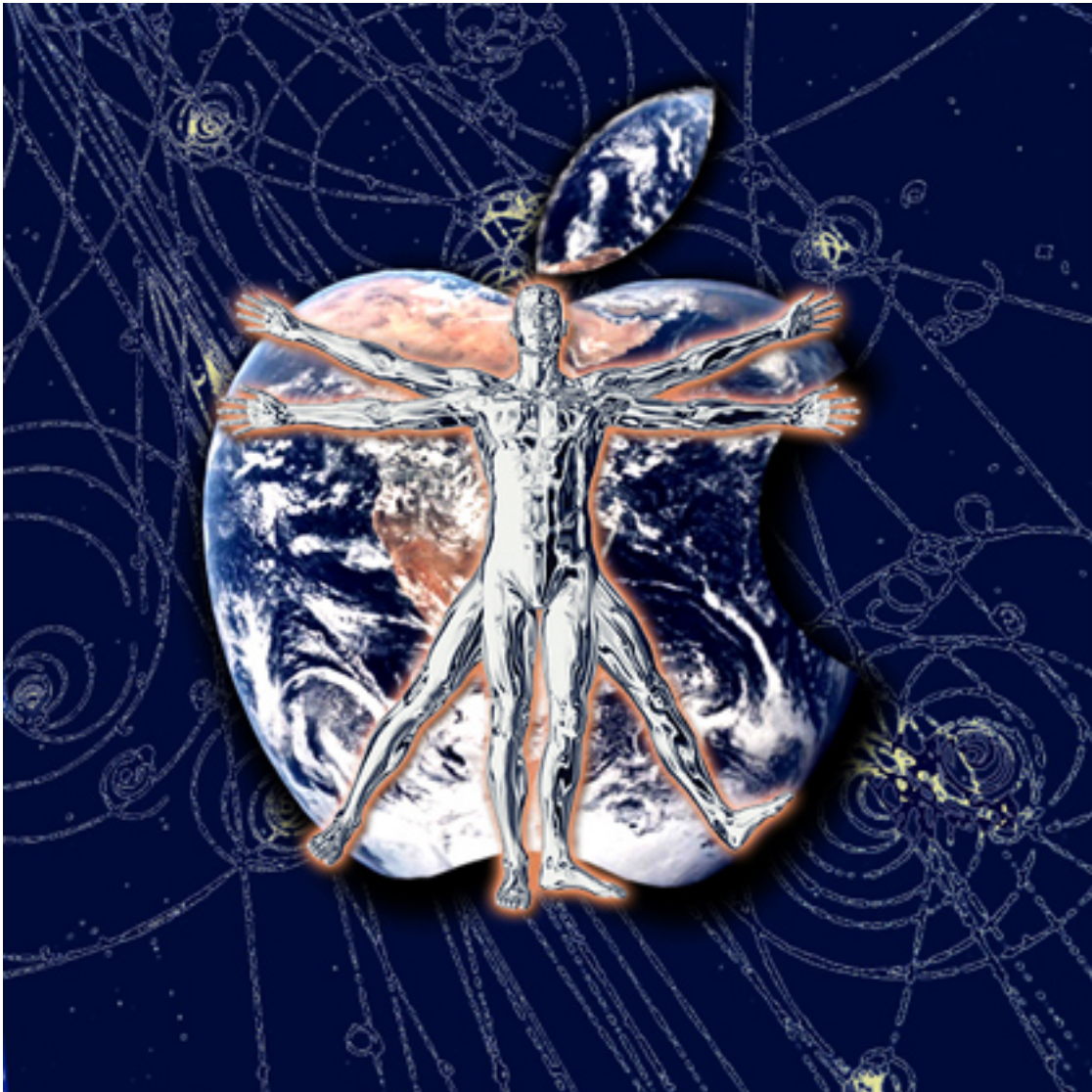# ATPM

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

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

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the June issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* June is an interesting space in time. It marks the end of spring and the beginning of summer. It marks the end of school and the beginning of long and lazy days. It's a calendar space trapped in time and seasonal transition. In this June issue, we take a special look at time in a decidedly Apple kind of way.

WWDC

For the first time in the event's history, Apple's annual conference for developers is sold out. For the Apple faithful anxiously awaiting the opening of this year's event, time has almost come to a stop. The release of iPhone 2.0 may be only days away, and each tick of the clock and every new announcement about the pending release of the 3G iPhone has millions of the world's citizens waiting impatiently for the conference's keynote address.

The Worldwide Developers Conference convenes about a week after ATPM*'s* press time. By the end of June, the cell phone industry may be changed forever. Until the opening of the WWDC and its fateful keynote address, many of us will watch the clock one long tick at a time.

Time Machine

If there's one feature of Leopard that beguiles and intrigues avid Mac users, it's Time Machine. This backup solution both frustrates and interests those of us who are organizationally challenged and knowingly in need of a means to store our digital stuff. It's brought the term "sparsebundle" into conversation and brought a form of digital file management rather reluctantly into our lives. Storage space "below the cloud" has its physical limits. Although digital triage has its benefits (How many different versions of our latest home movie epic do we really need to store?) hard choices await those of us who wish to bring order to a digital space with physical storage constraints. Western Digital, a previously lesser-known maker of hard drives, has become the prestige brand of choice for an emerging class of storage space connoisseurs.

Time Capsule

If you read Tom Bridge's review of Time Capsule in this month's issue, you might wonder if Apple's wireless backup solution is really two unrelated products melded into one. As a wireless base station it "shines the Apple," but as a digital storage solution it may leave some wondering what the company has done. The author of this column is successfully using Time Capsule to backup a home full of Macs, but outcomes apparently vary wildly by user and circumstance.

Time Travel

Apple's latest iteration of its iApps suite comes bundled in an attractively priced iLife '08 package. It allows users to present past events and future hopes on screen, on the Web, and in print. It's a potent portfolio of products that should be heralded for both its simplicity and its power to promote self-expression. It's also a key selling feature in the Mac's consumer resurgence. Messing with time is an ages-old human desire, and Apple's consumer products are delighting the hearts and inspiring the minds of millions of new users. It's no wonder Apple is close to regaining the PC sales crown in the K-12 market and makes the laptop of choice for millions of college students. Time waits for no one. But helping users capture the past and inspiring hope for the future have made the company the most potent force in the design and delivery of personal computing products.

Timetable

By most accounts Windows Vista is a bust. It's helped create demand for Macs at a level unseen in Apple's history. The much anticipated 3G iPhone is scheduled for a global rollout including release in territories that before now that had not seen an Apple product other than the popular iPod, and even then in numbers that evidenced scarcity more than ubiquity.

It won't be long before Apple competitors such as RIM, Nokia, HP, and even Microsoft seek to take back lost ground. There are timetables for tides and time windows for opportunity. Microsoft is already hyping its Vista replacement, and cell phones that mimic the iPhone will soon be in release. Will Apple make the most of its technology advantages or will time prove to be a foe rather than a friend? ATPM will cover this story in the months ahead.

The Time Has Come

Thank you for being with us this month. The time has come to explore our June issue. Each month ATPM chronicles the "personal computing experience" in a unique, informative, and entertaining way. Enjoy the June issue. We'll see you again in July.

Our June issue includes:

MacMuser: Mac to My Back

Sweet escape—Back to My Mac and .Mac facilitate out of office experiences.

MacMuser: 10.5.3 and Time Machine

Time goes by so slowly, sometimes. Though the latest Mac OS X update might kink the space-time continuum, nothing is seriously warped.

Next Actions: Master List

Ed Eubanks Jr. returns with the second installment of applications for Getting Things Done.

Segments: Apple Versus Dell

Breaking the molds—in the combination of business and technology, one size does not fit all.

How To: Find the Right NAS Drive

A Network Attached Storage device could be of immense benefit to multiple-computer households, or even just one computer that operates untethered on Wi-Fi most of the time. Sylvester Roque discusses the "it factors" for choosing a NAS device.

How To: How a Programmer Works With a Non-Programming Project

Charles Ross offers glimpses into the secret life of programmers and demonstrates the benefits of programming for novices.

Desktop Pictures: Boston

Reader Rob Colonna provides this month's photos taken in Boston, Massachusetts.

Cartoon: Cortland

"Wieser Graphics is history" as Lisa launches her final assault. Could this spell the end for Cortland and friends?

Review: Aluminum V2

The perfect hard case for your U2 Special Edition iPod, four years too late.

Review: Escape the Museum

The combination of adventure and hidden object levels provide hours of entertainment. Some objects are unfairly hidden, but help is freely available.

Review: OptiBay Hard Drive

Nice, but not super, Frank Wu reveals the reality behind the OptiBay drive's marketing.

Review: TapeDeck 1.0

TapeDeck rekindles the joy of cassette recording to simplify the process of getting your audio to iTunes or compressed for e-mail. Whatever you choose to record, it'll be really, really easy to do.

Review: Time Capsule (1 TB)

Good NAS, good Base Station, crappy Time Machine.

E-Mail

Drive Genius 2[1]

I had a drive fail recently. It was still operating fine, but SMARTreporter popped up and said the SMART status reported imminent failure. I was able to copy all my files off of it (that's the advantage of an early warning utility), but Disk Utility would not let me zero out the data (in fact Disk Utility wouldn't touch it at all). But using the Shred option in Drive Genius 2 I could overwrite the entire disk before sending it back to Apple. It did this even though it knew the SMART status was "failed" (it had changed from failing to failed over the course of a day) so that's a very big plug for this program.

—*Rowan*

CD-ripping Rip-off[2]

I make it a point to own a legit CD or legally download a copy of every song in my iTunes library. I want the artist who created it to benefit from the fact that I own a copy of his or her music. Once I buy it, it's *mine.* If I want to use the disc for a $15 Frisbee, that's my choice. All of my CDs are ripped for my three iPods.

If you want to save a buck or two, music lovers, buy a recycled or discounted CD from Amazon or you favorite local used CD store.

If the artists don't get paid, they may quit making music and get a job at the local Wal-Mart selling other artist's music. What a waste of talent *that* would be.

—*Grover Watson*

Another Ripping Rip-off[3]

You've precisely illustrated the reason why I have chosen to *never* patronize a digital music download service (free or paid). The former goes against the very spirit of the copyright laws (supposedly) designed to protect the music artists; while the latter is enabling and encouraging ripping off the consumer, whom (if they go along with it) are effectively just "renting" the rights to play the music. It appears there is no middle ground.

—*J. L. Eaton*

Photoshop For the Curious[4]

Thanks for the great ideas, Lee.

What a simple workaround to create a non-destructive dodge/burn layer. I've been experimenting with layer masks to get the same effect but haven't come up with anything near this simple or elegant.

—*Michael McKee*

Exporting From FreeHand[5]

I am not a designer and usually use FreeHand 10 only to make changes to images created by others, who have the same problem:

When exporting, FreeHand always defaults to `.swf`, so all of us have to pull down and change how we want the exported file saved. We *always* want to export as Macintosh `.eps`. Is there a way to change this permanently? Thanks for your help!

—*CMWyckoff*

> This may not be the answer you are looking for, but it might serve you better.
>
> Instead of exporting to EPS, try a Save As and select Editable EPS as the format. I started using this instead of saving native FreeHand 10 files. It created an EPS that I was fully able to use in my various other DTP apps, and I could still double-click to open them into FreeHand 10. From then on, I didn't have to select anything. I only needed to hit the regular Save button and it remained an EPS.
>
> I concede there may be some FreeHand effects that aren't properly retained when saving to an Editable EPS instead of FreeHand 10 format. But I also remind that I, personally, *never* encountered such trouble since I never really used advanced effects in FreeHand.
>
> —*Lee Bennett*

Apple Keyboard[6]

Agreed. This is probably the best keyboard Apple has made so far (though there are the die-hard "clack lovers" who swear by (the American-made models of) the Extended Keyboard II).

—*Chris Ryland*

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/drive-genius.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/macmuser-cd-ripping.shtml
[3] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/macmuser-another-ripping.shtml

[4] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/photoshop.shtml
[5] http://www.atpm.com/7.07/freehand.shtml
[6] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/apple-keyboard.shtml

My aluminum keyboard (wired) was probably the best keyboard I have ever used when I first got it. Much better than the MacBook keyboard I was so fond of. It was never as sturdy as this one is. I say when I first got it because I had an incident with it where I spilt a sticky drink over it. Now a few of the keys stick, but it still works pretty beautifully.

I have never been a connoisseur of keyboards, but I can say from my very limited experience of the previous Apple keyboard and a few Windows keyboards that this is my favourite.

—*Nick Savage*

• • •

Good news as I am in the market for a new keyboard. I have the Bluetooth white keyboard that came with my Mac Pro, and I'm not very happy with it. The keys stick (more correctly, the plastic grabs when pressing a key at an angle as I often do with the Command key), and they move around too much.

I'd much rather have a cheap ADB keyboard and get a USB converter than use this even though I very much like the wireless aspect.

—*Christian Gwizdala*

• • •

After months of a Apple Extended Keyboard (white with numeric keypad and the clear, dirt-revealing plastic), then a brief stint with a Dell USB keyboard (ugly, but at least those keys didn't randomly not depress), I borrowed an aluminum keyboard from a friend who just got a new iMac.

It took me 10 minutes to go from, "Hm, weird. Don't know if I like this…" to looking online for a cheap price and quick shipping on one for myself.

—*Christopher Bowns*

• • •

I absolutely love this keyboard; I love it so much every other keyboard feels like a monkey-spunked finger-waster straight from Dell. I now find it difficult to use other keyboards, due to the awareness of having to push those keys a pointlessly far distance.

I didn't "get used" to the aluminum keyboard; I instead immediately found it to be the purest form of keyboard yet devised.

—*Jeremy Roush*

• • •

This iteration of the Apple Keyboard does not have rubber dome keyswitches (the previous, plastic-bodied one did). It has scissor keyswitches similar to the ones on modern laptop keyboards. This accounts for the better feel compared to other desktop keyboards that do use rubber dome switches.

—*Andrew Witte*

• • •

Finally, Apple have released a decent keyboard. Those late-90s iMac-era keyboards were junk in terms of both feel and build quality. In my opinion, they couldn't even compete with those cheap $10 PC keyboards. Clearly they were trying for something different, but it just didn't work.

The aluminum keyboard isn't just decent; it's rock solid, and it definitely benefits from its thin form factor. I think it's now the most compelling keyboard from any of the big-name computer manufacturers. (and all this without messing with the keyboard layout, which is something both Logitech and Microsoft can't seem to help themselves from doing. Grr.)

I was worried that the (brilliant) Caps-Lock delay would impact those who (smartly) remap Caps Lock to another key. Thankfully, that isn't the case. When the Caps Lock key is remapped the delay doesn't take effect.

Next up for Apple, a new mouse? (I actually like the feel of the Mighty Mouse, but the build quality is poor. Our school has a few general-purpose computer labs stocked with new iMacs, and the scroll ball on every single Mighty Mouse died within a few months of use.)

—*Darren*

• • •

I'm a die hard "clack lover" who still has a couple of old Apple Extended ADB keyboards, and I really like the new Apple aluminum keyboard. It feels identical to the new MacBook Air keyboard; both have very solid frames that contribute substantially to the feel. The keys are easy to press down with no hesitation and are not mushy or stiff at all. I can type very fast on this keyboard. The MacBook keyboard is somewhat similar but does not feel nearly as good.

The other advantage is that this keyboard is silent, nice for typing in the bedroom, etc. (that's why I bought it).

—*Steve Lang*

• • •

I grew up with a Selectric typewriter in the house, and I took it to college with me, saying goodbye to it only after buying my first computer. Every keyboard I've owned has been judged by its standard. Apple's old style Pro came very very close, as did the first IBM computer keyboards. I've thrown away a lot of keyboards over the years and hated more than a couple notebooks because the keys were shaped wrong, they felt mushy, or the throw was too short, too long, too soft, or too hard.

When the ADB port was killed off, I tried a few USB-to-ADB adaptors and eventually accepted keyboard mediocrity. Then Matias brought out a keyboard[7] that very nearly replicated my beloved Selectric. I bought three of them and just recently gave the first its burial. Two days prior to that, a new iMac had been delivered to my desk, so with a groan I grabbed that tiny thin aluminum keyboard and plugged it in. Amazing!

Of all the notebooks I've owned, my MacBook has the least lousy keyboard, and this new Apple keyboard is its twin. Once I stopped moving between the low-profile keyboard on the MacBook and the clacky long throw of the Matias board, I realized that it wasn't just a not bad keyboard, it was a quite good keyboard. I wound up not pulling out a new Matias board—I quite like this thin little keyboard.

—*David Benson*

• • •

All I can say is, test it out first. I absolutely hated this keyboard and ended up, on the advice of *MacInTouch* readers, getting a USB MacAlly iKey instead. I had to get it used, but it had the feel I was looking for. I like a lot of laptop keyboards—the classic Vaios and the G4 iBooks, for example—but not this aluminum thing, as lovely as it was.

—*David Zatz*

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[7] http://www.atpm.com/10.09/tactile.shtml

I find that these new laptop-ish "short travel" keys feel fine for regular typing, but they're a real shortcoming when it comes to chording two keys, for instance Command-Option.

With the classic "deep" keys, it was enough to slap the thumb over the gap between the keys and you could be reasonably certain that you're holding both of them down together.

With the aluminum keyboard it's a bit more of a balancing act to get both keys down correctly, and it gets especially awkward when adding Shift into the mix (pinky on Shift, thumb on Command-Option), since this contorted hand position makes it very hard to hold both keys with the side of the thumb.

I think that's my only annoyance with the aluminum keyboard. Has anyone else found this to be a problem?

—*Andrew Vit*

> I found that to be a big problem at first, but I got used to it within a week.
> —*Michael Tsai*

Coping With Mac OS X's Font Rendering[8]

This may help Lex with his font issue. I have the usual post–middle age eyesight problems. My monitor is a Hewlett-Packard 23″ LCD with a 0.258 mm dot pitch (98 dots per inch) and a 1900×1200 resolution. Here's how I set up my Mac to minimize eyestrain:

In the Appearance preference pane I chose the Medium font smoothing style and turned off smoothing for fonts 8 point or less. In the Finder preferences for window text, I chose the 12 point size, but that can be bumped up to 13 or 14 points for those with poorer eyesight.

In my Firefox browser I chose as default fonts 16 point New York (serif), 16 point Arial (sans serif), and 15 point Courier New (monospaced). I set the minimum font size to 14 points and unchecked the "Allow pages to choose their own fonts..." option.

For e-mail (Entourage), I chose 14 point Verdana for lists and 12 point Monaco for e-mail text. Again, those point sizes can be bumped up.

For applications like Word and Excel, I set up the default templates to display new documents at a zoom level of 125% or 150%. I do the same with most other text-heavy applications.

With this combination of choices, I am quite happy with OS X font rendering. If my eyes are

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[8] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/e-mail.shtml#coping-with-mac-os-x-s

tired, I increase the zoom level or use keystroke combinations to bump up font size.

—Gregory Tetrault

> Increasing the sizes can certainly make the fonts more readable. Still, I believe that with better font rendering options they could be more readable at smaller sizes, thus allowing more efficient use of the available screen real estate.
>
> *—Michael Tsai*

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Mac to My Back

When the temperature outside starts with a 3 you know you have problems. A single digit, Fahrenheit, or preceded by a minus means it is what is technically known as bloody freezing. A single digit after the 3, as in the southern half of the UK this weekend, the correct term is bloody hot. Unless you are measuring in the RØmer scale in which case you will be dead.

With that in mind, after finding the coolest part of the garden and settling in to watch Lewis Hamilton beat the cheating Spaniard, a problem arose needing a quick and effortless solution since any exertion produced buckets of perspiration. The Mac transmitting the TV signal to the receiver laptop was having a little hissy fit every few minutes and needed a good seeing to.

Stuck in the Office

It was, after all, compressing video, uploading a gigabyte of data, and signing on to get e-mail every five minutes or so. As well as capturing live TV and transmitting to us in the garden. Being an original G5, it too was complaining about the heat, huffing and puffing its fans to keep cool. This seemed an ideal time to try Apple's Back to My Mac[1] because it meant staying in the garden while solving the hissy fit.

If you have never used Back to My Mac, it arrived in Mac OS X 10.5, and with it you can edit and transfer files between Macs as well as control one Mac from the other. Neither are new or unique services, but as usual, Apple has made it a no-brainer. Simply turn on Screen Sharing using the Sharing and .Mac Preference panes, and turn on UPNP or NAT-PMP in your router. They probably are already on.

.Mac Upgrade on the Way

The .Mac account is the only other requirement because, as Wikipedia states[2]:

> Back to My Mac uses wide-area Bonjour to discover services across the Internet and automatically configure ad hoc, on-demand, point to point encrypted connections between computers using IPSec. It requires users to have a .Mac subscription for the Dynamic DNS service portion of Wide-Area Bonjour.

Rumour has it that in June Apple will announce a big upgrade to the .Mac service—which already isn't to be sneezed at. Back to My Mac is just one further feature that makes the annual fee even more reasonable.

Back to My Bacchus

Getting back to our Macs, all we did was turn it on and immediately we could control one Mac from the other. Meaning we could retire to the coolest part of the garden, wipe the condensation from the glasses of chilled Bacchus wine, and watch Lewis. At the same time keeping an eye on the other Mac which was still busily working away in the office. Just to add to its woes, we fired up QuarkXPress and made a series of PDFs, which were uploaded via Transmit. All controlled with our backs to the Mac, from the garden via a laptop.

Perfick.

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[1] http://www.apple.com/dotmac/backtomymac.html

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Back_To_My_Mac
[3] http://www.tennent.co.uk

10.5.3 and Time Machine

The latest Mac OS X update[1] is available at a Software Update near you. Apart from fixing loads of glitches, it also messes with Time Machine; and some people, including me, have had mixed results after the update. For more details go to the discussions[2] on Apple's support pages.

In most cases, the drive used by Time Machine for storage refuses to mount. Various solutions are offered: a low-level reformat, turning Time Machine to a new drive and back again, and trashing Time Machine's and other preferences. See the discussions for greater detail.

Once...Twice...Three Times Went Crazy

We updated three Macs. The first, last night, went without a hitch and has been rock-solid. The second spent a long time, perhaps three hours, being busy saving things into Time Machine. The third Mac seemed happy enough after upgrading, Time Machine worked, everything else seemed unaffected. Then it had a kernel crash.

This is a pretty rare event for Mac users, the equivalent of a Windows Blue Screen of Death so ably demonstrated by his Biliousness, here[3] on Windows 98, here[4] (twice) on Windows 2000, and here[5] in 2005 while demonstrating the Xbox. Mac users, on the other hand, think of kernel crashes as traffic accidents involving a Jeep.

Getting a Good Thrashing

On restarting the Mac, the Time Machine drive would not mount yet it was obviously thrashing away at something, its little LED blinking Morse code at a terrific rate. The Mac was shut down and the Time Machine drive connected to a laptop. It refused to mount, and again the drive thrashed away at something.

Checking in Activity Monitor[6] showed `fsck_hfs` was consuming a lot of processor time and had been started by `root`. This usually happens automatically at restart on the drive containing the system, but this is the first time we've seen it run automatically on another drive. The system log in Console stated there was Runtime Corruption and `fsck` would be forced on next mount. The drive was returned to the original Mac and left for an hour or so for `fsck` to do its thing. Eventually the thrashing stopped, the drive mounted, and all is well.

As far as the rest of the 10.5.3 update: no other problems have been experienced and running Repair Permissions after the update showed nothing needed fixing.

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[1] http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1141

[2] http://discussions.apple.com/forum.jspa?forumID=1227

[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgriTO8UHvs

[4] http://www.vnunet.com/vnunet/news/2126451/blue-screen-death-crashes-gates-ces

[5] http://gizmodo.com/gadgets/notag/bill-gates-keynote-gets-the-blue-screen-of-death-29002.php

[6] http://www.atpm.com/12.11/activity.shtml

[7] http://www.tennent.co.uk

Next Actions
by Ed Eubanks, Jr.

Master List

Here's the second installment of the new-and-improved "Master List."

The list now covers all applications that are relevant to GTD (that I know of), divided into the categories I've been using from the start. *Next Actions* readers will hopefully recognize the distinctions between GTD applications and more general task managers. You'll also likely be familiar with advantages and disadvantages of locally-installed applications vs. Web-based tools. I believe these are helpful distinctions, although the lines blur considerably.

I've provided a sort of tiered coverage of these apps. My primary focus, naturally, is on the locally-installed, full-on GTD application. Second priority goes to the more general-purpose task management applications, also locally-installed. Finally, Web-based (and browser-based) tools and applications get bottom priority—and you'll notice that coverage of these is quite sparse. This is out of a sense of necessity on my part: I want to actually get back to writing about *using* these tools, not just the tools themselves, and I'm limited in how much time I can give to the various aspects of maintaining this column. I've also come to the conclusion that the Web application landscape is such a vast and ever-expanding world that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to accurately represent what these tools actually offer. Thus, I'll limit my coverage to merely listing these.

I strive every time I edit to be comprehensive in this list; I'm sure that I have missed one or two, perhaps even your favorite. I welcome feedback on the list, and invite you to alert me to those apps that deserve a spot on it.

Locally Installed GTD Applications

Action Tracker[1]

Developer: Mac Productive
Current Version: 1.3.1
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: FileMaker Pro (free Runtime version available)
Distinguishing Features: Also organizes notes, contacts, and other information related to projects.
News: None

ActionTastic[2]

Developer: Jon Crosby
Current Version: 0.9.3
Price: Free, open-source
Development Status: Beta
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: Yes

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[1]http://macproductive.com/actiontracker.html
[2]http://www.kaboomerang.com/blog/category/actiontastic/

Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Processing engine; iPod sync; Mail and MailTags compatibility.
News: None

EasyTask Manager[3]

Developer: Orionbelt.com
Current Version: 1.9.3
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: Yes
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Windows version available; automatic advance of uncompleted due tasks to "today."
News: Recent update improved online features, including iPhone support.

Frictionless[4]

Developer: Twin Forces
Current Version: 2.0d15
Price: Free, open-source
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None

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[3]http://www.orionbelt.com/
[4]http://www.twinforces.com/frictionless/

Distinguishing Features: Quick-entry box; fuzzy repeated actions.
News: None

Ghost Action[5]

Developer: Ghost Park Software
Current Version: 1.1
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: .Mac syncing (without iCal running); PDA/iPod syncing.
News: None

iGTD[6]

Developer: Bartek
Current Version: 1.4.5.6
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Compatible with Address Book, Mail, iSync, and MailTags, as well as Web browser support, Path Finder, Yojimbo, MacJournal, and others; quick-entry feature; simple yet powerful interface.

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[5]http://ghostparksoftware.com/
[6]http://igtd.pl/iGTD/

News: Version 2 is in development (public alpha release available for download), as is iGTD Pro.

iCog[7]

Developer: HensPace
Current Version: 1.88
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: Python 2.4 or higher
Distinguishing Features: Compatible with any OS running Python (including Windows); very simple, text-only utility.
News: None

Kinkless GTD[8]

Developer: Ethan Schoonover
Current Version: 0.83
Price: Free
Development Status: Beta
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: OmniOutliner Pro 3.6 or higher
Distinguishing Features: Nothing fancy, but a simple list management tool.
News: Schoonover has effectively abandoned development of kGTD since joining the staff of the Omni Group and working on the OmniFocus development team.

mGTD[9]

Developer: Apokalypse Software Corp
Current Version: 1.2
Price: Free
Development Status: "Pre-final"
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: Mori 1.4
Distinguishing Features: Expands Mori (digital notebook) functions to include GTD principles.
News: None

Midnight Inbox[10]

Developer: Midnight Beep Softworks
Current Version: 1.3.1
Price: $35
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Action timer; quick-note and quick-action hot keys; Mail compatible; "automatic" data collection.
News: Version 2 was recently discussed in great detail on the Web site.

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[9]http://apokalypsesoftware.com/products/node/1385
[10]http://www.midnightbeep.com/

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[7]http://www.henspace.co.uk/ikog/index.html
[8]http://www.kinkless.com/

OmniFocus[11]

Developer: Omni Group
Current Version: 1.0.2
Price: $80
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Mail- and Spotlight-compatible; simple interface with powerful view features.
News: Version 1.1 has been announced/discussed, said to include a true iPhone application that will be released around the time of the iPhone firmware 2.0 update.

pyGTD[12]

Developer: Thiamin Trek
Current Version: n/a
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: Python
Distinguishing Features: Cross-platform compatibility; incorporates Covey-style prioritization with GTD; a simple text-based list.
News: Web site is no longer on the server; if the problem persists, I'll remove this application from the list.

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[11]http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnifocus/
[12]http://96db.com/pyGTD/

Ready, Set, Do![13]

Developer: Todd Vasquez
Current Version: 1.2k
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: A very different approach using a set of AppleScript routines to impose organization and communication across a computer's entire filesystem; multiple language support.
News: Latest version includes a script for sending an e-mail to RSD from the inbox.

TaskPaper[14]

Developer: Hog Bay Software
Current Version: 1.0.3 (26)
Price: $19
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No

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[13]http://homepage.mac.com/toddvasquez/Ready-Set-Do!/Personal93.html
[14]http://hogbaysoftware.com/projects/taskpaper

QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Simple, text-based system; no-frills, intentionally designed as an alternative to more full-featured systems.
News: None

Things[15]

Developer: Cultured Code
Current Version: 0.9.1
Price: $50 (pre-release price of $40 with signup for newsletter)
Development Status: Alpha
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Features *will* include: iCal sync; repeating tasks; Mail compatibility; network and multi-computer operation; and import/export options.
News: Those who want to serve as alpha testers may request access. Final release version will cost between $40 and $50.

Thinking Rock[16]

Developer: Avente Pty Ltd.
Current Version: 1.2.3 (2.0e also available)
Price: Free, open-source
Development Status: Release

iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Cross-platform compatibility through Java; interactive collection and processing.
News: Web site now promises that the final version of 2.0 is coming soon (as of April 10, 2008).

Vortex[17]

Developer: AirBlade Software
Current Version: 1.0.13 (r22)
Price: £15 (approx. $30)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Two-panel view; single-click creation of new tasks and projects; contingent and dependent actions; time and energy requirement indices; Windows version available.
News: No longer for sale! The service and support available on their Web site is for those who already own a license. (This application will be removed for the next issue.)

What To Do[18]

Developer: Objective Satisfaction

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[15]http://culturedcode.com/things/
[16]http://www.thinkingrock.com.au/

[17]http://airbladesoftware.com/
[18]http://www.objectivesatisfaction.com/what_todo/

Current Version: 1.3.2
Price: $29
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Required Applications: None
Distinguishing Features: Drag-and-drop intensive for easy reorganization; .Mac syncing for multiple computers; XML export.
News: None

Locally Installed General Task Managers

Check Off [19]

Developer: Second Gear
Current Version: 3.8
Price: Free/Donationware
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Distinguishing Features: A menu-bar utility that manages basic task lists; syncs with iPods; a .Mac Backup QuickPick is provided.
News: None

Docket [20]

Developer: Surprise Software
Current Version: 1.3
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Distinguishing Features: A neat, basic list management application. A Windows version is also available.
News: None

DoIt [21]

Developer: Jim McGowan
Current Version: 2.6
Price: Donationware
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: Yes
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
Distinguishing Features: .Mac support, and AppleScriptability. Also supports file attachments and categories for lists.
News: None

High Priority [22]

Developer: Aram Kudurshian
Current Version: 1.11
Price: $6–personal; $12–family; $60–business
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
Distinguishing Features: A system preference pane, creates a menu in the menu bar that lets you create and update your iCal tasks.
News: *Not* compatible with Leopard; no plans are made for a Leopard-compatible upgrade as of now.

Hot Plan [23]

Developer: Intuiware
Current Version: 1.4.1
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
Distinguishing Features: Tracks a substantial amount of information about a given task, including completion status, priority, time remaining; supports tagging, color-coding, and locking of tasks. Also allows collection of URLs and files.
News: None

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[19] http://www.checkoffapp.com/
[20] http://www.surprisesoftware.com/docket/
[21] http://www.jimmcgowan.net/Site/DoIt.html

[22] http://www.kudurshian.net/highpriority/
[23] http://www.intuiware.com/Products/MacOSX/HotPlan/

iClock[24]

Developer: Script Software
Current Version: 3.0.5
Price: $20
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
Distinguishing Features: Offers a menu bar–based method of managing task lists; includes .Mac syncing.
News: None

Life Balance[25]

Developer: Llamagraphics
Current Version: 4.0.5
Price: $65 ($80 when bundled with Palm version)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
Distinguishing Features: Gives "meta-feedback" about tasks: how much time are you spending in different areas of your life (i.e. work, family, hobbies, etc.), and are you keeping it balanced? Palm and Windows versions available.
News: None

MultitaskingAssistant[26]

Developer: Green Cog Software
Current Version: 1.0
Price: Donationware
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
Distinguishing Features: Perhaps especially helpful for repetitive and redundant tasks.
News: None

Stapler[27]

Developer: The Blue Technologies Group
Current Version: 1.1
Price: €7.50 (about $10)
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: No
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes
Distinguishing Features: Is a combination notepad and to-do list manager, with creation date, notes, and a check-box for completed items. Tasks can be color-coded based on a low-level preference setup.
News: None

ToDo X[28]

Developer: Omicron Software Systems, Inc.
Current Version: 2.2
Price: $15
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Import from iCal only
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: No
Distinguishing Features: Offers categories, priorities, and attached notes.
News: None

ZooDo[29]

Developer: InterfaceThis
Current Version: 1.0
Price: Free
Development Status: Release
iCal Sync: Yes
QuickSilver Plug-in: No
Web-app Sync: No
Print Lists: Yes (through iCal)
Distinguishing Features: A basic task-creator for iCal, serving as a "collection bucket."
News: None

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[24]http://www.scriptsoftware.com/iclock/iclockmac.php
[25]http://www.llamagraphics.com/LB/index.php
[26]http://www.greencogsoftware.com/

[27]http://www.blue-tec.com/stapler/
[28]http://www.nomicro.com/Products/ToDo/
[29]http://interfacethis.com/zoodo/

Browser and Web-Based GTD Apps

30 Boxes[30]

Price: Free

Description: Lean and fast, including a calendar, task list, and limited Gmail interaction. Also RSS and iCal feeds, SMS, and sharing. Nice interface, too.

GTDGMail[31]

Price: Free

Description: A Firefox extension for GTD integration with Gmail. Pre-packaged labels, a Review process, specialized searches within Gmail, quick-entry for tasks, and printable. Current version, 1.31, is open-source; requires Firefox.

GTD-PHP[32]

Price: Free

Description: A PHP solution designed to be locally installed. A simple tabbed interface, capture and process stages, weekly review.

Neptune[33]

Price: $10/year

Description: Includes a collection "inbox" and context or project task viewing panes, as well as inactive projects and tasks. Daily e-mail reminders of tasks, new tasks can be added by e-mail, and data export.

Next Action[34]

Price: free

Description: Uses Google Gears and Firefox; has a lean, basic interface with multiple-list management capability. Works with or without a network connection.

Nexty[35]

Price: free

Description: PHP-based, so installs locally and runs in your browser; supports contexts and reminders.

Nozbe[36]

Price: Free

Description: Has markers for which action will be next and a time estimation for tasks. Contexts are visible and identifiable, and it is easy to collect and process quickly.

SimpleGTD[37]

Price: Free

Description: Tabs for next actions, contexts, projects, and done actions; drag-and-drop organization and easy "un-doing" of tasks

Toodledo[38]

Price: Free

Description: Has a Firefox plugin and a Google gadget for easy collection; also supports e-mail, voicemail, and traditional entry for collection. Includes a good overview of GTD in cooperation with their tools, as well.

Tracks[39]

Price: Free

Description: A Web server that runs locally, or hosted through tracks.tra.in. Fast, lean, and pretty, it offers calendaring and a multi-user component.

Vitalist[40]

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[30] http://www.30boxes.com/welcome.php
[31] http://gtdgmail.com/
[32] http://www.gtd-php.com/Main/HomePage
[33] http://www.neptunehq.com/
[34] http://code.google.com/p/trimpath/wiki/NextAction

[35] http://nexty.sourceforge.net/
[36] http://www.nozbe.com/page/index
[37] http://www.simplegtd.com/
[38] http://www.toodledo.com/info/gtd.php
[39] http://www.rousette.org.uk/projects/
[40] http://www.vitalist.com/

Price: $5/month (premium)

Description: Is a wide-scale GTD system: collection, project management, recurring actions, and tickler files. Includes a mobile edition, iCal and RSS feeds, and e-mail and SMS reminders. A "premium" (paid) version also includes security encryption, collaboration, file attachments, and calendaring.

Other Browser/Web-Based Task Managers

- Backpack[41]

- Basecamp[42]

- HiTask[43]

- Hiveminder[44]

- Joe's Goals[45]

- Mojonote[46]

- Remember the Milk[47]

- Scrybe[48]

- Sproutliner[49]

- Task Freak![50]

- Tasks[51]

- Tasktoy[52]

- Todoist[53]

- Tweeto[54]

- Zenlists[55]

GTD and Task Management Wikis

- D3[56]

- GTDTiddlyWiki[57]

- MonkeyGTD[58]

- Pimki[59]

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[41]http://www.backpackit.com/
[42]http://www.basecamphq.com/
[43]http://hitask.com/
[44]http://hiveminder.com/splash/
[45]http://www.joesgoals.com/
[46]http://mojonote.com/
[47]http://www.rememberthemilk.com/
[48]http://iscrybe.com/main/index.php
[49]http://sproutliner.com/
[50]http://www.taskfreak.com/
[51]http://www.kingdesign.net/tasks/
[52]http://www.tasktoy.com/
[53]http://todoist.com/
[54]http://www.tweeto.com/
[55]http://zenlists.com/

[56]http://www.dcubed.ca/
[57]http://nathanbowers.com/gtdtw/index.html
[58]http://monkeygtd.tiddlyspot.com/#MonkeyGTD
[59]http://pimki.rubyforge.org/

Apple Versus Dell, or Why Technology Isn't Just About the Technology

The Secret Diary of Steve Jobs[1]:

> As for the question, "So who knows?" the answer to that last question is, I do. I know. Let me explain. What people overlook is that the advantages that allowed Dell to prosper for about a decade were all fleeting advantages. Dell was for a while an innovative company, but its innovations did not involve product design. They involved manufacturing and distribution efficiencies.

This quote comes from another great post from Daniel Lyons in his Fake Steve Jobs persona. When people try to analyze Apple or compare it to other computer companies, they typically make at least one of two mistakes. One, they think every company that makes computers has the same business model. And two, they assume that technology is the only thing that matters.

When you try to compare Dell and Apple as businesses, all you can really compare are their relative financial positions. The manner in which the companies go about their business are so disparate that you can no more say "Dell should be more like Apple" than you could say "Apple should be more like Dell" ten years ago.

(That's not to say that the companies haven't employed similar strategies over the years. Apple's push toward online sales and reducing on-hand inventory[2] both come to mind. While the latter was most likely influenced by Dell's success with low inventories and the costs incurred by Apple's larger on-hand inventories, the former was pretty much inevitable, as many companies were moving toward the Internet for direct sales efforts.)

The Apple and Dell business models are completely different; while Apple has been innovating in a user-facing manner, Dell has been squeezing every last bit of efficiency out of its business and manufacturing processes. The problem for Dell is that there's only so much fat to trim from business and manufacturing—eventually, you start cutting away the muscle. When you innovate in a user-facing manner, there are far more opportunities for improvement.

The downside of attempting user-facing innovations is that they can be more difficult to achieve. Every attempt will not be successful. It's also harder to quantify the value of user-facing innovations. With a back-end improvement, you may be able to say "Doing X will decrease the time to completion by three seconds per unit, which leads to a time-saving of Y each year." When you try something new in the end-user space, however, you can't really say "Doing A will increase product sexiness by 12%, increasing revenues by a factor of B." Michael Dell simply can't walk into work on Monday morning and say, "Today, we're innovating." (As an aside, I always get a kick out of those innovation ads from IBM because I know there are companies that basically use the same scenarios that IBM is mocking.)

Over the past few years, Apple has put together a strong track record of reading the market and releasing innovative products, but not even Apple has been perfect. Expecting a company that has little to no experience with user-facing innovation to suddenly turn on a dime and replicate Apple's success is just folly.

When people look at computer companies, they are often blinded by the technology. They forget that these companies are run by people and, through these people, the companies have developed a culture. Changing the culture of a company is difficult and time consuming, if it is even possible. In The Perfect Thing[3], Steven Levy has a great comment from Sony CEO Howard Stringer regarding its

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[1] http://fakesteve.blogspot.com/2008/05/why-dell-will-not-bounce-back.html

[2] http://www.macobserver.com/columns/appletrader/00/000731.shtml

[3] http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0743285239/aboutthisparticu

efforts to launch a music store prior to the iTunes Music Store launch:

> "We were well ahead," he moaned, "but we tried to write the perfect legitimate download experience and got bogged down."

I'm pretty sure I heard more about this story elsewhere, either from another section of *The Perfect Thing* or from some other source, but I'm pretty sure the "bogging down" came from Sony's music label (and from the context of Stringer's quote, it seemed that "perfect legitimate download experience" was code for "unbreakable DRM"). In discussions about the dominance of the iPod, numerous people have thrown Sony at me as a company that could develop a viable iPod competitor—it has all the individual pieces. What people either don't know or choose to ignore is that Sony's internal politics and distribution of power have often hamstrung efforts by one division to release products that may impact other divisions, regardless of the benefits to Sony as a whole.

From a culture standpoint, Dell is in a very similar position to Sony. Not so much that Dell has internal divisions bickering over one another's products, but that the employees, from management on down, are conditioned to follow the Dell Way. At Dell, if a project isn't seen as having a direct economic benefit, the project dies. As I mentioned earlier, though, it can be more difficult to quantify the economic benefit of many end-user innovations. I think the combination of these factors leads to more conservative thinking. A conservative approach may lead to a higher percentage of successful projects, but taking risks on less certain projects can lead to larger successes— there are times when it's fine to string together a few singles, but sometimes you have to swing for the fences, strikeout be damned.

Who knows? Dell may turn it around. Dell may reinvent itself and aggressively attack new markets as opposed to cutting costs in existing markets. Anything is possible. But simply basing your theory on the premise that "Apple did it, so why the heck not" just doesn't cut it.

Find the Right NAS Drive

When desktop publishing was all the rage in the Mac computing world, hard drive space was not much of an issue for me. Most of the documents I created were small with few graphics. The biggest threat to hard drive space was the fact that I'm both a download junkie and a digital pack rat. Some of the Macs I have had were too slow for the whole "Rip, Mix, Burn" revolution. The bad news that is I missed out on most of the fun; the good news is that my hard drive needs were still quite modest.

Now that computers have become the focal point of the digital media lifestyle, things are a bit different. Desktop publishing files that occupied less than 1 megabyte of hard drive space have given way to audio and video files that can occupy several hundred megabytes or perhaps a gigabyte. It's also not uncommon for there to be multiple computers per household all sharing a single network and wanting access to the same files. Rather than have copies of the same file on multiple hard drives, many users prefer to keep their media files in a central location and share the files among all computers on the network. The problem is that not everyone has, or wants to maintain, a separate computer as a file server for the home media system. As a solution, some users are choosing network attached storage devices.

What Is a Network Attached Storage Device?

A Network Attached Storage (NAS) device is essentially a small file server. Once connected to your network, a NAS drive has its own IP address and can be accessed by any computer on your network. These devices typically consist of one or more hard drives, a network connection, and a stripped down operating system to control basic functions. In addition to providing centralized storage, many of the devices currently on the market also provide additional services such as FTP access, print servers, or music servers. The idea is to get your files in one place so they can be accessed by every computer on your network.

Why Would I Want One?

I chose a NAS drive for many of the same reasons that other users have: centralized file access, ability to serve media files, and convenience when compared to running a dedicated file server. While the first two reasons are pretty self explanatory, given my "do it yourself" attitude, why not set up a file server and share files that way?

I set up a file server once several years ago on our small, mixed home network, so I knew it wasn't that difficult. I could have set up one computer to serve media files, share printers, and have the same FTP capabilities as a NAS drive, but doing so would have entailed installing, configuring, and updating multiple pieces of software. I'd also have to purchase one or more hard drives.

The computers that I might have chosen to use as part-time file servers were often being used for other tasks. Adding file server duties to that list would probably have resulted in a performance hit. I had also experienced problems in the past getting the server to "wake up" on network activity. Leaving the server on 24/7 without ever putting it in sleep mode seemed to consume a lot more power than simply having one device designed specifically for that purpose.

What Should I Look For When Buying a Network Attached Storage Device?

My initial experiences purchasing a NAS device have not been as pleasant I anticipated. Although I had done some homework prior to the purchase, I still experienced numerous headaches along the way. Hopefully, I can save you some of those headaches. I don't focus on such things as how much drive capacity you need. My primary concern is how do we achieve an acceptable level of Mac support. I'm also not comparing any specific devices. Perhaps that's a topic for a future issue.

What reputation does the manufacturer have for the overall quality of their products? The level of Mac support a particular product has is almost irrelevant if the unit is constantly being returned for repair or replacement. You wouldn't trust your data to a hard

drive manufacturer with a shoddy reputation; why should this be any different?

Assuming that the product has a reasonable warranty, how difficult is it to get repairs done? This process varies by manufacturer, so make sure you understand it in its entirety. I knew, for example, that my drive had a reasonable warranty. Unfortunately I didn't read their return procedure carefully enough before purchasing the unit. Their procedure requires you to fax them a copy of your receipt[1] after receiving the e-mail containing a Return Merchandise Authorization number. Users without ready access to a fax machine will likely find this process a major inconvenience should they have to return the drive.

What kind of Mac support can you expect from the company? Many of these devices can be used with Macs even if the company doesn't have a stellar history of Mac support. If you are fluent translating PC-oriented troubleshooting techniques into the Mac world, that's not much of a concern, but for others it's a very frustrating process. Technical support crews don't always do a good job explaining what they are trying to test. I once spent about ten minutes booting a Windows machine and running a series of commands before realizing half way through that I could have run the same commands from my Mac had I realized what the technician wanted me to test.

What is the setup procedure like? Most NAS devices use a browser-based setup procedure. The setup wizards, though, often require the use of Internet Explorer. There is usually an alternative procedure for those of us not using Windows, but it may not be explained as well as you would like. In my case, I found that the procedure for setting up my drive without Windows was documented in the manual. After several failed configuration attempts over two days, an Internet search led me to a post which pointed out an error in the setup procedure.

Does the device have user-replaceable hard drives? There are some NAS devices, such as the D-Link DNS 323[2] and the NETGEAR ReadyNAS DUO[3] that leave this open as an option. I can think of at least two scenarios where this might be a useful. First, this allows starting with smaller capacity drives and swapping them for higher capacity drives as your storage needs increase. In theory, one could repeat this process several times. Second, once the device

is out of warranty, problem drives could be replaced without retuning the device to the manufacturer.

How Well Does the Device Work With a Mac?

Beyond the technical support issues, there is the question of how well the device will work with Macs. Finding the answer to that question can be interesting at best. Information as basic as how well the Mac can access the device can be a bit of a puzzle to work out. Sometimes the information presented appears contradictory. Articlebase, for example, has an article about NAS drives[4] that says:

> Native Mac support is spotty so make sure the device is compatible with your Mac and your version of the Mac OS. Macs are able to access Windows shares so this really isn't much of an issue.

Try making sense of that when you've been up too late the night before.

I take a bit of an issue with blanket statements such as these. Most NAS devices support several networking and file transfer protocols, and Macs understand these protocols for the most part. The problem arises in choosing a protocol and hard drive format combination that respects all of the Mac's file attributes. I formatted my device, for example, using ext3[5] and accessed the drive using the Windows-friendly SMB protocol, which the device supports. Most of the time the shared drives mounted fine, but periodically I experienced situations where I had to make multiple attempts to mount the device. I also have to be a bit more careful with filenames. OS X permits characters in file names that some protocol/drive format combinations do not handle well.

Even if the drive format and protocol options are fully supported on Macs, there are other considerations to be examined. Does the fact that the device can be used as a media server mean that it fully supports all the formats that iTunes understands? If you often purchase content from the iTunes Music Store, you'll want to make sure that those filetypes are supported.

Some Mac-friendly technologies, such as Bonjour, are not fully supported by all NAS devices. My drive, for example, needs to have Bonjour networking support enabled if I intend to use it as an iTunes music

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[1] http://www.fantomdrives.com/rmaform.html

[2] http://www.dlink.com/products/?pid=509

[3] http://www.netgear.com/Products/Storage/ReadyNASDuo/RND2110.aspx?detail=Specifications

[4] http://www.articlesbase.com/hardware-articles/home-network-attached-storage-buyers-guide-263932.html

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ext3#Functionality

server. That's not necessarily an unreasonable requirement, but you can't complete the initial configuration process using Bonjour. Although the whole point of Bonjour is to make discovery and setup of network devices easier, you can't take advantage of this without walking through the more complex setup procedure.

Final Thoughts

As you can see from this brief summary, there are many issues to consider when searching for the right NAS device. It doesn't touch on many of the convenience features[6] some of these devices offer. In the end I suppose the best advice I can give is to do a lot of homework taking your specific needs into consideration. Once you have chosen two or three likely candidates, download the manuals and give them a quick read. I think you will be glad you did. Here's a list of some of the more common manufacturers[7] to get you started.

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[6]http://www.articlesbase.com/hardware-articles/home
-network-attached-storage-buyers-guide-263932.html
[7]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_NAS_manufactu
rers

by Charles Ross, cross@atpm.com

How a Programmer Works With a Non-Programming Project

Most of the projects I work on fall into two categories: programming and iLife. The programming projects are usually those I do for a client, building software to the client's specifications, although I often create software for myself, working in FileMaker, AppleScript, or PHP. The iLife projects are just my creations of movies using the digital media of my family collected with the cameras. But once in a while, I end up working on a project where the goal itself doesn't require writing code and the end product has nothing to do with iLife.

I recently found myself working on such a project for personal reasons, and while doing so, noticed how often programming entered into the workflow. I created a number of small programs to help me do the job, I and thought it might be useful to share what I did and how I did it. Some of these programs automated the backups of the project, some automated repetitive tasks, but all were created to support the non-programming project I was working on, rather than being the project itself. Perhaps this will give a bit of insight into a programmer's thought process, and hopefully demonstrate the utility of knowing how to program even if one isn't a full-time programmer.

LearnAboutLiberty.com

A bit of personal history. 1996 was the first year I really began to take notice of politics. I began listening to AM talk radio, which led me to Larry Elder[1] (who has since disappointed me by supporting President Bush and the war in Iraq), which led me to the Libertarian Party's[2] candidate Harry Browne[3]. I read his book, Why Government Doesn't Work[4], and was convinced by its arguments, and eventually joined the Libertarian Party. I was somewhat involved, and ran for a local office when they asked me to in 2002. I didn't gain office, and eventually, like many, verged away from politics to handle life.

Then Ron Paul[5] entered the presidential race. I had been familiar with Ron Paul from when I originally studied libertarianism (he ran for President on the Libertarian ticket in 1988[6]). My wife became quite involved with the grassroots campaign, becoming the leader of the local meetup group[7], canvasing the neighborhood before the California primaries. While I didn't become nearly as involved in the campaign, I was returning to my studies of the ideas and implications of liberty. But my research was taking me all over the place, to books, Web sites, videos, and I was lamenting that I didn't seem to be able to find a single repository of information about the history and state of liberty ideas.

So I decided to build one. What you'll find here is the story of how I created the site and the tools I used as a programmer to help me.

Creating the Site

Choosing where to host the site wasn't difficult, as I already run a number of Web sites for myself, my wife, and my church using DreamHost[8], a Web service provider located in Brea, CA. I've been using them for all of my Web service needs for about four years, and have been extremely satisfied with the level of service and support I receive from them. If you're a novice at working with a Web server, they offer features that make it quite easy to administer all aspects. If, on the other hand, you're familiar with the server technologies, they offer the ability to manually customize the operation of the Web server. In fact, they are very Mac-like in their philosophy (although everything is currently served on Linux, I believe). Everything is very easy for the novice, but available for the advanced user (I'm somewhere in the middle regarding Web servers).

DreamHost's services offer many supporting technologies, but of interest here is the fact that they offer

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[1] http://www.larryelder.com
[2] http://www.lp.org
[3] http://www.harrybrowne.org
[4] http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0965603601/aboutthisparticu

[5] http://www.ronpaul2008.com
[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Paul#1988_presidential_campaign
[7] http://ronpaul.meetup.com
[8] http://dreamhost.com

MySQL[9] database serving and PHP[10] access. This opens up the possibility of running hundreds of open-source Web solutions based on these two technologies (often called LAMP[11] for Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP). I anticipated that my Web site would be edited by multiple people, so I chose a wonderful solution called Joomla![12], which allows users with accounts to create articles that are published within sections and categories on the site. DreamHost offers a feature called One-Click installations, where with very little configuration, they will set up many of the most popular open-source Web solutions, including Joomla.

The first step was to register the domain, which my wife and I chose as learnaboutliberty.com[13] after some brainstorming. Then I used the One-Click installation option to install Joomla at the domain, and spent a few minutes configuring it using Joomla's installation scripts (run from within the Web browser). All of this took about 15 minutes, after which time, I had a working site. No programming so far.

How the Web Site Works

I'll pause here in the story to give those of you unfamiliar with Web applications a bit of technical background. Web applications like Joomla (or WordPress[14], a blogging application my wife uses), have two components: the files that the user requests and the database that stores most of the information for the Web site. In this case, the files are written in PHP, a scripting language with features for querying databases. The PHP files can be thought of as dynamic HTML files. Whereas an HTML file simply displays the contents of itself in a Web browser, when a PHP file is requested, it runs code within the file. This may do any number of tasks, but usually it will send a search query to the database, get the results back, format the query results as HTML, and finally pass this to the original Web browser. Whenever you see a Web page that ends in `.php`, as in:

```
http://www.learnaboutliberty.com/index.php?o
ption=com_content&
view=section&id=14&Itemid=68
```
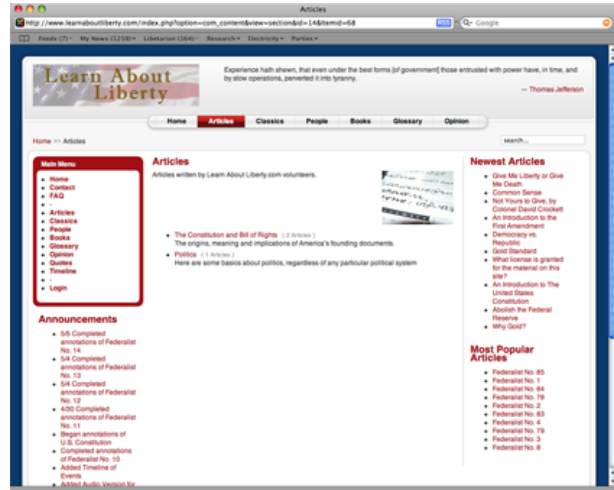
this is what is happening behinds the scenes. A document called `index.php` has PHP code that will run and find the information needed to display that page using the extra information included in the URL (such as that the `option` should be `com_content`).

Everything you see when you load the above URL is retrieved from the database. The PHP page makes queries to the database to know which quote to show at the top, which items appear in the Main Menu, even which colors to use for the background and links.

This allows the Web site to be dynamic. I can use the Web application to create content, such as a new article on the history of the United States Constitution, and the home page knows to add a link to that article under the Newest Articles portion of the Web page by filling that section with the results of a search for the ten most recent entries. Anyone with publishing access to the site is able to change the site without having to edit any HTML or PHP code. Creating an article adds a record to the database, which immediately shows up the next time someone loads a page that queries that database.

Backing Up

The first programming I did myself was to create backup scripts. DreamHost offers full SSH access to their servers. SSH stands for "secure shell," allows me to log into DreamHost's server in Terminal and enter commands as if I were sitting at their actual computer. Unix systems, such as Linux and Mac OS X, offer a facility called `cron` for automatically executing commands periodically, which makes perfect sense for a backup system.

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[9] http://www.mysql.com
[10] http://www.php.net
[11] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LAMP_(software_bundle)
[12] http://www.joomla.org
[13] http://www.learnaboutliberty.com
[14] http://wordpress.org

Backing up a database driven Web site run by a program like Joomla involves backing up not only the PHP files, but also the database files. DreamHost offers backup services by default, but I wanted a bit more for this site. I wanted a script on the server to make copies of the databases for all of the Web sites with backend MySQL systems. Then I wanted my computer to get these database backups (called database dumps) as well as the PHP and HTML files stored for each Web site.

First I needed a place to store my backups. I logged in to the Web server with ssh.

```
ssh user name@domain.com
mkdir backups
cd backups
mkdir mysql
```

The above commands, when I typed them into Terminal and provided my password after the first command, logged me into the Web server and created two directories, one inside the other. The next step was to create a script that would backup the MySQL databases.

```
cd ~
mkdir bin
cd bin
vi backup.sh
```

Here I'm returning to my home directory, creating a `bin` directory to store my script (`bin` is a common name for a Unix directory with executable programs), and then running a text editor called `vi` to create a new text file called `backup.sh` (the `.sh` extension indicates that the file is a shell script, meaning it contains commands that could be entered manually at a shell prompt). Knowing `vi` is very useful when working with general Unix systems, as it's included on every one of them. If you know `vi`, you can always be sure that you'll be able to create and edit text files on whatever Unix system you happen to find yourself using.

The `backup.sh` script is very straight forward once you understand the `mysqldump` command.

```
mysqldump -opt -umyusername -pmypassword -h
 db.learnaboutliberty.com lal_db \
    > ~/backups/mysql/lal_db.sql
mysqldump -opt -umyusername -pmypassword -h
 db.generationscc.org gcc_db \
    > ~/backups/mysql/gcc_db.sql
mysqldump -opt -umyusername -pmypassword -h
 db.gollybloghowdy.com gbh_db \
```

```
    > ~/backups/mysql/gbh_wordpress_db.gbh_d
b
```

Each line here performs the same operation on a different database. The `mysqldump` command is part of MySQL, and outputs the SQL commands that would be necessary to recreate the database. My user name and password are included followed by the domain name of each database and the name of each database. The `>` character says to take the output of the `mysqldump` command and write it to the named file in the path provided.

Next, I need this program to run every hour, which I use `cron` for by typing `crontab -e` at the command prompt on the remote system and editing the file that command brings up.

```
# minute (0-59),
# | hour (0-23),
# | | day of the month (1-31),
# | | | month of the year (1-12),
# | | | | day of the week (0-6 with 0=Sunday
).
# | | | | | commands
  0 * * * * /home/chivalry/bin/backup.sh > /
dev/null
```

The first six lines are comments to help me remember how to use `crontab`. The final line is the one that does all the actual work. The `0` says that this command should run when the minute is zero (at the top of the hour). The asterisks for each of the other entries can be interpreted as "all," so the command runs at all hours, all days, all months, all days of the week. In other words, the command will run every hour. The command I provide is simply the path to the backup script above. Here we're redirecting any output to the null file, which simply throws it away. After saving this file, my databases are going to be backed up every hour, and the configuration for backing up is finished on the server, so I return to my own computer to complete the backup process.

Now that the databases are going to be backed up every hour, I want to copy them and the Web site files to my local drive periodically, creating a local backup of the Web sites. This time I use BBEdit to create a different `backup.sh` file in `~/Applications/Scripts/Shell`, which shows a different directory structure I use on my own system for storing applications and scripts.

```
for site in chivalrysoftware.com generations
```

```
cc.org learnaboutliberty.com \
    backups/mysql
do
    rsync -e ssh -av user name@domain.com:$s
ite ~/Web sites
done
```

The first thing this script does is create an array of values for each of the remote folders I'll be backing up. It then loops through them using the `rsync` command, which synchronizes the remote folders with local folders in a directly called `Web sites`. Once this script executes, the `Web sites` folder will contain four folders, one for each of the remote folders backed up. `rsync` gets only those files that have changed on the remote system, so each backup after the first one is very quick. The `crontab` for executing this is very similar to the one on the remote server.

```
0 * * * * /Users/chuck/Applications/Scripts/
Shell/backup.sh > /dev/null
```

Once this has executed with `cron` and my Time Machine backup has run, in addition to the original files, I should have three full backups of the Web sites (DreamHost's, the one in my home folder, and Time Machine's).

Text Automation

Writing programs is often a matter of solving a simple problem in software that wasn't anticipated by the original developer. In this case, Joomla installs an article editor that allows the formatting of the article with buttons so that formatted text can be included without having to hand-code the HTML, although the manual coding of HTML is still allowed. One feature it doesn't include, however, is the use of small caps. Some of the historical material I was including on the site (specifically, The Federalist Papers[15]), included small caps often, which meant that I often need to change HTML code of the form `SMALL CAPS` to `<span style="font-size: smaller">SMALL CAPS</span>`. Doing this with AppleScript in BBEdit would be simple, but then I would have to copy the text from the Web browser into BBEdit, perform the AppleScript, and copy the result back into Safari.

The solution I chose instead was to use Butler[16], although there are any number of other utilities that would have facilitated the solution. Butler is my file

launcher. I use it to launch applications, look up information in Google or Wikipedia, as well as phone numbers in my Address Book, and to control iTunes. With it, I can press a key combination (in my case, Control-Space), type a few letters (such as "fm9"), and get a result (in this case, FileMaker Pro 9 Advanced). Pressing the Return key then launches the program. However, Butler can also execute AppleScripts and automate general key presses.

If you take a look at the two forms of the HTML code above, you can see that if the text `SMALL CAPS` is selected, one could copy the text, type out the opening HTML tag, paste the text and type the closing HTML tag. This is what I want to automate.

I began by opening Butler and creating a new keystroke smart item. I then performed exactly the keystrokes I just described and assigned this to a key combination. Now, when I have text selected, I can press Control-Space, "esc" (for "Enclose in Small Caps"), and the selected text is enclosed as described. I also found myself needing to perform a similar action to create italic text (`italic text` becomes `<span style="font-style: italic">italics text</span>`), and so I created a similar keystroke smart item tied to the abbreviation "ei".
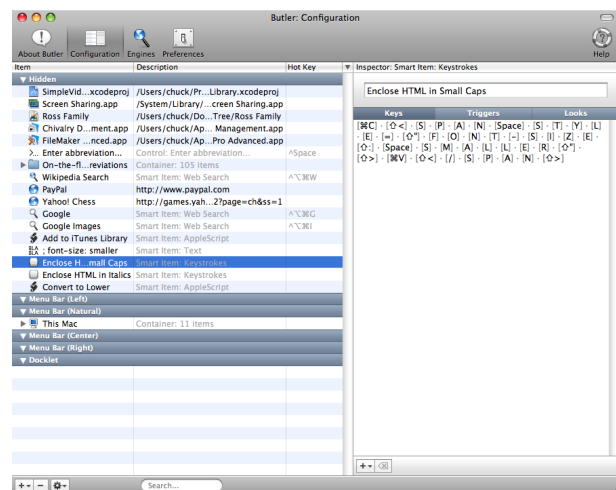
A different, but similar, problem occurred when the text that should be in small caps was already enclosed in a `<span>` tag for some reason. In this case, I didn't want to use another `<span>` tag, but rather edit the existing one. This was sometimes the case when the small caps appeared in a footnote, which was displayed in a different font than the main text. In this case, I wanted to add the text `; font-size: smaller` to the existing `<span>`, and to do so, I cre-

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[15]http://www.learnaboutliberty.com/index.php?option=
com_content&view=article&id=636&Itemid=81
[16]http://www.petermaurer.de/butler/

ated a text smart item in Butler that tied the typing of this text to the "fs" abbreviation.

Butler proved useful in one more instance. The Federalist Papers are public domain documents and exist in many places on the Internet. Although I have a physical book that I could have typed in, I would much rather copy and paste than type in the entire book. However, the particular Web site I used to get the text of these articles placed all emphasized text in all caps, while the original papers used small caps for some emphasis and italics for others. So I ended up needing to change many of the instances of all caps to lower case. For this, I used a combination of AppleScript with a bit of JavaScript (to get Safari's selected text).
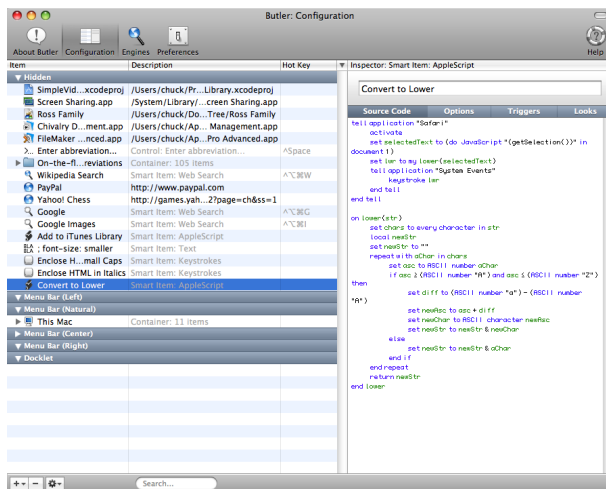
The `lower` subroutine accepts a string as a parameter and returns a string with each uppercase letter in it converted to lowercase. The main handler uses JavaScript to get whatever text is selected in Safari and passes this to the `lower` handler, using the System Events application to overwrite the selected text with the results of the `lower` handler. Using Butler to link this to the abbreviation "conv" allows for very quick execution of this code.

Conclusion

I'm honestly not sure how a non-programmer would handle the tasks I've outlined. I'd actually be interested in hearing some feedback in that regard. When each of these problems manifested themselves, my first thought was to solve them by writing some quick code. Each of the solutions I used took about five minutes to create, and each saved me time whenever they were used. There aren't many technologies used

here (`ssh`, `vi`, `cron`, `mysqldump`, Butler, AppleScript, JavaScript, HTML), but the fact that I had a basic knowledge of each of them made the solutions possible. What I didn't know I was able to look up (`cron`, because I use it so seldom, has always been a weak spot for me). I did use other programs to work with the project (GraphicConverter[17] to create a simple logo; iTunes to resample audio files to a lower bitrate; Nvu[18], an open source replacement for Dreamweaver[19] to perform some more advanced CSS editing of the site's general look). But most of the work was done with only Safari and the scripts outlined here.

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[17] http://www.lemkesoft.com/content/188/graphicconverter.html

[18] http://www.atpm.com/12.10/web-accessibility.shtml

[19] http://www.atpm.com/9.04/studio-mx.shtml

[20] http://www.chivalrysoftware.com

[21] http://www.chivalrysoftware.com/home/functionhelper.php

[22] http://www.nostarch.com/frameset.php?startat=filemaker

[23] http://www.filemakermagazine.com

[24] http://www.macworld.com

[25] http://www.atpm.com/Back/roll.shtml

[26] http://www.atpm.com/Back/filemaking.shtml

Desktop Pictures
by Rob Colonna

Boston

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]
This month's photos of Boston were taken by Rob Colonna. He makes them available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike license[3].

View Pictures[a]

[a]http://www.atpm.com/14.06/boston/

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures
Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[4].

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[5].

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x 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.
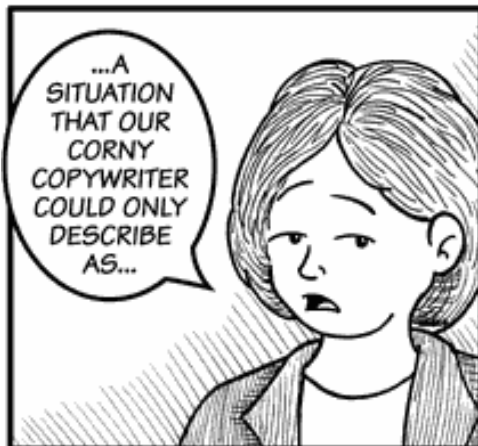
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[1]mailto:editor@atpm.com

[2]http://www.atpm.com/14.06/boston/

[3]http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/deed.en

[4]http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml

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

Cortland

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Aluminum V2

Developer: PDO[1]
Price: $20
Requirements: iPod video
Trial: None

ATPM RATINGS
VERY NICE

The iPod case market has seen a lot of interesting designs and materials for enclosing an iPod, everything from the Foof[2] to the YoTank[3]. Cloth, neoprene, leather, plastic, and metal seem to be the most common materials, roughly in order of increasing ruggedness, and metal cases have traditionally been the most rugged and most expensive cases from a given manufacturer.

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[1]http://www.pdostore.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=produ
ct.display&product_id=441
[2]http://foofshop.com/
[3]http://www.yotank.com/
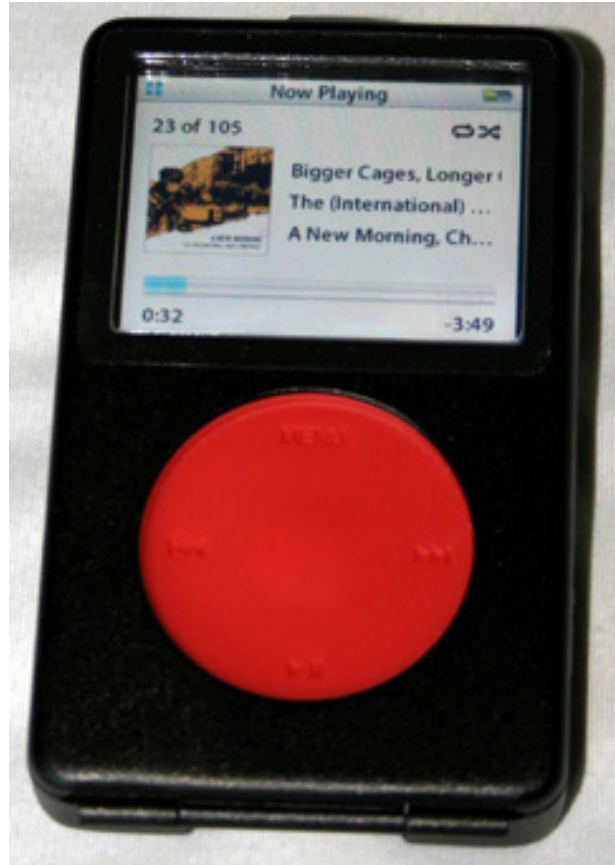
"Face shot" of case with iPod inside.

PDO has a pretty good horse in this race: the Aluminum V2 case for the iPod video. Made primarily of stamped and formed aluminum, it's probably not as bulletproof as a YoTank (machined steel or titanium might be the only things that are *more* rugged than one of those), but it's much lighter and far more attractive.

iPod in case with clamshell open.

Just the case, showing the foam-rubber lining in the back half.

The V2 looks like the perfect companion to the U2 Special Edition iPods from ages past with its handsome black-and-red color scheme. A clear cover over the screen keeps dirt and grit from causing scratches, while a surprisingly sturdy clip securely fastens the hinged front panel onto the rest of the case.

The back of the case features an integrated nub for the nearly ubiquitous cell-phone-style belt clip that PDO thoughtfully included in the box. Unfortunately, the nub doesn't come off (it appears to be glued or welded on, though it looks like there would have been enough material to screw it on), so the case won't sit flat on a desk or table. The inside of the case is lined with a soft foam-rubber material that fits an iPod video very snugly, allowing virtually no movement within the case itself.

Back of case with belt clip nub.

Also included is a cheesy metal-rope lanyard that threads through two slots in the back of the case. Unless your sense of style includes jelly sandals à la The Dude, you'll probably set this aside somewhere, never to be used again.

Belt clip attached to case.

My biggest complaint with the V2 is the (relatively) giant cutout at the bottom for the dock connector; it seems much bigger than it needs to be, and this reduces the degree of protection the case can provide. It does, however, provide an easy means of removing the iPod from the case, which might otherwise be difficult due to the snug fit.

Shows very large Dock Connector cutout.

Perhaps the most attractive thing about the V2 case, aside from the appearance, is the price. You simply cannot buy a metal iPod case for $20 anywhere else, and even most soft cases are in the $20 range. The V2 clearly provides much better protection than most soft cases and should last longer than most plastic cases as well.

Shows access to hold switch and headphone jack, as well as clip holding the case together.

PDO's Aluminum V2 case works great, seems like it'll last a long time, and looks good doing it at a great price. What more do you really need?

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[4]http://chrislawson.net

Escape the Museum

Developer: Gogii Games[1]
Price: $20
Requirements: Mac OS X, 400 MHz G3, 128 MB RAM. Universal[2].
Trial: Time-limited (one hour)

Sure, Marcus, museum "valuables," eh? Including that delicious sub sandwich on the right?

A long time ago when I first wanted to find hidden objects games (for my son, of course), there were only the handful of *I Spy* titles from Scholastic. I first got the ones made for Mac OS X, then even bought the ones that work only in Classic mode. Nowadays, almost every other week there is a new hidden objects game. How different can they all be? One of the latest games of the genre, Escape the Museum, sure succeeds at being different.

The typical hidden object game involves some contrived story. In Escape the Museum, you play the role of Susan, a museum employee who brought her daughter Caitlin to work. An earthquake happened and the two got separated. Susan must work her way through various damaged parts of the museum to re-unite with her daughter. Along the way you get some help from other museum staff members and some in the city outside. Your progress is slowed down by requests to salvage certain pieces from the museum's collection, which, surprise surprise, involves looking for hidden objects. It sounds like you are supposed to look for "valuables," but in reality the items to be found are mundane things like a sub (sandwich) or a roll of carnival tickets. I told you the genre involves contrivance. By the way, you should realize by now that the game has nothing to do with the Hollywood movie Night at the Museum[3] starring Ben Stiller.

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[1] http://www.gogiigames.com/Museum.html
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0477347/

Unlike the typical hidden objects game, in Escape the Museum you are not constrained by time. Move the mouse at your leisure to every pixel on the screen. Be careful not to click unless you are sure, as you are rated by accuracy. With the first object found, your accuracy is 100%. As you make mistakes, your accuracy drops. My able assistant, seven-year-old Justin, is good at not clicking like crazy; but I am not sure if other, perhaps younger, players can be as patient. Still, it seems that as long as you eventually find all objects you do not have to re-visit the room.

Like the typical hidden object game, Museum has hints to help pinpoint objects. However, the more you rely on hints, the lower your accuracy. But then Museum also offers help in what I call "auto-detect." If the pointer is atop a hidden object, it bounces and throbs. It costs nothing to use "auto-detect"; you just have to be patient and move the pointer everywhere without clicking.

It is a good thing that auto-detect is available because the objects in Escape the Museum are sometimes very hard to locate. I thought my years of reading the *I Spy* books with Justin would give me an edge, but I was wrong. Part of the reason is that the objects are usually small in size. Also, the player is usually across the room from the items. Some ob-

jects do not appear as their true forms. In the Human Predecessors picture, I was sure that behind the center caveman, on the shelf, is a watch. It is supposed to be a belt.

Can you see what I see? On the shelf in the background, is that not a watch? It is supposed to be a belt.

What is really bad is that the objects in some cases are close to being completely hidden. Although the game genre is called "hidden object," in reality, the objects should merely get partially obscured by other objects yet still show some parts that are characteristic to them. For example, a "hidden" bowling pin would still show the entire length of its shape, perhaps even the red stripes on white. Just showing the white tip of the pin is simply wrong, in my opinion. Likewise, a "hidden" shoe should still show its profile, not just the tip, as is the case in the Main Vestibule.

To better notice the way objects are sometimes almost literally hidden in Museum, I also spent some time playing Travelogue 360: Paris and Hidden Relic. Travelogue has the distinct advantage of allowing the player to zoom in. Hidden Relic's play area is actually smaller than Museum's, but the user is closer to the scene. In both games, objects overlap or blend into the background, but never get unfairly obstructed.

Escape the Museum is more than a hidden objects game. Intertwined with the hidden objects levels you have adventure levels. You still have to find a few objects. To escape the adventure levels, you need to follow the clues that appear as related objects are clicked on. For example, in one scene, you need to find a doorknob that has fallen off, but it is not in the lit area of the scene. It may be in a dark pile of rubble, so you will need to find a flashlight. Alas, the

flashlight needs a bulb and batteries. The adventure levels provide a refreshing and challenging alternative to eye-balling for hidden objects.

In Escape the Museum, visual and audio effects are very appropriately used. The music is eerie and seems to warn of some impending danger. It is too spooky for Justin, so he only plays the game with music volume set to zero. I am sure Justin would love to control the visual effects as well. In some adventure levels, while you are busy looking for the objects to create your escape route, the building will shake, sometimes accompanied by a rain of small debris. The effect is real enough to get Justin scared. A "spookiness" setting here would be nice for the younger players.

Escape the Museum is a different kind of hidden object game, with no time constraint and more reliance on accuracy, which may not matter that much anyway. It features a good combination of hidden object and adventure levels. Some objects are unfairly hidden or not clearly shown, but if you have patience the auto-detect feature will help you pinpoint them.

OptiBay Hard Drive

Developer: MCE Technologies[1]
Price: Starting at $229 (120 GB for 12-inch PowerBook G4, no external enclosure)
Requirements: PowerBook, MacBook, or MacBook Pro
Trial: None

The OptiBay hard drive is a wonderful product, unfortunately somewhat marred by deceptive advertising. Like many users who have chosen to have only a laptop computer, giving up a desktop computer altogether, I have found myself requiring extra storage capacity. I long ago replaced the stock internal hard drive on my MacBook Pro, and I've done it again since a 320 GB option became available. Yet a few weeks ago, I realized that even such a drive that would have been prohibitively expensive (and too large for a laptop anyway) a few years ago wasn't enough to hold all my files.

The OptiBay replaces the internal SuperDrive with a hard drive.

I'm loath to transfer materials to an archive and not have them available, though I am as diligent as possible about backing up to two different external drives. I'd been looking at the OptiBay drive for some time, even as I wondered who the heck would

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[1]http://www.mcetech.com/optibay/

need it. If you wonder whether it might be you, it turns out of course that it will be you. And as Oscar Wilde said, the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. I bought the OptiBay drive, anticipating that it would mean what for practical purposes was endless space.

A few days later, I received the OptiBay drive. I had selected the maximum capacity they offered, 250 GB. (Since I ordered, they have announced a 500 GB version.) It was exactly as they had advertised, except for one problem I'll get to in a moment. Basically, what you receive is a plastic sled that is just the right shape and size to fit into the area meant for the SuperDrive, with an appropriate design to hold a Western Digital drive. The kit even includes a set of high-quality tools.

Tools.

If you've ever opened up your MacBook Pro, you can install the OptiBay yourself. I am no handyman, as my wife will attest, and I had no difficulty whatsoever. The instructions are written in comprehensible English, and the photos are acceptable if not the highest quality. It's just a matter of removing and reinstalling a great many little screws, both Phillips and Torx. You just need to keep track of what is what,

because there are several different sizes of screws involved. You do have to be careful, because there are a couple of obstructions on top of the mounting screws for the SuperDrive, and you don't have much slack in moving around the wiring. Nonetheless, a steady hand and patience will make this an easy job. If I can do this, anyone can. If you are hesitant about messing around with the insides of your MacBook Pro, you can have the company take care of the labor.
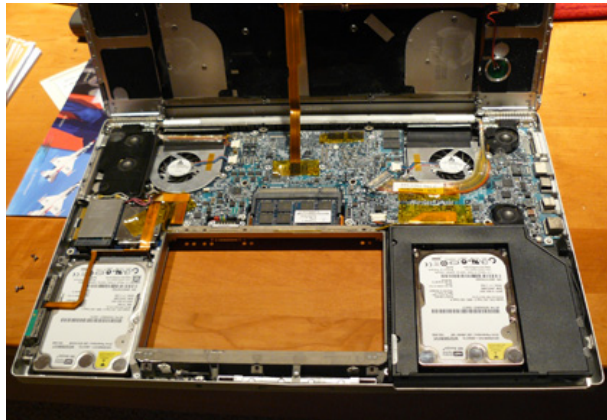
Opening the MacBook Pro.

The OptiBay drive isn't perfect. My unit had a manufacturing defect. One screw hole was slightly too large, and so the screw that was included wouldn't quite take. It went in, but only insecurely. I ended up using electrical tape to secure the bracket instead, and I am reasonably confident it'll hold up just fine. (Some people have asked if it would be possible to jury-rig a hard drive in the same space. I suppose you might create a one-off enclosure on your own, but the trouble it would take, unless you had your own injection-molding operation or machine shop, makes it a better bet to buy this ready-made version. They will sell a naked enclosure for $99.)

I booted up no problem, initialized the new drive, and I was good to go. I simply transferred all of my media files over to the new drive, backed up everything once again, and regained more than 100 GB on my main internal hard drive.

The MacBook Pro even weighs less. A pretty good result for the price and the time.

But here's the catch. According to the OptiBay Web site, you can buy an external enclosure for your SuperDrive or a non-portable drive they offer. I selected the former, and I was not disappointed. The aluminum unit is handsome and sturdy, and it was even easier to pop the SuperDrive into it than to put

the OptiBay drive into the MacBook Pro. It took maybe five minutes, and that was working at a patient pace.

The SuperDrive in its new external enclosure.

So far so good. Then I spent a frustrating three hours trying to get the SuperDrive to work. I could play CDs and rip them. I could connect the Super-Drive to my wife's MacBook and play CDs and rip them, and I could watch DVDs. But each time I tried to connect the SuperDrive to my MacBook Pro to play a DVD, I received an error message, whether I was using the Apple DVD Player, Trans Lucy[2], or Handbrake[3].

I became aware from various Web sites that there was some difficulty with MacBooks and external DVD drives, so I figure that was the problem. I reinstalled the DVD program, the drivers, and looked

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[2]http://www.atpm.com/10.05/trans-lucy.shtml
[3]http://handbrake.fr

at all sorts of tips posted on discussion boards. No luck.

The OptiBay Web site has a troubleshooting section. I e-mailed them to ask. They actually offer drivers, according to the hyperlink. I figured they'd send me a software patch and all would be well.

I was astonished, however, to receive the following reply, reproduced verbatim:

> Unfortunately the Apple DVD Video Player utility will not recognize a DVD video inserted into an external player if an internal DVD-ROM drive is not present in the system.

The manufacturer recommends the shareware VLC player. I downloaded it, and it works fine. Once you change System Preferences to launch VLC player upon insertion of a DVD, Trans Lucy, and Handbrake also work fine.

Still, it is mildly troubling that all the advertising suggests that the SuperDrive will work fine in the external enclosure, and you'll be able to gain all this storage space while retaining the ability to play CDs and DVDs exactly as if the machine were stock. The OptiBay Web site claims:

> Plus, you have the option of including an external SuperDrive or optical drive enclosure for your removed SuperDrive or Combo drive so you'll still have CD/DVD read/write functionality anytime you want for loading system software or applications, as well as burning, playing, or ripping CDs and DVDs!

It adds:

> This slim external FireWire/USB 2.0 enclosure transforms your optical drive into a bootable, bus-powered SuperDrive or Combo drive just as compatible with iTunes, iDVD and Finder Burning as before. Now just plug in your external SuperDrive or Combo drive to your FireWire or USB 2.0 port only when needed in order to play, burn, or rip CDs or DVDs or to load new system software or applications.

A thorough review of the OptiBay Web site reveals no warning about the flaw with DVD Player; you might have noted, once it is pointed out, that the manufacturer is careful to omit "DVD Player" from the list of Apple software with which "the bootable, bus-powered SuperDrive ... [is] as compatible as before." This is the type of subtlety in disclosure that only lawyers would approve of. Even if the problem is attributable to the Apple software, it is obvious OptiBay is well aware of the issue.

After some more looking around, I saw at least one other user of an OptiBay drive had posted a warning to a discussion board. He said that he would have appreciated advance notice, but he would probably would have bought the OptiBay drive regardless. I agree wholeheartedly with both sentiments. The product is fine, and I will live with using the VLC player—assuming it continues to be updated. But as a consumer, I do not appreciate being sold on promises that cannot be fulfilled. This is the type of conduct that gives entrepreneurial enterprises a bad name, and it's not necessary.

TapeDeck 1.0

Developer: SuperMegaUltraGroovy and ToastyCode[1]

Price: $25
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (limited recording time, low quality only, slower playback)

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, cassettes ruled the personal recording world. Familiar button controls like REC, FFWD, REW, and STOP defined an interface that carried over to VCRs, DVDs, and so on. It also meant personal expression limited only by the amount of available blank tape. The new Mac OS X application TapeDeck burnishes that memory by transmogrifying a portable recorder into a windowed application.

TapeDeck's interface combines a cassette recorder on the left and searchable tape library on the right.

TapeDeck supports one main feature. Start recording, capture the audio, stop recording, and file it as a "tape" in your catalog. Once there, export tapes to iTunes or attach them to e-mail as desired. Unlike plastic cassettes, there's no overwriting

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

of tapes; TapeDeck creates a new tape automatically each time you record. The only limit to your recordings will be the available disk space.

Interface

Even younger users unfamiliar with the original cassette tape recorders should understand the icons and titles for TapeDeck's controls. One click starts a recording, and another stops it. A numerical readout shows elapsed time, and the tape label displays your notes, made by selecting the title or NOTES section of the tape itself.

REW, FFWD, and PAUSE work like expected, though with a caveat. If you're already moving the tape one direction or have paused it during playback, you must press PLAY prior to using another control. Speaking as someone who owned several real-life decks, immediately changing directions would more closely match the real-life behavior.

The "loaded" tape provides most of the interaction, but the right-hand catalog offers two simple features. You can select a tape in the catalog list to load it or type in the search box to narrow down your list of tapes based on the title or notes field.

The interface isn't perfect yet. Though the application clearly displays the current recording quality (high, medium, low) and type (mono or stereo) setting in red, it's hard to see the unselected choices, and they don't look like buttons. First-time users need good cues for options they control, and this one lacks polish. (The developer could fix them by changing the interface to 2- or 3-position switches, something common on tape decks.)

Other Features

TapeDeck doesn't allow you to record over (or erase) previous sessions. Each recording creates a new tape, which sacrifices some freedom to edit partial recordings. In the same vein, it relies on Apple's AAC format for easy transfer to iTunes. Recording into a compressed format does reduce file size, which helps when you e-mail or upload the final product. Unfortunately, that also prevents you from making studio-level recordings. Its "high quality" stereo setting is

128kbps, the same bitrate used by the lower quality AAC files at the iTunes Music Store.

(If you want uncompressed recording quality and the ability to edit afterwards, check out the open source project Audacity[3] for a cheaper and somewhat harder-to-use option.)

A few features depart from the physical tape model and require that you poke around (or read the Help file) to uncover.

1. Organize your tapes by color-coding the large "A" next to your tape. Click on it to cycle through the available colors.

2. TapeDeck can record in the background. Configure REC and STOP hot keys for this, for example while reading a speech or presentation.

3. There's a blue bar next to the duration counter. Click along it to skip to that part of the recording without using REW or FFWD.

For a 1.0 program, TapeDeck runs pretty well. I did see the error message "Untitled 1.m4a does not exist" occasionally when deleting unneeded tapes. Fortunately, it only happened a couple of times.

Now, How Much Would You Pay?

TapeDeck records just like a cassette, apart from a few exceptions noted above. The unregistered version allows you to make test recordings and $25 gets you the whole program.

With the exception of applications like Audacity and Audio Hijack Pro[4], most audio recording applications cost big money, so this is a relative bargain. On the other hand, it records to the compressed AAC format and doesn't include an editor, so it needs other applications to be really powerful.

You need another program to edit and "finish" a recording, so why do I like it so much? TapeDeck's interface wisely capitalizes on the familiar, in sharp contrast to the over-powered applications I'm used to seeing in the audio world. Creative types can distribute a tune or audio blog moments after pressing STOP. I can capture and organize business notes with a minimum of fuss before and after. That's "excellent" to me.

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[3]http://www.atpm.com/13.04/audacity.shtml
[4]http://www.atpm.com/13.01/audio-hijack.shtml

Time Capsule (1 TB)

Developer: Apple[1]
Price: $299 (500 GB); $499 (1 TB)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5 for Time Machine functions.
Trial: None

Ever had that moment, when you fired up your Mac and something just wasn't right? A key file was missing, or maybe the drive itself was on its way to the big bit bucket in the sky? The shaking starts, the irrational panic follows next and, sometimes, the crying ensues. Time Machine, as part of Leopard, was designed to help save our tears, and our files. When I bought Leopard for my MacBook Pro, I also bought a 500 GB drive to keep a good archival record of my Mac's files.

But Time Machine works best when you're constantly plugged into your backup drive. If you back up infrequently, there's a lengthy scanning component that must take place if you're not always connected to your Time Machine volume. Lately, I'd been backing up to my external drive about twice a week via Time Machine.


Configuring Time Capsule and Time Machine.

And then Apple released the Time Capsule. We'd been "promised" network backup via Time Machine in early Leopard betas, according to several Web publications, but when Leopard came out, it was oddly

absent. Many surmised that networked backups over wireless were too much of a strain for Time Machine's capabilities. I suggest that our experience with the Time Capsule is a confirmation that backup over wireless isn't quite as easy as it's made out to be. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Time Capsule, hooked up to the network.

Let's talk about our network a little bit. There are three computers and a few random other devices hanging out on our network. My condo has a serious flaw, in that the central wall that separates the living quarters (and the network gear) and the office is made with two layers of cinder block, which means that wireless to the back half of the house is shaky at best, and Ethernet is impossible. Thus, the Time Capsule took over as the WDS[2] "main," and our 802.11n AirPort Base Station moved to the back of the house as the WDS "remote." This process was made incredibly simple by the new version of the base station software that ships with the Time Capsule.

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[1] http://www.apple.com/timecapsule/

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wireless_Distribution_System
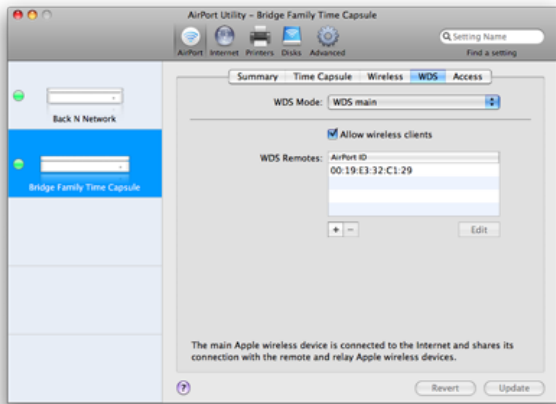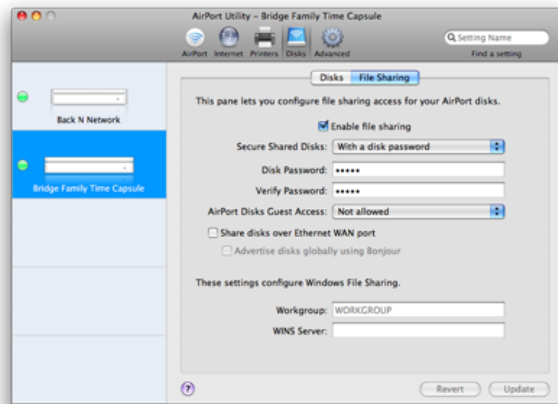
WDS configuration on the Time Capsule.

If you're giving thought to picking up a new base station, put down the Time Capsule as Apple's single best wireless router in a long line of successful models that it's put on the market for home networking. (Let's just pretend that the incredibly unreliable and rightly-maligned "Snow" base station never existed, shall we? Good, I've already suppressed memory of it.) The initial setup allowed me to simply swap the profile of the old base station for the new one. Five minutes from plugging it in, I had switched my network over to the Time Capsule. The last time I switched out network hardware, it was a good half-hour, and there was a lot of cursing going on.

Time Capsule with AirPort Extreme (802.11n) for size comparison.

The Time Capsule has an added feature not previously available to other AirPort equipment: an internal disk. Time Capsule's disk comes in two sizes: Large (500 GB) and Really Large (1 TB), and it features a Hitachi DeskStar drive (on a Serial ATA bus)

wired directly into the main board of the Time Capsule. The disk is available as network-attached storage, once you've set it up to be shared over your wireless and wired network, and it works pretty well as a common stomping ground for your home network. If you're looking for a way to share files to a common place on your network, accessible to all who may cross it, this is definitely a lot cheaper than a Mac mini running Sharepoints[3]—and certainly just as effective.


File Sharing configuration for the new Time Capsule drive.

But there's a bigger problem here. The Time Capsule isn't just a base station or network-attached storage. The Time Capsule's got a bigger purpose on your network. It's supposed to be a repository for your backed-up data. And, in terms of capacity, it does well: 1 TB is certainly the right place to be in terms of storage for a couple of users, and if it's just you on your network, 500 GB ought to be fine. But this is where the Time Capsule fell down for us. And why it's taken me literally days to write this half of the review.

I want to like the Time Capsule. I do. I've really come to love Time Machine on its external drive. But Time Capsule wasn't quite as nice. Sometimes when you go to the dealership for your car's periodic maintenance, the dealer gives you the next model up for the day. You drive around town in the sweet little ride that reminds you why you spend serious money on cars. When I took my last car in for its last periodic maintenance, I was given a clunker for the day. That's how Time Capsule felt in comparison to our Time Machine experience.

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[3] http://www.hornware.com/sharepoints/

My wife's MacBook Pro was the first machine we added to the Time Capsule. We set her up to back up before going to bed and let Time Machine store its backup on the Time Capsule. It worked pretty well, copying some 90 GB of data to the remote volume in the following three-day period. Yeah, that's a good long time to saturate the AirPort network, but it didn't overly affect tasks such as surfing or e-mail, or even some light compositional work in the suites of graphics tools put in our hands by many independent developers. It really didn't get along too well with processor-intensive World of Warcraft, though, bogging down the frame rate inside the game, and the process of the Time Machine backup in the background. But it completed. It was about a week later when the problems began.
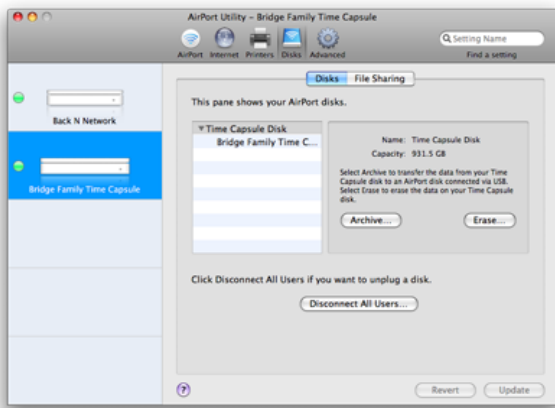
The Disks configuration section of the new AirPort Utility.

We ran into trouble with the disk image not properly mounting for further backup. At first, these were intermittent errors that would be fixed with a restart of the Time Capsule, but even that wouldn't solve our problems after awhile. So we started over. We deleted the old backup off the disk and took a Time Machine backup to disk over FireWire, then reset the target to the Time Capsule. We spooled out a cable in our living room to make the first backup over Ethernet and reduced the time of the initial backup from three days down to a single day. But again, the disk image would slowly be unmountable and unusable.

In the middle of this, I tried to set up my laptop to back up to the Time Capsule, but I experienced the same problem that my wife did when it came to transfer speed. I have about 100 GB of data, and in an overnight running of Time Capsule, only about 25 GB of data was moved to the Time Capsule, mean-

ing I'd be looking at an initial set-up of about four days to take a good "first backup" to the Time Capsule. After day two, I gave up and went back to my external disk, dejected. I may return to the Time Capsule's wireless capabilities, once I have a weekend to leave my MacBook Pro tethered to the Ethernet for another shot on an initial transfer, but with my wife's issues with her disk images corrupting over the course of a few weeks, why risk it? Why not wait for 10.5.3 or 10.5.4 and firmware version 7.3.2 or 7.3.3?

So, as a base station, Time Capsule is without question the best that Apple's made. It balances our mixed-use network, featuring a good number of wireless and wired devices quite well. The range on it is quite good and even penetrates our normally opaque-to-wireless exterior walls, with my iPhone picking up usable signals about 60 feet outside of my front door (to my considerable surprise!). However, the backup functions just aren't reliable enough, or fast enough, for me to recommend this to anyone who's using a laptop as her primary computer. Those with iMacs and Mac Pros might consider it as a useful utility, as those machines are much less likely to be go traipsing off to the coffee shop for a latte and the *Sunday Times* crossword, or to a client site for some planning work. But if you have an iMac or a Mac Pro, you can stay tethered to a FireWire or USB drive just as easily. Wait for the next version, I think.

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].

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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.

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.

How Can I Contribute to *ATPM*?

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

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

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

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-

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

jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how 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.

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