

# ATPM

16.02 / February 2010

Volume 16, Number 2



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

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# Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, [rleitao@atpm.com](mailto:rleitao@atpm.com)

Welcome to the February issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* January was an exciting month for Apple and owners of Apple's digital lifestyle products. We begin this month's issue with a quick review of January's news and an overview of all things Apple.

## The iPad

Perhaps the most anticipated new product from Apple in recent history was officially announced on January 27th during a special event at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater in San Francisco.

The [iPad](#) will be available in a WiFi-only version to ship by the end of March and a 3G-capable version scheduled to ship in April. Offering consumers a 9.7-inch Multi-Touch display, Apple's the newest creation is powered by an Apple-designed chip and is being marketed for a variety of uses.

Apple's presentation of this device showcased its ability to run over 140,000 existing iPhone OS apps as well as new apps specifically designed to take advantage of the iPad's large display and its functionality as a first-class eBook reader. Media response to the new device has been generally favorable, with much debate as to level of consumer demand for the iPad upon its release this spring.

## Record Results (Again!)

On January 25th, two days before Apple's announcement of the iPad, the company announced its financial results for the fiscal quarter ended December 26th. During the quarter, Apple shipped 3.362 million Macs, 8.737 million iPhones, and 20.97 million iPods. Total Mac shipments represented a staggering 33% year-over-year increase in unit shipments and record sales of Apple's popular brand of personal computers. iPhone unit sales increased 100% over the prior year performance, while the iPod line experienced an 8% decline in unit sales versus unit sales in the same prior-year period. The decline in iPod unit sales has been anticipated following the success of the iPhone. Offsetting the decline in iPod unit sales is the rise in the iPod's average selling price due to the influence of the iPod touch and its increasing percentage of all iPods sold.

The December quarter results produced Apple's second consecutive quarter of record revenue and earnings.

## The iPhone's Deferred Revenue Extinguished

From initial release until the December quarter (Apple's first fiscal quarter of fiscal year 2010), recognition of iPhone revenue was deferred over the two-year anticipated economic life of each handset sold. Apple deferred revenue on iPhone sales to comply with accounting rules in place at the time. Because Apple offers free OS upgrades to iPhone owners during

the product's anticipated economic life, accounting rules demanded that revenue be deferred because enhancements to functionality and uses occurred after the original sale.

The accounting rules have now been changed, and Apple adopted the changes at the start of its 2010 fiscal year. To make comparisons with prior periods accurate and consistent, Apple has filed retrospective financial reports recognizing virtually all iPhone revenue in the quarters the handsets were originally sold.

## **The December Quarter by Numbers**

For the three-month period ended in December, Apple reported record revenue of \$15.683 billion and earnings of \$3.38 billion, or \$3.67 per share. This compares to revenue of \$11.88 billion in the prior-year period and quarterly earnings of \$2.26 billion, or \$2.50 per share. This represents a 32% increase in revenue and a near 47% increase in earnings versus one year ago. In a prepared statement concerning the results, Steve Jobs commented that Apple is now generating \$50 billion or more in revenue on an annualized basis.

The change in accounting rules revealed that the iPhone was the largest contributor to Apple's revenue in the quarter, generating \$5.578 billion of the company's \$15.683 revenue take during the three-month period.

## **The iMac**

Apple refreshed its popular line of iMac personal computers in the December quarter. Sales of the latest iMac iteration propelled desktop Mac sales to 1.234 million units, a gain in unit sales of 70% over the prior-year period and 57% over the September quarter. This startling unit sales performance exceeded the expectations of even the most bullish Wall Street analysts. The iMac is finding success in a global market that continues a migration to portable computing devices. Strong iMac sales should continue in the March quarter (the current quarter) though not at the same sales pace experienced during the holiday season.

## **The iPhone**

Despite the 100% increase in unit sales over the prior-year period, the 8.737 million iPhone units shipped in the December quarter was below the expectations of many Wall Street analysts who carefully follow the company. The iPhone faces competition not only from the iPod touch but also new Android-based smartphones now coming to market. Apple has profited handsomely from the iPhone's exclusive carrier relationship with AT&T in the United States, but many expect the exclusive relationship with AT&T to end early this summer and for the iPhone to be made available on other carrier networks. It's widely anticipated that this change will boost domestic iPhone unit sales.

## **The iPod**

The iPod has reached a mature market phase. While it remains the most popular line of specific-use digital music players in the world, competition from music-capable smartphones such as the iPhone have changed that market's dynamics. The iPod touch has increased its

percentage of all iPods sold, and the migration to iPhone OS-enabled devices (the iPhone, iPod touch, and the forthcoming iPad) represents the future for Apple's handheld digital devices. The decline in overall iPod unit sales showcases the popularity of Apple's iPhone OS-enabled products and portends success for similarly enabled digital products to come.

## **Apple as Apple's Best Competition**

Paraphrasing Andrew Grove, the legendary CEO of Intel Corp., an enterprise shouldn't be worried about cannibalizing its own existing product sales through new product releases. His view was if a company didn't innovate and release new products even if those products cannibalized or reduced unit sales of the company's existing products, competitors would diminish the sales of those products instead.

Apple's record results in the December quarter demonstrate the validity and importance of Mr. Grove's axiom. The wildly successful iPhone and iPod touch have diminished the unit sales of Apple's specific-use digital music players, and the iPod touch itself competes with the iPhone for some product sales. But in aggregate Apple's product sales continue to rise, claiming more sales from competitors than Apple claims from its existing product lines through the release of new and innovative products.

The forthcoming iPad is positioned to compete directly with Windows-based netbooks, the fastest growing segment in the PC market. Although the iPad may compete for some sales with Apple's MacBook products, there's a much larger market for the iPad among potential netbook buyers than the market for consumers who might choose between Apple's own products to satisfy their digital lifestyle needs. Innovation involves risk, but well designed and attractively priced products provide for far greater potential rewards.

## **Our February Issue**

It's an exciting time for owners of Apple's digital lifestyle products. Each month the editors of ATPM work diligently to provide our readers with interesting product reviews and unique points of view to enhance what we call the "personal computing experience." Please enjoy our latest issue and join us each month as we continue to explore the digital world around us.

Our February issue includes:

### **[MacMuser: Frozen in Time Machine](#)**

Mark Tennent wants a decent Apple TV box.

### **[MacMuser: And the Winner Is...Who Cares?](#)**

"When we received the news that Chrome has overtaken Safari to become the third most popular method of accessing the Web, the overwhelming urge was to yawn."

### **[Next Actions: Master List, February 2010](#)**

Ed Eubanks Jr. updates his GTD Master List.

## **Segments: Back to the Beginning**

A reader shares a perspective after reading the “Back to the Beginning” segment in last month’s Welcome.

## **Desktop Pictures: New England**

Christopher Turner shares some photos of a trip to New England in May 2006.

## **Out at Five**

Matt Johnson’s new series, *Out at Five*, looks at the workplace and its boundaries from all angles, revolving around many of the same characters from his former series, *Cortland*.

## **Review: Element iPhone Stand**

A simple, solid display stand for iPhones, iPods, etc.

## **Review: SolarCharger 906**

A nice idea in concept but nearly useless in execution.



## Harmony 510 Universal Remote

I found the cheaper models to not work well where the better models performed better. On paper, the \$50 models should work, but they never work right. Basically, migrating the programming to a better model resolves the issues. I've encountered this more than once. Did you know you can control a iMac, Mac mini etc., or iPod universal dock with a Harmony remote?

—Bradley Dichter

I *did* know that you can control Macs—pretty much anything Front Row, which includes Apple TV. I didn't know about iPod docks; thanks for mentioning that.

—Ed Eubanks Jr.



You can have the extra activities you want relatively easily. Each activity has the ability to add “extra” commands after the regular command sequence has finished. Using the normal programming setup, create/edit the activity in question, and you will find the option you need. Just add the button press from your DVR remote to invoke the DVR menu (and possibly the other needed button press, if you want), and you're all set.

—K-Man

Adding customized activities is pretty straightforward; it's the button-presses that I can't figure out. Maybe there's a way to do it, even on the low-end model—but if so, it's not intuitive at all.

—Ed Eubanks Jr.



I agree their software could use a major overhaul. Whoever designed the user interface knows nothing about software design.

Essentially, though, just write down the button presses you would press with the original remotes (which remote, which button) on a piece of paper. Every button, every press. And you can add the exact sequence of button presses to “play back” at the end of the activity.

—K-Man

## **MacMuser: It Just Sits There Dribbling**

I feel you, my friend. I remember sending pictures of my yearly trips to the Kingdom of Thailand to my sister and having her tell me my files were too big (500K) for her ancient HP to handle. Fast forward ten years. . . I'm using a dual-core G5, the last of the G5s, which is at least four years old and about to become my teenager's best friend as I upgrade to Intel-based desktops. The G5 still screams with speed on my 21 megabit connection, and my sister is finally buying her first digital camera. Go figure.

—*gwats*

## **OmniFocus, TaskPaper, and Things**

This was a great review, in the tradition of ATPM. One thing that no one seems to have mentioned is the “Clip-o-tron 3000,” a cute name for the keyboard shortcut (Control-Option-Period) that lets you turn any e-mail into an action and define place it anywhere (undefined inbox, project, context). One commenter mentioned the scripts menu, but this is twice as easy. It's the best feature of OmniFocus, and a few bugs with Snow Leopard appear to have been worked out. It's true that the interface is too complicated; it still needs a simple today view, and the inspector holdover is just user interface stubbornness on the part of the design team (downright clumsy). But the program is still the best for anyone using a GTD philosophy.

—*Lew Friedland*

## **In Your Face**

I just got this today for my iPhone. To me it is the best accessory yet. I am typing without holding the phone. It can be used as a camera tripod or whatever, and it even can be used on a table top. It feels solid and seems like it will last.

—*Jeff*

## **Coping With Mac OS X's Font Rendering**

How can Apple get something so fundamental, so wrong, for so long? Say what you want about Microsoft, but Windows fonts look great at all sizes! It's supposed to be Apple that gets the user experience right. . .

—*Bobbo*

## **Outliner User Interfaces**

Great list of Mac-based outliners—unfortunately there's not a lot to choose from for Windows. This was frustrating for me, so I started to build my own: [Ume Outliner](#) is a single-pane outliner with rich text support. This is a relatively new project, but there has been quite a bit of progress.

—*Shayne*



The forum at [OutlinerSoftware.com](http://OutlinerSoftware.com) is a good place for discussion of Windows outliners. (Ume does get a mention there, though no user reports.) The forum actually started life as part of Dave Winer’s now-defunct legacy outliners site, but the discussion has more Windows-centric in recent years.

Great to be reminded of [this series](#)—in whose last installment, nearly two years ago, Ted called for “a revolution in user interfaces, adding more advanced outliner-specific capabilities.”

Over the last couple of days I’ve been playing with getting MORE files into the extraordinary Headspace for iPhone. (Surprisingly, this can be done: it’s a three-step process involving Brad Pettit’s MOREtoXML, then a text-conversion macro to rewrite the XML tags for Freemind, and then importing to Headspace over WiFi.)

Headspace really is a tremendously new, interesting, and different experience in outlining: combining the familiar outline and mindmap models in an unfamiliar way, with hierarchical outlines as objects in a non-hierarchical Web; collapsing outlines in 3D (so that the next level is visible behind and through the header); animating link navigation so that you very coolly ride along them inside the view; and above all allowing radical 3D manipulation of the view so that you can rotate 360 degrees on any or all axes, and view your outline from all angles and perspectives, including upside-down and behind. It’s so unlike anything before it that you kind of stare at it like a lunar monolith or a bone going up into the sky and think now that you’re master of the world, you’re not sure what to do next. But you’ll think of something.

—Nick Lowe

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## Frozen in Time Machine

### Wednesday

Back to work after the New Year, drove to the office, negotiated the dicey icy side streets to find the main roads clear. Only self and one other, who had travelled nearly 100 miles, turned up at the office. Staff living within walking distance all decided it was too dangerous to venture out, even though the pavements were clear. Many excuses offered, including that the very roads I had driven on were impassable. Offered to drive round to pick them up but told to go home instead.

### Thursday

Boss decides it is too dangerous to open the office. She has a laptop and VPN (Virtual Private Network) that lets her work from home; the rest of us have a mobile phone each. Sit at home for most of the day, bored, with nothing to do because cellphone reception is non-existent since local residents decided cellphone transmitters give you leprosy.

Drove along empty roads to do the shopping. Got lots of “labels” where sell-by date was close and no one was around to buy them. Go home and fill freezer. Could just as easily left shopping in the garden to freeze.

### Friday

Boss says it's OK to go to work. Now I am worried because the roads are sheets of ice. Gingerly drive to and from the office. Do next to nothing because none of our customers are at work. Suggest to IT Department that I install [LogMeIn](#) on my work machine so I can access it from home. No response to my e-mails.

Having no work to do, access home Macs via LogMeIn and get them doing useful things such as converting videos and burning to DVDs, which I had thoughtfully left in the drives before departing for work. Ceiling collapses in office due to roof leak I reported last year.

Get home to try to run the DVDs in our Blu-ray player. None of the films play, even though they are in the formats the player is supposed to be able to use. This included DivX, purchased for such an eventuality, but then found out it won't install on a Mac if it is running in 64-bit mode.

### Hamlet Who?

Aye, in the words of the late Dr. Who (and some other geezer), there's the rub. We cannot decide whether to sling a laptop, or perhaps an old Mac mini, next to the telly and run

that as the media player, even accessing our libraries via WiFi. Or to consider the advice of various magazines and get a fully fledged media player. Alternatively, we could buy a TV recorder box and cut out the computer altogether. But what about our existing library of films and music?

Come on, Apple, we need a decent Apple TV box that will cover all of our media-playing needs. And please make it compete in pricing. In the meantime, lower the price of the current Apple TV to around £100.

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## And the Winner Is...Who Cares?

We used to live near a dentist who ran his entire operation in a [HyperCard](#) stack he devised himself. All patient information, treatments, appointments, and bills were handled by his stack, running on one of those original, all-in-one Macs that us old hands think of as definitive. No colour, no sound, tiny screen, clunky operating system, no multi-tasking, and a mouse the size of a house brick. But a graphical operating system from the days when windows were holes in buildings.

HyperCard was a forerunner to the Internet as we know it today, the World Wide Web. It combined databases with [HyperTalk](#), an easy-to-use programming language, all wrapped up in a graphical front end. HyperCard also inspired [Pei-Yuan Wei](#), a Taiwanese student at UC Berkeley, to build an adventure game construction set. What he ended up with was one of the world's first Web browsers called [violaWWW](#), which came complete with a graphical interface plus the ability to run applets, three years before Java was brewed.

This was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when [Gophers](#) rubbed shoulders with [Archie](#) and [Veronica](#). Turbo Gopher VR even used 3D browsing, which from personal recollection could make you feel seasick as you tunnelled through Gopher space. In those days, Macintosh and NeXT (which became Mac OS X) were the systems used by many of the developers of the Internet.

It all came to an end when the University of Minnesota, in a Scrooge-like moment, started to charge for Gopher servers. Unlucky for them, the University of Illinois had just released Mosaic, a free and graphical Web browser, which soon overtook Gopher because it was easier to use. There are still over 100 Gopher servers in the world, which are supported by Mozilla-based browsers plus OmniWeb. The number of servers has actually increased recently.

Mosaic became Netscape and then was accompanied by all the other nascent browsers such as Lynx, Opera, Internet Explorer, Cyberdog, OmniWeb, Camino, and Chrome. We've tried them all for the Mac and each, apart from Opera, has been our favoured browser for a while. Currently it's Safari. On Windows XP, we've tried Firefox, Safari, and Chrome but stick with Internet Explorer.

So when we received the news that Chrome has overtaken Safari to become the [third most popular](#) method of accessing the Web, the overwhelming urge was to yawn. Some reports have it as zooming past. In reality, it is a difference of a mere 0.17%, but each has increased market share at Internet Explorer's expense.

Who cares?



# Next Actions

by Ed Eubanks Jr.

## Master List, February 2010

Two new additions grace the list this time. [Today](#), by Second Gear (the same folks whose Check-Off has been on the list for a while; not sure how I missed Today until now), makes the “Locally Installed General Task Managers” category; Today is a sort of thin front-end for iCal, allowing reference and rapid entry of both tasks and events. Also added is The Hit List, which I’ve been promising to add for some time now.

[The Hit List](#), in beta from Potion Factory, is aiming to compete at the OmniFocus and Things level (that is, the “high end” of the GTD apps category). It combines a nice set of features in common with both, plus the benefit of a nicely-designed interface that feels a bit more like Circus Ponies’ Notebook. I’ve made some extra comments in my list below about The Hit List, which is in the “Locally Installed GTD Applications” category.

### About the List

I always welcome any feedback on my list or suggestions for additions. I won’t necessarily add every suggestion, but I’ll look at them and evaluate whether they fit with what I’m trying to cover.

### Locally Installed GTD Applications

#### [EasyTask Manager](#)



**Developer:** Orionbelt.com

**Current Version:** 2.1

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** Yes

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** App (free); Web App (free)

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Windows version available; automatic advance of uncompleted due tasks to today.

**News:** None

### **Frictionless**



**Developer:** Twin Forces

**Current Version:** 2.0d18

**Price:** Free, open-source

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Quick-entry box; fuzzy repeated actions.

**News:** None

### **Ghost Action**



**Developer:** Ghost Park Software

**Current Version:** 1.3.2

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** Sort of—a non-syncing application (\$10)

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4 [only](#)

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** .Mac syncing (without iCal running); PDA/iPod syncing; two-way iCal syncing.

**News:** Version 1.3.2 improved Snow Leopard compatibility.

## [iCog](#)



**Developer:** HensPace

**Current Version:** 1.90

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Unknown

**Required Applications:** Python 2.4 or later

**Distinguishing Features:** Compatible with any OS running Python (including Windows); very simple text-only utility.

**News:** None

## [mGTD](#)



**Developer:** Jeff Fisher

**Current Version:** 1.3

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Pre-final

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** None (Mori template)

**Required Applications:** Mori 1.6.11

**Distinguishing Features:** Expands Mori (digital notebook) functions to include GTD principles.

**News:** None

### [Midnight Inbox](#)



**Developer:** Midnight Beep Softworks

**Current Version:** 1.4.3

**Price:** \$35

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** App coming soon

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Action timer; quick-note and quick-action hot keys; Mail compatible; automatic data collection.

**News:** The developers continue to push back the release of version 2.0, which is now projected for spring 2010. Inbox Touch is still also projected for spring 2010.

### [OmniFocus](#)



**Developer:** Omni Group

**Current Version:** 1.7.5

**Price:** \$80

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** App (\$20)

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4.8

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Mail compatible and Spotlight compatible; simple interface with powerful view features.

**News:** This workhorse continues to improve, with lots of under-the-hood updates and fixes, as well as an overhaul of the Perspectives options, improved use of attachments, interface improvements, better and faster syncing, and a small host of other fixes and upgrades.

### **[Pluto menubar](#)**



**Developer:** MOApp Software Manufactory

**Current Version:** 5.1.1

**Price:** €16 (about \$24)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

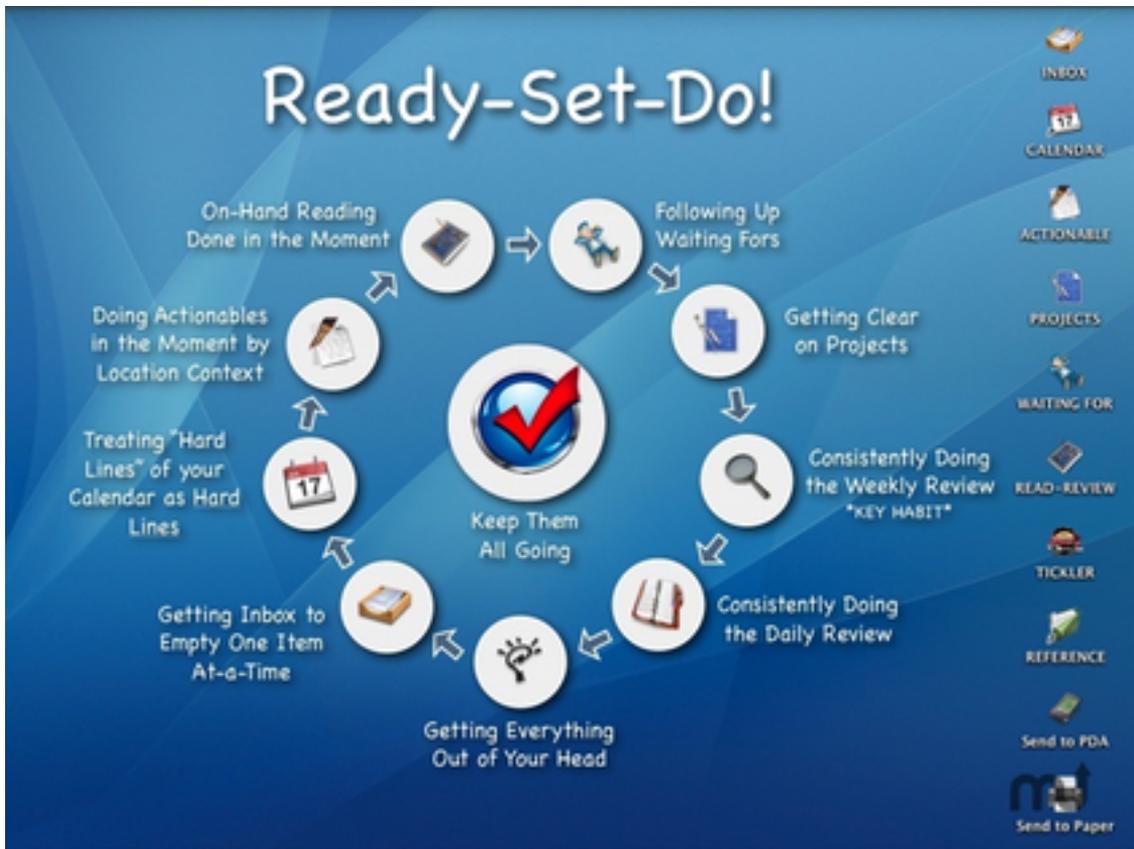
**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** This is a menu-bar application, but don't be fooled—it is a very fully featured GTD tool. There is a lot to see here, and you won't find any of the standard features you're looking for missing. Note the full-screen editing, searching, tags, contacts, and priorities.

**News:** None



**Developer:** Todd Vasquez

**Current Version:** 1.4.4

**Price:** \$30

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** A very different approach using a set of AppleScript routines to impose organization and communication across a computer's entire file system; productivity scoring; help with files and tasks related to meetings; multiple language support.

**News:** Thanks to Todd Vasquez who chimed in with a comment on the last list to mention some lesser-known features, and a new graphic.



**Developer:** Hog Bay Software

**Current Version:** 2.1

**Price:** \$19

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Simple text-based system; no-frills; intentionally designed as an alternative to more fully featured systems.

**News:** iPhone version is in beta—[learn more here](#).

### The Hit List



**Developer:** Potion Factory

**Current Version:** 0.9.3.18

**Price:** \$50 (pre-order)

**Development Status:** Beta

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**iPhone Presence:** No (but indicated as “coming”)

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** List view and “card” view; task timer; system-wide quick-entry; tabs allow good project management; AppleScript support; tags and prioritization of tasks.

**News:** There’s a lot to like about The Hit List, which, though still in beta, is already quite mature and usable. It has the full set of standard features required for a GTD application, plus a small handful of additional useful tools. It also has the benefit of a friendly, intuitive, and useable interface which borrows from the “notebook” and folder style meme, making good use of tabs, columns, etc. The addition of a system-wide quick-entry function is vital; the full-functioning ability to sync with iCal adds a lot of flexibility and allows The Hit List to fit into existing systems well; and the promise of an iPhone application to come will round out a lot of needed features for many. No multi-computer syncing is native; however, the library is portable, so a flash drive, iDisk, Dropbox, or other similar solution would accomplish what is needed. The Hit List has been in beta for a while, and development, though advancing, seems to be moving at a slow pace. Once it is finally out of beta, though, I look for The Hit List to do very well.

## Things



**Developer:** Cultured Code

**Current Version:** 1.2.9

**Price:** \$50

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** App (\$10)

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4.11

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** iCal sync; repeating tasks; Mail compatibility; tags; network and multi-computer operation; and import/export options.

**News:** Another round of fixes and minor tweaks since last time; visit the [release notes](#) for more.

## [Thinking Rock](#)



**Developer:** Avente Pty Ltd

**Current Version:** 2.2.1

**Price:** Free, open-source

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4

**Required Applications:** None

**Distinguishing Features:** Cross-platform compatibility through Java; interactive collection and processing; can be run off of a flash drive.

**News:** Version 3 is now available for *purchase* for \$40. Learn more about the difference in the versions [here](#).

## [What To Do](#)



**Developer:** Objective Satisfaction

**Current Version:** 1.3.2

**Price:** \$29

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No  
**Print Lists:** Yes  
**iPhone Presence:** None  
**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4.9  
**Required Applications:** None  
**Distinguishing Features:** Drag-and-drop intensive for easy reorganization; .Mac syncing for multiple computers; XML export.  
**News:** None

## Locally Installed General Task Managers

### Anxiety

**Developer:** Tom Stoelwinder, Model Concept  
**Current Version:** 1.0  
**Price:** Free/Donationware  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** Yes  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No  
**Web-app Sync:** No  
**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)  
**iPhone Presence:** None  
**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5  
**Distinguishing Features:** A menu-bar utility that gives a HUD-like interface to iCal tasks; sorts by calendar; Mac OS X 10.5 only.  
**News:** None

### Chandler

**Developer:** The Chandler Project  
**Current Version:** 1.0.3  
**Price:** Open Source  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** Yes  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No  
**Web-app Sync:** Yes  
**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)  
**iPhone Presence:** None  
**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.3

**Distinguishing Features:** A good integrated calendar makes this one a fairly full-orbed PIM.

**News:** None

### [Check Off](#)

**Developer:** Second Gear

**Current Version:** 4.0.3

**Price:** \$13

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5.2

**Distinguishing Features:** A menu-bar utility that manages basic task lists; syncs with iPods; a .Mac Backup QuickPick is provided.

**News:** None

### [Dejumble](#)

**Developer:** Thinking Code Software, Inc.

**Current Version:** 1.3

**Price:** \$19

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**iPhone Presence:** App (\$8)

**OS Requirements:** Unknown (would assume 10.4 or later, due to presence of Spotlight functions)

**Distinguishing Features:** A simple yet powerful menu bar-style task list manager, with tags, groups, notes, and a handful of other options.

**News:** None

### [Docket](#)

**Developer:** Surprise Software  
**Current Version:** 1.3  
**Price:** \$20  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** No  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No  
**Web-app Sync:** No  
**Print Lists:** Yes  
**iPhone Presence:** None  
**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.1  
**Distinguishing Features:** A neat basic list-management application. A Windows version is also available.  
**News:** None

### **Dolt**

**Developer:** Jim McGowan  
**Current Version:** 2.6  
**Price:** Donationware  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** Yes  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes  
**Web-app Sync:** No  
**Print Lists:** No  
**iPhone Presence:** None  
**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4  
**Distinguishing Features:** .Mac support and AppleScriptability. Also supports file attachments and categories for lists. Skins are available for customization.  
**News:** None

### **FlexCal**

**Developer:** flexgames  
**Current Version:** 1.13  
**Price:** Free/Donationware  
**Development Status:** Release  
**iCal Sync:** Yes  
**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No  
**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Distinguishing Features:** A task and event creator for iCal—something of a collection bucket for GTD users.

**News:** None

### **High Priority**

**Developer:** Aram Kudurshian

**Current Version:** 1.11 (Mac OS X 10.4 *only*)

**Price:** \$6 (personal); \$12 (family); \$60 (business)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4 only

**Distinguishing Features:** A system preference pane, creates a menu in the menu bar that lets you create and update your iCal tasks.

**News:** Thanks to Peter Herndon, who updated us on the status of High Priority in the last column's comments. The developer has gone to work for Apple and stopped work on High Priority. This one will be removed from the list starting next time.

### **Hot Plan**

**Developer:** Intuiware

**Current Version:** 1.4.2

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4.9

**Distinguishing Features:** Tracks a substantial amount of information about a given task, including completion status, priority, and time remaining; supports tagging, color coding, and locking of tasks. Also allows collection of URLs and files.

**News:** None

## **[iClock Pro](#)**

**Developer:** Script Software

**Current Version:** 1.0rc7

**Price:** \$20

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**OS Requirements:** Unknown

**Distinguishing Features:** Offers a menu bar–based method of managing task lists; includes .Mac syncing.

**News:** Script Software has stopped offering the older version of iClock (version 3.0.5—though you can still find it [here](#)), and now offers only iClock Pro, which is in beta for version 1.x.

## **[Life Balance](#)**

**Developer:** Llamagraphics

**Current Version:** 5.1.1

**Price:** \$65 (\$80 bundled with Palm version)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4

**Distinguishing Features:** Gives “meta-feedback” about tasks: how much time are you spending in different areas of your life (i.e., work, family, hobbies, etc.), and are you keeping it balanced? Palm and Windows versions available.

**News:** None

## **[NoteBook](#)**

**Developer:** Circus Ponies

**Current Version:** 3.0

**Price:** \$50 (academic and family pack pricing available)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** Yes

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4.11

**Distinguishing Features:** Highly customizable system with project management built-in; also works well for heavy day-to-day GTD use.

**News:** None

## Organized

**Developer:** iSlayer

**Current Version:** 1.11

**Price:** Donationware

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Distinguishing Features:** Dashboard widget with calendar events, tasks, notes, and world clock.

**News:** None

## Qu-s

**Developer:** Urban Design Limited

**Current Version:** 1.5

**Price:** \$17

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Distinguishing Features:** Allows lists (and other things) to be created as an editable part of the desktop. Good for simple lists.

**News:** None

## Stapler

**Developer:** The Blue Technologies Group

**Current Version:** 1.1

**Price:** €7.50 (about \$10)

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.4

**Distinguishing Features:** A combination notepad and to-do list manager, with creation date, notes, and a check box for completed items. Tasks can be color-coded based on a low-level preference set-up.

**News:** None

## TaskMate

**Developer:** Ryan Conway

**Current Version:** 1.2.1

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** No

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.5

**Distinguishing Features:** Ultra-simple task list: remaining tasks in a simple list; completed tasks in a drawer (which can be hidden). Tasks are just single-line descriptions with a check box. Could be right for the super-simplified life.

**News:** None

## Today

**Developer:** Second Gear

**Current Version:** 2.0

**Price:** \$22

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.6

**Distinguishing Features:** A window interface for quick reference and entry to iCal events and tasks. Allows global shortcuts for viewing and creation of new tasks and events.

**News:** From the same company that makes Check Off, this is sort of a thin front-end for iCal. It offers some good preferences for customizing the views, etc. It's been around for a while (since April 2008) but somehow didn't come onto my radar until recently. Version 2.0 was released in early January, bringing a lot of key updates and new features; see the [release notes](#) for more information.

## ToDo X

**Developer:** Omicron Software Systems, Inc.

**Current Version:** 2.3

**Price:** \$15

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Import from iCal only

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** No

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Mac OS X 10.2

**Distinguishing Features:** Offers categories, priorities, and attached notes.

**News:** None

## ZooDo

**Developer:** InterfaceThis

**Current Version:** 1.0

**Price:** Free

**Development Status:** Release

**iCal Sync:** Yes

**QuickSilver Plug-in:** No

**Web-app Sync:** No

**Print Lists:** Yes (through iCal)

**iPhone Presence:** None

**OS Requirements:** Unknown

**Distinguishing Features:** A basic task creator for iCal, serving as a collection bucket.

**News:** None

## **Browser and Web-based GTD Applications**

### **[30 Boxes](#)**

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Lean and fast, including a calendar, task list, and limited Gmail interaction. Also RSS and iCal feeds, SMS, and sharing. Nice interface, too.

### **[43 Actions](#)**

**Price:** Free (donations get extra features)

**Description:** Specifically designed as an iPhone Web app, it's light and lean for EDGE network optimization. Submit inbox items via e-mail, Twitter (with donation), Jott (with donation), and the usual features.

### **[GTDAgenda](#)**

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Another Web version of a GTD tool, with the standard features. Plus, addition of Goals, checklists for recurring tasks, schedule management, and an iCal-compatible calendar. A mobile version is also available.

### **[GTDInbox](#)**

**Price:** Free

**Description:** A Firefox extension for GTD integration with Gmail. Prepackaged labels, a Review process, specialized searches within Gmail, quick-entry for tasks, and printable. Works well in conjunction with RememberTheMilk. Current version, 2.0.8.4, is open source; requires Firefox.

### [GTD-PHP](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** A PHP solution designed to be locally installed. A simple tabbed interface for the capture and process stages; weekly review. Currently at version 0.8.

### [Neptune](#)

**Price:** \$10/year

**Description:** Includes a collection inbox and context or project task viewing panes, as well as inactive projects and tasks. Daily e-mail reminders of tasks; new tasks can be added by e-mail; data export.

### [Next Action](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Uses Google Gears and Firefox; has a lean, basic interface with multiple-list management capability. Works with or without a network connection.

### [Nexty](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** PHP-based, so it installs locally and runs in your browser; supports contexts and reminders.

### [Nozbe](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Has markers for which action will be next and a time estimation for tasks. Contexts are visible and identifiable; easy to collect and process quickly; iPhone-ready.

### [SimpleGTD](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Tabs for next actions, contexts, projects, and done actions; drag-and-drop organization; easy undoing of tasks.

### [Task Writer](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Easy keyboard navigation, good use of calendaring for tasks, and a useful set of attributes for tasks, as well as the ability to auto-hide unneeded list views, help Task Writer to stand out a bit.

### [Toodleo](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** Has a Firefox plug-in and a Google gadget for easy collection; also supports e-mail, voice mail, and traditional entry for collection. Includes a good overview of GTD in co-operation with its tools, as well. iPhone-optimized.

### [Tracks](#)

**Price:** Free

**Description:** A Web server that runs locally or hosted through tracks.tra.in. Fast, lean, and pretty, it offers calendaring and a multi-user component. Currently at version 1.6.

### [Vitalist](#)

**Price:** \$5/month (premium)

**Description:** Is a wide-scale GTD system: collection, project management, recurring actions, and tickler files. Includes a mobile edition, iCal and RSS feeds, and e-mail and SMS reminders. An iPhone-specific version is available. A premium (paid) version also includes security encryption, collaboration, file attachments, and calendaring.

## Other Browser/Web-based Task Managers

- [Backpack](#)
- [Basecamp](#)
- [CoMindWork](#)
- [HiTask](#)
- [Hiveminder](#)
- [Joe's Goals](#)
- [Mojonote](#)
- [Remember the Milk](#)
- [Scribe](#)
- [Sproutliner](#)
- [Task Freak!](#)
- [Tasks](#)
- [Tasktoy](#)
- [Todoist](#)
- [Tweeto](#)
- [Zenlists](#)
- [ZenPages](#)

## GTD and Task Management Wikis

- [D3](#)
- [GTDTiddlyWiki](#)

- [MonkeyGTD](#)
- [Pimki](#)

## **iPhone Applications (not Web Apps)**

- [Actions](#)
- [Chores](#)
- [Dejumble](#)
- [DoBot ToDos](#)
- [EasyTask Manager](#)
- [Firetask](#)
- [Life Balance](#)
- [Lists by MobilityWare](#)
- [Lists by Tynsoe.org](#)
- [Matalot by dPompa](#)
- [My Lists](#)
- [OmniFocus](#)
- [Outliner by CarbonFin](#)
- [Tanjias Checklist](#)
- [Tasks](#)
- [Things](#)
- [ToDo by Appigo](#)
- [To Do by Erica Sadun](#)
- [To-Do List by Concrete Software](#)
- [To-Do Lists by Tapku](#)
- [ToodleDo](#)
- [Zenbe Lists](#)



# Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

by Stanley Jayne, [stanleydjayne@mac.com](mailto:stanleydjayne@mac.com)

## Back to the Beginning

After reading [Back to the Beginning](#) in ATPM 16.01, I just wanted to share a memory with you.

In 1984 I discovered the very first Mac in a business supply store in Stuttgart, Germany. I had read about the Mac somewhere, and there it was. A 128K, grey, thing of beauty. It was a machine that they were going to use to introduce the Mac at a German trade show. I made a deal that as soon as the show ended they would sell me the Mac. What a joy...and pain. I had never used a computer and had no idea what I was doing, so there were some real growing pains. I loved MacWrite and MacPaint, and the spreadsheet program...I've forgotten the name. They were all wonderful, *but* there was also a little music program that was so powerful that I have seen nothing to compare, even today.

I have forgotten the name of that little basic music program also, but this was the beginning. It utilized the four channels of the Mac...one voice per channel. One could click the notes on a choral staff, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and move them around with the mouse until they were as you wanted them. It didn't end there. Any number of notes in any voice could be selected, and the program would instantly convert those notes to any fugal/contrapuntal device. It would turn the music upside down, write it backwards, make the notes twice or half as long as the original, transpose, or change them every way possible.

Sure, we have such wonderful programs like Finale, Performer, Garage Band, etc., but this very first music program on a Mac was a composer's dream. I have seen no program today that could do those things. If I were a programmer I would reinvent this thing and make a fortune.

Since that first Mac I have never looked back. I have owned two Windows-based machines, which I used for teaching music, but I became so frustrated with the last one that I gave it away to my very surprised 15-year-old student during a lesson. Right then and there I learned mine, and since converting my wife away from Windows, my house now has three Macs and two iPhones. We both love 'em.

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# Desktop Pictures

by Christopher Turner, [cturner@atpm.com](mailto:cturner@atpm.com)

## New England

We need new desktop pictures each month. [Write](#) to us!

### This Month's Desktop Pictures

Christopher Turner shares some photos of a trip to New England in May 2006.



[View Pictures](#)

### Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures [archives](#).

### Downloading All the Pictures at Once

Some browsers can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once.

**Safari** Use [this Automator workflow](#).

**iCab** Use the Download command to “Download all linked files in same folder” and configure the limits to download only the linked images.

**OmniWeb** Choose “Save Linked ▾ Images...” from the File menu.

### Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, feel free to send it to [editor@atpm.com](mailto:editor@atpm.com) and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue. Have a regular print but no scanner? Don't worry. E-mail us, and we tell you where to send it so we can scan it for you. Note that we cannot return the original print, so send us a copy.

# Placing Desktop Pictures

## **Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.6.x**

Choose “System Preferences...” from the Apple menu, click the “Desktop & Screen Saver” button, then choose the Desktop tab. In the left-side menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X’s built-in screen saver. Select the Screen Saver tab which is also in the “Desktop & Screen Saver” System Preferences pane. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, click on the Pictures Folder in the list of screen savers. Otherwise, click Choose Folder to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

## **Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x**

Choose “System Preferences...” from the Apple menu and click the Desktop button. With the pop-up menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

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

## **Mac OS X 10.0.x**

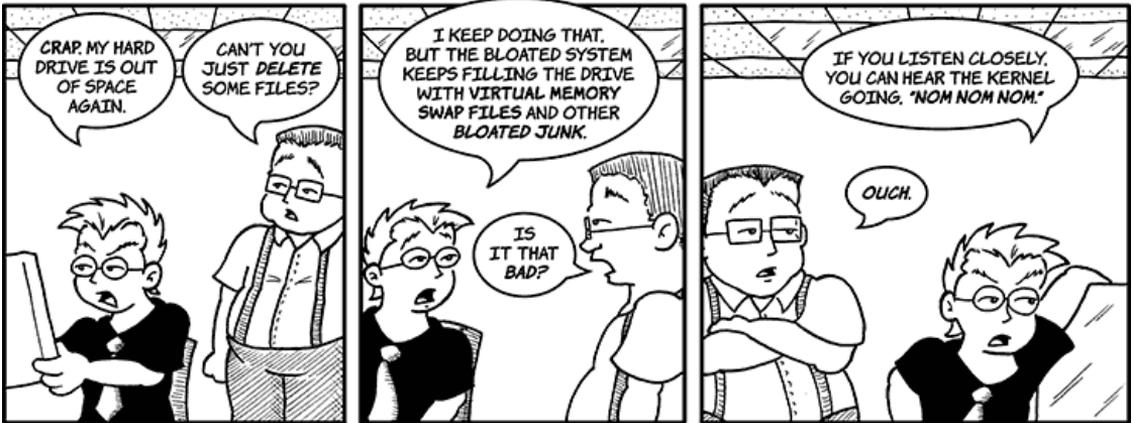
Switch to the Finder. Choose “Preferences...” from the “Finder” menu. Click on the “Select Picture...” button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your ~/Library/Desktop Pictures folder. Close the “Finder Preferences” window when you are done.



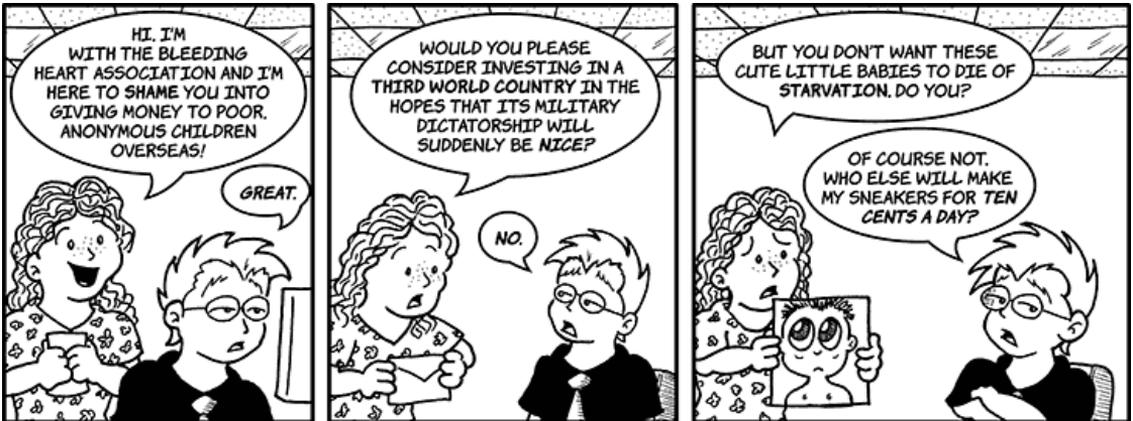
# Out at Five

by Matt Johnson, [mjohnson@atpm.com](mailto:mjohnson@atpm.com)

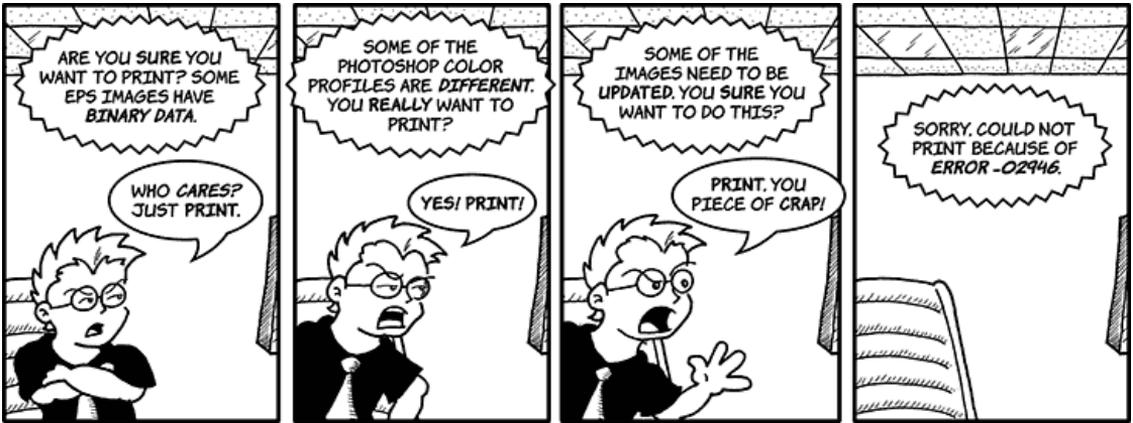
## Hungry, Hungry, Hard Drive



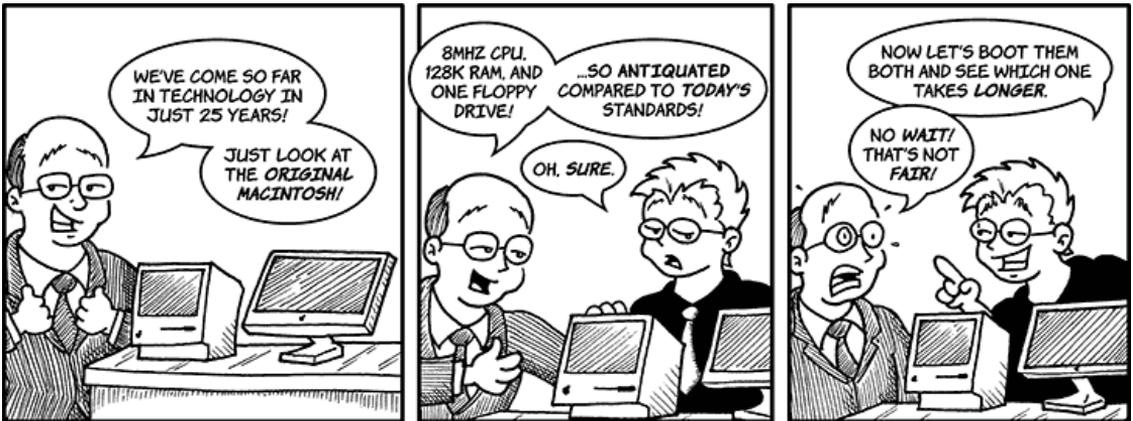
## For the Children



# Printing Errors



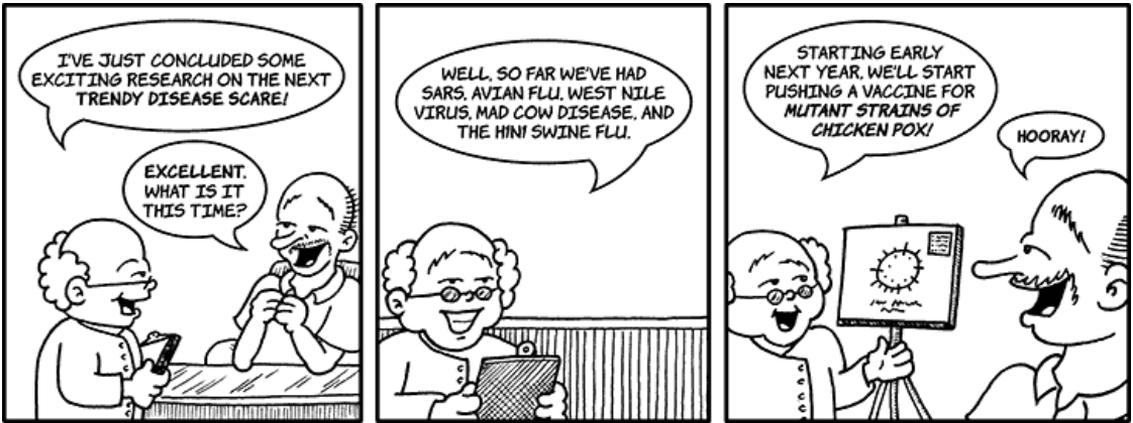
# 128K



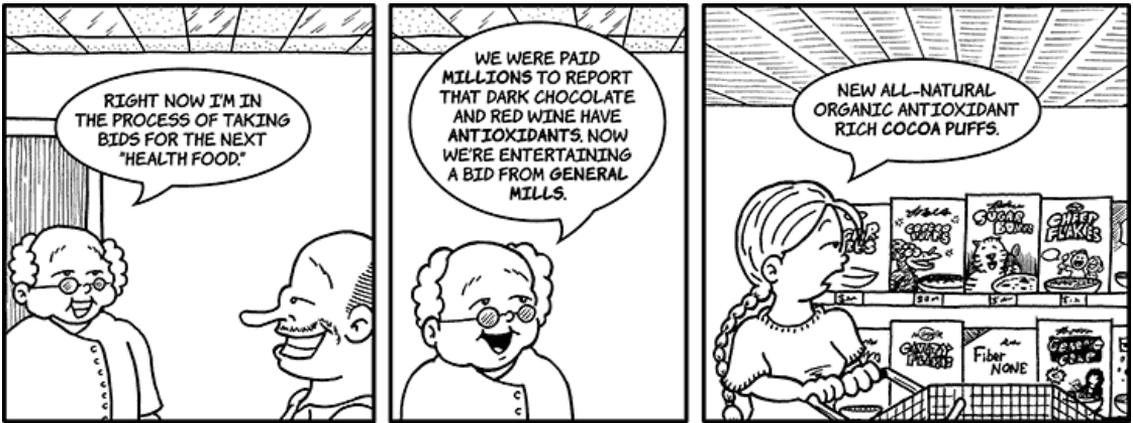
# Dr. Perry Noya



## Trendy New Viruses



## All Natural



## Branding Standards





# Accessory Review

by Chris Lawson, <http://chrislawson.net>

## Element iPhone Stand

**Function:** Desk stand for iPhone and iPod touch.

**Developer:** [Keynamics](#)

**Price:** \$30

**Requirements:** iPhone or iPod touch (all models), may work with some earlier iPods or other smartphones.

**Trial:** None



Keynamics, the developer of the [Aviator laptop stand](#) and the hilariously named [Laptop Stand on Wheels](#), hasn't been sitting idle as the iPhone accessories market exploded. While it's tough to claim much in the way of ergonomic advantages—Keynamics' specialty—with what amounts to a display stand for a phone, the Element is a solid effort when compared to other [similar products](#) we've reviewed.

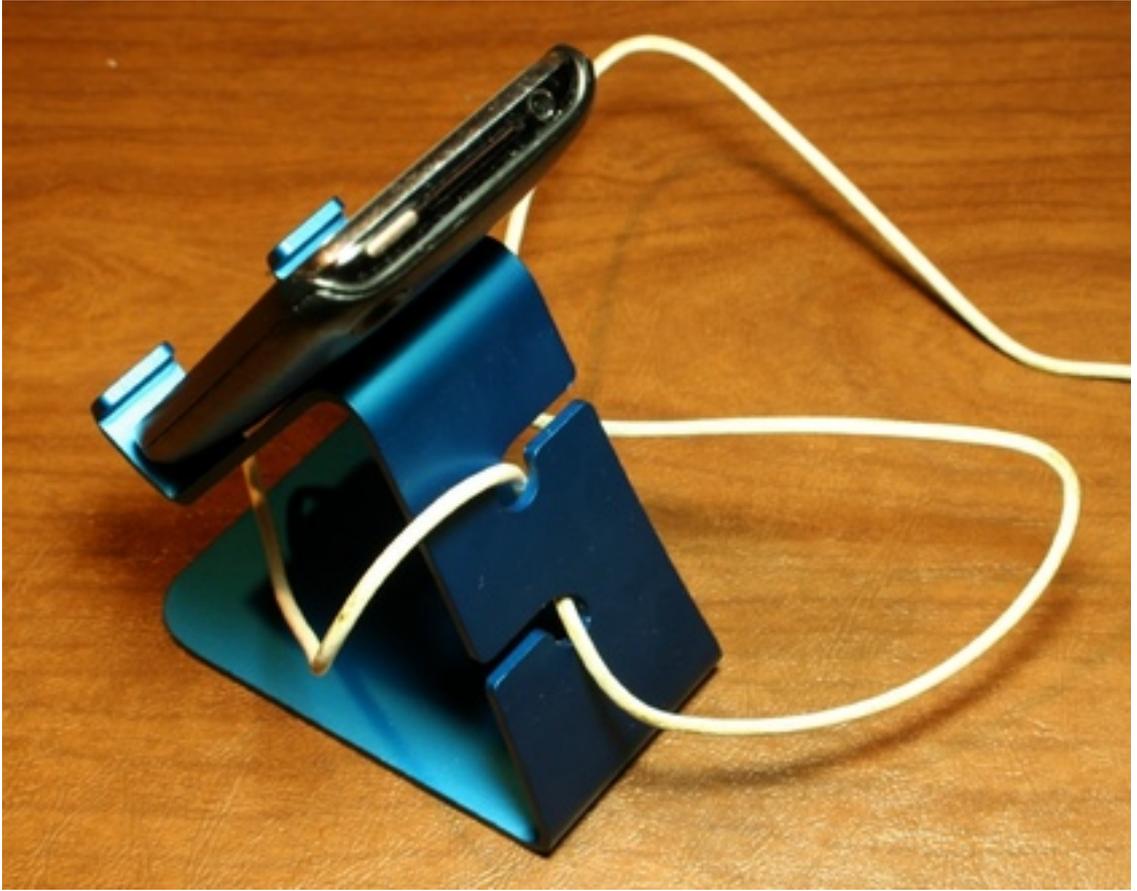


It's simple enough to set an iPhone, even in a case, on the Element.

Available in a multitude of colors at a price of \$30, the solid aluminum Element is simple, yet attractive. The open design allows it to work with a variety of devices, including all three iPhone models, the iPod touch, and even some earlier iPod models. There's plenty of room for your iPhone's case, too, which is a problem with the aforementioned PED3 stand.

The downside, if you could call it that, of all that room is that the iPhone doesn't sit particularly securely in the stand, though that's really a non-issue when the cable is connected to the phone. And it isn't as though the phone feels like it's in danger of falling off, even

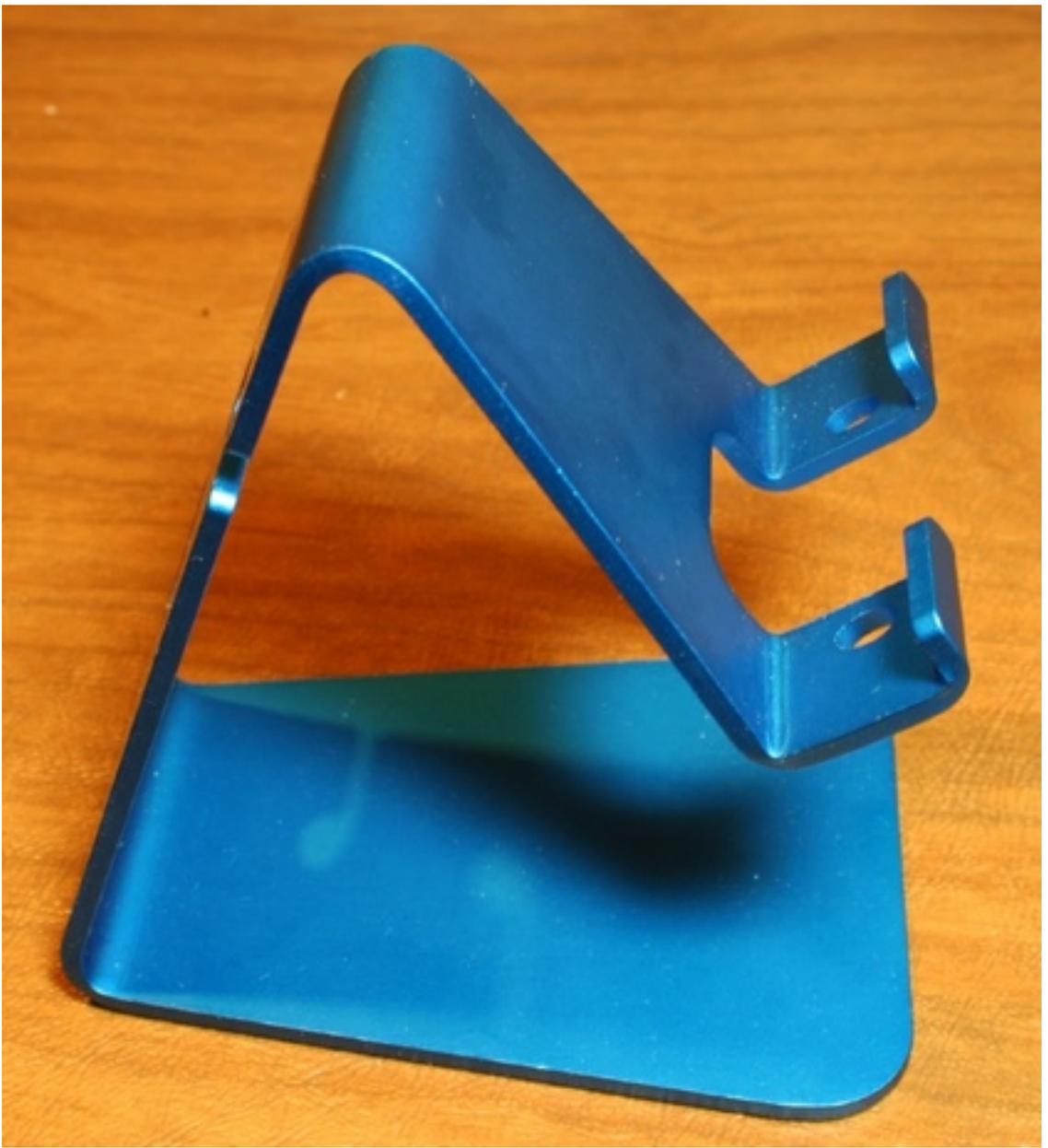
when it's sitting on the Element by itself. You can type on the iPhone if you want, although I don't find it particularly comfortable.



The built-in cable management does a fine job of keeping the sync/charging cable out of your way on the desk.

Two keyhole cut-outs in the back of the Element provide cable management. It's not perfect, but it's much better than nothing at all, which is what a lot of other stands provide.

There are a couple of clear anti-slip strips, probably silicone rubber, on the bottom of the stand. If your desk surface is reasonably smooth (finished wood is fine; rough-sawn wood might not be), the Element isn't going anywhere if you bump it. Those strips are surprisingly effective, especially for not feeling tacky to the touch. More weight would make them even better, but manufacturing concerns probably dictated the use of aluminum rather than steel in producing the stand.



The Element's design is simple and effective.

Want to set your phone in the stand and watch a movie? No problem, just turn it sideways. The tabs on the front are low enough that they don't interfere with the screen. The Element is great for using your iPhone as a desk-bound speakerphone, too. In fact, other than bouncing around in turbulence, I'd prefer something like the Element on an airplane over the [iFlyz](#) (and maybe the [In Your Face](#), too), although it's not as easily portable as either of those stands.

If you don't like Apple's various docks, or you want something that sits a little higher off of your desk and allows horizontal use of your iPhone, give the Element a try. You won't be disappointed.

*Copyright © 2010 [Chris Lawson](#). Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at [reviews@atpm.com](mailto:reviews@atpm.com).*



# Accessory Review

by Chris Lawson, <http://chrislawson.net>

## SolarCharger 906

**Function:** Solar-powered external iPhone battery pack.

**Developer:** [i.Tech](#)

**Price:** \$60

**Requirements:** iPhone or iPod with dock connector.

**Trial:** None



External batteries for the iPhone are nothing new. Almost as soon as the iPhone shipped, there were third-party manufacturers building rechargeable, external battery packs that hooked up to the dock connector and allowed you to recharge the phone on the go. The SolarCharger 906 from iTech is just such a device with an added feature: you don't even have to have electricity to recharge its battery.



The frame is removable if you want to save space or weight, but it's an essential accessory if you want to mount the SolarCharger on a window. The suction cups attach to the holes in the frame.

Solar power is one of the major thrusts of the "green revolution," and on the surface, a solar-rechargeable battery sounds like a great idea. You know, just set the SolarCharger by

a sunny window during the day (or under a light that's otherwise on at night, like a desk lamp), get the battery juiced up, and then you've got extra power for your iPhone when you need it. Better yet, hook up a solar panel and power your iPhone from the panel, saving the battery for when you really need it. The problem is that the SolarCharger is extremely reluctant to charge or supply power in anything but bright, direct sunlight.

Most people under the age of 35 probably remember using solar-powered calculators at some point during their school careers. These devices, which were usually simplistic but functional, had a solar panel of less than one square inch in size and worked fine in a classroom, even on a cloudy, dreary day with only artificial lighting high overhead. So you'll forgive me if I expected the SolarCharger to be able to develop enough current from its nearly five square inches of "high-performance monocrystalline solar panel" to at least charge its internal 1260 mAh lithium-ion battery in reflected or artificial light.

In fairness, iTech does explain in [their FAQ](#), "[the] SolarCharger needs to be placed under direct sunlight" and "[c]louds, smog, tinted window or shadows will impede the sunlight from [powering] the solar panel." They also warn that fully charging the SolarCharger's battery using only direct sunlight will take around 22 hours, meaning the best you can realistically hope for in a work day is probably about 1/3 of a full charge (and that only if you live somewhere it's always sunny, like Arizona, southern California, or possibly Philadelphia). Since I live in Michigan and it's currently winter, it should go without saying that I was unable to test this claim.

For those of you living in sunnier climes and spending a lot of time in your car, iTech includes a suction-cup mount to attach the SolarCharger to your windshield or other window. Maybe you've got a corner office on the south side of the building, or you work in a greenhouse? If you happen to be driving into the sun, this is probably helpful. If you're driving away from the sun...well, good luck. Even on a bright sunny day a few weeks ago, I was unable to get the SolarCharger to charge from the solar panel unless pointed to within about 30 degrees of the sun.

Finally, the SolarCharger won't recharge from solar power if its internal battery is totally drained, which isn't that difficult of a state to get into. Fully discharging the SolarCharger into a nearly dead iPhone will get pretty close, and letting the SolarCharger sit for a few more dreary days will finish it off. Then you'll have no choice but to hook it up to USB to charge it.

Other than the solar panel, the device is actually quite nice. The SolarCharger ships with a multitude of different charging tips, making it useful with a wide variety of portable electronics, most cell phones and gaming systems, in addition to generic USB and micro-USB adapters. The USB adapter lets you plug in Apple's standard charging cord, making iPhone or iPod charging a snap (and conveniently allowing iTech to avoid shipping a dock connector-specific adapter at additional cost).



The button on the back can be pressed to show the state of charge of the internal battery. Here the SolarCharger has a full charge. A small red LED below the button illuminates steadily when charging via USB and flashes when charging from solar power.

The 1260 mAh battery capacity is on par with that in the [Mophie Juice Pack Air](#), so when fully charged, the SolarCharger will give a totally flat iPhone (which has a 1400 mAh battery inside) about 80% of a full charge. That's enough to extend my time away from a charging cable by about a day or so or, if traveling on foot through those portions of the Mojave Desert with AT&T service, maybe indefinitely. A button on the back lets you instantly determine the internal battery's state of charge, and the same charge indicator LEDs also indicate when the device is charging.



The cable management doesn't play nice with the USB charging port. As you can see here, the port is easily buried under the SolarCharger's power cable.

There's one big drawback to the SolarCharger's design other than the solar panel, and that's how it handles USB charging. The plug to charge the SolarCharger via USB is located under the non-removable cable used to charge other devices from the SolarCharger, so in order to charge up the SolarCharger from a computer, you have to deal with the rat's nest of wire created by unwinding the neatly stored power cable. iTech should have put the charging port on the back of the device or designed the cable management for the power cable not to interfere with it.

Bottom line? Sixty bucks is a lot of money for a device whose major selling point is so limited in real-world use. If all you want is an external battery pack for your iPhone or iPod touch, there are literally dozens of simpler options out there for less than half the money and more than triple the capacity. The versatility is nice if you've got a bunch of different devices to charge, but sadly, the solar panel in this application is little more than an expensive gimmick.

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# FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

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