ATPM

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 March issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* While we wait for an official announcement from Apple about the release date for the much-anticipated iPad 3, the editors of ATPM have been working hard to deliver our unique blend of monthly views, news, and product reviews for your enjoyment. Much has happened over the past month, and we begin this month's issue with a recap of recent Apple-related news and events.

25 Billion App Downloads and Counting

At press time, Apple's App Store was about to pass the 25 billion download marker. Opened in July of 2008, the App Store has more than one-half million apps available for purchase and download by owners of the company's iOS devices.

Due to the number of apps now available and the challenges consumers often face when attempting to navigate through the massive online store, Apple has recently purchased Chomp, an app search engine. Presumably, the acquisition will provide consumers with additional tools to navigate through the store and locate desired apps for purchase and download. The Chomp app[1] is available in iTunes.

No Apple Dividend (Yet!)

During the annual Apple meeting of shareholders held in February, Apple CEO Tim Cook reiterated his call for investors to be patient on management decisions concerning the ways in which the company will distribute or deploy portions of the more than $100 billion in cash and marketable securities on Apple's books.

Apple is currently generating cash at the rate of about $1 billion per week. There have been calls from shareholders to reinstate the quarterly dividend program that was suspended in late 1995 and to repurchase millions of the company's outstanding shares.

A regular quarterly dividend would open the floodgates for investment in Apple by conservative funds and institutions that invest only in dividend paying equities, and a dividend could be amply funded through operations without an impact on the company's current cash reserves.

A share repurchase would reduce the number of shares outstanding. The impact of fewer shares is higher earnings per share each quarter. At Apple's current rate of earnings growth, a reduction in the number of shares outstanding isn't needed. Organic growth alone is delivering strong eps gains. On the dividend, Tim Cook did not close the proverbial door, but he said a decision to reinstate a regular dividend program had not been made.

Since last month's issue, Apple's share price has reached new all-time highs, and the company's market capitalization now exceeds one-half trillion dollars. The return to a regular quarterly dividend and the repurchase of outstanding shares are two ways in which management could assist in further boosting the company's share price.

But, long-term, the best way for Apple to increase the value of the company is by a continuance of the time-honored practice of providing real value to the consumers who purchase the company's products by the tens of millions each quarter. Apple's free iCloud service is used by over 85 million device owners, and the iPhone 4S is the most popular smartphone in the world. Quality, value, and strong customer relationships have brought the company great success and enriched the lives of shareholders and Apple device owners alike.

China Telecom

Beginning March 9th, China Telecom becomes the second authorized iPhone carrier on China's mainland. The iPhone is currently available on the mainland through China Unicom, and there's widespread speculation that the iPhone will be made available through China's largest carrier, China Mobile, following release of the iPhone 5 later this calendar year. In Apple's fiscal year ended last September, China was the only country other than the United States to deliver more than 10% of the company's reported revenue. By the end of Apple's current fiscal year, Apple's Asia-Pacific region, exclusive of Japan, may surpass Europe to become the company's second largest revenue producing region.

Our March issue includes:

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[1] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/chomp/id348286549?mt=8

MacMuser: Our Macs Are Under Attack[2]

Mark Tennent discusses the inevitable arrival of Mac malware as the platform becomes increasingly popular.

PEBKAC: More Than Just the Mac[3]

How does owning an iPhone or iPad change the way you use your Mac?

Segments: Making the Leap[4]

In this installment of his Apple-computing experiences, Dave Trautman tells of his mother's iPad adoption.

How To: Give Alert Sounds a Little Personality[5]

Following up on last month's tutorial on iPhone ringtones, Sylvester Roque is back to explain how to set up custom Mac alert sounds.

Desktop Pictures: Rwanda[6]

Christopher Turner shares some photos from his trip to Rwanda to adopt his family's third child, in November 2011.

The Spinning Beachball[7]

This month's comic has iPad users pegged.

Review: Agloves Touchscreen Gloves[8]

Want to use your iPhone or iPad but don't want to take your hands out of the toasty, warm gloves you're wearing? Agloves may have a solution for you.

Copyright © 2012 Robert Paul Leitao. Robert Paul Leitao is a contributing editor at ATPM *and is author of the Posts At Eventide[9] and The iPad Chronicles[10] blogs.*

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[2]http://www.atpm.com/18.03/macmuser.shtml
[3]http://www.atpm.com/18.03/pebkac.shtml
[4]http://www.atpm.com/18.03/segments-making-the-leap
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[9]http://www.postsateventide.com
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E-Mail

iMac Purchase

After three years of having a Mac Pro, I upgraded to an iMac—the best purchase I have made in a long time. I went all out and got a solid state hard drive and 8 GM of RAM. I am blind, and I use text to speech pro for reading ATPM.

　　—Edwin Yakubowski

MacJournal 6.0[1]

Good review! For those interested in a journaling app with far fewer features but, perhaps, a more elegant interface, DayOne[2] is cheaper and was an Apple pick. It is not meant for blogging but it excellent at getting you to write with its daily reminder feature. Very good for procrastinators.

　　Has anyone tried BeeLog[3] for journaling + Tumblr? Thanks again for getting me to look at MacJournal again.

　　—Eric Durbrow

Expert Mouse[4]

I agree with Dan the Man. The Expert Mouse Pro was the *best*—always was, always will be—unless Kensington realize their mistake and bring back an improved version of it. I love the large number of buttons, all of which I can program.

　　—David

Welcome to FileMaker[5]

Wow—after tinkering with FileMaker 2 in 1992, I now restarted with FileMaker 11. And your tutorial is by far the best I could find anywhere yet! Thank you so much for making me want to stick with it after all!

　　—Alexander

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/18.02/macjournal.shtml
[2]http://dayoneapp.com
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[4]http://www.atpm.com/11.05/expert-mouse.shtml
[5]http://www.atpm.com/11.07/filemaking.shtml

Our Macs Are Under Attack

Just recently we have received e-mails from our bank asking us to approve a payment. Click on the link and it tells you your account has been suspended; please enter security details to get it reinstated. Then there has been the e-mail, "How would you like your ad on 2 million Web sites," with two attachments called BlogBlaster and Unsubscribe.

The bank e-mail looked exactly like the real thing; even the reply-to e-mail address was correct. It was the Click Here button where the problem lay; hover over the button and it reveals the redirect to a host located in Iran. BlogBlaster may be a real piece of software but perhaps not in the best of taste, judging from the amount of spam that blog comments can attract. However, as the sending e-mail address was in mainland China it doesn't give one much faith in its integrity.

Macs have become targets after decades of living the good life, free from nasty viruses and trojans that jump from PC to PC. Or the voodoo that turns a computer into a zombie, sneaking unmentionable content onto the hard drive, making it act as a transceiver of whatever data the nefarious villains send around the globe.

The attacks are going to get worse despite Apple's best efforts to protect us. The latest (as far as we know) uses Java to climb aboard a computer. As a partial solution, Apple stopped installing the Java runtime by default.

Undesirable code can latch onto the back of seemingly innocent software. Gatekeeper[1], new to the next version of Mac OS X, tries to circumvent this by giving Mac users three sources for obtaining software: Apple's App Store, or trusted developers who are on the Gatekeeper white list, or from everywhere else. Mac users decide the level of risk they take.

The security walls of the App Store are a smart way for Apple to keep control of software quality as well as providing a reasonable level of safety. They also make a little money from every item sold, a nice cash crop.

Software downloaded from trusted sources will be digitally signed and let through by Gatekeeper, but users can still turn off security to open the doors for anyone smart enough to prise their way in. Malicious code attached to PDFs, Flash files, and Java will still be able to sneak past because they are not hidden inside applications.

Which means it is time to think more seriously about running preventative software. In the days of System 7, the free Disinfectant virus checker found many for us in the course of our work. Nowadays security software ranges in price from free to £70/$100. Our preference is for Sophos[2], an enterprise level solution on Windows with a free home user version for the Mac. Others swear by ClamXav[3] or iAntivirus[4], both free and used by us in the past. Norton AV kept us clean for many years, though it used to be problematic and was a trial to uninstall. When Norton asked for annual fees we moved on.

The one to avoid[5] is Mac Defender[6] or Mac Security, which was scareware issued last May. It pretended to scan computers for security issues, created a list of supposed threats, and offered a solution to delete them...at a cost. If users ignored the "threats" Mac Defender fired up a Web browser to display pornographic images.

But perhaps you have set your Mac to do that already...

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[1] http://www.apple.com/macosx/mountain-lion/security.html

[2] http://www.sophos.com

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

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

[5] http://support.apple.com/kb/HT4650?viewlocale=en_US&locale=en_US

[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mac_Defender

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

PEBKAC

by Christopher Turner, cturner@atpm.com

More Than Just the Mac

Recently, a friend and I were chatting about how Apple's non-Mac products have changed the way we work with our Macs. He remarked how he thought he may be "using the Mac for far too much of it," under-utilizing the iPhone and iPad. This got me thinking about how these devices have changed how much time I spend in front of my Mac.

Twitter

These days, I spend very little time on Twitter[1] while sitting at my Mac. Nearly all of my Twitter interaction is done on my iPhone through Paul Haddad and Mark Jardine's excellent Tweetbot[2]. (There is an iPad version[3] as well.) I also keep the venerable Twitterrific[4] on hand. These days, the only time I hit the Twitter Web site is to possibly check out a new follower's profile and Twitter stream.

E-mail

This is an area of usage where things likely work out 50–50. I do a lot of e-mail reading and processing on my iPhone. If there are Web links to read later, or a message in need of a lengthy reply, I'll leave those in my inbox to take care of later when I'm at my Mac. (And how nice would it be to have some sort of Instapaper[5] or Read It Later[6] functionality built into Apple Mail?) E-mail usage on my iPad is very similar to that on the iPhone, if I'm not using an external keyboard[7], though given the iPad's larger screen, I certainly get more of the click-on-this-link messages out of the way.

Web Surfing

I would say I do as little Web surfing on the iPhone as possible, but that's not entirely accurate. Several apps have built-in Web services, and Tweetbot now includes Readability[8], which has made checking out links from the Twitter stream much more enjoyable. I still do the majority of my Web surfing on my Macs, but the iOS devices have definitely cut into that.

RSS

An area that remains Mac-centric for me is reading RSS feeds. I am a long-time user of NetNewsWire[9] on the Mac, but I haven't made the transition to feed-reading on my iOS devices. This is mainly due to NetNewsWire using Google Reader for syncing, as do many other RSS apps which transcend both iOS and OS X. I've always been leery of Google, and see them as less trustworthy as time goes on. So I'm holding out for a non-Google Reader solution and carrying on with 100% of my feed reading through NetNewsWire on a Mac. I've said it before[10], and I'll say it again: the first developer to offer a Mac-iPhone-iPad RSS reader that syncs without Google Reader earns my money. Any takers?

Books

I've read a few books on my Mac over the past few years, in text or PDF form, but until the iOS devices (and Kindles) came along, most of my book reading was still done in the dead-tree editions. The past two years have seen my personal e-book reading skyrocket. I knew I had reached a personal milestone when I bought Lee Child's latest Jack Reacher novel[11] in Kindle format. Before, that had *always* been a hardcover purchase. Between Kindle apps on the iPhone and iPad, as well as iBooks, and Barnes & Noble's Nook app, I always have a book at my disposal, if nothing else because my iPhone is always with me.

Music

This one hasn't really changed since the iPod was first introduced. When I'm at my iMac, I listen to

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[1] http://twitter.com
[2] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tweetbot-twitter-client-personality/id428851691?mt=8
[3] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tweetbot-twitter-client-personality/id498801050?mt=8
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[10] https://twitter.com/#!/retrophisch/status/172839729245585408
[11] http://www.amazon.com/dp/B004P8JPS6/?tag=aboutthisparticu

music through iTunes on the Mac. If I'm not in my study, I have the iPhone docked to a stereo, or I'm carrying it around with headphones. Call this one a tie.

Movies, TV Shows

The iPad came in very handy for this during our trip to Africa[12] for getting caught up on the first season of Hawaii Five-0[13]. The cable service in our hotel room was nonexistent, so this was a boon for those evenings when we just needed to veg out. Our boys make good use of the PBS Kids app on the iPads, both around the house and while traveling. While I still make watch the odd item on my iMac, most of the time I'd rather stream it to our Apple TV and watch it on the 47-inch HDTV in the living room. Advantage: iOS devices.

Writing

This endeavor still finds me in front of a Mac. Maybe the 27-inch iMac entrenched in the study, maybe the 11-inch MacBook Air that can, and has, gone anywhere. But still a Mac. I have done some writing[14] on the iPad, but thus far that seems to have been a one-time event, outside of e-mail. And I can't say I've done very much writing at all on my iPhone, other than the odd note. Very much still a Mac-centric activity for me.

All in all, the iOS devices have me spending less time in front of a Mac's screen, and this is not at all a bad thing. My iMac still acts as my digital hub, and, despite iCloud's promises, I don't see that changing any time soon. Still, I'm thankful for my iPhone's omnipresence, giving me music and books any time, anywhere I want, and the versatility the iPad offers for some things over even the MacBook Air.

How has having an iPhone or iPad changed the way you work with your Mac?

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[12]http://www.atpm.com/17.12/pebkac.shtml
[13]http://www.cbs.com/shows/hawaii_five_0/
[14]http://www.atpm.com/18.01/zagg-logitech-keyboard-case.shtml

Making the Leap

When my mother was young, the phone was a novelty, television did not exist, movies were black and white, dancing was the thing to do on a Friday or Saturday night, and most of your news came from the newspaper, with live events arriving by radio and foreign news shown in News Reels before a feature film. She grew up in London, England. She served her country by spotting planes and watched the development of radar and computers for use in wartime. She is 88 years old.

Imagine having your world shrunk by the invention of jet aircraft, which could exceed the speed of sound. Many said it was impossible to travel faster than sound. Imagine the decades-long transition from transatlantic voyages to transatlantic flight. If you were a teenager at that time, you would naturally think your world was changing rather fast. You had to learn to be mature and resolved during the Great Depression; keep your feelings to yourself, because everyone was suffering the same fate. Spanish Flu might have taken many members of your extended family decades before this.

Imagine losing close friends to war and having to move to a foreign country to live with the man you met and married after the war ended. In Canada, they were called war brides. My mother traveled across seven times zones by ship and rail to rejoin her man in probably the longest journey she had ever imagined.

It is very hard to imagine how life was changing during those mid-century decades. Scientific advancements, live-saving medical discoveries, heroic achievements in sport, and daring journeys of discovery were trumpeted in magazine and news constantly. Each year, another amazing advancement would mean more change in your life. New materials and new products came rushing at you. The St. Lawrence Seaway and Panama Canal are hailed as marvels of modern engineering. And then, late one night, you sit down and watch Neil Armstrong set foot onto the moon.

My mother has always been aware there were computers. In fact she came very close to being one of "those women" who operated Colossus[1] to help decode secret messages. She ended up becoming a spotter but could have easily been trained to become one of them.

Computers were never a big deal for my mother. My oldest brother worked in the oil industry handling the network and database needs of a major company. None of my four sisters trained to operate any kind of computer—even as machines were being put into schools. I didn't get involved until the early 80s. My relationship with computers has been chronicled here in previous[2] stories[3]. But today everyone in our extended family owns desktop and laptop computers except my mother. Her grandchildren are all constantly demonstrating a sort of parallel attention between real life and their mobile devices.

So, it came to pass where my mother was—for the first time in her life—living by herself. She'd always *shared* living space with other people from the time she was born. She raised seven kids and was now both a grandmother to eight and great-grandma to three.

10 years ago my mother was offered the chance to use a PC to play card games or write some reminiscences of her life. She gave it a good try, but the desktop metaphor baffled her. She had never really had a "desk job" of any kind. She never had to use a typewriter, either. So the idea that your world was organized around what might be on your "desktop" did not apply to her. She would politely let us show her something, but she did not have any serious need for a computer, so it sat unused for years.

My father, on the other hand, had been a leader in bringing computers into the organization he managed. After he retired, he learned to use a laptop to trade on the market, to read up on things, and to exchange e-mail with friends and family. My mother, however, patiently listened to people talk about all the ways this new Internet was changing life. She

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[1] http://www.ask.com/wiki/Colossus_computer?qsrc=3044

[2] http://www.atpm.com/17.12/segments-first-mac.shtml

[3] http://www.atpm.com/18.01/segments-how-happen.shtml

did appreciate what it provided to my father. Of all the marvels she'd seen throughout her life, this little information appliance sitting on my father's lap day after day did not spark her interest.

I was at my local Apple Store on the day the first iPad was released (I have the T-shirt to prove it.) helping a colleague acquire one. Over the next few weeks, I noticed more and more grey-haired people in our Apple Store picking them up and poking them. I decided it might be interesting to give one to my mother. My family was used to contacting my father by e-mail, and they expressed their wish to continue using e-mail for my mother. Many of them live far from her, and it is not easy to speak to her over the phone as she is fairly deaf.

Now, when you proudly open an iPad box and hand a shiny new device to your aging mother she is going to beam at you no matter what she thinks of it. No matter what I pulled out of the box she was going to be happy to use it (if it made me happy). So, I was not expecting her to dismiss it; nor was I expecting her to gleefully declare it was just what she needed. I simply told her I thought she might enjoy using it for some small things. Mostly I was interested in whether she would like reading from it. My plan was to proceed very slowly.

In those first days I was able to use a neighbour's open Wi-Fi to get a fairly weak connection to the Internet. I set up this iPad as if it were my own, using my iTunes account and MacBook Pro as the host computer. This way I was able to "manage" the machine for her, and no one else would be able to change settings, install apps, or delete information. Although this was a barrier to other family, who would have liked to show her things, it also ensured that no one would cause the machine to fail or lose her settings.

It took only a few moments to let her play with the machine before I could see the ease with which she handled it. Delicate fingers had to learn to be less tentative and more direct with their commanding touch. The swipes and page turns worked exactly right for her level of experience. I put card games on it, added some public-domain books, and included my Netflix subscription.

I waited a full month before I approached her to have Internet added to her utility services (at meaningful cost to someone on a fixed income) and to have Wi-Fi put onto it so she might be able to use this iPad with online services. I showed her how to put bookmarks on Safari for the things she liked to check up on. I used the button-making feature of Safari to put direct links to her hockey team's Web site. I had Safari tabs for her news Web sites and one for lottery results. I put recipe apps on it, a shopping list app, and some other "fun" things she might use in her spare time. And I also put an iPhone app on it for connecting to her bank. It's rather funny how the bank's app is not optimized for the iPad but the 2× button really makes it easier for her to handle the login password and on-screen buttons. On any iPhone, this app would be hard for her to use.

After her Internet access was installed, I came over to sign her onto the provider's mail service. While I was filling out screens, she asked me if I could sign her up for Facebook as well. I have to confess that I think my chin dropped when I paused to take in her request. Here I was gently lowering her into the deeper waters of e-mail, and she was wondering if she could just jump into the turbulent currents of social media. I set her up right away. She had heard from others that this was a good way to stay in touch with grandchildren. She was right. All of them shared all kinds of things through Facebook, so it was natural for her to be able to monitor the traffic and see all the pictures.

I put out a call to all the people I knew to be on "the Facebook" with an invitation to "friend" their grandmother. Most of the reaction was similar to mine; slightly shocked. A few were suspicious this might be a hoax, but I assured everyone it really was "Mum" on "the Facebook" and she wanted to be able to see what everyone was doing.

For the next while there was much joy in Mudville. She didn't really get the idea of online chat, so I didn't press that. And the early iPad version of Facebook was just an enlarged iPhone app, so it looked rather odd to me. But she learned how to navigate around (getting stuck sometimes in the pictures area), and she quickly learned not to sign out.

I set up the mSecure app for all her passwords—which could also contain financial and other details. My sister dialed in the entire list of Mum's medications, along with details of other medical conditions. It was extremely useful to hand an emergency response person the iPad showing her full list of medications when she had to be rushed to the hospital for an infection. And when she flew to see my sisters, the air crew were fascinated with her iPad. It made her a minor celebrity for a time as she showed them what it could do.

She's "friended" a number of other people who have discovered she is on "the Facebook"—some who knew her years back and others who worked with her. She also shared images with a distant relative in New Zealand and learned of the boyfriends and breakups of her grandchildren.

Many a time she has confessed to finding herself up late at night playing solitaire on the iPad; or not realizing how much time had passed as she read her iBooks. She's dabbled in Words With Friends but did not take to it as readily as my sisters have. She has never gotten the hang of watching Netflix movies or the local TV streaming apps. But once I put the BBC iPlayer on the iPad it quickly was awarded "most-favored app" status while she enjoyed many wonderful stories only the BBC has available.

She's never taken to reading "the news" on her iPad, but she does look up stock market action on one particular app each day. She checks scores for hockey and football (Canadian football) while also looking at sport stories for tennis. So, having the NY Times or even the local newspaper apps hasn't attracted her to more reading. Her use of the iPad is a casual activity and not a "lean forward" experience. She is just as typical as everyone else who augment their TV watching with iPad lookups.

She holds it and uses it with sufficient skill and accuracy. I rarely have to re-teach her how something works. Sometimes an app update will change something in the interface, but once she's been shown where the change was made, she quickly adapts to the new way of navigating. In fact—once the iPad app for "the Facebook" was released—she taught herself to go exploring through the interface and is much less "lost" in the options.

I am most proud of my mother learning to use the online banking app to pay her bills herself and to monitor the balance of her accounts. She's slowly learned the nomenclature of banking and finally decoded the security steps required to use the app. It's great to watch her take control of things in her life that my father always did for her in the past.

Over the past year I placed a few "kiddie apps" on her iPad for when any great grandchildren might visit. There are pop-up book apps and some simple games, a SimCity app, and a train set app. About a week after I put the train app on her iPad, she confessed that she found herself playing with it for most of an evening without realizing it. These are the same seductions most of us have forgotten about early gaming experiences. A simple game with simple objectives and rewards draws one into the scenario; we are easily totally absorbed long before we realize how much time has passed.

Today I believe my mother has successfully made the leap from a pre-computer aptitude right into the post-PC era. Everything she needs to do can be done on her iPad. She hasn't had to turn her world upside down, re-arrange furniture, set up a home-office, take software training, or even learn to use a camera. She isn't issuing memos to staff, compiling data for research, or building budget spreadsheets, and she certainly isn't creating value-added Web experiences, or writing a blog. She's a consumer of digital entertainment and information. She is using her portable device to access things of interest to her and to manage the fairly simple life she is living.

Every once in a while she will say something to me which betrays her understanding of just how marvelous and, dare I say it, *magical* her new digital lifestyle is. Yet she knows what's going on in the world which interests her. She's able to enjoy authors she's always wanted to read. She's getting more aware of the impact of mobility on people's lives. Once afternoon she told me my father would have just loved to use an iPad.

As I compare my computer experiences to my mother's adoption of the iPad, I marvel at just how easy Apple has made it for people to use it. I'm also reminded of an article from <u>Glenn Fleishman</u>[4] (of *TidBITS*) where he talks about mirror neurons in the context of an interface that's easily apprehended by a new user. Although I know about mirror neurons (and their role in limbic resonance) in the context of human social organization, it hadn't occurred to me this was so clearly demonstrated in my mother's leap from a non-PC to post-PC era. But today it's obvious.

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[4]http://tidbits.com/author/Glenn%20Fleishman

Give Alert Sounds a Little Personality

Last month's column[1] about creating custom iPhone ringtones led to my thinking about using custom sounds on the Mac. I haven't done anything interesting with alert sounds in a while, so maybe it's time to re-examine that aspect of Mac use.

A Long and Somewhat Noisy History

It seems that for as long as I've been using computers I've either added system sounds or added various notification sounds. After one particularly nasty bout of troubleshooting my Apple IIGS, I added the unforgettable voice of HAL 9000 (a.k.a Douglas Rain) announcing, "I'm completely operational, and all my circuits are functioning perfectly[2]." as a startup sound. Even if I wasn't sitting at the computer, hearing that sound let me know things were past the point where the machine had been having issues.

I used a number of different utilities on the Apple II to assign sounds to a variety of system events. Emptying the trash was the perfect time for Oscar the Grouch to announce, "I love it because it's trash." In my early days using the LC II, incoming e-mail was greeted with, what else, Morticia Addams[3] announcing, "Mail's in."

Many of the utilities I used in my early Mac days never made the transition to Mac OS X. Oh well, added stability has its price, I suppose. After last month's column I couldn't resist any longer. It's time to add a few new sounds to the Mac. Don't panic; we'll do it in a way that shouldn't affect your system's stability at all.

Why Add New Sounds?

The excuse I gave my wife for this project is that I wanted some of the sounds to actually describe what was happening on the Mac. That is, after all, what an alert is designed to do—get your attention. I'm not by any means a touch typist, so there are times when

the rather nondescript sounds in OS X are not very helpful when it comes to differentiating minor issues that can wait for our attention from more important things that need immediate attention. I must admit, though, that part of my goal was to create sounds that were a little more interesting than the sounds currently being used. This is one case where Apple's options are, well, boring.

What We're Doing?

Last month we looked at adding ringtones to your phone using tools that you have at hand. This month we'll apply some of the same principles to supplementing some of your Mac's alert sounds. Just as there were third-party utilities for creating ringtones, there are probably similar utilities for creating alert sounds. We're going to try this using a modification of the procedures we used to create the ringtones.

What We Need—Gather the Right Tools

If you didn't like using iTunes for last month's project, use something else this month. Although programs which have a lot of editing capabilities give you more flexibility in creating new sounds, all we really need in the way of tools is a program that allows us to select part of a sound and convert it to AIFF format. I'll be using iTunes, but GarageBand, QuickTime X, Audacity[4], and a host of other applications could get the job done as well.

In addition to an editing/conversion program, we need some sounds with which to work. Your symphony of potential alert sounds could come from sounds you've recorded, snippets of songs from your music collection, or just about any other sounds. OS X alert sounds need to be in uncompressed `.aiff` format, but don't worry too much about that at this point. Once you've got the sounds collected, the format conversion is simple.

What We Need to Know—Gathering the Right Information

Just as there were a few things to remember when creating new iPhone ringtones, there are a few things to

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[1]`http://www.atpm.com/18.02/create-iphone-ringtones.shtml`

[2]`http://www.rosswalker.co.uk/movie_sounds/sounds_files_20100522_76672091/2001_and_2010/operational.wa v`

[3]`http://wavcentral.com/sounds/televis/addams/mails_in.mp3`

[4]`http://audacity.sourceforge.net`

keep in mind when creating custom alert tones. Following these suggestions will almost guarantee success on the first attempt:

If you want to use your custom sounds in the most possible situations, save them as uncompressed `.aiff` files. Although some OS X applications such as Mail and iCal can work with sound snippets in a wide variety of formats, other parts of OS X are not as flexible. The system sounds that appear automatically in the Sound preference pane, for example, must be in `.aif` format.

Keep your alert sounds short. Once these sound starts playing, in most instances there is not an easy way to stop them. I tested system alerts up to 30 seconds successfully for this article, but the longer sounds quickly became annoying. If past behavior is any indication, I suspect that on older machines playing longer sounds probably slows everything else down a bit. The sounds Apple provides seem to be no more than a second or two, though I prefer some to be a bit longer.

New alert sounds must be in the proper place for the system to "see" them. System-wide alerts must be in `Macintosh HD/System/Library/Sounds`. This is the system folder at the root level of your hard drive. Any sounds placed here are available to every user account on your system. When you attempt to add sounds to this folder, an administrator name and password are required.

If you want to limit certain sounds to specific user accounts, log in to that user account and place the sound files in `~/Library/Sounds`. That's the `Library` folder inside your "home" folder. If you do not see a `Sounds` folder, create one and then move your new sounds into it.

Lion users, remember that your personal `Library` folder is hidden by default. Getting to the correct folder is as simple as going to the Go menu in the Finder, holding down the Option key, and choosing Library.

Creating Alert Sounds

If you followed last month's column, the process to create alert sounds is virtually identical. The only difference is in the chosen format for the sounds. Sounds used as system-wide alerts must be in `.aif` format. Since iCal and Mail are a bit more forgiving about that, let's start with system alerts first.

Before creating any new sounds, let's make sure iTunes is configured properly. Launch iTunes and go to the Music section of your library. Right-click a

DRM-free song. Wait for the contextual menu to appear and examine the options. If one of your choices is either "Create AIFF version" or "Convert Selection to AIFF," you're ready to start. The exact wording of the option isn't important as long as iTunes is converting sounds to AIFF format. If you already have one of these options listed, feel free skip the next paragraph.

The conversion option listed in the contextual menu depends upon your chosen format for importing music. Making the format change is simple. From the iTunes Preferences window, click the General tab. Near the bottom of the window is a button called Import Settings.
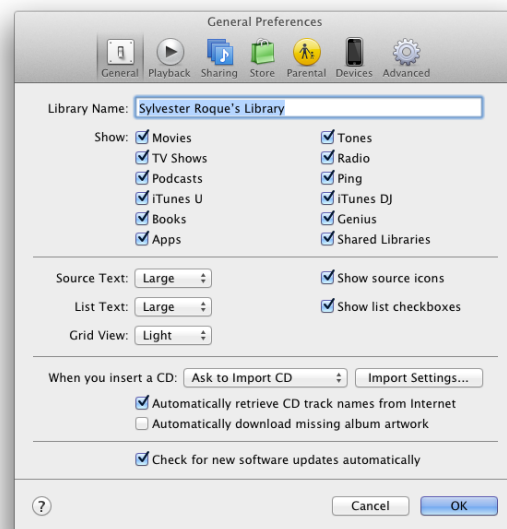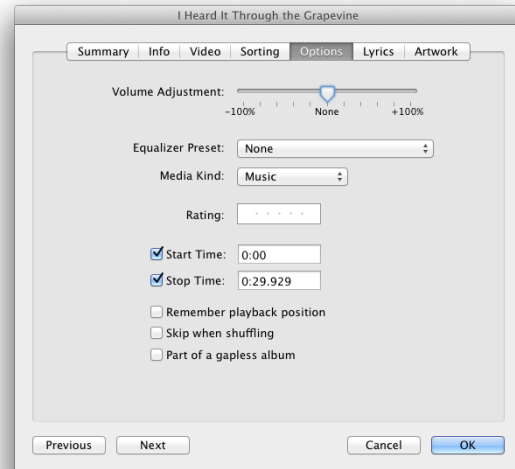

Where to Change Encoder Settings

Click here and wait for the next window to appear. In some versions of iTunes, this option is found in the Advanced tab and listed as "Import Using." In either case, change the Import Using pop-up menu to "AIFF Encoder."
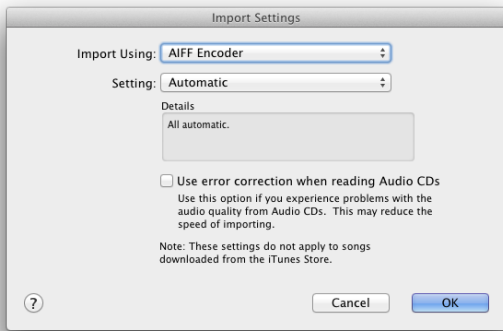
Set Encoding to AIFF

Set Start and Stop Times

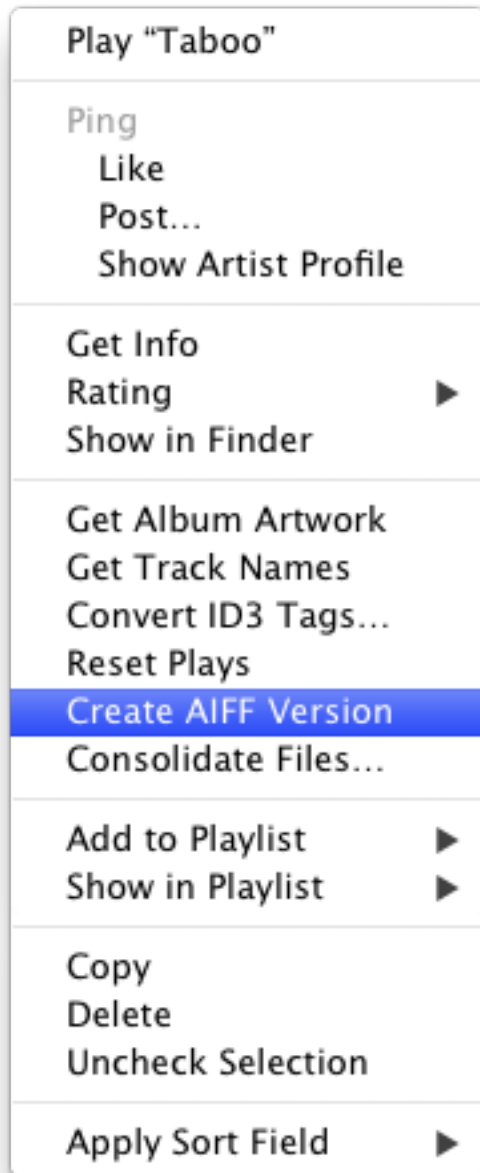## Creating a New System Alert

We'll create our new alert sound using the same process we used to create ringtones last month. We won't be using thirty-second snippets for this project, though. Sounds that long are fine for ringtones but quickly become annoying as alert tones, since there's usually no easy way to make them go away before they finish playing. A few seconds should be sufficient for most sounds.

Select a song or sound that you would like to use and let it play in iTunes. Let the sound continue playing while you make note of the start and stop times for the sound segment you'll be using. Now complete the following steps:

1. While in iTunes, right-click your chosen sound and choose Get Info. When the next window appears, click the Options tab and place check marks in the boxes for start time and stop time. Enter the times that you noted earlier. Take this time to make any equalizer and volume changes you like. Click OK.

2. Right-click the sound that you've been working on and choose "Create AIFF version."

Play "Taboo"

Ping
   Like
   Post...
   Show Artist Profile

Get Info
Rating   ▶
Show in Finder

Get Album Artwork
Get Track Names
Convert ID3 Tags...
Reset Plays
Create AIFF Version
Consolidate Files...

Add to Playlist   ▶
Show in Playlist   ▶

Copy
Delete
Uncheck Selection

Apply Sort Field   ▶

Convert Sound to AIFF"

Don't worry: the process creates a new sound without affecting the original file. After a few seconds, iTunes will beep to inform you that the conversion is complete. Right-click the original file and choose Get Info. Return to the Options tab and clear the checkboxes for start and stop times. If you don't do this, the next time this song plays you'll only hear the few seconds you selected for your alert.

3. Once that is finished, we need to locate the new sound inside your `iTunes Music` folder. In recent versions of iTunes, right-click the original song you are working on and choose "Reveal In Finder." This takes you directly to the appropriate folder. The new sound is usually right next to the original file.

4. Now that we've created a new sound, all that's left to do is to move it to the appropriate folder. Alert sounds that all users can access should be placed in the `System` folder at the root level of your hard drive. Once you have the `System` folder open, look for a `Library` folder. The `Sounds` folder will be in there. You will be asked for an administrator name and password to add the sounds.

If you want to restrict the new sounds to certain accounts, open the `Library` folder for that account and find the `Sounds` folder inside. Drop your new alert sounds there. If you do not find the `Sounds` folder then you will need to create one and drop the new system sounds into it.

Once you put the sounds in either location, they appear in the Sound preference pane under the "Sound Effects" tab along with the default sounds such as "Submarine" and Tink."

Adding Sounds to iCal and Mail
If you've used alert sounds such as "Basso," "Submarine," or "Tink" for iCal alarms, you may have wished for sounds that are a bit more descriptive. Suppose you've set an alarm telling you it's time to leave for school. Which sound does that job better, "Basso" or a bit of Chuck Berry's "School Days"? Both Mail and iCal provide application-specific ways of adding additional alert sounds. You can use an `.aiff` format system alert, but you also have other options.

If you know that the sound you create will be used exclusively with Mail or iCal, try a shortened version of the file "as is," without any conversion, first. I've tested copy protected and unprotected versions

of songs in my iTunes library as well as `.mp3` files, and all of them seem to play without issue.

Let's tackle adding sounds to iCal first since it provides more than one solution for alert sounds. If you want to use a wider variety of sounds in conjunction with iCal, do the following:

1. Create the event as usual.

2. In the Alert section of the event entry, choosing "Message With Sound" plays the alert sound that you select and puts a message on the screen with the details you have entered for the event. This option limits you to sound files that are in AIFF format and in the proper folder.
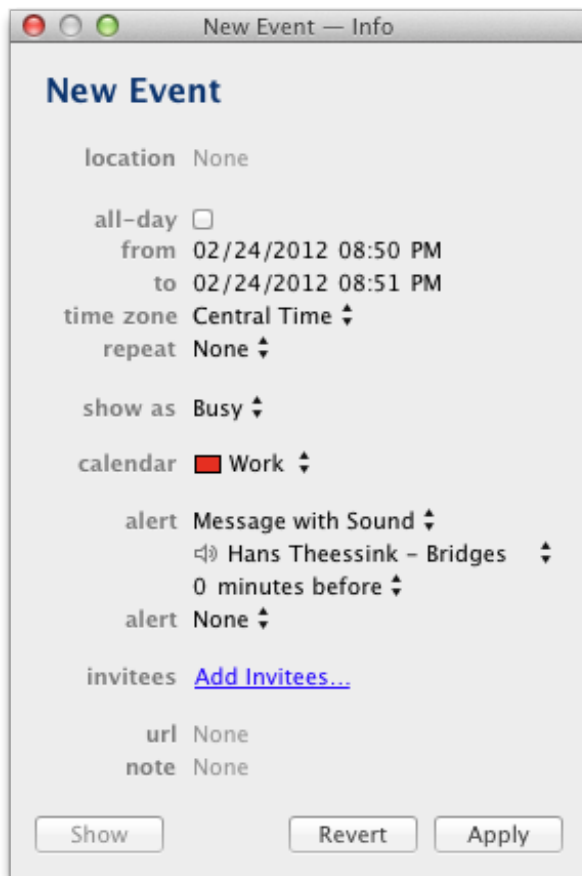
Trigger Alert Using Message With Sound

If you want to use file formats other than `.aif`, create the new event just as before, but choose "Open File" for the action to perform. A file name will appear there in a pop-up menu. Select the file you wish to use. If the file you want is not there, select "Other" from the menu and navigate to your chosen file.
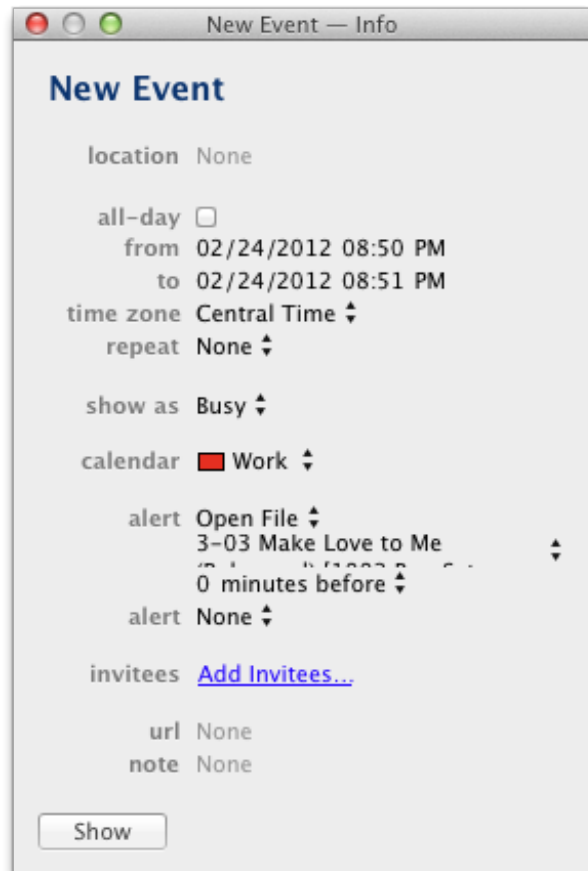

Trigger Alert Using Open File

When you are finished entering your alarm options, close the event as you would any other. I can see uses for either sound option. For recurring events such as the time to leave for school, I may not need to have the message "Time for School" appear on the screen. If, however, I want to create a sort of homemade alarm clock, the "Open File" option gives me many more options for the types of sounds to use as a wake up call.

When it comes to adding application-specific sounds, Mail does not get left out in the cold. Perhaps you too would like to hear the lovely Morticia announce

when you have incoming mail? That's easy enough, and you won't have to fight Gomez to do it. You will need a sound file of Morticia announcing "Mail's in" for this part of the project. You can find a version [here](5).

Once you have the sound file, place it anywhere you like. It does not have to be in the same location or format as system alerts. Once that is done, all that's left is to create a rule that controls when the sound will be played.

2. Open Mail's preferences and go to the Rules section. For convenience, give your rule a memorable name such as "Announce Incoming Mail." In the top portion of the sheet, experiment with the pop-up menus until you have a rule that will trigger when you want it to.

3. In the bottom half of the sheet, under "Actions to Perform," use the pop-up menu to select "Play Sound." In the second pop-up menu, choose the sound that will play when your rule triggers.
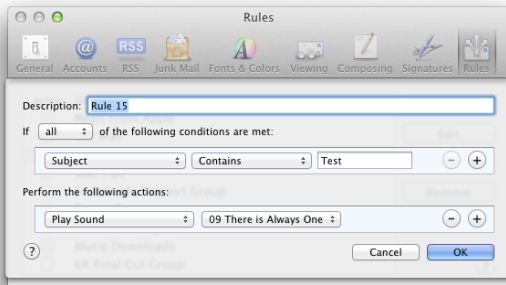
Creating Mail Rule

4. If the sound that you want is not already in the list, choose Add/Remove.

[5] http://wavcentral.com/tv/addams_family.html
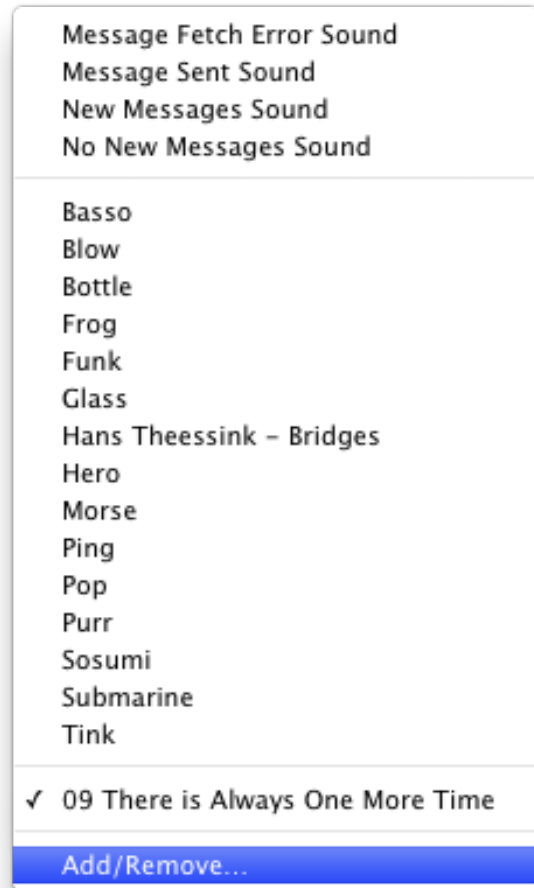
Selecting the Add/Remove Option in Mail

In the sheet that appears, choose Add and navigate to the sound that you want to play. Unsupported formats will appear grayed out and can't be selected. When you're finished selecting a sound, click "Done." Choose short sounds because, once it starts, the sound plays through to the end.

Final Thoughts

I hope you find this idea both useful and fun. Not being much of a touch typist, I am finding many times when a descriptive alert is useful. I know there are also other utilities out there that increase the number of events to which you can assign unique sounds. I'm sure there are also utilities that automate this process a bit. This process works nicely for me, though, because I don't add new sounds very often, and when

I do there isn't really a pattern to what segment of a song I use.

That's it for now. Until next time, the lab is closed. Apparently Mr. Addams is a rather jealous individual.

Rwanda

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

In November 2011, Christopher Turner and his wife traveled to Rwanda to adopt their third child. These are some photos from that trip, including shots of Rwandan Parliament, the Home of Hope orphanage, the Rwandan Genocide Memorial, and the sights of Kigali, Rwanda's capital.

[View Pictures](a)[a]

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[a]http://www.atpm.com/18.03/rwanda/

Above the Clouds Above the clouds over the midwestern United States.

After the Genocide Stained Glass "After the Genocide" by Ardyn Halter, whose parents were killed in the Holocaust.

Genocide Memorial Main Fountain The main fountain at the Rwandan Genocide Memorial. During the national month of mourning, the bowl in the center is lit day and night.

Home of Hope's Blue Gates The famous blue gates of a Home of Hope orphanage.

Housing Gives Way to Farming As you go down the mountain, homes give way to fertile land for growing crops.

Kigali Hillsides Looking out over part of Kigali.

Make of Your Life Something Beautiful Outside the garden at Home of Hope orphanage. Good advice, no matter your beliefs.

More Kigali Homes Another portion of Kigali. I loved the colors in this one.

On the Hill Homes on one of Rwanda's thousand hills.

Over East Africa Over east Africa aboard Kenya Airways.

Road to Home of Hope The non-paved road to the Home of Hope orphanage in Kigali.

Saint Familie Church Saint Familie Church in Kigali, site of a large massacre during the 1994 genocide.

Schipol Airport Signage I enjoyed the typography in Amsterdam's Schipol Airport.

UN ICTR Building The UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda building in Kigali.

Waiting for Fares Motorcycle taxis were an extremely popular form of transportation in Kigali.

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](3)[3].

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.

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[1]mailto:editor@atpm.com
[2]http://www.atpm.com/18.03/rwanda/

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

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.

The Spinning Beachball

by Grant Osborne, http://grantosborne.com

Agloves Touchscreen Gloves

Function: Use touchscreen devices while keeping fingers warm.
Developer: Agloves[1].
Price: $18–24.
Requirements: Hands, touchscreen device such as iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch.
Trial: None.

Many an iPhone or iPad user has experienced it: the need (or, let's be honest, want) to use an Apple-branded touchscreen device while out and about in cold weather. Has enough powder built up to hit the slopes? Let's check that ski report. Is this yet another snowpocalypse for the northeast? What does my weather app of choice say? Are the buses actually running on time in this blizzard? Great, flat tire. Need to call AAA. And play some Temple Run[2] while I wait.

The problem many iPhone or iPad users have run into in any of the above scenarios is that they're required to remove their hand from whichever warm and cozy confines it might have been in otherwise to operate the device. Agloves seeks to solve this obviously-a-First-World problem with its self-titled product.

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[1] http://www.agloves.com
[2] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/temple-run/id420009108?mt=8

Agloves has its own patent-pending technology that allows its knit gloves to work across a range of touchscreen devices. The secret to Agloves is the use of silver to help conduct your body's own bioelectricity through the knitting and onto the capacitive surface of your device. The silver is knit into all ten fingers, meaning that you can use any of your digits to control your iPad, iPhone, or iPod touch.

Agloves notes in its product literature two other properties of silver that some may care about. One,

silver is a thermal regulator, reflecting heat back to its source. In theory, this means Agloves should keep your fingers warmer than a like-thickness competing knit glove. Second, since silver is antimicrobial, it should help cut down on contact with dirt and germs. Granted, for the unscientific testing engaged in here, we were unable to test the veracity of such claims. Your mileage may vary.

So, do the gloves work? Yes, very much so. Spending two to four hours a week at hockey rinks means I have time on my hands to play with my iPhone. During games, my wife expects to receive scoring updates via text message. The Agloves sounded like a solution to keeping my hands warm during these moments. And, indeed, they have.

I've used them numerous time at the hockey rink, and while out and about. Winter thus far in north Texas hasn't seen our temps creep down much below 30°F, so I cannot attest to the Agloves' warming capabilities in extreme cold. Then again, they are not designed for the really cold stuff. They are not designed to be ski or winter-play gloves, since they're not waterproof. These are, after all, simply knit gloves. You could easily use them as a liner for thicker, sturdier gloves.

I did find touch-typing with the Agloves to take some getting used to, but after a few attempts, I got to be nearly as good with them on as I am without them. My hands are kept warm enough, and I haven't noticed any depreciation in touchscreen use on my iPhone or a Griffin Technology Survivor[3]-equipped iPad. They perform as advertised and look good enough for all but the most formal of wear.

Agloves currently offers three versions:

- The namesake original, which I tested; it is 7% silver-nylon.

- Agloves Bamboo, which is 15% silver-nylon and includes bamboo woven in as well. Agloves notes that bamboo is antimicrobial and states that this is its best glove liner for skiers.

- Agloves Sport, also 15% silver-nylon, which is more snug at the cuff than the original, thicker, and "stretchier."

In other words, there are Agloves for everyone.

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[3]https://store.griffintechnology.com/ipad/survivor-ipad-2

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](mailto:reviews@atpm.com)[1].

How Can I Subscribe to *ATPM*?

Visit the [subscriptions page](http://www.atpm.com/subscribe)[2].

Which Format Is Best for Me?

- The **Online Webzine** edition is for people who want to view ATPM in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to ATPM back issues and other Web pages.

- The **Offline Webzine** is an HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a Mac OS X disk image. The graphics, content, and navigation elements are the same as with the Online Webzine, but you can view it without being connected to the Internet. It requires a Web browser.

- The **Print PDF** edition is saved in Adobe PDF format. It has a two-column layout with smaller text and higher-resolution graphics that are optimized for printing. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Apple's Preview or Adobe Reader on Macintosh or

Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

- The **Screen PDF** edition is also saved in Adobe PDF format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen.

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.

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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.

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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.

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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/
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