

About This Particular Macintosh

Volume 1, Number 2

May 1995

Hi there, and welcome. This is the second issue of ATPM, and I'd like to thank everyone who read the first one and wrote to tell me what they liked and didn't like. I aim to please, but you are my target spotters and I need your comments in order to hit the mark.

The elements of design have changed considerably with this issue. Some of it I like, some of it I don't, but this issue is late as it is so here you have it. Expect more changes in the future, and keep in mind that I'm open to suggestions.

First some directions. If it looks like a button, click on it. If it doesn't look like a button, click on it anyway. But if it looks like a button, it's trying to tell you something. See the examples below. If you're still unclear about the difference, compare the title graphic in the "eMail" chapter to that of the "About My Computer..." column.



Looks like a button.
Please note the shadowed edges.



Doesn't look like a button. Click?
Nothing happens, see?

This issue also marks the debut of a new member of our staff. He is our mascot here at Only Boy Productions, and you may recognize him from the endnotes. What will he do? Well, in our regular columns—"Worth Downloading" and "The Game This Month"—we only discuss those programs which we like, use, and enjoy. But occasionally we carry a feature story, like this month's "What to Read," where we review both the good, the bad, and the ugly. (Yes, I know that's three things.) In these cases we will turn the baton over to our mascot. You'll be able to tell at a glance what he thinks of something. These are his moods:



Yowzal

He likes
it a lot.



Cool

This is good.



S'okay

No great
shakes.



Don't.

Just don't
bother.

There is a lot to cover in this edition. We have the very first batch of eMail, my usual column on the state of my Macintosh, and a review of some computer magazines. All that and the usual features: Worth Downloading, The Game This Month, and Something To Talk About. Oh, and do check out the contest in this issue. Free stuff could be yours!

Thank you for reading ATPM.

RD Novo

[Start Reading ▶](#)

eMail

Over the last month, 43 people downloaded ATPM 1.01 from eWorld, 107 from America Online, and 14 from CompuServe. That's a total circulation of 164 people. Of that number, six of you had something to say. I encourage the rest of you to voice your thoughts, too.

Satisfied Customers

I REALLY LIKE the...what would this be called?...well, I really like the whole thing. The graphics are nice. The formatting is great. (And since these are the things I notice first and last, and to me make or break a document, that's high praise!) I like the idea of it...veteran Mac user passing along his knowledge in a humorous, entertaining fashion. It's not intimidating.

Nancy Ross, *Internet*

- Oh, I don't know about "veteran Mac user." Experienced, maybe. As to what this is, I like to call it "the eZine for the rest of us." Design, while perhaps not as important as content <grin>, is a lot more fun, and I spend a lot of time at it. As a result, you'll see ATPM continue to evolve over the next few issues. You'll notice a few changes already, and I hope they are for the better.

I JUST DOWNLOADED your ezine, and have to tell you I'm impressed. It has a very professional look and a fun feel to it. When you know that you are going to do this monthly, I want to subscribe! I was very impressed with the content (I love personal approaches to the Mac) and the very polished look. One comment. In your "Worth Downloading" column, could you let us know where you found the files? In the Mac Net Journal, when you click on the icons, they have a pop-up that gives the address. Even if they are all in AOL or eWorld, it would help save time.

Dan Riley, *eWorld*

- I believe owning a Mac **is** a personal experience, kind of like owning a VW Bug used to be. We like sharing our Mac stories with other Mac users. Your suggestion is very appropriate, and that information has been added. Thanks.

I LOVE IT! I just downloaded your first issue of "About This Particular Mac" from America Online and I am hooked. It is personal, entertaining, and very well put together. I am waiting impatiently for the next issue. Please subscribe me at America Online if you can.

Paul Taylor, *America Online*

- I can, and I will. Subscriptions to addresses on eWorld, AOL, and CompuServe are easy, as I belong to all of those services. The Internet — and other online services via the Internet — are conceptually difficult, but I'm willing to try if anyone wants one. [Ed. Note: Paul Taylor is the editor of MacMedia, an online publication that will be among those reviewed in the June issue of ATPM.]

HEY, WAY COOL! your clean classy design and clever musings have inspired me to write my first ever kudos to an online zine. can i subscribe? i hug my quadra 840 AV (yes, it's quirky but adorable) every night. i have given my dear mac the best of everything: *[a list follows, including one of just about everything on the coolness factor list, and then some. RD.]* so, do i score points or what? oh, stop drooling, it isn't attractive for the editor of such a fine zine.

aprilsmoon, *America Online*

- Or what. After praise like that you certainly score points with me! And might I add, that's a fine computer setup you have there. More people should hug their computers. Thanks for reading ATPM, your subscription is in the mail (as it were).

Cool Ideas

I ENJOYED THE talk about the 'coolness' factor of my Mac, but there is no weighting scale for having two macs to work with for an over-all coolness factor :-).

Dan Riley, *eWorld*

- I considered adding a point for having two Macs, but then I decided you could just add their points together (counting any peripheral they share only once, mind you) for a total number. After all, this is about how cool your Mac is, not how cool you are. I mean, come on, if we stray from computers it stops being objective. <Ha!>

HERE'S AN ADDENDUM to your coolness test. I would suggest 1 point for having a 28.8k bps modem. That is currently cool. My current setup has a coolness rating of 15. I've got a... *[personal details went here. RD.]* ...and Softwindows (kinda cool to show DOSers that I can sink to their level.)

Domenico Bettinelli, Jr., *Internet*

- This was a tough one, but the idea behind the coolness factor was that you got one point for having something (like a modem) and another point for having the coolest kind of that thing. Right now a 28.8 baud modem is pretty darn cool, but an ISDN line is just cooler. After all, I didn't give out points for having a 25 page per minute printer either. (Though maybe I should have...)

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In Which the Author Zaps his Printer.

Has it really been a whole month?

April has been a bit hectic here in New York, what with the end of the school term and my impending move to the Midwest, and I was unsure of my ability to compete with my first ATPM effort. However, this second issue has been as much fun to produce as the first, and I hereby announce my intention to continue monthly publication. In the words of a Mercedes-Benz commercial, yeehaw!

There should be no question in your collective mind that I am modeling this column on **Jerry Pournelle's** regular piece in BYTE magazine. I love his personal approach to computing, and my attempt to emulate him is only meant to be the sincerest form of flattery. Sure, there's also a part of me that would like to get as much free hardware and software as he does, but hey, who wouldn't be jealous? Apple sent him a (free!) LaserWriter PS 16/600 the other day. I don't know the details, but I think Mr. Pournelle does not officially own the hardware he receives. Still, it's in his house, hooked up to his computers, and he gets to use it. In light of those facts, ownership seems like a minor detail to me...

Along with my intention to publish regularly, I hereby announce that I'll review any free stuff that appears on my doorstep. The more free stuff, the better the review. <grin>

I'm kidding. But I could use a new printer.

Mind you, I have the world's best printer, one of the original **Hewlett-Packard DeskWriters**. Cheap, good print quality, dependable. There's not much more you can ask for.

And the commitment from Hewlett-Packard is pretty good, too. The DeskWriter is at the bottom of the heap over there at HP. They've produced a gaggle of better, faster, more modern printers since they made mine, and yet they continue to support the lowly DeskWriter. For example, they were one of the first companies to provide QuickDraw GX drivers for their printers. I got mine back in September of 1994, when GX was still shiny and new.

Which reminds me, **QuickDraw GX 1.1.2** is now available from Apple. If you use version 1.0 — the original included with System 7.5 — I suggest you upgrade. If you've got version 1.1.1, and you have any problems, 1.1.2 might be for you. I'm not going to bother.

Back to the printer. I have had no problems until now, and this may not even be their problem.

You see, I **zapped the PRAM** on my Macintosh last week. PRAM, or Parameter RAM, is the memory where volatile information is stored, the stuff you don't want to have go away when you turn your computer off. A small battery in your computer maintains the data. PRAM's most obvious use is to keep track of what time it is from one shutdown to the next startup. But other volatile information is also kept in PRAM, and occasionally it is a good idea to clear this memory to flush out unneeded items. At least, that's what a MacUser column said. They suggested cleaning the PRAM every five to six months. This is called "zapping the PRAM."

How do you zap the PRAM? Well... I'm not going to tell you. I don't want anyone trying this at home. My computer worked without a hitch for three and a half years with the same old PRAM the whole time. Then I did this. <sigh>

When I turn my computer on, all the peripherals come to life too. This prevents me from having to reach under the desk to turn my printer on, and it assures me that my CD-ROM will be on when the computer boots (or I have to re-boot if I decide I need music). It is convenient. But after zapping the PRAM, during the computer's start-up process the printer spit out a test page. And not any test page. It filled a third of the page with random characters, most of them white in black squares. If any of you have inkjets, you know the distressed, all-is-not-right-with-the-world feeling you get when you print solid black graphics and the page comes out wet, heavy, and contagious. You pick it up gingerly to avoid getting ink on your fingers, and you hold your breath for fear the moisture will make your work bleed all over the page. The printout is so pitiful I just want to take the page out back and shoot it.

I got one of these every time I started up, and by the fifth **wet printout** I was so tense I just left my printer turned off. I contacted both HP and Apple by eMail, and I waited for a response.

Why didn't I call their telephone support lines? Well, this really isn't a good reason, but here goes. I don't like calling support lines because it makes me feel like a DOS user. I pride myself on being a Mac owner. I am proud that software companies have twenty DOS support staffers and one Mac support person, who also answers questions about other computing platforms. I am a Macintosh support snob. Besides, it wasn't so bad. If I waited until after my computer was done starting up, I could turn on my printer with no test sheet dilemma.

I thought I could make do.

An hour or two later I tried to print a draft of my thesis. My computer told me it couldn't print because the serial port was being used. I tried again. No good. I restarted and tried again. No bananas. My printer just wasn't responding. Plus, every time I restarted it spit gibberish at me. You have to understand, this was my thesis, and I needed a hard copy to give to my advisor, and I was leaving the state for good in two weeks. Like all people facing a dead printer and a deadline, I panicked.

I called HP. All the service folk had gone home. I checked my eMail. Apple had responded, saying that they'd never seen this before and I should contact HP. Uh-oh. HP had not responded. I left another plaintive appeal for assistance on their forum.

Then I re-installed my System software. And I mean I tore it down and started over. I booted from my external hard drive (always keep a System Folder on an external disk, for just such an occasion) and wiped all traces of my System from my internal drive. I almost trashed all my preferences files for fear they might have become corrupted. But I couldn't get myself to do

that. Then I reinstalled System 7.5. No QuickDraw GX this time. I loaded the old HP printer drivers and tried printing. Error. So I installed GX. I loaded the new HP drivers and printed. Serial port in use. I cried, I beat on my printer, I called my girlfriend, I considered dropping \$1500 on a laser printer. I checked my eMail, and finally, spent, I went to sleep.

In the morning I went out and bought a new printer cable to connect my Mac to my DeskWriter. Eleven dollars. I booted. No test print. My heart in my throat, I fired up SimpleText and hastily typed a few words. Then I printed. A minute later, resting in my printer's out tray, was a crisp sheet of paper with the words, "What the he-- happened?" beaming up at me.

I'm still not sure. A few days ago some nice guy — not affiliated with Hewlett-Packard — finally answered my pleas on HP's forum. He said that by zapping the PRAM I'd zapped the **AppleTalk** settings, and had turned AppleTalk on. The garble from my printer was AppleTalking hubbub, and the serial port was in use because AppleTalk was using it.

I figured he was probably right, but hey, my printer worked, what did I care why it happened?

Then I realized that I'd probably be writing about this for ATPM, and I recognized that I should provide closure for my readers. So I considered zapping my PRAM again, just to see what would happen.

I'm not that brave.

Instead, I dug my old cable out of the garbage and set the new one aside. With the old cable hooked up, my printer behaved flawlessly. Then I went to the chooser and I deliberately turned AppleTalk on. I restarted and... whamo. Garbled gook from my printer.

Boy did I feel stupid. But I guess that's how you learn, eh?

"Psst! Hey buddy, want a printer cable, cheap?"

HP still hasn't answered my cries for help, and Apple seems not to realize that this could happen. I would think that any number of computer setups would fall victim to this little detail, and yet neither company has the solution on file. Hm. Maybe I'll fill them in.

By the way, this is how you zap the PRAM on your computer: turn your computer on and immediately press the P, R, option and command keys. Hold them down until you hear the restart chime not once, but twice. All zapped.

Save yourself an hour or two on hold, use the following support areas... **Hewlett-Packard:** support on CompuServe, GO word: HPPERI (for HP PERIpherals, I bet, not HP PERIodic Support Provided Here.) **Apple Computer:** support is through eWorld, shortcut: Ask Apple

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What to Read

Part One. There are a large number of magazines, electronic publications, newsletters, and one-shot read me files of interest to Macintosh users. Some of them are worth your while, others are not. In the first part of this article I have sampled the selection of magazines physically in print. (You know, the kind that come with too many subscription cards inside.) My review of electronic publications will appear in the next issue of ATPM.

Over the last few years (I've been interested in Macs for about seven years now) the selection of magazines available to the newsstand public has been pretty static. The big magazines back in 1988 are still the big magazines in 1995. What we're seeing now is a passel of new magazines supposedly devoted to "Family computing," or to "PC and Mac," or some other catch-all phrase. I have my doubts (as illustrated below) about the usefulness of such publications. In any case, it seems the big magazines have held the standard pretty high, and the little-magazines-that-could do not seem to have been able to compete. The exception to the rule (there's always one bad apple set to ruin my sweeping generalizations) is Mac Home Journal. More about that publication later.

It is my firm belief that everyone who owns a Mac should read at least one Macintosh-related magazine every month. When I bought my first Mac I also subscribed to Macworld. Eventually I bought subscriptions to other magazines as well, and I credit their content for my awe-inspiring knowledge of Macintosh issues. When I sold my computer to my former girlfriend's parents, I suggested she throw in a magazine subscription as a gift. She did, and her parents are now cruising the Internet, adding accessories, and generally getting the most out of their computer. Even my mother subscribed to a magazine (see below) and knows a lot more about her computer than she did when she started.

Magazines are the best place to continue to learn about your computer. Subscribe. With this article I hope to make picking which one easier for you.



MacWEEK



MacWEEK is the best magazine out there. At least, that's what I think. It's also got the steepest price, though if you're in charge of computer purchasing at a mega-million dollar corporation that uses a gazillion Macs, you might be able to get a free subscription. Maybe. Best of luck.

As a weekly, MacWEEK is the best source for news and gossip in the Macintosh world. Breaking

news in every other publication, even online 'zines, seem stale after you start reading MacWEEK. If you want the latest news, complete with some glossy pictures, this is for you.

The magazine also includes a lot of stuff I never read. Information for computer systems managers at large companies. Information about networking your computers in an office. Information about the latest in ethernet or image editing. I like to think of myself as a power user, but I skip at least half of the articles every week. I guess the best way to judge your interest is this: if you know what MacWEEK is, you probably want to look at it. If you have no clue, you don't.

MacWEEK is not available on newsstands. If you subscribe to ZiffNet Mac — Ziff-Davis being the publishing company — or eWorld, you can get most of the stories online on Fridays, three days before the magazine arrives in mailboxes around the country. Cost is about equal, for now. Each issue runs about \$2.00 for subscribers (yes, that's \$100 for one year), and reading online can eat up about the same. Unless you're like me, and you do both. <sigh> MacWEEK is very much worth one method or the other.



These are the two most popular magazines in the Macintosh world. Either one is as good as the other, and getting both is probably the best thing to do. They don't cost a whole lot, and in any given month they cover different topics. I trust the information in both.

You won't get a lot of homey tips, but you will get scads of well-written product reviews, comparisons, and tests. Flip through a couple of months worth and you'll find almost every recent piece of hardware and software covered. Both magazines are also very proud of their fully developed test labs, and use them as often as possible. Recent issues covered 28.8 baud modems, large hard drives, small hard drives, monitors... and they cover topics again every year or so, to keep you up to date. If you think you'll be buying a monitor next year, no need to keep ahold of this year's monitor comparison, they'll do another soon with all the newest models included. Both magazines also sport eminent, lively columnists with something to say, from Guy Kawasaki to John Dvorak.

These magazines provide good news coverage and excellent purchasing advice. They also include regular help features and advice columns, but these are mostly aimed at the business user.

MacUser is operated by Ziff-Davis Publishing, the same company that owns MacWEEK, and their news is always up-to-date and thorough (though still late compared to MacWEEK). Macworld is run by IDG, a publishing company that puts out over 220 publications in 64 countries. They also carry reliable, up-to-date news.

Macworld is a little more expensive than MacUser, but also sports about fifty more pages in each issue. There's not much more to say about these guys. Pick 'em up, you can't lose.

Mac Home Journal



Mac Home Journal (MHJ) is a recent magazine, it first began publishing in 1993. My mother subscribed soon after they began, because it was billed as a magazine for beginners. That is still true. Much less sophisticated than MacUser or Macworld, MHJ may seem simplistic to some (like me) but seems to fill a niche for others. Go figure.

Don't get this magazine for breaking news. In the May issue (delivered in early April, I think) they covered Apple's suit of Microsoft, the capture of Kevin Mitnick, the rogue computer hacker, and news about the bug in MacInTax. The suit was announced in February, Mitnick was arrested just as long ago, and it was a bit close to tax day to mention bugs in your tax software.

On the other hand, they do offer articles on setting up a home office, desktop publishing, résumé writing, continuing education, and a bunch of reviews. MHJ is much more likely to offer useful information for families than for people who consider themselves "power users." However, their family offerings do not stand up to the breadth of those offered by "family computing" oriented magazines, like those below.

It seems almost that MHJ is trying too hard to appeal to everyone. Once they acknowledge that they cannot compete in the same arena as Macworld and Mac User, they should begin to play to their strengths and take off. I wish them only the best. And yes, I do write letters to the editor, offering the same advice.

FamilyPC, et al.



I mentioned in my discussion of Mac Home Journal above that the "family computing" crop of magazines did a good job of covering family issues. This is true. Unfortunately, they pay only the slightest attention to the Macintosh.

FamilyPC is a magazine devoted to, as they put it on their masthead, "PC Mac Multimedia." They also lay claim to covering productivity, home based business, and the educational software market: everything the every-family is involved in. But if you're a Mac owner, don't bother. You're better off with Mac Home Journal. FamilyPC just doesn't cater to Macintosh users. For example: in the latest issue the cover proclaims boldly, "The Best Multimedia Pentium PCs!" Inside, once you get to the article, you discover that they tested ten pentiums and, hey, look, a Macintosh! The one Mac goes on to score second, losing to a Gateway computer by one point out of a hundred. It would have won if it hadn't been more expensive.

In addition, the editorial advises that, if you are in the market for a new computer, you should buy the fastest computer you can afford... a Pentium. There is no mention of Macintosh except to say, "Should you box up your 486 PC or your 68040 Mac if you haven't noticed any bottlenecks yet? Of course not." But then the editor — Dan Muse — goes on to say that if you've decided to

buy a new computer to replace your old one, families should consider buying a Pentium. He never goes so far as to say you should replace your Mac with a PC, but he also never acknowledges that if you have a slow Mac you might actually want to upgrade to a faster Mac. The pinnacle of computing, he says, is the Pentium machine. Yeah, whatever.

The magazine is littered with this kind of inadvertent bias. I don't think they mean to foster it, but it is certainly pervasive. I don't care to read a magazine that irks me when it is only trying to be helpful. Still, I suggest that you go to your local newsstand, plunk down \$1.95, and see for yourself. Maybe you'll like it. If you are the sort who can glean good tips from a lot of irrelevant drivel, the ideas can be applied to your Macintosh at home. Even if you can't the magazine will, at the very least, let you flex your Mac-uber-alles muscles that have languished since IBM and Apple shook hands. The other magazines in this area, **ComputerLife** and **HomePC**, receive the same kind of review.

Publishing one magazine to cover all computing platforms is a laudable goal, but it seems pretty clear that you can't please all the people all the time. This is just as true for Family PC, et al. as it is for Mac Home Journal. You'll discover next month that online publications do not have this problem. Most of them are free, and are not overly concerned with how many readers they garner. They focus on one market and usually produce quality offerings.

See you next month for part two of What to Read.

MacWEEK: not available at newsstands, \$109 per year, eMail at letters@macweek.ziff.com

MacUser: \$3.95 per issue, \$19.95 for one year, eMail at letters@macuser.ziff.com

Macworld: \$4.95 per issue, \$24.00 for one year, eMail at macworld@macworld.com

Mac Home Journal: \$3.95 an issue, \$19.95 for one year, eMail at homejrnl@aol.com

FamilyPC: \$1.95 per issue, \$12.95 for one year, eMail at FamilyPC@aol.com

All icons came from each magazine's online area, and is therefore the property of said magazine. Mac Home Journal has no graphics on their site.

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Shareware is Dead! Long live Shareware!

Just a few words for the dearly departed, bear with me. **Shareware** is a wonderful idea. You get software online, you try it out, and if you like it, you send your payment and keep the program. But it hardly ever works out that way. Too many people use shareware without paying for it, and the authors are cheated. I encourage you to send in your shareware fees. But the fact is, there's no reason to pay except that it's the right thing to do.

And unfortunately, the honor system is a dying deal. People can live with themselves quite happily in spite of the ugly things they do. As a result of this, we are seeing the decline of shareware, and the emergence of a new trend.

I'm talking about **Demoware**. This software masquerades online as shareware, but offers limited functionality until you have paid your money. You may be locked out of some features, or the author may promise you a full version in the mail once you send in your registration form. This is no different from the program demos you get off some home-shopping CD. The authors won't let you use the whole program until you **buy** it from them. Make no mistake, this is not shareware. This is just cheaper than dealing with packaging, distribution, and advertising.

Shareware authors deserve happy thoughts, money, and generous encouragement. Often they only want a postcard or a kind word for their efforts. Demoware producers, on the other hand, are taking advantage of us. After all, we pay to download their programs. Often we pay to download a demo, and then pay full price for a shrinkwrapped copy. Sometimes we download the demo, and then are expected to download another, slightly different copy to get full access!

What's so good about shareware? Prices are low, ranging from freeware to about \$30. Once you have registered a piece of shareware, you are usually entitled to free upgrades to the latest versions as they come out. For example, I paid the fee for a game, Realmz, when it was in version 1.2.2. Now it has reached version 2.0.4, with an incredible number of improvements, and I have not had to pay for any new versions. Try suggesting that when you want to upgrade your commercial applications. Try suggesting that to the demoware producers.

My prediction is that we'll begin to see **a lot more demoware** in the years to come. The costs of production are much lower for publishers who previously put boxes on shelves. And for (former) shareware authors, demoware guarantees they get their "shareware" price from anyone who wants to use the program.

I really love shareware, and I really hate demoware. Or rather, I really love the ideals behind shareware, and I really hate the deception (as I see it) behind demoware. Consider shareware one of the last bastions of the 'net's anarchic, power-to-the-people attitude, if you will. I hear the death rattles of shareware as a sign that the time has come for all good folk to serve their country. Fork over your money. Support the shareware industry.

Greg's Buttons 3.7



Size: 126k
Fee: \$15. All paid up.

You may have noticed that the icon for ATPM has changed this month. That's because I changed the color of my menu bar on my Macintosh to suit the season. (You know: Spring = green.) How did I do that, you ask? I used a small control panel called Greg's Buttons 3.7, written by Gregory Landweber. Not only will it let me choose the color of my menu bar, but it'll also let me choose the color of the menu bar text, the font used for that text, and the color of the Finder windows. Oh, and I can also change the kind of buttons my Mac displays, from the normal, boring kind, to any of three stand-out varieties. \$15 is about as much as I am happy to pay for shareware, especially since there is no actual utility to the program — it just makes my Mac look pretty. I'm was happy to pay. Greg's Buttons is very well done, clean and straightforward, and comes as a fat binary, meaning that it runs in native form, both on old Macs and PowerMacs.

Notes from Last Month...

I have sent my \$25 for **DOCMaker** to the author, Mark Wall. I still think the fee is high, and I noted that on my registration form. After all, there's a lot of really great shareware out there for much less money. Unfortunately, Mr. Wall has a virtual monopoly in the field of electronic document distribution. I have seen a few online publications that use one or another of the document interchange formats, like Common Ground or Adobe's Acrobat, but none of them provide the navigation tools that DOCMaker does. In other words, none of them are as easy or as intuitive to browse as DOCMaker documents are. Gripe having been aired, I must reiterate that DOCMaker is a really cool program, worth your download and probably worth your money. Version 4.1.1 is out now, but the only change is a small bug fix for Power Macs.

HoverBar, recommended last issue, has been improved to **version 1.1.1**. This new version includes a few bug fixes, including one that makes your mouse clicks work the first time, every time. When you upgrade your HoverBar application your bars will remain in the same place, but you'll have to go through each one and change some attributes back to the way you like them. For example, after installing the new version of HoverBar, all of my bars had titles again, and they all displayed background applications. Annoying, but not critical. I recommend the upgrade. HoverBar 1.1.1 can be found on AOL, eWorld, and CompuServe. Use the software search on AOL, use the shortcut SHAREWARE on eWorld, and GO MACFF on CIS.

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The Game This Month

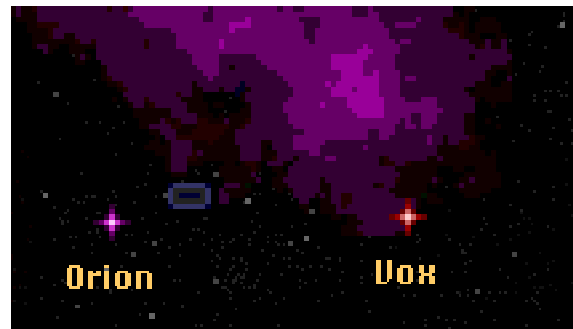
Master of Orion

I told you last time that I'd let you in on what Master of Orion was like. Well, it's a great strategy game. I don't know what it was, maybe my impending thesis, maybe April's moons were in alignment, whatever the case, for a week there I played **Moo** until I dropped. Then I would nap, wake up, and keep right on playing. This game is that good.

Okay, sure, right away you notice that the graphics are terrible. There was absolutely no effort placed in providing us with state-of-the-Mac art or sound. Simtex, the original authors of the PC version deserve much praise for their game design. Take 2 Interactive, the company that ported the game, doesn't. Yes, they provided us with a bug-free program, and that deserves a pat on the back, but they could have taken a little time out to improve the game too.

This may seem a detriment, but only until you get into the game. There is so much to do, so much to discover, that you can just keep playing on and on. You begin by selecting a race, ranging from the brainy Psilons (recommended for beginners) to the brawny Bulrathi bear-folk.

Then you are dumped on a planet with a colony ship and two scouts. Your mission, conquer the universe. If you manage to conquer the planet Orion on the way, more power to you (literally).



Moo graphics. Note the blockiness.

What is so great about this game is exemplified by the strategies you may choose to get to this end. You may conquer by sword and laser, if you like, building better and faster ships and missile bases. Or you can conquer by diplomacy, trading with your neighbors and then bullying them to vote you emperor of the galaxy. On the way you can develop lasers, hard ion beams, plasma torpedoes, combat teleporters, cloaking devices, repulsion beams, stargates, and cluster bombs. You can completely terraform airless planets into fertile industrial bases. You can spy on your enemies (and your friends!) and sabotage their cities. You can incite revolution. You can make peace, break truces, or threaten them into giving you crucial technology. And you can watch your alien empire grow, conquer, and spread.

Ain't life grand?

Of course, if you make a mistake and the others pummel you, it can get pretty depressing. But then you can do as I do, quit and start over! <grin> I tell you, there's no reason to not have fun when you're playing a game. If it's not fun, what's the point? Quit and start over!

I heave, really, only one complaint about Moo. I wish I could play against someone. That would be cool, but as it stands, this is strictly a one-player game. Maybe with the advent of multi-player Civilization (coming soon for the Mac, they say) they will get around to updating this game too.

Also...

Gee, so does this guy ever play anything but strategy? Not really, no. I keep most of my games on a SyQuest disk, and only a few remain on my hard drive for instant access. **Warlords II** is one of those, and so is **Master of Orion**. Any guesses as to what the others are? I'll tell you about those games next month, since I doubt I'll have much time to play games during my move.

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Something to Talk About

"About fifty yards behind me, poised on a sand bar, one paw still lifted and waiting, stood this big [mountain lion], looking straight at me. I could see the gleam of the twilight in his eyes... To me, at that moment, he looked like the biggest cat in the world. He looked dangerous. Now I know very well that mountain lions are supposed almost never to attack human beings... Rationally there was nothing to fear; all the same I felt fear.

"And something else too: I felt what I always feel when I meet a large animal face to face in the wild: I felt a kind of affection and the crazy desire to communicate, to make some kind of emotional, even physical contact with the animal. After we'd stared at each other for maybe five seconds — it seemed at the time like five minutes — I held out one hand and took a step toward the big cat and said something ridiculous like, 'Here, kitty, kitty.' The cat paused there on three legs, one paw up as if he wanted to shake hands. But he didn't respond to my advance.

"I took a second step toward the lion. Again the lion remained still, not moving a muscle, not blinking an eye. And I stopped and thought again and this time I understood that however the big cat might secretly feel, I myself was not quite ready to shake hands with a mountain lion. Maybe someday. But not yet. I retreated.

"I haven't seen a mountain lion since that evening, but the experience remains shining in my memory. I want my children to have the opportunity for that kind of experience."

Edward Abbey, from "The Journey Home"

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The Contest

Find the Blank

Okay, last month's contest winner is **Nancy Ross**. She suggested this month's contest. As a result of her suggestion, she gets to help me pack things in boxes the last weekend in April. Mind you, she's also a friend of mine.

This month's **contest** is somewhat dastardly. Somewhere in this document is a hidden button. It doesn't look like a button. It may not look like anything at all. When you click on it, a hidden message will be displayed. (See the example below) Send me the content of that hidden message, and you will win a prize! Don't worry, it won't be the gift of physical labor like Nancy received. It'll be real, honest-to-Betsy, cool stuff.

Oh, and btw, employees, friends, and family of mine are excluded from winning. Sorry, folks.

click here

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...endnotes

Next Time

Finally, I move to Nebraska, via Iowa. For all the gory details, plus, the best way to take down, move, clean, and set up a Mac, tune in next month. We'll have the second part of "What to Read", and if eWorld comes out with its new software, I'll finally review the three online services to which I subscribe. Plus, we'll have all the regular features, including what's worth downloading and the game of the month. See you next time.

Where to get ATPM



Details

About This Particular Macintosh, Volume 1, Number 2, May 1995 (ATPM 1.02) is an Only Boy Production, © 1995 by RD Novo:



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Benediction

This document was created with Mark Wall's DOCMaker 4.1.1. May his camels never get fleas.

The End.

ATPM 1.02

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