ATPM

13.11 / November 2007 Volume 13, Number 11

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

Cover Art

"Bite the apple, Dude." Copyright © 2007 Romeo Esparrago a.k.a. RomeDome. We need new cover art each month. Write[1] to us!

The ATPM Staff

Publisher/Editor	Michael Tsai[2]
Managing Editor	Christopher Turner[3]
Reviews Editor	Paul Fatula[4]
Web Editor	Lee Bennett[5]
Copy Editors	Chris Lawson[6]
	Linus Ly[7]
	Ellyn Ritterskamp[8]
	Brooke Smith
	Vacant
Webmaster	Michael Tsai[9]
Beta Testers	The Staff[10]
Contributing Editors	Eric Blair[11]
	Chris Dudar[12]
	Ed Eubanks, Jr.
	Matthew Glidden[13]
	Ted Goranson[14]
	Andrew Kator[15]
	Robert Paul Leitao[16]
	Wes Meltzer[17]
	Sylvester Roque[18]
	Charles Ross[19]
	Mark Tennent[20]
	David B. Thompson[21]

[1] mailto:cover-art@atpm.com
[2] http://mjtsai.com
[3] http://www.retrophisch.com
[4] mailto:pfatula@atpm.com
[5] http://www.secondinitial.com
[6] http://chrislawson.net
[7] http://qaptainqwerty.blogspot.com/
[8] http://www.ritterskoop.org
[9] http://mjtsai.com
[10] mailto:editor@atpm.com
[11] http://www.raoli.com
[12] mailto:cdudar@atpm.com
[13] mailto:mglidden@atpm.com
[14] http://www.sirius-beta.com
[15] http://andrew.katorlegaz.com
[16] mailto:rleitao@atpm.com
[17] http://www.wesmeltzer.com
[18] mailto:sroque@atpm.com
[19] http://www.chivalrysoftware.com
[20] http://www.tennent.co.uk
[21] http://drdbthompson.net

	Evan Trent[22]
	Vacant

Artwork & Design

Layout and Design	Michael Tsai[23]
Web Design	Simon Griffee[24]
Cartoonist	Matt Johnson[25]
Blue Apple Icons	Mark Robinson
Other Art	RD Novo
Graphics Director	*Vacant*

Emeritus

RD Novo, Robert Madill, Belinda Wagner, Jamal Ghandour, Edward Goss, Tom Iovino, Daniel Chvatik, Grant Osborne, Gregory Tetrault, Raena Armitage, Johann Campbell, David Ozab.

Contributors

Lee Bennett, Eric Blair, Ed Eubanks, Jr., Paul Fatula, Matt Johnson, Robert Paul Leitao, Graham Lindsay, Linus Ly, Wes Meltzer, Sylvester Roque, Mark Tennent, David B. Thompson, Christopher Turner, *Macintosh users like you.*

Subscriptions

Sign up for **free** subscriptions using the Web form[26].

Where to Find ATPM

Online and downloadable issues are available at the ATPM Web Site[27]. ATPM is a product of ATPM, Inc. © 1995-2007. All Rights Reserved. ISSN: 1093-2909.

Production Tools

Apache, AppleScript, BBEdit, Cocoa, Docutils, DropDMG, FileMaker Pro, GraphicConverter, LaTeX, Mesh, make, Mailman, Mojo Mail, MySQL, Perl, PyObjC, Python, rsync, Snapz Pro X, ssh, Subversion.

Reprints

Articles, original art, and desktop pictures may not be reproduced without the express permission of the author or artist, unless otherwise noted. You may, however, print or distribute copies of this issue of ATPM as a whole, provided that it is not modified in any way. Authors may be contacted through ATPM's editorial staff, or at their e-mail addresses, when provided.

Legal Stuff

About This Particular Macintosh may be uploaded to any online area or included on a CD-ROM compilation, so long as the file remains intact and unaltered, but all other rights are reserved. All information contained in this issue is correct to the best of our knowledge. The opinions expressed in ATPM are not necessarily those of the entire ATPM staff. Product and company names and logos may be registered trademarks of their respective companies. Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

• • •

Thanks for reading ATPM.

[22] http://www.symphonysound.com
[23] http://mjtsai.com
[24] http://hypertexthero.com
[25] http://www.cornstalker.com
[26] http://www.atpm.com/subscribe/
[27] http://www.atpm.com

Sponsors

About This Particular Macintosh has been free since 1995, and we intend to keep it that way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with *real* jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. Our aim is to produce a fiercely independent magazine, with multiple formats designed for easy reading rather than showing ads. The views expressed in these pages have always been our own, and to help prove it we do not accept direct sponsorships or advertising. We do, however, need to pay for our Web site and other expenses, so we rely on minimal advertising, sold indirectly via Google and Yahoo, as well as the support of ATPM readers who shop using our links[1].

[1] http://www.atpm.com/about/support.shtml

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the November issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* Next weekend we return to standard time in the US while Apple sets a new standard for product and corporate success. Join us this month and every month as we chronicle the personal computing experience in our unique and insightful way.

Leopard Unleashed

In the first four days of release, Mac OS X, 10.5 (codenamed Leopard) sold more than two million copies, eclipsing the sales records set by the previous edition of Mac OS X released in April 2005. Leopard accomplished in less than 100 hours what took Tiger more than one month to achieve, astounding members of the press and blowing away even the most ambitious sales projections. Although in nature the leopard is known a solitary cat, Apple's version of the wild feline has won millions of friends.

The iPhone Phenomenon

Apple's iPhone has quickly established its own market and has become the most popular smartphone in the United States. Set to storm the beaches of Europe later this month, the iPhone phenomenon continues to gain mass and momentum. Apple has secured contracts with service providers in most of the major European markets, and early estimates suggest the iPhone will replicate its early US success.

The iPhone Unlocked

The iPhone phenomenon has created its own extraordinary issue. Users are circumventing Apple's exclusive contract with AT&T to operate the phone on competitor networks. In response to demand for iPhones by end users who intend to avoid activation through AT&T, Apple is restricting retail sales per customer of the overwhelmingly popular digital device. Market watchers suggest tens of thousands of unlocked iPhones are already operating in Europe ahead of its official release in the EU nations.

Apple has chosen to restrict handset sales to protect its monthly service revenue from AT&T and Apple's European service providers. How well Apple can stop the flood of unlocked iPhones from being used on competitor networks without materially impacting unit sales will be determined in time.

Should Apple restrict iPhone sales to protect monthly revenue from authorized service providers or seek to maximize handset sales no matter the complications from unlocked iPhones? Send your comments to rleitao@atpm.com.

The Red Sox of Tech?

In late October the Boston Red Sox won Major League Baseball's World Series for the second time in four years and the seventh time in the franchise's storied history. Has Apple become the Red Sox of tech? For decades the Boys From Beantown were overshadowed by the team's archrival to the south, and for eighty-six long years the team and its impassioned fans suffered through a championship drought.

From the mid-90s until today, Apple's success has often been overshadowed by its archrival from the northwest. The Mac, Apple's flagship product, and its supporters suffered through many years of dwindling market share at the hands of the Windows dominated world. The Macintosh is the champion on college campuses, and the iPod rules the digital music player world. Similar to the fans of the Red Sox, Mac users became more devoted and Apple fans more resolute with each challenging year. Greeted with newfound success, the long years of waiting fall gracefully into the pages of history.

Big Blue Bested

On the last trading day of October, Apple's share price hit a new all-time high of $190.12 per share. The closing price of $189.95 valued the company at $165.70 billion, surpassing the market value of Apple's first nemesis and later chip partner, IBM.

The Numbers

For the three-months ended in September, Apple shipped 2.164 million Macs, 10.2 million iPods, and 1.119 million iPhones. The company ended the period with more than $15 billion in cash, no debt, and the rollout of the iPhone in Europe yet to come. For the fiscal year ended in September, the company had revenue of over $24 billion and net income of about $3.5 billion. It was a championship year for the corporate team from Cupertino.

Our November issue includes:

Bloggable: A Leopard Can Always Change Its Spots

Sun Microsystems' ZFS filesystem sounds awfully impressive, but is it right for you? That's a more loaded question than Wes Meltzer expected from a technical debate about the merits of possible file formats in future versions of OS X, but then again, just another day in the office when you're a blog reporter. That, plus the fastest Leopard review this side of the Euphrates, the iPhone SDK, Eudora 8.0, and whatever else you can throw a bad pun at in this month's *Bloggable.*

MacMuser: Phone Junkie Says iPhone Clunky

What if the "Gphone" is a real device? What if it's free?

MacMuser: Something Wicked This Way Comes

Mark Tennent ponders his choices in Macintosh upgrades.

Photoshop For the Curious: Back in February

Photoshop For the Curious is going on a small break and will return in the February 2008 issue. In the mean time, Lee Bennett has links to some great resources to peruse.

How To: Creating iTunes Content Presets

Sylvester Roque uses Automator to gain quicker access to the music he wants to hear.

Desktop Pictures: Australia

Reader Graham Lindsay offers this month's desktop photos from Australia.

Cartoon: Cortland

Just as all seems lost, our intrepid hero reenters the Mudrix to save the woman he loves in this month's *Cortland.*

Review: Billable 1.2.3

Ed Eubanks tries out this alternative to iWork '08 templates to gain more automation and ease to the process of invoicing clients.

Review: Graph Paper Maker 1.6.1

Graph Paper Maker is an exciting game in which you can learn quite a lot about sub-Saharan plant life. No, no, no: it makes graph paper quickly and easily—any kind that you want.

Review: iPhone Case Roundup

Three of ATPM*'s* iPhone-carrying staff members composed this round-up of cases to hold and protect their twenty-first century communicators.

Review: Luna

Stylish design, extensive configuration controls, iPod compatibility, and great-sounding audio make the Luna a splendid alarm clock radio.

Review: Nisus Writer Pro 1.0.1

In terms of core word processing functions, the latest product in the Nisus Writer family may be among the closest thing yet in offering Microsoft Word a run for its money.

Review: SuperSync 1.8.2

SuperSync attempts to take the pain out of managing music libraries across several computers.

E-Mail

I Love Layers[1]

Thanks for your immediate response to my layers info request. I read this month's lesson with great interest and enthusiasm. Will now digest it slowly and do the home work assignment. It's been a great series of articles.

—*Don Bruno*

iPhone[2]

I know this is a review of the iPhone, but since Apple has made this available on only AT&T I would think that you would provide some insights on that company's support and service. I lament that Apple made this a one-carrier phone (at least in the US). I am on Verizon and will not leave them. They have treated me right over many years, and I am a loyal customer. I am also a loyal Apple customer, but it ain't sufficient to lure me away from Verizon!

—*Michael Moon*

> One reason I didn't really discuss AT&T in this article was that from a support and service standpoint, I have no complaints or praises. It's just been what it's been.
>
> After being laid off from Verizon four years ago, I switched to Cingular to get, quite frankly, a better phone. I was very happy with Cingular, and have not found anything to complain about since the merger with SBC into the new AT&T Wireless.
>
> Unlike some, I had no problems with my iPhone activation (though it was not immediate; took about 15 minutes[3]), EDGE in my area (Dallas/Fort Worth) has been decent enough for e-mail and light Web surfing, and I've yet to have to contact customer service. So again, it wasn't that I was in any way ignoring the AT&T factor, it's just that I had no reason to mention it, for good or ill. And as you said, the review is about the iPhone...
>
> —*Christopher Turner*

• • •

I can add a few thoughts to the mix.

First, I was an AT&T (Cingular) subscriber before buying my iPhone. Wife and I carried BlackBerry 8700c phones for over a year. We have no service complaints about AT&T. Your mileage may vary.

Second, we moved to AT&T from Sprint because Sprint angered me substantially when I was trying to get a phone upgrade, really wanted something that was a combination PDA/phone without having Windows Mobile (so it would talk to my Macs), and got nothing but a run-around for over a month. Sprint's network was great, and my Sanyo phone had the best radio of any mobile phone I'd owned since I gave up my 3-watt bag phone. Sprint customer service, however, sucked. (Perhaps others have better experience with Sprint's business services.)

Third, Wife was sold when she learned our data plans would cost about $60/month less (total) than with the BlackBerrys! While I thought highly of my BlackBerry, it wasn't quite what I was looking for. It was good for e-mail, but less satisfactory as a PDA. The iPhone is closer to my ideal convergent device, but even it isn't quite there yet. Part of that has to do with the network—we just need more bandwidth for the kind of service I want. I think we'll get there before I retire/die/whatever, but it's still a few years out.

I activated our iPhones in about five minutes each. The process shut down our BlackBerrys (good thing, saved money) and adjusted our rate plan accordingly. It was simple, straightforward, and I have no complaints. Our service with AT&T is perfectly acceptable, and service at the company stores is great, provided they aren't overloaded. (Don't get me started on the contract stores!)

—*Dave Thompson*

Crossword Forge[4]

Thanks for the review. I should point out that the review is somewhat misleading in that it suggests that Crossword Forge only allows 1 intersection per word. That isn't true, in fact in your example screenshot 1 word has 4 intersections, 2 words have 3 intersections, and 6 words have 2 intersections (only 4 of the 13 words intersect only once).

A truer statement would be that the puzzles are free-form and random and do not enforce intersection or symmetry rules.

[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.10/photoshop.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/13.10/iphone.shtml
[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.07/iphone.shtml
[4] http://www.atpm.com/13.10/crossword-forge.shtml

—Cortis Clark, President of Sol Robots (makers of Crossword Forge)

> Sorry about that. The reviewer did not mean to give the impression that only one intersection per word was *allowed*. Rather, he meant that Crossword Forge was not *limited* to creating newspaper-type puzzles. We have clarified the text in the review.
>
> —*Michael Tsai*

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 *and may be edited for publication.*

Bloggable

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

A Leopard Can Always Change Its Spots

I can still remember the first time I could feel technology changing my life.

It was sometime in the fall of 2001, as I remember it, and I'd just installed and configured ReiserFS[1] on my SuSE Linux desktop a few weeks before. It was winter, and I lived up North, and in the middle of a storm, the power went out. And my computer turned off.

When the power came back, I started up my computer and found that the paper I'd been writing was mostly not blasted away by the crash, and I didn't have to `fsck` (run the file system checker on) my hard drive. The computer booted right back up like it always did, and ta-da! Done. No corruption, and the only lost data was what I hadn't hit 'Save' on. At the time, it looked like magic—journaling filesystem saves the day! I danced around my computer like it had just cured cancer.

I've learned a lot about technology in the six years hence, but I get that same sense of giddy gleefulness thinking about Sun Microsystems' ZFS, which is apparently coming as an unsupported, secondary option (like UFS, the Unix File System) to OS X.

ZFS, for those of us who aren't filesystem geeks, is a system for partitioning and formatting hard drive data that was designed to be lightweight and powerful. It supports some really cool but unexpected functionality, like redefining the meaning of "partition," and by making hard drive space easily reconfigurable and making it span multiple hard drives, RAID[2]-like. ZFS also allows you to do things like live snapshot backups of individual files, so that you can restore a file you've deleted, for instance—this is filesystem-level Time Machine, and I wouldn't be surprised if someday OS X uses ZFS' functionality to power Time Machine. I can't use the word "cool" enough, honestly, to describe this system.

So what interests me about this for the purposes of a *Bloggable*? Why should you care, dear reader? Three guesses, and the first two don't count.

...You got it!

Reader Interest Alert: If you've come here hoping to read about what everyone's saying about Leopard, um, you may want to skip ahead to the Leopard part[3] of this article. Several of my good, very geek-minded friends glazed over when I tried talking to them about this, so it may be outside your area of interest. For those of you who are interested in Macintosh filesystems, please, read on!

AppleInsider posted, early in the month of October, that they believed ZFS would play a role in the future of OS X, both in Leopard and beyond. "It's further believed," *AI's* Prince McLean wrote, "that ZFS is a candidate to eventually succeed HFS+ as the default file system[4] for Mac OS X." This wasn't the first time the topic had come up—in June, Sun CEO Jonathan Schwartz had a brief lapse of NDA and blabbed about it[5] to shareholders and members of the press—but it contained the kind of explicit details that usually mean you're either getting the truth or being hoodwinked.

Apparently that went over as well as a lead balloon in some quarters. *MWJ*, for instance, devoted a cheeky, line-by-line rebuttal of the AI article, ridiculing[6] pretty much every conceivable advantage of ZFS over HFS+, Mac OS X's default file system for nearly a decade (and an extension of the earlier Hierarchical File System, which is only a year younger than I am and only two years younger than the Macintosh itself). One of their biggest objections is that ZFS would misuse CPU time and hard drive space for all those nifty data integrity (inter alia) features. My impression is that the guys at *MacJournals* think HFS+ is a winner, and that the technological limitations of ZFS relative to current hardware are unresolvable.

[1] `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ReiserFS`

[2] `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAID`

[3] `http://www.atpm.com/13.11/bloggable.shtml#spotty-coverage`

[4] `http://www.appleinsider.com/articles/07/10/04/zfs_to_play_larger_role_in_future_versions_of_mac_os_x.html`

[5] `http://www.appleinsider.com/articles/07/06/06/apple_to_adopt_zfs_as_default_file_system_for_leopard.html`

[6] `http://www.macjournals.com/news/2007/10/04#a79`

I'm glad I'm not the only one who disagrees with *MWJ*. Drew Thaler, who at one time worked in Apple's CoreOS group of filesystems developers, fired back immediately that he thought all of the hysteria about ZFS was overwrought and silly. After all, he says, "Storage management has come a long way[7] since the original HFS was created." Thaler makes five explicit points about ZFS: (1) ZFS is a good candidate to replace HFS+ *eventually;* (2) ZFS' use of system resources isn't unreasonable today, much less in the future; (3) that just doing what HFS+ does now was hard enough, and it's running out of new tricks for an old dog; (4) that the article contains a specific factual error about RAID and ZFS; and (5) that *MWJ* is disregarding Moore's Law. For those of you keeping score at home, in the 22 years since HFS was born, readily available hard drives have 2,559,900 percent (!!) greater capacity and CPU clock speeds are up 29,025 percent. That's the percent-change from 20 MB to 500 GB and from 8 MHz to 2.33GHz. Whew!

Thaler thinks ZFS has serious potential, and he said so, both in the original post, "Don't be a ZFS hater," and the follow-up, "ZFS Hater Redux[8]." The second post is a counter-response to *MWJ*, which had fired back with "You don't have to hate ZFS to know it's wrong for you[9]," a vastly less snarky and much more fact-based argument. It's persuasive, but based on *today's* limitations. Thaler and *MWJ* are both writing in the kind of longhand technical language that geeks love but journalists can't always quote—but his response is essentially, "You'd better hope hard drive space doesn't increase at 2,559,900 percent over the *next* 10 years, or you're *really* going to wish you hadn't written this."

P.S.: The rate of increase in hard drive space is probably going to have to slow down. I've long suspected disk space is an S-curve—steep at the middle and flat at both ends. Why? Well, 2,559,900 percent of that 500GB drive would be, um, 12,500 terabytes. Hello, S-curve! But even a 2,000 percent increase, like the one from my 6GB hard drive in 1997 to my 120GB drive today, would be 9.76TB, which is a server array today.

My quasi-boss, Michael Tsai, agrees with Thaler (and me) that the issue here isn't whether ZFS is adequate for today's problems. The question is, is ZFS better-suited to tomorrow's problems than HFS+? He says, "HFS+ is or soon will be a liability, and ZFS is perhaps the best candidate[10] for its eventual replacement."

Jesper, of Waffle, makes the point even more succinctly:

> The big whoop about ZFS vs HFS+ is that while HFS+ will work for most of us just fine for another ten years, a ZFS with all the bells and whistles turned off will work *just as well.* Furthermore, when those ten years are over it will continue to scale[11] and offer good solutions when HFS+ has bottomed out, and in the meantime we can turn on any bells and whistles we deem worthy of the requisite tradeoffs.

(Emphasis mine.)

And you all know how I love to quote non-techie bloggers about technology. Blackfriars' Marketing's terrific blog makes another guest appearance this month, with a great entry about the ZFS brouhaha. "(ZFS) believes that users being aware of disks is so last century[12]," they write. "ZFS will accelerate Apple's ability to both simplify tasks and amaze consumers in future releases."

Spotty Coverage

You're probably reading this column for the Leopard coverage. It's not as interesting as ZFS, if by "interesting" you mean "filled with details you can't get by just installing Leopard yourself," but it's probably more applicable to your life.

If that's the case, I will summarize the Leopard coverage I have read in the following 48 words:

> Easier to install[13]. Time Machine is cool[14]. Translucent menubar sucks[15]. Dock sucks[16], unless you enable not-very-secret nonshelf mode[17].

[7] http://drewthaler.blogspot.com/2007/10/don-be-zfs-hater.html

[8] http://drewthaler.blogspot.com/2007/10/zfs-hater-redux.html

[9] http://www.macjournals.com/news/2007/10/07.html#a80

[10] http://mjtsai.com/blog/2007/10/08/zfs/

[11] http://waffle.wootest.net/2007/10/08/what-zfs-really-means/

[12] http://www.blackfriarsinc.com/blog/2007/10/one-of-apple-secret-leopard-weapons-zfs

[13] http://db.tidbits.com/article/9271

[14] http://daringfireball.net/2007/10/leopard

[15] http://www.webomatica.com/wordpress/2007/10/29/cosmetic-leopard-adjustments-dock-menu-bar-stacks/

[16] http://www.tuaw.com/2007/08/30/leopards-dock-doesnt-work-on-the-side/

[17] http://www.macrumors.com/2007/10/23/mac-os-x-leopard-9a581s-dock-visual-tweaks/

> All kinds of[18] neat under-the-hood improvements[19]. Many UI changes are stupid[20], but some are quite nice[21]. Better than Vista[22]. Not better than Vista[23]. Apple under-promised and over-delivered[24]. Your mileage may vary[25].

I could try to replicate the quality of coverage I've seen elsewhere, but I would fail, especially since I have not actually *used* Leopard. I decided to get this column in your hands instead. So I'll ask you to please read John Siracusa's epic review[26]. Whether you're a techie or not, he is truly the Tom Wolfe or Günter Grass of tech reviewers, and I bow in awe before his wisdom.

Can You Hear Me Now?

Speaking of spotty coverage, there's another kind this month: the iPhone! (Insert bad AT&T pun here.)

Apple's announced that there will be third-party development support for the iPhone, which does not especially surprise me but seems like it would be a surprise to some[27] people[28]. They haven't released any specifics, like whether it'll be its own standalone SDK or an add-on to Xcode or, for all any of us know, a development environment based jointly on Star Trek's LCARS and Emacs LISP (wouldn't *that* be something?). I'd link you to the announcement, but I can't *find* the announcement on Apple's PR site. *TidBITS* has a copy[29], though.

TidBITS also has a fantastic rumination on what this means, and the question of whether Apple will treat development for the iPhone more like development for OS X or more like development for the garden-variety cell phone:

> Related to this, however, is whether Apple and AT&T will require certification[30] of programs before they run—all programs, or perhaps just ones that use certain iPhone features. Research in Motion requires certification for programs running on the Blackberry that access features like dialing, but I'm told that process isn't onerous, and it's part of the approach that RIM has used to great success in penetrating government and high-security businesses.
>
> The other smartphone platforms—Palm OS, Symbian, and Windows Mobile—generally allow any arbitrary program to be installed, but access to phone features is typically limited, and network access is sometimes restricted to Wi-Fi, when that's available. This limits a cellular carrier's (and a user's) exposure to a phone sucking huge amounts of cell network bandwidth due to a third-party application.
>
> Apple could pull a neat trick by allowing programs that want to access only Wi-Fi network features to operate in an unlimited fashion; if EDGE service is desired, then a program needs to be registered and certified, and be a good network customer. There could even be a revenue requirement or split to make those kinds of applications work in AT&T's model.

I haven't given it much thought, and although there's no evidence that Apple has built such an infrastructure, that's not to say they couldn't still do it. The logistical question is whether they'd really want to build a completely parallel structure to their Apple Developer Connection, but at the same time, it would probably be counterproductive to tie iPhone developer status to ADC status.

John Gruber, who was bound to get a byline in this article at some point, goes to the next logical step, by wondering whether many iPhone-optimized Web sites have a future in the post-iPhone SDK world:

[18] http://mattgemmell.com/2007/10/28/get-rid-of-your-code-with-leopard

[19] http://arstechnica.com/reviews/os/mac-os-x-10-5.ars/5

[20] http://www.thinkmac.co.uk/blog/2007/10/leopard-stupidity.html

[21] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/25/technology/circuits/25pogue.html?ex=1350964800&en=46e6095d39495b9a&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss

[22] http://blogs.cnet.com/8301-13506_1-9806255-17.html

[23] http://www.microsoft-watch.com/content/operating_systems/why_leopard_isnt_better_than_vista.html?kc=MWRSS02129TX1K0000535

[24] http://www.slate.com/id/2177073/

[25] http://www.macworld.com/2007/10/reviews/leopard_review/index.php

[26] http://arstechnica.com/reviews/os/mac-os-x-10-5.ars

[27] http://diveintomark.org/archives/2007/10/04/if-wishes-were-iphones

[28] http://leoville.com/blog/2007/09/29/1037/

[29] http://db.tidbits.com/article/9257

[30] http://db.tidbits.com/article/9230

> (E)ven after the iPhone SDK ships, there will be far more iPhone Web application developers than native UIKit developers. I see MobileSafari-optimized Web development as the Visual Basic for the iPhone as a platform. Easier, more approachable, and wide open to everyone[31].

This leads us back to the question of development tiering, which I suspect might be simpler than building a parallel infrastructure to replicate what Apple already has. My inference is: (1) Web development is easy, (2) the iPhone already supports lots of Web developers, (3) developing for a device with more significant limitations than the Macintosh is much harder than building an iPhone-optimized Web site, (4) there are already many fewer Web developers than Macintosh developers. So is WebKit-vs.-UIKit (to use Gruber's nomenclature) the tiering we can expect? That might be a good guess.

In the meantime, plenty of people have discovered that the iPhone is not all sugar and flour equals cake in the land of third-party developers. You see, the warning that Apple put out about the iPhone 1.1.1 update wiping out third-party software[32] prompted some of them to think about sticking with 1.0[33], and others to accuse Apple of playing games[34] with iPhone modders[35]. And the boys at *Macworld* confirmed that the 1.1.1 update may very well brick your iPhone[36].

Gruber is without sympathy[37], and, as you can tell, I agree. This kvetching and moaning seems to me to be a little unfair, since the iPhone mods were, for all intents and purposes, cracks based on injecting foreign code into the OS using known security flaws. But some of these people are the same ones who complained loudly when Microsoft started cracking down on corporate Windows 2000 licenses (which exist since it's impractical for IT departments to run a verification program on every copy of a many-many-seat installation of Windows), and, to be fair, many of the others are just casual users who are probably going to regret playing with their iPhones. Part of the early-adopter price is the risk that some of the really cool things that early adopters do with their phones put them at risk of ruining those devices.

And I might have been in that boat, and I'd probably be annoyed at having bricked a $600 device. But I'd be annoyed at Me, not at Apple.

On to a cheerier topic! Jason at 37signals celebrates that which separates Apple from the mere mortals: their never-ending attention to detail and user experience. For every time a Switcher's wailed to me, "ARGH NOOOOOO CMD-Q IS NEXT TO CMD-W, WHY CAN'T IT BE FURTHER AWAY LIKE ALT-F4," one or another of them has marveled to me at the little details that remind us all why we buy Macs. Like the realization that the iPhone's iTunes Store link is near the iPod button[38] rather than where you probably expected it to show up, at the natural 13th position.

Smart. Of course!

Five Bars of Link Reception

- Robert X. Cringely ponders why the long-rumored, much-expected Apple-Google collaboration has been so elusive[39]. In a nutshell: culture wars still matter, in tech as well as in American politics.

- In the same month, Ben Sargent realizes what makes being a Mac user fun (less tinkering[40]), *Computer World* lists the 8 reasons Apple is No. 1[41] in consumer electronics, and Steven Frank discovers that Intel Macs have a better Windows experience[42] than a store-bought PC. What do these three things have in common? They all celebrate the Macintosh user experience, which is what sells Macs, and validate the Apple approach (simplicity, ease of use, clear user comprehension). Someday, maybe Microsoft will figure that out, rather than adding more strange features that seem to have been released without any significant user

[31] http://daringfireball.net/2007/10/iphone_web_apps

[32] http://www.macworld.com/news/2007/09/24/iphoneunlock/index.php

[33] http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/editors/2007/10/iphoneno111/index.php

[34] http://blogs.business2.com/apple/2007/09/apple-iphone-un.html

[35] http://www.tuaw.com/2007/09/25/iphone-dev-team-issues-statement/

[36] http://iphone.macworld.com/2007/09/bricking_my_ipod_1.php

[37] http://daringfireball.net/2007/10/un_in_unsupported

[38] http://www.37signals.com/svn/posts/628-iphone-context-over-consistency

[39] http://www.pbs.org/cringely/pulpit/2007/pulpit_20071019_003258.html

[40] http://www.brokendigits.com/2007/10/23/its-fun-to-play-with-stuff-or-why-im-glad-i-switched-to-the-m ac/

[41] http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9036299&pageNumber =1

[42] http://stevenf.com/2007/09/macs_really_do_run_windows_better.php

testing, like Vista's unusable Expose Lite[43] window-switching interface. Before you write to defend Flip 3D, please, try it. Not only is it vastly harder to use than the old Alt-Tab, which is still there for a reason, but it also misses what makes Exposé so great, like drag-and-drop preservation and non-stack-based window switching.

- Adium X 2.0 will have A/V support[44] for Google Talk and AOL IM, when it's released at some point in the distant future. This is so many levels of awesome, I was speechless for positively *seconds.* Wow. Sometimes, less competition in the market might be better: if the relatively small community of developers of third-party IM clients were still producing three OS X clients (Fire, Adium and Proteus), would we be better off today? Fire is dead, sadly, and Proteus hasn't had a significant release in two and a half years, but Adium is vastly better than it was in those days. One sentence fragment: more developers and Google Summer of Code.

- The very first Eudora 8.0 beta, for the moment basically just a plugin modifying Thunderbird, is out[45]. (I missed this last month.) One of my other ATPM buddies, Chris Lawson, is not complimentary[46], and neither is Charles Moore[47]. They're correct. Of course, I believe both are still using classic Eudora, which I am not, because neither Eudora nor Thunderbird has Spotlight support. But I think it's safe to say, don't hold your breath on Eudora 8.0; I don't know if any e-mail client can ever be like classic Eudora, may it rest in peace.

Copyright © 2007 Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com.

[43] http://windowshelp.microsoft.com/Windows/en-US/Help/ffab5395-d72f-420a-a04f-a309a2450eff1033.mspx

[44] http://www.adiumx.com/blog/2007/10/happy-leopard-day.php

[45] http://wiki.mozilla.org/Penelope_Releases

[46] http://chrislawson.net/blog/archives/000930.php

[47] http://www.applelinks.com/index.php/more/eudora_800b1_first_impressions_os_x_odyssey_886/

MacMuser

by Mark Tennent, mtennent@atpm.com

Phone Junkie Says iPhone Clunky

To say my daughter isn't addicted to her mobile phone is a bit like calling Jeremy Clarkson a shy introvert who never expresses an opinion. Seldom is there a time where her latest handset isn't within arm's length. The day phone marrow transplants come on the market, she'll be at the front of the queue.

It came as a bit of a shock when she said her impression of Apple's iPhone is that it's a "bit clunky" and she doesn't think the £35 a month contract is worth the money. This is the woman who worked her teenage years selling phones, then again through uni, and I recall her thesis was about mobile phones, too. No surprise she is delighted to work for Carphone Warehouse who gave her quality time with an iPhone. It is all the more strange as her brother in Chicago, never a great gadget freak unless it has six strings and humbuckers, couldn't praise his iPhone more highly.

Oo-er Missus

Apple seem to have missed a trick in the UK. I too rejected the iPhone as soon as they stopped them being unlocked. As a devout pre-pay user who buys fifty quid's worth of calls a year, an iPhone would be a complete extravagance. My phones have been Internet-capable for years—as they are hand-me-downs from my daughter they are usually pretty good kit. But I don't need Internet access apart from getting the right ring tone or a freebee game to play during those long lonely hours waiting for my partner, outside Marks and Sparks changing rooms.

Google may have cracked the problem. The Web has been buzzing with rumors that they are building a rival to Apple's iPhone. What this will do for Apple director Dr. Eric Schmidt remains to be seen. He also has a part-time job as CEO of Google. According to Lehman's Rafat Ali[1], Google is planning a Linux software suite and not the Gphone. But as you can already access Google from a mobile phone, this seems pretty pointless.

What if the Gphone is a real device as suggested by Douglas Anmuth[2], also a Lehman analyst? He believes Google plans a phone for early next year, with an over-sized touch display and Wi-Fi capability. However, this phone will probably be priced at less than $100 and possibly even free, paid for by advertising content. Google has already bought up Zingku, a mobile social network, instant messenger, and Web browser; and Android, a software company specializing in mobile operating systems that highlights the location of the user.

Getting It Together

What is the point of not bringing it all together in one little handheld package rather than trying to sell the idea to the mobile phone magnates around the world?

A free mobile phone service in return for adverts—and cool, video and Flash-based ads at that. Like TV, the ads will probably be better than the phone calls.

Copyright © 2007 Mark Tennent, mtennent@atpm.com.

[1] http://www.paidcontent.org/entry/419-gphone-not-a-phone-but-a-linux-software-suite-nyt

[2] http://news.independent.co.uk/business/news/article3058810.ece

MacMuser

by Mark Tennent, mtennent@atpm.com

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Alan Titchmarsh, better known for painting sheds blue and as the bosom pal of Charlie's dimmocks, was on the telly recently describing the dung beetle's arch enemy. According to Titchmarsh, the greater horseshoe bat waits for dusk, then pounces on the dung beetles as they take to the air in search of new pooh.

We have tiny pipistrelles swooping around our heads at early summer barbecues, zooming between us as we sit at the table, banking round the pond and back toward the church tower they probably live in. They are nothing compared with the greater horseshoe, which seems the size of a small Doberman and looks as mean as one, too.

In a way it's like laptop computers. Our G5 desktop Macs are no slouches and seldom leave us twiddling our thumbs, but it's stupid that our tiny low-end MacBook is considerably faster. It may not have great hard disk space or all the connectivity as a G5, but for sheer number crunching it's our first choice. Bung the files across to it via our wireless network to wherever it was left last time it was used—probably still relaxing on a couch in the TV room because it's a pretty idle machine—and leave it to do the business.

This leaves us in a quandary. What do we buy when it's new computer time, which, for me, will be next year if finances allow? If we were to go the fast laptop route, it would certainly release a huge amount of office space currently occupied by lumps of aluminum. But a second and third internal drive, neatly housed in the Mac Pro case, would also clear a chunk of space.

The iMacs look very cool, are considerably faster than my G5, and cost a lot less than a Mac Pro. But what would we do with all the spare monitors and other gubbins we have? In any case, do they have enough ports on them? Apple's Cinema Displays have handy extra FireWire and USB ports, all of which are occupied by the detritus of a designer's digital tools.

Returning to the laptop idea, a series of network attached hard disks would also solve desktop storage and lack of ports. With Leopard just arrived, it's like Christmas Eve for Mac-olytes like us. Unfortunately, Apple has changed its mind and Leopard's new Time Machine will not[1] work[2] with AirPort Extreme and network attached drives. Still, a fast laptop is looking increasingly attractive.

We would also be able to relegate one G5 to becoming the old workhorse, ready to scan, digitize, FTP, or one of the many tedious tasks modern online working means. But then, it would need a spare corner to sit in, take up a new chunk of currently unoccupied space, so defeating the whole space-saving idea of a laptop.

Decisions, decisions.

Copyright © 2007 Mark Tennent, mtennent@atpm.com.

[1] http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=306833

[2] http://lists.apple.com/archives/Carbon-dev/2007/Oct/msg00273.html

Photoshop For the Curious

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Back in February

I'll get right to the point. My schedule during October radically altered and left me no time to prepare the Mask-erades topic for this month. Likewise, travel plans for both November and December will be commanding much of my attention.

Thus, I'll complete the next *Photoshop For the Curious* column to submit for the February 2008 issue of ATPM. In that chapter, we'll look at Photoshop's image masks.

A sample image that uses Photoshop's image masking feature. (Artwork reproduced by permission of the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church.)

To whet your appetite for what is to come in February, take a moment to look at the above image, and then watch this short Quicktime video[1]. What you are seeing in the screenshot is the outcome of a project where I photographed individual pieces of large, hand-drawn art used to illustrate a church sermon series. The art was drawn one piece at a time during each sermon in the series, and this will be reflected on the printed DVD labels.

After opening all the individual photographs in Photoshop, each was placed on its own layer in a single document, and the surrounding background was masked. No, not erased—masked. This means that I can restore any part of the original image because the missing part is only hidden and not permanently erased.

As you watch the video, you'll see each individual photo layer onto the canvas. The layers are then rearranged into the proper order—the image of Christ in the background and the "harvest hands" in the foreground. Next, I applied the mask I had previously built for each piece of art. Creating a mask can require small or large amounts of time, depending on the complexity of the desired mask. A drop shadow Layer Style is then applied to the pieces in order to give them some depth in relation to each other. Finally, I moved several pieces around with the masks enabled to demonstrate how easily a masked image can be repositioned.

When *Photoshop For the Curious* returns, we'll revisit this piece of artwork and find out exactly how to create image masks. But, I'm not going to leave you completely hanging until February. For your homework assignment during the break, spend some time familiarizing yourself with these Photoshop Shortcuts[2]. Each of them can make using Photoshop much more pleasant. Of the 30 shortcuts, a handful of them actually revealed some information that was new to me.

I'd also like to suggest two podcasts that may interest you. The first is PhotoshopUser TV[3] produced by the National Association of Photoshop Professionals[4].

If you want even more, or you cannot afford the time to watch a weekly half-hour podcast, try Photoshop Killer Tips[5] by Matt Kloskowski. Each episode is a daily morsel that takes a quick, but detailed, look at a single feature of Photoshop. They're always less than five minutes in length and often only one or two minutes.

I wish you have a safe and enjoyable holiday. I'll see you in February.

Copyright © 2007 Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com.

[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/images/RadicalPrayerSeriesArt.mov

[2] http://www.webdesignerwall.com/tutorials/photoshop-secret-shortcuts/

[3] http://www.photoshopusertv.com/

[4] http://www.photoshopuser.com/

[5] http://www.photoshopkillertips.com/

How To

by Sylvester Roque, sroque@atpm.com

Creating iTunes Content Presets

Remember the good old days when Audion_[1] and SoundJam MP[2] were the Mac music playback programs of choice? Both programs did one thing and did it pretty well—they ripped and played audio.

I don't know exactly when it happened, but sometime after its introduction in 2001[3] iTunes became the default media application for many Mac users. iTunes can now play and manage a variety of media: video clips, television shows, podcasts, Internet radio, and ringtones for your iPhone are all at your disposal. Oh yeah, did I mention it still plays your music collection too?

Sometimes iTunes Helps Too Much?

iTunes didn't get in the way much when my entire library consisted of music ripped from my CD collection. A quick double-click usually produced a tune I wanted to hear. Then I made a fateful decision: I asked the ATPM staff which podcasts were worth investigating. Now I had unheard podcasts getting in the way. Shortly after that I added a few videos. Now a quick double-click and iTunes takes me to wherever I was when I last quit the program. That's not a bad feature, but it often requires a few more mouse clicks to get to the music I want to hear.

I tolerated this inconvenience until I started listening to Internet radio more often. Even with the streams stored in a separate playlist, finding my favorite streams usually required several mouse clicks. What I needed was a one-click-and-done solution. If my ancient car stereo can have presets for different stations, why can't my Mac?

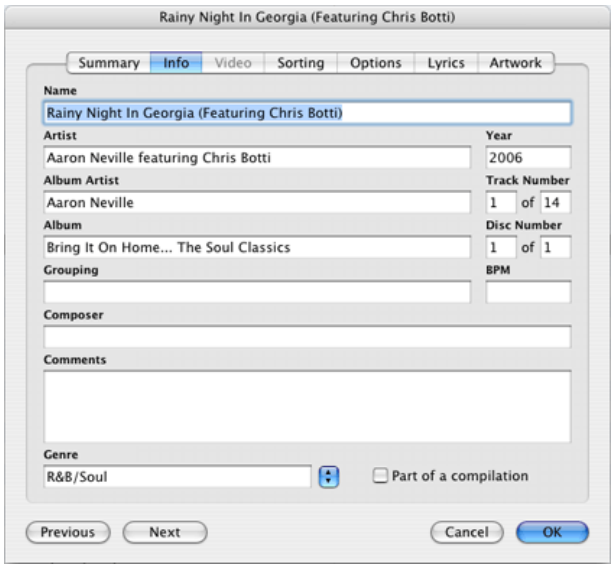
There may be better solutions out there, but I quickly cooked something up in Automator that allows me to launch iTunes and move to the content I want with a single mouse click. It's really a rather short project, so as a bonus I'll take a moment to discuss adding new stations to your iTunes library. Before we add new content or build any Automator workflows let's think about organizing iTunes a bit.

[1] http://www.panic.com/extras/audionstory/
[2] http://www.atpm.com/6.10/soundjam.shtml
[3] http://www.atpm.com/7.02/itunes.shtml

Organize That Library

I currently have well over 6,000 items in my iTunes library. iTunes tries to help me keep things organized by dividing the items into the categories in the source list. This is a good starting point, but it doesn't get me to my music in one click. Here are a few tips that should help you, iTunes, and Automator work together to get to the music you want more efficiently. Let's start within iTunes.

If you haven't already done so, start adding appropriate tags to the content in your library. This not only makes it easier for you to sort content, but Automator also becomes more efficient. It's capable of searching your library for specific content, but only if the items are properly tagged. Tagging your content is as simple as clicking an item, choosing Get Info from the File menu, clicking the Info pane, and filling in the relevant information.



Tagging iTunes Content

Make Use of Playlists

As their name implies, playlists organize the content in your library. If, for example, you often search for all content that fits a specific genre, or all songs by a

certain artist, playlists are one way to quickly get the same results. If you choose New Playlist from the File menu, you can create a playlist, name it, and drag items into it. This doesn't actually move the music files; it simply creates a set of pointers that you and iTunes can use for organization.

You can also create new playlists by selecting some content and choosing "New Playlist From Selection" from the File menu. Create and name a new playlist to hold the Internet streams we'll add in a moment. It's empty now, but we'll soon correct that.

Make Your Playlists Smarter

I have a few regular playlists in my library, but most of it is organized via Smart Playlists. With Smart Playlists, iTunes does the organization for you based upon a series of conditions that you specify. Choose New Smart Playlist from the File menu. In the dialog box that appears, fill in the conditions that will form the basis for this playlist. If you have ever created rules in Mail or Smart Groups in Address Book, this dialog will look very familiar to you. You can click the + symbol to make iTunes combine conditions to only select content that matches all of them.

Although you can limit the number of items in a Smart Playlist, my favorite feature is called "Live updating." With this option checked, the playlist changes whenever you add or remove content that meets its conditions. I have, for example, several playlists based on musical genre. The condition "Genre contains Blues" shows me all the blues content in my library. Create several of these playlists, and you can select music based upon your mood. You could create playlists based on any of the tags used by iTunes.

Smart Playlists Dialog

The impetus for this article actually occurred in mid-July when I launched iTunes and was greeted by an Aaron Neville Christmas song. I had recently rearranged the order of my library, and Aaron Neville's Soulful Christmas[4] was at the top of the list. I corrected the problem by creating a smart playlist that excluded podcasts and holiday music. The Smart Playlist excludes music that matches all of the following conditions: "Genre does not contain Holiday" and "Genre does not contain Podcast". A bit of experimentation will produce playlists that meet your viewing and listening habits. Now that we have things organized, let's add a new stream to the collection of Internet radio stations.

Finding Your Favorite Radio Streams

Now that I have a broadband connection full time, I like listening to streams from Internet radio stations. Programs that aren't broadcast in my area or aren't broadcast at convenient times are suddenly available on my schedule.

There are quite a few good streams in the Radio section of iTunes, but they can get buried among the stations you don't particularly like. Solve the problem by dragging your favorite streams into the playlist you created earlier. That helps organize the streams that are already in iTunes, but you can't add new streams can you? Yes, you can. There are actually two ways to do this if you keep a few caveats in mind.

When adding streams to iTunes, remember that the streams must be in a format that the program understands. If your favorite station requires a proprietary player or a password to gain access, those streams usually will not work in iTunes.

You must know the correct URL for the stream that you want to add. Perhaps the easiest to add are .pls files that import into iTunes when double-clicked. We'll discuss that more in a moment.

If you are looking for a source of streams, check out Shoutcast[5]. Many local radio affiliates are also moving onto the Web, so check your favorite station's Web site to see if there is a stream available.

You'll probably prefer to use a regular playlist for the Internet radio content that you add to iTunes. If you used a Smart Playlist, any Internet stations that you play in iTunes would get added to the smart playlist. I often try a station for a few days and then decide I don't like it. A Smart Playlist would become cluttered quickly. The stations that you don't want would remain in the playlist until the "pointer" with the information for that stream is removed from the library.

[4] `http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewAlbum?id=388331&s=143441`

[5] `http://www.shoutcast.com/`

Adding Stations to iTunes

Apple has some pretty good content in the Radio portion of iTunes. There is one problem though: unless someone in Cupertino is psychic, chances are they have left out a few of your favorite streams. Fortunately for us, it's easy to create shortcuts to your favorites.

If your favorite station has a stream in the form of a .pls file, that is by far the easiest to add to your iTunes collection. A growing number of stations have this as one of their download options. Once you and your trusty Web browser have located a .pls file, download the file as you would any other and locate it. Double-click the .pls file and iTunes should launch and begin playing the stream (assuming you have an active Internet connection). Once the stream has started playing, you can drag the pointer from the main library to the playlist that you are using to organize your Internet radio content. From now on, you can go to that playlist and play a stream simply by double-clicking on the file.

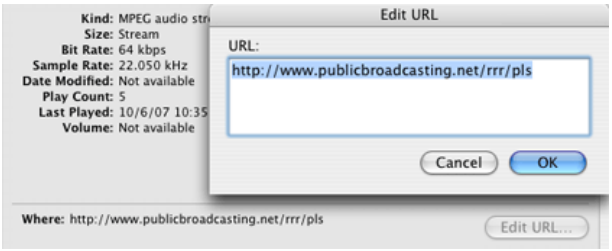
This is great, but what do you do if the station you want to hear doesn't provide a .pls file? With a little luck and the URL for the stream file, it may still work in iTunes. It takes a bit of work but can be worth it. Try the following steps:

1. Drag one of the streams in the radio section of iTunes into the radio favorites playlist that you created.

2. Go to the radio favorites playlist and click on the file that you just added to select it.

3. Choose Get Info from the File menu. Near the bottom of the Summary tab is an option to "Edit URL." Choose that option, paste the URL for your new stream into the dialog that appears, and click "OK." While you are here, you might as well click the Info tab and add any relevant information to the tags. You'll probably want to at least change the name and genre to reflect the new content.

4. Close the dialog, find the stream in the playlist, and double-click it. With any luck, iTunes will take you to the new content.



Adding a Station's URL

Automating Content Selection

Until now, all we have really done is clean up your iTunes library and add pointers to a few new streams. You can do these things no matter which version of OS X or iTunes you're using. In order to complete the actual automation phase, you will need Tiger and Automator. If you want Automator to close the iTunes window, you'll also need to download and install the Type Keystroke action[6] for Automator. It's possible to accomplish this with AppleScript, but I'm not much of a scripter so I'll leave that to someone else.

If you've never used Automator before, my previous[7] article should explain the basics well enough to get you started. As a bonus, if you complete the project in the article you will have a couple of potentially useful workflows. Now that the preliminaries are finally out of the way, let's launch Automator and put it to work.

Automator's actions, which appear in the leftmost pane of the window, are grouped according to the application that makes use of that action. Drop the required action into the pane on the far right of the Automator window. Depending upon the action being used, there may be one or more options to consider configuring.

From now on I'll follow the convention of listing the appropriate Automator application library followed by the action to be copied into the pane on the right. If any settings need to be adjusted for that action, I will include a description immediately below that step. Once you have completed the settings for an action, you may want to collapse the box by clicking the white triangle. This will save some screen real estate.

[6] http://www.automatedworkflows.com/files/products/automatoractions/free/awSysAPkg680.zip

[7] http://www.atpm.com/12.07/automator.shtml

Push a Button. . .Play an Item

I initially developed this workflow to exclude holiday music from my normal musical rotation. It used a Smart Playlist that excluded the genres Holiday and Podcast. I could have used a separate library to do this, but I would have to remember to press the Option key when launching iTunes. I'd also have to select the library file that I want to use. This seems much easier to me.

1. iTunes ▷ Get Specified iTunes Items

   Click the + sign in this action to select the content you want this workflow to play. Clicking the Options triangle and selecting "Show Action When Run" would cause this action to be displayed every time the workflow runs. This would make it possible for one workflow to select any content, but it would require multiple mouse clicks. We don't want that, so leave this option unchecked.

2. Finder ▷ Launch Application

   In the pop-up menu for this action, select iTunes. There aren't any other options that we need to configure, so let's move on.

3. Automator ▷ Type Keystroke

   We'll need to type a "W" (without quotes) in the text area and select the check box marked "Hold Down Command Key". This action mimics choosing the "Close Window" command from the File menu in iTunes. If you don't want to close the window, it's safe to omit this action.

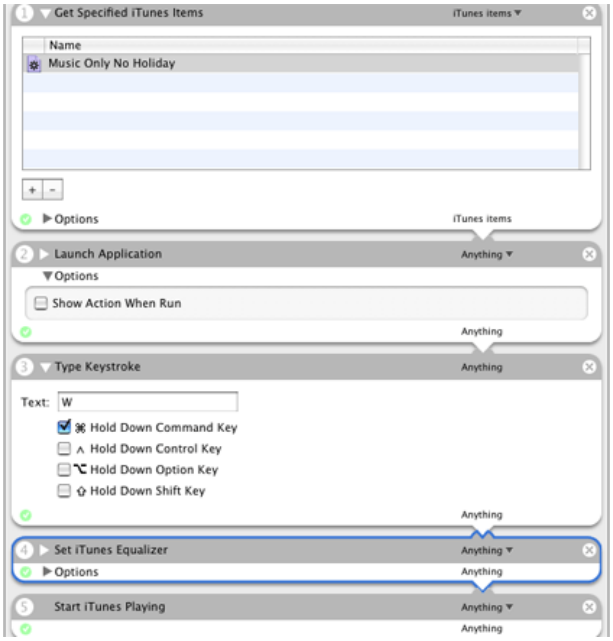
   In my testing, this action does not always work as expected. It doesn't break anything; it simply doesn't close the window as expected. I developed an Applescript that accomplished the same thing, but can't locate the code at the moment. That version required other modifications to the workflow, so I'll post the modifications as soon as I remember how I did it.

4. iTunes ▷ Set iTunes Equalizer

   This action is the equivalent of modifying settings in the iTunes Equalizer window. Make sure you check the "On" box and make any other adjustments to suit your musical taste. If you don't want to make equalizer adjustments you can omit this action.

5. iTunes ▷ Start iTunes Playing

   This is the action that actually starts playing your music. Don't omit this action or your music won't play.



Launch Specific Content

Once the basic workflow is completed and saved as a template, modifications linking the workflow to different content can be made in moments. After all modifications are complete, save a copy of the workflow as an application. I have several copies saved as applications—each one linked to different iTunes content.

Turn on the Internet Radio

The previous workflow will select almost anything in your iTunes library, but it doesn't play nice with your Internet radio streams. They don't even appear in the selection dialog. Fortunately there is an easy solution. In step one of the workflow, replace "iTunes ▷ Get Specified iTunes Items" with "iTunes ▷ Find iTunes Items."

In the first pop-up menu, change "Find" to "Songs." This changes the title of the action to "Find Songs in iTunes." That confused me for a

Copyright © 2007 Sylvester Roque, sroque@atpm.com.

bit the first time it happened. Under the "Whose" pop-up menu choose Playlist, followed by the name of the radio station playlist you created earlier. The workflow does not seem to work properly unless this condition is present.

Radio Station Presets

Click the + sign to add a second condition. Using the pop-up menu, set the condition to "Name is equal to" and specify the name of the stream you want the workflow to tune to.

Test the workflow before saving it as an application. If iTunes cannot connect to the stream, you will usually hear nothing. If the last thing selected in iTunes was a song, you will hear that. First try opening the stream manually just to make sure they are broadcasting at the moment. Now quit iTunes and launch the workflow to see if it plays the appropriate feed.

Once you can successfully play the stream from within the workflow, save two copies of your work. The copy saved in workflow format becomes a template for adding new streams. Simply add the new stream to your playlist, then open the template in Automator and change the name of the target stream accordingly. Once the changes are complete, choose a descriptive name and save a copy as an application. The application should now launch iTunes and go to the target stream with a mere double-click.

That's it for now. This took a few more words than I anticipated, but I hope you find it useful. I don't know what's coming next month, but for now I'm off to play with Spaces and the new Automator.

Desktop Pictures

by Graham Lindsay

We need new desktop pictures each month. Write[1] to us!

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

This month's photos were taken by ATPM reader Graham Lindsay[3], who writes:

All photos are copyright protected but available for personal use as desktop pictures. No commercial use without permission of author.

I live in Canberra, capital city of Australia. Lake Burley Griffin is the centrepiece of the city.

1. Carillon on Lake Burley Griffin[4]

   The Carillon is a set of bells that are played much like a pipe organ. There are recitals at lunchtimes on specified days throughout the year. More details are available[5].

2. F111 and the Sea Eagle[6]

   I was on vacation in Coffs Harbour (Mid-North New South Wales) and wading through Boambee Creek taking a variety of shots. I was tracking the sea eagle and trying to get closer.

   The F111s are based at Amberley Air Base at Ipswich, not far from Brisbane, Queensland and are known to take the opportunity to practise take-offs and landings at Coffs Harbour in the periods when no commercial or private aircraft are about.

   This one sneaked up on me while I was taking the photo of the sea eagle so I adjusted my shot and was fortunate to get both in together.

3. Fire on Water[7]

   Just another sunrise photo! Taken while I was at a conference at Murramurrang resort north of Bateman's Bay on the South Coast of NSW. It was exactly 7 AM and the angle of the clouds in relation to the slope of the shore and the interesting colours caught my eye.

4. Kookaburra[8]

   Another photo taken at 7 AM in the morning. This one was taken while I was on an early morning walk while at a retreat house in Mittagong (Southern Highlands of New South Wales). I tracked this bird for about an hour. He allowed me to inch up to him over a period of about ten minutes and I was able to get a close up shot.

5. Sydney Harbour[9]

   Photo taken from North Head with a non-Harbour Bridge view of Sydney CBD.

6. Tidbinbilla[10]

   Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking Station is about 30km from Canberra City. This shot is of one of the main radio telescope dishes. At the time the photo was taken, Canberra and surrounds, including Tidbinbilla, was just recovering from intense bushfires.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[11].

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

[1] mailto:editor@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/
[3] mailto:graham_lindsay@bigpond.com
[4] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/Carillon%20on%20Lake%20Burley%20Griffin.shtml
[5] http://www.canberratourism.com.au
[6] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/F111%20and%20the%20Sea%20Eagle.shtml
[7] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/Fire%20on%20Water.shtml
[8] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/Kookaburra.shtml
[9] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/Sydney%20Harbour.shtml
[10] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/australia/Tidbinbilla.shtml
[11] http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml

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[12].

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.

[12] `http://automator.us/examples-02.html`

Cortland

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

ACCORDING TO MY READINGS, LISA'S OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN COMPLETED.
VERY WELL.
WHY DON'T WE GO PAY CORTLAND AND HIS FRIENDS ONE LAST VISIT?

AT LAST, I HAVE ESCAPED THE BONDS OF MY SILICON PRISON...
...TAKEN NEW LIFE IN THIS FRAGILE CREATURE OF FLESH AND BLOOD.
DO YOU FEAR ME NOW, CORTLAND?
YOUR GREATEST ENEMY, YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE...
HIDING IN THE SHELL OF THE WOMAN YOU LOVE.

C-C-COME ON, ANGIE. IT'S ME. TERRY.
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? TAKE MY HAND.
PLEASE...
I DON'T THINK YOU *REALLY* WANT ME TO DO THAT.

AND NOW, CORTLAND, PREPARE TO FACE THE FULL POWER OF LISA'S FURY!
GRAAAA-AH!
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO BE FRIGHTENED OR INCREDIBLY AROUSED.
WHY ARE YOU NOT RIPPING IN HALF?!

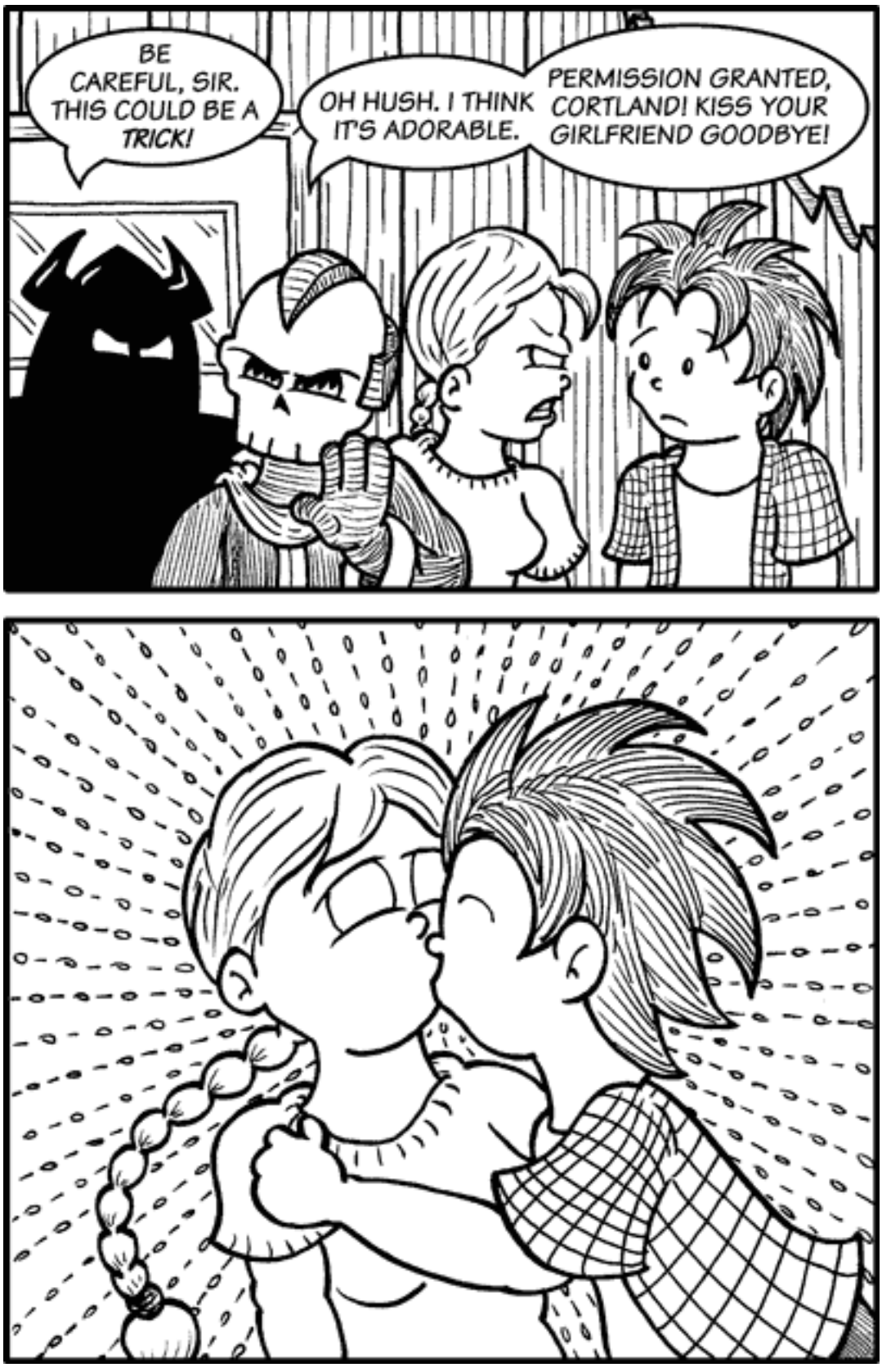
ALL RIGHT. LEVEL WITH ME. WHAT'S *WITH* HER?
I DON'T KNOW, OFFICER. I'VE KNOWN HER ALMOST MY WHOLE LIFE...
BUT THIS BEATS THE HECK OUT OF ME.
URGH! YOU'LL BE SORRY ONCE I FLING THIS TRUCK AT YOU!
ANGIE, LISA, PLEASE STOP!

ANGIE, LISTEN TO ME! I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE SOMEWHERE!
GIVE IT UP, MR. CORTLAND.
SHE'S ONE OF US NOW, AND NO MORE USE TO YOU.

MY,
HOW THE TABLES
HAVE TURNED SINCE
LAST WE MET.
YOU
WERE SO COCKY ONCE
UPON A TIME, BUT I SUPPOSE
YOU'RE GOING TO BE A BIT
LESS BELLIGERENT FROM
HERE ON OUT.
NOW
THAT WE HAVE THE ULTIMATE
BARGAINING CHIP ON OUR SIDE
OF THE TABLE.

SO NOW, CORTLAND, YOU HAVE FINALLY LOST.
DO YOU HAVE ANY REQUESTS BEFORE WE TAKE YOU LADY TO JOIN US IN OUR EVIL LAIR FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE?
YES.

MAY I KISS HER GOODBYE?


BE CAREFUL, SIR. THIS COULD BE A TRICK!
OH HUSH. I THINK IT'S ADORABLE.
PERMISSION GRANTED, CORTLAND! KISS YOUR GIRLFRIEND GOODBYE!

ALL RIGHT, I THINK WE'RE SAFE BACK HERE.
NOW, DO YOU WANT TO TELL ME WHAT THE HECK THAT THING IS, WHO THOSE PEOPLE ARE, AND WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON?
I'M—I'M NOT QUITE SURE YET.
BUT IF YOU HANG ON A SECOND, I'LL SEE IF I CAN FIND OUT.

WHAT'S THIS?
IN THIS BRIEF MOMENT THAT OUR LIPS TOUCH, I CAN FEEL SOMETHING STIR INSIDE.
I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
I'M FALLING THROUGH THE CODE.
HANG ON, ANGIE.
IF YOU'RE IN HERE SOMEWHERE, I'LL FIND YOU.

Copyright © 2007 Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com.

Software Review

by Ed Eubanks, Jr.

Billable 1.2.3

Developer: Clickable Bliss[1]
Price: $35
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.4. Universal[2].
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

I do just enough consulting to need a tool for billing. My needs are pretty simple: 99% of what I do is based on hourly billing (in other words, I don't need a lot of elaborate reimbursement tracking, inventory, or non-service oriented billing); I have just a few clients who usually pay right away; and I have simple and straightforward needs and wants for organizing my billing history.

In other words, my needs *could* be met by a spreadsheet and word processor; in fact, the new iWork '08 offers very pretty and easy-to-use templates for exactly what I need. But like many small-time consultants (I hope!), I'm lazy about my billing. Sure, I could do it with iWork—but I'd rather have something that brought more automation and ease to the tedium of invoicing clients.

Enter Clickable Bliss's Billable. Billable sets out to be exactly what I have described above. And while Billable is powerful enough for someone with greater needs than mine, it does a very good job for what I need in a billing manager.

Getting Started

Billable comes with a good introduction video, which runs by default the first time you launch the application. This video, which is comprehensive in demonstrating the features and use of Billable, is also fairly brief (thank you, Clickable Bliss). Thus, it doesn't take very long before you feel very comfortable using the application.

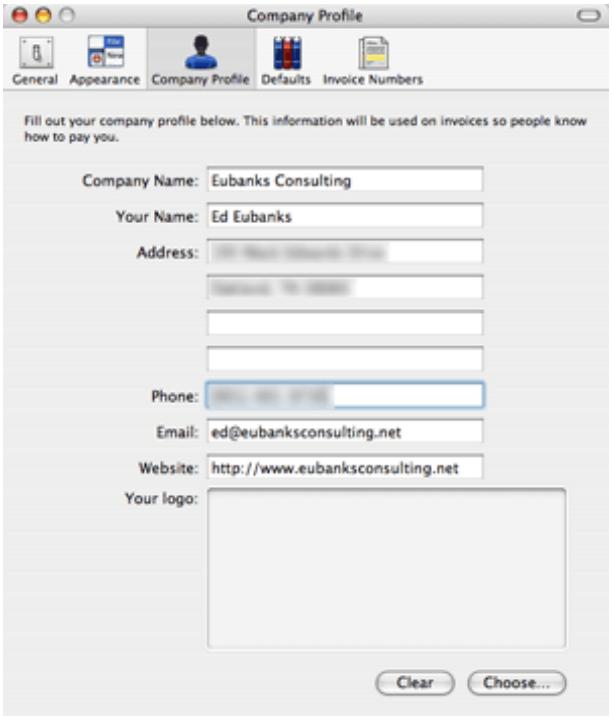
I'll mention here that Billable also has a complete Help file that runs locally using Help Viewer. In other words, it doesn't simply take you to a Web site where the documentation lives—a move that is growing in popularity, it seems, but annoys me, and suggests an incomplete product. Billable is only at version 1.2, but having the full documentation installed locally tells me that the developer bothered to write it before shipping!

By the way, the Web site *does* have a very active forum[3], where many questions have already been fielded. You may find your answers there, particularly if you've used other billing software and you seek a particular feature or tool that you don't see immediately. Clickable Bliss also appears to welcome feature requests in the forum, so you might recommend that tool if it isn't already there.

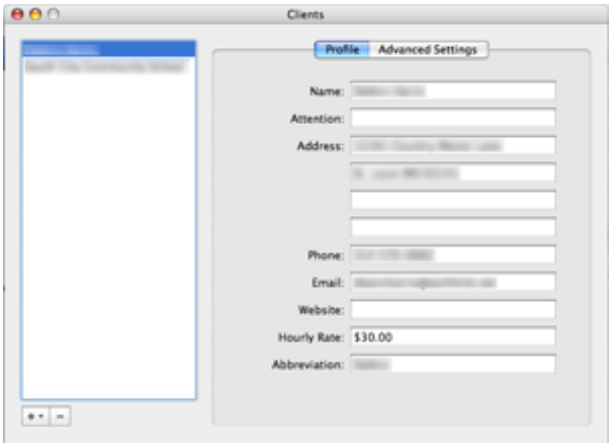
Setting Up

Billable is easy to set up, with options for building a company profile in the preferences, so invoices are customized from you and/or your company. If you have a logo, you can even include this—a nice touch to make the end-product more professional. And it even offers you the opportunity to create your company profile from the Me card in Address Book, if you prefer.

[1] http://www.clickablebliss.com/billable/
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3] http://forums.clickablebliss.com/viewforum.php?id=1



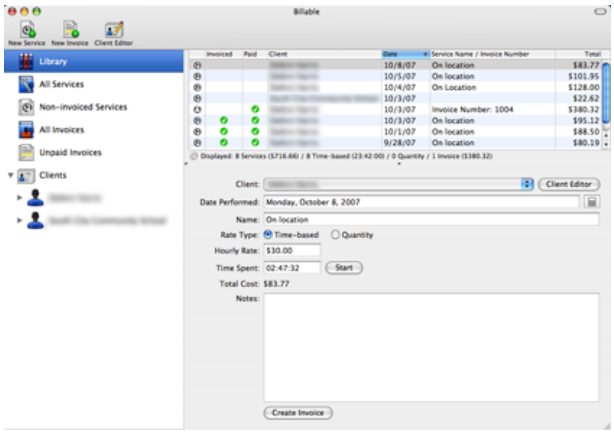
Establishing your client list is equally easy, if not more so. The Client Editor is simple and straightforward, and you may create users just as you did your company profile. However, Billable can also import data from Address Book, auto-filling in much of the client information and leaving you with few decisions before the client list is complete. Another helpful feature is the ability to set particular parameters for each client, such as hourly rates, default due dates, invoice numbers, and tax rates. I especially like the custom invoice footer text option, where I can personalize my invoices for each of my clients.



Building Data

Of course, set-up might be easy, but if day-to-day use isn't also simple then there's not much point. Fortunately, Billable is as easy to use as it is to set up.

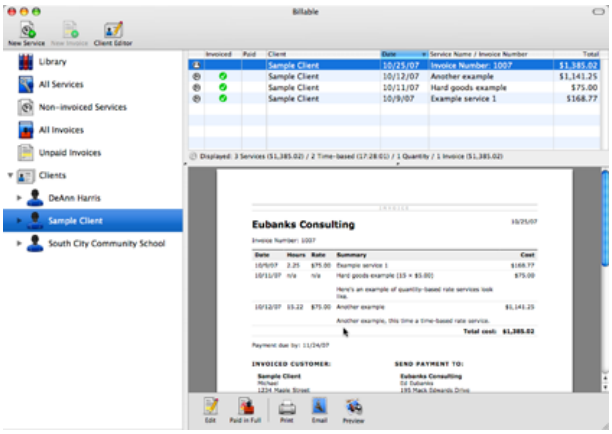
Creating new entries for billing is a matter of a mouse-click on the New Service button. If you're working for an existing client, you might choose them from the sidebar before this—if so, then an entry will be created with all of their default information pre-filled. Otherwise, you may choose them from the pull-down menu for clients; alternatively, entries do not have to be assigned to a client, and if you're just doing a one-time job then you might want to leave it assigned to "no client." An aside: I would recommend against this last option, for the simple reason that it will cause you headaches when tax time rolls around.



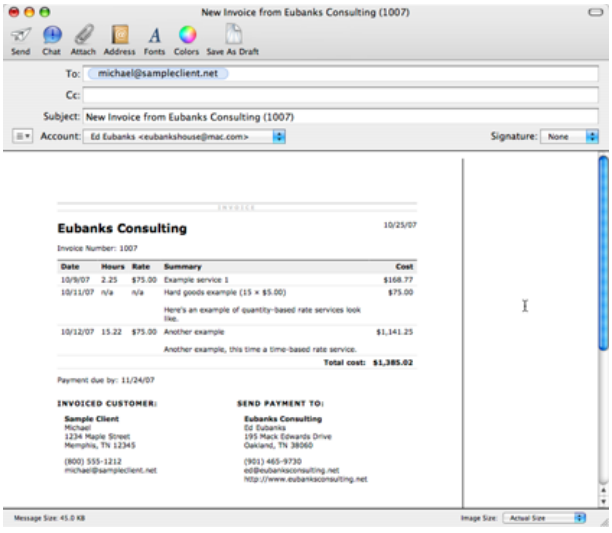
Specifics about each entry can be entered into the window. You can give it a name: "Mac Pro install," for example, or "location visit." Additionally, you can enter notes, and these will appear in the invoice(s) created for those entries. For time-based entries, the time spent can be manually entered, or—and this is the coup-de-grace for me—the Start button (immediately beside the time entry box) will start counting, either from 00:00:00 or from a pre-entered time; thus, if you take a break and hit Stop, you can start again later without having to create a new entry.

Similarly, creating invoices is just as easy. You may build an invoice for a particular entry—there is a button conveniently located at the bottom of every service window. Or you can select multiple entries from the list and create a single invoice for all of them. Once invoices are created, you can edit them—add a message to it, say, or adjust the due date—and you can mark payments as they are received. Fully paid

invoices are brightly marked as such, so auditing your outstanding invoices is a breeze.



Then, you can output the invoice via printer, saving as a PDF, or e-mailing it. E-mailing invoices is very clean—it is clear that Clickable Bliss went to great efforts to integrating well with both Address Book (for client creation) and Mail. Using the client information from the Client Editor, it drafts an e-mail with the subject, "New Invoice from [company name] ([invoice #])" and the invoice attached as a PDF. It's as simple as clicking Send from there, and your client has been billed. If you prefer, you can also choose "Copy Plain Text Invoice" from the Edit menu, either to paste into the body of an e-mail or for other purposes.



Meta-Thoughts

In addition to the attention given to Address Book and Mail integration, Billable is well-built as a Mac application, and it's AppleScriptable for more customized workflow integration. Overall, I give Billable high marks as a very Mac-like application, unlike some others in this category of software. This is important to me because, in addition to my laziness about billing, I also want my billing environment to be as comfortable as possible! Clickable Bliss has offered me that in Billable.

Quirks and Concerns

Nevertheless, Billable is still a 1.x product, and it shows in some of the missing pieces. For example, Billable has limited contextual menus—especially for deleting items from the list. I'm used to right-clicking an item to delete it; instead, to delete a service, I have to press the Delete key or choose Edit ▷ Delete. Forward Delete doesn't work.

Another feature I miss in Billable is a time-stamp for time-based billings. I'd like to record the time of day that I work, not simply the amount of time. I think this would instill a greater confidence in my clients that the billing is accurate.

Attending to my billing laziness, I also miss some form of default service settings. I tend to do the same kind of work over and over for my clients—or at least very similar things. For example, a lot of times I'm simply with my clients in their homes, working side-by-side with them. A simple "location visit" service would suffice, and would save me from typing this into the name field every time. And when I do more detailed work that is repeatable, this would be even more useful.

One invoice feature that bugs me is that "payable to" defaults to company name. This is based on the Company Profile, set up in the Preferences. If you need checks made out to you and not your company, you'll have to switch the Company Name to your name, and vice-versa. If you're handy with HTML—as many ATPM readers likely are—you could edit the invoice template to accomplish this, which Clickable Bliss happily supports.

Unlike in QuickBooks, invoices and payments must line up one-to-one. Billable does not allow a client to make one large payment for multiple invoices, and it doesn't keep a running balance of each client's dues or overpayments. I don't need these features, but others might.

Since I use Mail and Address Book, I had no difficulty with Billable's integration with these tools. However, if you use Entourage or another PIM, I don't know how much integration there will be. I pored over the documentation for information about this, but found nothing indicating compatibility with other PIM clients. Thus, your mileage may vary on those features.

Final Notes

Some of the forum posters seem to want Billable to be much more than it is; perhaps Clickable Bliss will deliver on this, or perhaps they are going to have to find fulfillment elsewhere! On the whole, Billable is just right for me, even with the quirks. I'm hopeful that the developer will work out some of the kinks I mentioned, and the rest I can live with. If you're like me—you need a simple, basic billing manager—then Billable might be for you. With the fully-functioning trial, it can't hurt to try it out.

Copyright © 2007 Ed Eubanks, Jr. Reviewing in ATPM *is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.*

Software Review

by Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com

Graph Paper Maker 1.6.1

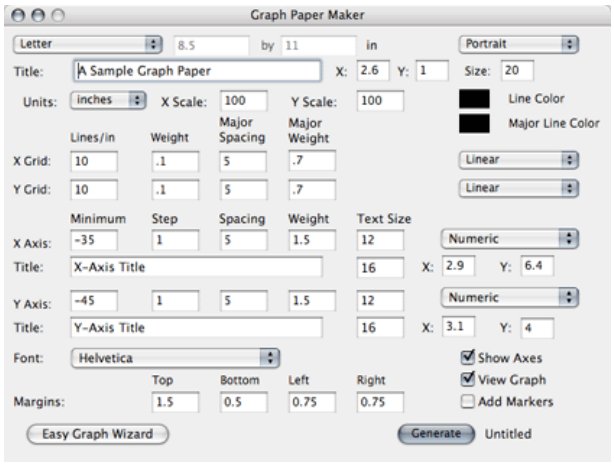
Developer: Black Cat Systems[1]
Price: $20
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (graph paper is watermarked)

When I first heard about Graph Paper Maker, I laughed. Why would anyone spend $20 on a program, plus pay for ink and paper, when she can just buy preprinted graph paper at an office-supplies store?

A few months later I got my answer. I was enrolled in a Coptic Bookbinding course, and I was making a template for a book's leather cover. I was going to have to cut a large number of slits into the leather in very precise locations. But measuring out the location of every slit to mark on my template quickly got tedious. What I needed was graph paper with 16 squares per inch. The graph paper would do all the measuring for me; all I'd have to do is draw my lines in the right places. But where could I find 16-square graph paper?

My First Graph Paper

When you open Graph Paper Maker for the first time, you're presented with a single window offering an overwhelming array of options. Of course, it's great that the program is so versatile, but my first reaction to the program's opening window screen was that it was way too advanced for me. Most of these options are for engineers and scientists, not amateur bookbinders.



It's a little intimidating at first glance.

OK, one step at a time. Choose the paper size and orientation. I don't want a title, so delete that. I know lines per inch, the same for X and Y. I left the weights alone and set the major spacing to 16 for a heavy line every inch. I ignored the rest and hit the Generate button.

Graph Paper Maker prompted me for a name and saved a PDF of the graph paper, which then opened automatically in Preview. But there were axes on the graph (which I didn't want), so I closed the PDF and went back to Graph Paper Maker. I deleted all the Axis numbers and the X and Y titles and clicked Generate. Nothing happened. Graph Paper Maker was frozen. I had to force-quit.

The problem was that it didn't like having all of those axis numbers empty. What you're supposed to do is uncheck the "Show Axes" box. On the one hand, it's nice that there's a simple check box for that. On the other, it's badly placed, so I missed it. I like that Graph Paper Maker has so many options and that they're all in one window, but that window should be better laid out. (And, of course, the program shouldn't freeze when something is left blank!)

Nonetheless, in the space of a few minutes I'd created the graph paper I needed. It was much easier than using a program that isn't designed for the task (I'm a hopeless database addict; I tried using File-

[1] http://www.blackcatsystems.com/software/graphmaker.html

[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/

Maker!) and much faster than calling all my local office-supplies stores.

Saving

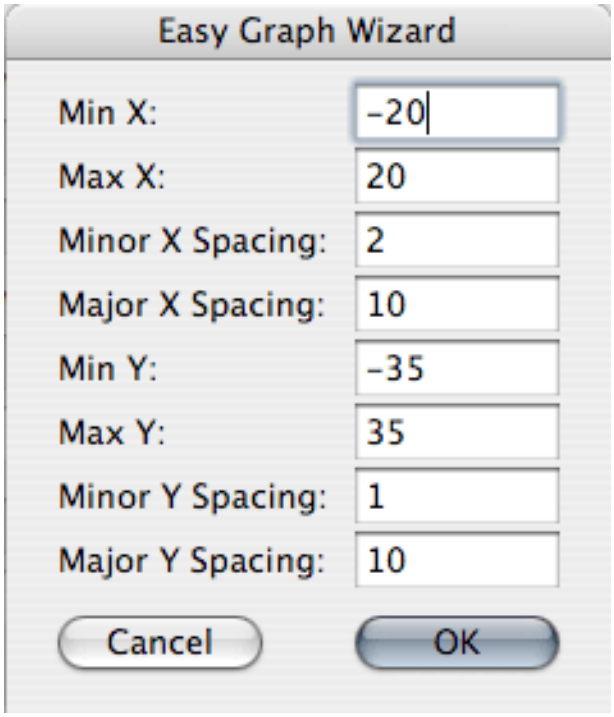
As I mentioned above, the graph paper Graph Paper Maker makes doesn't open within that program. Instead, it's saved as a PDF, so it can be reused later. That's good, but if you want to create a second (different) sort of graph paper, you have to close the Graph Paper Maker window and reopen it (choose Graph Paper from the Window menu) or else when you click Generate for your second piece of paper, the first will be overwritten without warning.

By itself, that's not such a big deal: you just have to remember to use a new window for a new piece of paper. (On the plus side, it makes it easy to make minor tweaks to a piece of paper you just generated.) But unfortunately, Graph Paper Maker doesn't remember the window's previous settings: when you open a new window, all the settings have reverted to the defaults. That makes it cumbersome, then, to create and save several similar pieces of graph paper.

Another problem with the program always reverting to its pre-set defaults is that it means I have to make some of the same changes every time I use the program. I never want axes. I always change the margins to half an inch on every side, and I change the line colors to light blue. I've also found that minor line weights are not uniform when printed at the default weight of 0.1. (I get alternating light and dark lines on my printer.) It looks much better if I change the weight to 0.15. Of course, different users will want different defaults than I do; a "save as default" option would be a nice improvement for a future version. (You can save a graph paper configuration for opening and editing later, but there is no way to make it the default when opening the program.)

Other Features

Perhaps you noticed the Easy Graph Wizard button at the bottom left side of the window. I didn't. Turns out it's just as well I missed it, because it isn't made to do what I needed. If you need to plot a range of values on a graph, though, the Wizard makes it easy to create a piece of graph paper suitable to your values.



Graph paper that you buy in a store is usually printed with light blue or green ink, rather than solid black. That's good for a few reasons: it's easy to see what you write over the lines, and the lines don't (or barely) show up when you photocopy them. Graph Paper Maker allows you to choose an ink color with the standard color picker. If you want the same color (just different weights) for your major and minor lines, I suggest using something other than the color wheel. (Crayons work well for me.)

Huey Lewis said it's hip to be square, but if you prefer triangles or hexagons or (non-square) rhombi, Graph Paper Maker offers Isometric, Hexagon, Axonometric, and Trapezoid layouts, though without title or axes. (I once needed polar graph paper for a geometry class; Graph Paper Maker can't make that. But that's the only kind of graph paper I can think of that isn't supported.)

Conclusion

Graph Paper Maker is a versatile program that allows you to quickly and easily create any kind of graph paper you're likely to need. Its user interface could definitely stand some improvement, but as it is there's no denying it gets the job done. If you ever find yourself needing a kind of graph paper that's not available at your local office-supplies shop, give this program a try.

Copyright © 2007 Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.

Accessory Reviews

by Lee Bennett, David B. Thompson, Christopher Turner

iPhone Case Roundup

Not surprisingly, even before the iPhone went on sale, we began receiving press releases from companies selling cases for Apple's latest game-changing gadget. Chris Turner was the first ATPM staffer to acquire an iPhone, having done so on that wild Friday night[1] at the end of June. Lee Bennett succumbed to iPhone temptation two days later, and David Thompson soon after. Among other niceties of getting used to their new slices of tech heaven, they began the search for cases to hold and protect their twenty-first century communicators.

What follows is a roundup of cases the three have tested over the past three months. Researching cases for any device, but especially for a device like the iPhone, is *highly* subjective, and what works for Chris might not work for Lee, and what might work for both of them might not work for David. Please let us know what you think of the cases reviewed here, and what cases for which you think we should keep our eyes open.

Classic Urbano Pouch

Developer: Vaja[2]
Price: $60

From south of the equator comes the Vaja Classic Urbano Pouch. This Argentine product is sturdy, shaped leather in a vertical case with a belt clip. The Vaja Web site doesn't reflect the Urbano in the vertical, however, showing a horizontal case. Mine arrived in the Midnight Blue/Birch color combo, but if I were ordering one direct from Vaja, I'd go with all black. Lee tells me when he went to the Vaja site, he easily saw the vertical cases, so your mileage may vary.

[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.07/iphone.shtml
[2] http://vajachoice.com

The sturdy Vaja Classic Urbano Pouch.

The Vaja is well-crafted, and features a magnetic clasp on its flap. It holds the iPhone in its leather-lined interior very well. Perhaps a little *too* well. My biggest gripe with the Vaja (besides the color combination), is that it's very difficult to get the iPhone out, which is particularly frustrating when there's an incoming call. And this was even with a couple of weeks' worth of wear. The cut holes in the bottom corners of the case aren't large enough to allow me to push the iPhone up enough to then grasp it from the

top and pull it the rest of the way out. The horizontal version of the Urbano may prove different.

The Urbano's rear with generic belt clip.

—*Christopher Turner*

Crystal Jacket Set for iPhone

Developer: Power Support[3]
Price: $30

I prefer a horizontal orientation for my mobile devices, especially for something as long as the iPhone. So, the Crystal Jacket from Power Supply works for me. I also prefer a strong belt clip with a security hook at the bottom that will catch my belt (or the fabric of a pocket) so I don't drop my phone. The Crystal Jacket has that feature.

[3] `http://www.powersupportusa.com/products/iphone_case.php?category=iphone`

Back side of unit showing the holster and belt clip.

The belt clip of the Crystal Jacket rotates, so if you prefer a vertical carry you can have it. The clip rotates 270 degrees to accommodate both dexters and sinisters.

The crystal part is an acrylic form-fitting split case that surrounds most of the phone with impact-resistant plastic. The case is clear and provides easy access to the iPhone controls. It will not, however, fit in the dock. I also have some difficulty connecting the iPhone cable, so you'll have to remove the case to dock your iPhone.

The case is sturdy, and mine is holding up to normal abuse quite well. One afternoon after a business meeting, I bumped my phone on a chair as I exited the meeting room. It came loose from my belt and bounced on the floor. The case separated and my iPhone hit the floor, but no damage was done. I reassembled the case and went about my afternoon business.

Front side of the cover and my favorite beverage.

I like the way the holster protects the screen. The screen faces my body when the iPhone is in the holster. Most of the screen is covered by that hard plastic of the holster when holstered. Finally, as a perk, the system comes with one of Power Support's clear screen protectors. I installed mine, but managed to get a bit of lint under it. While the protection isn't perfect, it should prevent minor scratching of the screen.

—*David Thompson*

Elan Holster

Developer: Griffin Technology[4]
Price: $30

Griffin's Elan Holster intrigued me, because it's advertised as an open-top case that can be carried horizontally as well as vertically. Of the four cases I tried out, it was also the only one that came with a cleaning cloth and a screen protector (static peel) for the iPhone. Nice touches from the folks at Griffin Tech.

[4] `http://www.griffintechnology.com/products/elanholster/`

The Elan Holster in vertical mode.

You can switch the Elan from vertical to horizontal by moving the leather-clad belt clip from the corresponding slot on the back of the case. I carried my iPhone in both positions, and yet I could never shake the wariness I felt at having the iPhone in the horizontal plane with no cover on one end. I always felt I was one quick jolt, of some sort, away from seeing my iPhone go flying. This never happened, though I did test this theory with my hands, and while my iPhone never went flying out of the Elan, it did move out enough for me to be concerned.

The Elan's belt clip, situated for vertical carry.

So it was vertical carry from that point on, which was fine for a while. But then I noticed, one day, as I was exiting my vehicle, that my iPhone didn't come with me. The Elan Holster had slipped off the belt clip, and had come to nestle between my seat and the door jamb. Not good. It's a shame, because the Elan is stylish and comfortable, and I've traditionally gotten good mileage out of products from Griffin.

The Elan's belt clip, situated for horizontal carry.

—*Christopher Turner*

HipCase For iPhone

Developer: DLO[5]
Price: $35

I'll make no secret that I prefer horizontal cases over vertical ones, and for me, the HipCase is the best there is for the iPhone. The black leather is stylish, and suitable for nearly every occasion. If black leather's not your style, the HipCase is also available in brown leather or black nylon.

The HipCase in black leather.

The HipCase doesn't completely enclose the iPhone, and trust me, this is a good thing. For one, it makes it really easy to push on the iPhone from the open section on the bottom of the case with a finger or two, then grab the iPhone from the top with the rest of your hand. The openings on the ends of the HipCase allow you to plug in your earbuds

[5] http://dlo.com/Products/HipCase_Prod.tpl?command=showpage&cart=11907431243698717

while the iPhone rides in the case, and also be able to hear the phone ring, since on the opposite end the iPhone's speakers are exposed.

The HipCase's built-in belt clip. Even the leather on the clip is stitched.

I do have two druthers with the HipCase. One, I'm unsure of the long-term reliability of the hook-and-loop fastener flap. That material can wear out over time, and if this is your main iPhone case, depending on your personal usage, you could be opening and closing this flap a lot. One thing you won't have to worry about, however, is either side of the material coming off your HipCase, as it is stitched in underneath the leather. Second, one corner of the leather-covered metal belt clip has become unstitched, and the edge of the belt clip is poking through. I'll chalk this up to having a case from among those first to roll off the assembly line, and I hope DLO reinforces future versions.

The opened flap on the HipCase, where you can see the two halves of the hook-and-loop fastener.

—*Christopher Turner*

Jam Jacket For iPhone

Developer: DLO[6]
Price: $25

DLO's Jam Jacket, juxtaposed with the HipCase, is a silicone sleeve that encases your iPhone in no-slip goodness. Unlike the HipCase, you can use all of your iPhone functions while the iPhone is still inside the Jam Jacket, even the camera.

[6] `http://dlo.com/products/jjcord_iPhone_Prod.tpl?command=showpage&cart=11907431243698717`

The Jam Jacket in Frost, a nice contrast with the iPhone's home screen.

I do like the grippiness one gets with the Jam Jacket, thanks to the dimpled sides of the case. I was *never* worried about the iPhone slipping out of my hand when it was in the Jam Jacket. Another prime feature of the case is the ability to wrap your earbuds around DLO's integrated "Headphone Management System." I wasn't too sure of this at first, but I grew to really like having my earbuds easily accessible all the time, right there on the case.

My earbuds wrapped around the Jam Jacket's "Headphone Management System."

My main gripe with the Jam Jacket is that it's *really* difficult to work the ring silencer switch on the side of the iPhone while it's in the case. All of the other external switches and buttons were easily accessible. Also, it would be nice if the Jam Jacket could be attached to one's belt, but it's designed foremost as a sleeve-style case. This wasn't that big of a druther for me, as I routinely wear cargo shorts, and the Jam Jacket-encased iPhone simply rode in one of the cargo pockets.

—*Christopher Turner*

iPhone Smart Case

Developer: WaterField Designs[7]
Price: $35 (Slip style); $39 (Flap or Clip style)

Each of the iPhone Smart Case styles are identical in regard to how the

[7] http://www.sfbags.com/products/iphonesmartcase/iphonesmartcase.htm

phone is carried. The clip style case simply adds a plastic swivel belt clip assembly, and the flap style includes straps with hook-and-loop fastener material that will wrap around things such as a belt or a tote bag strap.

Left: flap style Smart Case. Middle: clip style Smart Case. Right: basic Smart Case with iPhone inside.

One nice little touch about the clip style case is that it must be rotated horizontally before it can be removed from the clip. This helps ensure the case is not accidentally removed since gravity will generally keep it hanging vertically.

The flap style case was something I originally thought would work as an arm strap. However, the straps are not long enough, and once I received the cases, I knew right away it wasn't the type of case I'd want to wear against my arm anyway.

All three cases snugly hold an iPhone inside. None of them, as you might suspect, make it super easy to remove the phone. I don't see much point to any phone case that requires even a small amount of effort to remove the phone. I might have said that some people simply don't need to remove their cell phone very often and that these cases provide a wonderful amount of padding to protect an iPhone's screen—but what iPhone owner doesn't care about removing the phone from the case often?

—*Lee Bennett*

iPhone Suede Jacket Case

Developer: WaterField Designs[8]
Price: $9

Admittedly, I'm not in the market for this type of case. Yet, for someone who simply wants a slip sleeve, this one fits the bill. Its size is perfect. An iPhone easily slides in and out with hardly any effort, yet the sleeve is just snug enough to keep the phone from jostling around inside.

The iPhone Suede Jacket Case. WaterField offers similar cases sized for various iPods.

It may not be something I would use. But it is what it is, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with it. For comparison, consider Apple's iPod Sock. You might think it, too, is what it is, but I skim points off the iPod Sock just accounting for the "good grief" factor. WaterField's Suede Jacket Case has no "good grief" factor.

—*Lee Bennett*

[8] `http://www.sfbags.com/products/ipodsuedejacket/ipodsuedejacket.htm`

iPhone Travel Case

Developer: WaterField Designs[9]
Price: $35 (small); $37 (medium); $39 (large)

WaterField's iPhone Travel Cases are somewhat of the odd man out in this case round-up. They're all identified by WaterField as iPhone/iPod Travel Cases and would actually make splendid containers for most any small collection of electronic gadgets you'd want to tote with you.

The insides are lined with a soft material that won't scratch the contents of the case. All three sizes have various dividers. To me, this has less to do with organization and more to do with preventing the metal earbud jack or the power adapter from banging against the iPhone's screen. The large Travel Case, in addition to the inside dividers, has a zipper pocket on the exterior, also with divided pockets inside.

The small Travel Case holding an iPhone and USB sync cable. There is a third compartment divided into two half-size pockets, and I initially thought I could put the iPhone's power adapter in, but it felt a bit too tight a squeeze. Earbuds, on the other hand, would slip in nicely.

[9] http://www.sfbags.com/products/iphonetravelcase/iphonetravelcase.htm

The medium Travel Case easily accommodates my iPhone, USB cable, power adapter, and my iPod. The small Travel Case is above, for size comparison.

The large Travel Case (with small and medium cases above for size comparison) happily accepted the contents listed for the medium case in the photo above, plus my Garmin handheld GPS and the iPhone dock. A few additional small cables or tiny gadgets would likely have no problem living inside as well.

Two specific reasons kept me from rating these cases as Excellent. First, the price distribution seems a smidgen too tight. The small case is well-suited for someone who wants to pack extremely light, but $35 doesn't quite feel like a good value when just $4 more buys a much roomier, yet still relatively compact case. Consequently, I feel the large case is the best value for the money and, if it weren't for that

second reason, the large case alone might have rated Excellent.

The large Travel Case is not the type of thing I'd want to carry around as-is. It either needs some sort of handle grip, or just plan on using it to keep your gadgets in one place while the entire case rides in something bigger.

The second reason is the lack of a handle or usable grip on all three cases. Each has a very small loop of material that could be used to attach the case to something the loop can clip on, and the small case is small enough that you might simply carry it in your hand anyway. But the large case is just large enough to be a little cumbersome to carry as-is. All three are best-suited to pack your gadgets within, and then pack the case into whatever larger tote you might be using. If that's the type of case you've sought, the Travel Case will do well for you. The large case would perhaps benefit well by replacing the loop with a strap of the same material, running from one top corner to the other, providing something to grip and carry with your hand.

—*Lee Bennett*

Revo

Developer: iSkin[10]
Price: $40

Like the Jam Jacket, the iSkin Revo also encases your iPhone in a tight silicone sleeve and grips well in your hand. Also like the Jam Jacket, however, the ring silencer switch is a bit tricky to access while the iPhone is in the case. I also found it a little difficult to keep the flap covering the headphone jack open while trying to insert a cord.

The iSkin Revo with included plastic screen cover and silicone dock connector cover.

The Revo does not include any means to carry your earbuds, but it does include a clear plastic cover that fits over the case. In spite of my fears that the cover would fall off regularly, it actually doesn't. It grips the sides of the case rather well. The back of the Revo is slotted so you have a place to put the cover while using the phone. Though the cover does register a blip on my arbitrary "how quickly can I get it off to answer a call" scale, it's only a blip.

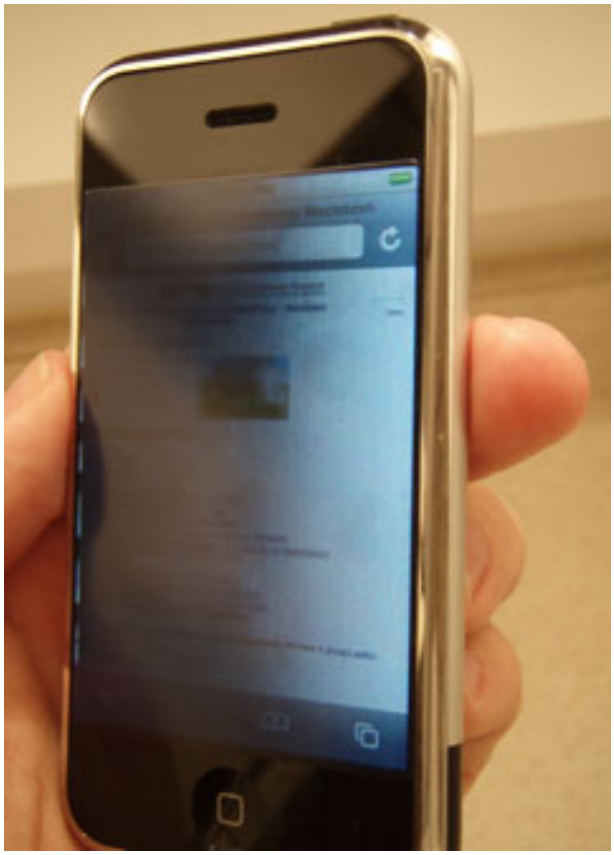
The Revo's recessed access to the ring silencer makes switching it on and off a bit difficult.

[10] `http://www.iskin.com/revo/`

Also included is a small piece made from the same silicone material intended to press into the dock connector port on the bottom of the iPhone. Its purpose, I presume, is to keep dirt out of the port when not in use. Unlike the plastic screen cover, this piece *has* fallen out on me more than once. It's small, so when it's not attached, it's a prime candidate for getting lost. Indeed, I did lose track of it for a time, but found it on the floor behind the night stand from which it fell.

The plastic screen cover and tiny dock connector cover removed.

The final component that ships with the Revo is a privacy film that clings to your iPhone screen.

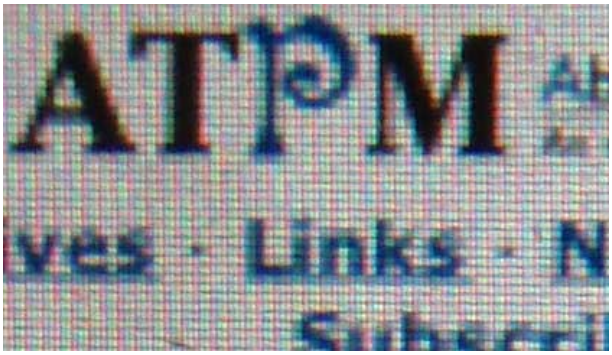


Interestingly, even though the privacy film did completely black out the screen at an angle, a photograph from the same angle is still able to make out a general idea of what is being displayed.

If this thing was an integral component of the Revo, I would not have given it a Very Nice rating. I hated the privacy film and was quite relieved that it easily came off without leaving any residue on the screen. For starters, you practically have to apply the film in a sterile environment and ensure your iPhone screen is equally sterile. Even the tiniest piece of dust or lint on the screen will cause an air pocket to form underneath the film. Since the film is slightly sticky, once the lint is on the film, you're not likely to be able to get it off.

The reason my privacy film produced this many air pockets is because I failed to properly read the instructions and peeled off the sticky side's shipping protector first. Plus, it dropped to my sofa before I had the chance to position it. So, your results probably won't be this bad, yet it's still fairly obvious that just one small piece of lint will produce one very distracting bubble.

Even if you do manage to affix the film smoothly, the nature of the film that produces the privacy also creates a grid of lines that dramatically reduces clarity in the iPhone screen. Suffice to say, even though I like the Revo itself, the privacy film will never touch my iPhone again.



Close-up of the iPhone screen with the privacy film attached.

—*Lee Bennett*

Reviewing in ATPM *is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.*

Accessory Review

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Luna

Developer: XtremeMac[1]
Price: $150
Requirements: Compatible with 4G iPod and later, 1G iPod nano and later, iPod mini. *Not compatible with iPhone.*
Trial: None

My previous alarm clock radio was more than 20 years old. The cassette player was on its last leg. I'd long since lost the detachable speakers, which sounded a far cry better than the internal speakers. There was no CD player in it and no auxiliary input for my iPod. If the alarm was set for 7:30 and I wanted to change it to 7:00, I had to go all the way around, 23 1/2 hours. But probably the worst thing about it was that it had absolutely no battery backup. I live in Florida, where we endure thunderstorm-induced power blinks on a regular basis. Since I had no intention of spending $30 or more on a battery backup outlet for a clock radio alarm that cost less than that, I frequently found myself using the alarm function on my phone on mornings when I couldn't afford to miss the alarm.

My 20-year-old alarm clock radio, collecting dust.

Needless to say, I was quite ready for a new alarm clock.

[1] http://www.xtrememac.com/audio/speakers/luna/index.php

At this writing, I've seen three different alarm clock radio units that have iPod attachments. Sony makes one I would love to try out, but I'm not sure I'll have the chance. iHome Audio also makes several models, one of which I believe I'll soon have in my possession and can eventually review.

Then, there's the XtremeMac Luna. Before I even received the review unit, I could tell from photos of all three companies' models that I liked the looks of this one the best. It is beautifully stylish, and XtremeMac has come up with a color scheme that makes it work well with either black, white, or silver iPods.

The Luna's black/white/chrome colors nicely complement black, white, and silver iPods.

The Luna also sounds wonderful. OK, it's no Bose Wave Radio, but it's also no "Naga-saka-knock-off" with speakers worth less than the spare change in your pocket. The sound quality is the primary reason I wish I could try out Sony's version, but I'm very content with the Luna's sound quality.

The four chrome protrusions on the top of the Luna are actually the controls. While the Luna looks beautiful and clean as-is, you're probably going to want to leave the included control description overlay on top the first few weeks until you memorize the functions of each knob/button.

The included cheat sheet helps get through the learning curve of the Luna's controls.

You've noticed in the pictures that I've set the remote control next to the Luna. If you think about it, whenever you are near the radio, chances are good that the ambient lighting will be low or almost nonexistent. Unfortunately, the remote does not have any kind of internal lighting or glow properties. The membrane-style buttons and their arrangement do not make it simple to just feel your way around the remote. Consequently, I've found that, as an alarm clock radio next to my bed, the remote is largely useless to me. If I were using the Luna as a shelf radio in an office, the remote would be of much greater use.

The Luna remote control provides easier access to some of the unit's functions than by using the control knobs, but probably only useful if there is enough light to see the remote.

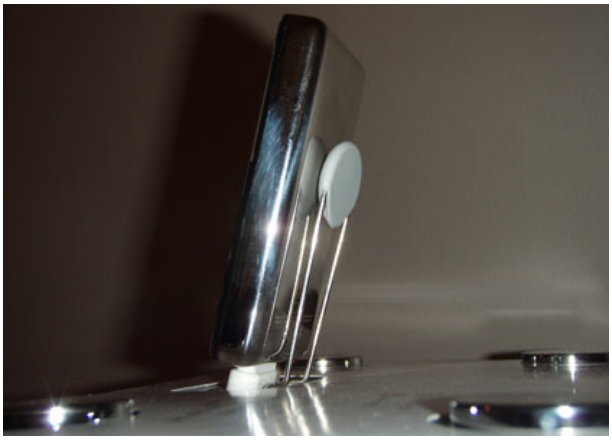
The Luna accepts most any iPod with a dock connector on the bottom. While XtremeMac doesn't indicate that it is compatible with 3G iPods, I'm not exactly sure why it wouldn't be. I had wanted to test this and I tried attaching my 3G iPod. Nothing happened, but the Luna may not have been to blame. My 3G iPod's battery may very well be completely dead, as I couldn't awaken it even by attaching power with its original cable and performing various reset procedures.

One possible future "gotcha" about the dock connection is that the Luna does not include any of the plastic adapters to make various iPod models fit securely in the dock. If you have adapters that came with an Apple Universal Dock or any other device, you may want to use them. I did not purchase a dock with my 5G iPod, so I do not have the adapters.

Without the adapters used with iPod docks, the 5G iPod's weight is completely supported by the possibly fragile dock pin connector.

I may not have had an iPod dock or the plastic adapters, but I do still have the SendStation Dock Extender[2] which I prefer to use.

[2] http://www.atpm.com/13.05/dock-extender.shtml



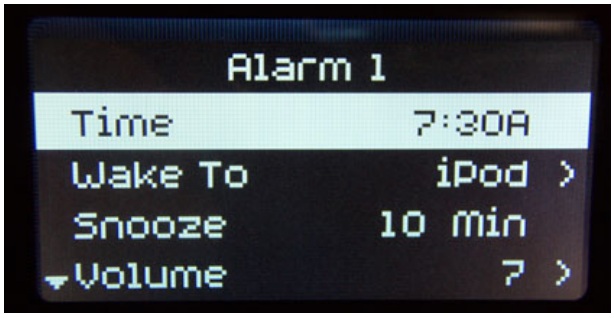
Using the SendStation Dock Extender with the XtremeMac Luna.

The above "gotchas" are the complete list of reasons I couldn't give the Luna an Excellent rating. The fact that I still marked it only one notch down to Very Nice should be sufficient recommendation that I consider those issues extremely minor and am still very impressed with the Luna.

While the Luna's aesthetics impressed me, the technical feature I most enjoy is the extensive amount of configuration available via the menus. Some people may wonder why they'd ever want such intricate control, but I love having such control. The Luna provides settings to adjust the display's contrast and backlighting to a specific amount, and can even invert the display, swapping light and dark pixels.

Adjusting the Luna's display.

There are two independent alarms in the Luna. Both have a large number of options that can be customized. Besides choosing whether to awaken to your iPod, the radio, one of several alarm tones, or the auxiliary audio input, you can program exactly how many minutes you want the snooze function to last, the volume at which to sound the alarm, what speed to gradually ramp up to the specified alarm volume, and how much to brighten or dim the display when the alarm sounds. The alarm setup even includes a preview to test how your settings will sound without having to set the alarm to go off a minute or two later.



There are plenty of options to set up exactly how you would like to be awakened.

I'll share a brief experience about the Luna's snooze function. I've been accustomed to units where, if you keep hitting the snooze, it will eventually give up and deactivate the alarm. My previous, 20-year-old unit did so after 45 minutes. I had what was probably a horrible practice of setting my alarm 45 minutes earlier than I really needed, and then hitting the nine-minute snooze 4–5 times. I guess being repeatedly awakened helps me be able to actually get up when the real time arrives that I need to be up.

The Luna, however, works a little differently. During a vacation, I intentionally used the Luna's snooze repeatedly, set for 10-minute intervals, and it was still functioning after seven rounds. It seems as though the Luna will allow you to use the snooze function indefinitely. When the snooze is left alone, iPod playback was still going after an hour. On the other hand, during another test where I used the

radio instead of my iPod, the radio did shut off about an hour after the last snooze cycle.

Either way, for me, the Luna is definitely a winner, thanks to its stylish design and extensive setup controls. It's found a comfortable home on my nightstand now that it has permanently kicked out the clunky piece of 80s technology that formerly occupied the space!

Copyright © 2007 Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM *is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.*

Software Review

by Ed Eubanks, Jr.

Nisus Writer Pro 1.0.1

Developer: Nisus Software[1]
Price: $89 (CD-ROM); $79 (download); upgrade, family pack, and other options[2] are available.
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9; 10.4 required for full right-to-left text support. Universal[3].
Trial: Feature-limited (prints watermark on last page; after 15 days, cannot save documents and watermark appears on all printed pages)

I have a confession to make: my word-processing needs are not that exciting. I have long thought that Microsoft Word's features, though impressive, were so much more than I would ever need that it was silly to continue paying for it. To come completely clean, most of my writing is done in DEVONthink Pro, where the text engine is essentially the same one provided with Apple's TextEdit. When I need more, I tend to use a tool more specialized in its function, which accomplishes what I need done. In fact, the introduction of Track Changes in the latest version of Pages removed the last criterion that justified keeping Microsoft Word installed; I simply don't need it anymore. I suspect that many Mac users are like me, in theory if not in practice.

Nevertheless, as a "it meets all of my word-processing needs in one application" product, Word has been the front runner for years. While others have tried, no other word-processing application has come close—yet—to offering Microsoft a run for its money in this category. Until now: Nisus Writer Pro (NWP), the latest word processor in the Nisus Writer family, may be the closest thing to the alternative to Microsoft Word as the word-processing application for everyone.

Following Up

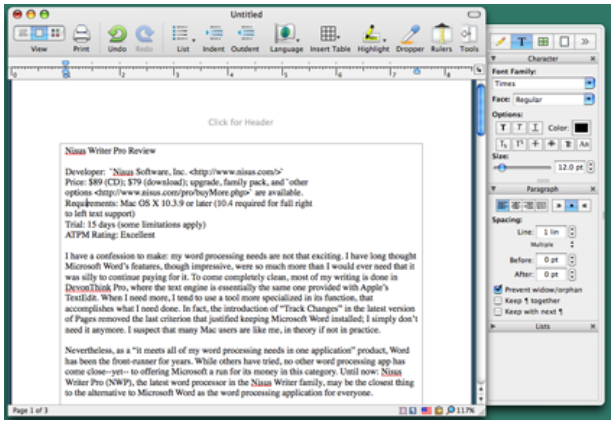
Since ATPM's last review[4] of NWP's sister application, Nisus Writer Express (NWX), a new version of that application has also been released. While I didn't look too closely at NWX for this review, it is worth noting that the 3.0 release of NWX followed the release of NWP and benefits from many of the same improvements.

I won't recap the wonderful work that Watts Martin did on the NWX 2 review, but will assume that readers are familiar with that very thorough review. For the record, it was in reading Martin's review that I realized how truly simple my word-processing needs are: Martin demonstrated in that review familiarity, even intimacy, with features that never occurred to me were useful in a word processor.

Basic Needs

But maybe a review from the perspective of a usually simple, occasionally more complex user is the one that will help the most users. If so, this review is for you.

NWP easily meets all the basic needs for word processing. My list of basic needs includes text formatting, styles, lists, and footnotes/endnotes. All are easily accessible in NWP, through both menus and a great tool drawer (still customizable, as Watts described back in NWX 2.x). And all offer more than just the bare-bones options, instead providing all of the choices any Microsoft Word user might expect (and maybe a few he hasn't seen).



Of course, NWP offers more than this, and the basics in NWP are numerous. Tables, numbering, in-

[1] http://www.nisus.com/pro/
[2] http://www.nisus.com/pro/buyMore.php
[3] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[4] http://www.atpm.com/10.11/nisus.shtml

dention control, table of contents, indexing, and extensive styles and formatting combine into a veritable battery of features. In fact, I can't think of a design element or option I've ever seen in Word or any other straight word processor that isn't in NWP. Yet the interface isn't cluttered, the menus are clean and easily navigable, and the drawer is a neatly organized tool.

Power Tools

As with NWX, NWP includes a number of features that are impressive and even surprising. The built-in thesaurus is fast, powerful, and easy to use while writing: one of the tabs in the drawer houses the thesaurus interface, and lingering on a word brings up suggested alternatives. Simply selecting Use applies the chosen synonym in place of the original.

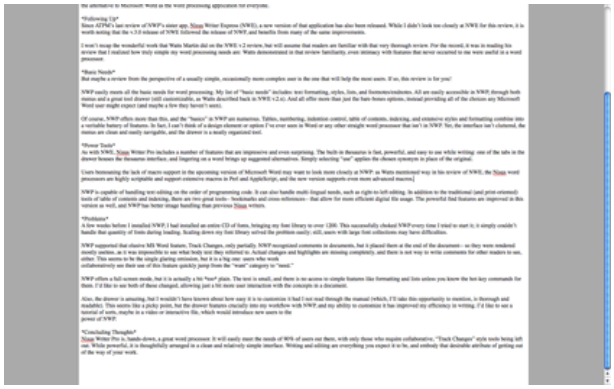
Users bemoaning the lack of macro support in the upcoming version of Microsoft Word may want to look more closely at NWP. As Martin mentioned way in his review of NWX, the Nisus word processors are highly scriptable and support extensive macros in Perl and AppleScript, and the new version supports even more advanced macros. Those of us who don't write our own macros will appreciate the many macros that come with NWP and will find great help at Nisus's forum page for Nisus Writer Pro Macros[5].

NWP is capable of handling text editing on the order of programming code. It can also handle multilingual needs, such as right-to-left editing. It supports multiple clipboards and allows you to customize hot keys for every menu command if you wish. In addition to the traditional (and print-oriented) tools of table of contents and indexing, there are two great tools—bookmarks and cross-references—that allow for more efficient digital file usage. The powerful find features are improved in this version as well, and NWP has better image handling than previous Nisus writers.

Problems

A few weeks before I installed NWP, I had installed an entire CD of fonts, bringing my font library to more than 1,200. This successfully choked NWP every time I tried to start it; it simply couldn't handle that number of fonts during loading. Scaling down my font library solved the problem easily; still, users with large font collections may have difficulties.

NWP supports that elusive MS Word feature Track Changes only partially. NWP recognized comments in documents, but it placed them at the end of the document—so they were rendered mostly useless, as it was impossible to see what body text they referred to. Actual changes and highlights are missing completely, and there is not a way to write comments for other readers to see, either. This seems to be the single glaring omission, but it is a big one: users who work collaboratively see their use of this feature quickly jump from "want" to "need."



NWP offers a full-screen mode, but it is actually a bit *too* plain. The text is small, and there is no access to simple features such as formatting and lists unless you know the hot-key commands for them. I'd like to see both of these changed, allowing just a bit more user interaction with the concepts in a document.

Also, the drawer is amazing, but I wouldn't have known about how easy it is to customize it had I not read through the manual (which, I'll take this

[5] `http://www.nisus.com/forum/viewforum.php?f=17`

opportunity to mention, is thorough and readable). This seems like a picky point, but the drawer features crucially into my workflow with NWP, and my ability to customize it has improved my efficiency in writing. I'd like to see a tutorial of sorts, maybe in a video or interactive file, which would introduce new users to the power of NWP.

Concluding Thoughts

Nisus Writer Pro is, hands down, a great word processor. It will easily meet the needs of 90 percent of users out there, with only those who require collaborative Track Changes-style tools being left out. While powerful, it is thoughtfully arranged in a clean and relatively simple interface. Writing and editing are everything you expect them to be and embody that desirable attribute of getting out of the way of your work.

Copyright © 2007 Ed Eubanks, Jr. Reviewing in ATPM *is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.*

Software Review

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

SuperSync 1.8.2

Developer: SuperSync[1]
Price: $29 (2 copies); $55 (5 copies); $79 (10 copies).
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (Remote library limited to 250 tracks, no music player, can only sync between 2 demo copies)

When you get to the point where you want to access your music library from multiple locations, you've got many options. iTunes' sharing feature works well as long as all your computers are on the same local network. At the other end of of the spectrum, you can simply copy your music between computers. While this seems simple at first, such a solution becomes more difficult to manage over time, particularly if you add new tracks to multiple computers. A number of different solutions lie in the space between these two extremes, including SuperSync. SuperSync is a software-based solution to this problem that attempts to merge libraries across multiple computers.

Sync Solutions

SuperSync is built around the idea of libraries—each source of music is a different library. At any time, SuperSync can access both a local and a remote library. Since system and network configurations can lead to different synchronization needs, SuperSync supports several different library sources. For the local library, which acts as your main library, you can either sync with your iTunes library, import from any storage device, or create a new library on a hard drive. With the remote library, you can either connect to another copy of SuperSync, sync with a generic storage device, import from an iPod, or read from another iTunes Music Library.

If you're already using iTunes on all your computers, then the configuration you'll most likely use is a combination of syncing your local library with iTunes and using another copy of SuperSync as your remote library. Like iTunes, SuperSync can act as both a music client and as a music server (in fact, your SuperSync server will appear in iTunes as a shared source). In this scenario, the instance of SuperSync hosting the local library is running as a client system and the instance of SuperSync hosting the remote library is running as a server. Unlike iTunes, however, the client and the server can communicate via the Internet—SuperSync is not limited to only accessing the local network.

From what I've seen, this configuration has two main advantages. First, as the name implies, SuperSync makes sure that your iTunes library is kept in sync with any changes made to the local library. Second, this method seems to access larger remote libraries much faster than the other methods. I assume this is because the information about the remote library is just passed to the client as opposed to actually read from the remote library to find music files.

Although the iTunes sync—SuperSync server model seems to be the easiest model to use, the other models have their uses. Using a generic storage device as a library allows you to manage music collections outside of iTunes. For instance, you could either populate or download music from a network-shared drive.

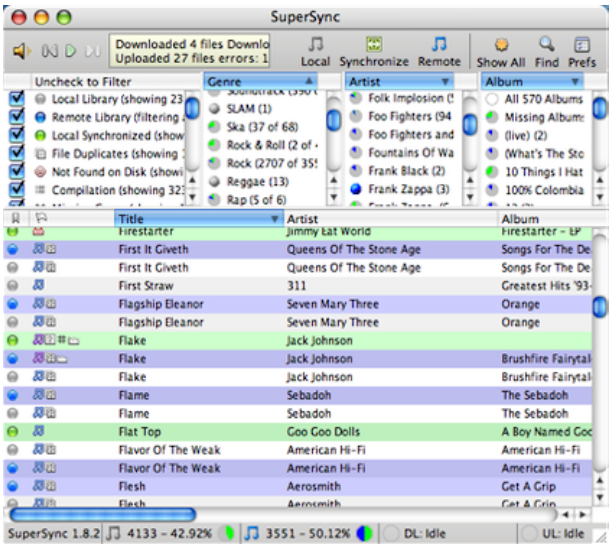
I've actually found that using an iPod as a remote library doesn't work as well as you would hope. Unlike dedicated tools for getting music off of iPods, SuperSync does not appear to read the iPod database. Instead, the application appears to just scan your iPod for any and all media files. In addition to taking longer than just reading the database, this process finds *all* the media files on your iPod, including things like MP3s included with games. If you actually want to extract these resources, then SuperSync gives you this ability, but I assume that most people are more interested in things like songs and podcasts, as opposed to the soundtrack to Cubis 2.

Confusing Interface

It took me a long time to "get" SuperSync. It looks similar enough to iTunes browsing interface that I expected it to work like iTunes. The bulk of my confusion, and of SuperSync's power, came from its built-in

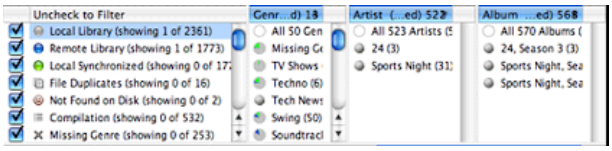
[1] http://www.supersync.com
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/

filters. SuperSync allows you to filter your collection by a number of different criteria. These include location, sync status, metadata, duplicate files, album status, and several others. At first, I thought these were analogous to iTunes' Smart Playlists. As such, I couldn't figure out why the application wasn't behaving the way I expected.



SuperSync features an iTunes-like interface for managing your music.

As it turns out, a better analogy for SuperSync's filters would be iTunes' Libraries. Whenever you use a filter, the Genre, Artist, and Album lists only show values present in the selected filter. The other confusing aspect was the checkbox to the left of each filter. Eventually, I realized that unchecking a filter would prevent the filtered tracks from displaying. Even though SuperSync doesn't allow you to create custom filters, you can use the combination of unchecking filters while viewing another filter to mirror some of this functionality.



SuperSync includes a number of filters you can use to limit which tracks get synchronized.

Filter selection is not preserved across application launches, however, so you will need to reset any filters if you prefer to have SuperSync configured in one particular way.

At some points, the user interface feels a bit slow to update. The main place I see this is waiting for new tracks to appear after a transfer completes. At first, I thought I needed to rescan my library to get the tracks to appear—I didn't realize the tracks were appearing until one time when I walked away from the computer before rescanning the library. Along these same lines, the track list doesn't appear to update dynamically if the contents should change. I don't recall seeing tracks appear in the any of the filtered lists (for instance, the New Uploads filter) until after switching to a different filter and then switching back to the original filter. Of course, this could be due to a combination of the previous issue and my impatience.

If you've spent enough time on a Mac prior to using SuperSync, you might get the feeling from the application that things are just a bit off. It looks like SuperSync is a Java application, which results in several instance of un-Mac-like behavior in the user interface. The issue that bit me most often was the inability to select anything from the track list or browsing interface via the keyboard. Other similar issues included some window resizing problems and an inability to dismiss certain windows via Command-W. I don't consider any of these deal breakers, but they definitely take away from the experience of using SuperSync.

The Syncing Experience

The syncing experience within SuperSync is based around a track's classification based on its location and current sync status. Tracks are coded as being in the local or remote library and whether or not the track is synchronized. You can quickly tell a file's status by SuperSync's convenient color-coding.

When you encounter an unsynchronized track, selecting the synchronize option will either upload or download the track, as is appropriate. If you prefer, you can limit SuperSync to only allowing uploading or downloading and, if you are running SuperSync as a server, you can require separate passwords for both browsing/downloading and uploading. Once SuperSync recognizes that a track is synchronized between the two systems, you can no longer transfer the file. This should prevent you from generating duplicate files on any of your systems.

That said, the logic for determining whether or not a track has been synced seems to be less than reliable. Before using SuperSync, I tried several different methods for keeping my music collections in sync before I gave up and decided that my Power-

Book would be my main music system. However, I still have a large number of tracks on both computers. When SuperSync compared the libraries of the two systems, it correctly identified about half of these tracks as being present on both systems. Unfortunately, SuperSync considers the remaining track unsynchronized. Using SuperSync's duplicate checking feature, I'm able to see all of these "misses." It appears that a few bytes are different between the pairs of unsynchronized files. I'm not sure where this difference has come from. It could be something related to my previous attempts at library synchronization. It could be related to difference in file tags and metadata, though nothing has jumped out at me. It could be some other random issue that I'm missing. Whatever the case, there doesn't appear to be any way to tell SuperSync that files should be considered synced. As far as I can tell, the only solution is to delete the file on one computer and synchronize it using SuperSync.

When syncing audio files with SuperSync, though, the application appears to keep better track of synchronization status. I haven't been using the application long enough to make any kind of judgement about the long-term viability of the synchronization status. Without assurances that the synchronization status will stay accurate, it's difficult to recommend blindly syncing any tracks that SuperSync says are unsynchronized.

Videos appear not to sync as reliably, however. When I downloaded a video podcast from the server, SuperSync had difficulty locating the file once it was imported into iTunes. Even after I sorted out this issue, SuperSync did not identify the files as being synchronized. On the one hand, SuperSync bills itself as a "music library synchronization" tool, so I'm hesitant to complain about issue with syncing video. On the other hand, SuperSync allows the syncing of videos, so I really feel that it should work properly. If you'd prefer to just ignore videos, however, you can choose to filter them.

Synchronization of SuperSync and iTunes in some ways exceeds my expectations while in some ways falls short. The main way the process exceeded my expectations is that podcasts are properly classified. I half-expected synced podcasts to get dumped into the Music section of the Library within iTunes. Instead, the podcasts appeared within the Podcasts section, fitting into existing podcast listings or creating new podcast listings as necessary. The shortfall in the process is that it does not mirror the process of syncing iTunes with an iPod—metadata like play count and ratings are not preserved.

Conclusion

As far as file synchronization goes, SuperSync is one of the more interesting tools that I've used. It's a better fit for my needs than iTunes sharing support because I actually get a copies of my music on multiple computers. On the other end of the spectrum, it's less painful to manage my collections from within SuperSync than it would be to manage them by hand. Unlike most synchronization tools I've looked at, SuperSync is cross-platform.

As I said earlier, though, there are aspects of the application which take away from the overall experience. Additionally, there is my concern about the long-term viability of the synchronized status between tracks. This may or may not be an actual issue, but the perception cuts into one of SuperSync's main features, the ability to quickly synchronize your various music libraries.

Copyright © 2007 Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is *ATPM*?

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

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

ATPM is looking to add more regular reviewers to our staff. Though all positions with *About This Particular Macintosh* are volunteer, reviewing is a great way to share your product knowledge and experience with fellow members of the Macintosh community. If you're interested, contact ATPM's Reviews Editor, Paul Fatula[1].

How Can I Subscribe to *ATPM*?

Visit the subscriptions page[2].

Which Format Is Best for Me?

- The **Online Webzine** edition is for people who want to view ATPM in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to ATPM back issues and other Web pages.
- The **Offline Webzine** is an HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a Mac OS X disk image. The graphics, content, and navigation elements are the same as with the Online Webzine, but you can view it without being connected to the Internet. It requires a Web browser.
- The **Print PDF** edition is saved in Adobe PDF format. It has a two-column layout with smaller text and higher-resolution graphics that are optimized for printing. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Apple's Preview or Adobe Reader on Macintosh or Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.
- The **Screen PDF** edition is also saved in Adobe PDF format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen.

[1] mailto:reviews@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/subscribe

How Can I Submit Cover Art?

We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for ATPM, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to editor@atpm.com for more information.

How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

Got a comment about an article that you read in ATPM? Is there something you'd like us to write about in a future issue? We'd love to hear from you. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. We often publish the e-mail that comes our way.

Do You Answer Technical Support Questions?

Of course (although we cannot promise to answer every inquiry). E-mail our Help Department at help@atpm.com.

How Can I Contribute to *ATPM*?

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

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

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

Segments contributors have gone on to become ATPM columnists. Send your stuff to editor@atpm.com.

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Technojargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how strongly we recommend it. Please contact our reviews editor[3], before you begin writing, if you have a piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index[4] for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

ATPM uses the following ratings (in order from best to worst): Excellent, Very Nice, Good, Okay, Rotten. Products rated Good or better are ones that we recommend. Okay products get the job done. We recommend avoiding Rotten products.

Will You Review My Product?

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

Where Can I Find Back Issues of *ATPM*?

Back issues[5] of ATPM, dating since April 1995, are available in DOCMaker stand-alone format and as PDF. In addition, all issues since ATPM 2.05 (May 1996) are available in HTML format.

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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

[3] mailto:reviews@atpm.com
[4] http://www.atpm.com/reviews/
[5] http://www.atpm.com/Back/