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macCompanion
YOUR GUIDE TO ALL THINGS MACINTOSH

Volume 6 Issue 8

Masthead

Apple Store Hardware

Apple Store Software

EVO NETWORKS

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Because your data is worth it.
The Data Center Express is the first ever secure, fully integrated, completely flexible and remotely managed data center designed specifically for smaller organizations.

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Evo Network's Data Center Express (DCE) is the only fully integrated, completely flexible and remotely managed data center designed specifically for small organizations with 5 to 100 users. The DCE features integrated security, collaboration services, disaster recovery, and remote access. All of which, scale to meet future business demands. This is a true enterprise class data center solution for a fraction of the price. Best of all, no in-house IT staff is required.

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- Single solution for storing and managing data in your organization with up to 1.5 terabytes of storage (1500 GB)
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- Disaster recovery solution protects servers, desktops, and notebooks
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- Designed and Assembled in the USA

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With the IT industry as fast paced and complex as it is, SB owners and managers find it hard to create and maintain an IT solution that provides a reliable, secure and scalable infrastructure that eases the communication of information and ideas with the organization, its partners and its clients.

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Integrated security, collaboration services, disaster recovery and remote access make this a true enterprise class data center solution for a fraction of the price of typical data centers.

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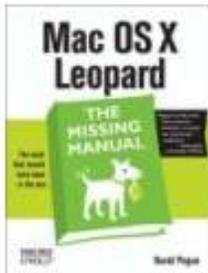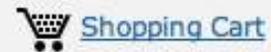
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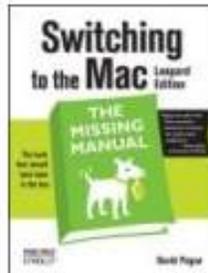
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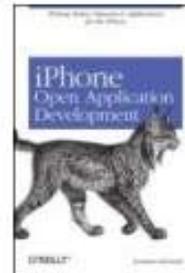
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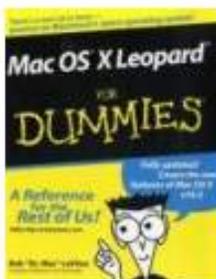
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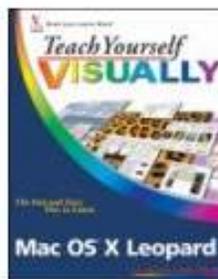
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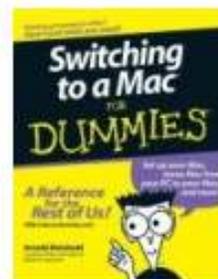
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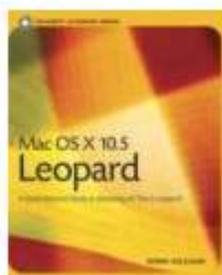
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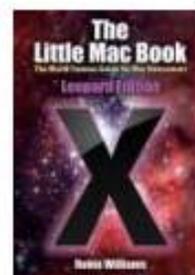
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Store

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Sample products:

Scan Gauge

Increase your fuel economy by knowing what mileage your vehicle is getting and adjusting your driving. Track your automobile's statistics with ease.

Pulstar Pulse Plugs

High-intensity discharge increases fuel economy.

Pure Energy Systems

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Radio

Free Energy Now (.net) provides a weekly, in-depth look at specific technologies via a live, hour-long interview with an inventor or company head.

This Week In Free Energy (.com) provides a weekly, 10-minute recap of highlights in the news.

Open Sourcing

Some inventors are willing to give their ideas to the world. By sharing details in an open forum, these inventors can tap the collective wisdom of many minds around the world for faster improvement of the technology. Multiple replications increase confidence in the underlying concepts. Independent teams are welcome to introduce new designs into the marketplace.

Video & Interactive Media

We produce feature videos of different technologies and are currently creating a library of educational, interactive online applications.

Academy

PES is currently developing courses addressing inventive energy-related topics that are inadequately covered elsewhere. These courses and workshops will serve as the foundation of our Academy. We invite course recommendations and other contributions.

New Energy Congress

PES Network Inc. hosts the *New Energy Congress (.org)*, which reviews various energy claims and ranks them according to a fixed set of criteria. Is it clean, affordable, reliable, credible, and safe? Go online to see how the most promising technologies measure up, or submit one yourself.

News

FreeEnergyNews(.com) is a daily report on developments in cutting-edge energy technology from around the world. *Pure Energy System News* (PESN.com) provides original reporting and publication of key press releases.

Directory ~ PESWiki.com

Imagine an exhaustive directory of alternative energy technologies, companies, inventors, theories, and tools.

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Apple Mac Pro

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[ADD TO CART]

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The 60 Watt MagSafe Power Adapter features a magnetic DC connector that ensures your power cable will disconnect if it experiences undue strain and helps prevent fraying or weakening of the cables over time. In addition, the magnetic DC helps guide the plug into the system for a quick and secure connection. [read more]

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[DETAILS]

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Apple MagSafe 85w Power Adapter (Macbook & MB Pro)

Compatible with MacBook Pro or MacBook/ Use an extra adapter for home or work / MagSafe Connector /

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Drobo utilizes a revolutionary storage technology that makes it simple for anyone to use, yet is powerful enough for business. Once you

Hardware

Software

Letter from the CEO

iPhone shocks, Rubies, MacBook Prose and Tesla Tech

By Robert Pritchett

July 2008. My 52nd birthday, the 7th year of *macCompanion* magazine, They July PDF of the July issue still not posted, while the macCompanion website has the latest. What is going on? Well, let me tell ya…

iPhoneitis

I waited to get my iPhone 3G. And waited. Then 3G networking was and is inconsistent. The price for entry into cellphoning as a virgin user is not cheap. Besides the iPhone itself (16GB) version, there is a one-time setup fee (like those damage deposits for apartments) getting nicked deep in the pocketbook. Please don't instant-message me. Those cost 20 cents each. I could have gone ahead and paid an extra $40 per month for instant messaging. And they have to get your credit card number, your Social Security number (not once, not twice, but 4 times). I'm sure for big-brother tracking purposes. I see why the illegal immigrants go for calling cards and throw-way cellphones.

I took the iPhone just in time (I thought) for the SolWest Fair in John Day Oregon – http://www.solwest.org. It worked fine when I left home. "No Service" even when I got back home. They had to spend 1.5 hours with me to fix an issue on their end as hey remoted in to figure out what was going on. Needless to say, all cell calls are recorded and monitored and witth4 GPS function, now you can't hide. The picture capture works fine though - http://peswiki.com/index.php/Talk:Events:SolWest:Gallery

Anyway, you will like Terry White's excellent iPhone review and comments from his readers. There is no way I could possibly have done as well as he has with his review. My time was focused elsewhere.

Rubies, Ruby for Rails, etc.

You will see while I was patiently troubleshooting my iMac G5 last month, that I was finally able to get through a **bunch** of Network and software-related books and we devoted a cover for August to it by Michelle Patterson. Rubies anyone?

MacBook Pro-iness

Oh, and this lovely MacBook Pro is so sweet! My only gripe so far, is that the "M" still looks like an upside down "W". If I practiced touch-typing, it wouldn't be an issue. I just do a double-take when I see a W where an M is supposed to be. The hi-res screen is worth every cent.

Dr. Leonard Horowitz wants me to collaborate on a video he is working on using Final Cut Pro up in Sandpoint Idaho later this month. He uses one too, but his is much older. He saw me using it, as I tried desperately to keep up in real time with each session at the Tesla Tech Conference http://peswiki.com/index.php/Events:2006:ExtraOrdinary_Technology_Conference at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque July 25-August 3rd.

Meanwhile, please take time going through our reviews. I still have to get together with others to do follow-ups and write-ups from the Tesla Tech Conference. As we continue to explore "alternative" energy. It has always been there, we just needed to see "outside the box" to learn how to harness it.

And by the way, have you ever seen a rotorless helicopter or plane without wings? They are using "new tech" to get around. The UFOs are now IFOs.

And magnetic energy is 10 billion times faster than the speed of light. I bet you didn't know that. Think Magnet motors. Think UFOs. Think Area 51. Think nanotechnology. Combine those thoughts. Now perhaps maybe we know how messengers from Heaven (real angels) get around.

And yes, we can use the other 95% of our brains – for good. I'm still trying to learn how to use the 5% utilization of my brain for good, How about you?

According to Hoyle...

Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard Preview

August 2008
by Jonathan Hoyle

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macCompanion
http://www.jonhoyle.com

Last month we reviewed this year's *Worldwide Developer Conference*, the all-important Apple conference for programmers, engineers and other technically inclined Mac person. Although much of the media blitz was over the new *iPhone*, most conference attendees found the information about the new upcoming *Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard* release to be of greater importance.

Confidentially Yours

Much of what is discussed at WWDC is covered under Apple's Non-Disclosure Agreement. Now, admittedly, it doesn't take a great deal to get into the "secret circle"...essentially, you must simply sign up for a free Apple Developer Connection membership http://developer.apple.com/products/ , electronically check the confidentiality clause, and boom all of Apple's free online information is there for your perusal. However, since this article is outside this arena, I will being covering only those areas available to the general public, and I'll make suggestions as to where to look for those who do have memberships and wish to investigate further.

What is not hidden behind the shroud of Apple secrecy? One thing which is you can usually count on is that the Steve Jobs keynote address is freely accessible, as Steve likes to use this pulpit to preach to the unconverted. Unfortunately, this year's sermon did not cover the Macintosh at all but rather the iPhone. This is very annoying to be sure, but fortunately, Apple has released a lot of public information about Snow Leopard through other avenues, such as press releases, web pages and information posted about WWDC itself.

For a high level overview on what *Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard* has to offer, visit Apple's web page on it http://www.apple.com/macosx/snowleopard/ .

Intel Inside

One of the biggest rumors spreading about was that *Snow Leopard* would be Intel-only. This is hardly much of a surprise, given that Apple announced its Intel products over three years ago, and stopped selling PowerPC-based Macs as of two years ago. Many developers were expecting this for some time now, so it would have been more surprising if it were not true. Just days before WWDC, however, *Gizmodo.com* predicted http://gizmodo.com/5014251/source-os-x-106-snow-leopard-will-support-powerpc-chips just the opposite: that PowerPC was going to be a supported platform for *Snow Leopard*. Unfortunately, Gizmodo's reasoning was faulty: it assumed that the existence of PowerPC-based drivers in the OS implied that the OS will target PPC. An Intel-only version of Mac OS X would still require PowerPC-based drivers simply because *Rosetta* emulated applications will need them. Since Rosetta will be around for at least until 10.7 or 10.8, we can expect to see PowerPC-built drivers (at least the 32-bit versions) around for a while.

As you are probably already aware by now, the original prediction was correct: *Snow Leopard* is indeed Intel-only. Although I cannot find any Apple-authorized statement to this affect, but *Snow Leopard's* actual system requirements have already been released through dozens of web sites, including *MacUser* http://www.macuser.com/speculation/snow_leopard_developer_preview.php , *Ars Technica* http://arstechnica.com/journals/apple.ars/2008/06/11/snow-leopard-to-be-intel-only-but-not-64-bit-only , *MacNN* [http://www.macnn.com/articles/08/06/11/snow.leopard.intel.only/ , *Softpedia* [http://news.softpedia.com/news/Snow-Leopard-is-Intel-Bound-87882.shtml , *Apple Gazette* http://www.applegazette.com/os-x/apple-gazette-daily-284-snow-leopard-intel-only-ps-semi-news-and-more/ , *OS News* http://www.osnews.com/story/19851 , *the Unofficial Apple Weblog* http://www.tuaw.com/2008/06/12/mac-os-x-10-6-snow-leopard-confirmed-to-be-intel-only/ , and many, many others. I can only assume that Apple verbally confirmed this to the news outlets, as I do not find any publicly released statement to that affect on Apple's web site. In any case, the cat is out of the bag, so I guess there is no harm in confirming that this is indeed true, as I can attest: having a *Snow Leopard* Prerelease DVD of my own.

A Thinner Fat

Of course, what this means is that for those compiling applications to run on Snow Leopard only, you need to compile only for two way Fat: Intel 32-bit and Intel-64-bit. Indeed, one could change that *and* to an *or* and make it one-way Fat: as most Intels out there today support 64-bit. For DLL and plug-in developers, you will want to compile your programs as three way Fat: Intel-32, Intel-64 and PowerPC-32. Why is that? Well, simply a DLL or plug-in must match the architecture of the host application, which loads it, and these are the only three types of applications that will run on *Snow Leopard*. (Recall that the PowerPC emulation provided by *Rosetta* is 32-bit only).

Even for those wishing to support both *10.5 Leopard* and *10.6 Snow Leopard* in their

builds, there is a very strong argument for dropping PowerPC 64-bit support: namely that PPC-64 lived and died in *10.5 Leopard*, and only the highest end G5 machines would even be able to run such applications. Furthermore, some of the technological advances in compiler options do not even bother to support PPC-64 (see below). Those developing in Java have already seen this limitation: 64-bit Java has always been Intel only.

Xcode Marks the Spot

Whether Apple actually intended to publicly release information about *Xcode 3.1* I do not know, but publicly released they did. On the *non-member* version of their WWDC web site (which is indeed public), they give the following description about Session #907: *New Compiler Technology and Future Directions* http://developer.apple.com/wwdc/sessions/#tab=mac&descriptions=on&session=907 :

Xcode 3.1 introduces two new compilers for Mac OS X: GCC 4.2 and LLVM-GCC. Learn how the new security and performance improvements in GCC 4.2 can help you produce better applications. Understand the innovations in LLVM-GCC, and find out how you can use it in your own testing and development. Finally, get a preview of future compiler developments.

This of course announces a couple of things: that the next version of *Xcode* is called 3.1, it will be able to use *gcc 4.2* (a vastly improved version of *gcc*, which has remained stagnant at 4.0.1 for about three years now), and *Xcode 3.1* will be able to opt for the newest and most powerful technology *LLVM*. Since both gcc http://gcc.gnu.org/gcc-4.2/ and LLVM http://llvm.org/ are open source projects, you can see what these new compilers have to offer without having to limbo under Apple's NDA pole. I will go into further detail on these compilers in a future article, but I can assure you that this is great news for Mac developers.

For those who have not already done so, it's simply time to say goodbye to the old *gcc 3.3* world. *gcc 4.2* is binary compatible with *gcc 4.0*, so you can mix and match these. But *gcc 3.3* is dead (and should have been made so before now).

Sadly, I do not see many article written about the new *Xcode*, despite the fact that so much of it is public domain information.

When is an Upgrade not an Upgrade?

One of the announcements about Snow Leopard which has caused a great deal of confusion has to do with its feature set; or better stated: its lack thereof. Without the whiz-bang features found in the previous releases of *Mac OS X*, many people are mistakenly viewing 10.6 as merely a bug fix release, more aptly named 10.5.5. This is far from the truth. Although there are virtually no *user-level* features, the infrastructural changes abound, making them all worthwhile. You may recall that the 10.1 release of Mac OS X was essentially the same thing. And frankly, it's high time Apple did it again. With all of the new widgets and features added to *10.4 Tiger*, followed by the dump truck pouring of features in *10.5 Leopard*, performance tuning and framework updates are a welcome substitute to yet more features. With the dropping of the PowerPC platform, Apple has a great opportunity now to truly concentrate on these kinds of improvements. Will it be worth the $129 they'll likely be asking for it? You're damn right it will.

Apple Cores

One essential and powerful new addition to *Snow Leopard* is the ease with which developers can finally take advantage of all those extra cores in the computer. Until now it was exceedingly difficult for a developer to create multithreaded code. The overhead and headaches involved with pthread's and mutexes can be enormous (as I know, having to deal with them day to day). How many cores are on the machine? How many are actually available. I might take a great deal of time to implement a threaded design to improve performance on one machine, just to find it hinders performance on another. Yuck. This is why so many programs are single threaded and waste all of that extra processing power your Mac has to offer.

With *Snow Leopard,* all of that changes. Now it becomes very easy for the developer to write his code in such a way that it will dynamically take advantage of extra cores (if they exist) and to skip it otherwise. In this day where processor speeds are beginning to plateau but processor and core numbers are increasing, this is the best path forward for application design.

There are several technologies available to the Mac developer to choose from. The Cocoa developer will like find Grand Central, an Objective-C based approach, which will make multithreaded development a breeze. This is a great improvement over the creaky NSOperation class formerly available. For graphics and mathematical developers, the new OpenCL API takes great advantage of the hardware's power and speed, particularly for the GPU. The C++ developer will likely find gcc 4.2's *OpenMP* protocol (a cross-platform API) to be just what the doctor ordered. And unlike the other options I just mentioned, this is open source so is publicly available now. I gave a brief code example of its use an article last year
http://www.maccompanion.com/macc/archives/November2007/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle27.htm .

Carbon Dating Yourself

For those who have not gotten the message yet, a look at this past WWDC schedule would see now Carbon session, only two labs (and both of these as transitions to Cocoa). I too am finding it a bit painful to kick the Carbon habit, as it has been my fluency back to the original Toolbox days of the mid 1980's. Unfortunately, Steve Jobs has spoken, and he has dealt a death blow to Carbon. We may mourn, but we also must move on.

The Cocoa framework itself seems interesting enough, but it's simply getting past that damn fugly Objective-C syntax which is the hard part. When your eyes wince at reading such code, it is not a very attractive proposition. Luckily, you have Uncle Jonathan here willing to take one for the team for you. Next month, I will spend an entire column devoted to C/C++ programmers and how to minimize the pain of Objective-C and exactly what all those damn brackets really mean.

Watch Your Language

If after all the brainwashing and Kool-Aid you still don't like Objective-C, fear not. With the latest versions of Xcode, you will be able to develop first class applications using alternative languages such as Ruby, Python and even AppleScript. Start with Interface Builder to create your GUI, but simply use your language of choice for coding. Although Objective-C remains the favorite son (getting all the cool new features first), there is no reason you should ignore these alternatives if they suit your needs. I will spend time in a future article on this particular feature.

A Kernel of Truth

At WWD 2007, Steve Jobs claimed that *Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard* was 64-Bit "Top to Bottom". Well, sadly, this was simply untrue. Despite the claims, the OS kernel in *Leopard* remained 32-bit. As of *Snow Leopard* though, the 64-bit kernel will arrive and save Steve from his departures from reality. For most developers, this change will be transparent, as 32- and 64-bit apps will continue to run side-by-side. However, those writing kernel extensions will have to change their compiler options from two-way Fat to three-way Fat. (No PPC-64 kernel ever existed, so this architecture can be ignored). More on this also in a future column.

Coming Up Next Month: Too embarrassed to ask what all that Objective-C grunge means? Don't Panic, I will hold your hand through to get you to understand what all means. See you in 30!

To see a list of all the According to Hoyle columns, visit:
http://www.jonhoyle.com/maccompanion

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

August 2008 Edition

By Harry {doc} Babad   © 2008

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The software related tips were tested on a 2.8 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo iMac with 2 GB 667 MHz DDR2 SDRAM; running under Macintosh OS X OS X 10.5.2

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

This month I continue sharing my occasional tip related finds with you. As the occasion warrants, some 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. Yes, I do write some of the tips I've discovered while Macin' around.

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 that information at the end of that specific write-up.

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

- Printer's and Uninterruptible Power Supplies (Battery Backup) Systems — No, No
- Opening Old MS Word Files
- Placing/Replacing Desktop Pictures in Your OS
- Rebirth Of the {named} *Command* Key
- View Files From Open dialog in Finder
- Don't Touch Your Mac During Software Updates
- Get More Clacks From Your Clicks
- Finding Where the © and ™ Symbols Live
- Internet Web Searches – An authors tale

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Printer's and Uninterruptible Power Supplies (Battery Backup) Systems — No, No

Do not plug your printer into an outlet that provides battery backup power. Printers draw a very large amount of power and it is not advised that they be provided with UPS backup power because it is not economical. Many UPS for desktop use have additional surge protected outlets that do not provide backup power. This is where laser printers should be plugged in. Since laser printers are plugged into outlets that do not use the UPS battery, the presence of the laser printer does not affect UPS wattage or run time. If you do plug the Ink Jet Printer into the outlets with battery backup power, the UPS backup time during an outage will be reduced.

APC Site. http://www.apc.com/tools/ups_selector/index.cfm
and Harry (doc) Babad

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Opening Old MS Word Files
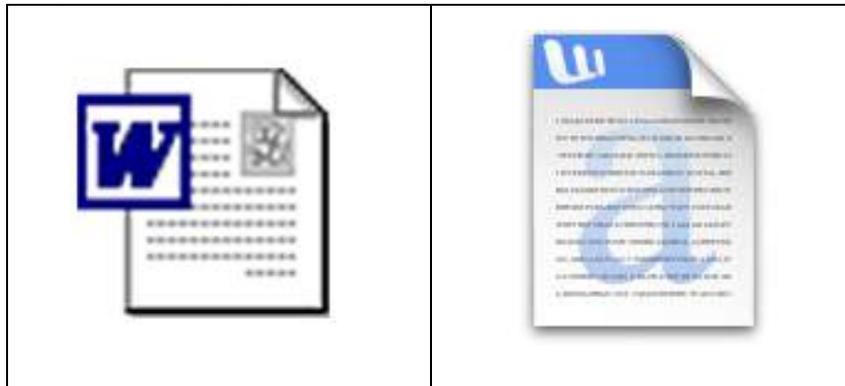
Reader Jim Harper feels like Word 2008 has severed his ties with the past. He writes: "I'm running Tiger and when I upgraded to Microsoft Office 2008 from Office 2004 I cannot open Word files created with my 90s Microsoft Word versions. Any solution available?"

Yes. Start by updating your copy of Office to the very recently released Microsoft Office for Mac 12.1.1 Update. This update is supposed to address an issue where older Word files won't open when you double-click them.
http://www.macworld.com/article/134138/2008/06/officeupdates.html?lsrc=mwweek

More on the update
I use the phrase "supposed to" in this context because it may not work. Microsoft has issued contradictory information on this subject. In a support note, Microsoft states that the 12.1.1 Update "fixes an issue that prevents Microsoft Word 2008 for Mac Service Pack 1 (SP1) from opening Word documents when you double-click the document or when you download the document from a Web site."

Yet, Knowledge Base document 953266 states that "The Office 2008 for Mac 12.1.1 Update blocks users from opening older Word for Mac documents by using the methods that are mentioned in the 'Symptoms' section." And those symptoms include double-clicking on a document, dragging a document to the Word 2008 for Mac program icon, dragging a document to the Word 2008 for Mac program icon that is in the Dock, and executing an AppleScript that uses the Finder to open a Microsoft Word document.

And the reason… Apparently these older documents may pose a security threat and opening them in such ways puts you at risk. Of course Microsoft is happy to let you open them by choosing Open from the File menu, which is somehow more secure because... uh, it's more inconvenient? Beats me.

> Mac 911 Tip of the Week Macworld Weekly By Christopher Breen Mon, 30 Jun 2008

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Placing/Replacing Desktop Pictures in Your OS

Q: How do you place/replace desktop pictures on your Macintosh?

A: *Mac OS X 10.3.x through 10.5.x*
Choose "System Preferences*. . .*" from the Apple menu, click the "Desktop & Screen Saver" button, then choose the Desktop tab. In the left-side menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use. You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Select the Screen Saver tab. which is also in the "Desktop & Screen Saver" System Preferences pane. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, click on the Pictures Folder in the list of screen savers. Otherwise, click Choose Folder to tell the screen saver, which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x
Choose "System Preferences*. . .*" from the Apple menu and click the Desktop

button. With the pop-up menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use. You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences. . ." from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.0.x
Switch to the Finder. Choose "Preferences. . ." from the "Finder" menu. Click on the "Select Picture. . ." button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your ~/Library/Desktop Pictures folder. Close the "Finder Preferences" window when you are done.

ATPM Volume 1406, June 2008, unnamed author
http://www.atpm.com/14.06/index.shtml

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Rebirth Of the {named**} *Command* Key**

Possibly the greatest new feature of the redesigned iMacs is their new keyboard-no, not because of its sexy thin design, but because the Command key is now labeled "Command" and the Apple symbol has gone from it. *Hooray*!

For those without the benefit of the history, the Mac has had a Command key since the very first model, and it has carried the little "clover leaf" Command symbol for all that time. At some stage during Steve Jobs' absence in the wilderness, some bright spark thought it would be a really good idea to put an Apple II-style Apple logo on the key—well, Windows PCs had a "Windows key," so why not?

A few folks no doubt trying to "simplify" the issue for beginners started calling it the Apple key, which wasn't actually a heck of a lot of help, given that every technical book writer went right on calling it the Command key, and at no stage has any Apple documentation ever referred to it as anything but the Command key. As many of you will have noticed, I've spent a lot of ink writing "Command (⌘) in these articles, in an endeavor to rub the point in and lessen the confusion. Still, some instructors have occasionally succumbed to the temptation to call it the Apple key simply because beginners could see an Apple logo there.

That's why I reckon the adoption of the word "command" together with the (⌘) symbol and without any further embellishment is arguably the best possible news for Mac beginners today.

Steve Cooper —AUSOM News, Melbourne, Australia
From Paul Taylor's May/June 2008 Hints & Tips column
http://www.mac-hints-tips.com/.

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View Files From Open Dialog in Finder

Here's a simple trick you can use in OS X 10.5's Open dialog box. Say you've decided to open a saved file in a given application. You press Command-O (or select File -> Open if you're menu inclined)
and the standard file open dialog appears. You then navigate to your desired file, which is buried a few levels deep in your user's folder. Once you've found the file, though, you realize you want do make a copy of it first—just in case something goes wrong with your planned edit.

You can switch to the Finder, of course, and navigate to the same folder… but that's time consuming, and seems redundant given you're already looking at the folder you want in the Open dialog. So here's the trick. Select the file in question (one mouse click), then press Command-R from within the Open dialog. The Finder will spring to the foreground, open a new window, and automatically select that same file in the new window.

This seems to work because the Open dialog responds to a number of the Finder's keyboard shortcuts—Command-R is the shortcut for Show Original, which is used to show the parent file of an alias. However, in an Open dialog, it doesn't seem to matter if the file you've selected is an alias or not; Command-R works fine on both. There are some other Finder shortcuts that work in Open (and Save As) dialogs in 10.5. For one, you can use Command-I to look at a file's Get Info window, as we discussed in my blog entry. You can also press Command-F to place the cursor in the Spotlight search box. Finally, most of the shortcuts in the Finder's Go menu work (and I believe they also work in pre-10.5 systems)—so you can jump to your home folder with Shift-Command-H, or to the top level of your machine with Shift-Command-C.

Being able to use these keyboard shortcuts in Open dialogs can save a bit of time when you're working with files in both an application and the Finder.

Macworld | Mac OS X Hints, Bob Griffiths, May 27, 2008
http://www.macworld.com/article/133615/2008/05/viewopen.html?lsrc=mwhints

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Don't Touch Your Mac During Software Updates

This tip's headline is a bit alarmist—so let us clarify. When you are running software updates, or installing new security patches, you shouldn't do anything with your Mac while it's running through the last Optimizing System Performance phase of a software update.

Launching applications while your Mac is performing this last phase of a software update can potentially damage system library files. In the worst case, there is a chance your Mac won't be able to start up again without significant troubleshooting.

So how should you run software updates? — We recommend you run security updates at the end of the day. Ideally, after restarting the computer with no other software running at that time. While Apple's software update feature does not make it easy to tell when a particular update was released, we generally recommend waiting about a week after a major update is released before you install on your Mac. For our clients who schedule regular monthly maintenance visits, we generally run all software updates on each Mac once a month after a fresh reboot.

Doc sez, that for they hyper cautious *belt and suspender* types, use *safe boot* up mode for all systems software and security updates. I've tried it — it works flawlessly… but the folks at LIMac form have it right for the rest of us including me most of the time.

According to Apple, to start up in safe mode:

- Shut down your computer and wait 10 seconds.
- Press the power button.
- Immediately after you hear the startup tone, hold down the Shift key.
- You should press the Shift key as soon as possible after your hear the startup tone, but not before.
- Release the Shift key when you see the gray Apple logo and progress indicator (spinning gear).

For more information checkout
http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1564?viewlocale=en_US/.

Creative Techs   LIMac Forum, Long Island, NY
Amplified by Harry (doc) Babad macCompanion
From Paul Taylor's May/June 2008 Hints & Tips column
http://www.mac-hints-tips.com/.

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Get More Clacks From Your Clicks

Don't Forget Contextual Menus — They give you more mouse for your click Before I pass on Steve Cooper's tip, I need to confess that I'm a contextual menu freak. Over the many years, since switching to a two button mouse I have at least seriously read about, if not tried most of the contextual menu CM] min-application I find on MacUpdate, and have worked particularly hard to learn
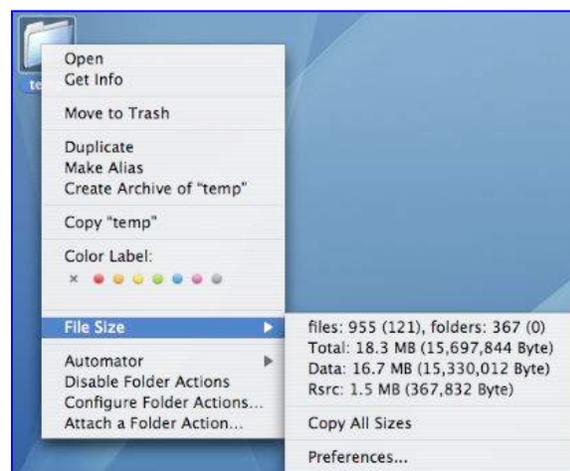
about the CMs hidden in my most used applications such as MS Word, FileMaker Pro, DEVONthink Pro, Safari, or Acrobat Pro. Using CM's is a faster and richer way to mouse around in situations where I've neither memorized a keyboard short cut nor created one.

Many times we use the term "contextual menu." Beginners and some others may well wonder what one of those is, anyway.

A contextual menu is one that offers commands or functions that are particularly appropriate to what you are doing at a given moment. Unlike the normal top-of-the-screen menus that remain unchanged as you use a particular application, a contextual menu will contain different items depending on where you are in your document and what you are doing at that moment.
Further, contextual menus don't appear in the top-of-the-screen menu bar, but rather "pop up" under your mouse cursor (arrow or other) so that you can select commands from them without having to travel to the top of the screen.
So how are such menus invoked? Well, for a start you need to understand that a contextual menu may or may not be available to you at any given moment. The author of the application you're working with decides when it's appropriate to provide one and when not.

Given that, there are usually two ways to invoke an available contextual menu. The first is to hold down the Control key while clicking the mouse button. As you press the control key, you may see a tiny "menu" icon appear alongside your mouse cursor. This doesn't always happen but if it does, it's a sure indication that a contextual menu is available in that particular situation. If you don't see the telltale menu mini-icon, try clicking anyway there may still be a contextual menu available.

For those of you who have a two-button mouse (including Apple's Mighty Mouse) there is another way — simply click the right button rather than the left one, and if there's a contextual menu available it will pop up under the mouse cursor (arrow or other).

If you're new to Apple's Mighty Mouse (the one with a small grey button in its upper surface), you may not have realized that it's a two-button mouse. That's most likely because it is set by default to act in single-button mode to avoid confusing those who have migrated from a standard Apple mouse.

Steve Coopers tip, to activate the right button, go to the Apple menu (at top left of your screen) and from that menu choose System Preferences; then in the window that opens click the Keyboard & Mouse icon. In that panel click the Mouse tab and you will see the options available for the Mighty Mouse's operation. Click on the label pointing to the right side of the mouse, and change the label from Primary Button to Secondary Button.

Close the window and you'll find that your right button has been activated. To try it out, click anywhere on your desktop, pressing the area on the mouse that lies to the left of the grey button. Nothing special happens. Now click the same spot on the desktop, this time pressing the area on the mouse that lies to the right of the grey button. You'll see a contextual menu pop up under the cursor.

Note that the Mighty Mouse knows which side of the mouse you've pressed by sensing the presence of your finger on its surface. This means that if you want to register a right-click, using your middle finger, you need also to lift your index finger from the left side of the mouse. If you don't, your click will be registered as a left-click (the default).

Some folks love the two-button function; others don't. It depends on your prior experience and perhaps on your manual dexterity. If you like the concept but find the Mighty Mouse difficult to use, you can easily buy a third party two-button mouse, virtually anyone of which will work with your Mac without the need to install new software. For a start, keep things simple and buy one that has just two buttons and a central scroll wheel; avoid those with a multiplicity of buttons.

With a Mighty Mouse or other two-button rodent (or by simply using the Control key with a single-button one) you may be surprised by the number of situations in which you can activate a contextual menu.

> Steve Cooper — AUSOM News, Melbourne, Australia
> From Paul Taylor's May/June 2008 Hints & Tips column
> http://www.mac-hints-tips.com/.

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Finding Where the © and ™ Symbols Live

Since nearly the beginning of Mac-dom, when you wanted to find out which key combination produced a font's special characters (stuff like ©, ™, £, ¢, %, ƒ, etc.), you used a utility called KeyCaps. More than a decade later, KeyCaps is still a part of Mac OS, but a better way to access these special characters is through the Character Palette.

You can access it two ways:
(1) From within Mac OS X business apps (like Mail, TextEdit, Stickies, etc.), just go under Edit and choose "Special Characters" or click on the "Actions" pop-up menu at the bottom of the Font Panel and choose "Characters;"
(2) Add Character Palette access to your menu bar so you can access it when you're working in other applications (like Microsoft Word or Adobe InDesign). You do this by going to the System Preferences in the Apple menu, under International, and clicking on the Input Menu tab. Turn on the checkbox for Character Palette and it will appear in the menu bar along the right side.

Either way you open it, here's how you use it: When you open the Character Palette, choose "All Characters" from the View menu, then click on the "By Category" tab. The left column shows a list of special character categories and the right column shows the individual characters in each category. To get one of these characters into your text document, just click on the character and click the "Insert" button in the bottom right-hand corner of the dialog.

If you find yourself using the same special characters over and over (like ©, ™, etc.), you can add these to your Favorites list, and access them from the Favorites tab in the Character Palette.

To see which fonts contain certain characters, expand the Character Palette by clicking on the down-facing arrow next to Font Variation on the bottom-left side of the palette. This brings up another panel where you can choose different fonts. You can also ask that this list show only fonts that support the character you have highlighted.

Now Doc sez, not to belittle Apples free tools, but I prefer, since I first discovered it as classic version 1.0.x, the $45 shareware tool by Ergonis Software called PopChar, now version X 4.0.1. < http://www.ergonis.com/products/popcharx/> PopChar X creates a floating window where you can click on a little "P" box to display a table of available characters for a particular font. Select the desired character and it instantly appears in your document. No more Key Caps, no more memorizing keystrokes. Not only does it let me find both ASCII and Unicode characters hidden in my fonts but also it remembers all the character I've used within that font. Voilá, one-click access to all special characters, in all applications lets you pick your character. All this convenience from an itty-bitty icon found in the upper left hand corner of my menubar.

TMUG Insider, Pleasanton, CA
From Paul Taylor's May/June 2008 Hints & Tips column
http://www.mac-hints-tips.com/.

Recent Characters – PopChar

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Internet Web Searches – An author's tale

Both as an individual seeking information, or a writer who packages that information for others, the Internet is both a friend and my enemy.

When you've leaned to tell the difference, site-by-site, article-by-article, citation-by-citation, you can be confident that you are both still learning and also gaining expertise about the subjects you search.

There is only one paradigm you need to remember, believes are not necessarily provable facts and facts can be misinterpreted or denied by ones beliefs. It's a human failing – live with it.

Is Wikipedia Reliable?
The creators of Wikipedia are the first to admit that not every entry is accurate and that it might not be the best source of material for research papers. Here are some points to consider:

- **Look for a slant.** Some articles are fair and balanced, but others look more like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. If an article has only one source, beware.
- **Consider the source.** Even if an article cites external sources, check out those sources to see whether they are being cited fairly and accurately — and do, in fact, reinforce the article's points.
- **Look who's talking.** If you research the contributors themselves and find that they are experts in their fields, you can be more confident in the entry.
- **Start here, but keep going.** Wikipedia should be a starting point for research but not your primary source for research material.

In December 2005, the scientific journal Nature published the results of a study comparing the accuracy of Wikipedia and the printed Encyclopedia Britannica. The researchers found that the number of "factual errors, omissions or misleading statements" in each reference work was not so different — Wikipedia contained 162, and Britannica had 123. The makers of Britannica have since called on Nature to retract the study, which it claims is "completely without merit."   [No errors per what number of articles but I'd not yet fully chased the Nature article.]

When visiting controversial entries, look out for edit wars. Edit wars occur when two contributors (or groups of contributors) repeatedly edit one another's work based on a particular bias. In early 2004, Wikipedia's founders organized an Arbitration Committee to settle such disputes.
Wikipedia does have some weaknesses that more traditional encyclopedias do not. For example

- There is no guarantee that important subjects are included or given the treatment that they deserve.
- Entries can be incomplete or in the middle of being updated at any given time.

- The writers of entries often fail to cite their original sources, thus making it hard to determine the credibility of the material.

These issues should not deter you from using Wikipedia. Just weigh the limitations of Wikipedia — and, for that matter, reference works in general.

From my perspective, at least Wikipedia admits to errors, and contributors correct them. Therefore the reliability of information on Wikipedia evolves… can you say the same for the other sources of Internet information you use?

One more hint — If you reference and use information from a Wikipedia article, always provide both the link and the date you captured the information.

PS:
I don't remember whether I wrote this or found and modified it. If I grabbed your stuff — mia culpa, as this column shows I always reference source material. Let me know your name and I'll give you full credit next month!

doc_Babad   macCompanion.com

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That's all folks. Tune in next month for more…

Harry {doc} Babad

The Northern Spy

Technology News and Views Since 1983

Recession? What Recession?

August 2008

By Rick Sutcliffe

Much of the U.S. economy is in trouble just now due to high commodity prices (especially oil), the high cost of its foreign adventures, the mortgage crisis, and collateral damage to the banking and automotive industries. Apparently not so all of North America, and especially the high-tech sector.

First Data Point

The malaise does not extend to Canada, which saw a very marginal one-quarter GDP decline, but seems likely to avoid a second, and this, technically, dodge a recession on a national basis. These figures do mask a deep division, in that the manufacturing centre is heavily dependent on the U.S. economy and goes where it does, whereas the resource-rich east and west are currently prospering, despite slight declines in the leading indicator package. Of course, when commodity prices inevitably decline into the next business cycle, the TSE could take a big hit, but...

Second Data Point

Despite being widely excoriated ahead of time for brutal price gouging, Rogers had an initial iPhone sellout for its first weekend of Canadian availability. The extensive bad publicity forced the 3G monopolist to reduce prices for an initial so-called sale, but this action amounted to reformation, not repentance. The numbers will presumably go back up in a month. However, the exercise indicated that lots of people have the money for toys.

Third Data Point

Still with the frozen north, the government of Canada held a radio spectrum auction in July that brought in some $4.5B, nearly triple expectations. This is starting to amount to serious money. Consequence: New and serious competition in the cell phone business from one or two new national carriers and a dozen or more regional ones. The Spy still expects one or both of Telus or Bell to switch to 3G, then Apple to second source the iPhone, thus forcing prices down at the same time as getting even with Rogers for embarrassing them in the initial rollout. BTW, there is no truth to the rumour that Apple Canada stores are not selling iPhones to poke a stick in Rogers' eye. Rather, they are not selling iPhones because they aren't a telecommunications carrier. Canadian law is what earns the black eye in this case, preventing a manufacturer from hawking its own products.

OTOH, Rogers managed to poke yet another stick in its own eye by rejigging its internet service so that page errors are redirected to their own advertising site, then answering critics by referring to this egregious interference as a product enhancement. Really? This is in the order of carriers throttling traffic other than their own, degrading performance on packets they are required to carry yet that compete with theirs.

Sigh. The trouble with the Spy's second law (against legislating against stupidity) is that nearly all laws are passed to do exactly that. Someone needs to tell Rogers (and like minded carriers) this before governments start passing laws enforcing net neutrality in the face of their stupidity.

Fourth Data Point

Whatever else is going on, people are still buying computers, and Apple's sales are still increasing far faster than the industry average, now propelling the company into third place in the U.S. market. iSteve has a long way to go before catching leaders HP and Dell for the market lead, but it now seems a matter of when rather than if. The larger iPod Touch, next iPhone iteration, and the iTablet/iSlate will all hype sales when they arrive. So will the quad core laptops. Note that Apple is still building mindshare, and per the Spy's Fourth Law (marketshare lags mindshare) still has a lot of credit built toward becoming number one in computer sales. Barring missteps, say about thirty months.

The Spy has never been able to comprehend the business world's viscerally emotional attachment to the PC and its limited, error-prone, virus-filled OS. Perhaps once IBM has been out of the microcomputing industry long enough to evaporate that portion of mindshare attaching to the mantra "IBM compatible", IT people will begin to evaluate systems with the dispassion of accountants instead of the passionate love-hate reactions they've had in the past. Perhaps now that Apple is selling its product in a box that can run W*nd*ws if one must, they can buy Macs without the downside of admitting they were wrong all these years.

One thing seems certain. The MS failure to upgrade W*nd*ws to a useable product finally has many IT managers trying to decide whether to install Linux or OS X as its replacement. MS seems paralysed, unable to react. The giant is in trouble, though the realization hasn't reached its brain yet. Nor has it reached the bottom line, though that will come. Lack of marketshare lags lack of mindshare.

Lethe Revisited (Again)

It wasn't easy to put our cat to sleep this past month, but when she attacked the hand that was weeding around her for perhaps the sixth time (another round of antibiotics for Joyce), and our children pointed out that grandchildren couldn't live with that risk, it became time. She now resides at peace under one of her favourite trees, a threat to neither birds nor humans. Our other old cat is already much less neurotic, indicating things were worse when we weren't looking. (Note to self: There is a paradigm for Vista here somewhere.)

For its part the Spy's MacBookPro continues to sleep better than ever, but sometimes in closed-lid mode must to be awakened by the remote. Other times, when moved or switched from open-lid to closed-lid, it has to have the lid flipped open and a couple of clicks on the pad before the external USB trackball comes alive. Also, no OS updates will work in lid-closed mode, but that's to be expected. Otherwise, no new sleep-related trauma to report. Apple is getting close to making this work smoothly.

Low-Tech Ruminations

The Spy is well-known to his own children as an incorrigible tool junkie who doesn't just have to have the latest in programming and OS utilities, but also haunts Rona, Home Depot, Princess Auto, and KMS Tools eyeing up the latest in woodworking and mechanics tools. His garage wall has for years been a model for "everything has a place so hang it on its own nails". However, a wall of tools is rather non-portable in the event of a move (why he rarely does so) and the dust and rusts inherent in open storage are also inconvenient unsightly. Thus he finally bit the biscuit and purchased a combo roller and top tool chest to get everything organized and off the wall. (Though encouraging him to be off the wall any more than already may not be so good an idea.)

This got him to thinking. (Uh-oh.) Computers have finally become the tool commodities we all thought they would. So, why not sell them in tool stores, between the socket sets and routers, just across from laser levels? It's a non-traditional thought, but the mindset is there, the rent is usually lower than in a mall, and a mini Apple store in a Home Depot seems like such a good cultural fit (to the Spy at least). Besides, the ones that sell automotive tools are already selling computers--your typical car has four or five installed and requires a couple more to diagnose. Hmmm.

This got the Spy also connecting computers-as-a-tool to a key social phenomenon. Could this (not just the abysmal math curriculum during and worse skills upon exiting high school) be part of the reason for the precipitous decline in computing science enrolment (up to seventy percent in some schools despite there being more jobs)? Perhaps when programming web sites is a second occupation for stock boys, cashiers, roustabouts, longshorepersons, truck drivers, and social workers, software engineering as a professional career loses its lustre. Well, folks, someone has to write and maintain the hard code. Hey, we still need people who get the picture, both big and small, who get programming languages, AI, data structure, modeling, Fourier transforms, who understand the cold iron and how machine language (OK, at least assembler) works. Besides there's much better money in professional software engineering than there is in script-kidding together cookie-cutter web sites from ill-understood code kits. Support your friendly neighbourhood technological society. Get a life. Get a career. Become a pro. Enroll in your local university computing science school.

--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
Apple: http://www.apple.com/

Raiders of the Lost Macintosh: August 2008

Best free downloads, shareware and demos

by Dr. Eric Flescher

eflescher@maccopmpanion.com

Here are some of the best free, shareware and demo applications out there that I have found. Try some of these out. You will be amazed what some Mac authors have created and designed. Found some ones you like not listed? Send me some and I will try to post them in future issues on *macCompanion*.

(1) Rawker

freeware converter program for RAW files

http://raifra.fh-friedberg.de/Mac/index-en.html

Mac OS X 10.3 users: Rawker 2 requires Mac OS X 10.4 or later.

The download file contains Rawker 2 and Rawker 1.

Modify settings that can improve the appearance of your images. The settings can be saved in a file and re-loaded later. During batch processing Rawker shows the image it is currently working on. Rawker produces TIFF image files with 16 bits color depth (which is 48 bits per RGB pixel) or PNG or JPEG files. For best results choose TIFF or PNG, because JPEG only supports 8 bits color depth and uses lossy compression. Metadata embedded into the RAW file are preserved when you choose TIFF or JPEG as output format.

Rawker converts RAW files using one of two modes: It can convert RAW files using Apple's Core Graphics (Quartz) technology, or it can use Dave Coffin's DCRaw tool. You choose which mode Rawker will use for RAW file conversion. DCRaw doesn't need to be installed separately, it's embedded into Rawker. The download file contains both Rawker 2 and Rawker 1 and the image viewer ImageShow.

(2) iMerge

http://www.geocities.com/jgroveuk/iMerge.html

Image-stacking and Mosaic-making program ultimately produced stacked black and white or color images.

Features:

   Input from BMP, FIT or AVI files

· Drag & drop or dialog-based selection of input files

· Manual or automatic image alignment, to within 1/16th pixel

· Manual or automatic brightness adjustment

· RGB or (faster) Monochrome mode, selectable at any time

· Flexible histogram adjustment tool

· Feathering of images
· Save result as BMP (RGB or B/W) or FIT (16 or 32 bit B/W) file
· Save and load projects as .IMP file

(3) InPreflight 2.5.4
Requirements: Leopard Mac OS X 10.5; File size: 3994 kb; Updated: 2008-06-23
http://mac.sixfiles.com/dbase/files/zevrix-solutions-inpreflight.html

InPreflight is a comprehensive quality control and file packaging solution for Adobe InDesign. Gathers extensive information about document fonts, colors and links. Instantly locates potential problems according to user-defined settings. InPreflight saves hours of checking your documents manually and dealing with consequences of costly mistakes. Includes a powerful packaging engine that allows the preflight and packaging of multiple documents. It can collect all files into one folder, eliminating the need to collect the same links multiple times for each design. Useful for collecting multiple InDesign files to share the same linked images. Savings can result in gigabytes of saved space and hours of production time. Powerful information tool can conveniently concentrate all necessary info in one place. Reveals several link attributes otherwise unavailable in InDesign

(4) iPhone Speedtest
http://www.apple.com/webapps/utilities/iphonespeedtest.html

An online webapp that tests your iPhones network connection. Test it on EDGE, 3G, and W-Fi. Get a detailed and accurate speed test result for all your connections, and track your stats.

(5) Alien Defeat
http://www.apple.com/webapps/games/aliendefeat.html

Looks like a knockoff of space invaders. Your spaceship has been attacked by aliens. Stop the aliens from boarding your ship before they take over! Tap the aliens as they appear to capture as many as possible before the time runs out and before your ship explodes!

(6) AOL Food Recipe Find for iPhone
http://www.apple.com/webapps/productivity/

With AOL Food's Recipe finder, locate delicious meal ideas and ingredients, all on your iPhone.

(7) ZKOUT - The Social Network That Follows You
 http://www.apple.com/webapps/socialnetworking/

Connect with friends on the fly - find out what they are doing and where they are.

(8) ESPN Mobile Web - iPhone Edition
http://www.apple.com/webapps/sports/

About ESPN Mobile Web - iPhone Edition
Delivers Free access to the most comprehensive sports coverage on your iPhone, including breaking news and analysis, up to the minute scores, ESPN Fantasy teams, ESPN Podcenter and more.

(9) Travel Channel GO
http://www.apple.com/webapps/travel/

About Travel Channel GO
Fun, informative & indispensable - Travel Channel GO brings both rich multimedia for thousands of places in 28 major US destinations, and complete local info everywhere in the United States.

(10) Mandelbrot Set
http://www.apple.com/webapps/entertainment/mandelbrotset.html

In mathematics, the Mandelbrot set, named after Benoit Mandelbrot, is a set of points in the complex plane, the boundary of which forms a fractal. Explore its beauty by diving into the boundaries. Tap the image and either zoom in and out or recenter the image. The Reset button brings you always back to the start in case you got lost.

Views from the Ivory Tower - August 2008

By Ted Bade

Apple and the iPhone seems to me to really be an experiment. You see, Apple is trying to determine the effects of annoying its fans by reducing the price of the iPhone every time they release a new version! People who stood in line to buy the first iPhones were (according to most news articles), appalled when Apple released version two and dropped the price by $100. With the reduced price, a number of people who were holding out because of the price, dashed out to buy their iPhones, patting themselves on the back for holding out and getting the better price.

At the WWDC in June, Apple announced the third generation iPhone, with lots of added features, including a real GPS, they also announced the price of the base model would be, yes, $100 less then the previous version! This got me to wondering, who was more annoyed by Apple? Would it be those people who recently patted themselves on the back for buying Gen 2 iPhones and saving $100 over those nuts that dashed out to buy the thing when it was first released, or would it be the nut who dashed out to buy the iPhone when it was first released, realizing they paid $200 more then the guy in July 08 will? (Then again, perhaps the most annoyed person is the one who wants to buy a iPod Touch instead of the iPhone, and who realizes that for $100 LESS, you get a real GPS!

In any case, I cannot imagine that Apple is creating a lot of good PR by changing the price the iPhone with every release. Personally, I am waiting for Gen 5 iPhones, ☺

Zune steps up to the plate - I can still recall all the noise about how Microsoft's Zune was going to seriously compete with Apple's iPod. In a recent magazine I read this interesting piece of information. After 1-1/2 years of being available Microsoft finally sold 2 million Zunes. Not bad overall. But lets put that number into perspective. In the **final quarter** of that year and a half period, Apple sold 10.5 million iPods. Put another way, Apple sold almost 5 times as many iPods in one quarter as Microsoft sold Zunes in six quarters.

This is no surprise to me. The iPod works. I expect the Zune isn't a bad piece of hardware, but Apple has a lot of customer satisfaction. Microsoft, on the other hand, has been getting a reputation as the corporate monopoly company, who would want to buy an entertainment device from a corporate monopoly?

RIAA at it again - Never, never, never buy music from a RIAA artist. I am serious. Those RIAA people are really out to destroy anything they don't directly control. Listen to and buy from independent artists, you'll be happier and won't be giving the RIAA idiots money to mess with things.

So what is my latest complaint? It appears that the RIAA is working with some computer manufacturers to remove stereo audio inputs from their computers. According to an article found on the Electronista site.

"Users of Dell systems with SigmaTel chips in particular claim to be only allowed single-channel recording out of the box and are told that an official solution that restores stereo input will cost $99; Gateway and (in Europe) Packard Bell systems with the audio hardware are also said to be affected."

Wow! Those RIAA guys are really evil. Next I expect a lie detector test for every citizen in the US. Step right up, answer a few questions, and pay your RIAA fine as you walk out the door! Give it up people, the RIAA's era of music is dead, dead, dead.

I do note that Apple wasn't one of the companies to sell out on this, so I guess we and out Macs are safe for the moment. In the mean time, listen and enjoy Independent label artists.

Another market share increase - Yet another great piece of news about Macs. It seems that Apple now holds the third place position in computer sales behind HP and Dell. Check out the article on the Eletronista site.

Another related article on the MacNN site, explains this information comes from the IDC research firm. Take at look at this article, since it has a nice data table!

What this indicates is that more people are buying Macs. With more people buying Macs, more software companies will consider making products for the Mac. A great thing for those of use that have been using Macs for years!

Conserving power - We have been hearing a lot about conserving power lately. It is important for a number of reasons. The most personal one is that it helps you save some money! I was recently reacquainted with a power conservation feature of may years ago: A power sensitive power strip.

The way this item works is when you turn on one device, such as a computer or receiver, the strip turns on the other outlets. Turning on things like your monitor, external hard drive, and printer; or in the case of your audio receiver, your powered speakers and DVD/CD Player. When the main device is turned off, these controlled outlets turn off.

For the most part, we could try to remember to turn all these peripheral off when we shut the computer down, but let's face it, more often then not, we forget. While the amount of power most of these devices use when not really doing anything is minimal, over time it can add up. Multiply that by tens of millions of people and you can see a real effect. I once heard that the power consumed by power bricks that are left plugged in and are not connected to anything over the entire USA added up to the amount of energy a typical large power plan can produce! That's a lot of wasted power.

One of the main reason these type of power strips went out of common use was that computers began to draw so much less power. The original devices weren't sensitive enough to act of the draw of a typical modern computer. I have a friend that got around this by using a light fixture in place of the computer. To turn his system on, he turns on the desk light! But that solution requires that the light be on all the time.

I recently set up two such strips. One to turn off my powered Bose speakers and DVD player when I wasn't using the stereo receiver. To do this, I connected the receiver to the main outlet and the Bose speakers, the CD/DVD player, and the power brick I keep by the stereo for an iPod to the outlets that are turned on (or off) when I turn on (or off) the receiver. The other situation I set up was for a Mac Mini. When the Mini is turned on, it turns on the monitor, the external hard drive, and the powered speakers. Turn off the Mini and it all goes off! Wonderful.

I had to search for a power strip that was sensitive enough to work with a very low powered computer like the Mac Mini. I found one company that I was very, very satisfied with. They not only make a strip that works with typical computers, but also make a more sensitive strip that works with extremely low powered computers, such as Apple's Mac Mini. The company is Bits Limited. They make a number of decides to help conserve power. Their line of power strips is terrific and their customer service is really outstanding!

Take a moment to look over their strips (or any other of this type) and see if you can find a way to make one or more work to help you conserve power.

Apple financial report - June ended Apple's third quarter and on July 21st Apple presented its quarterly financial statement. Here are the results I find interesting:

Apple posted a revenue of $7.46 billion and net quarterly profit of $1.07 billion. These results compare to revenue of $5.41 billion and net quarterly profit of $818 million of the year-ago quarter.

Apple sold almost 2.5 million Macs, (representing a 41% growth), over 11 million iPods (representing a 12 % growth, and sold 717,000 iPhones which compares nicely to the 270,000 is sold in the year-ago-quarter. To quote the web page:

"We're extremely pleased with the growth of our business and the generation of almost $5.4 billion in cash in the first three quarters of fiscal 2008," said Peter Oppenheimer, Apple's CFO. "Looking ahead to the fourth quarter of fiscal 2008, we expect revenue of about $7.8 billion and earnings per diluted share of about $1.00."

Read them for yourself by visiting the Apple site.
In the mean time, keep on enjoying your Mac!

Advanced Rails Recipes: 84 New Ways to Build Stunning Rails Apps

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett
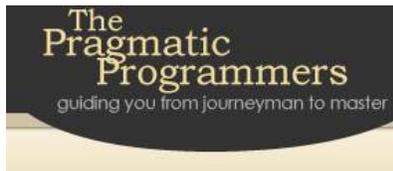
Author: Mike Clark
http://www.pragprog.com/titles/fr_arr/advanced-rails-recipes
Released: May 2008
$39 USD
Pages: 464
ISDN 13: 9870978739225

Strengths: More recipes for doing Rails. Mike Clark likes the cooking metaphor.

Weaknesses: None found.
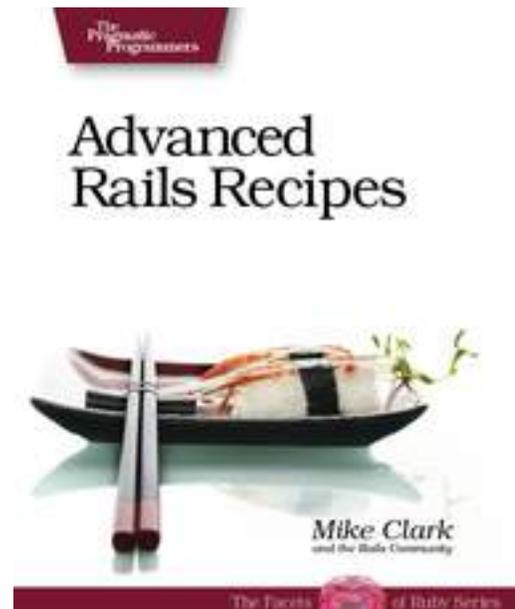
Introduction

Ruby on Rails continues to build up a tremendous head of steam. Fueled by significant benefits and an impressive portfolio of real-world applications already in production, Rails is destined to continue making significant inroads in coming years.
Each new Rails application showing up on the web adds yet more to the collective wisdom of the Rails development community. Yesterday's best practices yield to today's latest and greatest techniques, as the state of the art is continually refined in kitchens all across the Internet. Indeed, these are times of great progress.

At the same time, it's easy to get left behind in the wake of progress. Advanced Rails Recipes keeps you on the cutting edge of Rails development and, more importantly, continues to turn this fast-paced framework to your advantage.

Advanced Rails Recipes is filled with pragmatic recipes you'll use on every Rails project. And by taking the code in these recipes and slipping it into your application you'll not only deliver your application quicker, you'll do so with the confidence that it's done right.

What I Learned

Pragmatic Programmers has a forum for this at http://pragprog.com/titles/fr_ar/code

Conclusions

Watch Mike Clark's video - http://videos.pragprog.com/book-related/fr_arr.mov

Adobe AIR for JavaScript Developers Pocket Guide

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Authors: Mike Chambers, Daniel Dura, Kevin Hoyt, Dragos Georgita
O'Reilly
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596518370/index.html

Released: April 2008
$20 USD
Pages: 204
ISDN 13: 9780596518370

Strengths: Everything Adobe Air

Weaknesses: None found.
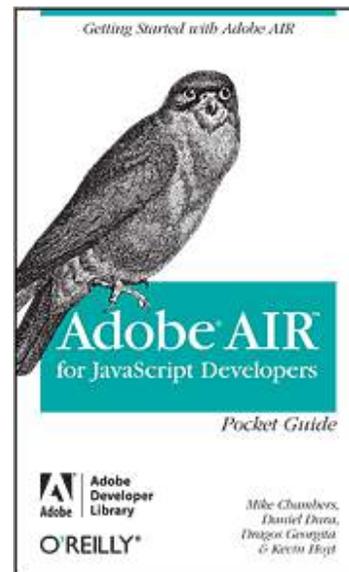
Introduction

This book is the official guide to Adobe ® AIR written by members of the AIR team. With Adobe AIR, web developers can use technologies like HTML and JavaScript to build and deploy web applications to the desktop. Packed with examples, this book explains how AIR works and features recipes for performing common runtime tasks.

Part of the Adobe Developer Library, this concise pocket guide explains:

- What Adobe AIR is, and the problems this runtime aims to solve
- How to set up your development environment
- The HTML and JavaScript environments within AIR
- How to create your first AIR application using HTML and JavaScript
- Ways to perform an array of common tasks with this runtime

Also included is a guide to AIR packages, classes, and command line tools. Once you understand the basics of building HTML and JavaScript-based AIR applications, this book makes an ideal reference for tackling specific problems. It offers a quick introduction to a significant new development technology, which lets you combine the reach and ease of the Web with the power of the desktop.

What I Learned

Do I really want to develop apps for Adobe AIR? S this technology just a lot of hot "AIR"? It utilizes Adobe Flash and HTML-based and builds on JavaScript, but this reads "proprietary" just like Apple does its Cocoa-based development platform apps and Xcode for Mac OS X. Adobe looks at cross-platform, while Apple pretends not to. And I already reviewed Adobe Flex.

O'Reilly sent me both the Beta Release version of this book on Adobe Integrated Runtime (AIR) (ISBN: 9780596515195) and not too much later, this book, so I guess they were serious enough to want me to review this stuff.

There are 4 chapters on web apps, AIR technologies, what is needed to get started with AIR, working with JavaScript and an AIR mini-cookbook for deployment, windowing, APIs, pickers, server monitoring networking and sound. There is even an Appendix for AIR JavaScript aliases.

Conclusions

Jump into the Adobe camp with both feet and keep from being left up in the AIR.

The Ultimate CSS Reference

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

http://www.sitepoint.com/

Authors: Tommy Olsson, Paul O'Brien
SitePoint
http://www.sitepoint.com/books/cssref1/
Released: March 2008
$45 USD
Pages: 204
ISDN 13: 9780980285857

Strengths: It really is the Ultimate Reference on CSS.

Weaknesses: None found.
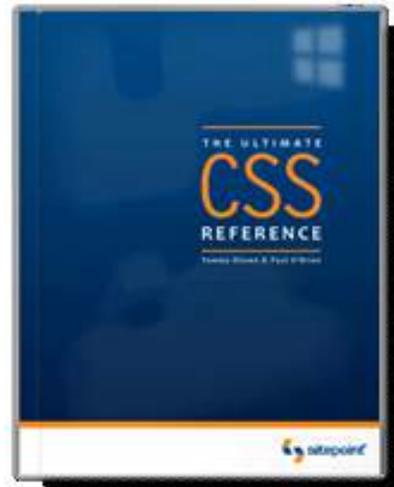
Introduction

Almost every web site created today is built using CSS, which is why a thorough knowledge of this technology is mandatory for every web designer. There are plenty of good resources to help you learn the basics, but if you're ready to truly master the intricacies of CSS, this is the book you need.

The Ultimate CSS Reference is the definitive resource for mastering CSS. The entire language is clearly and concisely covered, along with browser compatibility details, working examples, and easy-to-read descriptions.

Authored by two of the world's most renowned CSS experts, this is a comprehensive reference that you'll come back to time and time again.

What I Learned

There is an awful lot I don't know. This book helped me find out a lot I now know about CSS. It is a reference book, but it doesn't read like one.

Conclusions

You can learn all about CSS too.

Deploying Rails Applications: A Step-by-Step Guide

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Ezra Zygmuntowicz, Bruce Tate, and Clinton Begin
http://www.pragprog.com/titles/fr_deploy/deploying-rails-applications
Released: May 2008
$35 USD
Pages: 280
ISDN 13: 9870978739201

Strengths: Shows how to deploy Ruby on Rails applications by those who have done it.

Weaknesses: None found.

Introduction

First you'll learn how to build out your shared, virtual, or dedicated host. Then, you'll see how to build your applications for production and deploy them with one step, every time. Deploying Rails Applications will take you from a simple shared host through a highly scalable clustered and balanced setup with Nginx.

See how to tell whether you've bought enough firepower, and learn how to optimize your Rails projects applications in a systemic, rational way. Take advantage of advanced caching techniques, and become and expert with the latest servers in Nginx and Mongrel. Don't worry. You'll get a dose of Apache too.

Not only will you learn how to configure your production environment, you'll also see how to monitor it with free, automated tools that can restart your servers when the memory use gets too high for comfort. You'll see how to take a performance baseline, profile for bottlenecks, and solve the most common performance problems you're likely to see.
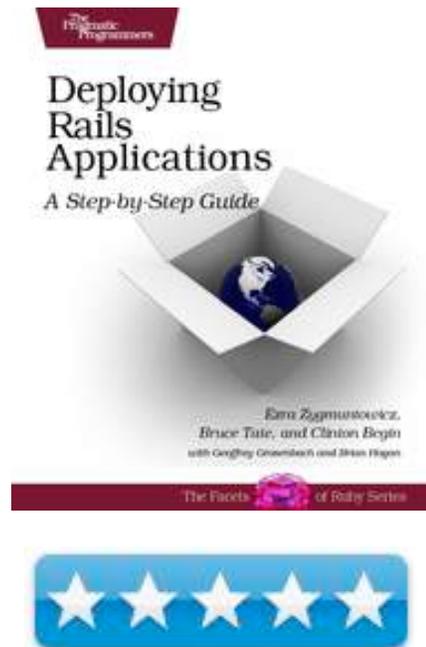
You'll learn:

- Everything from source control and migrations to Capistrano, rake tasks and beyond.
- Directly from an author who runs EngineYard, one of the best Rails hosts in the business.
- How to deploy your applications to multiple production servers with a single command using Capistrano.
- How to setup a Rails/Nginx/Mongrel cluster for applications with high scalability needs.

What I Learned

I learned how to cluster MySQL, knowing full well it is not optimized for doing so. I learned that there is an option known as sharding (splitting up a database into groups of cohesive data).

Conclusions

Learn how to deploy apps in Ruby on Rails.

Getting Started with Flex 3: An Adobe Developer Library Pocket Guide for Developers, 3rd edition

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Authors: Emily Kim, Jack Herrington
http://www.jackherrington.com
http://www.trilemetry.com/
O'Reilly
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596520649/index.html
Released: June 2008
$20 USD
Pages: 143
ISDN 13: 9780596520649

Strengths: Quick guide to learning the strengths and weaknesses of Flex.

Weaknesses: This is an Adobe-only technology.
Adobe Flex Community Center:
http://www.adobe.com/devnet/flex/
Flex: http://www.flex.org
The Flex Show: http://www.theflexshow.com

Introduction

Discover how easy RIA development can be with this one-of-a-kind handbook from the Adobe Developer Library. Several clear, step-by-step mini-tutorials teach you about web services, event handling, designing user interfaces with reusable components, and more. After finishing this guide, you'll be able to build Flash applications ranging from widgets to full-featured RIAs using the Flex SDK and Flex Builder 3.0. With *Getting Started with Flex 3*, you will:

- Walk through sample RIA projects and see examples of amazing applications people have built with Flex
- Work with ActionScript 3.0 and the MXML markup language
- Build user interfaces using the controls and tools available with the framework
- Get a tour of controls available commercially and through open source
- Learn how Flex integrates with ASP.NET, ColdFusion, PHP, and J2EE in the server

- Build Flex-based widgets that let you display real-time data
- Use advanced controls to build 3D graphs, data dashboards, mapping applications, and more

You'll find complete code for video players, a slideshow, a chat client, and an RSS reader, just to name a few. You also get plenty of tips, tricks, and techniques to leverage your existing programming skills, whether you come from an open source or Visual Studio-intensive background.

What I Learned

Flex is an XML-based language that is compiled into Adobe Flash applications.

The book is a quick tour for newbees to Flex who have been stymied in their creativeness by frames or other esoteric web-based coding – and maybe want to see what all the huff is about – outside the Mac developing arena.

This is mostly for folks not used to doing movies with Keynote > QuickTime or AppleScripting to JavaScripting and want to delve into the depths of ActionScripting and doing movies using Flex.

Remember, this is an Adobe platform function. The pocket book has 10 chapters on installation, on-line apps and multimedia, a few websites that use it (i.e. pounce.com) and some desktop apps that also use it, a walk-through on how to build an app, network apps that are supported, supported controls - like 3D graphing, doing movies for other websites, and using Adobe's AIR for putting Flex apps on the desktop (some of which are invading Mac apps). Chapter 10 is more like an Appendix of resources (books, sites, etc.)

Conclusions

If you don't mind "Flexing" some coding muscle, this is a good place to start.

Flex 3 Cookbook Code-Recipes, Tips, and Tricks for RIA Developers

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Joshua Noble, Todd Anderson
O'Reilly
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596529857/index.html
Released: May 2008
$45 USD
Pages: 704
ISDN 13: 9780596529857

Strengths: 1

Weaknesses: 1

Flex Developer Center:
http://www.adobe.com/devnet/flex/
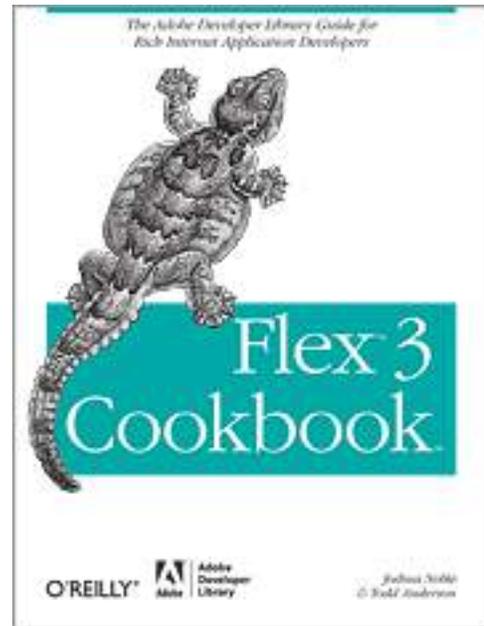
Introduction

The best way to showcase a powerful new technology is to demonstrate its real-world results, and that's exactly what this new Cookbook does with Adobe Flex 3.

Wide ranging and highly practical, *Flex 3 Cookbook* contains more than 300 proven recipes for developing interactive Rich Internet Applications and Web 2.0 sites. You'll find everything from Flex basics, to solutions for working with visual components and data access, to tips on application development, unit testing, and using Adobe AIR.

You also get ideas from the development community. Through its Flex Cookbook website (http://www.adobe.com/devnet/), Adobe invited Flex developers to post their own solutions for working with this technology, and from hundreds of posts, the authors chose the best and most useful solutions to supplement *Flex 3 Cookbook*.

Each recipe inside provides a solution to a common problem, explains how and why it works, and offers sample code that you can put to use immediately. Topics include:

- Containers and dialogues
- Working with Text
- Data driven components
- DataGrid and Advanced DataGrid
- ItemRenderers and Editors
- Images, bitmaps, videos, and sounds
- CSS, styling, and skinning
- States and effects
- Working with Collections, arrays, and DataProviders
- Using DataBinding
- Validation, formatting, and regular expressions
- Using Charts and data visualization
- Services and Data Access
- Using RSLs and Modules
- Working with Adobe AIR

Whether you're a committed Flex developer or still evaluating the technology, you'll discover how to get quick results with Flex 3 using the recipes in this Cookbook. It's an ideal way to jumpstart your next web application.

What I Learned

There is an awful lot I don't know and Adobe Flex is intended to make web 2.0 development a little easier. I don't really know if it does that or not, but that is why O'Reilly created the Cookbook series. In the Adobe Developer Library.

Because Flex Framework is so huge, there are an additional 76 pages of recipes posted at the O'Reilly website for this book listed above.

This book does a good job tying the pieces together and if the recipes don't work, you will be sure that O'Reilly will post the errata accordingly. That is what makes the O'Reilly site so attractive. The books are current as long as there is an Internet.

While the Flex 3 Pocketbook is for those who want to get their feet wet, this book is designed for those with a little more experience under their belt.

Flex apps bring together ActionScript and MXML into a cohesive whole. Do I understand it all? No, but since I deal a lot with Adobe CS 3 and Dreamweaver, it behooves me to take action and learn a bit about Flex 3.

Conclusions

For those who want to not just jump in feet first, but go through a baptism of fire with Flex 3, this is the 2nd book to get to figure out what Adobe is doing regarding Web site and desktop app development.

FXRuby: Create Lean and Mean GUIs with Ruby

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Lyle Johnson
http://www.pragprog.com/titles/fxruby/fxruby
Released: April 2008
$37 USD
Pages: 240
ISDN 13: 9871934356074

Strengths: The app that allows Graphical User Interfaces in Rails.

Weaknesses: None found.
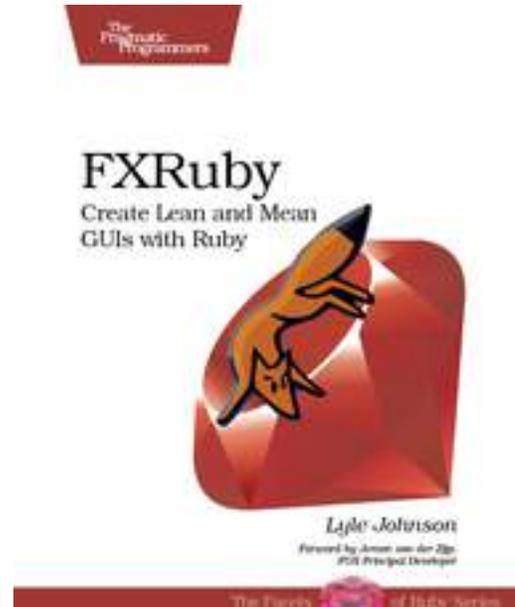
Introduction

FXRuby is a highly object-oriented toolkit for building lean, mean, cross-platform graphical user interfaces in Ruby. Since its initial release in 2001, FXRuby has become one of the most popular GUI choices for Ruby developers. This book is your best resource for rapidly learning how to develop powerful, sophisticated GUIs in your favorite programming language. If you're a newcomer to GUI programming, this book will introduce you to the basics of FXRuby programming by leading you through building a GUI application with FXRuby from start to finish. If you're an experienced software developer who just needs to get up to speed on FXRuby and what it can do for you, this book will help you put FXRuby to work in your Ruby-based applications. Along the way, you'll learn how to leverage FXRuby's vast collection of user interface elements to build visually rich user interfaces. You'll see how FXRuby uses the concept of sending messages between objects to implement eventdriven applications, and how you can most effectively use layout managers to construct flexible user interfaces. Go beyond the basics with proven, practical knowledge and techniques for developing real-world GUI programs in Ruby.

What I Learned

Graphics? Ruby? Yes, they can co-exist and do so through FXRuby – http://www.fox-toolkit.org.

Conclusions

Learn how to do graphics inside Ruby.

Groovy Recipes: Greasing the Wheels of Java

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett
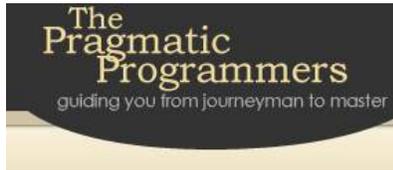
Author: Scott Davis
http://pragprog.com/titles/sdgrvr/groovy-recipes
Released: February 2008
$35 USD
Pages: 264
ISDN 13: 9870978739294

Strengths: Groovy jazzes up Java and the book also does "Grails" for web services.

Weaknesses: None found.
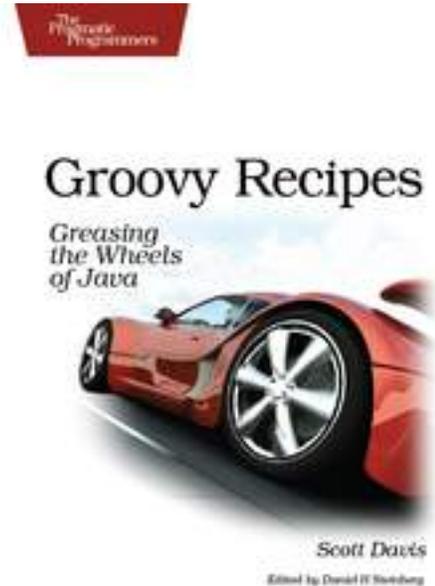
Introduction

Each recipe in Groovy Recipes begins with a concise code example for a quick start, followed by in-depth explanation in plain English. These recipes will get you to-to-speed in a Groovy environment quickly.

You'll see how to speed up nearly every aspect of the development process using Groovy. Groovy makes mundane file management tasks like copying and renaming files trivial. Reading and writing XML has never been easier with XmlParsers and XmlBuilders. Breathe new life into Arrays, Maps, and Lists with a number of convenience methods. But Groovy does more than just ease traditional Java development: it brings modern programming features to the Java platform like closures, duck-typing, and metaprogramming.

As an added bonus, this book also covers Grails. You'll be amazed at how quickly you can have a first-class web application up and running from ground zero. Grails includes everything you need in a single zip file — a web server (Jetty), a database (HSQLDB), Spring, Hibernate, even a Groovy version of Ant called GANT. We cover everything from getting a basic website in place to advanced features that take you beyond HTML into the world of Web Services: REST, JSON, Atom, Podcasting, and much, much more.

What I Learned

A single zip file for doing a complete web app? Groovy, man! An dyes, I dog-eared a number of pages in this book. If you do Java, you should be doing Groovy.

Conclusions

 Learn more about groovy at http://www.aboutgroovy.com

Harnessing Hibernate: A Step-by-Step Guide to Java Persistence

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: James Elliot, Tim O'Brien, Ryan Fowler
O'Reilly
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596517724/
Released: May 2008
$40 USD
Pages: 380
ISDN 13: 9780596517724

Strengths: Ties the spaghetti-code interfaces together between Java and databases. Also dovetails with "Spring" and "Maven Ant".

Weaknesses: If you are totally clueless about what is written in the "Strengths" section, move on.
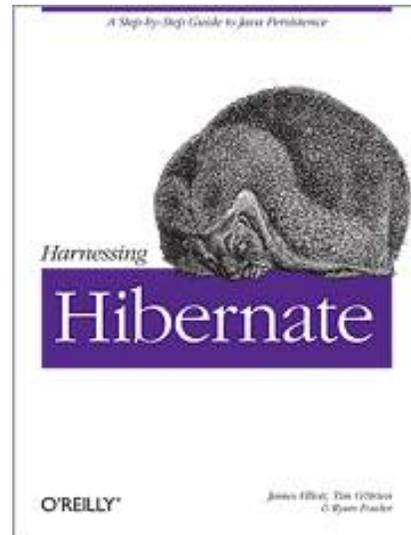
Introduction

"Java and databases make a powerful combination. Getting the two sides to work together, however, takes some effort. For many Java developers, it's the least pleasant part of their work. Even database experts, who may enjoy fiddling with SQL, dread the tedious plumbing and typographical spaghetti needed to put their SQL into a Java program. It comes down to the plain fact that Java deals in objects while most databases do not. In the ongoing effort to automate the task, the Hibernate persistence framework has emerged as a powerful contender: programmers write natural Java objects and some simple configuration files, and Hibernate automates all the interactions between the objects and the database.

This book covers Hibernate's primary features, such as mapping from Java classes to database tables and from Java data types to SQL data types, as well as Hibernate's data query and retrieval facilities. Harnessing Hibernate also shows how to:

- Perform object/relational mapping
- Work with persistent data from Java code
- Work with groups and relationships between objects
- Extend Hibernate's rich type support for your own needs
- Simplify query creation using criteria and examples

- Use the Hibernate Query Language (HQL) and understand how it differs from SQL
- Use Hibernate in conjunction with Spring
- Use Hibernate in conjunction with other packages, such as the Stripes web framework and the Eclipse IDE

If you find using SQL to be a chore, Harnessing Hibernate offers you an effective and painless method for working with the information you store in your applications."

What I Learned

Do I use Java? Not intentionally. But if I did (and I probably should know more, but I'm into this "Ruby" thing lately…), I'd want to know how to use this object/relational mapping service tool. This book builds on the Developer's Notebook Series and has evolved from the earlier Notebooks into a full-blown stand-alone book.

Conclusions

If you are into Libraries, Frameworks and Components and need to store and is use information in relational database environments and work in a JDBC (Java Database Connectivity) environment, make it easy on yourself and get this book.

The Mac OS X Leopard Book - How to do the things you want to do on your Macintosh

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   (c) 2008

Author: Scott Kelby
Publisher: Peachpit Press

www.kelbytraining.com
www.peachpit.com
Also Available as an eBook version of the printed book.
Released: June 2008, 1st Edition
$19.99 (Street 16.50) USD, $26.99 CND, £9.59 UK, € 16.86
Pages: 246
ISBN-10: 0-321-54395-5
ISBN-13: 978-0-321-54395-0

Audience: Beginner - Intermediate

Strengths: The ultimate Leopard Hints Book, focused, well written and Illustrated and written with just enough of a light touch to hasten my learning of OS 10.5's features. Not *Killer Tips*, just tips for the rest of us.

Weaknesses: Just a few discomforts… picky, picky Doc. Scott, I really looked hard for glitches.
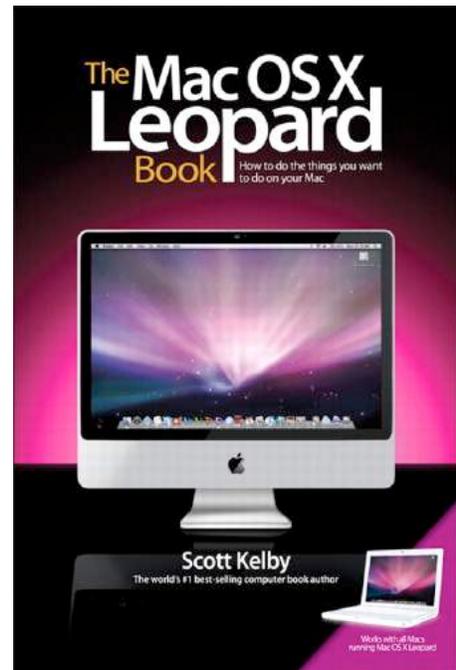
Testing of many of Scotts Hints, those I did not know already, was carried out on my iMac 2.8 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo with 2 GB 667 MHz DDR2 SDRAM running Mac OS X version 10.5.4.

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

Introduction
For a new or intermediate Macintosh user, switching to Leopard, this book is a great place to start. Especially so, if you like to explore and are a self-starter and if you want to avoid lengthy tutorials. Yes I know some 400 to 500-page tutorials are (1) lucid, (2) clearly illustrated, (3) comprehensive (4) well organized, and (5) even fun to read.

I enjoy such longer and more detailed books—after all, I'm an information junky. Fine books are available on Leopard such as those recently written by Robin Williams, Kate Langer, Joe Kissell, or Maria Langer. I've recently reviewed them for macCompanion.

After all Apple claims 300+ new features in Leopard, compounding the new features I recently learned in Tiger. http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/300.html

Stop – Tilt – Whoa: This is not to say that Scott Kelby's Books are not organized, nor lucid and even lacking of fun. Au contraire, they are all of these but with two differences. Scott has a knack for capturing information as hints, tidbits by any other name, that cuts to the quick in a few words. But from my perspective as a reader, Scott, who gave the world *Macintosh – The Naked Truth* is his quirky humor, irreverence to the towers of power, and those sneaky puns just grab me. < http://www.amazon.com/Macintosh-Naked-Truth-Scott-Kelby/dp/0735712840/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1217022687&sr=1-1>. What I don't like are Scott's allusions to song titles, which he fortunately left out… Hey Jazz and folk, blues and bluegrass music, even Bach, are my bag. But then, I'm older then Scott with more eclectic tastes that come from a bohemian youth while pursing advanced chemistry degrees on the side.

Background on Book's Focus
I agree with the publisher that, "with so many books out there on Mac OS X Leopard, what makes this one better and different is its focus. While other Leopard books can regularly be 500-plus pages, this book cuts through all the technical jargon and gives you exactly what you want: the most important, most requested, and just plain coolest things about Leopard that will change the way you work on your Mac.

"With Leopard's newest features, this book will show you how to customize your workspace with Spaces, search and view your files fast with Quick Look, restore any file on your system with Time Machine, and much more. Each page covers just one topic, complete with full-color photos and screenshots, making it easy to find what you're looking for fast." No I will not list the chapters but the range from a beginners "20 things a new Mac User Needs To Know" through sections in customizing and organizing your *Macintosh Life* to straightforward discussion of Apple's applications such as Mail, .Mac (now MobileMe), iTunes, iPhoto and doing the video thing on you Macintosh.

There more including outreach via the Internet using Safari.

For the most part each of the shortcuts (over 200 full and lots of fifth-page long snippets) in this 11-chapter book is a stand-alone entry. However, where deemed helpful, there are cross-references to other relevant content.

A Few Things I Learned – Nothing fancy, just new to me.
Photo Booth — To take pictures with the iMac's built in camera use Photo Booth, a tool I was not aware of on my 100+ applications rich computer. I found image capture, after installing Leopard, but of course the dialog box noted I had no image capture too attached to my computer. So I moved on to the next task, ignoring my built in camera.

Spaces — Using spaces for some of use can be helpful, but is not needed with my 24" screen. Spaces would have been useful when I had a 17" screen or when I buy a Macintosh portable.

Address Book Features — I don't use Apples applications such as Mail or iCal, but finally, Scott got through to me. I've started to use Apple's address book for my contacts exporting them from Eudora, my eMail client. Moving my FileMaker Pro address is doable, Scott gives a few hints, so that will be next, …soon. Now if mail had all the organizing features found in Eudora's, I'd be temped.

Dashboard Features and Flexibility — A fine explanation of the how's and wherefores of widgets and their handling. Scott, if I didn't hate widgets so much, preferring to convert them stand alone mini applications [e.g., WidgiApps. [Check out Amnesty Singles http://www.amnestywidgets.com/Singles.html/.]

IPhoto — I had not realized all of the simple image editing features that the application provides. I've used GraphicConverter and Adobe's Photoshop Elements to do image editing both of camera taken photographs and downloaded images from Google images. I must admit, Scott, that its time for a change to iPhoto.

Disappointments and Discomforts
Mini-Tips — White letters on dark blue don't do much for my willingness to strain my eyes reading a tip.

Missing Appendix — A listing of the titles and perhaps subtitle for all tips, including the mini-tips would have made the book more useful.

Index Shortcomings — I check out a number of key technical phases, (e.g., scroll bars) used in your narratives, against the index and was disappointed not to find them listed.

Conclusions

My overall all impression: good colored screen photos support the hints and tips, focusing the reader's attention. No long explanations, just nice short snippets. This is not the only Leopard book you'll need if you are truly an ex-PC user or a manual-tutorial oriented person. It is a great book to add to your collection, even for an advanced Macintosh user, for quickly leaning more about the richness of Leopard to broaden your use of Apple's excellent OS and related tools. Its size and focus are on a level where you browse, or use the TOC or Index, find what you want and get back to what they were doing.

According to Scott Kelby (Chapter Zero, Items 1 and 7) This book truly has a brilliant premise, and here's how Scott describes it: "If you came over to my house with your new Mac, and you said, 'Hey Scott, how can I delete a file from my Mac and make darn sure nobody else can retrieve it?' I wouldn't give you a lecture about file encryption algorithms, or 128-bit decryption protocols. In real life, I'd just turn to you and say, 'Just drag the file down to your Mac's Trash, and then go under the Finder menu and choose Secure Empty Trash.' I'd tell you just like that— short and sweet, right to the point—so that's what I tried to do throughout the entire book."

Scott, I agree and award you <mark>4.5 macCs</mark> plus my gratitude for a fine read and a few more smartness pills you created that I indulged in. Reading *The Mac OS X Leopard Book* beat the heck out of plowing though energy blogs trying to separate dogma and half-truths for inputs to the technical books and articles I write.

Recommendation

The price is right; each page covers just a single topic with little or no techno jargon or purple prose. You can turn to the page about the thing you need to do, and learn how to do just that one thing, quickly and easily. Whether a beginner or an intermediate user like me, this is a book every new Leopard user should add to their bookshelf – yes, the books right behind your workstation chair. I*s is the only book you'll likely need as you want to become more expert, No! But then I'm the kind of person who, before the Internet, would buy a cookbook if a baker's dozen recipes of the contained appealed.

PS:
Scott, please check out my "An Open Letter to Scott Kelby" article in this issue.

Learning Ruby
Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Authors: Michael Fitzgerald
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596529864/index.html
Released: May 2007
$35 USD
Pages: 255
ISDN 13: 9780596529864

Strengths: Typical excellent O'Reilly Reference book.
Grownup parent of the Ruby Pocket Reference

Weaknesses: None found.
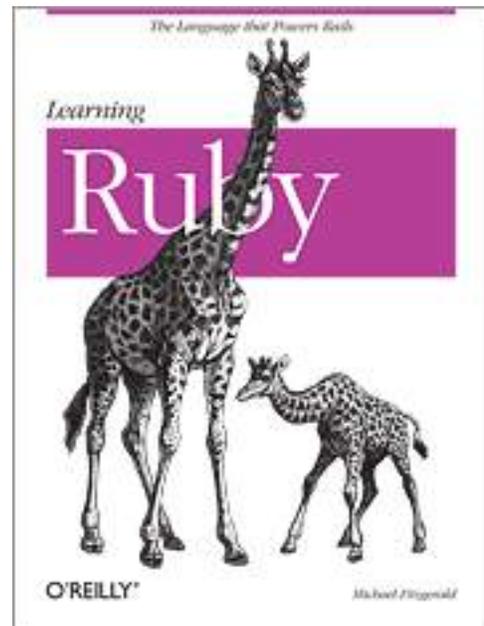
Introduction

You don't have to know everything about a car to drive one, and you don't need to know everything about Ruby to start programming with it. Written for both experienced and new programmers alike, *Learning Ruby* is a just-get-in-and-drive book -- a hands-on tutorial that offers lots of Ruby programs and lets you know how and why they work, just enough to get you rolling down the road.

Interest in Ruby stems from the popularity of Rails, the web development framework that's attracting new devotees and refugees from Java and PHP. But there are plenty of other uses for this versatile language. The best way to learn is to just try the code! You'll find examples on nearly every page of this book that you can imitate and hack. Briefly, this book:

- Outlines many of the most important features of Ruby
- Demonstrates how to use conditionals, and how to manipulate strings in Ruby. Includes a section on regular expressions
- Describes how to use operators, basic math, functions from the Math module, rational numbers, etc.
- Talks you through Ruby arrays, and demonstrates hashes in detail
- Explains how to process files with Ruby

- Discusses Ruby classes and modules (mixins) in detail, including a brief introduction to object-oriented programming (OOP)
- Introduces processing XML, the Tk toolkit, RubyGems, reflection, RDoc, embedded Ruby, metaprogramming, exception handling, and other topics
- Acquaints you with some of the essentials of Rails, and includes a short Rails tutorial.

Each chapter concludes with a set of review questions, and appendices provide you with a glossary of terms related to Ruby programming, plus reference material from the book in one convenient location. If you want to take Ruby out for a drive, *Learning Ruby* holds the keys.

What I Learned

I dog-eared this book, it's that good. Page 15 begins on how to add Ruby to Mac OS X Tiger, but it is the same for Mac OS X Leopard. To learn Ruby on Rails, go to http://www.rubyonrails.org/screencasts.

Conclusions

This is the first of many books on Ruby, but it probably ought to be one of the first you read on the subject.

Rails Cookbook

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Authors: Rob Orsini
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596527310/index.html
Released: January 2007
$40 USD
Pages: 534
ISDN 13: 9780596527310

Strengths: Next after Ruby is Rails

Weaknesses: None found.
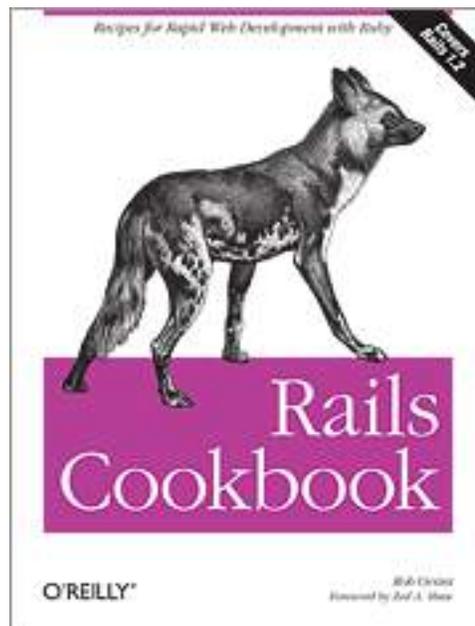
Introduction

Rails Cookbook is packed with the solutions you need to be a proficient developer with Rails, the leading framework for building the new generation of Web 2.0 applications. Recipes range from the basics, like installing Rails and setting up your development environment, to the latest techniques, such as developing RESTful web services.

With applications that are code light, feature-full and built to scale quickly, Rails has revolutionized web development. *The Rails Cookbook* addresses scores of real-world challenges; each one includes a tested solution, plus a discussion of how and why it works, so that you can adapt the techniques to similar situations. Topics include:

- Modeling data with the ActiveRecord library
- Setting up views with ActionView and RHTML templates
- Building your application's logic into ActionController
- Testing and debugging your Rails application
- Building responsive web applications using JavaScript and Ajax
- Ensuring that your application is security and performs well
- Deploying your application with Mongrel and Apache
- Using Capistrano to automate deployment

- Using the many Rails plugins
- Working with graphics

Whether you're new to Rails or an experienced developer, you'll discover ways to test, debug and secure your applications, incorporate Ajax, use caching to improve performance, and put your application into production. Want to get ahead of the Web 2.0 curve? This valuable cookbook will save you hundreds of hours when developing applications with Rails.

What I Learned

Here is another book I dog-eared pretty well. And of course, start with http://www.rubyonrails.org. Ruby on Rails is only 4 years old. For the Mac we use Locomotive – http://locomotive.roaum.org The JavaScript framework to use with Rails is Prototype. And the best program for deployment of Rails is done with Mongrel – http://mongrel.rubyforge.org

Conclusions

Take Ruby up a notch with Ruby for Rails.

Ruby by Example: Concepts and Code

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Authors: Kevin C. Baird
No Starch Press
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9781593271480/index.html
Released: June 2007
$30 USD
Pages: 294
ISDN 13: 9781593271480

Strengths: From the view of Unix. Also has a great comparison section to other programming languages.

Weaknesses: None found.
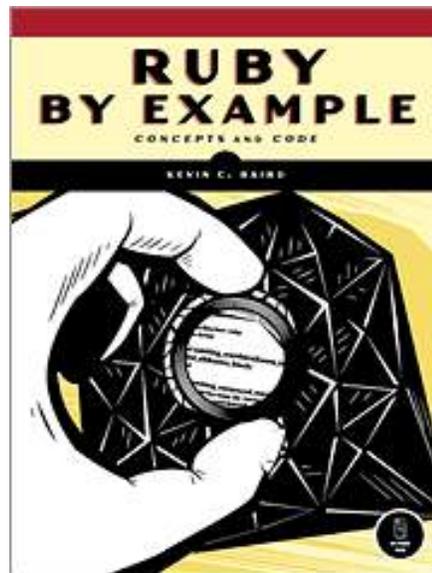
Introduction

There may be no better way to learn how to program than by dissecting real, representative examples written in your language of choice. *Ruby by Example* analyzes a series of Ruby scripts, examining how the code works, explaining the concepts it illustrates, and showing how to modify it to suit your needs. Baird's examples demonstrate key features of the language (such as inheritance, encapsulation, higher-order functions, and recursion), while simultaneously solving difficult problems (such as validating XML, creating a bilingual program, and creating command-line interfaces). Each chapter builds upon the previous, and each key concept is highlighted in the margin to make it easier for you to navigate the book.

You'll learn how to:

- Use the interactive Ruby shell (irb) to learn key features of the language
- Extend Ruby using RubyGems, the Ruby package manager
- Create numerical utilities, as well as utilities that process and analyze HTML/XML
- Implement purely functional and metaprogramming techniques to save time and effort
- Optimize, profile, and test your code to make sure that it not only does its job, but does it well
- Create web applications using Rails

Ruby is the fastest growing programming language today, and for good reason: Its elegant syntax and readable code make for prolific and happy programmers. But it can be difficult to understand and implement without a little help. Ruby by Example shows you how to take advantage of Ruby as you explore Ruby's fundamental concepts in action.

What I Learned

Unlike the other 8 programming languages it is compared to, Ruby is interpreted, not compiled, object-oriented, not procedural, strong dynamic typing and readable text and is a descendent of Lisp – and it stays out o four way.

Conclusions

Take Ruby from the perspective of Unix.

Ruby Pocket Reference

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Michael Fitzgerald
http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596514815/index.html
Released: July 2007
$10 USD
Pages: 176
ISDN 13: 9780596514815

Strengths: Typical excellent O'Reilly Reference book.

Weaknesses: None found.
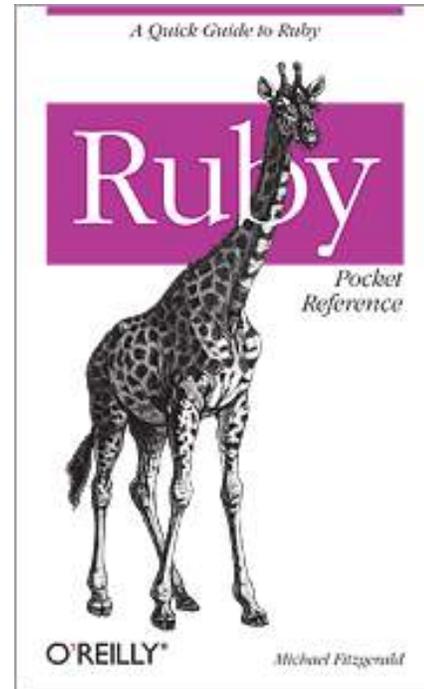
Introduction

Although Ruby is an easy language to learn, in the heat of action you may find that you can't remember the correct syntax for a conditional or the name of a method. This handy pocket reference offers brief yet clear explanations of Ruby's core components, from operators to reserved words to data structures to method syntax, highlighting those key features that you'll likely use every day when coding Ruby.

Whether you've come to Ruby because of the Rails web development framework -- Ruby's killer app -- or simply because it's a relatively clean, powerful and expressive language that's useful for a lot of applications, the Ruby Pocket Reference is organized to help you find what you need quickly. This book not only will get you up to speed on how Ruby works, it provides you with a handy reference you can use anywhere, anytime.

In this book, you find essential information on:

- Reserved words, operators, comments, numbers, variables, ranges, and symbols
- Predefined variables and global constants
- Conditional statements, method use, classes, and modules (mixins)

- Lists of methods from the Object, String, Array, and Hash classes and the Kernel module
- sprintf and time formatting directories
- Interactive Ruby (irb) and the Ruby debugger
- Ruby documentation

You also get information on the RubyGems package utility and Rake, a build tool similar to make.. If you're using Ruby daily and just want the facts-fast-Ruby Pocket Reference is your book.

What I Learned

Ruby is only as old as 1995 as an open source, object-oriented programming language.

Conclusions

If you are not into Ruby, this book is a good place to start. That and http://www.ruby-lang.org.

Greenware

Solar Energy Projects for the Evil Genius: 50 Build-It-Yourself Projects

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Mc Graw Hill Professional

Author: Gavin D.J. Harper
Publisher: TAB Electronics
http://www.mhprofessional.com/product.php?cat=113&isbn=0071477721
Released: June 22, 2007
Pages: 196
$25 USD, $31 CND, £15 GBP, € Euro
ISBN-13: 9780071477727
Audience: Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced
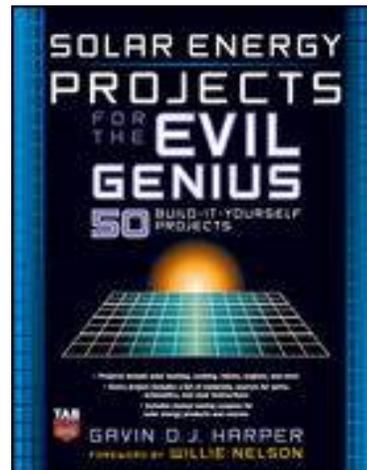
Strengths: Takes otherwise somewhat difficult to grasp concepts into layman's terms.

Weaknesses: Chapter 1 could be excised…and some projects don't fit the scope of the book title.

Introduction

"Let the sun shine on your evil side - and have a wicked amount of fun on your way to becoming a solar energy master! In this guide, the popular Evil Genius format ramps up your understanding of powerful, important, and environmentally friendly solar energy - and shows you how to build real, practical solar energy projects you can use in your home, yard - even on the road!

In "Solar Energy Projects for the Evil Genius", high-tech guru Gavin Harper gives you everything you need to build more than 50 thrilling solar energy projects. You'll find complete, easy-to-follow plans, with clear diagrams and schematics, so you know exactly what's involved before you begin.

- Illustrated instructions and plans for 30 amazing pretested solar energy projects that assume no prior experience with energy science
- Explanations of the science and math behind each project
- Projects that progress in difficulty - from simple ones that may inspire science fair entries - all the way to converting a real home to solar energy
- Frustration-factor removal-needed parts are listed, along with sources-plus all the tools you'll need

Solar Energy Projects for the Evil Genius provides you with complete plans, instructions, parts lists and sources for:

- Crushed berries solar cell
- Solar "death ray"
- Solar powered hot dog cooker
- Solar furnace
- Sun-powered refrigerator
- Camping shower, oven, and more
- Hot recipes for solar cooking
- Water purifier
- Flashlight
- Garden lights
- Solar vehicle
- Environmentally friendly robot"

What I Learned

If you write a book on a subject, stick to it. The first chapter wastes a lot of time on the "Global Warming"™ mantra showing that the author has drunk long and deeply of the Gaia Cult Kool-Aid, which incidentally has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Solar projects!

The projects run about 50 in length, but some are obviously extremely similar in scope and action, which makes me wonder why he didn't let well enough alone. Once is enough already.

And what, pray tell does making biodiesel (Project 50) have ANYTHING at all to do with the sun?

Maybe the author should have made the title include "Mad" Genius, instead of the "Evil" Genius!

 Now that I've vented my spleen, the other projects are pretty good and there is some great wheat amongst the chaff that almost redeem the book and the author. Almost.

 I did enjoy reading up on the solar hot water collector though. And I did learn a few things that I had glossed over or had forgotten in the past.

Conclusion

If you want to dip your toe into solar projects, here are some pretty good ones here.
The idea is that you will go get your parts for the projects from solarbotics.com

Recommendation

I was seriously thinking about becoming an affiliate for Solarbotics, who is based up in Canada. After reading the book, not so much. I even talked to them about it and they suggested I go get the books first. I did. More to come in the series later…

Water Car: How To Turn Water Into Hydrogen Fuel!

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett
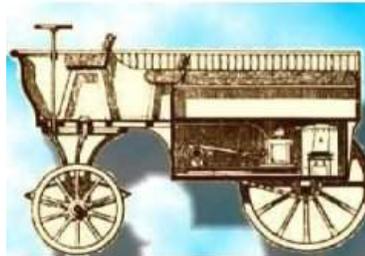
Strengths: Shows patents all the way back into the early 1800's on hydrogen fuel generation. The DVD has 3 video clips not seen completely on YouTube.

Weaknesses: This is not a "How-To" book, but rather, a "Did you Know?" book. Large print. Museum Closed.

http://www.blogtalkradio.com/waterfuelmuseum/ Water Fuel Museum Radio Volume 1
http://www.blogtalkradio.com/waterfuel2007   Water Fuel Museum Radio Volume 2
http://tobtr.com/kentuckywaterfuelmuseum Water Fuel Museum Radio Volume 3
http://odeo.com/channels/2112525-Water-Fuel-Museum-Vol-4 Water Fuel Museum Volume 4 Archive

Introduction

This is the first book ever written about the 200-year suppressed history of turning WATER into combustible hydrogen-oxygen fuel! The book was researched and written by James A. Robey, curator of the world's first Water Fuel Museum, in Lexington, Ky.

Although the book is not intended to be an exhaustive manual of how to build a water-powered car, in learning the history of the technology from these pages and the accompanying Free DVD, you will also learn how to do it yourself, inexpensively! Think of the impact this information can have on our world: water fuel produces no carbon pollution, and can actually release excess oxygen to the atmosphere.

1805-2008: 203 years of turning water into fuel!
In 1800 water was turned into hydrogen and oxygen, using a battery. In 1805 the first car with an internal combustion engine burned hydrogen from water. Jules Verne wrote in 1875 that WATER would be the fuel of the future. And 2008 is shaping up to be the year!

But very few know the story of water fuel technology development. Why not? Patent after patent has been filed, in the U.S. and abroad, attesting to the reality of this awesome, non-polluting fuel source. It could even reverse global warming by ending filthy fossil fuel emissions, while releasing excess oxygen to the atmosphere.

What I Learned

Way, way back in the early 1800's folks were successfully running vehicles with hydrogen as fuel. And there were patents cataloging the processes for doing so. So hydrogen as fuel generation is not rocket science, nor as difficult as certain naysayers and ax-grinders make it out to be.

I also learned that the ratio is 1800:1 instead of 1600:1 and hydrogen boosters are not hydrogen engine substitutes.

I'm sorry the Kentucky Water Fuel Museum is no longer open. Perhaps if more folks bought this book, the museum could become professionally supported and maintained.

I found that James Robey did a lot of research and interviews above and beyond anything I could have done. Granted, he has been at it for a lot longer than I have. I walked in being a skeptic and have walked away with a much greater appreciation for this centuries-old process wondering as many of you have why this is not included in every single vehicle in the world. But we come to the same conclusions. The powers that be make too much money off of existing energy systems that provide constant revenue streams, to permit a one-time purchase for power generation be successful.

I would like to have seen how the military used hydrogen in the Allied tanks and vehicles of WWII to extend mileage. Knowing how this was used during the Civil War was quite an eye-opener. Realizing that this technology was used almost back to the 1700's was astounding!

Now I've got to go and rewatch the movie "Chain Reaction"…

Conclusions

This book should be on everybody's shelf who are serious about the background and history of turning water into fuel. I found it to be nicely done as a "home-grown" book and the included DVD was a nice touch. Efforts like this cry out for support.

Hardware

CushTop Hideaway

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

BELKIN.

Belkin
http://catalog.belkin.com/IWCatSectionView.process?Section_Id=2033
Released: July 10, 2008
$40 USD
Requirements: Portable Computer and a lap.

Strengths: Microfiber hi-fi speaker-like cover material.

Weaknesses: No stop-slip material.

Introduction

- Designed for comfortable laptop use on the couch, bed, or floor
- Stores power supply inside
- Made of durable microfiber

My Experiences

The unit designed for a 15" portable is too small for the 17" Mac for inserting inside lengthwise, but it will go in on end.

I found it a bit curious that they advertise the unit for loading the power supply, however.

The CushTop Hideaway is stiff and retains heat from my legs as well as from the MBP (MacBook Pro). If you didn't have a computer you can always use this as a breakfast in bed table!

The Press release had this costing $25 more than listed in the online catalog.

I had this on my desk after using it comfortably on my lap and the MPB was sliding off, so be careful. There are no anti-skid or rubber friction devices included.
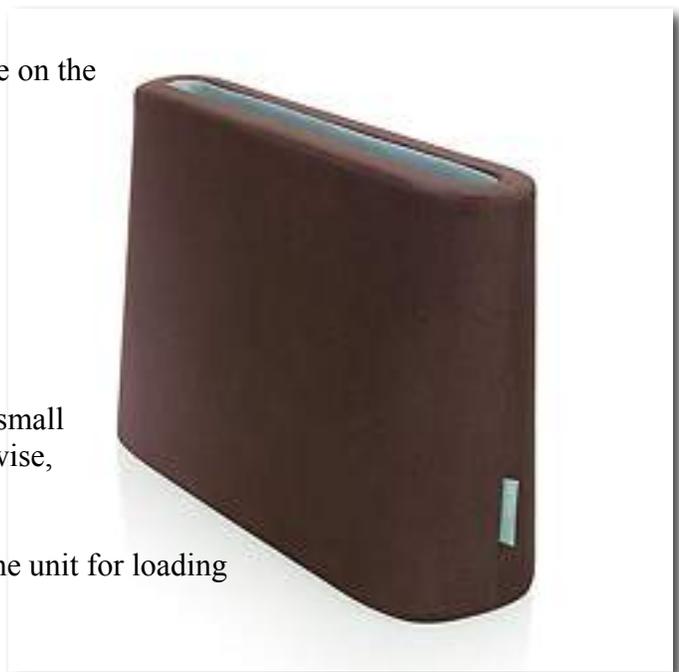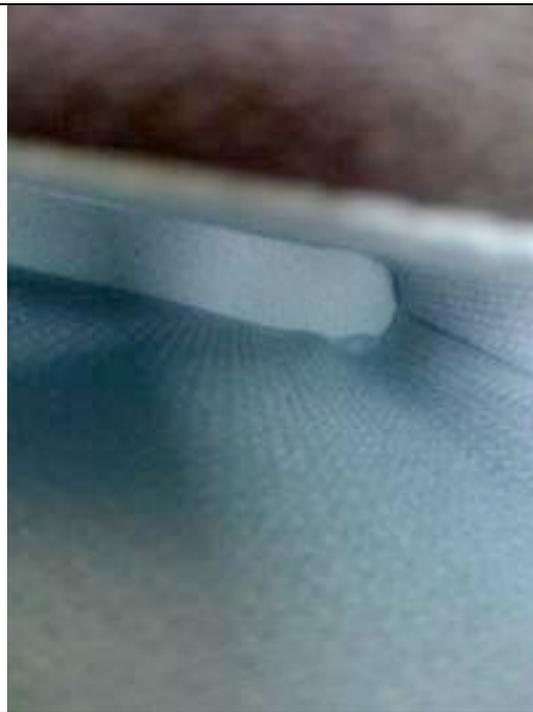
Bottom of Cushtop	Inside CushTop

Conclusion

Nice idea, well implemented.

iPhone 3G

Published by Terry White

Reprinted with Permission from http://terrywhite.com/techblog/?p=713

{**Editor:** Go to Terry White's TechBlog to see pictures}

Last year I wrote one of the most detailed unbiased iPhone reviews on the net. It has drawn over **97,000 reads** to date! So I thought it only appropriate to follow it up this year with a review of the **NEW iPhone 3g**. When I wrote my review last year I was comparing the iPhone to all other devices I had used including the Palm Treo 650 and Motorola Razer. This year, I'll be comparing the iPhone 3g to the original iPhone.

My buying experience

Last year's iPhone launch was VERY organized. This was the biggest hardware launch in Apple's history and quite frankly, they nailed it! I thought to myself "this should be the model for releasing new hardware to the masses." You could tell that months of planning had gone into it. Granted it wasn't without problems, but for the most part things went very smoothly. Last year, you stood in line, got to the counter/checkout person and said either 4GB or 8GB iPhone. You gave them your credit card and they gave your iPhone and emailed you your receipt. The whole process took 5 minutes for me once I got to the front of the line. Then you went home or back to the office and activated your iPhone using iTunes. Yes there were some issues on day one (and throughout the weekend) with the activation servers being overloaded and some people having to wait longer to get their iPhones activated. Overall though, the launch was a huge success.

This year things didn't go so smoothly. **There were MAJOR issues** on day one. Apple chose Friday, July 11th not only to release the new iPhone 3g, but also to release the 2.0 software update for the 6 million iPhone users out there and to roll out the newly revamped MobileMe online service. Some would call this ambitious! Some might call this stupid. Hind sight is always 20-20 and I guess Apple severely under estimated the demand that these simultaneous launches would have on their servers. The problem was that not only did Apple/AT&T require you to activate your iPhone on the spot at the time of purchase, but they also require people updating their original iPhones to be reactivated at the very end of the 2.0 software update process. This was quite frankly too much for the servers to handle and they crashed/timed out early in the day. Even though Apple was quoted as saying that the average activating would only take 10-15 minutes before the iPhone went on sale, it just doesn't work that way. Apple/AT&T even handed out iReady rate sheets to people in line so that they would be prepared to walk up and ask for what they wanted. However, people are going to have questions. Each question is going to delay the purchase process and make the people waiting behind them wait even longer. I would guess that the average activation was taking more like 20-35 minutes.

You might ask, "why would Apple go away from just selling the device and letting you activate it on your own time?" The problem with the last launch/iPhone was that there were thousands of iPhones that were never activated on AT&T. These phones most likely ended up in other countries on other networks. Therefore, both companies lost money. So to prevent that from happening, you have to signup for your 2 year commitment before you leave the store. It's clear that this was not a limit of the technology. When the activation servers crashed, reports say that

some Apple Stores just sold the iPhones and told people to activate them when they got home. I would have much rather seen Apple offer an "optional" pay, let's say $599 up front and the difference in price would be credited back to your credit card immediately upon activation. This would have made things go much quicker for those that didn't want to activate there's on the spot.

Friday, July 11th 2008, 6:00 AM PST

I was in Los Angeles on Friday the 11th getting ready to deliver my InDesign Seminar to a FANTASTIC audience of over 600 people. My seminar started at 10AM and I had to be there to get setup no later than 9:40AM. So my plan was to head over to the local AT&T store by 7AM. The doors were to open at 8AM and I figured I'd be out by 9AM. Before I headed over, I was talking with my buddy Scott and he told me that the iPhone 2.0 software update had just come online. So I hung up the phone with him and decided "well I can install the update while I'm showering and getting ready." That was a mistake! While the update downloaded in a about 15 minutes and installed in about another 20 minutes, I was STUCK at the "Accessing iTunes Store" stage. The last part of the process which talks to the iTunes activation server could not complete. I was running out of time. So I disconnected the iPhone which did no harm, but I was basically holding an iBrick. Without completing that last step, the iPhone could only be used to make emergency 911 calls. I had to leave if I was going to get to the store!

I made it to the AT&T store a few minutes later than I had hoped. I was 112th in line. One of the AT&T reps walked the line and counted and assured everyone up to about the 125th person that they would get an iPhone. After that person, you were not guaranteed to get one because they were not going to have enough. 8AM came and the doors opened. The line moved a bit. 8:15 came and went. 8:25 came and went. The line didn't move again until about 8:30. This was not looking good. I had my MacBook Pro with me in line (still trying to connect to the iTunes activation server to reactivate my phone). When 9:00 came, I knew that I might as well leave. There was no way that the line was going to move fast enough for me to get in and out before my seminar. So now I had no iPhone. My old one was still bricked (un-activated) and I couldn't get the new one. I finally got connected to the iTunes activation server during my lunch break and got my original iPhone back up and running again.

After my seminar was over at 5PM. I called the Apple Store (knowing that AT&T was now out of stock) and **I was quoted a 4 hour wait!!!** I decided that it wasn't worth it. So I went to dinner and then on to the airport to catch the redeye home. After about 2 hours sleep, I made it over to my local Apple Store (Somerset Troy, Michigan) at 9AM. There were about 30 people ahead of me. I walked out with a 16GB black iPhone 3g at about 10:50 AM on Saturday morning. When I left the store, the line had grown to about 100 people. On to the review…

Let's start with the new hardware

The iPhone 3g looks very similar (read almost identical) to the original iPhone, especially when you're looking at them from the front. However, when you look at the from the sides or the back you'll see that Apple has added a few more curves. The side volume control buttons and ringer on/off switch are more sleek and the stainless steel back plate is now a shiny black (or white) plastic. Although it's technically no thinner, it feels thinner in my hand. The slick black plastic also feels easier to hold. This is one of those things that's hard to convey in text. You'll have to hold one in your hands to get what I'm talking about here. By going away from stainless steel on

the back and going to plastic, reception should be improved. My calls do seem to be very crystal clear. I'm also happy that the iPhone 3g fits nicely into my favorite iPhone case, the DLO Hipcase.

3g data and GPS

The iPhone 3g includes not only a 3g data transceiver but also a GPS unit built-in. Although I loved surfing the web on the original iPhone, I would always hesitate to do so when I wasn't connected to Wi-Fi. The previous model relied on EDGE and while EDGE speeds were OK, it wasn't something that you would look forward to using for hours on end. The big new thing about the new iPhone 3g is that it can use AT&T's (and other carriers around the world) faster 3g (3rd generation) faster data network. Apple bills the iPhone as twice as fast and I would have to agree. In some respects they may even be being a little modest. The iPhone 3g is definitely much, much, much faster at loading complex websites. It loads text based websites almost instantaneously.

Although Apple includes a GPS with the iPhone 3g there is no turn-by-turn navigation feature. I've heard several theories on this including one that suggests with the case design, and power to the GPS, it's just not strong enough to do this. However, the GPS is strong enough to show and track your location on the Google Maps app. I tested this by plotting a route from my house to a local video game store. Once I got in my car and tapped the Locate Me button, the iPhone 3g showed my location with a pulsing icon. As I drove the route the iPhone 3g was VERY accurate in showing me where I was. It does work, but turn-by-turn with voice prompts would have been much better. Perhaps whatever the limitations are can either be overcome by a 3rd party developer or by Apple in a future software update. Smaller lesser phones have this, so how hard can it be?

Geotagging your pictures! Another benefit of the GPS and Location Services of the iPhone 3g/iPhone 2.0 update is that when you take a picture with the built-in camera, the GPS data (longitude and latitude) are now stored in the metadata of the shot.

Here's a shot I took with the iPhone's built-in camera. The iPhone automatically put my location information in the file. If you click the photo, it will take you to Google maps and show you where I was standing.

If you import these shots into apps like Adobe Photoshop Lightroom, you'll be one click away from seeing exactly where you were when you took the shot.

Headphone jack and dock connector

Apple did away with the funky recessed headphone jack from the original iPhone. Thank God! It was a pain in the butt to have to not only buy an adapter to use your favorite headphones, but also remembering to carry it with you. Now just about any set of standard headphones should

work for listening to your iPod content. Although the iPhone 3g uses the same dock connector as all previous models and other iPods, I'm hearing reports that you can no longer use the old FireWire based chargers. There may also be issues plugging your iPhone 3g into the various iPod speaker systems out there. Typically Apple now provides a dock connector adapter with each new iPod they introduce. However, I haven't seen one yet for the iPhone 3g.

Backwards compatibility

The one bad thing about the slightly more curvy back is that the iPhone 3g doesn't fit properly in the original iPhone dock. Nor does the iPhone 3g come with a dock. If you want a dock for your iPhone 3g you'll have to buy it as a $29.95 add on. That doesn't bother me as much as the fact that I have the Apple Bluetooth Headset which comes with a dock that charges both the iPhone AND the headset. With the iPhone 3g I can't use that dock and Apple hasn't announced or shipped a replacement for it. So I either have to use just the iPhone Bluetooth Charging Cable which does work (charges both the iPhone 3g and the Bluetooth headset) or charge the iPhone and Bluetooth headset separately.

Although Apple no longer includes a dock, strangely enough they do include a SIM eject tool so that you won't have to sacrifice one of your small paper clips. Granted I've swapped SIM cards on occasion here and there with my previous iPhones, but I can't imagine the average user doing this often. So I'm not quite sure why Apple included this tool. Perhaps it's for troubleshooting.

The other new item in the package is the newly redesigned USB charging adapter. It's much smaller! As a frequent traveler I do appreciate SMALLER electronics. However, the one thing I liked better about the older larger model is that the prongs folded down when not in use and for travel. On the new one the prongs are extended all the time.

Phone Reception

After all at the end of the day the iPhone is a phone! Therefore, nothing else really matters if you can't make or receive calls. I'm happy to report that the phone reception is BETTER! I would even say **MUCH BETTER**. There is a AT&T dead spot near my home. If I drove through that intersection while talking on my previous iPhone (hands-free of course), I would drop the call 100% of the time guaranteed. So the ultimate test was driving through that area today. Not only did I not drop the call, but the sound quality of the call remained consistent. As a matter of fact there are 3 dead spots on the way to my studio. I held a conversation today all the way from my house to the studio without a single drop. So therefore I'd have to say that the iPhone 3g definitely has better phone reception. Also I have to note that the speaker/speaker phone is definitely louder. Today I found myself needing to turn it down because it was too loud!

Bluetooth Hands-free

My car has Bluetooth hands-free built-in and it's compatible with the iPhone. The iPhone's Contact list downloads directly to the dashboard and I can look up numbers, make and receive calls without touching the iPhone itself. I noticed two differences with the iPhone 3g/2.0 update. The first is that now my contacts are listed last name first on the car's display. Before the update they were listed first name then last name. So if I were looking up Joe Smith, I'd go to the J's. Now I have to remember to go to the S's. No big deal, but I did notice it immediately. Also I now notice a slight echo when I'm on a hands-free call. It's not bad, but it is noticeable. I don't

think the caller can hear it, but I sure can. Other than that, pairing and voice quality remained unchanged. It just works.

Battery Life?

It's hard to judge battery life at this point because I haven't had a "normal" day of usage yet. Like any other new toy I've spent most of the time playing with it, testing and reconfiguring settings, etc. So of course I've drained the battery faster than usual because the screen is on the whole time I'm playing. If you pinned me down. I'd have to say that battery life is less than what I had before, but again that's not fair as I haven't really used it the way I normally would yet. So let's just say the jury is still out on this one.

The NEW 2.0 Software

Granted the addition of 3g data speeds, a GPS and a standard headphone jack are all welcomed additions to the iPhone 3g, however the big news is the updated OS. iPhone Software 2.0 comes on the iPhone 3g and is available as a FREE update to the original iPhones. It's also available as a $9.95 upgrade for iPod touch users. With the iPhone 2.0 update Apple fixed some long standing issues. One of the issues I had was an intermittent syncing problem. That issue seemed to be resolved. They also not only tweaked some of the existing apps, but made it possible to add native 3rd party apps.

Search your Contacts (it's almost there)

I have over 1,000 contacts on my iPhone and it was a pain in the butt either having to scroll up and down the long list or break them down into groups. Now Apple has included a search feature right at the top of the Contact window. I was very happy to see this addition. It works, but it's not quite there yet. In Address Book (Apple's contact manager) on the desktop, Apple got search right! You type in what you want and no matter where it is in the contact record, it finds it. However, that's not quite the case in the iPhone search. For example, let's say you have a contact that is listed as a business, "BMW Dealer", but you also have the sales rep's name in the name field "Jim Edmondson". If you do a search for BMW, it comes up. However, if you search for Jim - it doesn't! Searching for either BMW or Jim in Mac OS X's Address Book would find the contact.

New and Improved Calculator

The original iPhone calculator was basic, but had a big flaw. There was no "Clear Entry" key. So literally there was no room for error. If you were keying in a bunch of entries and made a mistake, hitting "C" would clear the whole thing. Now in iPhone 2.0 hitting "C" performs a Clear Entry (of the last entry) and you can correct your mistake! YAY! FINALLY!. If you need a Scientific Calculator just rotate your iPhone and your basic calculator turns into a Scientific Calculator. Neat!

New Contacts App

Apple has provided an additional way to get to your Contacts. It may seem like duplication of effort at first. However, you can now access your Contacts while on a call which wasn't possible before. I didn't discover this right away, but just this morning while on a call I needed to look up something in Contacts and it hit me BINGO! That's why they added the separate Contacts app! I guess this was easier than just changing the phone app to allow Contact access while on a call?

Microsoft Exchange and Cisco VPN! - Official Enterprise Support At Last!!!

This is BIG! Most major corporations use Microsoft Exchange for their Email, calendar and contact serving. The original iPhone software only supported Exchange via (relatively limited) IMAP support. Most corporations weren't willing to turn on Exchange IMAP support for their users to use iPhones. iPhone 2.0 changes all that! This is largely because IMAP just doesn't offer enough in terms of features/security such as remote wipe and requiring a password on the device. Now there is Microsoft's Active Sync support built right in.

My employer's IT department is the best! They were very eager to see this support in the iPhone. Not only were they one of the beta testers, but they had corporate email, calendaring and LDAP contact support up and running for iPhone 2.0 users on day one! It's a joy to be able to get work email pushed out to my iPhone seamlessly and better than I've had on any previous device. I can also access web pages on our intranet for the first time with the iPhone's built-in Cisco VPN support. This also alleviates the worry of losing my iPhone or having it stolen and someone accessing my data. Corporate IT departments can institute a password requirement and remotely wipe a missing iPhone once it's reported stolen or lost. The remote wipe is secure and writes 1's and 0's repeatedly to the iPhone. Even if they pull the SIM card or turn off the iPhone. Once the iPhone is back on the wipe will continue. There is no way to stop it. Setup was a breeze and done over the air. I had it up and running on Friday before I left LA. This will mean that the iPhone will now be open to millions of business users that couldn't have used the original iPhone (software). This is probably one of the most useful additions to the 2.0 version for me.

Push Email, Calendars and Contacts for the rest of us

Apple also rolled out MobileMe on Friday. MobileMe replaces Apple's aging .Mac service. The new MobileMe service is cross platform now for both Mac and Windows users. The $99/year service gives you 20GB of online storage, an email account and access to your contacts, calendar, pictures and files from any internet connected computer. What's new and more relevant to iPhone users is that this service offers "Push" email, contacts and calendars for iPhones. Similar to what a corporate Microsoft Exchange user would get.

The idea is that you wouldn't have to plug in your iPhone just to sync a new calendar entry or contact update. These updates would happen in both directions over the air. Once the MobileMe servers actually came online and stabilized, my "Pushed" information worked as advertised. My buddy sent me an address and phone number change. I made the change in Address Book on the Mac and noticed the change just happened automatically on the website version of MobileMe. Then I checked my iPhone 3g and it was there as well! I added a calendar appointment on the iPhone and checked my iCal and it was there.

Although MobileMe seems to work as advertised there are a couple things I'd like to see

improved. The first and probably the biggest thing is that I have multiple iCals, "work", "home" etc. Then I have some that aren't important enough to have with me on my iPhone. However, with MobileMe you either have to sync ALL or NONE of your iCals. There is no way to pick which ones go out to the iPhone and which ones don't. Worse is that if you subscribe to other people's/organization's calendars there is no way to have Subscribed calendars pushed out to your iPhone via MobileMe. For example, my wife and I share each other's personal iCals. She subscribes to mine and I subscribe to hers. Now with MobileMe "push" there is no way for me to see her iCal on my iPhone. This is a serious omission and I hope this gets resolved/added in an update.

Yes it's for both Mac AND Windows users! I can't stress enough that while .Mac was for Mac users only, MobileMe AND the iPhone are cross platform. That's one of the reasons why Apple changed the name from .Mac. So on the Windows side, MobileMe and the iPhone 3g/2.0 offers support for Microsoft Outlook. You'll get the same "Push" abilities with your Outlook calendar and contacts.

A couple of undocumented features

With every new iPhone software update there are usually a couple of features that don't make it into the headlines. This iPhone 2.0 update is no different. The first one I am very thrilled about as I'm a co-author of **"The iPhone Book"**, this one will be a tremendous help in finishing the update and that is the ability to natively take a screen shot of the iPhone screen. Simply hold down home button and press the power button to snap a picture of the screen. The picture is then added to your Camera Roll and can then be downloaded to your computer or emailed.

The next one is a smaller, but welcomed addition and that is the Mail app now has a BCC (blind carbon copy) field. Also you can now switch the outgoing account that the mail is going to come from on the fly (this only works if you have multiple email accounts, of course).

3rd Party App Support

Aside from getting my work email and pushed content from my contacts and iCals, 3rd party App support is the next biggest favorite of mine. No software company can do everything. Apple is no different. Therefore, I'm very happy to see Apple open the iPhone up to 3rd party developers. There are some really great apps for the iPhone and on day one Apple announced over 500 apps that are available in the iTunes App Store! Many of the apps are either free or very low cost. Some of the new apps even addressed some of my early criticisms of the iPhone. For example, I was surprised that Apple didn't include iChat (instant messaging) on the iPhone in addition to SMS. No worries because AOL has made AIM for iPhone available as a FREE app. Also I couldn't believe that there wasn't a Movies widget that would let you see theaters, movies and show times. Now I have two. Movies.app was my favorite web based iPhone app. Now it's a native iPhone app. I also found BoxOffice. I haven't decided which one I like best yet. They're both FREE!

Apple makes it pretty easy to add 3rd party apps to your iPhone. You can either download them using iTunes and then sync them to your iPhone or you can use the new App Store icon right on your iPhone to buy/download free apps. If you grab an app directly on your iPhone, it will be backed up to your computer the next time you sync.

Some of these 3rd party apps are really clever and take advantage of the built-in features of the iPhone. For example, Bank of America's "Mobile Banking" app uses the iPhone's location services. If you ask for the nearest ATM it will give you the option of keying in a zip code or simply finding it based on YOUR current location. The game Super Monkey Ball uses the built-in accelerometer and motion detectors of the iPhone to turn the entire iPhone into a game controller. Simply tilt and turn the iPhone to control the monkey through the game.

Having 500 apps available on day one is just the beginning! I expect to see hundreds more apps in the coming months.

My top 10 favorite iPhone apps

Remote, AIM, eBay, Movies.app, Mobile Banking, PayPal, Blackjack, Super Monkey Ball, MySpace

OK and then there's PhoneSaber because it just makes me (and everyone I show it to) laugh

However, the app that I'm most anxiously awaiting is Slingbox for the iPhone! That will be a killer app.

Still room for improvement

The iPhone 3g along with the iPhone 2.0 software update goes a long way towards improving an already great device. However, there are still dozens of things I'd like to see added! For starters, the one thing keeping the web experience from being perfect or near perfect is the lack of Flash support. Hopefully Adobe can get this on the iPhone soon. It is in the works! The iPhone still lacks some other basics such as MMS messaging (the ability to send/receive pictures/movies/sounds from phone to phone directly), voice dialing and video recording.

Here is my original list of **"50 Ways To Make The iPhone Better"** **(via software updates)**. The ones that Apple has added via iPhone software updates recently are colored blue and the ones that were added either via iPhone 2.0 or 3rd party software have been colored green. The ones in black are still on my wishlist:

1 - ~~Ability to use My OWN ringtones (sounds, music, etc.) The iTunes store will NEVER have some of the sounds I want to use.~~ 2 - Sync Notes to the computer 3 - Cut/Copy Paste system wide 4 - Email anything (besides notes, photos URLs) Contacts, maps, directions, voicemail messages as attachments, etc. 5 - MMS (Multimedia Messaging - send pictures/movies directly to another phone) 6 - Consolidated Mail inBox and an easier way to jump between accounts than going back, back, back 7 - **Flash support in Safari** (this is now my number ONE request). 8 - Video and ~~Voice (Memo) Recording~~ (3rd Party) 9 - ~~Color coded or Separate Calendar views (just like iCal does today)~~ 10 - ~~Searchable Contacts~~ (there but still needs improvement) 11 - To be able to assign ringtones to groups of Contacts (it's really a pain doing them one-by-one) 12 - ~~Wireless Syncing iPhone to Computer over Bluetooth or Wi-Fi~~ (MobileMe Push) 13 - ~~Voice~~

~~dialing~~ (3rd Party app - Speechcloud Voice Dialing - I haven't tried this app yet) 14 - Dial-up Networking (use the iPhone as a modem) 15 - ~~iPhones on AT&T corporate plans (discounts or not, I shouldn't have to setup a personal account to use the iPhone on AT&T)~~ 16 - Landscape Keyboard entry in all the apps 17 - Additional Audio email attachment support for files in Vonage (u-LAW encoded) WAV format 18 - Email to a group of Contacts 19 - ~~iChat/AIM built-in~~ (3rd Party) 20 - ~~Calculator CE (clear entry) key~~ 21 - ~~Native Microsoft Exchange support (MS Direct Push or 3rd party support).~~ 22 - Wireless stereo music playback over Bluetooth and AirTunes 23 - A one button Redial feature (example: triple tap the Home button) 24 - A "Dialed" list in addition to "Recent" and "Missed Calls" 25 - Ability to play music directly from the Slideshow feature 26 - ~~Built in Unit Converter~~ (I expect a 3rd party app for this) 27 - To Do's, sync'd with iCal/Outlook 28 - Password/Pin protected Notes 29 - An option that lets me choose what screen I land on when I wake my iPhone; it can either be (a) whichever I screen I was at last, like it does now, or (b) I can choose to always start at another screen (like the phone favorites, or the Home, etc.). 30 - Being able to rotate Mail 90 degrees 31 - Keynote app (now with TV out, you could use your iPhone for slide presentations without needing your laptop) 32 - ~~Pseudo GPS based on cell towers to tie in with Google Maps feature~~ (iPhone 3g includes a real GPS too) 33 - General file storage like a USB drive (Enable iPhone as a Hard Drive) 34 - Support for Stereo Audio over Bluetooth headphones 35 - Support for a Bluetooth Wireless Remote AND the ~~ability to use the iPhone as a Remote~~ 36 - Sound Profiles (example: I would create a profile that turns off all sounds except incoming calls for traveling) 37 - Auto dialing of a string of numbers/pauses (ie. you dial your company voicemail and tap a button to dial your ext. and pin) 38 - ~~Built in "Movies" widget (show times, buy tickets, trailers) Yes I know there are good web based ones. Having one built-in would be faster to access and could remember your settings.~~ (3rd Party) 39 - Safari password remember/store feature (Keychain for the iPhone) 40 - Multiple email signatures (also the ability to assign default ones per account) 41 - Mail spam filtering 42 - Mail Rules 43 - Full Bluetooth support on the Mac (Browse the device, dial from Address Book, etc.) 44 - ~~Delete multiple items at once such as emails~~ 45 - iPod songs as Alarm sounds 46 - ~~A true RSS reader (the one in Safari desktop would be a good start)~~ (3rd Party) 47 - Call duration display 48 - ~~SMS to multiple Contacts~~ 49 - ~~.Mac Push Email~~ 50 - The ability to direct ALL of the Audio sources over Bluetooth (such as email attachments, audio on web pages) 51 - ~~Built in Dictionary/Thesauru~~s (3rd Party) 52 - Add a ".com" button on the MAIL keyboard as well. 53 - ~~view PowerPoint attachments~~ and now iWork files too.

So as you can see Apple has made progress towards my list.

iPowerRush – iProduct battery backup

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Fusion Audio Technologies, Inc.
Eugene, OR
541-729-3899
info@ipowerrush.com
http://www.ipowerrush.com/
Released: February 26, 2008
$30 USD

Manual: http://www.ipowerrush.com/images/instr_lg.jpg

Strengths: Battery backup for iDevices.
Weaknesses: Batteries not included. Why not add rechargeable batteries, to be eco-friendly?

Other Reviews:
http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/ipowerrush_extends_battery_life_of_iphones_ipods1
http://iphone.click2creation.com/index.php/2008/03/ipowerrush-review/

Introduction

"Compatible with all Apple iDevices (iPod, iPhone, iTouch), the iPowerRush will increase the run time of your iProduct by 10 to 15 hours. Powered by 6 AAA batteries (not included) and equipped with a power on/ off slide switch the iPowerRush also sports a cool push button power indicator that tells you how much reserve is left in the unit. Coast to coast or shore to shore, just pop in 6 new AAA batteries and you're good to go! Anywhere, anytime. Never be without a Power Rush for your iDevice again.

The uniqueness of the iPowerrush is in its power source. It runs on six AAA batteries and provides instant power on for the iPhone while recharging the iPhone's internal battery at a rate of 50% capacity in just less than one hour. Most importantly, the iPowerRush delivers an unprecedented 500ma of current.

This fact is what sets iPowerRush apart from all other chargers on the market. By utilizing two sets of three batteries and then regulating the output voltage iPowerRush supplies the current and voltage other backup units cannot.

The iPowerRush naturally comes with a push-button Power Gauge and separate off/on Slider switch. An automatic limitation circuit prevents overcharging the device. The unit's slim design (2" by 3 5/8" by 1/2") somewhat resembles Apple's Nano and yet makes it extremely portable.

Apple estimates the iPhone battery can accommodate up to eight hours of talk time, six hours of Internet use, seven hours of video playback, 24 hours of audio and 240 hours of standby time. It's estimated that iPowerRush extends talk time by four hours, Internet use by three, video by 3.5, audio by 14 and standby by 120 hours."

What I Learned

There is not a whole lot to this add-on device. It's small. It's simple. It's plastic. It does require 6 AAAs. The on-off switch works. It does plug into the Dock port on iApple devices.

 It is a must-have when you run out of juice and you are out in the middle of nowhere-land.

Conclusions

This is one of those "I wished I'd thought of that" devices that ought to go into any kit bag for road warriors who have to be "plugged in" at all times and the iDevices don't have instant access (read USB) to getting repowered. It's cheap insurance.

MARWARE Sportfolio Blue for MacBook Pro 17"

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

MARWARE, Inc., 2402 Hollywood Blvd.,
Hollywood, FL 33020 USA info@marware.com
(954)-927-6031 (voice) (954) 927-2477 (fax)
http://www.marware.com/PRODUCTS/MacBook-
Pro/Sportfolio-for-MacBook-Pro?whence=
Released: 2007.
$60 USD

Strengths: Weatherproof. Non-slip strap. Metal
clips, rubber zipper tabs. Soft liners. Neoprene
construction. Solid.

Weaknesses: Cloth liners will wear with use. Will it
last? Not as well as a leather case would. Rubber-
coated zipper tabs might break.

There is a Deluxe version -
http://www.techcastnetwork.co.uk/2007/01/20/marw
are-sportfolio-deluxe/

Introduction

A sleek, sporty case that protects your Apple notebook, the Sportfolio easily adjusts to
your needs. Use it as a slim briefcase with the accompanying ultra-soft shoulder strap, or
remove the shoulder strap and use it as a protective slipcase in a briefcase or backpack.

Features:

- Large secure interior pocket for business essentials
- Plastic inserts and edge padding for maximum protection
- Easy-grip bottom for carrying as a folio
- Roomy exterior pockets
- Rugged neoprene outer construction
- Dual, lined zippers for easy opening
- Comfortable carrying handles

What I Learned

With permission from Pure Energy Systems, I bought my first portable Mac and decided to go with the best of the best – a 17" MacBook Pro, since I was told I would be doing a lot of traveling for the company. And I wanted a unit that performed well and could be used to iv great presentations using Keynote. But then the thought occurred to me as to how best protect it from gaining too much "character" too quickly. Something classy.

I looked to MARWARE for assistance and this is what I was sent. The leather units were all sold out or discontinued. I've carried bags that had plastic fasteners. These use metal ones. Mine is solid and almost carabineer-like and not like that shown in the picture below. Also, this case can be used like a brief case because it has handles if the strap is not desired. But the strap is a nice touch; soft on one side and neoprene for non-slip shoulder grip on the other. I like it. Straps of this quality can go for $30 or more.

The case has some heft. It is not a light cloth case. The soft walls hide rubber panels. The case itself is lined with neoprene where it matters most – on the seams and corners, so as not to scuff hardwood floors.

The zippers are also designed to not cut or scratch. Think of them as being "declawed", because they are rubber and not metal.

The liner "fuzz" is a nice touch too, in that it will not mar the metal cover of the MacBook Pro.

This case could be touted as "light duty". Don't take it on military operations. Because it is a cloth-based case, it won't take a lot of rough handling. Usually none of us do. The cloth pockets could rip and tear, so treat the case like you would do a loved one. Handle it with care and you should be okay.

Conclusion

Here is a case nearly half as heavy as the computer. It feels like it can handle bumps, bangs and bruises and protects the computer like a sleeve would do, but this one also has pockets inside and out for external parts and pieces.

The Amazing Soaripod

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

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http://www.soaripod.com/
Released: July 2008
$30 USD
Requirements: iTouch or iPhone.
http://www.soaripod.com/pictures.html
Comes With: Soaripod, Belt Clip holder, mesh bag.

Strengths: Has a handy Clip to mount with.

Weaknesses: A separate belt clip may be needed for real security of the iPhone 3G.

Competitor: http://joby.com/products/gorillapod/gogo/
Other Reviews: http://www.ilounge.com/index.php/reviews/entry/papadakis-technologies-soaripod/

Introduction

Papadakis Technologies has released the Soaripod, a US $29.95 accessory for people wishing to watch movies, television shows or videos on their mobile devices such as the iPhone and iPod touch. With it you can watch videos in a more comfortable position than having your head tilted down for a long period.

The Soaripod grasps the media device, but lets you adjust it to the most comfortable spot for your viewing pleasure. It was designed through extensive research by the president of Papadakis Technologies, George Papadakis, with the traveler in mind.

"The heart of the Soaripod is the P-clip (patent pending) attachment," he told Macsimum News. "It was designed to connect with a multitude of surfaces so you can watch movies anywhere, from planes, to trains, to automobiles. The 12-inch vertebrae gives you maximum flexibility to adjust the view of your media device, and allows you to watch a movie without having to strain your neck or back. You can position it for everybody to watch along with you, or you can position it only towards you for total privacy."
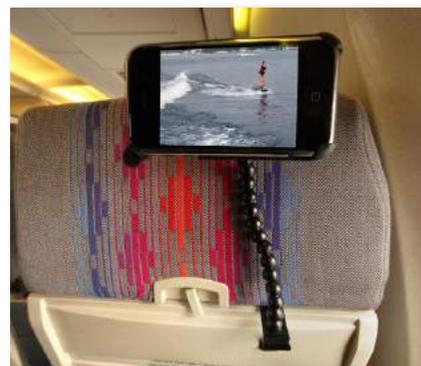
When you're done, the Soaripod's vertebrae collapses and disassembles storage in the included travel tote bag. The Soaripod comes with a clip to hold your iPhone/iPod touch, but can hold any other device with their respective belt clip.
http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/soaripod_released_for_iphones_ipod_touch/

My Experience

Well, at first it was; "What the heck?" And then I realized I needed to use the "belt clip" to squeeze the iPhone 3G into. It sort of kind of fits, but the clip holder has to sort of "stretch" to get a complete hold on the iPhone. Apparently, the older iPhones and iTouches don't have an issue.

As others have noted, a belt clip is al that is needed to hold the device in place. The one that comes with it can be rotated and it snaps as it rotates in what seems to be close to 45-degree increments (3 snaps from horizontal to vertical), so you know it is secured, at least as far as the Soaripod is concerned.

The "P-Clip" is not too strong, not too tight, but just right for easy slide on and slide off as long as you have an edge to clip it to.

And yes, there are 21 plastic intersecting ball joints.

Perfect for my desk.

Am I going to watch movies on it anytime soon? No. Convenient for using as a holder as a vidphone? Yes. Can I take pics using it as a holder? No.

Conclusion

Nice, if you intend to be tethered to your iPhone for long extended periods of time.

Tom Bihn's Ristretto Messenger Bag

By Guest Contributor, Kristine LeFevre
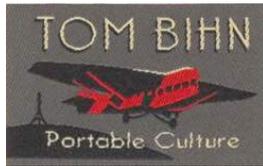
Tom Bihn
www.tombihn.com

$70 USD, $70 CND, £35 GBP, 45€ Euro

Requirements: Desire for perfection and quality.

Strengths: Great protection for your laptop, the benefits of the Cafe' bag, heavy duty construction, easy to carry.

Weaknesses: Really made for the MacBook Air and your thinner laptops.

Previous Reviews: Large Café bag, Swift bag.

Introduction (Hi!)

This bag has been specifically designed for the MacBook Air, 13" MacBook or IBM-Lenovo Thinkpad X300. Unfortunately, I do not have a MacBook Air so I have been using my 13" MacBook, and my iBook. I cannot say enough about Tom Bihn bags. Their computer and travel bags are the best around. I am a bag-a-holic, I am always on the lookout for new and interesting bags. I have yet to find any that match the quality of Tom Bihn.

What attracted me to this bag is that it has the look of the Cafe' bag, only vertical, and the protection of a computer bag, with a padded pocket for your laptop to sit in. I love the Cafe' bag, it is my favorite with the Swift coming in second, so I knew I would love this one too. This is the bag that has made the final cut for carrying around my iBook (I note here that I only carry this iBook around because it is what they gave me at work, I would much prefer the MacBook Air or to even use my personal MacBook). I travel from school to school and I need a bag that will protect my laptop from the daily wear and tear of being an itinerate teacher.

Description (all the technical stuff)

  Exterior of 1000 denier Cordura®. Lined with 500 denier Cordura®.
  Built-in padded compartment for the MacBook Air/13" MacBook/Thinkpad X300*
  Choose from three shoulder straps
  Overall measurements: 10.5 x 12.5 x 3"
  Made in the TOM BIHN Factory
  Padded Organizer Pouches for Superdrive, etc.

Using the Bag (The best part!)

What I like best about this bag is that I can carry
around my laptop, cords, iPod, cell phone, files,
keys, basically everything. I do notice though
when I put the iBook in, since it is thicker I have
a little less room in the main compartment.
(Which in a way is better because I fill my bags
to the brim usually with stuff I really don't need
and could stand to carry a little less with me.)

My computer is always protected due to the built
in padding. I really like this feature. It is like
having a built in Soft Cell in your bag. Since I
work in a high school and have to traverse the
hallways (y'all have seen the movies of high
school hallways, pretty realistic) with the
students, I like have the protection for my
computer.

Once again the shoulder strap is great. I have the
standard shoulder strap that came with the bag. I love the foam pad on the strap. It sits on your
shoulder and doesn't need fiddling with. Once you adjust the strap to the length you want your
all set. I also continue to use the key strap, as my work keys would be lost in the bottom of the
bag. The main compartment has built in pockets to hold pens/pencils, a cell phone and iPod,
which again keeps them from floating at the bottom. The front of the bag has a zippered pocket
and non-zippered pocket. These pockets are situated under the flap and are great for holding
your misc. items. A magazine or file, fits nicely in the back pocket for easy access.

Conclusion (just wrapping it up)

I like this bag. It keeps my computer safe and all my "stuff" organized and clutter free.

I love the Cafe' bag look to it and the ease in which I can insert and remove my computer. It
comes in great colors and is sturdy. This bag is great for someone on the move whether by car,
train, bus or bicycle. It can support the waist strap if you need to have your bag held closer to
your body, if on a bike or motorcycle, or walking down a busy city street. This bag combines the
look of the messenger bag with the protection of the Soft Cell. You just can't go wrong.

A Small Aside (by Wayne LeFevre)

Me, I think this is about the most perfect (man) bag of its type. It is my absolute favorite Tom Bihn bag. It will hold a MacBook, a magazine or two, and a few gadgets, maybe a book, but not much else.

It is a very slim, somewhat smaller bag. Think about the size of a MacBook, but about twice as thick. If anything, the only reason not to love it is that you cannot remove the padded protection for the computer. But then, that's the point of the bag, no?

It is not designed to be a "carry-all." It carries what you need if you want to, say, take your computer to a café, class or to work. With all the different color options that are available, and the quality of Tom Bihn, I heartily endorse this one! I give this one a 4.5 star rating.

Hear

By Ted Bade

Joesoft Engineering
Hear version 1
http://joesoft.com/
$50 USD
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or later; Universal binary;
256 MB RAM.
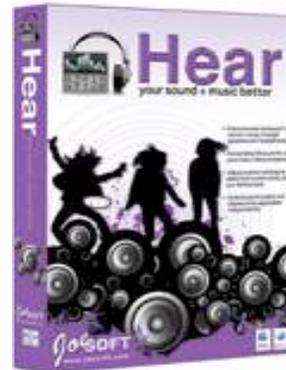
Strengths: Wonderful sound enhancements, lots of presets for just about any situation, easy to use.

Weaknesses: Limited documentation, sometimes doesn't work with USB headphones.

For a demo of this product: http://joesoft.com/downloads

Introduction

Hear is am amazing program that enhances the audio output of your Mac. It provides a variety of audio enhancements such as adding space, brightness, enhancing bass, and much more. You will be amazed at how your Mac sounds after installing Hear.

Hear does its magic by routing audio output through itself before it arrives at your Mac's audio output connections. The user can also control the volume output of any running application or turn Hear's functions off for individual applications as well as for all applications.

Think about it, your Macintosh interacts with you in two major ways, through sight and through sound. Yet the Mac tends to be lackluster when it comes to audio. There are many reasons for wanting to enhance audio. You might want better sounds from Mp3s, or use small speakers or lackluster headphones, or even use a less then wonderful amplifier. Hear can help with all these things.

MP3s are compressed by removing parts of the music. While most of this loss is outside of our normal hearing range, many people notice a lack of brilliance in the higher frequency ranges. Hear can boost these areas to make the higher frequency sounds more brilliant and therefore sound more natural. Most smaller speakers or headphones lack the ability to reproduce lower frequency sounds well. Hear can enhance the lower frequency sounds to make your smaller speakers sound better. It even has a function to add a sub-woofer like effect to a two-speaker system.

What I learned

One of the major problems with all stereo reproduction is that, while we have two ears (like the two microphones that record in stereo), but our brains process the sound we hear in a variety of ways. It sums up the input to our ears directly into the ear channel as well as through our head and other parts of our body, it also takes into account the timing differences of a particular sound as heard by each ear. Thus we "hear" spatial differences and can locate a sound sources. Stereo recorders cannot take into account all these variations, so the sound they produce sounds less real. A lot of work has been done over the past several years on how to make a stereo recording sound more real, making the audio sound more three dimensional. Hear makes use of some of these electronic tricks to make the sound more natural. It has functions that can add audio 3D effects, ambience, space to the sounds stage and more.

Another issue with audio in general is our ears. Some of us hear higher or lower frequencies better. Some of us have hearing loss in certain ranges of frequencies. Using Hear, you can enhance those areas where your ears don't function the best, adding or removing power to those areas, to balance the audio making it sound the best it can for you.

Hear controls affect music in the following areas: It has an audio equalizer which can be changed from 10 to 96 ranges of sound, the 3D area makes the sound move out of the speakers using several different controls, Ambience adds reverb effects, making your listening room sound bigger, an "FX" effect that controls the sounds in a variety of ways, a maximizer areas that gives you controls of the low and high contours, a "Brainwave Synthesizer" that effects the sound in yet another way, specific to the listener and their equipment, a Space effect that creates a virtual sounding space around the listener, a Fidelity control that restores sound often damaged in the recording process, A speaker section that lets the user adjust for a variety of speaker situations, and a subwoofer section that allows the user to control or even simulate a sub woofer. This program gives you a lot of control of the audio you listen to.

Hear's interface is simple. But you might need to find an audiophile (or audio engineer's) manual to understand what some of the functions do. Information provided by the program and the PDF manual is basic. The good news is you don't necessarily need to understand any of this to enjoy the features of the program. You could simply change each control and listen to the effect to understand what it does. Better yet, try a bunch of the included preset configurations.

Hear comes with a lot of preset configurations. Some are generic that work well in many situations and some are specific to a particular function. The standard presets are organized into sets such as basic (for general use). Effects (creates an effect space like a closet, large room, or subway tunnel), Games (for a variety of games types), Movie and TV (for various entertainment types like sports, comedy, action, etc), Music (for a large variety of music genres), and finally speech (voice recordings). I found that I could only sample a few of the plethora of presets provided with the CD and there is a folder with "additional presets" as well!

Experiment with the presets, listen to what happens, and settle on a preset that handles your particular needs. All of what Hear actually does can be heard (☺). When I first ran Hear I tried a number of the presets and used the program's ability to turn its effects on and off to hear the difference. I was really amazed. For most music, adding 3D and space effects makes the music fill the room, giving it more depth and making it sound more realistic. Ambience and base effects add depth and detail to the music. The overall effect is that the audio seems a lot richer and much more pleasant to hear!

I should admit that I do have a nicer audio system connected to my Mac via the fiber optic audio channel. My receiver can do surround sound and has a powered sub-woofer along with five good quality speakers attached to it. Which means I get pretty good audio normally. When I installed Hear I first noticed the wonderful effects of adding space and high end brilliance back to the audio. My "stereo only" iTunes music now seems to float in the air around my Mac rather then distinctly from only the front speakers.

The 3D and other space effects are even more noticeable when playing a game (such as World of Warcraft) which provides many different environmental sounds, along with ambient sounds, and music. With Hear turned on this audio is nicer, clearer or at least less muddy, and seem to fill the space a lot more. Obviously, adding space to environmental audio makes it sound a whole lot more realistic. Truthfully, while playing with Hear turned on, I heard a few effects that I don't believe I had heard before! For instance, the clinking of armor as I ran and the sound of raindrops were noticeable even with the other sounds of the game filling the space, not to mention the music coming from iTunes playlists I listen to while playing.

I also tried Hear with a Mac Mini that has only a two speaker system. There is no way these two speakers could sound as nice as a better audio system. However, using Hear significantly improved the audio quality. With a little playing around I was able to make an audio file that is heavy on the bass end change from the normal flat and powerless sound to a more powerful and rich sound. with clear bass frequencies. As a matter of fact, it was so nice that I don't think I would consider listening to audio on that machine any more without Hear!

Although using hear is very easy there were a few issues I had with it. The first is not really an issue with the program per se but with **using** the program. The setup that might sound good with one type of audio file might not be the best for another. Say you have an older recording and tweak Hear to make it sound pretty good. Later, when you play a different and better recorded file, these effects might add distortion or make the audio sound worse then it should.

Another situation involves moving from one type of music or audio activity to another. Let's say you turn on the preset that sounds great with Jazz, but then switch from Jazz to Electronica (I am a fan of both and tend to switch back and forth from day to day), The Jazz preset doesn't sound that great with the Electronic music, (Nor does the Electronic Preset sound that good with the Jazz). Not to mention, what should I do when listening to either type of music while playing a game? (My wish list for this program includes being able to set Hear presets within iTunes! So if a particular audio piece needs a specific preset, it would automatically play with it.)

My solution was to find a generic preset that enhances the general audio, without over doing any particular area. There is one section of presets that are designed for the audio system rather then what type of audio is being listened to. This is a great place to start with a generic preset. In the Defaults set of presets you will find settings like "Basic surround, reduce midrange, and clean touch. Try them out and see which sounds the best with your particular equipment and activities. Of course, you can tweak the individual controls and create a preset of your own. It might take a bit of time and experimenting, but it will work the best for your situation.

Hear also includes a feature that allows one to turn it's effects off for one or more applications. I found this function very useful for a couple of reasons. First of all, to resolve the game and music dilemma, I could choose to turn the effects off for one or the other. Since the quality of the music I listen to is pretty nice, and adding space to the game is a cooler effect, I could turn off the effects for iTunes (which I use to listen to music when playing). So I enjoy the 3D and space effects in the game and don't do anything to the music. The other solution was to stick with a general enhancer that makes the music sound better in general. All music could use a little space, a but more bass response, and a little brilliance on the high end. This works well for games as well as other audio activities.

I did run into one issue when using Hear. I had started an Electronic Arts game just before installing Hear. Suddenly, the game crashed on start up. I discovered that the Hear features were causing the game to crash. Rather then uninstalling Hear, I used the Hear interface to turn its features off for that game. This allows it to run okay.

I also had some issues with my surround sound headset (surround headphones and microphone) Hear didn't seem to be able to effect the audio going to these headphones. As we come to the deadline, I was in contact with the company on this and they are looking into it.
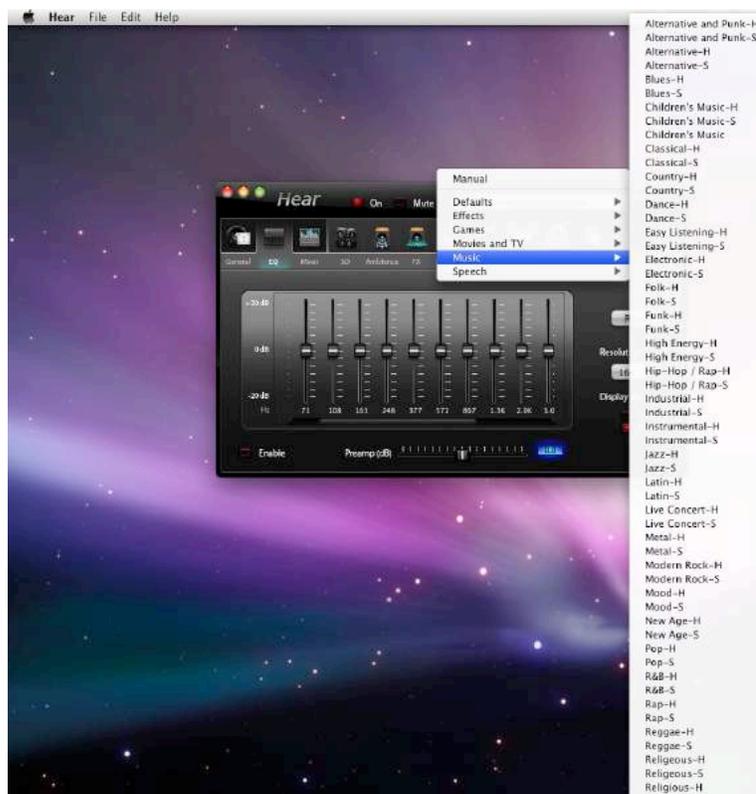
You can also get carried away when trying Hear's features. Turning this and that on or off, before you know it you have completely messed up the sound! Luckily, it is easy to simply restore to a standard preset and go back to experimenting!

Conclusion

Hear is a great application. It enhances audio in several different ways which put life and brilliance back into audio. It can also do a lot to make poor speakers or a lousy amplifier sound better. Most importantly, it expands the music, making it sound more natural by filling your listening space, which is light-years ahead of standard stereo. I am truly convinced that Hear is well worth the money. Turn it on and see just how wonderful your audio can be!

I've the NO UPC for my Leopard

iMac Blues
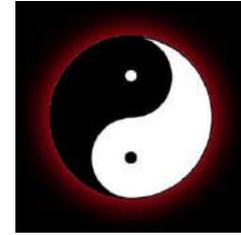
Rants, Raves and Revelations – August

By Harry {doc} Babad   © 2008

RANT: There are *no, none, niet, neine, non…* LEOPARD compliant Uninterruptible Power Supplies [UPC's] available, at least none that I've been able to find. Companies like American Power Conversion's (APC) and Belkin advertise in Macintosh publications without identifying the software limitation. Here are two sample APC adds

| **Macworld - February 2008** | **Macworld - August 2008** |

Now many of you who read either the Macintosh print media (e.g., Macworld, Mac|Life, perhaps macHOME) will have heard about the virtues of using an UPS to protect your hardware/software and document investments. You now, if you're a cautious person with an investment in your computer system and it's peripherals, you want to keep it safe from power surges and outages. Indeed, you probably have surge protectors on your present equipment… good but not great.

You really want to be able to withstand a voltage or other line glitch AND shut down you system safely. To do so you need the UPS to access your operating system…save you work and do a safe shutdown, even when the electrify in your home has shut down.

Aye, there's the rub! The two leading brands, those folks who most often advertise to Macintosh users, no longer have software that allows system shutdown if you, like many of us, are a Macintosh OS X Leopard user. Neither Belkin's Bulldog Plus v3.0.0 software and American Power Conversion's (APC) PowerChute Personal Edition v1.3.3 support Tiger but neither supported Leopard OPS X. 10.5.x. So I delayed updating to Leopard, as my of my readers know, while awaiting drivers and updates. I've previously owned, classic though tiger OS's, Belkin hardware and software systems — they worked. I have friends (<Tiger OS) who use the APC UPS systems and are pleased to recommend them.

The Belkin Story — I own and had been happy with Belkin's Model UPS F6C900-UNV. Initial call's, in February to Belkin technical support, assured me that there would be an update soon. Time passed; meanwhile I had protection from power outages and line problems, but no shutdown ability. Even our friends at HP had gotten around to updating the drivers for my older HP 8250 {Color) ScanJet. Okay, Belkin, what happening. Oh, the company had decided not to update their software support to Leopard and to add insult to injury don't provide that information on their website.

Let's Give APC a Look — Okay, after reading recent advertisements from APC in both Macworld and Mac|Life I decided to check out those UPS products. Two things, beyond the obvious drove me in that direction.

- First, a wide range of the APC UPS's were available on Amazon.com and on other Macintosh Superstore sites so I found what I needed, I could save some money.

- Secondly, when checking the APC website, I found they'd provided a good but slightly flawed tool {UPS Sizing Selector} for selecting the appropriate model UPS needed, a selection based on my hardware configuration and protection needs.

Great! But nowhere in the APC selection tool page was Macintosh OS, or for that part PC OS or LINUX compatibility mentioned. Okay, that's not quite right (See the screen shot below) – Macintosh hardware is indeed mentioned.

Learning that Leopard was not supported was a longer process. First checking the specifications for my selected UPS, APC BR1500LCD 1500VA 865 Watts 8 Outlets BACK-UPS, I found that the software supported Macintosh OS 10.4.1 {PowerChute Personal Edition v1.3.3 (10.3.9 - 10.4.1)} but

not Leopard. So, just because, I called APC's customer support line, and was pleased with their service, but appalled that they were still "working on" Leopard compliant software. My contact also confirmed that my choice of model was correct for my needs. After all Leopard was released on the 27th of October 2007… months ago.

But the chase provided me a freebie tidbit -

> Do not plug your printer into an outlet that provides battery backup power. Printers draw a very large amount of power and it is not advised that they be provided with UPS backup power because it is not economical. Many UPS for desktop use have additional surge protected outlets that do not provide backup power. This is where laser printers should be plugged in. Since laser printers are plugged into outlets that do not use the UPS battery, the presence of the laser printer does not affect UPS wattage or run time. If you do plug the Ink Jet Printer into the outlets with battery backup power, the UPS backup time during an outage will be reduced.

Okay, all right — I ran a quick check on other brands of UPS, picked on the basis of company name recognition, and found no devices that support Leopard.

So right now I wait, listen to weather reports, and am otherwise up the creek without a paddle. I wish I know hop to share this information with Apple; but I will send it to Macworld and Mac|Life for their information. No it's not false advertising, jut sheer obfuscation (e.g., the concealing of unpleasant facts.)

And for those of you unfamiliar with surge protectors and interruptible power supplies, read on.

Time out for definitions of functions

"A *surge protector* is an appliance designed to protect electrical devices from voltage spikes. A surge protector attempts to regulate the voltage supplied to an electric device by either blocking or by shorting to ground voltages above a safe threshold. The following text discusses specifications and components relevant only to the type of protector that diverts (shorts) a voltage spike to ground." To learn more check out: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surge_Protector>.

"An *uninterruptible power supply* also known as a continuous power supply (CPS) or a battery backup is a device which maintains a continuous supply of electric power to connected equipment by supplying power from a separate source when utility power is not available. It differs from an auxiliary power supply or standby generator, which does not provide instant protection from a momentary power interruption. Integrated systems that have UPS and standby generator components are often referred to as emergency power systems.

"There are several distinct types of UPS: off-line, line-interactive and double conversion (also called on-line). An off-line UPS remains idle until a power failure occurs, and then switches from utility power to its own power source, almost instantaneously. An on-line UPS continuously powers the protected load from its energy reserves stored in a lead-acid battery or flywheel, while simultaneously replenishing the reserves from the AC power. It also provides protection against all common power problems. For this reason it is also known as a power conditioner and a line conditioner." To learn more check out: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uninterruptible_power_supplies>

A properly design UPS with functioning software will (1) protect you computer and peripherals from power related problems for a unit defined period of time. Secondarily, (2) it save all open documents on your computer and then switch the computer off. *This is the protection I need since I'm not always at home using my system when lightening strikes or the city's power fails*.

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http://store.apple.com/AppleStore/WebObjects/BizCustom?qprm=484614&cid=AOS-US-KOW-BPRO&aosid=p212&kbid=1137

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Advertising Information

Contact Robert Pritchett, our Ad and Marketing Director, for working through the process of advertising with us.

rpritchett@maccompanion.com

We are the Macintosh® Professional Network (MPN), Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). MPN, LLC continues to evolve, ever since its creation in 1996 as a way to reach out to those who use computers for a living in an effort to make their lives easier and their work both enjoyable and profitable.

We also provide monthly book, hardware and software reviews at *macCompanion*. We offer ways and means for folks to get comfortable using the Macintosh™ created by the Apple® Corporation in the multibillion-dollar computer industry. We know that bad software doesn't live long in the Mac™ environment. On the other hand, good computer equipment and software becomes great as the word spreads, and we are very good at helping to spread it. Our suggestions over the years have also helped improve many successful products in use today. Through kind and gentle efforts, we have been able to help many people move to better tools-of-the-trade so they can be more productive in their work.

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.

Statistical Analysis

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".

Advertising with macCompanion

We have some advertising options you may choose from, and multiple months receive a 20% discount for both website and PDF-based ads. All advertising must be paid in advance. We accept credit card payments via PayPal, checks, money orders, by regular mail and cash in US currency by hand, if you meet us face-to-face.

Site Ad Rate

We offer website ads for a fixed-budget price of only $100 per month on our site. Following the KISS principle, we accept banner ads in only one size at this time - 468x60 pixels (per the Interactive Advertising Bureau standards for a Full Banner Ad Interactive Marketing Unit.) The ad will be rotated through with other ads, and there is no limit to how many you want to include.

The billing cycle begins based on the first day the ad placed on the site and is renewable on a monthly basis. This can begin immediately or at any time.

Affiliations

We do affiliations, and work with those who have made arrangements with online affiliate systems, or we deal directly with you if you have created code, and have a contract we can sign. Check out the Bazaar on our website at http://www.maccompanion.com/bazaar/bazaarindex.html

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We also accept sponsorships. Please let us know if you would like to sponsor *macCompanion*!

If you are as excited about our *macCompanion* readership as we are, please download the contractual terms and conditions documentation that are online in PDF format, or we can send them to you as an attachment. We'd enjoy having an ongoing working relationship with you too.

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