

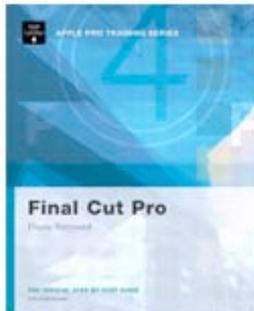
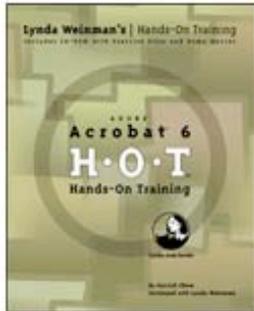
The Macintosh Professional Network Presents

macCompanion

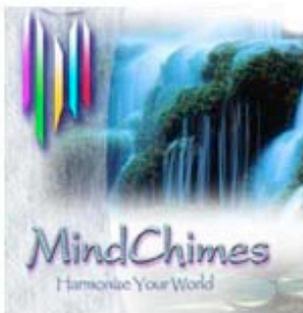
Your Guide To All Things Macintosh

January 2004 Issue 1 Volume 2

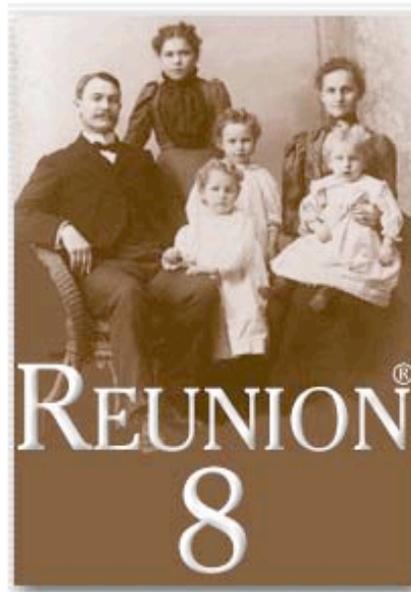
Books



Audio



Features



Family tree software that gets at the roots

Software



Fun 'N Games



© Macintosh Professional Network, LLC 2004. All Rights Reserved

Cover by Derek Caudill

Table of Contents

Contacts	3
Letter From the CEO	4
How can we help make the world a better place in which to live this year?	4
Letter From the Editor	6
Views from the Ivory Tower	7
Real World	9
For Would-Be Literati Only	9
Feature	12
Reunion□ 8.05 – Family tree software that gets at the roots	12
Audio	16
MindChimes 4.0: Virtual wind chimes	16
MusicSafari v1.1	18
Books	21
Adobe□ Acrobat□ 6 Hands-On-Training	21
Final Cut Pro 4 Editing Professional Video - Apple Pro Training Series	23
How to Do Everything with Adobe Acrobat 6.0□	26
The Best of The Joy of Tech	27
Mac OS X Panther Pocket Guide	28
Mac OS X Unwired A Guide for Home, Office, and the Road	29
The Non-Designer's Design Book, Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice Second Edition	30
Photoshop Elements® 2.0: 50 Ways to Create Cool Pictures	35
Games	37
Star Trek Elite Force II	37
Software	42
Anark Studio™ 2	42
FileMaker Pro™ 6 MacAcademy Volume 2 (<i>Layout and Form Design</i>)	44
Wildform Flix Pro 3.1 – Flash Video Authoring Tool	48
Mask Pro 3.0	52
Snapz Pro X 1.0.9 – Screen Capture	57
Speed Download 2	60
WorkStrip™ 3.0 – A launcher and work management tool	64

Contacts

Officers:

CEO/Publisher/Editor-in-Chief:

Robert Pritchett

Consultants:

Harry {doc} Babad

Ted Bade

Assistant Editor:

Julie M. Willingham

WebMaster:

Derek Caudill

Contact:

Feedback@maccompanion.com

Robert Pritchett,

CEO of MPN, LLC

Publisher of macCompanion

1952 Thayer Drive

Richland, WA 99352

USA

1-509-943-2524

rpritchett@maccompanion.com

Application Service Provider:

<http://www.stephousehosting.com>

This month's authors:

Ted Bade

Harry {doc} Babad

Dr. Eric Flesher

Shane French

Robert Pritchett

Julie M. Willingham

And our special thanks to those who have allowed us to review their products!

Letter From the CEO

How can we help make the world a better place in which to live this year?

Let me count some of the ways...

Buy Apple products:

Both Apple and the industry it fosters provide great products designed to improve the quality of life around the world.

Paul Roberts, IDG News Service, wrote **Experts: MS tweaks, new law won't make 04 safer** at <http://maccentral.macworld.com/news/2003/12/26/safer/index.php?redirect=1072511327000>

Jon Udell, InfoWorld wrote **Mobile Webcasting** at http://archive.infoworld.com/article/03/11/26/47OPstrategic_1.html "It's easy, it's cheap, it works like a charm."

Reduce Spam:

US Federal Laws notwithstanding, we can stop its spread by not participating in it and by going after folks who abuse the system.

See Gene Steinberg's December 27th article; **Spam, Spam and More Spam: Will New Laws Work?** at <http://www.macnighthowl.com/index.htm#work>

Promote Apple Advocacy:

Help innovate ourselves out of the economic doledrums in spite of naysayers.

Carleen Hawn wrote, **If He's So Smart...Steve Jobs, Apple, and the Limits of Innovation** at <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/78/jobs.html>

Eric Bangeman looks back at 2003 at <http://www.arstechnica.com/etc/mac/index.html>

Read *macCompanion*:

Why not promote us too?

We have an RSS feed with *NetNewsWire* and a plug-in for *MacReporter* at <http://maccompanion.com/rssv92.html> to help keep you up-to-date as well as our own notify@maccompanion.com so you can keep up on what is happening here. We also have a PDF version of each issue you may download at <http://maccompanion.com/buyissue.html>. You can also make us your home page at <http://maccompanion.com/bookmarkus.html> and even advertise or link to us at <http://maccompanion.com/solicitation.html>.

We'll continue to morph our website and offer other services this year. Why not become a part of the process? Read. Subscribe. Advertise. Communicate.

Use Mac-based and Mac-friendly Internet providers:

We use *STEPHOUSE* for hosting *macCompanion* at <http://www.stepphousehosting.com/>. They use an XServe to house our site. They also are an ISP. Try them. Why not do a google search and find a Mac-based ISP near you? Some are national and international. They don't suffer as much from the Internet-nasties as other platforms do. But you knew that, right?

Help put *macCompanion* on the International map:

Exposure, and location are both desirable.

Along with our 2004 campaign to "get the word out" about the wonders of the Macintosh platform, we are going to be doing a few things here at *macCompanion* to sweeten the pot. We will reduce the PDF version from \$2 to \$1 per issue and have an annual subscription for \$10 (real soon now).

We will also be having some fun running a contest/competition (no cash rewards, just some hardware/software from interested vendors). This will be open to all comers. (We'll work on shipping arrangements if you win and are beyond the borders of the USA.) We'll work on distributing something monthly. Why are we doing this? We'd like to beef up (no Washington State mad-cow jokes, okay?) our subscriber list and our notify list and we don't want to do it by way of that other illegal pork-byproduct Monty Python made famous - <http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~ddgarcia/spam.html>.

Here's what we plan to do: We are looking for a piece of music about the Macintosh that could be used on the *macCompanion* website. We will take the best entries and post them online for viewing and voting via our up-and-coming *macCompanion* Forum our webmaster is developing. The best song picked will get the best prize. Then we will run some other contests throughout the year. Put your creativity to work! Let us know what you think would be cool or hot at contest@maccompanion.com. Heck, the music could even become something that could be heard during a Stevenote!

Everyone loves a party. Let's make 2004 a big one!

Letter From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *macCompanion* for 2004!

This is going to be an exciting year for *Apple Computers* and all the industry that it has created. We'll see more after MacWorld SF (<http://www.macworldexpo.com/>) reports on what is in store for 2004.

Meanwhile, look in our pages and see what magic we have stirred up for you. Over the Holidays I read a few other SciFi and Fantasy books such as *Tennis Shoes among the Nephites* (<http://www.cheimerdinger.com>) by Chris Heimerdinger (an exciting romp through MesoAmerica), *Midnight for CharlieBone* and *Charlie Bone and the Time Twister* by Jenny Nimmo, (<http://scifan.com/writers/nn/NimmoJenny.asp>) (Charlie Bone magi-fantasy) and *Inkheart* by Cornelia Funke, (http://www.anovelview.com/cornelia_funke1.htm) (a fantasy book about book-character backlash). After reading *Inkheart*, I see this site in a different light: <http://www.bushin30seconds.org/>. It is so important that we speak truth and not propaganda – because it will bite us when we least expect it – and could bite often.

Why was this Holiday time valuable for me? There is a lot of stuff that has been written through desktop publishing and the magic of computing. Macintosh systems help make that magic possible. Let's spread truth and not falsehoods about the systems and software we use – and I'm not just talking about computer systems in an election year.

As you read through this issue of *macCompanion*, you too may sense the magic and fantasy open up to you as you read through each page our own staff have been able to conjure up for you. And perhaps you too will be able to distinguish between what is fantasy and what is really real.

Enjoy!

Views from the Ivory Tower

By Ted Bade

Greetings and welcome to a new year. December was a busy month and we saw the release of some exciting new stuff for the Macintosh. Most noticeably was the release of the game Halo for the Mac.

I am anticipating some exciting news from the MacWorld Expo in San Francisco this month. More on that in next month's article. For now lets see what the lovely month of December brought us.

Design Awards - It seems more and more that Apple is in the news winning awards for design and innovation. Recently Fortune magazine rated the top 25 designed products of the year. Are you surprised to find that Apple's G5 was on this list? I'm not. Its a marvelous machine, which I love more then I loved my older G4. Its cool, innovative, and it works. Not to mention, it's quiet!

Good job to Apple's design team for getting this award. To read the full article and look at all the cool items that Fortune rated for design visit: <http://www.fortune.com/fortune/photoessay/0,18467,546679-1,00.html>

Newer larger hard drives on the horizon - Computer research marches on. Recently a group of researchers discovered that a plastic material that is used as part of an anti-static coating on monitors could be used to store data in densities that are ten time higher then current hard drive materials. The name of the material is, well a wicked long chemical name, but they have given it one of those laymen names: perdot.

In an article found at the BBC news website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3245822.stm>, for the full article, they give an example of the material being able to store about 1 gigabyte in a cube the size of a sugar cube. Readers of SF might recall the Great SF author Isaac Asimov and his "Encyclopedia Galactica", in which the entire sum of knowledge in this universe was stored on a small cube. Seems like technology of the 21st century might be heading in that direction sooner then he thought!

A Faster G5??? - Steve Jobs told us that a newer faster G5 chip, and therefore Macintosh, would be available in 2004. Recently Forbes magazine online had an article concerning the future of Apple and the G5. In that article http://www.forbes.com/2003/12/22/cx_ah_1222aapl.html, they reported that IBM is ready to provide Apple with the next version of the G5.

This newer chip is expected to provide both a speed increase and size decrease. The value of the speed bump is obvious. By reducing the size down to 90 nanometers, the chip will require less power. It is possible that the newer chips will require less power even at considerably faster clock speeds. If the power requirement reduction of the newer chips is enough, we might see a G5 based PowerBook! Now that would be cool!! (or should I say, that would be hot?)

Halo for the Macintosh - If you are a fan of games and own a Mac, you probably have already heard that the Bungie's (now owned by Microsoft Corporation), Halo is now available for the Macintosh.

It has been a couple of years since the great Macintosh gaming company, Bungie, was bought by the folks in Redmond. Bungie produced some of the best Macintosh games (Marathon series, Myth series) and, I believe, made many people aware that the Macintosh was a viable platform for great games. They had been working on Halo when Microsoft bought them. Computer gaming fans, both Macintosh and Wintel based, waited anxiously for Microsoft to sell enough Xbox gaming systems to satisfy their bean counters, and release Halo to the home computer gaming industry.

In Late 2003 the Wintel version was released and in mid-December the Macintosh version was released. It is, IMHO, a great game, a lot of fun and contains that element of humor that the guys at Bungie have been known for. If you like first person shooter games with style and humor, definitely check this one out. For more information checkout the Macintosh Halo website: <http://www.macsoftgames.com/products/halo/MacSoft-Halo.html>.

By the way, playing Halo is quite intense! I have been playing games by Bungie since the beginning. Two things

they include in their games that other games usually don't offer is a warped sense of humor and the intensity of involvement. Listen to the comments of the Bots that show up in Halo, their comments will often make you smile. Then again, you might be too involved in the game to listen....

If you are into gaming, be sure to check out the new part of Apple's web site dedicated to game peripherals at <http://www.apple.com/games/gettingstarted/peripherals/>. Yes, Apple is aware that many users like to play games. Slowly they are showing they realize this by offering information that is of use to gamers!

Apple improves its discussion area web site - In December Apple released a redesign of its discussion and support areas. The improvements are supposed to help people more easily find answers to questions and add a credibility factor to answers one reads.

As a member of the discussion lists you can provide information about yourself. If you become involved, which I am sure Apple desires, then your rating or level goes up and you get extra "benefits", such as the ability to post a custom icon or more information about yourself. It appears most of these benefits are geared toward providing contact information. If one becomes involved in the discussions, helps other people resolve issues, then one will be able to post contact information so that people can contact you directly and perhaps even purchase your services.

On the other side of this coin, if you are a person who has a question, you can use this rating information to help evaluate the answers you get, search for answers appropriate to your situation, or even locate a person near you for extra help!

More Electronic Music - MP3.com was recently bought out by CNET. MP3.com, I believe, was very instrumental in making MP3 music popular. They were a great boon to many independent artists that have no other real means of making a presence on the Internet. I will miss MP3.com. I spent many hours searching through the many artists they made available. There are several MP3.com CDs in my collection.

What will CNET do? I haven't heard much. They gave members of MP3.com the opportunity to get Email from the new company (or refuse it). I agreed to receive Emails from them, but have heard very little. I hope they decide to give Internet space to the over 250,000 mostly independent artists that were represented by MP3.com. However, MP3's music archive wasn't part of the deal when the MP3 domain was sold. So it was just deleted.....

More and more music stores - Everybody is getting into selling music. In the last couple of months we have heard that Napster is back, sharing music for money! Dell, HP, Microsoft, and even Wal-Mart are now (or will soon be) selling music online. This is great for the artists and for the consumers. I am not sure how the record companies are doing with all this. Apparently the sale of CDs is dropping drastically.

While we might say that Apple helped bring about the Internet Music Store concept, I seriously doubt that they will remain in the lead. They have two major factors against them. First is Apple's own fault; their consistent habit of starting something new and wonderful then letting the rest of the world take over with their own versions. Secondly, there are a LOT more Wintel based PCs than Macs. I expect that soon, every new Dell will come with a link to Dell's music store, every new HP with a link to HP's store, and so on. Each would even include a certificate to download a few free songs. I even expect to see Computer's sold at Wal-Mart (with Lindows or whatever they call it), to come with a certificate for songs from their store. Once people get used to a service with a particular company, few will change or even explore other options.

Apple really needed to be very aggressive when first promoting the iTunes Music Store (ITMS), especially with Wintel users. But they blew that by not immediately releasing the Windows version, thus giving time for other people to build support of Windows based PCs. Additionally, by not letting iTunes support other MP3 players, Apple limits the market even more. Why would anyone want to use a store that didn't support their current player and required that they buy a \$300+ player? Even as a dedicated Mac-fanatic, I might think long and hard about spending \$300+ to carry songs which work fine on the player I already own.

Enough music for now. Join me as well turn our eyes toward MacWorld Expo in SF and see what exciting things Steve Jobs will be displaying this year!

Real World

For Would-Be Literati Only

—A good flexible thesaurus and links to the world of electronic dictionaries, a writer's friend.

by Harry {doc} Babad

Edited by Julie M. Willingham

So why would I write a column about dictionary links and a very good software thesaurus or two? Why would I load the article with more polysyllabic words than ought to be put on any eZine page? Heck, it's just a way to show you folks out there...there is truly a better way to deal with lost words.

I certainly own at least four very good dictionaries, ranging from those for mere words to those of a scientific nature. There's also a copy of *Roget's II-The New Thesaurus* sitting behind my computer desk, as is the *American Heritage Dictionary*. Now that doesn't count the other books I keep only an arm's length away. For finding antonyms and checking spelling, I frequently use *The Pocket Word Finder Thesaurus*. To help me check word spelling where the typed word is too spindled and mutilated for MS Word to deal with, I use *The Word Book II*. (For a complete citation, see the reference section at the end of this article.) But what I really rely on when writing documents are my electronic tools. Those are either stand-alone software or in narrowly focused search engine format linked to the World Wide Web. Understand that the stand-alone software versions of the American Heritage Dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus that I used years ago are prettier, because they contain illustrations. I now prefer to work from within a document, either through Apple's Mac OS X 10.x Services functions or with a click on a URL stored in my Dock™. After all, the Web is updated constantly, so I don't have to update the dictionary and thesaurus software applications. If I want a picture with my definitions or synonyms, I reach for the books.

Let's first find out about you! If what follows doesn't fit, turn the page and read the rest of our January issue.

- Do you like to write but sometimes get stuck on a word or a meaning?
- Are you occasionally at a loss for the right word? You know it's out there!
- Do you sometimes find that every spelling variant you try bounces? For example, I can't tell you how many ways I misspell *bureaucratic* before I get it right.
- Do you need a word but only remember the word with the opposite meaning (antonym?)

You know the feeling...the word you typed is just out of touch, a shadow in your mind's eye, or seems almost right, but not quite. My response to these semantic 'state of being a writer' problems too numerous to mention is to find and use electronic tools which at least make my search quicker, if not exactly easier. [Julie, no telling please! ... I'll pull your "Q" Clearance for most queenly editor...!]

What you need is a good, easy to use thesaurus assisted by a dictionary that also serves to guide you to synonyms and antonyms. Roget wrote one of the best and most widely used books. It's the one on the easy-to-reach bookshelf behind my desk. But, as great a book as it is, it drives me hyper because it's not hyper-linked! Having to word-by-word (page by page) linearly chase threads to possible useful words is something I thought I'd outgrown when I bought my first serious Macintosh. Goodbye, I thought, to manually chasing possible words helter-skelter over a thousand-page book to find the one that fits my thoughts. It seemed a bit awkward, especially as I got smarter in Macin' around. The paper search requires either a mnemonic memory or a scratch pad as I keep turning pages (yes, I use paper pads and a ballpoint pen for capturing ideas when there's a power outage, while camping in the rough, or when I'm barely awake in the middle of the night with a bright idea). So, over the years I've searched the Internet wonder-worlds looking for a better, easier way...the right software tools. I'll not bore you with past and now discarded finds, but will use this column to share with you my current favorites.

My Most Recent Finds and Selected Choices for Word Search Tools

Thesauri— My present choice for chasing synonyms around is the excellent and visually straightforward *Nisus™ Thesaurus™* Version 1.0.3. The software also provides word definition, thus serving as a dictionary as well. This tool is simple to install and use, and is given away free by the folks who gave you Nisus Write Express™ (Nisus

Software, Inc. <http://www.nisus.com/>). Although Mac OS X comes with built-in spelling checker, as do many applications, they are not thesaurus substitutes. Thanks to Nisus, you can download a free thesaurus, integrated to most of your software. This 120,000-word thesaurus can be used from within most of your applications, but alas not those from Microsoft™. With *Nisus Thesaurus*, you get a fast electronic thesaurus that automatically integrates with any Apple 'services' aware application. The Nisus thesaurus engine is provided by Princeton University, called *WordNet*®, an online lexical reference system found at <http://www.cogsci.princeton.edu/~wn/>. WordNet's Internet site supports finding both definitions and synonyms. Although the service is free, I found WordNet's interface to be more awkward than the Macintosh-oriented tool created by Nisus. Using the Nisus software is easy. Just select the word in your favorite application and choose "Nisus Thesaurus" from the "Services" sub-menu. When you select a word in Nisus Thesaurus, the synonyms for that word will be shown right next to it in the Word Browser, as will the word's definition. Antonyms, when available, are also only another click away. Check out Ted Bade's review of the Nisus Thesaurus in the December 2003 issue of *macCompanion* (<http://maccompanion.com/archives/december2003/shareware.html#2>) Try it; you'll like it—I did. If not, browse for an alternative. After all, the WWW is full of hidden treasures.

When browsing, I also found a rich and well-designed thesaurus at <http://dictionary.reference.com/>, a WINTEL user oriented site, which was quite good at helping me find both synonyms and antonyms. But since it was not instantly available from within my documents—it's not Apple Service housebroken—I only use it as a secondary tool. The differences are just a cut and paste step extra, but at times, I'm lazy.

Actually, someday I must do a check using a dozen or two arcane words, gleaned from my paper dictionary, to test the comprehensiveness of these comparable services. But like all things software, many of my choices evolve as I flit back and forth between different reference tools. Who knows what will next show up on MacUpdate™ and VersionTracker™?

Doc's Helpful Hint for enhanced reference book(s) accessibility: Create a folder and stuff it with either the applications, reference site URLs, or an alias of all the reference tools you use. Park it in your doubtlessly overcrowded Dock and there it be. All this is available to you at the twitch of the mouse's tail...err...cursor.

Dictionary Links—I have worked with the Omni Group's Omni Dictionary™ <http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnidictionary>, MacDICT X™ version 2.9 <http://www.bainsware.com/>, and the dictionary (and thesaurus) at <http://dictionary.reference.com/>. The latter (the thesaurus part of dictionary.com) was discussed in the previous section focusing on its thesaurus. Taking these in backwards order:

The Dictionary.com site contains links to an easy to use dictionary as well as to the thesaurus a feature I've previously mentioned. In addition, the site features:

- The word of the day, a free Email subscription away, whose archives can also be perused.
- A Fun & Games link (daily puzzles; the puzzle archives require a subscription).
- Access to Language Resources (grammar, usage, & style and associated FAQ's).
- Other Dictionaries-Language: French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish and more ... as well as subject oriented premium service selections for checking words associated with crossword puzzles, as well as legal and medical terms.
- Translator Functionality *featuring Chinese, Dutch, Japanese, Korean, and Russian!*

MacDICT X version 2.9 is a software client for the DICT™ protocol. It connects to dict.org to provide access to a number of databases, including Webster's Dictionary, Wikipedia, the Internet's free encyclopedia, and the World Fact Book™. MacDICT also accesses translation services on the web to translate to and from a wide variety of languages, for translating words and sentences, as well as full passages (I did not check out this last feature). It features an easy-to-use interface that allows the user to look up definitions in 11 databases and is completely free! Its developer proclaims, "The library may be a thing of the past, thanks to this cool information-seeking tool. This DICT client allows you to access a number of online databases on the DICT Development Group site for free, letting you look up words in a dictionary, research various topics of interest, translate words and phrases into other languages, and more." Give it a whirl; it works as advertised.

OmniDictionary, my present favorite, is a free Mac OS X client for a variety of Internet dictionary servers from the Omni Group. (These are the folks who have wonderful tools like OmniOutliner and OmniGraffle [flowcharting software], which I have started to use because of their simple streamlined interfaces and lack of other features that don't interest me.

"OmniDictionary is a Mac OS X client for network dictionary servers. It's pretty straightforward - type a word into the entry field, hit return, and the definition is displayed. If the dictionary server supports multiple dictionaries, you can select your desired dictionary from the dictionary popup to limit queries to that specific dictionary, or you can query all the dictionaries!" Since Omni Dictionary is simply a client for dictionary servers on the web, you have to be connected to the Internet (or have access to a local dictionary server) in order to be able to perform lookups.

"OmniDictionary takes advantage of Mac OS X's built-in services menu, so you can look up words from any of your other Mac OS X applications—just highlight the word you don't know and hit. OmniDictionary will automatically launch and look up the word. Bang! We kicked it up a notch."

This is another instance where a software tool takes the idea of a traditional dictionary off your bookshelf and onto your computer in a manner that doesn't require buying annual updates.

All of these tools have a way to export your word finds as text by cutting and pasting to any text processing software document. There may be other ways to do this directly, but I did not look for them.

I prefer OmniDictionary to the other choices I described because it is Apple Services compliant and has a more visually attractive set of screens and windows, and displays in a in larger type.

One cautionary note: Microsoft has fixed its MS Office™ suite so that it will not work with most Apple Services-compliant software. There you will still need to use these tools as standalone applications or web clients. But they sure work well with Filemaker Pro™, Mariner Write™, Eudora™ Email program, and AppleWorks™. I suspect it will also work well with ThinkFree Office™, but have not tested it in those applications.

Now For a Little Closure

Now, does my use of these tools mean that I'll neglect my hardcover dictionaries and pet thesaurus? No way! For those who love to read ... to find new words and play with them ... to browse through pages in a dictionary for the sheer joy of finding a new word that "tastes right" and then work it over in your mind until it becomes part of your verbal toolkit, keep your books. Nothing inanimate (and legal) beats the tactile feel of a well bound and artfully presented book. Wonderful! I can continue to have the best of both worlds.

There is one other instance where a book is better. I've found that when I am at a complete loss on how to spell a word, and all variations on a theme I tried electronically fail, I grab my trusted and thumb-worn copy of *The Word Book II* and start snipe hunting! Yeah, it mostly works. Why? It's simple! To my knowledge, no electronic dictionary checks for words either phonically (using pronunciation-based clues) or with wild cards.

Now if only the Oxford Dictionary of the English Language (Oxford University Press at 1-800-451-7556), in all of its 20-volume glory could be found at under \$300 rather than the current discounted \$895, I'd pass up toys for my Macintosh for the next six months and add it ASAP to my book collection. As for the CD version, I'll pass on that. It is for Windows-users only, and the \$295 is more than I want to spend, despite the fact that I have Virtual PC installed on my computer.

Book References:

Roget's II: The New Thesaurus, Third Edition, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1995, ISBN: 0-395-29605-6

American Heritage Dictionary, 2nd College Edition, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1982, ISBN: 0-395-32944-2

The Pocket Word Finder Thesaurus, Pocket Books Reference, 1989 ISBN: 0-671-61683-5(paper back)

The Word Book II, based on the American Heritage Dictionary, compiled by Kaethe Ellis, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1983, ISBN: 0-395-34028-4.

Feature

Reunion 8.05 – Family tree software that gets at the roots

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Leister Productions, Inc.

PO Box 289

Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

1-717-697-1378

sales@leisterpro.com

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

\$100 USD, upgrade \$60 USD + shipping. Order online at

<https://mango.he.net/~reunion3/WebStore/webcart.php> or from registered dealers

<http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Buy.html>

Requirements: PPC-based, Mac-only. Mac OS 8.5 or later, Mac OS 10.1.3 or later.

QuickTime 5 or later. 12 MB Disk space and 400K per 1,000 family records. CD-ROM

Drive. Be a member of a family and have a desire to know their history.

Features: <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Version8/NewFeatures/NewFeatures8.html>

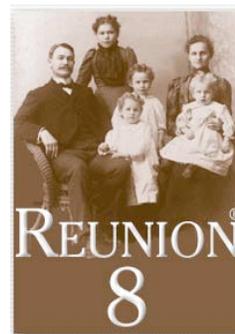
Updates & Q&A: <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Version8/Version8.html>

Competitors and comparisons: <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Comparisons.html>

Family website examples: <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/users/linkSearch.html>

Other reviews: <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/reviews.html>

Beginner to Genealogical Professional



Strengths: Multi-media, multi-lingual capable, webable "card-based" genealogy system for Mac OS X. Emanualized instead of PDF-based instructions.

Weaknesses: Okay, the *Reunion Alternate Resources* could use some "user-friendly" rethink.

(Play "We Are Family" music by *Sister Sledge*)

Lest you think I received Reunion 8 (R8) from Leister Productions (*LeisterPro*) for free, think again. I'm vested! This review isn't going to be a "How-To", but more of a "Link-To". Just like an extended family, right? *LeisterPro* has an excellent tutorial on the "How-To" that comes with the program.

In a world where identity-theft runs rampant, it is good to know I can still wake up in the morning, pinch myself and know I am who I say I am, based on my family history – and I can prove it!

Reunion 8 is a far cry from the *Personal Ancestry File (PAF) version 2.3.1* for the Mac. The PAF hasn't been updated since 1984 and still costs only \$6 for the book and software at <http://productsupport.familysearch.org/> by loading product number 3099200. When I asked the Family History Center in Salt Lake City when I was there couple of summers ago about an updated version for the Mac, I was told there were better programs out there and they weren't going to try and compete with them. They are correct. Reunion 8 is much better. See the Comparisons linked above. I learned that the hard way when I did a "TempleReady" genealogy seminar in Spanish (I gave away an extra copy of the Mac-version of the PAF 2.3.1 that finally was on CD instead of just on a 3.25" floppy anyway).

Why bother with Genealogy?

What gives people the genealogy bug? Finding a family name is one thing, but getting a diary, newspaper clippings, pictures, audio sound bites, oral histories and building that person back into a real, "I can practically touch you" person, generate a QuickTime movie and then post that online so it rivals anything that the Biography channel can create, is really magic! Some of this process via *LeisterPro* is known as "Web Family Cards". *LeisterPro's* R8

makes web-based family history easy, based on a "card system". Multi-media running on the Mac is *fully* utilized with Reunion 8.

See, genealogy research is *really* all about loving relationships across the spectrum from Adam to infinity and beyond. And families *can* be together forever.

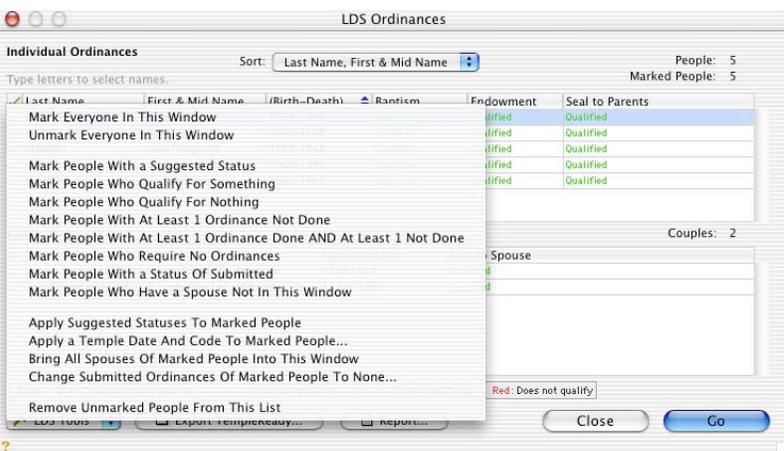
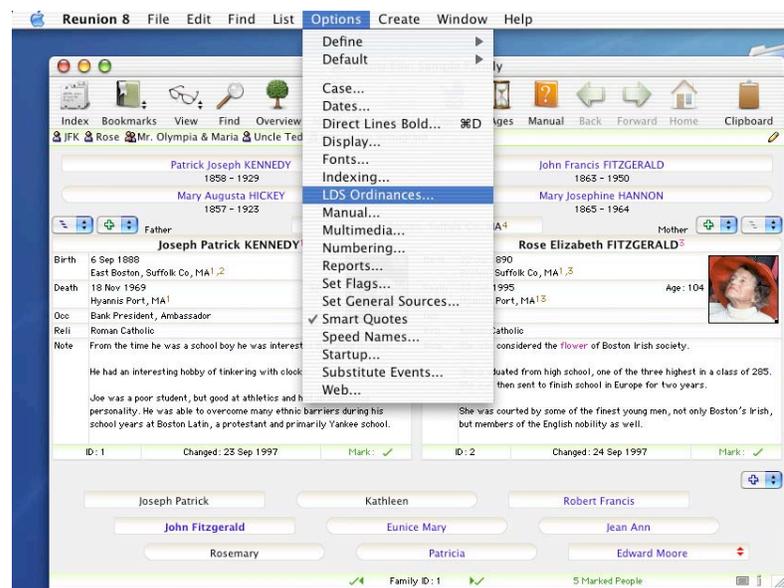
Now I'm, going to drop some heavy thought your direction: Believe what I write or not, that's your decision. This might be just a bit much for you, but it is real and it is true. These feelings run very deep and are based on a strong love for my no-longer-living relatives. I personally believe in doing certain temple ordinance work to help my ancestors who can no longer help themselves in their quest for eternal progress. They still have their free agency to either accept or reject that work done on their behalf, but I at least have given them the chance to do so. This belief is scripture-based, and is why we have a temple near where I live at <http://www.lds.org/temples/main/0,11204,1912-1-156-1,00.html>. I believe my no-longer-living relatives will welcome me with open arms when I meet them after this life, since I will have been instrumental in helping them become released from a spiritual prison from work I've done in mortality. I also believe they will help me in this life, as I help them where they are now. Yes, what goes around really does come around.

Recently this eternal principle has been posted online that expresses much better than I ever could, about why we believe the way we do about life after death; "Joseph F. Smith, World War 1 and his Visions of the Dead" at <http://ldsmag.com/articles/031219hosts.html>. Please read it, and then come back here.

See, I believe strongly in what is known as the "Plan of Salvation" and in the Atonement of our Savior. I have a Messiah. I also believe *all* mankind may be "saved" through the laws and ordinances of the Gospel, whether in this life, or the next. And I can personally do something about it to "make it so". I can be a messiah to others. This is deeply, wonderfully spiritual stuff. I also strongly believe that the marvelous technologies and tools we have today were given to us through divine revelation so we could expedite this work. Yes, really. And millions of folks believe the same way I do.

This is the end of the heavy thought process.

Now what has that got to do with Reunion 8? Plenty! R8 has conveniently pulled together all the programming set up for LDS temple ordinance work. I'd truly be set, if it wasn't for the fact that the Temples still only accept files via 3.25" floppies. They want records that can be processed within 2 months of delivery and so they are not conditioned to accept CDs yet. This is one of those "it sure would be nice if's", but heck, at least they take GEDCOM files



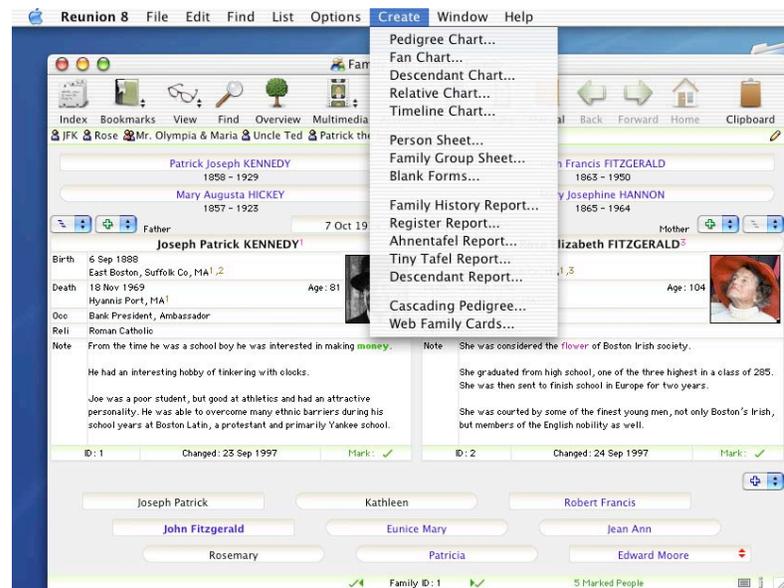
(<http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Articles/GEDCOM101.html>) from other sources besides PAF. However, I then have to submit my research to the local Family History Center so they can then read it, make it "TempleReady" and acceptable for use at the Temple. This takes time, but it is worth it!

Even if you don't believe as I do, you can still get into the genealogy mindset. This work isn't so much a hobby for millions of folks around the world, but nearly an obsession, as they seek out those who have gone before.

If you would like to take some free genealogy classes, why not find a *Family History Center* near you and sign up? Check out http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp. Join a local chapter of the *National Genealogical Society (NGS)* at <http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>. Or if you are in an area where you can talk with a Ward or Stake Family History Consultant (who are also volunteers), check out <http://www.ancestrylessons.com/beyond-the-veil/callings/ward-consultants.htm> to get a feel for what is going on. And genealogy has its own set of vocabulary, acronyms and ways of doing things. Just go to <http://www.familysearch.org/> and check out the Glossary!

A few of my favorite Reunion 8 things

Some things I love about R8 is that *LeisterPro* has done an excellent job partnering with *Heartland Family Graphics* to do family tree wall charts at <http://www.familygraphics.com/>. These are truly beautiful to see and the pricing can't be beat! And to take this process further, how about *Timelining* so we can see how we fit into history? Check out the ones done here at



<http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Version8/Perspectives.html>. There are 5 kinds of charting that can be generated: Descendant, Fan, Pedigree, Relative and Timeline. And now spouse photos can be included in picture charts right next to direct-line photos.

Do you want to customize R8? Plug-ins can be created with the free Alternate Resource Package. Not only that, but R8 can be used in other languages such as Dutch, French, German, Norwegian and Swedish at <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Version8/AlternateResource8.html>. (I guess we need to work on one for Spanish, don't we?)

And a Forum for Reunionmeisters can be found in the *ReunionTalk Database* at <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/RT/rtSearch.html> with participation found at <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/RT/RT.html>.

Now after all that, is there a manual? Yes, but it isn't what you are used to. It is not a PDF-based manual but an Emanual (what an appropriate play on words! Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14). It is an online electronic search facility for non-linear discovery. Don't worry, the info is cross-referenced. Think of the Emanual as being a multi-tasker.

Some add-ons can also be found at <http://homepage.mac.com/stevejackson/MacStuff.html> with a *FolderUpdater* and a *ReunionCalculator*.

Subtlety and Nuances

To tell guys and gals apart, the links in R8 have guys on one side and have squared off symbols, while the gals are on the other and have rounded symbols. Red arrows next to a name mean multiple spouses. A gold question-mark is a click away from the Emanuel help. Graphics are done in PNG and not in JPEG to maintain clarity.

Interested in actuarial information? Once the data is put in place, running statistical formulas is included as part of the package for "what-ifs". Based on empirical evidence and barring war and "weapons of mass destruction", how long do you supposedly have left to live? Find out.

If you want to find out even more on particular areas within R8, you can see some articles that have been published here at <http://www.leisterpro.com/doc/Articles.html>.

For comparison purposes from the *National Genealogical Society* magazine, I have taken the liberty of including this part of the "Report Card" below. Some of the numbers have changed, but not by much from the original NGS source.

Mumford.CA Genealogy Software Report Card
<http://www.mumford.ca/reportcard/reviewfrm.htm>

Scorecard	Date of review	Experience level	Planning	Recording	Analytical	Source Documentation	Reports	Charts	Publishing	Multimedia	Internet	Portability	Additional Tools	Convenience Items	Total	Total In %	
Reunion Version 8.2 Mac OS 8.6 or better	11	Feb 2003	5	4.5	7.0	7.1	6.1	7.5	7.3	5.8	5.3	6.1	6.1	6.6	6.7	76.1	63.38

This is comparing R8 to WinTel-based genealogy programs. It does stuff they don't, so don't take the *Report* too literally. For example, PAF 5.1.12 has a total % of 60.24. The current PAF version is 5.2. To use the updated PAF (free at http://www.ldscatalog.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CategoryDisplay?catalogId=10001&storeId=10001&categoryId=7000000&langId=-1&parent_category_rn=100069&level=2&bcname=Software%20Downloads%20-%20Free&top=Y&resetCat=N&replBC=subcatlist100069 [Yeah, I know it is a long link. Just copy/paste if it doesn't automatically take you there.]), you would need to repartition your hard drive, get a copy of a Microsoft Operating System (I use XP Pro) and then use VirtualPC <http://www.microsoft.com/mac/products/virtualpc/virtualpc.aspx> to run it. Or just buy the XP Pro with VPC package for \$250 USD. This is hardly justification for using PAF, when R8 is only \$100.

So with this excellent tool for the Mac, go do some family history research. Put together your past, find living relatives and throw a Family Reunion together showing them what you've been able to discover about your ancestors and those that have touched them, then go put it all online with R8.

Now turn off the "We Are Family" music. Get a copy of Reunion 8, and then go find your past. I promise you, it will enhance your future!

Audio

MindChimes 4.0: Virtual wind chimes

Reviewed Dr. Eric Flescher

Creator: Andrew York
PO Box 695
Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0695
1-626-355-5541
Fax: 1-626-355-4325
http://www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/trojan_family/summer02/LAGQ/York.html

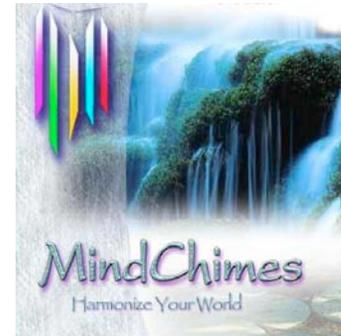
MindChimes
700 E. Redlands Blvd., Suite U
PMB 315
Redlands, CA 92373
info@mindchimes.com

<http://www.mindchimes.com/index.html>

\$20 USD, \$25 USD for both MindChimes and OceanSongs. Order at
<http://store2.esellerate.net/store/catalog.aspx?s=STR959983988&pc>
Version 2.1 to 3 for Mac OS 9, Version 4 for Mac OS X, PC Version is available.

Download Demo: <http://mindchimes.com/mindchimes.html>

Requirements: Mac OS X, QuickTime 5.0 or later with QuickTime Musical Instruments.



Strengths: MindChimes now works with Mac OS X. Great tutorial that takes the user through a step-by-step process to the making of musical chimes and shows other tools for volume, intensity, chime types and type and number of bells. Sets made can be saved and then reopened for your playing pleasure. Lot of flexibility and users can try out the tools for 30 days. Reasonable fee. Another program, OceanSongs (virtual surf tones), works somewhat in the same way except for surf tones.

Weaknesses: May take a little while to learn what makes the better sounds, but experimentation is the name of the game.

Sound is all around us. Some sounds are harmonious, while other sounds are less gentle to our ears. And this is true with computers and sound-labor intensive software programs. Certain sound software are utilities for transforming sound and music while others are sound producing and can create or produce various types of sounds and music. **Mindchimes** and **Oceansongs** are two sound and music programs that are both gentle to the ear but also be utilized as well for many uses.

Mindchimes and Oceansongs both produce a multitude range of sounds from bamboo to bells. The programs are companion utilities that can operate in the background of other software operations while using the computer. These are sound effects programs but they are more. These programs stimulate natural rhythms and cerebral and organic harmonic patterns of real wind chimes and ocean sounds.

Mindchimes has a set of tools that can produce new sound and music. A keyboard actually presses the keys that are produced with the software as it plays. The other options give you more latitude with sounds.



When one of the 12 sets is chosen, you can begin. Chime Types are clicked (middle keys), a number of Chimes pop up in the window to show music progression. There is a series of 9 modes that can be transposed. The new Chime Wizard, when clicked on, creates a series of auto-chimes. A Help button shows on screen, showing the steps needed to follow through a music session. When told to select a Chime Type, the window opens to tell what song is possible. By running your mouse over the keyboard, that particular sound plays along with your touch.

Next, checking anywhere in the Chime Wizard box lets you affect the tones. The higher the tones in the Chime Wizard box you click, the more tones of scale are heard. Your new music can be saved and later opened to listen in the future and modified for your pleasure.

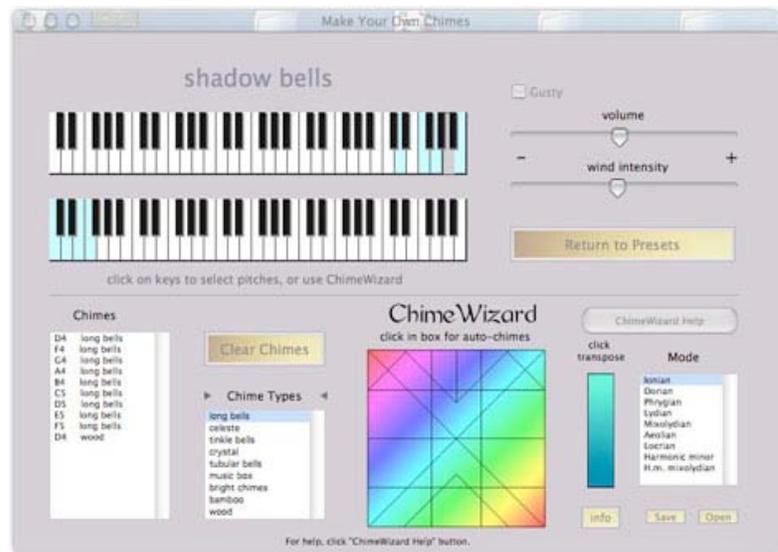
The Mode operations are next. Every Mode is a varied musical scale. This allows for a different musical “mood,” The modes change the sounds in different ways so there is even more flexibility with your song creations. Clicking with the Chime Wizard at any given time makes another set of chimes to take place and to sound.

The Transpose bar allows all the chimes to move higher or lower in pitch. The Chimes box meanwhile slows all the different chimes that are available in your chimes set. This is a good way to see each chime that is available. By selecting a chime in the Chime box area and pressing Delete, takes out the individual note while the Clear Chimes button clears away the whole chime set.

The virtual-graphic keyboard is available to create and edit the chime sets. By selecting the chime sound in the Chime Type box allows, even more versatility. Clicking on the keyboard keys lets the selection begin again. The two slider-bars on the right allow adjustment of the Volume or Wind Intensity. There is also a special inset box to check to make the intensity “Gusty.” The *Random* play button is also an interesting way to make another series of windchimes.

In the top toolbar, there is an option to pause the musical operation in progress. The Save button (or command-S) saves the Chime set of your choice. The Chime set once created, can be loaded by clicking the Open icon or pressing

Command-O. *Return to Presets* is another option in which you can return to the 12 windchimes scores. Possibly your own musical with Chime sets can be created and place on tapes or CDs. Original production can also be integrated with original video you make or graphic programs or presentations.



[Editor: To pause, go to the Control Menu and click *Pause*. To shut off, go to the Dock and click *Quit*.]

MindChimes and the companion program called OceanSongs (virtual surf tones) are free downloads for 30 days. Technically a shareware fee, you try out the music tools and utilize and pay when the deadline is due to keep on playing. Learning to use the MindChimes and OceanSongs are both mesmerizing. The tutorial is both easy and fun, even for novice music and computer users. While the chimes are rather easy to try out, making superior musical chimes may take a little time and practice. But experimenting is part of process and with a little time, your chimed music is available to hear or save.

Try MindChimes and its companion program, OceanSongs, for your musical pleasure. Soothing sounds with chimes or ocean, with your computer or hi-fi may be what you are looking for.

MusicSafari v1.1

Reviewed by Ted Bade

Creator: Simon Liu

Bitcartel Software

1-402-323-6692 or 1-402-323-6692 (purchases only)

Fax: <http://store2.esellerate.net/store/s.aspx?s=STR556259185&CMD=FAX> (fax order form)

support@bitcartel.com

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

\$20 USD

Initial Release, 03/11/2003. Most recent release, 12/24/2003.

Download site: <http://www.bitcartel.com/downloads/raw.dmg>

Requirements: Mac OSX 10.2 - 10.3.1, QuickTime 6.2+, G4 recommended, 50MB+ free disk space, RealOnePlayer[®] and WindowsMediaPlayer[®] 9 if you access those files types. iCal for scheduling.

Experience needed: Intermediate.



Strengths: Simple interface. Scheduling made easy through the use of iCal. Records in MP3 and AAC formats.

Weaknesses: Still being developed; lack of bookmarks and URL history.

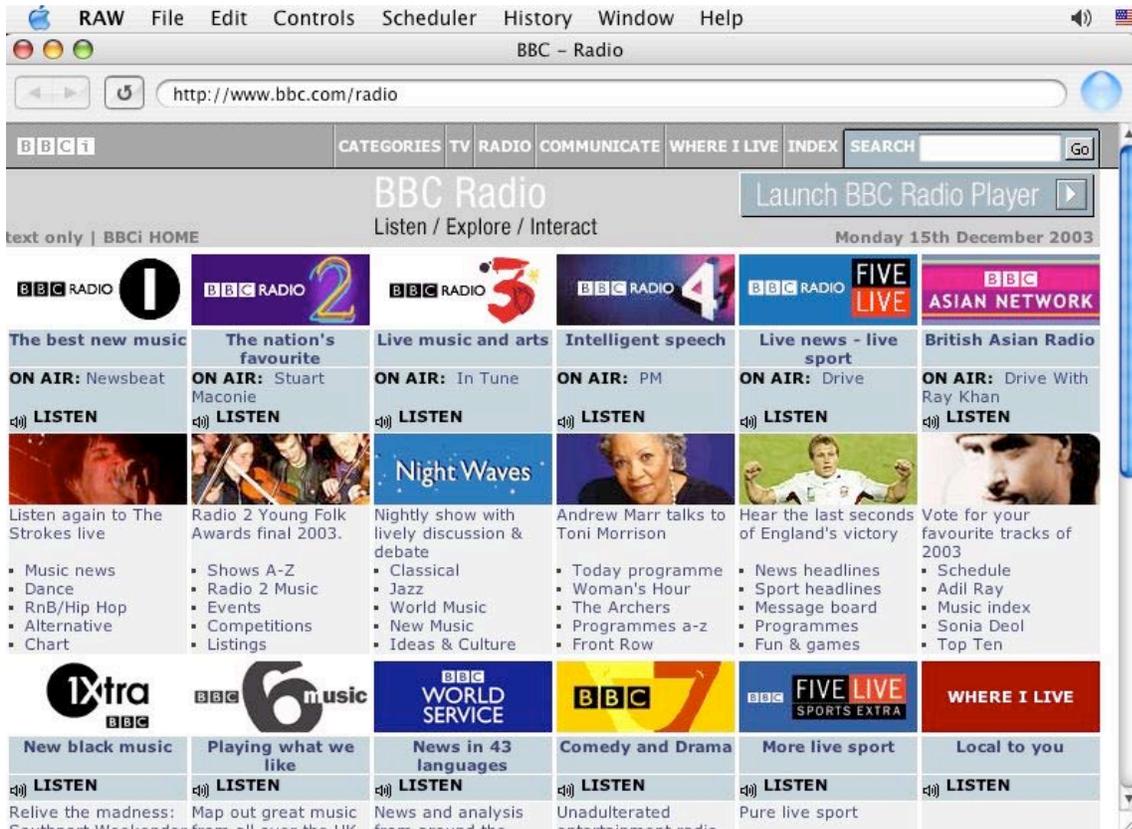
MusicSafari (which recently changed its name from RAW), is a neat little utility that can be used to capture audio from audio and audio/video streams and files over the Internet. It can record using either the high quality AAC or standard MP3 format. It uses a clean Safari-like interface, and works with iCal to let you schedule recordings. A great utility which can be used to "time-shift" Internet radio shows or to capture any audio stream.

Please note that this program was originally called RAW. After some consideration (myself and other people suggested the name RAW just wasn't a nice sounding name!), the author decided to rename it MusicSafari (an excellent name, in my humble opinion). Since this program is still in the development process, sometimes the name RAW still shows up. I expect eventually this will all be resolved.

What can a program like this be used for? There are a variety of web sites that stream all types of music and other audio files. Most of the time, as with a radio-frequency station, a show you are interested in might be run when you are not in a position to listen, or perhaps you want to listen to it a number of times rather than just once. Just like you would with your VCR (or DVR), you can schedule your Macintosh to record this show so that you can listen when it is convenient for you. MusicSafari records the file as either high quality AAC or MP3, which means you can transfer it to your iPod, iTunes, or another MP3 player.

Also, if you locate an audio file, say perhaps a music video, an interview, or even a music stream, you can navigate to that site using MusicSafari, click to listen and record the audio to a file.

Working with MusicSafari is easy. As the name indicates, this program is based on Apple's Safari web browser. You provide MusicSafari a URL and navigate to a specific stream or file containing audio for it to either start and record, listen to, or schedule to record at the right time.



MusicSafari comes with a link to the BBC web site, but you can enter any web URL. You don't have to enter the direct link to the audio stream, you can enter a URL and browse a site to find audio. For instance, you can record the audio track of a music video, a movie, or any other URL that plays audio to your Macintosh. The site can capture the stream in RealMedia[®], Windows Media[®], or QuickTime[®] formats. This means MusicSafari handles most popular audio and AV formats.

Recording is a simple matter of clicking on the audio URL then clicking the record button. You can choose to record and listen or record with the mute on.



MusicSafari works with Apple's iCal to schedule recordings. Using this feature is simple. First you need to locate the URL of an audio stream you wish to record. If it's a radio show that plays at a specific time, you will also need to know the time and date it plays. Load the URL into MusicSafari, then select the "Scheduler menu" and create an iCal event. In iCal you will need to provide the time and date. The recording is then set up.

There are a couple of shows on public radio that I never have a chance to listen to because they are scheduled when I am not in a position to listen. One particular show plays around 11 p.m. in my area, an hour after I am normally in bed. Using Apple's Safari, I located the URL of the station I would have listened to and found the URL to their live audio stream. I transferred the URL to MusicSafari, then used iCal to schedule MusicSafari to record what was playing at this URL at 11 p.m. and to record for one hour. The next day, I had an hour-long recording of a show I normally never get to listen to!

A word of caution about scheduling recordings: First, they won't work if your Mac is asleep or shut down. Don't think you can schedule something for 2 a.m. without adjusting your Mac's sleep schedule! If you do set up a scheduled recording, it is up to you to make sure your Mac is running and awake so the event can occur. It's a sad thing, but Macs don't wake up from sleep because of scheduled events. Perhaps someday this will be available. But that's Apples problem and not a problem with MusicSafari.

If you need to, you can break the audio recording into pieces. For instance, if you were recording a 3-hour audio show and intended to convert it to AIFF and then burn it onto a standard audio CD to listen to in the car, you can set MusicSafari up to break the recording into sections a little less than one hour, which should fit nicely onto a standard audio CD when converted to AIFF files. It will then break a long show into 1-hour long chunks. The only problem with this is that each section might end abruptly, right in the middle of the music. I am not sure if there are any real solutions to this problem, although I did suggest that MusicSafari be set up to look for a quiet spot anytime within the last 10 minutes and stop it at that point. However, doing this could create a very short audio orphan!

If you intend to convert your 1-hour long MP3 files into AIFF, you won't be able to use MusicSafari to do this. You will have to use the features of iTunes or another audio program.

If you have an iPod or other large capacity MP3 player, just let MusicSafari record the whole file and listen to that. One problem with longer audio files is you might not manage to listen to the whole thing before you have to stop. Then it is up to you to remember where you left off, because there are no MP3 bookmarks on the iPod. But I don't think any audio recording program offers bookmarks for the iPod. The only bookmarks I have found are those available in the special AAC files created by Audible.com, (how do they do that?).

While this program does record very well, it is still under development and thus has its share of problems. For instance, once a recording is complete, a folder will appear (where ever you designated it to be stored) with a name like: "RAW427-91895095". I am sure this name means something to the author, but it doesn't mean much to me, other than it was created by MusicSafari. Inside that folder will be another folder that has a name that reflects the time and date of the recording, than inside that folder is the actual recording. There is no option in MusicSafari to name this audio file. That would be nice. It just gives the recording a number.

If you do several of recordings, you will get several "RAW427-91895095"-like folders, each with a different number. It would be a lot neater if MusicSafari placed all the recording folders into a single folder.

Another major problem is that it doesn't save your history file once you quit MusicSafari. This means that if you visit a number of places, then decide to quit for awhile, there is no easy way to get back to a site other than to once again enter the URL. Also, if there is a favorite site you like to visit often, you cannot store this information in MusicSafari. However, it is easy to get around this by using MusicSafari in conjunction with Apple's Safari. Search for and locate audio URLs with Safari and transfer them to MusicSafari. Safari does keep a history and does remember sites you bookmark. Still, it would be nice to have everything in the same program.

Even though this program is in progress, it has a lot of potential. I found it easy to use. The audio files it creates are as good as the audio you choose to record, and it is easy to schedule recordings. I recommend looking at this program if you have an interest in recording audio on your Macintosh.

It's a real treat to be able to time-shift radio shows and other audio material for a time when it is convenient for one to listen. Internet audio is here to stay and applications like MusicSafari give Mac Users options for utilizing them.

Books

Adobe Acrobat 6 Hands-On-Training

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Garrick Chow

<http://www.garrickchow.com>

List Price: \$45 USD, \$68 CND, £35 including VAT UK

ISBN: 0321202996

Published: November 24, 2003

Paperback: 672 pages

Lynda.com

P.O. Box 789

Ojai, CA 93024

Toll free in the US: 1.888.33.LYNDA (1.888.335.9632)

Internationally: +1 805 646 7076

Fax: +1 805 640 9607

customerservice@lynda.com

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

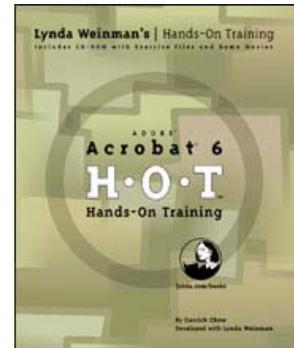
Online Learning: <http://movielibrary.lynda.com/html/modPage.asp?ID=65>

Book Link: <http://www.lynda.com/books/hot/acrobat6/>

And Peachpit Press

<http://www.peachpit.com>

Requirements: Adobe Acrobat 6 Standard or Adobe Acrobat 6 Professional
Beginner to Intermediate



Strengths: A "perfect" book. Meets all macCompanion criteria for a macC5.

Weaknesses: None found.

Adobe Acrobat 6 Hands-On-Training (AA6HOT) by Garrick Chow has got to be one of the best books on the subject I've ever read. If you use AA6, you will really know the subject matter after reading this book and following the excellent QuickTime video clips that are samples of the 7.5-hour training package Garrick Chow has created through Lynda.com.

Believe it or not, the 672-page book is a quick read, and yes, I marked a lot of places in this book for use with the job I am currently doing as a Tech Writer. What helped with the quick-read for me was familiarity with AA6 and the handful of Exercise Files (nearly 1 per chapter) and QuickTime presentations on the CD that comes with the book. I can also see immediate areas where I can improve the *macCompanion* month PDF distribution.

If you didn't know already, AA6 is cross-platform. Even though Garrick wrote *Mac OS X Hands-On-Training*, practically all the screenshots in AA6HOT are from the XP Pro environment, but where there are differences (mostly in Accessibility, Chapter 16) those are well-noted and discussed.

Lynda Weinman developed the Hands-On-Training series and has expanded it to include online video training for a unlimited-access monthly fee. AA6HOT is an excellent example of this extended training concept and I highly recommend getting it to expand your knowledge of Adobe Acrobat 6.

With this book, I now know more about the real differences between the Standard and Professional versions of AA6 – and why even though the Professional version is heavily leaning towards Microsoft products, I can use it to best advantage on the Macintosh platform too.

I also know a lot more about Distiller[®] and Elements[®] and how they fit into the Adobe[®] family.

So if you have any desire to know how to improve and simplify document exchange, document reviews and archiving, searching and indexing PDFs both internally and on the Internet, please get **Adobe[®] Acrobat[®] 6 Hands-On-Training**.

Final Cut Pro 4 Editing Professional Video - Apple Pro Training Series

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

Authors: Diane Weynand and Shirley Craig

List Price: \$45 USD, \$68 CDN, £34 UK

ISBN 032186494

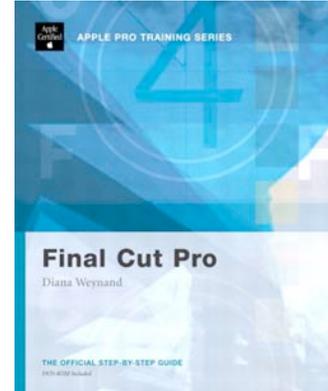
Published: July 16, 2003

Paperback: 872 pages

Requires Mac OS X 10.2.5 or higher, DVD-ROM Drive. Does not work with OS 9.

For Apple's Level 1 Certification List Price: \$25 USD, \$39 CDN

Peachpit Press,
1249 Eighth Street
Berkeley, CA 2178
1-510-524-2178
<http://www.peachpit.com>



Strengths: Mac OS X-specific wireless technologies all here. And updates via the website.

Weaknesses: None found.

This book is a comprehensive guide to Final Cut Pro[®], a powerful professional video editing software application made for Macintosh computers. This 872-page book is a hands-on course containing 21 chapters with an Appendix, Glossary, Index and a DVD-ROM. (The author viewed Final Cut Pro from an intermediate point of view, using current background of basic and intermediate level multimedia software with which to produce video. This reviewer was also handicapped without being able to use Final Cut Pro. Final Cut Express was gained to look at the similar interface and the applications that were found in Final Cut Pro but not Express.)

Lessons 1-7 deal with basic editing and training, which was well done in beginning the initial applications of the programs. Lessons 8-10 contain customizing, capturing and importing, and exporting sound, video and more. The Final Cut Pro software is also bundles with three programs called Soundtrack (a complete music creation program), LiveType (a very nice motion-graphics creation program), and Compressor (works with the compression of video/movies with MPEG-2, MPEG-4 and AIFF sound files). Lessons 11-14 deal with audio mixing, video transitions, Soundtrack compositing (excellent music-creation program that has many sound files) while Lessons 15-18 talk about the use of the Final Cut Pro effects. Lessons 19-20 cover titling with Final Cut Pro and Livetype. Lesson 21 concludes with ways to output media and create final products.

Each of these lessons starts off with “Preparing the Project” sections. These exercises include “Project Tasks” which contain practical applications that allow the development of pre-made exercises that can lead up to creating your own multimedia masterpieces. There are also sections which show keyboard shortcuts, and summarize what you have learned while doing projects.

The book with the DVD-ROM has two folders, which contain resources to assist with Final Cut Pro 4. The two sets of resources involve lessons which take your through a series of steps that help you work with the second part of the resources; pre-made Media files. These are authoritative and well done and give a good balance of precise details that you need to produce your multimedia projects. Final Cut Pro can be complex to use, especially in certain parts but some of the DVD can help in better locations compared to the written texts. The sound, interaction and visual cues are enhanced. While the DVD-ROM helped for the most part, the massive volume of text sometimes helped and sometimes made for some confusion or difficulty. The best place to start was Lesson 1 and with chapters dealing with the Final Cut Pro interface.

Clicking on the software icon made the Final Cut Pro interface appear. I immediately felt comfortable when viewing the Final Cut Pro interface. I began working with the intuitive tools and opening my movie of a total solar eclipse that I captured in Africa in 2001. This video appeared in the left hand corner with the timeline part of the interface in the lower half bottom (graphical presentations of the editing results). The shuttle control appeared below, on the lower left, while the jog control (appeared to the right) was easy to use in order to try to advanced or backup the video-animation. The middle play button and transportation controls were familiar to continuing play and movement of the video.

The bottom portion, the Timeline helps represent all the editing procedures that one makes. This is a like a work area where the editing is adjusted and completed in a graphically oriented fashion. Starting the Canvas window, the display appears visually and show the movie results. Tools located in a palette to the left, is a collection of tools, each with a shortcut key, that could be to access from keyboard if desired.

Figure 1

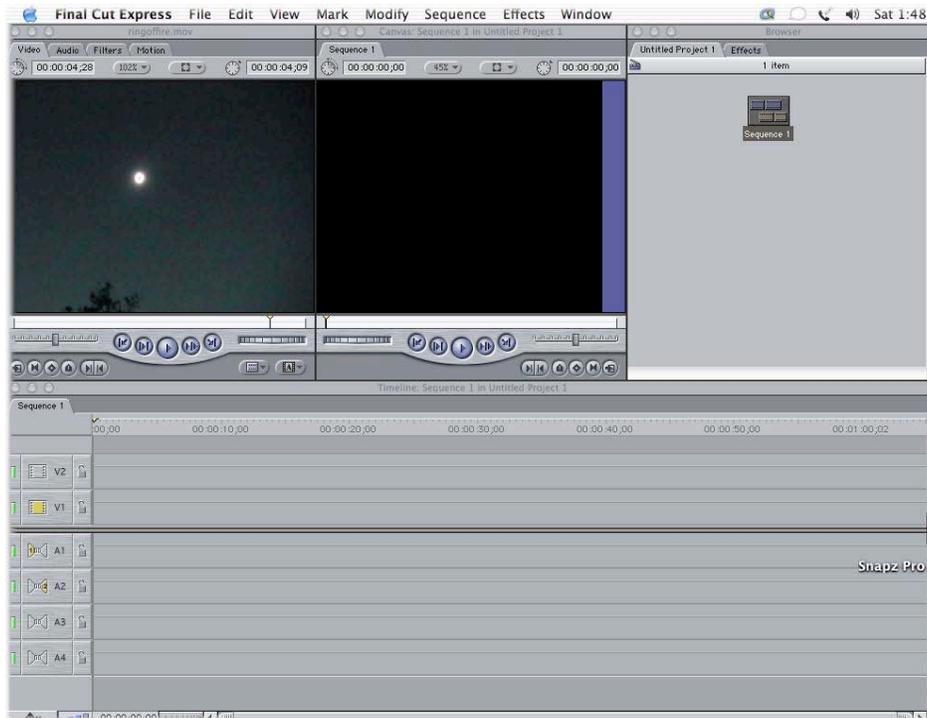
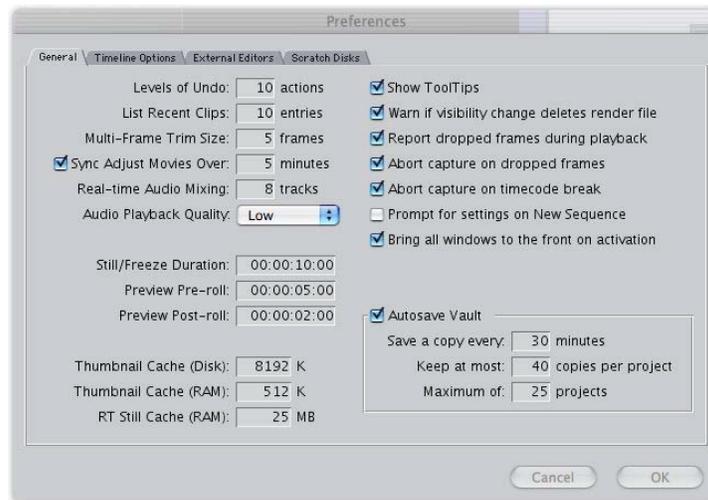


Figure 2



The preferences could access different adjustments in general areas, timeline options, external editors and scratch discs. Video and audio capturing as well as video and audio rendering requirements concerning the scratch discs could be changed if needed. Wavefront capture (in gigabytes) as well as the thumbnails could be adjusted along with the thumbnails and the auto-save capabilities.

Generally I thought the use of the lessons made for good reading and introduced many editing techniques that are suited for advanced and intermediate video-editing users. Novices might be hard-pressed to figure out some parts of some lessons and difficult parts of the exercises needed to produce a video with Final Cut Pro. It is difficult to know which lessons may be the difficult ones. In many cases, some of the tasks and lessons, even though sequentially oriented, may have been more difficult to decipher no matter in what order they appeared.

The parts that I thought were really well done were: Exporting to MPEG-2 format for DVD (p.765); applying transitions (p.407); mixing audio files and tracks (p.445-447); creating the SoundTrack software (p.491). Additional video information about MPEG and exporting to DVD and use of QuickTime software (p.765) as well as exporting video via manual recording, printing to video and exporting to tape (p.786) was well done.

The sections that were particularly difficult to try to decipher and worth with were: batch reconnection (p. 358); cross dissolve (p.422, which in this case, required forwarding to a section later in the chapter regarding “rendering transitions”). It is difficult task to complete an exhaustive text that deals with the many facets of multimedia design. In some cases, the difficulty was exacerbated by some inconsistencies with the text and instructional materials.

Illustrations and screen displays are peppered throughout the Final Cut Pro software. The text oriented exercises as well as the DVD lessons help as well. In certain location on pages, “blacked out” bars show which command application and the subset of the application can be operated. Sometimes inserted icons help illustrate views or applications: “circles” highlighted: arrows point within the illustrations that refer to part of the text that is needed to be “clicked” within the software areas (p.402).

In many cases, there are not enough of these procedures to make text reading text easier. Highlights are used, to make a more balanced illustrative guide to learning. Sometimes command areas are highlighted (in black or color) and sometimes not. It is difficult to be completely consistent, but such inconsistencies can make for difficult reading at times. For example, very small “arrows,” were sometimes difficult to see within the figure/illustrations (as in p.365). When the text said “cutaways” (for the sound effects), so to make “move away,” or “insert” amount of space in between, there was “no arrow” or circle used to produce this p.403). Other indicators were difficult to see or find:, like those around the multimedia mechanisms (like stereo pair indicators little dual triangles on p.391); the very small “arrows”(p.362). I was not sure when the text said “cutaways” for the sound effects so to make “move away,” or “insert” and the amount of space in between (there was no arrow or circle which one is expected to produce this);

Another way to signify some of the difficult parts might have been to include subsections, insets, or provide more frequent boldface lettering to the lessons. There were subsections under paragraphs, which were called “NOTES.” These tried to provide more guidance to project information. In several cases, illustrations would have been preferred rather than trying to read the lines of text (for example in page 203 regarding “you drag left to move earlier in time, and right to move later in the time). Many books that act as tutorials for software suffer from the use of too much text. Further visuals are always welcome to not simplify multimedia by offering more visual based instructional methods.

The book is a valuable resource for those who want to use Final Cut Pro. Reading through and digesting the book and the exercises takes a considerable amount of time. As one of, if not the premier, video editing software packages, the software utilizes a variety of tools to complete video editing to superior levels. But with each level of sophistication, learning requires a higher level of understanding to use the software and the tools. The integration of the sums of the parts yield better video creations, if one is able to master the different parts of the software. Even with a DVD, a book and instructions, Final Cut Pro can be too difficult to complete as well as desired. I have found that using Final Cut Pro book to be a good resource to expand ones knowledge in the use of Final Cut Pro. It is definitely a fine piece of software that intermediate and advanced users might want to use to upgrade their technological skills. This sophisticated Final Cut Pro and the additional software are worthy successors to less robust multimedia tools. But for those who cannot afford the price of the Final Cut Pro software, do not need the higher levels of integration, cannot master some of the techniques because of time, Final Cut Express may be the highest level to achieve in this manner.

How to Do Everything with Adobe Acrobat 6.0

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Doug Sahlin

List Price: \$25 USD, \$35 CDN, £18 UK

ISBN: 0072229462

Published: June 13, 2003

Paperback: 464 pages

Requirements: A running copy of Adobe Acrobat 6

McGraw-Hill Osborne Media; 2nd edition

2100 Powell Street

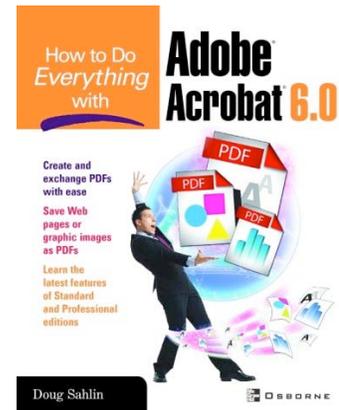
10th Floor

Emeryville, CA 94608

1-800-227-0900

pbg.commerce_custserv@mcgraw-hill.com

<http://www.osborne.com>



Strengths: Follows all the "correct" book formulas with lots of illustrations too.

Weaknesses: No online follow-up.

How to Do Everything with Adobe Acrobat 6.0 by Doug Sahlin is one of the many *How to do Everything* Book Series by *Osborne*. Because we do a Portable Document Format (PDF) version of *macCompanion* every month, our webmaster asked that I learn Adobe Acrobat 6 (AA6), and this is the first book that arrived on the topic. I'd never heard of the *Series* before, so this was a real treat for me.

Other reviewers mentioned that this was a quick read. Not bad for a thick book, if you were like me and had questions about Distiller, PDFWriter, integrating with MS Word, etc. But this book also shows some other neat things such as how to insert comments, collaborate over the Internet with Email Reviews, showing the real differences between Adobe Acrobat Standard and Adobe Acrobat Professional, using audio feeds, adding custom stamps and adding multimedia and movies to create presentations. There is a lot in AA6 I have hardly touched. Now I know how.

Oh, and as a Technical Writer at work, I hope I will be using what I learned here in the near future as well in that job too.

There are a few other things I didn't know existed in AA6, such as creating indexes that are also searchable. And creating Web pages from inside AA6.

This truly is a "HowTo" book, full of notes learned by Doug Sahlin throughout all 16 Chapters. It is very readable and has 2 Appendices (Acrobat 6.0 Keyboard Shortcuts and other Acrobat Resources) and a usable 13-page Index. Inside the back cover there is a Key Press Quick Reference, while inside the front cover there is a "What You'll Do in This Book" Chapter Reference.

So, did I mark it up? Yes I did, and so will you when you get this book.

The Best of The Joy of Tech

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Nitrozac, Snaggy

List Price: \$15 USD, \$24 CND, £10 Net UK

ISBN: 0596005784

Paperback: 192 pages

Published: December 2003

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

Requirements: Ability to laugh at one's self and some knowledge of computer culture.

O'Reilly Books

Sebastopol (Corporate Headquarters)

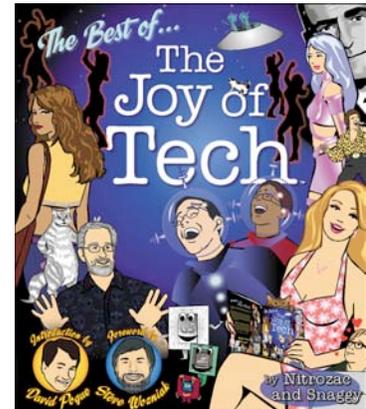
1005 Gravenstein Highway North

Sebastopol, CA 95472 USA

1-707-827-7000 or 1-800-998-9938

Fax: 1-707-829-0104

<http://www.oreilly.com>



Strengths: Pro-Macish, but not too much.

Weaknesses: Not snicker nor giggle-proof.

We didn't ask to review this book, but *O'Reilly Books* sent it anyway. I'm glad they did, because reading hard-core tech journals, books and manuals all the time can make Jack a dull boy. "Nitrozac and Snaggy" have been running computer funny-bone comics on their website for quite a while for the "Geek Culture-minded" and was one of the first macCompanions we linked to online at <http://maccompanion.com/funntoons.html>. Why? Because they have a lot of fun poking fun at the Mac-minded but don't stop there. They also poke fun at the Unix and Windows-based computer industry as well.

The Best of The Joy of Tech is a collection of guffaws and giggles including added commentary as well as a compilation of their "JoyPolls" about each comic and topic otherwise found at <http://www.geekculture.com/joyoftech/index.html>. Oh, and don't forget to read the "JoyWords" Glossary!

Go ahead, take a peek at the irreverent but not irresponsible niche we have chosen to participate in known as "Geek Culture". You might want to stay.

By reading this book, you will discover who these two pen-names really belong to. The forwards by noted computer luminaries are also worth the price of the book!

And Nitrozac could very well be the base-model for all the females in the Joy of Tech kingdom.

Mac OS X Panther Pocket Guide

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Chuck Toporek

List Price: \$10 USD, \$16 CND, £7 Net UK

ISBN:0596006160

Published: November 2003

Paperback:168 pages

Series: Pocket References

Requirements: Mac OS X Panther

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

O'Reilly Books

Sebastopol (Corporate Headquarters)

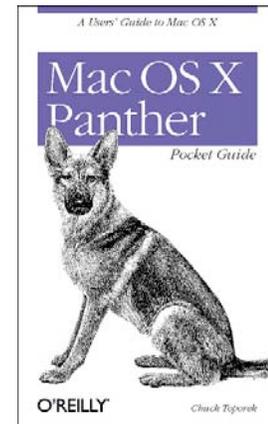
1005 Gravenstein Highway North

Sebastopol, CA 95472 USA

1-707-827-7000 or 1-800-998-9938

Fax: 1-707-829-0104

<http://www.oreilly.com>



Strengths: The book website keeps current with updates, changes and errata.

Weaknesses: None found.

While the Mac OS X Operating System continues to morph, Chuck Toporek continues to keep up with it in his latest book, **Mac OS X Panther Pocket Guide**. I don't know how he and *O'Reilly Books* are able to keep up with all the wonderful and exciting changes that *Apple Computer* does. I'm just glad they do! By the way, this is not a 3rd or 4th Edition, it is a First. There is that much difference between Jaguar and Panther.

When I discovered that the O'Reilly PR department had inadvertently quoted Harry {doc} Babad with the wrong website, Chuck Toporek had them quickly resolve that online at <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/macpantherpg/errata/macpantherpg.confirmed> after I brought that to his attention. For that alone I give them a macC 5 rating.

I love the "Equivalents" tables showing the changes from Mac OS 9 to Mac OS X. Chuck also addresses "switchers" and provides tips for those not only coming from Mac OS 9, but the Windows and Unix environments as well. Actually, there are about 250 tips found within the 168 pages of this little Pocket Book. Well, okay, it would fit in a pants pocket and not in a shirt pocket with a pocket-protector.

Chuck uses a Q&A process for the book format. Almost every section is filled with Questions and then those are answered concisely and precisely. Graphics are used sparingly, yet correctly. There is a 17-page Index as well as a 3-page Table of Contents to help find what you might be looking for.

If you haven't moved over to Panther yet, why not get this book to help you see what you are missing? And if you have already migrated to Panther, and the Help that comes with it isn't as helpful as you'd like, why not get this book to see how quickly you can get the answers to your questions?

The price for the hardcopy is almost what you'd pay for an eBook. Get it!

Mac OS X Unwired A Guide for Home, Office, and the Road

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Tom Negrino, Dori Smith

List Price: \$25 USD, \$39 CDN

ISBN:0596005083

Published: November 2003

Paperback: 224 pages

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

O'Reilly Books,

Sebastopol (Corporate Headquarters)

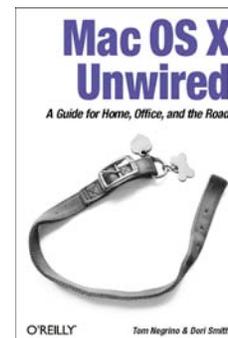
1005 Gravenstein Highway North

Sebastopol, CA 95472 USA

1-707-827-7000 or 1-800-998-9938

Fax: 1-707-829-0104

<http://www.oreilly.com>



Strengths: Mac OS X-specific wireless technologies all here. And updates via the website.

Weaknesses: None found.

Tom Negrino and Dori Smith have brought together just about everything there is to know about Wireless technologies used with Mac OS X Panther in **Mac OS X Unwired A Guide for Home, Office, and the Road**. Of course, it also covers the same technologies for earlier Mac OS Xs as well, but the latest and greatest can all be found in the 224 pages of this book.

It doesn't matter whether Bluetooth, Cellular Telephone, Infrared, Radio Frequency (RF) or Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) are the topic, it can be found here.

I heavily dog-eared the pages referring to sites where security tools can be had for the taking for the Mac wireless environment. I also marked the pages referring to Macs in Windows and Windows in Mac wireless networking environments since that is what we are currently using at work.

This book is pretty much "soup-to-nuts". It covers all the acronyms such as IEEE wireless standards 802.11a through 802.11whatever, why infrared is on the decline as far as Apple is concerned and why they love Bluetooth, IP addressing schemes, what is going on with CDMA2000 and GPRS and other technologies and how this all works with iSynch, iChat and Rendezvous.

Both the plusses and the minuses are discussed about each technology on a Mac, so each topic is well-rounded and full-spectrum (those of us with Ham Radio licenses knows what that means and why it is important).

And the authors give full credit for Apple having the intestinal fortitude to take a technology and move it up a notch, by giving the world one more area that has made other companies billions of dollars as they petitioned and successfully got the FCC (US Federal Communications Commission) to set aside a part of the radio spectrum to have unlicensed access for wireless networks back in the mid 1990's.

Yep. Apple not only gave us Internet Telephony, but Wireless Networks as well. Go ahead, read the book!

The Non-Designer's Design Book, Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice Second Edition

Reviewed by Harry (doc) Babad and edited by Julie M. Willingham

Reviewer's note: The illustrations used in this review are copyrighted by Robin Williams and used with the permission of PeachPit Press.

Author: Robin Williams

<http://www.book.nu/author/Robin+Williams>

List Price: \$20 USD

ISBN: 0321193857

Published: August 28, 2003

Paperback: 192 pages

Dimensions (in inches): 0.31 x 10.74 x 7.03

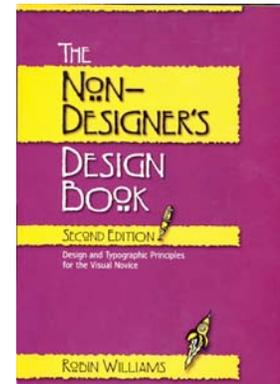
Peachpit Press

1249 Eighth Street

Berkeley, CA 94710

Phone: 510-524-2178; Fax: 510-524-2221

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



Strengths: An easy to read and understand, jargon-free book for anyone who wants to make their printed stuff look better by mastering the core principles of graphic design.

Weaknesses: When we all become better at page design, there'll be more to catch our eyes and entice us. Perhaps creating another distracting element to our present sensory overload. Good designs might replace the gray blurbs in publications we now avoid reading.

Audience: Beginning and intermediate level wannabe print page graphics designers.

Platform: This is a nonsectarian book and will work with any computing platform (WIN/Mac/UNIX) or box you own. After all, it's all in your head.



Overview

The book outlines the essentials of page layout, emphasizing the four concrete principles of design--*proximity, alignment, repetition, and contrast*. All of this is in an easy to read and well-illustrated volume that features before and after examples of page design. Robin Williams wrote this one "for all the people who now need to design pages, but who have no background or formal training in design."

Follow the four basic principles Robin clearly explains in this book. Become more aware of type and how it can be effectively used to enhance the design of your project. She shows you how to create excitement in your document by using contrast (*Don't be a Wimp*), and how to unify a page with the use of the principles of alignment and repetition. Such awareness can and will enhance the attractiveness of your product (document), so your work is guaranteed to look more professional, organized, unified, and interesting. No, reading Robin's books will not make you a professional designer, but you'll never again look at a page in the same way.

All you have to do is follow her clearly explained concepts, and you'll begin producing more sophisticated, professional, and interesting pages immediately. Humor-infused, jargon-free prose interspersed with design

exercises, quizzes, illustrations, and dozens of examples make learning a easy and a pleasure—you even get to play with tracing paper, playfully doing an intellectual hatchet job on the page layouts and designs in the magazines you already read. This is just what audiences have come to expect from one of my favorite authors.

Desktop publishing is no longer the domain of design professionals. It has become a cottage industry practiced by most folks who own a computer, a bit of software, and an idea they want to print and distribute. Robin's acronym for the design principles, which I discuss later in the review, comes to mind at this point. One constraint: this book's primary intended audience is not web designers, although they can benefit by reading it.

Note if you are web oriented, Robin has a separate design book just for you! Check out *The Non-Designer's Web Book*, by Robin Williams and John Tollett (PeachPit Press.)

Introduction

I write this book review as both a visualization novice and an analytical (scientist) type—creative, but without artistic ability. By reading Robin's books, I have become visually aware of design and the elements that shape it. I am more conscious not only of what attracts and pleases me, but mostly of what turns me off in the newsletters, magazines, advertisements, and brochures I receive daily. Most of it gets circle T'd, or, if possible, recycled at \$0.01/pound without my reading a word, or even five minutes later remembering what it was. Risking being a bit presumptive, Robin has paved a pathway for and all of us who are interested in looking in print to follow. After all, just because you own a computer loaded with hundreds of fonts and sexy graphics tools doesn't mean that your illustrated purple prose in going to catch someone's eye so that they read it.

Robin kick-started many of us away from our typewriter paradigms in her book "The Mac Is Not A Typewriter", 2nd Edition (Peachpit Press, 2003). [macCompanion review August 2003.] "The Non-Designers Type Book" (Peachpit Press, 2002) [macCompanion review December 2003] followed, at least on my pathway to overcoming my "visual illiteracy". Then, in this book, Robin started us looking at effective page design and the role type plays in spreading your word. Robin then takes us deeper into the world of design in her "Robin Williams Design Workshop" which she co-authored with John Tollett (Peachpit Press, 2001), a book I've yet only skimmed in preparation for my February '04 macC review.

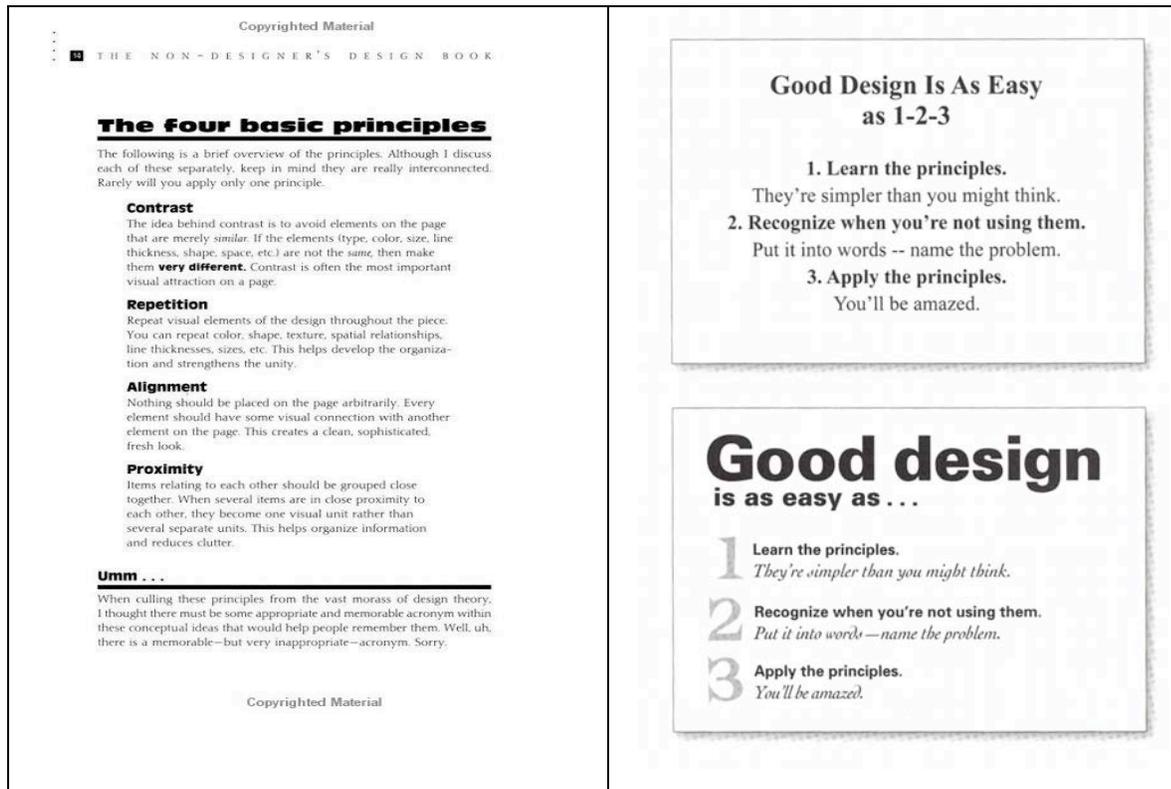
Quoting Robin (page 9) seems like the best way to share the theme and intent of Robin's book:

"This book is written for all the people who need to design pages, but have no background or formal training in design."
"This book assumes you don't have the time or interest to study design and typography, but you would like to know how to make your pages look better."
Most people can look at a poorly designed page and state that they don't like it, but they don't know what to do to fix it."
"Once you can name (*identify*) the problem, you can find the solution."
"This book is not intended to take the place of four years of design school."
"I guarantee if you follow these basic principles, your work will look more professional, organized, unified, and interesting."

So let's look at the book's contents, with me picking and choosing the design knowledge I want to share.

Book Structure and Contents

The 192-page book has 13 chapters divided into two sections: Design principles and Designing with type. In the first section, Robin covers the four basic principles of design: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. In the second section, you get a lesson in Typography 101, and learn about type families, contrasting elements of type, and how to effectively combine typefaces. In both sections, Robin makes sure you get the point of the material through illustrations, examples, exercises, and quizzes.



Robin provides a practical introduction to the classical principles of design in this pamphlet-sized book. Are you haunted by dream of glazed eyes—folks retreating to the TV set after picking up a piece of your copy? Her book will help you answer the "angst" question of why your stuff doesn't seem to grab your target reader. When starting my reading, Chapter 1, Robin's "The Joshua tree epiphany", immediately captured my attention. It struck me as one of the better examples of 'you shall not see if you do not look,' a variant of the classic story of blind men describing an elephant.

Her discussion of layout is organized around four basic design principles: Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, and Proximity.

- contrast to attract attention
- repetition to create a sense of unity
- alignment to give pages a more powerful look
- proximity helps organize information to tie related parts of a page together

Each is presented in its own chapter, with plenty of you-can-do-it-at-home examples. The individual chapters emphasize Robin's point in a simple, easily understood manner, then summarize it. In chapter 6, she applies the principles, one-by-one, to the same document so that you can see how each one improves the page design. As always, in Robin's design books, there are practical design exercises, optional quizzes, and a bibliography, should you want to learn more. Throughout the book, readers are encouraged to feel at ease in the often-confusing world of graphic design. After I butchered a number of Robin's quizzes, a sure sign I had read without actually understanding, a second reading imbedded the message more firmly.

In the second half of the book, the focus is on type, specifically the problem of combining multiple typefaces. Robin demonstrates that in page design, as in life, a relationship is established that is *concordant, conflicting, or contrasting*. This part of the book focuses on type, typography, and its use as a critical design element. It augments Robin's earlier work, *The Non-Designers Type Book*. (After all, designing pages is about getting people to read your messages; otherwise, they are art, an altogether different subject.) It does so without seeming to be repetitious. Indeed, this book augments the lessons Robin shared in her type-focused book by putting all those hard to learn lessons to practical and highly visible use.

Categories of type

There are many thousands of different typefaces available right now, and many more being created every day. Most faces, though, can be dropped into one of the six categories mentioned below. Before you try to become conscious of the *contrasts* in type, you should become aware of the *similarities* between broad groups of type designs, because it is the *similarities* that cause the conflicts in type combinations. The purpose of this chapter is to make you more aware of the details of letterforms. In the next chapter I'll launch into combining them.

Of course, you will find hundreds of faces that don't fit neatly into any category. We could make several hundred different categories for the varieties in type—don't worry about it. The point is just to start looking at type more closely and clearly.

I focus on these six groups:

Oldstyle

Modern

Slab serif

Sans serif

Script

Decorative

Type contrasts

S...
Weight
Structure
FORM
Direction
Color

Type Comes in All Flavors and Shapes

Don't be a Wimp, Experiment

The typography section, ranging from *Type (& Life ...* Chapter 8 through *Type Contrast* (Chapter 10) retunes our thoughts to how typography serves to enhance the designer's message while capturing the reader's attention. The overall theme is to use typographic principles to allow your words to stand out from the gray background of our visually crowded and disharmonious newspapers, magazine pages, and pamphlets. It's a little bit like driving down Main Street at 35 mph and seeing a blur of illegible yard sale signs. If you're a compulsive yard sale junkie you turn off at every sign, but the rest of us will, on a busy Friday or Saturday, will be tempted to turn only by those signs that are truly legible and eye-catching.

In Chapter 8, Robin explains the type-oriented principles of *concord, conflict, and contrast*, based on her classification of typefaces by style (Oldstyle, Modern, Slab Serif, Sans Serif, Script, and Decorative), weight (Light, Bold), shape (Narrow, Wide), and spacing.

The last section of this book includes the extras, where Robin highlights some key item she wants you to remember, gives you some additional exercises provides answers to the quizzes you've done, and, most endearing, lists the typefaces used in the book. Alas, in the manner of a true educator and design visualization guru, she forces you to search her book to find where these typefaces are used—no pages are given.

The second half of the book also includes a fine introduction to typefaces and font terminology as well as lots of examples on how to make typography a tool you will remember. Exercises (with answers) help to drive the points home, and the excellent bibliography will lead you to more in-depth study.

Other Thoughts

This section provides a collection of other things about the Non-Designers Design Book that could my fancy. Don't try to make them collect, but read them for their individual messages.

Robin and the 3 R's—As I've read in other books by Robin Williams, she is a strong proponent of the writer's 3 R's—Readability, Relevance, and Resources. Even the books index is thorough and detailed, making the finding of things your brain just doesn't remember an easy thing to do. (Hey folks, my words, not Robin's.)

Humor—An example of Robin's subtle humor, is how she ends her discussion of the four principals *Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, and Proximity*.

"Umm . . . When gathering these four principles from the vast maze of design theory, I thought there must be some appropriate and memorable acronym within these conceptual ideas that would help people remember them. Well, uh, there is a memorable—but rather inappropriate—acronym. Sorry." . . . This gives you an unforgettable acronym of C.R.A.P to remember them by.

Nonsense Word or a New Language—I also, at first, was quite annoyed by the 'almost English' nonsense words Robin uses for many examples that use extended portions of text, for instance—*Wants pawn term dare worsted ladle gull hoe hat search putty yowler coils debt pimple colder Guilty Looks*. Then I realized it was all a plot to force me, the reader, to pay attention to the design elements, not the words. After all, I did get off on all the quotes and other narrative examples that Robin used in her *The Non-Designers Type Book*. Yeah and the ploy worked—I looked a design instead of enjoying literary quotes!

One Shortcoming—The discussion of color was limited, but appears to be handled in *Robin Williams Design Workshop*. (However, I'm not sure I could have handled more information prior to taking the time to internalize Robin's teachings.)

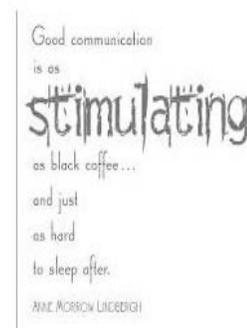
The Rule About Rules—Rules are made to be broken. Robin notes, "There's a rule, though, about breaking rules: You must know what the rule is (about) before you can (with knowledge) break it.

Last, but not least—the recurring theme...don't be a wimp! Spread your *design* wings and try flying high. It's amazing what you'll see.

Conclusion

This book is for all of you creating one-page or short multiple-page designs, such as simple advertisements, pamphlets, brochures, or business stationery and cards. Even when using tools like the new OS X version of The Printshop™ for Mac OS X Edition 1.0 or Microsoft Word™ your designs can look more appealing. This is a great book for those of you who want to improve the layout of your pages but don't want to make a living from it. Read Robin Williams' *The Non-Designer's Design Book*. It's for the scientist laying out a treatise, the secretary laying out an office newsletter, the business person designing their own advertising, the student wanting a better-looking term paper, or the consulting professional creating a lasting impression with a new client. Even us technical types can benefit from a little visual class in our documents! You'll find eye rendering images as well as eye-catching illustrations to highlight the author's short, clear explanations of the major principles of quality layout and presentation.

Although it will be past the holidays when you read this review, give this book as a "You're my friend and I don't want you to continue to be visually illiterate" gift. This book is for all the folks who don't have a lot of time to study page layout design, but who can benefit from knowing the four principles. It will also teach you how to more convincingly use the multitude of fonts we all collect, either inadvertently or as a font addict.



An Afterthought

Now, wouldn't it be great if Robin's next book on design, a future update to this one, included a CD with examples. Obviously, these would need to be in a software format commonly used by non-professionals. Such electronic examples would allow me to practice 'seeing' to avoid being a visually impaired person and to banish the tracing paper I always either botch (it slips even when taped) or tear holes in. Three cheers for Robin Williams, and 5 macC's for this 2nd edition of her outstanding book!

Photoshop Elements® 2.0: 50 Ways to Create Cool Pictures

Reviewed by Julie M. Willingham

Author: David Huss

List Price: \$30 USD, \$47 CND, £23.50 Net UK

ISBN: 0735713235

Paperback: 314 pages

Experience level: Beginning to Intermediate PhotoShop Elements users and photographers.

New Riders Publishing, © 2003

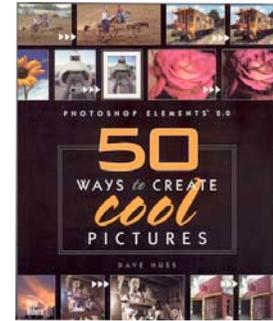
201 West 103rd St.

Indianapolis IN 46290-1097

Tel: (800) 571-5840 or (317) 581-3500

Fax: (317) 581-4663

<http://www.newriders.com/>—includes errata link



Strengths: Easy to follow and understand; clear examples; doesn't try to do too much at once; very light touch of humor; "Contents at a Glance", detailed Table of Contents, good Index.

Weaknesses: Sample files used in the book must be downloaded from publisher's website.

Summary

There are five major divisions in this book, which the author accurately entitles "Quick Start", "Making Photos Look Professional", "Getting Fancy", "Photographic Repair Shop", and "Publishing Photos". In the introduction, the author says he "...want(s) to introduce you to a cookbook for photographers..." and he does that. Good sample photographs, tips on how to use your camera more effectively, brief discussions of important photographic principles, and how to print your photos or put them on the Internet round out this excellent book.

Photoshop Elements® 2.0: 50 Ways to Create Cool Pictures, by Dave Huss, was fun to read, easy to understand, and included a wonderful variety of illustrative and sample photographs— people, flowers, cattle, airplanes, architecture, action scenes, nature scenes—enough for most readers to find something that they might photograph.

For those new to Photoshop Elements□ 2 (PSE 2), Huss shows how the software interface looks and acts, and tells you the hotkeys for the features and tools you will probably use most often. The "Quick Start" section also includes information on getting pictures into your computer by scanner or by digital camera, how to adjust and enhance your photos (and the difference between these tasks), how to choose sizes for your photos, and how to save them on your computer. In this section, I learned how to track pictures once they're in the computer (organization!), a fast but not optimal method for method for adjusting photos, and, at last, in a short understandable discussion, how pixels relate to resolution.

Part II, "Making Photos Look Professional", covers composition problems, including, cropping, making the horizon level, and fixing distortion created by wide-angle lenses and perspective. The chapter on color discusses how an accurate color may not be a pleasing color, and how to fix that nagging bluish (or greenish or orangey) tint that somehow got into your photograph. The chapter on lighting shows how to fix under/overexposures and red-eye, and how to add/remove highlights and shadows. Chapter 8, Final Touches, shows how to divide and adjust specific parts of a photo for brightness and contrast, as well as how to frame and matte a photo with PSE 2.

Part III, "Getting Fancy", was interesting and easy to follow. However, I didn't feel that the ability to add text (in its many variations) to a photo or the ability to make a photo look like a painting were especially useful or wonderful techniques. That said, in Chapter 12, Rearranging and Replacing Objects in Photos, I learned how to use the Marquee tools and Magic Wand to replace an overcast sky with a blue and cloudy sky. I especially liked Chapter 11

on panoramas, because this has been a photographic interest of mine. Huss gives tips on setting up the photographic shooting session as well as how to merge the results using PSE 2.

Part IV, "Photographic Repair Shop", includes in Chapter 13 tips on improving photographic composition (before you use the camera), and an extensive section on improving a person's appearance. There is an amusing example of adding an object from photo A (male lion) and adding it to photo B (outdoor church meeting) by matching lighting, repositioning, and resizing. Chapter 14, Restoration and Repairs, tells you that the most important tasks are figuring out what the problem is, planning how to fix it, and learning what can't be fixed. Learn how to remove dust and junk from scanned photos, and put color back into the cheeks of your great-great-grandpa's baby picture. I learned about Adjustment layers, where color and tone are changed, but the pixels themselves are not changed. This is like putting a special filter over your camera lens.

Finally, once you've adjusted, enhanced, retouched, and otherwise optimized your photos, you'll probably want to print them or put them on the Internet (Email, auction, web page). For the Web, Huss shows how to crop, down-sample, and attach your photos to Email, both with and without PSE 2. He also goes through creating a Web Photo Gallery and PDF Slideshow with PSE 2. The printer section covers resolution versus print time, why to flatten layers, papers, inks, and the Picture Package feature for multiple prints of different sizes.

Conclusion

Overall, this book was clear, interesting, and useful. I have already mentioned the parts that I especially liked or disliked. I do have three nits to pick about a repeated spelling error, a grammar error, and a spelling/usage error. While obvious to me, they weren't distracting, so I won't mention them here.

The biggest problem for me was that the samples photos had to be downloaded from the publisher's website, and that is why I rated this book at 4.5 macC's instead of 5. I have a 56K modem, and didn't always have the patience or time to wait with the phone line tied up. I can now see why some books on graphics include a CD with them. Nonetheless, Dave Huss has written a good introduction to (or reminder about) photography and PhotoShop Elements 2.0.

Games

Star Trek Elite Force II

Reviewed by Ted Bade

Aspyr Media, Inc.
P.O. BOX 5861
Austin, TX 78763
1-512-708-810
Fax: 1-512-708-9595
sales@aspyr.com

Web Site: <http://www.aspyr.com/>
<http://www.aspyr.com/games.php/mac/stef2/>

\$40 USD

Video Trailer: <http://www.aspyr.com/games.php/mac/stef2/>

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.1.5 or later; G3/G4/G5 Processor at 733 MHz or faster; 256 MB of RAM; 3D Graphics Acceleration Required (ATI Radeon/NVidia GeForce or better, 16 MB required, 32 MB recommended); 1.05 GB free hard disk space.

Multiplayer Requirements: Internet and LAN (TCP/IP) play supported Internet play requires a 56 Kbps modem or faster.

Experience needed: Intermediate to expert gamer.



Strengths: Interesting story line, online game play, great graphics.

Weaknesses: Stiff system requirements.

Star Trek Elite Force II (STEF2) is an exciting first person shooter that takes place in the Star Trek Voyager universe. You play the role of Lieutenant Alexander Munro, the leader of an elite tactical Ops force of the Voyager. This game requires skill in shooting, use of a variety of equipment, and solutions to puzzles. Its a fun game and offers excellent graphics. If you are a fan of the Star Trek universe, this is one way you can experience it first-hand. This game also offers competitive online action using a variety of Star Trek based maps.

System requirements for STEF2 are pretty steep. But if you can exceed them, this game is both fluid and realistic. I wouldn't recommend trying this game without a Mac that meets the minimum requirements. There is nothing more annoying than a shooter game in which you try to play in slow motion.

Since the experience of a game like this depend heavily on the computer horsepower your machine can provide, I feel it is important to let you know that I used a G5/1.8GHz (single not dual) with a Radeon 9600 video card, to test play this game.



There are two playing aspects of STEF2. First there is the Star Trek Voyager adventure included in the game. The second is called MultiMatch, which is played against the game's AI (Artificial Intelligence named Bots) or against other people on a LAN or over the Internet, much like Unreal Tournament or Quake III arena.

The game adventure takes place near the end of the Voyager series. Using a Borg facility to return to the Alpha quadrant, the Voyager becomes trapped in a dampening field. The mission of the Elite Force is to shutdown the dampening field and release the Voyager. To achieve this goal, there are a series of smaller goals you need to accomplish. Completing each task moves you and your team closer to the final goal.

As would be expected in a Star Trek episode, as your away-team is transported to the Borg Sphere you immediately run into problems with the transport. The team is split up. Instead of arriving together, they arrive in different locations. You then begin a variety of goals and missions that ultimately bring your to completing the mission goal.



Many of the missions involve a time factor. Like in real life, you need to accomplish a particular task before it is too late. Unlike real life, if you fail, you can return to the last saved game and try again, having learned from your failures. ;-).

There are a variety of tasks required to complete each mission. Often you need to locate a particular switch, power source, or control panel. Generally, doing this involves a fight with the Borg.

But fighting isn't the only way to accomplish some tasks. In many cases you are required to use your trusty Tricorder to analyze and manipulate objects. Then again, you often need to figure out the correct sequence of actions or to locate a hidden passage.

Since the sphere is loaded with Borgs, you get the feeling that you're always being watched. However, they don't usually attack until you do something adverse to them or the ship. And, thanks to the programmers, only the Borg in your general area tend to react to your actions. Many times, you can locate a power source in the area that can be destroyed and thus shutdown the Borgs in that area. Again, the Tricorder is used.

I found the game play to be interesting. Not only do you interact with the three other members of your away team, but you are also in contact with the Voyager, which provides support and intelligence when needed. (of course, sometimes there is too much interference!) The game's AI will coax you through certain tasks. For instance, in one task you need to locate a control source for a force field. The team member you are with explains that the control is on a deck below and that he will operate lift controls to lower you down. You hop on and when you finish the task below, he lets you know to hop back on the lift for the ride back up.



MultiMatch games are a series of "Holo Matches" you play either against game Bots on your local machine or with other people via a LAN or the Internet. The game maps reflect a variety of Star Trek environments and game Bots reflect a variety of Star Trek characters.

The game maps are mostly of the deathmatch variety, in which you shoot at all the other players in the game. Weapons and equipment are from the world of Star Trek. There are about a dozen maps to explore inside this game. You can adjust the game options in a variety of ways, much like any other well-done shooter.

Since this game plays well on my machine, I found the MultiMatch game play smooth, even when playing over the Internet. It was a little disappointing to find only a few games available to join on the Internet with people actually in them. However, this game is new, so there might be more in the future.

Star Trek Elite Force II is an excellent game that is a lot of fun and lets one experience a taste of the Star Trek universe first hand. The game mission is worth the price of admission alone, but you also get the MultiMatch games that can provide hours and hours of fun. It's a blast to become involved with a Star Trek universe mission, almost like being there ;-)



Software

Anark Studio™ 2

Reviewed by Shane French



Anark Corporation
1500 Pearl St. Suite 300
Boulder, CO 80302
1-303-545-2592

Shipped for Mac OS X: 07/29/2003

sales@anark.com

<http://www.anark.com>

Examples and Samples: <http://www.anark.com/gallery/viewall.asp>

The MSRP through the corporate website is \$1,000 USD (now bundled with Cinema 4D), and through various e-retailers you can find the product for \$700. A student edition can be found for only \$100. There are also 20-user licenses available at various rates.

Requirements: OS X 10.2.2 (Jaguar) or later, 256 MB of RAM or more, any graphics card that supports OpenGL 1.2.1 or later, Minimum of 100MB free disk space
Windows Specs: Microsoft Windows 98 SE/2000/ME/XP, Pentium II, 300MHz or better, 256MB of RAM or more, any graphics card that supports OpenGL 1.2.1 or later, Windows Media Player 7 or later, Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or later, Minimum of 100MB free disk space.



Strengths: Anark Studio 2 has the highest quality visual output of any interactive media using integrated video, 3D geometry, graphics, video and audio. Flexible workspace, storage and library palettes and newly upgraded powerful, yet simple component objects. Large, easy-to-follow manual, several key tutorials. Drag and drop video mapping to quickly map video onto 3D and 2D objects and view your completed creation in real-time. Create Application for Windows or Macintosh or the Internet with the Anark Client. Exporters for Discreet® 3ds max™, and plasma™ as well as Lightwave®, Maya® and Deep Exploration® -- ensures superior integration with all industry standard 3D modeling tools. Selectable formats as either interactive scalable Anark media or as high-resolution video for post-production and effect sequences. Choose resolution, frame rates and rendering options for appropriate quality. Necessary timeline enhancements such as zooming, view filters and components. Write your own JavaScript for complete interactive control.

Weaknesses: Not inexpensive. Does not work in Internet Explorer for OSX.

I've got a feeling Anark Studio® 2 (AS2) is headed for some breakthroughs in the world of multimedia. Wasn't it just yesterday that a little application, known as Macromedia Flash®, was somewhat clumsily introduced to the WWW? The unpolished beginnings of an Internet giant may be on the verge of repeating itself in the form of Anark Studio 2. I see incredible potential in AS2, but at the moment it's essentially used for 'eye candy only' purposes. The vast majority of creative studios haven't been introduced or have underestimated its ability. The industry is regularly bombarded with new software, and it's already a chore to learn continually added features to the software you currently use.

So why take a look at Anark Studio 2?

For one, it's easy-to-use. If you've used Macromedia Director®, Macromedia Flash®, Adobe After Effects®, or even Apple's Final Cut Pro®, then using AS2 should be fairly painless. AS2 uses familiar layers, inspector palettes, scenes, and timelines – which now allow zooming for precise editing. Filters in the Timeline also allow you to hide layers, behaviors, and properties so you can see what you're doing. And the Storage palette is an inspector that allows quick access to content and media assets. I suppose you could call the workspace customizable, but I think the default window arrangement is the best way to approach using the application.

It looks great. AS2 combines stunning visuals, incredibly easy 2D & 3D object control, high-quality animation, video mapping, audio and the ability to have a user interact with it. It's a unique tool that's made to captivate users and eventually advertisers. And did you notice the system requirements? It runs quite well on any modest computer. But AS2 is still a little underdeveloped in its workflow and usability, not unlike early versions of Flash.

AS2 is flexible. Write your own JavaScript (or in my case, ask my trusty programmer Brian Rak, brian@braksoftware.com) to create custom behaviors for maximum interactive control. The application includes nearly 70 built-in behaviors, giving developers the ability to create complex, event-driven interaction through drag-and-drop authoring without scripting. Then, deliver it as video, a standalone application, or on the Web via the Anark Web Client for Microsoft Window or Mac OS (unfortunately does not work on IE on the Mac yet).



Where does Anark Studio 2 fit in the picture?

Think of it as the place to combine your work and bring it to life. AS2 creates rudimentary 3D objects, but it's not made for complex 3D models (AS2 is currently bundled with Cinema 4D for this reason). So create your 3D, video, and audio in your favorite applications and import them into AS2 for a whole new perspective. Then, add smart design and interactivity to your project. You and your clients will be smiling.

My advice, stay ahead of the curve and learn Anark Studio 2.



FileMaker Pro™ 6 MacAcademy Volume 2 (*Layout and Form Design*)

Taught by Keith Keil

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad



MacAcademy/WindowsAcademy

102 East Granada Blvd.

Ormond Beach, FL 32176

Tel: 800-527.1914 or 386-677-1918

Fax: 386-677-6717

<http://www.macacademy.com/indexmac.html>; and

The Pleasaunce

Buckenham Road

Attleborough NR17 2LZ

United Kingdom

Tel: 01953.457.600

Fax: 01953.456.458

<http://www.macacademy.co.uk/indexmac.html>

Series Note: The FileMaker 6.0 [FMP] tutorial series consists of seven CDs priced \$39 USD each, with the whole set occasionally available from the publisher below \$273 USD. This review focuses on Volume 2, Layout and Form Design.



Requirements: The tutorials can be used both by Windows and Macintosh platform users with computers capable of viewing “video-style” CDs. The CD reviewed will work on both OS X and “classic” OS version-supported computers. After all, it’s a flexible, work at your own speed, personal training film.

Audience: Intermediate or beginning FMP users.



Strengths: Clear, well written, easy-to-understand.

Weaknesses: At time the pace is faster than I could comfortably handle, but then I was typing my notes into a MS Word review notes file simultaneously with viewing the lesson.

Overall Summary

Volume 2 of 7 in the MacAcademy’s FileMaker Pro [FMP] version 6 tutorials provide an excellent introduction to the basics of designing and using effective multipurpose layouts and attractive looking forms. Most DBs you create will, of necessity, contain or should contain two general layout categories—Data Entry vs. Information Viewing. As part of this volume, Keith Keil teaches you their differences and shows you, the beginning database developer how to most effectively create such layouts.

What is a Layout?

- A layout is simply a way to display the data from your fields in your records.
- You can create a full page displaying information about a single record or many records at a time.
- Each layout or form is totally independent of any others in your database. Therefore, you may format data to look one way in one layout and to look totally different in another.
- If you make any changes to any field's data in ANY layout, it will change immediately all of the others.
- Layouts may be several pages deep... up to 111 inches in length.
- You may have as many fonts, fields, or graphics as you choose on your layout. This gives FileMaker unlimited flexibility in creating any form of which you can think.



Volume 2 (Layout & Form Design) focuses the students' attention on defining the layout function and enabling their creation in easy to assimilate bites. Its chapters include Layout Overview, Layout Preparation, Field & Object Alignment, Replacing Objects, Removing Similar Objects, Object Formatting, Setting Default Attributes, Label Layouts, Merge Letter, Columnar List, Duplicating Layouts, Setting The Tab Order. It also contains illustrative information about making the forms (layouts) you create more attractive to the user.

As was noted in previous review of the first volume in this series (*macCompanion*, December 2003) the availability of a detailed, illustration and example-rich and easy to understand tutorial are a blessing. The volume I've reviewed is a great place to continue learning about FMP for both newbies and advanced users. It is unlikely to be needed by well-trained and experienced FMP solutions developers. Using the CD is as simple as dragging the provided Mac OS or OS X Player to your desktop (or hiding it in your utilities folder) and double clicking on its icon. The standard "player" controls that pause and restart the lessons work in the usual manner, simplifying "playing and replaying" the course elements.

Introduction

In this review, I will provide a synopsis of each major lesson chapter and share my experiences with the lessons I've learned. I emphasize that there was much for me to either learn or better appreciate about FMP, despite having lived with FMP from the earliest Claris published versions. The bottom line, as I view and work with these CDs I've come to a conclusion that it's time for a change or at least to evolve my database creation abilities. Now I hate going back to change my existing databases, but the few I've reworked since my review of Volume 1 of this series have benefited from my revisit.

Once again the tutorials emphasize naming standards, this time focusing on naming layouts. By organizing types of information, using naming standards by its function (data entry of vie reports) is effective in making the use of your database easier. It also serves you, its developer, when modifying your databases to accommodate inevitable changes in form, fact or function. The layout naming standards identified my Keil include {Read, Edit, Report (Rpt) Print (Prt)}. Using such classification you can ease information availability. By using FMP's extensive ability to control privileges [access as well as sharing] you can control, as Keith Demonstrates, the ability of casual users to change record information or database layout content or structure. This responds to a data manager principal paradigm—*It better to mess with my head than with database structure or my data.*

This volume stresses that you can create as many layouts (data views) as you need, with each independent of the other in appearance and as desired data (field) content. All such layouts are however based on the overall information set (in your records) organized into the data fields you created when setting up the database. This, as many of you will recall, was you initial step in creating a new database in FMP.

A Summary of Layout Type Options:

The tutorial begins with a discussion of layout types and options. *The standard view* is used for creating custom office forms. I use it to create an Index Card style view of all the fields in my database, sort of a master view of all the fields I have created to hold my data. It is my layout choice for entering new data into a record. This is something, that Keith Kiel did not mention, which can provide a master view of all your fields, regardless of which subset of fields you use in your layouts. Remember, nothing is lost. Filemaker Pro maintains all the information (field or data) you have created but hides what you don't immediately need, avoiding unneeded clutter in your layouts.

Second, and my most useful view choice as a collector, is the *column or lists view*. This view allows you to 'see' your data laid out in Excel like columns, one line for each record. Later in the review I'll share more Keith's teachings on this subject.

In addition FMP offers, and Keith teaches in Volume 2, how to use the *label* {Avery/Denison and other labels) and *envelope* layout views. Finally, by using a *blank layout*, a user can invoke the FMP mail merge capabilities, a feature I've not yet needed.

The last several lessons (chapters) dwell on how to optimize the usefulness of your various layouts by working with Tab Order and using duplicates of layouts to build specialized, view, data entry and print screens

And Now Let's Skim the Chapter Details

Early in the volume you can learn about *layout preparation and potential X-platform issues*. Since my databases are created on a Macintosh and not shared, I only skimmed this topic. But, if you share data in a PC-Macintosh environment this material is must reading. Remember you can also use this tutorial on your (yuck) PC. Keil discusses important X-platform Issues related to graphics, fonts {postscripting and imbedding problems that occur ca. 1% of the time). His advice for individuals creating databases that will be used by both PC and Macintosh users is to create the database on a PC. This is because, by inference but never stated, a Macintosh is a more forgiving and graphically flexible platform. Another issue discussed, of interest to all FMP users is the constraints, limitations, of printers of various type and capabilities The discussion is centered on differences print borders and page margins, margins which will affect the allowable visible space available in your printouts.

Moving on to the topic of *field & object alignment* Keil shares—the appearance of your layouts will also be printer dependent since PostScript™ differences will affect margin placement One interesting set of information, at variance with the teachings of Robin Williams is Keith Kiel's *Rules of Three* when used for layout designs.

- Use only three fonts. Keil proposes using of only Arial, Times New Roman and Verdana (all Windows fonts).
- Use only three styles: I presume them to be regular, bold and Italic since they were not specified.
- Use only three font sizes, Keil's choices are not identified.

The chapter on replacing objects and removing similar objects provides information on how to, quickly and in a controlled fashion, arrange and rearrange multiple objects. Information on the techniques for locking objects to avoid their accidental deletion, is provided. Methods, are provided for consciously and simultaneously deleting objects of the same type. Along the way Keith teaches you how to modify both record names, change the information in a selected field with a minimum of mouse clicks. A discussion follows on how to create printable custom layouts to use with stock blank paper forms such as those provided by the IRS.

The sections on *object formatting, formatting date and number fields*, are followed with a lesson on how to create attractive views using the FMP effects tools. The latter allows creation of a professional looking 3D Embossed or engraved look for your data fields. New to me was the concept of colorizing either fields or record page backgrounds. Using this technique might be fun if not over done. A lesson, associated with formatting, which did not take, was Keil's discussion of the ability collectively (in groups) formatting fields using the FMP *painter tool*. I need to study this a bit more. All these techniques serve to make the information in your database look better on screen, and by default easier to read and use.

Setting default attributes and shortcuts (objects and text) creating sample patterns for temporary use in your design layout to depict font, field formats and color therefore setting as default attributes to use as you create your layout. This explains why creating layout that takes me several hours or more, even for simple DBs, Keil's teaching can reduce the time, by using Shortcuts to save time needs significantly minutes instead of hours! This is helpful in creating customized layouts.

The tutorial continues with lessons associated with both creating and using *label layouts* and FMP's rich *merge letter* support. Since I use a DYMO™ LabelWriter™ for the former and haven't ever been forced to use MS Words mail merge, I did not attempt to learn and apply this part of the tutorial. I did however conclude, having read about merges for both pieces of software, that doing a mail merge with FMP was significantly easier, and almost as attractive as in MS Word. Thank you Keith Keil for your clear lesson on this complex subject. Suffice it to say, I own the CDs and can come back, later, to these topics should need them.

And Back to Layout Views and the Last Tutorial Sections

Columnar or List, a variant of a spreadsheet display is next discussed. This is the layout I use most when actually searching for information in my collectables or address databases. With it I can scan found records, say for Yakima WA and find the business, selling spices, whose name I only vaguely remember. The tutorial also presents information on moving fields adding line dividers and discusses. Albeit briefly, the difference between *table view* and *columnar lists*. Since I don't use the former, I was not concerned with the brevity of this part of the presentation. Bottom-line, this was a particularly helpful chapter, even to me a person who has used FMP since before it was spun-off from Claris, Inc.

The CD concludes with a discussion replete with excellent examples on *duplicating layouts*, a method that allows you to create a new customized layout, without starting from scratch. The last lessons then discusses *setting the tab order* allowing the user to find a better initial starting point in a layout to use in data entry. The FMP default tab settings that allow you to mouselessly move from one data field to another are, by default, set in the order in which the fields were initially created.

For example, I set up a database for all of the 'suppliers' of goodies I either use or want to remember, starting with name_First, name_Second, and then name_Affiliation. Most of the time I really want to enter data for a company by it's company name (e.g., affiliation) because I usually don't have a contact name to put into the first two fields. So by resetting tab orders so that field becomes my initial data insertion point when adding new information. This segment also teaches you how to setup custom tab orders therefore bypassing calculated fields, allowing for more facile data entry.

The final information in this volume is briefly, but clearly, focused with the necessity, in multiple user environments, to limiting which layouts the user, as opposed to database manager, can use or change. There are in FMP, powerful ways to limit individual users abilities to enter or delete data, change layouts, or even print out information... a subject taken up in greater deal in a later volume.

Other Asides and Thoughts

I have one issue with this second CD. Its instructor assumes that you've been practicing what you were taught both in the first CD and in the early lessons in this one. Therefore, he speeds up his presentation when reusing features already taught, particularly the use of keyboard shortcuts or for repeated actions needed to format a layout. This is not a serious flaw, since the student can replay the earlier material until they've gotten it right. It did leave me a bit breathless as I worked with this disk over an intense six-hour period. Perhaps I should either relay the lessons or better yet practice on a data free template or an actual copy of my treasured databases.

Conclusions

Volume 2 of the MacAcademy Filemaker Pro series is a must buy, which by yet unproven speculation I suspect will be true of the other 5 CDs in this series. Notwithstanding my previous comment, this second in the series, CD is an outstanding learning tool and deserves 4.5 macCs.

Stay tuned, in future macCompanion reviews, I will be providing you with my thoughts on the other five volumes of this series.

Wildform Flix Pro 3.1 – Flash Video Authoring Tool

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher



Wildform, Inc.
1501 Main Street, Suite 202
Venice, CA 90291
1-310-396-2025
fax: 1-310-396-2065
info@wildform.com
<http://www.wildform.com/>

pro \$150 USD; SE \$70 USD, ' Lite \$30 USD

Requirements: Power PC, Mac OS 9.2+, Mac OS X 10.0+, , 64MB RAM, 20MB free disk space Also available for Windows, Win 98/ME/2000/NT4/2000/XP

Tutorials: <http://www.flashanimationtutorials.com/?sid=DPHI-B31I-3fde765d711dc&ref>



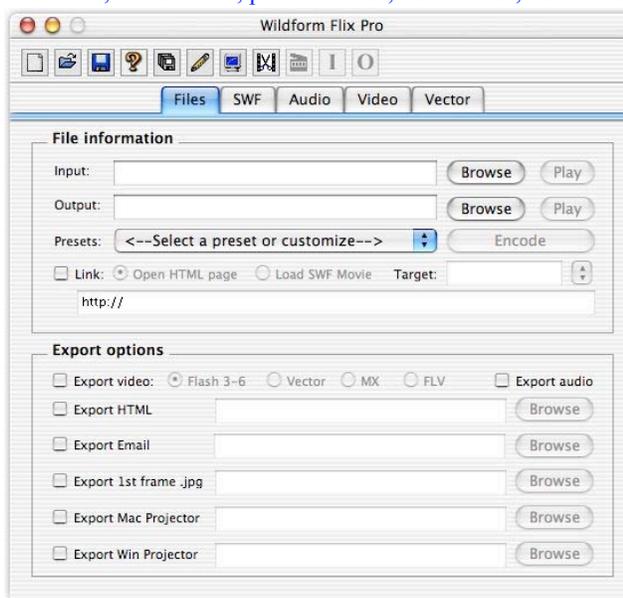
Strengths: Very flexible and easy to use. Encode and post video in three clicks with Flix Pro! Flix video works without a streaming server, plays on all platforms and browsers and streams through firewalls. Output video in a custom player automatically. Batch encodes videos. Convenient presets to prepare your video for streaming over the Internet at any bandwidth. Link video files to any web site. Customizable and savable settings and options work well. Flix is the only software that outputs all types of Flash video:

Weaknesses: I found some of the names of the packages misleading or confusing. Some features, like more difficult software or options, may take time to solve and use. No hard copy documentation but online documentation is helpful.

Flash[®] and Shockwave[®] (SWF) video and animations are now commonplace. This versatile multimedia format is used on website banners, websites, computer based training, videos, tutorials, presentations, distance learning, training, and quality Flash Video Encoding Products. If you have used software, the Internet or additional application, no doubt you have seen the result of SWF products. In any case, possibly you are looking for an easy and cost-effective way to create your own SWF video for the web, Pocket PCs, presentations, CD-ROMs, and other applications. While some software make the creation effort tedious, other software packages are making the process a much easier task. One of these software packages, Wildform Flix[®] Pro makes this process a pleasure.

The company *Wildform* has an array of software. I found the ability to separate and keep track of some of the different software offerings a little difficult due to their names and titles of the software. The one targeted for this review, Wildform Flix Pro, can be used to convert video to and from several formats (asf, .avi, .dv, .mov/.qt, .mpeg, .wmv, .mp4). Still Images could also be transformed (jpg, .gif, .png, .bmp, .psd, .tif, .pic, .tga) and audio files could be converted as well (.mp3, .wav, .wma) into Flash formatted products (the most popular media format on the Web).

Flix allows inserting links into video, create video banner ads and e-mails, and deploy customized media players. Flix video works without a streaming server, plays on

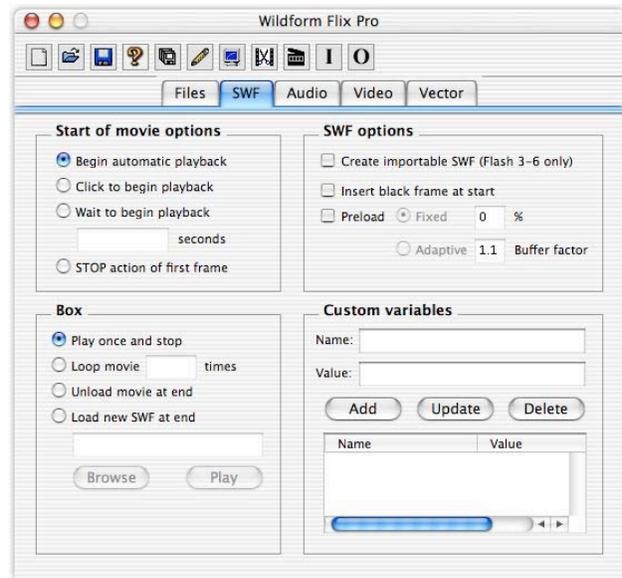


all platforms & browsers, and streams through firewalls. And since nearly everyone already has the Flash player installed, using Flix means that your viewers won't have to download any players.

The company produces “three versions” of the Wildform: Lite, SE and Pro. Lite is the best option for those who occasionally would like to easily encode files into Flash format for the purpose of placing video on the Internet, on CDs or included within presentations. This version is the simplest and most direct way to create animation. The other two versions provide more tools.

Wildform SE is for those who want to encode high quality video, but do not require use of the advanced features of Flix Pro (batch processing, editing and player output). These versions are for those who want more control when producing their creations. Flix Pro is for the user to help create professional-caliber video. This version is easy to edit, crop, encode and post your video using your own custom-made player in minutes. For this review, I worked with the Pro version.

The Pro version has vector video output which allows you to view screenshots. The video and animations allow for Flash 3-6 output, Flash MX output, Flash FLV output and Bitrate control. Presets (premade encoding) can be assigned and this software also takes advantages of high resolution 2-pass and Automatic Player Output (Basic, Automatic Player Output (Advanced)). Also possible are adding players to existing SWFs, In & Out point editing, cropping, Batch Encoding, overlays, Image filters, (brightness, contrast, hue, saturation), deinterlacing, noise reduction and use of Automatic links, ability to add metadata/variables. Saving as Flix settings files, automatic fixed preloader as well as automatic adaptive preloader, automatic SWF file chaining, JPEG export, outputs, WAV and MP3 files are also options. It was obvious to me this software has a lot of features and flexibility.

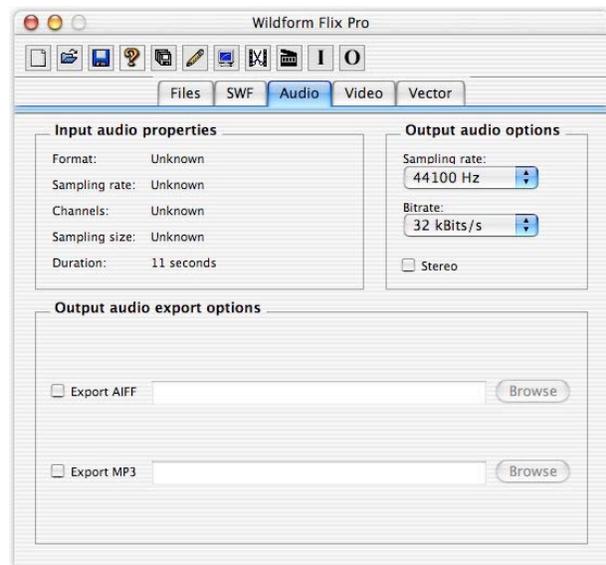


The interface is visually appealing, is well laid out and is fairly easy to understand initially. First I tried making a video animation from an animated gif that I created from a video that I shot during the total solar eclipse in Hungary in 1999.

Browsing for the digital video file and importing was easy. A little window with the first image of the animated sequence popped up. By clicking the options available in the tabs (Files, SWF, Audio, Video and Vector), allowed me to customize the video the way I wanted. This is where the learning process becomes a little more difficult.

The process takes a little planning, problem solving and forethought to produce your flash animation product the way you want. You need to take into account and consider the length of your video, the quality of the displayed product and your audience (who will view your work).

For exportation, I chose flash 3-6 (this would work in flash versions 3 to 6). Other options included Vector, MX, FLV and ability to export as audio (if you are just working with audio). In addition, it is possible to export as html (for insertion into web pages), export as email, export 1st frame as a JPEG picture (to be clicked upon to start) or there is the ability to export as a Mac Projector or Windows projector (a clickable file to show video).

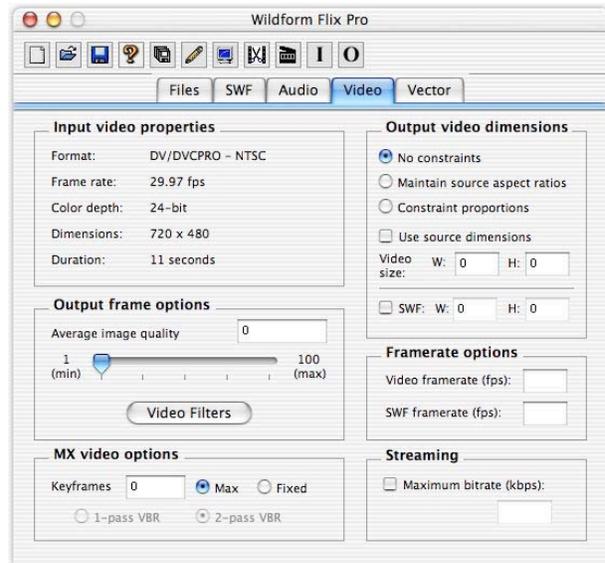


Clicking on the SWF tab brings up a variety of options. The Automatic and Clicking to Begin Playback are options. A number of seconds can be inserted to wait and begin the playback. The animation can be stopped after the first frame as well. Playing once and stopping, looping, unloading movie at end and load new SWF at end can also be selected.

SWF features including choosing to create importable SWF (flash 3-6) only, inserting black frame at start and/or preloading (fixed or adaptive). Custom variables can be added, updated or deleted.

Customizing audio, formatting, sampling rate, channels, sampling size and duration can be selected to meet various needs. Output audio options including choosing the sampling rate, bitrate settings or stereo if you would like. One nice feature is the audio can be exported as an AIFF file or MP3 (for popular music playbacks in iPod or your favorite CD player with MP3 options).

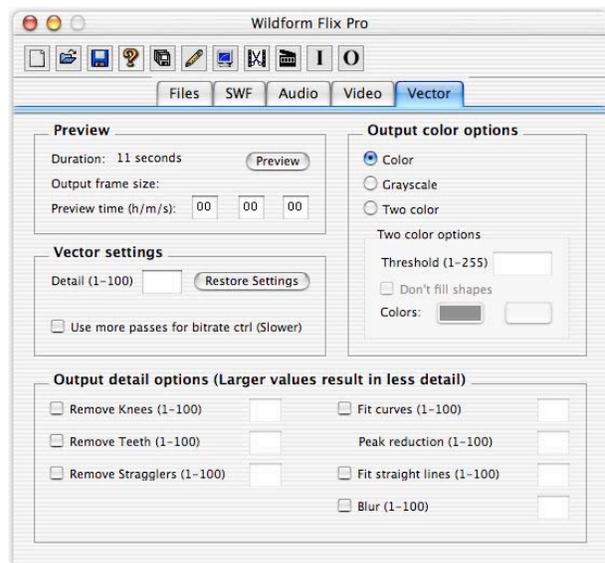
I'm an intermediate (SWF) user. My main aim was to produce a (SWF) video with the software. While I knew that there were other sophisticated parts of the software, my main mission was to leave more complex multimedia to other needs within the software. While I used various parts of the software, I was also aware that other parts of the software could be used to make even more powerful and stylish video effects. The software brings up other possibilities for choosing. Input video properties (format, frame rate, color depth, dimensions and duration) can be directed. Output frame options (quality versus speed) can be chosen on the slide bar.



I fiddled with the other options. For MX video options allowing keyframes (max or fixed) with 1-pass VBR or 2-pass VBR. I found that the MX video options are very important, as you will always get the best quality by using 2-pass VBR encoding with a maximum bitrate. So I chose 2-pass VBR.

Output video dimensions (no constraints, main source aspect ratio, constraint proportions or use source dimensions were important to decide how big your video would appear along with the Video size or SWF options. Choosing the width and breath sizing, I chose an animation that would show in a box-area about 1.5 rectangle. Specifying the video or SWF framerate (fps) and streaming at maximum bitrate were also options but I left those alone.

Under the Vector tab, the following could be customized: Preview (duration, output frame size) and Preview (set duration, output frame size and preview time . The vector settings (settings 1-100) and a button for using more passes for bitrate. Other options including the fitting of curves, peak reduction, fit straight lines and blur are possibilities to be chosen as well.



The toolbar has several icons for easy access. Openings, saving, choosing disc area are easily available. The “pencil” allows for overlays while the “TV-monitor” icon allows for different “skins” options. The “question mark when pressed “bombed” but I expect it was to find additional information. The scissors in the filmstrip used the editor (input, output, filters). The last were input and output.

I selected the average image quality range of 75. The Pro version is not complicated to work with and literally saves countless hours of production by automatically turning any video into an animation (full color, grayscale, two color and outline output options). In a few minutes my video animation was produced (see below).



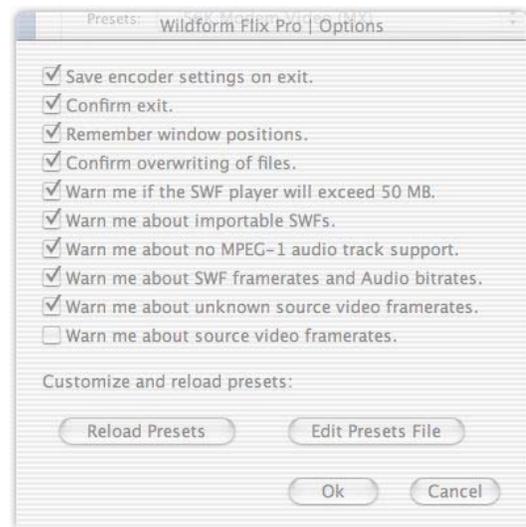
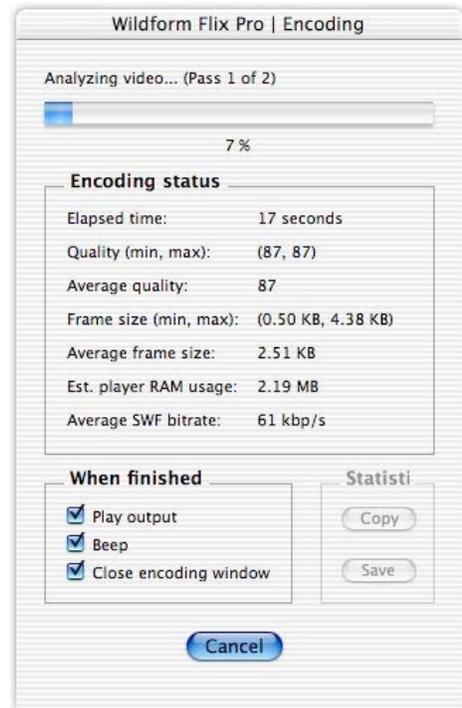
Once the animation is rendered, the final product appears on the desktop (or wherever you choose to store it), as a file with a big “F” (I had chosen a Mac projector to export to). This is the flash projector and once clicked, my eclipse animation started and played in real time. If desired these projectors can be embedded on to CDs and web pages.

Screen capture videos placed into Flash format are widely used for tutorials, presentations, distance learning, computer based training, and other applications. These can be placed on website pages and for offline distribution. Wildform Flix Pro does not have a screen capture, so I used another Mac Product, Snapz Pro X. [Editor: see the other review by Dr Eric Flescher in this edition of macCompanion.]

Flix Pro does not have some of the features and options of applications such as Adobe After Effects, Adobe Live Motion and Macromedia Flash. The advantage of FlixPro is that the “learning curve” is not as great, meaning you can actually produce your animation more simply, quickly and more easily. Wildform Flix Pro is much easier to use to create a quick animation movie due to the software’s straight-forward and relative ease of operation. Not everyone needs all the “bells and whistles” of more complicated software and not every production/task requires more advanced capabilities. It depends upon your needs and ultimate goals.

If you decide you need more options, the company offers other program packages with sets of tools (flix, fx, etc.) that can be used to help with titling and other tasks and that can be integrated with Flix Pro. That way you can start with the level of animation production to meet your needs and costs and then add additional packages and multimedia outcomes as desired and needed.

Flix Pro, for the most part, simple, very easy to use and very effective. If you want a stylish non-complicated piece of software to create video for the web, CD-ROMs, presentations or other applications, Flix Wildform is a great way to work and create Flash and Shockwave multimedia. Try Wildform Fix Pro (or another version) and see “shockingly” good results.



Mask Pro 3.0

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

Extensis, Inc.
1800 SW First Avenue
Suite 500
Portland, OR 97201
1-800-796-9798

<http://www.extensis.com>

Mac/Win \$200 USD, Upgrade to the latest version, \$100

Requirements: Adobe Photoshop 4.0 or higher or Corel Photo-Paint 8.0 or higher
Advanced Users only



Strengths: Many tools that are originally designed for graphic enhancement, are designed with Mask Pro 3, beyond the original advancements of Mask Pro 1 and 2 versions. Some tools are enhanced for better efficiency. Allows a host of tools for mask procedures.

Weaknesses: Mask Pro has an array of tools that are a marvelous concept but that are difficult to integrate and use at times. By admission, the authors admit, that masking requires much effort but the instructions did not achieve full success, even for simple or intermediate masking. The instructions and help materials, are for the most part, text based, and are lot to be desired, in terms of making sense to achieve desired results. Screen shots that are shown, usually show the start and end results many times, any achievements are hard to come by.

Computer users like to view their graphics and digital pictures as is. However, sometimes there are images that one wishes to improve, improvise or change. Photoshop[®] and Corel PhotoPaint[®] can be used as is, with either the Selection and QuickMask tools, to complete graphic achievements. These methods are usually challenging, difficult, laborious and time consuming to complete. **Mask Pro[®] 3.0** makes the masking and graphic tasks a much easier and more efficient endeavor for your graphic enhancement pleasure.

Mask Pro 3 works as a plug-in effect within Photoshop, Corel PhotoPaint or other graphic programs. Mask Pro 3 shows up within the tools of one of these graphic programs and allows the user to create “masks.” Masked areas, also known as transparent pixels, appear as erased areas on a checkerboard background. Unmasked areas appear as the image itself.

Masks, digital layers within graphics, can separate an image from one or more backgrounds, to change effects, filters, colors, backgrounds and more. Masks can also be used to replace, subtract then complete into areas with another color, image or some other digital effects. All you need is a better set of tools and Mask Pro 3 gives more flexibility.

To delay confusion with the use of graphics and masks, novice graphic users, before using Mask Pro 3, should take a basic tutorial of related graphic software, utilizing a book or instructions or trying on their own how to work with the graphics. There is certain terminology that graphic users need to “speak.” to understand the “language of graphic tools” and be able to change graphics/images. Even Mask Pro 3 starts with these.

Tools that are very similar to most graphic software advanced to intermediate, as well as intermediate and novice graphic users will find familiar graphic tools. Each graphic icon represents a symbol, which in turn lets the user make certain adjustments to the graphic area.

Magic Pen automatically draws an area to mask or restore while the Pen manually draws an area to mask or restore. The Magic Brush works like a “digital brush.” As one draws over another mask or area, the color or effect changes. Using the Keep and Drop Color tools, there is an area of a predetermined size which can either remain (kept in the mask area) or eliminated (dropped from the mask area). The Brush manually mode, adds or subtracts from a mask area while the Magic Fill tool let’s the user click to remove specks, holes or portions from the entire mask. The Fill Bucket command like fill buckets in other programs, used to fill in large areas. Magic Wand masks out large areas based on active Keep and Drop Colors.

The Airbrush tool manually adds or subtracts from a masked area but can also adjust the opacity (clarity of color or section showing through) can be adjusted gradually. The Magic Pen automatically draws an area to make a mask or restore an area while the Pen Manually draws an area to mask or restore. The Hand is used to move and adjust an image in the window. The Zoom once clicked, zooms in and makes the area appear bigger. The Erase Mode eliminates the selected area (fills with transparency). Restore Mode brings back the restored area (acts like the undo command in many software packages) and adjusts back to the original image. Dual Mode, available only with Magic Brush and Magic Fill, acts as a double tool and erases and restores. Toggle Modes adjusts between erase, restore and dual erase/restore masking modes.

After learning the basic needs and operations needed to manage graphics for home, business or pleasure, the more difficult jobs can begin. These operations allow for the use of many tools that allow for the “masking processes” to begin.

The Select tool creates an area without affecting the currently selected layer(s). The images are usually laid out in a series of layers the “stack up above each other.” These layers called “alpha channels” can be utilized to adjust the so-called “layers.” This is magic way to separate an area of an image so that appropriate section can be applied with a filter, turned off, reintroduced or another effect.

The Mask tool is the heart of the operations. Certain areas can be dropped out of the background from the currently selected layer. This option is appropriate for the image to the right, where I eliminated the background and placed the lion head on another background made with the Cloud filter in Photoshop.

Mask Composite is similar to the Mask tool but creates a mask by “eliminating” the background from a selected graphic layer. Each graphic is a series of layers of colors, patterns or effects. Various underlying layers can be masked (modified in many ways). That way you can adjust you’re for one of many backgrounds.

The Make-Work Path creates a work path, called a clipping path. Clipping paths are very useful when working in Photoshop as these line- tools acts like “ a slinky-like graphic curve,” to make a series of lines that can flexibly curve over unusual shaped areas. Once the path areas are enclosed, areas under or over the path can be modified. Mask Pro 3 makes this a much more easier process then the so called “Bezier curve” like lines which are difficult to manage.

The EdgeBlender removes halos (lighter shadow like colors or images) by removing unwanted background colors from the edges of the pixels. This making for better coloration especially nears the edges. There are many tool effects to make the process in even more exact. The Choke Radius tells EdgeBlender how many pixels in from the edge to average the colors while the "The Search Radius," tells EdgeBlender how many pixels to examine to determine what color the edge should be.

The Solid View lets your mask to be seen against a background color of your choosing rather than the “checkerboard” background of Single Layer View. The Single Layer View lets the user see the image when you isolate a section from the background

The Quick Mask View replaces masked (transparent) pixels with 50% red rather than a checkered background while the Mask View displays the mask in grayscale. Transparent pixels appear as shades of black while the opaque pixels are shown as white. Cleanup View, a good way to cover up holes, is similar to Mask View, lets pixels that are not completely, transparent (seen as black) or completely opaque (shown as white) are displayed as 50% gray.

With Composite View, your mask and any active layers are available while the Creating Soft Edges, allows the adjustment of the painting tools’ soft edges. Threshold, determines how much of the foreground vs. background that is kept (dragging the slider toward “more,” lets more of the original graphic will be kept). Conversely, dragging toward “less,” decreases the original image, makes it disappear.

Transition is the tool that determines lets how far to Keep and Drop colors so that they blend in to your liking. The Brush Edge allows the adjustment of the “brush edge” so that the differences between the colors and their edges appear smoother in a progression of color. Advanced Beginners, Intermediate, and advanced computer users can start off with the initial use of the software plug-ins by opening up a picture of your choice. The opening interface is clear but there are variety of optional tools to work with, depending on your needs and outcomes.

The tools assist with making masks in several ways. The trick is to try to find out which tools can do the job you want. With each image or graphic, there are different ways to approach each part of the graphic problem. Tools to perform various tasks can be use with keyboard commands or clickable-shortcut commands. The array of tools can show the flexibility of the masking methods or the confusion, which sometimes comes about with so many options.

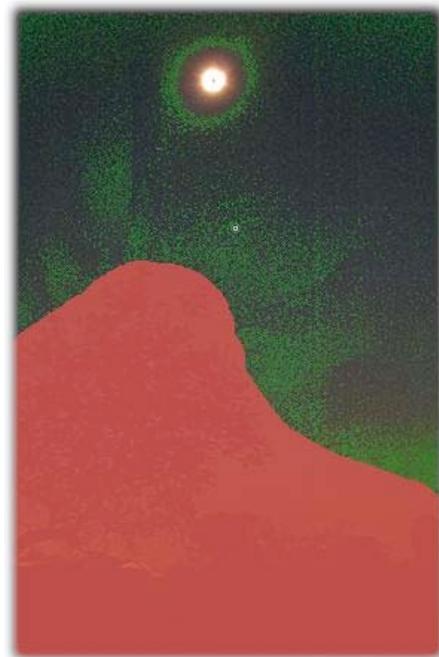
However with each version there are new tools. Mask Pro 3 offers more possibilities to render your graphics the way you want.

The Keep Color defines colors to keep in the image. Clicking across the defined area keeps the selected area as is. Oppositely, the Drop Color lets the colors vanish from the masked area. View Modes let's Mask Pro provide a variety of ways to view your mask as you work.

Mask Pro 3 includes several complete new tools. The EdgeBlender which reduces or eliminates halos (extra light related images), by replacing the color in partially transparent pixels along the edge of the mask, allowing masked images to blend better with new backgrounds. The PrecisionEdge (a Magic Pen Tool) accelerates the normal Pen tool selections by automatically fitting path to the closest edge. The IntelliBrush and IntelliWand allow the rapid start of masking without selecting Keep and Drop Colors by simply clicking on the background. The Mask Pro determines what to keep or drop and automatically adjusts to suit the image. Erase Only/Restore Only Mode allows you to erase or restore specific colors in your image while the Global Choke/Spread User defines the choke/spread values which allow the tightening or loosening of the entire mask. Selection Filter gives you the option of creating an image's rather than dropping out the background. Mask Pro Composite View lets the viewing of your mask graphic against background layers in the original image.

There are Tools that are enhanced from previous versions of Mask Pro 2. Stroke Undo Enhances the incremental steps of the Undo/Redo by including a full-stroke undo, allowing you to undo an entire brushed stroke immediately. Specify Background Additional allows the "viewing of modes" lets you view your masked image in QuickMask mode, or against a background color of your own choosing. Apply to Entire Image Adds the ability to apply tool functions to an entire image area while the Revert Lets you restore the original image before any masking that was performed, which allows starting all over if needed. The Clipping Path Generation Ability creates the clipping paths from selections or masks. Clipping Path Proxy Preview Visually indicates the effects of the Choke and Tolerance value settings before applying.

With all these great tools at your ready, what is the result? All in all, what can you do once you know that all these graphical tools and applications exist, for your pleasure? The proof is with how well you can achieve some simple and intermediate masking of graphics to achieve some measure of success. While I work with graphics quite often and in different ways, I am not an expert and graphic software should be able to achieve some measure of success. While I had achieved some initial masking techniques, I had hoped that Mask Pro 3 would make masking methods easier and more efficient. I wanted to achieve a certain amount of success with masking graphics, but while I found the tools appealing and some easy to use, even after more then a month with this program, I could not achieve the desired results with the guides.



I did try to make a picture that I created when I was in Africa in 2001. I wanted to take out the bottom trees and see if I could make the scenery of the eclipse sun on a different background. (The Extensis guide had used a different graphic to go on top of another graphic). I did not think the whole process would be that difficult but it was. I could not achieve what I wanted with these tools.

I was able to control the options for extracting certain colors in the image for a mask. Each color that was extracted showed up as a colored bar of different color.

I was able to apply the colors and parts of the masked area for the picture. Instead here I used the colored brush like tool (red) to stop the area I wanted to remove.

I then applied the Magic Tool to calculate and fine which parts of the graphics would be considered to be hidden (red colored patched area of the image).

But that is as far as I got. I could not apply the red area in the image so that I could take that out and then take the top part of the image and set it on a different image.

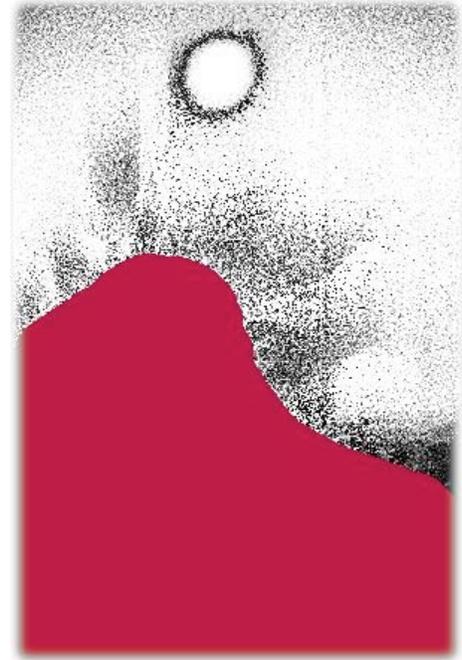
Mask Pro 3 is a complex set of tools. This software is not for novice or possibly intermediate users. By admission, the Extensis (in the Quick Start and Help guide) state these tools are difficult and require time to achieve special tasks. That is fine and I took on the challenge. I knew this program would take time to achieve as complex applications take time. But I ran in to too many dead-ends and too many hours of not achieving what I had hoped. Further instructions are needed to have assisted with this marvelous piece of software. Many times I could almost think of the desired results and make certain gains, only to be thwarted, as I could not make sense of the instructions no matter how hard I tried.

I am continually perplexed concerning how tools, which are visually based, continually use mostly text-based procedures and instructions, to demonstrate graphic based applications. Some computer-based books show a more intuitive, visual way of solving graphics and achieving desired results. However this was not the case, with Mask Pro 3, I am sorry to say. And I felt I was so close.

The Mask Pro 3 instructions are mostly text based. Some screen shots appear throughout the guide, showing images, tools and effects but it is difficult to make sense of how the tools integrate together to achieve final graphic goals. While some photos in the start up guide, tantalizing showed a final product with which I could mask part of a graphic and overlay it on another background did not come about after many hours of but could not acquire the final set of methods to complete such success. You have to watch carefully when going back and forth between the Photoshop tools and icons, the Mask Pro 3 set of tools and all the icons and procedures in the instructional guides. Clearer instructions and better explanations would have helped.

It is difficult enough to complete innovative graphic and software tools. But it is even more difficult sometimes to include some better instructions. While there are many books on the market, masking is still difficult to understand and comprehend. And that is where the minds of Extensis have tried to create new tools for masking and graphic endeavors. It is possibly where tools and understanding, either meet or don't meet that show the true value of powerful tools.

It would have helped if there were diagrams, drawings using arrows, parts of the tools and instructions or showed in a more step-by-step, visually based procedures, to achieve desired final results. While some success was achieved for rudimentary graphics, final results of mask placement with graphics were not achieved. While some photos in the start up guide, tantalizingly showed a final product with which I could mask part of a graphic and overlay it on another background, did not come about after many hours of work and I could not acquire the final set of methods to complete such success. It is a great program. The learning curve however is very difficult to achieve despite the great tools and applications. Take that into account before purchasing and working with Mask Pro 3, even with other

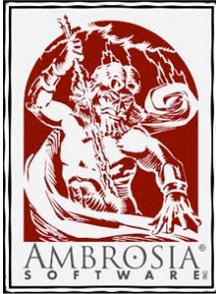


books, your time and other help. If Mask Pro 3 can't let you achieve the desired results, even simple ones, this software may not be for you but more suited to the advanced user.

Your ad could have been here!

Snapz Pro X 1.0.9 – Screen Capture

Reviewed by Dr Eric Flescher



Ambrosia Software, Inc.

PO Box 23140

Rochester, NY 14692

1-800-231-1816 (orders only) or 1-585-325-1910

Fax: 1-585-325-3665

help@AmbrosiaSW.com

<http://www.AmbrosiaSW.com/utilities/snapzprox/>

\$49 USD, Upgrading from Snapz Pro 2 to Snapz Pro X costs \$19 USD; upgrading to Snapz Pro X w/ movies costs \$39 USD (both are \$10 off the normal price).

Localizations for Traditional Chinese, Dutch, Japanese, Finnish, French, German, Korean, Spanish and Swedish

Originally released 07/27/2001. Version 1.0.9 Pantherized. See Version 2.0 features at

http://www.ambrosiasw.com/news/upcoming/spx2_betashots.html

Requires: Any machine capable of running Mac OS X.



Strengths: All-in-one utility to capture and store screen captures. Snapz Pro X 1.0.9 has "ClearScale" that automatically makes your images look better (clearer and sharper images, fonts and colors) when they are scaled up or down. This version adds movie-capturing capabilities that can be saved in QuickTime format. Corrections and formatting of the picture can be made within the software before saving instead of having to use a graphic editor after the picture is saved.

Weaknesses: See the link for Version 2.0 when it is released. The betashots look great!

Have you had a wish to capture images or short movies of your favorite games, application, documents, pictures and more? Mac OS X has this ability to take a snapshot of your whole screen (Open-Apple shift 3) or part of the screen (Open-Apple shift 4). While Mac OS X offers the capability with the Grab function that is capable of taking full screen snaps and saving the grabbed screen in PDF format, you may still want more options. Have you ever wished that your Macintosh had the ability to create sharper screen capture pictures or had the ability to capture screens from your DVD? Possibly you want to be able to save the captures in different formats without the use of a graphic editor or be able to turn your screen frames into QuickTime movies? If so, your wish may be answered by using **Snapz Pro X 1.0.9**.

This utility offers flexibility for capturing shots of your monitor's screens. Capturing the whole screen, selecting an object on the screen, part of the screen as an image or making a movie, are options. Selecting the full screen, the image is captured immediately while selecting object-mode, the image is captured when you click the mouse inside the window or menu. If you use the selection tool, once you've highlighted the area you want, the image will be captured when you hit either the return key or the Snapz Keys one more time (I found this out by trial and error).

No matter which mode you choose, Snapz Pro X 1.0.9 uses "ClearScale", a feature that automatically makes your images look better producing clearer and sharper images, fonts and colors when the images are scaled to a smaller or larger size. The screen captures did look crisper and clearer than normal screen captures.

You can use other options (palette, the color, border, file, type or changing the quality of the saved image), to finalize the way you want the image appear. Alterations to your final image include such options as scaling, cropping, dithering, adding borders, generating thumbnails and overlaying a watermark/copyright notice. The graphic settings can be changed along with specifying file-naming options. Another nice tool is the new "Fatbits" tool that lets you zoom in on the pixels on your screen, for doing close up and exact work.

More capabilities under the preferences tab, help speed up your ability to customize the final image and allowing for several options. The screen captures can be triggered with hot keys (which you can set up by yourself). If you want the software to take a picture at a special time or after a certain period of time, **there is a script (in the extras folder) that allows timed capture.**

Instead of the image being captured in one mode (current Mac OS X is in PDF format), you can choose which graphics settings format you would like the snapshots to be saved (graphic format .bmp, pict, .gif, .jpg, .png, tiff, .pdf, or Photoshop files etc.). This helps speed up your work, as a graphic editor does not have to be launched, so you could convert the files, after the initial screen/image is saved. If you are saving in JPEG format, this will also avoid loss of quality.

There is the option to view the captured image within 12 applications (including Appleworks, Photoshop, and QuickTime). You have several choices if you want a prefix appended to the image name. Miscellaneous settings allow the choosing and changing of the border type, thumb nail size, quality of the image, the background color, and the opacity (how clearly the graphic shows) of the background and copyright symbol.

Using the tools and techniques allows making the final image easier to view. Snapz Pro X has the concept of a "clipping border" using the Objects tool. This extends the border around the objects you have selected, and then applying a filter to that area, either dimming it or lightening it, depending on what Color and Opacity you have set. I set Clipping Border set to "Small" (set in the Preferences pane), and my image Border set to "Fade to White" (set on the main Snapz Pro X pane). This made the image look better. Another procedure is "Fade to Black" if these screenshots will go up on a web page with a black background.

Video capture is also at your fingertips. Movie options



include fixed capture, following a cursor, capture via a smooth panning of the screen, and choose the frame rate. There is also a microphone option and use of Macintosh audio track. Capturing as a QuickTime movie was simple.

I chose to try recording a series of cursor movements on the desktop, to point to different files, just as you might develop a demo of your desktop or directions to follow. By selecting the video option, the screen went grey except for a brighter window area. "Handles" appeared so that I could frame the area of the desktop I wanted captured. Clicking inside the "framed area," I immediately heard words (spoken from the software through my speakers) "Action." I moved the cursor around the screen and when finished clicked again and the voice said, "Cut." The Save Movie dialog box popped up for saving the video which I chose to do. This video sequence was saved as a QuickTime video mov file on the desktop. Clicking "okay", and my video was produced as a QuickTime movie file. The voice told me I was finished, by saying "That's a wrap." It was fun to hear "voice", which I thought was a nice touch. I looked at the finished product by clicking on the mov file that brought up the QuickTime player. After production, files can be worked into QuickTime Pro, iMovie and other video editors, for additional multimedia endeavors.

Those users wanting to go beyond the simple task of saving screen captures should try this software. If you desire or need more capabilities for screen capturing, Snapz Pro X will most likely fill your needs, now and in the future. [Editor: Watch for Version 2.0!]

Speed Download 2

Reviewed by Ted Bade

YazSoft

info@yazsoft.com

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

Speed Download 2.1 released November 2003 and localized in Italian, Dutch, German, French, Swedish, Chinese and Japanese.

\$20 USD

Download site: <http://www.yazsoft.com/download.html>

Requirements: MacOS X 10.2.6, Internet connection, web browser.

Experience needed: Intermediate



Strengths: Decreases the amount of time to download files. Operation mostly transparent to the user.

Weaknesses: Lacks feedback to user when there is a problem with a download. No prompts to enter username/password for secure sites.

SpeedDownload (SD2) is an interesting utility that offers to increase the speed at which your computer can download items on the Internet. Usually it does increase download speeds. Using SD2 is easy, the interface is clean. However, a lack of feedback when a problem occurs makes this interface less than perfect.

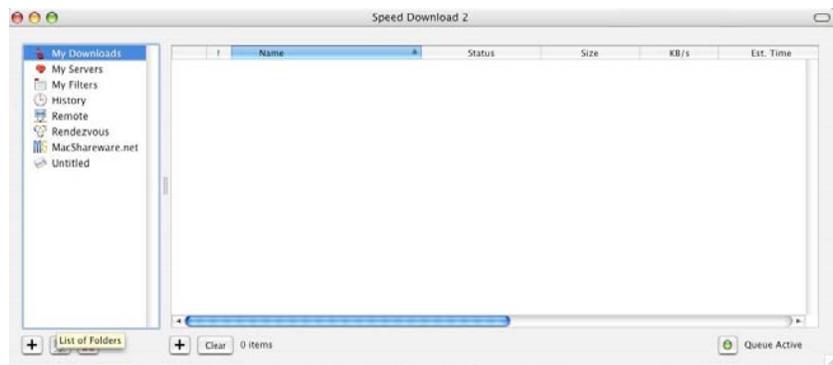
Let me start by stating what I used to test this software, a G5 running Panther and connected with a cable modem. I think this is important because your experience with SD2 might differ if your equipment is different.

How does a program like this work?

When you download a file using a web browser, a connection is made between your computer and the remote computer where the file resides. Depending upon how busy the remote computer and/or the Internet are, the speed of this connection varies. As an example, consider this; a server is told to allocate so much bandwidth to each account connected to it. In a perfect situation, this remains constant until enough computers are connected, at which point the server begins to divide available bandwidth; then at some point, it refuses new connections.

If you are the only person connected to the server, it will offer all the bandwidth it has available for an account, to you, for the download. If there are many people downloading, then your download will be given this bandwidth or what is available.

Say you want to download a large file. To increase the speed with which your computer downloads the file, SD2 opens up more than one connection to this server. This works so long as the server allows downloads to be started in the middle rather than at the beginning. SD2 starts two downloads, one at the beginning and one at some other point. In theory, if the remote computer allocates 10Kbs (Kilobits per second) for each connection, SD2 abilities would increase this to 20 Kbs! (for our example). To increase the speed, more than 2 connections to a file might be opened. SD2 then sews these pieces together when the download is complete. (Disclaimer: this is an example, not real life!!)



This is great when it works. When I ran a series of tests to see how SD2 affects a number of large file downloads, I

did see some of the files download in half the time.

What I found was how well SD2 works varies. This most likely depends upon the server you are downloading from, your connection to the Internet, and Internet congestion. With some servers, one gets excellent results, with others, moderate to no increases. There are several reasons why downloading speeds won't increase, such as the server only allows one connection, the server doesn't know how to restart a download in the middle of a file, or the server is so taxed, that adding a second connection has little effect.

I performed some real world tests to see how much benefit I would get from SD2. To do this test, I selected a number of large files from those listed at the VersionTracker web site, <http://www.versiontracker.com>. I downloaded them first using SD2, then immediately again using an account on my computer that does not have access to SD2. Doing this, the only difference should be the use of SD2 (there might be variations in the server and how busy it is, my hope was that little would change with the server or Internet in the time it took to download the first file).

The following table shows my results:

Files Size (Megs)	w/o SD2	With SD2	%-Difference
8.4	.55	:24	43.6
46	5:37	6:07	113.0
6.9	:10	:18	180
7.3	:22	:21	95.5
6.8	:52	:23	44.2
10.4	1:30	:30	23.1
14.7	1:38	:42	30.4
29.1	6:04	3:11	51.5
4.7	:16	:16	100
9.2	:32	:36	112.5

(%-Difference is a comparison of the non-SD2 connection versus the connection with SD2. 100% means they are equal. 50% means it took half the time with SD2 and 200% would mean it took twice as long with SD2.)

As you can see from the above data, there isn't always an increase, but there is enough of an increase to make this program useful. In my opinion, the reason some downloads were slower is due to server variations.

The reason I used the VersionTracker database is that this site doesn't store the files. The files are downloaded from a variety of servers. Also, I typically download files through this website.

One could probably get consistently better results from SD2 by creating a list of file servers that it works best with. SD2 helps with this by allowing you to add servers to a list for you to return to when you need something. One such server is MacShareware.net. SD2 comes with a built-in link to it. I found that MacShareware.net provided good download speeds with or without SD2.

I ran into problems some with SD2 when I went to certain sites. The first concerns secure servers. I had been given a secure server to download from, (one that requires a username and password). I entered the site's URL and expected that SD2 would prompt me for the necessary information. But alas, it didn't. What happened demonstrates one of my concerns with this interface: the program provided no feedback at all. The progress window simply indicated that it is waiting for a connection. Which leads one to believe something will eventually happen, which is incorrect.

The user needs to investigate the download in order to discover what is wrong. By right-clicking (control-click) on the file name in the download queue window, one can look at the "transfer details" for this file. In this example it indicated that the download failed and that it will try again in so many minutes. Reading further into this text I discovered that the transfer was cancelled because of an invalid username and password.

With the SD2 interface, the user needs to access a secure site by first setting up a server in the passwords section of SD2's preferences, and entering the username and password there. This needs to be only set up once for a particular server, if it doesn't change passwords each time you access it. But in a situation where one often goes to yet another secure server for something, setting it up each time would be a real inconvenience.

Another problem I discovered was that there are some sites that just wouldn't work with SD2. There was a larger file I tried for the above download trials that simple wouldn't download when SD2 tried to access it, but had no problem when accessed directly using Safari.

Which leads me to another similar concern about SD2's interface. No alert window opened to let me know what happened. This happened several times while I have been using SD2. I find this especially annoying because I tend to read about a program, click the download button, then move on, finding out later that nothing happened and now I have to use an alternate account to get the file. I admit, I didn't spend a lot of time trying to figure out why these downloads didn't work; but I easily discovered the problem was with SD2, since the files downloaded with no problem using my alternate account.

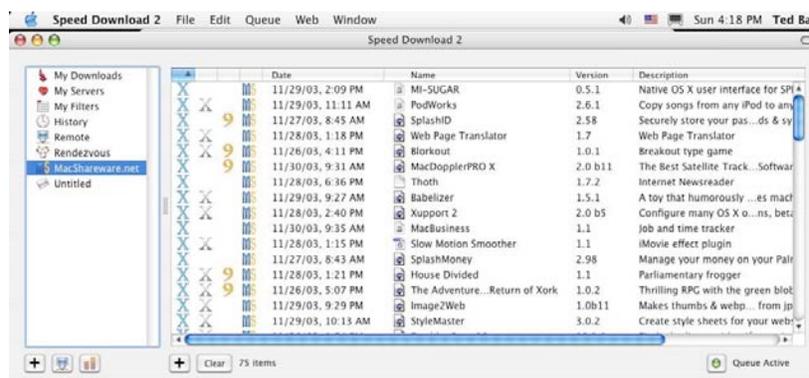
Some servers don't allow multiple connections and/or don't know how to restart a download in the middle. When SD2 runs into such a situation the download simple doesn't occur. The program allows one to easily add this server to a list of "sensitive servers". Which essentially tells SD2 not to open multiple connections.

It would seen more logical to, at a minimum, alert the user that a problem was occurring; better yet, display the message in a popup window, giving the user the ability to abort the download or to let it try again; and the best scenario would be to analyze the error, and if required, prompt the user for information such as a user name and password, suggest a logical course of action to the user, or to send the details back to the developer as feedback.

Using SD2 was very easy (except when the problems I noted above crop up). Once installed, when you click on a download in your browser, the transfer process is shifted to SD2. If it isn't running, then it automatically starts and adds its power to the download process.

SD2's interface allows access to a number of useful features. You can set it up to easily access your favorite servers for easy access. Besides the build in MacShareware.net link, there are other features associated with this site such as the ability to search for an item and to view the last so many new items (this number set in the preferences).

Another useful feature is the ability to schedule a download. This would be very useful if there are large files you would like to download and want to schedule them for a time when you are not using the computer. Once the download is complete you can have SpeedDownload do a number of things such as put your computer to sleep, logout, or even shut it down.

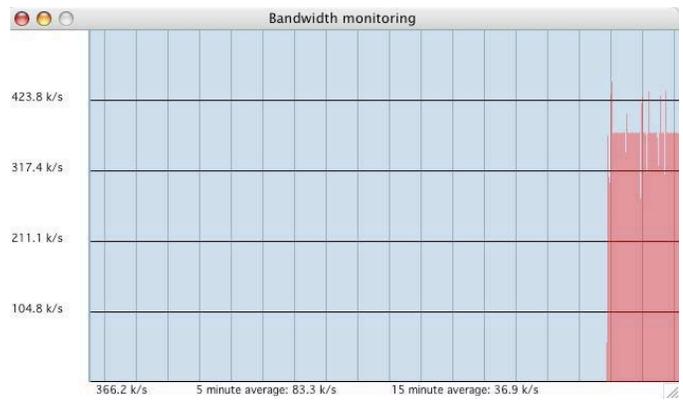


If you enjoy seeing the progress of a download, SD2 provides a nice chart, showing the download speeds. You can also view your download history and move files using rendezvous to another local computer. If you are sharing a file with a friend that also uses SD2, it can act to improve this transfer. I didn't test this feature.

I would truly adore this program if I hadn't run into those sites (secure and non-secure) that it had problems with. For an advanced user, this problem is merely an inconvenience. However, it would be a lot more problematic for people with less computer experience.

I would recommend this program to any Intermediate or Advanced user who could deal with these problems and would enjoy benefiting from the increase in download speeds. I would warn beginners away from it. After the interface communication problems are resolved, I would highly recommend this to anyone who has a need to increase their download speeds, which is anyone who typically downloads larger files.

Overall, I think SpeedDownload 2 is worth consideration. It offers a clean and easy interface and usually does what it is supposed to do. I strongly urge the people writing this program to resolve these problems, even if the resolution is only to make the program more interactive with the user when problems occur.



WorkStrip™ 3.0 – A launcher and work management tool

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babab and edited by Julie M. Willingham



Softchaos Limited, UK
14/18 Ham Yard
London W1D 7DT
tel: +44 (0)20-7434-0775
fax: +44 (0)20-7434-0776
support@softchaos.com
<http://www.softchaos.com/>

First released May 2002. Version 3.0 released July 2003.

\$38 USD, £ 22.95 Net UK, about 50 Euros

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2.4 or later.

WorkStrip is available as a software download or as a physical product. A 30-day demo is available for download. A Panther™ compliant version will soon become available.

This software can be utilized by all levels of Macintosh users.

This software was tested on a dual-processor Macintosh™ G4 running OS X 10.2.8.



Strengths: A well designed, advanced alternative to Apple's Dock coupled with the ability to organize your work for easy access.

Weaknesses: I found there was an unexpected learning curve associated with Version 3.0 which was somewhat flattened by it's publisher in Version 3.1

Overview

WorkStrip (WS3) is a well-organized and integrated launcher and work management tool, consisting of a number of independent but always accessible items arranged in a strip on the edge of your screen. Softchaos' designers have created a system-wide productivity enhancement tool for keeping track of your multiple work-hobby-family activities—if Email and an occasional shopping list or letters are the only ways you use your Macintosh, this software is not for you. If you continuously work on a variety of projects loaded with documents—sometimes related to one another having documents in common, try WorkStrip!

Introduction

Are your myriad interests eclectic and diversified? Do you use your Macintosh as the control center to manage all the files that support your interests and activities? Have you crowded your hard disk with files from all sorts of projects, while using a wide array of software tools? Then WorkStrip (WS3) might be the organizing tool for you.

If you are fed up with the limitations of Apple's Dock™, would life become easier if you had a place to individually collect, park, access, and ultimately work on all your projects? For me, as a *macCompanion* reviewer, that would mean (in part) easing access all the stuff I put into individual review folders for which I've volunteered. Would you like to organize all of your projects so that all pieces—document, graphics, sound files, video clips—no matter what the application, are in one place? If so consider WS3, a new central hub for organizing work on your desktop. Launch, quit, hide, and activate applications; open and preview documents from one elegantly floating designed WS3 element.

The strip can be configured to show all or a subset of the running applications and a user selected number of applications with their associated open documents. Your project-related Workspaces contain your scattered files, and folders. This is an organizational feature that eliminates your need to either move in-common from project to project or duplicate them, if you preserve project elements as complete archives. Each item on the strip has an icon and a tab from which the item's contents (menu) or associated panel window is opened. Clicking an item's icon will

either launch it or open it. Paraphrasing its publisher, WS3 is intelligent. It follows, remembers, and allows you to cluster your work efforts and Internet activities in "workspaces". You can bookmark files into different workspaces and open all files in a given workspace with one click.

By utilizing multiple Workspaces you create and place on WS3, the strip will keep project-related items easily accessible. Version 3, for Jaguar 10.2.4 or greater, allows advanced tracking of applications, documents, and websites to simplify organization of your work. The software also allows centralized (global) management of open document windows across applications and, for those who don't like to mouse around, fast and configurable keyboard navigation.

The Software

WS3 is like having multiple Docks blended with the classic, Action Menus™ (Power On Software). Its hierarchical menus and file-list panels are effective tools for file navigation and manipulation, and its workspace organization is great for assembling applications, documents, and folders specific to particular projects. I'm still having withdrawal symptoms from the loss of Now Menus™, but WS3 might turn out to be my cure. It is after all both an application launcher and a tool for organizing work.

WS3 is, in part, an advanced alternative to Apple's Dock coupled with the ability to organize your work for easy access. Its palette, which floats above your desktop, provides a host of features, including:

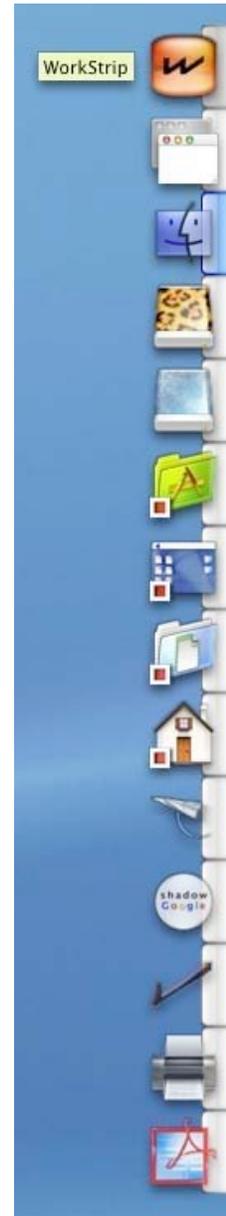
- Allows you to keep track of the documents you are using, organized by project (workspace)
- Creates multiple "Workspaces" to keep all your activity-related projects in order
- Instant access to all your document windows, across all applications
- Allows in a WorkStrip window, views of your recent files and folders
- Features advanced tracking of applications, documents, & web sites
- Ability to place folders and files directly on the strip
- User-conferrable, flexible auto-hide options to suit your tastes
- Allows instant file previews without opening an application (not tested)

The software enables global management of your computer's Go To and Open interface for all open document windows across all applications, except, according to my Internet search results, MS Excel (which I avoid).

When you begin using the program, you will find the interface just a wee bit strange if you've been a long time Dock user. Now, don't get me wrong, WS3 behaves as a well-designed Mac OS X program should. It's just that dealing with WS3 is a bit different than working with the Dock...so it takes a short learning curve. But after a 15-20 minute orientation, I found that WS3 is easy to configure and use. Although a ten-page clearly written manual is available, you may rarely need to consult it. The ReadMe file that comes with the software, although less detailed, is informative and well organized.

Getting Started with Setup-Assistant—To help your transition and initial setup, the Setup Assistant will appear after launching WS3 the first time. This will explain some of the main features of WS3 and will outline some of the different ways that it can be configured. All the settings in the Setup Assistant can be also be set from the "WorkStrip Preferences" window.

The developer makes an assumption about the skills of the average Macintosh user that did not hold true for me. Although my editor credits me with being an advanced user of Macintosh software, I need help getting comfortable with this software. In his Email response to me, Douglas Norton of Softchaos Support noted, "As with all Mac software, we hope WorkStrip is easy to use 'out of the box', with the vast majority of its features being intuitive to an experienced Mac user." More on that later. Unfortunately for me, the help system received in version 3.0 consists primarily of the help pages available with the Help Viewer, accessible using the 'WorkStrip Help', or directly from Help Viewer's contents menu."



I, dumb dummy that I am, needed a manual. I received the manual the next working day. I used the manual not only to get started in using all of WS3's major features, but also to assess its features while completing my review. After checking out WS3 features, the main thrust of my testing was to learn how to park and access the documents and folders I now locate in the Dock. I strongly recommend that *Softchaos* post a downloadable copy of the manual on its website for us less intuitive individuals to use.

Briefly studying the manual to get the WS3 concepts and vocabulary straight in my mind was all it took to convert my thoughts from "Why bother?" to "Wow, what a useful tool!"

Creating Workspaces—Creating collections of applications, documents, and folders that WorkStrip makes available at a single click is straightforward and simple. You folks who like desktop pictures to brighten up your Macin' can assign each workspace a unique desktop picture.

WorkStrip organizes files into Workspaces to represent a project, a *macCompanion* review, a client, or different aspects of your work, regardless of where they exist on the computer. Initially, WorkStrip creates one Workspace, "My Workspace", but you can create as many Workspaces as you need. A Workspace keeps all project-related items together, regardless of where they exist on the computer. No matter how files and folders are added to a Workspace, WorkStrip does not copy or move the original items; it only keeps references to them. If an item that exists in a Workspace is deleted from the computer, it will no longer show up in the Workspace.



Only one Workspace can be active at a time. The active Workspace will automatically appear on the strip and keep track of documents that you have opened, as well as websites that have been visited (Safari™ and Internet Explorer™ only). To place a folder onto WS3 and keep it there, drag it from the Finder and drop it onto the WorkStrip item's icon (the orange 'W'). The folder will then appear on the strip, marked with a square red tag. The folder's contents can be navigated using the popup menu, or, if you click on the tab behind the folder, a panel giving you a list view of the folder's contents. If you click and hold on the tab, you can reposition the item by dragging it along the strip. In addition to the Workspaces that you define and create, WS3 maintains a "global workspace", in which it records all the recent application, items, and Internet sites you use. These items are accessible from the menu on the WorkStrip item itself.

The WorkStrip Trash Feature—The software also contains its own Trash feature, which can be positioned anywhere on the desktop screen, including the menu bar. It is highly configurable and provides many useful features, including showing the number of items in the trash and the space used. It can also be customized to use custom icons for the empty and full states. Unfortunately, on my icon-filled desktop, the trashcan overlapped the left-bottom icon on my desktop. Limitations Apple created associated with Jaguar does allow it to recognize WS3's Trashcan as a finder screen object, so my placement choice was limited menu location...It's okay, really.

Constraints and Shortcomings

One constraint that wasn't obvious until I started working with the software was that WS3 doesn't associate a document with an application that is located in a different workspace. This has the potential for allowing creation of incomplete workspaces. After reading the manual and other reviews of the product, this limitation began to make sense, but still somewhat confuses me. This results from the fact that WS3's basic working focal element is not application-oriented, but workspace-oriented. It is focused on helping you manage the applications and associated documents you need for some particular task—all of this in a manner that was not intuitive to this reviewer.

WS3 has one significant shortcoming. Despite the publisher's feedback that "there is no way to place the icon for WorkStrip on the menu bar" I wish it were otherwise. But alas, "WorkStrip cannot be positioned on the Menu bar. As you may have observed, the WorkStrip Trash can obscure the menu items beneath it, and this detrimental behavior would be exacerbated if WS3 were to function in a similar manner." Since I hack-up my Finder with many haxies, I would also like the option to put a WS3 icon in the middle of my menu bar. I've not had any trouble with having the WS3 trashcan icon in the menu of any of my application's windows. Perhaps it's just because I'm using a large monitor, which spreads things out.

My Specific Challenges

When putting WS3 through its paces, I was plagued by one problem. No matter where I put WS3, I triggered it accidentally when working by mousing in my usual fashion. Zwock! There it was—an attractive eyeful, but totally distracting. I finally found, following the publisher's feedback, that I needed to set the preferences to activate WS3 only when my cursor touched the set (right hand side) screen location. By minimizing its size, it interfered less when I was working than in any of the alternative positions allowed by the software. Douglas Norton's feedback was: "All I can suggest to you is to experiment with the size of WorkStrip, its magnification feature, and the hiding options to achieve the best solution." At the time, I was not aware of an option to make WS3 invisible except with a hot-key was used.

In addition, while you can hide the majority of the WorkStrip Dock (which I chose not to do) and leave a Workspace icon peeking over the edge of your screen, you can't move the icon to a more convenient location on the desktop. Since I will, for the time being, continue to use both WS3 and Apple's Dock, putting WS3 at the screen bottom was not a credible alternative—both pieces of software popped up surrealistically and in a cinematic fashion. Yuck!

I did not, however, try an alternative solution that Douglas Norton suggested. "One feature that may relieve the situation is to use the Show/Hide WorkStrip keyboard shortcut, set to Command-Esc by default. Once WorkStrip is hidden in this manner, your access to the area beneath it will not be interrupted by an unwanted appearance of WorkStrip." I've more hotkeys established on my computer than I can keep track of. This when tried, locked into my normal two finger typing mode, creates an occasionally surprising 'Cracker Jack™ effect.

Developer Interaction

As implied above, after an initial shaky start, with the help Douglas Norton of *Softchaos* Technical, I was able to put this fascinating and useful piece of software to work. Douglas concisely, accurately, and clearly answered my long list of questions. His feedback was detailed and helpful. The response clarified not only my understanding of the software's underlying principles, but helped my find a *workspace* home of all the important stuff (documents and folders) that I stack in Apple's Dock. *Softchao's* responsiveness to my request for technical help ranked amongst the best I've experienced. (Need I say that I cannot make that statement about our 'fathers' who live in Redmond, San Jose, and Cupertino?)

At Douglas' suggestion, I also checked out the online product tour. In retrospect, I found it to be useful. It was a help mode I missed when first searching the publisher's website for help in understanding the software's paradigm. Indeed, since I only checked it out after I had reviewed the manual, I cannot in fairness tell you that if I'd taken the tour, I'd not have needed the manual. But then, as you readers know, I do read manuals, at least after I fall on my head tripping through the tulips. http://www.softchaos.com/products/ws3/pro_tou.html.

Conclusion

As Matt Neuburg matt@tidbits.com recently noted, "WorkStrip X is basically an application switcher and a launcher of applications, documents, and folders. So too, of course, is the Dock; and you can think of WorkStrip as a Dock supplement. It would be wrong, though, to describe it as a Dock replacement. A true Dock replacement is impossible, because the Dock possesses secret knowledge and capabilities to which Apple has allowed no one else access: the list of windows open in every application, the capacity to switch to a particular window, the capability to display a special application icon (such as iCal's display of the current date), and so forth.

"A shortcoming of the Dock is that one row of icons functions both as a launcher (of items that you've dragged into it) and as a switcher (between currently running applications). WorkStrip operates the same way, but it overcomes the shortcoming by allowing you to define 'workspaces.' A workspace is simply a set of items you've dragged into WorkStrip. The combination of items to form each workspace is completely up to you; it might be a category of application, such as Internet programs or games, or it might be the applications and folders needed for a particular task, such as writing a certain book. WorkStrip always displays exactly one workspace at a time, along with a special 'system-level' workspace whose items are always displayed." Read more: Matt Neuburg has some interesting things to say about WS3 that are not covered in my review.

I like this product. It took a bit of getting used to, even with the support provided in the manual. I can put the product through its paces. I have managed to duplicate and use my important items posted on the right hand side of Apple's Dock into workspaces. But I've not yet reached a comfort level that tells me to stop checking shareware sites for other dock and work management tools. As *macCompanion* readers and my other friends are well aware, "as a wee lad got hit on the head with the Blarney Stone." However, I have no idea why, but this software seems to clash with my computing style in a manner I can't verbalize. Others may find it fits them to a "T". Its abilities as a launcher and especially as a manager of documents in association with applications are second to none. As Matt Neuburg noted and I experienced, "it will require some practice and some revision of one's normal habits - such as remembering to open things through WS3 and not through the Finder."

Download the 30-day demo and put it through its paces. The time you will save by using this fine launcher and work management tool will be more, even at minimum wage, than you pay for this under \$40 product.

I give the WorkStrip version 3.0 product 4 macCs, a bit lower than it perhaps deserves, because its organizational paradigm differs from my work habits—at 67 years of experience, going on 90, I've paid my Macintosh dues.

Addendum: WorkStrip 3.1

Shortly after I sent this review to my technical editor, Julie, *Softchaos* published version 3.1 of WorkStrip. During a quick review of the new version, I was delighted to find that the publisher had enhanced the user interface and made life easier for those of us with very crowded desktops. Based on what I've read on the Internet, *Softchaos* is one of the all too few publishers **who takes users' comments seriously**.

I have listed the most significant (to me) added or improved features. This saves me from rewriting my review, but allows me to give the software a well-deserved 4.5 macC rating.

What's New?

- You can now enable/disable columns in lists on a per-panel basis, regardless of the default settings in the Preferences window.
- The Setup Assistant has been reworked to provide simpler configuration for first-time users.
- New Workspaces are now created using an assistant.
- A number of weaknesses in version 3.0 have been remedied, including adding 'Get Info' and 'Duplicate' to list items' contextual menus; and you can now start renaming an item in a list by clicking the name of the selected item.
- You can now keep the Mac OS X Dock out of the way when WorkStrip is running.

Well, that's it for this Issue! Please come back again and bring your friends!!