical effect was achieved. It would be much easier if there was a rotate control point. Likewise, for Transform effects that make the text appear to recede into the background, like Star Wars' introduction text, having a rotate control axis would make the task much simpler.

When it comes to saving your work, Art Text has a unique approach. Basically, you don't have to save anything. Whatever you create is automatically saved. Just simply quitting Art Text won't cause you to lose your hours of laboriously-achieved text effects. Whatever text and effects you were fiddling with would be there the next time you launch Art Text. The only you time you need to name a file is when you want to export your work for other programs to use.

Alternatively, you can just choose Copy to Clipboard and paste the result into your other program, except that Copy to Clipboard doesn't work as well as it should. Art Text uses only the PDF format when copying to the clipboard. If the application that you want to paste into doesn't support PDF, then the Paste menu option won't be available or, if is available, doesn't actually paste anything. That explained why Preview, which is the default PDF viewer, and Photoshop Element, with its built-in PDF rasterizing engine, could handle Art Text clipboard, whereas GraphicConverter, MS Word, NeoOffice, etc., couldn't. Copying to clipboard in PDF format only is a gap in Art Text, as it very much limits Art Text's usefulness.

As Art Text doesn't allow direct saving of work done and automatically loads just whatever was last worked on, Custom Style is what you'll need to use if you have a series of designs to do. Custom Style's main use is to save a set of parameters for later re-use, but it is

perfectly suitable for saving a work in progress for later editing while you work on a new design.

Art Text's unique way to deal with saving leads me to believe that the software's intended market includes those who don't own the major software packages like Photoshop or Illustrator, or at least those who are not too familiar with Photoshop's advanced text features. These people just need a quick way to produce attractively enhanced text and export the result to other programs, in other words, software packages whose strength is not text manipulation. Art Text is good for this purpose, even though no textures are readily available, there is no easy way to rotate objects, and the Copy to Clipboard feature doesn't work as expected.

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ScanSnap S500m

Developer: Fujitsu
Price: $495
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2.8, 1.25 GHz G4, 512 of RAM, USB. Universal.
Recommended: 1.6 GHz G5, USB 2.0.
Trial: None

Like many serious computer users of all platforms, the concept of a paperless office has often occurred to me as something of a pipe dream. As much as I love the idea, I had been fairly convinced that anything close to a realization was a long way off.

When I first heard about Fujitsu's ScanSnap, however, the brass ring of a (nearly) paperless office seemed within reach for the first time. As I have two four-drawer filing cabinets (both about three-quarters full) sitting beside my desk, plus another four drawers' worth of files in other places around the house, I would love to see these scale down a bit (or completely).

Where the ScanSnap is different is in the purposeful design. Most scanners are either flatbed scanners, designed primarily for photos, and able to handle documents primarily for duplication purposes—not for archives or searchable replicants; or they are scanners built into a multi-function printer, and the scanner is again geared toward copying or faxing a document. A dedicated document scanner that easily handles any size paper up to 8.5 inches wide is a completely different tool.

What's in the Box

The ScanSnap comes ready to use: of course the scanner itself and a power cable are included, and it also includes a six-foot USB cable and bundled software.

The ScanSnap atop one of my (soon to be vanquished) file cabinets.

Though the price is well above most home/consumer scanners, the return on investment is immediate: ScanSnap is bundled with Adobe Acrobat Standard (though version 7.0 came with mine, not the latest version 8.0) and ReadIris Pro 11. With Acrobat selling for $299 and ReadIris Pro for $129, you could say the scanner itself only costs $65—though that would imply a value far below its worth. The real return on investment will come on the hours saved by what this scanner offers.

When it comes to a scanner of this sort, the usefulness is limited only by the imagination of the user. This could be the solution to a household that has trouble maintaining adequate records for tax preparation, a way to archive all of the family recipes, or finally getting the business cards you keep in a Rolodex entered into Address Book or Entourage. It could be a tool for academic research or data mining. What papers do you have stacks of at your house? You could probably figure out a way to use the ScanSnap to get them quickly stored on your computer.

As for the included software—this is a true bargain. To begin with, Adobe Acrobat is a great tool to have on-hand for many reasons. Combined with the ScanSnap, any paper form—an

application, a job information form, a report—now becomes an editable document while preserving all graphical and layout elements. With Acrobat, it's easy to combine PDFs, make comments or add elements, or apply watermarks. A lot of these could be done with good OCR and a robust word processor or layout tool, but Acrobat makes it easy and a lot less painful.

Those early adopters, whose introduction to Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology coincided with the rise in availability of scanners in the late 1990s, will likely be predisposed skeptics. Consumer-level OCR used to outright stink, and many of us who tried it then made up our minds for a while. Let this serve as the official announcement that OCR has matured to a very usable level. If you get the right OCR engine—and ReadIris *is* the right OCR engine—accuracy is simply not a factor. There are still plenty of clunkers around, but ReadIris nails it every time, in my experience.

When my ScanSnap arrived, I was so excited it was almost like opening a Mac. It was well-packed and easy to set up—complete with a quick-start setup guide—and after a few minutes installing software I was on my way.

ScanSnap Experiences

For my very first scan, I inserted two single-sided pages into the "hopper" and pressed the large, prominent Scan button. The first time through, the staple holes of the second page caught the trailing edge of the first page, and a page-size error showed up. While this took a little of the magic away, I remained undaunted. I re-inserted the pages and pressed Scan again—this time it took, scanning both pages quickly, and saved them as a PDF on the desktop (where I had specified to save it). The PDF was then opened in Acrobat—when Acrobat was installed, the ScanSnap Manager software set this as the default application to open scanned files. I quit Acrobat and opened ReadIris, dragged the PDF into it, and it was instantly recognized. I asked it to complete the OCR process, and it simply asked me for a file name. The file was saved as an RTF file, again where I specified, and opened flawlessly in TextEdit—verifying that all of the OCR had successfully converted the image to text. Great!

For my second scan I inserted two double-sided pages (putting the duplex scanning to the test) and pressed Scan. This time, however, I had directed the ScanSnap Manager to open them directly in ReadIris (I had to show it where to go; ReadIris, though shipped as a bundled version, was not a default option for the ScanSnap Manager). Once again, ReadIris did a beautiful job of OCR conversion. (Note: because I didn't know to delete the previous pages, it actually added the new pages to them; I had to delete them manually before conversion), including bolded and italicized text.

My third scan was the "money shot" for my purposes. Inserting nine double-sided pages (17 total), I again pressed Scan. This time, the default application was DEVON Technologies' DEVONthink Pro Office, which also incorporates the Iris OCR engine. The scanner handled all of the pages well, and DT Pro Office opened the document without trouble. It wasn't surprising that the OCR built into DEVONthink was a bit slower in converting the

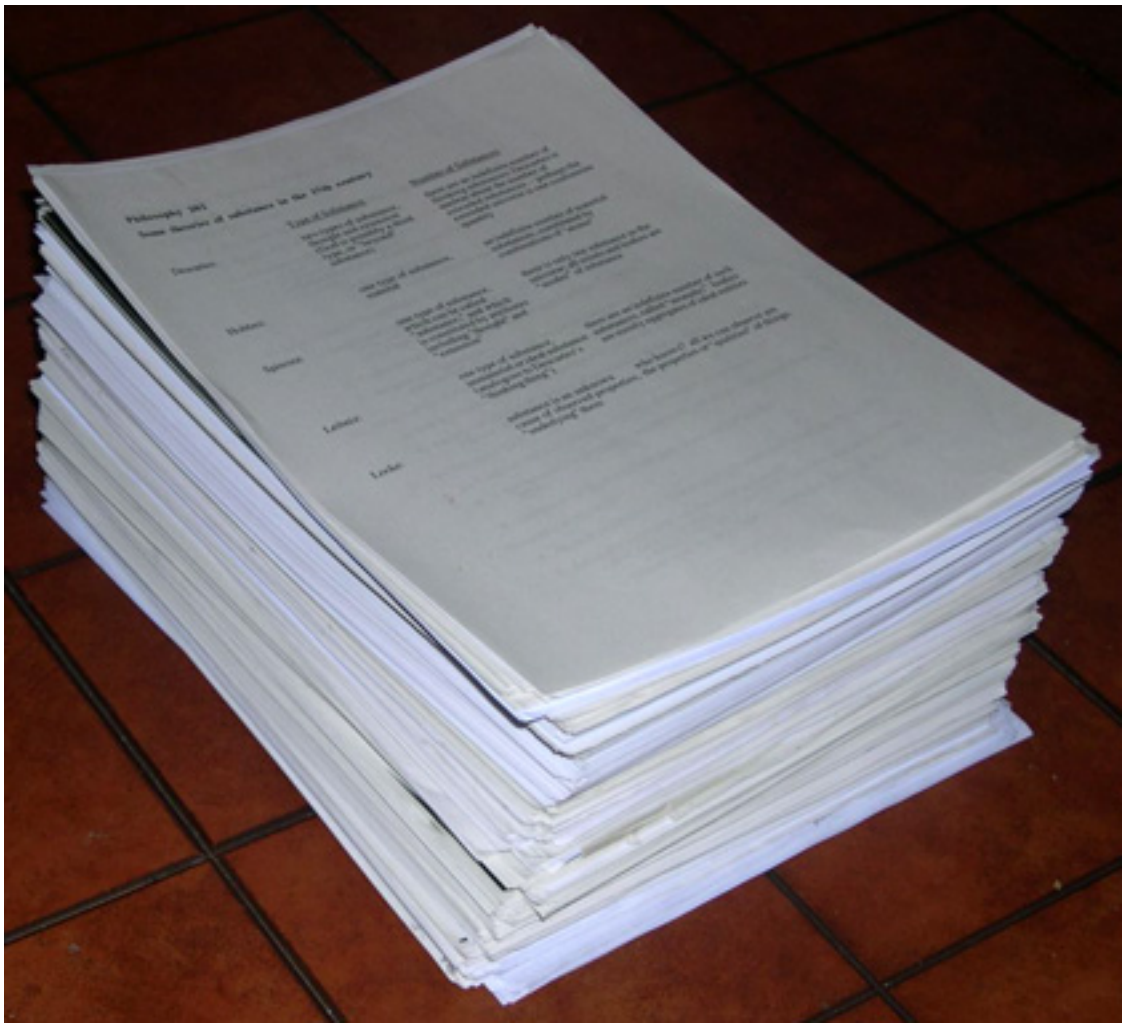
scans, but on the other hand it was fully automated—I didn't need to touch a thing for the scan to appear in my DT database as an editable, searchable PDF document. When the conversion was done, DT opened a dialog window that invited me to change the creation date, title, and author (default to creation date: today; title: scan date; and author: me), as well as as add keywords (which DT uses heavily for its artificial intelligence engine), and a subject line. Very smooth—and everything I could possibly want.

After these initial tests, I began to really put the ScanSnap through its paces. Scan after scan, this machine took everything I threw at it—including pages that were stapled, wrinkled, and even torn. Multi-column documents and documents containing tables and/or images were also no problem, and maintained formatting nicely. Regardless of whether the orientation is portrait or landscape, the scanner recognizes which and automatically switches formats. Even newspaper clippings were a success.

Pages that had been heavily curled needed to be flattened as much as possible—and even then, they would occasionally catch on each other and cause a scanning error. (This cannot be said to be a fault of the scanner, however, as it certainly did a better job at handling these than I expected.) Thus, I learned that, when scanning a set of well-used pages, it's not a bad idea to watch the pages being fed through—or count them after scanning—to verify that all pages made it in.

I have had one or two really bad snags—one 38-page essay that was especially dog-eared jammed up pretty badly. While the ScanSnap made quite a disturbing noise, there was no real problem in clearing the jam—the unit is well-designed in this way, as well—and starting over, after smoothing the corners a little more.

By the end of the first day, I had more than 50 academic articles and essays—representing more than 600 pages—put through the ScanSnap and imported into DEVONthink. I'd barely begun to knock out the contents of one file drawer, but I realized that with a few more evenings' work I can put a file cabinet or two up on Craig's List.



The fruit of my labors.

After using it for a week, I've emptied a file cabinet with almost 2,000 pages in it. Wow! I'm excited about the possibilities, and have already begun to brainstorm how useful this can be. For example, I'm planning to set up a local Web-server (already possible with DEVONthink Pro Office) on one of our home computers that has all of our manuals and documentation, receipts, medical records, insurance information, and other documents that fill a four-drawer cabinet, binders, or are scattered about the house; my wife and I can access this stuff through a simple search, rather than tracking them down and digging through them. And my writing research will be so much simpler from now on.

About the Scanner Itself

Fujitsu has been making document scanners for years. Every doctor's office or hospital that I've been to has one on every desk for scanning insurance cards and IDs. What once was available mainly to offices and professional services is now becoming a consumer-level success.

As a unit, the scanner "closes" into a nicely compact "blobject," with nothing protruding to get caught on (it even turns itself off and on automatically when closed or opened). This is nice to keep the footprint of the unit small when it's not in use. A carrying case is even available through Fujitsu for a reasonable price (around $40). I can see how this would be nice if a trip to the library were planned for major research work.

All closed up—a compact "blobject."

You can also order cleaning supplies and other consumables for it, since toner and paper dust will eventually make the platen get hazy, and certain parts (such as rollers) will wear out over time. Fujitsu has thought this through, and it is ready for consumer use.

Closing Thoughts

Obviously I'm an even bigger fan of the ScanSnap than I thought I would be—and it has earned my favor in every step. I think the ScanSnap represents a great addition to any household or office, and could substantially improve the way that records and file archives are kept.

I would even go so far as to say that the ScanSnap/DEVONthink combination could be an essential tool for moderate to heavy academic work. I wish these had been available when I started graduate school—my papers would have improved drastically from the way that research is made more efficient.

As I write this, I've literally sat for several minutes trying to think of something to say that isn't favorable—surely there is something to critique? I haven't tried the ScanSnap for photos, but I would imagine that it doesn't excel in that area as much as, say, Epson or Canon does. But so what? That's not what it is trying to offer. (By the way, the ScanSnap can handle images and even color on documents it scans.)

We're on our way to a truly all-digital, paperless society—and the ScanSnap is a big step in making the journey a lot less painful.

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by Ellyn Ritterskamp, eritterskamp@atpm.com

Smack Mahjong 1.0

Developer: Midori
Price: $20
Requirements: Mac OS X, 256 MB RAM. Universal.
Trial: Feature-limited (one of three tile sets, 3 of 50 layouts, no editor functions)

I nearly gave up on this game because the tiles were so small. Reviews Editor Paul Fatula experimented with it and discovered how to make them bigger. After that, it played fine. I wish the instructions were clearer about that process, because there are other users like me who would give up before figuring things out.

Mahjong is an ancient tiles game for multiple players. The modern computer variation is a solitaire-style game in which the player matches two tiles to remove them from the field. The object is to match all the pairs and clear the board. The game is relatively cheap to produce, and many free versions are available at online sites such as pogo. Free online games have other costs, though, one of which is advertisements, and the other is online access. Sometimes it is nice to be able to play a game on your computer without having to be connected to the Internet. Smack Mahjong, and others, will take care of both issues.

Getting started.

The problem I had when I opened the game is that the tiles are way too small. Each tile is roughly the size of my cursor, about a quarter of an inch. I knew how to play but could not see the tiles well enough to know which ones matched. One of the presets is to have playable tiles highlighted, which is helpful, but at this size, not good enough. I knew my eyes would be hurting after only a minute or two of play.

I wrote my editors and said I must have too small a monitor for the game. My Mac knowledge is nearly all self-taught, so when I run into a problem I presume it is something I have done wrong, or that my equipment is not fancy enough. Turns out that was not the case this time. After I whined about the tiny tiles, Reviews Editor Paul Fatula took a look at the game. He realized that if you click on one of the tiles, the array gets bigger. The tiles are much bigger, probably three times their original size.

Large tiles, and in shiny black!

Now that I could play the game, I enjoyed it very much. The backgrounds don't have much variation, but the tile sets have a couple of choices (white, black, and kid-friendly). The game has over 50 layouts. To play, you look for a match, like a #6 flower tile and another #6 flower tile. The four winds are represented with S, E, N, and W tiles. Some tiles look like dominoes, with varying numbers of dots on them. The trick is to avoid playing the ones that are easily accessible, and try to first play the ones stacked on top of or otherwise blocking other tiles.

I found this one especially challenging.

The kid-friendly tiles were cute at first but I lost interest quickly. They might be a great option for first-time players, though I'd rather learn things the hard way from the start than have to make an adjustment later.

These tiles are easier to play, but they give up the traditional look of the game.

Smack Mahjong is a pretty good game once you get the hang of it. The music is delightful. To be worth the purchase price, the game should eliminate the size display problem for first-time users. With that exception, I found it to be a well-designed and smooth-playing game.

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by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

TuneView

Developer: Keyspan
Price: $180
Requirements: iPod or iPod nano with dock connector.
Trial: None

From the moment Apple began using dock connectors on iPods, manufacturers have been creating means by which to integrate them into home entertainment systems. Most of the products are great solutions for the end goal of getting music from your iPod to your entertainment system while still sitting in your favorite chair. Other approaches fall quite short of the mark.

Most of the devices I've encountered for this purpose include a dock in which to place an iPod and an infra-red remote control to handle basic functions of iPod control. The only flaw in this method is that even if the device includes a means to navigate your playlists (and many don't bother with this feature for obvious reasons), you have to get up and walk over to where the iPod is located to see where you're navigating. Suddenly, the remote control is a little pointless. You've heard the jokes, haven't you, about people who get all bent out of shape because it's not until after they're settled and comfortable on their sofa that they realize the remote for the TV is *sitting on top of the TV?*

Regrettably, Apple does not (at least I have not seen it) include a means for viewing an iPod's menu screen through the video output on a TV. Even if they did, there are still some consumers who only use the audio outputs from a dock and have no desire, or ability in some cases, to have a TV turned on just to see the iPod screen.

The solution would seem to be that the iPod needs to remain in proximity of the owner, but still be able to send the audio and video back to the entertainment system. The most crude means for this is to simply use a long A/V cable to carry the audio (and video, if desired). Obviously, this means you have an unsightly cord running across your floor.

Other solutions have utilized Bluetooth to wirelessly transmit audio to a receiver attached to an entertainment system. None of these, however, ever seems to manage rave reviews over quality and reliability—and I'm not even sure there's enough bandwidth to even consider sending video.

Enter Keyspan's TuneView. This new approach to an iPod remote control puts your iPod's display screen in your hand while leaving the iPod attached to your entertainment system.

iPod Doppelgänger?

Once connected and paired with your iPod, the TuneView truly mimics nearly all of your iPod's menu functions. I say "nearly" because there are some items that would be pointless to include—the Games menu, for example. The remote control includes the display screen, which appears roughly the same size as an iPod nano's screen. Below the screen are nine buttons for navigating menus, changing tracks, and adjusting volume. A tenth button at the bottom is called the Wizard button. Think of it as a right-click (or control-click) for the TuneView. Pressing it reveals contextual options that are relevant to whatever you were doing at the time.

Unlike typical infra-red remotes, the TuneView uses a 2.4 GHz RF signal to communicate with the dock. My condo is 45×29 feet, and there was nowhere I could walk that would cause the remote to no longer communicate with the dock—even through three or four walls. Keyspan says that using the remote control in a 70- to 100-foot range through no more than three walls should work, though you may have to point the remote in the dock's general direction.

The TuneView is one of those products that, more or less, just works. The dock attaches to a power outlet (which, of course, also charges your iPod), and the audio/video signals are sent to your entertainment system via the respective 3.5mm and S-Video outputs. Attach an iPod, press a button on the remote, and you're in business.

So, if it's that simple and that good at what it does, why is my rating just Very Nice and not Excellent?

Regarding the TuneView dock, when I first opened the package, I noticed there's no connection for a sync cable. I imagine there may be a good reason for this. There could possibly be all sorts of conflict problems if a computer were trying mount an iPod volume and the TuneView remote was trying to access it at the same time. Still, the TuneView dock *is* just a dock, and if my entertainment system and the Mac with my iTunes library were in proximity (in my situation, this isn't the case), I would've wished I could use the TuneView dock for syncing. Maybe the connection could be added and some sort of toggle introduced so that it could only be used with the TuneView remote or synced to a computer.

Lacking a sync cable connection is minor, however. More serious is that I can't completely vouch for the quality of the connection to the iPod. The first unit I received worked for a day, then started having intermittent connection problems on the second evening I tested it. By the third evening, the dock would not communicate with the iPod at all. Inspection of the dock revealed that the small connector piece in the dock that fits into the bottom of an iPod had come loose and, eventually, broken off completely. This is the sole reason you're reading this review in the March issue instead of February as had been planned.

I was sent a replacement dock which is still working fine, so I cannot ignore the possibility that I simply received a fluke defective dock. Yet, as careful as I was even with the first dock, I've been extremely mindful with the second not to place any stress on the connector. I've never once had a problem or felt I was flexing the connector in my Apple-made docks, but I simply don't get a feeling that I can just drop my iPod in the TuneView dock like I do an Apple dock. Perhaps the various adapter pieces that snap into the dock to accommodate different-sized iPods aren't shaped exactly as they should be.

This possible (and I emphasize *possible*) dock design flaw is the primary issue I have about the TuneView. Overall, the TuneView is still a marvelous addition to an entertainment system that includes an iPod. Since the replacement dock that was shipped to me still seems solid, I will, for now, hang on to the likelihood that the original dock was simply defective.

Next, looking at the remote control, the first thing that will strike you is that it's not very large. This isn't a bad thing. Just keep this in mind when you look at the TuneView's PR photos or promo video which make the remote appear larger than it is. My own photo of the TuneView, above, is a bit more representative of the remote's size.

I do wish the remote used a click-wheel interface similar to those found on iPods. Maybe that isn't so simple a feat across an RF connection, but I can still wish for it! Fortunately, the TuneView's 10-button interface is very usable, and I found it undeserving of any major criticism. Keyspan addressed the potential issue of having to hold the Scroll Down button for a very long time by including Wizard button commands to jump to the middle of a list of songs as well as the end.

Keyspan informed ATPM very close to this issue's publication date that a firmware update should be released within a few days. They provided a beta preview, and I found that it will address a few issues I had with using the TuneView.

I originally wrote for this review that there should be a search function similar to the one Apple introduced into 5.5G iPods. This firmware update does, indeed, add a function to jump directly to a first letter. Like the function to jump to the middle of a list, the Find by First Letter function is also located in the Wizard button commands.

For those who've carefully managed album artwork for their iTunes library, the ability to display it in the remote's LCD screen would be splendid. Keyspan says the hardware was "designed at a time when the extended interface did not have an ability to present content such as album art. . .. We will address this in future generations of the remote." Translation: TuneViews that are currently sold probably will never be able to display album art. If the capability is added, it will likely only work on the newer/revised hardware.

Moving on to the responsiveness between the remote and its communication with the dock, I'm quite impressed. If there's any lag in navigating the menus, you'd have a hard time convincing me of it. Nevertheless, Keyspan apparently realized it could be better. The aforementioned firmware update improves the menu scrolling speed.

In the initial version of this review, I wrote that even though the TuneView keeps up perfectly while going through the menus, scanning through song or video playback was another matter. For example, I was about mid-way through a four-minute podcast and wanted to back up about 45 seconds to re-watch a segment more carefully. It takes probably just an instant longer—even with the firmware update—than it should to actually start scanning back (or forward). However, before the update, my play position would quickly end up much further than I wanted it. Instead of going back a few seconds, I ended up nearly to the beginning of the podcast. This appears to have been adjusted in the firmware update, and I was able to scan forward or backward just a few seconds with little difficulty.

The firmware update's other enhancements include moving the Video Browser menu higher on the home menu, improved language translations, and a behavior change when the remote control is asleep so that a button you press immediately acts upon a song. Previously, a button had to be pressed to wake up the remote, and then pressed again to actually perform a function with the remote.

Keyspan does have a bit more work to do on the beta, though. I saw at least one little glitch that will earn their developers a report from me, but I'm choosing to not describe it here. It *is* beta software, after all.

Finally, the price—something about which I'm rather torn. I realize someone who purchases the TuneView is getting quite a handful of technology that is required to manage the communication between the remote and the dock, as well as including the LCD display. But the TuneView is $30 more expensive than an entry-level iPod nano and only $20 cheaper than a mid-level Nano. The separation isn't much more for a 30 GB iPod video.

The previously mentioned solution of simply running a long A/V cable from your iPod to your entertainment system starts to sound more feasible, especially when such a cable can be obtained for less than $20.

I can't sit here and definitively say the TuneView costs too much. I can, however, say that its price point is such that you should definitely take a very careful look at less expensive iPod remote products before deciding that the TuneView really is what you want.

For those who are interested in the TuneView but would rather feed the music directly from a computer instead of an iPod, Keyspan will soon have you covered. The TuneView USB is scheduled to be released the first quarter of 2007, which means it may already be available by the time you read this review.

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