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

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Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the April issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* Each month the editors of ATPM bring you our unique blend of news, views, and product reviews. Thank you for joining us this month and every month as we we chronicle what we call the “personal computing experience.”

The New iPad

In March, Apple released the new Apple iPad to record demand for the company’s tablet-style device. Apple has chosen to keep 16 GB models of the iPad 2 in production and available for \$100 off of the original price, while bringing a new product iteration to market.

The new iPad offers a quad-core graphics processor on Apple’s proprietary A5X system on a chip. Currently, serious competition for the iPad does not exist. The biggest limit on product sales is Apple’s ability to meet global demand.

Apple Announces a Dividend

Apple suspended its regular quarterly dividend program in late 1995 as the company entered the most challenging period in its history. Last month, in a specially arranged conference call with analysts, CEO Tim Cook and CFO Peter Oppenheimer announced resumption of a quarterly dividend commencing in September. The initial quarterly dividend payout will be \$2.65 per share.

In addition to the reinstatement of a regular quarterly dividend, Apple announced that the company would repurchase \$10 billion of the company’s outstanding shares over the next three years. The share repurchase is designed to eliminate the impact of share dilution from the company’s stock-based compensation program. Both announcements were received positively by the market. Apple’s stock ended March trading at \$599.55, down from the all-time high of \$621.45 established earlier in the same trading week.

In this month’s issue of ATPM, we begin an article series focusing on Apple’s pathways to success and the underpinnings of the company’s high market value.

Our April issue includes:

The Apple Growth Story: A Multi-Part Series to Explore Apple’s Success

Robert Paul Leitao begins a series about Apple, Inc.’s financial performance and success.

MacMuser: Do Androids Dream?

Mark Tennent supposes Androids suffer iPad envy.

PEBKAC: Protecting the Memory Hub

While Apple's changing the digital hub for our lives from the Mac to iCloud, there are still precious memories worth protecting on our favorite fruit computers. Do you have a backup plan?

Desktop Pictures: Tsavo National Park, Kenya

During his trip to Africa last year, Christopher Turner paid a visit to the elephant orphanage at Tsavo National Park in Kenya.

Review: OtterBox Commuter and Reflex

An update of an old classic iPhone case and a new "tough" entry.

Review: Remotix 2.6

Powerful VNC remote access from an iOS device to host computers.

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Agloves Touchscreen Gloves

I have a couple of pairs of the original Agloves and use them both outdoors and indoors. My hands are always swollen and uncomfortable, and almost unusable in any kind of cool or cold weather; but the knit Agloves are easy to put on, very effective hand-warmers, and wonderful with the iPad and the iPod touch. They are one of the few products I have found that more than lived up to the original glowing review.

I am glad to see Agloves reviewed here so that more people can learn about them.

—*Jo Morrill*

Making The Leap

I was at a friend's house the other day, marveling at how easy his two-year-old son navigated on his iPad 2, which he bought after I convinced him to buy a 24-inch iMac. That fact that your Mom took to the iPad like a fish to water simply reflects the genius behind the device.

—*Grover Watson*

Text Parsing With FileMaker

I am wondering if it is possible to trim all of the text in a field (and there will be varying amounts of text/words), everything *up to* a specific word.

I am trying to help various users around the world to define a path to a picture that will be inserted into their container. So a user inserts a picture (reference only) from a shared Dropbox folder, and now I want other users to be able to insert that same picture by changing the filepath to reflect their personal path to Dropbox. One user may have a filepath of `imagewin://C:users/JohnSmith/Dropbox...` and another might be `imagemac:/Y:/Dropbox...` and many other variations on that theme.

I have a calculation field (Image Filepath Set) that uses `MiddleWords (Image Filepath Set; 5; 25)` and that works for everyone who has the first filepath (the same number of folders), but not for anyone else. I just used 25 in the calculation because it was a big number, and I wanted to include all possibilities. Overkill, I know.

I just want something that finds “Dropbox” wherever it occurs, and then deletes everything in front of it. It could delete Dropbox, too, I could build that into the calculation.

Any thoughts?

—*Marilou Vander Griend*

I've never come across a text processing task that FileMaker couldn't handle. It usually just a matter of breaking the processing down into pieces (as it is in any programming task).

So the first thing you want to do is find the occurrence of "Dropbox" in the filepath string:

```
$dpPos = Position( $filepath; "Dropbox"; 1; 1 )
```

You also need to know the length of the string:

```
$strLen = Length( $filepath )
```

Next, you want to get everything from the beginning of the occurrence of "Dropbox" to the end of the string:

```
$subStr = Right( $filepath; $strLen - $dpPos + 1)
```

Putting this all together in a single calculation:

```
Let(
  [
    $dpPos = Position( $filepath; "Dropbox"; 1; 1 );
    $strLen = Length( $filepath );
    $subStr = Right( $filepath; $strLen - $dpPos + 1)
  ];
  $subStr
)
```

Testing this in FileMaker, I got:

```
Dropbox/image.jpg
```

for:

```
imagewin://C:users/JohnSmith/Dropbox/image.jpg
```

and:

```
Dropbox/otherimage.jpg
```

for:

```
imagemac:/Y:/Dropbox/otherimage.jpg
```

—*Charles Ross*

Coping With Mac OS X's Font Rendering

I've done hours of research on this. I like OS X but I regret buying a MacBook Pro because of this font antialiasing issue. I've tried all the TinkerTool settings, too. I can't believe for

such a long time there still isn't a solution to this! I'm not used to not being able to fix a technical problem.

—*Kramlin*



We will see retina displays in MacBook Pros within a year. That will be the only solution to this issue.

—*Toxxiq*

We'd love to hear your thoughts about our publication. We always welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and praise. Or, if you have an opinion or announcement about the Macintosh platform in general, that's OK too. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. All mail becomes the property of ATPM and may be edited for publication.



The Apple Growth Story

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Part I: The Source of Apple's Success

Apple has become the crown jewel of American industry. The company's market capitalization (the sum value of all outstanding shares) now exceeds one-half trillion dollars, and next fiscal year, the company's revenue may rise above one-quarter trillion dollars. By the end of the current quarter, Apple will have amassed cash and marketable securities balances well in excess of \$100 billion.

On a per-share basis, there is already more than \$100 in cash and marketable securities standing behind each outstanding share. Apple is currently generating cash at the rate of more than \$1 billion per week, while addressing only a fraction of the global market for the company's products.

Over the next few issues of *About This Particular Macintosh*, I will explore Apple's success and provide an overview of the factors that contribute to the company's high value and its prospects for continuing growth.

As the editor of [Posts At Eventide](#), I actively track and forecast Apple's financial performance. At this site, I provide a repository of information on Apple's quarterly results over the past three fiscal years and the unit sales history for each of the company's major product lines over the same quarterly periods. But as an observer of Apple for the past 20 years, it's my view that the company's ongoing success is fueled more by the way in which Apple crafts customer relationships than by the popularity of any one of the company's hardware products.

Posts At Eventide Axiom #1: Apple doesn't sell products. Apple creates customer relationships, and these customer relationships sell Apple products.

- There are more than one-quarter billion iTunes customers.
- Customers have downloaded more than 25 billion iOS apps.
- Apple has now sold more than 200 million iPhones.
- Apple has now sold more than 55 million iPads.
- More than 20 million Macs will be sold this year.
- There are more than 360 Apple retail stores open for business.

At the center of Apple's success is the Apple customer. In Apple's last fiscal year, the retail stores represented about 13% of reported revenue. But the retail stores are much more than product sales locations. The stores function as primary product service centers and locations for the development of new customer relationships. Management has repeatedly stated that about half of Mac buyers at the retail stores are new to the Mac platform.

The introduction of the iTunes Music Store in 2003 and the release of iTunes for Windows allowed Apple to make the underlying computer operating system irrelevant and introduced hundreds of millions of computer users to Apple's approach to interface design.

iTunes provided Apple with the opportunity to introduce Apple and Apple products to tens of millions of new customers and has been at the foundation of what I call the "Apple Product Mutual Halo Effect." To understand Apple's growth story, one must appreciate not only Apple's individual product sales, but also Apple's yield per customer. Content sells devices, and content available through the iTunes Store and Apple's App Store can be shared across multiple devices owned by the same customer. There isn't a competitor on the planet that can match Apple's depth of content and array of digital devices. Yield per customer is a driving force behind Apple's continuing growth.

In next month's issue, we will continue our exploration of Apple's success and begin our look at the company's financial performance and the performance of the company's share price.

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Do Androids Dream?

Usually we have been avid adopters of the latest and greatest the Cupertino Conjurers can deliver. Very often their announcements coincide with our need to upgrade, and so we do.

I was hanging on Steve's every word when he announced the Power Mac G5s and put my order in while he was still making his presentation, only to discover that all the early Macs had been diverted to build a super computer. Not a bad one, too; it was in the top five in those days.

In the past, we have skipped one or two Mac editions such as the Quadra series. We upgraded our 7-series PowerPCs with faster CPUs in the glorious days when Apple made Macs with daughter cards. While my partner moved to the iMac, I prefer four internal drives and went Mac Pro. She goes for screen appeal and constantly reassures me that size isn't everything. After all, 23" is enough for any man or woman, eh?

Lately we became a two-path Pad family, the distaff to Android, while I remain strictly Infinity Loop. And this is where a real difference becomes apparent.

I usually charge up my iPad once a week if I remember to; she charges her Samsung iPad clone every night because she has to. The tablets get about the same use each day, the iPad possibly more, because it spends much of its life as a TV in the kitchen, streaming from the 'net or from the server, and playing movies which have been copied onto it. These are power-hungry activities that easily knock 10 or 20 percent off the battery charge.

Meanwhile, the Samsung might be being used for a little light reading or Web browsing, where the CPU sits idling away battery life and burning power at a rate of knots. Yet it still needs a good seeing-to afterwards.

Then I [read about](#) Dr. Dongarra at the University of Tennessee and a researcher at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He keeps track of the world's fastest computers and recently benchmarked the iPad 2.

First, he discovered that it is ten times as fast as the original iPad, and this is just using one of the iPad 2's processing cores. He reckons the iPad 2 will eventually benchmark at over 1.5 gigaflops, making it a supercomputer in 1994 terms. In those days, the dream machine was a Cray 2, washing machine-sized, and cooled in a bath of Fluorinert. Nowadays we hold the equivalent in one hand.

Just to make life interesting, Dr Dongarra is thinking of getting a couple of stacks of iPads and seeing what they can do as a cluster. Which means, if it's anything like my G5 order,

don't hold your breath if you've ordered an iPad 3. Dr. Dongarra's going to grab the first batch for his new supertoy.

Androids, read and weep.

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Protecting the Memory Hub

Beginning in 2004, I've made a calendar for the coming year featuring our children. For four years, it was just our oldest son. Then we adopted Boy #2, and for three years it was the two of them. The calendar for 2012 now features all three of our sons. I've always bought copies for our extended family: the boys' grandparents, great-grandmothers, aunts, and uncle. The calendars are given as gifts at Christmas time, and after the first three years, it became an expectation on the part of the extended family.

My habit has been to curate, throughout the year, an album in iPhoto of possible calendar photo candidates. Often, this is no small task, as we try to take many shots of our three sons. Just after Thanksgiving, I'll sit down and start sifting through the curated folder. Once I've done the initial purge, my wife will sit in and we'll go through it again, knocking out the ones she doesn't care for. Then it's calendar-creating time.

I've been pretty happy with the calendar layout and purchasing options Apple offers within iPhoto, and that's what we've used each year.

The 2012 calendar was delayed, due to the nearly three weeks my wife and I spent in Africa at the end of November and beginning of December, as we adopted Boy #3. There were a few "But what about the calendars?" from the extended family at Christmas; like I said, it's become a pleasant expectation. Rest assured, they arrived the second week of January and have been in full use at the respective households (and places of work) since.

Steve Jobs once famously held up the Mac as the "digital hub." It was to be the machine you plugged your cameras, iPods, musical instruments, whatever, into so you could work with photos, videos, and music. iCloud seeks to replace the Mac as the hub, and I'm tentatively dipping my toe into using iCloud more, but for me, the Mac still remains my hub. For a Type-A control freak like myself, having something that's under my control for keeping memories is key. I run my own backups on the Mac, even having backups of the backups. But I'm learning to let go a little more, for the convenience iCloud is supposed to offer.

Whether the Mac or iCloud, what has become apparent is that this isn't simply a case of being one's digital hub; it's become our memory hub. Most everyone's photos are digital now, and all of my digital photos, most of which never make it to [my Flickr feed](#), reside in Apple's digital shoebox, iPhoto. All of my videos, most of which never end up on Vimeo, are stored on there. There's good reason for having backups of backups. My Mac is where all of my memories are, and I look to secure them as much as possible.

Like many, you're probably in the same boat, and if you don't have a comprehensive backup system in place, you need to get one going as soon as possible, lest you take a chance at losing precious memories. Here's mine:

- Nightly backup of the entire Mac to an external hard drive via [SuperDuper](#); after the initial full backup, the script "Smart Updates" the backup drive, only adding or subtracting what's changed that particular day.
- Ongoing backup of the entire Mac via Time Machine to a different external hard drive.
- Weekly backup of the SuperDuper-cloned drive to another hard drive.
- Ongoing backup of the entire Mac via [CrashPlan](#).

The only thing I'm not doing that I should is rotating a backup drive off-site. (In case of a fire or some such event.) For now, my CrashPlan backup serves as my off-site protection for the memory hub.

We all have memories on our computers which are important to us: photos of our family; music from our formative years which defined us (child of the 1980s here); that e-mail from a world-famous author that was so encouraging. These things are worth protecting, and while companies like Apple, [Shirt Pocket](#), and CrashPlan are doing what they can to make it as simple as possible, it's up to us users to get it going in the first place.

My friends often get tired of hearing it from me, but the mantra won't change: backup, backup, backup!

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Tsavo National Park, Kenya

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

[This Month's Desktop Pictures](#)

Tsavo National Park in Kenya hosts an elephant orphanage run by the [David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust](#). The orphanage cares for other animals as well, but began with abandoned elephants, which remain the orphanage's biggest (no pun intended) population. In the morning, the two smallest groups of elephants are brought out for some exercise, milk, mud baths, and visitor education. Herein are some photos from Christopher Turner's visit there.



[View Pictures](#)

Baby elephant close-up The first group are the 1–2 year-olds, more than one of which was happy to get hands-on attention from visitors.

Cooling off with some dirt One of the toddler elephants works to keep cool.

Here they come! The toddler elephant herd makes its morning debut.

Here, let me do that myself Most of the toddlers' trunks were long enough that they didn't help with the milk bottles.

Monkey on the side of the road On our way to the national park, we saw two monkeys were foraging for scraps on the side of the road.

Muddy but cute One of the baby elephants rolls in the dirt after a mud bath.

Toddler mud pit pile-on The funniest highlight of the visit was watching the elephants play in their mud pit. I went back to the hotel that day with one leg of my cargo pants smeared with red mud, and one of my hands was caked with it after petting a post-mud bath baby.

Toddlers playing in the mud This guy wanted to get the humans in on the action, too.

Tsavo National Park A bit of Tsavo's more than 8,000 square miles.

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, please send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue.

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 Create a workflow in Automator with these three actions:

1. Get Current Webpage from Safari.
2. Get Image URLs from Webpage. Get URLs of images linked from these webpages.
3. Download URLs.

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.

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.7.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.



Accessory Review

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

OtterBox Commuter and Reflex

Commuter

Function: iPhone 4/4S case.

Developer: [OtterBox](#).

Price: \$35.

Requirements: iPhone 4 or 4S.

Trial: None.



Reflex

Function: iPhone 4/4S case.

Developer: [OtterBox](#).

Price: \$35.

Requirements: iPhone 4 or 4S.

Trial: None.



Every time Apple changes the size and shape of an iPhone, case and other accessory manufacturers have to decide if their products should be updated for the new device. OtterBox not only updated their Commuter case ([reviewed in ATPM 16.04](#)), but it also added to the line with the Reflex, a tough plastic “slider” case with silicone grip strips on the back.



The Commuter (left) and Reflex (right) both consist of two pieces.

Both the Commuter and the Reflex come in a variety of colors and claim to fit all iPhone 4 and 4S models. Testing on a Verizon iPhone 4 and an AT&T 4S supports this claim, as both cases work well on both phones.



The entire interior of the Commuter is silicone; the interior of the Reflex is mostly plastic with some fabric along the back.

The Reflex looks like an OtterBox version of the [bare-bones Zoe Case](#), but it addresses many of the shortcomings of that case. For instance, OtterBox was smart enough to put most of the mold lines inside the case.



The Reflex from the front...



...and the Reflex sliding together.

However, OtterBox's Reflex case doesn't stay together as securely as the Zoe Case did. If you need to take the phone out of its case often, this probably isn't a big deal—and indeed, the Reflex is much easier to install on the phone than the Commuter is.

There's very little silicone on the Reflex, and its plastic is hard, making it likely to slide around on a flat surface (like, say, the center console of your car). It also makes the Reflex feel cheap.



The Reflex has a fairly small headphone jack cutout.

Got a set of headphones with a big plug? Good luck plugging them into your iPhone while it's in the Reflex case. The headphone jack cutout is fairly small. The silicone button covers are also stiff, making the volume and power buttons difficult to actuate with one hand. Finally, the Reflex has virtually no protection for the Dock connector other than a raised rim around the connector and speaker/mic area.



The joint holding the two halves of the Reflex together isn't terribly secure.

The good news, though, is that the Reflex covers the entire back of the iPhone, with the exception of the cutout around the camera and flash. The Commuter for the 3G didn't, and I complained about it two years ago. No one at OtterBox was listening, as the new Commuter has the same problem—there's a giant circular cutout in the back whose sole purpose is showing off the chrome Apple logo.



The Commuter from the front. . .



...and from the back. Why does this case insist on showing off the Apple logo at the expense of protection?

The new Commuter's silicone liner is nice and supple, making the buttons easy to actuate. It also provides a flap for the Dock connector and headphone jack. (In case you were wondering, that giant hole in the headphone jack flap is there to allow the noise-cancellation microphone to work.) The headphone jack cutout is somewhat larger than on the Reflex, but headphones with very large plugs may still be incompatible with it.



The silicone dust flap does a great job of keeping gunk out of the Dock connector.

The silicone and textured plastic on the Commuter feel much nicer than the Reflex, although the back is solid plastic and thus tends to slide around on a flat surface much as the Reflex does. The silicone also catches a little bit on a jeans pocket, but it's fine in the breast pocket of a dress shirt.



With the flap flipped up, the Commuter has more room for a large headphone plug than the Reflex does. The hole is for the noise-cancelling microphone.

While the new Commuter is easy enough to remove from the phone, as with the older model, it takes some finger gymnastics to get an iPhone installed. In fact, the Commuter seems to be more difficult to install on an iPhone 4 or 4S than it was on a 3G. It took at least five tries before I was able to get my phone installed in the Commuter in one smooth motion. The squared-off edges of the 4 and 4S seem to be responsible, but it does feel like a definite step backwards from the older model.



A Verizon iPhone 4 disappears into the Commuter case. Installation is more difficult than it was with the 3G version, and it's substantially more difficult than it is with the Reflex.

What *isn't* a step backwards, though, is durability. After almost two years of everyday use on my iPhone 3G, the old-model Commuter's plastic had two major cracks in it, one through each "flap" at the top and bottom of the case. The new model appears to be beefier in these areas, so hopefully these are no longer weak spots.

Both cases come with screen protectors. Apple officially recommends against them now, and I don't see any real need to install them on an iPhone 4 or 4S unless you're really hard on your phone. It's nice to have, I suppose, but I don't have a need for it, and I don't think most iPhone users would, either.

The Reflex provides a reasonable level of protection but just feels cheap, not a great attribute for a \$35 case to have. I'm not crazy about how easy it is to accidentally pull it off the phone—more than once, I felt like the case was coming apart and the phone was headed to the ground as I was left holding half of the case in my hand—but once I get my phone in a case, I prefer leaving it there. For that reason, the Commuter is still my favorite OtterBox case, despite its minor shortcomings. I just wish they'd make the back solid.

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Software Review

by Sylvester Roque, sroque@atpm.com

Remotix 2.6

Function: VNC remote access to Mac/Windows/Linux computers.

Developer: [Nulana LTD.](#)

Price: \$20.

Requirements: iOS 4.2; Android version also available.

Trial: Feature-limited ([Remotix Lite](#)).



I ordered my first generation iPad as soon as pre-orders were being accepted and had to wait for what seemed like forever for the 3G/Wi-Fi models to appear. Since then, it's been close at hand, daily tackling a variety of tasks that used to require my trusty MacBook Pro. Even a crack in the screen hasn't diminished its usefulness.

One of the first things I started experimenting with was using the iPad to control my Mac Pro-based media center. Because that machine was connected directly to our television, I had to either walk into the living room and turn on the TV or activate screen sharing on my MacBook Pro to check progress on even the most basic tasks. Surely there was some program out there that would let me use the iPad to view the Mac Pro's screen and have at least limited control over the Mac Pro.

By the time the opportunity arose to review Remotix, I had already tried several similar programs with varying degrees of success. I ruled out many of these programs because using even the most basic features required establishing an account somewhere. The extra features were often more than I needed, and, besides, the last thing I wanted was another account. I had been using the free Remotix Lite for a week or two and it was promising, so I thought I would give the full version a try.

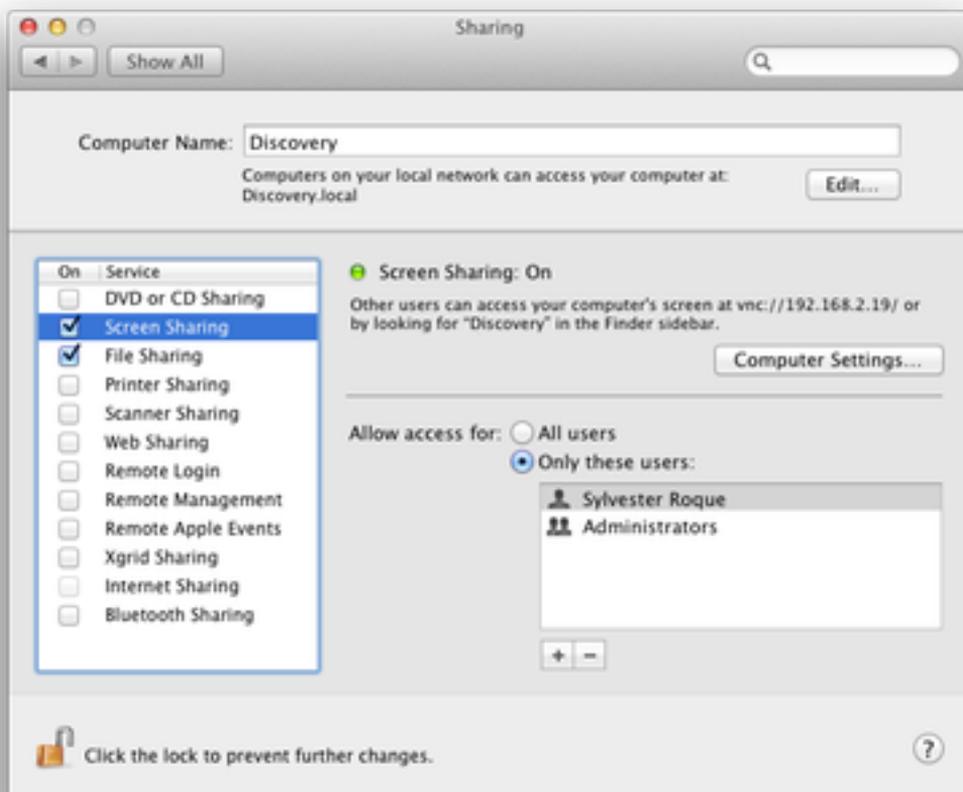
Installing Remotix or Remotix Lite

Both Remotix and Remotix Lite install the same way, and for all practical purposes run the same way. The only difference you will notice is that the full version has a few features not included in the Lite version. In both cases, installation on your iOS device is as simple as it gets: download the program from the iTunes App Store as you would any other app. The next time you sync your device with iTunes, Remotix will be there ready for you to configure and use.

Configuring the Computers You Want to Control

Before you start configuring Remotix, there may be some changes that you need to make on the Macs and PCs you want to control. On the Mac side, there's no need to install

additional software. You do need to open the Sharing preference pane and enable either Screen Sharing or Remote Administration.



Screen Sharing Enabled

In either case, click the Computer Settings button to access additional settings that control the degree of access each user is allowed.



Remote Management Options

Near the top of the Sharing pane is a phrase that says “Computers on your local network can access your computer at: computer name.local.” Make a note of the “computer name.local” part; you’ll need it later. Since I’m logging into administrator accounts on my own machines, I only needed to enable screen sharing to perform the tasks I need. I log into the Mac using the same user name and password I would normally use to log into those systems.

For Mac users who choose to use it, Remotix also supports logging in using authentication keys rather than passwords. Using this method, you don’t need to remember different passwords for each of your defined servers. A public key is installed on all servers, and a private key is stored on your iOS device. Directions for creating both the public and private keys are covered nicely in the Remotix help files.

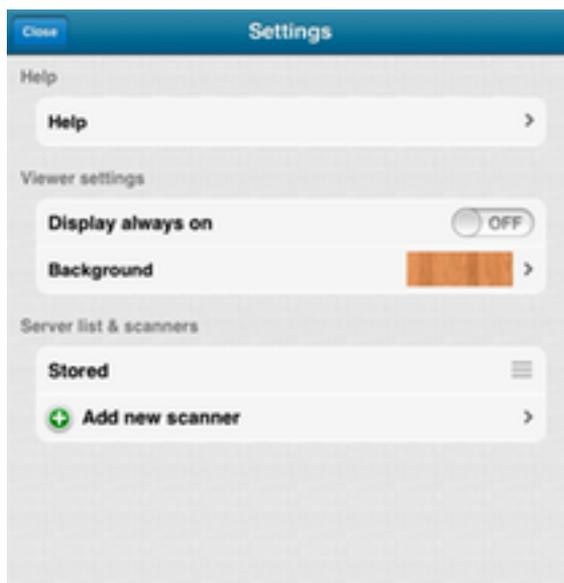
If you will be using either Remotix product to control a Windows PC, the Remotix help files recommend using either UltraVNC or TightVNC. Several other variations of the VNC protocol are also supported. With UltraVNC, your Windows user name and password can be used for authentication.

Remotix currently supports a variety of authentication protocols, so it should be useful in a variety of settings. When connecting to a computer running OS X, Remotix supports Screen Sharing in both “Ask for control” and “Ask to observe” modes. Authentication using your OS X user name and password is also supported.

Configuring Remotix

Now that the computers you want to control are configured, let’s configure Remotix so that it’s able to talk to them. Launch Remotix on your iOS device. After a brief splash screen, the main screen appears. Once setup is complete, this screen becomes a command center of sorts where you can choose the computer that you wish to control. Clicking the “Settings” button in the upper left corner of the screen brings up a few basic settings for the Remotix program itself. The help file is accessed here, as well as a setting to choose a different background image.

Don’t be fooled into thinking these options are purely cosmetic. The “Add new scanner” button is a recently added feature. It can be used to scan your network in search of servers (devices) to control.



Basic Remotix Settings

Tap the “Add new scanner” button, and you can choose to scan Wi-Fi, 3G, and a few other network interfaces for potential servers. Scanning most of the interface types identifies devices based upon their network address. The nice thing is that if you scan for devices such as Macs that are Bonjour-aware they are identified based upon their device name, not some cryptic numeric ID.

This scanner feature can be a quick way to identify potential servers, although it will identify anything in range that is using the interface you chose, including some servers

(devices) that you are unable to connect to due to configuration/credentials issues. Remotix found, but was unable to connect to and control, my wireless printer, for example. If scanning a particular network interface yields too many useless connections, you can delete that scanner and configure servers manually. If you find yourself configuring new servers regularly, consider purchasing the full version of Remotix. The very useful scanner feature is not in the Lite version.

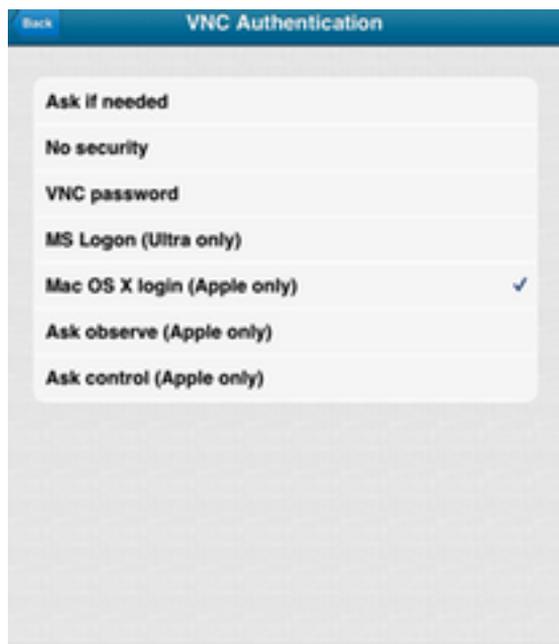
Manually Configuring Servers

Clicking the + symbol in the upper right corner of the Remotix screen brings up the “Add New Server” screen. This allows you to manually enter connection information for servers that could not be found automatically.



Manually Adding a New Server

Most of the settings are either self-explanatory or explained well in the help file. The settings for port number, VNC Authentication, and VNC Server Type can often be left as they are. I set VNC Authentication for Mac OS X, but you have other options.



VNC Authentication Options

In the Name field, choose one that will be easy to remember. On a Mac, I usually use the name I gave the computer I am going to control.

In the Host/IP field of the Add New Server screen you could use an IP address. In my setup, I've chosen to use the computer name instead for convenience. Use the name that appears in the Sharing preference pane. Remember the name I told you to make note of earlier? That's the name that gets entered in the Host/IP field.

We're almost finished with the configuration. Tap the Operating System field and check the OS for the type of computer you want to control. In the full version of Remotix, you can also control the quality of the image that you see on the iPad. If you are connecting to a Mac, Remotix can present your Mac's screen in in one of five different quality levels to accommodate your needs and the speed of your Internet/network connection. The picture quality choices are "Black & White," "Grayscale," "Medium," "Highest," and "Adaptive." Each increase in this setting improves the image your iOS device presents of your Mac's screen. Of course, there is a corresponding increase in the amount of bandwidth needed. The developers suggest that those with slower networks try the "Adaptive" setting as a good balance between picture quality and performance.

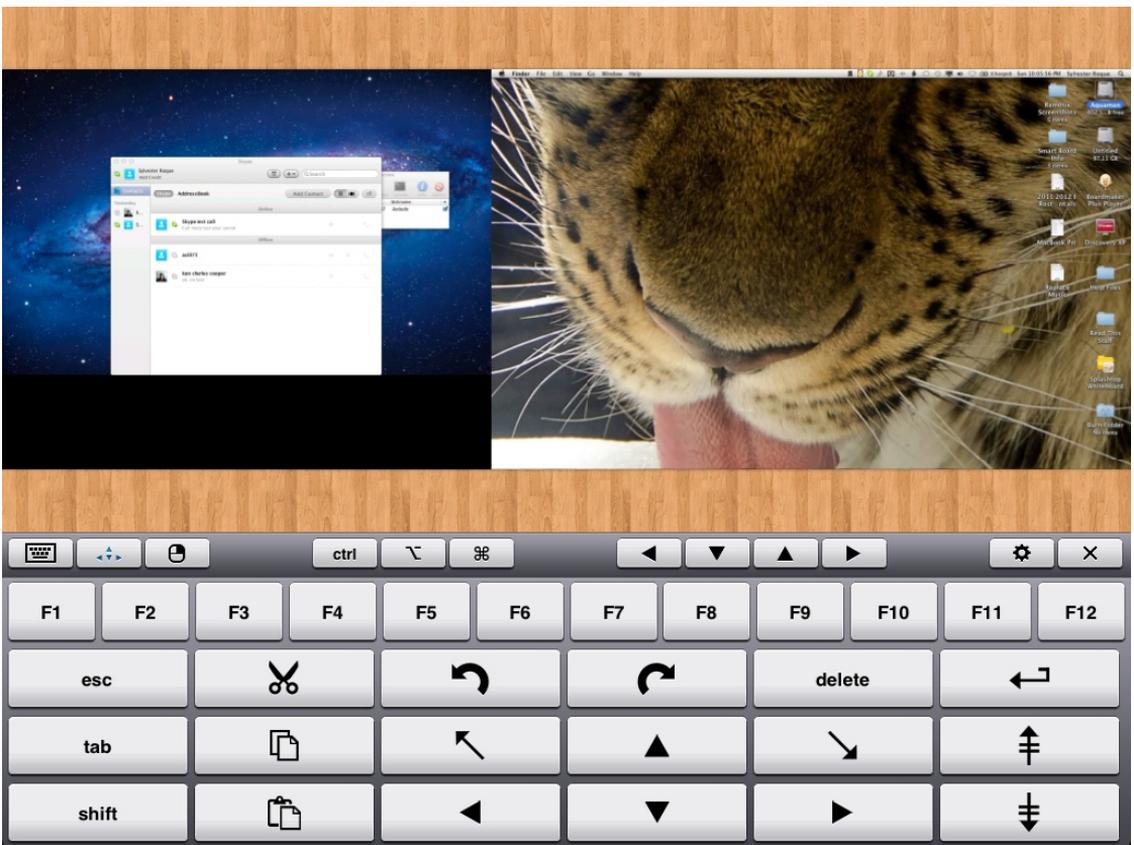
Remotix Lite is limited to Black and White or Grayscale images only. That's pretty much all there is to configuration for most users. If you need it, SSH authentication is also an option. There is also an option to save a thumbnail of the desktop when you disconnect from a server. It's an easy way to identify various machines quickly.

Using Remotix

Until now, I've spent most of my time discussing the initial setup of Remotix. I hope you haven't gotten the impression that it is a difficult process, because it really isn't. The nice thing is that using Remotix is just as easy and perhaps easier. Once you've configured a server, initiating a connection is as easy as tapping the thumbnail for the server that you want to use. Depending upon which form of authentication you've chosen, you may be asked for a user name and password. If you like, Remotix can remember these details for you.

Once you have connected to a server, gestures behave the way you expect them to on iOS devices. The two-finger pinch gesture that shrinks pictures shrinks the screen image of your server. Expanding your fingers expands the area of the screen you're working in. Nice if your fingers are a bit clumsy like mine. In fact there is full gesture support in the current version of Remotix.

If you're used to using extended keyboards with your Mac and find that trying to emulate those keys on an iOS device is cumbersome, you should really take a look at the full version of Remotix, which has extended keyboard support.



Extended Keyboard Support

I have to say that as intuitive as the iPad is, I find navigating through an iTunes playlist a bit cumbersome unless I really enlarge the screen. The area you need to press to trigger a specific song is just too small for my fingers. Since Remotix easily supports the arrow keys, this process is much easier for me. That and the ability to have adaptive image quality are worth the price of admission for me.

Final Thoughts

It took me longer to write this review than I anticipated, and that might be a good thing. I found out that the developers are apparently serious about improving the product. The first few days I used Remotix Lite, it would occasionally appear to quit. The app was still running in my iPad's multitasking bar, but it wasn't on screen. Tapping the program would bring it right back up, fully functional. Sometimes it worked for days without a problem, then the behavior repeated. Shortly after I agreed to write the review of the full version, an update came out that stabilized the program for me. Additional updates have been released, bringing improved performance and some interesting new features such as network scanning.

Remotix Lite will be sufficient for many users. I like it and still use it from time to time. Even though I had a license for a review copy, I paid for the full version. The adaptive picture quality, extended keyboard support, and network scanning are well worth the \$20 price to me. It's much easier to control my media machine now.

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