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<jghandour@atpm.com>

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Contributors

Ramon Cahenzli
Jamal Ghandour
Rishi Gupta
Tom Iovino
Robert Paul Leitao
Robert Madill
Barry L. Ritholtz
Mike Shields
Michael Tsai
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Publishers - Michael Tsai & Robert Paul Leitao
Editor - Michael Tsai
Managing Editor - Robert Paul Leitao
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Columnists

H.M. Fog
Jamal Ghandour
Edward Goss
Tom Iovino
Robert Paul Leitao
Chad G. Poland
Mike Shields
Michael Tsai
Belinda Wagner

Artwork & Design

Graphics Director - Jamal Ghandour
Layout/Design - Michael Tsai
Blue Apple Icon Designs - Marc Robinson
Typewriter-Style Section Headers - RD Novo

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Thanks for reading *ATPM*.

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Welcome

Welcome to our latest issue! While the Macintosh world awaits the release of Allegro, please sit down, grab a cup of Cappuccino, and enjoy our issue about the computers from Cupertino! This month Michael Tsai takes a special look at Internet e-zines while Robert Paul Leitao talks about Apple Computer and the ever-changing market for personal computers. But first...(hee, hee, hee).

Hot! Hot! Hot!

Ouch! Ouch! That's hot! Or should we say, "Hot Diggity Bunny?" Most members of the English language world have been exposed to Apple's "torched bunny" ads. The ads are "red hot," and we think the concepts are downright cool! Our readers have been recommending that Apple feature head-to-head comparisons between the PowerPC processor and its Intel counterpart. We hope the new ads will perform as well as our new computers! The real test is whether or not Apple's message comes to mind when people see an Intel ad featuring the "bunny people." Where will all this end? Who knows...The G4 processor is just around the proverbial corner! That thought ought to set Intel's *engineers* on fire!

The Write Stuff?

Pre-release reviews of Dr. Amelio's book entitled *On The Firing Line: My 500 Days at Apple* indicate it doesn't do much to shine the company's often tarnished image. In fact, most reviewers indicate the book does little more than provide a vehicle for Dr. Gil to let out steam about being fired. That's too bad.

It's our view that Gil Amelio did a lot to save Apple Computer. Although he disputes the final numbers, we also believe he was paid handsomely for his time at the helm. We wish

Dr. Amelio the best and would like to thank him for his contributions to Apple's turnaround and the company's recent success.

Unfortunately, this book appears to be the "wrong stuff" for anyone looking for an unbiased account of the interesting events leading up to the NeXT acquisition, the decision to use the Mach kernel in Apple's next generation OS, and the reemergence of Steve Jobs as de facto leader of one of America's best known companies.

If your looking for "juicy tidbits" about Steve Jobs' desire to "Park Different" or a story about why Mr. Wozniak and his famous co-founder are no longer close friends, this book is the "write stuff." However, we think most people should invest the \$25.00 asked for this book in a more productive manner. Please take a look at this month's Segments section. The topic is Macintosh shareware, a better way to spend your hard-earned money! Of course, this is only our humble opinion.

Mickey Mac!

Forgive us if this sounds a little "Goofy," but there are a number of rumors that suggest the Walt Disney Company is interested in acquiring Apple Computer. While many think this rumor must be from "Pluto" (we also hear the reputation of a few of theses rumormongers isn't exactly *Snow White*), we don't want to dismiss this possible *Toy Story* as factless "Flubber."

Can you imagine an all-in-one Macintosh sporting mouse ears? How about a "Minnie" Mac for girls and a "Mickey" Mac for boys? We don't think Cupertino's *Sleeping Beauty* needs a charming prince or a white knight. We'd rather wait for Apple to once again become Silicon Valley's *Cinderella* story.

Ed and the Bermuda Archipelago (Part II)

Known mostly to people who watch late-night programming on ESPN, Mrs. Ed (aka Mary) is a nationally ranked bullseye pistol shooter. It's not something Mary brags about, but Ed claims this fact has helped end many domestic disputes (especially the disputes that end in Mary's favor!). But Mary loves Ed. The thought that he was either missing or being held captive by island natives was too much for her to handle. The Fount of all Knowledge be damned! Mary would find her husband (Please see *ATPM* 4.03)!

Mrs. Ed readied herself to search the Bermuda Archipelago. She packed her mauve-colored parachute, an ivory-handled Colt 45 and Ed's old Gomer Pyle lunch, box filled with trail mix and berry-flavored gummi bears. Mary was set to leave when something caught her eye...It was a nearly complete *ATPM* trivia column. She knew something was wrong... Ed would not have left home without his *ATPM* work in progress!

Mary acted on her suspicions. Instead of putting her survival skills to the test by searching

the Bermuda Archipelago, she sent Hammerli, the family Lhasa Apso, to search the neighborhood ...(To be continued).

In the meantime, please see this month's Trivia column for a peak at Ed's nearly-finished handiwork. Thanks, Mary!

Know Different

It's no secret a lot of people don't know about the often subtle differences in functionality between a Mac OS-based computer and an Intel box running Windows 95. We're here to help! *ATPM* is an all Macintosh e-zine dedicated to celebrating the *personal* computing experience. Each month our columns and reviews highlight the benefits of the Mac OS and the unique advantages of Macintosh computing. We believe what we say. Now it's your turn. Please take a look inside our latest issue. This month's software reviews include a critical look at Macromedia's Freehand and at the latest version of Micromat's TechTool.

Please enjoy!

The ATPM Staff





Email

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Makin' the Switch

While I cannot live without PCs (gotta have my Quake II) I am happy to say that my first Macintosh computer, a Mac G3, will be arriving this week. I'm tired of bloated software, memory leaks, and having to reinstall my computer at least once a quarter.

I've been using PCs for approximately 9 years and as time has gone on, they've improved but are still built on an archaic architecture holding back all of today's technology potential while the future of Intel chips (codenamed Merced) is based on another poor technology, courtesy of HP. PowerPC has always been a faster and more powerful chip technology.

As for the operating system, I don't have to say a thing; you've already heard it a million times.

I hope to continue seeing lots of advancement in the Macintosh platform and will be going right along with it!

Christopher Dickens
chris@ntr.net

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Unsubscribe atpmdocmaker

I just wanted to let you know that there is nothing your organization did or did not do, that caused me to unsubscribe. This is strictly a decision on my part based on the direction that Apple is taking.

The elimination of the clones, the refusal to cooperate with Be, Inc. over the technical specs for the new G3 motherboards, the killing of the CHRP specification clones, the outright lying re: the ability of the Mac system software to run on a CHRP platform without extensive modification, and overall the spectre of Steve Jobs returning—all of these factored in create a situation where I have lost my desire to be associated with the Apple environment. I am going to be strictly working with Linux, Unix and BeOS systems as much as I possibly can.

Am I happy about this? No. I really do like the Macintosh platform, at least as an alternative to using Windows. I have always found them to be a tightly integrated package, and usually a much more hassle-free platform to work with.

But, to be brutally honest, Apple has allowed itself to fall far behind technologically. Please note, I said Apple, not Motorola or IBM. Those two companies have been doing wonderful things with the various flavors of the PowerPC chip. I truly hope that they continue to develop newer and faster versions for as long as they possibly can, if only to provide Intel with a reason to keep honest. Apple has fallen by the wayside in terms of system costs, bus speed, graphics integration, and any number of other ways compared to the cutthroat competition in the Intel world. Going back into their hothouse of no competition isn't going to help them out any.

Thanks for reading all of this diatribe—again, I have no problem with your publication; I just need to focus on other things.

Dave MacLachlan
dsm@maine.com

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We'd love to hear your thoughts about our publication. We always welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and praise at [<editor@atpm.com>](mailto:editor@atpm.com). Or, if you have an opinion or announcement about the Macintosh platform in general, that's ok too.





We Interrupt This Column...

Dear Readers:

This month I'm departing from my regular format to talk to you about an exciting new computer company. This company has an extraordinary product-line and a seasoned management team that's hell-bent on establishing itself in key markets. The company is willing to go head-to-head with Microsoft and Intel in order to gain customers and become profitable.

This new company is Apple Computer. Does this surprise you? Let's take a few moments and look at why I believe this is true and why I call Apple Computer a "new" company. To start, let's look at today's personal computer market. I think the conventional desktop computer market is entering what's called a "mature" phase. Most of the homes that can afford conventional desktop computers already have one. Very few consumers are urgently running to the store or waiting in long lines to buy a new PC. In order to motivate first-time PC buyers into the market or entice existing owners to upgrade their PCs, companies need to be offering something special. The "MMX" moniker isn't enough to do it and the lure of "multimedia" capabilities has been overplayed and exhausted. To many people multimedia means nothing more than the ability to play popular computer games. American consumers will no longer spend \$2,500 – \$3,000 for this privilege.

Intel, the company which makes the Pentium processor, has recently seen it's stock sink about 20% in value and the company now has competition from AMD for chip sales in the lower-priced PC market. Overall, the profit margin on desktop PCs has become razor-thin and sales (or sales growth) have begun to slow. In fact, Compaq has announced targeted price cuts in order to clear its existing inventory.

The fastest growing area in the personal computer industry is the sub-\$1,000.00 market. There are two ways to try and exploit this market. You can strip your existing product line of features and/or cheapen the quality of components to reduce your costs or you can design hardware products that effectively deliver specific functionality at a particular price (more on this a little later).

Today there are too many PC makers. Because margins on PCs are razor thin, volume

means everything. In markets where sales growth is in decline, companies can only grow by acquiring or cannibalizing their competitors. If US economic growth should stall, PC manufacturers would be among the first companies to feel the effects. Despite the hype, most computer users are not graphic designers or Web content creators. Few people make their living using their home PC. In a slower-growth economy, hardware upgrades and software purchases will be among the first items put on the personal financial "back burner." You don't need a 300 MHz Pentium II processor and the latest copy of Photoshop to access the Internet or do your homework.

But this all sounds like bad news...where's Apple in all of this?

It's a reasonable question with a very interesting answer. Let's look at Apple's recent history. Two years ago Apple Computer was on the fast track to oblivion. The company hired a new CEO to try and turn things around. The previous CEO, Michael Spindler, miscalculated and bet the company's future on the wrong end of the personal computer market. People are willing to pay a small premium for Apple's best technology. People are not willing to pay Apple a premium for two-year old technology. With the ascent of the clones, Apple was losing its market and its margin.

To stop the financial hemorrhaging, Gil Amelio immediately canceled outdated products and destroyed huge piles of inventory that would never become part of computers sold to consumers. The company had already lost its footing in the home PC market and was left to focus on its three primary markets - education, graphic design and content creation. But Apple had to share its shrinking market with the makers of Mac OS clones.

The company had invested billions of research dollars in a next generation OS and seemed no closer to producing a finished product than the day the research began. Dr. Amelio made many brave decisions but Apple continued to operate like it was an island unto itself. His new book may say more on the matter, but I don't think Dr. Amelio would have had the backing from the board of directors and the confidence of institutional investors to make the hard decisions recently made by Steve Jobs. I don't look at Dr. Amelio's departure from Apple as a failure. I look at it as the natural progression of events that he set in motion. The acquisition of NeXT Software was a very shrewd move for Apple. The WebObjects technology gave the company a badly needed presence in the enterprise market and the foundation of Apple's next generation OS needed to be replaced.

By early summer of 1997 Power Computing was "knocking on the door" of Apple's much coveted education market and the company seemed unable to bring new hardware products to market as quickly as the clone makers. In my view, Steve Jobs had little choice but to cancel the clones if for no other reason than to give the company a "breather."

Ironically, what Power Computing was doing to Apple is very similar to what Apple is now doing to Intel. Power Computing's operations were wrecking havoc with Apple's product plans. The "shelf life" of Apple's products (the time between a product's introduction and its replacement) was being cut from six months to less than three. It was virtually

impossible for Apple to develop a coherent marketing plan when the clone makers were able to offer faster, newer products to the same customers. Today, Apple is forcing Intel to bring faster products to market. Although Apple and the PowerPC technology have a very small percentage of the overall PC market, the fact that Apple can deliver faster, better products so quickly is forcing Intel to change its market plans. Because of Apple and the Apple-IBM-Motorola alliance, faster Intel chips will be coming to market more quickly than if Apple no longer existed.

Apple's return to profitability has been a very painful journey. Gone are two of my favorite technologies—OpenDoc and the Newton OS-based eMate. I was a few weeks away from ordering an eMate when Apple canceled further development the Newton OS and decided to stop manufacturing the eMate and Message Pad. I'm sorry to see them go, but they are a necessary casualty of a war that Apple must win.

Figuratively speaking, Apple Computer has been dragged kicking and screaming into the mainstream personal computer market. It no longer commands the market share clout that allowed it to operate as if it were its own industry. Apple's biggest problem is that it wanted to continue to make its own rules. Steve Jobs is changing all that. Apple needed to be a better-focused and more efficient company in order to survive in today's personal computer world. In my view, not only has the company learned to survive, it's begun to thrive.

Because of the recent changes, Apple Computer is well on its way to sustained profitability and should attain increased revenue on a sequential basis in the quarter that begins April 1, 1998. The company will accomplish this by reducing costs, eliminating most of its products and ceasing to spend money on "go it alone technologies." The company has also focused its design, marketing and distribution systems on delivering fewer products to more customers.

The "Think Different" campaign is intended to reestablish Apple Computer's image as an innovative, forward-thinking and unorthodox company. Most people might miss the main point of the campaign unless they think about Apple's largest markets—education, graphic design and content creation. It's a natural fit. The company has eliminated all national accounts except those that are willing to feature Apple's products and highlight the company's advertised message.

The successful introduction of the G3 technology is almost mind-numbing when one considers that a full product line is just now coming into place. MacOS8 is so popular it compelled the company to change its OS strategy. No longer do company executives talk publicly about replacing the Mac OS. What's going on behind the scenes is even more extraordinary. Gradually the underpinnings of the Mac OS will be replaced with the same core technology that's used in Rhapsody. It will happen seamlessly and without most users realizing it. In the end, Mac users will have the advanced look-and-feel of the Mac OS combined with the underlying strength of a modern and robust operating system.

The decision to cancel further development of the Newton OS will allow the company to focus its efforts on extending the reach of the Mac OS to a new series of products. It will also permit the company to more effectively apply its R&D resources in developing products that can successfully compete in the sub-\$1,000.00 market.

By September of this year, I expect Apple Computer to announce products specifically geared to the sub \$1,000.00 market. Unlike products offered by many of its competitors, these products will not be cheapened or stripped-down versions of Apple's conventional desktop PCs. Rather, the products will be designed with specific features and functionality in mind. The products will be uniquely Apple and draw on the strengths of the Mac and the Mac OS.

Apple's cross licensing agreement with Microsoft will allow the company to further reduce its own R&D expenses. Fewer products, lower costs and the development of a modern OS are Apple's foundation for success.

I don't understand how all this will help Apple grow...please explain

Unlike the overall market for Apple's competitors, the company's primary markets offer it attractive gross margins on sales and an opportunity for steady and continued growth. Apple's challenge is to "lock down" its market share in these markets. Once firmly reestablished, Apple can grow at a pace equal to or greater than that of its primary markets. Apple reached more parents through schools than it ever did by simply having a booth at Sears. The computers people use at work are quite often the computers they prefer to use at home. By firmly reestablishing itself in its core markets, it will again build momentum in the home market. The education, graphic design and content creation markets will "hold their own" should the US economy begin to slow. By focusing on these markets Apple Computer can meet its internal gross profit goals.

How does all this make Apple a "new" company?

A new line of hardware products, an ever-improving OS and much lower cost structure will help Apple better serve its primary markets. The company is planning to reenter the home market with products designed specifically to meet the needs of home users. The company's distribution systems have been overhauled and computer buyers can purchase products either from resellers or they can "build-to-order" a computer directly from Apple via the Web.

Apple Computer is now a "market driven" company. Its hardware products are the best in the world and by reducing costs the company is able to realize a healthy margin on its products while offering those products to customers at very attractive prices.

The "turnaround" of Apple Computer is an amazing story! Better products, lower sales, higher profits. Apple's new found success should cause buyers to "Think Different" about their next computer.

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Lights. Camera. Disaster?

I saw the movie Titanic. I'm sure that doesn't surprise anyone. Heck, who hasn't seen it? It has become one of the biggest blockbusters ever made. Surprisingly enough, it doesn't even feature one car chase, animated dinosaur, or interstellar battle.

In fact, this genre of movie, the recreation of a historical event, is probably one of the toughest films to make. Unlike pure fiction, the director has to carefully research each fact of the event and represent these facts as accurately as possible in order to keep his or her audience engaged in the action.

Of course, the further back in time the director chooses to set the film, the easier time a director has to pull off his or her magic. Fewer people have first-hand knowledge of the event. As long as the director doesn't commit an obvious anachronism, such as having Julius Cæsar calling Mark Anthony on his cell phone to make a tennis date on the Ides of March, most audience members will not be able to tell if a certain style of Roman sandal wasn't created until 300 years after the movie is set.

Of course, the reverse is true. The more recent the historical event, the more people have first-hand knowledge of the goings on of the time. And the audience members will be critical of any inaccuracies.

Recently, Ron Howard's Apollo 13 comes to mind as an example of a very well-done piece. Here was an ambitious endeavor. Take an event which happened merely 25 years earlier and carefully recreate the period so that those people who have clear memories of the events will be fooled into believing that they are watching something plausible from recent history.

Beyond the stunning visual effects and painstaking attention to set details which marked this piece, the dialogue and references to everyday technology had to be delivered convincingly to enhance the illusion.

Who can forget the nervous laughter of moviegoers when, after the ill-fated ship's oxygen tank exploded, Tom Hanks' character was forced to calculate the new trajectory

long-handed on the back of a mission notebook. Then, in order to ensure the accuracy of his calculations, he read his figures to Mission Control where a roomful of engineers used slide rules to verify his work.

And people really went to the Moon this way?

In my opinion, the most interesting line of the movie was when Tom Hanks' character was leading a V.I.P. tour of congressmen through the vehicle assembly building at the Kennedy Space Center. Convincingly impressed, Hanks stated that the computer used to realize the sophisticated Apollo mission was now so compact, it could fit into a space the size of a typical family room.

My, how times have changed. Today, you can find more computing power in the family car than existed on the Apollo craft. This reduction of size and increase in power has been the marching order of high technology since its inception.

So, why is Apple dropping the Newton?

When the Newton was first released, the promise of a computer that you could port around in your briefcase was real Dick Tracy TV Wristwatch stuff. Hey, even if the silly thing claimed to read your scrawl but couldn't make heads nor tails of your note to pick up a dozen eggs and a gallon of milk, the promise was there.

It was thought that one day, those engineers were going to improve handwriting recognition. One day, those engineers were going to speed up the pokey processor. One day, those engineers were going to write meaningful programs to make your Newton something to show off.

And, slowly but surely, these promises began to materialize. Last year's release of the MessagePad 2000 actually gave the device some muscle. Increased processor power, plus improved software, led to improved handwriting recognition. Finally, developers began to put together software packages that were both useful and powerful. The toy that had initially caught the attention of a few began to earn some recognition.

Soon, other companies began to jump into the fray. Realizing that small but powerful was the way to go, products such as the PalmPilot made their debuts. These products, it seems, have spurred the folks in Apple's Research and Development to improve and refine the Newton further still.

But, how did Apple's corporate brain trust meet the new challengers? In typical Apple fashion, with laser sharp focus, they released the eMate.

What?

Don't bother improving what you have, Apple. No, that's too easy. Instead, attempt to

release a new product that looks nothing like what you are attempting to establish in that portable market. Instead, come out with something completely different. Undertake this move while the company loses astronomical amounts of money quarter after quarter. Split your efforts among many products. Divide, don't conquer.

The next Deep-Blue-style chess move came when Newton, Inc. was spun off from Apple. The product, which was so popular that the programmers in my office were unable to get a unit to field test as a data collection device due to high demand, was packed off to this subsidiary company. Strange, a successful product being marched out from under control of a company in turmoil. No wonder speculation ran rampant that the company was going to go under. It looked sort of like Apple was being broken into components in order to be sold off piecemeal.

Now, Steve Jobs announces that Newton, Inc., is officially getting the axe from Apple. Rather than support dueling OS's, the strategy is to utilize the scalable Mac OS for use on a new line of portable products. Jobs pronounced that the new products will also be affordable, making PDA technology available to all.

Of course, Apple's leadership is missing the boat. A lot of people were finally won over by the Newton system. Software developers, who are responsible for creating the applications that make the system worth investing in, are now left on the deck without a lifeboat. Software developers in the office in which I work are up in arms. It took a lot of convincing on their part for the management in our office to support software development for the Newton. Initially scared off by the Apple logo, the merit of the product soon won over even the most skeptical of the bunch. Their decision went against all logic, which stated that Apple was not long for this world.

Now, well, I have to be concerned that the Mac in my office may get the axe as the management seeks to pick the office clean of Apple products. Standardization, they'll call it. Payback is more the term I was looking for.

Knowing Apple's history about marketing new products makes me a little leery. We can all remember the fanfare surrounding Pippin, a product which never materialized here in the States. That experience, in addition to Newton and eMate, raises a few warning flags. Apple has documented trouble marketing products beyond servers, desktop and laptop computers. How is Apple going to release a new product and make those who have been burned in the past come back for more abuse?

In my opinion, Apple needs to find something to throw its weight into and make it a reality very soon in order to regain its credibility. Credibility has never been this much of a problem for, say, the PowerBook line, even though some models were prone to burst into flame. The difference between the PowerBooks and Newton is that Apple has made a commitment to laptops. Apple hasn't yet made to the same commitment to palmtops.

A new Mac OS palmtop truly needs to be affordable, powerful, and useful for end users. It

needs to be portrayed as an integral part of the Apple family, rather than a bastard stepchild. There needs to be as big a push of the new palmtop product as there is for the OS. If you're going to launch something, you might as well do it convincingly. There needs to be voluminous support for Newton Developers who are now frustrated by Apple's decision. These people, after all, are the lifeblood of the system. No applications, no users. Most of all, Apple now needs to look back on its prior failures and learn the valuable lesson of how *not* to market a product.

Apple needs to step carefully. Scaring anyone else away from their products is a bad move. The danger is that the last scene of Apple: the Movie won't be the triumphant hero's welcome after a dramatic splashdown in the Pacific. Instead, it could very well be a slow pan of shivering Mac users, huddled in lifeboats, watching aghast as the company slips beneath the cold, dark North Atlantic waves.

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ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR
OPINION



ON A CLEAR DAY, YOU CAN SEE THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN...
BY MIKE SHIELDS

Well, I've gone and done it. This is the first time I'm using BBEdit Lite instead of MS Word to write my column. And, I wasn't even gonna start out this way, but it seemed appropriate in my effort to become 100% Microsoft-free. I'm still selling the bumper stickers, by the way.

Anyway, last month I alluded to a conspiracy. Which I'll write about next month. Usually, as this is the April issue, I write an April Fool's column, and a good time is had by all.

However, this month, strange things are happening. To me. As this column is ultimately about me and my place in the Macintosh world, I thought I'd share them with you. After all, my seven readers will agree, what happens to me in relation to the Mac is most important.

Conditions at Ray-O-Hac are much like the new Fred Savage show, Working. It's become a must-see around the Shields house, and not just because it's on NBC. For the few of you that haven't seen it, and if you don't watch, you should, it's about a guy fresh outta college, played by Fred Savage, learning his way around the corporate workplace of Upton/Webber, the most heinous company on the planet. Of course, that's fiction, because I work at the most heinous company on the planet. And I don't even have a sitcom to show for it.

Their latest transgression? Thanks for asking. If you don't, the piece just ends, and I'm still approximately 750 words short.

But I digress. Normally, I go from desktop to desktop, correcting any fix the Huser (I'm gonna hafta come up with a new one for that) breaks on his Mac. And since Macs work 99.9% of the time, I'm kinda enjoying the life of the Maytag repairman.

Until last Thursday. The site manager put me on another special project. Because I did the first one so well. I don't remember if I told you about it, but, to review, it involved me, a Zip drive, and about thirty or so Zip disks. Why? To copy key files from key personnel for a Hart-Scott-Rodino anti-trust review. I must've done something right, as the merger was approved. So, you Ray-O-Hac readers, and I know you're out there, now have someone to blame.

What did I get as thanks?

Lunch at the Olive Garden.

That's it.

Not that I don't like the lasagna there, but a raise would've been nice. I would've accepted a certificate. At least it beats our Christmas bonus last year, which was a box of jelly beans and a plastic Slinky™.

The highlight of the project was that myself and my two colleagues that I worked with, brought it in early, hence under budget. That was our mistake, although I didn't know it at the time.

Had I known about this new project, I probably would've found a way to screw up on the previous one. What they've got me doing is recreating type and creator information for files that were backed up improperly.

Ok, how do you back up a file improperly? Simple: you don't use a Mac. As a result, the file gets converted to a DOS text file. Which is fine, if all you're doing is writing DOS text. Sure, there are utilities available that allow me to perform this simple little procedure, however, the scope of the project is extremely large.

Approximately 75,000 files, give or take.

Why so many? Ray-O-Hac has a wholly self-contained service bureau. For the few of you out there that don't know what that is, it's a place you take your print work to make it look pretty. We need our own, because we do super secret competition-sensitive stuff. Not to mention the classified work. I could tell you more but, of course, then I'd have to kill you. And that would significantly decrease readership at a time we're actively searching for sponsors. Not a good thing.

File Buddy is Your Friend

The utilities I alluded to earlier are, in no particular order: Type/Creator Database 3.1, a necessarily incomplete listing of Type and Creator info for over 17,000 different file types; Can Opener 3.0, which will open any file and allow you to determine what's inside; and File Buddy 4.3.3, to perform the actual task. The project leader actually suggested we use CTC 1.4, but for a large project like this, File Buddy does a better job, IMNERHO.

The procedure is as follows: Copy files from the server to a scratch disk, drop it on the Can Opener, make the change, try to open the document to make sure you guessed correctly, and copy the file(s) back to the server. Repeat 'til finished, or until you go postal—which ever comes first.

Now, I don't mind the work. Actually, it's kinda refreshing; I get to meet new people and see new sights, as they've relocated me to the service bureau location. It's ok, as I get to use a 9600/300. Sure, I'll miss my 6100, but not for long. Ok, I go back and visit at lunch to catch up on e-mail and remind the fine folks in the bullpen who sits in the captain's chair.

What they forgot to tell me when I undertook this task is that the project leader is insane. He's spent the short time we've been together finding ingenious ways to make the project last longer.

Now, it's my view that an undertaking of this size should be done brute force, top down. The Mac's file system is up to the task of presenting files this way, allowing folders to be copied and files to be changed quickly and efficiently.

But, of course, we needed a priority list of what files to do first. Ok, not a huge deal, but the harbinger of things to come. The latest? He decided that he didn't want me to restore large amounts of files all at the same time. I mean, why use one copy command, when fifty will do the job just as well? He maintained that to keep the integrity of the file system on the server, it was better to do it this way. ??? I mean, I could go into a diatribe of why this is unnecessary, but anyone who's used a Mac for more than half an hour can probably figure it out. Also, I suffer from bilateral tendentious, which is just a small step away from the dreaded carpal tunnel syndrome.

Of course, if I do contract carpal tunnel, I can claim disability due to a work-related injury, and then return to the leisurely life of MacMan™. And then maybe I could get my column turned in on time. Stranger things *have* happened. Just not to me. Otherwise, I would've written about them by now.

72 and sunny in El Segundo.

e Ya next month.

Disclaimer: Mike will accept praise, flames, and job leads at: <mshields@atpm.com>. He wants to stay in the LA area and would prefer some sort of Mac job in the entertainment industry.



eZines, eWorld, ePublishing

Since this is our anniversary issue, I thought I'd break from my usual theme and talk a little about *ATPM* and online publishing in general. Please forgive me if I ramble on a bit.

Writing for and publishing *ATPM* these past few years has been great fun—and a lot of work, too. It seems like such a short time ago when I saw the very first issue on eWorld and got hooked. I didn't subscribe right away, but I read every word of every issue. It wasn't too easy to miss an issue, because in those days you could read eWorld's list of new files in just a few minutes. In those days, there *was* an eWorld.

Remember when the "online service for the rest of us" was still here? That was back when everyone (or at least I) thought services like America Online and CompuServe were nifty—before everyone realized how much niftier it was to have real ISP. At that time, eWorld was one half of Apple's two-pronged Internet strategy. The other half was an OpenDoc part called Cyberdog. I haven't heard much about an Internet strategy since. Sure, we know that QuickTime is becoming more and more Internet savvy—Apple just announced that Java programmers will be able to take advantage of it—but I still haven't heard anything about how Apple plans to keep Macintosh the preferred platform for Web development (where it currently holds more than 50% marketshare). The company's quite fond of extolling how Java is a big part of the Mac's future, but they haven't said much about how they really plan to use it. Maybe they don't know yet. No one seems to know what Java's good for. (Raise your hand if you remember when WordPerfect was going to become an OpenDoc part. Or when it was going to be rewritten in Java.)

Back to eWorld. It was killed one Interim-CEO ago under the reign of Gil Amelio. I still think he was big in Apple's turnaround, but Jobs is getting all the credit. I guess some things never change—Steve Wozniak was the genius behind the Apple II, and Jef Raskin was the creator of Macintosh. Still, many people that now believe Apple is back. I can't help given Jobs some of the credit for that.

I'm dwelling on eWorld because, to me, it represents a lot of what Macintosh and *ATPM* are all about. eWorld was killed on April Fool's day, the same day Apple Computer was incorporated. Danny Novo started *ATPM* in April of 1995. Maybe there's something about April. Or maybe it's just a coincidence.

eWorld's software was a modified version of the software America Online used. Ironically, some of the AOL software was part of AppleLink—the online service (mainly for developers) that Apple used to run before AOL split off from it. Talk about a full circle. Sounds a lot like Jobs co-founding Apple, being ousted, and coming back. I doubt NeXTStep used any of the original Macintosh code, though.

Apple took the increasingly commercial and in-your-face software from AOL and gave it a personality. They gave it new fonts optimized for on-screen viewing—eWorld Tight and Epsy Sans (also used on the Newton and AppleGuide). Unlike AOL, where graphics were everywhere and getting larger, eWorld had a consistent design. Each section had a banner at the top of the page. All the graphics were in the same style. They were artistic, not commercial. eWorld felt more like a community than a service. It was friendly and fun—just like the original Mac. To some of us, it made AOL and CompuServe seem like Big Brother; they looked and felt like DOS in comparison.

I don't know for sure, but I think eWorld was part of what inspired Danny Novo to create *ATPM*. The first few issues, especially, felt completely at home in eWorld's community. Lots of things have changed since then. *ATPM's* different than it once was—not better or worse, I think—just different. Online publishing in general is different, too.

A year or two ago was the hey-day of DOCMaker e-zines like *ATPM*. They seemed to be everywhere I looked on eWorld, AOL, or the net in general. People started to take notice. Last January, *MacFormat* (a print magazine in the UK) wrote:

Freely-distributable e-zines, or fanzines if you like, are generally written and produced by enthusiasts and reflect their own special interests. They don't make any money out of it, so they've got no commercial axes to grind and there's no blatant avortorial content.

This is what most e-zines were like. They were meant solely for fun. Most didn't have advertisements, and you knew the ones that did weren't in it for the money. The Macintosh spirit inspired people. It made them want to create, to spread their thoughts and feelings through the newly discovered wires of the Internet—because they could. Now that we're officially in the late '90s, I can look back at the idealism of what once was. ;-)

I'm not saying today's e-zines aren't labors of love. This one is, and there certainly are others. But I can't help noticing that many of them just aren't around anymore. There was a great QuickDraw GX e-zine (originally distributed as a GX PDD, until GX started losing steam) and a hip DOCMaker e-zine called *The Real MacOy* with the kind of spiffy graphics and straight-to-the-point editorials that you just don't see everywhere. One e-zine, *MacSense*, was written like a professional magazine from the beginning. In fact, there were many things it did better than even *Macworld*. Eventually, it became a "real" commercial venture; the magazine (still in DOCMaker format) was distributed on a CD-ROM filled with goodies, until it ceased to exist sometime last year.

Most e-zines, though, didn't die—they changed. In May of 1996, we started publishing versions of *ATPM* on the Web, in addition to our standard DOCMaker edition. Today, I think we're about the only ones with this dual format. Most e-zines, like *MacReview*, simply transitioned to the Web. Daily news sites like *The Macintosh Resource Page* and *Macintosh News Network* appeared on the Web. Filled with commercial-type news, but with a more personal touch than you'd find on a site like *MacWEEK*, their big-name sponsors bring in money and lend accountability. Other sites like the *MacKiDo Temple* offer e-zine-like content in a Web page format. (You can find links to all these pages at <http://www.atpm.com/links/>).

One consequence of this move to the Web is that every day you looked, somewhere there are new articles to be read. There are so many sites with editorials, news items, and product reviews that it's easy to miss them if you don't check the news sites daily. It's the same way for webmasters; their sites are constantly in flux. Never can one say that an article is done, because if you discover a typo it's never too late to go back and fix it. Gone are the times when you could sign up for some free subscriptions, sit back, relax, and wait for e-zines to arrive in your in box. Well, not completely gone. There are still a few old-fashioned e-zines like *ATPM* around. ;-)

Though we do serve Web versions of all our issues at <http://www.atpm.com>, our primary format is still DOCMaker. It's tangible. It's actually on your hard disk. You can put it on a floppy and take it with you (Does anyone still use floppies?) just like a "real" magazine. It's a complete unit, not just a collection of articles written daily or weekly. We're going to keep expanding *ATPM* without fundamentally changing what we are. Why fix what isn't broken? I'm sure a similar debate is going on inside Apple right now: should Rhapsody replace Mac OS as the Apple OS for consumers? Or should Mac OS be given a modern foundation and Rhapsody relegated to a server OS? Stability went way up with Mac OS 8 and 8.1. I, for one, was really surprised that they could pull it off. It doesn't feel like I'm running a 14-year-old OS. I know people who are still using 14-year-old Macs! And here's an e-zine now in its fourth year of publication. That sure seems young in the grand scheme of things, but in the online publishing world, that makes us one of the oldest. Yowza!

"The Personal Computing Paradigm" is © 1998 by Michael Tsai, <mtsai@atpm.com>. This column is the first piece of writing Michael has done in Microsoft Word since the day he tried Word 6. He's not thrilled with Word 98, but hasn't found anything better—especially for writing bylines in the third-person.





BY JAMAL GHANDOUR, jghandour@atpm.com

Transparency on the Web

Guest Column by Ramon Cahenzli, rca@spin.ch

“Yeah, it was when I received *ATPM* 4.03, so I had to step into action immediately.” This was Ramon’s motive for staying up until 3:00 AM writing a whole graphic section upon the topic I suggested last issue. So for this month, we have decided to put Ramon in the driver’s seat. As for me, I will take a rest and enjoy the freedom of being an end user for a change. In the meantime, do not hesitate to send any graphic questions or contributions to [<jghandour@atpm.com>](mailto:jghandour@atpm.com).

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GIF89a Export’s “Hidden Feature”

GIF89a export filter is powerful. Remember that the GIF89 export filter in Photoshop works differently when the image is already in indexed color mode. There, it displays an almost-WYSIWYG (dithered even if you are not using any dithering) preview of your image and lets you select colors to make transparent (as opposed to masking the transparent regions). This is quite handy sometimes.

Getting Rid of Borders Around Images

When trying to put a generally dark image on a page with a dark background, many people almost go crazy. Having either a white or an empty background in Photoshop and then making it transparent results in fringing remnants of pixels that form a border around your image. This is a result of anti-aliasing and alpha blending which Photoshop does automatically.

To solve the problem, just use your dominant background color as the background layer; it’s as easy as that. Photoshop will automatically adapt alpha blending to the current background, and your images will look beautiful on your page. Here’s an example (with

multiple background tones though, variation with dominant color added too):

This is our starting visual:

It consists of 13 layers, uses 24-bit color, and is 180K in size.



This is our target background:

It has already been edited, saved in JPEG format, and is 3K in size.

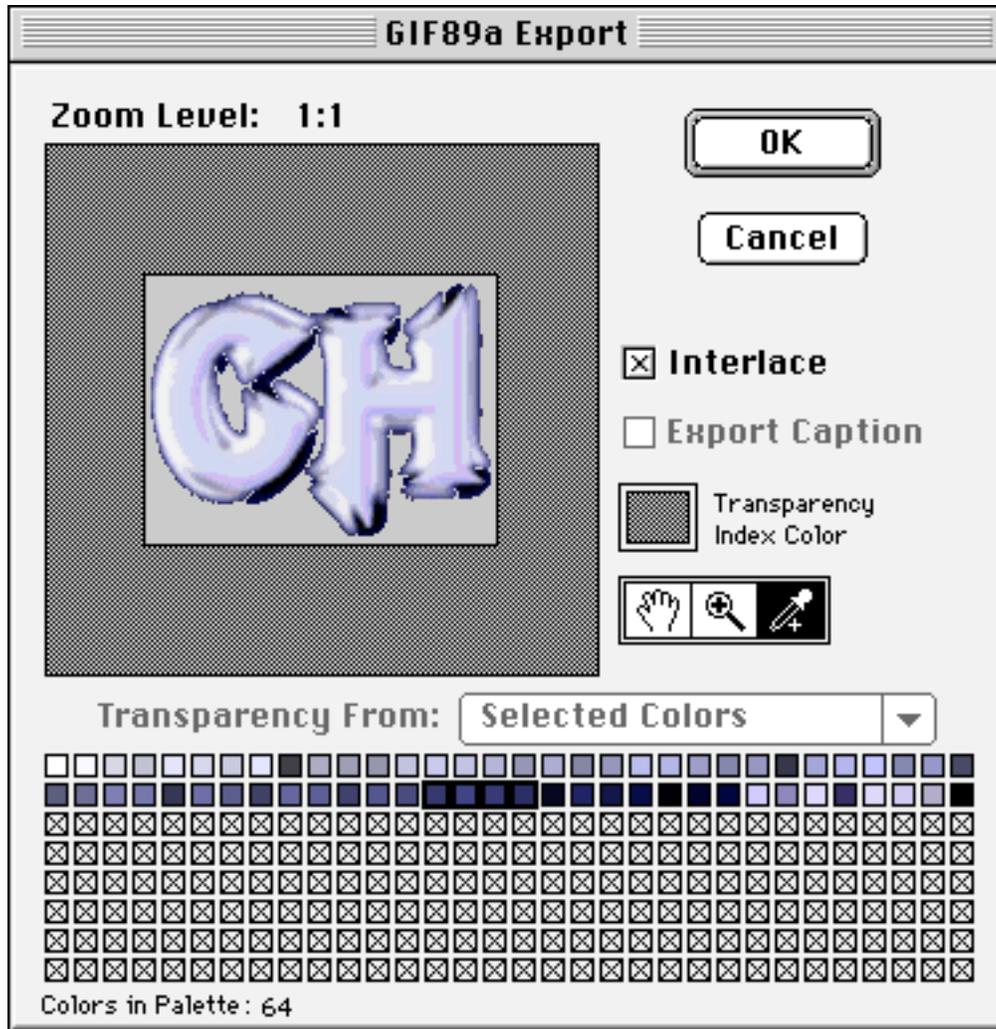


1. Crop the image as closely as possible to the region you want on your page. This step is important, as it reduces the number of colors in your image's background significantly.



2. Now index the colors. Use an adaptive palette, without dithering. Start out with a 6-bit palette, just to see how it looks. If it doesn't look good enough, climb to 7- or 8- bit.

3. That wasn't so bad, was it? Now export the image using the GIF89a export filter. Go to File/Export to do this. There, select the background colors you want transparent. The image will look severely distorted now, but don't worry.



4. As a final step, look at the image on the page background you want. Look at it right in the browser.





We went from 180K to 4 K in this example. We could have saved even more with a more advanced, but trickier technique. Instead of just using the same background for your image as for your page, try finding the dominant color of your background and using that.

Just replace step 1 with the following: Select the dominant color of your background. If this is more of a problem than you thought, try using the color picker tool to get a 3x3 or 5x5 average. Fill the background layer of your image with that color. The advantage of Photoshop in this area is that it will automatically correct the alpha blending around your image so that it fits the new background. Once finished, look at the result in your browser.



Using this technique you could replace this dark blue background with a screaming neon pink, and the image would still display without borders. Always remember to keep your original files (with layers and in full color), since you are never sure whether you want to change the appearance of your page later.

In this example we only saved 0.3K more, but for some images this technique produces startling results, both significantly decreasing image size and reducing the fringing.

Photoshop May Be Smart, But It's Not Wise

When indexing and selecting your palette (assuming you're not using Web-safe colors; I never do) don't let Photoshop choose! Most of the time, when starting out from a 24 or

16-bit image, you'll end up with a 8-bit adapted palette, diffusion dithering. You don't really want that. First of all, try turning off diffusion dithering. Any dithering really annoys me, so I try to get rid of it as quickly as possible. Just turn off that function and look at your image. Not satisfied? Ok, your old image is just a quick command-Z away. You might need dithering after all, but now let's add another twist. Set the palette to adapted, 5-bit. Yes, that's right, 5-bit. Sometimes dithering does amazing things, and you might end up with a good-looking image. If that doesn't work, undo and increase the bits. If you're lucky you'll end up with fewer than 8 bits, making your image smaller.



Something on the exact palette: Photoshop will sometimes convert your existing palette directly and offer you a preset exact palette when indexing. Don't always do that. Your image might look **just the same** with an adapted palette, diffusion dithering off, but with only half the colors! Let's say Photoshop offers you an exact palette with 201 colors. Try 128 or even 64 colors; you'll be surprised! From there, making good transparent regions is not hard at all. Try the "hidden feature" mentioned above for amazing results.

Ramon Cahenzli is an independent webmaster and graphics designer working and living in Switzerland. After finishing college he plans to go back to Spin, a Web design company and ISP for whom he already worked for a year. Currently he's too busy playing Myth to do anything else though.



Check out <<http://www.spin.ch/~rca>> for more graphics.



Mac Shareware Games Blow Away PC Head

I love a good conversion experience.

A friend, who is a PC guru and bit of a Mac Basher, was over my house the other night. I always like to show him the latest techno wizardry I can squeeze out of my Quadra 650. Believe it or not, the four-year-old Quadra matches up much more closely to his one-year-old Pentium than to his three-year-old 486...Not that he'll admit it. Of course, the main difference between the Mac and the 486 is the Mac is in very active, daily service; the 486 currently resides next to old snow boots in the bottom of his hall closet.

I fire the Quadra up, and his first question is about my choice in startup screens. "I didn't pick it, **Startupfrills** is set to randomly select from a few dozen of my favorite graphics." Hmmm, pretty cool. Then comes a wicked startup **Clixsound**—he looks at me, and I just smile. Ditto for the **Desktop Texture**.

I know he has soul of a geek, so I explain the randomizer, and show him the Startup Items folder within the System folder. "Oh, just like Windows 95 Start Items."

"Yeah, just like it. Exactly like it. In fact, Apple copied it from Windows '84..."

He gets the sarcasm.

We run through a bunch of QuickTime VR movies, graphics, sounds and icons. "Pretty Cool," he says. Although he's a hardcore PC head, he's a fair enough guy to admit when something is on the money.

I decide to play with his head a little. He's been whining in the office about Windows 95 "shortcuts." It seems that if you move the original item, Windows 95 loses track of it—something to do with the underlying DOS tree.

So I create an alias—"shortcut" to him—of something on a removable SyQuest drive; I move the original item on the drive, then copy the alias to a Zip drive. Next, I delete the original alias. I do this again to a floppy. Then I give both the original item *and* the alias two different, unrelated names. Finally, to make matters more interesting, I swap the SyQuest

disk.

Of course, the alias not only tracks the original, but also asks you to insert the proper disk *by name*.

I know he's floored by this, but is not ready to admit it. "Yeah, what happens after you reboot?" So I reboot. Another cool startup screen, Clixsound, and Desktop Texture.

Once again, the alias happily tracks the original item. He just shakes his head, muttering something under his breath...

Quickly switching subjects, he spies an icon (a **multi-con**, actually) on the desktop, and asked "What's that for?"

"Just an icon for all my *shareware* games." I replied.

"Oh, shareware, that stuff sucks."

S-s-sucks? Ahem.

Now, mind you, this guy is a hardcore Quake player. Eight of us often stay in the office hours after work, playing the networked version on fairly new 233 MHz Pentiums with 21" monitors. His standards for games are pretty high. And, he's a PC head, remember? So let's just say his shareware experience is—how can I phrase this politely?—unremarkable.

I think learning how much Windows '95 shortcuts suck compared to a System 7 Macintosh feature softened him up a bit. Enough with the body blows, it's time for a right hook to the jaw. I know he was a millipede fiend back in his arcade days, so the first game I launch is **Apeiron**.

What can I say? He's *blown away*. The graphics, the sound, all of it. Mind you, this is on my four-year-old Quadra, with its little 15" Apple AV monitor. Blown away, totally blown away by a shareware game—which, as we all know, suck.

Next, I demo **Blood Bath**. I know the shoot 'em up action would appeal to the gamer in him. Did I mention he's an ex-Marine? He loves the target practice.

A few minutes of **ShatterBat**, which has uses a full 3D perspective and has an unusual gameplay. Then some **Maelstrom** and **Swoop**, and some more **Apeiron**, all of which look so damn good I can see the little spittle accumulating in the corner of his mouth.

The capper was the Mac-only shareware game **Short Circuit**. For those of you unfamiliar with Short Circuit, it is a not-as-easy-as-it-looks, increasingly complex, hybrid arcade/strategy game. It is also *incredibly* addictive.

“What’s that?” he asked of the Short Circuit icon.

“Oh, just a **really** old shareware games.” I replied, and launched the game.

90 minutes of **Short Circuit** later, we were both exhausted. Remember that this came on top of two solid hours of **Apeiron**, **Barrack**, **Bloodbath**, **Shatterbat**, **Maelstrom**, and more **Apeiron**. I had one very exhausted PC gamer on my hands.

He was stunned by the whole experience—not just the quality of the graphics, the smooth gameplay, intense sounds, and concepts behind each unique game—but by the fact that this level of quality existed in Mac *shareware* games. His experience with PC shareware games had been of two flavors: cheesy and damn cheesy.

As he stumbled out after midnight (we both gotta be at work before 9 AM), he mumbled “I gotta rethink this Mac thing.” I considered it a moral— if not an actual—victory: One less PC-er bashing the Mac to the undecided.

...

Here’s my afterthought of this experience: Wouldn’t it be great if Apple loaded up all of its new boxes with a few 100 MB of these excellent shareware products? While I’m making a wish list, let’s add a few 100 MB of shareware graphics, sounds, icons, desktop patterns, and QT and VR movies—what the hell, lets just fill up a CD-ROM or two—to further separate the “Apple experience” from that of the Wintel world!

Just a thought...

...

For those of you unfamiliar with any of the shareware products mentioned, they can be downloaded from AOL or elsewhere on the net.

Short Circuit:

<<http://www.short-circuit.com/>>

Apeiron, Barrack, Maelstrom, and Swoop are from Ambrosia:

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

ShatterBat, from Antennahead Software

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

StartupFrills Home Page

<<http://www.eruvia.demon.co.uk/startupfrills>>

Clixsounds

[<http://www.clixsounds.com/>](http://www.clixsounds.com/)

Both Multicons and Desktop Textures 2.1 are available on AOL.

If you have something interesting to say about life with your Mac, write to us at <editor@atpm.com>. We're happy to publish opinions or stories from our readers in this Segments section.





BY EDWARD GOSS, egossaim@neca.com

Think Different Misses the Mark

As my wife and I sat enjoying a recent James Taylor live concert, it came to me. Has anyone ever done a *really good* cover of a James Taylor song? Ok, maybe Linda Ronstadt's "Hey Mister, That's Me Up On The Jukebox." Outside of that fine effort, I could not think of one cover version that I like better than the way JT does 'em live.

My convoluted mind started thinking about Apple Computer (I know it's a stretch, but bear with me). JT is the consummate showman, with a fine back-up band and an energy to his music rarely heard from other artists. He and his band play each song as though it is the first time, not the umpteenth. He obviously wants his fans to have the best time possible at his shows. If you have not seen him live, do so if the opportunity presents itself. You will know what I mean. How does this get me to thoughts of Apple Computer or "Think Different?" Here goes.

Apple has fine people. They make a fine product. We love 'em. We tell our friends to buy 'em. Why? Because they are better than the alternative. No more, no less. They are better than PCs, but how hard is that? Macs still crash too often and have enough incompatibilities to keep excellent sites like MacFixIt <<http://www.macfixit.com>> far too busy.

Although Macs are easy to set-up and use, the average person still should not have to put up with unexpected crashes and inconveniences like corrupted preference files, start-up conflicts, and various incongruities associated with "modern" computing. What people really need is a stable operating system, plug-and-play compatibility, and software to do the task at hand. Is that too much to ask? The advent of System 8.1 and the G3 processor are truly steps in the right direction, but I want Apple to stop thinking different! Thinking different is too easy! Anyone can do that! **Think better!** Thinking different got us the "Chia Pet" and "Clap-On, Clap-Off." Thinking better got us the Fender Telecaster and the Porsche 911! Which would you rather have?

Apple Computer should focus things important to the average user. The speed race is better left to those who suffer LAGS (Latest and Greatest Syndrome). Should I spend \$2000 on a G3 upgrade for my Power Computing PowerCenter Pro 210? Will it help me get my daily work done **better**? Nope. Do you want your screen to redraw in the blink of an eye, or

half-a-blink? Would I recommend the newest line of G3 computers as an answer for **all** users? No way.

If Apple wishes (there's that word) to increase market share, they should sell computers to people who don't yet own a Mac. How's that? More than 85% of the computers in this world are **not** Macs. Why not sell to them? We tell people Macs are better, we show people Macs are better, but they don't **buy** them! Why? They won't be useful at a workplace or school where there are mostly PCs. That's why.

What Apple needs to convince these people are Macs that can integrate into existing PC environments without a hassle. What better way to increase market share than to convert millions of PC users? This will not happen overnight. But imagine people switching to Macs and discovering that they really **are better**. Not fancier or faster, just a better way to get the job done.

Which brings me to my "Wishful Thinking." Apple Computer of Cupertino California, "**Think Better!**" Build this computer and watch as the world slowly changes its mind about you and your products. Build this computer and stand back; the world *will* beat a path to your door.

My (Wishful Thinking) next Mac has a G3 processor (speed is not all that important—266 MHz will do), 64 or more MB of RAM, and a large, ultra-fast hard drive (6 MB) partitioned into two parts. One part contains a stable Mac OS. The other half contains the upcoming Virtual PC 2 (for those who must exist in a Windows world). It should also have a minimum of 4 MB of video RAM (for graphics users), a built-in Zip drive, accommodations for either Mac or PC monitors without an adapter (my Power Center Pro has that, and it's very handy), and built-in Ethernet options (for network users).

Just think of it—all computer users could buy a Mac and use it any way that they wanted! Gradually, people might see that Macs really are better. More software would be written for Macs, more networks would be set up with Macs in mind (because it **is** easier), and whole offices might convert when the Windows technicians (and they are legion) found out how much easier their job would be helping Mac users!

Apple, please stop "Thinking Different" and be the best, like James Taylor. "**Think Better.**"

Wishful Thinking is a space for Mac enthusiasts who know exactly what Apple's advertising should be. Did you come up with a great advertising tag line? Have you had a Mac campaign stewing in the back of your mind for a year now? Send your ideas, or your art, to <editor@atpm.com>



ABOUT THIS STUFF



REVIEWED BY RISHI GUPTA, rsgupta@cyberus.ca



Product Information

Published by: Interplay

Programming & Design: MacPlay

Web: <<http://www.interplay.com/fallout>>

Street Price: \$50

System Requirements

Power Macintosh

System 7.5 or greater

2x CD-ROM drive

95 MB free hard drive space

20000K free memory

640 by 480 (or greater) monitor

Boldly, you stroll through the streets of the Hub, the largest city in the wasteland. It's fairly crowded, after all, it's noon and everyone is on lunch break. You notice people giving you dirty looks and making their way to the other side of the street as you approach. You wonder why, then realize that the Power Armour you just conned out of some idiot and the combat shotgun you boldly carry at your side might be intimidating to some people. Too bad for them. The rumbling in your stomach reminds you that you haven't eaten since yesterday. A block away you see a man selling some sort of meat on a Popsicle stick. "It'll do," you think, and you jog over. You ask the man for one and he tells you that the price of one is fifteen thousand dollars. Enraged, you quickly level your shotgun and fire off a few rounds, aiming for the head. Success, your bullets meet their target and the man screams, right before his head explodes. The other people on the street ignore this, like it's an everyday occurrence. You grab a handful of his food items from his cart and satiate your hunger. You then proceed on your morning stroll, hoping to get some clue as to where you

can find a waterchip for your vault.

Just another typical day in Fallout, CInet Gamecenter's Mac Game of the Year. Fallout is officially labelled as an RPG (Role Playing Game), and that may scare you (it certainly had me a bit afraid) if you normally don't like RPGs. Of course, that's assuming that this game is like all the other "traditional" RPGs like Exile, Realmz, etc. It's not. Fallout takes the definition of RPG and rips it apart, making the RPG accessible even to people who only play shooters like Quake and Duke Nukem 3D. There are no mages, centaurs, or magic spells in Fallout. There are no puzzles to speak of; you certainly don't need to run around trying to find some item or place which will cause the game to "progress" one step further. Fallout is completely non-linear. It's just like real life; you can go anywhere you want at any time. Of course you wouldn't, because you would have lousy weapons, no armour, and a small number of hit points.

Fallout does keep what I feel are the two best things about RPGs. The first, is a rich game world where you get to interact with characters and change their lives. When you kill someone, his or her friends and relatives will not be pleased. If you help someone, he may help you in the future. If you've been running around, robbing stores and killing innocents, the "good" characters you meet will not like you. Conversely, if you've been squeaky-clean, the "bad" characters won't think very highly of you and be more reluctant to help you (in fact, they may just downright insult you to your face). If your character is more intelligent, you may be able to talk your way out of situations where a dumber character would have to fight. Fallout's gameworld is extremely diverse and there are many ways to finish missions.

The second thing from RPGs that Fallout keeps, is character creation. Part of Fallout's replayability comes from character creation. To create a character, you divide up points among major traits like strength, charisma, perception, intelligence, etc; as well as minor traits like lock-picking, small guns, energy weapons, speech, etc. You pick three areas to specialize in; you will be much more talented in these areas than the average person. You can also pick three optional traits such as "Night Person" (you function better at night and not so well during the day). If all of this seems overkill, then just pick one of the three characters that come with Fallout. All of the creation stuff is done for you. But it sure is nice to be able to play the game however you want by making a custom character. You can load up on strength and weapon skills and play as Sylvester Stallone; or you can distribute your skills, placing emphasis on intelligence and charisma, and play as James Bond. You can even choose your gender; this will have a small effect how characters treat you in the game.





After you're done choosing or creating a character, the fun begins; you start the game. Unlike many other RPGs, the quality of the graphics will amaze you. No thirty-two pixels wide, squarish looking characters here. All the characters are fair-sized (about 4 times the size of the characters in *Postal* or *Warcraft II*), smoothly animated, and highly detailed. The surroundings are also shown in lush detail. *Fallout* also doesn't skimp on sound either; there are a variety of rich sound effects for firing weapons, dodging attacks and other actions you will perform. Furthermore, *Fallout* has a decent background score, which is the perfect accompaniment to the environment you're in. If you're in a modern city, contemporary tunes accompany your travels. If you're in an abandoned, spooky setting, eerie, haunting music accompanies. *Fallout's* graphics and sound deliver a truly immersive experience.

Multimedia is all well and good, but if a game doesn't deliver on gameplay, it gets tiring quickly. Recall the fad we had a few years ago, of the movie games like "Johnny Mnemonic" and "The Daedalus Encounter." Games that cost millions to make and used the cutting edge in sound and graphics. But they didn't offer anything in terms of gameplay. Fortunately, *Fallout* does not have this problem. In *Fallout*, gameplay comes first. Like all games, *Fallout* has a plot. You have to find a waterchip for your vault, which is running out of water (there is background story which I won't get into). You start your quest in this context. But you will quickly discover new people and places. You will be offered quests that have no relation to the waterchip quest but which will get you a lot of money, experience and other cool stuff. Stuff that is helpful in any situation. You won't be able to accept every quest, which is why you can play *Fallout* over and over again. There is simply so much to do. The great thing about *Fallout's* quests is that they are so open-ended. You can go about them however you want to. You will use a variety of tactics including but not limited to combat, sneaking/stealth, lock-picking, and setting traps. The game world offers virtually unlimited possibilities.

Of course, you'll have a lot of fun with combat. After all, roasting someone to a crisp is certain to put a smile on even the most sullen face. Fallout's combat system is exceptional and will let you do this with unparalleled ease. The reason why it's so easy to fight is that there is no separate combat mode. Many RPGs have you walk around normally, then jump to a separate "combat mode" when you encounter a "hostile" creature—a combat mode which is hellish to learn. Not so in Fallout since the exploration and combat modes are one and the same. This adds a whole host of possibilities to the game. Tell me, in which RPG can you kill a storekeeper and his guards and loot their bodies? If someone gives you a dirty look, introduce him to your friends, Smith & Wesson. Once you start attacking (or someone attacks you), you have a certain number of action points you can use up in your turn. These can be used to perform a variety of tasks including accessing inventory, firing weapons, walking, opening/closing doors, picking locks, etc.



A unique feature to Fallout's combat system is aimed shots. These cost you one extra action point, but if you hit the person, you have a good chance of causing what's called a "critical hit". These include crippling limbs, blinding someone, or knocking them out. For example, at the beginning of the game, it's rather useful to build up hand to hand combat skills. Why? Because then you can hit human male characters in the groin with your brass knuckles. As you can imagine, that would cause a certain amount of pain to the unfortunate character at the receiving end of the blow, just like in real life.



However, you have much more than brass knuckles in Fallout. Fallout has an enormous array of weapons for you to cause mayhem with. You have short-range weapons such as the ripper vibroblade (delivers such a strong electric shock to a foe that he goes flying across the room) and the super sledge hammer. You have medium range weapons like the plasma pistol (usually causes a foe's skin to melt off) and the combat shotgun. And for the sniper in you, there are long-range weapons like the sniper rifle and rocket launcher. You'll never get bored of disposing of your foes with over two dozen weapons available.



Before



After

All is not good in Fallout, though. Where Fallout comes short, is in the consumption of system resources. You are going to want either 650 MB of hard drive space free, or one fast CD-ROM drive for this game. On my PowerMac 6100-60, I opted for a 230 MB install (there are options for 95 MB, 120 MB, 230 MB and a full 650 MB) and used my 4x CD-ROM drive for the rest. Gameplay was quite acceptable, but level loading and game saving times became unbearable towards the end of the game. If you don't have a fast CD-ROM drive or you aren't very patient, free up some hard drive space and install as much as you can onto the hard drive. You'll appreciate your decision as you proceed farther into the game. Gameplay would probably have been somewhat quicker if I had more RAM. Fallout prefers 32000K allocated to it, but I got by allocating 20000K (and paid the price in speed). A final gripe is that you can't rename your hard drive once you install Fallout, or it won't run.

Now that you've heard both sides of the story, you'll want to try this game for yourself.

This is why MacPlay/Interplay has created a demo. A word of warning, this demo was created when the game was in beta stage. Thus it is slow, buggy, and has a silly mission. The demo is only playable if you turn off background sounds (command-p to pause, then deselect "play background music"). Many people had gripes that combat was too slow in the demo. Players took forever to do something and there were too many "extra" characters walking around during combat doing absolutely nothing. Fortunately, Interplay listened and everything has been fixed in the full version. Why, the full version even has an option for you to speed up combat and adjust the difficulty of the game. Keep this in mind and use the demo only to get a taste of the game. The faulty demo has most likely cost MacPlay countless sales, as many people were turned off by the demo but loved the full version. The full version is so much more fun and is literally three times as fast. Just read some of the posts on comp.sys.mac.games.adventure to get an idea of how much better the full version is than the demo. You can find the demo on MacPlay's website or on some of the more recent *MacAddict* (which give it a "freaking awesome" rating) CDs.

Unfortunately, Interplay has decided that there will be no Fallout 2 for the Macintosh. Even though it would use the same cross-platform libraries as StarFleet Academy and Fallout 1, they claim that testing costs are too high. Well, the only way to change their mind and show them that there is demand for Fallout 2 and that there is a Mac game market is to buy the game. If your decision is wavering between Fallout and another game (made by a company which is more dedicated to the Mac like MacSoft), get Fallout. If you're tired of Myth and Quake and want something new, get Fallout. If you're simply in the market for a new Mac game, get Fallout. It is one of the finest games to make it to the Mac in a long time and is worth every penny.

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ABOUT THIS STUFF



REVIEWED BY JAMAL GHANDOUR, jghandour@atpm.com



Product Information

Published by: Macromedia, Inc.
600 Townsend Street
San Francisco, California 94103
Phone: (415) 252-2000
Fax: (415) 626-0554
Web: <<http://www.macromedia.com>>
Street Price: \$399 US

System Requirements:

Power Macintosh
System 7 or later
16 MB of RAM required (32 MB recommended)
30 MB of disk space minimum, 60 MB or more recommended
CD-ROM Drive

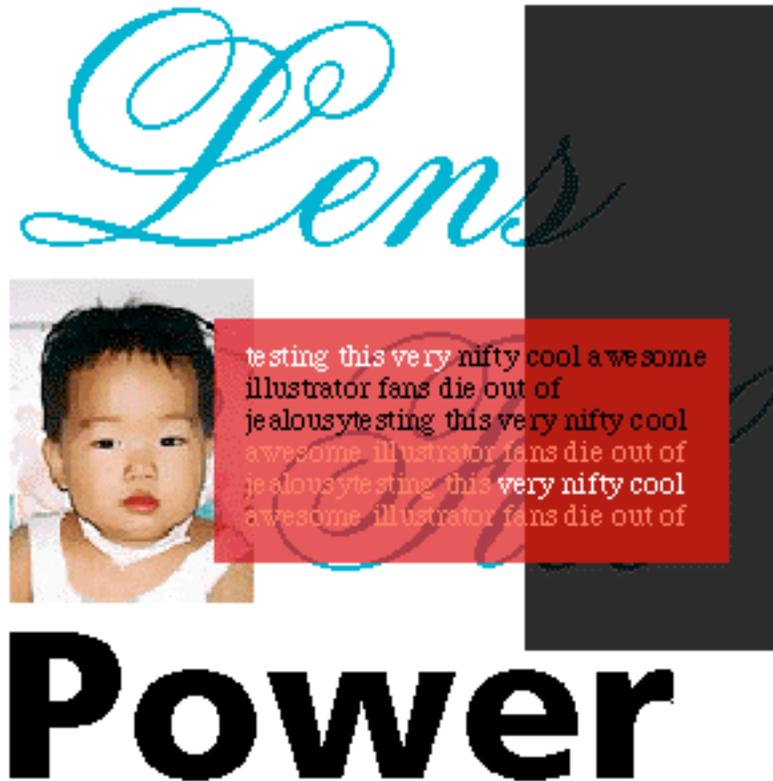
Macromedia has released the 8th version of its vector-based drawing program called FreeHand. It is with sheer gladness that I am reviewing this outstanding product. I admit I have always been an avid FreeHand fan, and the latest version truly adheres to its nickname of "Illustrator killer". To me it seems that Macromedia has been listening closely to its consumers, the program has hugely benefited from that. Trying to be as objective as I can, I will hereby state the new features, so that you can be the judge.

Note: you have almost complete control over settings in the below features, I left that out so as not to be overly repetitive.

Lens Fill

Although not the best of the new features, it is definitely the most exciting. Lens fills can emulate effects over anything beneath them, including bitmaps. The effects consist of:

Transparency: Finally a true transparency that works without QuickDraw GX. Not only does it print, but you can also show transparency effects in the overlapping areas of the objects only.



Magnify: As the name suggests it magnifies areas of the pasteboard. The best part is that it works even if the objects are not directly under the Lens.

Lighten, Darken, Invert, Monochrome: More of the same, only this time these are really nifty sames. ;-)

Intuitive Design Tools

Freeform Tools: In the toolbox, users can now find the brand new freeform tool for working directly with paths. This tool is particularly effective for creating organic forms by pulling or pushing paths. Simply said: "Hasta La Vista Bezier controls!"

Interactive Transforms: Double-clicking any object or selection of multiple objects with the pointer tool brings up interactive transform handles around the object. Not a technological break through but definitely a neat feature.

Effects

Graphic Hose: Ever see Painter's image hose? Well before you get any ideas, this is called graphic hose. ;-)

Emboss: Embossing of vectors

Shadow: Shadowing of vectors

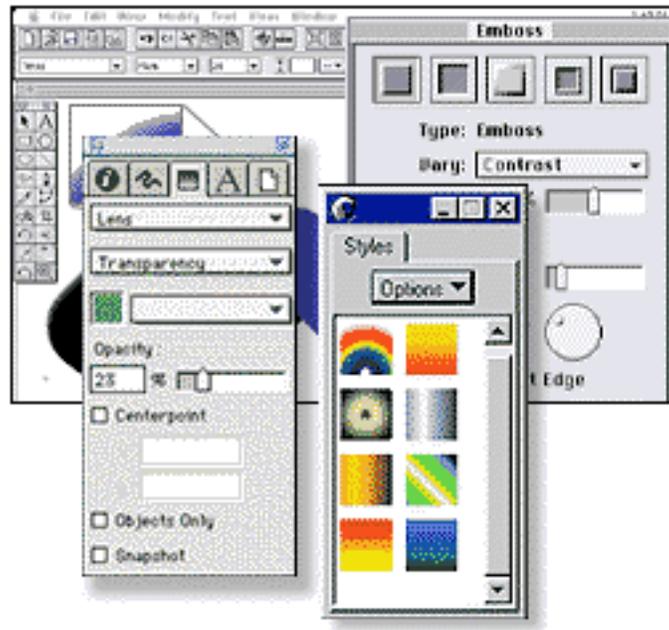
Mirror: Mirroring of vectors (what did you expect?)

Typography

Font Preview: WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) font menus

Show Invisibles: In the spirit of Microsoft Word, you can now view special characters such as space, tabs, and returns.

Change Case: Not the end of the world but a worthy mention. It would be also appropriate to mention that Adobe's Illustrator had this feature implemented ages ago.



Performance

It seems Macromedia sacrificed a lot of speed in favor of features when it moved from

version 5.5 to version 7.0, making many users unwilling to upgrade(myself included). Well, Macromedia has introduced the following features in order to overcome that pitfall: Faster Bitmap Handling, Rasterize in Place, Low Rasterization RAM, Fast Preview, and Custom Views. Also included are Performance Graphs to monitor speed improvements.

Customization

Button Bars: Now you can devise the menus you always dreamed. All you have to do is choose the commands that you use most frequently, then turn them into buttons on floating palettes

Keyboard Shortcuts: The QuicKeys alternative; program your own keyboard shortcuts within the application itself.

A Lot More

There are too many other features to mention. They include: Export Again, tighter Web integration, graphics style sheets, and others.

Is the Battle Over?

The Illustrator vs. FreeHand battle has been going on since the earliest Apple years. What is so exciting about all this isn't the product as such (which will become obsolete in 10 years) as much as the anxiety to see Adobe's counterattack and vice-versa. Competition is beautiful thing that, more often than not, results in better products, better prices, etc. I hope uncle Billy Gates is listening :-)

For the time being, it seems that FreeHand has the definite upper hand over it's main competitor, Illustrator. Since Adobe just recently released it's latest version (7.0), it will take a while before it can wake up from the shock and retaliate. My personal opinion, is that FreeHand 8.0 (Is it me or is number 8 becoming a sign for quality?) is a killer app that can't be missed.

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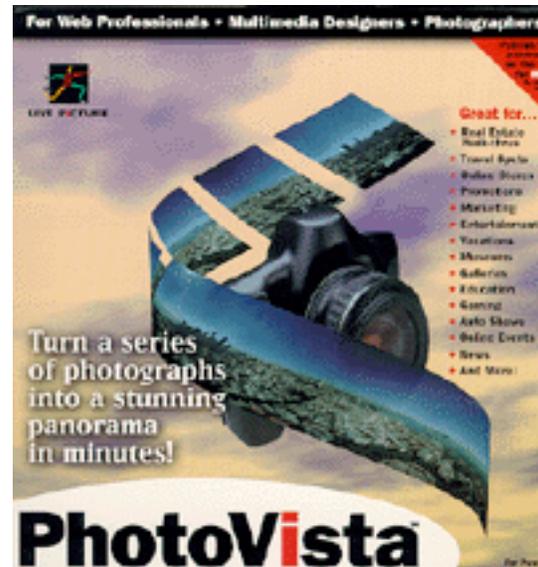
PhotoVista

Product Information

Published by: Live Picture Inc.
5617 Scotts Valley Drive, Suite 180
Scotts Valley, CA 95066 USA
Phone: (800) 724-7900
Web: <<http://www.livepicture.com>>
Street Price: \$79 US

Requirements

Power Mac
System 7.5 or later
16 MB RAM (32 MB RAM recommended)

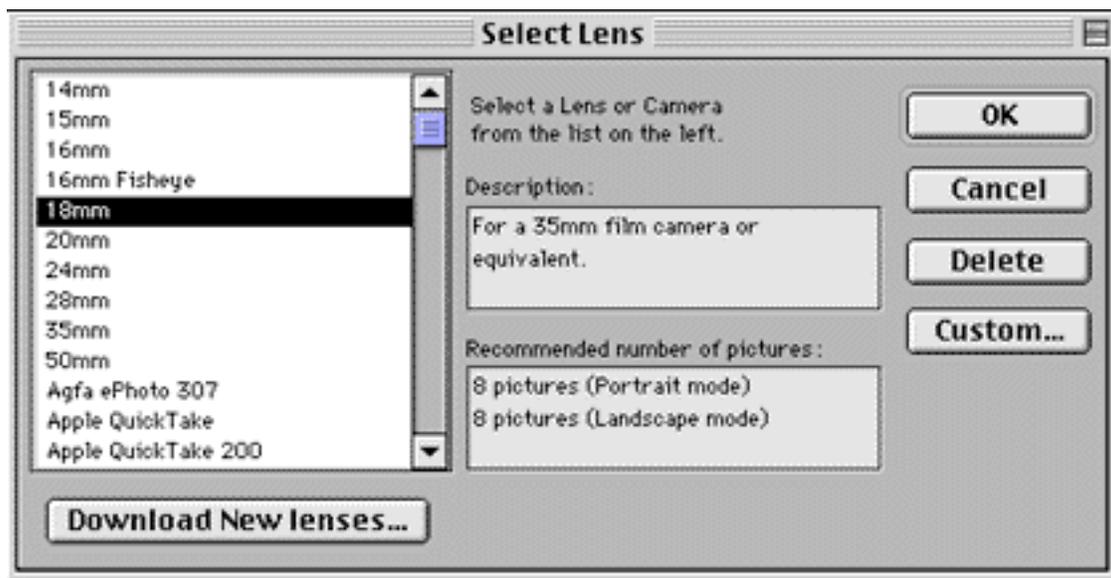


This application has one major purpose, to facilitate the creation of photographic panoramic scenes. The program performs this task extremely well and will not disillusion those image-makers who previously worked in the original Apple QuickTime VR environment. The CD-ROM installation process places a folder of 4.9 MB size on your hard drive. This installation includes the application, tutorials and examples to use in the creation of panoramas. It is not necessary to have the CD in the drive in order to run the program. I immediately appreciated this product for the manual(s). Both the written and on-line versions were helpful and not at all tedious to use.

You now have your choice of how to establish an image base for creating the panorama. You can use an ordinary camera, or video cam to record your scene and then digitize the resulting photographs with a scanner. You can skip the camera and scanner and go directly to a digital camera and import those images. You are advised as to the absolute necessity of insuring that the imported images are imported and titled in the order they are to be stitched. Otherwise, expect chaos! These images can be imported in a number of formats ranging from PICT and GIF to JPEG or bitmap. One final piece of advice before you click the shutter button on any type of camera: always use a tripod for more predictable results. (Notice the tripod shadow in one of the visuals in this review!)

Before continuing an examination of the application, I must admit that what attracted me to this particular product was my experiences with architecture students who attempted to create panoramic views of their projects through the use of taped-together photographs or Polaroids. Alignment and exposure mismatches abounded in their attempts.

PhotoVista™ ends any of those particular problems, and allows for a perfectly aligned and exposed view of a 360° scene or any portion of that particular scene. The perfect result demands that you follow certain procedures.



You must identify the focal length of the camera lens you are using. The application will advise you as to how many images should be taken and the degree of overlap that must be used between each image in order to create a perfect final “stitch.” Take time to do this advance work, and the rest of the process is a “snap!”

Now that you have your digitized images on your hard drive, it's time to turn to the **PhotoVista™** “workspace.” Prior to doing this, make sure you give plenty of RAM to the program. This is essential if you are working with large panoramas. Starting the application generates a very user-friendly workspace. That workspace screen contains six interactive controls. You “Open source images,” “Rotate” the images for proper orientation “Flip” the images either horizontally or vertically if necessary, insure that the correct “Lens” have been matched and then enter into the “Stitching” process. Initially, you create a “Preview Stitch” allowing you to view the adequacy of your image.





This image “develops” rather quickly as it is produced in a low-resolution quality. Clicking on “Full Stitch” will allow the program to warp, align and blend your pictures into a final seamless image. You may also chose the final resolution and do some final cropping of the picture. It is then possible to import your image into your favorite image editing application (**Photoshop**, etc.) and do final tweaking, text additions, color corrections, and other changes to your hearts content.



The potential of **PhotoVista™** does not stop with the ordinary panorama. These images can be “mapped” onto spheres or cubes and used as a screen saver. (Using **After Dark 3.0** and the included **RealSpace™** screen saver module). Additionally, those of you who have Web sites can create compact, high-quality panoramas of around 100K or less in size. No problem with quick downloads due to this bandwidth friendly aspect. The aspiring artists amongst you can upload your panoramas to be published in the PhotoVista *Panorama Gallery*.

The potential for this production is understated. Imagine having a “mega-pixel” digital camera, laptop, and portable colour printer; photo documentary and real estate career possibilities abound. In the area of shopping, entertainment and education, the possibilities are endless. Department store sites, City and gallery tours are obvious subjects for the offerings of **PhotoVista**™. As a photographer, I look forward to a summer of experimentation with this application...let the snow meltdown commence!

Copyright ©1998 Robert Madill, <rmadill@atpm.com>. Mr. Madill is a Professor of Art and Architectural History on the faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



StuffIt Deluxe 4.5

Product Information

Published by: Aladdin Systems, Inc.
Phone: (408) 761-6200
Fax: (408) 761-6202
Email: <sales@aladdinsys.com>
Web: <<http://www.aladdinsys.com>>
List Price: \$130

System Requirements

System 7.1.1 or higher
4 MB of RAM



StuffIt Deluxe from Aladdin Systems is the standard in Macintosh compression software. Most Macintosh files on the Internet or on online services are compressed with StuffIt. In addition, StuffIt can expand files from many other compression programs, making it a very useful piece of software to own.

StuffIt is useful for many things. It can speed up transfers of files over modems and networks by reducing the amount of data that needs to be sent. It reduces the number of floppy disks or removable cartridges needed to hold files and allows large files to be spread across multiple disks. It is also useful for squeezing more data onto hard disks.

Compression programs make files smaller by finding more efficient ways of representing the data they contain. There are many ways of doing this, and I don't have space to go into detail here, but the result of compression is that the file is usually reduced to about 50% of its original size. Large text files usually compress a bit more than this, while JPEG graphics files and QuickTime movies (which already employ their own sort of compression) don't compress as much. Compressing files can take anywhere from seconds to minutes to hours, depending on how large the file is, what speed computer it is being compressed on, and several other factors. A file compressed with StuffIt or any other compression program in its class must be expanded before it can be used; once expanded, it becomes an exact duplicate of the original file.

StuffIt Deluxe is a package that performs very few tasks, but does them extremely well. It also goes to great lengths to give the user many different ways of accomplishing the same thing. StuffIt Deluxe is really two compression programs in one: StuffIt Deluxe and StuffIt SpaceSaver. StuffIt Deluxe is a full-featured compression program made for archiving files. It is the main component of the package, and when people refer to a file that is stuffed, or if you see a file whose name ends in '.sit', the file in question is compressed with StuffIt Deluxe. StuffIt SpaceSaver, the other component of the StuffIt Deluxe package, is an automatic compression program that uses a different compression routines than StuffIt Deluxe and is designed to transparently increase the capacity of your hard disk. Aladdin uses the terms 'archived' and 'stuffed' to refer to files compressed with StuffIt Deluxe, and the word 'compressed' to refer to SpaceSaver compressed files. I will do the same for this review.

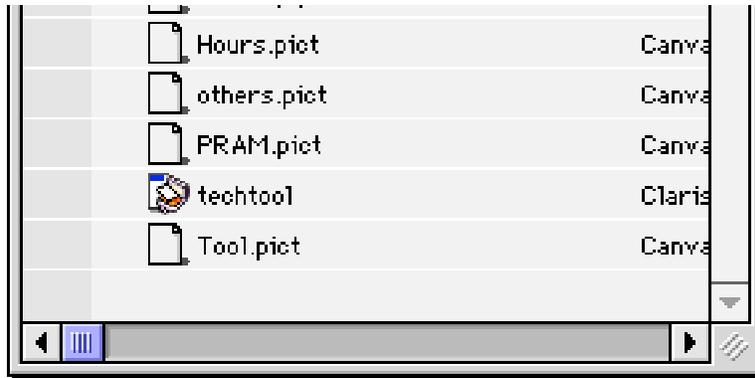
Changes In StuffIt Deluxe

StuffIt Deluxe 4.5 is a modest improvement over version 4.0, the first product I reviewed after joining the *ATPM* staff a little more than two years ago. The most notable change is that the Browser is now compatible with Mac OS 8. Other feature additions include support for more file types such as MIME and LHA, as well as the ability to decrypt Aladdin PrivateFile documents and mount Aladdin ShrinkWrap disk images. Finally, you can now perform common operations from a contextual menu in the Finder.

StuffIt Browser

The True Finder Integration control panel makes it possible to perform almost all StuffIt tasks without ever opening the main application. Double-clicking an archive file in the Finder opens a browser window showing the files and folders in the archive, as well as statistics about how much space is being saved. Files and folders can be stuffed by dragging them into the browser window and expanded by dragging them out of it. You can also manipulate files and folders in the archive just as easily as if they were inside a normal folder. You can even open certain types of files such as text documents and PICT graphics by double-clicking them while they are still in the archive. This opens the appropriate StuffIt Viewer, which lets you view, and sometimes edit, files while they are still in the archive. Once you've used StuffIt Browser, you won't know how you ever got along without it.





Stuffing

There are quite a few different ways to stuff files. This is because different people find different methods more intuitive. To stuff a file or folder, you can:

- Select it in the Finder and choose 'Stuff' from the 'Magic Menu' that True Finder Integration adds to the Finder.
- Drag and drop the file or folder onto the DropStuff application.
- Add the suffix '.sit' or '.sea' to the name of the file or folder. Adding '.sit' creates an archive, while adding '.sea' creates a self-extracting archive that you can give to people who don't have StuffIt.
- Open the StuffIt Deluxe application, create a new archive, and add the file or folder to that archive.
- Drag and drop the file or folder into an open StuffIt Browser window in the Finder.
- Select it in the Finder and choose 'Stuff' from the contextual menu.

Expanding

There are also many different ways to expand files. To expand an archive, you can:

- Select it in the Finder and choose 'Expand' from the 'Magic Menu.'
- Drag and drop the file or folder onto the StuffIt Expander application.
- Remove the suffix '.sit' or '.sea' from the name of the archive.
- Open the archive in the StuffIt Deluxe application and expand individual files.
- Drag and drop files or folders out of the StuffIt Browser window.
- Select it in the Finder and choose 'Expand' from the contextual menu.

These procedures may sound difficult to remember, but after using StuffIt for a short period of time they become second nature. While you only really need to know one way of stuffing and expanding files to use the program effectively, sometimes one method is more efficient than another.

StuffIt Expander

The StuffIt Expander drag and drop application can be used for expanding and decoding just about any file from the Internet and is probably the most useful part of the entire package. You can tell it which types of files you want expanded, and even tell it to 'watch' a folder. For instance, if you select your Netscape download folder as the 'watch folder,' whenever you download a file with Netscape, it will automatically be decoded and expanded.

Advanced Features

In addition, StuffIt Deluxe has some advanced features such as the ability to encrypt archives so they cannot be expanded without a password, and the ability to break archives up into segments. Segmenting is useful if you want to distribute a large archive over a set of floppy disks or other removable media. With the DropSegment application, segmenting is now as simple as drag and drop. For people who like to write macros, StuffIt Deluxe can also integrate well with QuicKeys, AppleScript, and UserLand Frontier. The reference section of the manual describes how you can control StuffIt Deluxe with AppleScript. In addition, because the main compression engine is an extension, other programs can utilize its capabilities. For instance, ShrinkWrap, a disk image utility, can automatically stuff its files if you have StuffIt installed, and disk cataloging programs such as FindIt can locate files within StuffIt archives.

Another handy feature is Gather. If you select a group of files or folders, then choose Gather from the Magic Menu or the contextual menu, the files are collected into a newly-created "Gathered Items" folder.

SpaceSaver

SpaceSaver is a separate component of the StuffIt Deluxe package that uses a different compression method than the rest of the package and performs an entirely different task. It is dedicated to transparently increasing the amount of data that can be stored on your hard disk. It can compress files automatically during idle time, or on demand via similar techniques as StuffIt Deluxe. However, SpaceSaver compresses each file individually; it does not create archives. You can have SpaceSaver compress or not compress files based on their label, their modification dates, or by keywords in their names such as 'small' and 'big'. Whenever you open a SpaceSaver compressed application or file, it is automatically expanded.

The problem is that SpaceSaver runs rather slowly on even the fastest of Macs. In fact, it doesn't seem to be much faster than StuffIt Deluxe. It is nowhere near as transparent a product as Symantec's AutoDoubler, its closest rival. This could be because AutoDoubler expands only the portions of files that are needed, and does so into RAM, rather than onto

the disk. Also, SpaceSaver doesn't save as much disk space as StuffIt Deluxe does. On typical files on my hard disk, it averaged only about 30% savings. StuffIt SpaceSaver can be useful if you need to increase the capacity of your hard disk in a pinch, but be aware that using it incurs a huge performance penalty. If you are serious about a transparent compression program, you should look into AutoDoubler, a part of Symantec's Norton DiskDoubler Pro package (reviewed in *ATPM* 2.06). However, with the rapidly decreasing costs of additional hard disk space, a new drive is probably the most cost-effective solution.

The Shareware Alternative

If you decide that you don't need all the features of the full StuffIt Deluxe package, Aladdin has shareware programs that perform many of the same tasks. StuffIt Lite is similar to the main StuffIt Deluxe application, although it isn't quite as full-featured. In addition, DropSuff and StuffIt Expander are available as shareware, and can compress and expand just as well as StuffIt Deluxe, except that they don't give you the True Finder Integration control panel, which lets you stuff files by renaming them, and includes the StuffIt Browser and Finder menu. In my opinion, the main reason to buy the entire StuffIt Deluxe package is the StuffIt Browser.

Nothing Is Perfect

The StuffIt Deluxe package comes close to being ideal. However, there are several improvements that could be made. A serious flaw (and the reason I did not give StuffIt Deluxe an Excellent rating) is that stuffing and expanding using Magic Menu or the StuffIt Browser do not take place in the background. Stuffing and expanding should take place in the background all of the time. At present, this only happens when the StuffIt Deluxe application or one of the drag-and-drop applications is used. Also, it should be possible to queue tasks. For instance, it would be nice to be able to drag a file into a Browser window, regain control of the Finder, select an archive, choose expand from the menu, and have these tasks be executed one after another. (Symantec's DiskDoubler Pro, StuffIt's principle competitor has offered this feature for at least three years now.) As it stands now, you must wait for the operation to complete before regaining control of the Finder, though you can switch to another application while the Finder is busy.

Final Words

StuffIt Deluxe is a full-featured compression solution. It offers excellent speed and savings, and with the new version you can now use the StuffIt Browser again. It is integrated well with the Finder, and is very intuitive to use. The manual—should you need to refer to it—is first rate. If you are looking for a well-refined compression program, or a utility to decode files from the Internet, look no further than StuffIt Deluxe.

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ABOUT THIS STUFF



REVIEWED BY TOM IOVINO, tiovino@atpm.com

TechTool 1.1.6

Have you ever noticed those snazzy custom icons for your South Park .wav files folder have turned to just plain old generic icons? Is your Mac, normally the most stable thing in your life, exhibiting quirky behavior? Are you double-clicking on an icon, but not going anywhere fast? Could it be time to call an exorcist?

Well, is a way, yes. Only, this one doesn't do battle with a little child named Damion. Instead, it works its magic on Desktop Folders and PRAM. It's the powerful freeware utility by Micromat, TechTool 1.1.6. <<http://www.micromat.com>>



Contortionist be Gone!

You may have heard that occasionally you need to do some preventative maintenance on your Macintosh. Sometimes, the invisible Desktop Folder becomes corrupted due to excessive adding and deleting of files, or system crashes. This file acts as a directory for your hard drive, letting the OS know where to locate a particular file.

Other times like the Parameter RAM, pronounced “pea-ram”, needs to be flushed, or “Zapped.” Believe me, it’s not as dangerous as it may sound. The parameter RAM is a non-volatile RAM chip located on the motherboard of the Macintosh. The PRAM contains user and system-defined settings that must be retained after the computer has been powered off. Settings such as time of day, mouse scaling, keyboard repeat rate, and startup drive preferences are all stored there.

In order to handle either task, Apple would require you to hold down a number of keys at startup to complete the task. Especially for zapping the PRAM. And you have to hold those keys down at the right time. And there are so many keys to hold at once, you look like a contortionist. Not so with TechTool.

Upon launching the program, you are greeted by a friendly control panel which identifies the date the computer was manufactured and the number of hours it has run. Every August 22nd, I hold a little birthday party for my Performa 6116 at work.

From there, the utility gives you single click options to rebuild the desktop or zap the PRAM. The utility smartly provides the added safety of allowing you to store a copy of the PRAM settings and Desktop file in the event something should go awry.

Additionally, the utility does a better job than the traditional methods of zapping and rebuilding. TechTool actually deletes the target file and allows the system software to start fresh, rather than just rewrite over the old information the way Apple’s fix works.

Other features of this powerhouse utility are outstanding as well. You can analyze your system for corrupt system software, inventory your extensions and control panels, get the lowdown on your hardware’s technical specs and, since version 1.1.4, the utility has included a routine to clean your floppy disk drive with a special cleaning disk.

And, if you are confused about how to use these features, TechTool boasts a solid help screen. It not only describes the utility in detail, but also provides a primer on how the PRAM and Desktop files function, how they can become corrupted, and how to recognize when trouble looms. It’s also snappy reading, rather than just a long, dry technical text.

Is TechTool perfect? Well, it’s very close. If the utility could identify corrupted font files, the bane of Desktop Publishing professionals worldwide, this would prove to be a welcome addition. Also, if TechTool could provide a survey of exactly what software was loaded on your hard drive with the version number, that would also be helpful.

But for automating that preventative maintenance, there’s nothing quite like TechTool. It’s

a real winner in my book!

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Guidelines

The Official *ATPM* Guidelines

The Official *ATPM* Guidelines page is the place to go when you have a question about our publication. We can't imagine that you simply wandered in here. That's because the information on this page is very dry and mostly unentertaining (which is why it's on this page and not included in another part of our publication). We guess you could call this the "Relatively Boring But Occasionally Important Page of Information." OK, enough already with the extraneous syntax, now onto the stuff.

What is *ATPM*

About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or "e-zine." It's published by Michael Tsai and Robert Paul Leitao (who are still looking for a cool logo for themselves that depicts their joint effort). *ATPM* was created to celebrate the personal computing experience. For us this means the most personal of all personal computers—the Apple Macintosh. *About This Particular Macintosh* is intended to be about your Macintosh, our Macintoshes, and the creative, personal ideas and experiences of everyone who uses a Mac. We hope that we will continue to be faithful to our mission.

We'd Like Our Readers To Be Involved

Here, at *ATPM* worldwide headquarters, we're interested in hearing from you, our loyal readers. We're especially interested in stories about you and Life With Your Particular Macintosh. We guess we could have called this publication LWYPM but it just didn't sound quite right. So we called it *ATPM* and decided to ask for your stories and anecdotes about our most personal of personal computers. *ATPM* is also looking for people interested in joining our editorial staff. We currently need a [Shareware Reviews Editor](#), a [Publicity Manager](#), and an [Interviews Manager](#). Please contact us at [<editor@atpm.com>](mailto:editor@atpm.com) if you're interested.

Cover Art: We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for *ATPM*, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to <editor@atpm.com> for more information.

We Want To Hear From You

E-Mail: Got a comment about an article that you read in *ATPM*? Is there something you'd like us to write about in a future issue? We'd love to hear from you. Send your e-mail to <editor@atpm.com>. We often publish the e-mail that comes our way.

Segments—Slices from the Macintosh Life: This is one of our most successful spaces and one of our favorite places. We think of it as kind of the *ATPM* "guest room." This is where we will publish that sentimental Macintosh story that you promised yourself you would one day write. It's that special place in *ATPM* that's specifically designated for your stories. We'd really like to hear from you. Several Segments contributors have gone on to become *ATPM* **columnists**. Send your stuff to <editor@atpm.com>.

Let Us Know That You Know What You Know

Hardware and Software Reviews: *ATPM* publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how enthusiastic they are about recommending it to others. If you have a new piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review, contact our reviews editor at: <reviews@atpm.com> for more information.

Shareware Reviews: Most of us have been there; we find that special piece of shareware that significantly improves the quality of our Macintosh life and we wonder why the entire world hasn't heard about it. Now here's the chance to tell them! Simply let us know by writing up a short review for our shareware section. Send your reviews to <reviews@atpm.com>.

Your Stuff: If you or your company has a product that you'd like to see reviewed, send a copy our way. We're always looking for interesting pieces of software to try out.

Wishful Thinking

Wishful Thinking: Is the space for Mac enthusiasts who know *exactly* (if you do say so yourself) what Apple should do with its advertising campaigns and product introductions. Have you come up with a great advertising tag line? What about that Mac campaign that has been stewing in the back of your mind? Send your big ideas (or your art) to <editor@atpm.com>.

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About This Particular Macintosh is free, and we intend to keep it this way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with "real" jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. As such, we rely on advertisers to help us pay for our Web site and other expenses. Please consider supporting *ATPM* by advertising in our issues and on our web site. Contact <editor@atpm.com> for more information.

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That's It

We hope by now that you've found what you're looking for (We can't imagine there's something else about *ATPM* that you'd like to know.). But just in case you've read this far (We appreciate your tenacity.) and still haven't found that little piece of information about *ATPM* that you came here to find, please feel free to e-mail us at (You guessed it.) <editor@atpm.com>.





This is the latest in *ATPM's* series of Trivia Challenges. I hope you enjoy them. Answers to this month's Trivia Challenge will be found in the next issue of *ATPM*.

Trivia Challenge #6—Rock Singers

On the left is a list of Rock Singers. On the right is a list of the bands they left to enjoy some success as solo acts. Match the lead singers to their former bands.

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Sting | A. The Miracles |
| 2. Kenny Rogers | B. Yes |
| 3. Alex Chilton | C. The Righteous Brothers |
| 4. David Gates | D. The Eagles |
| 5. Burton Cummings | E. The Stone Ponies |
| 6. Chrissy Hynde | F. The First Edition |
| 7. Dennis Yost | G. The Animals |
| 8. Jon Anderson | H. The Police |
| 9. Johnny Maestro | J. The Who |
| 10. Smokey Robinson | K. The Box Tops |
| 11. Linda Ronstadt | L. The Classics IV |
| 12. Eric Burdon | M. Bread |
| 13. Roger Daltry | N. The Brooklyn Bridge |
| 14. Bill Medley | P. The Guess Who |
| 15. Glen Frey | Q. The Pretenders |

The Rules

Each question has only *one* correct answer. You may get help when needed. (Anyone who knows all of these answers is as sick as I am!) The answers are stored in a hermetically sealed envelope guarded by a fierce Lhasa Apso named "Hammerli" who lives in our house.

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