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Welcome

Welcome to the November issue of ATPM. Issue 6.11 contains the following articles and reviews—but first a look at the most important news items of the past month:

Mac News

- Connectix released a [demo version](#)¹ of its widely popular [Virtual Game Station](#)², featuring unlimited play time and thus making the demo almost as good as the full version.
- Motorola introduced a [1 GHz version](#)³ of the PowerPC G4 processor.
- Apple released a [preview of QuickTime 5](#)⁴.
- Microsoft released the long-awaited [Office 2001 for Mac](#)⁵.
- Napster introduced [Napster beta 1 for the Mac](#)⁶, building on the success of Blackhole Media's Macster client.

ATPM Polls

Last month's reader poll asked for the operating system you are using. The [results](#)⁷ found 54% using Mac OS 9.x, 36% using Mac OS 8.x, and 5% using some version of Mac OS X. This month we want to know whether you own stock in Apple Computer. Go cast your [vote](#)⁸!

Columns

Apple Cider: Cast Off Your Vote

In honor of the upcoming US presidential election, Tom Iovino's unusual *Cider* this month takes us into the arena of politics and the strange things politicians sometimes say.

1. http://www.connectix.com/redirect/cvgs_mactrial_a04.html
2. <http://www.atpm.com/5.03/vgs.shtml>
3. <http://yahoo.cnet.com/news/0-1006-200-3154333.html>
4. <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/preview/>
5. <http://www.apple.com/hotnews/articles/2000/10/microsoft/>
6. <http://www.napster.com/mac/download/>
7. <http://www.atpm.com/polls/mainos.shtml>
8. <http://www.atpm.com/index.shtml#poll>

“It’s no exaggeration to say that the undecideds could go one way or another.”
—George Bush”

Beyond the Barline: My Summer at Camp—Part Three

David Ozab covers the third part of his experiences at the MetaCamp. This month he explains how to separate pitch from time and notes the introduction of Videodellic, a new video editing program fitting between iMovie 2 and Final Cut Pro.

“As anyone who’s ever played with the playback speed of a tape deck or record player will recall, pitch and duration are intimately linked in a recorded medium. As speed increases, pitch rises and duration shortens, while as speed decreases, pitch lowers and duration lengthens. This same principal governs the keymapping of hardware and software samplers, but loops generally cover the duration changes. But what if you want to change pitch without changing duration, or duration without changing pitch?”

Graphics and the Internet: Seven New Deadly Internet Graphic Sins

Grant Osborne continues his series on *Graphics and the Internet* with seven more deadly sins that should be avoided in Web site creation, ranging from intrusive Web music to endless pages.

“3. Not Finding the Spel Chekker. Just about evry HMTL creaytor has a spel chekker. Find it and yooz it. Unsure about a spelling? Visit Dictionary.com.”

Segments: Apple’s Results Revisited

H. M. Fog shares his views on Apple’s recent disappointing quarter. Did the market overreact? Are Apple’s financials better than they appear?

“Still, Apple is in much better shape than the share price suggests. Only time (and a coherent strategy) will improve the price. There is so much value behind each share I’m surprised new shareholders aren’t arrested for stealing shares at the current price. Wall Street is betting against Steve Jobs and Apple. Personally, I’d rather wager on the side of innovation and technology leadership than stock charts and hearsay.”

Segments: Response to "A Worm in the Apple"

Robert Paul Leitao and reader Bob Zemeski respond to David Hewson's article in the London *Sunday Times*.

"You say that Apple needs a miracle to survive, but weren't you one of those who had Apple written off a few years ago? Yet it seems you were strangely quiet about Apple's subsequent recovery! For the last four years Apple has been one of the most profitable personal computer makers. That's more than can be said for IBM or Compaq."

Reviews

Updates

Eric Blair keeps us updated on changes in Web Devil 5.0 and ConceptDraw 1.55.

Backyard Baseball 2001

Mike Shields takes a look at the newest baseball game from Humongous' popular children's software series. And although it's aimed at kids, it can keep "adults" quite busy.

"Admittedly, this game is made for elementary school age kids; however, I was having so much fun, my playtesters almost didn't get a turn, and I almost didn't get this review in on time!"

Intrigo Lapstation

Daniel Chvatik evaluates the merits of the innovative Lapstation as a "portable workspace." Does it work as well as it looks?

"I think the Lapstation is a great idea. I wanted to love it and tried hard to do so, but I just couldn't find more than one comfortable way to use it. It's quite a bit to carry around (though you can get a special carrying bag as an accessory), and the price tag seems to be too high to justify the limited functionality."

Monsoon iM-700 Ice Flat Panel Speakers

Daniel Chvatik explains the appeal of this popular series of flat panel speakers. It's a round world, but some things just look and sound better when they are flat.

“Choosing speakers is a bit like choosing a car: there’s no clear best choice. It depends on what kind of car you want, what color you like, and how much you want to pay. But of all the flat panels I have seen and tried, the Monsoon iM-700 is simply the coolest pair at an attractive price.”

Outlook Email Archive 1.9

Gregory Tetrault explains why this e-mail archiving system may be a solution to some problems created by Outlook Express 5’s single e-mail database.

“Outlook Express (OE) allows you to organize your e-mail into folders on the OE ‘desktop.’ Default folders include Inbox, Outbox, Sent Items, Drafts, and Deleted Items. You can create more folders as necessary, and you can use rules to direct e-mail into specified folders. This organizational scheme seems to meet the needs of most users, except for one fact: your e-mail files exist in one large database. Even the folders are ‘virtual.’”

Sensiva 1.1

Raena Armitage explains why the Sensiva macro software, a new program that lets you execute commands by drawings symbols on the screen, may be the solution to your stylus cravings.

“A lot of shortcut and macro programs exist to make life on your Mac just a little bit easier, but Sensiva is the only one I’ve seen that doesn’t require you to learn big strings of keystrokes or leave menus and floating windows everywhere. It’s been theorized that people are better at remembering symbols and pictures than strings of text and numbers, and if this is the case then Sensiva is ahead of the pack in terms of an easy and intuitive interface.”

Kodak Smart Picture Frame

Daniel Chvatik completes his review of the digital picture frame and explains why he likes what he sees.

“The frame makes a great gift for a family member who lives far away and is not quite tech-savvy enough to check the Internet for your images. You can upload the images to their frame remotely, and they can enjoy new family pictures

without ever having to do a thing. I rarely have time to watch the news or get a weather report, so the frame's channels actually proved quite helpful to me. All it takes to get the information is a glance at your frame at the right time."

Space Bug

Brooke Smith introduces Space Bug, a little arcade-like action game with a simply goal: save the Earth!

"For all those who pretended to be X-Wing fighter pilots after seeing Star Wars, Space Bug is for you—smash and crash those bad guys to protect the Earth from doom."

Web Confidential for Mac 2.1 / for Palm 1.1

Eric Blair explores whether Web Confidential is the solution to today's information overflow. Allowing you to store passwords, Web sites, credit cards, and much more information, it promises to act as a gateway to the outside world.

"Like its predecessor, Web Confidential 2.1 provides a central location for storing Web passwords, e-mail contacts, PIN numbers, and the like. It still features strong security features to protect this information. Furthermore, by making one-button submission accessible to all major Web browsers, Web Confidential has eliminated one of its major flaws from the previous version. However, some of the interface problems remain from the previous version, and they keep Web Confidential from getting an Excellent rating."

Extras

Cartoon: Questionnaire

Are you a Macoholic? Fill out Michael Morgan's questionnaire and you will find out!

Desktop Pictures: France

ATPM reader Janet Mobley takes us with her on a trip to Montpellier, Chambéry, and Paris.

Desktop Pictures: Maine

Katarina Neef shows us how beautiful a fall day in Maine can really be.

Trivia Challenge: VPs if You Please

This month, Edward Goss challenges you to match US Vice Presidents with the Presidents they served under.



MP3 Player Plug-Ins

I'm looking for an MP3 player or a plug-in that does time stretching without pitch shifting and/or pitch shifting without time stretching. I know that hard disk recording sequencers (Cubase, Logic, Digital Performer etc.) can do this and that there are even these kinds of plug-ins for the WinAmp MP3 Player. On my G3 PowerBook with Virtual PC I naturally can use WinAmp with one of these plug-ins, but this solution is slow and changing platforms isn't comfortable. So if you've ever heard about real time stretching and/or pitch shifting with Mac MP3 software I would be happy to get a hint. I'm a teacher of music and would like to work with MP3 files in music lessons and rehearsals at school.

—*Ekkehard Hüffmeier*

As far as I know, there are no Mac MP3 plug-ins as of yet to accomplish this task, though new ones are always being written. I have an old freeware program called [Sound Hack](#) that can independently change the pitch and duration of an AIFF file through phase vocoding. I describe this process within another program (Meta-synth) in this month's issue, but the basic points apply. I hope this helps for now. —*David Ozab, Contributing Editor/Music*

iBook Batteries

I read in *MacFormat* magazine's review of iBook, from a year ago:

The batteries are lithium-ion-based, which means you can charge them whenever you like without the risks associated with some other types of battery, where charging before the battery was run down could limit the battery's duration.

However my reseller said that it was still best to plug it into the mains only when it was empty, which is really quite a drag sometimes—if you're travelling, you need to be able to plug it in when you get to a power point, not when it's empty!

Can someone give an authoritative comment on this?

—*David Kettlewell*

Your question makes reference to the infamous “memory effect” exhibited by Nickel Cadmium and, albeit to a lesser degree, Nickel Metal Hydride (NiCad and NiMH) batteries. Essentially if these types of batteries are used and charged regularly without being totally depleted, they will get confused and think they are empty when they are not (admittedly this is a bit of an oversimplification, but it will suffice as an explanation for the time being)...

Cordless phones are a great example. People use them for ten or fifteen minutes, and then throw them back into the charger. Doing this regularly conditions the battery to “think” that it is empty when it is at, say, 75% of its charge. Sometimes you can fix this by draining the battery completely, and then recharging it (called a deep discharge) but unless there is some built in provision for doing so, often you must throw the battery out and buy a new one.

Lead acid batteries (used in cars, uninterruptable power supplies, etc.) do not suffer from this problem at all. However, unlike NiCad and NiMH batteries, which thrive on deep discharges, if you drain a lead acid battery fully, you may ruin it and might not hold a charge ever again. I just wanted to mention that because some folks don’t realize how lead acid batteries differ.

Lithium ion batteries are the latest attempt to overcome the memory effect without resorting to the big, heavy lead acid batteries which are too cumbersome for laptops and other portable devices. Li-ions seem to combine the advantages of both technologies. They hold more charge than a NiCad or NiMH, yet they do not suffer from the memory effect. In this sense they are like lead acid batteries. However they are no heavier or bulkier than NiCad or NiMH, and they do not mind being deep discharged.

As laptops evolved and became more and more ridiculous (bigger screens, faster CPUs, lots of power hungry accessories, etc.) NiCad/NiMH were not providing enough juice to get usage durations whereas Li-ion provides a very nice block of time for even the most power hungry laptops.

In my experience the Li-ion batteries do not suffer from the memory effect at all. I plug and unplug mine with no regard for its relative charge—and I do not think you should concern yourself with this matter either. Your reseller is probably just offering you advice he was trained to give based on earlier battery technologies. I certainly wouldn’t encourage the practice of recklessly plugging and unplugging your PowerBook...keep it plugged in when you can, and use the battery when necessary. If you charge the batteries, do so for uninterrupted blocks of time if possible. But don’t concern yourself too much with these details...particularly if you are on the run.

Lithium Ion batteries are really fabulous—they are the best batteries we’ve seen yet, and everybody is jumping on the bandwagon: cordless phones, and all sorts of other battery powered gadgets are all switching over because the advantages are clear. Li-ion is still pricier than NiCad or NiMH—but that should change as they become more widely used. —*Evan Trent*

Real Audio

Does anyone have experience of trying to work with files in Real Audio format?

There's a radio program here in Sweden about old customs and traditions, which you can download every week to listen to at home. That's very nice...but they've gone for Real Audio format, and the friend who wants to archive them isn't a computer user at all, and needs them on audio cassette.

The files are a bit quiet and I would have liked to normalize them in my sound editor, SoundMaker, but I can't see any way of converting the .ra format to anything else—neither by exporting from the RealAudio player or producer, nor by importing into QuickTime Player, SoundMaker, or SoundApp.

Even just playing the files and recording them in the background direct in the cassette recorder doesn't seem to work, I think, because the Real Audio player is constantly trying to connect to the Internet—which I don't want since I have a modem/phone connection. And when the dialog box is on the screen the playback gets interrupted.

So it boils down to two questions, I guess. Can I convert from .ra format to something more flexible? Can I run the Real Player without it trying to connect to the Internet all the time?

—*David Kettlewell*

This is an interesting question. I have come across a handful of plug-ins for sound editing suites which will export to the Real Audio format, but I have not found any that will import the .ra filetype.

One program to try is [RealProducer Basic](#). This is a free program from Real that lets you create and edit .ra files. I have never used it and I have no idea if it will allow you to export to another format, but it's worth a shot. They have a commercial version, RealProducer Plus, that provides considerably more in terms of functionality. But before plopping down cash I would ask them about the program to see if it can export to AIFF, for example.

It is possible that as Apple and Real.com become more closely intertwined that a RealAudio codec for QuickTime will show up, and then in theory any QuickTime capable audio or video editing suite should be able to do what you want. But I wouldn't hold your breath on that one.

With respect to your question regarding recording .ra files as they are playing, keep in mind that there are two types of RealPlayer streaming files. Some files contain the audio data, just like an AIFF or System 7 Sound (double-clickable sound) file. These files tend to be on the larger side. However more often than not RealPlayer downloads a tiny little file which is, essentially, a bookmark to the RealAudio media server that hosts the audio or video stream. When you open or double-click that file RealPlayer will attempt to connect to the Net and retrieve the data, just as if you double-clicked on a URL bookmark file in the Finder.

The easiest way to determine which type of file you are dealing with is to get info on it in the Finder and de-

termine its size. If it is very small, it is merely a bookmark; if it is larger, it is the actual audio/video data. In the case that it is a bookmark you will have to record the music out to a cassette recorder while connected to the Internet and listening to the audio in realtime.

The best way to do this is to connect your tape recorder to your Mac's headphone or AV outputs (depending on the particular model Mac you have) and then set the audio output appropriately in your Sound (or Monitors and Sound) control panel.

If you need to amplify the output beyond RealPlayer's maximum volume level, you may need to get an out-board amplifier from a local electronics/audio store for a few bucks. Here in the States I can get them at Radio Shack for about \$10—\$15. They go in between the computer and the cassette recorder and have a little volume knob so you can amplify the signal. The quality is usually quite poor, but it's a cheap fix.

There may be some options on the PC, and if you are willing to run Virtual PC and ask the Real.com folks about PC options, then perhaps that will prove to be a worthwhile solution. —*Evan Trent*

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Apple Cider: Random Squeezings From a Mac User

by Tom Iovino, tiovino@atpm.com

Cast Off Your Vote

Part of the fun of working for the government is that every few years all semblance of order is thrown into the air. That's what we in the United States call Election Day.

So, rather than write my typical rambling *Apple Cider* column, I will instead turn to the morsels of wisdom that have fallen from the lips of our most honorable leaders and other notable pundits. Enjoy!

"I want to make sure everybody who has a job wants a job." —George Bush, during his first Presidential campaign

"This is a great day for France!" —Richard Nixon, while attending Charles de Gaulle's funeral

"Now, like, I'm President. It would be pretty hard for some drug guy to come into the White House and start offering it up, you know?...I bet if they did, I hope I would say, 'Hey, get lost. We don't want any of that.'" —George Bush, talking about drug abuse to a group of students

"I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy. But that could change." —Dan Quayle

"Hawaii has always been a very pivotal role in the Pacific. It is in the Pacific. It is a part of the United States that is an island that is right here." —Dan Quayle, during a visit to Hawaii in 1989

"What a waste it is to lose one's mind, or not to have a mind. How true that is." —Dan Quayle, addressing the United Negro College Fund

"I am honored today to begin my first term as the Governor of Baltimore—that is, Maryland." —William Donald Schaefer, first inaugural address

"The caribou love it. They rub against it and they have babies. There are more caribou in Alaska than you can shake a stick at." —*George Bush, on the Alaska pipeline*

"Mars is essentially in the same orbit. Mars is somewhat the same distance from the sun, which is very important. We have seen pictures where there are canals, we believe, and water. If there is water, that means there is oxygen. If oxygen, that means we can breathe." —*Dan Quayle*

Walter Mondale: "George Bush doesn't have the manhood to apologize."
Bush: "Well, on the manhood thing, I'll put mine up against his any time."

"Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country."
—*Former Washington, DC Mayor Marion Barry*

"I'm not going to have some reporters pawing through our papers. We are the president." —*First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton*

"Politics is supposed be the second oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first." —*Ronald Reagan*

"I have often wanted to drown my troubles, but I can't get my wife to go swimming."
—*Jimmy Carter*

"Things are more like they are now than they ever were before." —*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

"During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet." —*Vice President Al Gore*

"The President has kept all the promises he intended to keep." —*Clinton aide George Stephanopolous*

"That lowdown scoundrel deserves to be kicked to death by a jackass, and I'm just the one to do it." —*A congressional candidate in Texas*

"It's no exaggeration to say that the undecideds could go one way or another." —*George Bush*

"The Holocaust was an obscene period in our nation's history. I mean in this century's history. But we all lived in this century. I didn't live in this century." —*Dan Quayle*

And, this one has got to be the best:

"A fool and his money are soon elected." —*Will Rogers*

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My Summer at Camp—Part Three

Fading Memories

When I originally planned this column (sometime in May, when the MetaCamp was first planned), I had no idea that I would end up with so much material. Now, as I finish this series, the 100-degree heat of early August has given way to the inevitable autumn rain (not to be confused with the winter or spring rain) of late October. My impressions of the MetaCamp linger, and my notes are still at my side, but the details have faded somewhat. So, instead of attempting to report the specifics, I will cover the two topics of Sunday morning's session: Metasynth's phase vocoder and the Videodellic demo.

Separating Pitch from Time

As anyone who's ever played with the playback speed of a tape deck or record player will recall, pitch and duration are intimately linked in a recorded medium. As speed increases, pitch rises and duration shortens, while as speed decreases, pitch lowers and duration lengthens. This same principal governs the keymapping of hardware and software samplers, but loops generally cover the duration changes.

But what if you want to change pitch without changing duration, or duration without changing pitch? Through analysis/resynthesis techniques, you can break any sound down into a set of frequencies (this is called Fourier Analysis, after the French mathematician Jean Baptiste Fourier who first theorized this in 1822), then resynthesize the sound with a bank of oscillators equal in number to the total number of frequencies (Additive or Fourier Synthesis).

Since the frequencies and durations of the oscillators can be changed independently, so can the overall pitch and duration. Metasynth achieves this through its phase vocoder. An in-depth discussion of phase vocoders, along with the related topic of fast Fourier

transforms, is far beyond this column. Instead, I will cover some basic tips for applying the phase vocoder within Metasynth and refer the interested reader to *The Computer Music Tutorial* by Curtis Roads (MIT Press, 1996).



The Oscillator Bank Phase Vocoder

The Basics of Phase Vocoding

In the last issue, we used the image synth to analyze our [Welcome to Metasynth](#) sample and resynthesize it based on a custom scale derived from the [Guitar Reverb](#) sample. The analysis/resynthesis in the phase vocoder works in a similar fashion, but with a far larger—and therefore more accurate—oscillator bank. To apply the phase vocoder, open a sample, then select Osc Bank Phase Vocoder in the Morph menu. In this menu, you can change the fundamental (important for pitched samples), the length (either by percentage or number of samples), the pitch, and the window size. You can also apply a filter. In general, [small](#) changes sound the most realistic, while [larger](#) ones are progressively more bizarre.

The Filter/Effect Option

With this option you can filter out certain frequencies or apply inertia effects to your sample. “None,” of course, means no filtering, which is best for realistic results. The Noise Filter removes low amplitude data, which the system deems less important, often reducing noise but sometimes producing a slightly metallic result as well. The [Harmonic Filter](#) removes all frequencies that don’t correspond to the harmonic series of the fundamental.

In this case, the choice of fundamental is critical. The [Odd Harmonic Filter](#) leaves only odd harmonics, producing a result similar in quality to a square wave, and the [Octave Filter](#) leaves only the fundamental and its octaves.

In addition to the filters, there are three inertia effects. [FFT Amp Inertia](#) averages original and resynthesized amplitudes, producing a pseudo-reverb. [FFT Pitch Inertia](#) averages original and resynthesized frequencies, producing a drone and micro-glissandi on attacks. [FFT Inertia](#) combines the two.

Window Size

Perhaps the most critical setting in any phase vocoder is the window size. This is due to the central paradox of analysis/resynthesis. Smaller windows are better at placing attack times, yet cannot capture enough cycles to track frequency; larger windows work well for frequency, but cannot accurately place attacks. In other words, the better the timing the worse the pitch, and vice-versa. In Metasynth, the default size of 1024 samples seems to work best, but I recommend adjustment if the sound just won't come out right.

Videodellic

After a short break, Eric gave us a demo of Videodellic, which is now available on the U & I Web site. My initial impressions were quite good. Videodellic is a video editing program that seems to fill a void between iMovie 2 on the low end and Final Cut Pro on the high end. It has very sophisticated video synthesis functions and complex video effects and, most intriguingly, can operate in real-time mode synchronized to either MIDI or audio input. The interface is similar to Metatrack's, with video tracks in place of audio tracks, and tracks can be overlapped or intercut in numerous ways. The result can be bounced down to QuickTime, or played full-screen in "overdrive" mode.

What separates Videodellic from other video editing programs, though, is its potential as a real-time multimedia instrument. This characteristic places it in the same category as Imaga's [Bliss Paint](#), but with far greater control over all the parameters.

Final Thoughts

I remember leaving Ashland that afternoon filled with enthusiasm. I had met some interesting artists and musicians, learned a lot about Metasynth (and finally got the encouragement to buy it for myself), and had completed my first composition since May.

Since my return, I've kept in touch with everyone through the U & I mailing list, and I've contributed to the growing collection of Single Preset Compositions (though I've been a bit busy lately to work on any more of them). Meanwhile, the premiere of *The Blue Hole* has been scheduled as part of the Future Music Oregon Concert, November 11th, in Eugene, Oregon.

Metasynth Resources

- [U & I Software](#)
- [Metasynthia](#)
- [MetaScape](#)
- [MetaStation](#)
- [Single Preset Compositions](#)

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Part VIII: Seven New Deadly Internet Graphic Sins

Thanks to the response to last month's column, we're doing it all again. Here are seven *more* Web design sins!

1. Mailbox Images

I don't know why I don't like these, but I especially don't like the animated ones. If you want people to contact you, just write "E-mail me at yourname@yourwebsite.com." It's much neater.



2. Looney Tunes

"Music on Web sites is the Internet equivalent of pan-pipe elevator Muzak." That was a quote, by me, just now, on what I think about music on Web sites. I couldn't find a real quote—sorry!

This isn't strictly a graphic sin, but lots of people e-mailed me to tell me of their hatred for people who make you listen to badly composed MIDI music while browsing their Web sites. Put simply, MIDI is a way of storing tunes using a very small amount of space. The small size makes it ideal for use on the Internet. The trouble is that it makes any tune sound like it's being played on a cheap Casio keyboard. So what are my objections? First, the tunes take too long to download. Second, they rarely add anything of value to the page. (Yes, I agree that the Internet could be a wonderful multimedia experience incorporating graphics, video and sound—but please wait until the technology catches up and we can enjoy these things without any speed loss.) Third, there's never any warning. Imagine surfing away in the dead of night. Everything is quiet. Shhhhhh! Very quiet. Then, all of a sudden, blasting through your speakers comes a MIDI version of "Stairway to Heaven."

If you absolutely have to have music on your Web site, please give us the choice to turn it *on* rather than make us hunt around for the option (if any) to turn it *off*.

My final point on this subject has to do with copyright. (We covered copyright in [part one](#) of this series.) Remember, if you use other people's songs on your Web site without their permission you are technically breaking the law. Remember Napster? Metallica and their industry friends took Napster to court for violating their copyright. If that's what happens for infringing copyrights, what would they do to you for not only copying their songs but also making them sound like bloody rubbish?

If you want, you can find out [more about MIDI](#) and listen to some [music](#) that doesn't sound too bad. I won't pick out a Web site containing bad music, as I don't want to make an example of a single case. I'm sure if you run a search on Google for "really bad MIDI music on home pages" something will turn up.

3. Not Finding the Spel Chekker

Just about evry HMTL creaytor has a spel chekker. Find it and yooz it. Unsure about a spelling? Visit [Dictionary.com](#).

4. Using an Image for a Lot of Text

Some Web sites use graphics in place of text. Now, I'm not talking about headings and small items of text here, I'm talking great big passages of text.

a simple header

Using a graphical image as a header is fine—it livens the page up. If no one used graphics for this type of text then most Web sites would look like they were designed in 1996. What annoys me is when a large passage of text is entered on the page as a graphic. For example:

Sometimes a webpage will use a graphic like this to display some text. Normally this is so that they can use some horrible NON-STANDARD FONT that looks UNreadable. This font is called "chilada". It works well for headers and titles but doesn't work particularly well for body text!

Text loads in an instant and uses very little memory. Pictures, on the other hand, can take up considerable room. Furthermore, you cannot use a computer to search text stored as an image. If, for instance, you were going to try to search for an occurrence of "Woman Weeping" in a piece about Picasso, well that's just tough! You can forget about search engines spidering your site effectively, too.

5. Pages that Go On and On and On and On

If you have a lot of text on your Web site then split it up over several pages. Text is difficult to read on monitors as it is; if you break it down in manageable chunks, visitors will be more inclined to read it.

On a similar note, If you have lots of pictures to show, don't stick them all on the same page, as it will take ages to load. One option is to make thumbnails of the images (i.e., smaller versions of the pictures), presented such that when a visitor clicks the image he will be taken to the bigger picture. Make sure that your thumbnail is a physical reduction

in size of the image rather than a reduction using HTML, or it won't make any difference in the load time. If you don't like thumbnails, you could make a slide show. Take a look at the example below.

My Slideshow



6. How do I Get in?

Sometimes I'll visit a site on, let's say, shoes. I'll type the address into my browser of choice and await a load of information on shoes. The page loads up. What do I see?

- A big logo: "Steve's Shoe Web Site."

- Lots of banner ads: about twelve for some banner exchange and a couple for some other shoe sites.
- An affiliate link to Amazon.com, for books about shoes.
- A big mailbox, next to the words: "E-mail me today, sign my guestbook, and join my mailing list!"

The problem is that the entrance into the main site is through a small text link down at the foot of the page. You might be able to find it, but that'd be because you're the one who put it there. Get some other people to check your site. Make sure that navigation is easy, and make sure that you can get to all the main pages from every page on your site. Remember that your visitors won't always enter your site from the main index page. Think of every page as a possible entry point.

7. Tiny Text

We touched on this last month, and it remains a big bone of contention among our readers. This is also a "sin" of which even we at ATPM are a little bit guilty. So, starting with this issue, we've changed the way we specify fonts in our style sheet. The best advice here is to check your Web site on as many different browsers and platforms as possible. Good luck!



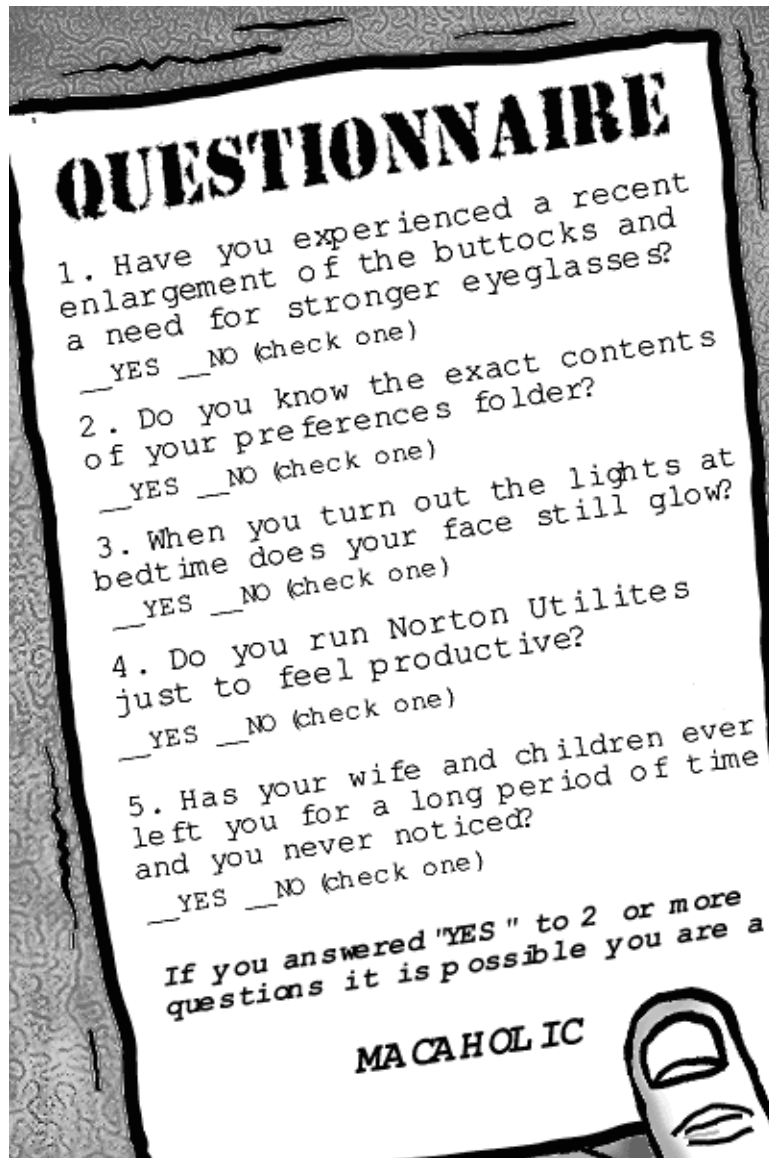
Next month we'll be looking at the PNG graphic file format.

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Extras: Cartoon

by Michael Morgan, mrspiffy@earthlink.net



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Extras: Desktop Pictures

France

This month's reader pictures are from [Janet Mobley](#), editor for the North Coast Mac Users Group. Janet lives in Sonoma County, California. The pictures were taken on her [trip to France](#) this May, and are from Montpellier, Chambéry and Paris. She used an Olympus D-620L to take the pictures (at the lowest resolution to fit 99 shots on one flash card) and a little Photoshop to lighten them.

Northeast

These pictures were taken by [Katarina Neef](#) on a beautiful fall day in Maine, around "Indian Summer." She used an Olympus C-2000Z and slightly edited the images using Cameraid and Adobe Photoshop.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

If you haven't seen the rest of the series, it includes: [Yellowstone National Park](#), [Drops](#), [Toronto](#), [Niagara Falls](#), [Monaco](#), [Montréal](#), [Bahamas](#), [Clouds](#), [Aerial](#), [Made with Macs](#), [Landscapes](#), [Northwest](#), [Animals](#), [Spring Flora](#), [National Parks](#), [Insects](#), [Konstanz](#), [Mark Montgomery's Desktop Pictures](#), [Konstanz Part II](#), [British Columbia](#), [New York](#), [France](#), and [Northeast](#).

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

iCab and Interarchy (formerly Anarchie) can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once. In iCab, use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path." In Interarchy, use HTTP Mirror feature.

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 publish 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 8.5 and Newer

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](#).



Apple's Results Revisited

I've reviewed the numbers for Apple's fourth quarter and the fiscal year. Aside from how clean the balance sheet appears (it really is impressive) the problem is revealed within the sales data.

The iMac continues to be Apple's unit sales engine. It accounted for roughly 50% of unit sales, but only a third of revenue; and it continues to make impressive sales gains both sequentially (compared to the previous quarter) and year-over-year.

There was, however, a dramatic drop in G4 and PowerBook sales compared with the third quarter. I'm assuming the drop in G4 sales is due, in part, to poor product transition. In the case of the PowerBook, its drop makes a lot of sense as a serious refresh is needed.

However, the Cube is the real disappointment for Apple. The numbers tell me Apple was counting on it to make a real margin difference, compared to the iMac, and to drive revenue gains. In all I believe Apple jumped off the iMac too soon in terms of advertising and marketing support. Those summer-release iMacs were really cool, after all.

The question in my mind is whether Apple can get through the first fiscal quarter without seeing a reduction in cash and equivalents. In the short-term I'm not concerned about the size of net profits, but about the company burning cash. I suspect if Apple does things right, it can finish the quarter without spending more than it takes in. This may be the reason behind the hiring freeze and the talk of eliminating a few non-essential projects.

A break-even quarter will not muddle the balance sheet. I think the stock is currently grossly undervalued, partly because the market still doesn't understand what Apple is doing. If I were Apple, I would target 24% gross margins as the goal for the quarter and pursue market share gains ahead of the release of OS X. I'd focus advertising and marketing dollars on the iMac, do what can be done to sell through the Cube inventory,

prepare to release a new PowerBook in the second quarter, and get OS X ready for release as soon as possible. Dual-processor G4s are nice, but practically useless while OS X isn't ready for shrink-wrap.

Right now there is roughly net \$11 cash/equivalents and investments behind every share. That means all of Apple's operations, patents, brand name, products, etc. are being valued at roughly \$8 per share or approximately \$2.7 billion, which is absurd! Further, looking at the equity accounts, Microsoft's original \$150+ million investment is being valued at \$75 million. I assume this means that half the investment in convertible, non-voting stock has been converted to common shares or been re-purchased by Apple.

Still, Apple is in much better shape than the share price suggests. Only time (and a coherent strategy) will improve the price. There is so much value behind each share I'm surprised new shareholders aren't arrested for stealing shares at the current price. Wall Street is betting against Steve Jobs and Apple. Personally, I'd rather wager on the side of innovation and technology leadership than stock charts and hearsay.

There are few PC companies in this world that can engineer a change in market approach without layoffs and extraordinary charges. If Apple can accomplish all that it's stated it will do—without incurring a quarterly loss—I'll be impressed.

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Response to “A Worm in the Apple”

The following are two responses to David Hewson’s [A Worm in the Apple](#), published by the London *Sunday Times* on October 22, 2000.



Dear Mr. Hewson:

It amazes me that people of your calibre go out of their way to fault Apple. Granted they have mucked about with their customers, but no more than anyone else has in business. I know that there is no real interest from the public in reading about Compaq or Dell, so it is not as if I don’t entirely understand your motivation. Apple has millions of adherents, so I can see how easy it would be to get them riled by taking a poke at their favorite computer company. Well, you succeeded—and that is why I am responding to you.

I, like you, have used Apple for almost 13 years and sincerely believed at the time there was no better personal computer on the planet with which to do what I wanted to do. I fixed computer mainframes for 10 years prior to my purchase. But please understand me, I would move to any platform, if financially feasible, if there were one really superior to Macintosh’s. Maybe in the near future I will make a move, but not until the basic Windows OS gets rid of DOS. I agree with many things you have aired, and I believe Apple needs its butt kicked along with every other computer monger that takes advantage of the consumer. But why single out Apple for abuse? I did not see you write about Microsoft’s thievery of technology from Apple and others. I not did hear any tirade concerning their blackmail of Apple to keep them alive, nor did I see you write about the multitude of thieves or the general thuggery of others in the industry. There was not one word of how that “evil empire” destroyed, bought, or stole from others to make the world go their direction. Oh, that is business!?

You state correctly in your story that since Apple's high in April shareholders have lost close to \$9 billion in value. But Apple is not alone. Since Dell's calendar 2000 high their shareholders have lost close to \$100 billion, and Microsoft shareholders have lost around \$300 billion. Is the game up for them? So Apple is not immune to the ups and downs of the market. Is that new news?

Likewise, is Apple the only computer company that puts out PR to cover themselves? How many times was Windows 98 announced, and how many beta versions were released to the unsuspecting to perfect this hybrid OS? Why don't you beat the drum and demand that Microsoft produce a clean OS for the masses? They have in NT? Windows 2000? Hardly. You would have the people who don't know any better (and there are plenty of them around) think that they chose Microsoft of their own volition. The masses use Windows because they have been coerced to do so—and you very well know this. But expend your ink toward writing about this?

I don't care who makes what, but I do care that one company dictates to the rest of the world what they can and cannot do. Microsoft, rather than being an industry innovator, has stifled innovation from others. You say that somewhere along the way Apple forgot how to innovate—but when has Microsoft ever done so? Everyone knows that Mr. Gates and others have considered Apple as their R & D department. Now, you complain that they aren't innovating. I am not as riled that you are down on Apple as I am that nothing so berating is said about the rest of the industry (beyond generalities). You mentioned Apple's "point and click," laser-printing, digital cameras, and pocket communications, not to mention GUI innovations and other technologies that PC users use every day. These same users light candles at the altar of Bill Gates and Microsoft for giving these things to them, when the evil empire didn't have a clue where the cheese was for the mouse.

You say that Apple needs a miracle to survive, but weren't you one of those who had Apple written off a few years ago? Yet it seems you were strangely quiet about Apple's subsequent recovery! For the last four years Apple has been one of the most profitable personal computer makers. That's more than can be said for IBM or Compaq.

Mr. Hewson, you said you once thought that nothing would part you from your Mac; well, I don't think it would take a miracle to get you to switch to anything—just money. Millions have been duped for decades into believing Microsoft's propaganda. The masses were given little or no other choice in the PC world because Microsoft would not let them have anything else. The world of business would not switch because of money, not because

Microsoft had better software than anyone else—you know that, and so does anyone with a pea-brain. Microsoft had better marketing of inferior technology, while Apple had superior technology with inferior marketing. It is no hidden truth that the arrogance of Apple showed like a neon sign compared to their marketing skills.

Do you think the computer world would be where it is today without Apple's innovations? I don't know how long they have, and I hope that you are wrong again—but it appears it would delight you to no end if they were to go down in flames tomorrow. Well, when they go we can always kick around Be or some other company that dares to be different.

I am not your enemy, but I had to sound off. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,

[Bob Zemeski](#)



There's an old Christian saying about miracles "For those who believe, no explanation is necessary; for those who don't believe, no explanation is possible."

We can debate megahertz, software availability, and product price. We can discuss platform differences, operating system functionality, and market share. But in the end, every computer buyer makes a decision on the product they will purchase based on their personal needs, desires, taste, and budget.

Apple products are not everyone's choice. But they are the choice of millions of computer users around the world. Personally, I don't buy Apple products because I want to "think different" or even "be different." I buy Apple products because the combination of the Mac's unique design and functionality are well suited to the way in which I prefer to go about my day and the manner in which I choose to organize and complete my work.

I prefer to use a Mac. I also like to start my day at church and listen to music on my way to a client's office. I only wear argyle socks when they are the last clean pair in my closet. I don't like Velveeta, but I'd like to try a Vegemite sandwich.

The author of this story states correctly that since Apple's high in April of \$75 per share, shareholders have lost close to \$19 billion in value. But Apple is not alone. Since Dell's calendar 2000 high their shareholders have lost close to \$100 billion and Microsoft shareholders have lost around \$300 billion. But who's counting? The last few weeks only prove that Apple is not immune to the vagaries of the market. Steve Jobs has been proven to be mortal (again). Is that new news?

The author believes Apple needs a miracle. So what? Some people need a miracle for the next breath they take or the next step they walk. I prefer to live life not taking anything for granted. It's when I stop believing in miracles that I know I have real problems.

Some people bolster their faith by lighting candles or conversing with statues. Some politicians in the US claim to find inspiration by touring the Lincoln Memorial. Some English barristers find comfort rereading the Magna Carta. Each to his or her own.

For me, I like candles. I also like to hear the chime whenever I start up my Mac. Miracles? Maybe. But for the last four years Apple has been one of the most profitable personal computer makers. That's more than can be said for IBM or Compaq. Rather than mention the need for miracles perhaps the author should review the facts.

[Robert Paul Leitao](#)

The Segments section is open to anyone. If you have something interesting to say about life with your Mac, write us at editor@atpm.com.



Review: Updates

by the ATPM Staff, updates@atpm.com

Web Devil 5.0

Originally [reviewed](#) in ATPM 6.07, [Web Devil](#) has been updated to version 5. It now allows the creation of documents containing download settings and now displays the list of URLs downloaded. This update also sports some bug fixes.

ConceptDraw 1.55

Since its last [review](#), [ConceptDraw](#) has been updated to version 1.55. Along with some bug fixes and improvements in performance, there have been several more visible changes. The Mac OS Interface, Windows Interface, and Network Diagramming libraries have been updated. There is also a new library for the Mac OS X Interface. The update includes a new Print dialog as well as a Text Auto Expand mode. A serial number is required to [download](#) the update.

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Review: Backyard Baseball 2001

by Mike Shields, mshields@atpm.com

Developer: Humongous Entertainment

Web: <http://www.humongoussports.com>

Price: \$19.99

Requirements: 132 MHz Power Mac with System 7.5.3 or later, ages 5–12.

Trial: None



The Backyard Kids are back! With the World Series just around the corner—in fact, the interminably long playoffs are probably commencing as you read this—and my favorite team eliminated, it was good to be able to play a game in which I could control the outcome somewhat.

Admittedly, this game is made for elementary school age kids; however, I was having so much fun, my playtesters almost didn't get a turn, and I almost didn't get this review in on time!



I started a season, picked my players, and played a game. You can choose from the 30 Backyard Kids as well as 31 of today's superstars as kids. Naturally, I loaded my team up with superstars, and created one of my own as well.

While other sports simulations require constant manipulation of both mouse and keyboard, everything here is controlled by simple mouse clicks. I especially liked the option of batting practice, as it does take a little getting use to the mechanics of placing the bat to ball.

Of course, we have our commentators from the press box, Sunny Day and Vinny the Gooch calling the play by play.



The Commentators

After picking my team I chose a batting order. The computer tried to do it, but I felt it was better that my pitcher bat ninth instead of sixth.



Picking the Batting Order

So, I started the game. Every once in a while, your pitcher gets to choose from an array of trick pitches. At first, they worked, but I also managed to serve up a gopher ball. As a batter, if you hit the trick pitches, you receive what are called Power Ups. I especially liked

the Aluminum Bat, as I was able to throw a couple of tape measure blasts out of Eckman Acres. There's even a way to steal bases, and you can set your defense. All with the simple click of a mouse.



OK, I'm dangerously past deadline, but I had fun. Amanda, recently turned 6, could play the game by herself, and sometimes win. Scott, who just turned 4, is also able to play on his own, after sitting on my lap for a game or two. Humongous Entertainment has hit another home run with Backyard Baseball, but for now you'll have to excuse me; I must get back to the game. It's the bottom of the fourth, and I'm down by three runs...

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Review: Intrigo Lapstation

by Daniel Chvatik, dchvatik@atpm.com

Developer: Intrigo

Web: <http://www.intrigo.com/>

Price: B1: \$89, B2: \$139, B3: \$189

Requirements: none

Trial: none



Portable computers have become increasingly popular over the years, and this popularity has brought with it the need to not only take your computer on the road with you, but to also bring your entire “workspace” with you. That’s the idea behind the line of Lapstation “mobile computing workspaces” by a young company called Intrigo.

Intrigo’s concept is indeed intriguing. Those who use portable computers probably realize on a regular basis that sitting with your laptop placed on your lap is not necessarily very convenient or productive. Intrigo has tried to counter this view through the Lapstation, a raised flat surface with wrist pads and two pouches on the sides for storing various objects that you may need. When I first learned about the Lapstation, I was very excited. Then I saw pictures and was awestruck. It just looked so cool. There are three models and a variety of styles from translucent “vapor” to a smooth titanium finish; they just scream “high-tech.”

Then I started using it—or rather tried to use it. Maybe it’s just me, but I didn’t find the Lapstation to be practical. Obviously, when you already have a desk for your laptop to sit on, you have no need to use it. If you are lying or sitting in bed, it turns out that the surface is too high to work comfortably—I was always almost sinking below the platform and had to hold my hands high up to reach the keyboard and trackpad.

Sitting on the sofa, I can’t use the Lapstation either. When it’s opened, the two sides are supposed to hold it up, but for me the spread between them is so large that the Lapstation keeps slipping off the sofa on either side. The solution is to fold it back together so it forms a simple flat surface. This, however, presents two additional problems: I cannot use the two pouches and after a while it gets quite heavy. The Lapstation is way too large for use as a simple surface, anyway. The only position where I am able to use it

(and here it is actually *really* comfortable) is sitting on the floor with my back leaning on the soft side of my couch. But I don't think this limited use justifies either its price or lugging the Lapstation around everywhere you go.



I have a few more gripes besides the limited usability. For one, the Lapstation is bigger than it needs to be. The designers could save in both thickness and overall size without losing much functionality. When unfolded, the Lapstation is not as stable as I would have preferred. It doesn't exactly collapse, but it can sway to the left and right in an annoying way.

Lastly, once it is unfolded, there is no way to “lock” it in that state. It comes together loosely at the top, and the only object that holds it there is the weight of your computer pressing the halves together. This problem really should be addressed; if you move the Lapstation even slightly, the halves part and then come back together. A body part could become caught in the space between the two halves, with pretty painful results. Otherwise, however, the Lapstation is very well built, with a snappy lock that holds it together when folded up.



There are three basic versions of the Lapstation, which differ in price, materials used, and looks.

The Different Kinds of Lapstations

B1

- Lightweight High-impact Polystyrene Structure
- Medium Density Neoprene Wrist Pads
- Dual Suspended Mesh Pouches

B2

- Translucent High-impact Polycarbonate Structure
- Ultra Soft Gel Filled Pads
- Premium Quality Dual Suspended Mesh Pouches

B3

- Durable Titanium-finish High-impact PC/ABS Alloy Structure
- Ultra Soft Gel Filled Wrist Pads
- Premium Quality Dual Suspended Mesh Pouches

I think the Lapstation is a great idea. I wanted to love it and tried hard to do so, but I just couldn't find more than one comfortable way to use it. It's quite a bit to carry around (though you can get a special carrying bag as an accessory), and the price tag seems to be too high to justify the limited functionality.

Maybe I just don't appreciate it properly; maybe others will find it a tremendously useful tool for the road warrior. However I didn't, so I only give it an Okay rating. I believe that if Intrigo puts a bit more work into the idea, it could have a wonderful product on its...lap.

Specifications

- Adjustable Width: 27.5" to 32.5"
- Adjustable Height: 10.0" to 11.5"
- Work Surface: 25.3" x 16.0"
- Closed Volume: 16.0" x 12.6" x 3.8"
- Pouch Dimensions: 10.0" x 5.0"
- Weight: 5.6lbs (B1), 5.9lbs (B2), 6.3lbs (B3)

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Review: Monsoon iM-700 ice Flat Panel Speakers

by Daniel Chvatik, dchvatik@atpm.com

Developer: Monsoon

Web: http://www.monsoonaudio.com/index_models_mmedia.htm

Price: \$169.00 (see best deals below)

Requirements: Analog sound output (which all Macs to date have).

Trial: None



I have a soft spot for flat panel speakers; I fell in love with them when I reviewed the [Benwin BW2000 speakers](#) over a year ago. It's not too hard to see why. Their generally sleek design and efficient use of space complement the new lineup of Macs nicely. Besides Benwin and a few smaller players, Monsoon Multimedia has been a central force in this market. With the iM-700, they've released a set of speakers marketed especially to the Macintosh crowd. What this means is that they have translucent highlights (i.e., ice color) but are otherwise identical to the MM-700, except that the ice costs you an extra \$20. Ice or not, the 700 series flat panel speakers make a wonderful addition to your computer.



Why Flat?

The key appeal of flat panel speakers is, well, their flatness. Monsoon achieves this by using "planar magnetic technology," a fancy way of saying that a series of powerful neodymium magnets moves a conductive polymer diaphragm inside the core of the

speaker, producing sound with a high fidelity. For those without a physics degree, this means that there's a very thin plastic "sheet" that moves inside the speaker, roughly similar to the membrane of a traditional speaker but without the cone.

Now, to clarify an important point, I mean high fidelity by my definition. There certainly are audiophiles out there (those guys who pay \$10,000 for their sound system) that would laugh at me using the expression "high fidelity" in connection with these speakers. But my point of comparison is not the most expensive speakers out there, but rather the sound of built-in Mac speakers, the Benwin BW-2000, and regular computer speakers in general. The MM-700 sounds much better than all of those, especially the built-in Mac speakers. I don't count the speakers of the G4 Cube because they are external (and not separately available for purchase), but the Monsoons also win this comparison. The Benwin flat panels are a step up from the built-in speakers, both price-wise and quality-wise. But they sound crappy compared to the Monsoon 700s. Some of the nicer regular speakers rival the Monsoon in sound quality, but it's a close race. The Monsoon satellites' planar technology creates more focused dispersion patterns of sound, reducing reflections from your desktop or display that can make the sound "muddy," something that really helps sound clarity and spatial richness in a desktop environment.

The big subwoofer really lets you shake up the place. It may not be powerful enough to cause a minor earthquake, but it does pack enough of a punch for most uses (but don't expect it to fill a dance hall with sound). The overall system is well designed with a supplied remote volume "puck" that you can place on your desktop to adjust volume or mute the speakers. All other controls—power on/off, bass volume, and the standard sound in and speaker out ports—are on the back of the subwoofer.

iM-700 and MM-700 Technical Specifications

Satellites	4" X 8" dipole radiating planar magnetic transducer
44 W total system power	22 W subwoofer; 2 x 11 W satellites
Crossover	Active, 3rd order at 250Hz
Woofer drive unit	5.25-inch cone, Xmax = +4mm (per DUMAX measurement)
Woofer cabinet	6.9 liters, tuned to 65 Hz; 10" H x 9" W x 9" D
System frequency response	50 Hz to 20 kHz in workstation environment
System time response	Less than .25 ms dispersion to -20 dB
Maximum SPL at .5 meters	99dB RMS using EIA 426B noise

Flat Versus Regular

There isn't a convincing reason to choose flat panel speakers over the more regular cubic/cone design or vice versa. It mostly boils down to a matter of taste. I personally think flat panels are much prettier. They use less space, fit better on the desktop, and can be hung from the wall (although the iM/MM-700s are not directly wall-mountable). There's also the coolness and high-tech factor. I don't see any reason not to recommend flat panel speakers. Their sound quality is on par with comparable regular speakers in the same price class, if not better. If you don't like the way they look with your system, don't get them.

If you decide you want a sleek flat-panel speaker system, the next question is which one. The Benwin speakers I reviewed before are a good value for the money. There are more expensive Benwin speakers for more demanding users. But if you want a really nice system and are prepared to pay for it, the Monsoon speakers are one of the best alternatives. If the 700 series is too powerful or too weak for you, Monsoon also offers the MM-500 and MM-1000, respectively, to address your concerns. I found the iM/MM-700 to be the best

value for the money and to look best overall (OK, so looks *do* matter a lot to me). Personally, I don't think the little icing on the iM version is worth the extra \$20, although it looks very nice next to a snow iMac.

The Verdict

Choosing speakers is a bit like choosing a car: there's no clear best choice. It depends on what kind of car you want, what color you like, and how much you want to pay. But of all the flat panels I have seen and tried, the Monsoon iM-700 is simply the coolest pair at an attractive price.

Pluses: Good sound, powerful bass, cool design, handy remote control.

Minuses: Maybe a bit pricey, but can be found at discounts (see below). Should be wall-mountable.

Best Deal: The lowest price I have seen is \$99.99 for the MM-700 at [Computers4sure](#).

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Review: Outlook Email Archive 1.9

by Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com

Developer: Stefano Cappello

Web: <http://digilander.iol.it/capste/oea/info.html>

Price: \$15 (shareware)

Requirements: Microsoft Outlook Express 4.5.x or 5.x, 3.5 MB free application RAM with OE open.

Trial: Feature-limited (only archives nine messages at a time)



Microsoft's Outlook Express and E-Mails

Outlook Express (OE) allows you to organize your e-mail into folders on the OE "desktop." Default folders include Inbox, Outbox, Sent Items, Drafts, and Deleted Items. You can create more folders as necessary, and you can use rules to direct e-mail into specified folders. This organizational scheme seems to meet the needs of most users, except for one fact: your e-mail files exist in one large database. Even the folders are "virtual."

This creates a number of problems. The first is that backup programs search for changed or new files. Every new e-mail changes OE's "Messages" file and its associated "Database" file. Performing an incremental backup after receiving a single e-mail message requires you to copy two large files (>30 MB on my drive). The second problem is that OE keeps writing to the same "Messages" and "Database" files. These become very large even if you delete old messages. (You must compact the OE database files to recover the space used by deleted messages; you do this by holding down the option key after launching OE but before the application fully loads.) The third problem is that OE does not support archiving or exporting of e-mail messages. The only work-around is to create dummy accounts, move selected e-mail messages into them, and delete the messages from the original account. This cumbersome procedure works, but requires much planning and time.

Outlook Email Archive to the Rescue

OE users who want to archive, export, or reorganize their e-mail messages and attachments will find that Outlook Email Archive (OEA) easily handles these tasks. OEA works with OE 4.5 and 5.0.

Archiving to Finder Files

Outlook Express needs to be open before you launch Outlook Email Archive. The manual recommends creating an archive folder structure in the Finder that mimics your OE folder structure before archiving. You begin the archive process by clicking on the OE icon (Figure 1).



Figure 1

OEA examines the folder structure in OE and changes its upper popup menu to read "Select a folder..." You use this menu to choose which OE folder to archive. The Type of Archive popup menu lists types of archives (Figure 2).

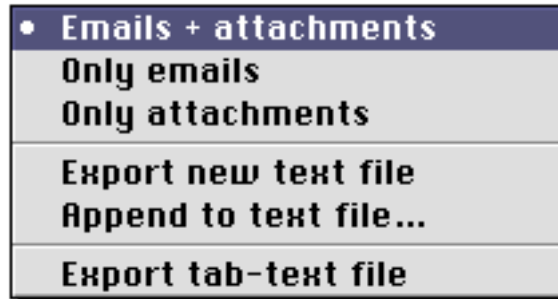


Figure 2

The first three choices generate Finder files. You can archive e-mails, attachments, or both together. E-mails are saved as individual text files within folders whose names indicate the archive date preceded by the Julian day number (Figure 3). If you save attachments and e-mails, attachments will be placed in the same folders as their e-mail messages.

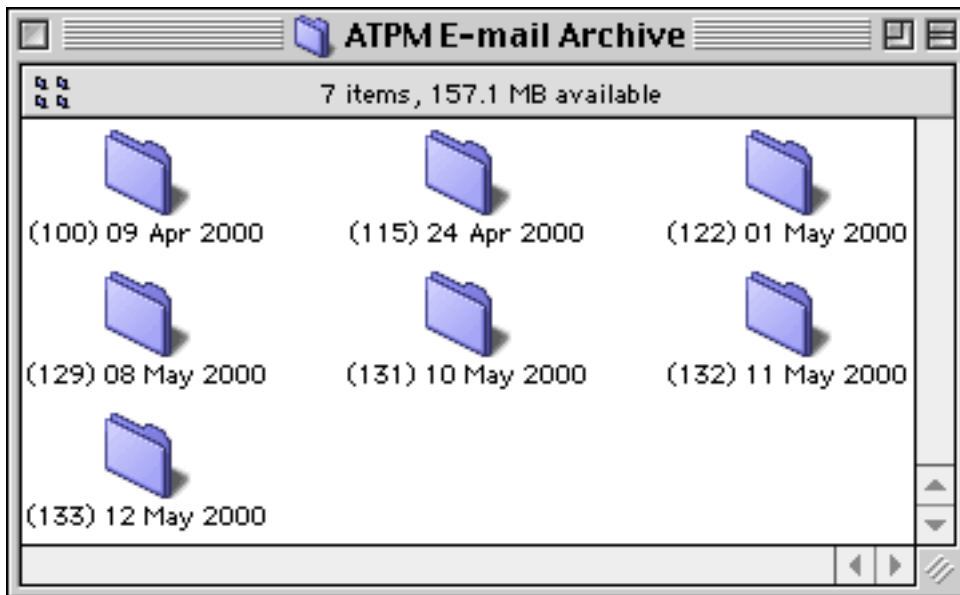


Figure 3

The third pull-down menu lets you choose the basis for archival structure: received date (the default choice) or sent date. Beware of the latter choice. The sent date actually includes the date *and* time. If you create a Finder archive by sent date, you will end up with a plethora of nested folders labeled with sent date and then sent time (to the second). Each folder generally contains one message and its attachments (Figure 4). Most users should stick with the received date method that generates fewer folders.

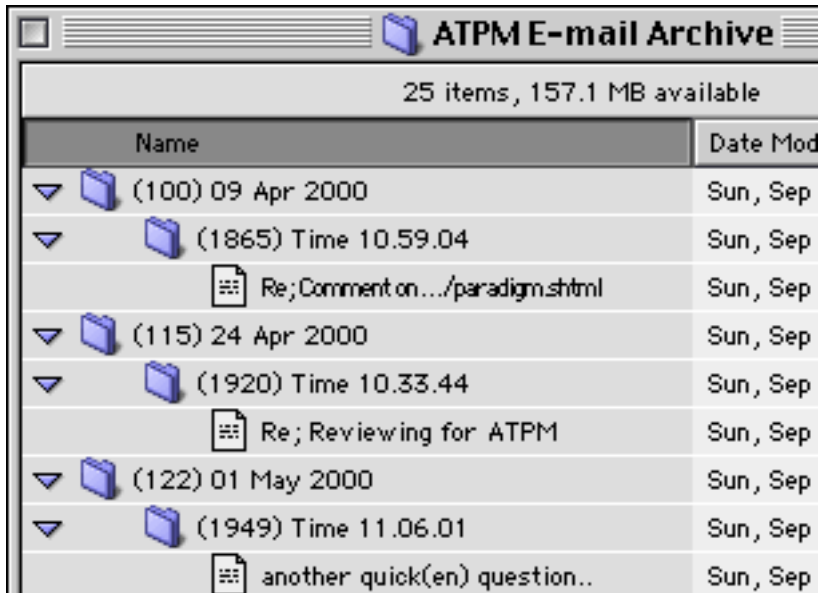


Figure 4

Next you choose a location for the archive. You can either drag a Finder folder onto the name box or click the folder icon and navigate to your archive folder. At this point I recommend that you set your preferences. You can choose the date format for Finder folders and files, the creator type for the text messages (SimpleText, BBEdit, Tex-Edit Plus, Microsoft Word, or AppleWorks), and whether to avoid archiving unread, flagged, or edited e-mail messages. After you close the Preferences window, you click the Archive button and wait for archiving to complete. (Note: If you have not registered your OEA program, only the nine oldest e-mails will be archived.) On my system, archiving required

approximately one second per e-mail (without attachments). OEA displays an Archive Report window upon completion (Figure 5). If you wish, OEA will move the archived OE e-mails to the trash. I recommend backing up your archive before deleting the OE trash file.

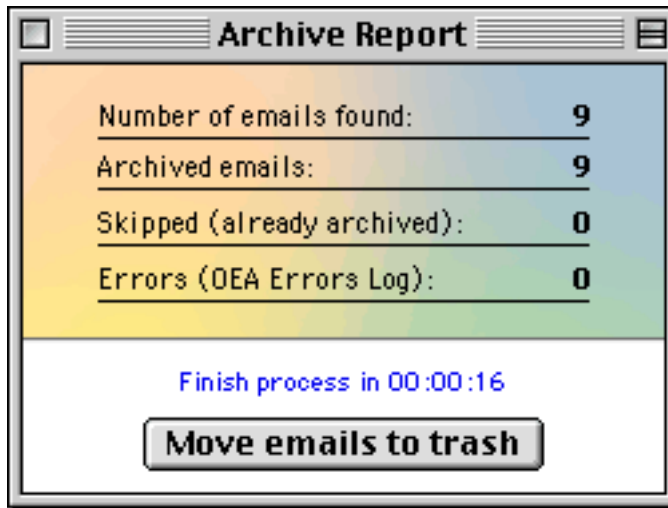


Figure 5

Your Finder message archives can be retrieved by date. If you index the disk or volume containing your archived e-mail messages, you can use Sherlock to search messages by content. You will need to update the index after creating new archives.

Archiving to Text Files

OEA will export multiple messages to a single text file. The archive process is the same as above except that you select either "Export new text file" or "Append to text file..." from the Type of Archive pull-down menu. Messages appear sequentially in reverse chronological order (based on either received date or sent date) and are separated by a row of equal signs. Use "Append to text file..." to add newer archives to older ones. The only problem is that your newer messages get placed at the end of the text file. I recommend moving them to the beginning to maintain the reverse chronological order.

Archiving to a Database

OEA can export messages in tabbed-text format for import into database programs. You do this by selecting "Export tab-text file" from the Type of Archive pull-down menu. OEA names the file "OEA x DB Export" followed by the archive time (e.g., OEA x DB Export 11.35.22 AM). The tabbed-text file can be imported into any database program. OEA includes some templates for FileMaker Pro users.

Reviewing OEA Tasks

OEA keeps a bare-bones log of archive tasks and any errors. The log lists the date and time of archival, the originating OE folder, and the type of archive file. OEA stores log information within the application, and it cannot be exported. (You can copy the log using ResEdit: open OEA in ResEdit, open the "Data" resource, open ID 5006 ("log"), select and copy the ASCII text on the right, then paste the text into a text editor or word processor document.)

Archiving Speed

I used OEA to archive a folder with over 1500 short messages with no attachments. On my beige 300MHz G3, archiving (to any format) required 26 minutes (or about one second per message). Archiving cannot be interrupted, so plan ahead!

Summary

OEA nicely compensates for some shortcomings in Outlook Express. The \$15 shareware fee seems reasonable for this useful program.

Pluses: Easy to use, flexible, low cost.

Minuses: Appended messages are out of order. Lack of a text-based log file means that OEA modifies itself whenever it updates the log (increasing the chances of damage).

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Review: Sensiva 1.1

by Raena Armitage, rarmitage@atpm.com

Developer: Sensiva

Web: <http://www.sensiva.com/>

Price: free

Requirements: Mac OS 8.1 or higher.



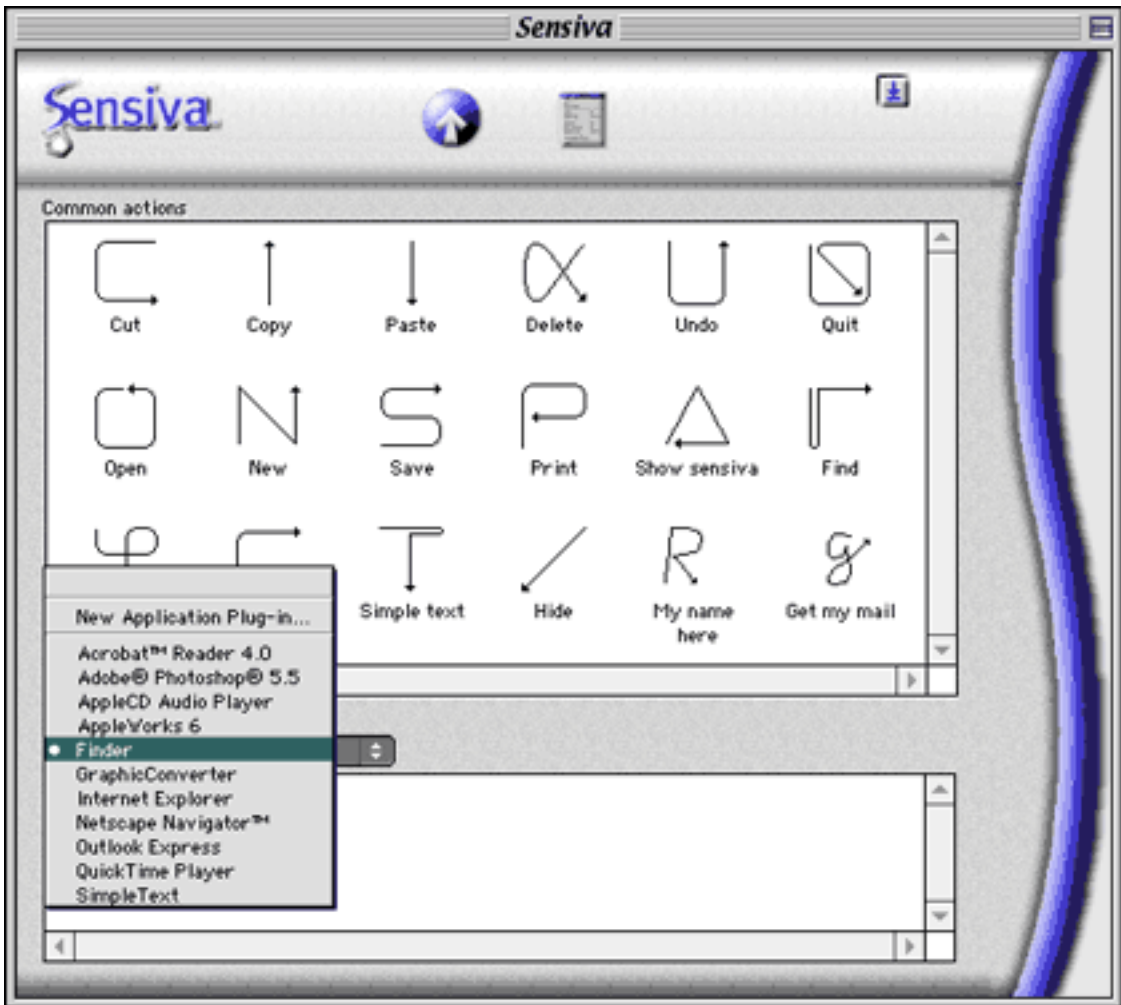
The Joy of Stylus

Good Lord, how I would love a Palm. I would really, really love a Palm. I can see myself becoming one of those people who is so addicted to their Palm that their normal handwriting has become all loopy from too much Graffiti. I don't really need all my information at my fingertips or any of the other reasons why normal people would use a Palm; I just like the whole idea of being able to squiggle away with a pen and have my computer understand what's going on. Christmas is coming, and when Santa comes to visit the local department store I'm going to sit on his knee and ask him nicely to pop a Palm down the chimney. Failing that (since I'm probably not on his list of good girls), I'll just keep using Sensiva.

Doodle Away from the Comfort of your Own Mousepad

Sensiva is a great little application, freely downloadable from its Web site, that lets you execute commands by drawing symbols with the pointing device of your choosing, be it trackpad, mouse, or graphics tablet. If you already use a program like QuicKeys to execute

multiple commands with a single keystroke, then you'll find that this works in a very similar way. Sensiva isn't restricted to keystrokes; it can type a string of text for you, run an AppleScript, launch any application, or go directly to a Web site.



Sensiva's Application Interface

Sensiva comes in two parts: an application and an extension. You use the application to see the commands that are available to you and to create and edit symbols and commands to suit your needs. The extension runs Sensiva itself, so you can quit the application once you're finished editing commands and still carry on using your commands.

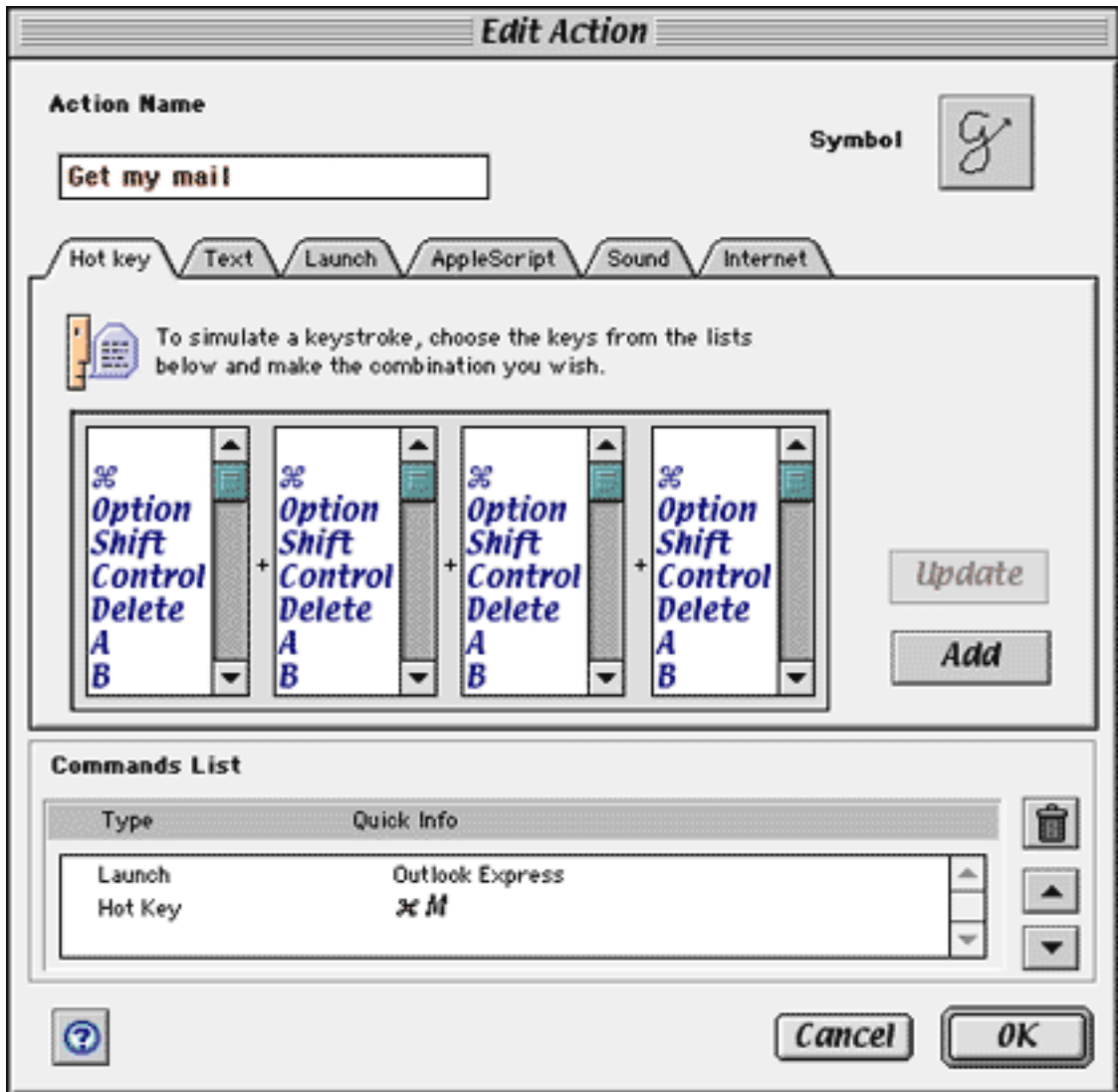
Sensiva will let you use universal commands such as Undo and Copy, and you can also have application-specific commands like 'Empty Trash' in the Finder and 'Zoom in' in Photoshop.



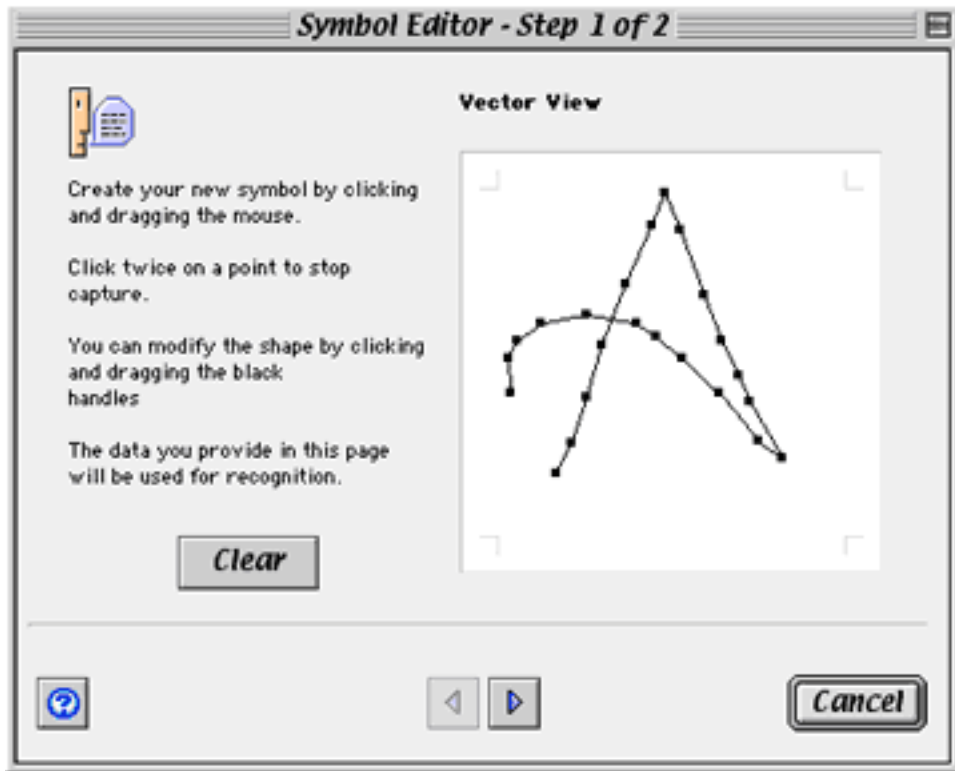
Scribble scribble scribble—ooh, I launched Sherlock!

You draw a command by holding down one of the modifier keys (either Option, Shift, Control, or Command—you can only choose one) and drag the mouse in the shape of the command's associated symbol. A trail follows your pointer, and if you've successfully

drawn the command a blue S appears in the corner of your screen. Easy as that. Unfortunately, this creates problems because you cannot properly shift-, command-, or control-click anymore.



This squiggle logs me on to the Internet, launches Outlook Express, and grabs all my e-mail. Since I've made it a universal command, it'll work in whatever application I happen to be using at the time.



Here I've made a stylized curly A symbol. I first assigned it to Internet Explorer as a URL shortcut to <http://www.atpm.com>. Next, I assigned it to my e-mail program as a shortcut to make a new message and address it to the staff mailing list. Finally, I assigned it to AppleWorks and BBEdit as a text shortcut, to save myself a few keystrokes when I type "About This Particular Macintosh."

At first I was drawing my little 'A's and 'G's, and it'd work maybe one time in five. But, like using Graffiti on the Palm, you have to practice the commands to make sure you're getting them right. Once you get the hang of things, you'll find that it becomes second nature to draw a squiggle with your mouse to empty the Trash, type your name and address, or launch Sherlock.

I've been using Sensiva with a mouse, but it also provides support for Wacom graphics tablets—so if you already prefer using your stylus instead of a mouse, you'll probably find this interface to be a breeze.



Editing a Command

Is it any Good?

For an application that originated on the PC, the Sensiva application itself is a very well-behaved. It even pays attention to the Appearance Manager, using your preferred accent color as it draws a trail behind your mouse. Its support for AppleScript is definitely a big bonus; it even lets you write and test the script right there in the Sensiva application, if you're just whipping up a quickie.

The supporting documentation, on the other hand, is pretty poor. The tutorial consists of a two-sentence explanation of what it does, and the HTML files provided as "help" make the odd dubious reference to right mouse buttons, leading you to wonder exactly how much time the Sensiva folks spent on them. There doesn't seem to be anything in the help or on the Web site to help you with troubleshooting. Since this is early days for the Mac version of Sensiva (this is its first 'full' release) I expect this to improve.

It's also unfortunate that Sensiva does not yet properly support Macs with multiple displays. Again, this is something I would assume will be addressed in a later version.

Is it Useful?

A lot of shortcut and macro programs exist to make life on your Mac just a little bit easier, but Sensiva is the only one I've seen that doesn't require you to learn big strings of keystrokes or leave menus and floating windows everywhere. It's been theorized that people are better at remembering symbols and pictures than strings of text and numbers, and if this is the case then Sensiva is ahead of the pack in terms of an easy and intuitive interface.

If you're looking for a good, transparent, and unique answer to your macro needs, then this is probably for you. And, since I doubt there'll be a Palm under the tree this year, this bundle of squiggly fun is definitely for me.

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Review: Kodak Smart Picture Frame

by Daniel Chvatik, dchvatik@atpm.com

Developer: Weave Innovations

Web: <http://www.storybox.com>

Price: \$349 (includes six months of premium service, subsequent service ranges from \$4.95 to \$9.95/month)

Requirements: Mac with Internet connection, Netscape 4 or later or Internet Explorer 5 or later.

Trial: The software is free from the Web site.



In issue 6.09, I gave you a preview of the Kodak Smart Picture Frame. Now that I have had time to use a production version for a while, I can give you the second part as a review. I will assume that you already read [the preview](#), so if not, please do so. In the preview, I told you what the frame promises. So, does it deliver? Yes, it does.

The Hardware

I described the hardware last time, and not much has changed. The buttons, which attracted my only complaint about the hardware itself back then, have been slightly adjusted so they can be used more comfortably. The LCD's viewable area is comparable to that of a medium sized regular frame (4 x 5 1/4 inches). The resolution is 640 x 480 pixels. I'd prefer the LCD to be larger or to have a higher resolution, but alas, this would make the frame much more expensive.

The frame only faithfully reproduces colors when you look at it straight-on, but the image itself is viewable from pretty much all angles. There is enough built-in memory to store 36 pictures, and the memory can be expanded using CompactFlash type I & II memory cards (but not microdrives).

As with normal picture frames, the frame's vertical angle can be adjusted. Overall the frame does not use too much desktop space, although you may want to place it in a location where its two cables (power and telephone) can be hidden from sight. As I said last time, the frame has a more traditional look, compared to the expensive high-tech frames that Sony makes; this was vividly confirmed when a friend of mine came to visit and didn't even notice that it was a digital frame. Now that's what I call unobtrusive technology!

The buttons used to operate the frame are located on the top, back, and right sides. Because of the angle of the frame, they are nicely hidden but nevertheless easily accessible. The modem connection works pretty well, and loading images and channel content into the frame does not take as long as I had feared. Being able to automatically update the frame every night makes this really easy.



My only real complaint about the hardware is that the power cable sits very loosely on the bottom of the frame and tends to fall out when I move the frame. Weave is aware of this problem and working towards a solution.

The Software

Hardware is important, but what really makes a machine tick is the associated software. Here, too, Weave Innovations has done a great job. Actually, there are two sets of software. The first is associated with the frame itself and the controls; the second is the StoryBox network, used to upload pictures via the Net and sharing pictures with friends and family.

The frame software is very intuitive to use. There are seven buttons. On the back is the simple on/off button; on the right side is the Pictures/Channels button (more on channels later); and on top lie the Menu, Left and Right scroll, OK and Share! buttons.

Most functions are accessed by pressing the Menu button, scrolling to your selection and pressing OK. The menu has a flat hierarchy, meaning there are no unnecessary sub-menus. Several commands act directly when selected (like the Update Now! command), while others require you to make a selection to act upon (like Delete, which asks you to select the images you want to remove from the frame's memory). The menu allows you to set several options, such as automatic on/off times (so the frame isn't on at night when you don't use it) and the slide show (which can be configured to cycle through the images and channel content at various time intervals). You can also order Kodak prints of your images directly from the frame.



The Share! button allows you to share images with your friends directly from the frame interface. And, last but not least, the Pictures/Content button lets you switch between these two “modes.” In pictures mode, you see your picture (or pictures). The content mode is similar to a digital newspaper delivered to your door (or rather frame) with every update. It displays items such as news, sports, weather, etc. Overall, the frame software gives you most of the options you’d expect, with a relatively easy interface.

The StoryBox Network acts as your connection to the outside world. It lets you download pictures to your frame. (Make sure any pictures you do download are at least 640x480 pixels in size and in JPEG format, with .jpg at the end of the file name.) The network also allows you to share images with other people, send greetings to other users, adjust frame options, manage your online pictures in albums, and modify your channel selections. The current selection of channels includes:

- E! Online Entertainment Headlines, including a selection of movie, TV, industry, celebrity, event, and music news.
- MSNBC Top Stories of the Day and MSNBC Custom Headlines, where you can choose from international news, business, technology, science, living and travel, national news, health, and opinions.
- Weather Channel, which includes weather forecasts for your zip code and temperature maps for the US.
- CBS SportsLine Sports Headlines from a variety of sports and configurable by team and/or region.
- TrafficStation, which is personalized, real-time traffic and traveler information.
- Pictures from Getty Images and soon World Class Art.

The [Web site](#) is well-designed and can be accessed either from the frame or from your Mac. It’s a nice way to share images on the Internet. You get up to 40 MB of space for your pictures—roughly 400 images—and you can purchase more space, a code of practice similar to Apple’s [iTools](#), although Apple only gives you 20 MB to start with. You can also order prints directly from the network, allowing you to use higher resolution images than if you were to use the frame directly.

The Final Word

Would I get one for myself? I am tempted, but probably not just yet. I am thinking about getting one for my parents, and although I will have to return my review copy of the frame, I will probably continue using the StoryBox network even without it. For now, though, the frame simply doesn't satisfy my "high-tech cravings" enough, and the wood just doesn't fit with my furniture. Maybe if they offered different styles...

The frame makes a great gift for a family member who lives far away and is not quite tech-savvy enough to check the Internet for your images. You can upload the images to their frame remotely, and they can enjoy new family pictures without ever having to do a thing. I rarely have time to watch the news or get a weather report, so the frame's channels actually proved quite helpful to me. All it takes to get the information is a glance at your frame at the right time.

All in all, I really believe this product is a step in the right direction.

Pluses: Inexpensive relative to competition, easy to use, remotely manageable, good quality.

Minuses: Low resolution, colors change with viewing angle, only one style of frame available.

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Review: Space Bug

by Brooke Smith, bsmith@atpm.com

Developer: Hannu Parjanen and Juho Ruohola

Web: <http://www.saunalahti.fi/juhruo/spacebug/>

Price: free

Requirements: Power Mac with 9 MB of free RAM.



For all those who pretended to be X-Wing fighter pilots after seeing Star Wars, Space Bug is for you—smash and crash those bad guys to protect the Earth from doom.

In this case, the bad guys are asteroids, alien missiles, and comets that strike the Earth, causing it to lose strength. The object of Space Bug is to get to level 10 without letting the Earth and your spaceship lose their strength. As you protect the Earth, you also need to acquire as many points as you can—now that's what I call multi-tasking. (I have made it to level 10, but unfortunately my score was just over 200—more on this later.)

How to Play

Use the arrow keys to move the spaceship up, down, and sideways to collide with a missile, asteroid, or comet. As you hit each of these flying objects, you increase your score and you keep the Earth from getting hit. At the same time your score increases (in the upper left-hand corner), your ship's strength decreases. For example, you get 5 points for every missile you hit, but as you hit the missile you lose 1 percent of your ship's strength.

An asteroid or comet colliding with the ship decreases the ship's strength by 5 percent. If an asteroid hits the Earth, you lose 10 percent from the Earth's strength; if a comet hits the Earth it takes about a third of the Earth's strength. But an asteroid garners you 15 points and a comet gets you 30 points.

Happily, it's possible for both your ship and the Earth to regain strength. When you press the number 1 key, a blue missile flies from the bottom of the screen to the top of the screen. On the way, it drops a gray square (a ship repair kit) somewhere in space. Move your spaceship over to pick up the repair kit and the ship's strength returns to 100 percent.

If you want to return the Earth's strength to full capacity, press the number 2 key to repeat the blue missile's action. However, each time you press the number 1 or 2 key, you lose 100 points from your score.



As you pass each level, there's an increase in the frequency and speed of the flying objects, demanding extremely good hand-eye coordination. As I mentioned before, I did get to level 10; however, my score was pitiful because I used the 100-point ship and Earth repair kits a lot. This is where the laser-shooting mode comes in. At the beginning of the game, just after you click New Game (or even during the game), type Return or Enter to go into laser-shooting mode. You still use the arrow keys for direction, but you press the Space Bar to shoot lasers at the missiles, comets, and asteroids. This is obviously a better mode to play in since the ship won't lose strength (there won't be any collisions). However, some

asteroids or missiles will get past you and collide with the Earth. Perhaps a combination of the two—switching modes during game play—might work. But I'm not convinced that the repair kit option worked during the laser mode (at least it didn't when I was playing).

Overall, I like Space Bug. It's fun to play and the game is well designed. The explosion sounds are cool, and there's even a warning beep when the Earth has less than 20 percent of its strength left. There are even some instructions to make your own ship with ResEdit—I never tried this, but it's a good little perk for the creative types.

The graphics are good, and the game itself plays like the old smash and crash arcade games—and there's nothing wrong with a little smash and crash once in a while.

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Review: Web Confidential for Mac and Palm

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Web Confidential for Mac 2.1

Developer: Alco Blom

Web: <http://www.web-confidential.com/>

Price: \$20

Requirements: System 7 or higher.

Recommended: System 7.1 for shared menus, Mac OS 9 for Keychain.

Trial: Feature-limited (no PowerPC version, can't create records after 30 days).



Web Confidential for Palm 1.1

Developer: René Laterveer

Web: <http://www.web-confidential.com/>

Price: \$20

Requirements: Palm OS 2 or higher, Palm Desktop 2.1 or higher.

Recommended: Palm Desktop 2.5.

Trial: Feature-limited (no HotSyncing, can't create records after 30 days).



Back in issue 5.01, I [reviewed](#) Web Confidential 1.1. For those who don't remember, Web Confidential is an application that keeps track of Internet addresses, passwords, and other personal information. At that time, I felt that Web Confidential was a strong program that did its job. There were several shortcomings, however. First, even though you could encrypt your data with either the Blowfish algorithm or MacPGP 2.6, there were several loopholes in the program that would allow others to view your passwords. Second, several of Web Confidential's better features required you to use a specific application, as opposed to your Internet application of choice.

Web Confidential now stands at version 2.1. It includes some changes in the program itself. Also, Web Confidential now has the ability to sync with any Palm-compatible handheld, making certain features, like the ability to keep track of ATM numbers, much more useful.

On the Desktop

Although the name would imply that Web Confidential only tracks Web sites, it is capable of far more. Each Web Confidential file contains 15 categories for storing data; they are WWW Sites, WWW Forms, FTP Servers, Newsgroups, E-Mail Contacts, Login Accounts (Telnet), POP Accounts, Bank Accounts, Credit Cards, ATM/PIN Cards, Personal Data, Software Keys, Serial Numbers, Membership Numbers, and Miscellaneous. Each category contains five fields for data entry—usually a name field, one to three fields specific to the data type, and a notes field.

As you might expect, both the WWW Sites and the WWW Forms category are for Web sites. However, there is a difference in the types of sites each category expects. The WWW Forms category is for sites where there is a Web-based form asking for login information. This is the approach that you see on many e-commerce Web sites or Web-based mail services. The WWW Sites category is for sites which have no password protection, or which display an authorization window asking for your name and password. In my experience, the form approach is by far more common, but I still encounter sites that use the authorization window method. It is nice to see Web Confidential handle both types of sites.

In Web Confidential 1.1, dealing with forms was both one of the program's greatest strengths and biggest weaknesses. Using Shared Menu, Web Confidential allowed users to access information about Web sites in the active Web Confidential file. If you were using Internet Explorer, you could send your name and password information from the information card to the server and be logged into the Web site. If you used Netscape Communicator or some other Web browser, you could not access this feature—all you could do was copy the password to the clipboard.

In Web Confidential 2.1, this has been fixed. You can now use this feature in Internet Explorer, Communicator, and iCab. Also, you can choose to have Web Confidential input this information to the Web site without submitting it or input only your user name. Unfortunately, these features do not seem to work with iCab if you have it set to open a new window whenever it receives a URL from another application.



The WWW Sites category is even better about providing access to the pages in the category—when you access a site, either by clicking the “Go” button in the Web Confidential application, or by selecting it from the lock and key menu when your Web browser is active, your name and password are sent to the server and you are logged in automatically.

Most of the categories behave as you would expect them to—the FTP Server category keeps track of FTP accounts, the E-Mail Contacts keeps track of e-mail addresses, the Credit Cards category keeps track of credit card information, etc.

Although Web Confidential 2.1 now allows any of the major Web browsers to use one-button form submission, there are still areas where it limits the programs it supports. First, to use Web Confidential to automatically log in to a telnet account, you'll need BetterTelnet 2.0. Second, Outlook Express is required if you want to use Web Confidential to set up a POP account. These features won't appeal to as many people as one-button form submission, however, so I don't consider this a serious problem.

In my review of version 1.1, I complained that the simplicity of Web Confidential's interface was both a strength and a weakness. There were three issues that I touched on in that review—the Go button, the Check drop-down menu, and extraneous fields in the E-Mail Contacts category. These issues, listed below, remain in the new version.

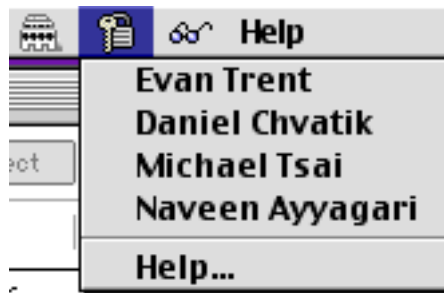
First, the Go button that sends you to the Internet address for a card is always active, even in categories that do not contain Internet addresses. Clicking it while in any non-Internet category forces an attempt to open a Web site using whatever text is entered in the second text field. It should dim when it's not necessary, like the delete button does when there are no cards in a category. The same can be said for the Check drop-down menu. If it is clicked when the current category does not support Internet addresses, it says "Not Available." I would prefer if it were disabled. Another minor interface issue is the E-Mail category. Although only two fields are used, the two remaining fields are titled "n/a" but they still accept text. It would better if these fields were dimmed and/or non-selectable.

Another cool feature is the Quick Open item in the File menu. Any file in either the Startup Items or Cabinet folder that Web Confidential creates will appear in this menu. Additionally, any item in the Startup Items folder will open, appropriately enough, when Web Confidential launches.

Also in Web Confidential 2.1 is a contextual menu plug-in for adding information to Web Confidential. All you need to do is highlight the text of interest and choose where you want to store it. There is one issue with the contextual menu plug-in—you cannot specify whether Web Confidential should create a new entry or change the active entry. Therefore, to create a new entry for an e-mail address, you would need to switch to Web Confidential, change to the E-Mail Contact category, create a new entry, switch back to the original application, select the text, and then bring up the Contextual Menu. All these steps severely limit the usefulness of the contextual menu plug-in for creating new entries in Web Confidential.

Share and Share Alike

One of Web Confidential's major features is that it uses Shared Menus, a feature of the Mac OS since System 7.1. Shared Menus allows Web Confidential to make its own menus available to other programs. For Shared Menus to appear in a program, the author must include the code to make this possible. Fortunately, many Mac Internet programs include this functionality, including Netscape Communicator, Internet Explorer, Mailsmith, Outlook Express, and Interarchy. Since Shared Menus are available system-wide, Web Confidential's menus will also show up in some non-Internet programs. The only one I have found thus far is BBEdit, but it is possible that there are more out there.



Web Confidential places three menus in programs that support this feature. There is the Web Confidential menu, which allows you to add the current Web page to Web Confidential, switch to Web Confidential, switch to URL Manager Pro, switch to another Internet application, or go the Web Confidential home page. The lock and key menu acts as a bookmark menu, allowing you to access Internet addresses for whatever program you are using. The final menu, the glasses menu, lets you access information cards for Web pages stored in the WWW Forms category. This can get slightly confusing, though—when you are using a Web browser, pages in the WWW Sites category show up in the lock and key menu, but pages in the WWW Forms category do not. On the one hand, this makes sense, since Web forms require the user to interact with Web Confidential to pass the username and password information, whereas sites using no password protection or an authentication window do not. On the other hand, it may confuse users who expect all their Web sites to be in the same place. To accomplish that now, you must list Web sites in the WWW Forms category twice.

With programs like Interarchy and Communicator, Web Confidential falls a bit short with Shared Menus. Although programs like these can access multiple Internet protocols, only items from the main protocol appear in the lock and key menu. This means no grabbing Web pages in Interarchy and no sending e-mail about that cool Web page from Communicator.

Lock and Key

Another feature in Web Confidential 2.1 is the ability to interface with the Keychain feature of OS 9. Web Confidential can read the contents of a Keychain and add it to the Web Confidential file.

Once the Keychain entries are made available to Web Confidential, you can choose to save any changes you make, by clicking the Keychain icon that appears next to any entries in the Keychain. The only problem is that it is easy to forget to click that icon, since you normally don't need to do anything to save your changes.

Also, you can choose to add any Web Confidential entries to your Keychain. This is accomplished by clicking the plus icon that appears in place of the Keychain icon. Unfortunately, you cannot delete from the Keychain using Web Confidential. This isn't a major thing, but it would be nice.

Finally, Web Confidential and the Keychain can work together—Web Confidential can store a Keychain password, and the Keychain can store Web Confidential passwords for decrypting files.

Keychain integration is not perfect, though. For instance, both Web Confidential and the Keychain allow you to name Keychain entries. However, when you save the name using Web Confidential, it changes the type of the Keychain entry, not the name. It doesn't appear to cause any problems with the Keychain, but at the very least, it is an annoyance.

Another case of this can be seen with Timbuktu passwords. I have three systems I access regularly with Timbuktu, so I have three Timbuktu passwords in my Keychain. When I imported the Keychain into Web Confidential, only one of the Timbuktu entries made the trip.

Integrating Web Confidential and the Keychain is a good idea—there are times where the Keychain is more convenient than switching to Web Confidential. Furthermore, there really isn't any way to edit something once it's in the Keychain, short of changing its name. The integration doesn't seem complete, though. Although the problems seem minor, they are still annoying.

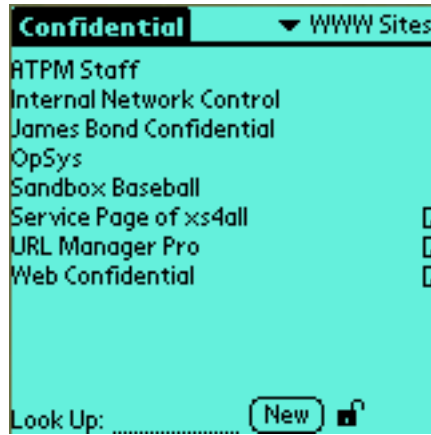
On The Road

To be perfectly honest, I never really thought much about Web Confidential's non-Internet related features. Why would I need to keep my PIN on my computer? I'm not going to drag it down to the ATM when I need cash. In this regard, a Palm version of Web Confidential makes perfect sense—information that comes in handy away from the computer can finally travel away from the computer. Also, if you have a tendency to move from computer to computer, it certainly makes more sense to put all your passwords on a portable device than to keep a copy on each machine. Finally, if you create a new account while you're not at your computer, you can jot it down in your Palm and sync it with Web Confidential on your computer when you get back to it.

Web Confidential for Palm could easily be described as Web Confidential Lite, and that's to be expected. The vast majority of Palm owners do not use it to connect to the Internet. The only Palms that ship standard with Internet access, the Palm VII and the VIIx, use Web clippings and e-mail. Therefore, it makes sense that there's no "Go" button or other way to access the Internet directly from Web Confidential for Palm.

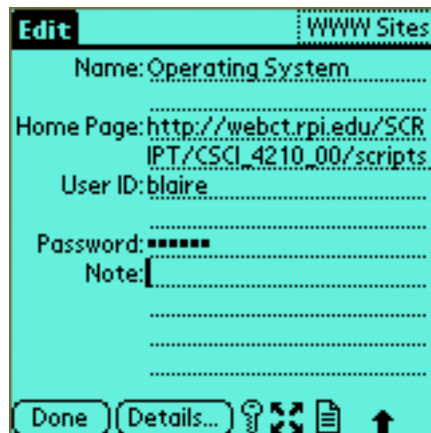
Instead, you get what can be described as the prototypical Palm application. Like the built-in Memo and Phonebook application, Web Confidential for Palm has two views. The first is a list view. Similar to the previously mentioned applications, this view shows the names of the items entered into the database. These items can be sorted into categories. By default,

Web Confidential for Palm comes pre-set with the same 15 categories as Web Confidential. When you sync, items coming from the desktop are placed in the proper category.



List View

The second view is the detail and editing view. This is similar to the editing view in the Phonebook application. In this view, you can see the same five fields as in the desktop application. If you prefer, the password field can be displayed as bullets (•). When you select this field for editing, it switches from bullets to clear text so you can read or change the password.



Detail and Editing View

All in all, Web Confidential for Palm is everything a Palm application should be—compact, efficient, and able to get the job done.

Protection

Both the Macintosh and Palm versions of Web Confidential allow you to encrypt your information to keep it safe from prying eyes. Both versions include the ability to encrypt using the 448-bit Blowfish algorithm. According to the documentation, there is no known attack against the Blowfish algorithm. Also, the Macintosh version includes the option of using MacPGP, if you prefer.

One complaint I had about protecting passwords in version 1.1 was the eyeglasses icon next to every password. Whenever the cursor was placed over the eyeglasses, the password would be displayed. In version 2.1, you now have the option of disabling the eyeglasses in the preferences. This will keep casual browsers from peeking at your password; unless they know their way around Web Confidential, they aren't going to be able to find your password.

Also, both versions allow for automatic encryption after a period of inactivity. Although this keeps your data secure, there are a few downsides. In the Macintosh version, when the password file is locked, the entries in the Shared Menu become inactive. The full list is still displayed in the menu, but clicking on one does nothing. As for the Palm version, the downside is more of an annoyance than anything else—whenever you want to sync with the desktop, the database must be decrypted. If the database on the Palm is encrypted, nothing gets updated. The only notice that anything is wrong is an entry in the HotSync log.

Conclusion

Like its predecessor, Web Confidential 2.1 provides a central location for storing Web passwords, e-mail contacts, PIN numbers, and the like. It still features strong security features to protect this information. Furthermore, by making one-button submission accessible to all major Web browsers, Web Confidential has eliminated one of its major flaws from the previous version. However, some of the interface problems remain from the previous version, and they keep Web Confidential from getting an Excellent rating.

Likewise, Web Confidential for Palm is also a very strong product and everything you would expect from a Palm application. It is the perfect mobile solution for keeping track of passwords and other pertinent information while you are away from the computer. The only complaint I have about it is the requirement that you decrypt the database before HotSyncing. One of the original selling points of Palm products was the ability to sync with a single button. Now, I have to choose between leaving my database decrypted or remembering to decrypt it when I drop my Visor in the cradle.

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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.

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What Are Some Tips for Viewing PDFs?

- You can [download](#) Adobe Acrobat Reader for free. If you have a Power Macintosh, Acrobat Reader 4 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. Links to external Web sites are reproduced in footnotes at the bottoms of pages, in case you are reading from a printed copy.
- 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.

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Of course. Email 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.

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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.



Trivia Challenge

by Edward Goss, egoss@atpm.com

VPs if You Please

This is the latest in ATPM's series of *Trivia Challenges*. Answers to this month's *Trivia Challenge* will be found in the next issue of ATPM. If you have any suggestions for future *Trivia Challenges*, or would like to contribute a *Trivia Challenge*, please e-mail me at egoss@atpm.com.

I'd like to congratulate last month's *Trivia Challenge* winners: Iowan Toni Graham and Shane Liesegang from Virginia. This month's prize of a dynamite ATPM T-shirt goes to the first two correct entries I receive at egoss@atpm.com. Individual readers are eligible to win only once every twelve months.

This month's *Trivia Challenge* is timed to coincide with America's presidential election, which should be news about the time you read this. On the left is a list of former US Vice Presidents who went on to become Presidents themselves. On the right are the Presidents under whom they served. So vote for your favorite on November 7; then match up the Presidents and VPs as you take part in:

Trivia Challenge 6.11—VPs If You Please

1. John Adams	A. James A. Garfield
2. Martin Van Buren	B. Warren G. Harding
3. Millard Fillmore	C. Andrew Jackson
4. Chester A. Arthur	D. Richard M. Nixon
5. Theodore Roosevelt	E. Dwight D. Eisenhower
6. Calvin Coolidge	F. George Washington
7. Harry Truman	G. Zachary Taylor
8. Richard M. Nixon	H. Franklin D. Roosevelt
9. Lyndon B. Johnson	I. William McKinley
10. Gerald Ford	J. John F. Kennedy

Last Month's Answers—6.10—TV Times

1. "Here's Johnny!"	G. The Tonight Show
2. "Yadda yadda yadda."	C. Seinfeld
3. "Well...Isn't THAT special!"	F. Saturday Night Live
4. "DOH!"	I. The Simpsons
5. "Na-nu, na-nu."	A. Mork & Mindy
6. "Yabba dabba doo!"	J. The Flintstones
7. "Hello everybody." "NORM!"	E. Cheers
8. "To the moon, Alice, to the moon!"	B. The Moonlighters
9. "I'm comin' 'Lizabeth! It's the big one!"	D. Sanford And Son
10. "And now for something completely different."	H. Monty Python's Flying Circus

The Rules

Each question has only *one* correct answer. The answers are stored in a hermetically sealed envelope guarded by a trusty cat named "Donald" who lives in our house.

This Month's CD Recommendation

[Sailing To Philadelphia](#) by Mark Knopfler. Another fine batch of tunes from former Dire Straits' front man Knopfler. Featuring duets with James Taylor, Van Morrison, and Difford & Tilbrook (Squeeze), along with stellar playing from Guitar Guru Knopfler and his talented band of friends make this a wonderfully pleasant album. Meticulously recorded in HDCD for those who have an HDCD player, "Sailing To Philadelphia" will also sound great on any conventional CD system. A must for Dire Straits and Knopfler fans, it might even convert a few of those who haven't heard this talented Brit yet.

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