

SHUTTERBUG

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Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One

Aperture Training

Canon Rebel and EOS 30 D Field Guides

Mac PRO Upgrade Guide

Google Sketchup Pro 6

Sony DCRSR200 Camcorder



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In addition, thanks to you, our readers, who make this effort all possible.

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Columns

Letter from the CEO

Five years of *macCompanion*!

By Robert Pritchett

Happy Birthday *macCompanion*! This month is year 5 of monthly distribution of *macCompanion* magazine.

While the computer and telephony industries have been working themselves into iPhrenzies and studying the tea leaves of iPhonomics, we've been busy looking at hardware and software solutions that magnify the Mac with this issue of *macCompanion* magazine.

As a side note, we have had a few staff changes recently loosing a few to less active roles as they graze in greener pastures.

If you have not noticed, we changed the gray-scale animated logo using a combination of Laughingbird Software's *Web Graphics Creator*, a bit of *Photoshop* tweaking and feedback from staff and others to make it more readable.

We also removed web pages and past PDF issues from 2003 through 2005. If no one really noticed, then we did the right thing. All articles and reviews have a shelf life and if you want to find those you can always use the *Way Back Engine* to pick those up linked in our Index - <http://www.macompanion.com/archives/archivesindex.html>

And after attending some funerals and noticing that I did not attend my own, I've learned it is more important to have been considered "significant" rather than in just being "good". Have I done any good in the world today? Have I accomplished anything of real significance? Have I made a positive impact in someone else's life?

This month our cover has a shutterbug designed by Michele Patterson. The intent is that we would be covering photography as a theme. So we have some book reviews that go that direction. If you want to look at camera reviews, then go to Philip and Joanna Askey's excellent camera review website at <http://www.dpreview.com/>

Meanwhile, enjoy the articles researched and posted by our excellent volunteer staff, drop by our advertisers and affiliates and let the world know about us!

May your birthdays be memorable and your lives significant.

According to Hoyle...

WWDC '07 Roundup

by Jonathan Hoyle

jhoyle@maccompanion.com

macCompanion

July 2007

Despite the fear that a "repeat" topic might dampen interest, this year's Worldwide Developer's Conference broke its attendance record again, with 5,000 attendees. There were companies sending people for the first time, and long time Mac development houses sending greater numbers than ever before. Sending two or more individuals made a great deal of sense, given that there were 159 sessions, usually running 8 at a time, not including the 94 labs. To get the most out of this conference, companies ought to send at least two, if not three, to get adequate coverage of the plethora of information.

The growth of the conference is indicative of the growth of the platform itself. There are now nearly a million registered Macintosh developers, and an untold number of unregistered ones. With the recent news that Apple's marketshare has skyrocketed to over 14% for portables and over 10% for desktops <http://www.macworld.com/news/2007/06/22/macshare/index.php>, it is no wonder that attendance is overflowing. And despite the fact that it is named a *Developer's* conference, there was an amazing number of upper management, marketing, IT and students present. Sessions devoted to these other areas were available too, making this more of an all around Mac conference.

The Steve Show

As usual, WWDC kicked off with a keynote by Apple CEO Steve Jobs. Although Steve's showmanship remains as strong as ever, one can see that his technological edge is not as sharp as it used to be. In recent WWDC's, we see how Steve relies more and more on his notes, following a rigid demonstration, mostly pulling it off as if it were impromptu. Slight hesitations creep in here and there, such as when he momentarily forgets what a particular icon represents, but all in all, he still puts on the best show of any conference.

Although most of the material covered in this conference is covered under non-disclosure (and thus I am unable to disseminate), the keynote address is open to the public and free to discuss. For those who have not already had the opportunity to see it, I recommend going to Apple's web site and watching the keynote yourself at: <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/qtv/keynote>

The topic for this year's WWDC was, of course, *Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard*. This is an exciting new update to Mac OS X which most Mac users will be very pleased with. Some of this information was available last year, and some of it new. Steve listed these Top 10 features of Leopard.

- New Desktop (new feature this year)
- New Finder (new feature this year)
- QuickLook (new feature this year)
- 64-bit
- Core Animation
- BootCamp
- Spaces
- improvements in Dashboard
- improvements in iChat
- Time Machine

These items are described in Ted Bade's column in this month's *macCompanion* as well. Reviewing Leopard deserves an article of its own, so we will cover this in its own dedicated column next month.

One More Thing...

Perhaps second only to Lt. Columbo, Steve Jobs is constantly associated with the phrase "One more thing...". This year, it was actually two more things. The first was the announcement of the Safari web browser being porting to Windows XP and Vista. Many developers had mixed feelings about this, since Safari is one of the things that made Mac OS X superior to Windows. Worse still, the Jobs presentation suggested that Apple was more interested in capturing the FireFox market on Windows, not the Internet Explorer market. Perhaps the reasoning is that those on FireFox are the ones wise enough to look at browser alternatives, whereas IE users are click-monkeys who would never switch anyway. Still, it's a bit annoying that Apple would target FireFox (a good browser) rather than Internet Explorer (a poor one). Safari is only marginally better than FireFox, yet is twice the speed of IE.

Apple has shown some initial success with Safari for Windows, with 1 million downloads in its first 48 hours. As a comparison, Apple's wildly successful iTunes for Windows has 1 million downloads every 24 hours, making the Safari download rate already at half the pace of iTunes.

The last item was, to no one's surprise, the iPhone. Unfortunately, this announcement was quite the disappointment. Raising the crowd's anticipation, Steve Jobs announces that he has a "*very sweet solution*" for developers wishing to target the iPhone, one which is "*really innovative*". A new iPhone SDK? Perhaps an *Xphone* development environment? No, instead Steve reminds us that Safari comes on the iPhone. Thus, developers merely need to write to *Web 2.0 + AJAX* standards, and their applications will run on iPhone just as it does on any system running Safari. Of course, this is not what developers had in mind. Does Steve not know this?

Despite the down note Steve left us with, all in all it was a good keynote. Not as good as last year's, but better than others'. With the conference now under way, Mac developers had a week of learning and preparing for what is around the corner.

Whither Carbon?

"There will come a time when we will stop investing in Carbon..." - Bertrand Serlet, Senior VP of Apple Software Engineering, 6/11/07

There was one big bombshell dropped at this year's conference, eclipsing other programming topics: the announcement that the Carbon API (*Application Programming Interface*) will not be ported to 64-bit. This is a major reversal from last year's conference, in which we were told that Carbon would indeed be 64-bit compatible. Some explanation is in order for those new to the terminology:

Since the introduction of Mac OS X, there have been a number of APIs by which developers may create native applications. If you develop in Java, your cross-platform projects can be made double-clickable applications with little effort. Unix programmers can create console applications on the Mac by writing to the BSD API. Unix GUI apps can run as well, as long as the user has installed the optional X11 package. However, the two primary API's by which *real* Mac OS X applications are typically develop are these: Carbon and Cocoa.

Carbon is a C-based API, popular with C++ programmers, and is an evolution of the original Mac Toolbox from 1984. Over the past 20+ years, these API calls have been improved and modernized, making Carbon a first-class development suite (far superior to the Win32 API on that other system). In conjunction with *Interface Builder*, Apple's GUI generator, one can very easily develop topflight applications with Carbon. The vast majority of applications sold for the Mac are Carbon-based.

Cocoa has its legacy in the old days of OpenStep and NeXTStep, Steve Jobs' former company. Whereas Carbon is a procedural API, Cocoa is object oriented, and allows a developer to create applications even more quickly than Carbon. It even takes greater advantage of *Interface Builder*. Unfortunately, Cocoa has two major disadvantages to it: 1) its API is a radical departure from any previous Mac APIs (so you are relearning from scratch), and 2) it requires developing in *Objective C*, a niche language with bizarre syntax, and is virtually unheard of outside of Cocoa development.

Steve Jobs had maintained the fiction (at least in word) that both Carbon and Cocoa would remain equally supported. Even as recently as last year's WWDC presentation on Leopard, Apple confirmed equal support for Carbon moving into the 64-bit world. This year, however, all that changed. It was announced that the Carbon API will not be ported to 64-bit; 64-bit applications will have to be rewritten in Cocoa.

I will discuss this greater detail in an upcoming article very soon.

Special Events

After hours on most days at the conference, Apple holds various evening events. This is a time developers can unwind and enjoy these other activities, most of them involving free food and drink. There were some changes this year, some good, others not so good...

Sunday: In recent years, WWDC Sundays was a time for students. Sunday afternoons often had workshops for students to learn how to develop Mac software. Sunday evening was typically set aside as a Student Reception/Career Fair event, in which a number of companies would have booths accepting resumes and talking with students. Over the years, the Student Reception has become more diminished, despite its increased attendance. Sushi and exotic appetizers gave way to pizza and soda to finally this year's cancellation altogether. As a substitute, a separate session *107: Students - Getting the Most Out of WWDC* was presented on Monday afternoon. Unfortunately, even this substitution was mishandled, as the presentation was advertised on the WWDC Student web page to start at 5:00 PM, but was actually scheduled for 3:30 PM (and in fact did not begin until 4:00 PM due to the *Mac OS X State of the Union* session running late). This was yet another example of the logistical errors that plagued this year's conference.

Monday: Monday evening was the ADC reception, a chance for developers to meet and chat with Apple engineers. 1,200 Apple engineers made the trip to San Francisco, an amazing figure. As with last year's conference, the ratio of Apple employees to attendees was 1:4. This is a significant sign of how serious Apple is about courting its developers. The food at the reception was mediocre, but the contacts were impressive. This night alone made the conference worth its price.

Tuesday: This was the night not to miss. Tuesday evening at WWDC has two events: the *Apple Design Awards* [<http://developer.apple.com/wwdc/ada/>] and the awesome *Stump the Experts* audience participation game show [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stump the Experts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stump_the_Experts)]. Pizza is served in the interim, and it is definitely a geek paradise for the night. Interesting, Apple decided to double up by moving its Scientific Poster session from Wednesday to Tuesday this year. Doing so increased the number of attendees viewing the posters, and made for one of the best WWDC Tuesday evenings in recent memory. The only complaint I had was that by putting all those things on one night, I did not have as much time to read all the posters I had wanted.

Wednesday: Here Apple dropped the ball. With the Scientific Poster session having moved from Wednesday to Tuesday, Wednesday evening was left "To be announced" [see: http://developer.apple.com/wwdc/schedules/wednesday_pm.html]. Many (including some Apple employees themselves) suspected a surprise for that evening. In previous years, Wednesday was movie night, so some had hoped that this would return in 2007. I did not think there was going to be a surprise, but I had imagined that they might devote the time to rebroadcast some of the more popular conference sessions, as they had in 2006. But alas, there was nothing. Not even an announcement of nothing. This appears to be another of the many logistical errors that this year's WWDC has been suffering.

Thursday: With the size of the conference continuing to grow, something had to be done about the Apple Campus bash. For many years, Apple had held a large party on the campus of Apple in Cupertino for WWDC attendees on Thursday night. The Apple store would be open for extended hours, and developers would stand in line to get goodies at a conference discount. Buses would shuttle the attendees from the convention center to Cupertino and back, and there would be a line for this as well. When attendance was at a manageable two to three thousand and bus rides took about 15 minutes, this was not much of a problem. However in 2003, Apple moved the conference from the nearby San Jose to a more distant San Francisco, making the bus ride a 45+ minute proposition each way. Now double the number of attendees, and you have a nightmare on your hands.

And a nightmare it was in 2006. Enough was enough. For the 2007 conference, Apple reluctantly (but wisely) changed the party venue from the company campus to San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens, across the street from the Moscone Center. It was a complete hit. The food was wonderful, stations of hot dogs, Italian sausage, pasta, sushi, dim sum, tacos, ice cream and much, much more were scattered all about the garden. Ozomatli played to the delight of all, and most stayed until past dark.

The smashing success of Thursday night went rather far in compensating for the lackluster amenities and disappointing food during the week. Hopefully, this will be a sign of future improvements for upcoming WWDC's.

Coming Up: Next month, a detailed review of Mac OS X Leopard, followed by a review of Apple's new Xcode 3 development tools. See you in 30!



Geek Speak: Random Mac Stuff You Need to Know

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Creating A Dashboard Widget

By Matt Brewer

Today we're going to take a dive into a technology that debuted over two years ago with the release of Tiger: Dashboard. I personally have a love/hate relationship with Dashboard. Sometimes developers try to make a widget do too much, when it would have been better as an application. At other times, the widget is just useless. All that aside, Dashboard can be useful for some simple tasks.

Introduction

If you have any web development experience behind you, then you are well on your way to becoming an awesome widget developer. A widget is essentially a complete webpage, with HTML, Javascript, CSS and all that. A widget can take it a few steps farther than just a webpage however, as Apple has given us developers a "widget" Javascript object that lets us perform system calls for executing Perl, AppleScript, or even Shell scripts.

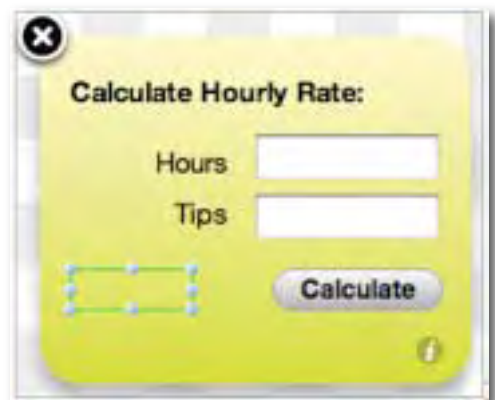
Because widgets are essentially webpages, you can develop a widget in a standard text editor and refer to documentation and go through a whole bunch of work. Or, you can download a beta copy of Apple's Dashcode that will make an official appearance in Leopard. Right now the beta is available for Tiger, you will just need an ADC account to login and download. This download only requires a basic subscription, so you can sign up for free. Go ahead and download a copy of dashcode here < <http://developer.apple.com/tools/dashcode/> >. This isn't an introduction to using Dashcode either, I'll assume that you can figure out the basic functionality of it on your own.

Mission Statement

Now that we have a bit of ideology behind us, let's talk business. You have just started a job as a server at a local restaurant and you want to easily be able to calculate how much you made per hour. The math is fairly simple, you'll figure up your actual wages for the hours worked, add in your tips, and then divide by the hours. However, that is a lot of work to do after working a shift and you want to make it easier, so you decide to make yourself a widget!

Creating the Front Interface

Fire up Dashcode and choose the "Custom" widget when creating a new document. Dashcode provides you with an easy, drag-n-drop way to add objects to your widget. Take the time now to open up the "Library" from the toolbar and explore. Notice that there is an Inspector as well. Take a look through all the options there. Now, let's get started.



First off, drop a couple basic "Text" objects onto the front of your widget. As you place objects, they appear in the source list on the left. If you wish to rename them (which I highly recommend), you'll need to open the Inspector and set the "ID" field. Drag two "Text Fields" onto the face and arrange as shown in the screenshot. Also add a button for calculating the hourly rate. And, even though you can't see it, there is one more "Text" object on the face of the widget. Just drag a regular text object and in the Inspector, delete the text in under "Localization - Key". Then your object appears invisible, with no text. We're going to use this one as the output area for the user.

Creating the Back Interface

Now to create the interface for the back of the widget. In the source list on the left, you should see a black icon that says "back". This is the other side of your widget. We're going to be cheap and just delete the handy "Made with Dashcode" image and add a few things to the back of ours. Two "Text" objects, used as labels go on the back. You can change the color of the text in the Inspector. We'll add a button that will fire up the user's default web browser and take them to my website, and also add a quick "Text Field" where the user must enter an hourly wage. Notice the "Done" button and "i" button were already configured.

Adding Code

At this point, I recommend you download the completed project

< <http://www.macfanatic.net/downloads/software/samplecode/mcJuly2007-make-a-widget.zip> >

and follow along. The main reason is that all those text objects were given specific names and the code references those names. You might not have changed the IDs (names) via the Inspector and therefore your source list will have a lot of “Text1” and “Text2” and so forth. If the IDs don’t match, the code won’t work. Basic HTML element accessing.

First, we’re going to add the main code that crunches the numbers. I have called this function “calcTips(event)”. The basic design of this function is to grab number values from the three Text Fields we put on the widget (one is on the back remember), error check those variables, do the math, and place that number in the output area on the front of the widget. Most of the code is related to error checking and rounding the number off to two decimal places, since we’re working with money.

```
function calcTips(event) {  
  
    // Grab the decimal values from the input fields  
    var hours = parseFloat(document.getElementById("hours").value);  
    var tips = parseFloat(document.getElementById("tips").value);  
    var wageRate = parseFloat(document.getElementById("wageRate").value);  
  
    // If user hasn't entered any info, just return  
    // The isNaN(variable) is like checking for NULL  
    if ( isNaN(tips) || isNaN(hours) ) {  
        alert("User didn't enter enough info");  
        return;  
    }  
  
    // If user hasn't filled in the prefs on back, let them know  
    if ( isNaN(wageRate) || wageRate < 0 ) {  
        alert("User hasn't entered hourly wage");  
        document.getElementById("output").innerText = "Set Wage on Back!";  
        return;  
    }  
  
    // Calculate the actual rate  
    var out = ((hours * wageRate) + tips) / hours;  
  
    // Do the rounding to get to two decimal places  
    out = Math.round(out*100)/100;  
    var outString = out+"; // Converts out to a string by adding a empty space  
    if ( outString.indexOf('.') < 0 ) {  
        outString = outString + '.00'; // Add the decimal places for money :)  
    }  
}
```

```

    }
    outString = outString + '/hr'; // Just add this for formality

    // Set the result in the field
    document.getElementById('output').innerText = outString;
}

```

A few quick things to note from the code above.

The `parseFloat()` function is a nice one to use to convert a string to a number. If something goes wrong, it returns “NaN”, which is why we check for that in the lines following the first couple statements.

The `alert()` function is similar to `NSLog()` or `printf()`, except you can’t use placeholders as far as I can tell. You just pass the variable or string in, and it prints it to the console. The user won’t ever see these when using the widget, but these messages pop up in the Run Log in Dashcode, so it will help you debug.

Notice when grabbing text from a `TextField`, you use the “.value” call. However, when grabbing text from just a regular `Text` object, you use the “.innerText”. Play around with those until you’re comfortable. It makes a difference.

Preferences

Now that we have the code in place to crunch the numbers, let’s hook up our preferences. Preferences for a widget are very similar to the `NSUserDefaults` and such methods that you use in Cocoa. Your widget can read from it’s user defaults (most likely at launch) and then write objects back to the defaults, on a keyed value. You will want to use preferences because this allows your widget to easily save values across system restarts, logins, etc. If you didn’t use this, your widget wouldn’t retain values.

```

function load()
{
    setupParts();

    // We're going to retrieve our preferences and fill in the textFields on the back now
    var wagesFromPref = widget.preferenceForKey("wageRate");
    if ( wagesFromPref && wagesFromPref.length > 0 ) {
        wageRate.value = wagesFromPref;
    }
}

```

The `load()` function is in your JS file by default, and the only code in there is `setupParts()`, to initialize your widget. However, we need to read our preferences into our widget at startup, so this is where we’ll do it. Notice the call “`widget.preferenceForKey(keyAsString)`”; This returns your object, or `NULL` if it doesn’t exist. If we got something other than `NULL` and the string wasn’t empty, we set the `textField` on the back of the widget to that value and move on.


```

function showFront(event) {
    // your widget needs to show the front

    // The user might have just flipped from the back to the front,
    // so we're going to save the preferences they might have set
    var wageRate = document.getElementById("wageRate").value;
    if ( wageRate && wageRate.length > 0 ) {
        widget.setPreferenceForKey(wageRate, "wageRate");
    }
    more code here....
}

```

The showFront() widget is called when the user clicks the glassy *Done* button on the back of the widget to flip back around to the front. At this point, the user should have entered a value into the textField on the back, and we want to read that in, quickly error check, and then set the preference with “widget.setPreferenceForKey(value, keyAsString); That’s all to that. There is more code below in this function, but it’s stuff setup by Apple.

Making the Connections

We have written the code for our widget, but it still doesn’t do anything because we haven’t hooked up any of the functions to our buttons yet. Select the “Calculate” button on the front of the widget and pull up the Inspector. Click on the blue object-like tab on the far right and you’ll see a full list of Javascript handlers that you can assign functions to. For our button, it’s obvious that we want to assign the “calcTips()” function to the “onClick” handler. Just double-click in the table on the right side and you can either type in the function name, or use the pop up menu to select a function.

To make the widget a bit more keyboard friendly, we’ll also add two handlers to the “tips” textField. Assign “calcTips()” to the onBlur and onChange handlers and when the user tabs through the fields and leaves the last field, it will automatically run. It’s the closest thing I could come to assigning Return to a button in a Cocoa app.

One last note on the back of the widget, I have assigned a quick function to a button, to pull up my webpage. The function uses “widget.openURL(urlAsString); to accomplish that. Very handy.

Conclusion

You’ve used the *Play* button to preview the widget during development. Be sure to play around with Pausing it as well and admire the full Javascript debugger that Apple has provided. There is also a code evaluator that lets you test code in real time on your widget. When you are ready to share your widget, just go to *File -> Deploy Widget*. That places a regular widget file wherever you choose. You can also use *File -> Deploy Widget to Dashboard* if you want to use it on your own Mac right away.

There are a few more things you can do to the widget, such as set some info in the attributes area, design a custom widget icon, or make a better background for the front of the widget. All of that is stuff I worked on, but not very much. As a challenge, I encourage you to add a few more features to the widget, such as a list view and a way to store data, so that the user can browse through previous days.

Contact Info

You can always send me an email at mbrewer@maccompanion.com or visit my website at <http://www.macfanatic.net> for more information about me and my ramblings. I also produce a weekly audio podcast taking an in-depth review of cool and new Mac applications, along with tips, developer interviews, tutorials, and the occasional tutorial.

Doc_Babad's Macintosh Tips - A Macintosh Tip or Three...

July 2007 Edition

By Harry {doc} Babad © 2007



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The software related tips were tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM; running under Macintosh OS X OS X 10.4.9.

This month I continue sharing my occasional tip related finds with you. Most, but not all of the Tips I share come from — Paul Taylor's Hints & Tips column <http://www.mac-hints-tips.com> and are used with his permission. Where I use any one else's tips for this column, I acknowledge both their source and their contributors.

Oh, I almost forgot! Unless otherwise noted, all the tips and tidbits I share, where appropriate, work on my computer. If I don't own the software but if the tip sounds interesting, I'll so note at the end of that specific write-up.

NEW: Great Stuff – Tips for you to checkout

As I cruise the i8nternet I run across some great tips, that I'm not likely to get permission to reprints. So I've started a new section to this column for do-it yourselfers.

Tips I've provided this month include, organized as always in a random order:

- Delete Printer Drivers to Reclaim Space
- Zapping PRAM in OS X
- Deleting Stubborn Files
- Use proxy icons to create Mail attachments and more...
- What You Don't Know About Optical Media...Could Kill You (Or Your Drive)
- Email Formatting Glitches – Allow all recipients to decode your message (Renamed – the original title by Ilene Strizver was Email Etiquette]
- Mac OS X Keyboard Shortcuts – Compiled by Mike Sivcevic (SilverMac)
- Easily Create Lots of New Folders (An untested by me, Terminal based hint)
- Great Stuff – Tips for you to checkout

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Delete Printer Drivers to Reclaim Space

One way to reclaim some hard drive space is to delete drivers for printers you'll never use. By default, OS X installs 2GB of printer drivers in /Library/Printers.

Just open that folder and drag into the Trash the drivers for individual printers, or the folders containing drivers for an entire brand. It's not easy to replace these drivers, so be sure to delete only the brands and models you're confident you'll never use.

Design Tools Monthly
April 2007 – Taylor's Hints and Tips Column

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Deleting Stubborn Files

Occasionally, Mac OS X will refuse to delete a file from your Trash no matter what you try. You can always use the Terminal application to force empty your Trash, assuming you are comfortable using the UNIX command line, or you can use one of these applications to do the dirty work for you.

Mac HelpMate: www.macworkshops.com/machelpmate

Mac HelpMate can force empty your trash, and it does much more. It also manages routine system maintenance tasks, monitors the health of your hard drive, repairs permissions, remotely controls other Macs, and more. This utility is free.

Cocktail: www.maintain.se/cocktail/index.html

Similar to Mac HelpMate in some ways, Cocktail can delete those stubborn files and also performs many system maintenance tasks for you. Cocktail costs \$14.95.

Super Empty Trash: www.faqintosh.com/risorse/en/sys/setrash

Super Empty Trash is a one trick pony, but it performs that trick without any hassle. It is an AppleScript-based application that simply force empties your Trash, and it lets you select which disk's Trash files should be deleted. Super Empty Trash is free.

iCan: <http://www.kanzu.com/index.html>

Can is a \$10 shareware trashcan for OS X which sits on the desktop or can be limited to the menubar, where I prefer it to live. . It's interactive - it appears empty when it's empty, and full when it's full, just like the one in OS 9. From the menubar you can Empty, Smart Empty, Force Empty or Secure Empty The trash. And of course there is a warning about how *big* your trashcan is, so if there's more there than you thing ought to be you can check it out and rescue the accidentally dumped files.

The Mac Observer via Apple Barrel, Ridgecrest, CA
April 2007 – Taylor's Hints and Tips Column
And Harry (doc) Babad – macC {uses iCan}

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Zapping PRAM in OS X

Sometimes you hear Mac technicians say a computer needs its PRAM zapped. For most of us, this sounds very odd, and maybe even a little obscene. But don't worry; it's a standard part of the Mac troubleshooting routine.

PRAM stands for "parameter random access memory." A document in Apple's knowledge base reads:

"PRAM stores certain system and device settings in a location that Mac OS X can access quickly. Exactly which settings are stored in the computer's PRAM varies depending on the type of computer as well as the types of devices and drives connected to the computer. Parameter RAM is a small area of non-volatile RAM (NVRAM)."

Because PRAM is "Non-volatile RAM," it will store data even when the computer is turned off. It will also typically store data when the computer automatically shuts off due to severe battery drain.

According to Apple, some of the data stored in PRAM includes:

- Display and video settings such as refresh rate, screen resolution, number of colors
- Time zone setting
- Startup volume choice
- Speaker volume
- Recent kernel panic information, if any exists
- DVD region setting

Many issues can be resolved by "zapping the PRAM." This includes issues such as Macs that are flashing a question mark when powered on, to missing pictures on the iMac G5's display, to computers that simply won't power up at all. PRAM can be corrupted by faulty (typically third party) software, power surges, and electromagnetic interference.

In most Macs you can "zap the pram" by powering the computer on, then immediately holding down the Command, Option, P, and R keys simultaneously. The Command key is the one with the cloverleaf or Apple on it.

According to Apple, OS X does not store network settings in PRAM. If you experience a network issue, resetting PRAM will not help.

If PRAM is reset, you may need to verify your time zone, startup volume, and volume settings using System Preferences. Certain firmware updates may reset PRAM as a normal part of their installation process."

Note that zapping PRAM is different than resetting the Power Management Unit (PMU,) which you might have to do on certain Apple laptops. Apple says “A PMU reset should not be necessary except as a last resort in cases where a hardware failure of the power management system is suspected. Performing a PMU reset returns the iBook and PowerBook hardware, including NVRAM, to default settings and forces the computer to shut down.” ~ Ed

Small Dog Electronics
April 2007 – Taylor’s Hints and Tips Column

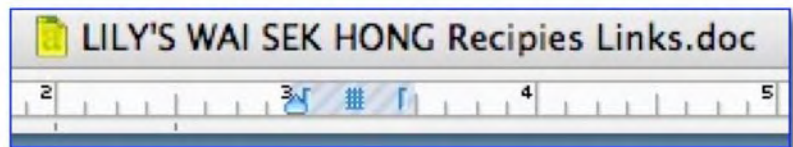
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Use Proxy Icons to Create Mail Attachments and to imbed web address into your emails

When checking out, Macworld’s, OS X hints column, I came across Kirk McElhearn hint (blog) and decided to try whether it worked for Eudora, my favorite email client. Yes, Kurt it does!

According to Kirk, if you're working on a document and you want to send it to someone as an e-mail attachment, you probably know that you can drag the actual file icon to the Mail icon in the Dock to create a new message containing that file. But to do this, you have to navigate to the Finder and find the file.

There is another way: Save your work, click the proxy icon in the title bar (that's the small icon next to the file's name) and drag it onto the Mail icon in the Dock.



This creates a new message with the working document attached to the message. (This method also works with Microsoft Entourage.)



You can do this with Web pages in Safari or Firefox (and perhaps in other browsers) by dragging the icon to the left of the URL in the address bar; in this case, the current URL is pasted in the body of the newly created message.

If, however, you are viewing a local file, the file itself will be added to the message.

Note that different programs deal with attachments in different ways. With Mail, any changes you make to your file after adding it to a new message will not be reflected in that attachment; the file is added to the message in its state at the time you drag it. Entourage, however, only records a link to the file, so you can keep working on your document and making changes. When you save or send the message, the latest version of the document will be attached. Other e-mail programs may have different behavior; so if you use a different program, try it out to see how it works.

Kirk McElhearn — Macworld, May 31, 2007

<http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macoshints/2007/05/proxyicon/index.php?lsrc=mwhints>

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Email Formatting Glitches – Allow all recipients to decode your message

It's tempting to format outgoing email with different fonts, point sizes and colors, and to punch up your text with the use of italics and boldface. Unfortunately, what you send is not necessarily what your recipient gets.

Some email programs don't read special formatting, including fonts that your reader's computer doesn't have. And many allow the user to set preferences for plain text instead of rich text, which includes styling. The result: your carefully formatted email is reduced to plain text, or worse, littered with 'alien' characters (more on that below).

What's the solution?

First, stick to system fonts, such as Arial, Times, Verdana, Trebuchet or Geneva, which virtually all users have. And, unless you're certain that the recipient can read your formatting, keep it simple and use only keyboard characters and styling that won't get lost in translation. For emphasis, try surrounding your important text with *asterisks.* All Caps is another option, but one to be used sparingly.

Remember that Caps are considered shouting in the cyberworld! For most people who have access to personal computers, email has rapidly overtaken 'snail mail' as the preferred means of sending written communication, both business and personal. The near-immediate delivery and low cost of email are hard to beat, but the technology does have limitations when it comes to typographic finesse. Here are some dos and don'ts to ensure that your electronic communication is received with its message intact.

Safe Characters

One of the most puzzling occurrences in emails is the occasional appearance of strange, unfamiliar characters in the text, often foreign or mathematical in nature. We can usually read around them, but even so, what are they and how did they get there? This can occasionally happen to non-standard keyboard characters when they're sent from one email program to another. These characters include such typographic niceties as 'smart' quotes and apostrophes, en and em dashes, and bullets. These characters and others like them are not always encoded or translated consistently from one email program to another.

The result? Your carefully formatted curly quotes, ligatures and ellipses can turn into something unrecognizable to your recipient's inbox. The solution is simple: play it safe and stick to the standard keyboard characters. While this means using 'dumb' straight quotes and double hyphens instead of correct dashes, at least your message will arrive in a readable form. (But don't forget: when copying and pasting text from an email into a designed piece for print, reformat these 'dumb' characters to adhere to the principles of good typography!)

Signatures and Attachments

Other points of good email etiquette include using a signature and being savvy about attachments. A signature is a short block of copy that identifies you and includes your contact information.

Most email programs allow you to set up one or more signatures to choose from, or to select a default signature that will automatically appear at the bottom of every email you send. Usually used for business, signatures can be a great time-saver if you use them appropriately. Remember to include your signature in each subsequent email to the same recipient so no one has to search for the email with your phone number.

Another tip: don't include images and logos in your signature. These are often filtered out by spam filters and could result in your addressees not getting your email at all. As for attachments, keep them to a minimum and keep an eye on their size: between 50K and 2MB is best. In fact, spam filters often screen out emails with attachments that are 50K or less as a means of virus control.

For attachments over 2MB, check with the intended recipient before sending and ask for confirmation afterwards. Sometimes mailboxes have maximums on the size of acceptable attachments; others are too full to accept them at all.

And, a final tip: proofread your email carefully. Once you hit send, there's no turning back!

~ Ilene Strizver, founder of The Type Studio, is a typographic consultant, designer, writer and specializing in all aspects of typographic communication, from the aesthetic to the technical. Ilene conducts Gourmet Typography Training internationally. For more information visit www.thetypestudio.com or contact ilene@thetypestudio.com.

Ilene Strizver, LIMac Forum, Long Island, NY
Paul Taylor's Hints & Tips March 2007

What You Don't Know About Optical Media...Could Kill You (Or Your Drive)

If we were a local news show, we'd be running teasers saying things like "Could the blank disc you put in your disc drive *destroy* it? We'll tell you at 11." But since we're out here in the wilds of the blogosphere, we're just going to go ahead and tell you now. I mean, you're already here and everything.

ZDNet's Jason O'Grady went to burn himself a DVD the other week and ran into a bit of a problem. A SuperDrive-killing problem. <http://blogs.zdnet.com/Apple/?p=441>

When the disc came out of my drive the white thermal printing was mostly de-laminated from the top of the disc surface. About half of the white thermal surface had peeled off inside the SuperDrive mechanism. Note: that is not a label that I installed or some sort of a sticker, it's the white thermal printable topcoat that ships from the manufacturer on the media.

Pieces of the label were trapped throughout the inside of my SuperDrive and it wouldn't read any disc, in fact, subsequent discs that were inserted got scratched beyond further use by all the white shards that were distributed throughout the inside of my machine.

Fortunately, Jason's MacBook Pro was covered under Apple Care, though the Genius who handled it informed him that it wouldn't have been covered by Apple otherwise, a repair that would have totaled almost \$450.

The moral of the story? Stay away from shoddy B-grade media: in this case, *Prodisc White Thermal Hub Printable 8x DVD-R*. Remember: sometimes it's worth it to pay a little more for something *that will not break your optical drive*. Jason recommends Verbatim; I've had good luck with Staples's generic brand. Burn safely, everybody.

Doc Sez – Use the COSTCO TDK medium for all non-essential files but put archival material on Taiyo Yuden media. I've only lost one in about 100 CDs when using the TDK data CDRs, both for music and data. Oh the material is not lost since Roxio's Toast lets me know when I've a bum copy and I just burn a new one. I've not done much with DVDs other than large data compilations, and the TDK DVD-Rs work fine; I've not burned 100 disks so have no statistics. In all cases, I use my internal superdrive as a read source and my LaCie 1394 (Pioneer DVD-RW DVR-107D) or my Sony DRX-820UL-T double density drive (DVD-RW DRU-820-A) as burners.

<http://www.macuser.com/> Posted Feb. 20, '07, 9:35 AM PT by Dan Moren
http://www.macuser.com/hardware/what_you_dont_know_about_optic.php#more

PS: We've written about the penny-wise pound foolish attributes of not using quality media in the 3RS column in the March 2007, Volume 5 Issue 3 of macCompanion. Doc_Babad

Comment on Dan Moren's Article by: HawksM February 21, 2007 10:39 AM

I concur that sticking to quality media is important, I also agree that Verbatim is the way to go. I have sold all brands of media for years. Among blank DVD-R manufacturers Verbatim by far has the least amount of complaints. I don't have experience with Super Drives, but I do know that the physical specs of the disc are important with Super Drives. With DVD there are 2 substrates glued together as opposed to CDR, which is 1 substrate.



I will also say that store bought media is "outsourced" and branded for companies like Memorex, HP, Staples etc. They do not manufacture their own media. Therefore consistency and quality from batch to batch is a gamble. They will change manufacturers from batch to batch as they see fit.

For DVD-R stick with Verbatim or Taiyo Yuden. For CDR stick to Taiyo Yuden, MAM-A (Mitsui) or verbatim.

One more point about quality manufacturers they will be much more likely to play in DVD players after they are burned. Have you burned a DVD only to have it freeze when you watch it with friends? Stick to the quality manufacturers. The few pennies that you save by using B-grade media will not be worth it in the long run. What ever happened to the saying "You get what you pay for"?

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Mac OS X Keyboard Shortcuts – Compiled by Mike Sivcevic (SilverMac)

I know some of you know many of the shortcuts listed below. So skip the ones you know, and join the shortcut of the week virtual club. You'll be surprised by how much better your wrists feel when doing less mousing around.

Start up hot-keys (press key while booting)	Menu Commands
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• X = Force Mac OS X startup• C = Start up from a bootable CD• N = Attempt to start up from a compatible network server (NetBoot)• T = Start up in FireWire Target Disk mode• Opt-Command-Shift-Delete = Seeks a different startup volume• Shift = Start up in Safe Boot mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shift-Command-Q = Log out• Shift-Option-Command-Q = Log out immediately• Shift-Command-Delete = Empty Trash• Option-Shift-Command-Delete = Empty Trash without dialog• Command-H = Hide window• Option-Command-H = Hide Others• Command-N = File New window

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cmd-V = Start up in Verbose mode • Cmd-S = Start up in Single-User mode • Cmd-Opt-Esc = Force Quit menu • Cmd-Opt-D = Show/hide the dock • Ctrl-Eject = Bring up Shutdown / Sleep / Logout Dialog • Ctrl-Cmd-Eject = Restart immediately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift-Cmd-N = New Folder • Cmd-O = Open • Cmd-S = Save • Shift-Cmd-S = Save as • Cmd-P = Print • Cmd-W = Close Window • Opt-Cmd-W = Close all Windows • Cmd-I = Get Info • Opt-Cmd-I = Show Attributes Inspector • Cmd-D = Duplicate • Cmd-L = Make Alias • Cmd-R = Show original • Cmd-T = Add to Favorites • Cmd-Delete = Move to Trash • Cmd-E = Eject • Cmd-F = Find • Cmd-Z = Undo • Cmd-B = Hide Toolbar • Cmd-J = Show View Opts • Cmd = [= Go Back • Cmd =] = Go Forward • Shift-Cmd-C = Go to Computer • Shift-Cmd-H = Go to your Home folder • Shift-Cmd-I = Go to iDisk • Shift-Cmd-A = Go to Applications folder • Shift-Cmd-G = Go to Go-To Folder • Cmd-K = Connect to Server • Cmd-M = Minimize Window • Cmd-? = Open Mac Help • Cmd-Space = Open Spotlight (OS X 10.4)
<p>Clipboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cmd-C = Copy • Cmd-V = Paste • Cmd-X = Cut • Cmd-A = Select All 	
<p>Window Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cmd-W = Close window • Cmd-Opt-W = Close all windows • Cmd-M = Minimize window • Cmd-Opt-M = Minimize all windows • Cmd-H = Hide Application • Cmd-~ = Cycle through windows for current application • Ctrl-F4 = Cycle through every open window • Cmd-Tab = Bring up the Application Switcher. • Cmd-Tab = Cycle Forwards • Cmd-~ = Cycle Backwards • Cmd-Shift-Tab = Cycle Backwards • Cmd-Q = Quit application 	
<p>Universal Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-Cmd-* (asterisk) = Turn on Zoom • Opt-Cmd+ (plus) = Zoom in • Opt-Cmd- (minus) = Zoom out • Cmd-Opt-Ctrl-8 = Invert Screen colors 	
<p>Finder Navigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cmd-N = New Finder window • Cmd-W = Close Window • Opt-Cmd-W = Close all Windows • Cmd-Down = Open File/Folder • Cmd-Up = Navigate to parent • Cmd-Right = Expand folder (in list view) 	<p>Expose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F9 = Show all open windows on the screen at once • F10 = Show all windows for the current application. • F11 = Shows Desktop • F12 = Activates Dashboard • F12 (hold) = ejects disk

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cmd-Left = Collapse Folder (in list view) • Opt-Cmd-Right = Expand folder and its subfolders (in list view) • Opt-Cmd-Up = Open parent folder and close current window • Cmd-Shift-H = Jump to your Home folder • Cmd-Shift-A = Jump to your Applications folder • Cmd-Shift U = Jump to your Utilities folder • Cmd-Shift K = Jump to the Network browser • Cmd-Shift G = Go to Folder... • Cmd-1 = View as Icons • Cmd-2 = View as List • Cmd-3 = View as Columns • Cmd-Space = Open Spotlight (OS X 10.4) • Cmd-Delete = Move file/folder to trash • Cmd-Click window title = Display the file path 	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-Cmd-D = Show/Hide Dock • Ctrl-Up = Move up one page • Ctrl-Down = Move down one page • Opt-Drag = Copy to new location • Opt-Cmd-Drag = Make alias in new location • Cmd-Drag = Move to new location without copying • Opt-Cmd-Eject = Sleep • Cmd-click window toolbar button (upper right corner) = Cycle through toolbar views • Ctrl-Cmd-D and mouse over word in Cocoa applications = shows Dictionary description for that word •
	<p>Screen capture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cmd-Shift 3 = Capture the screen to a file • Cmd Ctrl Shift 3 = Capture the screen to the clipboard • Cmd-Shift 4 = Select an area to be captured to a file • Cmd Ctrl Shift 4 = Select an area to be captured to the clipboard • Cmd-Shift 4, then press Space = Capture entire window

From: Mike Sivcevic's SilverMac
From: <http://www.silvermac.com/mac-os-x-keyboard-shortcuts/>

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Easily Create Lots of New Folders (A OS X Terminal Based Hint)

Introduction: I often need almost identical sets of folders for various projects ranging from macC reviews to various tasks for consulting clients. You may know the routine. [macC Software Review... Graphics, Background, Drafts, Developer dialogs – with the generic folder name differing only the product's name. For example Graphics-MSW '04.] Therefore when I stumbled across Rob Griffiths' hint I was eager to try, but alas not terminally so. But I'm passing it on anyway for those who are terminally addicted to such tools.

Rob's Hint: Have you ever had to create a large series of folders, perhaps for a new project, new client, or just as part of organizing your massively large and massively disorganized hard drive? In the Finder, it's trivial to create a new folder—just press Shift-Command-N. But if you've got 10 or 20 or 30 folders to create, the process can get tedious—create the folder, rename it, create the next, rename it, repeat until done. Ugh. Using Terminal, however, you can

greatly simplify this task, as you can easily combine the ‘create’ and ‘rename’ steps into one action.

In Terminal, you use the command `mkdir` to create new directories (folders). For instance, `mkdir "My Folder"` will create a folder named My Folder in the current directory. But `mkdir` is actually more powerful than that, as it will accept multiple new folder names on the input line. For instance, consider this command:

```
mkdir "My Folder" "My Other Folder" "Not That Folder"
```

The above will create three new folders with the ever-so-useful names of My Folder, My Other Folder, and Not That Folder. Note the quote marks around each name—you’ll need those if your folder names contain spaces. Alternatively, you can put a backslash before each space and skip the quotes, but I find it easier (and more visually obvious) to use the quotes. Unless you specify the full path to each folder, `mkdir` will create them in the current directory—so remember to use `cd /path/to/destination` before creating your new folders.

So what if you have a *lot* of folders to create? Start by making a text file containing the name of each folder to be created—one entry per line, and any folder name with spaces must be enclosed in quotes (or use backslashes, as explained above). Once you have this file created, place it in the folder where you’d like all the new folders to go, then `cd` to that same folder in Terminal. Then type this command (assuming you’ve named your file `dirlist.txt`):

```
cat dirlist.txt | xargs mkdir
```

Each entry in the file will be created as a folder in the current directory. (For the Unix purists, you can also use `<dirlist xargs mkdir` instead, but I find the `cat` version easier to comprehend.)

Finally, what if you’d like to create a selection of folders, all with the same base but a varying suffix? For example, Project A, Project B, Project C, etc. Try this command:

```
mkdir "Project" {A,B,C,D,E,F}
```

You’re not restricted to single letters, of course—anything you want can go within the curly brackets. Just remember that if you want spaces in the suffixes, you’ll need to enclose them in quotes, too:

```
mkdir "Project" {"New Home","Vacation","To Do"}
```

And yes, I know there are a *bunch* of ways to do this stuff using GUI tools—including Automator, among others. However, it’s Geeky Friday, and none of those GUI tools will help you much if you’re trying to do this work over a remote connection.

Mac OS X Hints By Rob Griffiths May 11, 2007

<http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macosexhints/2007/05/foldercreate/index.php?lsrc=mwhints>

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Great Stuff – Tips for you to checkout

As I cruise the Internet I run across some great tips, that I'm not likely to get permission to reprint. So I've started a new section to this column for do-it yourselfers.

Stem E-mail Overload — Strategies for keeping your inbox under control by Joe Kissell
<http://www.macworld.com/2007/02/features/clutter3/index.php?pf=1>

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That's all folks...

Harry {doc} Babad



The Northern Spy

Technology News and Views Since 1983

Summer Madness - July 2007

By Rick Sutcliffe

Is it just the Spy's Imagination

or are Apple and Google getting cosier all the time? Of all the possible blockbuster mergers out there, this one would seem a good fit. Corporate culture, cooperative working record, cutting edge technology, and marketing savvy all seem to line up.

Perhaps this has something to do with iSteve's foray into the application world with the recent big hit release of Safari for Windows. Searches from the browser bar pull in a small chunk of change, but cross platform web applications may be the way of the future, and it would be hard to imagine a better big mac combo for the role than Apoogle. Question is, would iSteve end up as the head cheese or a side garnish?

The laugh of the month

comes at the expense of all the W*nd*ws apologists who've seen the handwriting on the wall and decided to review Leopard, only to sneer at Apple for having copied from Vista. They should have looked at Apple's OS from a few years ago, the slate from whence creativity-challenged Vista borrowed its look and feel in the first place. Apple ain't copying Vista, folks. It's being faithful to itself.

Further thoughts on the Spy's fourth law

in which, for the new readers this month, the Spy opines:

Marketshare lags mindshare by two to five years

include the thought that it applies to more than just the marketing of computers. The economic boom in Western Canada is now at such peaks that many smaller and especially newer employers cannot find workers. It's not just about wages. Everybody wants to work for companies that have already established mindshare with them. The same goes for universities, which would best market to students in grade ten or eleven, and reap the benefits two years later, than sell to seniors who've already decided--this in particular if they are small and need to establish mindshare (big ones already have it)..

Ditto churches, where the trend to ever larger megachurches continues unabated, as those who build a reputation for being the "happening place" end up with all the people. For that matter, in his own church treasurer role, a version of the Spy's fourth law comes out as: "The last thing the Lord gets hold of is a person's pocketbook", which is a mere rephrasing of "where the heart goes, so does the billfold, but not right away". Let's not get into the question of whether any of this is a good thing; the Spy's Laws aren't moral absolutes, just proverbs on the human condition.

But there's an obvious negative aspect of the fourth law that's had too little attention here. If on the one hand, a company does not learn for a couple of years or more of bottom lines that it has successfully generated mindshare by seeing an increased marketshare (and by then it could be a landslide), it follows that disaster may strike without economic warning on the downside. In other words, a large commercial operation that loses mindshare becomes a zombie for two to five years--dead without knowing it. (Small ones get the news faster, but that's another matter.)

Does anyone in Redmond understand this? If so, perhaps it partially explains why MS is busy using threats and incentives to knuckle under every Linux distributor in sight--handling the goonery itself this time instead of by proxy. (If you can't re-establish mindshare on your own, go out and muscle it away from others.) So far Ubuntu and Red Hat haven't passed through the dealmaking gates to avoid the implicit threat of patent litigation over vague claims of infringement, but others have. What have we here? Maniacal cleverness, or death spasms? Wait five years to be sure, but the Spy is already thinking of a subsidiary law that goes something like:

You can't buy or steal others' mindshare; you have to earn your own.

Oh, and by way of an illustration,

that is less obvious than Apple's doubled marketshare in the last three years (double again in the next three?) Sony appears to be winning the format wars this time around after having lost the earlier (Beta vs VHS) one. Perhaps it's their turn. Blockbuster Video's recent decision to concentrate on only Blu-ray video disks and drop retail support for the rival HD DVD format may turn out to be the market breaker. Of course, the mindshare battle was already won by the PlayStation 3, which uses Blu-ray, so why be surprised?

This month's upgrades noted in passing include,

- premiere OS X system utility Cocktail, now up to version 3.8 and sporting a new interface on a boatload of new features. Highly recommended for those nasty cleanup jobs that don't have an easy interface otherwise. Tweak system settings, manage caches, the Spotlight index, recalcitrant trashes, and log files, tune network settings, alter interface variables and assorted hidden settings, and automate system maintenance. Cocktail is \$15 to unlock the demo. When you need it, little else will do.

- the "type what I mean" utility Typinator from Ergonis software is now at version 2.0. When this puppy is running it will replace an "abbreviation" the user types with a specified text. This can be used to auto correct common typos on the fly, or to expand things like "dt" into a correctly formatted current date such as 2007 07 03 or "myrl" into, say "http://www.webnamehost.net". Of course, case can be preserved. The Spy is just trying this one out for the first time, and it's been many years since he's used such a utility, to the jury's still out. Seems interesting though. Oh, unlike PopChar, Ergonis' other indispensable utility, it doesn't work in System 9 apps.

- Newsgator's NetNewsWire is now up to Version3.0.1b13. Version 3 brought a much nicer user interface, higher speed, and better integration with the Newsgator system. One reason the Spy likes it: If you use this nice little RSS reader on two different machines to the same account, it will remember what you've read in each newsgroup, as the preferences are stored on their site--another wave of the future, as this makes the product a front end to a web application. Indeed, you can access the same data via their web site if you wish. The product is \$29.95, but upgrades for recent purchasers are free.

- And, with the release of the iPhone only two weeks off, Apple announced improvements (upgrades) to its much-anticipated product. They now tout longer battery life than the original specs (though all such claims have to be taken with a block of salt) and a touch-screen made of optical glass rather than plastic, for better scratch resistance. If this trend continues, perhaps corporations will eventually go through the entire product life cycle from planning through multiple upgrades and on to obsolescence before actually releasing the product. Come to think of, some already do. Call it the virtual life cycle of the virtual product--not that this will be Apple's fate. After all, millions are already waiting in line panting for the chance to give iSteve money for this new toy.

Not in Canada, though, where discussions with Rogers seem to be in limbo. Well, perhaps by the time it does happen here, the Canuck buck will be at par with the Yank one, and we'll only be paying a slight premium for the privilege of buying American-made goods instead of double (in some cases). To be fair, Apple is one of the least predatory pricers in this respect; some are even worse at applying the RO factor.

And, speaking of passing,

it appears we can RIP Sony's "connect"--the digital music and video service whose one-time engineers will now be transferred to the Play Station product line--yet another in the long line of information highway road kills attributable to the iPod/iTunes juggernaut. Just goes to show that the old Sony is alive and well, still making mistakes, something the Spy never does, of course.

The heroic service award of the month,

goes to Sarah, on the help desk at ConfigServer, a Chirpy little company that specializes in making, installing, and supporting a set of fabulously useful scripts to enhance the utility of cPanel servers for web hosts. These include a front end to MailScanner, a mail queue manager, a firewall installer and front end, and a disk explorer that can be used from the WHM front end--all such wonderful timesavers you wonder how any server manager could do without them. And, under his other hat of a web host, the Spy uses these scripts daily. So should ever host.

Back to Sarah. It seems there was some confusion a week ago over a cPanel and MailScanner upgrade that weren't quite compatible. Moreover, on "Cork" (WebNameHost's main machine) the /tmp partition filled up in the process, disabling MailScanner and assorted other services altogether, and cosmetically damaging a third application. The problem wasn't immediately obvious to the Spy, so enter the data centre technician to provide cPanel support per contract. The latter reinstalled Exim and MailScanner (without at first saying so, but the Spy watches all), then pronounced everything good. What he'd actually done was killed off the custom settings in Exim, disabled the MailScanner front end and turned MailScanner off without fixing anything, leaving 2500+ messages in the MailScanner queue unprocessed--a not untypical result from a certain genre of tech who throw "fixes" around like roadkill to crows.

When the Spy finally spotted the full /tmp, and cleaned this up, MailScanner was once again functional, though the ConfigServer front end to it was not, due to an inappropriate upgrade of the front end (admittedly the Spy's own fault).

Over to Sarah at ConfigServer, who had the fix (how to downgrade the front end appropriately) and a boatload of other info at her fingertips so the Spy could himself put the now somewhat messed up box completely back into proper working order.

By further contrast, the tech at the other third party supplier's help desk went in, repaired their app's problem, and sent a message saying a directory had been out of sync--no real explanation, and the customer none the wiser if it happens again.

Sarah's approach is how it should always be folks. Don't hand the starving man a fish, teach him how to fish. A big virtual rose thank you to her and ConfigServer. Now, just wait till cPanel 11 goes release and the machine upgrades big time, we install Apache 2.0, and move to higher versions of PHP and MySQL. Interesting times are coming. The Spy wishes sometimes that upgrades were all tested ahead of time and installed just working. Oh wait. That's called a Mac.

In a rather odd move,

the board of CIRA (Canadian Internet Registration Authority) who oversee the .ca TLD, have decided to expire all domain holders' memberships as of 2007 07 31. Until now, if you had a .ca domain, you were a member and could vote for the board. Now, everyone who wishes to remain a member must re-apply per the eMail recently sent out to all registrants, fill in an online form, then go through a telephone interview to confirm the data. Not sure of the reasons behind this, but it's going to be a rather massive pain in the neck.

The Spy also wonders if the change will make it easier or harder for the three incumbent board members who are up or re-election to retain their seats. Indeed, he wonders rather personally, as he has been selected by the CIRA nominating committee as a candidate to contest the upcoming election.

So, hey. If you own a .ca domain, make sure you follow the instructions, get your membership updated, and vote in the upcoming board elections (Sept 6-13), whether you vote for the Spy or not. The names of the candidates selected to appear on the final Nomination Committee slate together with their election statement and qualifications will be posted somewhere on CIRA's website on or before July 5, 2007.

--The Northern Spy

Rick Sutcliffe, (a.k.a. The Northern Spy) is professor of Computing Science and Mathematics at Trinity Western University. He's written two textbooks and several novels, one named best ePublished SF novel for 2003. His columns have appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers, and he's a regular speaker at churches, schools, academic meetings, and conferences. He and his wife Joyce have lived in the Aldergrove/Bradner area of BC since 1972.

Want to discuss this and other Northern Spy columns? Surf on over to ArjayBB.com. Participate and you could win free web hosting from the WebNameHost.net subsidiary of Arjay Web Services. Rick Sutcliffe's fiction can be purchased in various eBook formats from Fictionwise, and in dead tree form from Bowker's Booksurge.

URLs

The Northern Spy Home Page: <http://www.TheNorthernSpy.com>

The Spy's Laws collected: <http://www.thenorthernspy.com/spyslaws.htm>

The Spy's Shareware download site: <http://downloads.thenorthernspy.com/>

WebNameHost : <http://www.WebNameHost.net>

WebNameSource : <http://www.WebNameSource.net>

nameman : <http://nameman.net>

opundo : <http://opundo.com>

Sheaves Christian Resources : <http://sheaves.org>

Arjay Books: <http://www.ArjayBooks.com>

Booksurge: <http://www.booksurge.com>

Fictionwise: <http://www.fictionwise.com>

NetNewsWire: <http://www.newsgator.com/Individuals/NetNewsWire/>

Cocktail: <http://www.maintain.se/cocktail/index.php>

Typinator: <http://www.ergonis.com/products/typinator/>

CIRA: <http://cira.ca>

Views from the Ivory Tower - July 2007

WWDC Announcements

By Ted Bade

As we expected, Apple made a few interesting announcements at the WWDC last month. Mostly it was about Leopard, which won't be released until October. I think a lot of people expected more from Apple this time. But I guess we will take what we can get. I have to admit that it was nice to see the keynote speech return to Apple's computer roots. It was about Macs and MacOS X. One might say that this is to be expected, since the event was a developer's conference for the Macintosh. Still, I was happy to hear all the news about MacOS X and what we can look forward to.

Some interesting news from WWDC07

First of all, game publisher Electronic Arts announced that they will be releasing titles for MacOS X. They immediately are going to release 4 popular titles, C&C 3, Battlefield 2142, Need for Speed carbon, Harry Potter and the order of Phoenix game. They also announced simultaneous (Win/Mac) releases of several sports related games.

While this is good news for Mac gamers, it has a caveat. EA is releasing the games using a system called Cider developed by a company called [Transgaming](http://www.transgaming.com) - <http://www.transgaming.com/products/cider/> Cider games will **only work on Intel Macs**. It does its magic by replacing calls to Window's OS APIs with ones that work under MacOS X. This works because the game has already been optimized to work with Intel based CPUs. I had expected that a company would develop as system like this. It is a great thing for gaming companies that can now easily offer even their worse titles to the MacOS X community. They don't have to completely rewrite the game, but pay a fee for a simple conversion.

Back at the WWDC, game developers id also announced they planned to release titles for the MacOS X community. There is no word if they will use something like Cider or write the game directly.



Steve Jobs demonstrated ten important aspects of Leopard. Will ship in October. You can watch the entire Keynote by visiting the Apple site: [<http://events.apple.com.edgesuite.net/d7625zs/event/>]. Some of the more interesting aspects of Leopard include:

1. *A New Desktop* - Dock turns into a reflective table. It actually appears to sit horizontally on the bottom of the screen. Desktop designed to have a digital image on the desktop rather than a solid color. So the Menu can become transparent.
2. *Stacks* - Steve is really annoyed by all your messy desktops with icons strewn everywhere. With Stacks you can grab a bunch of icons and tie them as one to the Dock. A good example of this is items downloaded from the Internet. They appear all over your desktop, With Leopard and Stacks, a "Downloads" icon will appear on your dock. If you click on this icon the various items you downloaded fan out from the Dock for easy access. In the demo we saw a curved row and well as a grid display of these items. The good thing about this is that there will be less clutter on the desktop but you won't loose easy access to items you want to store there! Pretty cool feature.

3. *A new (updated) Finder* - There were a lot of things shown about the new Finder. It is supposed to be easier to access other Macs on your local network (although it is pretty easy now). They also added a Cover Flow (as in iTunes) view for the Finder, so you can use the album case metaphor to sort through files in a folder. It looks interesting but I am not too sure how practical it will be. I am a list view kind of guy and will probably stay that way. Perhaps I am “old school” but I think alphabetically and find things faster that way. Back to my Mac uses .mac account to keep track of changing IP addresses of the home Mac. So when you are on the road and need to access your home machine, you can find it via your .mac account. Obviously this requires one has a .mac account and that you leave your home machine on all the time. I am sure this will be useful for traveling business people.
4. *Updated Dashboard*, includes the ability to easily create your own widgets.
5. *QuickLook* is a feature that allows your to see the contents of a file without running the application that created it. Aspects of this are already in the current Finder, since you can see a thumbnail of an image or play a movie directly from the Finder. Wit this feature in Leopard the document is opened and can be viewed completely. This would be a useful feature for those people who need to find a particular item among several and have confusing naming conventions!
6. In *iChat* there are some new features. iChat theatre lets you share the media from another program with a friend via ichat. You can do slide shows, Keynote, or show anything that uses the new Quicklook feature. You can also add a backdrop, that is am image behind you when you video chat. The image can be still or a motion video. Finally, you can mess up your image using various PhotoBooth” effects, this will probably be a big hit with the kids.
☺
7. *Spaces* - this is a pretty cool effect that lets the user organize the projects they are working on in separate visual spaces on their Mac. The advantage of this is less screen clutter. A good example of how this can be used is say you are creating a web page. In one space you can have the web creation tools and in two other you can have your favorite browsers which will view your output. At the same time your can have another space with your email client checking for incoming mail. Since all these applications are in different visual spaces, they don't get in each other's way, which means you don't have to hide and switch between applications or move open windows out of the way to see something. All you do is switch to the space that has the application and its window(s) open exactly the way you like them. I do this all the time at work (on a Unix box) and I really believe it makes my work a lot easier.
8. *Time machine* - You probably heard about this. Automatically back up your drive to another drive on your hard drive or a network server. Its a good idea, but you need to have a large capacity drive available all the time. Of course you can then use it to recover lost files or to even go back to previous versions of a document. Time machine is a great idea, and Apple is being good to its customers by making it easy to back up their Macs. Let's get a vote of hands here, except for your geeks and power Mac users, how many average Mac users do you think have either an installed internal or an external backup drive? I didn't see many hands there ☺. Frankly, I think Time machine will make life easier for those people who already backup their Mac hard drives. Are iMacs going to come with two drives in the future? How about Apple laptops? It is an option with MacPros, but its an option. By this I mean, the user has to buy an extra drive. So Time machine is a good feature, but will the average user be able to take advantage of it?
9. The Finder is now completely *64 bit*, which means it is faster and can make use of larger memory spaces. (I have to admit, my hopes soared when I say that US road sign icon on the dock of the demo computer. I was hoping we might hear that someone was releasing a map software package for MacOS X. Oh well, just a 64 bit Finder ☺.)

10. *Core animation*. What this means is that animation features are build into the core of MacOS X. This is a techie thing, but it means if someone wants to access animation features easily, they can. If a program makes use of the core animation features they should be smooth and slick.

11. *BootCamp*, the ability to use MS Windows (XP or Vista) will be built into Leopard.

These are some very interesting things. I think they all are terrific and can't wait to try them out myself. However, I imagine that most of the glitz and glamour in these features will come with a real need for a fast processor. Apple has always done a good job of optimizing their OS to work well or at least okay on their older machines. With all this new glitz, I expect another round of older machines will be excluded from the fun. Don't get me wrong, I am not complaining. As machines get faster and faster programmers work to find ways to use all that speed and so they add cute animations and features. Just don't expect to do this on your old Mac!!!

After finishing the top ten list for Leopard,, Steve Jobs got the audience to catch their breath, I know I did, with a startling announcement. He announced that Leopard would be available in October. He then said they would sell the basic version for \$129. Paused as the audience caught their breath, (thinking: "was Apple going to use MS's multiple OS plan to make money????"), then announced the business version for \$129, as the audience laughed (realizing the joke and probably in relief!) Then went on to announce several other versions,, right to the Ultimate version all for \$129!

Also announced was a new version of Safari, including a version that works on Windows. We will have to keep our eye on how well this works and how it is accepted by the Window's community.

While all this is good news of things to come, it isn't something that is actually here. This is the second time Apple has demonstrated features of Leopard. I think people want more then demonstrations. They want to be able to buy and use it. It appears the market felt that Apple wasn't really doing enough as well, since Apple's stock price went down during this event. It actually dropped several dollars per share. While it remained above \$100/share, the drop shows that people expected Apple to announce a product, not a future one.

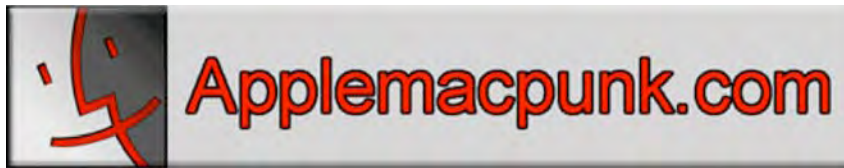
I am also concerned about the computing horsepower needed for all this glitzy stuff. I am sure Steve Job was demonstrating it using either the current most powerful or the soon to be released most powerful Mac. How will it fair on my old G5/1.8?

Hidden data in purchased iTunes files - people have discovered some personal information hidden in DRM free music purchased from the iTunes Music store. Apparently the purchaser's name and email address are hidden inside. So far I haven't heard the official reason why this is done. Is it a means of tracking music that is being shared illegally or is it just an artifact of the song being sold to a particular user?

Some people are up in arms about this. I can't see why it is an issue. If the song file is mine and will stay on my computer, then it is as safe as any other information on my computer. There is more information about me on every iTunes store receipt I get emailed to me. These emails include my name, emails address, postal address, and the last four numbers of my charge card. If someone were to hack into my personal machine, I think they would be able to find a lot more then my name and email address ☺.

Oh, I forgot, there is that sharing thing. Are people afraid or concerned because they believe this information can be used to track their illegal sharing of files? Well I guess that is the risk one has to take when sharing a file. If it wasn't for those people who go completely overboard sharing music, we wouldn't be in this situation of needing DRM in the first place. So if you are concerned and do indeed share your music, think about all the hassles you have caused every other person who listens to digital music.

Until next time, keep on enjoying your Mac!



Mac Security 101

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<http://www.applemacpunk.com/>

For Better or For Worse: Safari For Windows

By Kale Feelhaver

Apple surprised all of us at WWDC 2007 by releasing a new version of Safari, v3, which will run on both Mac OS X and Windows. The new version is currently available in beta, and freely downloadable off Apple's website. A lot of analysts have called it a good thing, while still others have said this move is destined for failure. Personally, I'm not concerned with the pass/fail status of Safari for Windows, but I do have some security concerns.

Everyone knows that Microsoft Internet Explorer is the most exploited web browser on the Internet. Luckily for Mac users, Microsoft discontinued development on the Mac version of Internet Explorer (IE) in June 2003, a few months after Apple released the original public beta of Safari for Mac OS X. They continued to support the application until December of 2005, when Microsoft officially declared it discontinued. The lack of IE on the Mac platform made 100% of IE-based exploits exclusive to Windows. This was good news for Mac users, but it gave all of us a false sense of security. If 99% of all browser exploits are focused at IE... that made Macs immune to 99% of the exploits. This makes the Mac more secure based on the odds, but it does not mean that Safari is truly more secure than IE. Fortunately, many security professionals put Safari through the wringer, and they found that the browser was truly a secure design, which gave it 2 advantages. However, in 2006, the first Safari-focused exploits made their debut on the Internet. These were still tame compared to the thousands of exploits focused at IE, but they did receive a lot of press.

Apple's release of Safari for Windows brings a stable and fast web browser to PC users and there's a good chance that it will have a fast adoption rate. In fact, during its first 2 days, Safari for Windows saw over 1,000,000 downloads. This is good news for Apple, but could prove to be bad news for Mac users. Now that Safari is making its way into the Windows community, Safari-based exploits may become more common. There is no way to tell if these exploits will target Safari as an application, or if they'll target Windows through Safari. Windows-centric exploits should not affect Mac OS X, but if the exploit is targeted specifically at the application... it may be just as dangerous to Mac users.

Being an IT professional (and general computer geek), I downloaded and installed Safari on a Windows system to test it out. My own test results showed that the browser was far faster than any of the other Windows browsers I have tried, but it was also very buggy. I had random crashes and saw a lot of odd behavior that wasn't seen in IE or Mozilla Firefox. I have not yet downloaded Safari v3 for Mac OS X, but I would assume it is nearly as stable as the current version, which is not the case with the Windows counterpart. At this point it is too early to tell how serious these bugs are, but time will tell.



Now, before you run and change your default browser to Camino, keep in mind that the Firefox browser is essentially the same scenario. There have been exploits that targeted Firefox on all platforms, but most have still been Windows specific. Safari is still a great web browser on the Mac and will continue to be, but Mac users should be aware of the possible exploits that could result from the Windows version. As always, be careful on the Internet, and watch where you click.

Books

Acrobat 8 in the Office, First Edition

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad © 2007

AdobePress
Training and inspiration for digital communicators

Author: Donna L. Baker

Adobe Press / Peachpit Press

<http://www.adobepress.com/>

<http://www.peachpit.com/bookstore/product.asp?isbn=032147080X&rl=1>

Released: First Edition. Published December 2006, © 2007

Format/Pages: Paperback, 384 pages

Product Dimensions: 8.8 x 6.9 x 1 inches

\$40 USD list, \$27 Street, \$50 CND, £ 29 GBP List, 27.54 Street.

Requirements: Adobe Acrobat 8

ISBN-10: 0-321-47080-X

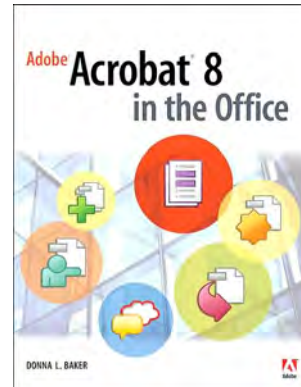
ISBN-13: 978-0-321-47080-5

Audience: Intermediate/Advanced Acrobat 8 [AA8] users.

Although this is not written for beginners, many of the projects, for the most part part, can be usefully attempted by novice AA8 users.

Strengths: A well-organized and written project oriented book that uses Acrobat 8 to simplify and perhaps automate a variety of office and small business tasks that range from organizing comment filled document reviews assembling a document library for the use of your company's clients.

Weaknesses: Ms. Baker too often forgets that AA8 is also used by Macintosh users, providing mostly project backgrounds focused on PC users. At times she fails to identify the limitations of the Macintosh version of Adobe's product. Knowledgeable Macintosh users will be able to follow along the PC focused examples, but newer users of AA8 Pro may have problems working through the exercises and examples.



Mac Users



PC Users

Introduction

When I saw the release notes for this book I was intrigued. I had just recently finished a joint review, with Robert Pritchett of the newly released Acrobat 8 and of John Deubert's AA8 Visual Quick Start Book published by Peachpit press both in the February 2007 macC. I was ready to try something more complex than tuning up recipes, and editing PDF formatted documents.

I realize that Adobe Acrobat is one of the most widely recognized tools for document management, office communications, and improved workflow, and Acrobat 8 is the most powerful version yet, introducing new tools for shared reviews, creating automated forms, license management, additional security, and many others. Indeed the basis of my document filing and retrieval system is AA8/Filemaker Pro combination with the paper to PDF input provided by a Fugitsu S500M ScanSnap Scanner (Article and review in the May 2007 MacC).

Acknowledging that PDF has become the ubiquitous electronic document format, industries as diverse as engineering, legal, manufacturing, and government all rely on Acrobat to make their tasks run smoother and more efficiently.

According to the publisher... "Here to help guide you, Acrobat expert Donna Baker presents real-life scenarios that you can apply to any situation in which document control and management is an issue. With practical advice, productivity tips, and step-by-step directions for using the latest Acrobat features, Acrobat 8 in the Office will help you understand the broad capabilities of this *what-can't-it-do?* Software."

What You'll Find in this Book...

First of all the book contains a list of well-focused tutorials (See the TOC), which are mostly independent of each other. For those that rely on prior described information Ms. Baker does a great job of cross-referencing. One of the most useful and effective aspects of this book is the effective combination tutorial, examples and bonus material-additional studies that Canadian Donna Baker has posted for download on her web site. Although some of the illustrations are fuzzy and the book is somewhat Mac-o-phobic, it is easy to use. You can use these web-posted materials to easily follow-along the lessons/projects in the individual chapters.

Alternatively, as I did in one instance (e.g., Chapter 7) use the provided material to create a template to do my own document library project. The provided PDF files serve to significantly enhance the content presented in the book. [[http://www.donnabaker.ca/downloads.html -acro8office/](http://www.donnabaker.ca/downloads.html-acro8office/)]

Indeed with the additional examples that illustrate and exemplify aspects of a project, a user can successfully work with the Safari eBook version of *Acrobat 8 in the Office*. Use an eBook, not I of course, but then I'm a born and bred bibliophile who never leaves the house without a book or other reading material.

Among other useful features, this book will:

- Shows you how to use Acrobat in real-life situations to improve you productivity, save you money by helping to automate or facilitate common document related tasks, and expedite document related communication, while maintaining your data security.

- Covers the new features in Acrobat 8, including shared reviewing, Acrobat Connect (an online meeting room), auto-recognition form fields, new merging and document optimizing tools, redaction tools.
- Describes how to best combine new and existing Acrobat tools to accomplish nearly any office communication task.
- As previously mentioned, it focuses on project related and bonus (advanced) lesson materials found on Donna's Web site at <http://www.donnabaker.ca/downloads.html> that contains source files for examples in the book, plus bonus projects and case study chapters.
- The book, in each chapter, provides a *what else can you* do section, that will allow you to further enhance the products you created to increase their ease of use or function.

I've annotated the books table of contents with my thoughts about the projects, but if you'd like a complete look at the full table of contents check out O'Reilly's Safari Books site:

<http://safari.oreilly.com/032147080X?tocview=true/>

An Annotated Partial Table of Contents... or materials I could readily use.	
Introduction	<p>This is a well written introduction to the book its audience and conventions. Indeed the statement about the book's focus "This book isn't a manual, and while the scenarios can be amusing at times (<i>they are</i>) it isn't meant to be read from cover to cover. Instead it looks at a range of scenarios you might face in your workplace and shows you how you can use Acrobat to help solve many common workflow and document management problems."</p> <p>Right on with one proviso-I would have welcomed a list of introductory Acrobat books recommended by Ms Baker, for folks when find they're in too deep.</p>
Chapter 1. Getting Your Bearings	<p>I've now extensively used and read about AA8, but nevertheless found Chapter 1 and easy to read refresher. I do forget about feature I don't use. Ignoring Ms. Baker's guidance, this chapter is a must read. As for the rest of the book, just shop around.</p>
Chapter 2. Building a Cohesive (<i>presentation</i>) Document	<p>I, as do the heroes of this chapter, too often have to build a presentation, at times on short notice and from bits and pieces of data stored on my hard drive. Text (mostly in MSW format), images; information from PowerPoint presentations I've accumulated; graphics, and the occasional graph I've built in Excel. These are all grist for my new project. This chapter focuses on using AA8 as the common <i>vessel</i> for creating a new presentation, by combining and tuning all my needed information into a new AA8 document. The good news is that the lessons are clear and easy to follow. The bad news is that there is no information on converting the final AA8 document to PowerPoint, which might</p>

	occasionally be handy.
Chapter 3. Communicating with Comments	I routinely do document reviews, my bread and butter as a consultant, but have never had occasion to either initiate or participate in an AA8 based review. I found this chapter both interesting and easy to follow. All of my reviews were based in filling out MSW review comments into specified comment forms. The materials in this chapter should I need it in future review work. AA8 would certainly make integrating feedback into an original MSW document easier.
Chapter 5. Making Accessible Documents in Acrobat	Although this information was fascinating, I had no immediate use for it although several of my professional colleagues are either significantly hearing or visually impaired. I read about Apple's accessibility features and was delighted that AA8 also provided such support.
Chapter 6. Managing and Organizing E-mail Using Acrobat	I already have a means for organizing my email by using Eudora's extensive folder capability. I've modeled my email organization on my hard drive's folder layout. I also download and store all key documents I receive in project folders as text files along with their attachments. One element of this chapter was interesting was the premise that you could use AA8 as a storage tool, in a format that would likely outlast the format of my email client, but not text of course. If you have the need, by all means learn to organize email-using AA8.
Chapter 7. Assembling a (<i>web accessible document</i>) Library	Although I have no need for creating libraries of information as records, I found the methods useful. After all, I do at times have a frequent need to maintain and store collections of technical and project data including background documents that are searchable and as needed made secure from change. Why you ask? I have come to realize that AA8 allows me to create complete client project completion reports that are more professional than creating a CD collection of separate multiple format assorted documents.
Chapter 10. Streamlining Form Development and Data Management	I enjoyed this chapter very much since I've been experimenting with both form creation and hope in the future to use electronic forms for data gathering. Its details go far beyond my present needs; no matter its an interesting and potentially useful subject.
Index	All the terms and subjects I checked were there, what more can I ask from an index? Well, perhaps a PDF document of this book with the index terms hyperlinked.

Discomforts

Graphics Quality — In too many of the small images, the items selected a simple white on black bars, making them difficult of interpret. As usual even with a magnifying glass many of the images are difficult to read. Other images have sections (e.g., 5.1, 7.1, 12.1 that are simply impossible to read.). I know color printing cost more, but the added legibility would be worth a few dollars more – after all what we get on our screen is both WYSIWYG and in color.

Treatment of More Advanced Chapter Content — as one reads and works through the various projects, I found that everything worked fine for me till I hit about the last quarter of the lesson. Ms Baker then switches into, with out warning, expert mode, and for the most part I get left completely behind. I get lost, despite working with downloaded examples and not for a lack of trying. I'm perhaps, despite relying heavily in AA8 in my work, am only an intermediate user. Some way of warning readers, should this book be updated, that the topics in the later part of the chapter require more knowledge or experience would be helpful. It would also lower the readers stress levels.

Customizing Adobe Acrobat's Toolbars — A number of the projects would have been simpler, for the user, had Ms. Baker introduced the concept of customizing AA8's toolbars. There would be less mousing around

Chapter 9 Omission – Packing and Preparing Legal Documents — Although I had no need for the chapter's contents, I was disturbed by a lack of discussion of quality assurance both with respect to the individual documents included and the package itself. Too often in litigation, material is disqualified from use purely on the basis of lack of a quality pedigree. I'm not sure this comment is little off the wall, but I'll let Ms. Baker determine that.

Conclusion

This is an excellent and well written book that contains a bakers dozen well defined projects that can be used to enhance your office's ability to bother create complex useful integrated and search documents and to use the documents as a powerful communication tool. You can even learn about communicating by printing your documents in a format beyond that of your laser printer. Although Macintosh is not the system spoken by Ms Baker, despite occasional assurances to the contrary, all user of Acrobat 8 professional could benefit from some of its contents. It will be just a bit harder for those of us who use apple products as our principle-computing platform.

Recommendation

At \$40 (list price) this book, although pricy, would make a good addition to the library of anyone wanting to use Adobe Acrobat Professional for tasks beyond simple document transfer and the compilation of groups of documents into packages. Unlike other books I read and review, it would not be an impulse buy, but would be high on my must have list if any of the AA8 projects described met my needs. A difficult set of subjects is well treated in a well-focused and relatively easy to use book, kudo Ms. Baker.

Author Background:

A prolific author and writer of many Acrobat books, as well as books on graphic and Web design software. Donna lives on a lakeshore in central Canada, where all manner of wildlife from muskrats to the occasional coyote come to call. She has written the previous edition of this book, and the popular Adobe Acrobat How-Tos book. As an information development specialist Donna L. Baker writes extensively about graphics applications and interactive knowledge products. She also presents at professional development seminars and Acrobat user group meetings, and consults for a wide range of industries. Her work has appeared on PlanetPDF and Adobe Studio Web sites.

http://www.donnabaker.ca/book_acro8office/acro8office.html

Adobe Photoshop CS3 One-on-One

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Author: Deke McClelland
O'Reilly Media

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596529758>

Released: June 2007

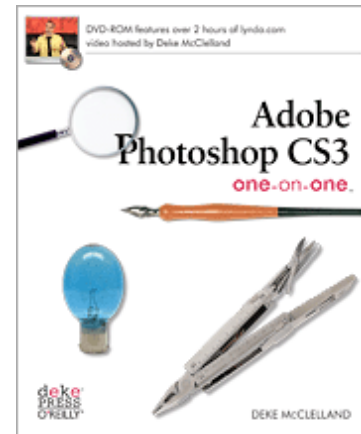
Pages: 544

\$50 USD, \$65 CND, £35.50 GBP

Requirements: Adobe CS3, a DVD player and either a Mac with Mac OS X 10.4.8 or later, 512 MB RAM, 2 GB hard drive space, 64 MB video RAM, 1024x768 resolution, Broadband Internet, QuickTime or a PC-equivalent system.

ISBN 10: 0-596-52975-9

ISBN 13: 978-0-596-52975-8



Strengths: Interactive DVD with Book – whodathot? Full color and easy on the eyes and mind.

Weaknesses: None. Yes. Really!

Deke McClelland has done such a great job with Adobe products, that he has his own Deke Press section, like Pogue has Pogue Press at O'Reilly!

This book under-promises and over-delivers with the “Read-awhile, play with Photoshop, sit-back-and-watch-the-DVD” approach to educating us about Photoshop CS3.

If you are into learning Photoshop (see Chris Marshall’s review last month), then you will want to get this well-organized, full-color book.

There are 12 chapters covering pretty much everything that Deke covers in his lynda.com training packages for Photoshop, only none of this information is regurgitated from his other excellent training experiences. This is pretty much all new stuff.

He sets us up with his configuration from lessons learned over time, before we can dig into Photoshop CS3. I recommend following his defaults, because he has “been there, done that”. An he doesn’t want us tripping over ourselves as we learn all the hidden features in the plethora of nooks and crannies that Photoshop has become over time.

So what's inside? Quite a bit. Opening and organizing, highlights, midtones and shadows, correcting color balance, making selections, crop, straighten and size, paint, edit and heal, creating and applying masks, focus and filters, building layered compositions, text and shapes, styles and specialty layers and finally, printing and output.

The DVD departs from previous training approaches as Deke asks us to sit back and relax and – do nothing but listen and watch nearly 3 hours of show&tell. And Lynda.com has done a marvelous job with their video preparations The price for the book, if it were just the DVD, would be worth what it costs.

What I enjoyed is that the videos are not designed for TV interlacing, but for computers and pixel resolution is normally running at 880x660 instead of the usual 720x240. What we get is truly high-quality legible screen imaging and is superb! Way to go Lynda.com!!

Each chapter in the book is subtly color-coded and tabbed. The layouts are “perfect” in balance and form based on years of learning how to do presentations.

This book is definitely a coffee-table piece and will make any owner proud to show it off, if it isn't bookmarked and dog-eared to death by the time you get done reading it.

If I were teaching a Photoshop course, this is the book and DVD I would use. It's that good!

Aperture Training – Real World Aperture and Aperture 1.5

Reviewed by y Wayne LeFevre



Peachpit

Essential books for the creative community

Author: Orlando Luna and Ben Long

Publisher: PeachPit Press

<http://www.peachpit.com/title/0321441931>

Released: July 11, 2006

Pages: 256

\$35 USD, \$44 CND, £25 GBP, €27,44 Euro

ISBN-RW: 0-321-44193-1

<http://www.peachpit.com/title/0321496620>

Released: October 18, 2006

Pages: 552

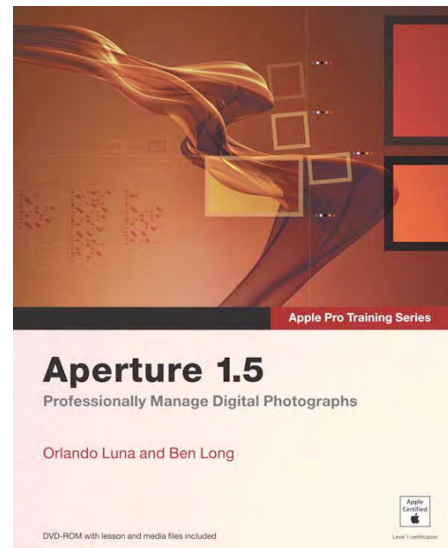
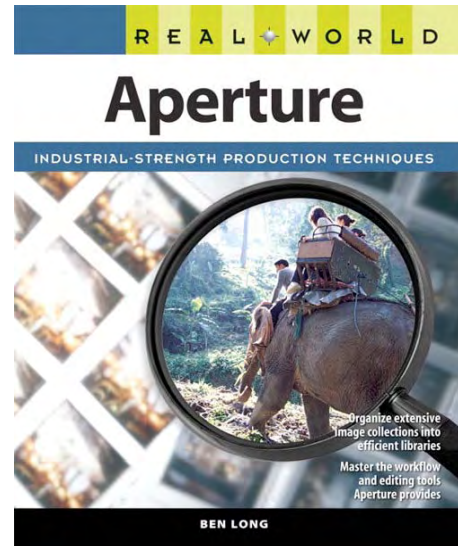
\$50 USD, \$62 CND, £36 GBP, €39,20 Euro

ISBN-APT: 0-321-49662-0

Audience: Beginner/Intermediate/Advance

Strengths: Covers, fairly well, the concept and application of Aperture.

Weaknesses: Not their fault, but pretty much only game in town.



Introduction

It is possible to count on one hand the number of Aperture training and help books available. After purchasing Aperture, I tried to find training everywhere, from books to videos. It so happens that there are about... four books on Aperture training out there. Adobe LightRoom, which I have not used, but I understand is an easier application to grasp the fundamentals, now has hundreds of titles for it with more growing daily. I jest on the number, of course, but it does seem that there is no shortage of reading material for LightRoom.

The two other books on Aperture are Apple Aperture 1.5 Photographers' Guide and Aperture Exposed. I decided to focus on *Real World Aperture* and *Apple Pro Training Series: Aperture 1.5*, because they were the easiest to find and flipping through them at the local Borders, seemed more my learning style.

The description for the Apple Pro Training Series book states:

“Now fully updated for version 1.5, this comprehensive book-DVD combo starts with the basics of image management and takes you step by step all the way through Aperture's powerful photo-editing, image-retouching, proofing, publishing, and archiving features. Version 1.5's new features are completely covered, including the new image editing tools, expanded search capabilities, new Loupe tool, and support for many more RAW file formats. It delivers comprehensive training - the equivalent of a two-day course - in one project-based book. You'll learn time-saving techniques for sorting, ranking, and organizing images for use in different jobs, and effective ways to display images for client review, apply metadata, keep your online portfolio up to date automatically, color-manage your workflow from input to final print, and much more. Real-world exercises feature professional photography from a variety of genres, including fashion, sports, wedding, commercial, and portraiture. All the files you need to complete the exercises are included on the DVD.”

The book takes you step by step through Aperture in textbook style, using a hands-on approach. Included with the DVD are all the images in the chapter lessons. Lessons one through seven follows a single photo assignment of a typical catalog shoot and provides an introduction to the Aperture interface, features and workflow. Lessons Eight through Twelve uses several different assignments for learning Aperture's more advanced capabilities, focusing on organizing, using metadata, editing, output and archiving.

Upon completion of the course material, a student can become an Apple Certified Pro by taking the certification exam offered only at Apple Authorized Training Centers. Successful certification as an Apple Certified Pro gives you official recognition of your knowledge of Apple's professional applications. The lessons are complete and offer a great approach in learning the application. In each chapter, you learn by following the lesson and taking a review followed by learning some keyboard shortcuts all at your own pace.

Note: With this book and the book I talk about next, neither one are intended as a comprehensive reference manual, nor to replace the documentation that comes with the application. The book and DVD that comes with the application does a bang-up job in that department though, having some terrific screencasts on the DVD. So as a disclaimer, at least flip through the manual and visit the Apple web site every once in awhile.

The reason I have included Real World Aperture in this review is that they are very similar. The two books are written by the same author, and have similar if not at times the same examples and photographs. Real World Aperture takes less of a clinical, sterile structured approach and approaches the training in more of a, well, real-world approach. It is set in a much more relaxed atmosphere, easier to read and follow along without having the computer sitting in front of you. It is constantly going into side bars about real world stuff, “How does Aperture Compare to Photoshop?”, “How is Aperture different from iPhoto?” - that sort of thing.

The book basically details all of Apertures capabilities and will help you understand how to integrate Aperture into your current workflow. You will learn, out of the book:

- Chapter 2, again, fundamentals. You’ll tour the interface and learn the basics of navigating the program.
- Chapter 3 will guide you through the process of importing images. You also start to organize your workflow
- Chapter 4, you’ll dive into Aperture in earnest. Here, after a discussion of how to define a workflow, you’ll learn about all of Aperture’s tools for organizing, comparing, and sorting.
- Chapter 5 moves on to image editing.
- Chapter 6 you’ll learn about Aperture’s raw capabilities and how to use them. It also introduces raw theory that will help you get more out of Aperture’s editing tools.
- Chapter 7 details how Aperture sends out files to be edited with a third party solution, and how to bring it back in again.
- Chapter 8 takes you through output options, from print to web to book.
- Chapter 9 finishes you up with archiving and backups. Finally tying it all together for one big happy workflow.

This is the wordy book, though in size, it’s much slimmer. It digs in depth with each topic, flushing out the why’s and how’s, the theories as well as the productivities. It doesn’t just set you out and tell you what to do, as the previous book, but more of a why you are doing it and what you will want to accomplish with it. It’s a great book that can stand up on it’s own.

So, again, why review them together? Because they make a great match. Either book can do the job, and do it well. Whether you want to take the classical school classroom way, or just learn the why and how to develop your own style. When you put them both together, you get the complete picture, not only will you be able to pass the certs, but you’ll be able to understand the questions.

With these two books being half of all training books on Aperture ”in the wild”, you really don’t have much choice, so it’s a great pleasure to find that they both are great tutorials together or alone.

Canon Rebel XTi (400D) Digital Field Guide and Canon EOS 30 D Digital Field Guide

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher



Canon Rebel XTi/400 D Digital Field Guide

Author: Charles K. Lowrie

<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470110074.html>

Released: February, 2007

Pages: 288

\$20 USD, \$24 CND, £14 GBP, €15,84 Euro

ISBN: 978-0-470-11007-2

Novice/Intermediate

Strengths: Full color. Includes information about camera and how to use the camera to make better photographs. Good use of tables, colors, bold face, photos and more.

Weaknesses: . The first part about the camera is missing some visual camera photos and additional information. Some pictures pertaining to the camera are not included (like where to put the card). There are a lot of “bells and whistles” to understanding what controls can do what and how and when. It was most irritating to have to hunt for the camera’s icons and what they mean. Instead of saying in text what to do, the visual of the camera’s icon would have been far better to include.

Canon EOS 30 D Digital Field Guide

Author: Charles K. Lowrie

<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470053402.html>

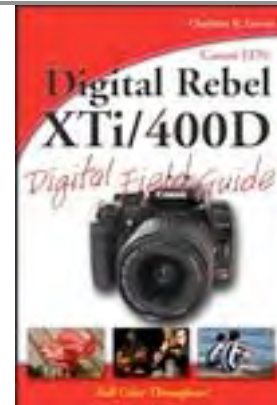
Released: October 2006

Pages: 288

\$20 USD, \$24 CND, £14 GBP, €15,84 Euro

ISBN: 0-470-053-40-2

Novice/Intermediate



Strengths: Full color. One section focuses upon camera information and the second main section using the camera to make better photographs. Tables used for different information and making better and different types of photographs are well done.

Weaknesses: The first part is not as good as the second. The information about the camera is confusing. Information about the camera is confusing at many times.

These two books are created by the same author. The "look and the feel" of both books are so similar, in so many ways, that I thought it would be more instructive to compare and contrast the two books, the EOS Rebel Xti and the EOS 30D cameras. I am glad I did for several reasons by for myself and for readers who may use either cameras (or in my case the XT which is very similar to the XTi).

It is really nice that both books are in full color. The colorful photos and the screenshots make the instruction and learning an easier one. The white text within the burnt-orange titles on top of the pages give an easy way to find out the content within the book/chapters. The mini-tutorials were numbered and the titles were in bold face. Nice but that did not help much with the understanding of the instructions. I can understand the use of an introduction and quick tour sections within the first part of the books but these created more headaches than being beneficial.

There are some small side notes (within pink small square), cross-reference (light blue) and tip (in light bulb icon) that appear next to the text areas. While these are meant for true informational purposes, some of these helpful-hints take you to other chapters or sections within the book. While there were only a few of these, especially in the introduction and the first chapters, I passed over them as I found these annoying. Little visual cues that were missing, I found were major weaknesses. And I began to see that this very nice looking book had several other weaknesses.

Having purchased a new Canon Rebel XT, I was looking at using these two books to help me learn how to use Canon cameras, especially in terms of all the capabilities that can be used to make better photos. Photographing for many years, including both digital and non-digital camera use, I am aware of what needs to be accomplished with photos (some published as in *Astronomy* magazine). However there is always room for learning and having used digital cameras for several years, I was looking forward to advancing my skills with the Canon capabilities. An older photographer that also wanted to use and learn about the newer technology.

A nice photo of the command dial, used on the Canon camera(s) for making different crucial settings, showed up (page 2). But it did not explain, like it should have, what each of the icons meant. I would have liked to see lines that show what each icon meant instead of "hunting." However (page 4) has a list of these. But a list is not a graphic display and this cross-reference only communicated about one of the dial modes. I won't go into some of the other wording that I found confusing. But I found more.

Later on with the same page one of the tips (P.4) , has a lengthy set of sentences about changes to the menus and the ISO settings. The text then said “ for other menus, however, be sure to press the Set button to confirm changes that you make.” I was so amazed at this - I just wanted to scream! Looking in the Index, there was no information under “set” or “buttons” for example.

Within the books are 3 parts in 8 chapters. Both books are basically divided into three main sections with the last being an appendix. One sections has information about the camera. The second part deals more with how to make your photos better by using the camera. Both have an introduction which is where some of the problems begin.

Finding the setting that turns off the flash, for example, even if you don't want the flash to fire, like during a total solar eclipse (which many people still do!). Neither books, showed visual information where the icon on the dial would turn off the flash. There were several instance of the lack of references related to commands, camera functions and more. This non cross referencing I found confusing and not helpful in my quest.

There were more photos of the camera and its sides and features on the 30D book then the Rebel book (pages 12-13). The 30D book showed visually where in the camera the Compact Flash card and eject button can be found. The Rebel book did not show this at all. The view of the whole camera and its features is more sparse in the 30D while the Rebel photo shows all the control areas. Both have good visuals of the LCD display screen but cameras have different panel displays. The viewfinder display photos are a little different according to the camera differences. These include lines to highlight what the icons mean and where they are situated. I wondered why the author did not do that with the camera function mode dial settings.

There are some good things. The tables of information for the rest of the book are pretty much the same in each book. These highlight in specific details how to take better photographs according to different setting (Low-light, Night shots , Action and Sports, Environmental Portrait and more. In many ways, this part of the books, are well done, readable and easy to understand. The trick is that these tutorials do not integrate how to use the cameras to meet those specific photographic needs. It is assumed you already know how to use all the “bells and whistles.” For some of you that might be enough to go on your merry way. For others, you might have to struggle a bit.

Since I have a XT and not an XTi, I wanted to know more about the dust elimination capability so hyped with the XTi. The XTi book focuses 3 pages on it and does a good job. I now know the need for using that function in the Xti to make sure dust not get into your camera or lenses or eliminate them if they do so you create better pictures. I did not get the XTi mainly because of this extra device, and bought the XT instead which saved me possibly a couple hundred dollars. If there was a difference between the Xt and Xti, I did not see it in these books. In fact, the 30D book, had no information about dust elimination or this Xti device/process. So I am led to possibly believe that this device is not needed (until I find out further - any I looked in the book for a Sony digital camera that was not written by the author of these two books).

Finally looking over the Appendix, it was helpful. While the XTi book includes (A) custom functions and (B) Internet resources, 30D has information about RAW images (in Rebel it is in four separate sections in the book, which is maddening), conversion RAW programs and creating an efficient workflow (a recent buzzword for making more efficient use of your photographic work).

A guide should be informational, easy to use and very visual in a way that integrates the helpful written material. The structure should be a tutorial based one that guides the user to understanding how to use the device, in this case, the Canon cameras, to take better photos in whatever settings you wish to photograph. I feel the author had noble intentions but the integration was lacking. The techniques are there but how they mesh with the use of the technology could have been much more arrange and displayed in a much more effective means.

If you know how to use the Rebel XT, XTi and/or 30D and want to learn how to take better pictures you might be okay. That second part of the book is solid. Those of you who are trying to learn how to use any of these cameras for the first time and want to learn how to become a better photographer, you might still find the book a good deal. This is true especially if you have the little Canon tutorial (which is very good I must add) that comes with the camera.

I like the second half of the book but not the first. For these books, the price is right if you want to find out how to take better photographs. You might have to “hunt” a little. Like myself, its a matter of time how long it takes for finding the “gizmos” on the camera and then using the skills you might learn to get the expected outcomes. Any new learning, no matter what, has different types of “learning curves” that sometimes make learning easier or more difficult. In this case, these two books, because of the way they are written, make learning about the cameras more difficult, confounding and irritating. Its up to you and your stage of learning with a Canon camera and how to photograph with them, whether one of these books can help you. You make the choice whether you can try this book or another based on this information.

Ebay Business for Dummies

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher



Author: Marsha Collier
Wiley Publishing
111 River St., MS 4-01
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
201-748-6702

<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0764584383.html>

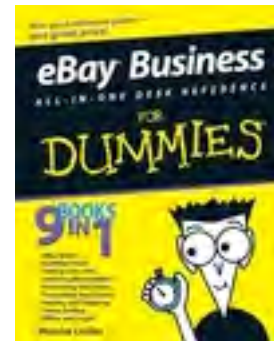
Released: May 2005

Pages: 864

\$30 USD, 39 CND, £19 GBP, €23,77 Euro

ISBN: 0-7645-8438-3

Novice/Intermediate/Advanced



Strengths: Breadth and depth covered by the author is amazing. 9 books in 1 for a great price that covers all you want to start trying eBay auctions, including trying to sell your own wares.

Weaknesses: No color pictures and illustrations, which is not a disadvantage for learning about eBay in many cases. A disadvantage that I have found but is not a real big deal, is that the parts are number consecutively in number (1,2,3) but each subpart called a chapter is renumbered (Part 1 Chapter 1; Part 2 Chapter 1). While I understand the logic, it was a little hard to find the sections I wanted, until I saw that the each edge of the right page has information that is much more specific, compared to the titles with the page numbers at the top of the book.

Imagine that you just found out about Ebay. You are interested in finding some items on an auction or want to sell some of your equipment or some other product. You want to know everything about the service, how to find items, how to bid, even how to sell your items on auctions and make some money. Ebay does not have a manuals. The next best thing to a user's manual that will give you a solid understanding of this auction site is this great book - *Ebay Business*.

I was confounded that it took me so long to find this book. Several years ago, like many others, I started buying selected items like cameras, meteorites, stamps and more. I learned the "hard way" how to deal with finding the right items, bidding, trying to outbid others and later selling items. I did well but I was not efficient. I now have a pretty good knowledge of auctioneering through my "trials and tribulations." I could have saved myself time and effort and become a more effective "auction player" if I had read this book first. And I think you will feel the same way.

This book is nine books in one. In 868 page, it details all that you need to know about Ebay. It's not the prettiest looking book (black on white text and non color photos, etc.) but it is "what's inside that counts!" The author is an ebay Powerseller, has written two other best-selling Ebay books already - *Ebay for Dummies* (4th edition) and *Starting an Ebay business for Dummies*. Perhaps this book is an integration of both of these other top selling books into one. She has carefully and concisely written almost everything you would want to know about eBay. It starts with the first chapter and just keeps on going.

It's not overwhelming. Start from the beginning or pick and choose which chapters to read and learn with. The index is solid and detailed. It is a great reference to find what you want to know within the massive book.

Part 1 covers the Basics while Part 2's chapter shows the essential tools that you can use. Detailed section that eBay users will find very useful are Chapter 3 (Checking things out before buying) which includes giving and receiving feedback, scrutinizing a seller's reputation, getting protection on Ebay and more); succeeding by sniping (the art of outbidding at the last second which I have succeeded and lost); Chapter 3 buying and selling like a pro allows you start selling and your business if that is what you also want to explore as well. Part 4, Sourcing Merchandise educates you on online retailing, presenting your items, promoting your goods, power selling, office and legal information and storing and shipping materials. In short, this book covers all your want to learn about eBay.

Don't let the title fool you. Most of the dummies books, I have found are done well. This instructional book is good for Novice eBay users to Advanced. It will grow with you as you learn so it is a great buy for many reasons. If you want to know all you can find about Ebay, this is a superior book to start and work with throughout your eBay experience.

It is an all in one desk reference. This book was published in 2005 and I wish I had found it sooner. In the beginning, I did not think I needed some instruction for starting to buy and later sell. But there were a lot of "little things" to find out about and educate myself much of it "trial and error bases." This book would have saved me a lot of time and would have made me a more efficient auctioneer. Having said that, I would say get this book if you are serious about selling some items or gaining some items. Using Ebay is not difficult but working with it on a more consistent and effective basis would have helped me initially and now. In that case, I would say check this great book out. You will be educated and learn more at the same time in a direct and easy manner. The book is easy to read and has a wealth of information that will help you now and later to do the best on Ebay.

MacBook for Dummies

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher



Author: Mark L. Chamber

Wiley

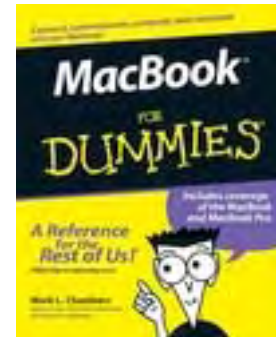
<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-047004859X.html>

Released: August 2006

Pages: 384

\$22 USD, \$26 CND, £15 GBP, €17,43 Euro

ISBN: 0-470-04859-X



Novice/Intermediate

Strengths: The book includes a very good introduction. Good screenshots and illustrations including the pointers to specific areas within the illustrations. Five icons help pinpoint helpful information along the way. Chapter 23 “Top Ten Things to Avoid like the Plague” is quite good as well as Chapter 22 “Top Ten Laptop Rules to Follow (which is insightful and well written). Good price, well written and readable.

Weaknesses: Chapters like the ones with iDVD and iMovie have minimal amounts of information. Really these and some of the sections just have the basics. To know and learn more, books that detail more information regarding specific applications should be found besides these basics. For iLife applications, you might want to turn elsewhere. Users who read about “movies,” “projects,” “video clips,” may find the information in this book not well defined, especially concerning when and how the media can be imported, exported and utilized.

There are several books on the market dealing with MacBook. Several include not only information about MacBook but MacBook Pro. This is one includes both. I wanted to see what the author had to offer in this MacDummies series related to these laptops. I found the author of this book has previously published the *Mac OS X All-In-One Desk Reference for Dummies* and completed thirty computer books. My wife bought a MacBook, so I decided to research this book to see what it could tell me.

The book covers 384 pages and spans 23 chapters with seven part/sections. The first part of the book includes a very nice introduction that gives the reader a nice prelude to learning about the laptops. As the author says, “he started with no assumption” regarding knowledge of the laptop. The book starts “from the ground up” and launches into some interesting ideas that relate to more than the “hardware.” It is nice that in this beginning section, the author pinpoints information about “switchers,” those computer users who are moving into the Macintosh realm from the PC/Windows usage (particularly targeting Windows XP users). He also nicely mentions that if you are new to Macintosh and the Apple world, most of the software is in the computer and does not have to be purchased. This is a great tip that probably many PC people still don’t know about, even though many Apple users already are mindful about.

While many of the Dummies books vary in their versatility, breadth and depth of the instructional content, this one is solid. While the illustrations are only black and white, the screen shots are readable. Several include pointers to various sections within the illustrations that zone in on the information talked about. This takes away the annoying guesswork that I have found in some books that I have read in which “hunting” within the illustrations was a regular and recurring point. There are also five icons that are placed throughout the pages. These (Tip; Mark’s Maxim; Technical stuff; Warning!; Remember) serve to include precise additional information that assists along the way regarding the instructions.

Part 1 includes information pertaining to Mac laptops, turning on and starting with the system and computer. Part 2 focuses in on Mac OS X, while Part 3 launches into the world of connecting and communicating. Part 4 focuses on the iLife applications (introductory instruction), while the text takes you through each application starting up and using. If you want more in-depth information other books will be needed. Part 5 is sharing access and information while Part 6 deals with important troubleshooting, upgrading information and maintaining your laptop.

Part 7 is called the Parts of Tens. This includes Chapter 22 “Top Ten Laptop Rules to Follow” (insightful and well written) and Chapter 23 “Top Ten Things to Avoid like the Plague” (useful for many reasons in your encounter with the internet, applications, hardware and more).

All in all I liked the book and what it had “to say”. Novice and intermediate laptop users might like it not only for its good price, but also the information it provides. It is readable and you gain insights throughout the book.

If you already have a Macbook or Pro and have worked with it and want more information concerning the iLife applications, you might want to turn elsewhere. Users who read about “movies”, “projects”, “video clips”, may find the information not well defined, especially concerning when and how the media can be imported, exported and utilized.

Ferguson Hill Mini Speaker System

Reviewed by Wayne LeFevre



FH007 & FH008 Speakers
<http://www.fergusonhill.co.uk/>

FH007 \$995 USD, \$1195
CND, £500 UK
FH008 SW \$595 US, \$725
CND



Requirements: Any line level source including computer audio out, iPod, MP3, CD, or DVD players.

Strengths: Perfect sound for the size. Mac-like quality, finish and design.

Weaknesses: Price for some. Otherwise, absolutely none.

Introduction

First, let me preface this article by saying that I have never claimed to be an audiophile. I like music, though, and I know the difference between what sounds good to the ear and what sounds “a little off.”

I tell you that to tell you this; these are the best speakers I have ever heard! They are definitely the oddest speakers I’ve ever seen, and there have been many an odd shape being thrown at the computer/iPod industry of late.



There are two horns, two bass spheres, and an optional sub-woofer. The horns and bass sphere speakers are made from a clear acrylic that makes the whole system see through. This is enough aesthetically to make them clearly a conversation piece, yet unobtrusive as possible.

Driving all of this is an amplifier box with one simple control on the front. Volume. More on this later. For the look, nothing could be more Mac-like. They are as artistic as they are fantastic sounding. The FH007 system is based upon Ferguson Hill's larger popular system - the FH001/2/3. This larger system is way over the top, but way cool and affordable only to the more affluent, unless one wants to take out a second mortgage!



Technical Bits

To get a little more technical into what you receive for your money, the aluminum amplifier is the heart of the system. The amplifier is a class A/B four channel, each driving a separate speaker, producing clean, clean sounds. Though they can be cranked quite loud, you will notice that they aren't trying to push out (cue tractor pull and monster truck announcer,) "100 Watts per channel for the ultimate party sound!" Taking the opposite direction, Ferguson Hill has decided to take the sound-over-volume approach. The frequency response of the Horn/Sphere speaker system goes from a very low 75 Hz to 20 KHz. With the addition of the FH008 Subwoofer, the bass response of the system extends down to a deep 45 Hz.

There are two ways to input music. One is a 3mm plug, the other a standard RCA Red/Black jack. The inputs from the speakers themselves are 3mm plugs, one from each horn and one from each bass sphere. If you opt for the sub-woofer, a specially made cord will be included that basically splice into the bass. The subwoofer, by-the-way, operates with an active cross-over amplifier that makes the cross at a range from 150 to 45 Hz, adjustable. At 100 Watts, it doesn't take but a small move with the volume control on the subwoofer to get an acceptable bass sound. Much more than what it can take. This isn't the subwoofer that you get with your all-in-one box speaker system. This is the real thing weighing in at 25 pounds, 8 inch drive unit, heat fins and more. It produces clean bass without the brassy rumble that you hear with your average .1 system. With the volume at half you could compete with any custom rolling thumpers next to you at the stop light. I have found that if you put the volume to about twenty-five percent and the frequency cross-over to about mid-range you will get the optimal bass quality for the system.

The subwoofer is definitely optional with this system, as the sound is great even without it. Having had it, though, and listening so long with it, I don't think it would sound complete without it. It gives it an extra oomph, and if you have it set right, which so many systems I hear do not, it gives a subtle yet noticeable complement. So often, for whatever reason, people like to really jack up their bass so you really hear it even drowning out some of their other instruments. Ah, kids these days.



FH008 Subwoofer

How it really sounds

I was told, and quite rightfully too, that there is a difference between lossless and the 128 bit lossy files and how they sound. With this system, you really can tell the difference, and you'll soon be re-ripping your CDs, or wondering why iTunes doesn't do FLAC. The cable I have to hook up my iPod to the amplifier is a [Tara Labs Rectangular Solid Core RSC® Diva Cable](#). It's a premium cable that is made in many complementary colors. Specs on the cable include four RSC® Super Annealed Oxygen Free Eight Nines Copper conductors, natural fiber spacers, anti-corrosion coated copper braided shield, nylon mesh sleeve, single 24K gold mini-stereo plug, and two specially designed petit 24K gold plated RCA plugs that are smaller and lighter than a standard RCA plugs. So down to brass tacks, the cable should deliver a broader fuller sound.

I think that will be a choice left up to the individual consumer, as the cables start at \$129 USD. It's not a cable that can be purchased at Best Buy, however. My cable came with the business card of the person who made it, R. Marino, so that's got to be saying something. As far as actual sound difference, I'm sure there is. I'm not sure if I can tell, but I haven't tried a cheaper cable either.

As far as the speakers go, they are fantastic! There is a nice fat sound through the entire audio spectrum. There wasn't a piece of music that I tried that one range versus another didn't sound great. The Beatles "Because" off the *Love* album was clear all the way through from the birds at the start to the tonal quality of the mids of the band's a cappella.

The highs of *Tchaikovsky: Serenade For Strings In C*, if you like to waltz, are as bright and clear as if you were in front of the actual performers. My daughter, well, let's just say I've caught her fiddling with the subwoofer controls and says Mims never sounded so good.

The whole point of a well designed, well placed, well driven speaker system is to actually try and fool you into believing that the musicians are singing and playing their instruments onstage, live, right in front of you. The Ferguson Hill system does that better than most, even those systems costing much more. There's nothing like cranking Elvis Costello through this system, able to handle every high and low without a crack or flat. More importantly, however, is how it looks next to your Mac. You won't believe how pleasing the design is next to your system. As long as you keep the amplifier box away from your laptop, (it gets incredibly hot! Almost a burn-your-skin hot.) Something I would definitely add is an iPod dock with remote.



As you can see in this photo, the FH07 system sits right at home next to your Mac.

Stylish and provocative, it encompasses everything that is Mac. It definitely breaks the mold in what a pair of speakers should look like, and sounds better than it looks!

Personally, I don't have it hooked up to my computer system, though it might, if I had the room on my desk. For now, it looks so good, I have it in the front room for all to see. I have it set up so I can attach an iPod, as well as my Slim Devices Squeezebox, which is streaming my iTunes.

It definitely makes guests pause, and I've found no one who didn't like them or appreciate the sounds they made. I think I even find myself actually listening to more music and less podcasts than before. Plus there's that whole iTunes Plus store...

Conclusion

The biggest question of all will come down to whether or not you want to spend a thousand of your hard-earned dollars on a speaker system that may not even be your main system. For this system, if you can afford it, yes. If you live around a showroom that displays them, at least take a listen. Availability of this system is world-wide, but somewhat limited in the USA, there's only one distributor at the moment, but if you're around Deerfield Illinois, just take a listen at [Ultimate Audio Video](http://www.ultimateaudiovideo.citymax.com/page/page/3698484.htm) - <http://www.ultimateaudiovideo.citymax.com/page/page/3698484.htm> Several retailers have recently been introduced in the States that you can also find the Ferguson Hill Speakers, including two in San Francisco, Minnesota and Chicago, IL. Check [Ferguson Hill's](http://fergusonhill.co.uk/distributors.php) web site - <http://fergusonhill.co.uk/distributors.php> for all dealer locations around the world.

Suddenly, those really cool JBL Stormtrooper helmets and Harman Kardon sticks will seem mighty limiting, and maybe even a little "off", though you might not even know why. Even though there may be some limitations to the Ferguson Hills, such as you can't put an amplified source through it, so keep it away from your home receiver! (Though feel free to hook it straight up to your home system's CD/DVD player.) You may also find it difficult to find the real estate for all the components. But in pure across the board tonal quality, I challenge you to find a better system for your iPod or Mac.



White gloves included for handling.

Mac Pro Upgrade Guide

By Tommaso Alvisi <http://www.o0o.it/pro/>

As usual...warranty is void!

Created on 30 May 2007 Last Modified on 26 June 2007

Since i bought almost a year ago my Mac Pro, i dreamed about the upgrade possibilities with other Woodcrest (x51xx XEON Socket 771) processors or, better (yup!), with Clovertown ones (x53xx XEON Socket 771). They don't draw much more power (on charts) BUT they give you plenty of computational power.

HardMac, AnandTech and others tried this way already with positive results but they used two X5355 ES (Engineering Sample) which aren't production samples readily available and worst of all, cost more than 1000 Euros EACH!!!!

About 2 months ago, I found the ideal choice: the nice E5320 (SL9MV).

Its power and thermal specs are quite similar to the 5150: 80W instead of 65W!!! Also it's the best for trying the BSEL mod since it has a default bus of 1066 MHz, so modding it to 1333 MHz we can push it to 2,33 GHz from the stock 1,86 GHz!!!

After following this guide you'll have an 8 cores Mac Pro from a "normal" 4 cores one. For reference, you'll go from a total of 10,64 GHz to 18,64 GHz!!!

And, best of all they cost about 350Euros each, or only 250 on eBay.

So maybe I should call it the **El Cheapo Mac Pro Upgrade!!!!**

Test Mac Pro configured as follow:

2x Xeon WoodCrest 5150 Dual Core 2,66 GHz 4GB FB-DIMM (8x512MB) 3x or 4x SerialATA 300 Hard Drives Pioneer DVD Burner "SuperDrive" Genuine Apple nVidia 7300GT 256MB

Hardware Tools:

Screwdrivers for some screws to open the MacPro (about 5, not much!) Torx T15 (at least 20cm long)

Software Tools

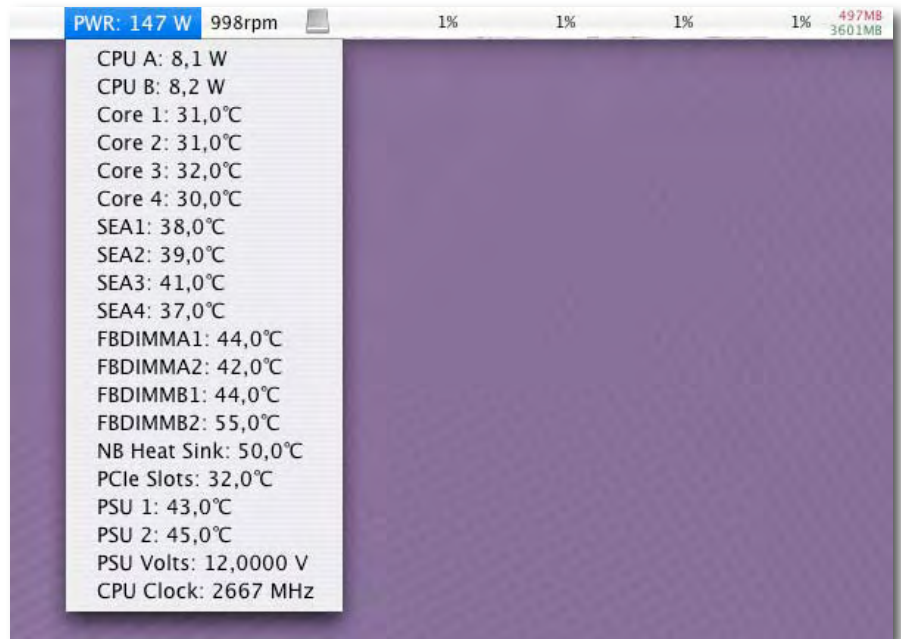
Hardware Monitor smcFanControl MenuMeters FFmpeg (cli) HandBrake PowerFractal

NOTE 1: Hardware Monitor's Power Consumption (in watts) estimation is about 40-60W less than the real one. NOTE 2: Fans speed were configured to 1000rpm and 1500rpm on the eight cores upgraded system.

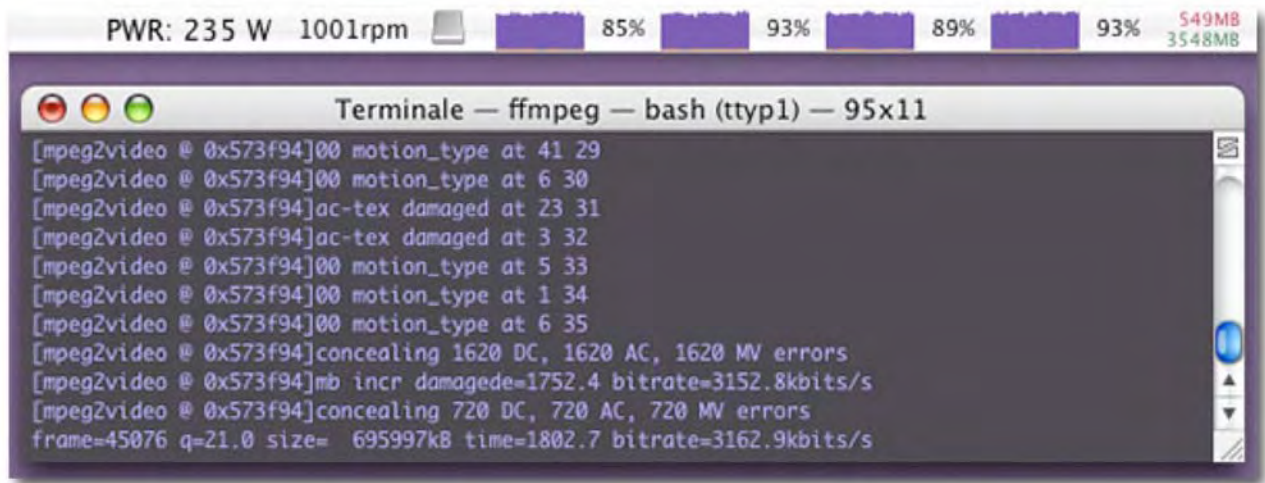
Here's how my Mac Pro was before the upgrade:



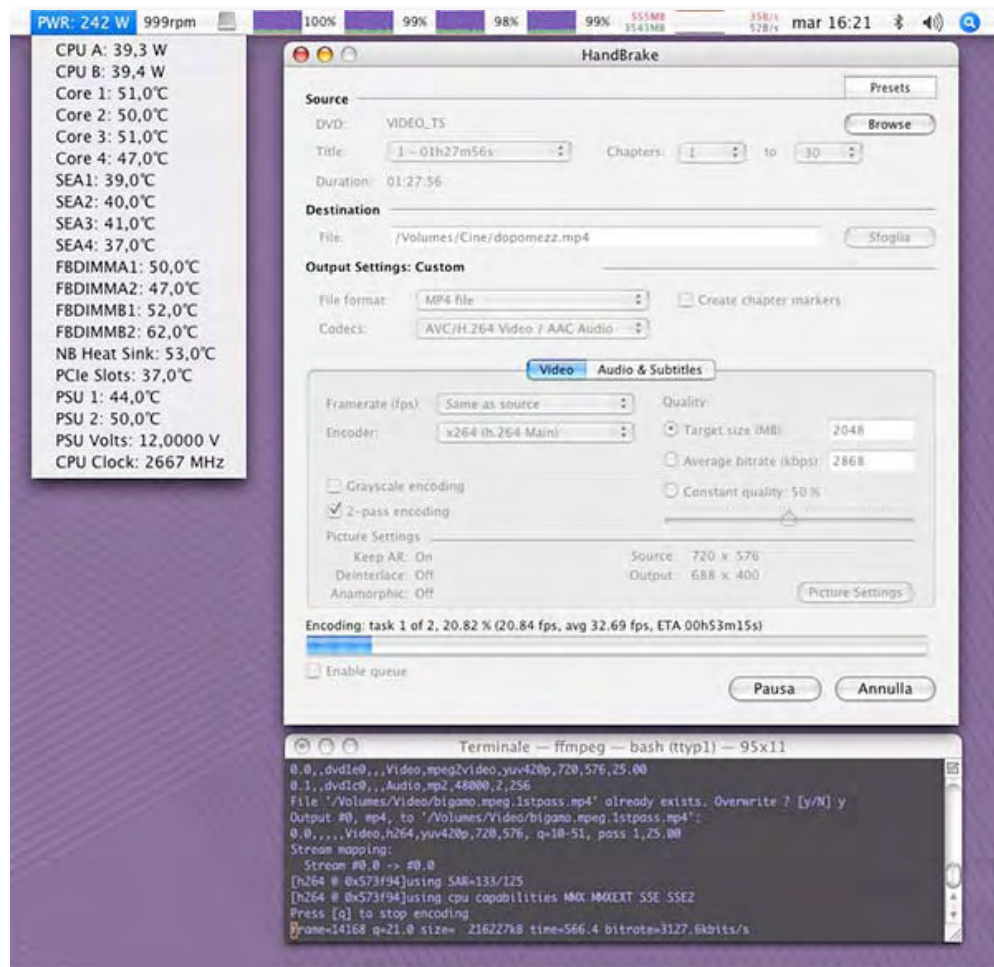
Now let's see how good it is without any modifications, simply as Apple sells it, with only some more RAM and storage the estimated power consumption under idle: 147W (about 200 real watts).



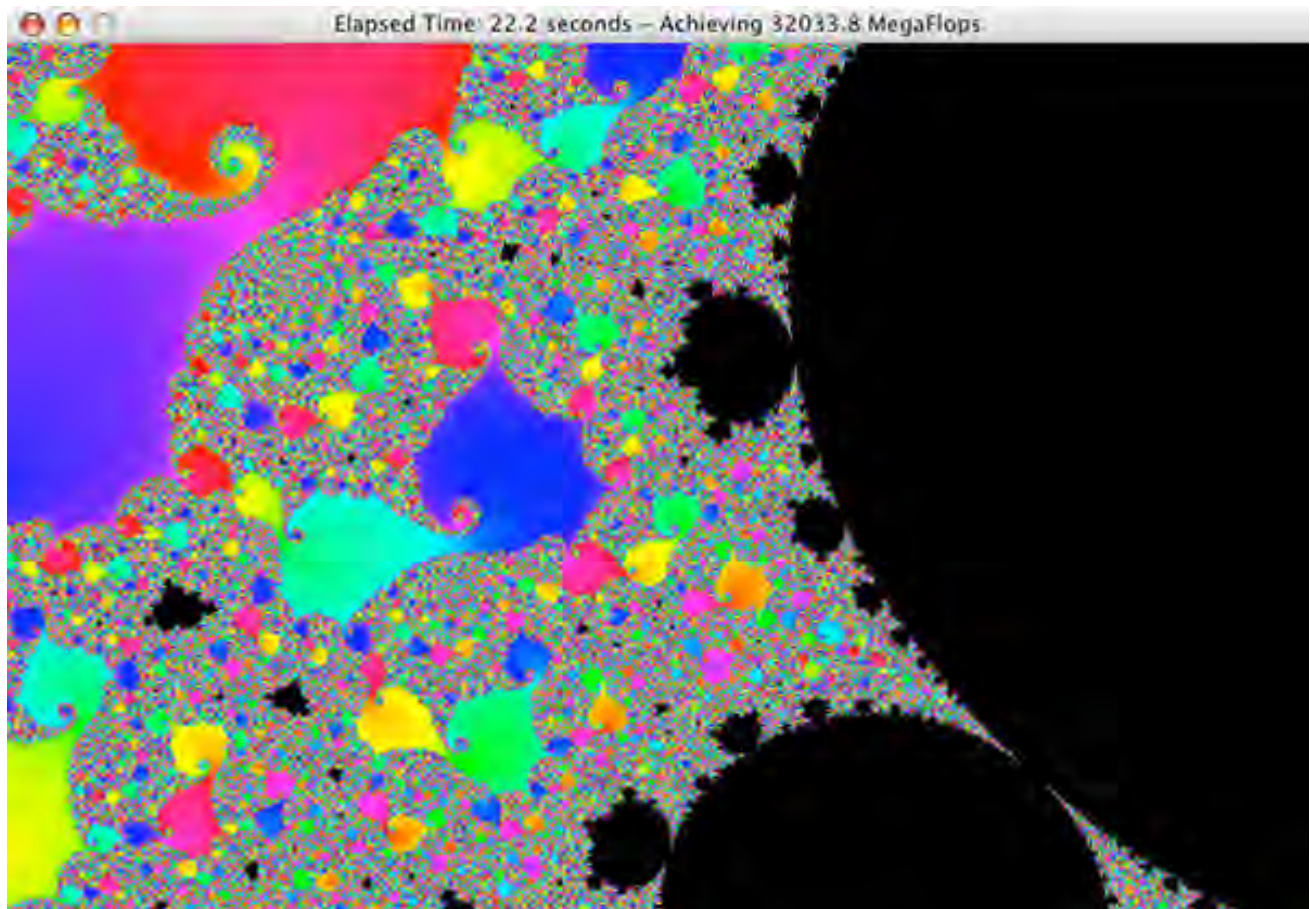
a quite effective ffmpeg auto option for threads calculation:



and under full load: 242W (about 300 real watts).



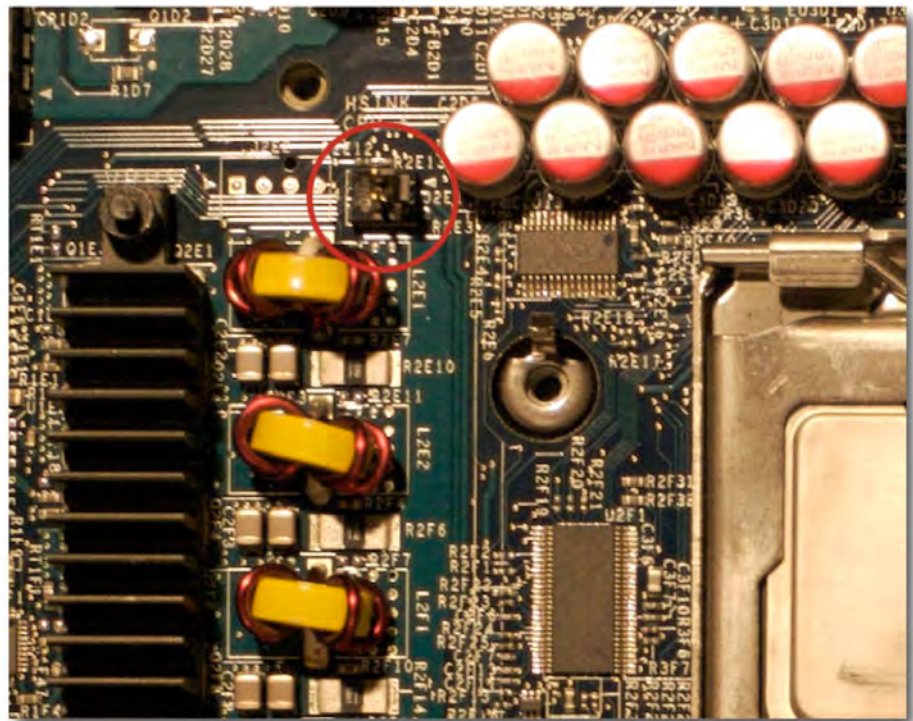
With PowerFractal: average of 30-35GigaFlops, not bad indeed!!!!!!



Now let's upgrade!

Open the MacPro as seen on many sites like [HardMac](#) or, if you have it, on the official Apple Service Manual. When only the CPU heatsinks remain, pay attention to the cpu thermal sensor headers!!

Disconnect the CPU-A
2 pin connector...



..and the CPU-B one.



Then unscrew the 8 screws (4 for every cpu hs) with the long torx. When you successfully remove the heatsinks you'll see the 5150 xeons! Yup!



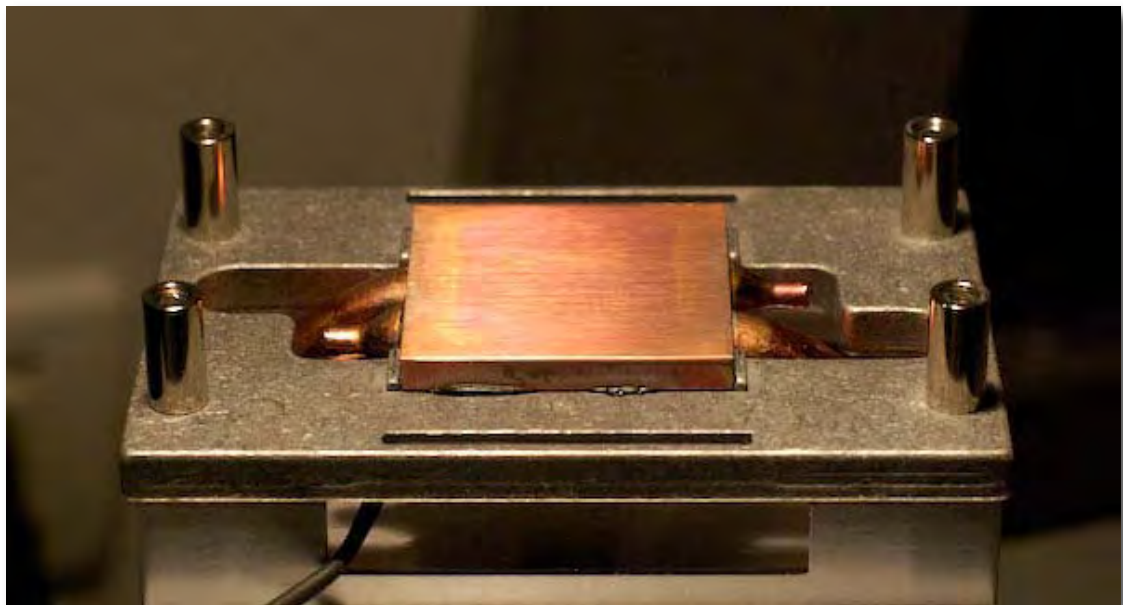
Remove the old CPUs. Here you can see one of the new xeon, soon to be installed! ;-)
) Noticetwice the cache! From 4MB to a whopping 8MB per CPU!!!



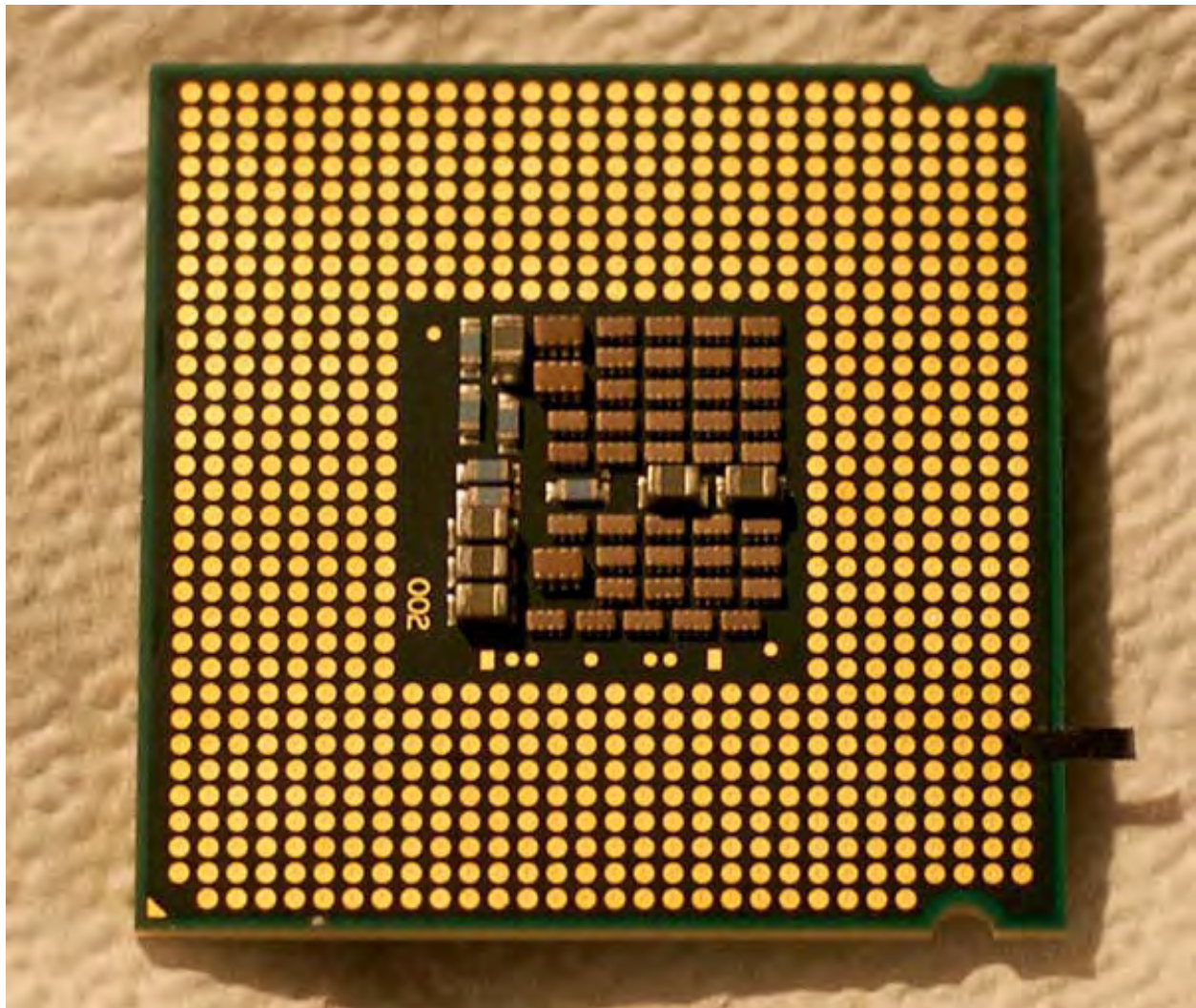
Clean carefully the new cpu and the bottom (the copper plate) of the heatsinks with acetone and a CLEAN cloth (i suggest to clean the old cpus too right after removing them, much better!).



Here it is a cleaned (at its best) copper plate.



According to the Intel datasheets, to bypass CPU's BSEL (from 1066 MHz to 1333 MHz bus) you only have to isolate (i.e. cover) the sixth contact on the last row (look at the picture below). It is easily accomplished with a VERY thin strip of insulator tape. Pay attention to cover only the required contacts...TAKE YOUR TIME!!!



Ok, now let's put the processors inside the MP mainboard sockets (771) and apply an even amount of thermal compound (paste).



Fire it up! ;-)

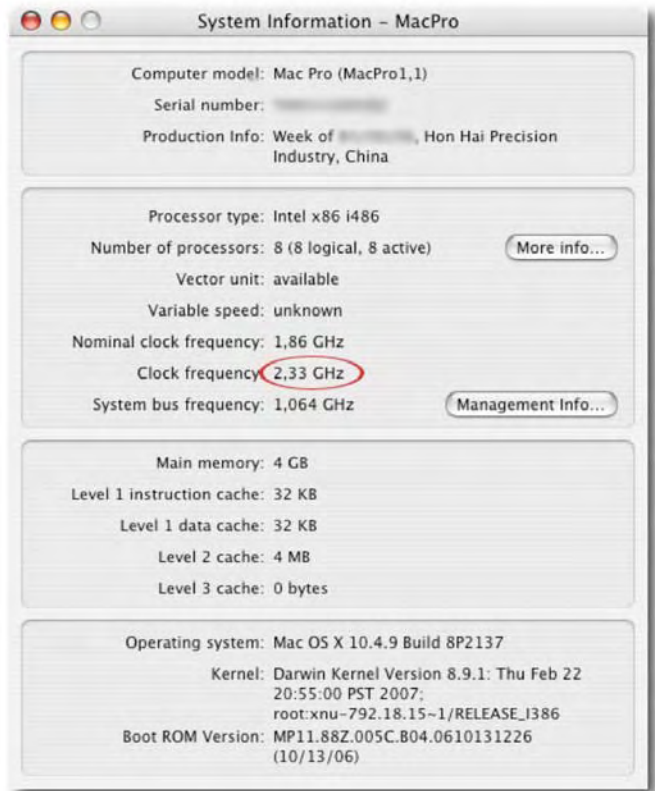
This is what "About this Mac" should tell you if the upgrade is successful! The CPU is obviously unknown.



If you looked closely at the previous screenshot, you should have noticed the CPU speed isn't correctly detected too! So we have to find the "hard" way! ;-)

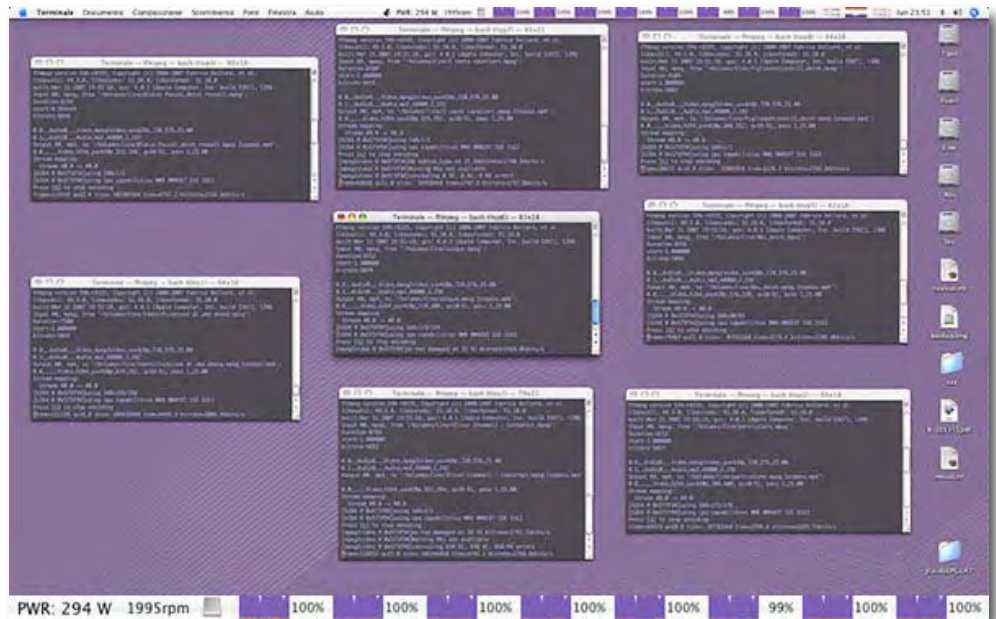
If you have Hardware Monitor installed under Window -> Show System Info you'll find what we're waiting for!

Success!!!!



Ok, in idle it draws now about 180-200W (230-250 real ones, remember!), but have a look at some benchmarks...

First a full load test with 8 (E I G H T !!) ffmpeg instances...290-300W (or 340-350 measured at the power outlet)

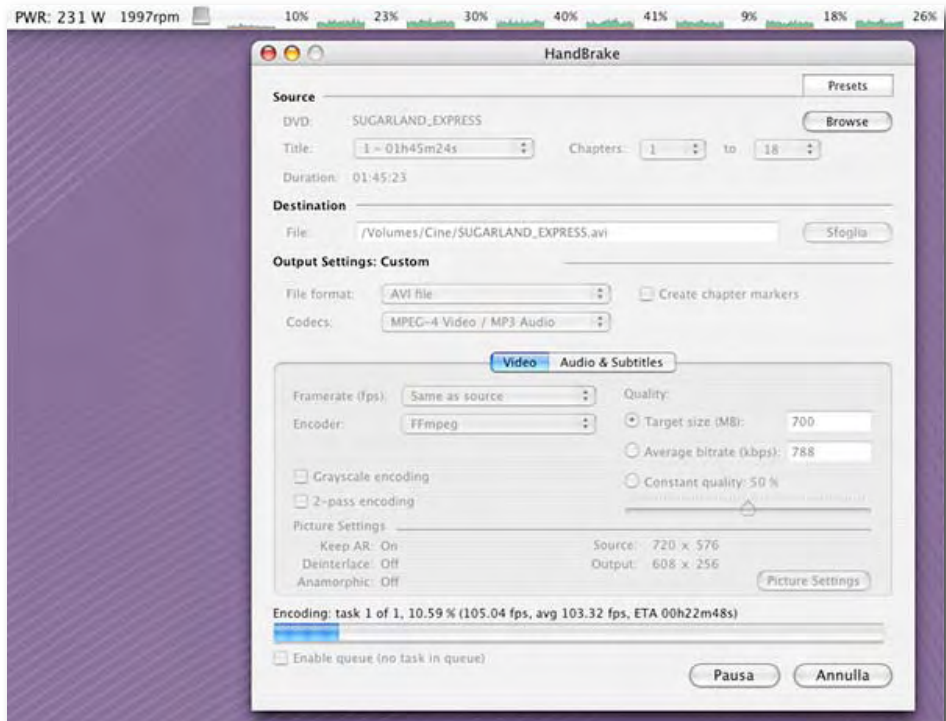


Notice that with normal MPEG4 avis HandBrake (based on ffmpeg) isn't using the total computing power... only less than 30% average for a 103fps encoding!!!!

So I tried with 3 instances!!! (you have to duplicate and rename the Handbrake Application to do so!) ;-) Look below!!!!

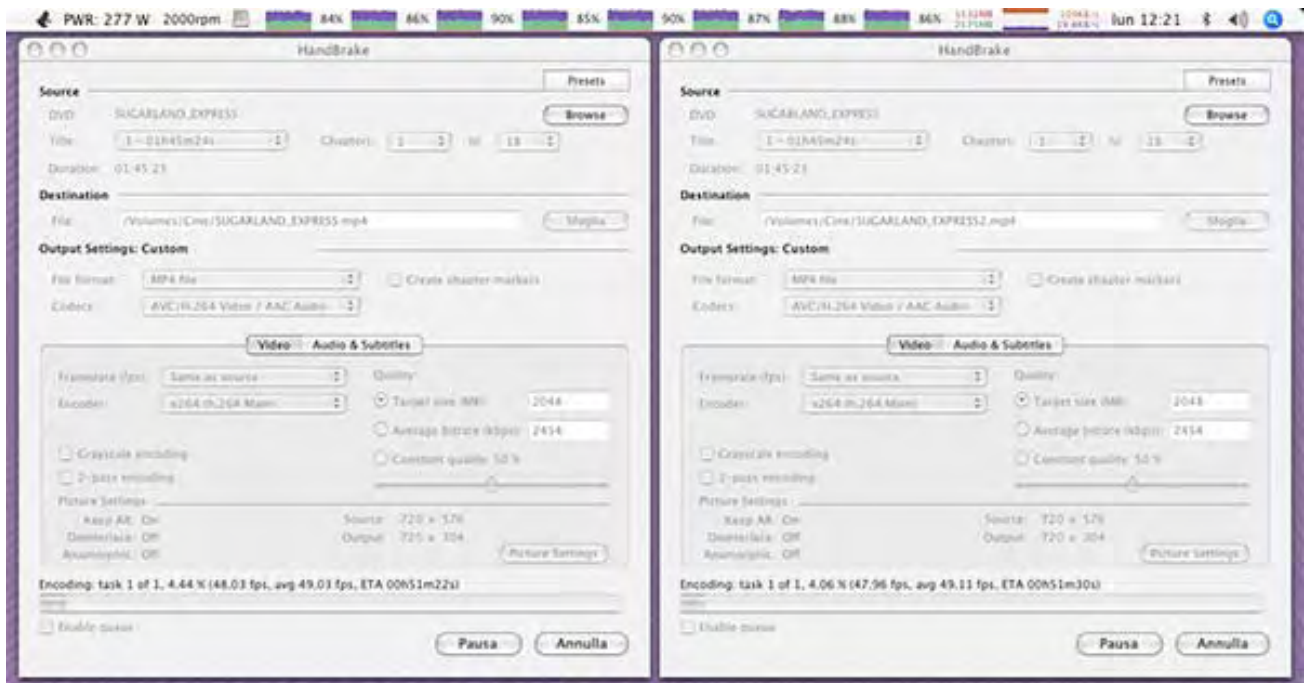
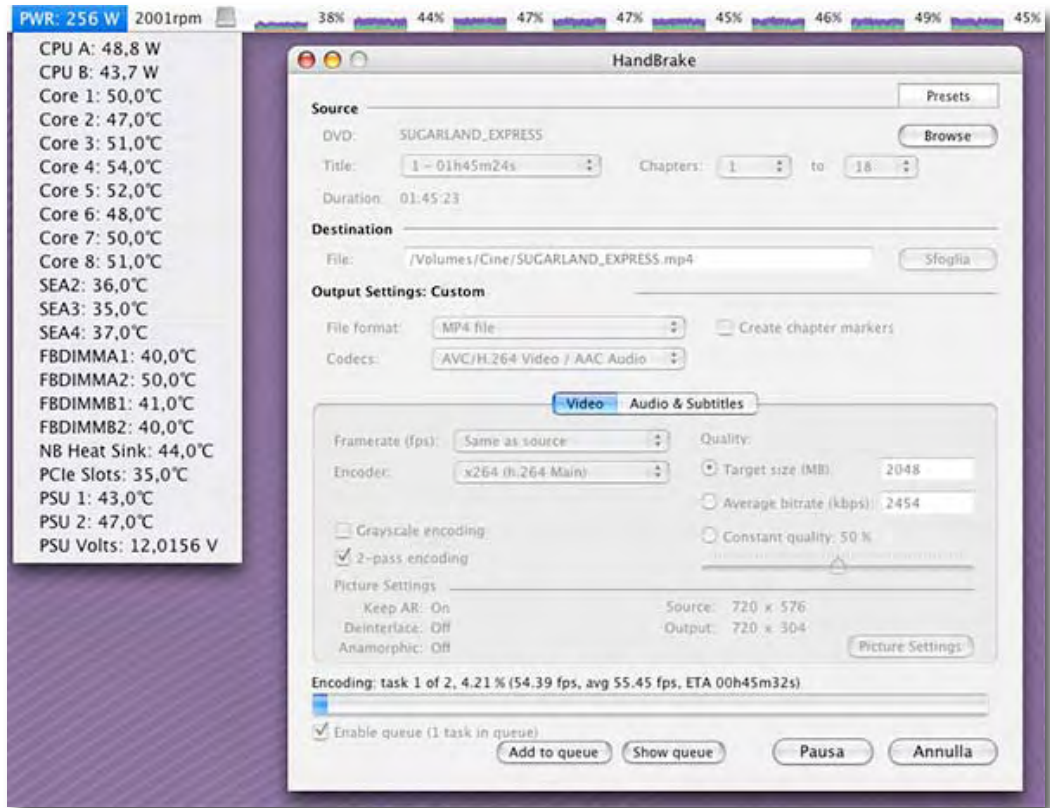
UNBELIEVABLE!!!

310fps on total average with less than 80% of load!!!!!! I think it can do about 400fps!!!! This is about 5 minutes for a 90 minute long feature!!!!!!

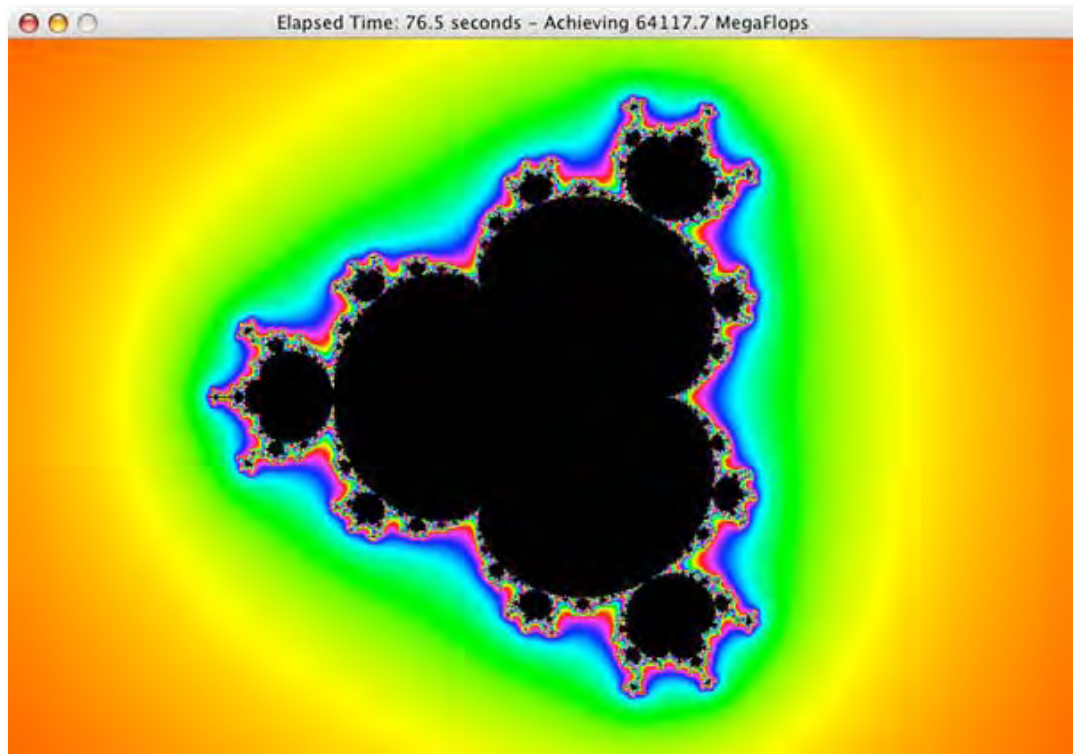


And even at its stressful settings (H264 higher res, 2x AAC audio tracks) HandBrake remains under 50% global CPU utilization!

When I added a second instance (each at a rock steady 50fps) it barely went up to 85%!!!! I presume that the total maximum would be 110-120fps if a more efficient multi-threaded encoding would have been implemented!!



And look at the PowerFractals results! Between 64GigaFlops and 66 GigaFlops!!! For your reference the Mac Pro 3.0 GHz x 8 does 84 GigaFlops...but it COSTS as much as a CAR!!!! ;-)



Conclusions

A real full load of 330-350w isn't bad for a such powerful workstation, almost double the powerfractal results! I found that after upgrade is better to keep system fans AT LEAST at 1000rpm (which produce a very acceptable amount of noise...VERY QUIET!)

FBDIMMs are VERY VERY VERY POWER HUNGRY!!!!!!! About 10-15W each module!!!

Strangely enough the capacity of the modules doesn't matter, so the SWEET SPOT is with four modules (quad channel)!!!

The full load comes down to 300W if only 4 modules installed.

:: Quick Update ::

Mac Pro it's rock solid, I've used it as my main machine for two weeks now! I've completed successfully a 2 days and half rendering with 8 threads. During heavy load (I mean HEAVY), I only raise the fans to 1000-1500rpm when 8 cores crunching! And maybe only because ambient temps in my house are around 27-32C or about 80-90F ...I don't have air conditioning and here is a pretty darn hot 'n sunny summer! **That's a stress test!**

If you liked this guide please consider a small donation for my future projects!!! Considering time involved, risks, hosting fees, the processors since I had to buy them as soon as possible and so paid 700Euro on top of what I already spent for the Mac Pro itself!! Thanks anyway for you visit, even without donations, at least help me with the nice offers on this site!!!!

Sony DCR-SR200C Hard Drive Camcorder

Reviewed Daniel MacKenzie



<http://www.sony.com/>

\$850 USD, \$906.36 CND, £426.49 GBP, €634,08 Euro

Retail - \$1,050 USD.

Comes with: 100GB Internal Hard drive.



Strengths: Small, good quality video, reacts well in cold temperatures, sharp LCD display

Weaknesses: Not a lot of compatibility with the Mac.

Buy Mac-specific software for an extra \$100 USD

<http://www.pixela-1.com/sony/hdd/mac/>



Introduction

Hard drive camcorders are relatively new on the market and there is a growing need for them. It is a bother to have to change tapes when you are in the middle of shooting something or just about to shoot something. It's the same thing with DVD camcorders. You have to change the disc when it gets full. Unfortunately, right now, hard drive camcorders are expensive to the regular consumer and if you have your heart set on one, you have to make sure you get the right one.

Getting Started

It came with a couple of discs. One had a tutorial video of a weird cartoon talking to a couple on a vacation. This may just be my opinion, but I didn't like it. It made me feel like I was a child (younger than me). The other was a software CD that contained Movie and Photo editing software. The movie software isn't compatible with Mac, but the photo software is. It installed fine.

Using the Hardware

This camera is very easy to use. It even has a "simple mode" that you can use for simplified controls. It features 10X optical zoom with an additional 80X digital zoom. A rotatable wide screen LCD screen is used to see what you are filming. When the area around you has a lot of light, it makes the viewfinder hard to see. Sometimes you don't know what you are filming. There also is a Night Shot mode. I had a lot of fun with this. It is used when there isn't a lot of light around. An infrared sensor turns the video green but picks up more light. It looks like night vision. The built-in microphone is good if you are shooting home videos, but it picks up a lot of background noise. If you are looking for something more professional, you can purchase external microphones, which you can find at sony.com. Another feature is a built-in 4 megapixel camera if anyone wants an all-in-one camera. It comes with a video mode and a still picture mode but you can still take still pictures in video mode.

The camera is the perfect size. It fits in the palm of your hand and lets you reach all of the buttons you need. The LCD screen is a touch screen, which lets you access many of the camera's features from one screen. It can rotate over 180 degrees, so you can adjust it to the way you like it.

Something interesting happened to me while I was reviewing this product; since it is a USB camcorder, iMovie doesn't work with it. You can't import directly into iMovie. So I e-mailed Sony's customer support and they said that the camcorder was completely compatible with iMovie. I'm not sure what he meant by "compatible" but you can't import directly. Eventually, I got the video into iMovie using an analog/digital converter and the camera's preview mode. I had a lot of trouble. Another way you might be able to get the video on to the computer is having the Mac think the camera is a regular USB hard drive and extracting your video that way. Either way, it's a pain.

Conclusion

Overall, this is a great camcorder if you have Windows. Its ease of use and video quality make it a good buy, but I would not suggest it to any Mac user. I was disappointed that the compatibility was so poor. The only major improvement that Sony can make to the product is making it usable with Apple computers.

Recommendation

A beginner to seasoned user would find this camera useful. But you should have a Windows computer or a Windows partition on your computer (Boot Camp, Parallels, etc.)

Tom Bihn Large Café Bag

By Guest Contributor, Kristine LeFevre



Large Café Bag

<http://www.tombihn.com/>

\$55 USD, \$59 CND, £28 UK

Requirements: None



Strengths: Heavy Duty, many configuration options for wearing.

Weaknesses: None. The perfect run-about.

Introduction

I am an itinerate teacher. I travel from one school to another school every day. I also am a “soccer mom” and a Junior High and High School Track coach. I also am a quilter in my “spare time.” What does all this have to do with Tom Bihn’s Large Café bag? Everything. I carry my world with me everywhere I go, and I couldn’t do it without this bag.

Description

From the website, “The Café Bag is a hip accessory for travel and everyday use. It can be used to carry smaller laptops when you purchase the optional [Size 5 \(12" Powerbook or Small PC Laptops\)](#) or [Size 6 Vertical Soft Cell \(13" MacBook\)](#) laptop sleeve. The main, open-top compartment and front zippered pocket are covered by a flap that closes with the distinctive Tom Bihn offset buckle. On the back, you’ll find a simple open-top pocket; inside, a snap-hook for your keys and two pockets for your checkbook, cellphone, and other items. The Café Bag rides on your shoulder with a padded 1-1/2" strap and can also be carried by a webbing handle on the top/back. You may purchase an optional removable waist strap, so you can wear it bike-messenger style.

It’s available in many colors. Large Size measures 12" x 13" x 3".

Exterior of 1000 Denier Cordura®. Lined with 500 denier Dupont Cordura®.”

Using the Bag

I can fit everything into it. From folders, binders, books, quilts, food, water bottles, cameras. It all goes in.

I use this bag as my purse, though Tom Bihn’s site makes sure that it is not perceived as one. It does have a male consumer population to appease, and it really works for them. It looks like a professional bag that would not look out of place on any male shoulder. It is tough, good looking and user friendly. It has one large pocket on the inside and smaller pockets for pens, phone, iPod, etc. It has a large open pocket in the back, where I put folders and mail and magazines. It has a zipper pocket in the front, which is pretty roomy.

Conclusion

I love this bag. I admittedly am a bag person. Some people do shoes, jewelry, and clothes. I do bags. (*Wayne: All true. Trust me on this one. It’s almost silly!*) This is the best bag I have ever had. (*Again, that is truly saying something not to be taken lightly.*) It has a key strap that I totally use for my work keys, and I would lose them every time if it didn’t.

The shoulder strap is strong and sturdy, but most of all comfy. It has a gel shoulder piece that slides up and down the strap so you can adjust it to your body, along with the strap length itself. It’s perfect for me, and I’m sure if you try it, you’ll find it perfect for you too. With this price, how could you go wrong?

I just love this bag!

DragonDrop X 1.3

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad © 2007

Developer: David Adamson

dadamson@cs.oberlin.edu

<http://cs.oberlin.edu/~dadamson/DragonDrop/Release>

Released: 13 Jul 2006

Happyware: If you use DragonDrop, you must be nice. To put a concrete mandate behind such a general statement, do something unexpected and good for someone you don't know.

System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or later Universal binary 500 KB Hard Drive Space.



Localization: DragonDrop supports internationalization. The kindness of strangers has produced Japanese and French, Russian and Dutch and German localizations. DragonDrop can be localized by anyone who can use a text editor - no experience with programming is required, nor are any developer tools. Volunteers are welcome.

Source Code: Available

Strengths: The software does exactly what it says it will. I can use it to easily focus on active projects, and also cleanup some of my desktop clutter. For me that make it a keeper.



Weaknesses: None beyond those items listed by its developer none of which trouble me.

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The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.9.

Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developer's narratives, if they are clearly written? *This review is one such example.*

Introduction in Including Publisher's Summary

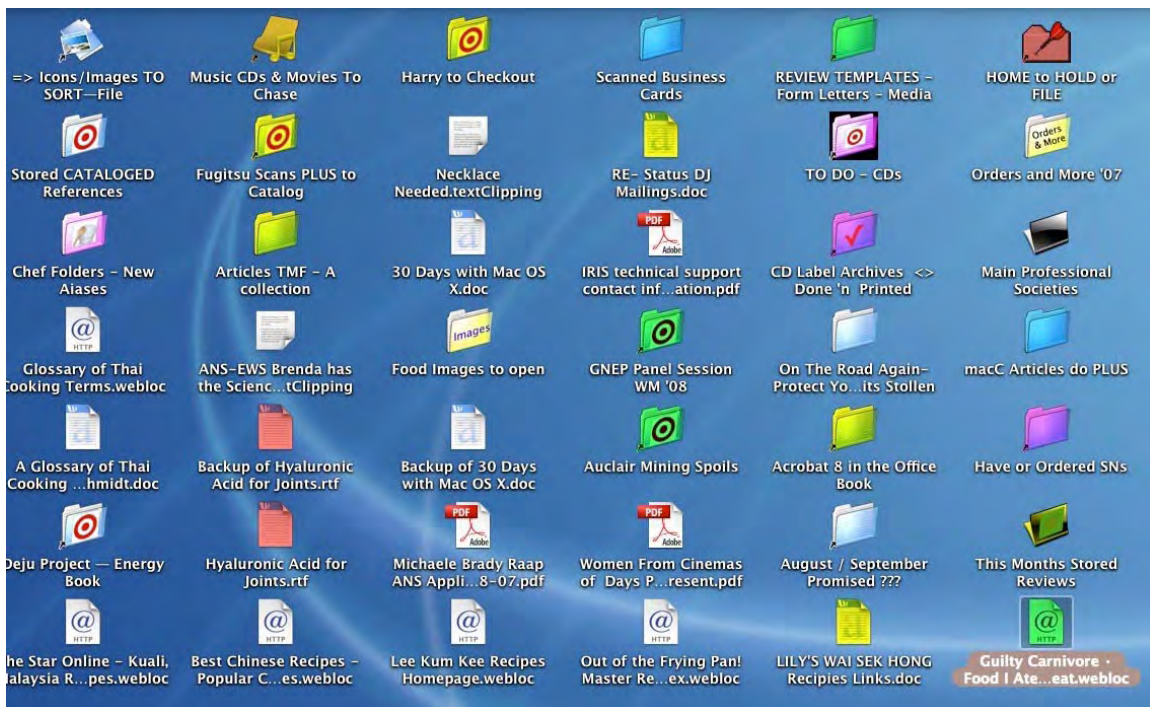
DragonDrop is intended to reintroduce some of the functionality lost with the death of tabbed windows in Macintosh OS X. Some of us remember tabbed windows, those who trod the classic OS paths. Drag an open window to the bottom of the screen, and a title-tab peeks up, readily displaying its contents at a click or a drag. It then collapsed to insignificance (tab size) at a click of a mouse.

This program provides some of those lost attributes of the classic OS, and parallels some of the ease of access features I relish in the \$10 Fruit Menu haxie by Unsanity [<http://unsanity.com/haxies/fruitmenu/>] with the ease of file/folder access of XMenu [DEVON Technologies <http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/freeware/>]. The major difference, DragonDrop uses a tabs metaphor rather than one oriented to the Macintosh menubar.

Using the Software

Just drag the application to that folder, double click and you're on your way. I did a slight detour, and made sure, see below, that my installed copy Unsanity's WindowShade ignored DragonDrop's existence.

I'm a macC contributor, community volunteer, and part time waste management consultant. As a result, I've a constantly changing mix of project folder alias' that clutter my desktop. *Humor me, that's my organizing principal.*



I found the best way to use the DragonDrop software, and in part, clear some desktop clutter, is to create tabs for all of my active project folders. For each new tab, I tossed a desktop alias to that project's folder.



No, you cannot create a tab for a document, I tried. I thought based on the information provided in David Adamson's readme file, I could make it work, but I read the readme wrong.

Interestingly, when I dragged an application's icon onto DragonDrop it created a tabbed window showing the applications' contents. Such contents are usually accessible only by using the contextual menu command "show package contents" That makes sense, if you think about it. An application is just, as treated by the OS, a *constrained* type of folder whose contents you shouldn't mess with.

However, you can turn either a folder or a folder's alias into one. These are not static displays but active Finder-mode functioning windows. I was able to drop and drag new items into the DragonDrop *windows* and drag some of a *window's* contents to my desktop. Nice feature!

Drag any file or folder over DragonDrop's icon in the Finder or in the Dock, and drop it there. A window will appear, showing the contents of the folder you dropped, *or of the folder containing the file that you dropped*. This file-viewer is a poor cousin to the Finder's list-view, offering basic file operations by way of menu commands and (of course) drag and drop.

In addition as noted by the developer: The file-icon in the title bar of a window in any application (including DragonDrop) can be dragged into DragonDrop just like any other file icon. By default, DragonDrop's tab-windows minimize by collapsing to the bottom of the screen. By way of the Preferences window (command + semicolon), this behavior can be changed to echo the *WindowShades* software of *days of yore*, or to suck it into the dock in the mandated Mac OS X manner.

A Purposeful Limitation — According to its developer, only one DragonDrop window will be revealed at a time, the others collapse upon losing your attention. Dragging anything over a collapsed DragonDrop window causes its contents to be revealed, and will re-collapse once the dragged thing has passed by. There's more, David notes, hopefully self-evident functions.

Glance through the menus; toy with the preferences, experiment and play. Doc Sez it fun and doesn't cost you *nothin'*.



Discomfort

My only gripe about this otherwise easy to use and helpful product is that I could not get the contents of a tab that contained sub-folders to work in spring-loaded mode or to open when selected and double-clicked. Instead I had to right click (control-click on a one button mouse) to get a contextual menu that contained an open command. *Ups, I just checked and despite setting my Finder preferences appropriately, none of my desktop or deeper level other folders seem to active the spring folder's function.*

What DragonDrop Doesn't Do (*Developer's Note*) — This software is very much a work in progress, with many features missing that I desire. Patience, and possibly volunteer work, should see the things we wish come to pass.

My bulleted (wish) list:

- It appears that Unsanity's WindowShade X and DragonDrop do not play well with one another. It is recommended that you add DragonDrop to the "Exclude List" in WindowShade's preference pane.
- There isn't a whole lot to sort by, only name and date. This may change, but DragonDrop is supposed to be a lean little launcher/drop box, and not the whole of the Finder.
- Icon View is not yet an option. I've got some ideas, and a few half-made prototypes, but nothing deliverable. Thoughts, or class donations, or indication of desire would be appreciated.
- And probably a few other things. Let me know what keeps you from enjoying my toy, and I'll try to fix it.

Conclusion

If you liked the ability to clear your screen, as we did in the classic environment, by using tabs, you'll like this simple but capable software. For the rest of you who prefer to minimize temporarily distracting documents to the dock, just continue on your way — this product is not for you. But it's free, so you might just try and see if tabs, would once again work for you. After all your browser, and soon MS Office 2008 (Mac) are full of them. You're not giving up the Apple Dock's functionality, just using an alternative to it.

Recommendation

Hey its free, if you'd like the tab capability try it, you just might like it. If you do, or even if you don't, drop David Adamson a line. Silence from readers deadens the spirit and chills the creative juices.

HoudahSpot 1.4.11 – A Spotlight front end. To find Mac files. Fast!

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad © 2007



Houdah Software

support.houdahspot@houdah.com

<http://www.houdah.com/houdahSpot/>

Released: 17 May 2007

Shareware: \$20 USD

System Requirements: Mac OS X Tiger 10.4.8 or later with Spotlight enabled; Universal Binary, 2.8 MB Download and at least 8.4 MB on Hard Disk



Strengths: A simple to use, rational extension of Apple's Spotlight tool that works, painlessly.

Weaknesses: A user manual, perhaps assembled from the developer's web contents, would be helpful to those wanting to master, not simply use, this program

For a Demo of this Product: I know the product can be downloaded, but I was unable to find the duration of the demo period.

Copyright Notice: Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies. The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.9.

Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developer's narratives, if they are clearly written?

Introduction in Including Publisher's Summary

I hate Spotlight! No. I've not turned it off. But I never use the Apple tool except when EasyFind [<http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/11076/>] doesn't work for me because I'm searching document contents, a task it's not designed to do. In that respect it is a more powerful find tool that we used in the classic Macintosh OS systems. But I really do need to find things, more often than I'd casually admit, that are buried in documents I've written or downloaded as text or PDFs.

Why test HoudahSpot — HoudahSpot is a desktop search tool based on Apple's Spotlight technology. It enables users to quickly create and store detailed and focused search queries using an interface simpler than that provided by Apple in either Spotlight or the Apple Find tool.

What's Wrong With Spotlight — Note: HoudahSpot **doesn't fix** all the issues that I have with spotlight such as not searching FileMaker Po databases or my Eudora Mail. As noted later in this review, it builds on and augments Apple's spotlight engine. It therefore makes it at a minimum more user friendly. Actually it makes spotlight's features useable for routine use, something I'd never achieved before finding HoudahSpot.

The main problem with Spotlight is that *making everything searchable doesn't imply that everything will be findable*. Hits and more @#\$%@* hits any resemblance to what I seek is purely coincidental

Keyword search works only if there aren't too many words. *Sometimes even two words are too much*. In addition, since Spotlight gives equal weight to each word no matter whether it is buried deeply within a file or is part of a document's name. So instead of focusing keywords to search, you must think of a word within the document sufficiently unique to focus your search.

You can't search: FileMaker Pro databases contents, invisible files, some systems files, or for the subjects or contents *imbedded* in Eudora's email messages. Searching for a specific image, particularly one with a letter-number as a name can get you reaching for a Prozac.

What is so hard about allowing word completion in a text box? Type in the word, hit return. (E.g., EasyFind.) Spotlight starts searching with the first letter you type and the interface gets weirder and more surreal as new results appear with each new letter.

Although detailed, I've never been helped much by Apple's Spotlight tips.
<http://www.apple.com/macosx/tips/spotlight.html/>

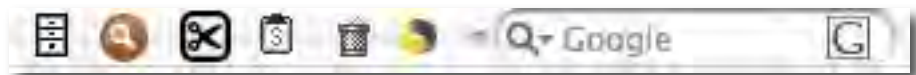
How is HoudahSpot Different from Spotlight — HoudahSpot builds, augments, on the Spotlight engine. It aims and succeeds in providing a front-end that is more convenient, flexible and powerful than Apple's offerings, at least for the Tiger OS. The software allows you to specify where you want to search: your home folder, your documents, ... anywhere. Of course, search criteria also allow you to restrict the search to specific file types.

Getting Started

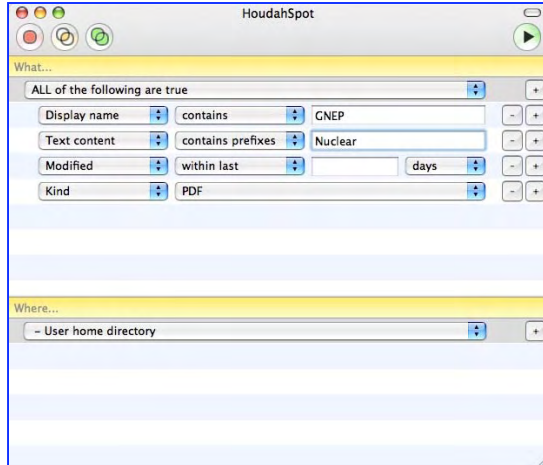
After a traditional transfer of the software to my applications folder, I needed to use a special file provided by the developer, to complete registration. At that point, after a bit of preferences tuning (have it open at login), I was ready to start testing the product. Notice the red Spotlight-like icon in my menubar!

Alas the only disappointment with

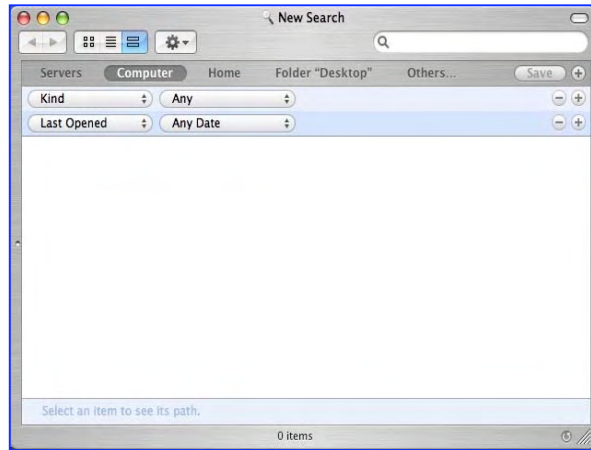
the preferences was that I could not make it disappear from the dock, not could I make the Spotlight icon disappear.



My first reaction on booting the software was to smile broadly! It has a simple to relate to window that is large, and configured in a way that even a spotlight dum-dum like me can understand. Perhaps I can use this software to make Spotlight find things I need it to!



HoudahSpot

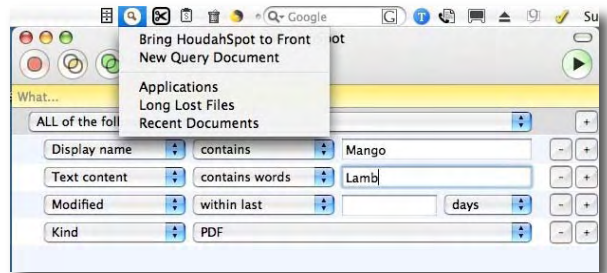


Apple's Find Tool

Using the Software

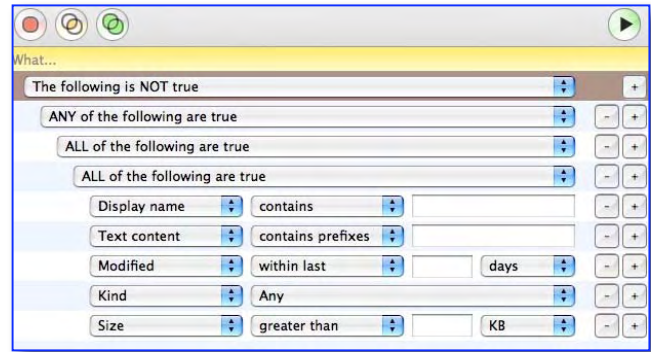
Having decided to test the product I regretfully abandoned EasyFind for two weeks; anguish-such withdrawal symptoms. I actually had to turn of my custom shortcut (Option-F), to force my self to stop using the EasyFind. Much to my delight, with almost no learning curve I was able to use HoudahSpot. In preparation to testing the product I skimmed the online features description and the product's help files.

All of my searches, either for embedded material or by title and perhaps kind went well. What's well? I not only found what I remembered I owned/created on the search subject, but also stuff I'd forgotten I'd collected. Houdah Software's application is like bright spring sunlight brightening up you searches, compared to the narrowly focused and difficult to use search tool called Spotlight.

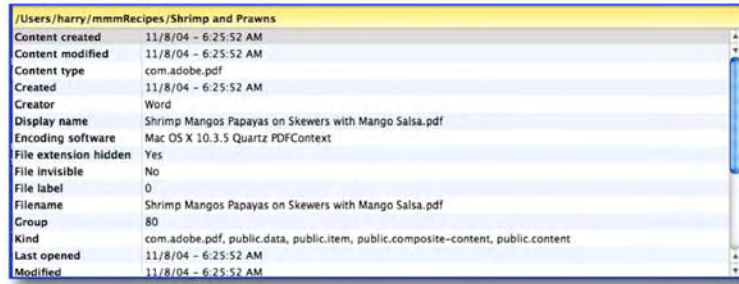


Features

- *Unlimited Flexibility in the Search Form* — You can both do simultaneous multiple variable searches (e.g., by or using a preferred template, you may configure just about any aspect of HoudahSpot: default query form, result list columns.
- Boolean Type Searches — I'm used to doing Boolean searches on when googling and when searching with DEVONagent. If Apple's Spotlight has that feature, I have not been able to figure it out. With HoudahSpot, you can use Boolean terms (and, or, not...) to create complex queries by grouping search criteria.
- Find by Example — I was surprised at the flexibility of this feature in focusing searches but again did not find many occasions where my searches were sufficiently narrowly defined for me to make repeated use of "Finding" by example. The developer notes: *It's never been easier to find similar files. Drag a file to a criteria and it will reflect the file's property. E.g. to find all files modified the same date as an existing file, just drag it onto a "Modified" date criteria.*
- Saved searches — These are much like Spotlights smart folders. Since I never save search results except when googling, I didn't spend much time on the feature. However, according to the developer saving a search its run state and result sort order are saved along with the query. A search saved while running jumps back to life as soon as it is opened. HoudahSpot comes with 2 such predefined searches: 'Applications' and 'Recent Documents'.
- Templates — I did not choose to create any because the work I do is so varied that no search pattern was worth capturing.
- File Preview — An excellent feature, more useful than that in Apple's Get Info. *HoudahSpot provides generously sized file previews. Right from the result list you may now preview most of your files: text, PDF, images, movies, audio files...*

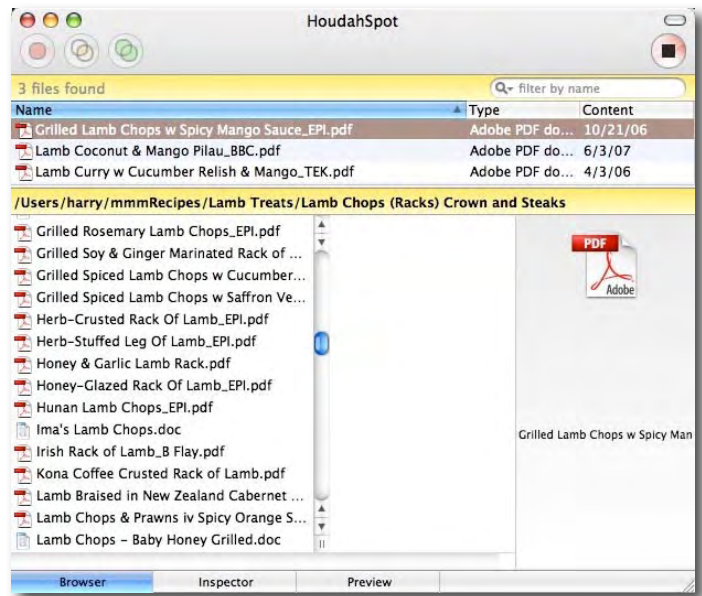


- File Inspector – Not quite get info on steroids or MS Words “document properties” but the software enables you to perhaps find out more than you wanted to know about your individual files. Well, the program knows all that Spotlight knows; that's quite a lot!



- Drag and Drop Search Criteria Creation — I could not find an immediate use for this feature since over the test period, any similarity of one search to that made previously, was purely coincidental. You, if so desired, *can save your queries (setup) for later reference. A query set up with a few basic criteria and a search scope might serve as a starting point for future searches.*

But when all is said and done, despite its unlimited customizability, friendly interface and general ease of use, I'm turning my EasyFind software back on. The good news is that when I need to search more deeply into documents than I can with EasyFind, I shall continue to use HoudahSpot. The image => shows my results searching my DVD sized recipe collection for mango-lamb dish combinations. [Note: Check out the file-path on the yellow bar? Neat!] Now, being repetitive, if I could only make the Spotlight Icon in my menubar go away – I can't turn Spotlight off, or I'll disable HoudahSpot.



HoudahSpot Limitations – The Publisher’s Description

HoudahSpot is based on Apple's Spotlight technology. It finds only what Spotlight can find. Apple chose to exclude some select system directories from the Spotlight index. By setting your privacy preferences you may have excluded some more.

Spotlight relies on importer plug-ins to index file content and metadata. Such importers are provided either by Apple or by the respective application authors. If you can't find a file by contents, you may lack the appropriate importer. Try searching for the file by name.

Discomforts

No Separate Manual — I created a manual, of sorts, by downloading most of the sections of the Help function. I then merged the PDF files so I could read through the material prior to jumping in and trying to use HoudahSpot. Why you ask? I have such a dislike for Spotlight, I thought I'd better get a bit smarter, before any trial and error of Houdah's product made me as grumpy as does Spotlight. I also found the detailed discussion of HoudahSpot's features, in its website helpful in orienting to the product.

Conclusion

HoudahSpot makes me glad that Apple invented Spotlight. The product allows me sufficient control over my searches that I don't get a case of the spotlight DTs. It is a beautifully laid out fully functional and easy to use augmentation to spotlight. If able does as well in Leopard, spotlight might become the reasonable search tool it was meant to be. From my perspective I have the best of both search world environments —the dynamic duo of HoudahSpot and EasyFind. Indeed, with HoudahSpot installed, I'm glad I resisted the repeated impulse to trash Spotlight.

Recommendation

If you use spotlight, get a life. Buy HoudahSpot. Save time and avoid spotlight-ites based aggravation. Best of all you as a mere mortal now can make Spotlight work, finally work, for you! Twenty bucks is cheap to relieve the heartburn and raised blood pressure that is the routine fate of many heavy Spotlight users.

InstantShot 2.4 – A souped up menubar located screen shot “grab” tool

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad © 2007



Digitalwaters Projects
info@digitalwaters.net
<http://projects.digitalwaters.net/index.php?q=instantshot>

Released: 12 March 2007 (My birthday)

Freeware — keep the movement going and make a donation. I know you'll love this product, so help motivate the developers to keep on being Mac-creative.

Localization: English, Italian, Traditional Chinese, French, Japanese and German.

System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or later; Universal binary; 500 KB Hard Drive Space.

Strengths: Instantshot! Does not occupy space on the desktop. It's accessed from the menubar. It is flexible, stable, and intuitive and feature rich. In addition the developers web site contains both detailed user manual and some trouble shooting information.

Weaknesses: None that I could find during a week of testing in preparing g this month's macC reviews.

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The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.9.

Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developer's narratives, if they are clearly written? This review is such an example.

Introduction in Including Publisher's Summary

Do you often use screenshot software and feel that something is missing? I do both for my macC reviews and for other articles I write. Since starting to use Macintosh OS X, I have tested a wide variety of screen capture utilities. These include Apple OS' screen capture shortcuts and Apples Grab application on which I now depend.



In addition I've tried:

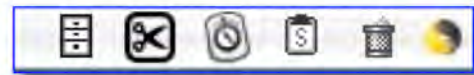
- Yellow Mug Software's Freeware SnapNDrag,
- piDog Software's Screenshot Plus,
- Ego Systems Screenshots Preference Pane 1.0, and
- The commercial strongman of this genre, Ambrosia Software's Snapz Pro.

I've reviewed some of these for macC, but other than the Apple tools, despite their quality, these 3rd party products have not appealed after several months of use. I have modified Apples screen capture tools to give JPEGs by default, using *Screenshots Preference Pane*.

Snapz Pro, a highly praised product is just too complex for my needs. The others just weren't right — a personal preferences thing, rather than a fault in their operation. Another product that I've noticed by not yet tried is ScreenCaptureX, which I get to in the near future. All of these products can be downloaded from the MacUpdate site.

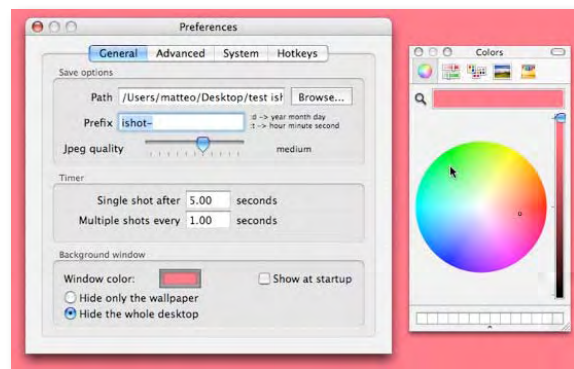
Since I prefer to access utilities from the menubar, because I suffer a continual case of dock bloat. I've tested, given good scores to, but have never remained comfortable with dock doubling software. Therefore I was delighted to read about InstantShot, a menubar accessed screen capture utility — so read on.

InstantShot! creates an icon in the menu bar. Clicking on the icon, a menu will appear. Select the capture type from the menu (whole screen, a portion of screen, timed screenshot or multiple captures) or, if you want to change the save format, select the desired one from the submenus and then... capture! It's the scissors icon.

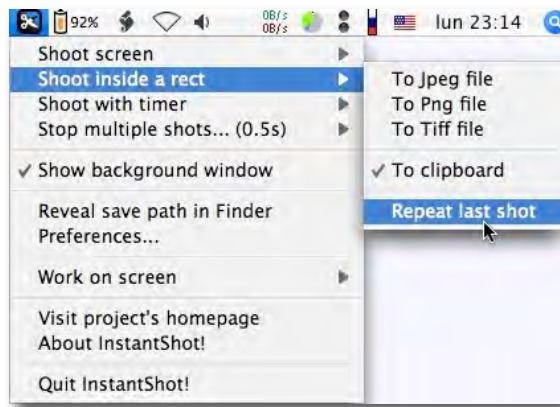


Getting Started

Installing the product is as simple as dragging it into your applications folder. Its icon appeared in the menu bar, ready to use. I took a few seconds to tune the program's preferences — Turned off adding the image of the cursor, default the saved image to my desktop, and assured that the program would open on startup. Some of these operations are usually done from the dock, but this screen capture utility is dockless. (You can drag its application icon to the dock, but why bother.)



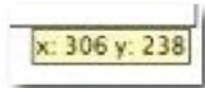
Using the Software



Okay, What Did I Do — hmm? — I pretended that it was my only screen capture tool for a number of articles I was writing. It thereby replaced the Apple screen capture shortcuts I normally use and the Grab application for timed screenshots. What's more to say.

The software worked flawlessly for all of my image-capture needs; an entire screen, rectangle enclosed screen portion and timed (menu) captures. My major use is either in rectangle or time mode. A bonus, there's a

rectangle size tool, a part of capturing rectangular areas that does just that.



Rectangle Mode-One Irritation —

When using the rectangle capture mode, you always get a helpful instructions window, useful once or twice, but like the MS Office Wizard, an irritation after a while. I've yet to find a way to make it go away.

Click on a window to capture it or click and drag to define a generic rectangle. (When Universal Access' services are enabled in the System Preferences, the selected window is brought to the front, too!)
Right click to use the last rectangle. Press Space for the whole screen. Press Esc or Cmd- to cancel the operation.

Not Tested — I at present, have no use for taking multiple quickly sequenced shots, a feature of InstantShot, not having any reviews that require capturing a sequence of actions. This might come in very handy for writers of manuals.

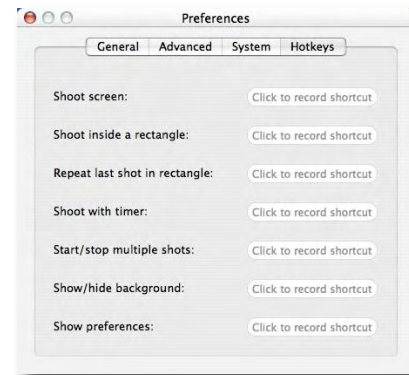
A bit of strange: I use GraphicConverter as my primary graphic manipulation tool. For some reason, when I capture an image in InstantShot and open it in GraphicConverter my default application, I gain the ability to instantly edit the image. Wow! That view also lets me shift between the last group of clips I've capture. *I wish I could turn this feature off*, since I seldom need it, but alas it has no preference to do so. Of course, when I when drag a captured image into my article only the image gets imbedded.



A few of the products other interesting and easy to access features —

Using the Same Rectangle for More Than One Shot — you can right click anywhere with the mouse (or Ctrl+click with one button mice) to use the last rectangle you defined.

User Configured Hot Keys for all Screen Capture Modes — I've too many hot keys already so I am on a campaign to stamp them out on my computer. The application is available from the menubar that a hot enough access for me.



Direct Control of File Names — The ability to confirm the filename for each saved image except in multiple capture mode. This is wonderful in comparison to having to rename each *Picture 1*, *Picture 2*... when using the Finder screen capture shortcuts.

Timed Capture — Ability to set the delay for a single timed capture or multiple captures.

Availability to Scale Images and More on Your Saved Images – I've not used this feature but it seems interesting. It's the only feature I have no idea how or when to use. But it looks easy to do so I'll fool with it after I meet my editor's deadlines. The software also allows controlling the compression level for the JPEG format. There is a similar feature in GraphicConverter that I've similarly ignored

To Frame or Not to Frame? — Whether to add a fixed border to the chosen rectangles becomes an option as does, to a limited extent, the style of that border

Conclusion-Recommendation

This is a lovely, easy to use product. It provides all the screen capture features I need directly from the menubar. No I'm not tossing Apple's Grab, but have removed it from my dock freeing up a spot for something new. Try it, you'll like it.

Then pretend its shareware and send the developers a gift. They actually have a wish list on the Amazon UK website – access from the bottom of the web site. A nice idea — it beats cash and gifts are not reportable to Italy's equivalent to the IRS.

PS

I was pleased to read of another use for the product – one individual noted that the product was used to take a screen shot every 5 minutes to assist billing his clients. I'm glad my clients, on occasion, only want me to keep tract of their time on a 15-minute basis. Amazing!

iTask 1.5 — Another step towards the paperless office

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad © 2007



Developer: Box & Locks

support@boxandlocks.com

<http://www.boxandlocks.com/>

Version Released: 02 Mar 2005

Previous macC Review: Version 1.4 [macCompanion August 2004]

Shareware: \$15 USD



System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later; Not Universal Binary; 1.8 MB hard drive Space needed.

Strengths: Easy to use means of keeping track of you todo lists.



Weaknesses: Unlike other similar tools, there is no way I could find to transfer my tasks list to an iPod, since carrying my desktop Mac around, makes checking on tasks a bit difficult.

For a demo of this product: <http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/13050>

Copyright Notice: Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.9.

Introduction Including Publisher's Summary

iTask is a compact desktop application that should help you manage the various tasks, promises, chores and to-dos in your life. With this program you can replace all those refrigerator white board lists, post-its and to-do notes — use this on-screen scheduler. Like all good “organizer” software you can choose to categorize your current and future tasks and prioritize their individual importance, so your reminders evolve with your workload.

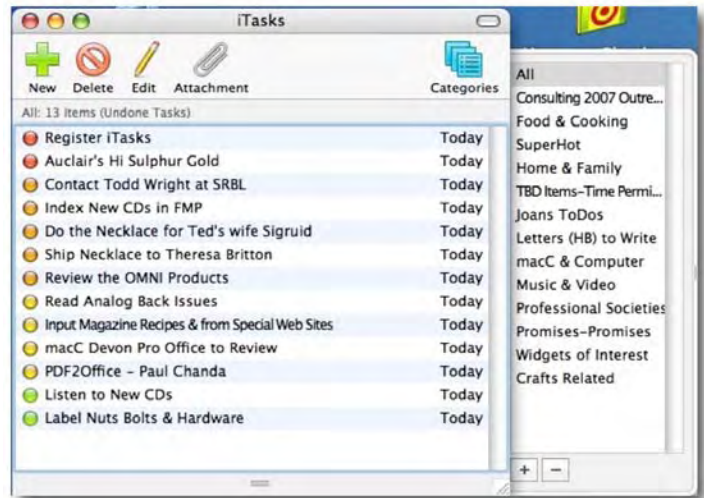
Now to be fair, and open about this all, I presently use a combination of Kelvin Delbarre's ToDo X \$15 shareware program [<http://www.nomicro.com/>] for to-dos and general promises notes having no firm due dates; and DEVONnote to handle the other I must remember bits and pieces of information in my life, but only the ToDo software is relevant to this review. Nevertheless, iTask or other comparable product, is a great tool to use when life's getting too hectic and you've just got too much to remember. It feels so good to check off an item or three when it's done!

Getting Started

A standard install, drop and drag to my applications folder, and the product was available to me, with a simple double click. I had a problem entering the provided serial number, so wrote this review in the demo-mode. Since the demo mode is full featured, that lack caused me no problems.

Using the Software

Since I already us a todo application installed, my testing of iTask was simple. I just copied over the contents of that todo list to iTask. My list of categories covers a reasonable amount of ground so I am convinced that, according to its developer, you can organize your to-do lists for both the office and your home; and organize anything from your filing (perhaps) to remembering to take out the laundry. I do agree that you can organize anything you can name, and categorize your current and future tasks and prioritize their individual importance, so that your reminders evolve with your ever-changing workload.



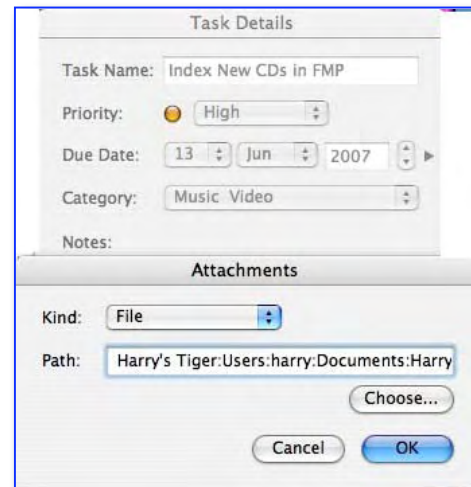
General Features:

- Built-in ability to access multiple list categories from its main window.
- Uses a single data entry window for inputting to both list category and list files
- Prioritizing an item changes its location in the list
- It is easy to add a due date in the data entry window
- Allows the easy establishment of priorities, from highest to lowest as well as labeling them as done.
- In list item entry mode, the user has the ability to add notes to the list item name.
- A simple set of user preferences, keep the complexity down.



There is a unique feature in this product, the ability to tie an attachment to a task. However, in the absence of a help file, this was a counter intuitive process. Specifically, I have an item called Index New Music CDs (Music Video Category) to which I was going to link to my CD Collection FileMaker Pro Database. Okay, I did that using the attachments button on the data entry window. But there seemed to be no difference in either the item description or its category to show there was a link defined to an attachment.

Then, I found, a trial and error thing, that I could get to the attached database by selecting the item in the software's main wind (I used the all listing) and clicking on the attachments icon (a paper clip). Wonderful tool but strangely hidden for a users sight.



Review Limitation —The software has a feature I did not test including the ability to integrate with Apples iCal. Why, I don't use iCal, PandoCalendar works just fine for my needs.

Discomforts

Still No Help Files — My review of version 1.4 noted that the lack of help files it was harder to work with than the developer's blurb led me to expect. There are still no help files in version 1.5. Yes the program is intuitive, but then I've used a Macintosh continuously from my first SE-30. But there are both newbies and PC-switchers out there that could benefit from this program with a little bit of help from its developers. — Hint.

Category Alphabetization — When using a task manager, I create one category for super hot items. You know, they needed to be done yesterday. Since the Apple Finder allows list prioritization, by putting a space in front of a document name, I would like to thereby bring that category to the top of my list. This kind of a feature has worked in other todo list application but does not work in iTask. Neither could I drag to categories into a different order. List also cannot be reordered. Why?

Moving Individual to Todos to a Different Category — After completing my category list, I decided that some of the items in my "super hot" category could just as well live in a new *Crafts Related* category. So I created one. Much to my surprise I could not drag and drop my individuals tasks to a new category.

Spelling Checker – Where art thou? – Much to my surprise the program ignored my misspellings, something competitive products did not do. Since I'm an appallingly bad typist, I always spell check everything with either a build in checker or with Spell Catcher. But really, is it so hard to hook into Apple's spell checker. The product after-all is text based.

Limited Printing Flexibility — The software is still limited to printing only the contents of the selected category but does not include that category's name. It also does not print the notes attached to a task, something I would find useful. The developer could significantly enhance this product by strengthening the print options.



Menubar Access Desired — Making the product accessible on the menubar would de-stress my crowded dock. [No I don't like dock-doubling software.]

Export Feature — The export feature does not appear to work in the normal manner to allow creation of text or RTF files. Instead it just creates a backup copy of the iTTask List (database). See the PS to this review for a work-around.

Conclusion

Overall, this product represents a good approach to configuring a checklist software product. Although it contains a number of features that are missing from its simpler cousins, I found its implementation awkward to use and incomplete.

Understand, price is not a concern, rather the absence of Macintosh like features such as drop and drag implementation, and accesses to a spell checker are troublesome. I especially wanted to be able to use the “attachments” feature since that is missing from other programs I've tested. In the absence of a help file, it took me longer to figure out how to *implement* this excellent feature than it should have.

There is much about this product that deserves praise, but it needs attention from its developers to bring it to the top of the available todo products list. My major overall concern is the fact that many of the recommendations I suggested in my last review (version 1.4) [macCompanion August 2004]. It is not clear whether the developers have abandoned the product since the last update was 02 Mar 2005.

Recommendation

If the features of iTTask out weight its limitations, by all means download the product and try it out. It is easy to use and makes for a capable if inflexible todo list manager.

If you are seeking something a bit more robust I suggest you browse MacUpdate site for other available products. Should a newer version, say 1.6, be released, one that addresses some of the weaknesses in the current version, I would strongly recommend your trying it out. I will!

Meanwhile, I shall continue to work on checking out new products as they appear, ever looking the newest best todo software. For now ToDo X does what I need. But perhaps that will change after I review *What to Do* in this issue of macC.

[<http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/24074/what-todo>]

PS

I managed to convert the full contents, in text format (including notes) from my task list. But I did it the hard way. Dropping the database file (.itsk) onto MS Word gave me decipherable garbage. [See below.] All I needed to do to add a bit of clarity was to replace </t> with a space, and use a 5 point space after each paragraph.

Index New CDs in FMP 1 6/13/07 Include both Daedalus and 3RFS
finds 6/13/07 13 06 2007 Music & Video Harry's
Tiger:Users:harry:Documents:Harry's Documents:DATA BASES &
FILES:Books,ÄMusic,ÄMovies:CD MUSIC Babad's List.fp5
macC Devon Pro Office to Review 2 6/13/07 Get
SN? 6/13/07 13 06 2007 macC & Computer 0
PDF2Office - Paul Chanda 2 6/13/07 Need New
SN 6/13/07 13 06 2007 macC & Computer 0
Review the OMNI Products 1 6/13/07 OmniOutliner 3,6,2 _ Organize your
idea, projects, and more. </break>OmniGraffle Pro4.2 beta 5 _ Create diagrams flow
charts, and more. </break>OmniPlan 1.1.1 rc 1 _ Project management made painless.
</break>OmniWeb 5.5,4 _ Web browser with Safari engine & many enhanced features.
OmniGraffle 4.2 beta 5 _ Create diagrams, flow charts and more. </break>OmniOutliner
Pro 3.6.2 _ Pro version of the popular outliner.
</break> 6/13/07 13 06 2007 macC & Computer 0

Index New CDs in FMP 1 6/13/07 Include both Daedalus and 3RFS finds 6/13/07 13 06
2007 Music & Video Harry's Tiger:Users:harry:Documents:Harry's Documents:DATA
BASES & FILES:Books,ÄMusic,ÄMovies:CD MUSIC Babad's List.fp5
macC Devon Pro Office to Review 2 6/13/07 Get SN? 6/13/07 13 06 2007 macC &
Computer
PDF2Office - Paul Chanda 2 6/13/07 Need New SN 6/13/07 13 06 2007 macC &
Computer
Review the OMNI Products 1 6/13/07 OmniOutliner 3,6,2 _ Organize your idea, projects,
and more. </break>OmniGraffle Pro4.2 beta 5 _ Create diagrams flow charts, and more.
</break>OmniPlan 1.1.1 rc 1 _ Project management made painless. </break>OmniWeb
5.5,4 _ Web browser with Safari engine & many enhanced features. OmniGraffle 4.2 beta
5 _ Create diagrams, flow charts and more. </break>OmniOutliner Pro 3.6.2 _ Pro
version of the popular outliner. </break> 6/13/07 13 06 2007 macC & Computer

the Web Graphics Creator

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Software

AKVIS Enhancer V.6.0

Reviewed by Michael Potter



Enhancer V.6.0
www.akvis.com

\$69 USD, € 53 Euro

System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9 or later;
Universal binary; 512 MB RAM; 15 MB Hard Drive
Space; One of: Photoshop 6-CS3, Photoshop Elements or
GraphicConverter X.



Strengths: simple interface, recover lost image details with ease

Weaknesses: limited documentation, minor quirk transferring image to Photoshop

For a demo of this product: <http://akvis.com/en/enhancer/index.php>

Introduction

It's not uncommon to compose a shot in your digital camera only to find when you get back to your computer for "developing", what you saw in the viewfinder and what the camera captured are two totally different things. In many cases these problems are caused by the automatic settings in your camera taking their readings from a different part of the scene than your eye. The end result can be images that are under or over-exposed, leaving the subject flat and lifeless.

AKVIS Enhancer is a plug-in for Adobe Photoshop that promises to recover some of the lost detail in areas of uneven exposure and even bring back detail in parts of your photos that are overexposed.

Being somewhat of an expert at taking underexposed images, I was eager to give AKVIS Enhancer a try. The Enhancer plug in was tested in Adobe Photoshop CS3 Extended on my MacBook Pro running OS X 10.4.9. Images were captured with a first generation Canon Digital Rebel SLR.

Getting Started

Installation of Enhancer is straight forward, but there certainly is no hand-holding on the part of AKVIS. They spend more time in the sparse installation instructions describing their license agreement and how to get past it than they spend on installing the plug-in for Photoshop CS3.

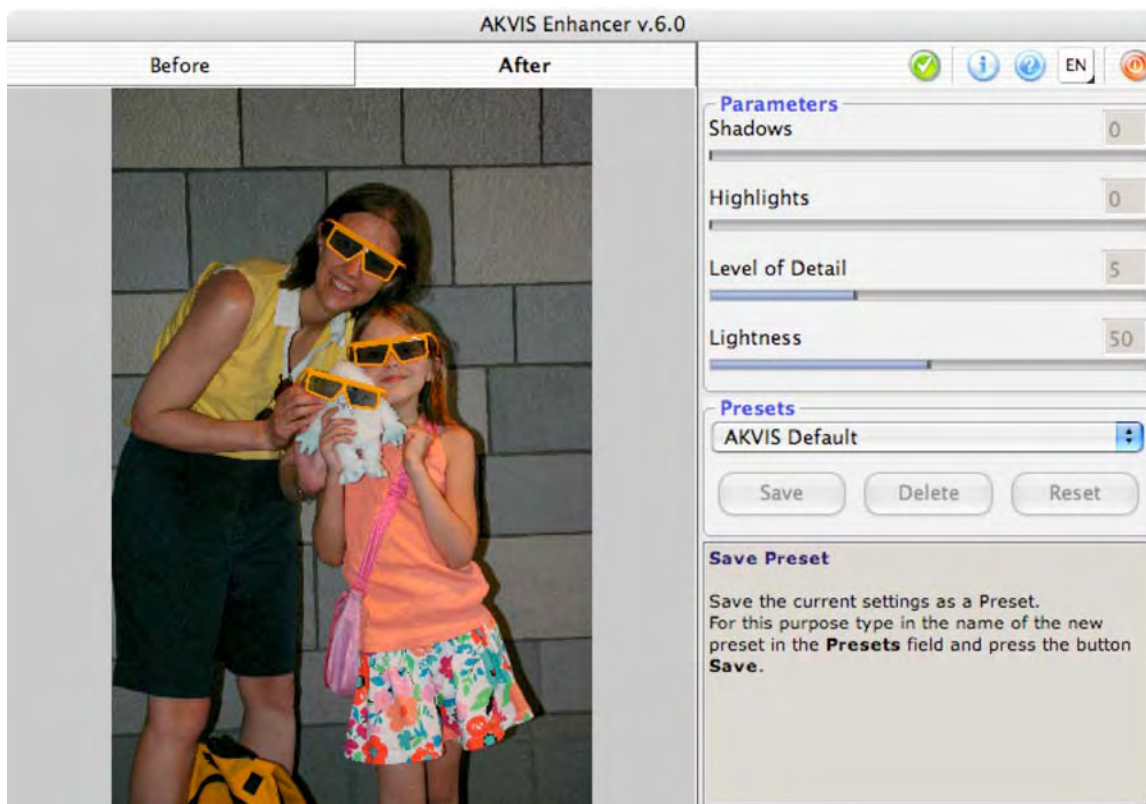
"Drag the folder into the Plugins folder of your photo editor"

That's the extent of their instructions. Though I downloaded the Photoshop CS3 version, there's no indication as to WHERE the plug-ins folder might reside on your Mac. Surprisingly, the DMG doesn't include an alias to the proper installation location even though the download was for CS3 specifically.

So while I'm aware "Plug-Ins" is found in the Photoshop folder within Applications, I have to wonder how many other people are? Granted, AKVIS' customer base likely trends toward the more experienced Photoshop users, but, still, there's a wide range of Photoshop users out there and many are not aware that plug-ins exist, let alone where the folder might be, so a little help from AKVIS would be appreciated to ensure everyone has a pleasant experience with their product.

Once AKVIS Enhancer is installed and Photoshop is restarted, however, it's very easy to locate in the Filters menu under the sub-menu AKVIS.

When activated, you'll see that it's really quite a simple interface with only four main parameters to adjust.



The **Shadows** parameter lightens and enhances detail in the underexposed parts of an image without causing loss of detail in the light areas.

Conversely, **Highlights** brings out the detail in light areas of an image. As with shadows, the light areas become darker, but as you move the slider to the right, AKVIS warns that you may lose middle tones in some images causing the image to flatten a bit.

Level of Detail tells Enhancer how much detail to pick out of the image based on color transitions. So the higher the value, the more detail is visible. Because it's based on color transition, you may find more noise in your image if it was underexposed to begin with and you set this value too high.

And the last adjustment is **Lightness**. Quite possibly the simplest setting in the toolbox, it defaults to 50 on a scale of 1 to 100. As you slide toward 100 the image gets lighter and as you slide toward 1, the image gets darker.

In addition to those parameter adjustments, there are *Before* and *After* tabs to keep track of the progression of changes made to the image and a *Presets* drop down to save and select some of your favorite settings.

Using the Software

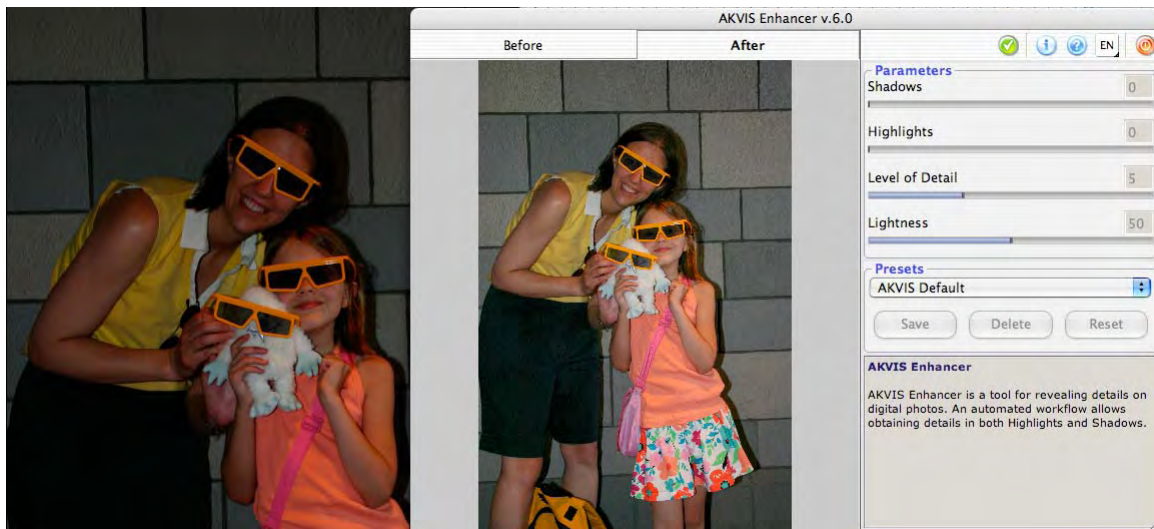
I set out to enhance a number of different pictures from my library. In the end, I limited my selection to just two for this review. The first was taken in a dark hallway with little overhead light and the other snapped outdoors with the subject backlit a bit too much.

Some of the others I messed around with didn't highlight Enhancer's core functionality as well as the photos chosen – namely, bringing the detail out from your muddy images.

Starting with the first image, you can see that although a flash was used, it's still woefully underexposed in the left half of the image. Colors are dull and the whites are grey. Also, detail – what Enhancer is going to help us with – is lost in the texture of the wall as well as the subjects themselves.

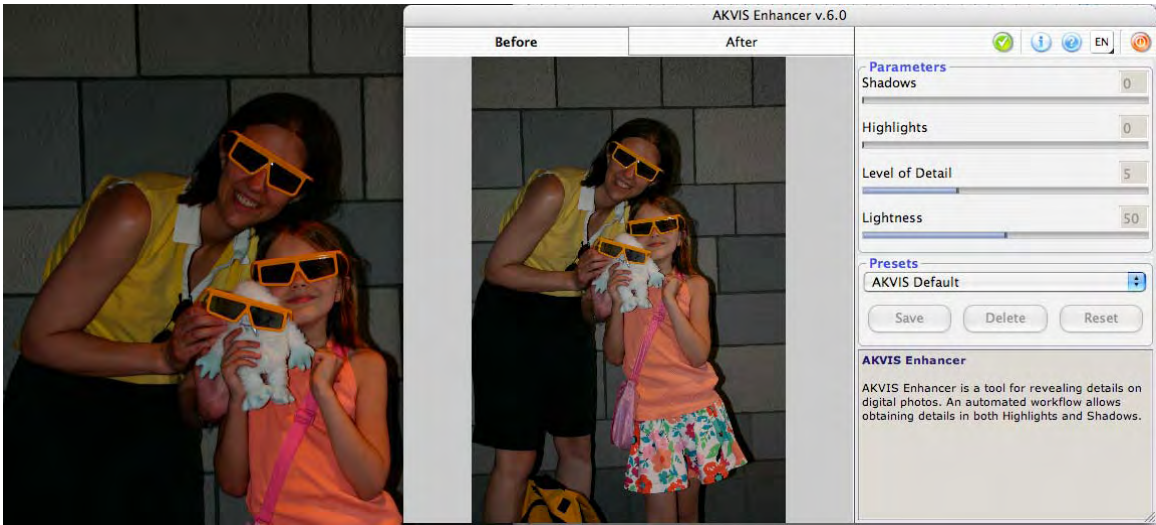


The moment I bring it in to Enhancer, however, there's a dramatic difference seen with no other tweaks to the parameters made:



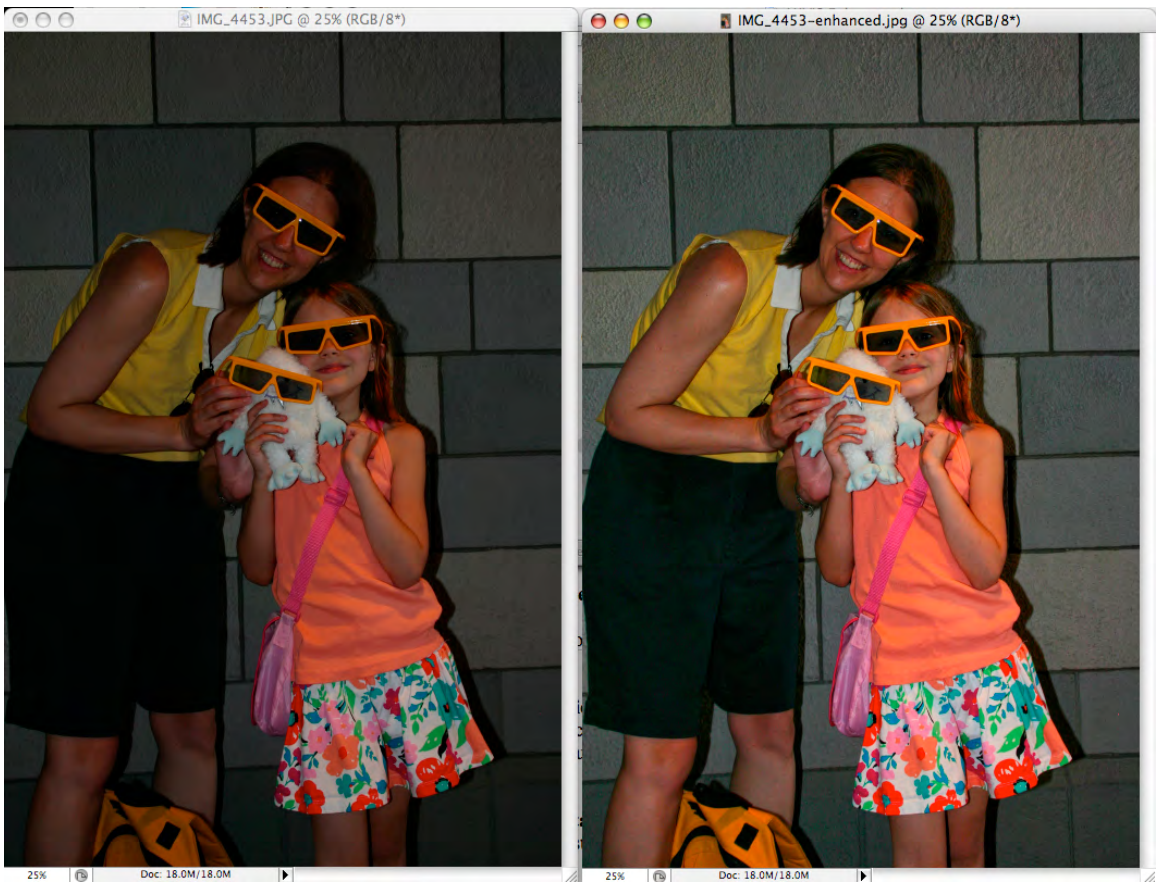
That's the original off to the left with Enhancer's window floating above it on the right.

Clicking on the *Before* button in Enhancer reveals one of the issues I have with the program: What you see in the window is not necessarily what you get.



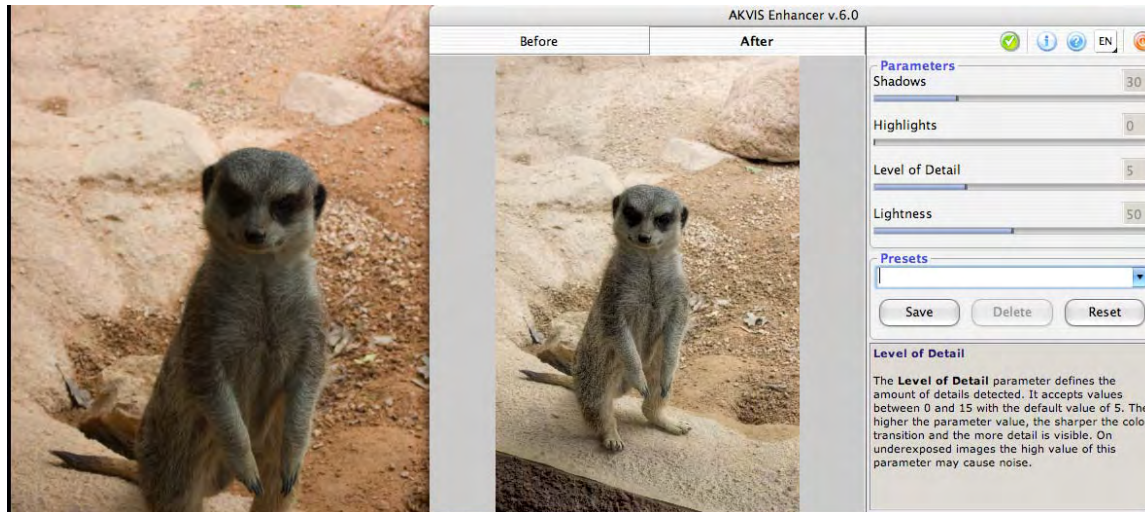
Here is the original on the left and what should be the original within Enhancer on the Before tab, but you can see that Enhancer's version is much lighter. And I've found that to be the case in Photoshop as well after the enhancements have been applied.

Below is the original image and on the right is the enhanced image. Though notably improved, it's still not as light as the version seen on the *After* tab in the AKVIS Enhancer dialog box.



My initial reaction was that this was due to the image being a JPG and not a RAW image that would allow for more granular tweaks, so I played around with a few RAW images to see what would happen.

In the screen shot below you can see the original outdoor image on the left behind the Enhancer dialog box.



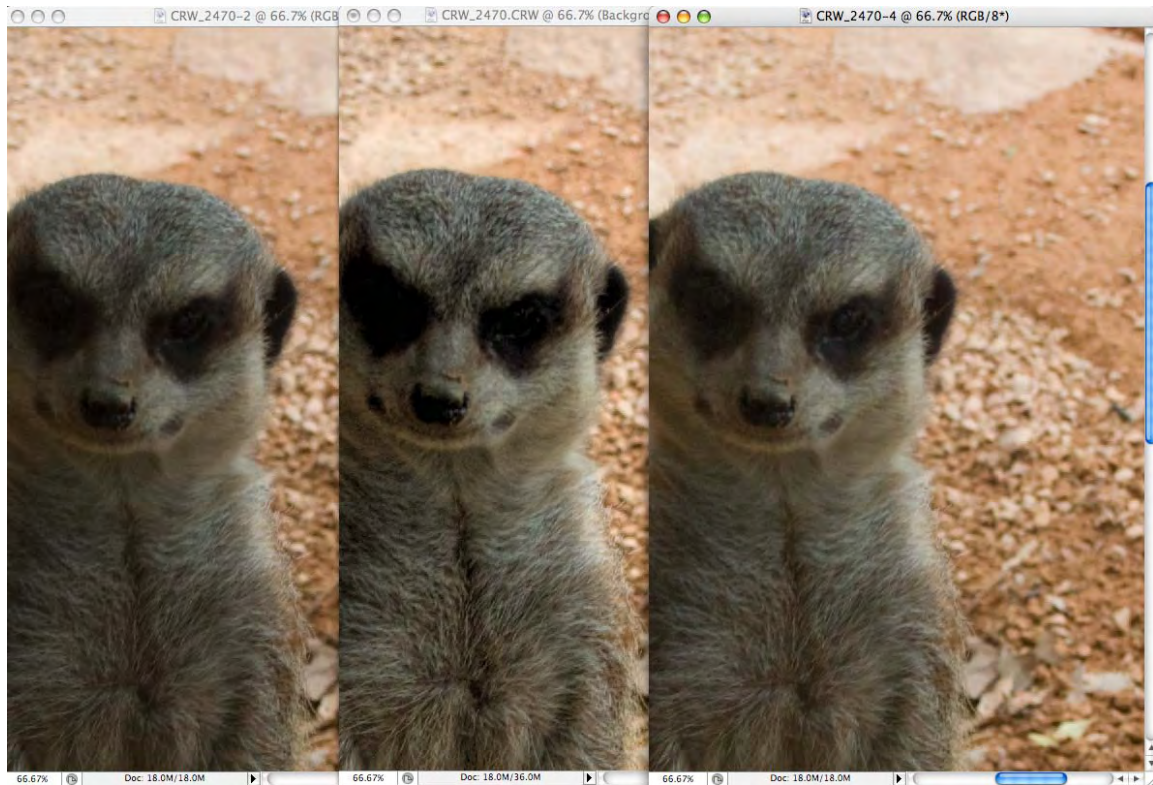
AKVIS Enhancer did a great job of pulling the subject out of the picture and adding a lot of detail otherwise lost to the shadows, but, once again, when I clicked *Apply*, the image darkened considerably when brought into Photoshop.

It's hard to say what the problem is here. Clearly Enhancer gave me a much different result in its dialog box than what it gave me in Photoshop. It could be a compatibility issue with Photoshop CS3 or perhaps a minor flaw in Enhancer that's not sending the data over properly. In either case, there aren't very many places to turn to find out the answer. I clicked through to their FAQ only to find, once again, multiple questions about licensing and serial numbers, but nothing on specific issues in any of the photo editing applications they support.

However, Enhancer's main function is to bring out the *detail* in an image. So how did it do with that?

Pretty darn good!

Sticking with our little furry friend, I loaded up the original, the Enhancer retouched version and a version that I tweaked by hand using the Camera RAW dialog box in Photoshop and, though not obvious if you look at them individually, the results are quite striking when compared side by side:



On the far left is the original, the AKVIS Enhancer version is in the middle and the hand re-touched photo is on the right. What should grab you immediately is the wonderful contrast in that middle photo. The blacks are black and the fur really looks great. Despite my best 5 minute effort in Adobe Camera RAW, the meerkat on the right is still a bit washed out and I couldn't get much more detail in the fur without the image getting too grainy from the sharpening – though I think I may have pulled a bit more of the 'kat's facial features out.

I'm sure I could have come up with better results if I'd messed around in Camera RAW a bit longer (especially to get rid of that washed out look), but it would have taken me considerably longer than the results produced by Enhancer in a mere fraction of the time.

For fine detail work, AKVIS Enhancer could not be beat.

Conclusion

Perhaps one of AKVIS Enhancer's biggest downfalls on the Mac platform is the limited number of programs it's compatible with. Though I'm not familiar with GraphicConverter X, I'm well aware of the capabilities of Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. If you only shoot in JPG or TIFF, the simple controls of AKVIS Enhancer will help you bring out the best in your photos and do so much more easily than you could using Photoshop's Shadow/Highlight adjustment or even Levels and Curves. It's a shame the plug-in is not available for iPhoto.

Considering the target market is most likely the prosumer photographer who shoots in RAW 100% of the time and can take advantage of the excellent RAW image importers in Photoshop, Aperture and Lightroom – and has the skills to use them properly – if you're looking for a program to offer only tonal enhancement to your images, then AKVIS Enhancer is likely overkill.

What I didn't "get" about Enhancer when I first sat down with it is what, ultimately, makes it a great addition to your Photoshop toolbox. That is, the ability to draw out detail in *specific parts* of an image – the shadows or the highlights – without affecting the areas you want to leave alone. For extracting detail thought lost to the shadows, AKVIS Enhancer could save an image that otherwise would be destined to the trash can.

Recommendation

AKVIS Enhancer is a great product and performs as advertised. I am a little concerned about the differences between what we see in the Enhancer dialog box and what we get in Photoshop after applying the filter. For that I marked it down a half a star or so. And if it really is meant for a broad range of users with varying skill levels, then the lack of proper installation instructions is unacceptable – a simple one sentence "Please place in the Plug-ins folder of Adobe Photoshop CS3 which is found..." in the Read Me would be more than they have now.

However, if you came to me tomorrow and said, "I really need an easy way to enhance the detail in my digital photos. What's an easy way to do that in Photoshop?" I wouldn't skip a beat in recommending AKVIS Enhancer ... though I'd be waiting by the phone for your call asking, "How do I install this thing?"

ConceptDraw 7.0.3 Professional

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



CS Odessa, Ltd.
29 Frantsuzskiy Blvd.
Odessa, 65044 Ukraine
Fax: +38(048)728-6661
CS Odessa LLC 1798 Technology Dr Ste 244
San Jose, CA 95110-1399 USA
Toll free (US/Canada): +1 (877) 441-1150
Main Phone Line: +1 (408) 441-1150
Fax: +1 (408) 441-1138
Telephone Support: +1 (877) 441-1150
+1 (408) 694-3213

<http://www.csodessa.com>

<http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/products/cd5/main.php>

Released: May 2007

Free Trial version or \$300 USD.

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or later or Win 2000/XP/Vista

Languages: English, French, German, Spanish and I suspect, Russian or Ukrainian.

Strengths: Cross-platform.

Weaknesses: Sorry, I've been spoiled by 3D. This is 2D.

Tour:

http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/products/cd5/screenshot_tour.php

30-Day Trial:

<http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/resources/suppdwnl.shtml>

Learning Center:

<http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/products/cd5/study/main.php>

Other Reviews:

<http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/products/cd5/reviews.php>

http://www.applelinks.com/index.php/more/conceptdraw_70_business_technical_diagramming/

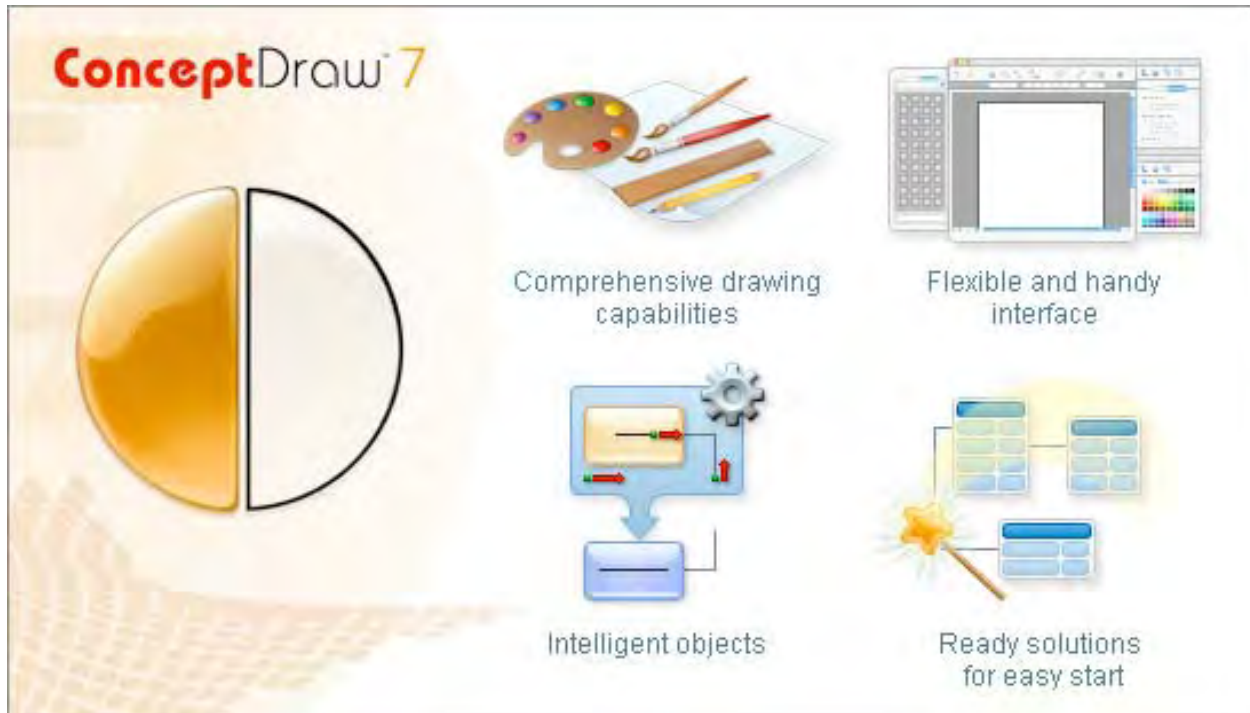
Useful Links:

<http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/resources/supflowres.shtml#cd>



Introduction

ConceptDraw 7 is a powerful diagramming and drawing tool that enables you to effectively visualize and communicate information and processes. Create professional-looking graphics and diagrams such as flowcharts, network diagrams, database diagrams, floor plans and much more in minutes. ConceptDraw 7 provides a comprehensive tool set to easily represent and share any kind of information.



As we wrote back in 2005, ConceptDraw is Visio for the Mac. And others agree - <http://www.visioformac.com/> Now we have ConceptDraw 7 Professional.

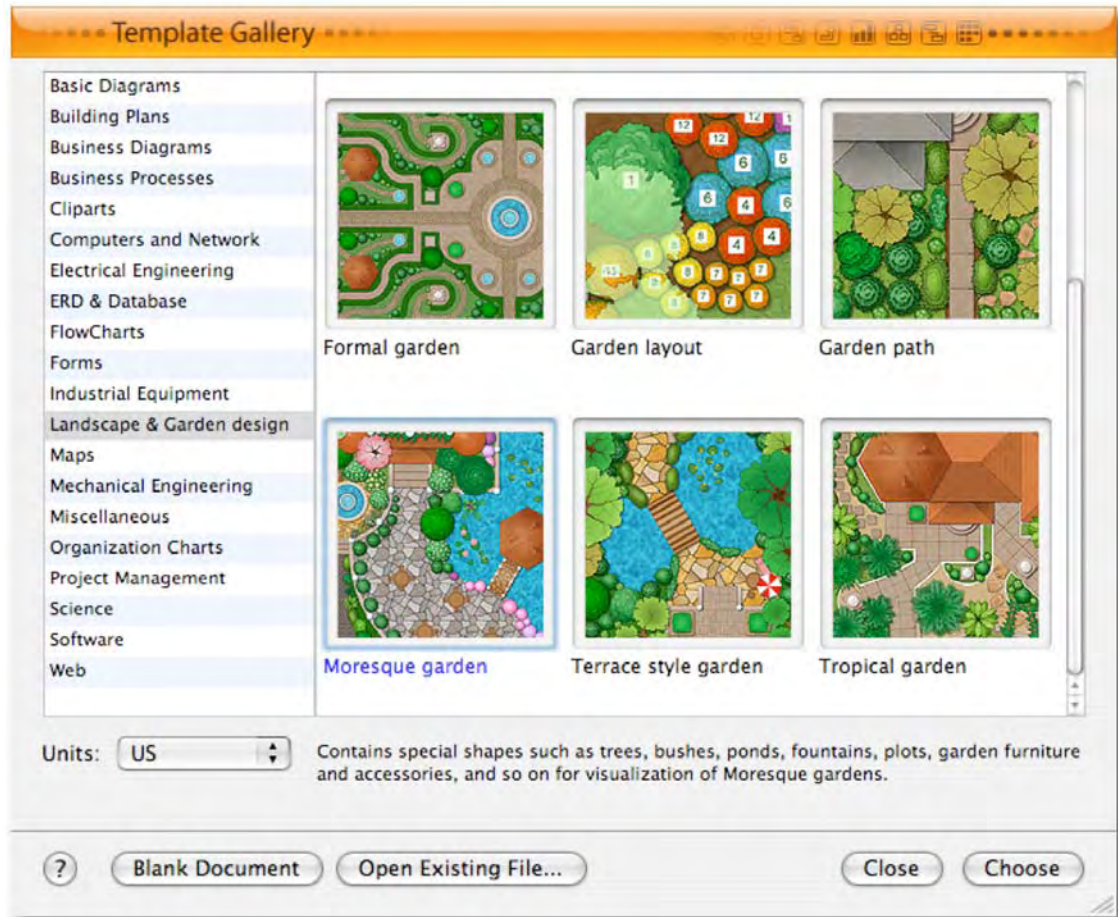
I requested to review this app, even though I have earlier versions, because I wanted to see how well it would work on a real project, such as the floor plan layout for the Ever-Green Renewable Energy Resource Center I've been fussing with lately.

To see what has changed, go here - http://www.ski.com.ua/en/products/cd5/whats_new.php
Many of the improvements revolve around reducing the time it takes to get work done.

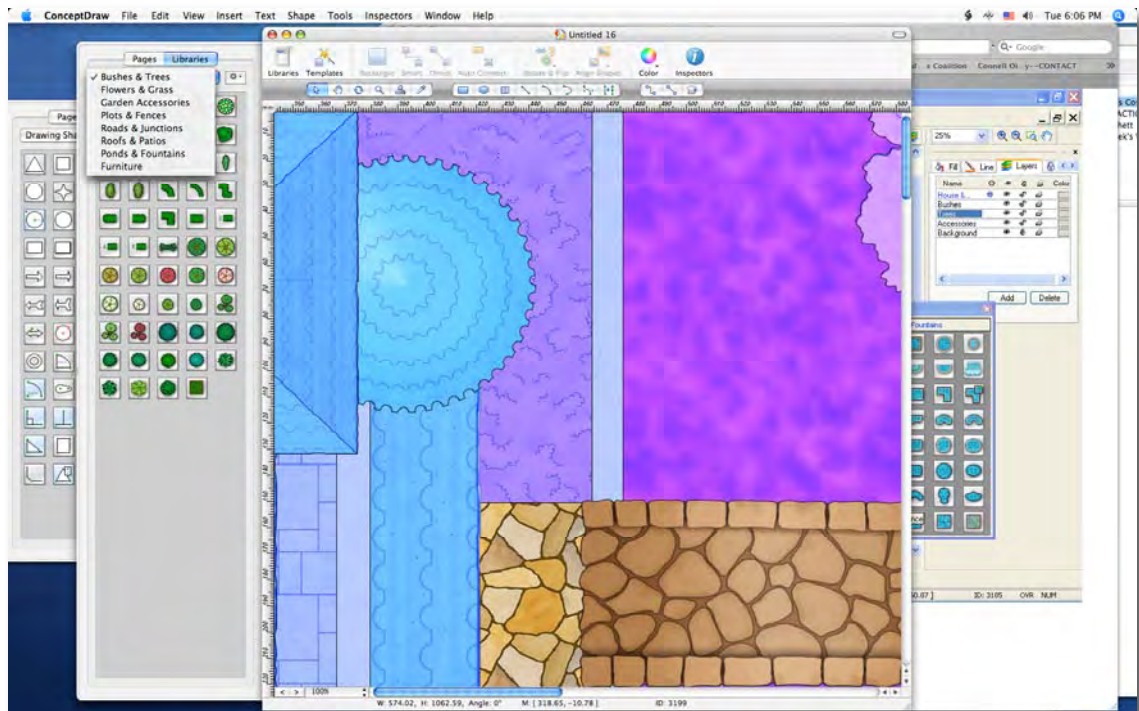
All the applications for network and system diagramming, software and database design, business diagramming and charting, website planning as well as home and landscaping can be found here - <http://www.ski.com.ua/en/products/cd5/applications.php>

The power in the program for me lies in the Template Gallery.

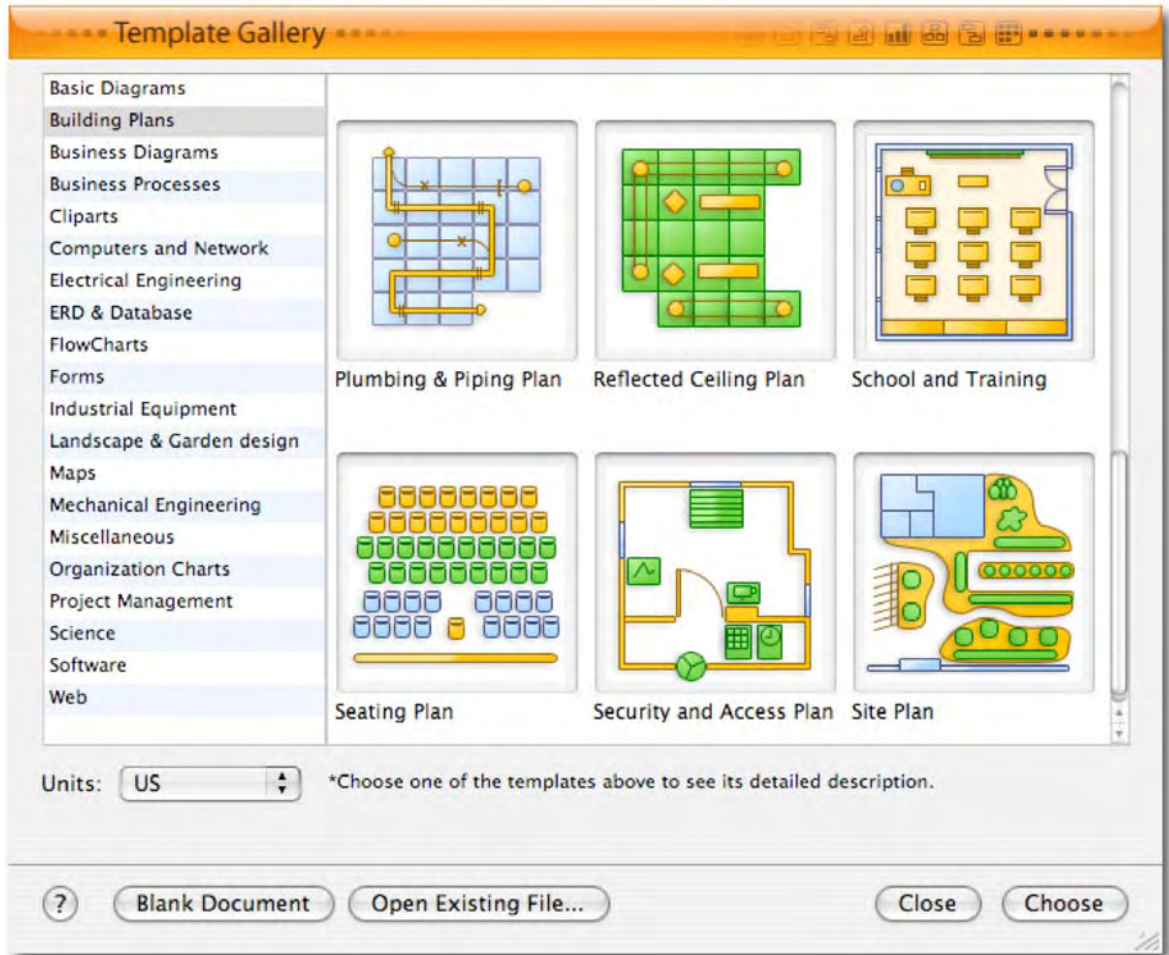
For example, Landscape and Garden Design looks like this –



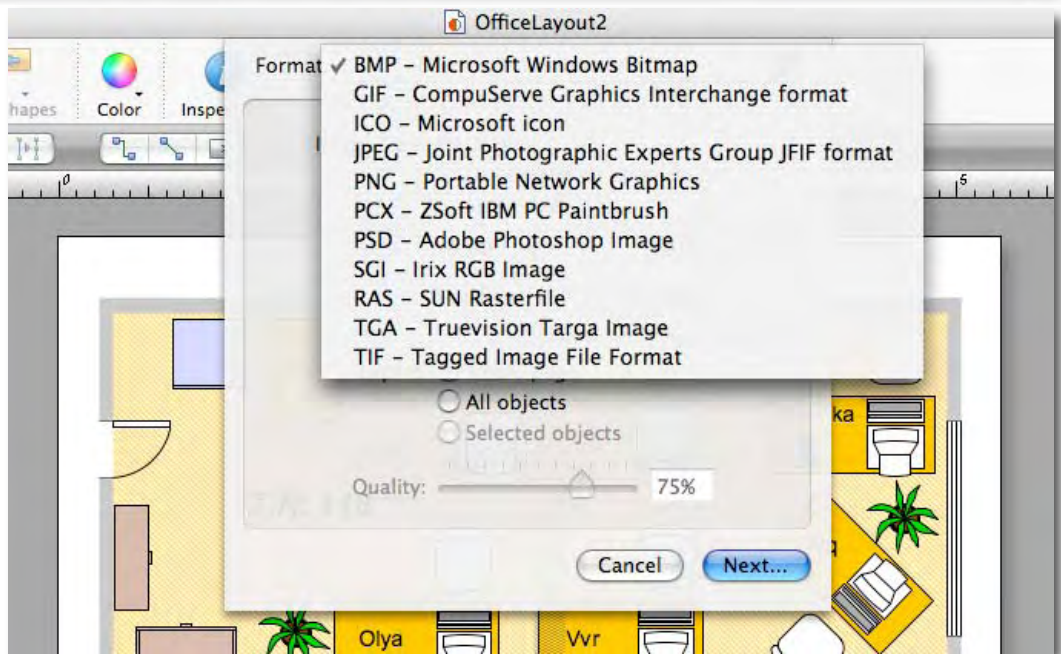
When that is picked we can go deeper and look at this –



The Business Plans Template looks like this –



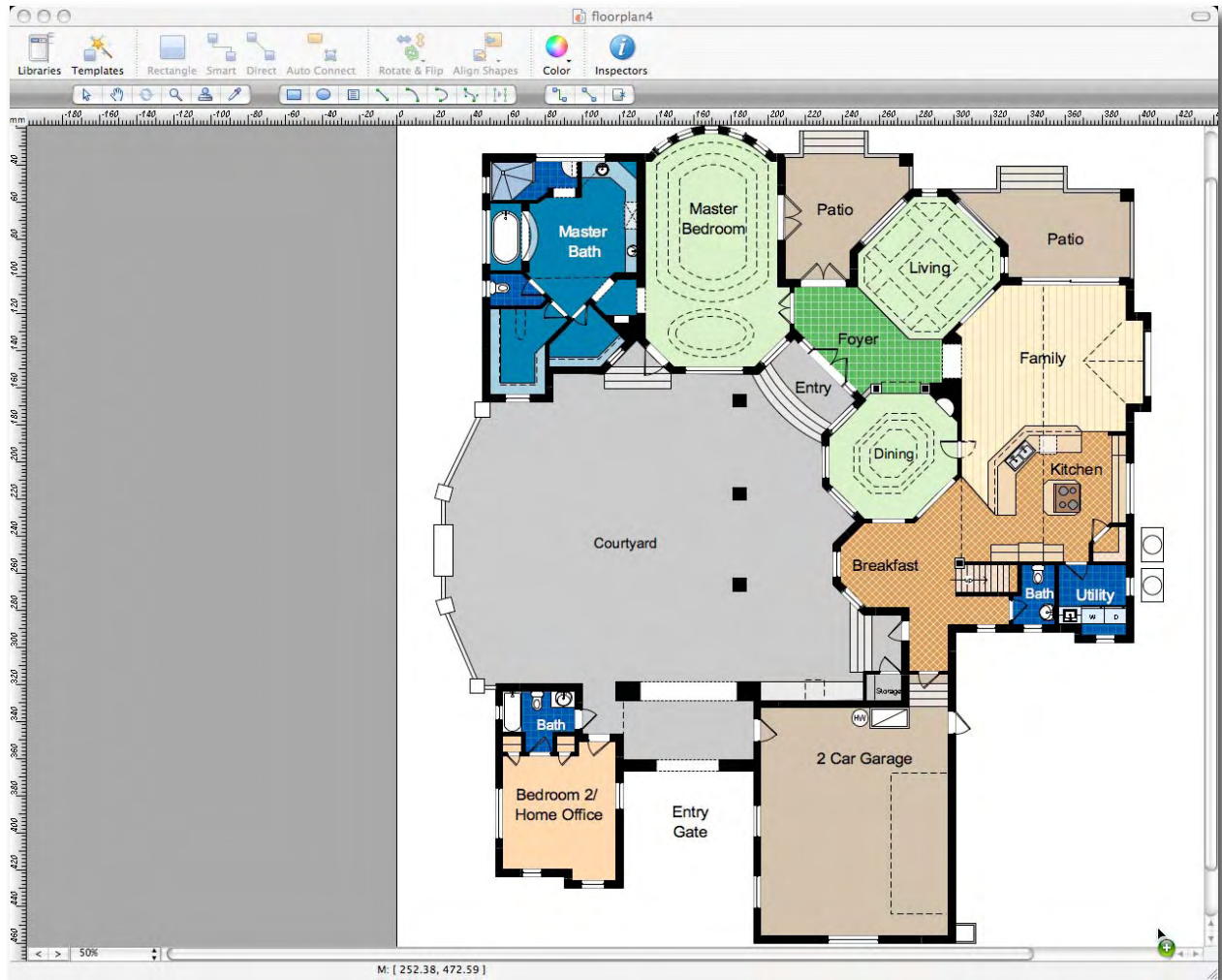
Once a plan or drawing is completed – including layers – the whole thing can be exported to any number of formats –



And then used on either a web page, PDF or even in presentations. This is a fairly rich environment for also scripting, doing scientific illustrations, sentence diagramming, chemical, electrical and

mechanical engineering, flow, org and project management charting, timelining and calendaring, working with sales, marketing and Venn charting, web site hyperlinking, geo-mapping and of course, software diagramming.

I was interested in how it handled Floor Planning. I'll let you know if I use it for my project or use one of the other apps instead.



Conclusion

So, what have we got? Lots of templates. Lots of ideas to work with. This is a great app for 2D, but I want my 3D fix. However, if you need Visio-like functionality on the Mac, this is it.

Google Sketchup Pro 6 with Layout (beta)

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043
650-253-0000

FAX: 650-253-0001

<http://www.sketchup.com/>

<http://www.sketchup.com/?id=106>

Sketchup 6 – Free. Sketchup Pro 6 - \$495 USD, £370 GBP
(with VAT)

Evaluation (8-hour): <http://www.sketchup.com/?id=76>

Layout (beta): <http://www.sketchup.com/index.php?id=1956>

Released: January 2007.

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or later, 128 RAM, 80 MB
diskspace or Windows.

Tutorials: <http://sketchup.google.com/vtutorials.html>

Forums: <http://forum.sketchup.com>



Strengths: Cross-platform. Integrated with Google

Weaknesses: *Layout* is still quite Beta.

Other Reviews:

<http://www.aecbytes.com/review/2007/SketchUp6.html>

Introduction

BIM me up Scotty! Building Information Modeling

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Building_Information_Modeling is the next generation of Computer Aided Design that has taken 25 years to mature to this point¹. Google has provided a path to get there with Sketchup Pro 6. I believe that Google has provided this mostly to enhance their perception of the world through Google Earth and the 3D (3-Dimensional) Warehouse.

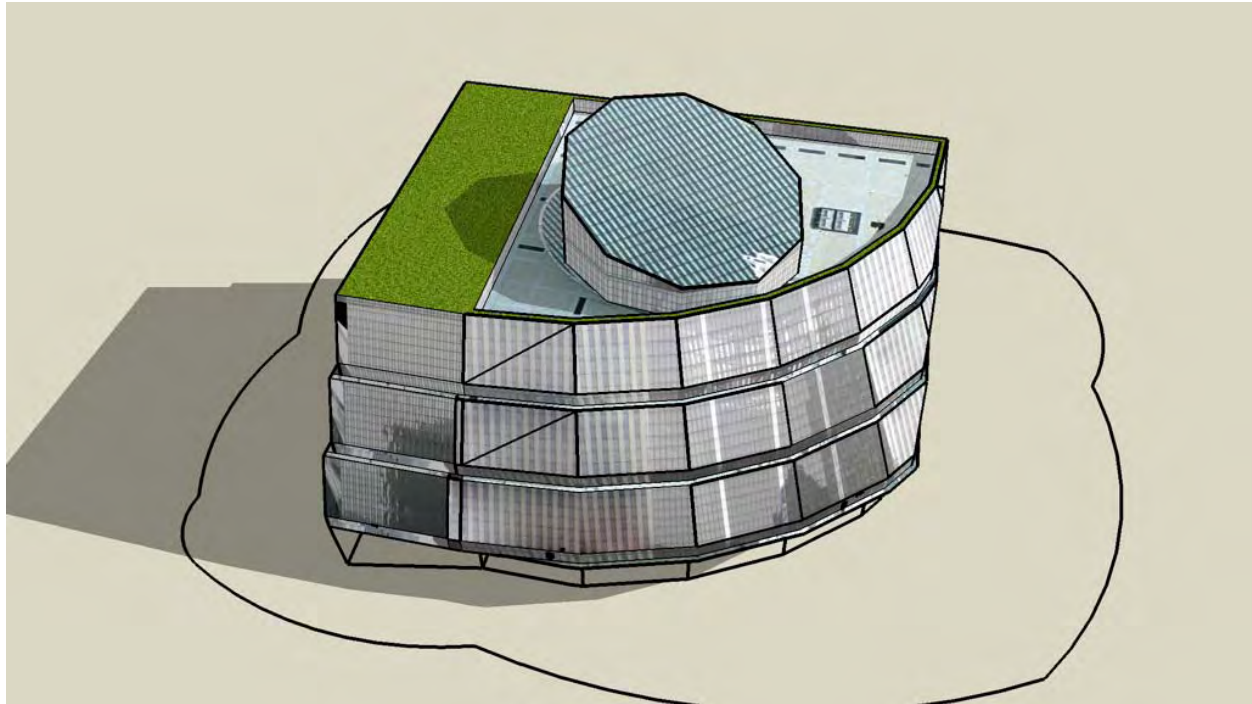
Getting Started

Download the 8-hour Demo or go ahead and buy the full version so you can enjoy 3D modeling. The Pro version comes with a beta copy of LayOut (a 2-dimensional presentation tool) – and it is still very much a beta app.

¹ <http://www.nemetschek.net/architect/bimwhitepaper.php>

Using the Software

After looking at Belight Software Live Interior 3D (which review will be posted by Ted Bade in August), I needed something more that would fit with the conceptual drawing and design work for the **Ever-Green Renewable Energy Resource Center** discussed in the June issue of *macCompanion* Magazine. So visualize this, a picture is worth a lot more in proposals than words.



As like most cross-platform software, this one takes a little getting used to even with the tutorials, so don't expect to be an expert producer without taking some time to manipulate the program.

I really enjoyed going through the 3D design section in the 3D Warehouse to get ideas for the Conceptual Drawing for my proposal. Once I had it down, I was able to then step through the "tour" feature by creating clips to rotate around the picture and turn it into a QuickTime movie located here - <http://www.macompanion.com/RenewableEnergy/RenewableEnergy.html>

I can really see the merit of doing a "virtual walkthrough" once I get the interior organized.

One of the sweet deals is *PhotoMatch*, that matches an image to the modeling environment or "make the model real" by using a background photo to place it in.

I'm still learning how to get the Layout app tied into Sketchup without getting frustrated in the process. So much to learn, so little time and I feel I do not have it to play with a beta program while trying to be productive.

Meanwhile there are the tutorials to play with at <http://sketchup.google.com/sptutorials.html>
If you really want to get geeky, there is a Ruby hook to do Ruby scripting in Sketchup - http://download.sketchup.com/sketchuphelp/gsu6_ruby/Docs/index.html

Read Lachmi Khemlani's excellent review of Sketchup 6 from the PC-perspective at <http://www.aecbytes.com/review/2007/SketchUp6.html>

Conclusion

There is not too steep a learning curve in using this app to go "3-D".

Recommendation

There is low end, middle and high end software available for the Mac for producing 3D apps. Sketchup Pro 6 one lets us do "walkthroughs" without paying the high price for those high end apps like *VectorWorks* and I would place it in the middle. Get the demo and find out if you want to pay \$500 to add in *PhotoMatch* capability.

There are a lot of great ideas and designs that Google has captured online and I'm awed at the creativity of the designers who posted their creations for all to see.

This is just plain fun! <http://sketchup.google.com/index.html>

Web Graphics Creator 3.0

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Laughingbird Software LLC
2510 Worth Way
Camarillo, CA 93012
(805) 386-1616

<http://www.laughingbirdsoftware.com/>

<http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/>

Released: November 2006. Updated June 2007.

\$40 USD

Requirements: Mac OS X or Windows.

Forum: <http://www.logodesignforum.com/forums>

The Manual: http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/the_manual/

Strengths: Cross-platform.

Weaknesses: Tends to want to stay active when attempting to quit. Still has “eCover Creator” artifacts. “Buttons” need a little more finessing. It relies heavily on proprietary Flash technology. The FlipBook feature has issues. Takes a little getting used to.

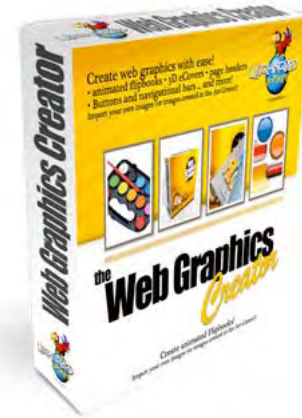
Tutorials: <http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/tutorials.html>

Reviewed using the iMac G5 and Mac OS X 10.4.10.

Disclosure – Laughingbird Software paid for advertising in the June and July issues of the magazine.

Introduction

Since Laughingbird Software and I go back a ways with troubleshooting other apps and finding solutions to problems and because we received funds for advertising this app, I figured we needed to get a copy and kick the tires. This is an example of what I was able to generate using this app -



macCompanion

I did so by pulling in a graphic of the earth (holographic image) and integrating that into the tweaked text function in the Art Center and using Apple Chancery for the font. It acts quite like *The Logo Creator* reviewed previously. However, it takes some getting used to for changing and editing text.



Getting Started

Previously known as the “eCover Creator”, this program now has more functions.

eCover Creator can generate photorealistic covers – you will need to be able to right-click with your mouse to use this app. Use this to “flip” or rotate graphics. In this case, a rotating software app package can be animated.

Flip Book Creator requires lots of graphics for turning pages in a book online and apparently doesn’t really play nice in a Windows Internet Explorer 7 environment. I was thinking of using it to flip pages in the *macCompanion* magazine. After reading some of the comments in the forum, I have not pursued that. I’m concerned about the overhead.

Button Creator animates web buttons and tabs after some tweaking. For website visitors, they need the proprietary Flash player to view the buttons. The assumption is that everybody already has Flash installed. That is not a valid assumption.

A clue of what is being used to run this program comes from the “Get Info” in Mac OS X – It would seem that it is using Macromedia Director MX 2004 as the engine of choice.

“Wicked” wrote –

“I this might be what you are looking for... In the examples below I am going to be referring to button #1,#2, and #3. These will represent for example that you want to use 3 buttons to create a menu on you're site.

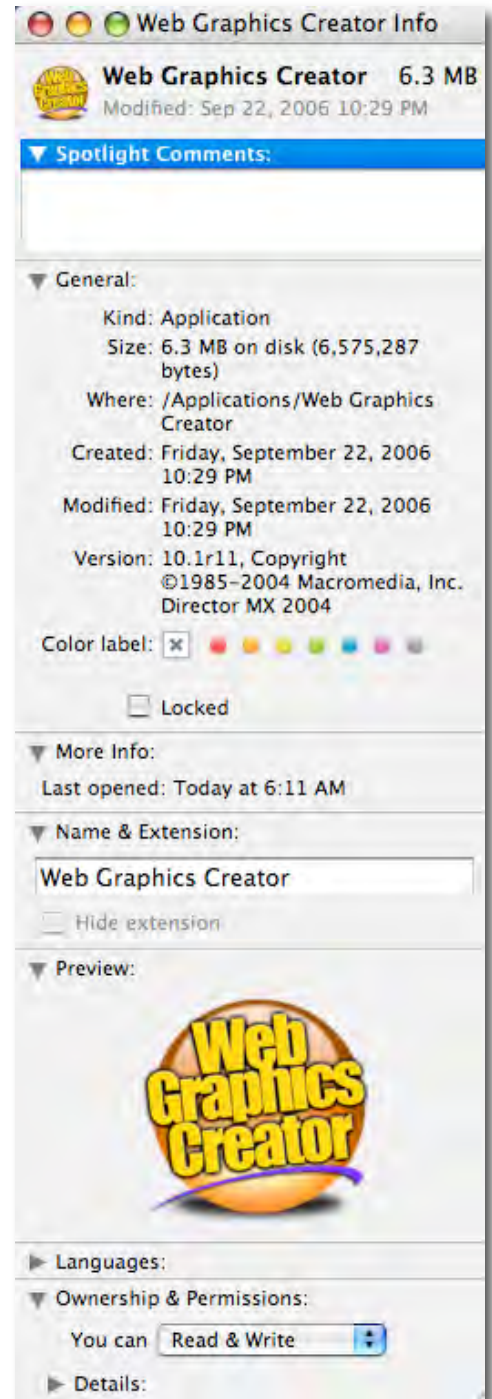
So lets say that wanted to have you're website menu like this:

- Button #1
- Button #2
- Button #3

First create you're swf buttons in the button maker and make sure to assign them a URL or link when making them. Then you would upload them to you're web hosting into a folder. So for this example lets say you uploaded you're swf buttons to

YourSite.com/buttons/(then swf files here)

So then if you wanted the buttons to appear on you're home index.html file for example then you would need to open up that file and look at all the code and figure out where you want to put them in the body section of the document. Once you find the place you want to put them this will be the code to make it happen using the button 1,2,3 example.



Quote:

```
<object width="100" height="50">
<param name="movie" value="/buttons/Button1.swf">
<embed src="/buttons/Button1.swf" width="100" height="50">
</embed>
</object>

<BR>

<object width="100" height="50">
<param name="movie" value="/buttons/Button2.swf">
<embed src="/buttons/Button2.swf" width="100" height="50">
</embed>
</object>

<BR>

<object width="100" height="50">
<param name="movie" value="/buttons/Button3.swf">
<embed src="/buttons/Button3.swf" width="100" height="50">
</embed>
</object>
```

The areas you would need to edit are highlighted in red and green. You would need to edit these areas in green to fit they way you want to buttons to look as far as size. The areas in red would need edited to reflect where you have uploaded the buttons to you're web hosting or server.

The layout I have shown you above should display you're buttons as

Button1

Button2

Button3

All stacked on top of one another to create a menu.

Make sure you edit the areas highlighted in red and green to reflect what is right for you in the code. You have to adjust the width and height portions of the code to get the button the size that you need it to be. The area in red on the code has to be edited to reflect where you have uploaded the .swf file you created. Perhaps you could leave a link to your site so i can see what is going on with it.”

This is an example of the Forum feedback Q&A regarding just one piece of the program.

Conclusion

There seems to be more issues on the Windows side than there are on the Mac side of things. It seems to be an awful lot of work to animate buttons and tabs for Flash-specific websites.

Knowledge of HTML and Macromedia/Adobe apps seem to be required to use this program intelligently.

Recommendation

I strongly suggest going to http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/Art_Center_examples.html and reading the tutorials so you can get a better idea of the potential of this program - <http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/tutorials.html>

If you don't mind the occasional quirks and Macromedia centricity, this might help get the creative juices flowing.

Interactivity with websites can be a bit tricky. What I found is that even if this app is a little quirky due to possible Operating System updates and changes and perhaps some Macromedia artifacts on my system, this is an interesting program for Web developers for \$40 USD.

Enjoy the fruit Spread the seeds



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rpritchett@maccompanion.com

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Besides our website and consulting efforts, we also create *macCompanion* as a freely available PDF-based monthly. It averages about 100 pages per month. July 2006 was the 4th-year anniversary of this labor of love. The *macCompanion* staff is an all-volunteer team of writers and reviewers from many parts of the globe, and they also have a great wealth of knowledge and experience in their backgrounds. That base of talent also continues to keep growing as the Macintosh Professional Network expands.

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We are very excited about our site statistics! The multilingual-capable [macCompanion](#) website is close to 2 million page views a month and readership continues to increase rapidly through our "whisper campaign".

We continue to get greater visibility every day. Many of the various 35 computer operating systems (with many moving towards the Mac® OS X™ environment), 115 online search engines, 269 countries and domains and 319 online robots have discovered us – and continue to do so. So far, over 201 other websites have also linked to us. Many of our readers have made our site one of their favorites. While nearly 70% of our readership stops by for a quick visit via RSS feeds, over 23% spend between 1/2 to 1 hours at a time going through over 250 different pages on our site (mostly archives). Many of those who quickly drop by, come to get the monthly PDF issue of *macCompanion*. Over 35GB of bandwidth was used in December 2005 alone for download purposes. Previous months have averaged around 20GB. Trend analysis indicates that will continue to increase as folks decide to “Move to the Mac”.

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Well that's it for this issue. Please come back again next month!

The *macCompanion* Staff