ATPM

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

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Welcome

Welcome to the January 2002 issue of *About This Particular Macintosh*! This issue marks the beginning our eighth calendar year of publication. When the first issue of ATPM was uploaded to the Apple eWorld server, Michael Spindler was CEO of Apple and Newt Gingrich was Speaker of the US House of Representatives.

Our monthly Internet magazine has spanned two presidential administrations, three Apple CEOs, a few House Speakers and the first and only ATPM staff karaoke night. The karaoke night began and ended when ATPM staffer Mike Shields began his personal rendition of Ray Charles' "Georgia." It wasn't that his song was so bad, but a local in a cowboy hat and tutu quickly upstaged him. We didn't ponder whether or not the local was working through a personal identity crisis or just preferred costumes that clashed. We can say that his attire was far more interesting than his performance.

Part of the problem with Mike's song was that we weren't in Georgia. We were in Austin, Texas. This was back in the days before Apple Computer purchased the material assets of Power Computing and both Apple and Power Computing has significant operations in the Austin area. We thought it would be a cool place to stage our first annual and ultimately only ATPM staff karaoke night. We found out later that the local performer was a lead engineer for Dell.

What's the Prob?

Well, right now there really isn't one. A casual review of the ATPM staff e-mail exchanges over the past few months reveals an interesting contrast to the staff correspondence when ATPM began publication several years ago. Noticeably absent from our recent exchanges are conversations concerning Apple's ability to remain in business and talk about the Mac's moribund market share. Today's e-mail exchanges often concern the latest advancements in Apple technology and the continuing transition to Mac OS X and Mac OS X software applications.

Big Blues

No. This is not about the folks at IBM. After all Big Blue smartly chose to exit the consumer PC business long ago. Big Blue is the co-designer of Apple's processors and owns the PowerPC trademark. What bad things can we say now about Apple's original nemesis and latter day partner?

What we can say is that 2001 was not a particularly good year for the PC business. But these days it's not Mac users singing the blues. The HP-Compaq merger plan is on the rocks, and Gateway is struggling to survive in a very difficult market for Windows box makers.

That fateful night in Austin taught us an important lesson—PC patrons weren't ready for the blues, at least not soon after the release of Windows 95. They'd prefer a cowboy in drag to a heartfelt rendition of an American classic. Apple was the archetype of the Silicon Valley IPO and its travails over the years have provided the makings for a modern-day Shakespearean tragedy turned triumph. Unfortunately, an appreciation for culture often takes a back seat in the minds of those looking for a fast buck, a quick laugh, or just a good time.

Culture in a Cup

The days of engineers in cowboy hats and tutus running roughshod over veteran Mac users like Mike are over. We really don't mean to pick on the Dell engineers. But in our view locating a fashionable and innovative product in the Dell line would be akin to finding fine cheese in the Velveeta section of your supermarket. That's not to say there isn't a place for Velveeta or Dell, but both sets of products may be designed for people whose first thought of the world "culture" is that it comes at the bottom of a Dannon yogurt cup.

The King is Dead…

2002 may be the year that the computing world accepts the end of the desktop paradigm. In our view there are only two PC makers that have anticipated the changing needs of consumers—Apple and Sony. For all its might (and we do give credit where credit is due—Dell has probably the best customer service set-up among all major PC makers) the days of cheap PC boxes meeting the needs of an ever more mobile and more sophisticated computer user ended before the start of the new millennium.

The desktop PC box has been on borrowed time and the precipitous drop in PC sales evidences that consumers want more than a cheap PC with Windows XP. Windows XP might have been fine two or three years ago, but the market has changed and Microsoft's products and business model are out-of-date. A victim of their own success, they now have to compete for new revenue in markets that companies like Sony and Nintendo control. Good luck maintaining sales and revenue growth in markets with more savvy competitors.

Long Live the King

The former problem with Apple is that it relied on its product name at a time when its products were no longer conspicuously better that its competitors. The company then tried to play "me too" too quickly. It was kind of like a venerable opera troupe overnight changing its specialty to modern dance.

Several years in the making, the release of Mac OS X heralded a new day for Apple and a reiteration of the strategy that originally brought the company success. The company's products are well integrated and designed to meet the needs of its select clientele. Apple has learned the hard way that the best way to meet a suitable mate isn't to date every available person in town, just those who share a common interest. Apple products are uniquely designed to meet the needs of their users.

Macworld Expo is just a few days away. Apple's PR department has outdone itself this year. The buildup to this expo is dripping with so much honey-laced hype; the game wardens in Northern California will be working overtime to keep bears away from the convention center.

Honey, I Shrunk the PC

Expect new product announcements (of course) but be ready for details about the next phase of Apple's integrated product strategy. Unlike the other major PC makers, Apple's products no longer have the look of a wardrobe set from a Village People performance.

The desktop paradigm has come and gone. Sure Apple will continue to make iMacs for the education market and consumers who would prefer a family-style PC. But the minitower is geared toward pros and home enthusiasts who expect the best of themselves and the equipment they choose to use.

The iBook and TiBook will continue to outshine the products offered by Apple's competitors in terms of both ease-of-use and total functionality. Mac users now have a luxury box seat from which to watch Apple's Wintel competitors continue their long and drawn out song and dance. The music has slightly changed but the wardrobes haven't gotten any better. Alas, there will not be a second ATPM Staff karaoke night. Apple and Mac users are no longer apologetically singing anyone else's tunes (iPod users notwithstanding).

Same Time Next Month

In next month's issue of ATPM we will review Apple's results for the first fiscal quarter and provide an in-depth review of the major announcements from Macworld Expo. Until then, please enjoy the quality commentaries and columns inside this month's issue. Eight calendar years and counting…

The ATPM Staff

This issue of ATPM includes:

Beyond the Barline: My Resolution

For the first time in several years, David Ozab is making a New Year's resolution, and putting it in print just to keep himself honest. Will he keep it? History says "no," but anything's possible.

Hollywood: Comic Con and DV Expo

Mike Shields reports on the Mac presence at the San Diego Comic Con and DV Expo, bringing up conspiracy theories, Final Cut Pro 3, and trade show goodies.

About This Particular Web Site

Paul Fatula reports on fun sites like Pork4Kids and The Flying Cow, as well as useful ones such as a great software site and one that tells how to get spammers to pay up. Last, but not least, you can see how clever your fellow Netizens are by checking out the Gallery of CSS Descramblers.

Interview with Frank Vercruesse

Daniel Chvatik interviews Frank Vercruesse, author of the popular Mac OS X utility ASM (Application Switcher Menu), which brings some beloved OS 9 behaviors to OS X.

Report: MacExpo in London

Chris Ward brings us news from London's MacExpo trade show, covering big guns like Adobe and Macromedia as well as smaller developers such as Perforce and P&L.

Networking: Sharing an Apple Printer on a Mac Network

Matthew Glidden explains the networking options for Apple printers, from Ethernet and LocalTalk to non-networkable printers that can nonetheless be shared using appropriate software on a host Mac.

How To: Working with Downloaded Files without Special Utilities

Have you ever downloaded a file and discovered that you cannot open it? Gregory Tetrault writes a 'how-to' column for dealing with difficult files. He also challenges ATPM readers to a contest: find a downloadable file that stumps him!

Desktop Pictures from Hawai'i and Montréal

Chris Turner brings back some desktop pictures from his trip to Hawai'i, focussing on Pearl Harbor and the Place of Refuge (on the southern Kona coast of the big island). Daniel Chvatik's pictures of snowy Montréal are less exotic but no less beautiful on your desktop.

Shareware Roundup: Financial Help

Brook Smith reviews three OS X shareware programs for managing your personal finances: Moneydance, Hold-Up, and Where Did All My Money Go?.

Review: LaunchBar 3.1.2

Michael Tsai reviews LaunchBar, an innovative Mac OS X system enhancement that makes applications, folders, and URLs quickly accessible from the keyboard without requiring a lengthy configuration process.

Review: Portraits & Prints Template Maker

Eric Blair reviews Portraits & Prints Template Maker, a companion application to the recently reviewed Portraits and Prints.

E-Mail

Changing the Default JPEG Opener

I would like to know how to change the default application for a JPEG file. Let me explain: If I have downloaded a photo from the Internet and my default application for JPEG pictures was QuickTime PictureViewer, it will be saved as a Picture Viewer file. But if I have now decided that I wanted to view this picture with Goldberg, which is a picture application that doesn't allow any editing functions (except copy-paste, which I can't use because it would be too long), how can I do it? Does all this have to do with what Internet Explorer calls the "file creator" (which is "pig2" for Goldberg and "ogle" for PictureViewer?

—Rccladdict

There are a few ways to tackle this. The least technical is to use the File Translation tab of the File Exchange control panel. Then, find a JPEG file set to be opened with QuickTime PictureViewer and map that file to Goldberg. Now, whenever you double-click a QuickTime JPEG file, it will open with Goldberg. (I have done this to make TeachText and SimpleText documents open in SimpleEdit.)

You can also go to Internet Explorer's preferences and select File Helpers. Sort these by extension and scroll down to the jpe, jpeg, and jpg entries. Then assign those files to Goldberg.

Another solution is to use an AppleScript applet designed to change the creator of any JPEG file dragged on it to Goldberg. There are plenty of sample scripts that do this type of task. *—Gregory Tetrault*

A Simple Mac CAD Program?

Is there a design programme that would enable me to set up a grid on the page, and on that grid measure out and draw an object? The objects in this case are the various timbers of an old-time sailing ship. Ideally the programme would enable me to draw out one side of the frame and then ask it to add another, identical, side, reversed, on the other side of the keel. I am sorry to sound so vague. I know this could be done on a simple CAD programme, but such a thing doesn't seem to exist in the Mac world. Your help and suggestions would be much appreciated.

—Marius Pope

You are correct that a CAD program would do this for you. One option is <u>CADintosh</u>, a shareware program by the author of GraphicConverter. Another option would be something along the lines of AppleWorks which has a very good, albeit basic, drawing component that should suit your needs quite nicely.   —*Eric Blair and Evan Trent*

Think Different

I was wondering if you happen to know where I might be able to download a QuickTime version (or whatever) of the think different ad "here's to the crazy ones." I have a friend that used to have it and lost it in a system crash. I was trying to find it for her again.

—*Carole Williamson*

I found <u>one site</u> with a somewhat low-quality QuickTime video. Another site has some nice annotated <u>desktop pictures</u>.   —*Michael Tsai*

Mixed Networks Make Strange Bedfellows

I appreciate your efforts to get this article online. I could not find the help I needed in several networking books and I find it for "free" right here.

Great asset to both the Mac *and* the PC-using community. Thanks!

—*Kevin Raley*

Macs and PCs Sharing the Same Internet Connection

Could I do this using a wireless network? What would be different in the setup? I know Apple has AirPort which is pretty fast (11 Mbps). AirPort cards only work on Macs, right? Could I use an AirPort card on the Mac and a compatible card (IEEE 802.11b) on the PC? Would they be able to communicate?

—*Samuel Kravin*

Yes, it works. The setup depends what type of card you have on the PC. I have an AirPort network here, and a friend uses his PC laptop to connect. However, with his card (Linksys) I had to disable WEP password protection to make it work. Since you can use a closed network with access control, and since WEP is easily breakable, it's not such a big loss.   —*Evan Trent*

My Resolution

New Year's is traditionally the time for resolutions, those great promises we make to ourselves on January 1st, only to break them all by Groundhog Day. Like most people, I've had a terrible history with resolutions, so much so that I've given up making them. This year, though, I'd like to take another crack at it. I'm only making one, and I'm giving myself the whole year to accomplish it. I'm also putting it in print to keep me from backsliding.

Drum Roll Please

My resolution for 2002 is to be running OS X on my Mac by the end of the year. Doesn't sound so tough, does it? But wait, I'm a musician. My software doesn't work on OS X. True, but slowly that is changing, and I'm facing the New Year with confidence. This is the year I will upgrade to OS X.

What Works?

Actually more than you might imagine. First, and most importantly, my sound card, the Midiman Delta 2496 is OS X compatible. Midiman also has new drivers for their MIDI interfaces. I had been looking at the Midisport USB 2X2 as a possible purchase, and now that I know it will work with X, I have no reason to be apprehensive.

The shareware audio editor Felt Tip Sound Studio (which I use extensively) was among the first audio programs carbonized. When I'm ready to move up to a more sophisticated package, Bias' Peak 3.0 and Deck 3.0 will soon be OS X compatible as well. Bias' Peak DV, a stripped-down version optimized for use with Final Cut Pro, is already out for OS 10.1.

What's Coming?

Bitheadz is working on Version 3.0 of the Unity DS-1 Digital Sampler, which, along with many other improvements, will be OS X compatible. I presently own version 1.4, which I'm very happy with, but I've resisted upgrading without the promise of OS X support. Now that I know for certain that Unity DS-1 will run on 10.1, I am willing to pay for the upgrade when I have the available funds.

Emagic is scheduled to release their new versions of the Logic Audio series (Platinum, Gold, and Silver) for OS X this month, along with compatible hardware interfaces. These were demonstrated at the last Macworld, and were originally slated for a September release, but were then delayed until January. I'm in the market for a new sequencer, and though Logic might not be my first choice overall (I find Cubase more intuitive), a 10.1 version will go a long way to changing my mind.

Steinberg's Nuendo (basically Cuebase without MIDI) is also due out for OS X in the first half of next year. No word yet on a release date for a carbonized Cuebase, however. As far as other applications I might consider, neither Digidesign nor Mark of the Unicorn has made any announcements regarding OS X. MOTU's has "aquafied" the look of Digital Performer 3, maybe that's a hopeful sign, though personally, I'd take either Logic or Cubase over D.P.

What's Missing?

There are three applications I just can't manage without, and none of them are scheduled for OS X compatibility any time soon. First, there's Coda's Finale. I'm presently up to my elbows in my dissertation (serves me right for writing an opera!), and a notation program is indispensable. Despite my occasional gripes with Finale, I've invested far too much time, and created way too many scores to switch easily. So I'm sticking with Finale 2000 until I can upgrade to a carbonized version.

Cycling '74's Max is another program I can't live without. I paid for the upgrade to 4.0 (the first paid upgrade in years) to get the integrated Max/MSP package along with more stable performance with my sound card. Now I'm hoping for a carbonized version, and, maybe if it's not too much to ask, make it 4.1 so it's free to those of us with the latest upgrade.

Finally, there's U & I Software's Metasynth (along with the bundled Metatrack and Xx). If you missed my columns on August 2000's MetaCamp, suffice to say that Metasynth is one of the most unique and flexible sound synthesis programs ever made. Todd Barton is talking about reviving MetaCamp this year, and, if he does, I will be there. My first question to Eric and Edward will be, "When will it run on OS X?"

Conclusion

So that's my goal. I'm a lot closer now than I was in May (when I wrote my first column on OS X), but I've still got a long way to go. That said, I still hope to fulfill my resolution, and, at this time next year, to be writing at length about my new OS X–based home setup. If for some reason, though, the upgrades I'm hoping for get delayed and I can't keep my resolution, I have one consolation: I can blame it on someone else!

On a Clear Day You Can See the Hollywood Sign

by Mike Shields, mshields@atpm.com

Comic Con and DV Expo

Clearly, things have changed since last I spoke here, and time will only tell how they have affected me. And as a result, you, my loyal three readers, drop me an e-mail, to let me know how I'm doing.

This Is a Job For…

Macintosh! Of all the Conventions and Expos I've attended lately, the San Diego Comic Con has been the most recent. And, surprisingly, it was the one with the greatest number of Macs in attendance, I guess, for those of us that couldn't attend Macworld Expo in New York, which took place at the same time. I attend about six of these types of things a year, Macworld not being one of them, for various reasons. I hit Internet World, and the Showbiz Expo, and one or two others.

With the Mac having 40% penetration on the Web, it surprises me to no end how out of the way the people at Internet World go to avoid the Macintosh issue. It's the same with the Showbiz Expo, as us creative types have skewed the Mac owning statistic for awhile now. Yet, they were nowhere to be found. Sure, a couple of booths were using them as point of sale cash registers, and the fine folks at both Final Draft, Inc. and Screenplay Systems had the decency to feature their fine software (unsolicited plug) on both platforms. However, for the most part, the Mac had gone missing. But not in San Diego. Creative types were giving Photoshop seminars, and various companies were demonstrating their characters and video games on the latest and greatest.

If I were into conspiracies, which I am, I'd say that Bill Gates had spread some money around the industry. And as you my three readers know, when I refer to the industry, I'm of course speaking of, the business. Think of it, Microsoft Inc., as the 21st Century mafia—my connections with the Russian mafia notwithstanding. Ok, I'm not really connected, more on the outside, looking in; but they might finance my film, hopefully, before the new century starts. But I digress. The facts are in place. The Mac is the easiest, quickest, and most cost effective solution to all things movie-related. This was proven out when I more recently attended the:

DV Expo

I walk in, and the first thing I saw was the black booth. Very slick, stylish, yet understated. Minimalist in its approach, with the big fat Apple logo staring me in the face. The words Final Cut Pro 3 emblazoned below. They lost points for not having any free handouts, as well as needing to pay actual money to attend the Final Cut Pro 3 seminar—although they were demoing the software at the individual workstations.

The more serious infraction occurs when you move to the Matrox with RTMac booth and discover that they're bundling the board with Adobe Premiere. I asked one of the vendors why, and they said Apple is not returning their calls. This is perplexing, as I've seen FCP get a boost from the Matrox board. Yet another conspiracy? Only time will tell. If I don't tell you before then….

Well, that's enough Apple and Mac bashing for one column, I think. Good things about FCP3? Many. There's the definitive review. The biggest and best thing is, of course, OS X support! That collective sigh of relief you just heard came from G4 users everywhere comes from not needing to run in Classic mode anymore. Personally, I think this should've happened when they released OS X, however, beggars can't be choosers. Other new features include integrated compositing (including Adobe AfterEffects plug-in support) and QuickView, a new preview mode that lets you quickly preview complex effects before you render them. Rendering is a four letter word to most of the DV editing community. Of course, the latest and greatest G4 allows quick render times, however, it's always good to not render if you don't have to.

Other highlights, of my day, which may or may not be Mac-related, include, but are not limited to, winning a free T-shirt and mousepad from the aforementioned Adobe; getting yet another T-shirt from the fine folks at DV magazine, one of *the* sponsors of the event, for simply filling out a form; and finding a lens that I can attach to the Canon XL1s, for a film look. This last one cuts another 50K off of my movie *Diamond is a Girl's Best Friend*'s budget, which can't be a bad thing.

The DV Guys were giving out free tote bags, with their logo on it. I needed one, as the aforementioned sponsors wouldn't give me one, as they didn't think I was press. I went there first. I even pitted them against the booth next to them, in a bidding war over equipment. Remember, anything that creates an opportunity to spend less money is a good thing. I did receive a couple of Microwave-of-the-months. Some companies still

don't get that you should give out a cross-platform CD at these events. Or, even provide Mac software in the first place. And before I get e-mails, try ten seconds on high, put it on top of a styrofoam cup, and watch the light show. And before I get other e-mails, no, I don't actually advocate this.

Another thing I noticed was the size of the Expo, or rather, the lack thereof. I was able to walk the floor in a couple of hours. This included the three demos that I attended. I walked around twice, just to make sure that I didn't miss anything. I didn't. It was indeed fully one fourth the size of The Streaming Media Expo that I've recently reported on to you. And, what's worse, I didn't even get any good job leads. If digital video truly is the wave of the future that I believe it to be, and that Bill Gates believes it to be, where was the Microsoft booth? Where were all the companies that support Microsoft and its foray into non-linear video editing that Our Good Buddy Bill is about to buy?

There must've been another Expo that week. Or maybe I'm the only one on the DV bandwagon. I'd hope it was the former, as the latter is intuitively denied by the record attendance, as well as the knowledge that everyone who has ever bought a G4 receives a copy of the current version of iMovie, a.k.a. Final Cut Pro Lite. Anyone who can successfully edit the demo clips provided can put together a video good enough to put up on his personal Web site.

I'd begun to think that people were starting to give up on the Mac. This was of course, before I attended last month's DV Expo. So, popular opinion to the contrary, and conspiracy theories aside, the Mac is back. Hopefully, the various vendors and dealers will be, too. If not, be here next time, when I can tell you all about it.

72 and sunny in Redondo…

E you next time.

Pork4Kids

This site, which proudly proclaims itself "a service of the National Pork Board," begins with three animated children and a pig floating about the screen. Ironically, it is one of the children who says, "Build a sandwich with me," while the naïve piglet by his side smiles a wide grin. Kids can "Go Hog Wild" playing simple games, touring a real hog farm, and sending pig e-cards to their friends. Links for Teachers and Parents take a more educational direction. There are also plenty of recipes to be found here, and you can even make a Cyber Sandwich if you get hungry…but if you want roast beef on that sandwich, you'll just have to wait: Beef4Kids is still under construction.

OSNews

This site, which covers every OS out there in its goal of "exploring the future of computing," features, as I write this, articles about OS X, Linux, Windows XP, and Novell Netware. I discovered the site when I followed a link to an extensive article by Scot Hacker, a fan (like myself) of BeOS, who made the leap to OS X. In addition to off-site links and feature articles, there are interviews, editorials, and forums in which readers can discuss their OS of choice. Interestingly, BeOS, the most popular category, has nearly 50 times as many posts as Mac OS/Mac OS X.

Getting Spammers to Pay Up

What's an *ATPW* without an anti-spam link? This one, sadly, is of practical use only to residents of Washington State, but it's well worth a read for others as well. Its author, in fact, is working on a *book* about fighting spam. This site helps Washington residents take advantage of the state's anti-spam laws, providing not only a list of steps to successfully collect money from spammers, but also a sample DEMAND FOR DAMAGES letter and, should that fail, a sample formal complaint, ready to submit to court. (Those outside Washington might want to consult Spam Laws to read applicable laws, if any, for their area.)

Gallery of CSS Descramblers

In case you've been sleeping under a rock for the last few years, DeCSS is a program that lets a computer break DVD encryption protocols, either for innocent playing or, well, less innocent purposes. Long a victim of court battles, free availability of the DeCSS source code represents a victory of free speech over the reviled Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and this page is a monument to that victory. It links to numerous implementations of the DeCSS algorithm as well as some rather creative expressions thereof, including T-shirts, songs, and even haiku.

The Flying Cow

Of course, a flying cow! I mean, come on. What could be more normal than that? Cow tipping is for wimps. In this game, you put a cow on a catapult and fling him towards a target, under the watchful eyes of a farmer. The cow moos when he hits the ground, and the farmer occasionally remarks on your skills (or lack thereof). If you get more than 300 points, you are inaugurated into the Cow Flingers of All Time. Go ahead, make your mommy proud: fling a cow today!

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Frank Vercruesse (author of Application Switcher Menu)

ATPM had the pleasure of interviewing Frank Vercruesse, author of ASM (Application Switcher Menu), last month. ASM is an extension to Mac OS X that provides OS X with the equivalent of a superior version of OS 9's application menu. In addition to the customizable menu, ASM lets the user modify some of OS X's application switching and window layering behavior, and it includes other enhancements to improve the transition to and enjoyment of OS X.

• • •

Tell us a bit about yourself. Where do you live and what do you do for a living? How did you get started programming, especially for Mac OS X, and what setup do you use when you develop projects like ASM?

My name is Frank Vercruesse. I am a 23-year-old student of computer science at the University of Leipzig, one of the bigger cities in Germany. And that's where I live too.

I started programming more than ten years ago. At that time we had no computer at home. However, there was a study group for computer enthusiasts in the neighborhood. Most of the time we played only games, but I also wrote my first, simple programs there. In 1991 my father finally bought a computer. It was a Mac LC, which still runs fine by the way, and I played around a lot with HyperCard and explored almost every corner of the system using ResEdit. Later I learned C and some other programming languages.

As the long awaited public beta of Mac OS X came out last year, I was very excited about it. After a few weeks of tweaking, I was familiar with the new OS and its development tools. It took another while until I could write my first Cocoa program, because I had to learn Objective-C first in order to use the frameworks. For the development of ASM and my other projects I mainly use Project Builder and Interface Builder. My current machine is an indigo iMac (400 MHz G3, 384 MB RAM).

What gave you the inspiration for ASM? What do you think makes ASM special?

First of all I'm a big advocate of Mac OS X. As a developer I especially appreciate the Unix underpinnings that make the new system very stable and reliable. Anyway, I'm not so happy with some aspects of the new user interface. As a long time user of the classic Mac OS I'm used to clicking in the top right corner of the screen in order to switch between running applications. Of course, there is the Dock that more or less fulfills this purpose now, but old habits die hard. So I began to think about the reincarnation of the sorely missed menu and this has led to the development of ASM.

I don't know if there is anything special about ASM. It's my first program ever that I've released to the public and I'm happy that it became so popular.

What was the most challenging part in creating ASM? How did Apple's lack of public documentation for the new system menus in 10.1 affect your project? What are—in general—the easiest and hardest parts in developing for Mac OS X?

In my opinion Mac OS X is a real relief from the developer's point of view. Thanks to the memory protection it's much harder to crash the whole system compared with the classic Mac OS. So if your application crashes permanently—a likely situation during the development process—you don't have to reboot the machine every time. Furthermore, since Mac OS X is a true Unix system, porting code from other operating systems is now easier in most cases.

The tricky part—I can only speak for myself—is the lack of (public) APIs (Application Programmer Interfaces) for system wide customization of the user interface. There was a standard way for developers to do such things with the classic Mac OS. You were able to manipulate almost everything of the system with the help of a system extension. You know, this led to incompatibilities between certain extensions and it's probably not a good idea to simply re-implement it for Mac OS X. However, Apple should really consider giving us developers the chance to modify some aspects of the system, especially the user interface.

As you already mentioned Apple doesn't provide any documentation for building system menus. It's a private framework that they obviously want to reserve for their own use—at least for the moment. Therefore the most challenging part in rewriting ASM as a menu extra (the actual term for system menu) was to find out how such a beast works. This was

a tedious process that required some intuition. Though I'm now able to make my own menu extras, it's actually a bad practice to rely on private APIs, since they are subject to change. In the worst case I'll have to rewrite ASM again when the next update for Mac OS X comes out. But what were the alternatives? A less functional or no ASM at all!

You have been developing for OS X since the public beta. How has Apple's developer support and documentation changed since then? Do you feel Apple sufficiently supports developers like you? What could they do better in your opinion?

Well, there is always something that can be improved, but I think in general the quality of their developer support is good. Apple gives away their developer tools and the documentation is also available on their servers free of charge. Maybe a matter of course but none the less a clinking good thing, especially for students like me whose finances are mostly tight.

Something I'd consider problematic is the still incomplete documentation, particularly for the Cocoa frameworks. Sooner or later you are confronted with the infamous "description forthcoming" statement. Though the situation has improved since the public beta, it could be better. Fortunately, there are some other sources on the Web and a few mailing lists that help to overcome these difficulties. Anyway, I'm probably not the one who should blame others for lack of documentation, but rather set my own house in order…

Some other improvements that I'd really appreciate: Apple should make the whole bug database accessible to all developers. A more comfortable search function for the mailing list archive would also be nice.

All in all my personal experiences with Apple's developer support are positive so far. For example, I've posted a description of a bug that I found in Mac OS X to one of their developer mailing lists. A few hours later I got an e-mail from an Apple employee who confirmed the problem and provided a workaround.

What do you feel Apple needs to improve most in OS X, from a user's point of view?

The Finder.

Tell us a bit more about the development process. What are the main phases, and how much time do you spend on each?

There are several approaches to software development, but my knowledge of the various theories is very limited. Unfortunately, I've never paid much attention to this topic in the past. So it's actually a quite chaotic procedure instead of a well-ordered development process.

Sometimes I make a quick sketch in order to visualize the basic structure of the program, but I start coding without any noteworthy preparations usually. All I have is a more or less vague imagination of the program's design in my mind's eye. That is, I subdivide the whole program into smaller components. Each of these parts is implemented independently as far as possible. At the beginning there is only a simple code skeleton that actually does nothing. Then I add and refine features step by step, so the program becomes more complex a bit at a time. Sooner or later—when the basic features are working—I put the individual components together. The user interface evolves at the same time.

It's hard to tell how long each "phase" takes. I have to spend a lot of time reading the documentation in between, since I'm still in the process of learning Cocoa. Mostly, there are different ways to achieve one's goal and it's not always obvious for beginners what the optimal solution is. Testing can be also very time consuming. Occasionally, you spend countless nights to find just one nasty bug.

Where will you focus in the future? Are we going to see a lot more development for ASM, or are you working on a new project?

The project that I'm currently working on is similar to ASM. It's also a menu utility, but has a more general approach. You will be able to build your own, individual system menus with a few clicks. ASM will live on in the form of a plug-in for the new project. I hope to release a first version of the program in January. The basic features already work, but it is not yet very polished.

Thank you very much for your time. Good luck with your future projects!

Thank you.

MacExpo in London, UK

There was excitement and enthusiasm in the air of MacExpo 2001, and there was a reason. Perhaps because Apple was exhibiting at a UK show for the first time in five years, or perhaps because Mac users currently have a lot to celebrate, there was one of the largest turnouts of visitors and exhibitors in the history of the show. In a time of economic downturn (especially in the computing market), Apple is one of the very few IT companies currently running at a profit. A major upgrade to an amazing new OS has been released, developers are flocking back to the Mac in droves, machines are increasing in power but decreasing in price, and now Apple has once again starting manufacturing non-Mac products. To top all that you can't move without seeing Macs featured in adverts, TV programs, or films, so there really is a lot to celebrate.

The major product releases aside, trade shows like MacExpo are an excellent place for smaller companies to flaunt their wares, so it was encouraging to see lesser known companies' equally competent software and hardware. It's almost impossible to detail every single product and manufacturer, but here are the products that appealed most to me, whether due to merit or the looks of their presentation stands.

Apple had two major products to promote on the day: firstly iPod, which had its official launch on the first day of the Expo. iPod is Apple's first non-PC or monitor product for a few years, and while I was disappointed to see something rather unoriginal like an MP3 player, it has the company's usual panache and flair. Primarily designed to complement Macs and iTunes (though a Wintel version will ship shortly), iPod has a 1,000 CD-quality song capacity, a 10-hour battery life, a crisp LCD screen, and it weighs only 6.5 ounces. It will sell for approximately £350 ($399) including VAT and specially designed headphones, although some would say the price puts iPod out of the reach of a large portion of the consumer public.

Apple's software releases include OS X 10.1, which, along with an increasing number of applications and games for the new OS, shows OS X finally becoming a viable option for many Mac users. Other, less-publicized, releases included iTunes 2 and the second generation of AirPort, Apple's wireless networking standard.

Stalwarts of computer shows, Macromedia, whilst having no major new products to promote and a slightly unimpressive stand, were demonstrating their software through a series of seminars. Items of note to Mac users from Macromedia are of a support bent and include the launch of a certification program for Dreamweaver, Flash, and ColdFusion, creating recognized qualification for proficient users of the applications. The release of a series of online video tutorials for Director 8.5, a new volume licensing program, and the launch of a worldwide-authorized training center network were among other announcements from Macromedia.

Adobe, possibly Macromedia's largest rival, was once again out in force, launching the latest version of their layout and design software, InDesign 2.0. Available in early 2002, it will be compatible with OS X and include a host of new features (such as transparency) never seen in similar programs from its competitors. With Quark increasingly slow and unreliable when it comes to delivering what users want and when they want it, InDesign could easily become the layout package of choice within a few years. Illustrator 10 is out now, again with support for OS X, and adds many new features like data-driven graphics, symbol libraries, and Web export. However, there is still no news on Photoshop for OS X, which I'm sure was the most popular question to stand staff throughout the show.

Perhaps one of the most anticipated software releases of the year, and indeed the most pleasantly surprising, was the launch of Maya for OS X. Maya has been the 3D graphics industry's most successful and powerful application, so its port to OS X marks a welcome return of powerful 3D applications to the Mac platform. Maya is out now, and its features include QuickTime, OpenGL, and full Carbon support.

First from the smaller developers is a release from Perforce software, which specializes in Software Configuration Management solutions (SCM). SCMs help development teams manage large programming projects by providing a graphical representation of what stages programmers have achieved in projects. The application is available exclusively for OS X and is another sign of life getting easier for Mac OS developers, who, let's face it, haven't had an easy time in recent years.

The launch of OS X and the relative ease of developing for the OS have opened up a gateway for a wealth of new developers, one such being P&L software, better known as developers for Apple's WebObjects. Their first venture into application programming is Mesa, an Excel-like spreadsheet for Mac OS X, including full compatibility with Excel databases.

Finally, Toon Boom Technologies was out in force plugging their new 2D vector animation studio, Toon Boom Studio. The package includes all a budding animator requires to make Web-based animations, with features that include SWF export and LipSync, although I do feel that the Flash file format is sometimes rather limiting, making all animations look startlingly similar; however, in the meantime it's the best around.

One glaring omission from my software roundup is Microsoft Office V.x, but I'm sure that Microsoft won't let you ignore the product over the next few months, and quite frankly its stand at the show was pathetic, being a long, thin table with several bored looking staff seated behind it.

For those users looking to accessorize their Mac, there were plenty of hardware releases to peruse as well. Ammicro specializes in distributing hardware accessories for the Mac, and new to its rosters are, among others, Keyspan's 1cm-thick 4-port USB hub and USB 2.0 PCMCIA card, iRez's FireWire Kritter and StealthFire Web cams, Digicom's USB GSM adapter, and PowerLogix' G4 upgrade for Rev A, B, C & D iMacs.

Also on a hardware note, Hermstedt announced the latest version of their popular ISDN adapter, Webshuttle. It allows connection speeds of 128Kbps, does not require a power adaptor, and is available for OS 9 and OS X.

There were obviously many more exhibitors at the show, including, with new product releases, HP, Minolta, Canon, Arbiter, Dantz, Iomega, Macally, Corel, FileMaker and many, many more. MacExpo has always been one of the best (UK) Mac shows, and this year was no exception. With so many high-profile exhibitors attending, it was an encouraging and exciting show, reflecting well the current shape of the Mac market.

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Sharing an Apple Printer on a Mac Network

Apple exited the printer market a few years ago, leaving behind their LaserWriter, StyleWriter, and ImageWriter printer series. Each series had several models, some with network support and some without. You can still share many of the latter kind, however, using a hardware or software network adapter.

Note: This article only addresses Apple-branded printers and Apple-made network sharing options. For more information about other printer sharing options, see the Threemacs.com Printer Sharing site.

Printer Network Options—Are You Network-Ready?

Apple printers have three levels of network support: Ethernet, LocalTalk, and none. So what about your printer?

Ethernet

Ethernet is straightforward. If your printer has an Ethernet port (labeled with the icon below), it can be shared on an Ethernet network. See the Threemacs.com Ethernet Printers page on how to set up an Ethernet-enabled printer.

Ethernet Port

LocalTalk

Specific StyleWriter and LaserWriter models (listed below) support LocalTalk, which means you can connect them directly to a LocalTalk network using a LocalTalk adapter.

LaserWriter: LaserWriter, Plus, IINT, IINTX, IIf, IIg, Pro models, 16/600, 12/640, 8500, 12/600, 12/660, NT, NTR, Personal LW 320, Select 360, 4/600

StyleWriter: 4100, 4500, 6500

If you have one of these LocalTalk-ready printers, see the Threemacs.com LocalTalk Printers page to find out how to set them up. If you want to add a LocalTalk printer to an Ethernet network, see the Threemacs.com LocalTalk-to-Ethernet page.

No Network Support

Some Apple printers that have no built-in network support can be shared via a hardware or software network adapter. If your printer isn't listed in the following sections, however, it's not known to have any kind of network support.

Hardware Network Adapters

Apple produced several hardware network adapters, focusing primarily on the StyleWriter range. Farallon (now Proxim) produced the iPrint SL, which adds Ethernet capability to many StyleWriter models. If you have one of these adapters connected to your printer, see the aforementioned LocalTalk or Ethernet pages, since these are now LocalTalk- or Ethernet-ready.

iPrint SL Ethernet adapter: StyleWriter I, II, 1200, 1500, 2200, 2400, 2500

StyleWriter LocalTalk adapter: StyleWriter 1500, 2400, 2500

StyleWriter Ethernet adapter: StyleWriter 1500, 2500, 6500

ImageWriter LocalTalk adapter: ImageWriter II, LQ

These hardware adapters are no longer in production, but you may find one at a parts reseller. See the Threemacs.com Products pages for more information on locating adapters.

Software Network Adapters

There are two Apple software network adapters, the Printer Share extension and the LaserWriter 300 extension. Software network adapters require a "host" Mac, which acts as a bridge between the printer and the network.

On an Ethernet network, your "host" Mac needs an Ethernet connection (for connecting to the network) and a serial port (to connect to the printer). Install the software network adapter on the host Mac and connect the cables as shown.
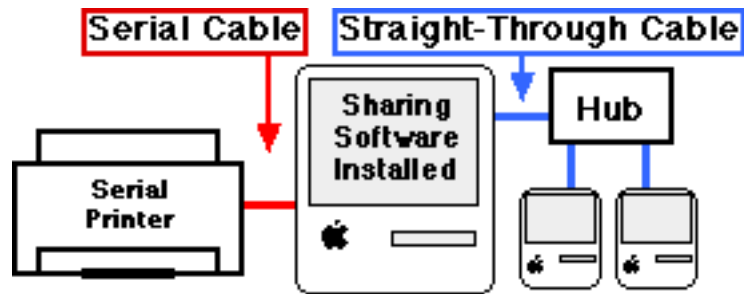
An Ethernet Serial Printer Setup

On a LocalTalk network, your "host" Mac has one cable connecting its AppleTalk port (typically the printer port) with the network with a LocalTalk adapter and another connecting its other serial port with the printer as shown.
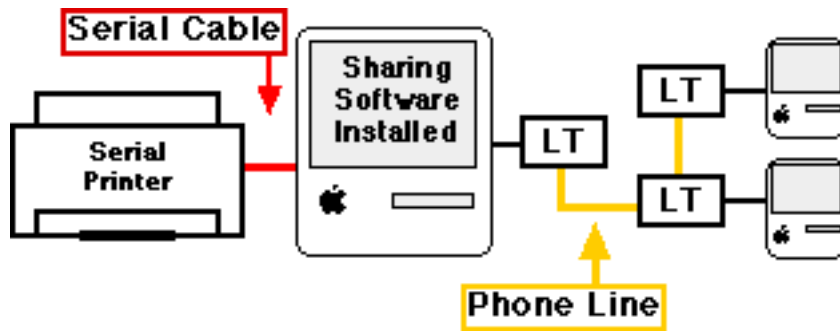
A LocalTalk Serial Printer Setup

Printer Share Extension

The Printer Share extension works with System 6, System 7, and Mac OS 7.6–9, supporting many StyleWriter and ImageWriter models.

StyleWriter: StyleWriter I, II, 1200, 1500, Color Pro, 2200, 2400, 2500

ImageWriter: ImageWriter I, II, LQ

The Printer Share extension comes with your Mac's system software. Check the Extensions Manager control panel to verify that it's present and active.

To share the printer, open the Chooser on the host Mac, select the printer icon and then the Setup… button, which opens the sharing window.

Naming Your Shared Printer

Check the "Share this Printer" option, name the printer (add a password if desired), then choose OK and close the Chooser.

To use the shared printer, first install the printing software on the other networked Macs. Open the Chooser on a networked Mac and choose the printer icon to see the list of available printers, which should include the printer you just shared. Select the printer's name, close the Chooser, and you're ready to print.

LaserWriter 300 Extension

There are three LaserWriter models you can share on a network using the LaserWriter 300 extension.

LaserWriter: LW Select 300, Personal LW 300, Personal LW LS

Make sure you install the LaserWriter 300 extension on all networked Macs that will use this printer. Open the Chooser on the host Mac, then select the printer icon and the Setup… button to open the configuration window. Name your printer (add a password if desired), check the Share this Printer box, and select OK to close the window. You can

now open the Chooser on other Macs on the network, select the LaserWriter 300 icon, and see the printer name you just created. Select the printer name, close the Chooser, and you're ready to print.

Working with Downloaded Files without Special Utilities

The Internet facilitates the exchange of information. Often, the information resides within a downloadable file rather than a Web page or e-mail message. Most of the time this presents no difficulties for Macintosh users: double-clicking the downloaded file launches an appropriate application. However, the Internet is platform- and application-neutral, and the file you downloaded may not open when you double-click it. This column describes how you can handle these uncommon but annoying problems.

Scenario 1: When you try to open the file, an alert box appears with the message "Could not find the application program that created the document «document name»." The "Show recommended choices only" box at the bottom of the alert window is checked.


Could not find the application program that created the document named "Test File--TEXT type".

To open the document, select an alternate program, with or without translation:

- Corel WordPerfect with MacLinkPlus translation
- P Microsoft PowerPoint with MacLinkPlus translation
- W Microsoft Word with MacLinkPlus translation
- W Microsoft Word
- MS Works with MacLinkPlus translation
- MS Works 2 with MacLinkPlus translation

☑ Show only recommended choices

Cancel   Open

Alert window when file type is known but creating application is not known.

This alert lets you know that the file was not recognized by your Macintosh as one that can be opened with any of your installed applications. The alert box then presents you with a list of suggested applications. How can your Macintosh give you a list of suggested applications? Documents created on a Macintosh almost always contain two pieces of information: file type code and creator code. Both codes use four characters (numbers, case-sensitive letters, or symbols). As expected, the file type code describes the type of file such as TEXT, PICT, JPEG, PDF, cdev (control panel), or APPL (application). A document file's creator code indicates the application that was used to create or modify it. Examples include MSIE (Microsoft Internet Explorer), DAD7 (Canvas 7), ttxt (SimpleText), and MSWD (Microsoft Word).

When your Macintosh recognizes a document file's type and doesn't recognize the file's creator code, it suggests a list of possible applications. In my example, my Macintosh suggests opening the unknown text file with a word processor (Corel WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, or Microsoft Works), a presentation program (Microsoft PowerPoint), a Web browser (Netscape Communicator), and a utility program (Spell Catcher 8 converter). My Macintosh didn't suggest SimpleText, because I trashed all copies of that program. (Note: I have MacLinkPlus Deluxe installed, so many of my choices include "with MacLinkPlus Translation." You will not see those choices if MacLinkPlus is not available.)

If you like one of the recommended choices, simply select it from the list and click the "Open" button. The selected application will launch and the document will open (usually). If the document doesn't appear, try opening it from the File menu of the selected application. If that doesn't work, double-click the file again and uncheck the "Show recommended choices only" box. Try using an application that previously wasn't listed.

Scenario 2: Just like Scenario 1 except that the "Show recommended choices only" box is checked and grayed-out.
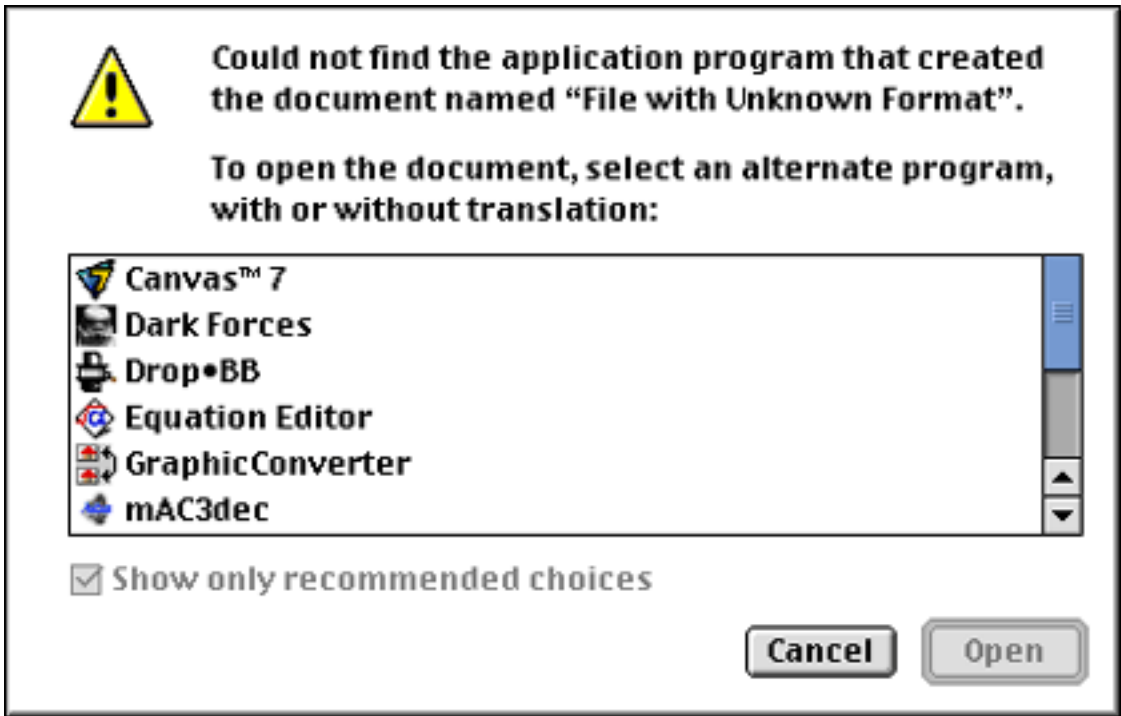
Alert window when file type and creator are unknown.

This alert tells you that your Macintosh doesn't recognize the document file's type or its creator. This sometimes happens with files created on a non-Macintosh computer. It can also happen when document files get stripped of their resource fork. The alert window contains an unfiltered listing of dozens of applications that can open documents. If you know the document file's type, just select an appropriate application. For example, you may know that you downloaded a text file, so choose any application that can display text. The selected application will launch, and the document *may* open. If the document doesn't appear, try opening it from the File menu of the selected application. If this doesn't work, try using a different application to open the document file. You may need to use the application's Import menu choice to open the downloaded document file.

Scenario 3: Just like Scenario 2, but you are unable to find an application that can open the document file.

This scenario occurs when the document file was created with an application not installed on your Macintosh. For example, the file may be an Adobe Illustrator document saved in native format. If you know the creating application, you have a few options:

- Get the application. Of course, this may require time and money.

- Import the file into another application. For example, Canvas can import Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop files.

- Get a demonstration version of the application. You may be able to open the document and either save or export the document to a different format. If the demo does not support saving, you may be able to copy all or part of the document and paste it into another application. For example, I received a corporate logo as a QuarkXPress (a page layout program) file. I downloaded and installed a demonstration version of QuarkXPress and copied the logo to Canvas.

- Get a reader or player for the application. Some applications such as databases provide free or low cost readers that allow you to view documents but not modify them.

- Ask the document's creator to save the document in a different format that you can use.

If you do not know the creating application, your options get more complicated.

- Ask the document's creator to save the document in a different format.

- Use a utility (or an AppleScript applet or script) to find the document file's type and creator. Utilities that can access this information include File Buddy (shareware from SkyTag Software), DiskTools (shareware from Rainmaker Research Inc.), DiskTop (shareware from Prairie Group Products), ResEdit (freeware from Apple Computer), and other utilities. You can look up file type and creator codes using TCDB (Type/Creator Database), a $15 shareware program created by Ilan Szekely. TCDB lists all common and most uncommon types and creators.

- If the document does not have file type or creator information (both codes are either "   " or "????") and you cannot contact the person who created the document file, then you have only a few choices. You can try to examine the document's text content

by opening it with BBEdit (or the free BBEdit Lite, both from Bare Bones Software), Microsoft Word, or another application that let's you open any type of file. Using BBEdit as an example: launch BBEdit, go to the File menu and choose Open…, choose "All Available" from the "Show…" popup menu, and navigate to the document file. The text content may be all you need, or the text may give you a clue about the nature of the document file.

- See if the file has a resource fork. Launch ResEdit and open the document file. If you get an alert message stating that the file has no resource fork, click on the cancel button. A document file without a resource fork may have been created on a non-Macintosh platform or had the resource fork information stripped away. If the file has a resource fork, you can look at some of the resources to get clues about the document's type.

- Use a special file examination utility like CanOpener from Abbott Systems Inc. This utility examines a document file and can display any text, pictures (PICT, JPEG, GIF, TIFF, PhotoCD, etc.), icons, movies, and sounds contained in the document.

If you have run through the scenarios above and still cannot open a downloaded document file, then it could be corrupted (try downloading a new copy) or in a proprietary format from a non-Macintosh computer platform.

Why I Wrote This Column and a Contest for ATPM Readers.

Apple Computer, in my opinion, has made a major blunder with OS X: file type and creator code information is optional. What is worse, some misguided users want Apple to drop support for file types and creator codes in future versions of OS X. The originator of the "Mac OS X Anti Metadata Petition," Todd Blanchard, completely misunderstands how file type and creator codes work. He stated that he often had to use ResEdit to reset the file type and creator codes of downloaded files so that they would open. I have *never* had to use ResEdit to reset file type and creator codes to open a downloaded file. I am so confident of this claim that I hereby offer a *prize* to the first person who can stump me.

Contest Goal

Send me (or point me to) a file that I cannot open without adding or editing file type or creator codes.

Contest Rules

1. The file must be available on the Internet via HTTP, FTP, or Usenet groups and must originate from someone other than yourself.

2. The file cannot be a proprietary format from a non-Macintosh platform (e.g., no 3D graphics files from a Unix workstation).

3. The file cannot be a proprietary Macintosh file for which I have no application. Do not send proprietary CAD/CAM, 3D, page layout, Mathematica, etc. files.

4. The file cannot have been altered by removing its resource fork, changing its file type and creator code information, or corrupting its data.

5. E-mail entries to gtetrault@atpm.com. If the file is small, you may send it as an attachment. (Please indicate the download link in your e-mail message.) Otherwise, send a download link to the file (e.g., http://www.weird_file_place.com/weirdfile.sit).

6. The contest ends at the end of January 2002 or when 100 entries have been received. (I do not have the time to test hundreds of files.)

7. Winners, if any, will be announced in the February issue.

Contest Prizes

I will negotiate a prize with any winners. Available prizes include a number of Macintosh games, applications, and utilities. I also have a copy of "Adope Photoshop 5.5 and Illustrator 8.0 Classroom in a Book."

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Extras: Desktop Pictures

Montréal

The pictures were taken by Daniel Chvatik in Montréal, Canada, on a short trip this December. They were taken with a Canon PowerShot S300 and post-processed with Cameraid 1.2 and iView MediaPro. The ghost-like appearance of two of the images comes from using the flash at night while it is snowing. Enjoy!

Hawai'i

Contributing Editor Christopher Turner provides this photos from a November trip to Hawai'i. The pictures were taken with a Nikon Coolpix 950 at a resolution of 1600x1200 and resized in GraphicConverter to 1024x768 for use as desktop pictures.

Pearl Harbor

arizona_flag.jpg—Before the Arizona Memorial was constructed, the US Navy marked the Arizona's grave with a simple flagpole, from which Old Glory still flies today.

arizona_memorial.jpg—The Memorial stands over the Arizona's final resting place, where more than 1,100 sailors are entombed.

arizona_missouri.jpg—Symbols of the beginning and the end of World War II for America; the Arizona Memorial, and the USS Missouri, upon which the Japanese surrendered in August, 1945.

arizona_shrine.jpg—All who perished on the Arizona are listed here.

nimitz01.jpg—Modern American sea power is reflected in the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the USS Nimitz.

nimitz02.jpg, nimitz03.jpg, nimitz04.jpg—The Nimitz is a floating city, where more than 5,000 sailors live and work while at sea.

shrine_flag.jpg—Old Glory stands ever proud in the Arizona Memorial shrine.

Place of Refuge

Located on the southern Kona coast, of the big island of Hawai'i, is Pu'uhonua o Honaunau, known as the Place of Refuge. This was the site of one royal residence of the King of Kona, preserved to show aspects of traditional Hawai'ian life.

por01.jpg—The Hale o Keawe temple.

por02.jpg—The coconut palm grove of the Royal Grounds.

por03.jpg—Palm trees are not native to Hawai'i, but were brought by the Polynesians who settled the islands.

por04.jpg, por05.jpg—The ocean view from the Hale o Keawe temple.

por06.jpg, por07.jpg—Postcard material for sure; and more beautiful in person than this image can do justice.

por08.jpg—Golden sky as the sun sets.

honu01.jpg—The green sea turtle is called honu by the Hawai'ians; they are an endangered species, and taking photographs is as close as one is allowed to get to them.

honu02.jpg—There is nothing wrong with this turtle, nor any of the others one may find on Hawai'i's beaches. They simply chose to beach themselves from time to time to rest and get some sun.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

iCab and Interarchy (formerly Anarchie) can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once. 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 X

Switch to the Finder. Choose "Preferences…" from the "Finder" menu. Click on the "Select Picture…" button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your "~/Library/Desktop Pictures" folder. Close the "Finder Preferences" window when you are done.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu. Click the screen saver button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS 8.5–9.x

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

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

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

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

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

Random Desktop Pictures

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

DeskPicture

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

Financial Help

You've probably spent quite a bit of money this past holiday season. If not, then more power to you. But whether you spent lots of green stuff or not, it doesn't hurt to be financially organized. So, with a new year ahead, I thought it appropriate to check out three financial shareware programs.

Moneydance 3.2

Developer: The Appgen Software Companies
Price: $30
Requirements: Mac OS X
Trial: Feature-limited (100 transactions)

Moneydance is a nice little shareware program that's very intuitive and straightforward. It's easy to use and has just about everything for keeping track of your accounts. You can also use it with Quicken.

When you start, you'll get a homepage that looks like this:
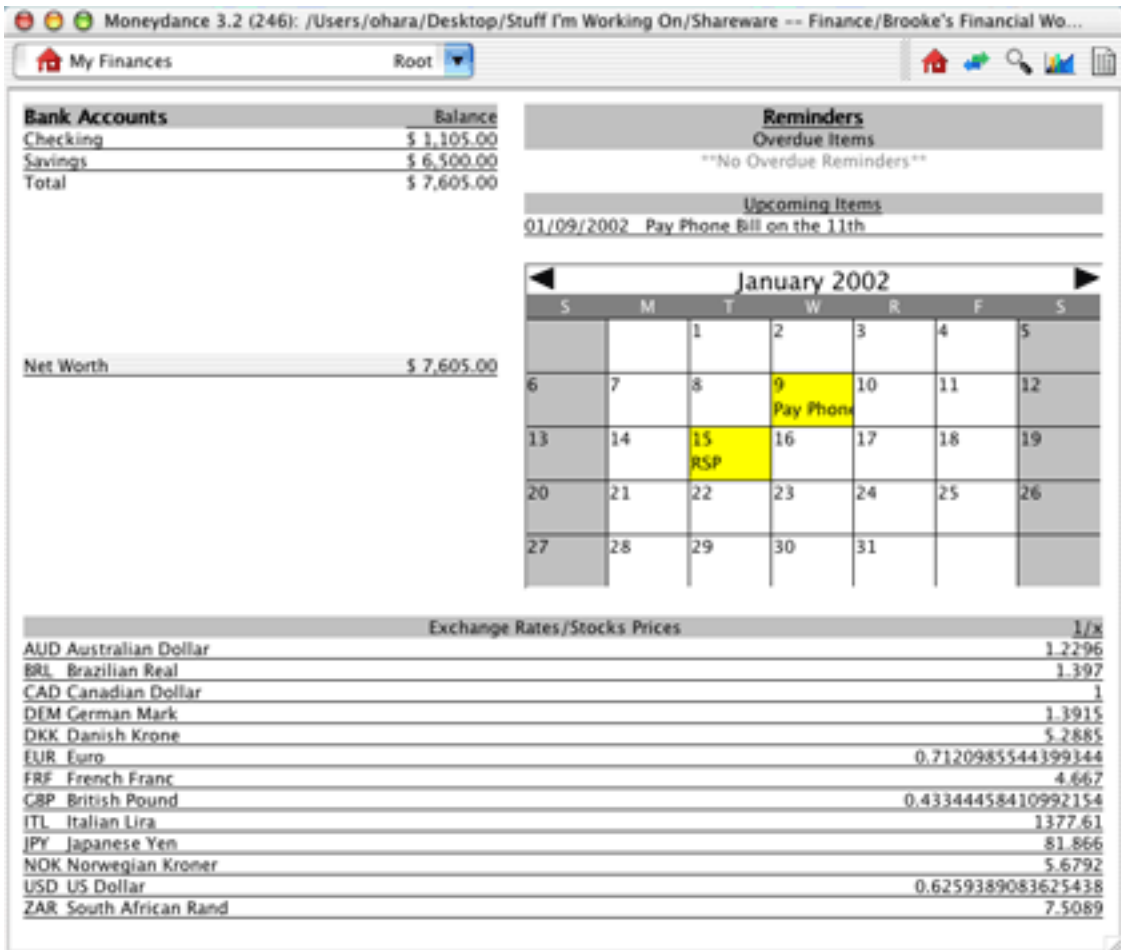
As you can see, I've got some reminders set to help me remember to pay my phone bill and to make my monthly contribution to my RSP. The homepage also lets me see my Net Worth (I'm not using my real numbers!).

To get started in Moneydance, select your currency (I chose Canadian dollars) from the Tools menu and select Edit Currencies/Exchange Rates. You can then set up your new accounts from the Account menu by selecting New. (I made mine a Bank account and then made two kinds—a Checking and a Savings.)

Here's an example of my Checking account (I'm still using fake numbers!).

Note: The transaction shown in yellow has not been completed yet. It's my rent for the first of January!

Extras (found under the Tools menu) include: a Calculator, a Loan Calculator which calculates how much money (principal and interest) you have to pay per month over a certain number of years, an Address Book, a Chart of Accounts that shows all of your accounts broken down into sections (for example, the total amount you spent in Education or Vacation), as well as Reminders where you can set up daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly reminders. And there's a Budget Manager to help you budget—just what everyone needs.

From a selection of icons in the upper right hand corner of the homepage, you can generate graphs (Expenses, Income, Income and Expenses, and Account Balance); download information from the Net, for example, the latest exchange rates; or generate reports such as Net Worth, Account Balances, Cash Flow, Transactions, Budget, and Missing Checks.

The Help Contents has a very good index and there's even Additional Help where there's an 800 number listed just in case you've still got questions that the Help Contents didn't answer.

Overall, Moneydance is a very good program. I found it very easy to navigate with a simple, yet attractive interface. There's lots more to explore in Moneydance and I think you'll find it worth exploring.

Hold-Up 1.5

Developer: Pierre-Olivier Latour and Didier Larue
Price: $20 (Basic); $30 (Pro)
Requirements: PowerPC-based Mac with Mac OS 8.5, 800x600 display
Trial: Feature-limited (2 accounts, 5 filters, and 30 transactions per account)

According to the Read Me file, Hold-Up is "nice looking, very easy to use and very powerful too thanks to its innovating features." And I would have to agree.

Although the version I've reviewed here is a demo (which means it is not fully functional but the time is unlimited), there's enough to play around with, so you'll know whether you'll want to invest in the complete version or not. There are two versions: Basic and Pro, so you can see which one would best suit your needs. Note: There are differences among the Basic, Pro, and Demo versions of Hold-up. These differences are outlined clearly in a chart in the Read Me document.

To begin, use the demo Hold-Up (normally you'd choose New Account from the File menu but you can't for the demo version) and double-click on one of the accounts set up for you in the demo version. Select Information from the Account menu on the title bar and insert general information about your account (the name of your account, the currency you are using and any notes that you want to make), owner information (your name and address, etc.), the name of your bank, and the names of two contacts from your bank.

You can then delete the information used in the demo and insert your own info. Choose New Transaction from the Account menu to start your transactions. As you can see here, I have a starting balance of $5,000 and then started to add my expenses (books, rent, and telephone) and my income (pay check).

The two transactions with the blue circle and the "i" in the middle indicate a note that I made when I created the transaction.

Hold-Up has a PDF manual that gives the basics on how to use the program, although by the look of the interface, you'll find it's pretty intuitive. The interface is simply one window with two lists and one button, so you can see everything in one glance. I'd have to say Hold-Up is a good program. Its simple interface will give even the financially challenged hope. This program is definitely worth a look.

Where Did All My Money Go? 2.3.9

Developer: Bert Torfs
Price: $25
Requirements: Mac OS X
Trial: Feature-limited (only 100 transactions)

Belgian Bert Torfs has developed what looks like a nice little financial program, but it's not for the faint of financial smarts! Although there are a lot of positive reviews on Version Tracker, I was very frustrated trying to figure out just how this shareware program worked. It's not an intuitive or user friendly program. I was clicking all over the place trying to figure it out, but to no avail. Finally, I had to resort to the manual. (Just as an aside, I usually try to work with shareware programs without reading the manual at first, simply to see if they're user friendly!) Add to this the fact that I had to download the manual. Now, if there's one thing that frustrates me, it's having to go hunting for the manual separately from the downloaded program. Okay, so I've got a few issues…

So I now have the manual up and running in a PDF and I spent about 45 minutes to an hour just trying to get through the 33-page tutorial. First, I had to set up the expenses and then the accounts. It took a lot to figure this out simply because the names of the files in the manual did not match the names in the actual program. For example, in the manual it says to set up the accounts by going to the Setup menu and choosing Accounts. I clicked on the Setup menu and chose Account Owner instead of Account hierarchy (There was no Accounts!). Maybe I was tired (and I'm willing to give WDAMMG the benefit of the doubt) but I found it hard to get the correct option because of the mismatched information: Account Owner vs. Account hierarchy vs. Account. It's not clear and definitely not user friendly!

Also the interface is quite forboding. Just to look at it is intimidating.

Compared with the aforementioned programs, WDAMMG is not easy to figure out. Or else I am just really bad with finances. I just find that a shareware program is really not worth exploring if you can't get the gist of it within an hour. Personally, I feel I spent way too much time trying to figure this program out with and without the manual! However, I'll give my clever readers the benefit of the doubt. If any of you are financial wizards then you might "get" how this program works intuitively without having to go through the 33-page tutorial! Hope you have better luck than I did.

Review: LaunchBar 3.1.2

by Michael Tsai, mtsai@atpm.com

Developer: Objective Development
Price: $19.95 (personal); $39 (business)
Requirements: Mac OS X
Trial: Feature-limited (can only access seven different items per session)

What Is LaunchBar?

LaunchBar is a utility for Mac OS X that provides quick access to your files. When you activate it by pressing Command-Spacebar, the LaunchBar window (the "temporary shelf") slides out from beneath the menu bar. You then type a letter or three and LaunchBar opens up a list showing the files that most closely match the letters you typed. It's a bit like the address auto-completion in Internet Explorer 5, except that it works for everything from applications and folders to e-mail addresses and Web bookmarks. If LaunchBar's top guess matches your intention, you can press Return to launch the application, open the folder, or view the URL. Otherwise, you can navigate the list with the arrow keys, the spacebar, or the mouse to select the item you want. LaunchBar learns from your selections: the next time you type the same abbreviation, the item you chose will be at the top of the list.

Why I Need It

Mac OS X still lags behind OS 9 in many areas. To me, the most important of these is the Finder. I've tried using the OS X Finder like I used the OS 9 Finder, and I've tried the NeXT-style Columns view. But although I'm proficient in both styles, neither works as smoothly as I'd like. As of version 10.1, the OS X Finder does a tolerable job of remembering window and icon positions, so lately I've been using the Icon and List views almost exclusively. I keep the windows for my frequently accessed folders open at all times.

What I miss are Mac OS 8/9's popup windows (a.k.a. drawers), spring-loaded folders, and FinderPop. Popup windows give me quick access to drag and drop targets while keeping them out of view. Spring-loaded folders let me start dragging a file, tunnel through folders until I find where it should go, and have the resulting window clutter disappear when I release the mouse button. FinderPop has many uses, but I most often used it for opening deeply nested folders and applications.

On OS 9, I used DragThing to create a process dock and a tabbed dock with applications that I frequently drop onto, and also to assign hot keys for launching applications. On OS X, I've been using the system Dock instead of DragThing's process dock, but the system provides no built-in means for me to mimic DragThing's other functions.

Variations

LaunchBar is simple to use, and except for configuring the preferences I've already described its entire interface. The advanced features are accessed by simple variations of the above techniques, and you'll get a lot of mileage out of just using it as a launcher. For starters, you can access any application on your system with just a few keystrokes. There's no need to search through different application folders or to further fill your already bulging Dock.

But if you spend a little time reading the online help and tips, you'll be surprised and pleased to find that this simple little utility packs quite a punch. Type Command-Return instead of Return to select an item, and LaunchBar reveals it in the Finder. If you instead use Option-Return, LaunchBar opens the file and hides all your other applications. If you type Command-C, you can copy the path of the current item to the clipboard. This is especially useful for entering folder paths into Terminal, though it can also be used as a faster way to navigate open file dialogs in some applications.
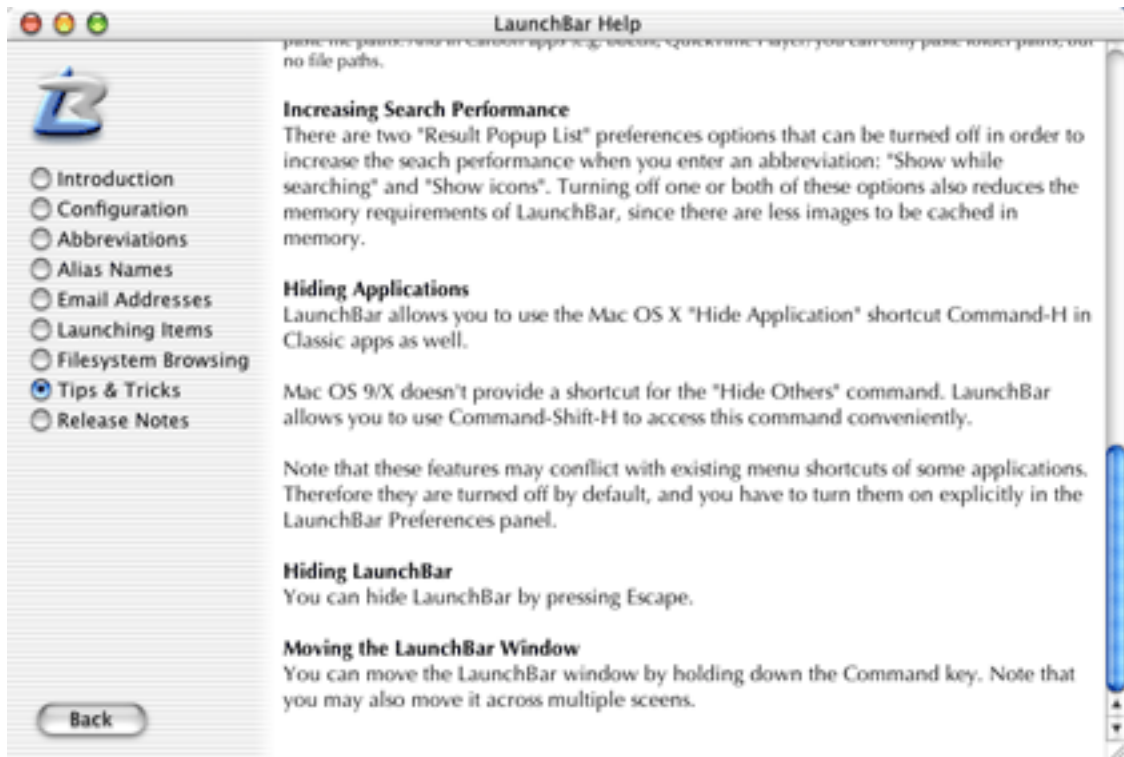
You can drop items onto the collapsed LaunchBar to replace the item that's there ("Put onto temporary shelf") or add it to the list of items that LaunchBar searches when you start typing letters ("Add to setup"). If an application is on the shelf, LaunchBar can use it to open the dropped files. Likewise, if a folder is on the shelf, LaunchBar can move or copy the dropped files into it, or create various kinds of Unix links. You can either select the drop target with LaunchBar and then drag an item onto it, *or* begin dragging and activate LaunchBar while keeping the mouse button held down.

These features are great, but it's a shame you can't hold down modifier keys while dropping onto the shelf. When dropping onto an application, I almost always want it to open the dropped files, so I'd like to be able to hold down Command-Option (in keeping with the Dock convention) to avoid the Dropped Files window and have LaunchBar open the files straightaway.

LaunchBar can also act as a file system browser. If you press the right arrow key with a folder selected in the list, the list is replaced with the folder's contents. It's as if LaunchBar is displaying a single column from one of the Finder's Columns views, and you can easily tunnel up or down the hierarchy. This is great for me, because Finder Columns windows are too bulky to keep open all the time. With LaunchBar, I can summon an instant browser for the window I want, and it will disappear when I'm done. I only wish that LaunchBar let me type-select items when in this mode.
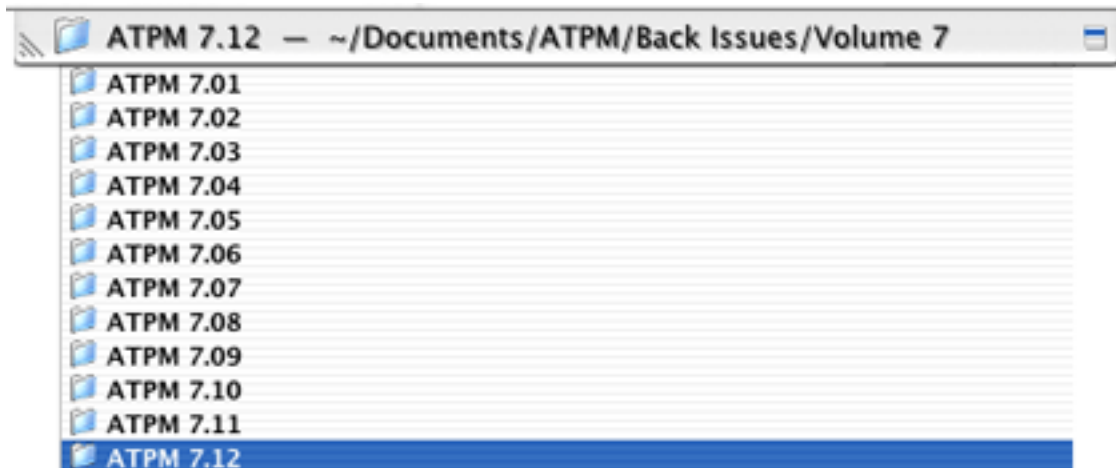

Finally, if you type Command-R LaunchBar displays a list of the currently running applications so that you can easily switch between them. I haven't found much use for this feature because typing a few letters of the application's name isn't much slower, and works whether the application is open or not.

How It Compares

LaunchBar has a configuration window for setting the items it searches, and a preferences window for configuring various appearance and behavior settings. I found that one of the best parts of LaunchBar is that you can configure these settings once and forget about them. Because LaunchBar periodically scans for new files and learns my abbreviations automagically, I never waste time futzing with it. When I used DragThing, each time I installed or upgraded an application I'd have to put the new icon into one of the docks and reassign its keyboard shortcut. The docks and shortcuts were always slightly out of

sync between my two machines. With LaunchBar, these hassles are gone. Further, while 30 items on a DragThing dock start getting out of hand, LaunchBar easily scales up to hundreds of applications and folders.
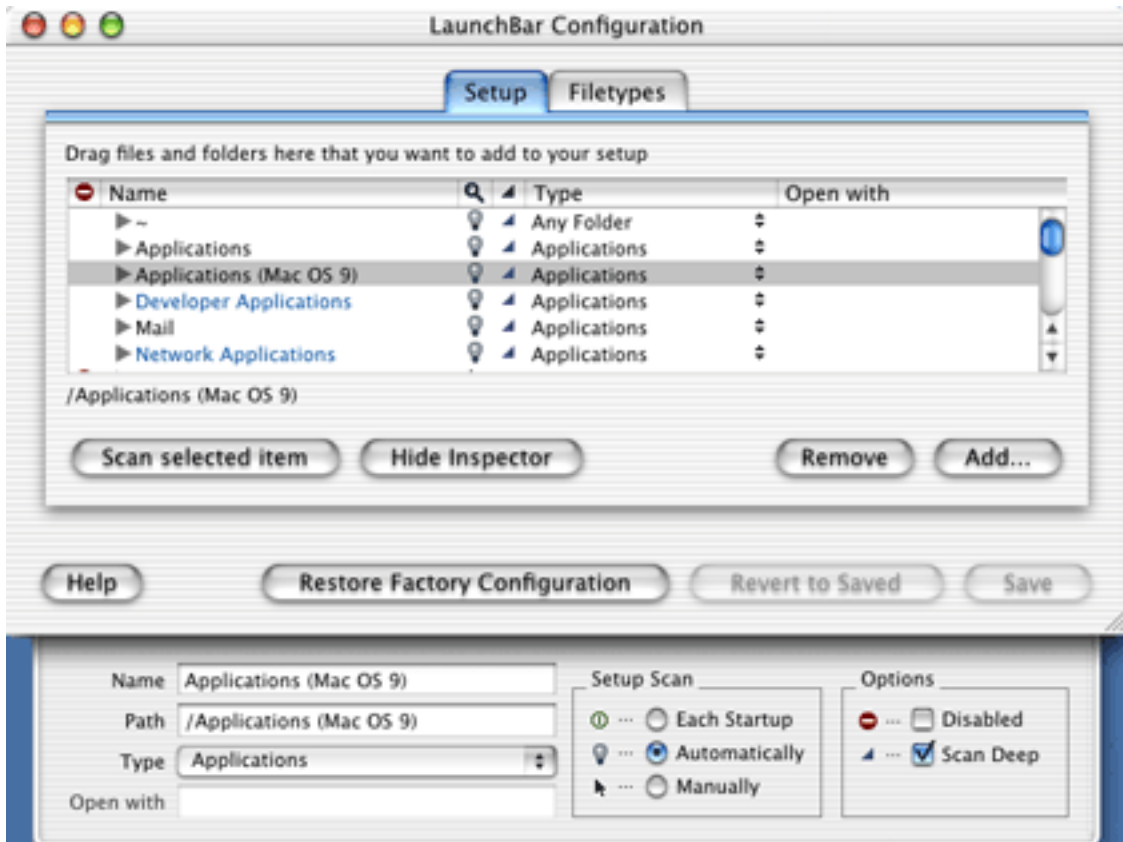
Another benefit over other launchers is that the abbreviations can be mnemonic. I can use normal letters like "i" for iCab, "m" for Mailsmith, "it" for iTunes, "b" for BBEdit, "pb" for Project Builder, and "amu" for my ATPM Mirror Upload script. With other utilities I ended up settling for F5, F6, F7, etc. to avoid conflicting with application-level keyboard shortcuts. Granted, typing Command-Space, b, Return isn't as quick as typing F6, but my fingers can stay on the home row and I can't touch-type the F keys anyway.

Conclusion

LaunchBar has replaced DragThing's drop dock and hot keys for me, and it includes enough of the features of popup windows, spring-loaded folders, and FinderPop that I rarely miss them. There are a few rough edges: for instance, the 30-second setup scan should happen in the background. But overall, it's an excellent utility and the most innovative system enhancement I've seen since PopupFolder. I'm not happy using OS X without it.

Review: Portraits & Prints Template Maker

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Developer: Econ Technologies
Price: $9.95 (list)
Requirements: Mac OS X
Trial: Feature-limited (only four photo cells per template, only one print and save per session)

Last month, I looked at Portraits & Prints 1.0.1, an OS X-only application for creating prints from your digital photos. This month, I'm checking out Econ Technologies' companion application, Portraits & Prints Template Maker.

Whereas Portraits & Prints only includes templates for printing out a collection of images in common photographic sizes, P&P Template Maker lets you create the templates used for printing your photos. And although the templates included with Portraits & Prints only include photographs, P&P Template Maker lets you use basic drawing and text tools for creating templates.

Laying It Out

When you create a new template, you are presented with a sheet that asks for a template name, a category, a creator, and a description. This information is used when the template is added to Portraits & Prints. Since the application now has a name for the template, it would make sense for this to be used as a suggestion for the file name, à la Photoshop. However, this is not the case—new files are still named "Untitled."

Photo cells act as placeholders for images in Portraits & Prints. You can place as many as you want on a template and have them be any size that you want. The only restriction is that they be rectangular. On the surface, this may seem like a small restriction; why would you want to print out non-rectangular images? However, if you decide to make more advanced templates, you might feel constrained by this limitation. You can't, for instance, put an oval photo cell inside of a rectangular frame drawn with the image editing tools. Also, you can't have a photo cell that feathers the edge of an image—such an effect might be nice on the holiday card templates available on the Portraits & Prints Template Exchange.

P&P Template Maker provides an Inspector panel for getting information about each object in a template. For photo cells, you can view and edit the cell's dimensions and aspect ratio. If you find an aspect ratio that you like but are still not happy with the cell's size, there is a Constrain option. When constraining the aspect ratio, the resize behavior

becomes erratic. The resize handle in the middle of the cell's bottom does nothing. The resize handle in the middle of the cell's top moves the cell without resizing. Finally, the four corner resize handles both resize the cell and move it vertically along the page.
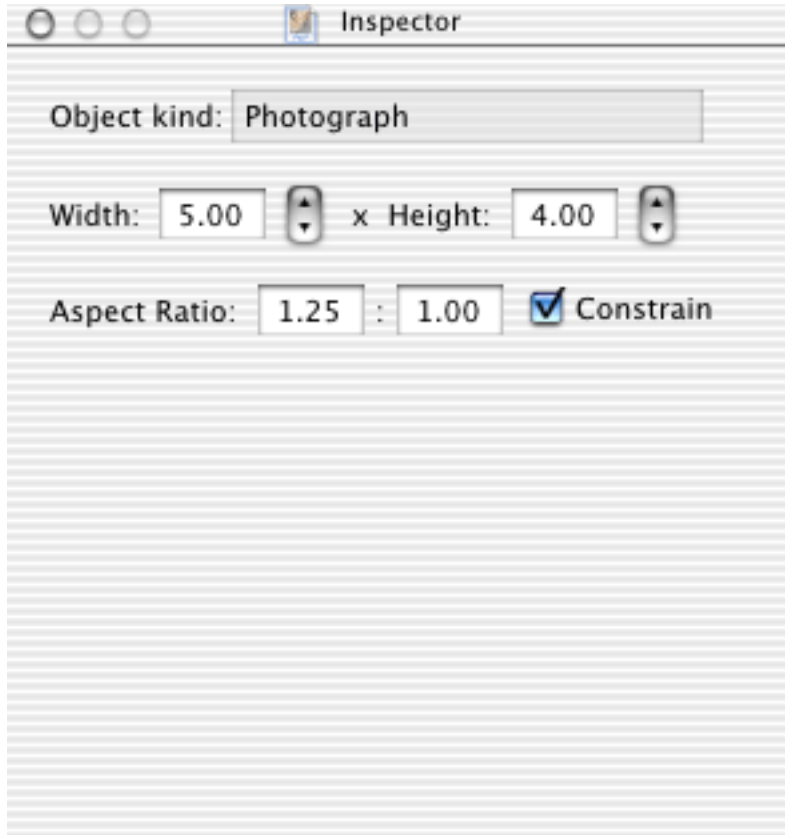
The inspector panel for a photo cell.

As for the basic drawing tools, P&P Template Maker provides a line tool, a rectangle tool, and an oval tool. On the surface, these tools behave like you would expect. However, they have some shortcomings that become apparent with use.

First, there is no way to make a tool selection permanent. After you finish drawing a square, the program reverts to the selection tool. This isn't entirely uncommon; I've seen other programs that do this. Most of these programs, though, allow the user to specify that he wants to keep the drawing tool active—double-clicking or clicking with a modifier are two common examples.

Second, shift-dragging does not work. In many programs, shift-dragging will constrain a rectangle to a square, an oval to a circle, or a line to 45° angles. P&P Template maker just ignores the Shift key.

Third, shift-resizing also does not work. Often, shift-resizing is used to constrain the aspect ratio of an image. When you shift-resize in P&P Template Maker, the object is deselected, but still resizes.

The latter problem could be somewhat rectified if the Inspector panel for shapes had a Constrain option, like the photo cell. For rectangles and ovals, you can only modify the line width, line color, and the fill color. For lines, you can only modify the line width and color.

The text tool has slightly more options than the drawing tools, but it too, has shortcomings. When you want to add text, draw a text box to the size you think you will need. You can later resize the text box if you guessed wrong. For the text tool, you can select any font and size you would like. You are limited to one font face and size per text box, so creating something like the ATPM logo as a text object would be fairly difficult—you would need to align three separate text boxes. At the most, you have three options for text styles: bold, underline, and italic. The exact options are dictated by the font face—if a font does not support a style, the option is grayed out. The text can be centered, aligned left, aligned right, or justified.

You can also select a foreground and background color for the text. In the Inspector panel, there is a permanently grayed out and selected checkbox next to the Foreground field. This is used to indicate that the foreground color is always on, but I think that it is misplaced, since it could make the user believe that there was some way to make the foreground transparent. It wasn't until I looked at the help that I found out the checkbox was only a hint to the user. That's too bad, because you could come up with some interesting effects by having some sort of background showing through where the letter would have been.

Finally, you can allow users to edit the text inside of Portraits & Prints. To do this, you give the text field both a name and an identifier. Since text fields in Portraits & Prints are edited in a sheet, the name is used to indicate which field is being edited. The identifier field is used so Portraits & Prints can remember which text is associated with which field when

the catalog is closed and opened. For some reason, the identifier field is optional while the name field is not. Personally, I think that you should at least be warned as to the consequence of not inputting an identifier.

If you want to create templates that have more complex objects than you could make with P&P Template Maker's basic drawing tools, you are in luck—the application also lets you use clip art. There are four ways to add clip art to a template. The first three are the usual suspects: importing a file, drag-and-drop, and pasting from the clipboard. The fourth option is using Services. By default, the only service included with OS X that is usable with P&P Template Maker is Grab (which takes screenshots). You may extend the functionality of the application by adding additional graphics services.

The Inspector panel for clip art objects lets you change the image's size by entering values for the height and width or using a percentage of the original height and width. Like the Inspector panel for the drawing tools, there is no Constrain option. Likewise, shift-resizing is broken for a clip art object.

Falling Short

As a companion to Portraits & Prints, P&P Template Maker makes an already useful application even more attractive. As an OS X application, though, it fails to impress. The problems with the drawing tools make learning the application difficult for those coming from more standard Macintosh drawing tools. Since you are limited to rectangular photo cells, your freedom in creating templates and extending Portraits & Prints is limited. Additionally, P&P Template Maker fails to use any of the advanced image effects provided by OS X's Quartz layer. There are no automatically calculated drop shadows, the text effects are limited, and there are no transparency or watermark options. If you own Portraits & Prints and are getting tired of the included templates, P&P Template Maker might be worth considering at $9.95. However, it's obvious that work could still be done to make this a more compelling add-on.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

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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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- You can quickly navigate between articles using the bookmarks pane at the left of the main viewing window.
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- Try turning Font Smoothing on and off in Acrobat Reader's preferences to see which setting you prefer.
- All blue-underlined links are clickable.
- You can hold down option while hovering over a link to see where it will lead.
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Shareware Reviews

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