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

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[1] http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/aboutthisparticu

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the December issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* The editors of ATPM wish you and your loved ones a merry and happy holiday season.

The iPhone 4's Quick Success

Although the iPhone 4S was announced to mixed reviews, the product's early success has pushed aside any concerns Apple's decisions to continue with the original iPhone 4's enclosure would dampen enthusiasm for the new device. The iPhone 4's eight-megapixel camera and dual-core A5 chip are among the significant enhancements to the iPhone's features. The new iPhone holds its own not only as a point-and-shoot digital camera, but also as a competitive handheld console for gamers.

Siri

If there's one particular feature available on the iPhone 4S that has generated a great deal of press, it's Siri, the user's "intelligent assistant." Siri allows one to use voice commands to send text messages, arrange calendar appointments, and much, much more. Siri is among the reasons Apple will sell 130 million iPhones or more in the company's current fiscal year.

iWork '12?

We noticed it's been a while since Apple updated iWork for the Mac. The latest Mac versions of Pages, Numbers, and Keynote are suffixed with an "'09." For those of us who choose to use iWork as our primary productivity suite, it's time to give us an update. Numbers, in particular, has a simple elegance. But it could use a bit of an update and an upgrade in sophistication. iOS versions 1.5 of the iWork applications for Apple's mobile devices were released in mid-October.

AAPL on Sale Now

Apple's share price is on a holiday discount of its own. No matter the 82.7% rise in earnings per share last fiscal year and the roughly $87 in cash standing behind every outstanding share as of the end of the September quarter, at press time AAPL is trading at only 14 times trailing 12-month earnings.

During the current fiscal year that ends next September, Apple will surpass HP in revenue to become the nation's biggest technology company. As much as 75% of Apple's revenue in the current fiscal year may come from iOS-based products that include the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. All of Apple's iOS products were first released within the past five years, and both the iPhone and iPad are in early stages of global market development.

Apple HD TV

We're not talking about the $99 Apple TV that many of us use to stream content to the television in our living room. We're talking about a full-fledged HD TV. The rumors that Apple is planning to enter the HD TV business have been consistent and persistent for the past few months. We'll know early next year if an HD TV is coming to an Apple retail store near you.

iTunes Gift Cards

Among the most popular gifts to give and receive during the holidays are iTunes gift cards. No longer do you need to know a person's size or favorite color. Chances are that they will appreciate an iTunes gift card in any denomination. iTunes gift cards are available at thousands of retail stores, and the recipient can choose from countless numbers of songs, movies, apps, and applications that suit their preferences and tastes. iTunes gift cards have become their own form of currency during the annual holiday season.

Our December issue includes:

MacMuser[1]: The Best Thing About the iPhone 4S

While enduring a hospital procedure, Mark Tennent explains his favorite feature of the iPhone 4S.

MacMuser[2]: Box-Shifting Causes Migration

A new Mac migration tale.

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/17.12/macmuser-iphone-4s.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/17.12/macmuser-box-shifting.shtml

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[13]http://www.theipadchronicles.com

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Reflecting on the Green Screen Experience[1]

As a historian who works a lot with the publishing process, from the days before printing was invented through the 18th century, and as a user of computers from the days of the blinking white (then green) cursor to WYSIWYG systems, I found your reflections fascinating. It's really only in the last quarter century that any writer, except those who engraved their own handwriting like William Blake, could expect that their manuscript/typescript output would look like the published version. That little book by Robin Williams, The Mac is not a Typewriter[2], summed up the shift.

And yet there's a return to products like WriteRoom[3], or Scrivener, that take a step back from WYSIWYG. For that matter, I think the best word processor ever produced for the Mac was Microsoft Word 4, because it combined a reasonable view of the *words* one wrote without the *page layout* elements (margins, etc.) that mar otherwise useful programs like Mellel or Pages.

My workflow now involves keeping a bibliography in Bookends, taking notes in DEVONthink Pro Office, and drafting in Scrivener. For lectures, I go straight from Scrivener to PDF. For publications, when I've decided that the argument is good, I export to RTF or Word for submission, revision, and copyediting.

But even there, I know that what I submit will look very different from what appears in print. That's because publishing professionals will take it on from there. Usually the results please me; sometimes not. But in either case, what my WYSIWYG word processor produced is not at all like the finished product.

And I still remember moving from the typewriter, the white-out and correcting tape, and needing to literally cut and paste to rearrange material, to the possibility of rearranging vast swathes of text, or putting them in a holding tank if I wanted to try out my piece without them but keep the option of putting them back. That was the really liberating part of the whole business for me.

—*Brian Ogilvie*

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

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/17.11/segments-green-screen.shtml

[2] http://www.amazon.com/dp/0201782634/?tag=aboutthisparticu

[3] http://www.atpm.com/12.09/writeroom.shtml

The Best Thing About the iPhone 4S and How to Cope in Clink

Another two weeks in clink, or hospital whichever way you look at things. All to dig a vein out of my arm to fix the twice repaired artery in my leg. Bloody stuff and still very painful. However, it does give the armoury of entertainment a good run out, and here are some recommendations.

First up is the iPod, which proved essential when stuffed to the diodes with radio shows and plays downloaded in advance. They even left enough space for a movie or two and some TV shows. All courtesy of BBC iPlayer and home recordings.

Next is the iPad. Its small form factor, with an STM cover for propping it upright, made all night viewing a breeze. Movies and TV shows recorded and compressed kept me going for days. Meanwhile my lifeline, or more accurately wifeline, was busy preparing new ones for me.

We did try a MacBook, but its weight and large size made it vulnerable in a situation where every surface is cleaned several times a day. A MacBook Air would have been a better choice, but I don't know how safe it would be on open wards with no secure locker. Get whisked off for a scan and return to find it had also been whisked off. Whereas the iPad is small enough to keep with you.

Finally, the iPhone rounds off gadgets for the gammy. At first my old iPhone 3GS, but the lure of a 4S waiting at home proved too great, and what a good thing, too. A quick switch of contracts was all that was needed to stream TV and radio to my hospital bed-bound misery.

Obviously, the above are all Apple products, but there is a good reason for this: they all take the same charger. One tiny white plug and lead powered them all up, rather than the large box of transformer-rectifiers used by other manufacturers.

The best thing about the new iPhone is the aerials. Apple spent extensive research time on them, and it has really paid off. This is the first cellphone I can get a signal on in my own home, which being near the seafront, is surrounded by buildings rising higher as the land slopes gently away from the coast.

A cellphone signal has been all but impossible to pick up from any supplier on any of the dozens of handsets we have tried.

With the iPhone 4S, I get a solid three or four signal bars anywhere in my home. Brilliant!

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

Box-Shifting Causes Migration

A courier arrived at our door one day carrying a large brown box on his shoulder. He had tried to deliver it next door where the address label said it should go to, but they didn't want it. There was no addressee, and the name of the building was as incorrect as the number. What we and our neighbors didn't know was that the box contained a brand new 27″ iMac, graphics tablet, extended keyboard, and trackpad. Plus QuarkXPress 9 and Microsoft Office.

Nice! Shame it wasn't for me but for my wife. Meanwhile, I am struggling to convince my employers that as my job is 100% computer- and telephone-based and I have full access to their Citrix servers, I can do my job successfully from home just as I have done many times in the past when it suited them. Now that I need to—due to large wounds on my arm and leg, which are redressed every day—they are getting snippy about it. Blimey! I was better off when I was self-employed.

But that was a digression. This column has more to do with setting up a new Mac. The iMac is the umpteenth Mac swap we have done over the years, from way back in the era of Mac Plus and Mac IIci in the late 1980s. We know it takes time and, as ever, relies as much on the speed of the connection between the two Macs and their hard drives. In the early days, it was painfully slow; using the serial network, we could do it via external hard drives, which were never quite large enough to do the switchover in one go. As an average, we used to reckon on two or three days, often running all night.

This time, we can create a FireWire 800 network, and while the old G5 Mac Pro is long in the tooth, it's still no slouch. We have given up supporting anything older than a fast G4 nowadays. Apple's Migration Assistant was the chosen tool, and, being Mac users, we didn't bother to read any instructions. Three hours later, the new Mac was up and running. Not quite as we would like, but as it was so quick that we will probably erase its drive, reinstall the system, and redo the migration, this time starting the source Mac in FireWire disk mode as we—ahem—should have done.

It's all good fun, isn't it? And that 23″ display is going to look very cool next to the one already on my desk.

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

Staying Connected in Africa

Greetings from Rwanda! As this issue goes to press, my wife and I are in the African republic finalizing the adoption of our third child. We've been here for two weeks, and have up to another week in Kenya to look forward to. (Procedural muckety-muck with US Immigration; not everything can be processed in Rwanda.)

Staying connected with back home and the larger world has been a challenge. We each brought our iPhones, but they've been locked in airplane mode since we boarded our initial flight out of Dallas. We checked with AT&T about using them internationally, but the costs of doing so were just too great. Thanks to a Facebook group devoted to adoption in Rwanda, we learned it was relatively cheap to buy a simple phone for texting and local calls. So we set our sights on doing that.

Our first full day in-country we performed our first currency exchange and immediately sought out one of the myriad cell phone sellers. And when I say myriad, that's not an exaggeration. Take those half dozen or so cell phone kiosks you see at an average American mall and multiply it by a few hundred. Thousand. A few hundred thousand. (OK, *that* may be an exaggeration, but it seems that every where you look there are booths or larger stores devoted to selling mobile phones.)

Mobile is huge here, as it is in much of the developing world. A mobile infrastructure is much easier to build out than a wired one. *Everyone* here has a mobile phone. Not many people have a land line. Heck, even the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Children (under the Office of the Prime Minister) has her mobile number on her business card. *And that's all.* (And yes, this means that we do, in fact, have a business card from the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Children.)

So, mobile phone acquired, along with *two* SIM cards, each with about nine US dollars worth of time and texting, total cost: US$35. Why two SIM cards? Turns out this no-name phone from China or Korea or wherever has two SIM slots. There are two mobile providers in Rwanda, the original MTN, and the

relative newcomer, Tigo. It's cheaper to call internationally, especially to the United States, on Tigo. Most everyone we'd be in contact with in Rwanda is on MTN. So the dual-SIM card capability would benefit us greatly. (An eight-minute phone call at 4 in the afternoon, Kigali, back to Dallas cost about 300 Rwandan francs, or 50 cents US.)

On every street corner, in every other empty space of a strip mall or building, there are men and women selling cards for time and data on MTN and Tigo, usually under yellow umbrellas of the former and purple umbrellas of the latter. They are fairly aggressive, but not obnoxiously so. They won't hesitate to come up to ask if you need to buy, but back off quickly if you decline. It's very cutthroat, however, as the percentage they receive from each card sold is their livelihood. They won't hesitate, once a buyer has been identified, to try to sell over one another to earn that percentage. While we haven't had to engage in an on-the-street purchase, our local attorney has, and it was interesting to watch.

So far as Internet access is concerned, we brought my 11-inch MacBook Air, plus an iPad 2, which has proven handy for watching US TV episodes previously downloaded when your only choices in the hotel room are Al Jazeera English and a sports channel that shows nothing but football (soccer, fellow Americans). Our hotel has Internet access in the room, usually served via WiFi from a router mounted out in the hallway. Unfortunately, that WiFi hasn't worked since the day we moved in. Enter a wired connection and Mac OS X's Internet Sharing feature.

Though I always carry a 25-foot Ethernet cable in my pack, I heartily accepted the hotel staff's offer of a cable to plug in with. I consider the Apple Ethernet-to-USB adapter for the Air to be one of those "better to have and not need, than need and not have" pieces of kit, and it indeed saved our bacon. With the MacBook Air plugged in, it was off to the Sharing pane in System Preferences, and after turning on Internet Sharing, our iPad and iPhones could access the outside world over WiFi. Problem solved!

Well, kind of.

Two days prior to the writing of this piece, our hotel's connection went down about 8:00 PM local time. And has yet to resurface in our room, despite the tech sitting at the front desk, plugged in, 48 hours later. So while we were happily checking in on Twitter, Facebook, and e-mail in the mornings and evenings, that was no longer possible, wired connection or not.

So lunches and dinners have been spent at places with known free WiFi, and the staff of two institutions now recognize us on sight. Just this evening, while eating steak kebabs and sambusas (local version of the meat-filled, deep-friend pastry), the Air was on the dining table, purchasing tickets through KLM's Web site for our flight to Kenya. (And zapping some spam from my e-mail inbox.)

So while staying in contact with our family back home, and with our friends around the world, hasn't been as easy as back in Dallas, it has not been an insurmountable challenge, either. The people of Rwanda have been very friendly and accommodating, and we have, to a degree, fallen a little in love with our newest child's homeland. We will certainly return in the years to come.

Create Your Own Homemade Audio Book

Anyone paid attention to some of the new car ads lately? I don't know exactly when it happened, but the ads stopped focusing on traditional selling points like fuel mileage, horsepower, or legroom, and started focusing on connectivity. Everyone, it seems, wants us to know how easy it is to access your entertainment from their auto.

That transition was inevitable given the amount of time most people spend in their cars these days. The car stereo has been around for a while, and with the advent of CDs, and later MP3 players, it's no surprise that audiobooks[1] became popular. Who wouldn't want to put some of that commuting time to good use with a little light reading?

Cupertino to the Rescue

I've always had mixed feelings about reading text in audiobooks or other digital formats. On the positive side, with an iPad I can store hundreds of books in the space that was occupied by one traditional hard-cover. Unfortunately, until relatively recently, there has been one major drawback: consumers had to depend upon someone else to create the content. If your needs for creating audiobooks are modest, Cupertino may have come to your rescue. It wasn't exactly easy for end users to take documents they created and turn them into audiobooks. In fact, if you're reading this issue on a Mac, you probably already have all the necessary tools.

A few months ago, almost as an afterthought, in an article about the benefits of TextEdit[2] I mentioned the prospect of creating your own spoken word audiobooks using TextEdit. Let's be clear here: we're not talking about ripping existing audiobooks but rather converting documents you've created, or have legitimate access to, into audio files that can be played on your portable device or in your vehicle. For this project, we'll make use of TextEdit to open the documents and your Mac's text-to-speech features to create the audio files. iTunes will, of course, handle transferring the audio file to your device,

and Automator will handle the process with as little human intervention as possible.

Apple at Your Service

My first efforts at creating my own audiobooks from text files did not go as smoothly as I would have liked. In researching potential solutions, I discovered that in Mac OS X 10.6 and later Apple has already provided one solution to the problem. It's not perfect, more on that on a moment, but it works. In an effort to have this function available when you need it and out of the way when you don't, it's been placed in Services[3] and hiding under the name "Add to iTunes as a Spoken Track." Like other services, this one is contextual; it only appears if some text is selected.

The "Add to iTunes as a Spoken Track" service was built using Automator, so we can modify it to suit our needs. Go to the root level of your hard drive and open the `/System/Library/Services` folder. Drag the `Add to iTunes as a Spoken Track` file onto your Automator icon, and it will open. Let's examine what's being done and what we might want to change.
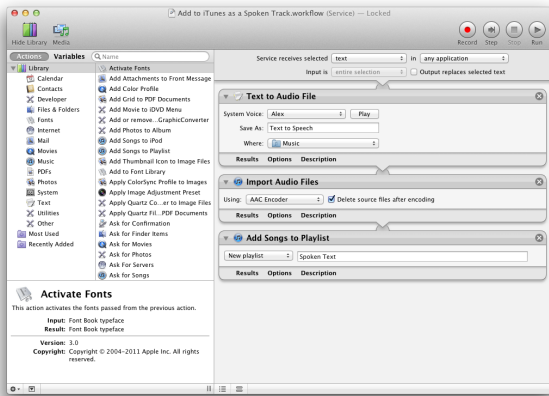
The first thing you'll notice in the pane at the far right of the window is that this service is set to accept text from any application. Take a moment to examine this set of pop-up menus if you like. This is what controls the contextual nature of services. The settings tell the service which applications to appear in and which types of data to accept. With the current settings this service accepts text from any applications. This means that the text which will be turned into an audiobook could come from PDFs, Web pages, or just about any other source. No need to change these settings. They're most useful just as they are.

The rightmost pane also contains the three steps that make up the heart of this workflow. If your screen doesn't show the expanded view of this workflow, click the small triangle on the top left of each step. This will expose the settings for each step allowing us to make adjustments.

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audiobooks
[2] http://www.atpm.com/17.07/textedit.shtml

[3] http://www.atpm.com/16.01/services.shtml

Expanded View of Workflow

Let's look at each of the steps in a bit more detail.

- The *Text to Audio File* step sets basic parameters for the completed audio file. The System Voice pop-up allows you to decide which voice will be used to read files to you. Choose a voice from the pop-up and click "Play" to hear a sample. Choices will vary depending upon which voices are installed on your system. The save location is already preset for your iTunes Music folder so there's no need to change that unless you want the files stored elsewhere.

- The *Import Audio Files* step decides which type of file will be created. By default, the service uses the AAC format but AIFF, Apple Lossless, MP3, and WAV files could also be created. AIFF and WAV are probably compatible with the most devices but also produce the largest file sizes. MP3 files are a good choice if you do not need to bookmark the file and return to a specific point once it has started playing. AAC files provide some ability to be bookmarked and offer somewhat smaller file sizes.

- The final step, "Add Songs to Playlist," adds the newly created files to a playlist in iTunes. The default is to create a playlist called "Spoken Text," but the name of the playlist can be changed. The pop-up menu also allows you to direct the files to an existing playlist.

Once you have made any changes and saved the workflow, we can move on to run the service. It is simple but does require a small amount of intervention on your part.

Creating Your First Audiobook

Now that we've come this far, let's create your first book and hear the results. Open a document which contains some text that you want to hear read aloud. Select some or all of the text in the document. Now choose Services and select "Add to iTunes as a Spoken Track." The Services menu is found in the application menu (to the right of the Apple menu). You'll know the task is completed when iTunes makes the same beep it does when an audio CD has finished importing.

The time needed to complete creation of your audio masterpiece varies somewhat. It seems to depend primarily on how much text is being selected and converted. A draft of this article took less than two minutes, while conversion of a typical issue of this magazine took around four minutes on my 2008 MacBook Pro.

Potential

There are a few things about this procedure that I don't like but haven't found reliable workarounds for yet. Some are more annoying than others. Here are some things I have discovered that might help you.

- This service will take text from any application and attempt to turn it into an audio file. The problem is that Web pages often contain quite a bit of ads and other text you may not need or want to hear. If you are using Safari 5.1, look in the right hand corner of the address bar and see if the word Reader[4] appears. If so, click that before selecting the text you want to convert. For sites that offer both screen and print versions of their content, try both and see which you prefer.

- Using "Select All" is convenient for selecting text quickly but can produce some unwanted results. Select the ATPM cover page, for example, and the resulting audio file will contain just about everything on that page including all of the staff names.

- As it's currently constructed, this solution requires user intervention to both select the text and name the audio file. This is a minor inconvenience for some users but might be a significant issue for our readers who have impaired vision.

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[4]http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-13727_7-20007195-263.html

- It may be possible to remove even more extraneous text before doing the conversion. I've seen a few scripts that may fix some of these issues, but I'm still testing those. I'll keep you posted.

- Try a test file or two first. If you find that the text is not being read at an appropriate pace, go to the Speech preference pane, select the voice you are using to read your text, and adjust the rate until it is more to your liking.

- Once your file has been imported into iTunes, you can be sure that iTunes will remember where the file stopped playing. To make iTunes pick up where it left off select the new "audiobook" in iTunes and press Command-I to bring up the "Get Info" window. From there, go to the Options tab and choose "Remember Playback Position."

Final Thoughts

I started this article a few months ago when a reader asked if we had ever considered doing a podcast. Given how busy our volunteer staff is this may have to be a tentative step toward an alternative. It's far from perfect, but it's also gotten me to take a look at the whole e-books issue. There are some tools out there for that as well, but I've only scratched the surface there. Look for more on that in the future as well.

Getting to Know My First Macintosh

As a staff member in a university, I had unwritten privileges where I could use any available Macintosh for writing: reports, printing scripts, checking e-mail, and doing occasional drawings. Although I did not require an appointment, I was expected to be very unobtrusive if a class was held in the lab. I was always expected to give up my lab seat if a student needed a machine.

Having already learned to use an Apple II, IIe, and even having a passing acquaintance with an Apple IIgs, I was curious about these new machines. So, eventually, I found myself sitting at the clackety keyboard of a Mac Plus with 512KB of RAM and a noisy 40 MB hard drive. And then I had to learn to type on the clackety keyboard. I had to learn what hidden options there were in the Apple key (Command key) and which programs had secrets to be discovered under the Option key. There were no Fn keys like on some of the IBM XT machines being used in the faculty offices. And there were no plastic overlays to tell you which key does what. It was just a simple machine with a mouse to take over where the keyboard left off.

I had to teach myself how to use the mouse. There was an animated HyperCard tutorial which shipped with early Macs where a person—who was new to the concept of clicking, dragging, moving, and double-clicking—might get some guidance, practice, and skill development before diving headlong into the "graphical user interface." I still remember putting letters on the marquee one-by-one and getting things to change by clicking them two times very quickly.

For me, the movement of the mouse was *the reverse* of what I thought it should be. If I wanted to move down the screen I instinctively tried to move the mouse up. It wasn't until much later where programs developed a "hand" cursor for sliding graphics or screens in the direction of the mouse. I was forced to learn how dragging the square on the side of the window downward would move the "virtual paper" upward. It only took about a week before the side of my brain which normally dominates finally gave up fighting the way the interface was asking me to scroll.

For anyone who types 70 WPM on a manual typewriter, the transition to a computer includes similar frustrations with latency and disk access freezing. My keyboarding speed very often outstripped the speed of the line cursor to complete my sentences. Any number of things might slow down the progress of the cursor across a line, and sometimes I found myself stopping just to let the cursor catch up. I knew enough about 8-inch and 5-inch floppy drives to appreciate the speed and capacity of a hard-shell 800KB double-sided floppy diskette. And I knew enough about hard disk drives on mainframe systems to appreciate the marvel of having such enormous capacity right there in a plastic box directly under the machine.

Mere months after establishing myself as a power user of a Mac Plus, there appeared a Mac SE with two internal floppy drives. It was eminently faster, and I was certain the screen was better (although not bigger). It allowed me to clone a diskette in no time, and it eventually had a hard drive installed right inside.

About this time I was seeing (in *MacWEEK* magazines around the faculty) a new Macintosh profile, which was touted as the next generation of the device. The Macintosh II boasted NuBus slots, internal math chips (PMMU) for faster numerical calculations (which translated into being able to process video), and a much bigger display. Here, finally, was the machine I was prepared to lay down real money to own. Here was the machine I knew would do the things I was looking for from a computer. And so I ordered one.

I owned a desk full of set squares, a professional compass set, t-squares, and mechanical pencils. A drafting table took up valuable space in my apartment. These tools had served me for years in my production work designing award-winning sets and diagramming complicated lighting layouts. When the computer lab coordinator learned I was using MacDraw to do layouts and floor plans, he quickly installed a copy of Canvas so I could do more professional drawings. Once I was able to create a line—to scale—with the measurement already indi-

cated alongside, I felt like I was standing at the gates to heaven itself.

But the seduction of Macintosh did not reach its peak until the release of the Mac II.

I say seduction because I believe that's what was going on. Like when you think back to a girlfriend from decades ago you can think of only a few of the things which attracted you to her. I was becoming aware of the seduction only after I was hopelessly besotted. From the delight produced by the startup "chime" and the glee of installing a HAL9000 phrase as my system beep (so the machine would speak its warning: "I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that") served to build a foundation in the relationship I was creating between me and my machine. As with all new romances I had dreams for the future.

With my new machine I could install NuBus cards for capturing and editing video. I could have extra power from Radius' Rocket acceleration. I could put Ethernet into the machine, and I could add large external SCSI drives to the back. This machine was capable of very good colour quality, but it would be a couple of years before I saw it because I had to scale back to a B&W monitor when the price of the machine rose between the ordering and the delivery.

I had cleared a place in our apartment where the machine would live, and I got a pair of metal stands so the machine could sit vertically beside my desk. How my girlfriend put up with me I don't know. It must have seemed as though a newborn had arrived, and I just could not stop talking about my new baby to anyone who would listen. Once it finally arrived I was in an altered state for days. Fortunately, I had a new circle of enthusiasts I could share my delight with. Many of them were also new Mac owners.

I don't know how many other new owners of a Mac II were attempting to operate it from a floppy, but I was foolish enough to think it was simply a matter of patience and planning to be able to boot the machine from a diskette and then work with MS Works from a pair of diskettes. You can never know the mind-altering experience using a Mac with only floppy drives is—if you have never tried it. It was, quite frankly, a budget decision to buy a Mac without a hard drive. They were expensive. It became glaringly obvious in a short time that I was not going to manage anything more than simple documents by this method. It was in that first month of using my Mac II with only floppies when I resolved the most important decision I ever made regarding my future with computers.

Nothing I buy for the computer will ever come from the family budget. That was my creed. If the machine was going to get a peripheral, a printer, external drive, colour monitor, more software, and a video card—I would have to find a way to make the machine pay for it. It is, even today, the best decision I made about all my home computers.

Shuttling floppies between work and home I managed to write and print a consulting report for a small business regarding a video installation which paid me enough to order up a nice 100 MB SCSI external hard drive, more RAM, and a printer. Surely it would take me a couple of years to fill that drive with my documents, diagrams, reports, and other things. I also quickly decided the future would include upgrading the floppy drives to accommodate the 1.4 MB FDHD diskettes. I was quite proud of installing those by myself. Now I was able to read DOS formatted disks.

I was not deterred when I had to learn spreadsheets. I had attempted such work on an Apple IIe and was familiar with accounting practices through my father. It made complete sense to me to have an "entry" box and then see the results in columns and rows. I had been schooled in ledgers and bookkeeping so I was wary, but unafraid, of scaling the heights of numerical calculations, formulae, and tabulation, for these were the things a computer makes all the more efficient, accurate and capable.

I learned to use Kermit to access our MTS mail system through a Robotics 1200 modem. Anyone off-campus was rarely using e-mail. The faculty's AppleTalk network slowed to a crawl on a daily basis. The chance of a cursor completely freezing up were high enough to quickly train me to hit "Command-Save" after each paragraph. For me it was a simple conversion of the carriage return arm of my manual typewriter. When you were done with a paragraph you hit Save like you might with a double-Return on a typewriter. It was a way of saying "that part's done" with the Command key.

This isn't to say I have never lost my writing.

I too (like so many before me) have worked for hours on a project, dutifully saving with confidence, only to find the file itself corrupted or diskette failure staring back at me. I quickly became one of those people walking the halls with a little box of floppies containing my current and past work as I ventured to and from the lab. I was never a backpack kind of person and I did not use a briefcase—unless I travelled. But I did eventually purchase a disk-wallet to hold my current data in.

The world was a new place once I owned a hard drive. The response of my Mac II was wonderful. The saves were instantaneous, and the ability to just keep working without interruption was a relief to say the least. I still kept the habit of saving at every paragraph even when it was a short little blip of the watch-icon-cursor instead of the grinding of a floppy in the drive slot.

Backing up important files from the hard drive onto floppies was a drudgery I resolved to put up with. I would run Leopard (a backup utility) and take all my newest work and put it on the 70 or more floppies I had. My wife still remembers hearing the sound of the eject motor from the next room for each disk I had to take out and put in during some 60–90 minutes it took to do a backup. I was not yet using my machine to edit video or make 3D objects, but it was allowing me to work on writing projects, which eventually paid for an Apple Personal LaserWriter.

At first I tried to use another printer, but I was quickly plunged into the deep end of incompatible drivers and systems. This was a world in which I knew my friends with PCs were already familiar. My friends with PCs were constantly opening up their machines and moving cards around, changing connections, writing BIOS instructions, and generally being home-mechanics to their PC. I was told my printer would easily connect to my Mac II and print lovely high-quality text and images. But it never printed anything but a test sheet. Only after four trips up to the store and back with different instructions did I learn how the operating system I was using on my Mac II was older than the system required for using this printer (my first exposure to the upgrade treadmill). Well, that printer went back into the box and I brow-beat the owner into taking it back; having proven their salesperson misled me about its compatibility. Then I ordered a $6,000 LaserWriter from Apple.

I had, by this time, invested in a number of software products. I was well into the shareware community, and was being advised by other Mac users which online BBS to be a member of. A year or so later I switched from MS Works to ClarisWorks when it appeared, and I never looked back.

I learned to build a flat database using Claris-Works. I made it a project for my upcoming wedding. All the budget planning, bookings, scheduling, mailing lists, confirmation lists, gift lists, and "thank you" mailings were done using the database, and taught me so much about properly structuring data and "chunking" parts and designing reports for printing out labels and mail-merging. This computer was a part of my working life as well as becoming a standard part of my home life.

When my son was born, I worked from home on a year's leave. I spent many hours and days on the machine with my baby son asleep in a sling across my chest. He quickly became comfortable with my keyboarding and would fall into a deep sleep any time I started writing. Later I worried that when he would be in school learning to "keyboard" he might fall asleep at his machine due to the conditioning I was laying down.

It was from ordering RAM from a company in Texas that introduced me to a "document processor" program which soon became my all-time favourite writing tool. FullWrite Professional arrived on a small set of floppies with my RAM upgrade SIMM chips. At the time it was published by Ashton-Tate and, throughout its convoluted history, was serially owned by a number of companies. It ended up a victim of very poor technology journalism when few reviewers at the time cared to explore its potential, instead complaining how it required a full megabyte of RAM just to run.

Using FullWrite (and eventually upgrading through each version) I was able to generate enough income from my computer to pay for my house. So, the little pack of software which came free from the RAM people ended up being the tool with which I started a family, bought a house, and changed careers.

My Mac II served me faithfully for 10 full years. I was one of those people who would prefer to add to, enhance, upgrade, or build on to my machine than replace it. Eventually I had two large internal hard drives, two Radius Rocket cards, an Ethernet card with a 10Base-T dongle, an external drive, an Iomega Jaz cartridge drive, a large NEC colour monitor, and a box full of software. I was never able to upgrade the processor beyond the basic speed, but my needs were easily managed those first years.

This wild romance matured into a comfortable steady-state. I was deeply committed and faithful to making it work. In those final few years I was seeing so many of my colleagues buying PC after PC and shedding them for even more speed and features later on. I felt proud to have leveraged my investment for so long. I was never interested in the next sexy thing to grab my eye. I was already in a permanent relationship and happy to stay that way.

Eventually my desk at work came to support a PowerBook Duo portable machine with a docking station.

Nowhere to Go But Up

ATPM receives many press releases each month. Most of them are merely informative, but we enjoyed this one so much that we had to publish it verbatim. — Ed.

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Apps by Abe has recently released their 3rd Apple Application, "Pocket Brain: A To Do List." After the initial release, about a month ago, Abe Balsamo & Co. sent a Press Release to help stir interest around the world. The press release was a hit. It got cited by a blog and led to 2 total downloads of the application. With such high expectations on this underachieving Apple Application, Abe Balsamo & Co. has nowhere to go but up.

Taos, New Mexico—After the success of his previous two apps, "Arrhythmias" and "Unwritten Rules of Baseball," Apps By Abe owner, Abe Balsamo, is "going for the jugular." He says the release of his third application, "Pocket Brain: A To Do List" is a direct attack on the Apple iPhone application "Reminders" which comes Free with every iOS 5.0 iDevice.

"When I realized that Apple was getting into the business of giving away a free and awesome To Do List with the release of their new operating system, I figured that I could capitalize by putting out a simple, not-nearly-as-refined-or-cool-or-easy-to-use To-Do List. . . and charge for it! I figured I could make more than them if I charged for it, and I was right-on!"

"For $0.99, you can now download my app, "Pocket Brain: A To Do List," which will bring nothing extra to your experience on your iDevice!," says Abe Balsamo, President and developer and lone employee of Apps By Abe. "In fact, the Pocket Brain has been know to forget stuff, but never fear, it remembers some information-sometimes!"

An anonymous reviewer wrote: "This is the least-great app I have on my iPhone, and that is absolutely saying something. . .I've got some real crap on my iPhone! I'm so glad I wasted my life savings on this app. Just today, it forgot that I was supposed to pick up my daughter from school, but then it remembered. . .a day later! She was so pissed and hungry when I got there. I thought it was funny, though. . . it was, like, real artificial intelligence, complete with forgetfullness! What an app!"

With over 2 downloads (estimated, more-or-less) over the past month, the app has so much potential. This may be the application that makes Abe Balsamo & Co. (the '& Co.' is his dad's dog, Fifi) famous. "Maybe someday I'll be able to move out of my parent's garage (which he calls "The Garage") or at least help with the rent!" "I've already made more off it than Apple has made off of their "Reminders" app, maybe someone should remind them to charge for theirs'," Balsamo says laughing out loud. He points out that "he's sure" Apple spent more time and money developing their app than he did. "Apple's business model is all messed up! How do they expect to ever make a dime?" Balsamo asks rhetorically.

With such high expectations on this underachieving Apple Application, Abe Balsamo & Co. has nowhere to go but up. "It's good to be at the bottom, looking up. That way, I can see how much more I need to offer to be successful. At least I'm not in the forest (in the competitive market) where I probably couldn't see the forest for the trees." How then, could Mr. Balsamo know that his application is so fricken bad? He has a point!

With so much to be done and some much competition to conquer, optimism is high in "The Garage." "I think I'll go to the the coffee shop this weekend, celebrate my success by spending my $1.40 on a cup-of-joe, and harass the guy next to me to download my app. Then I can write it off as a business expense and maybe get another download. . .that would be awesome!" As you can see, Balsamo is a business genius and really has nowhere to go but up! In Balsamo's own words, "I have finally gotten a significant piece of the market share in a burgeoning multi-billion dollar industry.

Desktop Pictures

Jeff Krause, http://www.flickr.com/jeffkrause/

Disney World

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

Armed with a Canon EOS 7D, a tripod, and a Disney World annual pass, Jeff Krause[3] enjoys creating HDR images from Disney's Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Hollywood Studios, and Animal Kingdom parks.

> I use a combination of Lightroom, Photoshop HDR, and Photomatix. Photomatix is my favorite choice vs. Photoshop HDR wizard. Although with enough tweaking it can produce excellence results, too.

> I also use a masking technique for some shots. Especially for fixing motion blur between HDR brackets and blown highlights on lamps at night.

View Pictures[a]

[a] http://www.atpm.com/17.12/disney/

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, please send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[4].

[1] mailto:editor@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/17.12/disney/
[3] http://www.flickr.com/people/jeffkrause/
[4] http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

Safari Create a workflow in Automator with these three actions:

1. Get Current Webpage from Safari.
2. Get Image URLs from Webpage. Get URLs of images linked from these webpages.
3. Download URLs.

iCab Use the Download command to "Download all linked files in same folder" and configure the limits to download only the linked images.

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.7.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.
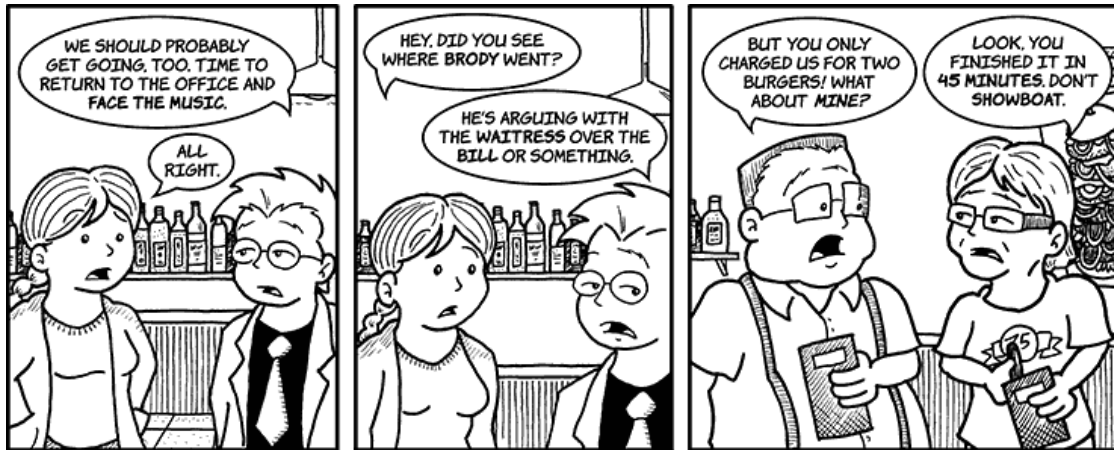
Mac OS X 10.0.x

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.

Out at Five

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Settling Up

Goodbye Note

Leftover Pizza

Missing the Fireworks

Long Lunch

Fringe Benefits
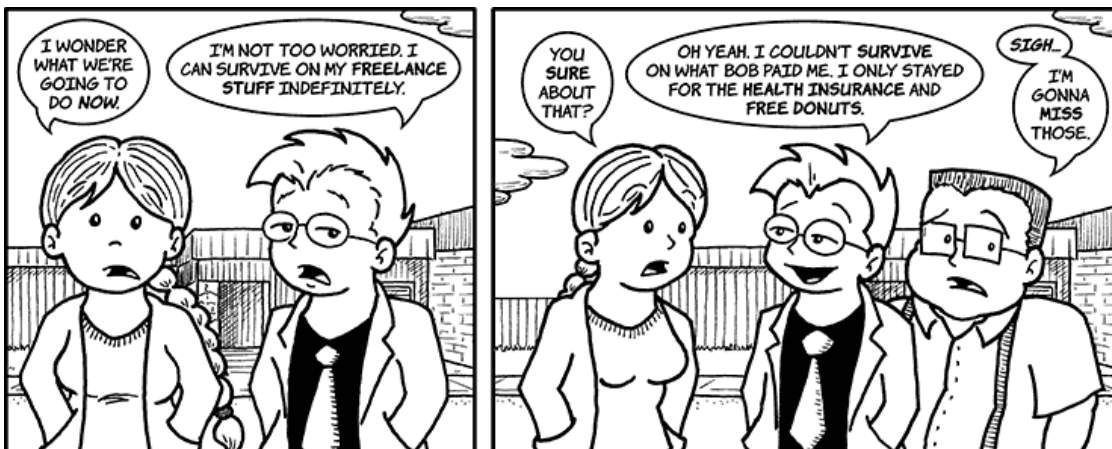
Todd's Moving On

Last Goodbyes
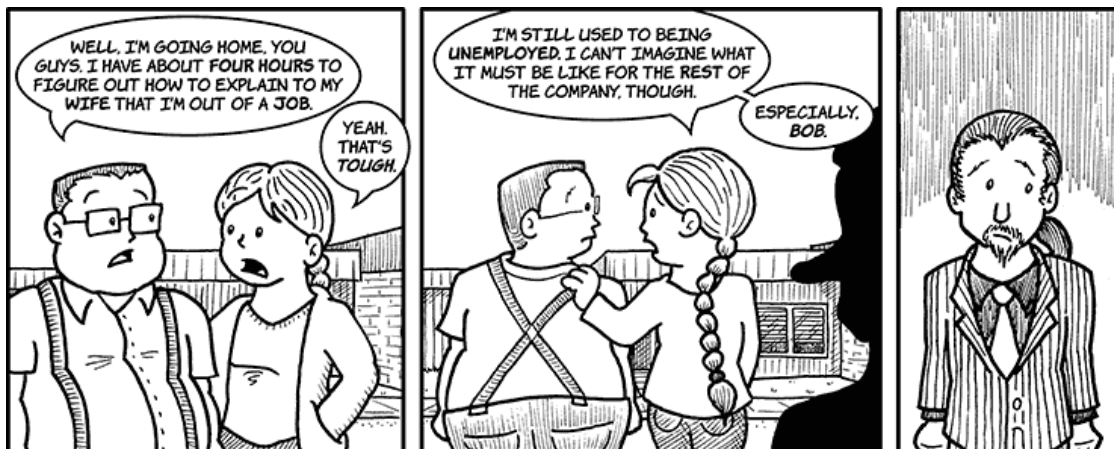
The Spinning Beachball

by Grant Osborne, http://grantosborne.com

Copyright © 2011 Grant Osborne.

Comic Life for iPad 1.1.1

Function: Make comics on the iPad.
Developer: plasq LLC[1]
Price: $5[2]
Requirements: iPad with iOS 5.0.
Trial: None

Having recently reviewed Comic Life for Mac[3], I was curious about Comic Life for iPad when I stumbled upon the iOS app. What functions does it inherit from its desktop-bound sibling? How would my iPad-created comics be shared with the world? Would I be able to edit the iPad comics using the desktop version and vice versa?
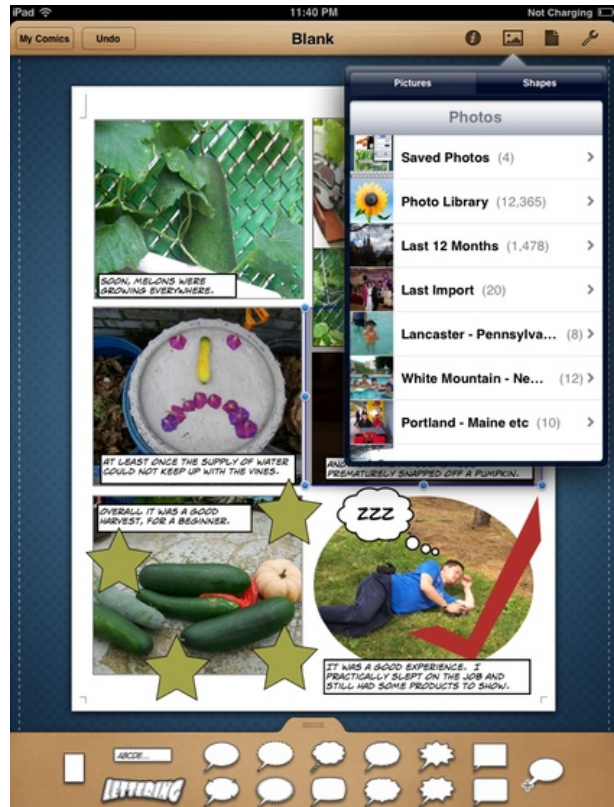
Let Us Make Comics, the iPad Way

When you first launch Comic Life for iPad, you are taken for a tour of the app's basic functions, which is a good thing because unless you've already used other apps to create content on the iPad, the transition from Mac OS X on the desktop to iOS on the iPad can take time to adjust. The Comic Life for iPad interface somewhat resembles that found on the Mac version, although the touch interface makes all the difference. Probably both to save on screen real estate and to have a clutter-free environment, most of the controls found in Comic Life for iPad are located in the upper right of the screen. Depending on the graphic element you select, the few controls offer up the gadgets applicable to the objects.

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[1]http://plasq.com/products/comiclife/ipad/
[2]http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/comic-life/id432537882?mt=8
[3]http://www.atpm.com/17.11/comic-life.shtml

Most of the tweaking of photos and such is to be done with the controls in the upper right.

Based on my experience with Comic Life for Mac, I expected to be offered a set of fun templates to choose from, but none were found. I went ahead with a blank template and chose the usual humdrum templates, which are just a bunch of rectangles in various sizes. Luckily, upon further poking around with Comic Life for iPad, I noticed that the next available template barely shows on the right side of the screen. Instead of a window full of templates, you just have to scroll horizontally to see the templates. While there are not as many templates as found in Comic Life for Mac, there are enough to get you up and running. Even my favorite template, Road Trip, is present.
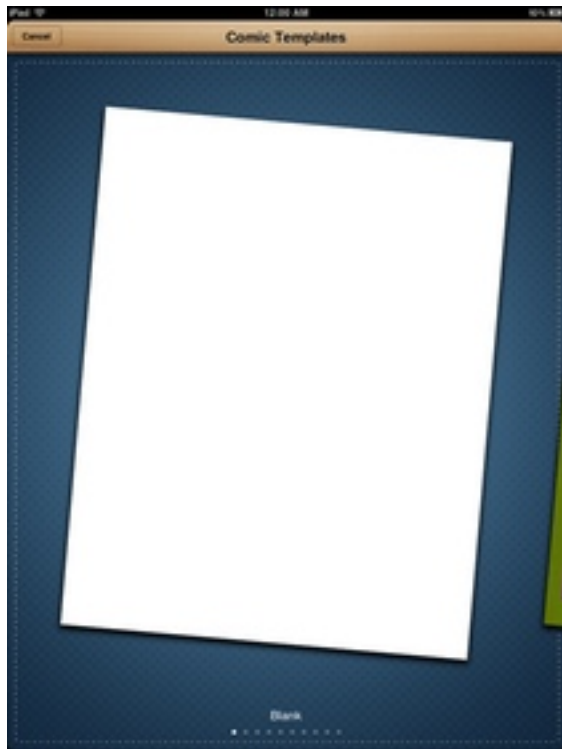
There are fun templates to be found; you just have to scroll horizontally to find them.

Photo Input

Whether you chose a blank template or a fun template, the next part of the process is the same. Into the panels you would place photos, add speech or thought bubbles, captions, and lettering—only you have to do so through the touch interface. Instead of dragging and dropping a photo into a panel, you would first select the panel, find the photo, then tap the photo. For a first-generation iPad, the only source of photos is whatever is found in the iPad's photo library. Note that the photo library does not only have photos synced from a Mac but also screenshots and images created in other apps, such as Doodle Buddy.

With an iPad 2 you have the extra option of using the camera to include captured photos. I do not have an iPad 2, so I can only say that having the camera opens up an almost endless source of photos. Lastly, you also have a small collection of symbols to spice up your comic creation. In the sample comic that I made, you can find some gold stars in the next-to-last panel. If you are so inclined, you can also make your own shapes. After some experimentation, I made the check mark seen in the last panel. The tool is actually

quite powerful, as you can add control points, smooth out sharp corners, and more.
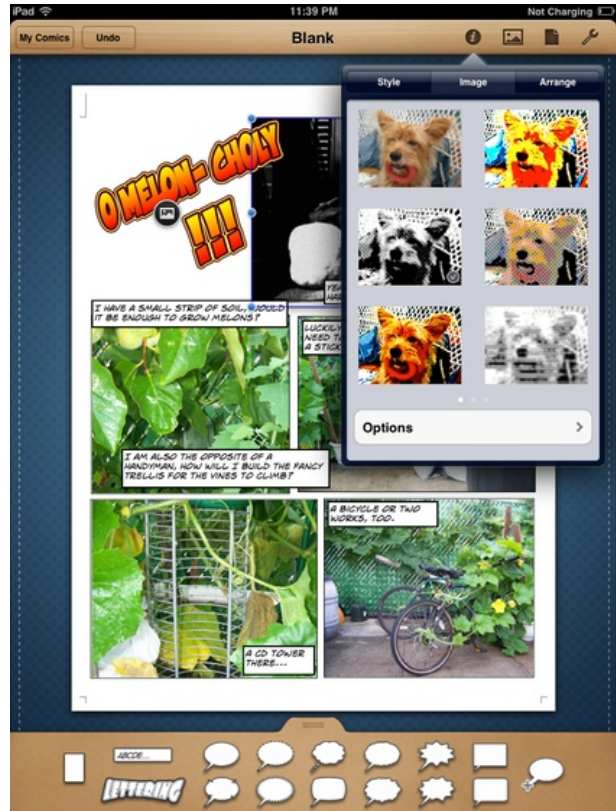

There are not too many shapes, but if you have the skill and patience you can make your own.

While reviewing Comic Life for Mac, the most welcomed feature I found was being able to have multiple pictures in a panel. I am happy to find that Comic Life for iPad has the same capability even though the process is different. With Comic Life for Mac, when you drop another photo onto an existing one in a panel, you are prompted to decide whether to neatly replace the first photo or simply slap the new one on top of the old one. Since there is no drag-and-drop with Comic Life for iPad, to overlay another photo atop an existing one, you would just touch some area outside the panels and insert a photo there, then move it into place afterward. To precisely replace a photo, you would select it, then tap again to bring up its context menu. Personally, I would just delete the photo and insert a new one.

Tap a photo to bring up a menu of what you can do with the photo.

Some simple effects to spice up your comic. I used the black-and-white effect to indicate the past tense of first panel of my sample comic.

Once you have your photos in position, you can carry out some rudimentary photo processing. You can also add a border and shadow, with both properties having more settings you can tweak.

One thing I quickly learned is that my photo library needs much more organization. Comic Life for iPad uses the standard list box for photos, with folders and their albums listed first, followed by events. There are just too many items to scroll through! For the sample comic, I did group the photos I needed into an event, but it was still much work scrolling to the bottom to get to it. In the end, I moved the event to the top of the list, although I now know it is best to create an album with the photos for the project, place that album in a folder, then move the folder to the top of the list. All those steps are to be done in iPhoto, on the Mac, of course.

Text Me

A good comic has more than just a bunch of pictures. It has captions, bubbles, and lettering that together with the pictures tell the whole story. Comic Life for iPad provides all these text gadgets in the well at the bottom of the screen. Again, using the controls in the upper right, you can customize your texts by changing typeface, point size, justification, etc.

As a font lover, I was glad to see that Comic Life for Mac comes in only one version with many fonts. There is no deluxe version, and all the extra styles and fonts are already included. To my pleasant surprise, Comic Life for iPad too has all those fonts, including the few decorative or dingbat fonts. I certainly can use more dingbat fonts to supplement the shapes collection.
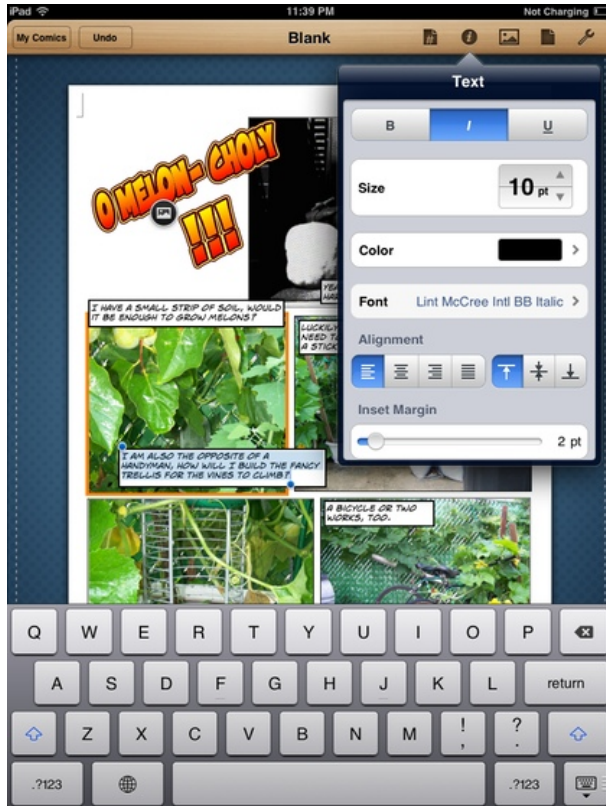
Adjust typeface, point size, style, etc. from the same controls on the right.

Lost in Transition

Not every feature in the desktop version comes to the iPad version. You cannot group objects so that they can be moved together. On a Mac, grouping usually involves clicking an object, then holding down the Shift key and clicking the next object(s). The two or more could then be resized or moved as one object. Sometimes I can be a perfectionist and want every panel lined up properly. On the iPad, I will just have to let things be. Not having grouping is not a big deal as I do not use the function that often.

Share the Laughter

Making comics would not be so enjoyable if you could not share the final products with friends. Comic Life for iPad takes care of our desire to socialize by letting you send the comics via e-mail as JPEG or PDF, send to Facebook, or print out on paper. You can also add the comic pages as individual pictures to the iPad's photo library. Sync your iPad, and now you have a backup of the comic on the Mac. However, I would love to be able to transfer the comic file itself to the Mac for editing. I would use the iPad to hash out some ideas then sync the draft to the Mac, all in a more familiar environment with mouse and keyboard shortcuts to speed up the work.

In case you are curious what my sample comic is all about, you can find them at the end of the review.

Last Panel

If you want to create content on the iPad, Comic Life for iPad is a Very Nice app to use. With the new fun templates, you can create not just comic books but also greeting cards, travel reports, and posters. While constrained by the touch interface, Comic Life for iPad still lets you do most of what you would normally do with Comic Life on the Mac. It would be nice if the comic files could be synced to a Mac then edited on the desktop, but I consider this a wish-list item.

A sample comic that shows many of the features found in Comic Life for iPad.

OmniFocus for iPhone 1.13

Function: Task, project, and personal-life organizing.
Developer: The Omni Group[1]
Price: $20[2]
Requirements: iOS 4.0
Trial: None

Computers have brought a lot of good to the world, but I've struggled for a long time to replace the humble sticky note. I've written sporadically for the magazine about my efforts to clean up my disastrous organizational schemes.

So here, we're ready to discuss another: OmniFocus for iPhone.

I first got interested in GTD around the time that I was beginning to struggle with the challenges of organizing myself, and became even more interested when I got a new job title, with responsibilities that were less in the "reacting to day-to-day events" mode and more planning, more timetables. In short, I needed to be more organized.

We use Microsoft's Exchange server and Outlook/Entourage for mail at work, rather than an IMAP server. This turns out not to be such a bad thing. I got by for a long time by keeping stuff that needed doing in my inbox. But that stuff piles up, and soon I was spending more time keeping my inbox cleaned up than actually doing things.

Ed Eubanks has done an excellent job writing about GTD in general, and OmniFocus for the Mac and for the iPad, in his GTD series[3]. So I won't rehash that.

OmniFocus is a great tool, and it's difficult to review any one component independent of the others. The iPad and iPhone versions are similar, but have their differences; the Mac version[4] is almost completely different.

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[1]http://www.omnigroup.com/products/omnifocus-iphone/
[2]http://itunes.apple.com/app/omnifocus-for-iphone/id284885288?mt=8
[3]http://www.atpm.com/Back/next-actions.shtml
[4]http://www.atpm.com/15.04/gtd.shtml

How to Think About GTD on the iPhone

The central difference about the iPhone version is that the screen is much, much smaller. I have all three versions, so I don't use my iPhone as my master-planning device. You have to think about the physical limitations of the iPhone. Because of the amount of time entering large numbers of tasks with your thumbs would take, plus the additional time the modal interface takes, it's just not the way to go.

OmniFocus for the iPhone is a zippy, quick way to drop in a few new tasks and see what's on the horizon for the day—or whenever you have a free moment.
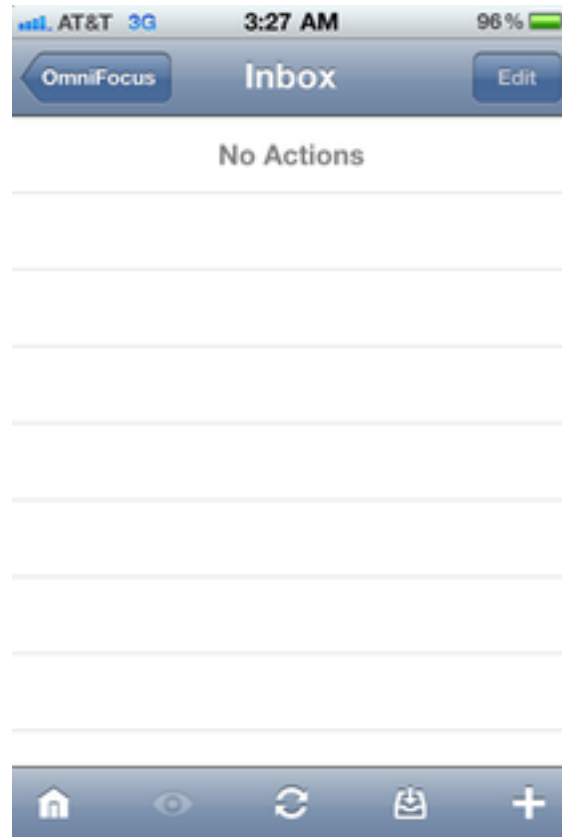
The inbox, where every GTD system begins.

In traditional GTD methodology, the inbox comes first and foremost. Everything goes into the inbox before you start doing anything. This is where the

iPhone version of OmniFocus really shines: to enter any one task, especially when you're in line at Starbucks or something comes to mind while you're at lunch.

I spend about 20 minutes a day entering tasks. My fingers are pretty good as an iPhone typist, but I would not want to do all my task entry on the iPhone.


OmniFocus' New Task dialog is indeed quick. However, the Context and Project dialogs are modal, which makes it slow to input full items. On the iPhone, I generally just dump it in my inbox and categorize later.
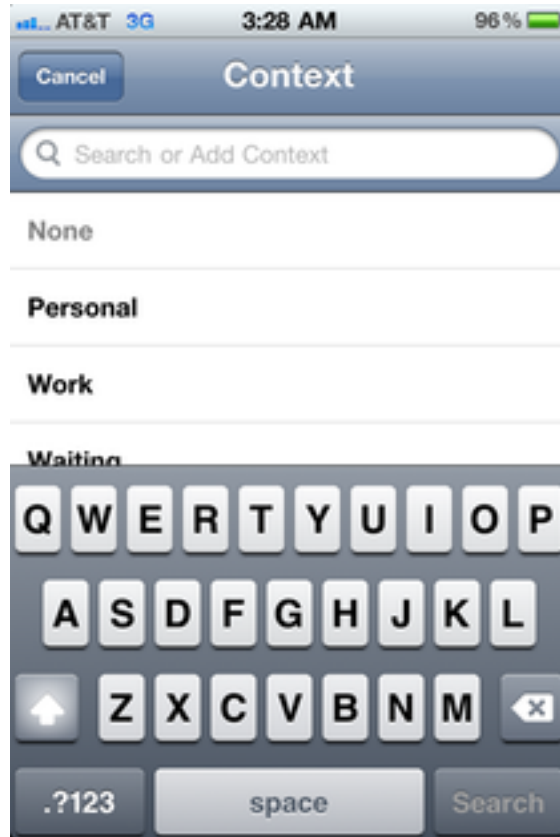
One problem is that the Context and Project dialogs are modal.

You can set all of the GTD metadata you're familiar with here. However, it's so time-consuming to type all your notes in, and takes so many modal dialogs to set contexts and projects, due dates, and any other metadata you need, that I try to avoid major surgery. This is for those "next actions taking less than five minutes" tasks, not the multi-step, multi-week, project-based entry.
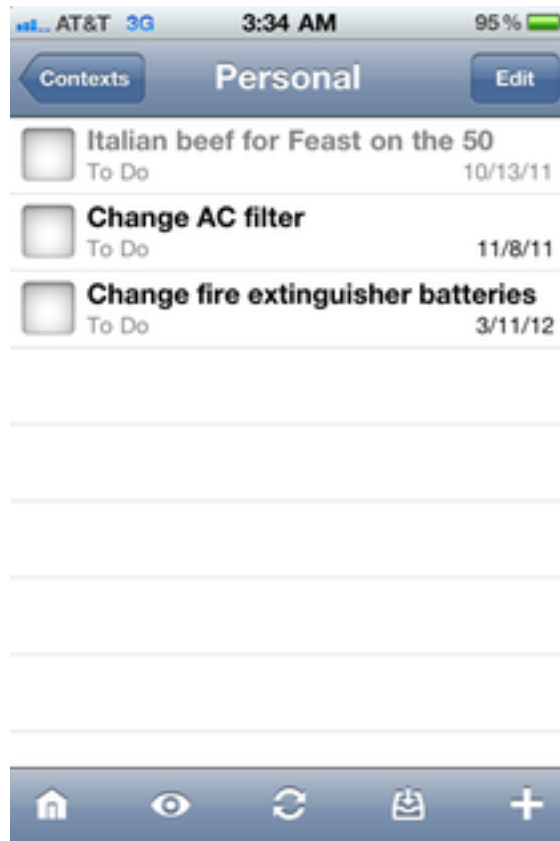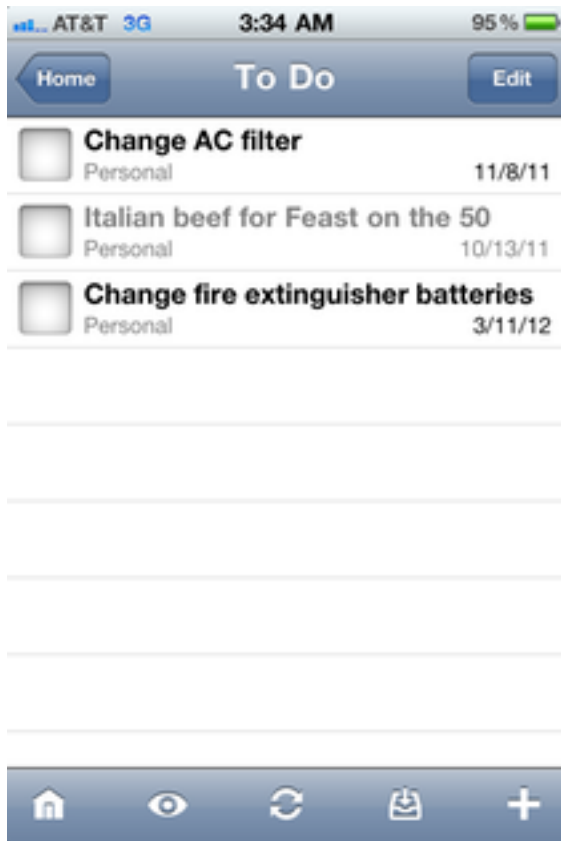
Forecast: The holy grail view.

This is the thing that makes the iPhone version really shine. Very often, I just want to see what's due today. This view shows me my meetings and appointments for the day in my phone's calendar, as well as what's due today.

I would say that I spend 30–45 minutes a day in OmniFocus for iPhone. Of that time, virtually all of it is in Forecast View. It gives me an overview of what's due in the next few days, sorted by day, plus a glance at my calendar for the day, reading out of the Calendar app on your iPhone.

When this was first introduced, I found it to be totally revolutionary. It's rare that I even bother to check my calendar in Outlook anymore (this is aided by alerts), much less in Calendar, thanks to the Forecast view.

I'd like to point out that the Forecast view probably violates the basic precept of GTD that you always move on to the next action whenever you have time. This view does show you that, but puts primacy on the next few things due, and obscures future-due items.

But I'm no purist.

The context and project views are the most standard views to those who are familiar with GTD.

These are the most conventional OmniFocus views. It's surprising how little use I get out of these views. But I think that's because I have the iPad and Mac versions for that, frankly.

Other Things of Note

- You can use any version of OmniFocus independently, if you so choose. A friend of mine uses it just to keep his to-do lists, more or less.

- But they can also be synchronized, using Mobile Me, the OmniGroup's servers, or a WebDAV server of your choosing. Your items, projects and contexts are synchronized…curiously, your perspectives are not. I understand that that's not practical for the Mac version, but it struck me as odd that I needed to recreate my views on my iPad and iPhone independently.

- I try to avoid setting my project, context, etc., when I'm doing data entry, and then come back to it later on my iPad or Mac. The modal dialogs are really annoying.

- Although it can be done, I haven't found the horizontal orientation view to be useful. There's just not enough real estate on the iPhone screen, and there's no second pane or anything.

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What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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

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