ATPM

11.05 / May 2005
Volume 11, Number 5

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

Cover Art

Copyright © 2005 Rob Randtoul.
We need new cover art each month. Write to us!

Editorial Staff

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief	Michael Tsai
Managing Editor	Christopher Turner
Associate Editor/Reviews	Paul Fatula
Copy Editors	Raena Armitage
	Johann Campbell
	Chris Lawson
	Ellyn Ritterskamp
	Brooke Smith
	Vacant
Web Editor	Lee Bennett
Publicity Manager	*Vacant*
Webmaster	Michael Tsai
Beta Testers	The Staff

Contributing Editors

	Eric Blair
	Matthew Glidden
	Ted Goranson
	Andrew Kator
	Robert Paul Leitao
	Wes Meltzer
	David Ozab
	Sylvester Roque
	Evan Trent
How To	*Vacant*
Interviews	*Vacant*
Opinion	*Vacant*
Reviews	*Vacant*

Artwork & Design

Graphics Director	*Vacant*

Subscriptions

Sign up for **free** subscriptions using the
Web form .

Where to Find ATPM

Online and downloadable issues are
available at http://www.atpm.com.

Production Tools

Acrobat
Apache
AppleScript
BBEdit
DropDMG
FileMaker Pro
FrameMaker+SGML
GraphicConverter
Mesh
Mailman
Mojo Mail
MySQL
Perl
Photoshop Elements
Python
rsync
Snapz Pro X
ssh
StuffIt
Subversion
Super Get Info

The Fonts

Cheltenham
Frutiger
Isla Bella
Marydale
Minion

Reprints

Articles and original art cannot be reproduced without the express permission of ATPM, unless otherwise noted. You may, however, print copies of ATPM provided that it is not modified in any way. Authors may be contacted through ATPM's editorial staff, or at their e-mail addresses, when provided.

Legal Stuff

About This Particular Macintosh may be uploaded to any online area or included on a CD-ROM compilation, so long as the file remains intact and unaltered, but all other rights are reserved. All information contained in this issue is correct to the best of our knowledge. The opinions expressed in ATPM are not necessarily those of this particular Macintosh. Product and company names and logos may be registered trademarks of their respective companies. Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

Thanks for reading ATPM.

Sponsors

About This Particular Macintosh has been free since 1995, and we intend to keep it that way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with "real" jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. As such, we rely on advertisers and readers like you to help us pay for our Web site and other expenses.

• • •

This issue of ATPM is sponsored by Bare Bones Software:

• • •

We've partnered with CafePress.com to bring you high-quality ATPM merchandise. For each item you buy, $1 goes towards keeping the atpm.com server running. You can also help support ATPM by buying from online retailers using our links. If you're going to buy from them anyway, why not help us at the same time? We also accept direct contributions using PayPal and Amazon's Honor System. We suggest $10 for students and $20 for individuals, but we greatly appreciate contributions of any size.

Finally, we are accepting inquiries from interested sponsors and advertisers. We have a variety of programs available to tailor to your needs. Please contact us at advertise@atpm.com for more information.

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the May issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* It's been said, "April showers bring May flowers." Our May issue will shower you with so much news from April, we've named this the first official "full bloom" issue of your favorite monthly Macintosh Internet magazine. So let's go "full bore" into this month's issue:

Lookin' Back, Movin' Forward

An amazing thing happened in the first three months of calendar year 2005. Apple Computer shipped more Macintoshes in the first three months of this year than the company sold in the Christmas quarter. Traditionally, this is the slowest period of the year for Macintosh sales, yet Apple shipped one million, seventy thousand Macintoshes in the three-month period ending March 26, 2005. This represents not only more Macintosh sales than in the previous quarter, it also represents an increase in sales of more than three hundred thousand Macintoshes over the prior-year period. In all, it was a record second fiscal quarter for Apple in terms of both sales and earnings. Due to the popularity of the iPod mini, Apple shipped more than five million, three hundred thousand iPods in the March-ending period.

Moving forward, the company expects to match the quarter's revenue performance in the second calendar quarter of 2005.

Tiger's Pounce Equals Revenues Bounce?

Yes and no. Saving an extensive statement concerning the April 29th release of Mac OS X 10.4 (code-named Tiger), we'll take a quick look at a related issue that has fostered much conversation on Macintosh discussion boards. The release of Tiger will add to Apple's sales in the next few quarters. But the revenue generated by the Macintosh and the iPod dwarfs the revenue generated by the sales of Tiger to existing Mac owners. Where Apple sees the biggest benefit from the release of Tiger is through the sales of new Macintoshes to buyers who succumb to the allure of OS X 10.4 and by the cost-benefit of an Apple-developed operating system.

Apple's hardware competitors such as HP, Dell and Gateway must pay an OS royalty to Microsoft on each Windows-PC shipped. This gives Apple a significant cost benefit over its competitors. To the extent the sales of Tiger to Mac owners desiring to upgrade the OS on their computers covers the costs of development, the cost advantage Apple has over its competitors only widens.

Movin' Back, Lookin' Forward

Thanks to the increasing popularity of the Macintosh, Apple Computer has moved back into the top five for US sales among the world's PC makers. It's been a long way back for Apple and the Mac. Apple's Macintosh unit sales are rising faster than the unit sales gains of the overall PC business, establishing Apple once again as a growth company in its core business. This is good news for all Mac users because it may lead to more software development for the platform as software companies see growth opportunities in Apple's rising share of the PC market.

Looking forward, Apple should be able to sustain strong year-over-year unit sales gains for the next few quarters.

Why Is It Called a "Speed Bump"?

We wonder why the release of a faster Mac is often called a "speed bump." For those of us familiar with the hazards of suburban streets, speed bumps are designed to slow one down rather than to speed one up. One either slows down over a speed bump or chooses to drive in a bit of a zigzag to avoid the thumping thing that can happen over a speed bump to everything in one's trunk.

In any case, at press time Apple released speed-bumped G5s sporting up to 2.7 GHz performance in a dual-processor configuration. The new machines promise to speed up one's work rather than slow one down. We wonder though. Where are the long-promised 3 GHz G5s originally forecast to be ready for release sometime last summer? While we wait for IBM to clear its G5 development hurdles we bring you our latest issue.

Life in the Fast Lane

Each issue of ATPM is designed to be easy and enjoyable to read. There are no literary speed bumps in any of our editions as we strive to bring the best Macintosh-related content in a convenient monthly format.

Our first official "Full Bloom" issue includes:

The Candy Apple: Sometimes, We Get What We Pay For

Ellyn ponders whether quality products are worth the extra cost.

Bloggable: Apple, Rehabilitated

"An empirical look at just how outsized an influence the Mac intelligentsia have would be nice…and this month, we have one."

About This Particular Web Site

In this month's *ATPW*, you can read about a zero-emissions van, pay a visit to Chernobyl, and look in on some fresh British lard. We'll also help you locate an unknown file extension and delocate to a non-corporate café for some refreshment when you're done.

Pod People: Creative Understanding Achieved Via iPod

"I love my iPods. They transition me from one place to another: from home to work, from place to place, and now, from rehearsal to concert."

Segments: The Apple Store SOHO

"Starbucks had better watch out. There is no reason Apple's retail stores could not draw java-crazed e-nomads away with an iCafé in concert with their in-store Genius Bars."

How To: Buy a Mac mini or Upgrade Your Cube?

Comparing the new Mac mini to upgrading its predecessor, the Cube, this article includes performance comparisons and installation commentary for the Cube PowerLogix PowerForce7457 CPU upgrade.

Cartoon: Cortland

Cortland and his friends wrap up at the luncheon schmooze and learn that Wieser Graphics might get bought out Also, someone is very interested in Cortland's portfolio.

Desktop Pictures: Canadian Rockies

Reader Bill Jastram shares photos from a winter vacation to Banff and Yoho National Parks.

Frisky Freeware

Frisky the Freeware Guinea Pig checks out Cyberduck.

Review: Expert Mouse 7.0

Bigger, badder, and now in a Darth Vader edition, Kensington's Expert Mouse is another rare product that lives up to its marketing hype.

Review: Keynamics Laptop Stand on Wheels

So incredibly comfortable that you're more than willing to ignore its odd looks.

Review: MacJournal 3.0.2

Feeling it isn't ideal at its intended purpose, our *Bloggable* author Wes Meltzer finds MacJournal to be enjoyable for organizing his writing.

Review: Mind Hacks (book)

Paul Fatula reviews *Mind Hacks* a book that looks at some of the peculiar and unexpected functionings of the human brain and allows the reader to experience and begin to understand them.

Review: 15-inch PowerBook G4

Two steps forward, one step back, $100 cheaper than before.

Review: TransPod FM

DLO's TransPod FM seeks to be an all-in-one solution for iPod use in a motor vehicle. A long weekend road trip in the family minivan, then a few weeks in a SUV for everyday driving, give the TransPod the chance to prove its mettle.

E-Mail

iPod shuffle

For me, I like the idea of having an iPod shuffle as a companion to a white iPod. The Shuffle lets me leave the "big" one at home when I go to the gym or need to not be distracted when it's crunch time on some work. It's still an iPod—I should mention that the coolest thing is that such *amazing* sound is coming from something so small and nearly weightless. Solid review, guys. Nice e-zine you got going on here.

—*Steve Harris*

Switched Over and Turned On

Like you, I was dragged pretty grudgingly to using a Mac. If OS X were not based on Unix, I never would have conceded. I used Macs for many years in the late 80s and early 90s and never felt like they were much more than glorified word processing machines.

Kinship through compatible plugs? Could there be some social engineering going on? Is there soylent green inside? Is Logan running?

—*Erin Ptacek*

Axio Backpacks

Thanks for this review. I Googled "user review axio swift backpack" and this is the best review that came out of the search.

I recently bought an Axio Swift a few days ago. But despite being very careful in handling the backpack, e.g., setting the bag down on straps and not the shell, I notice that the glossy polycarbonate shell scratches easily. You can see this when its viewed at an angle under the lights. The scratches are not deep but in these areas the glossy finish is no longer present.

Here are my questions:

1. What's the best way to maintain its glossy like-new finish?

2. For the scratches that are already on the shell, what's the best way to remove them?

—*Leo D. Venezuela*

I ran into a similar problem recently when I noticed the Swift had been accumulating paint on it from bumping into doors and such. I got most of that off with judicious application of a fingernail and toothpick, but I certainly see your dilemma.

My Megalopolis, for what it's worth, certainly looks somewhat worse for wear after three years. That's one of the drawbacks of a hard-shell pack. They tend to have shiny finishes, and they tend to show scratches/nicks/scuffs much more than nylon packs would.

For treating scratches and keeping the finish shiny, I would suggest a) contacting Axio to see what they recommend and b) in the absence of any recommendation from Axio, car buffing and waxing compounds. Fortunately, the Swift's carbon-look color layer is protected by a fairly thick clearcoat, so the worst you'll probably have to deal with are scratches in the clearcoat. (No touch-up paint, thank goodness!)

Ah, the price we pay for style, right?   —*Chris Lawson*

Pod People

There are 2232 tracks in my music library, and when I load a random selection onto the Shuffle there are usually one or two that I can't place; they might be tracks from a compilation CD I bought ten years ago, or recent free downloads by artists I'm unfamiliar with. I don't see the lack of a display as cause for complaint—I knew what I was buying—but what's so hard to figure out about having music on your hard disk that you can't immediately identify?

—*Miche Doherty*

Now I think I understand. I was assuming that on the Shuffle, we would select specific songs or types of songs to transfer. It seems that maybe some folks are using the "randomly select" feature to import their items, whereas I assumed it would make more sense to preselect the stuff.

I do understand how using the random feature would result in having some things on the Shuffle you could not identify. If this is a problem, the solution is to create playlists and use those.

I also wanted to point out that the Shuffle allows you to play items within a list, in sequence. So you could still transfer an audiobook or French lessons or whatever, to be heard in sequence.   —*Ellyn Ritterskamp*

Outline Exchange and XML

You are definitely writing a best-of-breed series of articles. Thanks.

You said, "If there's interest in this,…" I say, "YES!"

I just spent huge chunks of time (read days) trying to move a large set of notes from Tinderbox to OmniOutliner. Despite the fact that Tinderbox can generate just about any HTML, I spent hours and hours in BBEdit working out the incompatible details. There are huge differences in how these programs generate and deal with text markup—the stuff between the quotes in the _note element. When OmniOutliner sees something it can't understand (like an HTML tag or a special character) it just quits the import. Repeatedly trying and failing allowed me to isolate the issues, but it was a definite one-time, one file effort. Quotes in the Tinderbox notes were a particular rub since they confused the OPML syntax. Amazing how both Tinderbox and OmniOutliner both support bold text in notes, but moving from one to another requires manual massaging of every instance of bold text.

If I read your goals correctly, tweaking some DTD or XSL code once could solve these issues for any data I may want to move and give me the means to go back and forth between outliners without loss of meaning (unless one of the outliners just don't handle a specific meaning). I think this is a most worthwhile endeavor and would be willing to contribute my meager talent to it.

—*Con Rodi*

Paint It White: My First Macworld San Francisco

I am not a Mac owner, but the next machine I buy will probably be one. From my few visits to the Apple store in NYC, it looks like there is plenty to be had. If I went to Macworld, I too would seek out the small (or not small) vendors with creative, useful products, not just a bunch of cute gimmickry. I would be hesitant to return if my experience was being overstimulated mostly by flashy, low utility products.

—*Neil B*

• • •

It was as if I was there. I particularly liked your insights on just how much Macworld has veered from being a technology-based tradeshow.

Right on target about the marketing spin, and the glass block idea should really catch on.

—*Donald Crease*

• • •

I think you're missing a huge part of MWSF, which is the opportunities for training and education. MW is much more than just the commercial exhibits.

I've attended MWSF for the last decade or so. During that time there has been a lot of change. A silent change of sorts has been the high level of integration we now see in Apple hardware and software. There used to be booths for add ons like RS-232 interfaces, SCSI accessories, CRTs, video cards, etc. New hardware now is fairly complete. Software is in a similar situation. There used to be all sorts of little companies offering add-ons that are no longer needed.

Another change is that so many things we now buy have become very cheap. Ink jet printers, hard drives, laser printers, scanners, memory all used to cost thousands of dollars. Now you can get good quality in all those categories for under $500 and sometimes under $100. That reduction in sales price means those companies can no longer afford to have a booth

I hope IDG and Apple can find a way to keep the event alive. It is very much worth it to attend the workshops and classes, to meet other users, to visit the booths and to meet some of the people who build the products we use.

—*John Konopka*

Sometimes, We Get What We Pay For

With toilet paper, it might make a difference. With canned corn, not so much. What am I talking about? I'm talking about whether to spend the extra money for a brand name product, or whether to buy the cheaper version.

When it's hard to tell the difference, you might as well go with the generic version of a product or buy in bulk. That is the canned corn example. I see choices on the grocery shelves, and the well-known brand name cans of corn cost as much as twice as the no-name brands. Having tried both kinds, I can tell you it does not matter much, to me anyway. They taste the same, and it's not as if the cheap version has twigs floating in there.

So canned corn does not matter to me, but it may matter to you. Some other item may not matter to you, but it will be important to me to buy the nicer brand. Toilet paper, for instance. I have a short list of brands that I like, and I believe it is worth spending more to buy one of them. I realize there are people in this world who can't afford the luxury of toilet paper, or even toilets, and that in comparison I can be seen as selfish. But I have accepted my inconsistencies, and am doing the best I can for now.

Recently I realized how far I am willing to go to get the perfect product. I have been buying the same model of walking shoe for the past three years or so, and I replace them every three months. That's when the cushion starts to break down. I was a few weeks early for a new pair, but my knee started hurting—not when I walk, but all the time—and that is the sign it is time for new shoes. So I went across the street to the running store. I pointed to my shoes, and they knew to replace them, like always. The guy went in the back, and came back without a box. "I don't have these in a 10."

I said fine; when could he get more? Not for two weeks. Ouch. I toyed with some other makes, but once you find the perfect shoe there is no point in changing. The way to find the perfect shoe, even for walkers, is to go to a running store: they will look at how you

stand, and find the right kinds of shoes for your gait. That was three years ago—the manager knew what size shoe I needed, without measuring my feet! It impressed me no end.

On this recent visit, after a while the sales guy asked if I wanted him to check their sister store. I said sure, and he called. They had a pair in my size. He asked should they hold them for me, and I said yes. After he hung up, I asked where the other store was.

I should have asked beforehand. I drove 30 miles to get the perfect shoe.

But at the end of the day, it was worth it. My knee quit hurting, and I had a pair of shoes with which I knew exactly what I was getting. It was worth a gallon of gas, even at today's prices. And in the States we pay a third of what some Europeans pay, so we should quit whining.

Toilet paper. Walking shoes. Prozac—they say the generic version just doesn't work as well. Our iPods and Apple products. It's not that we are snobs, not wanting to settle for less, but that we are willing to pay a little extra for quality we can count on.

Is that a trademarked phrase yet? "Quality we can count on"? I am willing to sell it, if anyone needs a branding scheme.

Onward.

Apple, Rehabilitated

Photoshop contests were once the province of lone gunmen, producing mock-ups and fake shots of new devices, and then e-mailing them out to everyone they know and posting them on Fark. But in a (possibly desperate) attempt to dredge up some new hits, *Business 2.0* ran a feature in late March called "What's Next For Apple?".

It was a Mac Photoshopper's dream, with all kinds of crazy, nonsensical devices showing in their photo essay. Everything you have ever heard on bulletin boards or crazy analysts—the iPhone, the Mac media center, the WiFi iPod—is back up for revisiting, including all sorts of other hokey things. An iPod watch? Come now. You have to be joking. You're not? What? And you quote Rob Enderle with a straight face? Fie, fie!

I was very impressed with the artistry of the devices, though I have to admit, I was underwhelmed by their conceptions.

Apparently spring is the time for Apple to be reborn. *Business 2.0* is hardly the only publication to be engaging in such a festival, what with Microsoft finally releasing details about Longhorn, and Tiger shipping, and a certain measure of Zeitgeist, everyone is looking forward to the devices of the distant future, and much of their hopes are pinned on Stevie J.

Maybe it's because the iPod phone looks more and more elusive all the time. (No, not this one. What a fantastic joke, though.) Motorola says the carriers don't want the phone because it'll interfere with their ability to sell songs to people, just to play on their phones, for $3 each. Nevertheless, Moto is soldiering on, maybe playing chicken with Cingular and Verizon—but maybe they'll sell it on their own, Engadget wonders.

And don't forget the Unix intelligentsia getting on board with the Mac, Paul Graham says. He thinks the hacker market is influential far beyond its numbers, in that Richard Florida "creative class" sort of way. People like Jonathan Rentzsch (interviewed at DrunkenBlog recently), Nicholas Jitkoff, David Watanabe, and, well, Paul Graham. Why? "If you want to

know what ordinary people will be doing with computers in ten years, just walk around the CS department at a good university. Whatever they're doing, you'll be doing," he writes. And, he adds, they're all using Macs now.

Never to be left out in *any* Mac-related writing, John Gruber, who is a Paul Graham of a very different niche, disagrees to a certain degree. Of course. He insists that in the GUI world, the Mac has always been the CBGB of the computing universe (my words, not his), and that "[t]he core difference between Mac OS X and the old Mac OS…[is] that it is good in (mostly) all the ways the old Mac OS was good, and but is also good in entirely different ways. It is the Mac and it is Unix…" (As a somewhat mystifying tangent, Tim Bray suggests he might switch back, even though he himself wrote that OS X is the best laptop Unix there is, three years ago. John Gruber deserves credit for catching the inconsistency, not me.)

An empirical look at just how outsized an influence the Mac intelligentsia have would be nice, too. And this month we have one, using NetNewsWire—apparently the biggest desktop aggregator and an OS X-only product—as its benchmark. Bray runs through his RSS-feed client numbers, and discovers that 22.9 percent (187,000) of his readers use NetNewsWire, with the silver; Richard McManus at *Read/Write Web* also finds it in second place, with 7 percent; FeedBurner says it's second with 16.95 percent; and 17.9 percent at 37signals. Not too shabby, for 3 percent of the computer market. I am not the only person who thinks this ties into Paul Graham's Law, that hackers are necessarily ten years ahead and right now they're using Macs; McManus agrees with me, or rather, I with him.

Given this new influx of the computing world's intelligentsia, *Macworld* wants to look ahead. "What comes after Tiger?" they ask. The answer is, well, maybe a lot, and maybe not all that much. Would you like "smart locations," with GPS receivers, or the return of the thin-client model as "Profile"? And maybe, finally, Home-on-iPod? Don't stop thinking about tomorrow, don't stop, it'll soon be here…

Since You're the Intelligentsia…

- Couldn't wait for Tiger? You'll hate these folks! MacMall and ClubMac mailed out copies early since they had them in stock. Supposedly they had to send them back, because it was an "accident," but we all know how these things work. (Congratulations, guys, on gaming the system for, like, five extra days.)

- [DVForge](#) decided to up the FUD ante just a little, and offer a cash kitty of $25,000 to anyone who would write a Mac virus and infect two computers with it. Just about every Mac user on the planet shouted loudly in complaint, but I like [Miraz Jordan's](#) reaction: "There's nothing in the world which is totally safe and offering a reward to create something no-one wants is [just sheer foolishness](#)."

- Arve Bersvendsen discovers, much to his dismay, that Apple has been [plagiarizing one of his CSS tutorials](#) by including it, without attribution, in the WebCore test suite. When he contacted them, they responded by removing the pages from its servers, which he says is not really a remedy suited to documents distributed on every computer using Darwin. They won't even talk to him about licensing it. Very interesting.

- Remember the CherryOS saga from [last month](#)? Well, the people at Maui X-Stream are going to release it as [open-source software](#) now, they say; and, any goodwill notwithstanding, the PearPC programmers are [looking for money to sue](#). This one's pretty clear-cut, and could be the first GPL case tried in the US, if the SCO-IBM suit is indeed [delayed till 2006](#). (And assuming Judge Wells doesn't throw out SCO's GPL argument as immaterial. They're arguing IBM's GPL licensing is unconstitutional.)

- More reprises from last month: A digested (i.e., not tens of pages long) analysis of the latest developments in *Apple v. Does*, [thanks to](#)*MacCentral* and [MDJ](#). That way you don't have to buy a $30 subscription.

- Apple keeps making [more](#) and [more](#) money. Profits of $290 million in three months, folks. For a company that just sells a niche-market computer and a hit portable music player (to the tune of 5.31 *million* last quarter). Because he's always funny that way, Jack Miller at *AtAT* [reminds](#) that "the analysts were predicting $3.21 billion, and Apple said it'll probably pull in $3.25 billion instead. Why, that's only a piddling $40 million more than anyone expected! Never mind that Apple's guidance for actual profit is also over $32 million higher than the analysts had been predicting—sell! SELL!!"

- Speaking of [NetNewsWire](#), Julio Ojeda-Zapata of *Your Tech Weblog* says he thinks it's a fine RSS reader, but too expensive, especially when other tools are available free. He tried it for its podcast support, and is [going back to iPodder and NewsGator](#).

- Holy 802.11b range, Batman! A company called QuickerTek is selling an external antenna for any AirPort-equipped Mac, though designed just for the Mac mini, with 27 decibel-milliwatts (500 mW) RF power. A native AirPort antenna has 30 mW, or about 15 dBm. What does that get you? One million doll—err, a mile of reception!

- You may have heard that Adobe is buying Macromedia. When two become one, I suppose; *if* the Mac market is still being held up by the graphic design community—something with which I think Paul Graham would disagree—this has the potential to make things either better or much worse. Jason Kottke has a vastly better round-up than I could have compiled, so I will merely send you there. Especially if you are a micropatron.

- David Pogue, of *Pogue's Posts*, gets his bacon saved by GraphicConverter. Apparently, the Canon Rebel XT he was reviewing got set in RAW mode, and nothing but GC would recognize its unique format. Go, go GraphicConverter.

And that's April, folks. Come back next month, when you're all sated with Tiger and soaking up the tryptophan, and we'll talk about how the first month is going. I'll leave the lights on for you.

Copyright © 2005 Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com.

Peter's Solar Electric Van

The Auto Alliance's claim that modern vehicles are "virtually emission-free" is a long way from the truth, but here is one vehicle that really is emission-free. Peter's Solar Electric Van, powered by solar panels and a wind generator, has a 100-mile range and a maximum speed of more than 60 mph. If one guy and a few of his friends can achieve this with a few thousand pounds' worth of parts, it's pretty pathetic that the American auto industry is still making sub-25 mpg gas guzzlers.

The British Lard Marketing Board

Contrary to popular opinion, webcams are not just for camgirls. Thanks to the British Lard Marketing Board, you can now watch lard on a webcam. The image refreshes quite frequently, every ten seconds, so you won't miss much. Unfortunately, the link for a larger image doesn't work, so if you'd like to see lard up close, you'll have to look in your own fridge or ask at your local grocery store.

My Rides Through Chernobyl Area

This is just a really breathtaking site/story…a girl rode her motorcycle through the Chernobyl "dead zone," taking pictures and documenting her own experiences/feelings and a little of the history of the Chernobyl meltdown. The nuclear radiation in the area has rendered it unsuitable for human habitation for literally hundreds of years. Ride along with Elena and explore some of the disaster-area ghost towns. (Thanks to Noe Venable for this link, and also for some of my favorite music!)

The File Extension Source

A colleague received an important document by e-mail; the only problem was she couldn't open it. When I Googled for the extension (WPD), I found this site, which gave me a detailed list of all of that extension's uses. I was surprised to find that a number of different programs name their files with the same extension; the Web site listed them all, along with the companies that make each program and a description of the uses of the files with that extension. You'll get bored fast if you browse the alphabetical lists of file extensions, but bookmark this site anyway; you'll need it someday.

Delocator

With a Starbucks on every block, it can be hard to find a café with, um, personality. This Web site lets you enter a zip code and lists both non-corporate and Starbucks cafés in the area, with addresses and phone numbers. Searching for my own zip code I find 74 cafés and 123 Starbucks "within a five-mile area." Yeah, a lot of these are more than five miles away, but there are also a few places I've never heard of that are less than an hour's walk from my door. Guess I'll be drinking a lot of iced chai this summer…

Creative Understanding Achieved Via iPod

It surprised precisely no one that I was an early adopter. I come from a long line of early adopters, from mainframe VAX computers, to the original Macintosh, to my adoption of Eurydice, my first-generation iPod 5 GB in November of 2001. I am the original pod person. My boss at the time thought I was crazy. He liked the idea, but couldn't stand the price point. At $500, it was a big investment, well above my usual gadget point, but as musically obsessed as I am, it was an easy sell.

I outgrew my original iPod just in time to pick up a 40 GB 3rd-generation iPod, now teeming with purchased tunes and ripped CDs, as well as data backed up from my laptop. To me, the iPod has become both backup device and road trip companion, but my new iPod shuffle has become my training device. When I am not fixing computers or writing about them, I am a musician. I sing in Choralis, an 80-member community choir, and Echos, a 24-voice select chamber ensemble, and we perform about six times a year with music ranging from classical to modern. My iPod shuffle has become my constant practice companion. It will fit the entirety of any work we're preparing, and this year it has helped me immensely in preparing to sing Bach's Mass in B Minor. In fact, it will hold not just one, but three separate recordings of the Mass depending on what I need in terms of practice: precision, artistry, or tempo.

My Shuffle has become my gateway to a whole new level of practice. It's safe to say that I have nearly no keyboard skills. You can sit me at a piano and I can tell you which one is a middle C, or what keys a D-flat major chord needs, but if you ask me to play anything, I may run from the building screaming. This makes practicing a real bear for me, but turning to a recording or two, I can get a good feel for passages, and utilities like Garage Band make it fairly easy for me to handle playback of difficult melismas and inverted fioratura and move them to my iPod shuffle for later practice.

There's no question I'm a pod person, but I'm not one of those ubiquitous figures on the streets of DC, their white earbuds and cord showing off their iPod, nestled in their coat pocket. I've long since replaced my earbuds with a pair of Bose QuietComfort

headphones, given as a gift by my girlfriend Tiffany. Good headphones add so much to the experience, you can hear the nuance of the cellos, or the buzz of the reeds of the bassoon, which you frequently miss with the small white buds. I realize that for many, half the appeal of the iPod is showing off the device that set you back a few Benjamins, and the headphones seem to do the trick nicely, but I could care less about looks when it comes to a piece of audio equipment. My giant studio cans certainly weigh more than the Shuffle does, but given that the Shuffle weighs just over an ounce, pretty much anything would fit that bill.

We performed the B Minor two weekends ago, and the performance was amazing. Moving from piano, to iPod-orchestra, to real orchestra, was the thrill of a lifetime. It was no surprise to change from piano to strings and horns, flutes and oboes, taking away that awkward transition from rehearsal to performance. I love my iPods. They transition me from one place to another: from home to work, from place to place, and now, from rehearsal to concert.

The Apple Store SOHO—My Small Office/Home Office Away From Home in Manhattan

Apple has officially opened one hundred and two retail stores across the United States and the world. The one in New York City's SOHO district, is arguably its largest and best equipped. The store includes a phalanx of fully workable computers, printers, and a wireless network, along with a host of preconfigured, ready-to-use peripherals. Moreover, the Genius Bar exists as a safety valve if anything unfortunate were to happen to my trusty PowerBook.

Armed with these resources, my PowerBook, mobile phone/headset, and few choice pieces of software, I am well on my way to making the Apple Store my very own personal office. The seminar area affords me comfortable seating, strategically-placed electric outlets, and a clear path to the restrooms. I can easily schedule business meetings with clients and colleagues around the seminars, and if need be take them to one of the benches in a quieter section of the store for a more focused one-on-one.

And it is not just the store in Manhattan; I could very well set up shop across the country and in a few select international sites. The store itself is conveniently located to some fine shopping and dining establishments, and if proper attire is an issue, I have all the fashion stores on Broadway between Houston and Canal Streets from which to choose.

Still, some pieces are missing to make this work. I shall need software that will allow me to work and communicate over someone else's servers, increase my desktop screen area, and most importantly save me money. The applications described below are a starting point, and their number should increase with each subsequent visit to the office/store.

- Postfix Enabler 1.0 is a graphical front-end to the Postfix e-mail server application. When configured properly, it can make your computer act as its own outgoing SMTP mail server, so long as the Apple Store servers are set up to relay mail. The linked site contains not only the application but also a step-by-step tutorial on how to set up and configure every facet of the it.

- [Adium X](#) is an instant messaging application based on the public domain GAIM program, which supports almost every IM platform and protocol imaginable. Acquire Adium X and save yourself and your computer a good deal of brain and processor cycles. A very thorough help and support engine walk users through the configuration of the program and preference settings. I like my contact list to lay transparent over my desktop, but that's me.

- [Skype](#) is *free* Internet telephony software. It works on your Mac, and it works on your friends' and colleagues' PCs, Linux computers, and PDAs. Did I mention it costs you nothing? With Skype you can call one person, or conference in an entire meeting of people over the Internet and hold a multi-site meeting right from your desktop. The folks at Skype have a service called Skype-Out, which for the equivalent of two cents a minute, on average, lets you to dial landline phone numbers throughout the world. You will have to visit the Web site to make the exact country specific cost determinations.

Once these are installed, I can be up and running in no time, and be able to send and receive e-mails, take part in instant messages and group chats, and make and receive Internet-based phone calls to and from my colleagues. Hence, costs stay down and productivity goes way up.

I planted myself down one rainy Monday and spent the day in to the evening working from the store. Surprisingly, the only people who came up to me were individuals having problems with their hardware who could not deal with the interminable lines at the Genius Bar. Other than that, the day sailed by with me writing up reports, virtually collaborating on a project, remotely connecting to servers on-site, and making a phone call via the Internet to smooth over rough spots in the project.

What did take me back was something I remembered from my days hanging out at CompUSA stores when they first opened. People will say and do the darndest things in public, and in a computer store you are a bound to learn more about what drives a consumer, and what particular aspect of targeted marketing they pick up on.

The Mac mini comments were eye-openers. I heard phrases from "It's so small" to "That's not a computer, it's a media center." Perhaps the most intriguing statement, mentioned by more than a few, and I shall paraphrase, was "Now we don't need to purchase one of those G5 desktop computers, rather leave the mini plugged in at home and take a twelve-inch notebook on the road."

The concept of the carpetbagger office is not for everyone. It takes a certain personality to not only pull this off, but also attempt it in the first place.

While, I am not ready to have business cards printed up with the Apple's SOHO store street address, I am curious whether some adventurous soul has taken the plunge. Starbucks had better watch out. There is no reason Apple's retail stores could not draw java-crazed e-nomads away with an iCafé in concert with their in-store Genius Bars. I can see the job the posting now: "Looking for an experienced Coffee Barista and Apple Genius, equal parts aptitude and attitude." Well, maybe not equal.

My 10:30 AM appointment just came in. Stop by the office later and we can chat in person.

Buy a Mac mini or Upgrade Your Cube?

Introduction

Apple recently introduced its new kid on the block, the Mac mini. The tiny size and quiet operation immediately recalled my veteran and familiar Cube, chugging away on the desktop, a model long since discontinued.

The Cube's small, silent concept kept it appealing long after the development of bigger, meaner Macs. "Sure," my internal user would say, "they're faster, but how about those fans? Imagine the racket! Ah, peace and quiet."

The Mini rattled my smug internal user with its low price and superior form factor. Was it time to trade in the Cube and shrink the desktop even further? It was probably an illusion, but my Cube suddenly felt older and slower. To forestall the inevitable, I let my internal user shop for upgrade options.

Children of the Cube

As the 2005 conceptual offspring of 2000's space-saving, whisper-quiet Mac Cube, the Mini is impressive value on physical volume alone. $499 gets you the base 1.25 GHz Mini and beaucoup Apple software. Another $100 will get you a 1.42 GHz CPU and 80 GB of disk space. (Drive size and cost is a bigger concern for the Mini, since it uses pricier 2.5" notebook hard disks, instead of the typical 3.5" desktop size.)

Performance and cost are major factors in buying a new system rather than upgrading the existing one. Swapping the Cube's CPU isn't trivial. You'll need tools, a clean working area, and technical confidence. Previous experience taking apart your Cube isn't essential, but it definitely helps. The faint of heart should just head to the Apple Store or Apple.com.

Performance

As a newer piece of hardware, the Mac Mini isn't just a faster CPU. A variety of internal improvements make it perform better than a Cube running at the same CPU speed. As an approximation, compare these XBench Mac Mini and GigaDesigns CPU upgrade results.

- 1.25Ghz GigaDesigns 7455A
- 1.25Ghz Mac Mini

Even if you get a more recent CPU upgrade than the 7455A, the Mini will perform better at the same CPU speed.

Cost

Several manufacturers make CPU upgrades cheaper than the base Mini's $499. I bought the single-CPU PowerForce7457 1.3 GHz G4 processor. It's currently $329 from Other World Computing, which also offers Sonnet's 1.2 GHz EncoreG4 for $299. (You might save money buying aftermarket from eBay, but caveat emptor.) Manufacturers also offer dual-CPU cards, which some applications benefit significantly from.

The CPU upgrade may be slower than a new Mini, but remember that you're actually comparing it to what you're using now (in my case, a stock Cube). The new CPU should be notably faster! Also, you save the headache of moving all your applications and files to a new Mac. For day-to-day convenience, a CPU upgrade wins. (Convenience of the installation itself is another story.)

Before You Install

For Cube owners, upgrading the CPU means (Cube owners, grit your teeth) installing a fan. It's practically Cube heresy, but I'll spoil the ending—the PowerLogix fan is very quiet. You'll have plenty of other things to concern yourself with, anyway. In the end, the fan will seem like a minor detail!

Before you unplug anything or even turn off the Cube, check your firmware. You must have version 4.1.9 installed, which my Cube did not. Run the Apple System Profiler to check your firmware version. Download the firmware installer if it's not at least 4.1.9! (See the CubeOwner.com firmware page for assistance. The site's forums provide a great post-install resource.)

To actually upgrade the firmware, you'll need to boot from a Mac OS 9.1 (or later) partition. If you've got one hard drive and it's formatted solely for OS X, this can be a major pain. By hook or crook, you'll need to install OS 9.1 on something and boot from it. Have a friend with a spare external hard drive? Time to call in a favor.

The updater itself takes a few minutes to install. Follow the firmware instructions and then verify the system is up and running again.

Installation

My PowerForce7457 included a CD-ROM with PDF and QuickTime installation guides. They guide you through taking apart your Cube and swapping the CPUs. Again, this is for the technically confident! If you're worried about snapping something or shorting out an electrical component, have a Mac service shop do it for you or stick to buying new systems.

Rather than writing a step-by-step installation guide, since you'll have them, here are some installation observations.

1. Electronics stores carry the Torx wrench needed to remove the Cube's internal screws.

2. The hard drive chassis uses a smaller Torx size than the rest of the Cube. If you're also swapping the hard drive, as I was, make sure to have both sizes.

3. This is a great chance to bond with your PC-using computer geek friends. There's a persistent belief that Mac users are afraid of the inside of their machines. Taking apart your Cube before their eyes should put that to rest.

4. Don't take everything apart in your Cube. After a half-dozen disassemblies, I realized that my initial swap took longer than expected because I removed components I didn't need to.

5. The motherboard is secured (but not permanently attached) to the metal shielding on the bottom of the Cube. It will take a lot of wiggling to get it loose and probably dislodge the plastic inset on the USB ports. Set it aside for reconnection after reassembly.

6. There are lots of nooks and crannies inside the Cube. Be careful not to lose screws in the internals!

7. Installation took about an hour the first time, with occasional breaks to consult the manual. Don't plan to do it all in ten minutes.

PowerLogix L3 Cache Issue

Computers are complex, so fixing one thing can break another. After I finished the installation, the included PowerLogix CD-ROM installed some software necessary to make the new CPU work. Watch out for the PowerLogix L3 cache patch! Ostensibly, it allows L3 cache ratios over 6:1, which would provide a minor speed improvement. However, many Cube owners find that it causes subtle and maddening problems elsewhere on the system. My own system suddenly sprouted disk read and write errors and would lose sound on the speakers. Eventually, it would lock up. It's a mystery why this patch causes problems, but my advice is to disable it or check with PowerLogix for a new patch. (Thanks to the CubeOwner.com forums for finding this fix and preserving my sanity!)

OS 9 Boot Issue

The PowerForce CPU can only boot to Mac OS X, so it's not possible to create a dual-boot drive or even boot from a Mac OS 9 CD-ROM after installation. This doesn't affect running applications inside Classic, just booting to the actual OS. (The PowerLogix installation CD-ROM includes instructions for re-enabling Mac OS 9 bootability, should it be needed.)

New CPU Impressions

Adding the CPU upgrade gave my Cube a new lease on life, once the L3 cache problem was fixed. Major concerns were Web page loading speed and paging through photos in iPhoto. Both could take several seconds with the original CPU, but it's a fraction of that now. Video editing is once again practical, and Final Cut Express works like a champ. A system that felt sluggish and very 20th-century should now last another few years, probably until the Mac minis are small enough to be mistaken for the original iPod.

Summary

Upgrading a Cube's CPU is technically challenging, but proves there's plenty of life left in the system itself. If you want to keep your system around, a few hundred dollars and an hour of care will improve its speed dramatically. Just make sure to follow the instructions and back yourself up with Apple support or a user resource like the CubeOwner.com forums.

Cartoon: Cortland

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com
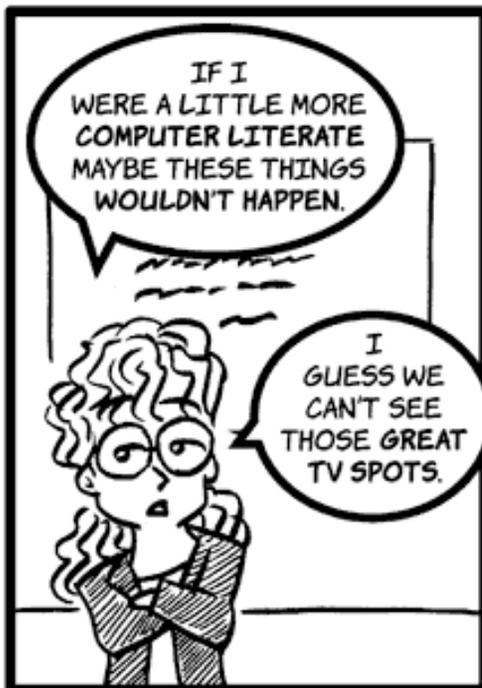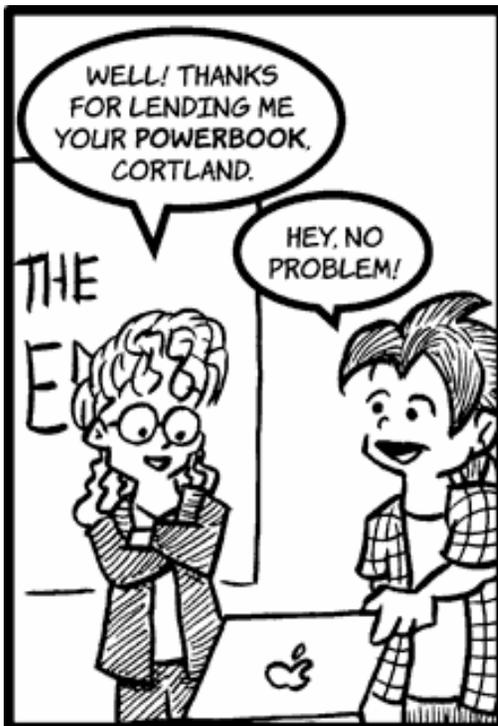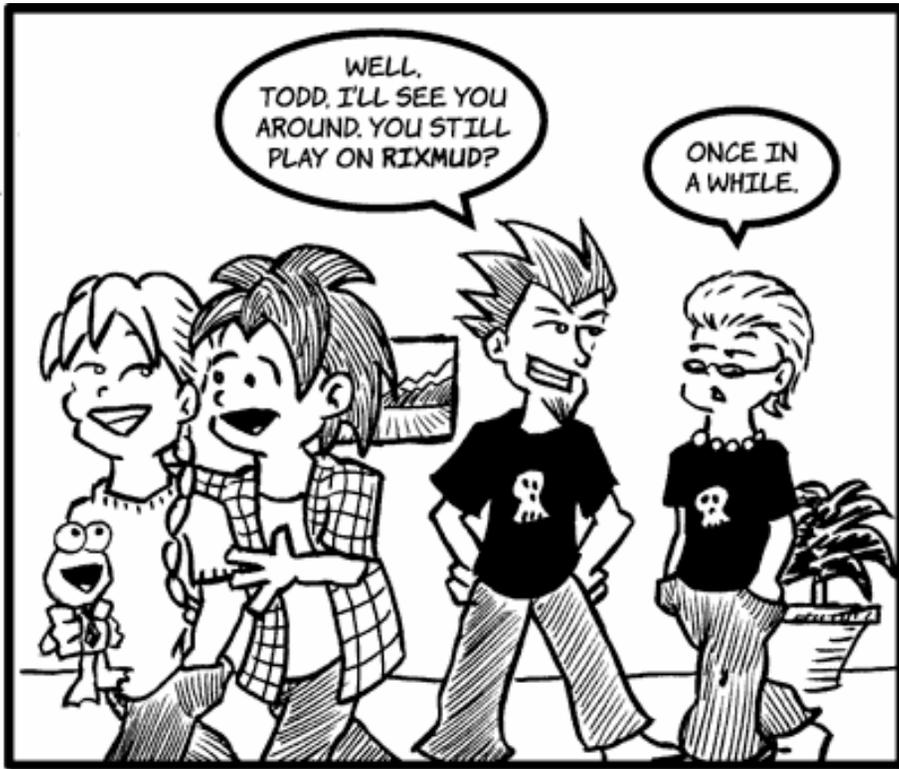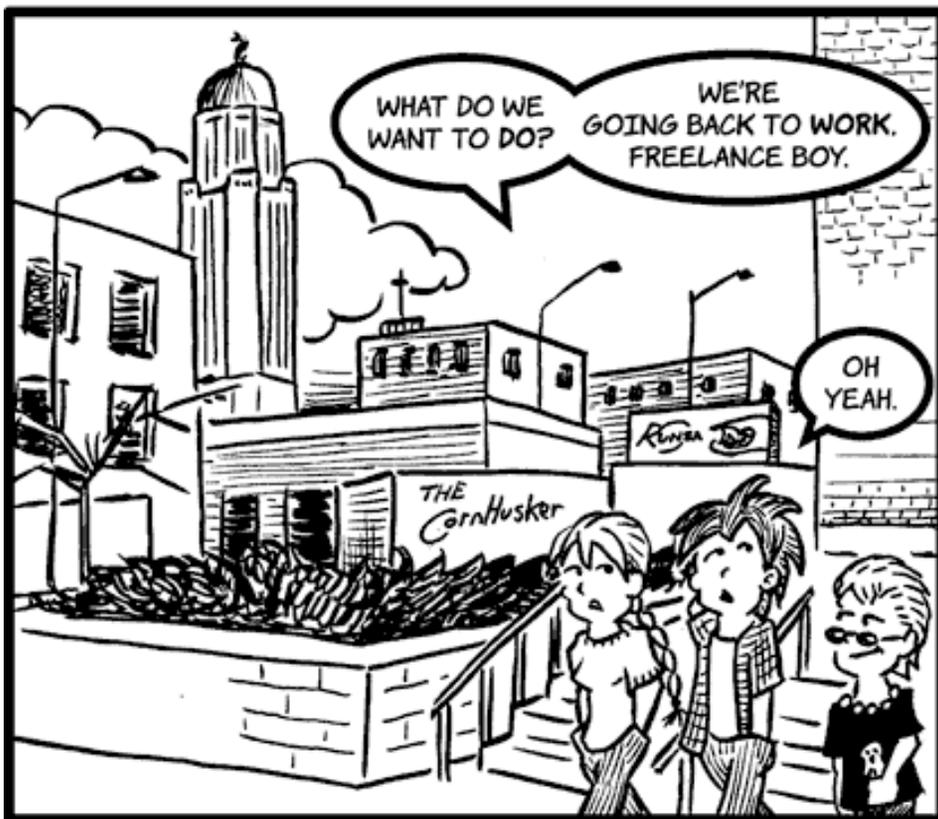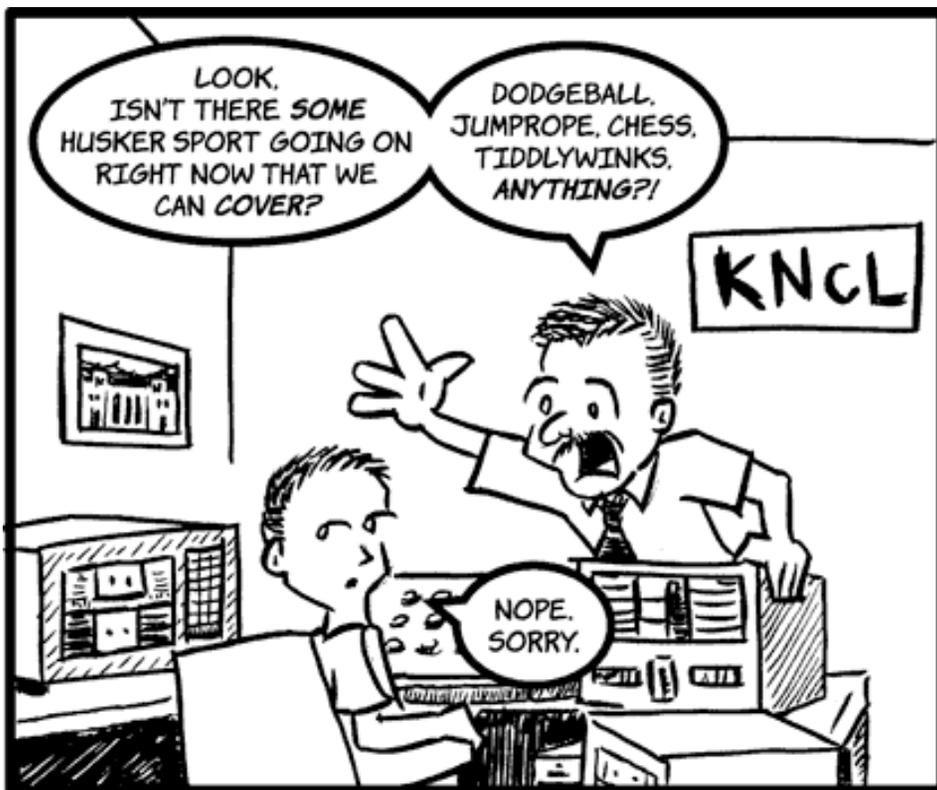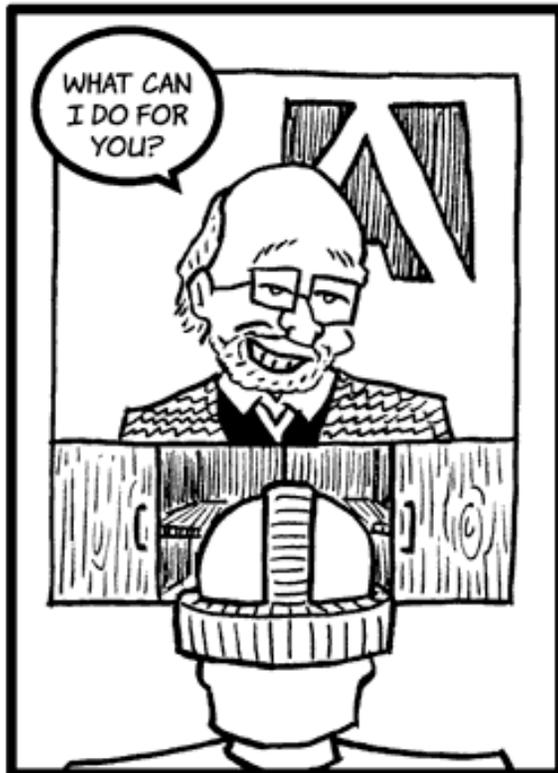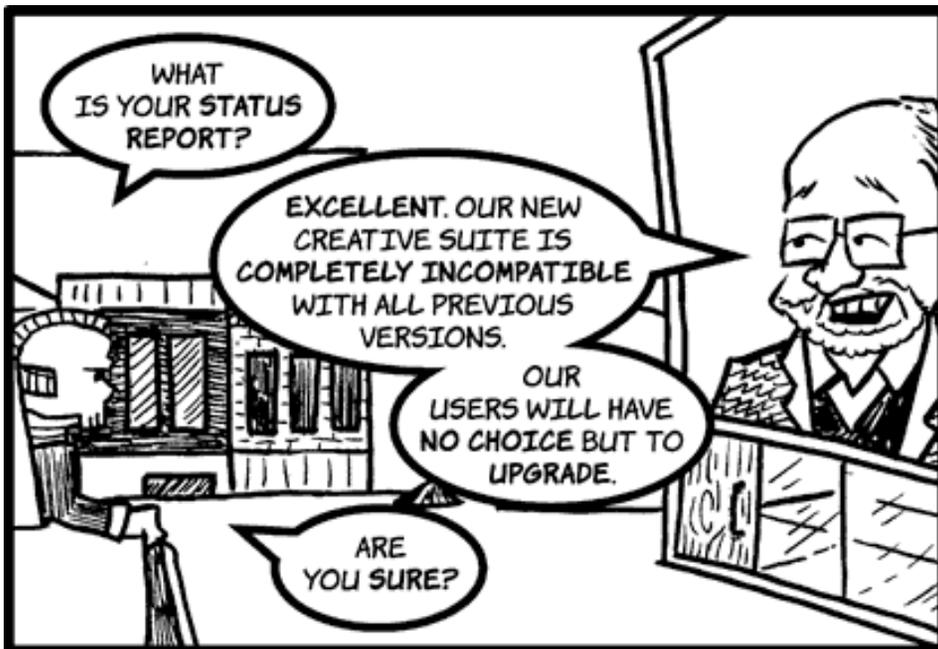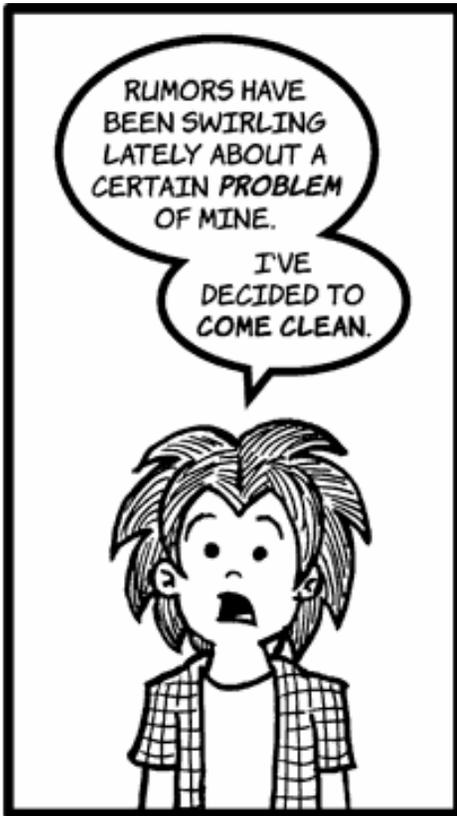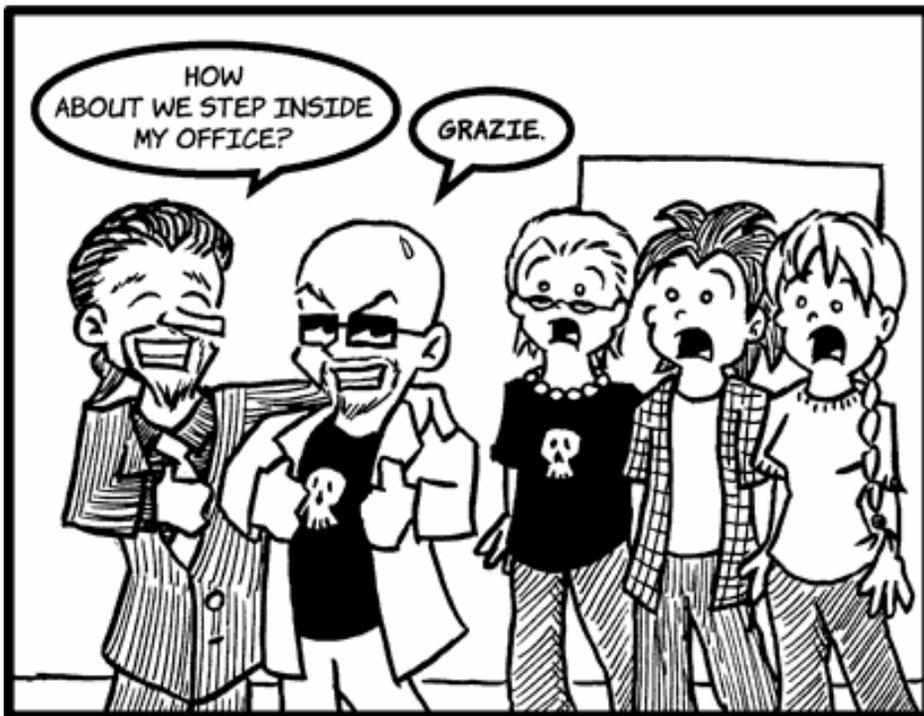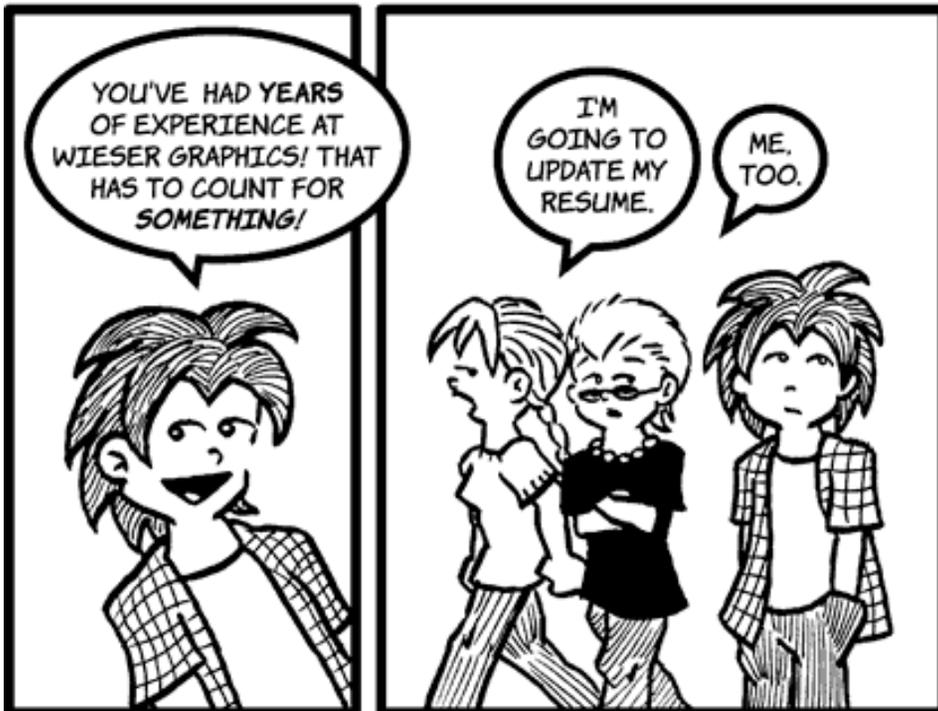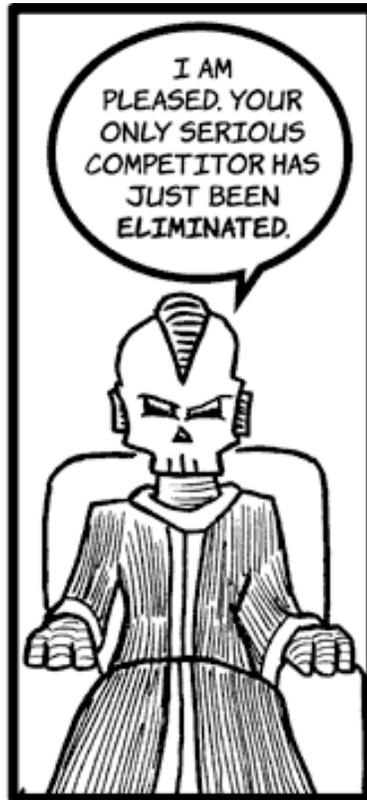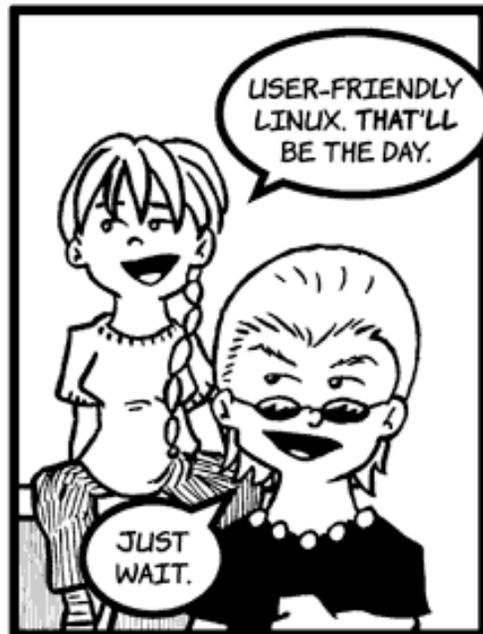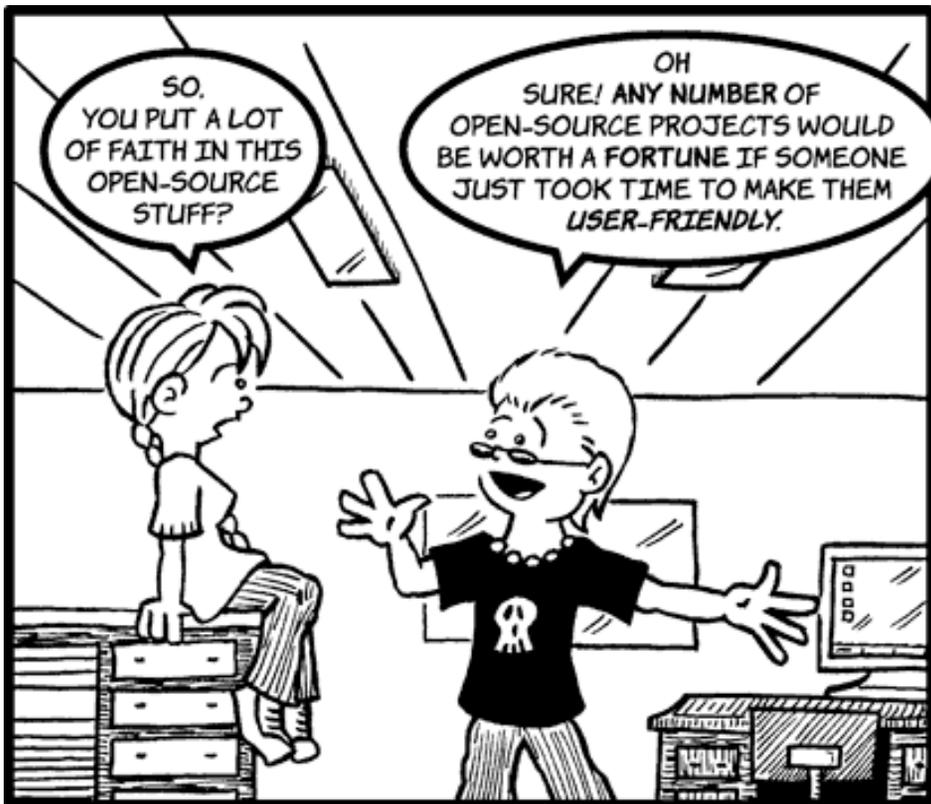
*Copyright © 2005 Matt Johnson,* mjohnson@atpm.com.

Canadian Rockies

Canadian Rockies

Recently, Bill Jastram and his wife took a winter vacation to the Canadian Rockies. These photos include shots taken in both Banff and Yoho National Parks. They focus on four locations:

- Canmore, just outside Banff National Park (a wonderful place to stay before entering Banff Park).

- The region around Banff, including some amazing views from atop the Gondola ride (well worth the price of admission).

- Lake Louise (a fantastic glacier and lake. A must see, but not necessarily a place to stay).

- Emerald Lake, by far their favorite. 30 minutes west of Lake Louise, 15 minutes into the mountains from the adorable little railroad town of Field. Not generally on the tourist route, but a jewel (pardon the pun) of a place to take a walk around the lake and experience a worthy meal at their lodge.

Going in winter they hit the weather just right, with lots of sun and just touch of snow. The rates are far better (they went in March) and there are fewer people.

The photos were taken with a simple Canon PowerShot S230, about the size of a thick pack of cards and easily carried in a coat pocket or with a small belt-loop case. Bill has taken it on many journeys, and it works like a gem. He uses a 15" Aluminum PowerBook to manage the photos with GraphicConverter.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

iCab and Interarchy (formerly Anarchie) can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once. Use the "Web > Download Entire Site" command in the File menu, giving it the URL to the pictures page above. In iCab, use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path."

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x

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 popup 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.

Mac OS 8.5–9.x

Go to the Appearance control panel. Click on the "Desktop" tab at the top of the window. Press the "Place Picture..." button in the bottom right corner, then select the desired image. By default, it will show you the images in the "Desktop Pictures" subfolder of your "Appearance" folder in the System Folder, however you can select images from anywhere on your hard disk.

After you select the desired image file and press "Choose," a preview will appear in the Appearance window. The "Position Automatically" selection is usually fine. You can play with the settings to see if you like the others better. You will see the result in the little preview screen.

Once you are satisfied with the selection, click on "Set Desktop" in the lower right corner of the window. That's it! Should you ever want to get rid of it, just go to the desktop settings again and press "Remove Picture."

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

Go to the "Desktop Patterns" control panel. Click on "Desktop Pictures" in the list on the left of the window, and follow steps similar to the ones above.

Random Desktop Pictures

If you drag a folder of pictures onto the miniature desktop in the Appearance or Desktop Pictures control panel, your Mac will choose one from the folder at random when it starts up.

DeskPicture

An alternative to Mac OS's Appearance control panel is Pierce Software's DeskPicture, reviewed in issue 5.10 and available for download.
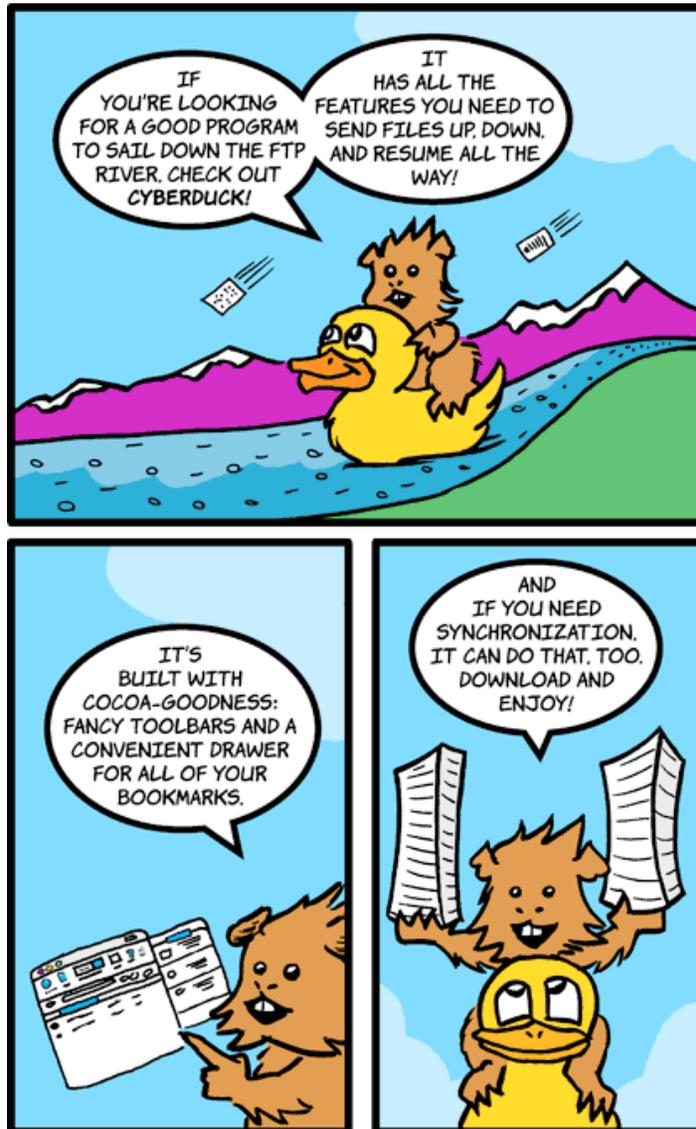
Cyberduck

Copyright © 2005 Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com.

Review: Expert Mouse 7.0

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

Developer: Kensington
Price: $100
Requirements: Mac with USB, Mac OS X
Trial: None

ATPM RATINGS
VERY NICE

Kensington took its time bringing an optical version of its venerable Turbo Mouse to market. The Turbo Mouse was the original multi-button ADB trackball, introduced back in the late 1980s with two buttons and evolving through the late 1990s into a four-button, do-everything wunderkind of a mouse. Unfortunately, Kensington didn't rush to produce a USB version once the iMac hit the market, leaving users stuck with the imperfect solution of a USB-ADB converter or—heaven forbid—even worse, the stock iMac mouse. Finally, when it got a USB version to market, the rest of the market had moved on to the optical mouse, and Kensington's renamed Expert Mouse was behind the times again.

No longer.

The latest revision of the Expert Mouse, version 7.0, has been out for about a year, and it fully lives up to its billing as the "ultimate trackball." With USB connectivity, optical tracking, four programmable buttons, a brilliantly conceived "Scroll Ring," an included wrist rest, and a billiard-size trackball, this mouse is *the* whole package.

Let's get one thing out of the way: the Expert Mouse is the epitome of all things trackball. It's the latest offspring of the original trackball mouse. If you're a trackball-hater, approach this review with an open mind. Don't hate the player. Hate the game—and Kensington's game is not to be hated lightly.

A good mouse starts off with one of two things: either it's dead simple or it has great software. Apple has always taken the dead-simple route. Kensington takes the opposite tack, with incredible software that makes an otherwise complex mouse quite easy to use.

Software has traditionally been a Kensington strong point, and the latest version of MouseWorks for Mac OS X is no exception. The only drawback is that third-party mouse support has disappeared. (A little-known secret on the Classic Mac OS was the fact that Kensington's ADB MouseWorks software was amazingly supportive of non-Kensington

devices, sort of like an ADB version of [USB Overdrive](.) It's hard to find fault with Kensington for failing to re-implement this feature when it rewrote the software from scratch for Mac OS X.
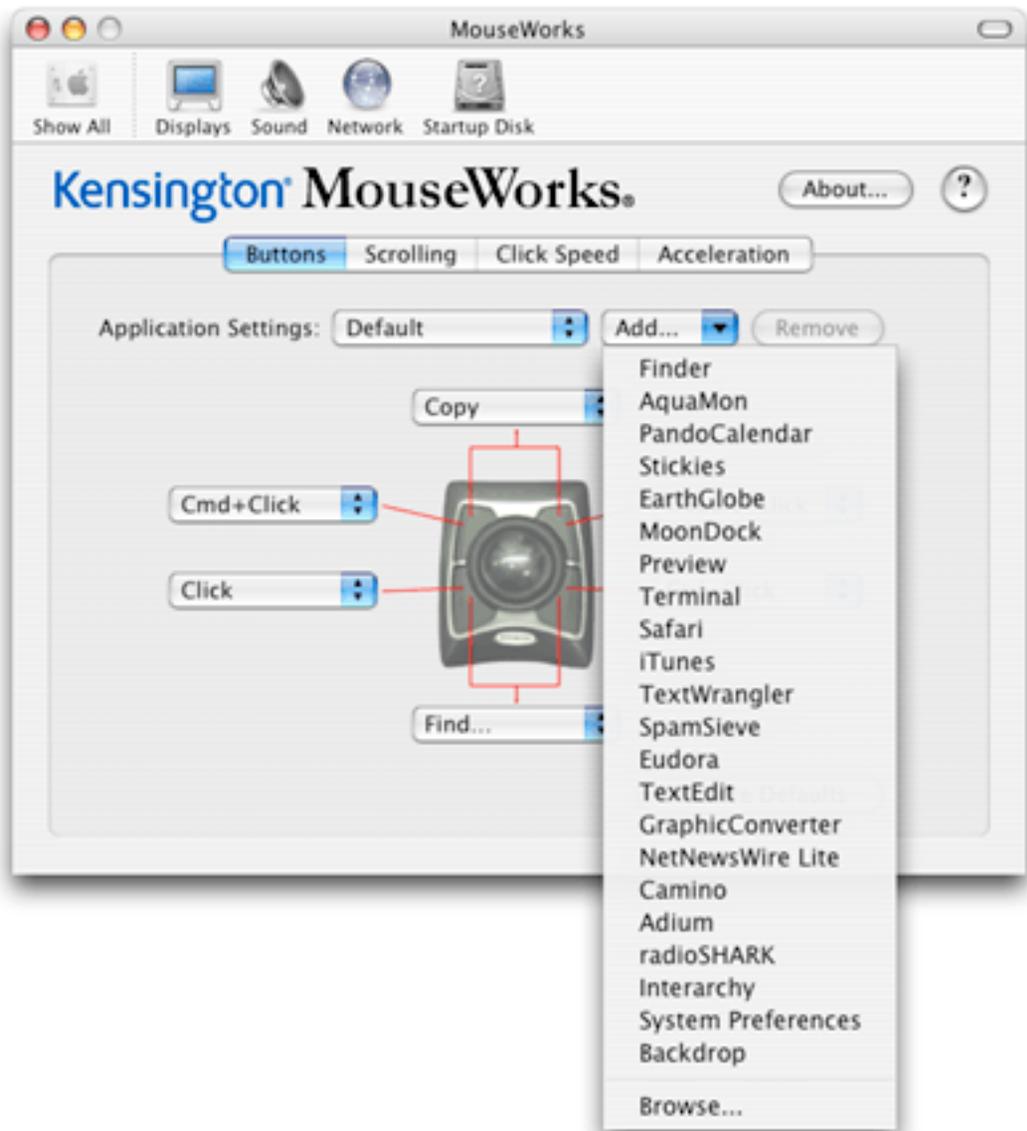
MouseWorks will be immediately familiar to anyone who has used the Classic version, except it's now implemented as a preference pane rather than a control panel application. Separate tabs are provided for button assignments, scrolling control, click speed,

and—best of all—acceleration, which allows for a fantastic degree of fine tuning. There is excellent help and documentation, which are thankfully no longer the rarity they once were. Buttons can be assigned on a per-application basis, giving the user limitless possibilities for individual behavior in each application. This comes in especially handy for media pros, though almost every power user can, in time, make good use of it.
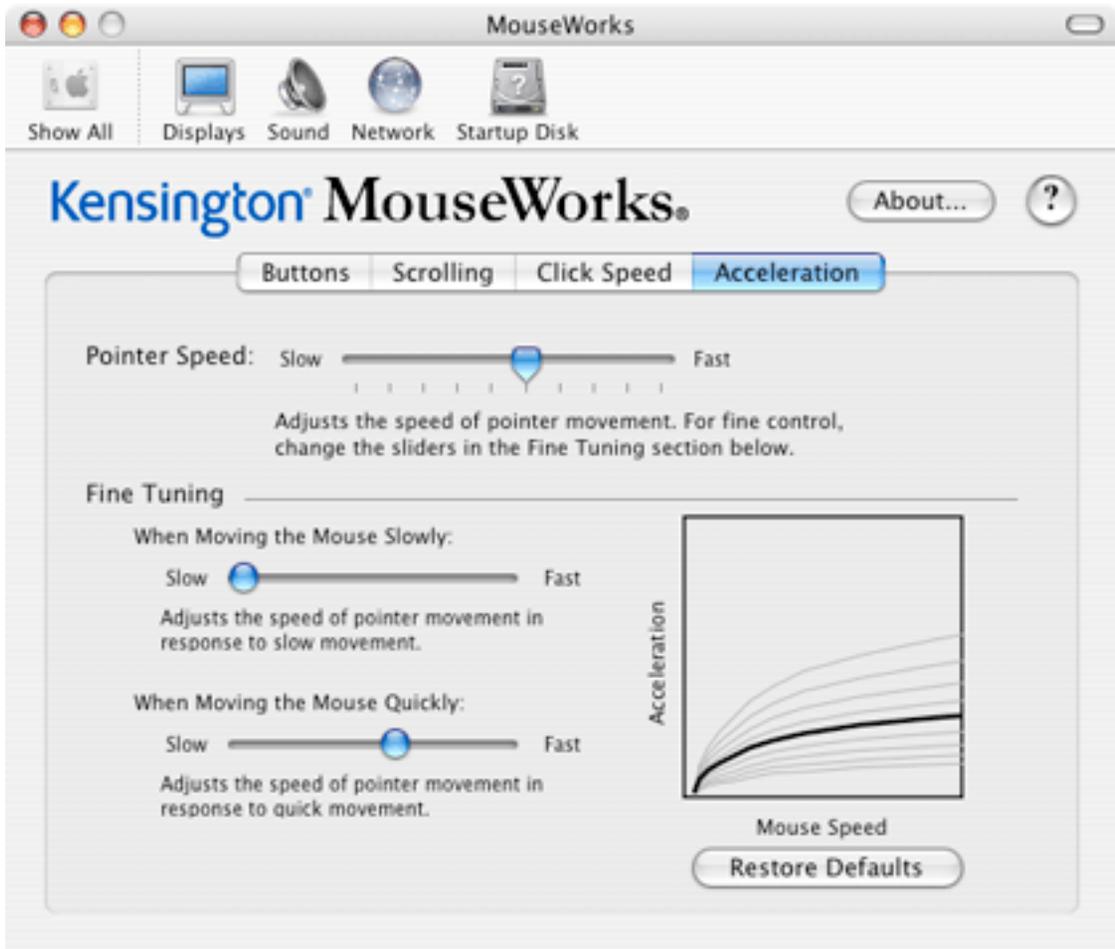
As with all good software, the default settings are sensible, too, though most folks will probably find the default scrolling speed and cursor tracking a bit too slow. Unlike Classic versions of MouseWorks, the new version bases these values on their corresponding global system preferences, so if you find yourself wanting to turn it up to eleven, make sure you've adjusted the settings in the Keyboard & Mouse preference pane first.

Conversely, if you find it turned up to eleven and a mere tap of the mouse sends the cursor all the way across your screen, make sure the Keyboard & Mouse settings aren't too high.

There seems to be one minor bug with the software under Mac OS X 10.3: plugging or unplugging the mouse seems to activate the screensaver within about 20 seconds. There doesn't appear to be any rhyme or reason to this behavior, but it's fairly reliable and happens almost every time.

Let's move on to the mouse itself. The great benefit of this long line of trackballs has always been the size of the ball, which allows for much better cursor control than, say, the built-in trackballs on 100-series PowerBooks or the thumb-balls used on Logitech and Microsoft's widely tolerated optical trackballs. If you're soured on trackballs because of bad experiences with another model, rest assured this is one area where size does matter, and the Expert Mouse could well change your opinion.

The included wrist rest is a nice touch. Though wrist-rest mousepads are a dime a dozen now, the pleather-covered dense foam makes for a comfortable and stable support. Just don't plan on taking it off. It snaps into its two mounting holes very tightly, and it's pretty tricky to remove. The leading edge sticks up a little higher than it should, which is mildly

uncomfortable. Moving your hand up on the mouse a bit helps, but doesn't entirely avoid the problem. Of course, if you already have a wrist-rest mousepad, this should be a non-issue.

Kensington sensibly attaches a six-foot cord, putting the Expert Mouse within reach of even the worst hide-the-tower-under-the-desk setups. This cord is no longer detachable, as the ADB cable on the Turbo Mouse was, nor is there a USB pass-through on the Expert Mouse, though there's admittedly less reason for one with the proliferation of USB hubs on the desktop. Though not tested for this review, a wireless version of the Expert Mouse (using proprietary RF, not Bluetooth, unfortunately—maybe in version 8.0?) is available for an additional $20, if you're the type who hates any cord clutter and loves to use batteries.

Tracking is accurate and generally smooth, although not as precise as I remember the Turbo Mouse being under Mac OS 9 on my Wall Street, especially at slow tracking speeds. Fortunately, with the optical pickups, you'll never have to worry about the ball sticking or the horrible thunking sounds the ball bearings in the old Turbo Mouse could make when dirt and dust got into the mechanism. Trust me, with heavy use, this happened more often

than you might think, and the Turbo Mouse required fairly frequent cleaning. It's one of the disadvantages of a trackball, with its upward-facing mechanism that collects whatever gravity drops on the ball.

Scrolling with the ring is very comfortable and feels quite natural, since my ring finger and thumb rest on or near the scroll ring anyway. It is not, however, as smooth as the tracking is. In fact, it's noticeably jumpy at times. The scroll ring has very shallow detents that seem to exacerbate this problem, much like the soft clicking you feel on most scroll-wheel mice. At least some of the blame can be laid at the feet of application developers, though. Scrolling is noticeably smoother in Safari than in either Camino or Eudora.

Finally, those four glorious, programmable buttons are all within easy reach for maximum clickability. Even reaching over the massive trackball to chord is no problem, as your hand settles into a natural spread over the top of the mouse.

When I dropped $120 on a Turbo Mouse back in 1999, I did so sight unseen and without having tried it. Call it instinct. With the $20 price drop and superior features, the Expert Mouse is an even better value than its grandfather was, because the experience is markedly improved. While a lot of people might say $100 is too much for a mouse, a lot of people haven't given the Expert Mouse a fair shake.

Kensington is one of the very few computer or peripheral makers to offer a fully transferable five-year warranty on *anything*, and their technical support has been highly praised in the rare case that it's necessary. Do whatever you can to experience this mouse, and then try to argue it isn't the best trackball—and maybe the best mouse—ever made. Well done, Kensington. Well done indeed.

Review: Keynamics Laptop Stand on Wheels

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

Developer: Keynamics
Price: $80
Trial: None

Industrial designers have a tough job. Jonathan Ive has to come up with eye-catching products and, instead of simply letting form follow function, he has to balance these two virtues in a product that's easy, intuitive, and comfortable to use while looking great at the same time. This middle ground is a tough position to occupy.

At the form end of the spectrum, you get things like Pressure Drop's TrestleHub, memorably described by Gizmodo as having been designed "to perfectly complement your collection of Klingon battle dildos."

Meanwhile, at the function end of the spectrum, you have the Keynamics Laptop Stand on Wheels (LSoW), a visual abomination (with an equally terrible name) that works so incredibly well, you find yourself wondering what family members would think if you gave these stands out as Christmas presents.

I'll be honest—the first time I saw this stand, I thought it was a joke. As soon as I sat down in front of it, however, I knew I had found an incredible product. As regular readers may recall, I made similar remarks about Rain Design's [iLap](#) about a year ago—immediately after using it for the first time, I knew there wasn't any reason not to own one. The Keynamics stand is much more comfortable to use on a desk, but trades in a lot of versatility to gain comfort.

The most striking aspect of the LSoW—other than, well, its *appearance*—is its weight, which comes in at 10 pounds (4.5 kg). The rear portion of the stand is heavily weighted because the front six inches are designed to hang off the edge of a desk or table. It looks unstable, but it's not, thanks to that weight. (Users with very heavy laptops, however, may find themselves wanting another pound or two back there, as the stand has trouble balancing laptops more than approximately seven pounds.) The LSoW is thoughtfully designed with a built-in handle to allow for easy transport, though only the most masochistic users would attempt to use it as a truly portable stand.

By hanging out over the edge of a desk, the LSoW encourages users to slide in underneath it and place their chairs into a reclining position. As one of my favorite ways to use the iLap is in a recliner or on the couch, I welcomed an excuse to kick back at my desk as well. Ergonomic experts claim a reclining position eases pressure on the spine and back,

and the angle of the LSoW allows for the wrists to be straightened, reducing the likelihood of injury. The raised back of the stand brings the screen up about four inches to a more comfortable viewing level, reducing neck and eye strain.

It's clear from using this stand for some time that a great deal of thought went into the ergonomics. I have never found a more comfortable stand for desk use. Those of you who generally avoid reading manuals will want to set aside 15 minutes to go through the included setup and instruction guide. It explains how to get the most comfort out of the stand without putting yourself in a position that your chiropractor will have to correct later, at great expense.

With the laptop hanging out over the floor like it does, you might worry about it sliding off and meeting an untimely demise. Don't worry. The tacky rubber strips on the bottom and front lip of the stand ensure that even the slickest, heaviest laptops will stay securely in place. In typical use, merely pushing on the laptop will be enough to move the entire stand, thanks to that rubber.

Laptops with front-loading optical drives will need to be lifted up slightly to use the drive; if the lip were about two to three millimeters shorter, the slot-loading drives in the PowerBook line would work perfectly. Thankfully, this lip is much less of an issue on the Keynamics stand than a similar feature was on Contour's poorly designed NoteRiser.

Another great benefit of the LSoW is its utility on shallow (front-to-back) desks. By hanging the laptop off the front of the desk, the effective depth of the desk is increased by six or seven inches. This increase in desk space is very welcome in cramped quarters like a college dorm. And speaking of desk space, the wheels make it easy to roll the stand off to the side if you need workspace in front of you. I would have absolutely loved a stand like this in college, where the desks were never big enough and my laptop was always in the way.

After a month of using the LSoW on a daily basis, I find myself wishing for a similar product for my external mouse, which is now sitting far enough back on the desk that I find it bothersome to have to reach for it. Obviously, using an external keyboard is virtually out of the question, but recent PowerBook and iBook keyboards are good enough to use full-time without being uncomfortable.

Ergonomically, the Laptop Stand on Wheels is without peer. There's no way you're going to get this comfortable at your desk using any other product, or combination thereof, without replacing your entire workspace (including your desk) with a multi-thousand-dollar product such as something from ErgoQuest. Considering the competition, the $80 price is a bargain. It isn't the best solution for people who hate laptop keyboards (sorry, no suggestions there) or for people with stiff-backed chairs (buy a new desk chair; you'll thank yourself later), but it's darn near perfect for almost everyone else.

Review: MacJournal 3.0.2

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

Developer: Mariner Software
Price: $25 (download); $30 (boxed)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2
**Trial:** Fully-featured (15 days)

ATPM RATINGS

GOOD

When you write often and generate a great deal of supplementary text, as a blogger or as a "real" writer, keeping track of all the bits you're pushing becomes quite a challenge. Where did I put that nut graf for the signed column I'm writing? Where did I write down those inspired sentences to make into a lead—and where are my notes on that review of MacJournal for ATPM?

I sat down, just before I agreed to review MacJournal, and took an inventory of all the myriad places I keep my text files, and it dawned on me that I must be insane. When I write a Bloggable column, I do about three hours of organization. In any given month, I take notes on research for info graphics, product pages, and features I'm working on; I make clippings for fiction that is under way; I jot things down for the occasional weblog post; and of course I produce my columns and reviews.

The goal, in reviewing Mariner Software's very nice tool, was both to test its explicit functionality and to see if MacJournal made my writing process cleaner and more organized. To give away the conclusion, the answer was that it was not useful as a blog client, that it did made me more organized, but that didn't lead to better or faster writing. At least everything is in one place now.

Let me detail the challenge I was asking a piece of software to overcome. My writing system has undergone natural selection over the years. It involves a lined paper notebook, voice notes on my cell phone, sticky notes on my desk, text and clipping files strewn about on my desktop, a Gmail label for link dumps, and a clipping drawer in Drop Drawers X. To write one of my columns or reviews isn't rocket science, but it sure generates a lot of inane jottings. The computer has made it possible for people like me to be as disorganized as gonzo Hunter S. Thompson, R.I.P., and produce clean writing: I have yet to fax my

astonishingly patient editors, Michael Tsai and Chris Turner, numbered pages of notes otherwise out of sequence. Before I finished downloading the disk image, my software was already developing an ulcer worrying about organizing me.
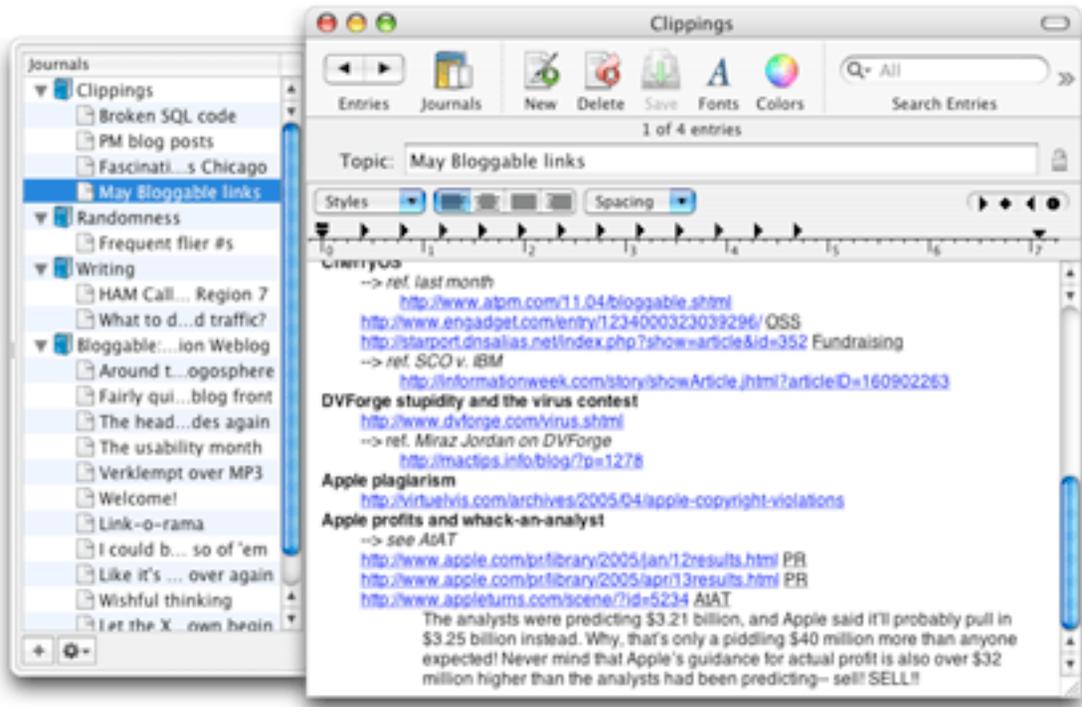

MacJournal, doing a month's worth of computerized organizing.

The first thing I did with MacJournal was, basically, try it for its intended purpose. I reviewed MarsEdit in January, so I wanted to kick the tires on an entirely different kind of client. MacJournal stores its entries in what seems to be RTF, so you have access to the full OS X rich-text editing suite; and you can do other interesting things, like insert text links that show up as underlined and clickable. Then, you export it to HTML (or RTF or plain text, if you must be so déclassé) and put it on your Web page, if you're still into that mode. One of the perks, though, is that MacJournal also supports posting to LiveJournal and Blogger—and therefore Movable Type, in theory, though I couldn't make it work in practice.

For this purpose, I went through a great deal of effort, importing all my old Bloggable: The Companion Weblog entries. It could have been smoother, but MacJournal doesn't automatically recognize and import Movable Type's export format; I had to go through and tweak each entry into a format the import window's "Try to discover entries in file" option wouldn't gag on. (Hint, hint, Mariner Software.) As you can imagine, it was great fun with 13 entries, so I did not attempt it on my 176-entry primary blog. Also, if you use MT and write your entries with a text formatting system other than the default "Convert line breaks" option, you will have to go through and convert every link and blockquote, too. What I got from this exercise had one advantage over a conventional weblog client: I had offline access to all my old entries, too. I tried it on an airplane, though, and did not find this to be particularly useful. If you are often away from the Internet, and you write as you go along like Alex Pang or Maciej Ceglowski, you could turn this into a posting queue, but I am neither a heavy traveler not a reliable blogger, so I am seldom offline.
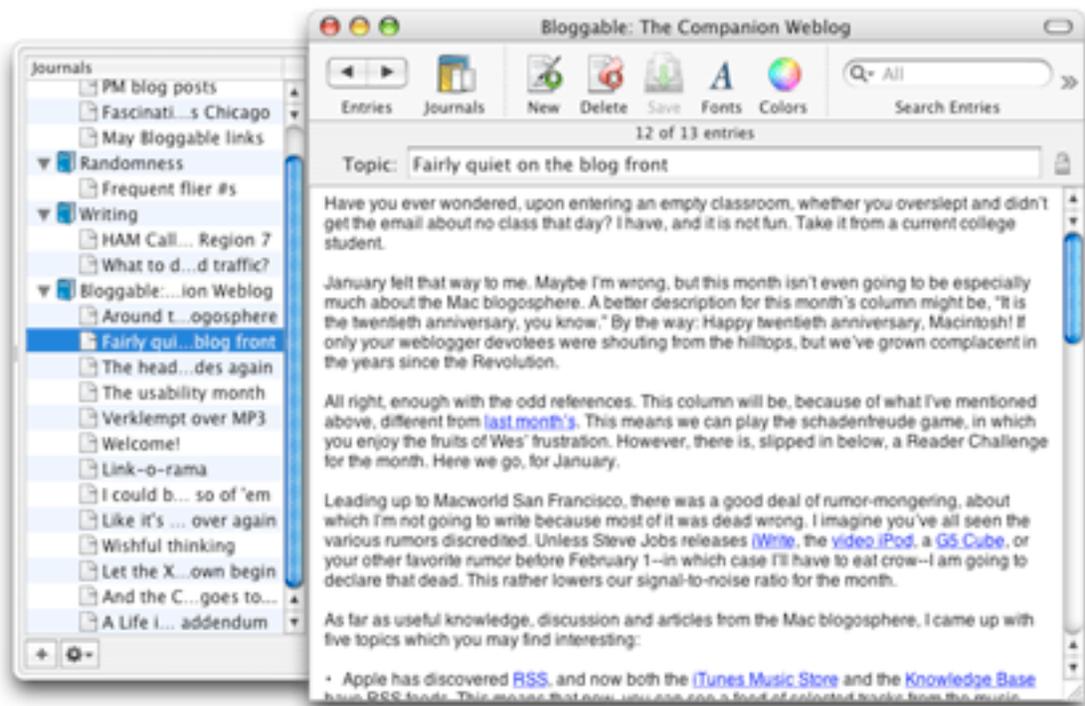
Bloggable: The Companion Weblog, in a vastly prettier format than even Markdown. It's a shame I couldn't make the 'Share->Blogger…' option play nice with Movable Type.

In theory MacJournal can identify individual entries in an imported file. In practice, it must follow an unusual format incompatible with most weblog systems' exporters.

Then, I moved to the heart of the matter. How could I leverage a wide variety of incompatible formats into one application?

MacJournal supports multiple journals, so I divided my usage up into "Clippings," "Randomness," "Writing," and the already-present "Bloggable." Then, I made some new entries and treated them as my clipping files.

It turns out this is a fantastic approach. The best analogy I can make is that it is like the process of fact-checking, at least the protocol we use at the major New York magazine where I am now an extremely lowly intern. If you want to be sloppy, you can scatter your notes from phone calls, your Web, Nexis and e-mail print-outs, and the writers' back-up files in your desk drawer. If you want to be clean, you start sticking things in folders, and dating the sheets of paper and sticky notes and everything else, and highlighting relevant portions.

But for the proprietary nature of the notes contained within, and my present lack of a scanner, I would gladly show you how much cleaner these notes are than the notes I keep in my Moleskine. (I still keep grocery lists and the like in it.) For instance, I recently wrote

an entry to go on the magazine's blog, and my notes, if I had done this the old-fashioned way, it would have involved a link stuck in a clipping Drawer and the text jotted down in the Moleskine. Instead, it looked like this:
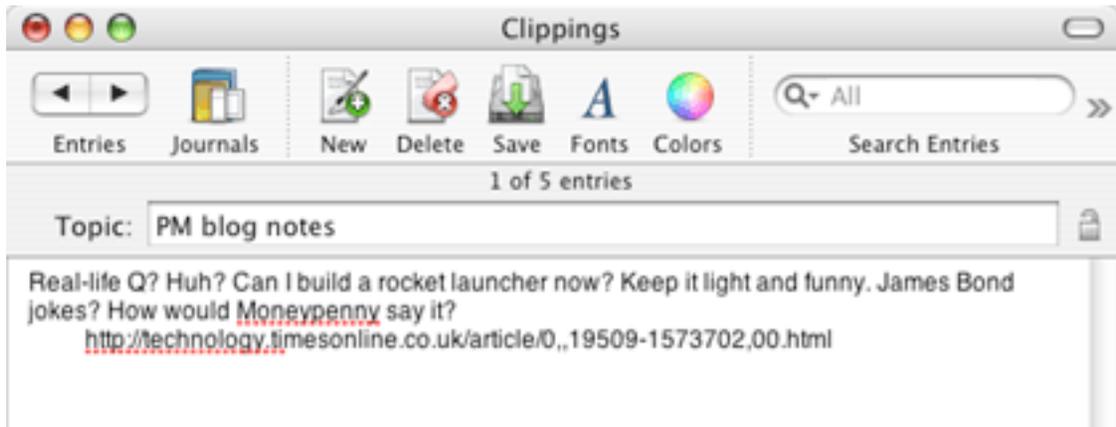
Imagine how much easier it is to write a quick post, when you don't have to cross-index URLs and suggested text in separate places and formats.

I would guess I shifted several hours of organizational time, in writing my Bloggable column for this month, from the front end to the back end using MacJournal. It became a lot more time up-front, because it meant no more making notes while standing on the 4 train. The old method afforded me a lot more luxury to be cute and funny, even though I am neither, and to ponder word choice, in part because it relied so greatly on offline work.

And, of course, for fear of losing *everything*, I reverted to the old method for this review. (The notes for my reviews are written in the Moleskine, ever since I got burned with a last-minute hard drive near-miss last fall.)

To summarize the process, I enjoyed using MacJournal to organize my writing. It turned the process of forging words from thoughts into more a craft and less a scavenger hunt. Yet I did not enjoy it for its intended purpose, keeping a journal, because without the interoperability, it was just like keeping a folder somewhere full of RTF files. Its lack of a talented import-export unit, like an American car company, hampers it.

Does your writing process sound like mine? The $25 will be well worth the hours (or days, if you are particularly Thompsonian) MacJournal could save you. But are you an avid blogger? You may want to look for a tool that will better suit your needs.

• • •

On April 27, just before this issue went to press, Mariner Software released an updated MacJournal, version 3.1. Though we didn't feel we should offer you a less-than-thorough review of the new version, their press release does not indicate what I consider to be any major new features other than pre-release 10.4 compatibility.

Review: Mind Hacks (book)

by Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com

Author: Tom Stafford & Matt Webb
**Publisher:** O'Reilly and Associates
Price: $25
Trial: 8 of the 100 hacks are available on the book's Web site.

Emo Philips used to tell a joke that went something like this: "I used to think that the brain was the most wonderful organ in my body. Then I realized who was telling me this." For some reason my mind thought of that as it read a book about ways to trick itself, particularly when it encountered one of those many tricks which worked even if it knew the trick in advance.

Other volumes in O'Reilly's *Hacks* series will give you tips for hacking OS X or Google; *Mind Hacks* is about the human brain. Applying the term *Hacks* to any of these "Hacks" is a bit tenuous; you're not modifying or reprogramming your brain with new abilities, just getting a better understanding of it. A better analogy would be using a program in all

sorts of ways and discovering strange bugs, cases in which the program acts unexpectedly…and then thinking about just what there might be in the program to cause it to behave that way.
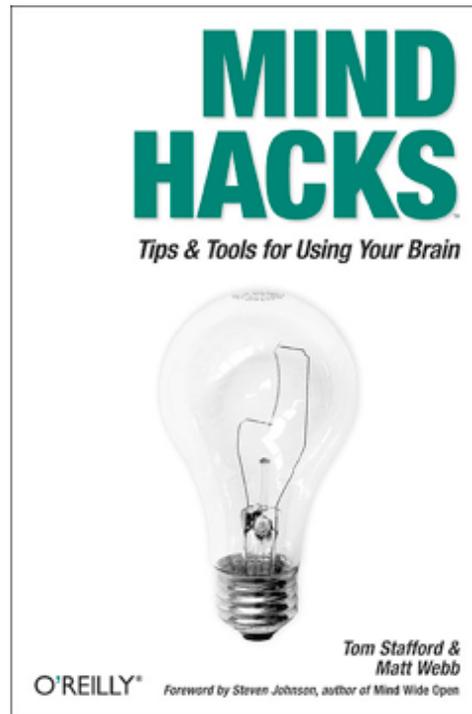
The Hacks

The hundred hacks in the book are grouped into categories (e.g. Seeing, Moving, Remembering) and can (really) be read or skipped in any order, though I do suggest reading the first chapter first for a little background information. There's a lot of cross-referencing in the hacks, referring the reader both forwards and backwards in the book for related information.

Each hack begins with an introductory summary, then moves to an "In Action" section that describes the experience/phenomenon in question and a "How It Works" section that explains or at least theorizes about what's going on inside the brain. Occasionally insight from a previous hack allowed me to come up with my own ideas of why something worked: sometimes my thoughts would be confirmed, other times I was left wondering if I might be on to something.

Each hack is only a few pages long, including both text and pictures; you're only getting the tip of the iceberg of the complicated subjects that are covered. "End Notes" and "See Also" sections following each hack direct the reader to sources of research and academic studies. I like that many of these references are online (read: free); the book offers lots of jumping-off points for research projects and experiments.

I found most of the hacks in the book to be interesting, and though I'd encountered a number of them before (optical illusions are easily found online, for example, and the placebo effect is well-known) there was easily enough material to keep me interested (creating false memories, subitizing, sight influencing perception of sound…). Even if I'd already discovered a particular piece of anomalous brain functioning in my own real-life experiences, the book encouraged me to think about why my brain works the way it does.

Trying It

As implied by the "In Action" section, most of the hacks are written with the intent that you "try it yourself," so you can experience the discussed strange brain functioning first-hand (or try to; there were some cases in which I did not experience the described effect). It's actually pretty impressive how much we can learn about the brain without making use of fMRIs and EEGs and other such high-end equipment. Sometimes I'd read a hack I'd never heard of before and think, Yeah that'll work…and then I'd try it and it would work…but how did I know?

It's understandable that most books in the *Hacks* series require you to be in front of a computer in order to get the most out of them. But I take my brain everywhere; I shouldn't need to be sitting in front of my Mac as I read *Mind Hacks*, right? Wrong. Most of the hacks direct you to some Web site or other to watch a movie or a Flash animation or to see a series of pictures; the book is well-illustrated, but only in black-and-white and

often, that's not enough. A few stills from a movie might give the reader a vague idea of what's supposed to happen, but certainly doesn't let the reader experience the effect being described.
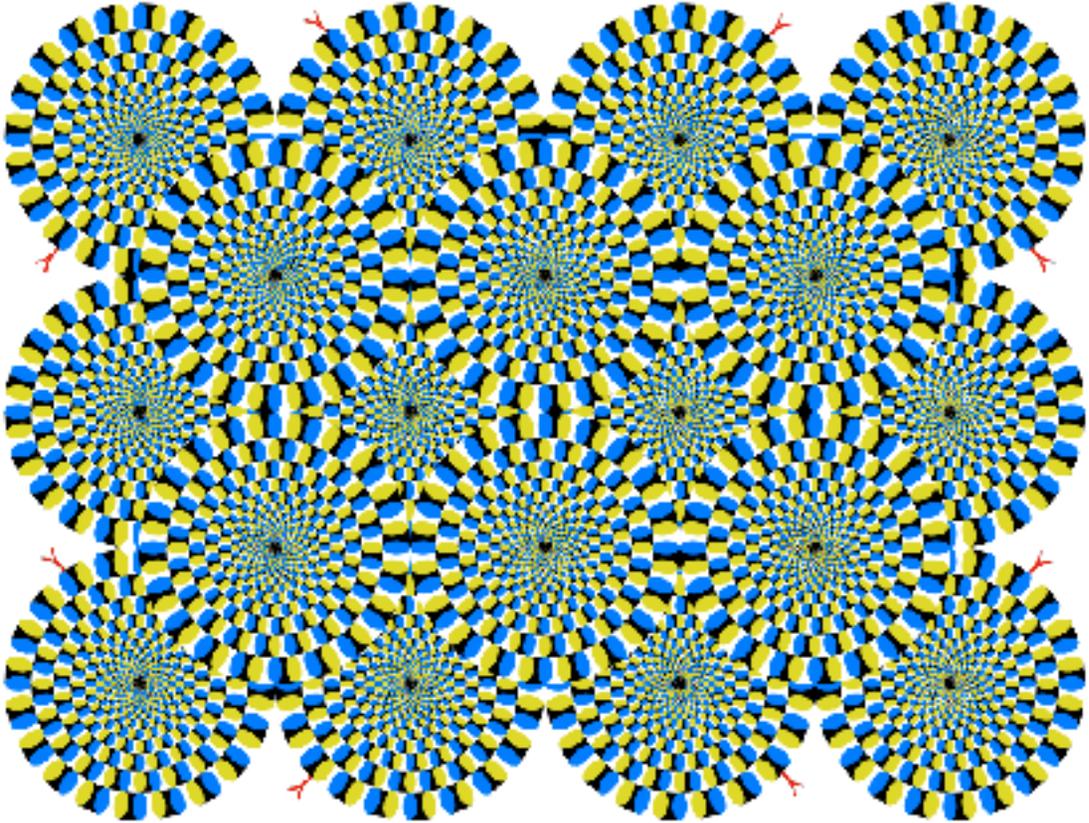

Image by Akiyoshi Kitaoka

Nearly all of the URLs the book offers are long and unwieldy; I wish the book's authors had used a service like tinyURL to shorten them. Or they could have made the book more reader-friendly by posting a page of links on the O'Reilly Web site; someone sitting at his computer reading the book could then click on a link rather than be required to type it out.

Conclusion

This is a book that pits the conscious mind against the unconscious mind. I am programmed, but I am also aware of it and I have the ability to investigate my own inner workings. My brain perceives something wrongly, but after reading *Mind Hacks* I know that it's perceiving wrongly and why and how. But if I know then my brain knows…and yet the illusion continues to work. *Mind Hacks* offers an interesting introduction to some of the peculiar propensities of the human mind.

Review: 15-inch PowerBook G4 (January 2005)

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

Developer: Apple
Price: $1500-2700
Trial: None

As was widely expected, Apple released an update to the PowerBook line in January. More of an evolutionary step than a revolutionary one, the new PowerBooks add comparatively little in the way of new features or specs but, with the "AlBook" design on its third revision, there is a higher level of refinement than ever before.

The gotta-have-it new feature is the new scrolling trackpad, letting you use two fingers on the trackpad to scroll and pan about the screen. While it may seem trivial to people who have never used it, after spending just one afternoon with it, you'll be wondering why every laptop in the world doesn't have this feature. Forget scroll wheels, scroll buttons, or any other scroll add-ons; Apple has once again introduced an amazingly simple, intuitive,

and powerful feature to the market. The scrolling features of the new PowerBooks are available for most late-model iBooks and PowerBooks through the use of iScroll2, a free replacement trackpad driver by Daniel Becker based on the Darwin trackpad driver.

Unfortunately, the trackpads have had their share of problems. While scrolling is incredibly improved, basic mousing has taken a step backwards in reliability. There are countless reports of people having problems with jumpy cursor movement, overly stiff buttons, trackpad tapping, etc. Apple has acknowledged the problem, though a permanent fix has yet to be discovered or disclosed. The 15" model reviewed for this article has been largely problem-free, though the button is noticeably stiffer and scrolling is noticeably jerkier than on the TiBook it replaced (or the Wall Street before that). The most annoying problem, which the official fix has thus far failed to remedy, has been occasional loss of "contact" between the trackpad and my finger, causing the cursor to release during drags. This usually presents itself during window resizing, where the window will "fall off" the cursor, and a click will be issued at the end of the cursor's path (where the window resize widget would have been dragged had it not "fallen off"). As usual, individual skin chemistry and ambient humidity play a big role in how serious the problem is.

The other major new feature, which has thankfully been entirely problem-free thus far, is the Sudden Motion Sensor. The SMS is also called the "Apple Motion Sensor" in some cases, and has yet another name in the Darwin source code. Apple's advertising refers to it as the Sudden Motion Sensor, so that's what I'll use here.

Similar in purpose to IBM's widely advertised hard disk motion sensor (in the memorable commercial where the guy intentionally knocks a laptop off the coffee-shop counter, only to realize the laptop isn't his friend's), the Sudden Motion Sensor detects acceleration and deceleration of the laptop and parks the heads on the disk drive to minimize damage. The innovative feature in this case is Apple's placement of the sensor on the motherboard, rather than inside the hard disk. Because the SMS is software-accessible, it has been the subject of perhaps the most hacking since the Color Classic. Enterprising programmers have already developed some intriguing proof-of-concept programs, a fairly complete input framework that lets you use it like a mouse, an iTunes controller, and an interesting

arcade-type game. Thus far unfulfilled is a suggestion for an Etch-a-Sketch-like Trash, which sounds incredibly cool, if somewhat silly. Suffice it to say that the SMS has the "cool factor" going for it, and it seems to work as advertised.
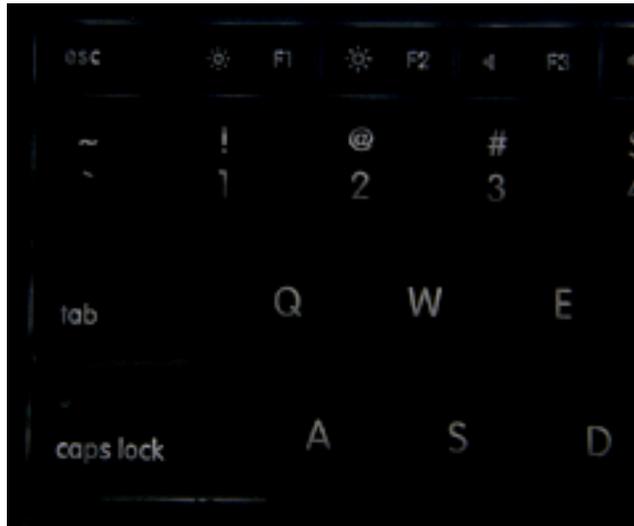
Keyboard backlighting has been around a while, but as someone who was upgrading from an icKeys-illuminated TiBook, I just have to point out that once you experience the glory of the backlight, you'll never want to give it up. The keyboard on the new 'Books feels even better than the TiBook's keyboard did, and the backlighting makes working in a darkened space like a dorm room or airplane cabin simply effortless. No more fumbling around with awkward gooseneck USB lights, just clear, softly lit labels on every key. The auto-dimming screen is a very nice touch, too, though it needs to be a bit more aggressive in extreme low-light situations, such as a totally dark room.

With the AlBooks, Apple seems to have returned to the days of the Wall Street, when laptop keyboards didn't leave "keyprints" on the screen. At the least, the AlBooks are much better than previous models, especially the TiBooks, which were highly susceptible to transfer of skin oils from the keyboard to the screen. In a move sure to please cheapskates everywhere, Apple has begun shipping new 'Books with a sheet of plastic foam between the screen and keyboard; I recommend you save this and use it to prevent any possible "keyprinting" on the screen. Those of you who want something a little classier, though it's by no means as necessary as on older PowerBooks, should check into the numerous leather or cloth screen protectors out there.

Other improvements introduced in January are mostly minor. CPU speeds have been bumped up roughly 12 percent across the board, with the 12" and 15" models getting a boost to 1.5 GHz (and 1.67 GHz as an option for the 15") and the 17" going to 1.67 GHz. For the two larger models, the user-upgradeable 512 MB RAM is now a single module instead of two, leaving the second slot free for future upgrades and preventing a wasted DIMM. (The 12" model has only one DIMM slot.) Hard disk sizes are generally up across the board, with the top-of-the-line 17" model getting a 100 GB drive, the largest on the market. All PowerBook hard drives are now 5400 RPM drives, making for faster disk access than the 4200 RPM drives in previous generations. The claimed weight for the 15" model is down from 5.7 to 5.6 pounds, which is probably too little for anyone to notice. The 17" model has on-board dual-link DVI, giving it the ability to drive the 30" Cinema Display, and the 15" SuperDrive model can have it added for $100 via Build-to-Order. The last significant change to the lineup is pricing, which is down by $100 on almost every model. More computer for less money is the general rule of progress in the industry, and it's always nice to have a price cut.

If you have a PowerBook introduced in the last 18 months, there's really little reason to upgrade. iScroll2 adds the most important feature introduced in the new PowerBooks to all recent Apple laptops, so the only things you'll really gain are speed and some hard disk space (and the ability to drive a 30" Cinema Display, if you're one of the lucky few). If you're still slogging along on a TiBook or older laptop, or you're ready to make the jump

from the iBook to the PowerBook line, the new PowerBooks are just what Uncle Steve ordered. Those of you using a laptop as a desktop replacement won't mind the oddities of the new trackpads, and the rest of the features greatly overwhelm this annoyance.

Review: TransPod FM

by Christopher Turner, cturner@atpm.com

Developer: Digital Lifestyle Outfitters
Price: $99 (list)
Requirements: 3G iPod or newer, or iPod mini
Trial: None

Someone must have been telling me something. On the same day as the blurb on *MacMinute* noting new black and silver versions of DLO's TransPod, the latest edition of *Macworld* magazine arrived in my mail box. Within was a full-page ad for the TransPod.

With a long-weekend road trip coming up, I thought it would provide the perfect opportunity for a good review. E-mail communications with DLO's Vice-President Andrew Green had a silver review unit at my residence the day before we were scheduled to depart. I had requested silver, because I thought it would complement the interior of my Honda Pilot . Unfortunately, the road trip was taking place in my wife's Odyssey. In reality, it wasn't unfortunate, as it gave me a chance to look over the mounting options of the TransPod between two distinct vehicles. More on that shortly.

There's a lot in the TransPod packaging. There is the TransPod module, called the Base Dock by DLO: this is what your iPod or iPod mini will slide in to. The digital FM transmitter is also inside the module. DLO provides an insert for use with the iPod mini, as well as two soft pads that stick to the interior of the TransPod module so your iPod doesn't rub against hard plastic. One of the two pads is slightly thicker than the other; which one you use depends upon which model iPod you own. After selecting the proper one for my third-generation, 40 GB iPod, I tried the fit. The iPod doesn't just slide down into the TransPod; you have to give it a little push until it clicks in to the dock connector. It's a snug fit, which is good, as it means there is no chance of your iPod falling out.

Once the fit of the iPod in the module was confirmed, it was time to look at mounting options, and the TransPod kit provides a couple. There is a two-piece plastic arm set; one piece of the arm has a power adapter plug on the end, so you can plug it directly in to your vehicle's power socket. Usage of the second arm piece, which is more adjustable than

the charging arm, is dependent upon how you want to place the iPod so it's easy to use. In the Pilot, I elected to use the both pieces of the arm. You can see in the photos below how I arranged the TransPod module.

I really like the setup in the Pilot. The iPod is easily viewable when the vehicle is not in motion, and I can still hit the buttons by touch while driving, should the need arise.

Mounting the TransPod in the Odyssey, however, proved a bit more of a challenge, due to the placement of the power socket at the very base of the center part of the dash, where the dash meets the floorboard. I tried using the arm set-up as in the Pilot, but no matter how I adjusted the joints, I was unable to get the unit high enough that it would be comfortable, and safe, to use. So it was time for option two: the dashboard mount.

Here is where I took points off of the TransPod. The plate provided for mounting to the dash has a place for two screws, also provided in the kit. I was not keen on screwing a mounting plate in to the dash. Those readers who may be leasing a vehicle would certainly not want to do so, as the repair would mean more money out of their pocket when the

lease is up. We plan on keeping our Odyssey for many years, but the thought of drilling in to the dash did not appeal to me. Unfortunately, DLO does not provide any other dash-mounting options in the TransPod kit, and I was left to fend for myself.

Fortunately, I had some velcro stripping from a long-ago project left over, and this proved to be the solution I was looking for. The mounting plate was secured to the dash with these velcro strips, then the dash mount arm was attached. I plugged the power adapter in to the Odyssey's main power socket, then in to the dash mount arm. Finally, the TransPod Base Dock was attached, the iPod slid in to place, and we were ready for our road trip.

One word on attaching the TransPod Base Dock to the dash mount arm or the adjustable power socket arm(s): the dock is designed to attach sideways, then rotated ninety degrees to a vertical position to lock it to the arm. I had no issues with leaving my iPod inside the Base Dock while attaching and detaching the TransPod from either mount, but some iPod owners might be more discriminating than I.

Usage of the TransPod in the automobile is fairly straightforward. At the bottom of the Base Dock is a single-line LCD display. This denotes which FM frequency the unit is set to. Users can adjust the frequency with the up and down buttons on the Base Dock's right side. If you live in a FM-heavy metropolitan area, DLO has thought ahead and provided a stereo jack on the left side, as an alternative means of output.

I live in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, and there are a *lot* of FM stations. I chose the lowest number on the "dial," 87.9. This proved to be a good choice, as we had no areas of interference during the nine-hour drive from our home in the northern portion of the metroplex to the New Orleans area. Use in the Pilot since our return has also shown no interference with using that frequency. Your mileage may vary, of course, depending upon the strength of the stations in your area who may be operating at any given frequency.

I have been looking for an iPod vehicle mount for some time. My past experiences with FM transmitters had me using a cassette adapter with my iPod. I am pleased to say that the TransPod FM has answered my desires, for now at any rate. I wish DLO offered a non-invasive dash mount, but this doesn't take away from the TransPod's operating ability.

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?

We currently need several **Contributing Editors**. Please underline contact us if you're interested.

How Can I Subscribe to ATPM?

Visit the subscriptions page.

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. You can use Sherlock to search all of the online issues at once.

The **Offline Webzine** is a HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a StuffIt archive to reduce file size. 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 Acrobat 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 Adobe's free Acrobat 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 Acrobat format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Adobe's free Acrobat Reader on Macintosh or Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

What Are Some Tips for Viewing PDFs?

- You can download Adobe Acrobat Reader for free. If you have a Power Macintosh, Acrobat Reader 5 has better quality and performance. ATPM is also compatible with Acrobat Reader 3, for those with 680x0 Macs.
- You can zoom the PDF to full window width and scroll through articles simply by single-clicking anywhere in the article text (except underlined links).
- You can quickly navigate between articles using the bookmarks pane at the left of the main viewing window.
- For best results on small screens, be sure to hide the bookmarks pane; that way you'll be able to see the entire page width at 100%.
- Try turning Font Smoothing on and off in Acrobat Reader's preferences to see which setting you prefer.
- All blue-underlined links are clickable.
- You can hold down option while hovering over a link to see where it will lead.
- For best results, turn off Acrobat's "Fit to Page" option before printing.

Why Are Some Links Double-Underlined?

In the PDF editions of ATPM, links that are double-underlined lead to other pages in the same PDF. Links that are single-underlined will open in your Web browser.

What If I Get Errors Decoding ATPM?

ATPM and MacFixIt readers have reported problems decoding MacBinary files using early versions of StuffIt Expander 5.x. If you encounter problems decoding ATPM, we recommend upgrading to StuffIt Expander 5.1.4 or later.

How Can I Submit Cover Art?

We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for ATPM, please e-mail us. The way

the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to editor@atpm.com for more information.

How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

Got a comment about an article that you read in ATPM? Is there something you'd like us to write about in a future issue? We'd love to hear from you. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. We often publish the e-mail that comes our way.

Do You Answer Technical Support Questions?

Of course. E-mail our Help Department at help@atpm.com.

How Can I Contribute to ATPM?

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

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

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

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-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 enthusiastic they are about recommending it to others. If you have a new piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review, contact our reviews editor at reviews@atpm.com for more information.

Shareware Reviews

Most of us have been there; we find that special piece of shareware that significantly improves the quality our Macintosh life and we wonder why the entire world hasn't heard about it. Now here's the chance to tell them! Simply let us know by writing up a short review for our shareware section. Send your reviews to reviews@atpm.com.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

ATPM uses the following ratings (in order from best to worst): Excellent, Very Nice, Good, Okay, Rotten.

Will You Review My Product?

If you or your company has a product that you'd like to see reviewed, send a copy our way. We're always looking for interesting pieces of software to try out. Contact reviews@atpm.com for shipping information. You can send press releases to news@atpm.com.

Can I Sponsor ATPM?

About This Particular Macintosh is free, and we intend to keep it this way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with "real" jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. As such, we rely on advertisers to help us pay for our Web site and other expenses. Please consider supporting ATPM by advertising in our issues and on our web site. Contact advertise@atpm.com for more information.

Where Can I Find Back Issues of ATPM?

Back issues of ATPM, dating since April 1995, are available in DOCMaker stand-alone format. In addition, all issues since ATPM 2.05 (May 1996) are available in HTML format. You can search all of our back issues.

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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