ATPM

13.12 / December 2007 Volume 13, Number 12

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

Cover Art

Copyright © 2007 Catherine von Dennefeld[1]. We need new cover art each month. Write[2] to us!

The ATPM Staff

Publisher/Editor	Michael Tsai[3]
Managing Editor	Christopher Turner[4]
Reviews Editor	Paul Fatula[5]
Web Editor	Lee Bennett[6]
Copy Editors	Chris Lawson[7]
	Linus Ly[8]
	Ellyn Ritterskamp[9]
	Brooke Smith
	Vacant
Webmaster	Michael Tsai[10]
Beta Testers	The Staff[11]
Contributing Editors	Eric Blair[12]
	Mike Chamberlain[13]
	Chris Dudar[14]
	Ed Eubanks, Jr.
	Matthew Glidden[15]
	Ted Goranson[16]
	Andrew Kator[17]
	Robert Paul Leitao[18]
	Wes Meltzer[19]
	Sylvester Roque[20]
	Charles Ross[21]
	Mark Tennent[22]
	David B. Thompson[23]

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

	Evan Trent[24]
	Vacant

Artwork & Design

Layout and Design	Michael Tsai[25]
Web Design	Simon Griffee[26]
Cartoonist	Matt Johnson[27]
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, Mike Chamberlain, Richard W. Dillman, Ed Eubanks, Jr., Matthew Glidden, Matt Johnson, Chris Lawson, Robert Paul Leitao, Linus Ly, Wes Meltzer, Mark Tennent, Angus Wong, *Macintosh users like you.*

Subscriptions

Sign up for **free** subscriptions using the Web form[28].

Where to Find ATPM

Online and downloadable issues are available at the ATPM Web Site[29]. 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.

[24] http://www.symphonysound.com
[25] http://mjtsai.com
[26] http://hypertexthero.com
[27] http://www.cornstalker.com
[28] http://www.atpm.com/subscribe/
[29] 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 December issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We wish you a happy holiday season and memorable moments with family and friends. May the season of lights pierce the late autumn darkness, and may the joy of the holidays bring you peace and gladness.

There and Back Again!

November served up a thrill ride for Apple investors. The first week of November saw AAPL reach all-time highs only to plummet about forty points by the end of the second week of the month. Ending November trading at $182.22, the stock price is now close to where it began the month. The folks at Six Flags couldn't have developed a more extreme experience for Apple thrill seekers but should consider the month's price chart as a model for their next roller-coaster design. Some rather white-knuckled investors were happy to see this high-speed ride come to an end.

It's Not Burnt. . . . It's Crispy!

This might be the best way to describe the approach of Dell's management to explain the PC maker's most recent quarterly results and market position. Dell is continuing to lose market share to PC rivals HP and Apple and has changed its sales strategy to embrace sales through high-volume discount retailers.

Growing at a turtle's pace compared to the global PC industry in general, Dell's profit margin on PC sales has slimmed, and Wall Street was decidedly unhappy with the results. While there seems to be a bit of smoke surrounding Dell's results, the company's products don't seem to be setting the world on fire.

Aren't You Orange. . .?

That's the start of the tag line for one of the world's most often told knock-knock jokes.

Orange is also name of Apple's iPhone service partner in France. No joke intended, early reports indicate the French are "going bananas" for the iPhone, while Apple's exclusive carrier arrangements are driving some EU regulators nuts. Apple's monthly revenue arrangements with its carriers are making the iPhone less of a profit center for its service partners and more of a market gain opportunity, as a high percentage of iPhone buyers are migrating from other carriers when they purchase and activate their new phones. Competitors don't like the sound of opportunity knocking only on Apple's door.

Christmas Shopping in America

Media reports indicate that Americans approached the annual Black Friday shopping event as if it were an Olympic-scale competitive sport. Rising before dawn to compete for pole positions at entrances to early-opening stores, Americans sprinted through the doors to grab heavily discounted items ahead of the competition.

Cyber Monday has apparently became a holiday sport for office chair potatoes, as Internet shopping activity a week ago set new records for visits to many retail sites. Meanwhile, anecdotal reports indicate that Apple retail stores are experiencing record-setting foot traffic as eager consumers satisfy their curiosity about the Apple iPhone and the recently revamped iPod line of products.

Watch for record-setting iPod sales this season, with increasing demand for Apple products as we move closer to Christmas. Absent discounts and with no worries about supplies, the Apple stores will be among the last stops for consumers this holiday season. For yet another Christmas season, the iPod will top the lists of most desired and most received holiday gifts.

Bye, Bye Boot Camp Beta

Just in time for holiday shopping, Apple is advising users of Apple's Boot Camp beta that their license expires on December 31, 2007. While this previously announced deadline should come as no surprise, those who have enjoyed its use may be surprised at how quickly time has passed since its release. A commercial version of Boot Camp is incorporated into Leopard, the latest release of Mac OS X. To receive Boot Camp updates and support, Mac users desiring to run Windows on their Macs will need to upgrade to Leopard before year-end.

Home For the Holidays

No matter the cost of fuel or the threat of inclement weather, Americans will hit the road this season to

make it home for the holidays. Perhaps the most traveled time of the year, the familiar sights of home, the aroma of old-fashioned holiday meals, and the comfort of family and long-remembered holiday traditions draw people "home" from near and from far.

During your travels, bring along a copy of the latest issue of ATPM. It makes for easy reading in the moments between special moments.

Our December issue includes:

Bloggable: Would You Like a Cup of Coffee With That?

Mac OS X 10.5 was delivered a little under-roasted—a very light New England roast, perhaps, rather than the French roast some developers in California wanted. Oh, you mean that's "Java" with a capital "J"? And they're annoyed because they wanted the new version of the Java runtime to ship with Leopard? Wes Meltzer's going to have to put a little more Kindling and links on the fire to keep warm while he rewrites this month's *Bloggable*.

Mac About Town: Visions of Sugar Plums

Sometimes its hard to know what to wish for for Christmas—or for Macworld Expo for that matter. Mike Chamberlain ruminates about his list as he prepares to settle down for a "long winter's night.

MacMuser: And Here's Another Thing About Leopard

Mark Tennent theorizes that FireWire support has been improved in Leopard, then notes that auto-maintenance scripts are now stored as plain text files and are easy to tweak.

MacMuser: Wonky Web Sites

"How come if I go to a Web site and it doesn't work in my browser when millions of others sites do, it's my fault for the failure?"

Next Actions: What Leopard Means For Getting Things Done

Ed Eubanks, Jr. looks at Leopard's updated applications and what they mean for Getting Things Done.

Apple Talk: "Think Different"

From Angus Wong's point of view, Windows Vista and Microsoft are already doing everything possible to ensure that Apple continues to be a resounding success.

Desktop Pictures: Artmatic

ATPM reader Richard W. Dillman shares his Artmatic creations for this month's desktop pictures.

Cartoon: Cortland

Is this the end for Cortland? He faces a massively upgraded Lisa in the Mudrix in the fight of his young, graphic-designing life.

Review: HyperImage 1.0

Find yourself clicking and saving pictures from a Web site over and over again? HyperImage bills itself as an industrial-strength downloader of Web images that saves both time and your mouse-click finger. This review covers how well the application fulfills that promise.

Review: Photoshop CS3 One-on-One

Deke McClelland's name has become synonymous with his splendid series of "One-on-One" training books for graphic design. The latest offering, covering Adobe Photoshop CS3, is no exception.

Review: Signal

With Signal, you can turn your iPhone or iPod touch into an über iTunes remote control.

Review: SmartCharge

A great idea for iPods that is fatally flawed in its execution.

Review: TuneView USB

Offering the same navigation functionality as its cousin[1], the TuneView USB provides direct access to your iTunes library instead of using an iPod.

Review: Videator 4.2.1

Feature-laden nonlinear video editor could use better text effects.

[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.03/tuneview.shtml

E-Mail

Nisus Writer Pro 1.0.1[1]

Nice review. You mention that some of the options are not easily accessible in full screen view and that the text is too small; however, if you move the mouse cursor to the top of the screen (while in full screen view) and wait for a second, the menu bar will pop up and you can make any changes you need, including a higher text zoom percentage. The bar will fade away as soon as you click anywhere in your document.

—*Byron*

• • •

Lovely review. Your conclusion is spot-on, that Nisus Writer Pro is the perfect word processor for those of us who need power in our text tools but don't want all the clutter and crap of Word's feature-bloat or even Pages' layout tools.

One thing this review neglected was the professional and classy support from the Nisus people. They are both personable and utterly helpful.

Nisus is a class act, and NWP deserves your accolades.

—*Ryan Miglavs*

> I appreciate your mentioning that. I haven't had occasion to contact support for NWP, but if your experience is the norm then I do offer them my accolades. Support is a key part of a good product, and you're right to mention it.
>
> —*Ed Eubanks Jr.*

• • •

I'm glad Nisus Writer lives on, but still need a few things it used to have (pre–OS X) but hasn't added back yet.

Can anyone tell me which apps do have comments that are somehow anchored to the text they refer to?

—*Cynthia Cheney*

> Pages (part of Apple's iWork) handles commenting and "tracking changes" admirably. I understand that the OpenOffice variants (both OpenOffice and NeoOffice) offer tracking of changes as well, but I don't have experience with them in that area. Apart from these, I don't know of any non-Microsoft products that support this. Perhaps another reader may suggest one, but if not I think Pages is the best alternative for this particular feature.
>
> —*Ed Eubanks Jr.*

A Leopard Can Always Change Its Spots[2]

I'm surprised you wrote so much about ZFS without even mentioning the basics about Leopard's support for it.

For those who are interested, ZFS support does ship with Leopard (type "man zfs" in the terminal if you're interested; all the command line tools are there, including "zpool," etc.), but you have to download the technology preview from Apple's Developer site to get write access or create ZFS volumes.

The documentation is currently unclear on the two things I'm most interested in: whether ZFS volumes can be used as Time Machine targets, and whether ZFS volumes can be root (early betas didn't support this, but I don't know what the final word is).

Make no mistake, ZFS is a big deal, if only for data integrity. With current hard drive densities, you get about 1 bit wrong for every 40GB you read. That may not sound like much, but the potential for rot is there. That's why I'm interested in investigating whether or not ZFS volumes can be used as Time Machine targets (even as sparse bundles on top of ZFS is fine with me). You don't get any feature benefits, but ZFS' volume scrubbing does increase data integrity in the real world, right now.

—*Alan Yeung*

Phone Junkie Says iPhone Clunky[3]

I commented here a few months ago that the monthly expense of being tied to an account with AT&T was cost prohibitive, and I see that point of view was not mine alone.

I opted for a new iPod touch instead, and although it has some limitations, it was the far better choice for my pocket. People like to own things outright, not be tied to a "vig" every month.

I can buy a cheap Motorola Razr phone unlocked on eBay, buy a prepaid SIM card, and make cheap

[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/nisus-writer-pro.shtml

[2] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/bloggable.shtml

[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/macmuser-iphone.shtml

calls all over the world without a dreaded monthly bill waiting for me in Denver.

But this is Apple, Inc., and I'm dying with curiosity to see what the next generation of iPhone will look like. Apple can only go up from here.

—*Grover Watson*

Graph Paper Maker 1.6.1[4]

Unless you need all of the features of Graph Paper Maker, may I suggest this site[5]. From the way I read what you needed the graph paper for, this would also meet your needs—and it's $20 cheaper.

—*Dennis VanWormer*

Coping With Mac OS X's Font Rendering[6]

The biggest problem with the Mac OS X font rendering system is not in fact the anti-aliasing, as you may believe, but rather the hinting. There is a mistaken belief that hinting is only needed for non-anti-aliased fonts.

This is very wrong. With hinting, most fonts need less anti-aliasing, making them crisper, and smoother. This is why people who have minor visual problems (such as the inability to focus on the black pixels, because of the near presence of the non-black pixels), have such a problem with OS X. For the majority of people it isn't a problem. Though they would notice the difference if shown a better implementation. Which is the reason Apple doesn't care—it is good enough for the majority of users.

As an example I have found that with the right settings on a modern GNOME system (such as Ubuntu), the clarity is far better than either non-anti-aliased OS 9 or the merely smoothed OS X. If Apple were to simply implement a proper font hinting and smoothing system, most of the complaints would go away.

—*Andrew*

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.*

[4] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/graph-paper-maker.shtml
[5] http://incompetech.com/graphpaper/multiwidth/
[6] http://www.atpm.com/12.01/paradigm.shtml

Bloggable

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

Would You Like a Cup of Coffee With That?

You can't go to a tech-related conference without wandering through a thicket of Apple portables of all different sizes and shapes: MacBooks, PowerBooks, iBooks, even the old black-and-white Wall Street PowerBooks occasionally. Just about every computer geek I know uses a Mac, which is amazing for those of us who remember being pariahs. And every time I turn around, someone new is replacing a PC with a Mac.

But some nasty invective about Java on OS X posed the question: is the honeymoon over for Apple?

At *Javalobby*, Michael Urban put the kindling in the fireplace with a post telling Apple to buzz off. The absence of version 6 of Java on Leopard is a mortal wound, Urban says, and Apple doesn't care about developers and is dragging its feet on Java because it's being distracted by other things. He's giving up Macs to prove the point:

> Apple has basically spit in our face[1]. Not only did Leopard not ship with Java 6, but Apple, in typical fashion, apparently thinks it has no obligation to its customers to inform them about why the plans changed, and when (or even if at this point?) Apple will ever have a working copy of Java 6. Apparently, Apple has even been just deleting threads in their forums where people are complaining that Java 6 doesn't exist, rather than actually respond to them and let them know if there is any kind of time line for Java 6. But wait... It gets worse...
>
> As most know by now, Apple has yanked the Java 6 developer previews. No sign or trace of them left on the ADC site. Apple gave no indication as to why it yanked them, if and when there would be new ones, etc. So effectively, we are currently left with Leopard having NO fully working version of Java available for it. You can't get Java 6, and Java 5 is so broken that parts of it are flat out unusable on Leopard. As a Java developer, this is a situation I obviously cannot live with.

Urban says that he's going to use his MacBook Pro as a dual-boot machine for the time being, spending most of his time in Windows. I'm not sure why anyone would volunteer for that kind of torture, but I guess you have to prove a point somehow, especially when you're slinging harsh words about the "unprecedented arrogance of Steve Jobs."

James Gosling has another idea for someone like Urban: just don't use a Mac at all. He says that he's been using Solaris on his laptop[2], a Sony VAIO, and he has a whole laundry list of benefits that it provides, like network auto-configuration and some of the cool ZFS features. (Apparently he didn't read last month's column[3], or he would know—Q.E.D.!—that HFS+ is vastly superior.) He notes, in a follow-up post, that he knows he's not really Apple's target demographic and is OK with that[4].

But before we get too far afield, some ask, is this Java 5 so broken in Leopard? Adrian Sutton doesn't think so[5], and isn't afraid to say it. He even calls it "a significant improvement" over the 10.4 implementation. That's pretty stiff.

Then there's the timing issue. John Gruber and Eric Burke both did a double-take at the assertion that Apple had been dragging their feet on Java 6 for Leopard. Burke looked up the history of Java on OS X and put together a nice little graphical time line showing the gap between the releases of Java, OS X, and OS X implementations of Java. His conclusion is that the 11-month gap he anticipates between the release of Leopard and the release of Java 6 is in character for[6] previous OS X releases. So far, it's been a month and I haven't seen Java 6 for Leopard, but I'm not in the Conspiracy Against Java Developers camp either.

[1] http://www.javalobby.org/java/forums/t102936.html

[2] http://blogs.sun.com/jag/entry/solaris_and_os_x

[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.11/bloggable.shtml

[4] http://blogs.sun.com/jag/entry/solaris_and_os_x_continued

[5] http://www.symphonious.net/2007/10/31/java-5-on-leopard/

[6] http://stuffthathappens.com/blog/2007/10/28/os-x-java-definitive-timeline/

But Gruber went straight for the jugular. He commented, in a link to Urban's first post, that the only people who would care about the absence of Java 6 on Leopard were Java developers, and in a very narrow sense that's true, since I can't think of a single major OS X application written in Java. This hit a nerve, so he posted a full-length follow-up:

> The only way to ship software is to prioritize, and prioritizing means dropping things that are less essential in exchange for things that are more essential. Obviously, for Apple, Java 6 is not a priority. And, judging by reports that even Java 5 support is worse on Leopard than it was on Tiger, Java as a whole is not a priority for Apple.
>
> But it's not like Apple is sitting on a top-notch Java-6-for-Mac-OS-X and withholding it out of spite. They simply decided to allocate engineering resources elsewhere. In the case of Java, I don't think it was even a close call. What should they have done? Delayed Leopard even further? Pulled engineering resources from something that did ship with Leopard for Java? Java simply isn't relevant to the Mac[7].
>
> Several irritated Java developers suggested that I'd feel differently if it were a developer runtime that I personally cared about—that I'd be irate if, say, Perl or Ruby or Python were dropped or degraded in Leopard. But that's not a good comparison; Perl, Python, and Ruby pretty much compile out of the box on Mac OS X. Apple doesn't have to do much at all—at least relative to Java—to include them on Mac OS X. Why? Because that's how these tools are designed and engineered—they're made to "just build" on any Unix-like OS. It's not Apple's responsibility that Java isn't like that—it's Sun's.

Now Gruber's schtick is often to find the polemic where I didn't think there was one, and insisting that Java is basically irrelevant to the Mac is surely ignoring plenty of Java-based enterprise software he's never had the misfortune of using. (I have, on the other hand, and I can safely say that if you think Java is bad on modern Mac hardware in OS X, imagine using it on a 600MHz Celeron in Windows XP. I was never so glad to have my work computer replaced.)

The compromise position belongs to Ted Leung. He writes that a lot of developers started to buy Macs, and push to be able to use them at work, based on the influence of Java developers, who had the luxury of switching before many tech people could. They're the ones who are being hung out to dry, Leung notes. One of the issues is that, although it's true that Java doesn't compile without any problems on OS X, the hang-up is when Java has to talk to the Mac parts (like Carbon) rather than the Unix back-end.

But the real meat of Leung's post is at the very end. He says Java's second-rate status has a lot to do with its licensing. The big improvements to Python and Ruby in Leopard, Leung writes, came from outside Apple, and that was made possible by open-source licensing. (The inference is that Apple has better things to care about.) But Java's not open source[8], and more to the point, most Java developers don't seem to care. If Java were an open-source product, he says, it might have brought Java 6 to Leopard already.

As Leung says, we'll have to wait and see. But Gruber's still right on one thing: if a Java release falls behind in the release-timeline forest and no one but enterprise users are around to hear it (and those enterprise users are still going to be using 10.4 or even 10.3 for another six to nine months), does it make a sound?

Throw Some of *That* on the Fire

Every so often, a non-Apple product strikes a nerve in this little corner of the blogworld. We Mac users may be the Shire, just a sliver of Middle-Earth—but J.R.R. Tolkien made Bilbo and Frodo Baggins' Shire very important for a reason, too.

Late in November, Amazon released its Kindle. It's an e-book reader using E Ink technology, which I'll explain in a moment, and which downloads books formatted specially for it (not PDFs, pointedly) using Sprint's EV-DO data network. The screen is about the size of a paperback novel, and the whole device close to an undersized hardcover book. Ama-

[7] http://daringfireball.net/2007/10/shipping_means_prioritizing

[8] http://www.sauria.com/blog/2007/10/30/leopard-java-and-open-source/

zon claims there are about 90,000 books available for purchase in their library, mostly back-catalogue items that publishing houses aren't marketing anymore.

The device is a little like Sony's Reader, in that the two devices share similar sizes and similar screens, but the Reader uses PDFs with digital rights management. And, of course, that limits the available number of books for sale to about 20,000. Life is worth living, and the Sony interface looks a lot more user-friendly, but I should disclaim that I have not used either device. It's also worth note that the Reader has to be synchronized with a computer, like an iPod, whereas the Kindle uses a cellular data connection to reach the outside world. (The iPod touch and iPhone can use WiFi to connect to the iTunes Store, but not cellular data.)

What first intrigued *me* about the Kindle was that it seemed like it could be what the Sony Reader ought to have been. E Ink, the leading (by which I mean only) commercial purveyor of so-called "electronic ink" displays, is the vendor of some astonishingly cool technology (which I've actually written about before[9]). The display uses completely passive technology, using very small bubbles filled with black and white toner chips with opposing electrical charges. Using the same principles as an LCD, the display driver applies a charge to specific bubbles, making them either white or black, and they stay that way until you flip them over again. The result is a high-resolution, high-contrast display that reads with a resolution approaching that of a consumer-grade laser printer and requires very little electricity and no backlighting.

But I could write a book about what could've been with the Kindle. Maybe someday, someone will make a device this revolutionary without the Kindle's limitations, or maybe the Kindle 2 will come along someday and fix its flaws.

Many of the choices that Amazon made in the technology behind the product are sound. EV-DO is a good choice for data connectivity; E Ink displays look astonishingly like paper (well, paper behind glass, but still); and harnessing the device to Amazon's good relationships with publishers is a no-brainer. They're the perfect vendors for this device. *BusinessWeek* thinks the Kindle will be the iPod of books[10].

But what everyone seems to be talking about, other than its clearly revolutionary potential[11] (*potential*), is its dreadful user interface. I alluded to that earlier, and it's painful to see a device that sounds so crippled by a couple of flaws. The device just doesn't look like a book; it looks like my dad's Tablet PC convertible laptop or an oversized Treo more than anything else. There are buttons everywhere, including a keyboard, and the device is white and does not match the grayish tint of the E Ink screen. (E Ink screens are about as white as paper towels, at 40%, about half the 80% of typical copier paper, much less the extra-extra-extra-extra white of inkjet paper.)

Now, I have not used the device, and I'd like to before I say anything too dramatic. But I'm not hearing anything positive about the usability of the Kindle, suffice it to say. Thibaut Sailly, who writes *Well...*, is a product designer who is pretty hard on[12] the Kindle's form factor and some of the hardware decisions that Amazon made. He strikes, again and again, the one important question about hardware design: what purpose does this serve? The Kindle looks vaguely like a book, but not very much; some elements are symmetrical and some are not; some of the buttons are duplicated; and there's a curious white strip separating the scroll indicator from the face of the book, reminiscent of that odd triangle of black plastic on the rear passenger windows of the Ford 500.

Craig Hunter, too, notices one particular interface foible that the Kindle suffers from. He's not sure it needs a physical keyboard at all, since its interface doesn't rely very heavily on a keyboard. If the Kindle wants to be the iPod of books, he says, it needs to take a cue from the iPhone[13]. He asks us to imagine a Kindle with no hardware buttons and a gesture-based interface. (I doubt that's possible with current E Ink technology, but perhaps someday.) What a device that would be!

I leave it to *TidBITS'* Glenn Fleishman to find the other big flaws the Kindle suffers from. He enumerates a few: no PDF support; limited Web browsing; and an unbelievably high price for a single-purpose device.

Not everyone thinks the Kindle's flaws are technological. Steven Poole wants his ideal device to *be* a book, for all intents and purposes[14], since his

[9] http://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/industry/1716862.html?page=4

[10] http://www.businessweek.com/investing/insights/blog/archives/2007/11/buy_amazon_-_ki.html

[11] http://www.macworld.com/news/2007/11/26/kindle/index.php?lsrc=mwrss

[12] http://well.thsy.org/2007/11/bookishness.html

[13] http://hunter.pairsite.com/blogs/blog20071121.html

[14] http://stevenpoole.net/blog/e-book-the-letter/

list of requirements includes certain stipulations only printed paper can meet. And *Cracked.com's* Daniel O'Brien puts the contrarian view best when he says, "You know what else feels like real paper and doesn't require cables or monthly bills? Fucking books.[15]"

If you want to know what I want to see from the Kindle 2, I want the hardware buttons limited to four: next page; previous page; menu; select. I want more than 4 shades of gray, because I know E Ink has 8 shades of grey working on the Sony Reader, and because I'm sure they're working on even higher-performance displays. I want higher resolution. And I want the device to look and feel like a book, which means it should be about the size of a trade paperback when closed, and have a 30mm physical bezel and a half-inch book "margins" built into the display, and PDF display supporting either embedded fonts or EPS outlines so the book designer is still in charge. After all, he or she knows better than a computer what makes a book easy to read, and the best books are set in typefaces that are both legible and match the book. And most important of all, as *Ars Technica's* Jon Stokes also noticed[16], the device should flip open, like a book, to show two side-by-side pages at a time, and, when closed, it should have the profile of a closed book, preferably with a little display on the front, showing the title of the current book, like a cell phone.

(An aside: Too many reviewers are hung up on the lack of typeface choices on the Kindle. It doesn't matter. If I ran a publishing house, pretty much every book would be typeset in either Hoefler & Frere-Jones' Mercury Text[17], which is about as readable a 9pt serif there ever were and which will stand up on virtually any kind of printing. What matters is the placement of text on the page, the right combination of leading and point size, the consideration of margins and justification and tracking to make the page melt away and the words pop. But computer users have substituted typeface changes for good type management for so long that even technology reviewers are confused.)

But if Amazon wants to send me a Kindle and see what I think, I'd be happy to offer my thoughts. Do you have one? Comment, or send me an e-mail at wmeltzer@atpm.com, and I'll make note of it for my next column.

Fire Starters

- Michael S. Kaplan, who apparently works for Microsoft, has a nice post on usability and Plug-and-Play keyboards. I've never tried to do this with Windows, since all of my Windows keyboards have been PS/2 models, but he has some neat screen-captures of how Windows and OS X deal with the problem of identifying unidentified keyboards[18]. I wouldn't want to try to do it the Windows way, and that's not just a personal preference.

- Bryan Bell, he of the gorgeous icon work[19], noticed that Aperture has a solid menu bar[20] even though the rest of Leopard does not. I cheated by putting a white stripe on top of my background image, but it's a good question: I wasn't aware that there was a preference that changed live. Hm. Apple, please share.

- On the theme of neat odds and ends in 10.5, Jens Ayton uncovers how Apple makes the iCal icon show the current date in the Dock[21]. Remember that[22]?

- *TidBITS'* Matt Neuberg has a fantastic roundup of all of the new features in Leopard's Spotlight. The long and short of it is that it's much more usable[23] than in 10.4. With something like Spotlight, "more usable" means "more useful." I find myself using it a whole lot more than in 10.4, myself.

- John C. Welch realized, and wrote a *Macworld* column about, the death of NetInfo in Leopard. Ding dong, the witch is dead, I say. God only knows how many times I found myself frustrated by NetInfo, in the early days of using OS X, when simple tasks that I could perform from the command line didn't work because I had to

[15] http://www.cracked.com/blog/2007/11/21/so-book-like-youd-think-it-was-a-book-but-its-not/

[16] http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20071125-books-vs-documents-whats-wrong-with-so-called-ebooks.h tml

[17] http://typography.com/fonts/font_overview.php?productLineID=100017

[18] http://blogs.msdn.com/michkap/archive/2007/11/05/5892994.aspx

[19] http://www.atpm.com/11.01/marsedit.shtml

[20] http://bell.tumblr.com/post/18834001

[21] http://jens.ayton.se/blag/the-mysteries-of-ical-revealed/

[22] http://www.atpm.com/13.08/bloggable.shtml#tinker-to-evers-to-chan

[23] http://db.tidbits.com/article/9283

make NetInfo changes. But it is no more[24], he says.

- *ZDNet's* David Berlind thinks Apple is going to be forced to license OS X[25] by hacked copies of the OS floating around on the Internet, which bypass the software locks on installing OS X on non-Macintosh computers. I doubt they ever would, but even if they did, my anecdotal experience is that most non-technically inclined Mac users use whatever version of OS X is on their computers pretty much until they're forced to upgrade for one reason or another. The percentage of computer users who might use these cracks to use OS X on their PC is so microscopic I doubt Apple's worried about it at all, because the percentage of computer users who would buy OS X to run on their non-Macintosh computer is smaller than tech bloggers like David Berlind think.

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

[24] http://www.macworld.com/news/2007/11/16/netinfo/index.php?pf=1

[25] http://blogs.zdnet.com/Berlind/?p=897&tag=nl.e622

Mac About Town

by Mike Chamberlain, mchamberlain@atpm.com

Visions of Sugar Plums

I've been away for a while, though not from my Mac of course. Now the calendar is again creeping up on the holidays, and gifts and new years and, well...what the calendar is always creeping up on—tomorrow. What would the current season be, however, without a wish list for old Saint Nick. So here it goes...are you listening Uncle Steve? We know the Christmas at Cupertino comes in January at the Moscone Center, so we promise to be patient.

1. An iPhone that can go head-to-head with a Treo or a Blackberry in functionality. I know it's the most beautiful piece of technology in the world. I know it's really a mobile computer that also happens to be a phone. I know that third-party apps are coming with the SDK in February, but can't we have a phone that does the minimum tasks that come standard in every Palm device sold in the sophisticated way that professionals need? Can't we have a to-do list? Following an aborted four miserable weeks trying to work with a BlackBerry, I know that the user interface that we get from Apple is a sometimes-underappreciated blessing, but it's not the *only* thing that we need. Isn't there a way to bring some of the slick new Mail functionality and iCal interface to the iPhone party? Please?

2. Some clarity around Apple TV. The past six months of my techno year have been focused on AV in the house. Now that I have finally pulled the trigger on HD and swapped out most of my equipment, I am stymied trying to decide if Apple is really serious about TV. Rumors and indications seem to suggest movie rentals (surely you don't think you are going to go toe-to-toe with Netflix!?!), and there is ongoing speculation about an HD offering from the iTunes store. So what is Apple going to do? Continue to sell SD quality, DRM'ed movies in the iTunes store? The Ethernet ports on the back side of my TiVo and HD DVD player tell me that things are moving forward and that if Apple is going to be involved, we ought to be seeing something soon. Alternatively, there might be a great after-Christmas sale on Apple TVs.

3. Uncle Steve, while you're playing Santa, can you do something for a friend of mine? He's convinced that you have all the technology in hand that you need to produce a first-rate compact notebook and wonders why you haven't added something to the product line that so many people are asking for.

4. And what's Christmas, Uncle Steve, without some stocking stuffers? A little flash memory to speed things up in the laptop department? Some more work on Safari which, as lovely as it is, continues to be an issue on a number of Web sites? Some tweaks of Leopard? (I'd settle for a way to absolutely disable Spaces so that it doesn't activate in the middle of a dungeon fight in the Outlands!) More DRM-free music at the iTunes store?

But seriously, Uncle Steve, I know that no matter what I put on my list, you'll come up with something I didn't realize I needed but suddenly can't live without. In fact, that's the reason that it will be easy to get to sleep on Macworld Eve. Sweet dreams—I'll leave the cookies and milk on the mantle.

Copyright © 2007 Mike Chamberlain, mchamberlain@atpm.com.

And Here's Another Thing About Leopard

Our Leopard family has started to have cubs as the updates come in thick and fast. But one change that was unexpected and definitely for the better is FireWire handling.

As far as we are concerned this fast connection interface has always been better than the SCSI it replaced, One of our office drawers is full of cables and inevitably half a dozen SCSI terminators of different types, dating back to the old black ones that only Quadras used. The memories of SCSI are not pleasant: of getting the correct ID and which devices in a chain prefer to be in which order. No, SCSI was never a favorite here.

Stirring Polenta

FireWire, on the other hand, is simple to connect up, even to a live Mac. The newer 800 version makes USB 2 seem like stirring polenta, especially for sustained disk writing when FireWire 800 is so much faster. We have a couple of Western Digital My Book Pros[1], with triple interfaces for both FireWire 400 and 800 as well as USB 2, and we have tried them all. But the first drive we bought kept dropping its FireWire connection and needed the rigid digit treatment and pulling its cables to get it to mount again. Western Digital sent a replacement, but that did the same. So they sent another and let us keep the first as well.

While the third My Book has worked flawlessly, under Mac OS X 10.4 the second was always flakey. However, since installing Leopard, both drives have performed trouble-free. Whatever was wrong with FireWire in Tiger has been fixed in Leopard.

Periodic Dances

The same can also be said of the automatic maintenance scripts. They are still set to trigger in the early hours of the morning when most Macs are dead to the world. However, they're now scheduled by launchd[2], which is smart enough to adjust the schedule if your Mac happens to be asleep or shutdown at the appointed time.

There's no easy GUI route to changing their default time. Or is there? They are now stored as plain text files:

/System/Library/LaunchDaemons/com.apple.periodic-X.plist

The *X* is either "daily," "weekly," or "monthly." In the past, editing the times meant a trip to Terminal and Pico or using a tool such as Onyx. But now any plain text editor will do the task.

Above is the daily script with the time it runs changed to 9:05—a lot easier to do rather than doing the pseudo-periodic daily, weekly, monthly dance in Terminal. And if you screw things up and didn't make a backup before altering the script, just go to Time Machine and retrieve the old one.

You are using Time Machine, aren't you?

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

[1] http://www.wdc.com/en/products/Products.asp?DriveID=242

[2] http://www.macfixit.com/article.php?story=20071129113753285

MacMuser

by Mark Tennent, mtennent@atpm.com

Wonky Web Sites

How come if I go to a Web site and it doesn't work in my browser when millions of others sites do, it's my fault for the failure?

That was basically the response I got from new home selling site House Simple[1] here. On my Mac's screen, the site looks like the image below. I reported it to their team and was told:

> This is happening because you have increased the text size on your browser and this throws the design out. There's little we can do to stop this as it does the same on all sites with HTML text on it.

House Simple

Whose Mac Is It Anyway?

Now excuse me, but I thought that I was in control of my computer and in any case I had only set the display to Verdana 13pt so I can actually see the darned 23″ screen at arm's length. If their Web monkeys had used CSS they would have overridden my settings, and what about all the other gazillion sites I visit? Perhaps House Simple's precious design (which, let's face it, is nothing very wonderful) should be rethought?

[1] http://housesimple.co.uk

But They're Not the Only One

House Simple is not the only company who tell me it's my fault their Web site doesn't work. Scottish Power put us through all manner of hoops to run our online account, as shown below. All requests for a change go unheeded.

Scottish Power

Why do these sites insist on turning off the toolbar? It's my browser, on my computer, if I want to see the toolbar I blinking well will. Especially as in Safari it shows the progress of the page loading.

Listen

Some companies listen, eventually. HSBC changed their online banking Web site, and it ceased to work on Macs. On contacting their Web team, I spoke to the actual programmer who fixed the glitch within an hour and telephoned to get me to check that it worked.

Do-It-Yourself chain B&Q re-designed their site a while ago, and it refused point blank to work on our Macs. We reported this to their team who ignored us completely. As we dabble in a bit of property development, we have spent many thousands of pounds at B&Q's site. Their delivery trucks have worn a pair of grooves in our drive, so when we stopped buying

from them it was noticed. A nice lady rang to inquire why.

We explained the problem, which she promised to look into, but nothing happened for months. Eventually the Web designers changed and someone who knew their job fixed the problem. But hard luck, B&Q, because we've found different suppliers.

Even Mac Friendly Sites

I just haven't got the heart to tackle Waitrose for their new "improved" site which doesn't display correctly no matter what size I set my fonts.

Waitrose

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

Next Actions

by Ed Eubanks, Jr.

What Leopard Means For Getting Things Done

Apple's Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard was one of the most anticipated upgrades for Apple's operating system ever. With many new features and improvements to old features (more than 300[1], Apple reports), combined with a renewed interest out of response to Microsoft's Vista and a record 30-month interval since the last major upgrade, Leopard's reception was a virtual lock. More than two million copies sold in the first weekend confirmed it: Mac users are excited about Leopard.

Now that it has been out for over a month, many of the features and improvements are becoming familiar. Yet, many people (especially those still deciding whether to upgrade) may be asking, What does Leopard offer me for better exercising my Getting Things Done (GTD) fu?

I had a column halfway finished when I bought my upgrade to Leopard; it was only a day or two before I realized the other column would have to wait. I'm going to take a break from working through the GTD principles and take a look at Leopard's GTD-esque features. I'll break them down by application or feature and try to reflect on what *may* be an advantage to some users. Let me first make these disclaimers: your GTD workflow may or may not receive *any* benefit from some or all of these; also, there may be GTD aspects that I've failed to consider or recognize. (I'd love to receive helpful feedback on this if you have any.)

Mail

Apple's e-mail client, Mail, got a pretty substantial upgrade with Leopard, adding a number of features. GTD users will be especially interested in the addition of to-dos. Mail now allows the easy creation of a to-do or task, which automatically synchronizes with tasks in iCal. In short, you don't have to change applications from Mail to iCal to create, edit, or check off tasks. Any field that appears in iCal can be viewed and edited in Mail (though by default some are hidden); choose View ▷ Columns to add or remove columns that you want to view in Mail. If the task-management list found in iCal is sufficient for your GTD needs, or if it co-operates in some way with your GTD application (through synchronization, for example), then Mail will extend your GTD workflow nicely.

Notes is another new feature in Mail, and while it is more limited in its GTD application, I can see how some might decide to make heavy use of it. The concept is pretty simple: think of Notes as a digital notepad built into Mail. The difference between Notes and, say, Stickies is that a Mail Note can be easily converted into an e-mail or a to-do with a single mouse click. And a Mail Note can have metadata appended to it (via Indev's MailTags[2]). Of course, another major difference is that they live in Mail; you don't have to open another application to see or work with them.

Mail also can handle RSS feeds now and has a function called Data Detectors built in. The RSS feed handler is fairly bare bones, much like the one in Safari. Data Detectors recognize information within the body of e-mails such as addresses, phone numbers, and date or appointment references, and it allows you to easily create new entries in iCal or Address Book with that data. Neither of these is, by default, GTD-specific, but they can save you time and streamline your workflow.

I like Mail's additions for better GTD implementation, because it's consistent with David Allen's own principle when it comes to collection tools: "Give me as many buckets as I need, and not one more." It may well be that these tools expand the already existing features of iCal to make it entirely sufficient for your GTD needs. Or it might simply prevent you from needing to change applications as frequently to reference your task list, or streamline your data collection when using e-mail and RSS. Regardless, these are nice additions and point Mail in a direction that I like to see it going. Even if they aren't enough for you as is, it may be that the tweak or adjustment that you miss will be added in a future update.

[1] `http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/300.html`

[2] `http://www.indev.ca/MailTags.html`

iCal

While iCal didn't receive as much attention in terms of new features, it did get a number of nice additions. A few of these offer further streamlining for the GTD-minded user.

Events in iCal now have a drop box, where you can attach files for each event as needed. URLs, documents, photos, videos—attach them all and keep them readily accessible for the event. What is more, they will be distributed to attendees automatically as well. This will save many of us a lot of time and headaches keeping up with which docs are needed and who has received them.

A long-awaited feature for iCal is group calendaring, and iCal's introduction of CalDAV calendar sharing opens this door wide. It's easy to set up access to existing CalDAV server accounts, and CalDAV group calendars have access to a number of features for scheduling events, such as the Availability window and Auto-pick for discovering the best time for meeting, published office hours, and delegation of calendar control to other users. Of course, you'll need a CalDAV server to utilize these tools, and getting access to one is not an easy endeavor. My guess, though, is that over time, more and more Web-hosting services will offer CalDAV as a part of their products.

Another feature that many users have longed for is the ability to automatically add alarms to new events, and the Leopard-updated iCal offers this as well.

It's easy to focus on tasks and to-do lists as the primary function of GTD while forgetting that calendaring is a key part of the GTD equation. The improvements to iCal offer some strong changes to an already great calendaring application.

Finder Improvements

Outside of Mail, iCal, and GTD-specific apps, most of us spend a lot of time in Finder. Naturally, any improvements to navigating or organizing Finder are welcomed because they save time and attention—or both.

Quick Look and Cover Flow are two such improvements, and they are both nice features. The upgrades for Spotlight are also great. If you follow Steve Jobs's recommendations (back from when he introduced Spotlight as a forthcoming feature for OS X 10.4 Tiger), you throw all of your files into one big folder and archive that way. Both Quick Look and Cover Flow offer new ways to find the particular files you're seeking, and they do it in very different ways: Cover Flow allows you to skim through many files quickly, while Quick Look gives you a way to peek into a specific file.

What makes these especially powerful is using them together. Use the improved Spotlight to find a set of documents that file a particular keyword or search term, then view them in Cover Flow to narrow your search more quickly, finally utilizing Quick Look to verify that you've found the file you want.

Two other Finder improvements make a difference for productivity: Stacks and Spaces. If you like Exposé, or if you're frustrated by the lack of screen real estate that you have (and who isn't?), then Spaces may offer you a solution to organize your workspace(s) more efficiently. Stacks jump out of the Dock to give you fast access to the contents of certain folders very quickly.

Many of the features and improvements in Finder are subtle, but in combination they offer a collective boost in efficiency.

Other Areas of GTD Interest

There are a handful of other Leopard tools and features that may contribute to your GTD productivity. If you use more than one Mac—and you're a .Mac subscriber—then Back to My Mac will surely be a welcome feature. Automator's new capacities make scripting (and—duh—automating) your Mac easier than ever. Time Machine will all but remove the hassle of backup routines for a lot of us. Even Dashcode and Dashboard Web clips will be very useful.

The bottom line: Leopard doesn't simply bring enhancements to the appearance of the OS, easier backups, and Boot Camp as standard. It offers system-wide advances that will serve as lubrication to the fine machine that is your Mac. If you're considering the upgrade, think of Leopard as a small investment that will pay for itself many times over in hours saved, thanks to the many refinements it offers to a productive worker.

The List

Ah, the list. So much has happened since my last updated list in the June issue[3]. As I mentioned in my last column[4], I've been working on a new, easier-to-read, and more attractive version of my list. I've also been moving and starting a new job, so unfortunately the list has gotten short shrift in my priorities.

[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.06/next-actions.shtml
[4] http://www.atpm.com/13.08/next-actions.shtml

As of now, the new and improved list is about two-thirds complete, and I anticipate finishing it up in December. (Once it is finished, by the way, it will also be much easier for me to keep it updated—another benefit of the new and improved version.) Assuming I stay on track for this, I'll post it in the January issue, even though I won't publish my next full *Next Actions* column until February. Thanks for your patience.

Meanwhile, if you know of any GTD-oriented applications that aren't on the June list (and weren't mentioned in the comments[5] then), please let me know!

Copyright © 2007 Ed Eubanks, Jr.

[5] http://www.atpm.com/13.06/next-actions.shtml#comments

Apple Talk

by Angus Wong, atkw@anguswong.net

"Think Different"

Just to start things off this month, I feel obliged to remind everyone that, yes, the Zune is still being sold in stores. Anyway, it's only been a year or so, and we can't expect it to die off so quickly. After all, Windows CE is still around, having transmogrified[1] into various mutations including the most recent Windows Mobile (append year of beta testing) manifestation. The Zune is assuredly being kicked in the ass by the iPod but, as with other blattodea[2], is probably still going to be around for a while longer.

Now, I know, I know, it is entirely unfair to compare the Zune with the iPod. After all, Microsoft is not targeting the same demographics with the Zune. While the iPod was designed for, well, everyone, it appears the Zune was made for Microsoft staffers. OK, so not all of them use the Zune, but internal market-share numbers at Microsoft are very impressive. I can almost guarantee that the iPod holds only a niche position within that sliver of a slice of a segment of the world market, and that's even including the iPods in the disposal bins around campus. So stop comparing apples and orangutans. These are totally separate market segments.

Now, another comparison people like to make is between Vista and Leopard. Doh! Hello, people? When will you learn? Comparing what is essentially Windows NT 2006 with what is essentially Mac OS X 10.5 is just ridiculous. As I mentioned before, the whole point of Leopard is to make computing faster, easier, more productive, and safer for humanity. Vista, on the other hand, is Microsoft helping to pass on that message to the market. It's all done very subtly. There won't be a "Go buy a Mac" sticker on the Vista box, but it's pretty much saying that without being overtly direct. With its big footprint on the computing industry, Microsoft simply cannot be seen in "collusion" with Apple to expand OS X market share. Forget antitrust regulations—the Microsoft shareholders would riot. No, no, no. The company is already doing everything possible to ensure that Apple continues to be a resounding success:

- Making sure anyone who wants to run Vista has to consider buying a whole new computer.
- Making sure anyone who is willing to buy a whole new computer for Vista has to think long and hard about which "edition" of Vista he wants to install.
- Making sure anyone who has actually bought a new computer, actually installed Vista, and is actually running it, wonder what the difference is between it and XP.
- And, of course, making very sure that anyone who is actually using Vista on a brand spanking new computer can fully enjoy his favorite kinds of malware[3], which is the uncontested cornerstone of the Windows experience.

And it's not just Microsoft that's doing this. The PC vendors are also in on the game, everyone working extremely hard to increase Macintosh market share quarter after quarter. I have my hunches (e.g., all these CEOs have huge AAPL positions or something) but, really, I don't know why they are doing it. It just boggles my mind. But whatever the reason is, "good on 'em!"

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about.

A few months ago, at the day job, I got assigned a ThinkPad X60 (now produced by Lenovo). I noticed an annoying Message Center alert among various other annoying Task Tray icons. After trying to ignore the little bugger for about three restarts (i.e., on the first day I used this brand new PC), I finally clicked on it.

Because I really have a lot of spare time and zero new messages in my proper e-mail inbox, I was happy to see two mysterious messages I had to read. (Not!)

One of them cheerily suggested that I "Learn how to achieve all-day computing."

"Do more, save more, and spend more time unplugged with ThinkPad batteries," it said.

[1] http://www.shaunofthedeadmovie.com

[2] http://www.museums.org.za/bio/insects/cockroaches/

[3] http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/09/17/vista_hit_by_stoned_angelina/

I wanted to just delete it without reading, but being guilty of RTFM[4] non-compliance in recent years, I decided to check out whatever hot tips Lenovo (or whoever had canned these messages) offered, especially since I wasn't completely familiar with *this* particular PC's shade of monochrome (to be fair, there was a fingerprint authentication doodad that I was itching to configure).

So I clicked on the friendly "Learn more..." hyperlink.

Bam! My Web browser launched (thankfully, Firefox was already installed) and loaded up...an E-commerce page on Lenovo's server where I could purchase a "ThinkPad 56W Ultraportable AC Adapter" (part number 02K6880) or a "ThinkPad 72W Slim AC/DC Combo Adapter" (part number 73P4485).

Scrolling down the page, I noticed there were almost a dozen other screens that I could click on, ostensibly for more great power products I could buy to "Learn how to achieve all-day computing."

I finally understood: Lenovo's idea of "all-day computing" was to spend all day mucking around with this crap, and then spend "all night computing" just to catch up on real work. If that's not putting your PC and Windows to work, I don't know what is. More bang for the buck, right? Why turn off your computer and spend time with your family and enjoy life, when you can burn the midnight oil with Vista? Isn't there some kind of metric that says the more you use something the less it actually costs for you? I guess that's what the PC guys mean when they talk about Total Cost of Ownership. With the Mac, you just do whatever you have to do and turn it off. No opportunity to muck around and waste cycles. Evil!

The most intriguing thing about the "total PC user experience" fiasco is wondering exactly who masterminded it. I am sure the PC vendors (a.k.a. Original Equipment Manufacturers in industry-speak) learn somewhat from Microsoft's example, but inquiring minds want to know if there's a secret "black ops" team in Redmond that designs these horrendous hurdles for Windows users to jump. Or maybe there's no team at all, and the OEMs just naturally and instinctively mimic the "industry leader."

Contrast all this with the Apple experience and you can see why I say the entire industry is in collusion to ensure that only Apple will prevail. The high-level strategy is working, too. Reports are in that Mac OS X has taken over half of the Japanese OS market[5]. But it's not a completely fair pilot test because Microsoft skewed results by increasing already-outrageous Vista prices. Unless it intends to do this in other markets to ensure Apple's success, the Redmond AppleCare master plan might be a bit slower to execute in, say, North America and Europe.

But mark my words. The entire PC industry, spearheaded by Microsoft, is very seriously "thinking different." So different that I have no idea what it is doing. I just know that people are buying a whole lotta Macs and telling their friends to do the same.

So the next time you add an Apple product to your shopping cart, don't forget to thank the Windows guys for pointing the way.

[At the time of writing this article, the new Zunes[6] had apparently just shipped[7].]

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

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RTFM

[5] http://www.electronista.com/articles/07/11/13/mac.up.win.down.in.japan/

[6] http://www.suntimes.com/technology/ihnatko/651607,CST-FIN-Andy15.article

[7] http://www.electronista.com/articles/07/11/13/new.zune.ships/

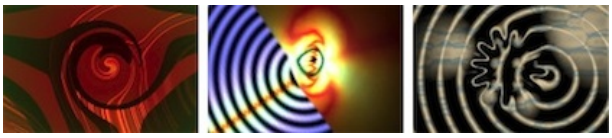
Desktop Pictures

by Richard W. Dillman

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

This month's pictures were created by ATPM reader Richard W. Dillman[3] using Artmatic[4] and Photoshop.



View Pictures[a]

[a] http://www.atpm.com/13.12/artmatic/

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[5].

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

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

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

Safari Use this Automator workflow[6].

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.

[1] mailto:editor@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/13.12/artmatic/
[3] http://www.ticopa.com/cyberynth/downloads/index.html
[4] http://www.artmatic.com
[5] http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml
[6] http://automator.us/examples-02.html

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x through 10.5.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

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

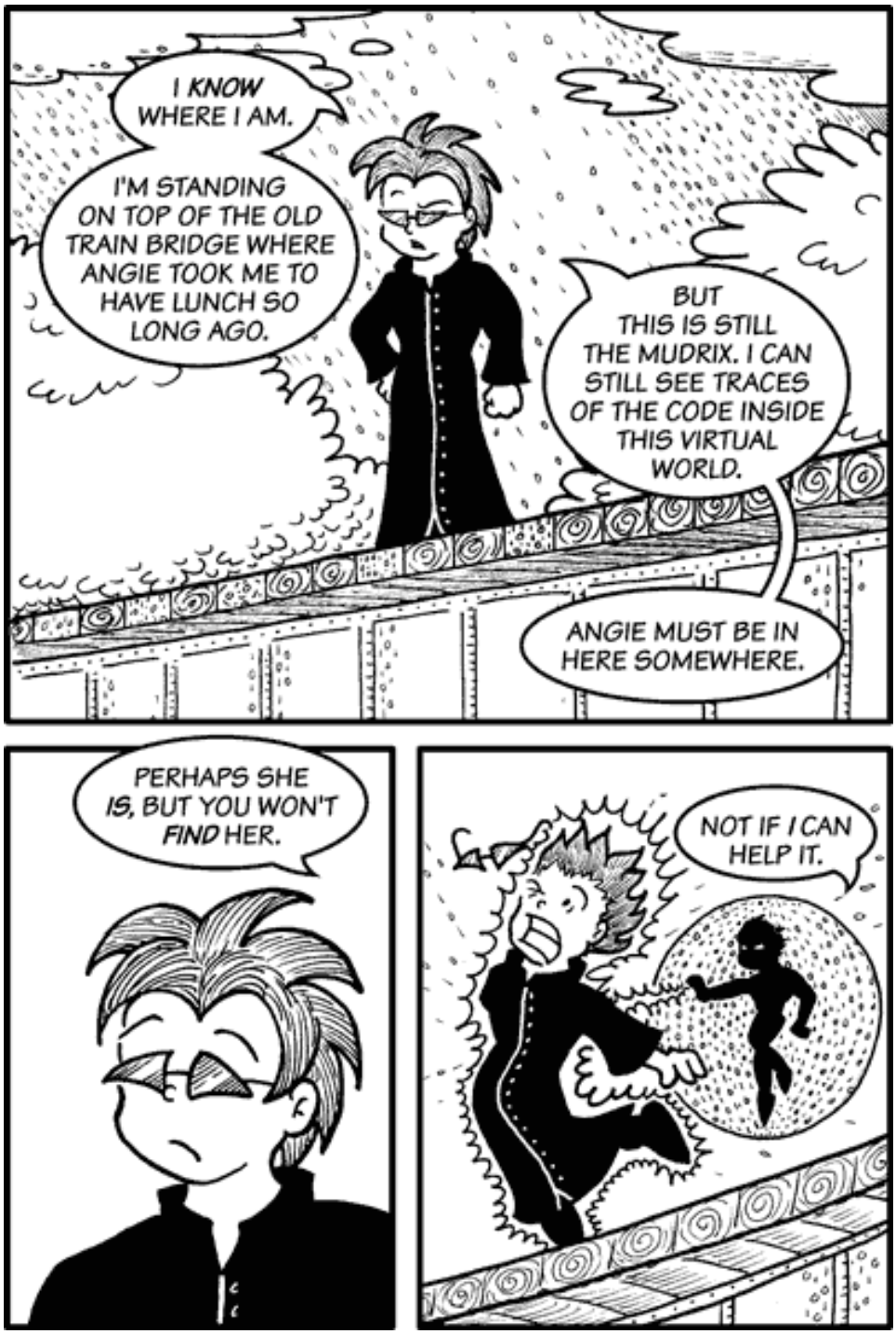
You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences..." from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder,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

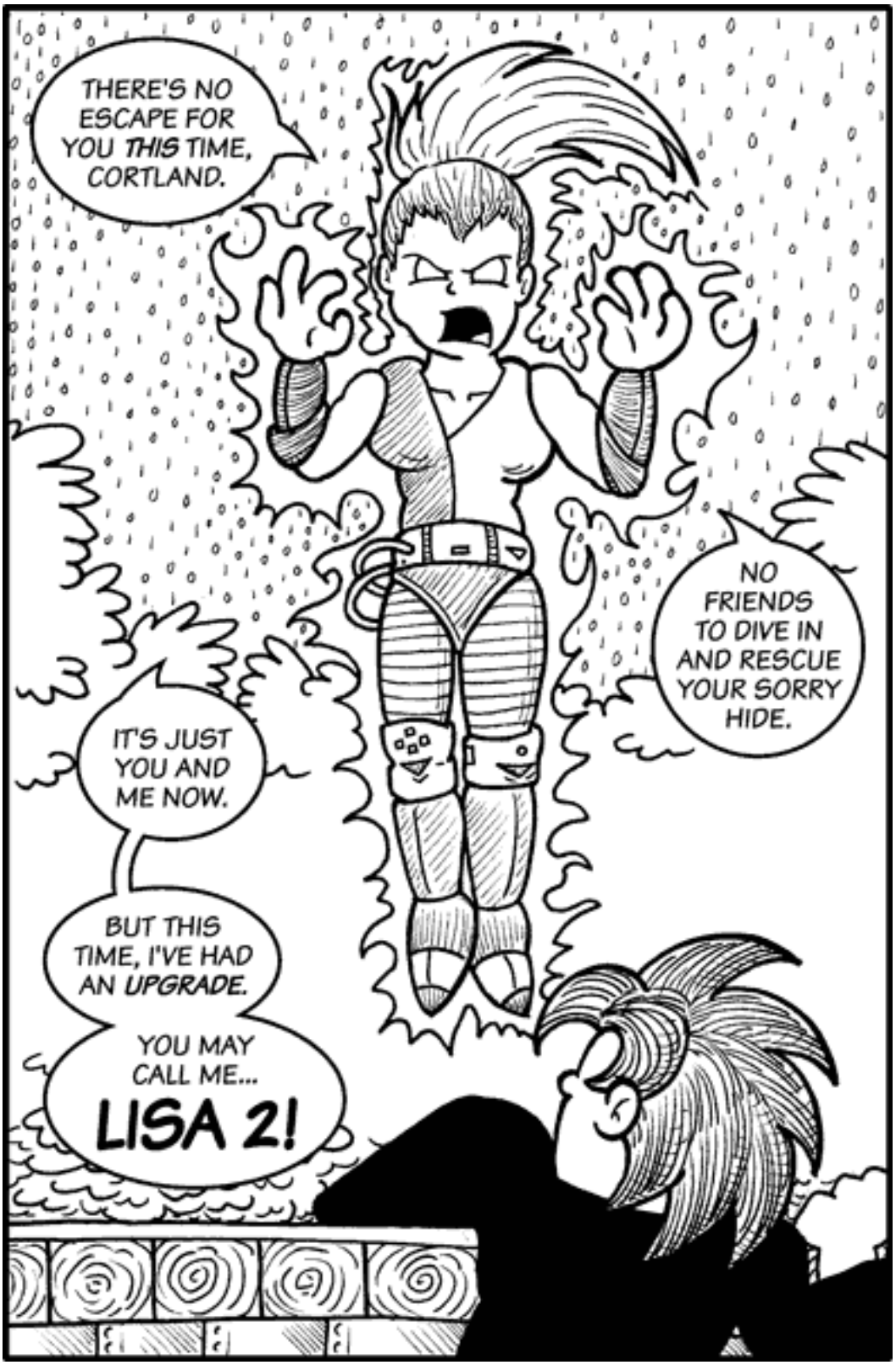
Mac OS X 10.0.x

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

Cortland

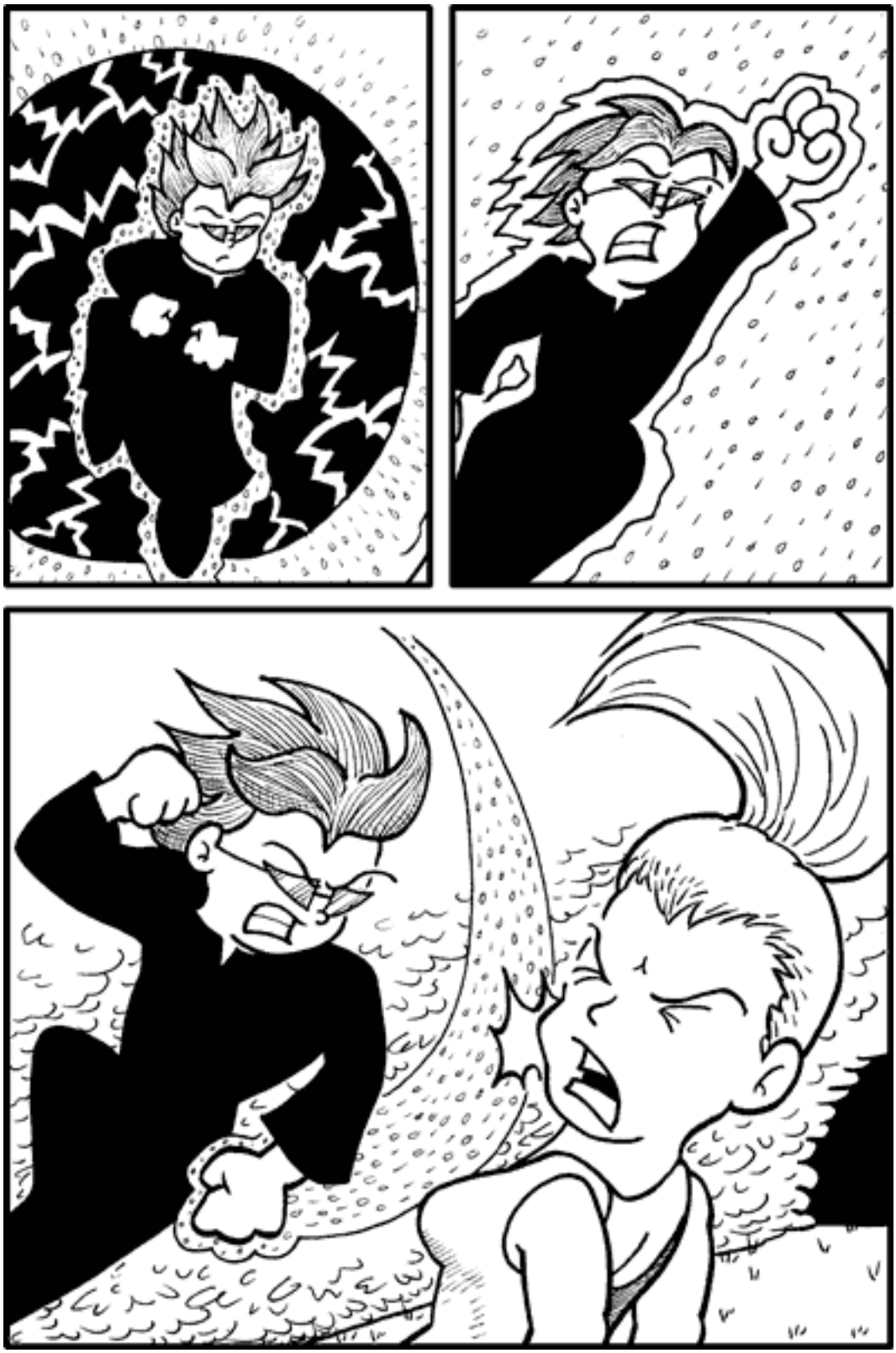
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com




THERE'S NO ESCAPE FOR YOU *THIS* TIME, CORTLAND.
NO FRIENDS TO DIVE IN AND RESCUE YOUR SORRY HIDE.
IT'S JUST YOU AND ME NOW.
BUT THIS TIME, I'VE HAD AN *UPGRADE*.
YOU MAY CALL ME...
LISA 2!

SO, YOU WEREN'T CONTENT JUST TO LEAVE YOUR WOMAN TO ME?
YOU COULDN'T JUST LEAVE HER? YOU HAD TO COME STORMING INTO THIS WORLD?
MY WORLD?
YOU HAD TO CHALLENGE ME ONE LAST TIME?
SO BE IT!

GOODBYE, CORTLAND
IT'S A SHAME OUR FINAL ENCOUNTER HAD TO BE SO SHORT.
I WAS SO LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING WITH YOU A BIT BEFORE FINISHING OFF YOUR GIRLFRIEND FOR GOOD.

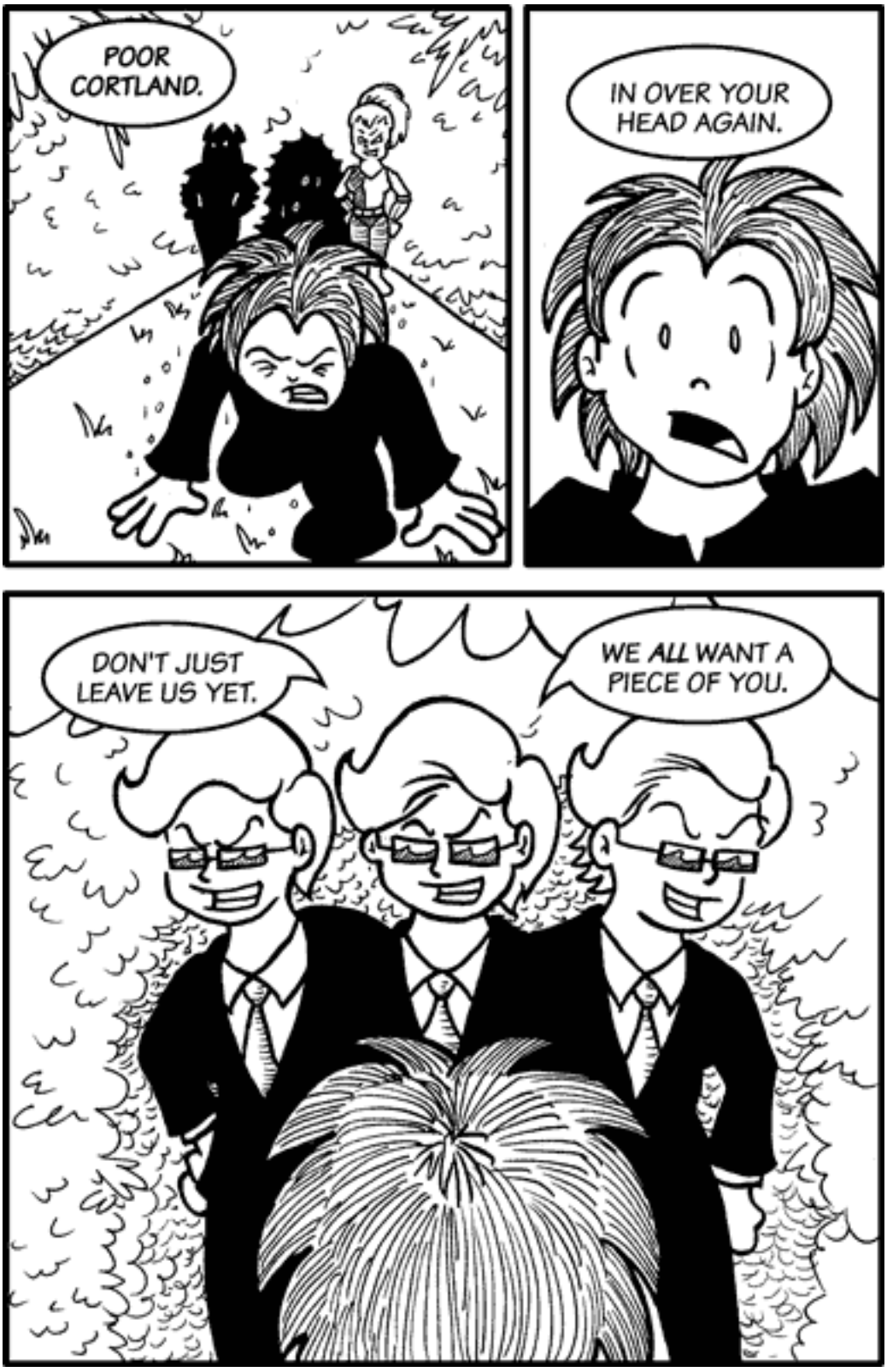


ALL RIGHT, LISA. I'VE HAD ENOUGH.
BRING ANGIE BACK TO ME. NOW.
MY, CORTLAND. HOW RUDE YOU ARE.
DON'T FORGET THAT YOU'RE OUR GUEST HERE.

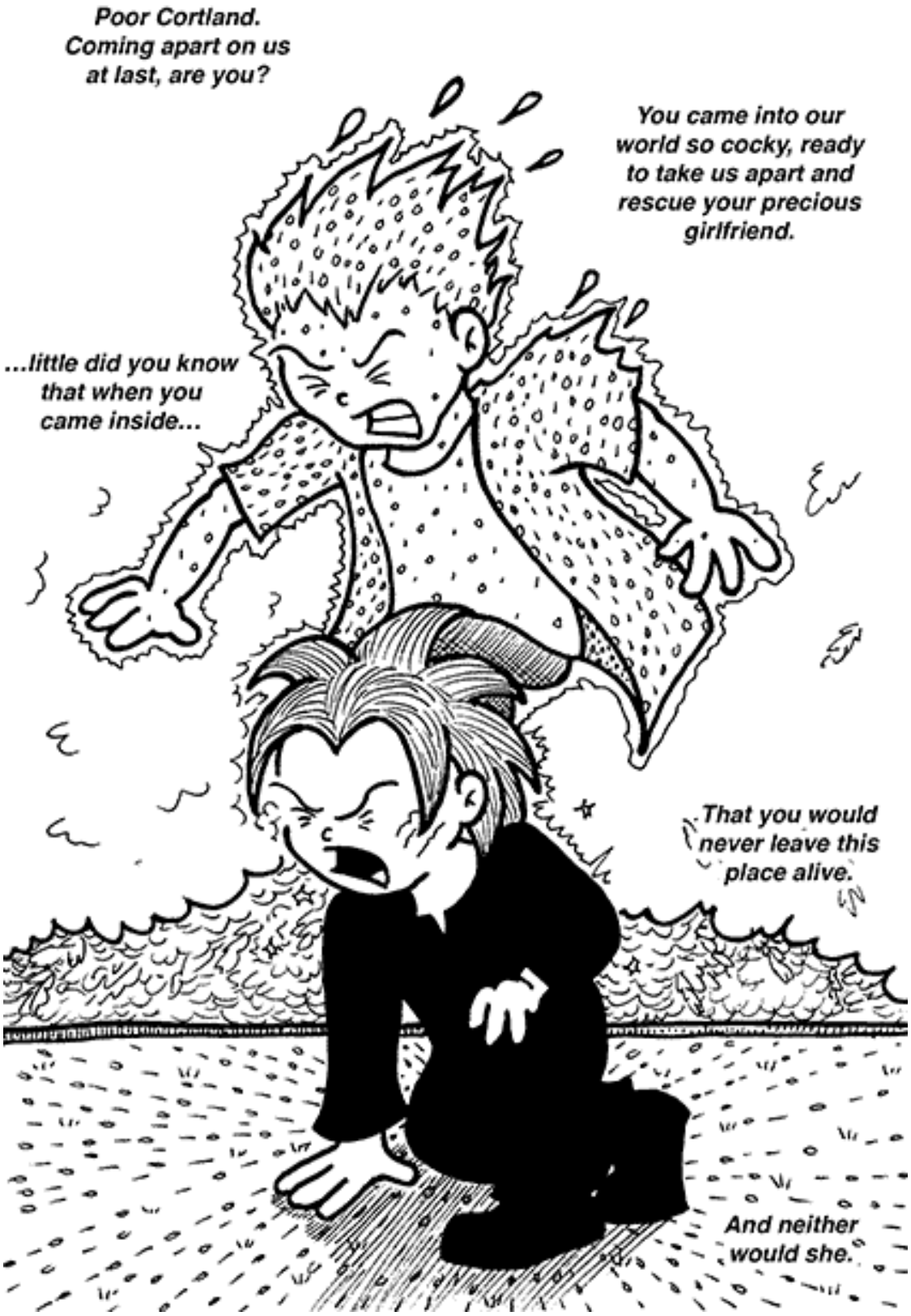
YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT LISA.
OUR TECHNOLOGY MAY BE ANCIENT INDEED...
...BUT ONE THING WE COULD ALWAYS DO WELL...
WAS MULTITASK.

OH DEAR. IT LOOKS AS IF OUR POOR LITTLE GRAPHIC DESIGNER IS IN OVER HIS HEAD AGAIN.
LET'S HOPE YOU HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
THIS NEVER HAPPENED *BEFORE.*
I CAN SEE THE CODE AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME IT'S ALL COMING APART.
I'M STARTING TO FEEL MYSELF SLOWLY SLIPPING AWAY.
I HAVE TO END THIS *NOW*, WHILE I STILL *CAN.*


POOR CORTLAND.
IN OVER YOUR HEAD AGAIN.
DON'T JUST LEAVE US YET.
WE ALL WANT A PIECE OF YOU.

THAT'S RIGHT, CORTLAND.
WE'RE MULTIPLYING AND TAKING ON THE FORMS OF ALL YOUR WORST ENEMIES.
SO THEN...
ARE YOU STARTING TO FEEL A BIT... OUTMATCHED?


Poor Cortland.
Coming apart on us
at last, are you?
You came into our
world so cocky, ready
to take us apart and
rescue your precious
girlfriend.
...little did you know
that when you
came inside...
That you would
never leave this
place alive.
And neither
would she.

NOW CORTLAND, YOUR TIME HAS FINALLY COME.
YOUR ENERGY SPENT, YOUR WILL COLLAPSED, YOU HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE REMAINING.
JOIN US!

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

Software Review

by Matthew Glidden, mglidden@atpm.com

HyperImage 1.0

Developer: KavaSoft[1]
Price: $30
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (adds a watermark to downloaded images)

HyperImage downloads pictures posted and linked throughout a Web site's structure and presents them for slideshow or directory viewing. As a reviewer of music and software, this helps me find specific screenshots, concert pictures, and so on. Rather than pick through Google's image search one-by-one, I can build an expansive review of pictures available away from the Web. An application that can take a series of site URLs, download them over lunch, and present the contents at my leisure definitely wins over the time and mental effort of clicky-clicky-click.

Installation

It doesn't take much to get HyperImage going. Download the DMG, mount it, and drag it into your Applications folder.

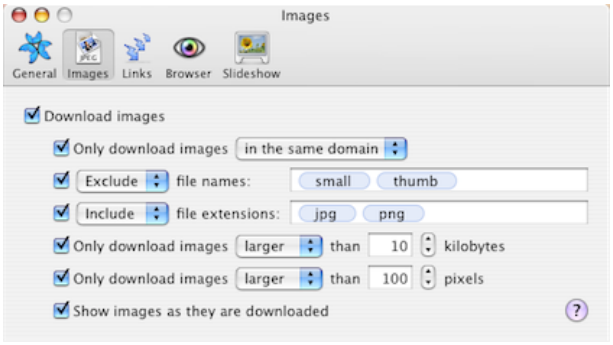
Feature Exploration

Enter a Web site's URL in the address bar and choose Download to start the cascade of data to your Mac. The pictures (and directory structure) from a site appear below the address bar as they arrive.

[1] http://www.kavasoft.com/HyperImage/index.php
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/

The download and browsing layout.

If you're looking at sites with a wide-ranging goal, like my interest in a good concert picture, the default options capture just about everything for picking and choosing. If too much dross gets through, the preferences pane helps you cut down the total number returned.



Limiting images by domain, type, and size.

I found this most useful to eliminate thumbnails and other small pictures, since they don't look good posted with an article. Other users, especially those on dial-up, might prefer only pictures below a certain size to reduce download time.

Slideshows work much like iPhoto or other image presentation software. You can look at a big platter

of images within a window or toggle the full-screen viewer to absorb the whole screen.

The full-screen viewer works both during and after image downloads.

Some sites number their images sequentially, like 001.jpg, 002.jpg, and so on. Target one of these specific groups by enclosing the desired image range in brackets as part of your URL.

While HyperImage does include features like a site "mirror" that downloads everything or checks the pages for broken links, it rightly focuses on image capture and presentation. (The link-checker, for example, probably matters most to image-site Web masters, and they should already have one of those.)

Most Useful Feature

HyperImage targets image collection so directly, it's hard to pick out a single "best" element. I guess the fact that everything runs in the background and you can queue up several sites for sequential download serves as my favorite feature.

Bugs and Nitpicks

After using HyperImage on-and-off for a few weeks, my usage patterns changed. Instead of entering one URL and watching the images arrive, I let everything finish prior to review. If I changed my mind partway through, it took quite a while for the "stop downloading" command to take effect. To avoid that irritation, I'd just wait for the download to finish, browse a few results, set new "filters" for the site that eliminated a category of useless images, and run everything again. The application would be more efficient (and feel more like a Web browser) with a very responsive "stop" button.

I only ran into one stability problem using HyperImage. While working on a music review, I checked out the ThomasDolby.com site for suitable artist pictures. Unfortunately, something about the site caused the application to crash and close. I re-opened it and tried again with the same result. I rebooted my Mac and tried again with the same result. This proved the only crash-causing site I found during my month-long review usage. (Of course, actually trying to break the program might have found more issues.)

Is It Worth the Money?

I definitely see the value in HyperImage, given the amount of time you can spend clicking around (and around) on image sites. Almost every URL I "visited" provided a nice list of pictures that tell the site's story without all that bothersome text. For version 1.0 software, it follows through well on delivering a complete site's images. If a software update corrected my issues with the interaction delay and crash-causing sites, the whole package would be even more useful.

Summary

People who like to work with big caches of images should get a lot of utility out of HyperImage. At first glance, it looked like a cousin to Google's image search, but with more comprehensive results. After some use, it seems the two really go hand-in-hand. Search first for image sites that match a desired term (say, "lolcats") and then let HyperImage plumb the depths of the URLs you find.

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

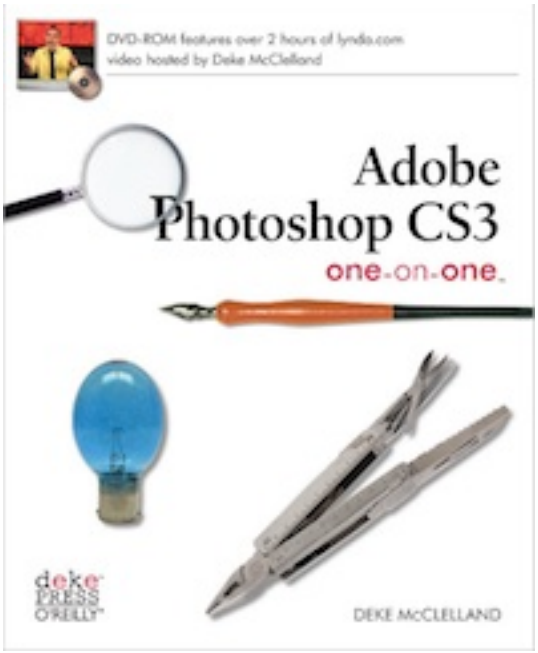
Book Review

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One

Author: Deke McClelland
Publisher: O'Reilly[1]
Price: $50
Trial: Web site includes a link to sample chapter, but there is no content on the sample page as of this writing.

Graphic design trainer extraordinaire Deke McClelland is back with a new, 544-page edition of his One-on-One series. This edition takes you through Adobe Photoshop CS3 and is filled with material suitable for amateurs and professionals, alike.



If you read my book review last year for McClelland's Adobe InDesign CS2 One-on-One[2], I'm afraid you're going to start having a sense of déjà vu. McClelland has nailed a wonderful format for training with this series and continues that format in *Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One*.

Many of you know that I have been providing a monthly series for ATPM titled Photoshop For the Curious[3]. While I cannot claim to offer the same marvelous format found in the One-on-One series, I was pleased to realize that some of my basic descriptions of Photoshop functions echo McClelland's own explanations.

Like the InDesign CS2 book, *Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One* is formatted into 12 chapters, each representing a detailed lesson on Photoshop CS3. The lessons include such topics as adjusting with Levels and Curves, color correction, image size and resolution, masks, and print output. Each begins by outlining what you are going to learn and concludes with a quiz to help you retain what you learned. You can follow at your own pace and perform the same steps described in the book on your own computer. The book encourages a hands-on approach with each lesson.

There are hundreds of full-color illustrations and screen shots to guide you. Plus, it wouldn't be a One-on-One book without the frequent "Pearl of Wisdom" and "Extra Credit" sections.

As before, a DVD-ROM is included with the book. This time around, the videos are produced by lynda.com[4]. Book buyers are offered seven days of free trial to all the training videos available on the lynda.com Web site.

The DVD videos play on your computer—not a home DVD player. This format allows for large-size videos in which you can see every screen detail during McClelland's explanations. They are presented via links in a simple Web document. For the true geek, you can even find the basic QuickTime movie files in a folder on the DVD.

While the book lessons are hands-on, McClelland specifically informs the viewer that the videos are intended to be hands-off. The viewer is encouraged to sit back, watch the video, soak in the information, then return to the lesson to try things for yourself.

Like McClelland's other books on the Adobe Creative Suite applications, you'll find advice to

[1] http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596529758/
[2] http://www.atpm.com/12.08/indesign.shtml
[3] http://www.atpm.com/Back/photoshop.shtml
[4] http://www.lynda.com/

use the keyboard shortcut adjustments and color workflow profiles that are included on the DVD-ROM. While the keyboard shortcuts no doubt make certain Photoshop tasks a bit simpler, I would still prefer lessons that offered training instruction using Adobe's default commands for Photoshop. As for the color workflow, the provided profiles will likely improve things for amateurs, but professionals who already have a color workflow will probably want to skip this step.

Something that struck me as a bit odd is the way nearly all of the first lesson doesn't even talk about Photoshop. Rather, it covers Adobe Bridge and the topic of organization. This is not a bad thing since Bridge is definitely something you'll want to use along with Photoshop if you're working with lots of images. I'm only saying that it seemed strange to start out a Photoshop book with a lesson on Adobe Bridge.

A paraphrase of my closing from the *Adobe InDesign CS2 One-on-One* review is appropriate for this *Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One* review: O'Reilly's reputation for quality books is well-known, and this latest of more than 20 Photoshop books authored by McClelland is a welcome addition.

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 Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Signal

Developer: Alloysoft[1]
Price: $30
Requirements: iPhone or iPod touch. (A version compatible with Pocket PC devices is also available.)
Trial: Feature limited (one-third of your library is inaccessible).

As if I didn't think my iPhone was already cool enough, I now have a new party trick. Let me set up the scenario: you walk into my home to join a few friends for an evening of food, fun, and listening to some great music. Everyone is seated and someone blurts out, "Hey, have you heard the new songs from Matchbox Twenty?"

At this point, you might imagine that I'd get up, pick up the new CD, stop the currently playing music, change CDs, and start playing the new album. An even better case would be that I'd add the CD to a multi-disc changer and then switch to it.

Better still is the fact that, instead of CDs, I'm playing music wirelessly from iTunes through an Apple AirPort Express connected to my entertainment system. So, I might only need to walk to my computer, locate the desired album, and double-click a track to start it playing out in the living room.

Here's where Alloysoft's Signal enters the picture. Rather than getting up to my computer, I instead whip out my iPhone and, with a couple of taps, start playing Matchbox Twenty's new album, Exile On Mainstream.

In the words of Steve Jobs, just like the iPhone itself, "it works like magic."

Admittedly, there are some rough edges. Signal is pretty new and, at version 1.0.3, Alloysoft has only just recently fixed a bug that prevented access to any item in an iTunes library that contained quotes or extended characters such as accents. There are also little "grr" moments with the user interface, but they're all very minor and, because Signal is just a Web application from the iPhone's point of view, I'm confident the interface will only get better and better.

Signal requires absolutely no configuration to operate. There isn't even a preferences window. Simply launch Signal on your computer, and it basically operates as a standalone Web server. When Signal is running, a window appears with your computer's local IP address plus a port number. It's presented as a URL and it's the address to which you connect with MobileSafari on your iPhone or iPod touch. If your local IP stays consistent, it's perfectly fine to bookmark this address.

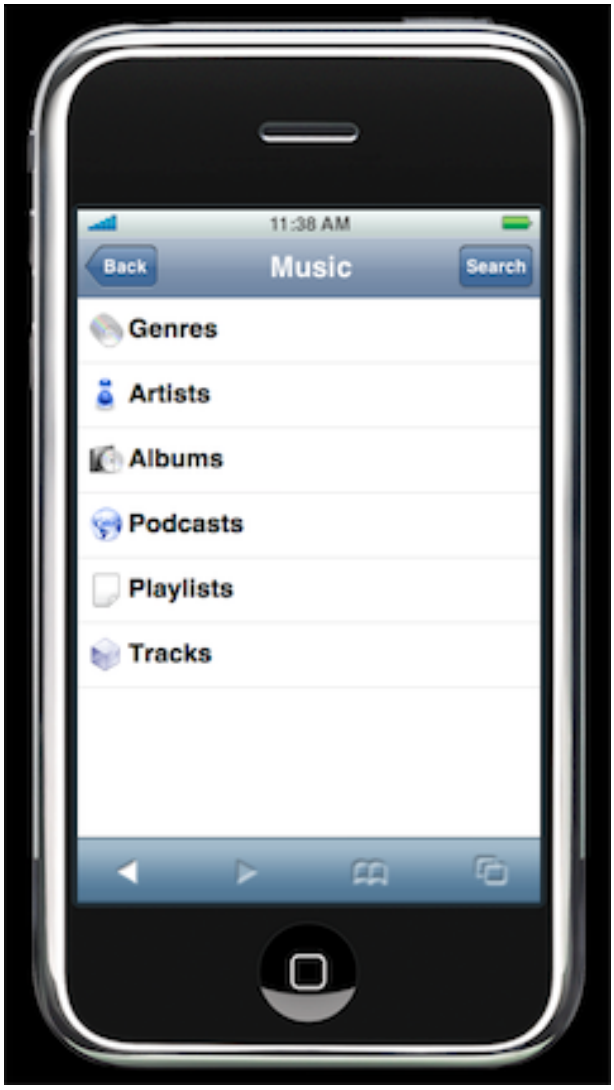
On the iPhone or iPod touch, when you first connect to the address specified by Signal, you'll see the default screen that shows while a song is playing. If no song is already playing in iTunes, it'll just be a mostly dark screen. Nothing's wrong here—just tap the browser button (with the white musical note) in the upper left corner.

[1] http://www.alloysoft.com

If iTunes is already playing a song when you activate the Signal Web interface, Signal will dutifully display the track's playback information.

When you enter the browser for the first time, you'll be presented with links to access Music, Videos (including video podcasts), or TV programs. The latter of those two unfortunately do not have any further categorization and simply provide a full list of all videos or all TV programs. This is especially unfortunate if you have saved a lot of episodes from several podcasts or several television shows. Alloysoft should add one or more layers of categorization to the Videos and TV menus. I would like to be able to select Podcasts inside of the Videos menu, and then have a listing of all podcast subscriptions, and then access only the episodes of that podcast.

Fortunately, however, the familiar breakdown of Genres, Artists, Albums, audio Podcasts, Playlists, and individual Tracks are offered in the Music portion of the Signal Web interface. To play an album, I can simply tap Music from the top level of the browser, then Albums, then scroll through to find the album.



Navigating Signal's Music menu. From here, I can navigate to my music much the same way as an iPod.

A much-appreciated extra touch is the search function. The Signal Web interface only displays a few dozen items per page plus Next and Previous links to move back and forth. It would take a very long time to scan through a full library containing thousands of songs. Instead, if I know the name of what I want to play, I'll just tap the Search button

and start typing the first word of what I'm looking for. When the results appear, I can either tap the item to see what's inside, or tap the + button next to the item to add it to the active playlist.

Also nifty is that, while music is playing, I can keep browsing and add even more songs to the active playlist, queueing them up just like a jukebox. When I'm all done, I just tap the title bar (between the Back and Search buttons) to return to the default playback screen.

From the playback screen, you'll see the currently playing track's cover art, the name of the song, artist, and album, buttons to pause or move to the next or previous track, the aforementioned browser button in the upper left corner, and the playlist navigator in the upper right corner. The playlist navigator shows every track you've queued in the active playlist and lets you immediately skip to any track in that playlist by tapping the track.

Note that the active playlist is sometimes a representation of a literal playlist in iTunes. You'll see it named as Signal Queue, and it is used whenever you add tracks to the queue. Conversely, this playlist is not used if you select an existing playlist in iTunes.

To reveal adjustment controls for changing the volume, assigning a rating, and toggling repeat and shuffle options, just tap the album art from the basic playback screen.

The Signal playback controls shouldn't be unfamiliar to anyone who's used iTunes or an iPod.

It would be nice if there were a way to access a player widget to scan forward and backward within the currently playing track. This may be a great deal of wishful thinking, however. Dynamically updating such a slider via the Web interface is, I'd suspect, not a simple feat.

A behavior of the browser interface that could be improved is when, for example, you tap an album name and decide you want to play everything in that album. To do so, you either have to tap the + button next to every song to add them to the queue, or back up one level and tap the album's + button. The latter isn't really that bad, but including an "Add All" and a "Play All" link would seem more intuitive.

The former would add all the tracks while keeping everything already in the queue. The latter would wipe out the active queue in favor of immediately playing the selected album.

I encountered a few situations where the basic playback screen didn't refresh itself when I changed out the active playlist queue to a new album. It's easily remedied by tapping MobileSafari's refresh button, but it's still a condition that should be checked out and corrected.

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find my review of Keyspan's TuneView USB[2], which is a product you may want to consider if you do not have an iPhone or iPod touch. However, at only $30 (on sale for $25 at this writing), you'll definitely want to choose Signal if you do have an iPhone or iPod touch.

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.

[2] `http://www.atpm.com/13.12/tuneview.shtml`

Accessory Review

by Chris Lawson

SmartCharge

Developer: SendStation[1]
Price: $25
Requirements: iPod with Dock Connector (except 3G) or iPod shuffle (1G only)
Trial: None

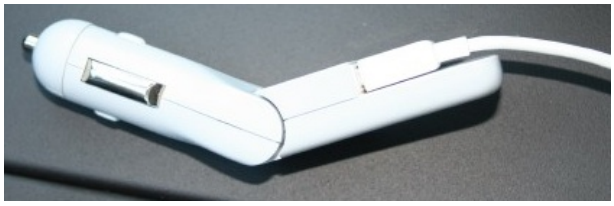
Back in December 2006, *Playlist* magazine ran a story[2] stating that some 60 percent of 2007 model-year vehicles sold in the US featured at least an auxiliary input allowing iPods to be played through the car stereo. With that in mind, all those iPod listeners spending hours a day in their cars would need some way to keep the iPod juiced and ready to go.

Just your typical generic shot of the SmartCharge.

Enter the various car chargers, of which perhaps the most elegant-looking is SendStation's SmartCharge. The $25 power adapter includes a 12-volt plug and a special USB cable that taps into a Dock Connector-equipped iPod's line-level output for a clean music signal. Second-generation iPod shuffle and third-generation iPod users need not apply, however; SendStation specifically excludes these models from the compatibility list.

[1] `http://www.sendstation.com/us/products/smartcharge/`

[2] `http://playlistmag.com/news/2006/12/19/autoipod/`



The SmartCharge is adjustable for tilt, enabling it to fit into tighter spaces that other power adapters miss out on.

The SmartCharge does a fine job of charging the iPod and a fine job of feeding the stereo a clean signal from the iPod's output, but could not do both at the same time in any vehicle-cable combination tested. Playing music while charging the iPod results in a variable high-pitched whine and static through the stereo, which makes listening to the music nearly impossible. To this writer's ear, it sounds like there's a bad ground somewhere, which is why multiple vehicles and cables were tested (all with identical results). SendStation's technical support team concurs with this assessment:

> What you describe clearly seems to be a grounding issue, which is beyond our control. Unfortunately some cars have that, others don't.

I'd be willing to accept this explanation had I tested exclusively in older cars or cars with aftermarket stereo systems that weren't installed by a professional, but one of the test vehicles was my brand-new 2007 Mazda 3 with its factory stereo, a combination that seems like it ought to be free of any odd "grounding issues."

The Mazda 3 has an ideally designed center console that allows for a clean hookup with the SmartCharge Dock connector in a compartment sized just right for iPods.

It's a shame, really, because there isn't a whole lot to the device, and it's about as nice-looking as something that shoves into a cigarette lighter plug can be. Without any way to know ahead of time if your vehicle is one of the ones that has a "grounding issue"—and without any way to know whether or not the "grounding issue" can be fixed by a mechanic—it's pretty difficult to give the SmartCharge a positive recommendation.

That center console also includes a 12V power plug and the auxiliary input jack, shown to the right of the SmartCharge.

Copyright © 2007 Chris Lawson. 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

TuneView USB

Developer: Keyspan[1]
Price: $150
Requirements: USB port, Mac OS X 10.3.9, iTunes 7.1.1. Universal[2].
Trial: None

In March, I reviewed Keyspan's TuneView[3]—an iPod Dock and RF remote control combo that allows your iPod to connect to a stereo system via its line level output and navigation with a remote that sports its own LCD display for browsing the iPod's menu. I mentioned in that review that Keyspan would soon release the TuneView USB to be used directly with iTunes instead of an iPod.

Though the product names have been flopped a little bit (the original TuneView is now called TuneView for iPod, and the TuneView USB is now simply called TuneView), the USB version is now available.

The TuneView (originally named the TuneView USB) remote control is the same as the one used for the TuneView for iPod. The receiver is a device a bit larger than most USB thumb drives and attaches to a computer with a standard USB type A to type B cable.

This review is really more of an update to March's review[4] because the TuneView USB is functionally identical to the iPod version. Thus, allow me to point you to that review for a refresher.

Having now tried both the versions of the TuneView, I must stress that there are some distinct factors to consider when choosing which is best for your needs. Obviously, if you do not have a 4G or 5G iPod, a 1G or 2G iPod nano, or an iPod mini, there's no point in choosing the iPod version. Because I do not have access to a 6G iPod classic, iPod touch, or 3G iPod nano, I can't confirm whether line level audio output will work from these devices, but most people are aware by now that video output from these models only works with Apple's A/V cables that contain the decoder chip. It could be that Apple's cables can be used with the TuneView Dock just the same as an Apple Dock. I just have no way to test this.

If, however, you are using a compatible iPod, the TuneView for iPod might be the better way to easily get video to your television. With the TuneView USB, either your computer has to be in the vicinity of your home entertainment system, or you'll need a length of quality cable to send both audio and video to the system.

In my situation, the only videos I manage with iTunes are podcasts that I generally watch right on my computer. So my needs were limited to sending music tracks to my living room. Rather than running long cables from the den, I instead use my Apple AirPort Express to stream music wirelessly. Once it's set up, the small remote is all I need to browse and play any track from my library of more than 7,700 tracks.

In order to communicate with your iTunes library, the TuneView USB remote control must be paired with your computer. This is accomplished with a receiver that attaches to your computer's USB port, and a fairly light footprint background application to manage the connection. Once you pair the remote control to the computer and let the software perform a snapshot of your iTunes library, it's rare that

[1] http://www.keyspan.com/products/tvu200c/homepage.spml
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.03/tuneview.shtml
[4] http://www.atpm.com/13.03/tuneview.shtml

you'll have to open the utility panel again. In the rare case the remote isn't seeing your most recently added tracks, you need only update the snapshot, and you can do so from the remote's Wizard screen.

On the topic of snapshotting your library, there was a time during the beta testing period that insane amounts of time were required to process a library as big as mine, but Keyspan worked on this problem. By the time the TuneView USB was released, it was capable of running the snapshot of my entire library in about 45 seconds.

I have a few minor points of contention about the TuneView USB. While it's $30 cheaper than its iPod-loving cousin, it really isn't an inexpensive solution for remote control of your music. However, I continue to acknowledge, as I did with the TuneView for iPod, that the cost to integrate the two-way RF communication and the LCD screen for the interface probably comes at a premium. With that in mind, I don't think either TuneView model is unfairly priced, and I've not seen a comparable hardware product available any cheaper.

Another issue would be easily remedied with a firmware update to the remote control—the TuneView USB lacks the feature to jump to the beginning of a specific letter in a library list. It does allow jumping to the beginning, middle, or end of a list, but that's not enough for large libraries. The TuneView for iPod firmware already has the alphabet jump capability, so I see no excuse why the USB version does not.

From a pure aesthetic point of view, I wish the USB receiver were a self-contained dongle. Currently, it ships as a module as wide as my four fingers, and it must be attached with a standard USB cable (one is included with the TuneView). I suppose, in some situations, the cable attachment might be the better choice, but I'd rather be able to plug the whole receiver as a dongle directly into a USB port without a cable. A USB extension could instead be bundled for cases where positioning the receiver elsewhere is desired.

When you set up a batch of songs to be played, via the remote, the TuneView software automatically places all the desired tracks in a new iTunes playlist called TuneView. I'm not entirely certain why this is necessary, but it's not generally something that's a problem unless you choose an existing playlist that has many songs in it. When you do, it'll take a few moments to populate the TuneView playlist with all the tracks.

In the course of the past two months of using the TuneView USB, there were a couple of instances when the TuneView system apparently froze up when this playlist population step took place. I had to reset the remote's pairing with the TuneView software to regain access. It is this scenario alone that confirmed my decision to rate the TuneView as Good instead of Very Nice.

If you happen to own an iPhone or iPod touch, you already have a much more sophisticated remote control and would only require Alloysoft's Signal[5] software to take control of your iTunes library.

Otherwise, the TuneView USB functions adequately to provide a high level of iTunes control when your situation does not allow you to see and use the iTunes or Front Row interface.

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.

[5] `http://www.atpm.com/13.12/signal.shtml`

Software Review

by Linus Ly, lly@atpm.com

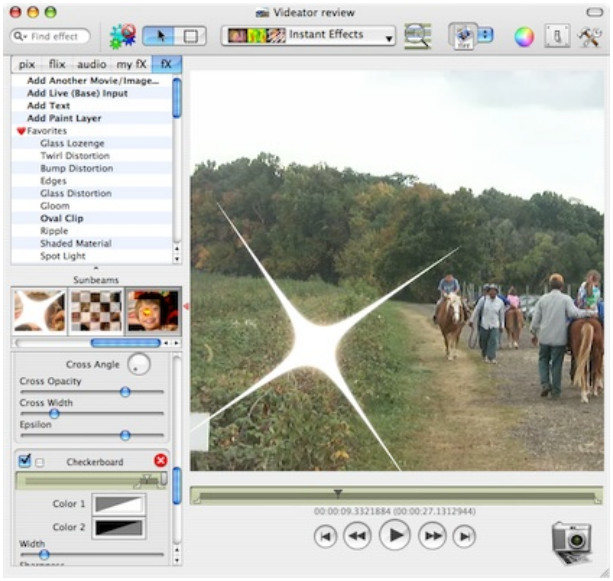
Videator 4.2.1

Developer: Stone Design[1]
Price: $49; free upgrades for life
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal[2].
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

I became seriously interested in computers in the late '80s. Going with my best friend's recommendations, I got an Amiga 1000 computer and stayed with the Amiga platform through two more upgrades. Desktop video (DTV) was the Amiga's forté, and I had my share of exposure to it. The power to create movies on a computer in one's home, for relatively little money, was just so tempting. I did not make any money out of the experience, but the DTV bug stayed with me years later. When I came across Stone Design's Videator, I became intrigued by it. If, years ago, I had had all those special effects found in Videator, would my DTV experience have turned out differently?

Videator's startup screen describes itself as "Movie Magic for Mere Mortals," and this is pretty much true. Open a recorded video or a live feed from iSight camera, click on an effect (fx) on the right side of the screen to instant overlay the effect on the video, tweak the effect's settings or its duration to your heart's content, perhaps add some audio, then export the resulting product to a movie.

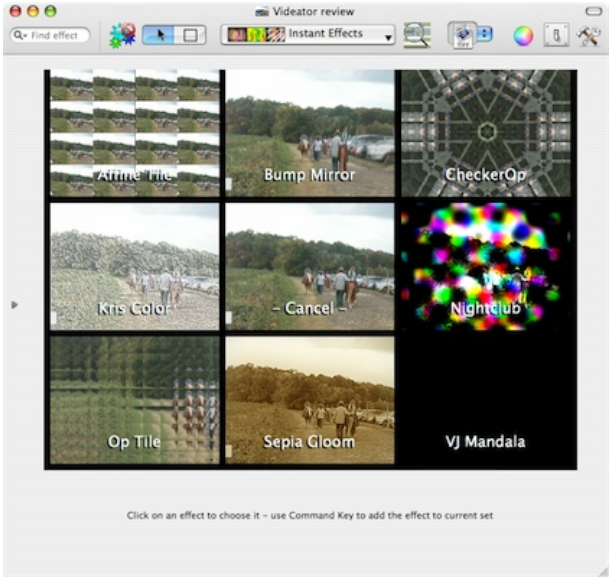
Movies can be saved for viewing from a local disk, over the Web, or on an iPod. You can add more than one effect and have them either overlapping or not. There are many effects to choose from, but there are two I find to be of greater importance. The Paint Layer effect lets you draw freely on top of the video. If you have artistic talent, with the Paint Layer effect you can basically create your own effect. The other important effect is Text. Although it sounds boring, text is tremendously helpful in getting the message to your viewers. You can find a sample video[3] that I made with a few of Videator's many effects. The video is supposed to be a news report by the fictitious WAFN TV station. I tried not to get carried away by adding too many effects but couldn't help using some of the flashy ones.



Load a movie, add some effects, and tweak their parameters—then you have yourself a better-looking movie.

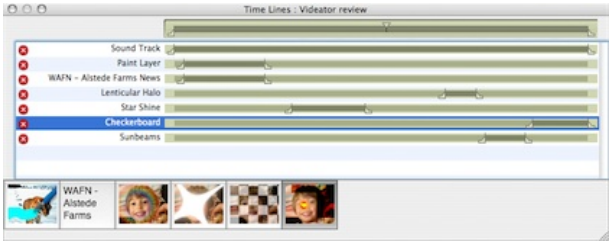
There are over one hundred effects to work with, and there are many ways to apply them. The default way is to choose the effect from the left side of the Videator screen, also known as the Library area. With the default way, you see a sample picture of what the effect does, plus the effect's various parameters that you can alter. You can also add effects from the top menu, perhaps because you prefer to hide the Library area to have a bigger work space. Lastly, you can select effects from the Instant Effects item in the toolbar. The nice thing with Instant Effects is that you get to see what your video looks like before the effect is applied. However you add an effect to your video, undoing is easy with Command-Z or by clicking the effect's close widget.

[1] http://www.stone.com/Videator/
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3] http://homepage.mac.com/linusly/iMovieTheater13.html



At a glance, you see what the eight effects in the set make your video look like. Pick one of them or click the center to cancel.

To fine-tune the various effects you have used, select the Time Lines item from the menu bar. The Time Lines give you a nice overview of all the effects and audio tracks in use. As you drag the various sliders, the video is updated to let you know where you are.



Exercise more control over the various effects you have selected.

Aside from adding effects to videos, you can also slice and dice them. You can drop one video into another video, somewhere between the beginning and the end, or append one to another. I like the fact that when Videator combines videos of different sizes, the different videos keep their different sizes, instead of being reduced or enlarged. Unlike iMovie, once two video clips are combined, they are no longer separate clips, so iMovie users will have to adjust to the Videator way. You can also cut and paste segments of clips, but making the perfect selection can be tricky. You will need to rely a lot on the time line below the video. There are keyboard controls to finely make a selection, but I wish there were an option to zoom in on the selection or a visual search, both of which are implemented in SimpleMovieX[4].

Videator handles still images pretty well, too. Making a slideshow is as easy as picking the photos and leaving the transition effects on random. You can always pick different effects after the movie has been composed. You can also insert pictures into movies or overlay them. However, I find it hard to adjust the size of overlaid pictures. Using the Scale slider, from the smallest size, I cannot make the picture grow slightly larger but rather in big jumps.

Video editing is not an easy thing to learn, but Videator comes with very good documentation. Within the program help is just a click away. You can also download the help PDF separately. The documentation covers both the basic tasks and expert tips, such as how to change the various default settings. The Effects Catalog nicely lists all the effects with pictures to illustrate what they do. Last but not least, the tutorial[5] is very helpful for those who don't like to read manuals.

Stone Design boasts that Videator can make the effects so fast thanks to Apple's Core Image, Core Video, and Quartz Extreme. However, Stone also acknowledges that Videator is on the bleeding edge of technology and encourages Videator users to report any crashes to Apple. While my Videator experience has been relatively trouble-free, I have discovered a few consistent, annoying bugs.

The QuickTime-style go-to-beginning and go-to-the-end buttons don't work the way I think they should. Once they are clicked, the video should be updated to show the beginning or end of the video. You actually have to click these buttons twice.

Another more serious bug involves adding audio to videos. Lately I have been doing a lot of video recording using a digital camera. The movies are saved in QuickTime format and look good on the computer or on TV. It seems that whenever I load these movies into Videator and then add sound clips to them, the sound clips don't play at all. On the Time Lines, their start and end points would be at the exact same point. But if I copy from the movies into a new Videator window, then all is well. I don't know if it is a bug with QuickTime or Videator, but the end result is that I cannot directly add sounds the videos I recorded with the digital camera.

[4] http://www.atpm.com/13.06/simplemoviex.shtml
[5] http://www.stone.com/Videator/Quick_Start.html

Lastly, and perhaps most dangerous, of the bugs that I found is the Revert To Saved menu option. Sometimes I like to use this option instead of executing many undos. While dealing with the audio problem described earlier, I thought perhaps it was necessary to first remove the video's original soundtrack before new soundtracks could be properly added. It made no difference, and I thought simply selecting Revert To Saved would put me back to square one. I got the expected warning that the changes would be lost, but then after I supposedly reverted to a saved version of the video, the Time Lines would still show that my video had no soundtrack, and playing it confirmed the finding. Had I gone ahead and made more changes then saved, I would have lost the original soundtrack.

Bugs aside, there are a few features I wish Videator would have, even though it does have many features already. Flashy effects are nice to see but they get old really quickly. I would like to see more useful text effects like credit roll, crawling text, and close caption. It would be fun to be able to do text that recedes into the background, such as that made famous by Star Wars. iMovie has this text effect, and it is even appropriately named Far, Far Away ("A Long Time Ago, In A Galaxy Far, Far Away…")

Which brings us to the question: can Videator replace iMovie altogether? After all, iMovie is the nonlinear video editor that comes with every new Mac. The answer is no. If, like me, you have iMovie 5.0.2, or iMovie '06, then you will still want to use iMovie along with Videator. It is true that Videator loads movies quickly whereas iMovie imports movies with a noticeable delay. Also, Videator's effects happen instantly while iMovie has to render its limited number of effects. Still, iMovie 5 and '06 beat Videator decisively in the area of text effects. Text may be boring compared to flashy effects, but they are very useful and cannot be ignored.

It may be hard to believe, but there are certain effects iMovie has that Videator sorely lacks. The Fast/Slow/Reverse effect can be comical or dramatic, whereas Rain can be useful in many situations. Maybe Stone Design purposely avoided making effects that are already in iMovie, but for me, I find more useful effects in iMovie's limited number than Videator's many.

I think for now Videator can be used for most of the work, then the result brought into iMovie for better text touchup or to have some special effects applied, if applicable.

If you have just iMovie '08 then, from what I read, the advantages described above may not apply. In '08 the effects are fewer in than previous iMovie versions. However, effects are no longer rendered but instead get generated instantly. What's more, titling is still there, so in the end, iMovie still has the upper hand in one area.

Back to my wish list for Videator. Some of the flashy effects could use some improvements. Many of them only work on the entire frame of the video. I would like to be able to adjust the effects to work on a certain area. For example, in my demo movie, I wanted to pixellate just the face of the people who walked the horse but there is no way to do that.

Despite the few bugs I found and my wish list, I still think Videator a great addition to a videographer's toolbox, but not to totally replace iMovie. If I had had it back in the late 80's, I could have saved so much time. With over one hundred effects to choose from, many ways to access them, support for non-linear editing, great handling of still images, good documentation, the inexpensive Videator is a Very Nice application to have.

Copyright © 2007 Linus Ly, lly@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/