



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

Cover Art

Copyright © 2000 by [Leonardo Minott](mailto:ileo@mac.com)¹

<http://homepage.mac.com/ileo>

We need new cover art each month. [Write to us!](mailto:cover-art@atpm.com)²

Editorial Staff

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief [Michael Tsai](#)

Managing Editor [Daniel Chvatik](#)

Associate Editor/Reviews [Paul Fatula](#)

Copy Editors [Raena Armitage](#)

[Johann Campbell](#)

[Paul Fatula](#)

[Ellyn Ritterskamp](#)

[Brooke Smith](#)

[Adam Zaner](#)

Vacant

Publicity Managers [Christopher Turner](#)

Vacant

Contributing Editor/Welcomes [Robert Paul Leitao](#)

Contributing Editors/Opinion [Tom Iovino](#)

Contributing Editors/Reviews [Eric Blair](#)

[Gregory Tetrault](#)

[Evan Trent](#)

Vacant

Contributing Editor/Shareware *Vacant*

Contributing Editor/How To's & Reviews [Jamie McCornack](#)

Contributing Editor/Trivia [Edward Goss](#)

Contributing Editor/Music [David Ozab](#)

Contributing Editor/Networking [Matthew Glidden](#)

Contributing Editor/Web [David Spencer](#)

Contributing Editor/Games *Vacant*

Help Jedi [Evan Trent](#)

Vacant

Hollywood Guy [Mike Shields](#)

Webmaster [Michael Tsai](#)

1. ileo@mac.com

2. cover-art@atpm.com

Assistant Webmaster [A. Lee Bennett](#)
Interviews Manager *Vacant*
List Server Host [Evan Trent](#)
List Mom [Michael Tsai](#)
Beta Testers [The Staff](#)

Artwork & Design

Graphics Director [Grant Osborne](#)
Graphic Design Consultant [Jamal Ghandour](#)
Layout and Design [Michael Tsai](#)
Cartoonist [Michael Morgan](#)
Blue Apple Icon Designs [Jamal Ghandour](#)
Other Art RD Novo

Editors Emeritus

RD Novo
Robert Madill
Belinda Wagner

Contributors

Eric Blair
Daniel Chvatik
Paul Fatula
Edward Goss
Jens Grabenstein
Tom Iovino
Robert Paul Leitao
Michael Morgan
Juri Munkki
Grant Osborne
David Ozab
Mike Shields
Brooke Smith
David Spencer
Gregory Tetrault
Evan Trent

Christopher Turner
Macintosh users like you

Subscriptions

Sign up for **free** subscriptions using the
[Web form](#)¹ or [by e-mail](#)².

Where to Find ATPM

Online and downloadable issues are
available at <http://www.atpm.com>.

ATPM is a product of ATPM, Inc.
© 1995–2000, All Rights Reserved
ISSN: 1093-2909

The Tools

Acrobat
Anarchie
AppleScript
BBEdit
Cameraid
FileMaker Pro
FrameMaker+SGML
Frontier
ImageReady
LetterRip Pro
MacPerl
Mailsmith
Photoshop
Snapz Pro
ShrinkWrap
StuffIt

1. <http://www.atpm.com/subscribe/>
2. subscriptions@atpm.com

The Fonts

Cheltenham

Frutiger

Isla Bella

Marydale

Minion

Reprints

Articles and original art cannot be reproduced without the express permission of AT^{PM}, unless otherwise noted. You may, however, print copies of AT^{PM} provided that it is not modified in any way. Authors may be contacted through AT^{PM}'s editorial staff, or at their e-mail addresses, when provided.

Legal Stuff

About This Particular Macintosh may be uploaded to any online area or BBS, so long as the file remains intact and unaltered, but all other rights are reserved. All information contained in this issue is correct to the best of our knowledge. The opinions expressed in AT^{PM} are not necessarily those of this particular Macintosh. Product and company names and logos may be registered trademarks of their respective companies. Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

Thanks for reading AT^{PM}.



Sponsors

About This Particular Macintosh is free, and we intend to keep it that 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.

We would like to thank our exclusive sponsor, Small Dog Electronics, for its generous support of AT^{PM}, the Macintosh, and all things cool. Sponsorship does not imply endorsement, and endorsement does not imply sponsorship. Thank you for your support.



<http://www.smalldog.com>

You can help support AT^{PM} by:

- Buying books, music, or movies through [this link](#)¹ to Amazon.com.
- Buying Mac hardware or software through [this link](#)² to MacConnection.
- Buying Mac hardware or software through [this link](#)³ to Outpost.com.

Please consider advertising here to support AT^{PM}. Contact advertise@atpm.com for more information.



1. <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/aboutthisparticu>
2. <http://service.bfast.com/bfast/click/mid9452939?siteid=13311227&bfpag=machomepage>
3. <http://www.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat?id=N00D3BtDeo0&offerid=2161&type=3>

Welcome

Welcome to the August issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* This is the official post-Macworld, pre-Seybold edition of your favorite Internet magazine. Without further ado, we bring you the really cool stuff from the hottest computer show on earth.

Cubism

In a surprise announcement at Macworld, Apple CEO Steve Jobs introduced a new high-performance personal computer. Incorporating the G4 processor running at 450 MHz, the Cube is a high-powered, lower cost PC for the consumer market. Measuring a fraction of the size of the Mac mini-tower and equipped with its own stylish translucent stand, the Cube is designed to bring the performance of the G4 to home users who are looking for more power than what's available in the iMac—at a price below that of Apple's professional line of computers.

Color Me Brand New

Apple's iMac now comes in four new and distinctive colors: indigo, ruby, sage, and snow. Gone are the candy colors that premiered in January 1999. The top-of-the-line graphite iMac, featuring 128 MB of RAM and a 500 MHz G3 processor, now shares the stage with a translucent snow-colored sibling. For consumers and schools looking for a less expensive offering, a \$799 iMac sporting the 350 MHz G3 processor will be available in September.

Two Brains, One Body

Apple's new pro-level mini-towers now come with dual G4 processors. Priced the same as the single processor computers they replace, the dual-processor Macs provide an important performance punch to the product line as Apple strives to regain its leadership in the content creation market.

Other Macworld Expo announcements include:

- The release of the beta version of Mac OS X is still on schedule for “late summer.”
- Apple's much maligned “hockey puck” mouse is history. It has been replaced by an optical mouse better suited to the contours of the human hand, and it works without a roller ball.
- Microsoft Office 2001 for the Mac will be released in October, but it will not be

“Carbonized” at that time.

We have Macworld coverage throughout this issue, and Eric Blair even brought back some [photographs](#)¹ for your perusal.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

The announcement of the Macintosh Cube reopens the debate about the posting of rumored information on Mac affinity Web sites. Rumors that the Cube (or a product like it) would be released at Macworld became the center of controversy when Apple's legal staff demanded that the rumored information be removed from various sites. Even the Macintouch site, one of the most informative and respected Mac-related sites on the Web, received notice from Apple to remove its report, even though it contained no original information on the prospective product but did offer hyperlinks so that readers could find originally posted information.

Except for the reports about the Cube's size, the products described on the rumor sites bore little resemblance to the product that Apple has now officially announced. Undoubtedly Web publishers do have 1st Amendment rights protecting free speech. But is it fair to post information about a new product that is not only unauthorized, but most likely contains incomplete or erroneous information?

In the case of Macintouch, in which the Web site merely reported on a report, we believe Apple's legal team may have gone too far. But what should be the rules about posting rumored information about unannounced products? Rumors about the Cube and Apple's response to the rumors became the subject of their own reports. We think this all a bit crazy.

Based on the time proven truth that rumors often have little resemblance to the forthcoming reality (the existence of a 17" monitor iMac still remains a myth), we think it's best not to ask people for unauthorized and often incomplete information, and it's better for people who think they might be in the know not to tell. Discretion is often the better part of valor.

Margin Mania

The day before the start of Macworld Expo, Apple released its financial statements for the third fiscal quarter. Although sales were below already reduced expectations, the company was able to slightly exceed Wall Street's consensus estimate by reporting net earnings from operations of

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/macworld-gallery/>

\$0.45 per diluted share. Including the gain from the sale of some of its investment in Arm Holdings, Apple earned a net profit of \$200 million, or \$0.55 per diluted share.

How did Apple report slightly better than expected earnings on lower than expected sales? The company earned an average gross margin of 29.8% on the products it sold. By comparison most PC manufacturers struggle to get gross margins somewhere near 25%. The fact that the iMac had gone nine months without a major upgrade accounted for the slower sales. Higher proportional sales of G4s and PowerBooks contributed to the increase in margins.

The quarter's financial highlights are as follows:

- Revenues for the quarter were about \$1.825 billion.
- Net profit from operations were \$163 million, an increase of 43% from a year ago.
- During the quarter Apple sold over a million Macs in their various sizes, shapes, and configurations.
- Apple currently has \$3.8 billion in cash and short-term investments.

See You At Seybold?

At the end of the month Steve Jobs will give a keynote address to attendees at the Seybold convention. At last year's convention Mr. Jobs announced the introduction of the G4. A month later the company announced there would be a delay in meeting demand. We'll cover the Seybold show in our September issue.

Please enjoy our latest issue!

The ATPM Staff



What About Emagic?

I found your site through a search engine while trying to obtain opinions about digital audio products for Mac. My search turned up your [multi-part series](#)¹ earlier this year on this exact subject.

I was curious if there were some conscious reason for your excluding Emagic, since they have products that most others rank near the top.

Particularly, under [hardware audio interfaces](#)², Emagic has the Audiowerk2 Production Kit which bundles a card, digital audio software, and other utilities. The card competes in features and price in the Consumer PCI Audio Interface category with the Midiman Delta DIO2496, but with the software an added bonus. These are the two products I am considering, along with the Roland UA-30 USB audio I/F.

Also, under the [software](#)³ category you discuss Steinberg Cubase VST, but not the competing Emagic Logic Audio series. They are similarly priced, both from German companies, and have similar feature sets. Since Opcode has been wasted by Gibson, placing me in the market for new DAW software, these are the two product lines I have been researching. Both offer trial versions for direct comparison in my system, so independent reviews, while helpful, are not crucial for my decision. But on the hardware side, other's reviews are prerequisite for my making an intelligent choice.

Emagic lives at <http://www.emagic.de> and has a USA distributor <http://www.emagicusa.com>.

I was unfamiliar with your site prior to this, but am interested in all things Mac, so will explore when I get a chance.

—Weldon Smith, Los Angeles

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.02/digitalaudio.shtml>

2. <http://www.atpm.com/6.05/digitalaudio.shtml>

3. <http://www.atpm.com/6.04/digitalaudio.shtml>

Sadly, the only reason I can think of was totally unconscious. I am aware of both Logic Audio and the Audiowerk2 production kit, but for some reason overlooked them both when I wrote the series. I have nothing against Emagic; they produce fine software and hardware.

I have a friend who recently switched from Vision to Logic Audio. Though it took her awhile to get used to the new interface (which from her description is unlike any other DAW/sequencer I've experienced), she rates it higher than both Digital Performer and Cubase VST (which she particularly disliked—your reaction may vary).

Maybe I just fell back on what I use myself, or have used in the past. Or maybe I just need to wean myself from Opcode (RIP). I may be changing software platforms very soon, though, and Emagic is definitely on my list. I'll keep you (and all my readers) posted.

Anyway, nobody's perfect. Thank you for pointing out my oversight. —David Ozab, *Contributing Editor/ Music*

...

Shopping for a Mac

I've just read your [Segments article](#)¹ in the June issue of ATPM, and it completely bears out my own findings on the subject of purchasing Macintosh equipment at the big electrical retailers.

My first Mac—a Performa 400, bought in 1993—was purchased from a local branch of Currys electrical retailers. I knew what I wanted, namely a Mac and not a bland, beige PC box, and got a decent deal for it. However, purchasing software for the machine from the outlet I had bought it from proved completely impossible! Several weeks later, the store ceased to sell Macs at all.

My second Mac—a Performa 5200CD (ahh, happy memories...)—was purchased from a branch of Dixons, a similar retailer to Currys, in mid 1996. Again, the same story over again, a good deal, but the store stopped selling Apple equipment a few weeks later. The same store now has one iMac and one iBook (with the “E” and “1” keys missing, though nothing vital, you understand) lying rotting in a corner amongst a stack of “Packard Bell” boxes...

My third and current Mac, a blueberry iMac (yum!) was purchased from Bainbridges, the Newcastle-upon-Tyne branch of the John Lewis group. At the time, the box-shifters at PC World—by all means buy your iMac there, just for God's sake don't ask them for advice!—were doing a time-limited offer of a free HP DeskJet 840C printer for the same price as the iMac on its own. Bainbridges themselves were not doing any similar offers, but I wanted their two-year (free!)

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.06/shopping.shtml>

extended warranty on the iMac, having had significant problems with the 5200. Not only did Bainbridges match the PC World deal, giving me a free printer, but also gave me the two-year warranty and three months of free telephone technical support—not that I’ve needed it, of course, hey, we’re talking Macs here. :-)

In return, I recommended Bainbridges to a colleague of mine who wanted to buy his University-age daughter an iMac for home, an iBook for college and a USB CD-RW drive and a scanner—well over £2,500 worth of kit! And buy it all at Bainbridges he did.

So, all in all, everyone’s happy. Bainbridges have got lots of our cash, my colleague has got his daughter her new kit, and I’ve got my free printer.

Currys, Dixons and PC World...are you listening? Hey, guys, like the ad says, “Think Different”!

—*Ken Ward*

...

International Issues

ATPM is a great info source for me and my friends here who used Macs since 1984 (128K). However, I notice that your coverage of the international Mac is null (i.e., what applications support Arabic? Is this new application WorldScript compatible.) Thanks for considering.

—*fgabbani*

Thank you for your feedback. We would gladly try to improve our international coverage, but in most cases our staff members simply lack the qualification and testing resources to report on the international aspects, such as proper support for other languages. We are trying to improve in areas where we can, such as by introducing a new links section with country-specific information. —*Daniel Chvatik*

...

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

becomes the property of ATP[®]M.



Apple Cider: Random Squeezings From a Mac User

by Tom Iovino, tiovino@atpm.com

Talk About—Pop Music

Oh, I remember my 16th birthday back in 1984 very well.

No, it wasn't the birthday cake or the party I had with my family that I remember. It wasn't even the party my friends threw for me where I discovered just how much fun a party with my female classmates could be.

No, I don't recall any of these memories as clearly as the big gift I got that year—a stereo system.

While it wasn't top of the line, it had exactly what I wanted. A turntable. A receiver which actually did a decent job of picking up radio signals in the finished basement I called my room. An equalizer that allowed me to make whatever I was playing sound as if it was broadcast from another planet. And, my favorite feature, a dual cassette deck.

Once I opened the boxes and assembled the components, I was amazed at how good this thing sounded. After reading the owner's manual and familiarizing myself with the features, I proceeded to break the law.

That's right. I made cassette dubs for my friends of the latest Huey Lewis and the News album I had recently purchased. Not just a few—I made dozens for all of my friends to thank them for coming to my party.

Fast forward to 2000. The music industry is now facing a new threat, even more nefarious than little old me sitting in my basement dubbing tapes for hours. That enemy is the Internet.

Actually, it's not really the entire Internet the music industry is upset with. Artists have had a large presence in cyberspace for years. Just one trip to Yahoo to search under their music category, and you'll be waiting for a while to see the entire page if you only have a 56K modem.

No, the problem centers around Gnutella and Napster, two services that allow users to download MP3 files to their hard drives. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) asserts

that the only purpose for these and other similar services is to pirate copyrighted music. Indeed, there are a plethora of copyrighted titles available for search and free download. Napster, the provider currently under the gun in legal actions, contends that their service helps promote startup bands and allows consumers to sample tracks before they go out to buy the CD.

A careful analysis of these two opposing viewpoints raises some interesting points.

On the side of the RIAA is current copyright law. Basically, anyone's creation, once published, is considered intellectual property. No matter if it's Tom Clancy's latest novel, the most recent episode of *ER* or the hottest new album from Coolio, all of the hard work and effort is the property of the artist and the promotion company who has an economic stake in the performance of the finished product. This prevents me from just going out, getting a song sheet for Human Beinz's *Nobody But Me*, recording the song in my garage, and selling it as my own work.

The RIAA also claims that Napster is working against up-and-coming artists. According to Chris Keup with MSNBC:

Until recently, if a band had the gall to try something original there was still one opportunity left to attract the of a major label—by racking up undeniable independent album sales. Dave Matthews is a perfect example of this approach. He attracted large crowds to his shows, but it was the 150,000-plus albums he sold independently that convinced RCA that this music could translate beyond a live setting.

Additionally, the RIAA uses the revenues from the sale of CD's, merchandise, and concerts generated by more successful artists to attract and encourage startup bands to take the leap and produce new music. By covering their bets with funds from big-name artists, they can afford to take a few risks on some unknown groups.

While these arguments are convincing, Napster and its defenders make some good points as well.

First, the impression of the music industry in the minds of the public is that of a bunch of goons, chasing after every and any penny they can, while sticking the public with the tepid and insipid offerings of formula bands and artists. That's what makes the protestations of multi-millionaire recording industry executives and recording artists seem so anti-listener—they are talking about preserving their legal rights while their CD's sell for \$18 a pop. Some are even going so far as to investigate avenues by which they can gain additional revenues from the resale of their recordings—say, at garage sales.

This sentiment goes hand in hand with the public's waning interest in other traditionally highly attended and viewed entertainment. Major League Baseball saw an enormous drop in attendance and viewership of its games after the disastrous 1994 players strike, which eventually canceled that year's World Series—something which hadn't even occurred during the trying times of the Great Depression and World War II.

The NBA and the NHL followed suit shortly thereafter with strikes or lockouts of their own. The NFL's Monday Night Football has seen its ratings plummet—leading to the sacking of two thirds of last year's broadcast team and the hiring of comedian Dennis Miller to spice up the banter. Taking a family to one of these events—once the most important method of getting people excited about the sport—has become an expense most families can no longer afford. Essentially, the multi-million dollar contracts of players and the huge salaries of the team's executives are pricing John Q. Public and his family out of the stadiums.

Napster contends that their service only allows participants to trade their recordings among themselves. Since no one is selling the music for a profit, there is no real copyright infringement. Napster's cause is strengthened by a recent decision from the Ninth Circuit US Court of Appeals, which declared that some non-commercial copying of music is protected by law. That protection extends even to making a song available for thousands of random Net users to download, the company's attorneys say—and that means Napster is doing nothing wrong.

Napster also sees itself as the best method for new artists to promote their work. By getting their songs out to as many people as possible, Napster says, struggling bands can get their big break into the recording industry.

How will this all shake out?

It's safe to say that the courts will have the final say in how this current arrangement will move into the future. I, however, have a simpler solution.

Why doesn't the recording industry pull their heads out of the sand and create an alternative way for listeners to hear their favorite music online and at their request? I'm sure these executives could create some type of service where, for a monthly fee or on a per-song basis, users could download as many files as they care to listen to. This way, users could get the songs they wanted while the industry could get some of their money back. Since all of the middle men (distributors, manufacturers, printers, etc.) would be out of the loop, these songs could be offered at a discount and still allow the artists and labels to make some decent money.

Of course, some people may still exchange these files with their friends. But, as long as it is on a small scale and not for profit, I guess they'd be treated like that long-haired kid dubbing Huey Lewis and the News records in his basement for his friends.

Copyright © 2000 Tom Iovino, tiovino@atpm.com.



Thoughts About Macworld New York

Well, as much as I would have liked to have been there, the Expo was 3,000 miles away, so like most of you I had to gather what information I could second-hand. I watched Jobs's keynote several hours after the fact (sorry Steve, nothing you say will get me up before 6 AM PDT) and was mostly pleased. Hardware was the focus of his presentation, and the software parts were largely reruns of Macworld San Francisco; here are my thoughts on Apple's new offerings:

What I Expected: New iMacs

The iMac is still Apple's big seller, and, after nine months, a new model was slightly overdue. The biggest improvement is in disk space, which makes sense given Apple's commitment to consumer digital video. The colors are a nice improvement, darker than the "fruity" shades of the previous iMacs and translucent like the original iMac DV SE. (I particularly like Indigo, which is my favorite shade of my favorite color.) Lowering the price of an entry-level iMac to \$799 was another great move. Now a newbie on a budget can swing the essentials—iMac, Zip drive, and an inexpensive printer—for about \$1000. PC companies may have to start paying people to take home ugly beige boxes.

As for musicians, the iMac is still best for hobbyists who plan to work mostly with MIDI. However, the absence of PCI slots and the inability to add a faster internal drive make these computers inadequate for professional multitrack digital audio. That may change, though. More shortly.

What I Hoped For: Dual Processors

I may not buy a multiprocessor Mac for years, but I am so happy that they exist. The new G4s are potentially the best digital recording hubs ever made. Once software companies start taking full advantage of both the Velocity Engine and the multitasking capabilities of OS X, we will witness a new revolution in professional digital audio. I picture software based mixers with potentially unlimited plug-ins, independent effects and compressors on every "channel," complex real-time manipulation of live audio, and other things I can't even imagine now. In five years, though, we may not be able to live without them.

What Surprised Me: The Cube

This one came practically out of nowhere. Yes, several rumor sites had been leaking information about a “cube-shaped Mac,” but they missed every other detail. The computer they described was ridiculous (14" either totally featureless and unopenable or just an ugly square iMac), while the computer Apple unveiled is exquisite.

I still can't quite believe that they made the computer that small and yet were able to leave out a fan. If anyone can appreciate a quiet computer, it's a musician. As I write this column, I'm constantly aware of my G3 humming softly under my desk. I take great comfort, though, in the fact that it is much quieter than some PCs I've seen that have fans in the case, on the motherboard, *and* on the video card. I've been on airplanes that were quieter—during takeoff! It's hard to judge sound quality over all that.

So the Cube is potentially a great computer for a musician. But it suffers from the same lack of expansion slots as the iMac. The more I think about it, though, the more I think that Apple's onto something. When the first iMacs came out two years ago, the biggest complaint was the lack of a floppy drive, an ADB port, a serial port, and a SCSI port. All it had was this weird new USB, and nobody made USB peripherals. But by designing the iMac the way they did, Apple forced the USB market into existence, and now USB is the standard serial protocol on all personal computers. Starting with the Blue and White G3s (mine's still purring away), Apple introduced another new protocol: FireWire. Though FireWire has been a hit in digital video, and some other peripherals have been introduced (hard drives, CD burners), the full potential of this very fast interface has yet to be realized.

The G4 Cube could have the same effect on the growth of FireWire as the iMac had on USB. Yamaha is currently developing the mLAN (or “music LAN”), a system that transmits both digital audio and MIDI over FireWire. In another year, we may see a fully functional digital studio rig built around a small and silent G4 Cube. I can't wait.

Music at Macworld

The Music and Sound Pavilion was back for a second time, but most of the presentations were repeats of January. The biggest news was Apple's increased publicity of this part of the Expo. The section was [showcased](#)¹ throughout the Expo at Apple's Web site, showing me that they haven't forgotten a small but still important part of the loyal Mac following.

1. <http://www.apple.com/creative/musicaudio/showcase/>

The other big news out of the Pavilion was the Velocity Engine-compatible Steinberg Cuebass VST 5.0. I expect Mark of the Unicorn and Emagic to follow Cuebass's lead shortly as each manufacturer jostles for position in luring former Opcode users. Hopefully, this competition will also encourage quick carbonization of each of these companies' flagship products.

And Finally: What About Those Speakers?

Harmon Kardon introduced two new speaker systems at Macworld. The G4 Cube speakers, which are actually two small spheres, and the "[sticks](#)¹" designed to upgrade the sound systems on all the new Macs. Both cover a wide frequency range (up to 20KHz, and down to 80Hz and 40Hz respectively), which can be enhanced with the iSub subwoofer. These speakers look good and hopefully sound good, too. My only objection is with Apple's wording on their Web site, which states "the audio signal is completely digital from the computer to the amplifier to the speaker cones." As far as I know, sending a digital signal (which is nothing but ones and zeroes) to a speaker cone would just produce an ultrasonic pulse wave. Maybe someone from Apple could contact me and convince me otherwise.

Next Month: My delayed review of Kyma 5.0, and a report from the Metasynth Camp in Ashland, Oregon.

Copyright © 2000 David Ozab, dozab@atpm.com. [David Ozab](#)² is a Ph.D student at the University of Oregon, where he teaches electronic music courses and assists in the day-to-day operation of The Future Music Oregon Studios.



1. http://www.harman-multimedia.com/phase_II/html/hsticks_overview.html
2. <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Edlo>

Schemin' and Themin'

In past *GUI Junkie* columns, we examined how to change the basics of the Macintosh graphical user interface—the icons of your drives, applications, and documents, and the desktop background. But what is a Mac user to do when that's not enough? What happens when you want to change the entire appearance of your Macintosh, including the ways the windows and menu bar look?

The Rise of the Scheme

When Apple first introduced Mac OS 8, Macintosh users the world over were drawn to the new, redrawn windows and folders, and their 3D effects. Greg LandWeber, a math student and programmer, liked the new interface so much that he coded a special extension that users could drop in their 7.x System folders to get the OS 8 look. It was called [Aaron](#)¹, and is still available for anyone not running OS 8 or above.

Aaron proved to be immensely popular, and led to Greg's development, with Arlo Rose, of what has become the premier way to change your Mac's interface: [Kaleidoscope](#)².

We are used to seeing the typical Macintosh window and files look like this:

Not too shabby, especially when compared to that other popular operating system. Very clean, very elegant.

But what do you do when you want a totally different look? Say, something classical, yet stylish. Uppercrust, even. That's the beauty of Kaleidoscope. Your Mac's new look is only limited by your imagination—and that of the Kaleidoscope scheme designers.

As for that classical, stylish look?

1. <http://kaleidoscope.net/greg/aaron.html>

2. <http://www.kaleidoscope.net>



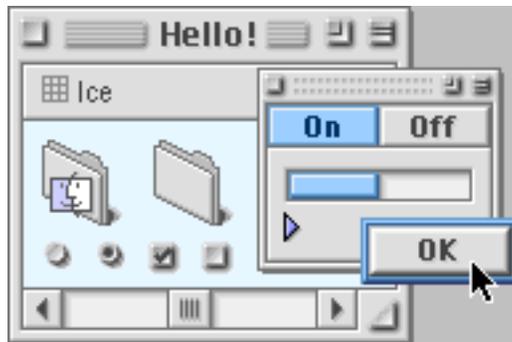
This Arlo Rose-designed scheme not wild enough for you? How about his Scherzo! scheme?



Perhaps you're more of the dark and silent type? There's a scheme for you too...



Or one for the light and cheery...



And these are just the schemes that come with the Kaleidoscope package! There are hundreds more available from the [Kaleidoscope Scheme Archive](http://www.kaleidoscope.net/schemes/)¹. Below are a few examples.

Like your Palm handheld so much, you want your desktop to follow suit? Then use Duncan Cowan's Co-Pilot.

Or maybe you'd prefer the colorful stylings of Gedeon Maheux & Albie Wong's collaboration, Echelon 8.5?

Kaleidoscope is compatible with all versions of the Mac OS, from System 7 through Mac OS 9. If

1. <http://www.kaleidoscope.net/schemes/>



you are using Mac OS 8 and later, Kaleidoscope will take full advantage of the Appearance Manager, so any Appearance-savvy application will automatically use Kaleidoscope's interface. Kaleidoscope also supports the new interface features introduced in Mac OS 8.5, including 32-bit icons, proportional scroll bars, window proxy icons, and sound.

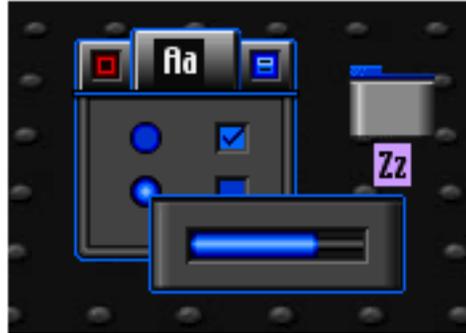
And Apple Said, Let There Be Themes (Well, Maybe Not...)

During development of Mac OS 8, Apple officially declared the name of the standard Mac interface to be Platinum. One of the reasons for this was that Apple was experimenting with the concepts of themes for the Mac OS.

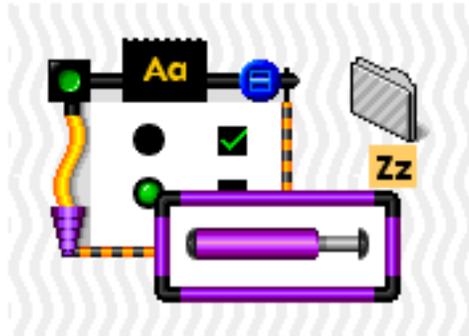
Themes are very similar to schemes, in that they change the overall appearance of the Mac interface. Unlike schemes, however, they do not require the use of a third-party utility like

Kaleidoscope. Rather, themes are part of the Mac OS, and reside in the Themes folder inside the Appearance folder inside the Macintosh System Folder.

Apple beta-tested three themes for Mac OS 8—alongside the default Platinum, there were Hi-Tech:

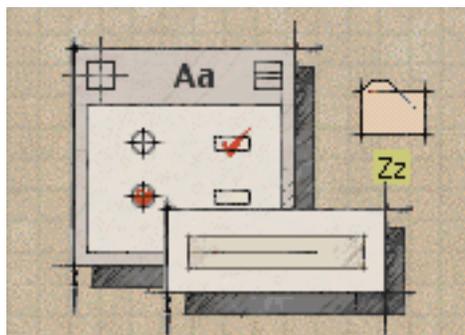


And Gizmo:



It was later learned that the third theme, Drawing Board, was tested only in Japan, though it found its way to other shores through the Internet.

However, these themes never saw the light of day beyond beta testing, and have not been included in any version of the Mac OS ever released to the general public. (And no, I cannot provide you with these themes, so please don't ask.) They live on in the Internet underground, but have led to the creation of new themes that you can simply drop into your System Folder and use.



A great place to start looking for new themes is the [wonderful theme archive](http://www.macthings.net/framesetformt.html?main=/themes/)¹ at Macthings.

Plays Well With Others

You can use both themes and schemes at the same time, but be aware that Kaleidoscope's schemes will override whatever theme you currently have chosen. In some strange cases, where you have a non-Platinum theme selected, and a Kaleidoscope scheme that doesn't quite change all of the system's icons, you can end up with some unusual combinations of clashing GUIs. Fortunately, Kaleidoscope tends to play well with the third-party themes, as their creators generally use the original Platinum theme as a base for their designs.

Next month, we'll explore in detail the operation of Kaleidoscope, and look at a step-by-step tutorial of changing themes within the Appearance control panel.

Copyright © 2000 Christopher Turner, cturner@atpm.com. Contributing Editor Christopher Turner has more schemes and themes than he knows what to do with, though he has gotten more choosy about the ones he uses frequently.



1. <http://www.macthings.net/framesetformt.html?main=/themes/>

About This Particular Web Site

by David Spencer, dspencer@atpm.com

Cartoonbank

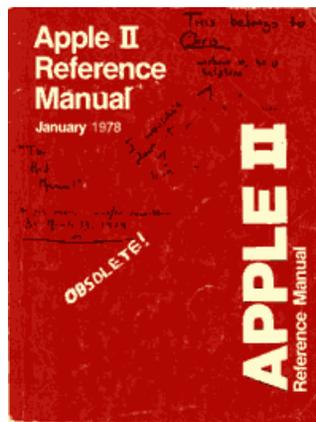
Web: <http://www.cartoonbank.com>
Classic New Yorker Cartoons

Do you have a favorite *New Yorker* cartoon? If so, check out Cartoonbank. It's a warehouse of *New Yorker* cartoons that you can view. But there's much more than just viewing a favorite cartoon—you can have a reprint made and framed, send e-cards, create vanity cartoons, and more. Hey, you might even find that cartoon drawn by *Seinfeld's* Elaine Benis.

Making the Macintosh

Web: <http://library.stanford.edu/mac/>
Technology and Culture in Silicon Valley

In Making the Macintosh, Stanford University has started an ongoing Web site to chronicle the Macintosh and how it was developed. Stanford is in a unique position to do this because the university has information from the original engineers and technical writers. The site is rich with information about how the Macintosh came to be. There are also a number of photographs, some of which have been rarely seen. It's a great complement to books like [Apple Confidential](#)¹.



From Making the Macintosh

1. <http://www.atpm.com/5.08/appleconfidential.shtml>

MSN's Computing Central: Bandwidth Speed Test

Web: <http://www.computingcentral.com/topics/bandwidth/speedtest500.asp>

How fast is your connection to the Internet...right now?

If you want to know how fast your Internet connection really is, check out this Web site. All you have to do is go to the site and it will determine the speed of your connection. There is also a thermometer that graphically displays your current speed, compared to such things as 56K modems, ISDN, and T-1 lines.

The Dialectizer

Web: <http://www.rinkworks.com/dialect/>

Jimbo! I reckon ya gotta come check this dern Web thingy out!

Imagine Microsoft's Web site written by the most backward redneck in Arkansas or Elmer Fudd writing the content on *USA Today's* site. Envisioned by Samuel Stoddard, this site converts otherwise proper English into several "lesser" dialects. The Dialectizer reads the text from the Web site of your choice and runs a script that changes key words into one of several different dialects. You can choose from Redneck, Jive, Cockney, Elmer Fudd, Swedish Chef, Moron, Pig Latin, and Hacker.

TrafficStation

Web: <http://www.trafficstation.com/>

Real-Time Traffic Reports

With maps of most major US cities, TrafficStation helps you keep one step ahead of a nasty traffic jam. All of the traffic information updates itself per minute—there's a clock that displays the last update. In cities that participate in traffic congestion readings, you can see just where the light, medium, and heavy traffic is. Additionally there are markers to denote construction areas, traffic accidents, and police/fire incidents.

If you register with my TrafficStation, you can get customized traffic reports and even have e-mails sent to your computer or cellular phone when traffic gets particularly nasty. The street information is restricted to major arteries within these cities, and there's no way to zoom in to a particular area. But, if the bulk of your travel is on a highway, this site may be of some use to you.

MacToolbox

Web: <http://www.mactoolbox.com/>

Resources for your Mac



TrafficStation

There are lots of Mac help sites out there, so what makes MacToolbox so unique? Odd as it might sound, I like the personal feel of it. Of course, there's great content—lots of excellent resources ranging from helpful books to Mac performance specs. You'll find a great help section and all kinds of odd facts about the Mac.

The whole site just feels friendly and approachable. And it's probably because the site is run by one individual—Darren Edwards. This is a great example of the kind of creativity the Macintosh fosters.

Copyright © 2000 David Spencer, dspencer@atpm.com. David Spencer has been a Mac advocate since 1991, when he traded in his IBM PC Jr. for a Mac Classic.



Part V: The GIF File Format

Before we start, here's a plea to all of you AT^PMers out there. In a few months time I will have come to the end of my planned *Graphics and the Internet* columns. So far we've looked at copyright, obtaining images, JPEGs, Banners, and (below) GIFs. In the coming months I'm going to be looking at GIF animation, things that look really bad on Web pages, and Web page layout tips. After that, the ball is in your court. So, if you could e-mail gosborne@atpm.com any questions you have or articles you'd like to see about Web graphics, I'd be extremely grateful.

Okay then, sorry about that interruption. On with the show.

GIFs are everywhere on the Web. They're like the 'Moby' of Internet graphics. In the same way that you can't turn on the TV without hearing a Moby song on a commercial, you can't surf the Web without seeing a GIF.

What's a GIF?

So, what are they all about? Why do we need them? Why can't we use JPEGs for everything?

GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format, and like most acronyms, that doesn't explain what it's for particularly well. The GIF was invented by CompuServe, who needed a universal format for graphics. The compression algorithm for GIFs is owned by Unisys, and anyone who produces software that creates GIFs has to obtain a license from Unisys to be able to do so. Luckily, we don't need licenses to make GIF files, so we can carry on as we were, without the fear of Unisys breathing down our necks.

If you read our article the other month on JPEGs you may remember that I said a JPEG suffers from 'lossy compression,' which basically means the more you shrink it, the more the quality of the image deteriorates. GIFs on the other hand, use a lossless compression algorithm, so that you don't lose any information when you save the file.

JPEGs vs. GIFs

Remember the [JPEG article](#)¹, when we said that JPEGs were best for photos? If not, go back and read that article now.

GIFs are good for: buttons, banners, text (in graphic form, rather than plain ol' HTML), and simplistic images.

GIFs come in two flavors, one is the GIF87a and the other is the GIF89a. Most graphics packages give you the choice of which you wish to save as. The main difference is that 89a supports animation, and 87a doesn't. Most browsers will read 89a now, so unless you have reason to do otherwise, stick to 89a.

Another difference between GIFs and JPEGs is the number of colors they allow in an image. JPEG images allow, in theory, 16.7 million colors. (I say "in theory" as you'd need to have a pretty large image to just fit one of each color.) GIF images allow only 256 colors. Remember this as we'll come back to this restriction later.

The other feature that JPEGs lack, but GIFs have, is the transparency feature. This allows you to select a color to be transparent, and when you insert it into your Web page, the background graphic shows through.

Creating GIFs

When creating GIFs, it's worth remembering that they will only allow 256 colors. If you're creating your GIF image in anything more than 256 colors, when you save your image as a GIF, your Mac has to get rid of any extra colors used, making your image look all messed up. If, when you start creating your image, you instruct your graphics program to only use 256 colors, then you'll be fine.

Bear in mind that a GIF with fewer colors and smaller physical size will end up with a smaller file size—very important for Web graphics. If a file is small it takes less time to download. The quicker your Web page takes to download, the less likely visitors will get bored and go elsewhere.

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.06/graphicsandtheinternet.shtml>

Saving GIFs

When you save an image as a GIF, you'll usually get several options, although sometimes you'll have to click on a button called 'Advanced' or 'Options' depending on what program you're using.

Save as 87a or 89a

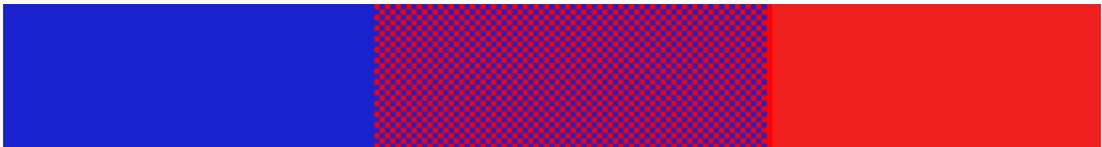
87a was the original version of GIF. 89a was a revision that allowed, amongst other things, animation and interlacing. The default is normally 89a, as this is widely supported.

Optimize Colors

Choosing this option will throw away any unused or little-used colors. Remember fewer colors = smaller file size.

Fewer Colors

Similar to the above option, but you get to choose how many colors your image will be saved with. Normally you'll be able to preview the image so you can see if it looks any good with, for example, 24 colors. When you reduce the colors, the software recreates the missing colors by dithering two colors together. Look at the example below—by mixing red and blue we get a purple color.



Row Order (interlaced or normal)

By choosing 'interlaced' over 'normal' your image will appear in a browser gradually as it is loaded, giving the viewer something to look at a lot quicker.

Use Exact Colors

If your image has 256 colors or fewer, then choosing this option will save your colors as you intended them.

Use System Colors

Choosing this option forces your image to take on a set of 216 predefined colors. This is called a Web-safe palette. More on this later.

Use Adaptive Colors

Choosing Adaptive gives the best results if the Exact option is unavailable. The Adaptive option chooses the colors for your image based on its existing colors. Say, for example, you have a picture of the sea on a sunny day. The Adaptive palette would mainly consist of blues. When a GIF with an adaptive palette is shown on a Web page with another GIF image, the browser will adapt the palette to give the best results for both images. This isn't always needed with today's 24-bit monitors, though.

Transparent GIFs

The trouble with computer graphics is that they are so square. You can get around this limitation by making part of the image transparent. When you put this image on a Web page with a patterned background, you can see the background through the image. Here's an example.



GIF Without Transparency



GIF With Transparency

Check out your manuals and help files to find out how to use transparency with your graphics software. Most of the time it's part of the Advanced Saving Options and you can choose which color(s) to make transparent.

One of the problems of transparent GIFs is that you can only have full transparency or no transparency. There's no middle ground, so you can't have a pixel that has 50% opacity. This can cause a problem when you show a GIF on a dark-patterned background.

Most applications have anti-aliasing features. This stops your images looking jagged by placing mid-color pixels to 'blend' away the sharp edges. On the image above, the anti-aliasing puts different shades of gray between the black and white to smooth the edge.



With Anti-Aliasing



Without Anti-Aliasing

However, when we put the GIF on a darker background, the transparency feature just takes away the pure white background, and leaves all that anti-aliasing stuff behind, giving us a stupid looking white edge glow.

How can we avoid this problem? Well, there is a simple solution. You need to use a graphics package that supports layers. (I've used Adobe Photoshop, but I don't like to specify particular software as not everyone has the same programs. Corel Paint or Photo Deluxe will do the same job.)

- Load the image that you want to make transparent.



- Create a new layer underneath your image.
- Change the color of the new layer to a prominent color in your Web page background. As the example uses a range of pink hues, I've chosen a mid-pink color for our background. (below)



- Now when you save your image (using the pink as your transparent color) instead of having a white glow around the image, you will have a nice, hardly noticeable pink glow.
- Problem Solved!

Web-Safe Colors

Earlier on in the article I mentioned Web-safe colors. I'm not going to spend a long time on these as they are really, really boring, and a quick search on Yahoo! will give you more than enough information to send you to sleep.

Basically there are 216 "safe" colors that will look the same on Windows as they will on Mac OS, regardless of whether the user's computer has 256 colors or millions and millions. Any colors which aren't part of this exclusive club could look dithered.

216 sounds like quite a lot of colors, but wait until you see the choice you get. It's the modern equivalent of trying to paint a picture of a woodland scene with a paint box that has 10 different pinks, 10 different blues, and not much else. If you want your images to look good on all systems, stick with Web-safe colors. You can set most graphics software to limit you to just using these colors.

Shrinking the Size of GIFs

If you want to reduce the size of a GIF, you can either visit the [GIFcruncher Web site](#)¹ or you can do it by hand.

To reduce the size by hand, it pays to know how GIF compression works. Look at the two images below. They are both the same image but one is rotated 90 degrees.

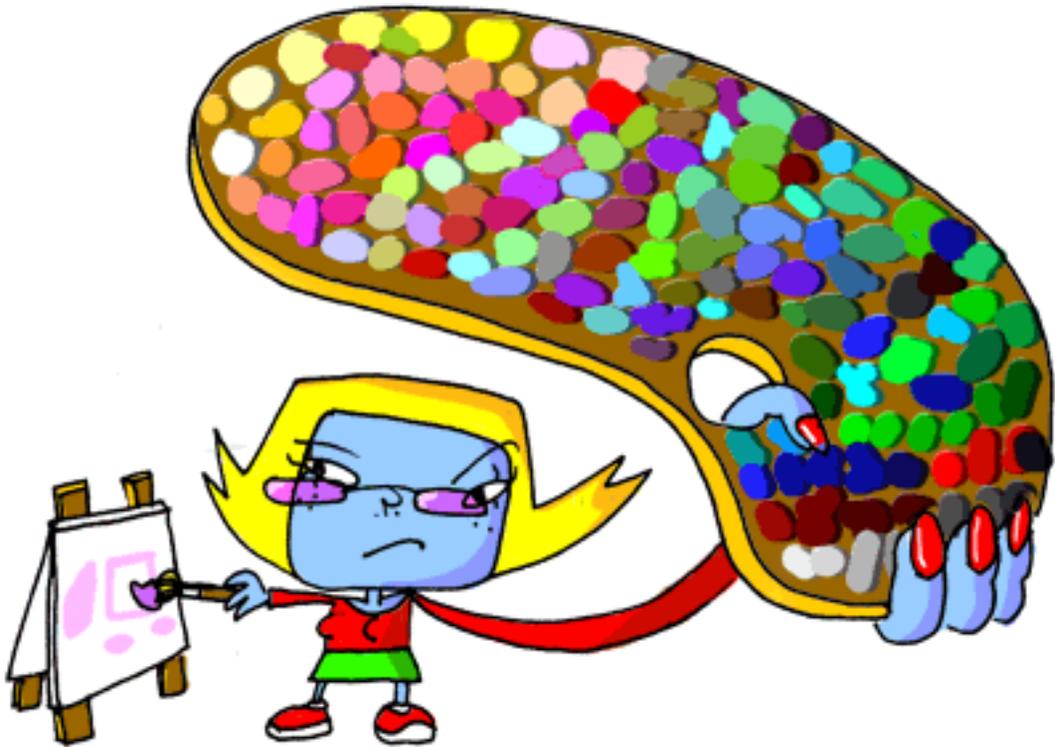
The image with the horizontal stripes is 4.7K and the image with vertical stripes is 5.5K. That's a whole 0.8K difference.

Why is this? Well, when it saves the image, the compression algorithm looks at each horizontal line one by one.

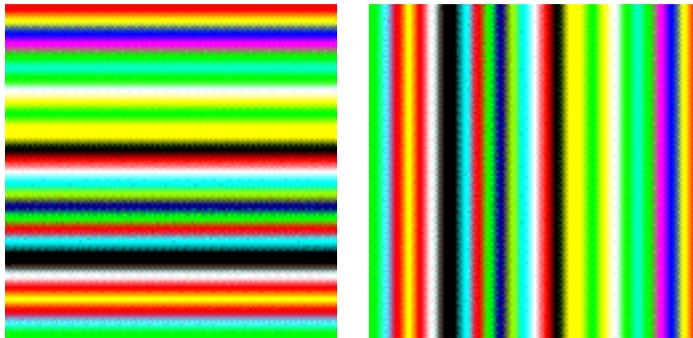
In the case of the horizontal lines image:

Line (1): A big long red line. Line (2): Another big long red line. Line (3): Again, another big long red line. Line (4): A big long yellow line. Line (5): Another big long yellow line. Line (6): Again, another big long yellow line. Line (7): A big long blue line. Line (8): Another big long blue line...and so on.

1. <http://www.gifcruncher.com>



The Web-Safe Palette



In the case of the vertical lines image:

Line (1): There's a few red pixels, a few yellow pixels, a few blue pixels, a few purple pixels, a few green pixels, a few cyan pixels, a few more green pixels... and so on...
Line (2): There's a few red pixels, a few yellow pixels, a few blue pixels, a few purple pixels, a few green pixels, a few cyan pixels, a few more green pixels...and so on...
Line (3): There's a few red pixels, a few yellow pixels,

a few blue pixels, a few purple pixels, a few green pixels, a few cyan pixels, a few more green pixels...and so on...and so on.

We can see that in the vertical lines example, we need a lot more information for each line, making the file size bigger. We can use this information to reduce the file size of the image below.



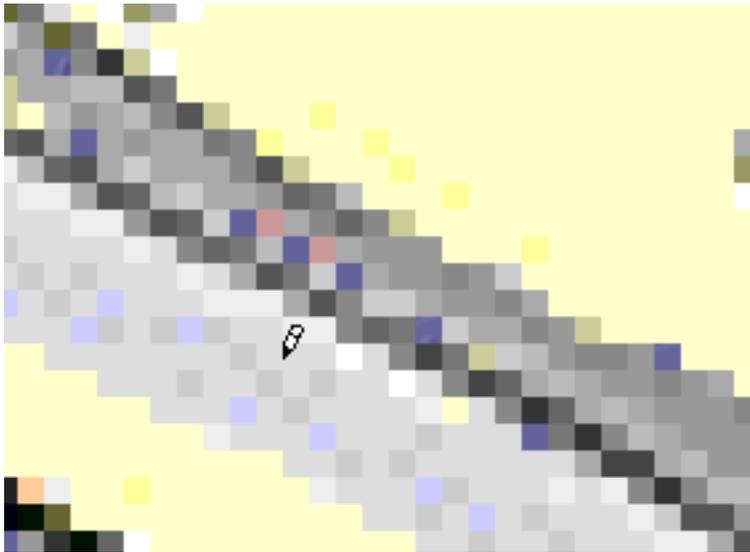
The image on the left is the original GIF and it is 21.7K. The image on the right is the same GIF after we have manually reduced its size. This is now 13.8K.

Before starting this sort of thing, reduce the number of colors to an acceptable level (without making the image distorted), and turn off any anti-aliasing on your software.

Reducing a GIF's file size by hand can take a bit of time and patience. The main difference

between the two images is the backgrounds. On the second image we have replaced the shaded background with six plain stripes with no dithering. This will reduce the file size by a large amount.

The second thing we have done is removed any extraneous pixels. If you look at a close-up of the monitor image below, you'll see that the shadow is made up of two similar looking gray colors. Removing one of the grays by simply drawing over it with the other gray color will help keep the file size down.



If this is all a bit too time consuming and boring, there are several shareware and commercial programs that can optimize GIFs for you. Check out Photo GIF by [BoxTop Software](#)¹.

If you want to find out more about GIFs, why not go back in time and read Jamal Ghandour's excellent *Art Department* columns in ATPM 4.03 and 4.04. These cover [Web Palettes](#)² and [Transparency](#)³.

Next month I'll be showing you how to create an animated GIF. Please send any comments or

1. <http://www.boxtopsoft.com>
2. <http://www.atpm.com/4.03/page10.shtml>
3. <http://www.atpm.com/4.04/page9.shtml>

questions on this or about anything to do with Web Graphics to gosborne@atpm.com.

Copyright © 2000 Grant Osborne, gosborne@atpm.com.



Extras: Cartoon

by Michael Morgan, mrspiffy@earthlink.net



Copyright © 2000 Michael Morgan, mrspiffy@earthlink.net.



Insects and Konstanz

After 15 months of having regular desktop pictures featured in ATPM, we decided to do something different. Due to the large numbers of talented photographers interested in having their pictures made available to our readers, we decided to double the fun and have two desktop pictures series in each issue of ATPM instead of just one. In future issues, we will also introduce the ability to “vote” for your favorite pictures, allowing us to give you even more of what you want.

We also want to allow you to share you favorite photos with others. If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, feel free to send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll publish it in next month's issue. Have a regular print but no scanner? Don't worry. E-mail us, and we tell you where to send it so we can scan it for you. Note that we cannot return the original print, so send us a copy.

Insect Desktop Pictures

Juri Munkki of Helsinki, Finland used a Nikon Coolpix 950 to capture these [macro-photographs of various insects](#)¹.

You need a bit of patience and luck to get interesting pictures of bumblebees and butterflies, but it also helps to use a relatively high shutter speed. Shutter speed and aperture will almost always be a compromise—a wide open iris will severely limit the depth of field, whereas smaller iris sizes will usually result in long exposure times that fail to freeze the image properly.

The macro mode on the 950 allows you to get close, especially when the zoom is in the optimal range, indicated by the change in color of the macro mode indicator.

At times, the auto-focus is fooled into focusing on the background or on something other than your target. In those cases, either manual focus can be used (move the camera back and forth to find the limits of the depth of field). Alternatively the shutter button can be pressed halfway down to lock the focus on an easier target, such as your own finger. Then, while still holding the button, the photo can be recomposed using the real target.

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/insects/>

Next time you see flowers, have a closer look and you'll probably find beautiful insects having a feast somewhere in there.

Konstanz Desktop Pictures

[These pictures](#)¹ come courtesy of [Jens Grabenstein](#)². The photos were taken with a Canon EOS 300 using a 28–80 mm zoom lens and 200 ASA 35mm Kodak film. Most of the photos were taken in the surroundings of Konstanz, a small town located in the South of Germany, close to the Swiss border. The photos were developed and digitalized using [Kodak PhotoCD technology](#)³. Re-sampling and re-touching were performed with [Adobe Photoshop 5.5](#)⁴.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

If you haven't seen the rest of the series, it includes: [Yellowstone National Park](#)⁵, [Drops](#)⁶, [Toronto](#)⁷, [Niagara Falls](#)⁸, [Monaco](#)⁹, [Montréal](#)¹⁰, [Bahamas](#)¹¹, [Clouds](#)¹², [Aerial](#)¹³, [Made with Macs](#)¹⁴, [Landscapes](#)¹⁵, [Northwest](#)¹⁶, [Animals](#)¹⁷, [Spring Flora](#)¹⁸, [National Parks](#)¹⁹, [Insects](#)²⁰, and [Konstanz](#)²¹.

-
1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/konstanz/>
 2. <http://www.grabenstein.de>
 3. <http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/products/pictureCD/pc/>
 4. <http://www.atpm.com/6.07/updates.shtml>
 5. <http://www.atpm.com/5.03/yellowstone.shtml>
 6. <http://www.atpm.com/5.05/drops/>
 7. <http://www.atpm.com/5.07/toronto/>
 8. <http://www.atpm.com/5.08/niagara/>
 9. <http://www.atpm.com/5.09/monaco/>
 10. <http://www.atpm.com/5.10/montreal/>
 11. <http://www.atpm.com/5.11/bahamas/>
 12. <http://www.atpm.com/5.12/clouds/>
 13. <http://www.atpm.com/6.01/aerial/>
 14. <http://www.atpm.com/6.02/madewithmacs/>
 15. <http://www.atpm.com/6.03/landscapes/>
 16. <http://www.atpm.com/6.04/northwest/>
 17. <http://www.atpm.com/6.05/animals/>
 18. <http://www.atpm.com/6.06/spring-flora/>
 19. <http://www.atpm.com/6.07/national-parks/>
 20. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/insects/>
 21. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/konstanz/>

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS 8.5 and Newer

Go to the “Appearance” control panel. Click on the “Desktop” tab at the top of the window. Press the “Place Picture...” button in the bottom right corner, then select the desired image. By default, it will show you the images in the “Desktop Pictures” subfolder of your “Appearance” folder in the System Folder, however you can select images from anywhere on your hard disk.

After you select the desired image file and press “Choose,” a preview will appear in the Appearance window. The “Position Automatically” selection is usually fine. You can play with the settings to see if you like the others better. You will see the result in the little preview screen.

If you are satisfied with the selection, click on “Set Desktop” in the lower right corner of the window. That’s it! Should you ever want to get rid of it, just go to the desktop settings again and press “Remove Picture.”

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

Go to the “Desktop Patterns” control panel. Click on “Desktop Pictures” in the list on the left of the window, and follow steps similar to the ones above.

Random Desktop Pictures

If you drag a folder of pictures onto the miniature desktop in the Appearance or Desktop Pictures control panel, your Mac will choose one from the folder at random when it starts up.

DeskPicture

An alternative to Mac OS’s Appearance control panel is Pierce Software’s DeskPicture, [reviewed](#)¹ in issue 5.10 and available for [download](#)².



1. <http://www.atpm.com/5.10/roundup.shtml>
2. <http://www.peircesw.com/DeskPicture.html>

Extras: Segments

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Macworld New York 2000 Wrap-up

If you're reading this, then I did indeed find my way back to Penn Station, completing my first trip to Macworld since the 1997 show in Boston. By now, you're probably sick and tired of reading the seemingly endless press releases on new products that were announced at the show, so I considered not even mentioning the new products. Then I realized, that would make for a fairly pointless article. So what I finally decided on is what you get here: some weird combination of what's new, my experiences at the show, and a few editorial comments thrown in on my part. I also brought back some photographs, which can be found in ATPM's [Macworld gallery](#)¹. Enjoy!

First of all, New York is definitely different than Boston was in '97. For starters, there was shuttle from the train station to the show. Yes, the Javits Center is only a few blocks from Penn Station, but this was my first trip into the Javits Center and there were some moments of consternation as I tried to figure out exactly how I was going to the Expo, not to mention avoiding the adult video store across the street from the station.

Second of all, you could definitely tell the difference between the show in Boston with PowerComputing and this year's without the former clone maker. Don't get me wrong—with the benefit of hindsight, killing the clones was the proper decision for the time. Unfortunately, this significantly reduced the odds of an ATPM staff member (this year, that would be me) [winning a free computer](#)².

New Mouse and Keyboard

At last year's keynote address, Apple showed that they know how to laugh, when Noah Wyle, of *ER* and [Pirates of Silicon Valley](#)³ fame, walked out on stage playing the role of Steve Jobs. This year, Apple showed that they know how to listen to their users.

The keynote started with Jobs announcing a new Pro keyboard and mouse that would ship with all new Macintosh desktop models. The keyboard features virtually the same layout of arguably

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/macworld-gallery/>

2. <http://www.atpm.com/3.08/page10.shtml>

3. <http://us.imdb.com/Title?0168122>

Apple's best keyboard, the Apple Extended Keyboard II. The only changes are the addition of four keys for controlling the CD/DVD drives that ship with the computer.

The new mouse is also quite impressive. It is an optical mouse, so it has no moving parts. Furthermore, the standard mouse button has been eliminated. Now, the entire front half of the mouse clicks. At first, I was concerned that it would be easy to inadvertently click the button while moving it around. After using the mouse for a few minutes, I don't think this will be a problem.

The new keyboard and mouse aren't perfect, however. The biggest problem with the mouse is that it still uses a single button. I have larger issues with the Pro Keyboard. Although the keyboard looks like an Apple Extended Keyboard, it still has the mushy keys of the keyboard that debuted with the iMac. I use one of these keyboards at work and have noticed that key presses don't always register. It seems like you need to press each key a certain way or it won't work. If Apple has fixed this in the Pro Keyboard, then I might be able to live with the mushiness of the keys. If not, I will continue to use my third-party keyboard.

Although some users may be unhappy with the new Pro Keyboard and Mouse, I think Apple made the correct decision designing the ultimate mouse and keyboard combo. When the iMac first appeared, there were very few USB devices. Furthermore, none of these devices looked like they belonged next to an iMac. Companies like MacAlly and ContourDesign quickly filled this void with iMac styled hubs, cables, keyboards, mice, and mouse adaptors. Yes, these companies made good money on these devices, but they also helped the iMac in its successful debut by making sure that you could use your computer for more than a pretty paperweight.

Many new users will be happy with the new devices, though power users may want more. These people will go to companies such as MacAlly and ContourDesign. Had Apple released a two or three-button optical mouse and the ultimate USB keyboard, it would have seriously harmed, if not destroyed, the peripheral makers who contributed to Apple's success. The new Apple seems to be learning that you need to play nice with the companies that contribute to your success. In the short run, it may cost some sales (for instance, I purchased a MicroConnectors keyboard instead of ordering the Pro Keyboard), but in the long run it will turn out better for both Apple and Macintosh users.

New iMacs

The new iMacs look good. The new colors are bolder than the older colors. Also, by limiting the number of colors, Apple may be making the iMac more appealing to retailers. For those who can

remember back to the Best Buy fiasco, the main issue was that Best Buy did not want to carry all five “flavors” for fear that one or two wouldn’t sell.



Two of the New iMacs

The two low-end iMacs, the iMac and the iMac DV, aren’t that different from the previous offerings. In fact, the new iMac DV is a downgrade on the old iMac DV in that the DVD drive has been replaced by a CD drive. The big change, aside from the colors (indigo for the iMac, indigo and ruby for the iMac DV) is the price drop. The iMac now sells for \$799, making it the lowest-priced iMac ever. The iMac DV has been reduced to \$999, making it the least expensive Macintosh with built-in digital video capabilities.

The iMac DV+, in indigo, ruby, and sage, essentially takes the place of the old iMac DV, although the processor is now 450MHz. It is priced at \$1299. The only big change is in the iMac DV SE. Available in graphite, the only color to survive into the new generation, and snow, it features a 500 MHz G3 processor, 128 MB of RAM, and a 30 GB hard drive. Even though all this has been added, the DV SE still retains the same price of \$1499.

New Power Macs

At first glance, it doesn’t seem that much has changed in the high-end G4s. For starters, the processor speeds remain the same—400 MHz, 450 MHz, and 500 MHz. However, the 450 MHz and 500 MHz models now feature dual processors. Also, the 10/100 Ethernet port has been supplanted by a gigabit (10/100/1000) Ethernet port on the motherboard. Typically, this is a \$1000 option on high-end servers; this is the first time it has been offered standard on a consumer

machine.

Finally, the hard drive sizes have been increased to 20 GB, 30 GB, and 40 GB on the 400 MHz, 450 MHz, and 500 MHz machines, respectively. Even with these changes, the prices will remain the same: \$1599 for the 400 MHz model, \$2499 for the 450 MHz, and \$3499 for the high end 500 MHz machine.



Power Mac G4 Cube with Cinema Display

Of course, the most stunning product announcement was the introduction of the Power Mac G4 Cube. Measuring 8" x 8" x 8" and housed in a clear rectangular case, it is the possibly the smallest desktop machine to ever ship. Even if it isn't, it still represents the first time this much power has been packed into a box this small. It includes a top mounted DVD drive that bears a scary resemblance to a toaster when a disk is sticking out. Also, it comes standard with either a 450 MHz or 500 MHz G4 processor, either 64 or 128 MB of RAM, either a 20 GB or 30 GB hard drive, and 10/100 Ethernet. 1000Base-T is an BTO option available later in September.

No doubt, the Cube looks beautiful, but I sincerely wonder who it is aimed at. At \$1799 for the 450 MHz model and \$2299 for the 500 MHz model, it comes close to the price range of the higher-end G4s. Perhaps Apple's plans will become clearer as we get closer to the Cube's September release date.



Down on the Floor

Yeah, its fun to see what Apple has to offer at Expo time, but the fact is you know something's going to be coming. It's like those people who complain that they watched the keynote and learned that the computer they bought three weeks ago had been replaced by a newer machine at the same price. If you know enough about Apple to watch the keynote, you know Steve Jobs will be introducing something new. The real fun of the Expo is the experience of being on the floor.

Like I said earlier, this was my first Macworld Expo since 1997. That show was an interesting show—it was the beginning of the end for Mac cloning, it was the last show in Boston (though we didn't know that at the time), and it was the beginning of Apple's miraculous turnaround. Between the first day and the second day of the show, the stock price went from around \$13 to around \$25.

Obviously, when companies were booking space at that show, they didn't know Apple was starting to turn itself around. Very few large, cross-platform companies were at the show. Off the top of my head, there was Adobe, Microsoft, and Symantec. Many smaller developers were present,

including commercial developers (such as Bare Bones Software) and shareware developers.

Fast-forward to 2000. In addition to the three large developers mentioned above, other newly cross-platform companies made an appearance at Macworld. 3dfx was demonstrating its new Voodoo5 card. IBM was showing off ViaVoice. Creative was at its first Macworld exhibiting its Nomad line of MP3 players, its Sound Blaster Live audio card, and the WebCam. Also, I noticed a lot of e-commerce providers setting up shop at the Expo; perhaps this means we will be seeing Macs used in more e-commerce solutions.

Although it was nice to see newer companies displaying at Macworld, several other developers were noticeably absent. That list included the aforementioned Bare Bones Software, REAL Software, and FWB. Also, very few shareware companies were able to purchase booth space at this year's show, which really is too bad.

For those who don't know the Javits Center, the floor of the Expo was really divided into two areas. Unlike the Boston shows, which were split between two buildings, there was no line that indicated larger booths on one side and smaller booths on the other. For instance, Adobe and Microsoft were on one side while IBM was on the other. Apple had its display on the side with Adobe and Microsoft but set up various pavilions (music, consumer, education, etc.) on the other side.

The showroom floor was decidedly packed. At times, I found it difficult to get from point A to point B because of the crowds. Although frustrating at times, this is a good thing. Although I would have liked to float freely and talk to whoever I wanted whenever I wanted, it's a better sign for Apple that the bodies were packed tight.

Another thing that I noticed was that the show was nowhere near as loud as my last Expo. In Boston, various booths actively riled up the crowds. At one point, the PowerComputing and LinoColor booths had chants of "PowerComputing Rocks!" and "We Kid You Not!" going across an aisle-way.

This year, there was none of that nonsense. No trash-talking, no cross-aisle chanting. It was a bit disappointing, really. The closest anybody came to saying anything was Adobe referring to a competitors program as, "...that other program." I'm not sure what application the rep was referring to, but I think he was demoing LiveMotion, so he was likely talking about Macromedia Flash.

Finally, one of the great things about going to the Expo is getting free stuff. In past years, I used the

freebies to justify the cost of the show—“Yes, it cost \$25 to get in, but I got at least twice that much in free stuff.” Let’s just say that it was a good thing I had gotten a free pass to this year’s show. It used to be the case that companies would give you a T-shirt or something for coming within five feet of their booths. This year, companies were much more frugal. At first, Ambrosia would only give you a shirt if you ate a bug. MusicMatch tossed some T-shirts to the crowd, but only a handful of people got them at the time. All told, I walked out with a rubber bug, two plastic balls, a rubber hockey puck, a pen, an “I hate PCs” pin, a download calculator, and a bunch of magazines. What a depressing bounty. On the other hand, I almost had my left thumb ripped off by a flying Ambrosia CD.

Let the Games Begin

Ok, now we get to the fun stuff—games! The last time I went to Macworld, gaming wasn’t a major focus. Motorola was running a racing competition on their StarMax clones and Bungie was present, but that was about it. At that show, the only thing I bought was a \$10 solitaire game for my mother. There wasn’t much available beyond that or the Marathon series; that should give you an idea of how slim the offerings really were in that department.

This year was quite different. Both MacSoft and Aspyr had booths set up and were selling games, including some of the newer offerings like The Sims, Driver (pre-order only), and Deus Ex. Blizzard also had a good-size booth where they were showing and selling Diablo II, as well as announcing that Warcraft III would be released for the Macintosh. Finally, GraphSim was present and showing their newest port, Baldur’s Gate.

The hub of the Mac gaming world at Macworld was easily the 3dfx booth. Along with demoing the Voodoo5 graphics card, the booth had computers set up where attendees could try out new games like the previously mentioned The Sims, Deus Ex, and Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation. Also available to salivate over were pre-release games such as Rune, Driver and Oni. Without 3dfx, several games would not have seen the Expo floor as their developers or publishers had no plans to purchase booth space at the show. 3dfx definitely is showing that it wants in on the potentially lucrative Mac gaming market.

Nectar of the Gods?

No mention of the 3dfx booth would be complete without at least a passing reference to what occurred between 2:00 and 2:30 PM on each day of the show. At last year’s Expo, Ambrosia’s Jason Whong said he would eat real bugs at this year’s show if any Ambrosia product shipped in the

following fall, winter, or spring containing bugs. No sooner had he said that than Ambrosia's next product shipped and several bugs were discovered by users.

For a short while, there was some question as to how Jason would keep up his end of the bargain—you see, Ambrosia had no presence planned at this year's show, and furthermore Jason had since left Ambrosia to become Assistant Product Manager at Green Dragon Creations. Well, 3dfx stepped in and brought Jason and Ambrosia together for this special culinary opportunity. Each day, Jason ate three courses of bugs. I was only present for the second day, but we were informed that Jason had indeed thrown up that morning, and he was fairly sure it wasn't alcohol-related as he'd had very little to drink the night before. Thursday's menu opened with mealworm stir-fry, followed up by cockroach (including leftover hissing cockroach from the previous day), and finished off with a dessert of tarantula.



Jason Whong Dines on Mealworm Stir-Fry

To give Jason's palette a chance to recover, Ambrosia demoed two of their upcoming releases between the courses. First was Pop-Pop, which can only be described as Tetris meets Breakout, with a little anim  and thumping music thrown in for kicks. Second was Ragnorak. There really wasn't much to be shown at this point—the terrain engine is done, however, and it looks great.

Before the name of the game was revealed, I heard several people saying “Is that Halo?” Ragnorak should be out around the end of the year.

On a side note: if you’re disappointed that you missed Jason’s show at Macworld this year, you might not be out of luck. During the demo of Ragnorak, a bug reared its ugly head, so you might want to start planning for next year.

Also, I wonder if it’s too late to have Judge Jackson make an addition to his ruling. Personally, I believe that whenever a Microsoft product ships with a bug, whoever ordered it to ship must eat an insect for each bug found. Call me crazy, but had Microsoft used this tactic throughout its history, I’m willing to bet product quality would have been much higher—who knows, Windows users might never have seen the infamous Blue Screen of Death.

Microsoft

While on the topic of Microsoft, I think it’s important to note how much the Macintosh world has changed since 1997. For those who don’t know the story, Bill Gates appeared on the giant screen behind Steve Jobs to announce that Microsoft would produce Office for the Mac for at least the next five years. To put it lightly, Gates was not greeted warmly. This year, when the Microsoft rep walked on stage to talk about Office 2001, there was actually some applause.

I can honestly say I’m not impressed by what I saw of Office 2001. I watched the demo in the keynote, then I sat through a longer demo the next day. Yeah, the interface is cleaner and more Mac-like—for instance, control-clicking finally brings up the contextual menu. Hiring the guys from [The Iconfactory](http://www.iconfactory.com/)¹ was another nice step.

Aside from these improvements, there’s nothing making me say “I’ve gotta have that!” Entourage could be useful, but it’s really Microsoft Outlook for the Mac. Nothing in Word jumped out at me. Excel finally has some list management tools, but the biggest improvement seems to be in PowerPoint. In 2001, you’ll be able to save your slide show as a QuickTime movie, allowing virtually anybody to view it.

Thankfully, the file formats in 2001 will be the same as the formats in 98 for the Mac and 97 and 2000 for the PC. If you are happy with 98, you can continue to use it without fear of losing compatibility with those with whom you exchange files. Microsoft is trying to improve cross-

1. <http://www.iconfactory.com/>

platform compatibility, though. The new version will include a check box to automatically append the three-letter DOS extension to the end of the file name. If this option could be turned on by default, it could make life much simpler in cross-platform environments.

Things almost turned very ugly very quickly following the Office demo. The next person brought on stage was Microsoft's Vice President of Gaming, Ed Freis. Freis announced that Microsoft would begin to port many of its games to Mac. Then he mentioned that many of the people in attendance knew that Microsoft had purchased Bungie to secure Halo for Xbox. Had Freis uttered something along the line of "Halo will not be coming out for the Mac," or the words "Halo is going to be an Xbox-only title," I don't think he would have gotten off the stage alive. It would have made '97 look like a standing ovation. Fortunately for both Freis and the Macintosh games world, he brought Bungie's co-founder, Alexander Seropian, on stage. Seropian announced that Halo would in fact be available for the Macintosh. On that note, Freis was allowed to live.

Demos, Demos Everywhere...

...but not a beta in sight. To the disappointment of many, myself included, Jobs announced that Mac OS X beta would ship in September. Now, before anybody starts screaming "It's slipping!," recall that Apple promised a beta "in the summer" and that September is still in summer. Many of us hoped we'd be able to pick up a copy at the show, but it just wasn't to be.

Thankfully, we were able to get our fix of X with the numerous demo stations Apple had set up around their area. In demoing the next generation OS, Apple was also highlighting their new monitor offerings; the demos were running on G4s attached to the new 22" and 15" LCD displays and the new 17" CRT display. Let me just say that Aqua looks like it was designed to be run on these machines. I've been looking for an excuse to get a larger monitor on my personal system. I just never dreamed it would be "...but beige clashes with my menu bar!" Let me add this side note—you may have seen the pictures of the older 22" Cinema Display in magazines, but you won't realize the true size of the picture till you see it in action. My first reaction was "Wow." Strangely enough, that was also my second and third reactions.

Aqua looks great. I've seen the pictures, but until you've seen it up close and personal, you don't know what you're missing. When I first read about Aqua after its introduction, my initial thought was "What the hell are they thinking?!?" I'd mellowed a bit since, but almost all of my doubts vanished when I saw the demo in action. It's still a little odd seeing a text menu at the left side of the menu bar. The dock still leaves some things to be desired. Apple is definitely making some improvements as the public beta draws nearer, though. For instance, the disclosure triangles,

which were absent from earlier versions of the OS, are back.

One tidbit an Apple employee told me was that dragging a disk to the trash could go the way of System 7's "Publish and Subscribe" feature. Over the life of the Mac OS, the dragging of disks to the trash has been the #1 complaint of users. The contextual menu and the keyboard may become the only way to eject disks. Personally, I think it's a good thing that new users will be encouraged to use other methods, as dragging a disk to the trash is counter-intuitive. However, some of us have been doing it this way for over ten years. The old functionality should remain for those set in their ways. Furthermore, if Apple changes it so that dragging to the trash erases a disk, it will, at least temporarily, confuse scores of long-time users.

We've about a month or so until the public beta. It is possible that aspects of OS X will change before it gets into our hands. I liked what I saw at the Expo and I think it will be interesting to see how the software looks when Apple makes it available to the general public.

Odds and Ends

Well, there are always those portions of an Expo that really don't fit into any given category, but they're really too good not to mention. I guess the first thing would be ATI's monumental screw-up on the Tuesday before the keynote. In case you didn't hear, ATI spilled the beans that there would be at least two new G4s and one new iMac. Now Steve Jobs doesn't like it when people spoil his surprises. The end result was that ATI was *persona non grata* when it came to Apple. For the first time in several years, there are other companies (3dfx and nVidia) saying they want in on OEM deals with Apple. ATI doesn't need to give Apple any reasons to look towards its competitors.

Come to think of it, this could be the best thing ATI's done for Mac users in years...

I finally had a chance to meet somebody who worked on a piece of software I've reviewed—Rusty Little of Alsoft (see ATPM 6.03 for the review of [DiskWarrior 2.0](http://www.alsoft.com/diskwarrior2.0)¹). We talked for a while, and he shared an amusing tidbit with me. Seems Apple announced that there would be live music at the annual developer bash during the Expo. In my experience, the nondescript "live music" usually means a local band, and I'm sure there are plenty of those around New York City. Apparently, Apple's love for secrets extend to party planning, because the "live music" turned out to be Smash Mouth. You know, there are times I really want to be a developer!

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.03/diskwarrior.shtml>



Eric Blair, your faithful reporter



Alsoft Guys

The award for coolest display goes to Intego, makers of NetBarrier, reviewed [last month](#)¹. Intego's display was a huge green rook that reached to the ceiling. The rook contained a monitor where

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.07/netbarrier.shtml>

Intego's software was demoed. Unfortunately, my camera died while the rook was still on my list of photos to take, so I can't share it with you. However, I have a feeling the sheer size of it would have been lost in the translation.

And finally, the hit product of the show could end up being Rewind, from Power On Software. Rewind is a utility that stores the most recent actions on your computer and lets you undo any action. You don't know how many times I've wished for something like this, including the first time I accidentally replaced an application with a folder. Power On has had several popular and successful utilities from its Action line and it looks like it could have another winner here. This application could end up as the next "must-have" utility for the Mac, especially with the scores of new users the iMac has brought to the platform.

Well, that's about it from the floor of the Expo. I'd say it was definitely a positive note to mark the final Macworld New York of the millennium. See you at next year's show!

Copyright © 2000 Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com. Illustration by Grant Osborne.



Review: Updates

by the ATPM Staff, updates@atpm.com

Agenda 1.1

 [Agenda](#)¹, originally [reviewed](#)² in issue 6.06, has been updated to version 1.1. This release fixes many of the problems with the original iMac-like interface. The Power menu has been replaced with the standard file menu and the calendar now “turns on” automatically when the program is launched. It also sports a larger display for increased visibility. The recording icon is now the standard red dot found on most devices. Audio events for the day now play when Agenda is launched. Finally, the number of colors has increased from four to nine. The new colors are Blueberry, Graphite, Indigo, Sage, and Ruby.

CDFinder 2.8.1

 [CDFinder](#)³ has been updated to version 2.8.1 since it's original [review](#)⁴. Now, items in the main browser window can have their names edited in place. Also, there are two refinements to the way CDFinder sorts. First, it now supports the Natural Order extension when sorting by name. Second, it now performs a secondary sort by name when the primary sort is done by some other characteristic. AppleScript support has been expanded to include the ability to get info on found items. Also, two bugs were fixed in this release—one concerning crashes on certain PowerPC computers with OS 8.1, and one concerning cases where CDFinder was unable to find the catalog folder.

SoundApp 2.7

 Since we last reviewed [SoundApp 2.6.1](#)⁵, several new features were added, such as: audio CD playback and conversion, several new conversion options, rough support for Nomad II voice files, several AppleScript additions, improved performance under OS 8.x, and many smaller improvements and bug fixes, especially with VBR MP3s.

...

-
1. <http://www.yenco.com/agenda/>
 2. <http://www.atpm.com/6.06/agenda.shtml>
 3. <http://www.cdfinder.de/>
 4. <http://www.atpm.com/5.03/cdfinder.shtml>
 5. <http://www.atpm.com/6.04/mp3roundup2.shtml>

There are far too many Mac products these days for us to review each one, or even keep up with all the ones we have reviewed. Indeed, many shareware authors are revving their products more than once a month! The Updates section is where we acknowledge significant new versions of products that we have previously reviewed. If new features, bug fixes, or other revisions are substantial enough to change our assessment of a piece of software, we will generally publish a full review of the new version.

Copyright © 2000 the ATPM Staff, updates@atpm.com.



Review: Alchemist 1.0

by Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com

Developer: Computer Systems Odessa Corporation

Web: <http://www.aha.com.ua/Alchemist/home.html>

Price: \$20

Requirements: Mac OS 8, Power Macintosh G3, 32 MB free RAM, 800x600 resolution with thousands of colors, 15 MB of hard drive space.



Alchemist is yet another variant of Tetris, except you can take time to think about piece placement. The pieces consist of green beakers; blue, orange, and purple flasks; and gold teardrop-shaped sealed flasks (all incorrectly referred to as “vials” in Alchemist’s documentation). The Alchemist board pattern is variable, from a simple square to a complex “spider” shape. Each board shape corresponds to a piece pattern (line, L-shape, square, cross, etc.). The object of the game is to place successive pieces on the board and form the desired pattern with a set of colored vials. When this occurs, all adjoining flasks of the same shape and color disappear from the board (similar to creating a row of one color in Tetris). The game ends when a piece cannot be placed.

Look and Feel

Alchemist was originally developed for Windows and was ported to the Macintosh. The game screen uses unintuitive methods for every task, and common keystroke combinations such as Command-N for New Game and Command-Q for Quit do not work.



Figure 1

You configure the game board and set visual effect options with the interface shown in Figure 1.

You bring up this interface by clicking a box at the far right that contains a group of light blue squares. Pressing the white circle with a down-pointing triangle pops-up a list of board configurations. “Lines” is the active configuration in this example. Clicking the gold “wing nuts” adjacent to the purple text bubbles toggles the listed effects. I hated the “Elevate figure over the board” effect and turned it off. The game board configuration options use nonsense names like Ceitnot, Magic, Mirror, and Puerile. There’s no preview when scrolling through the list, so you have to experiment to see what each configuration looks like.

Music and sound settings are adjusted with the tiny controls adjacent to the violin on the left of the screen. The volume is controlled by changing the level of the yellow liquid in the cylinder. The buttons below the cylinder control the sound tracks. They are (from top to bottom): Next Track, Pause, Play, Previous Track, and Stop. Thankfully, when you pass the cursor over a button, its name appears in large blue letters at the bottom of the Alchemist window. Mastering these controls is important, since the QuickTime MIDI music tracks feature screechy, poorly synthesized, soprano recorder music. Save your sanity by clicking the Stop button. You’ll still be able to hear the sound effects during game play.

Game Play

To play the game, you click the crystal sphere in the lower right corner of the screen. The sphere contains the piece you must place on the board. The default board shape is shown in Figure 2. You drag the piece over the board using the mouse. You can rotate the piece 90 degrees clockwise by pressing the space bar.



Figure 2

If the piece will fit on the board, the underlying squares turn from red to blue (Figure 3). When you place a piece that results in a pattern match for any set of colored vials, those vials and all

adjacent vials of the same color disappear. You get a score of 1 if only the minimum number of vials disappears. Your score goes up with the square of the number of extra vials cleared. The placement of a piece that generates multiple colored vial matches with lots of adjacent vials can add hundreds of points to your score. Game play continues until the next piece cannot be placed. You can send your scores to the Alchemist Web site by clicking the gray scroll at the bottom of the screen. Alchemist maintains a worldwide high score list for each board configuration.



Figure 3

Exiting the game is another interface nightmare (Figure 4). I longed for a simple “Command-Q,” and happily learned that Alchemist is compatible with [QuicKeys](http://www.atpm.com/6.08/quickeys.shtml)¹. I immediately created Command-key triggers for quitting, saving, and loading games.

Instructions and Help

You can access the help manual by clicking the question mark in the lower right part of the game window. The HTML-formatted electronic manual was poorly translated into British English (probably from Ukrainian). Windows and Macintosh instructions are commingled, and they include such unhelpful terms as “left-click” and “right-click.” The instructions incorrectly tell you to hold down the Control key while moving pieces. Instructions for submitting high scores are written only for Windows. (If you have properly set up Internet Config, you can simply accept

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.08/quickeys.shtml>



Figure 4

Alchemist's default e-mail choices.)

The Alchemist Web Site Experience

The Web site loads slowly, goes blank during the loading process, and does not display correctly using IE 5. (It looked fine with Netscape Communicator 4.74.)

Conclusion

I hated Alchemist's interface, its screechy music tracks, its poorly written HTML-based manual, and its slow-loading, buggy Web site. Another problem with Alchemist is its need for 32 MB of application RAM. You must have at least 48 MB of physical RAM (with a stripped-down OS) to play the game. That's a hefty requirement for a board game.

However, once I got past those failings, I found that game play proceeded smoothly. The sounds and animation effects added life to the game. Developing strategies for piece placement requires logic, planning, and experience. Each board configuration offers different challenges, and the individual piece designs vary extensively (more than in Tetris). Alchemist became a top-five game for one of ATPM's copy editors. Jake Sargent, a reviewer at TheMacMind.com [called it](http://www.themacmind.com/reviews/thealchemist.html)¹ the best and most addictive puzzle game this year. I enjoyed the game, but it has not become a favorite. I

1. <http://www.themacmind.com/reviews/thealchemist.html>

give it an Okay rating due to its many interface and documentation flaws.

Copyright © 2000 Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



Review: Candy Crisis 1.0

by Foo Chik Chuan, chik@mac.com

Developer: John Stiles

Web: <http://www.candycrisis.com>

Price: \$25 (shareware)

Requirements: 100MHz Power Mac with GameSprockets installed.



Introduction

In or around 1996, John Stiles released Skittles. I was fond of the game even though the concept was not entirely original. While hosting emulation.net, John found time to work on a sequel. I was glad to hear this sequel was released and tried it out immediately. I was not disappointed. Everything about this game screams slick quality. The computer opponents have been beefed up, and much attention has been given to the audio-visual department. Yet the underlying simple gameplay of the original is largely unchanged. Skittles 2 was subsequently renamed Candy Crisis for legal reasons.

Background

Candy Crisis is undoubtedly Tetris-inspired (like Jewelbox and Columns) and the basic concept should be familiar to most. Like those games, a two-dimensional well starts off nearly empty. Pieces (called candy) of various colors fall from the top of the screen, and the player manipulates them to form arrangements at the bottom. As the pieces pile upwards towards the top of the screen, there is less space for manipulation and a greater chance of putting the pieces in disadvantageous positions. When the pieces reach the top of the screen, the game ends.

Like Tetris, it takes a minute of watching or playing Candy Crisis to understand it. Candy Crisis is not a clone though. The aim of the game is to score points, defeat the opponent, and gain levels by creating 'combinations.'

Two candies fall from the top of the screen each time. The player manipulates them by moving them laterally, rotating them or increasing their speed of descent, to place them in advantageous positions. Four or more candies of the same color come in contact to form a combination and disappear with a pleasant sound effect, leaving the top pieces to rearrange and take their space. Every time four same-colored-candies come in contact, they vanish, which means that it is possible to trigger chain-reactions of disappearing combinations. Therefore large combinations



A game beginning. Two wells are shown (human vs. computer). At this stage, it looks like a two-player Tetris game.

or chain reactions are a good thing, and much of the game is spent trying to build large combinations quickly. The larger the combinations, the more points the player gets. There is also the concept of punishing the opponent which will be discussed later.

Technicals

My first impression of the game was the 7 MB download size. The game itself is a single executable, which is neat. DrawSprocket and InputSprocket are supported and required. DrawSprocket changes the resolution to 640x480 full screen (don't worry, your desktop icons are safe) when the game starts.

InputSprocket allows the use of all those fancy input devices, and I tried a CH FighterStick just for laughs. Totally impractical, but it worked. Keyboard controls for each player consists only of four keys anyway.

Gameplay

There are three options for gameplay: player vs. computer, player vs. player, and single-player. Multiplayer is limited to two players on a single computer at the same time. Network play is unlikely to be added. Pity.

The computer opponents (there are twelve of them) have certainly been beefed up from last time. The documentation claims the opponents have individual techniques and adjust their tactics in response to the player's. I am not sure about the computer's ability to adjust, but it did seem that some opponents play in different ways compared to others.

At middle to higher levels the computer tends to move at an unnatural speed and precision. Sometimes the placement looks random, but I have never figured out whether there is a method behind the madness. I do know that the computer is capable of some nasty combinations!

When playing against the computer, I found the game's difficulty to be satisfactory. It is not too easy, and more importantly there is no sudden leap to too hard. Furthermore, the time needed to complete a particular level varied each time I played it. An opponent that I could beat in five minutes one day, could take fifteen minutes the next time. I attribute this to the concept of combinations: unlike in Tetris, it is hard to predict the position of the remaining pieces when a combination is created. Chain reactions can occur when unplanned (which is a bonus, because the player gets more points), or planned chain reactions can fail to arise as pieces migrate downwards and are no longer adjacent to each other.

The computer opponent's portrait winces and smiles depending on how much trouble the computer is in when playing. It is very rewarding to perform a good combination against the computer and be rewarded by a painful wince. Some portraits give you an evil smile when you lose.

Multi-colored candy and bombs appear occasionally to spice up the game. A bomb clears out candy of a particular color. Although this sounds benign, a well placed bomb can clear out half the game screen, and trigger more combinations, converting a losing position into a winning one. This has saved me several times!

Strategies

When playing against a computer or human opponent, the concept of 'punishing' the opponent is a big incentive to creating large combinations. Large combinations cause dud pieces to appear and drop into the opponent's well, and the number of dud pieces is proportional to the size of your combination. Producing three or more dud pieces on the opponent's side may not be much, but massive combinations, or a quick series of good combinations can overwhelm the opponent. These dud pieces block the opponent's ability to put same-colored pieces adjacent to each other, and can only be removed if a successful combination occurs adjacent to them. Oh, and they put

the opponent's pile closer to the top of the screen...



The computer opponent drops some duds on me. Observe the computer's expression.

In a two-player game or when playing against a computer, each side is trying to create good combinations. While a single massive combination can put the opponent out of the game, such a combination takes time. Furthermore, the player who creates a large combination also needs lots of pieces in his well, putting him at risk of losing.

On the other hand, keeping a well empty is reassuring. But with so few pieces lying around, it is hard to make effective combinations, and a good combination from the opponent will fill the well with dud pieces in a hurry.

Ironically therefore, creating small effective combinations and sending frequent consistent single piece duds (what an adjective) may be the best defense against the computer mind.

Sometimes in the rush and panic with your pieces stacking sky high, it is hard to create even a basic four piece combination!

Audio Visuals

The audio and visuals deserve a big mention. Each level has a particular theme, consisting of unique music and backgrounds, and the computer opponent's portrait in the centre of the screen. These add to Candy Crisis's lush atmosphere. I never got bored of the music throughout the time I have spent playing Candy Crisis. To add to the excitement and add insult to injury, the music speeds up when the player is about to lose the game. The combination of music, backgrounds, and facial expressions added personality to each opponent and level.

Sound is used to good effect to herald the arrival of multi-colored candy and bombs. Multiple combinations disappear with dings of increasing frequency, a terrifying sound for the opponent to hear.

The Candy Crisis Web site claims that particle effects, dynamic shadows, lighting, transparency, and even reflective candy are used. I won't pretend to be able to point all these out, but everything from the selection menu to the level backgrounds to the scorched candies just look slick!

Ending games

When playing against the computer, each player has three lives, which means the player can replay the last level three times. Points obtained during the failed attempt are removed. When two humans play, the game just goes on until someone quits.

The high score screen deserves a mention. The top scores are listed, but so are the best combinations, a very nice touch. One flaw I think is that the high score does not list the level achieved. A player may attain a high score by playing prolonged games against the lower level computer opponents, while players who tend to finish opponents off with larger combinations tend to have lower scores.

Conclusions

I play Candy Crisis against the computer opponent, or against my girlfriend. There is a bigger thrill playing against a human especially with the complaints and punches on the shoulder. The computer plays a good game as well, and the computer opponent's facial expressions in response to how badly his game is going provide surprisingly good feedback.

Overall, Candy Crisis is a slick game with a simple concept that is very well executed. From the interface to the smooth-as-glass graphics, it has as much polish and flair as any arcade game of its type. I would recommend players try out the available demo, and bring a friend!

Copyright © 2000 Foo Chik Chuan, chik@mac.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



Review: Nisus Email 1.0.9

by Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com

Developer: Nisus Software

Web: <http://www.nisus.com/products/NisusEmail>

Price: \$29.95 (14-day free trial available)

Requirements: Power Mac with Mac OS 8.0 or greater.



When I first learned that Nisus would be entering the e-mail program market, I couldn't figure out why. Eudora had recently announced a "free" (advertisement-sponsored) version, Outlook Express was already free (no quotes), and there were already a slew of smaller company and shareware e-mail clients on the market.

But when, a few months later, I read a feature list for the program, I understood. Nisus Email had some truly innovative ideas to contribute. It would allow you to send an e-mail by simply dragging and dropping some text onto an icon. Attachments could be sent the same way. Each message would be saved as a separate file, indexable by Sherlock and readable by any program that can read a text file. A special folder would periodically be checked for e-mails to send out: saving a document there would be all you have to do to send off an e-mail.

The program promised flexibility, powerful filtering capabilities, the ability to deal with multiple accounts, close integration with my favorite word processor (yes, Nisus Writer), and a host of other features that had me immediately thinking Nisus Email would be the program for me.

The Innovations

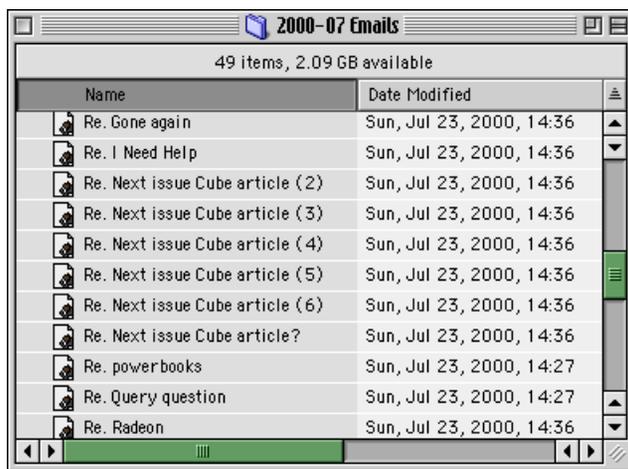
It may seem peculiar to you that Nisus' inspiration in making Nisus Email was the observation that sending e-mail is difficult. You launch your program, hit "New Message," type in the person's e-mail address (or alias), subject, body, and send it off. However, Nisus does manage to improve on the process, offering a number of options which, if not literally more simple, are indeed often a lot more convenient. For example, here I am in my word processor writing a review; what if I want to send a quick note to the editor letting him know my piece is on its way? I can just type it in here, along with the review itself, select it, drag it onto the "floating post office" icon, and off it goes. Nisus Email looks for a "To:" header, adds a "Subject" if I don't specify one in the text I drag and drop, and sends the message. I don't even have to leave my word processor.



Floating Post Office

There are variations on the above, as well. If I neglect to type a “To:” line on the text I drag and drop, Nisus Email will display a bunch of icons, representing my address book. I click on the icon for the person or group I want to send the text to, and off it goes. The icon display closes on its own, and back to work I go, with a minimum of interruption. I can send any file as an attachment in the same way.

Also exciting is the way that Nisus Email stores e-mails, both incoming and outgoing: they are simple files, readable by any program that can read text, one for each e-mail message. They’re named for their subject, with a number in parenthesis if the subject appears in several e-mails, so they’re easy to find in the Finder. By default, they’re placed in folders named for the month and year they’re received, but you can easily set up filters to send different e-mails into different folders. If you use Sherlock’s “Find By Content,” you can index your e-mail messages and find them just as you would any other document, something you can’t do with programs which store all your e-mails in one file. You don’t have to worry about special proprietary e-mail storage formats, importing and exporting old e-mails into new programs so you don’t lose them forever, or any similar such nonsense.



Nisus Email stores messages as text files.

This method of storage is also nice for users of Retrospect and other backup software. When running an incremental backup, Retrospect looks for files that have been changed since the last

backup, and backs them up. Simple, right? Sure. But ugly and wasteful if you have a single “Inbox” file of several MB, and the whole huge file has to get backed up again each time you get even a single e-mail. With Nisus Email, you can save a few MB of tape with every backup: not a lot, but it adds up. You also don’t have to worry about “compacting” huge mailboxes from which you deleted a bunch of messages: when you delete a message, it goes into the trash. Empty the trash, and free up the space. This is Finder integration at its best.

The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Innovations

By now, you’re probably getting pretty excited about Nisus Email, especially if you’re a fan of Nisus Writer. Unfortunately, it didn’t take me too long, once I got the program, to learn that however great Nisus’ innovations might sound, they aren’t good enough to make up for the program’s abysmal implementation. Some of my complaints about the program are doubtless matters of personal taste; others I imagine will be pretty universally agreed upon. So as you read this, feel free to judge my judgements, and certainly, go ahead and try Nisus Email for yourself: you can use it, full-featured, for 14 days before buying it.

OK, so what could possibly be wrong with the quick send features? Essentially, there are two pretty significant problems.

The first problem has to do with how an e-mail sent by Nisus Email shows up in the e-mail program used by the recipient. Many users, myself included, sort their mailboxes by sent date. This allows them to be read in chronological order, following threads of messages easily, and knowing how old each message is. Nisus Email, however, doesn’t properly encode the sent date of e-mails it sends. The result of this is that an e-mail I send with Nisus Email arrives in the recipient’s inbox with a “sent date” of several hours before the message was actually sent.

If the recipient receives a good number of e-mails daily, mine can easily be lost in the bottom of the heap, mixed in with messages already read some time ago. Eventually it will probably be noticed, but it will be very much out of order for someone trying to read a thread of e-mails, or may be noticed too late for a timely response. This to some degree cancels out the value of the “Quick Send”: it’s great that I can send an e-mail quickly and easily, but if the implementation of Nisus Email makes it likely that the e-mail won’t be noticed or seen quickly by its recipient, I’m better off using a less-convenient e-mail program or making a phone call.

The second problem doesn’t apply to the “one click” drag-and-drop-with-“To:”-header send, but it applies to other ways Nisus Email sends e-mails, which involve clicking on the icon of the

contact you want the e-mail to go out to. When you drag a message (or file, to be sent as an attachment) to the “Floating Post Office,” a window completely fills up your screen, showing icons for each contact.



Drag to a recipient’s name to address your e-mail.

Unfortunately, the icons are all the same and by default show up in no particular order (actually, the order in which they were added to your address book.) So much for convenience. The icons can be sorted into alphabetical order, but they cannot be viewed as an alphabetically ordered list, and you’ll have to re-sort them each time you add a new contact. (Otherwise, your list will be semi-sorted, with the new contact(s) at the end).

The icons also cannot be customized. (They can be changed from clouds to mailboxes, but they all have to look the same; you can’t even have some clouds and some mailboxes.) My screenshot only shows a small number of contacts; there’s no reason to cover my entire screen to display such a small number of icons. On the other hand, I could easily have a hundred contacts in my address book: it’s nice that Nisus Email can handle such a large number, but with such a large number, it would really help if the icons could be customized.

Multiple Accounts?

Multiple account support is painfully barebones. I have multiple accounts, but I don’t like to let my e-mail program save my password: such a feature all but guarantees that I’ll forget the password myself, and it allows others to check my e-mail if they can get hold of my computer. (Nisus Email offers no password protection whatsoever.) But what happens when I ask Nisus Email to “Receive and Send All”? Take a look:



Which account?

The burning question is, which password do I type in? There is no indication of which account Nisus Email wants a password for. In order to check e-mail from a single account, you have to first select the “Personality” you want (which cannot be done from the keyboard), and then select “Check Mail” from a different menu (which also has no Command-key sequence).

The poor multiple account support also serves to further cut the usefulness of the “Quick Send” features which are supposed to make Nisus Email such a wonderful program. You cannot specify a default “from” account for any of the people you have icons for. I keep separate e-mail accounts for ATPM, my “real” job, personal e-mails, and mailing lists. What happens if I find an article online that might be of interest to members of a mailing list I subscribe to? I cannot, as Nisus Email would have me believe, simply drag the URL to the “Floating Post Office,” click on the icon for the mailing list, and send the URL to the list. Why not? Because nowhere in that process do I get to choose which account my message gets sent from, and the odds are I’d end up sending it from the wrong account. Instead of simply sending it, I have to click on the “Edit” portion of the contact’s icon, select the right account from a drop-down menu, and then click “Send.” That turns what should be a “Two Click Send” into a “Four Click Send.” Admittedly, Nisus Email is no worse than many other e-mail clients in this particular respect; still, it’s another instance where poor implementation and lack of thinking things through serves to defeat the quick, simple convenience that Nisus Email claims it can provide.

The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "User Personalities" with the following fields and options:

- Your choice of personality Nickname:
- Your actual Name: Example: James I. Smith
- Your Email Address: Example: smith@abcd.com
- Subject when sending attachments: <files> will be replaced by the actual file names.
- Outgoing Mail Server: Example: mail.abcd.com
- Incoming (POP) Mail Server:
- POP Login Name:
- POP Password:
- Save my password.
- Buttons: Delete, Save, Cancel, OK

Why does this window look inactive?

You also cannot configure Nisus Email to treat your various accounts differently. They can either all be checked automatically, or none of them can. If they are, they must all be checked at the same

interval. You may leave the messages on the server or not, but whatever you choose, it goes for all accounts. If you want to preview the messages before downloading them (i.e., see Subject, Sender, Size, etc., but not Body), you can do so, but again, it's all or nothing. You cannot configure a different sound or action for when new messages arrive from different accounts. In fact, all you can configure on a per-account basis are the names of the servers and accounts, your “real name,” and (of all things!) the default subject to be used when sending an attachment. (Just to keep things inconsistent, the default message to be used when sending an attachment is set on a per-contact basis.) Also, note that the window in the screenshot above appears inactive, even though it is the active window. C'mon, Nisus, that's just plain sloppy.

Receiving Messages

One thing lots of people like to be able to do with an e-mail program is check their mail and read incoming messages. This capability is, it seems, pretty much an afterthought in Nisus Email. (Though frankly, if the “Quick Send” features worked as well as they sound in theory, I'd pay the thirty bucks just to use Nisus Email for that.) I'll make only a few comments here.

Nisus Email lacks the ability to show e-mails by the Date Sent. Instead, it uses “Date Received”: not when the e-mail was received on your server, but when it was loaded onto your computer. Come back from a week-long vacation, and you'll have hundreds of e-mails and no way to tell whether they were sent a week ago or a few minutes ago without opening each message. Ironically, the documentation says the following on the subject:

We have chosen to list by date received because of numerous problems with the accuracy and consistency of the date sent in e-mails. On rare occasions when the sender does not realize that their clock is not working, you can easily not even know you have just received an e-mail listed by date sent, because its date is so old.

The only e-mail program I have ever come across which has problems with the “accuracy and consistency” of dates is Nisus Email. The documentation points out that it can be a problem if an e-mail arrives with an earlier date than is correct, since the e-mail can be lost, but Nisus Email's implementation all but guarantees that that will be a problem with all e-mails it sends! In many years of e-mail use, I have almost never gotten e-mails with bad “Date Sent” information. Face it, Nisus, not every computer user is an expert, but we all know how to set a clock.

Nisus Email intelligently distinguishes between messages which are “Unseen” and those that are merely “Unread.” Unfortunately, however, when you open up a message, that's not enough to

mark it as read. Closing the window with Command-W doesn't do it either, though clicking on the close box will mark the message as read. If you want to close the message and mark it as read using the keyboard, you have to hit Enter (which activates the "Mark as Read" button). Yet another bug which should have been fixed before product release.

When I'm viewing a message, I can't hit the delete key to delete it: I have to use the mouse to click on a button at the bottom of the screen. Once I click the "delete" button, the message closes, it's no longer in the inbox, and the message selected for me to view next is *not* the one next in order from the one I deleted, so if I want to read the next message in order, I have to click or arrow-key my way to it, assuming I can remember which one it is: the deleted message is gone, so there's no place-holder.

Conclusion

At the risk of sounding melodramatic, Nisus Email is a tragedy. The folks at Nisus had a truly great, innovative idea, that promised to change the way I send, store, and read e-mail. At best, this release is a "proof-of-concept," giving an indication of what could be done, if only it were done right. As much as I admire the ideas behind Nisus Email, and as prejudiced as I am in favor of Nisus as a company (I'm a huge Nisus Writer fan), I have to give Nisus Email a rating of Okay. The program is usable by those with relatively basic needs, but I can't even recommend it as a "sending only" e-mail program due to its inability to correctly date outgoing e-mails. It needs a lot of work before it's ready for prime time.

Copyright © 2000 Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



Review: QuicKeys 5.0

by Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com

Developer: CE Software, Inc.

Web: <http://www.cesoft.com>

Price: \$85–\$90 (street), various upgrades available.

Requirements: Power Mac with Mac OS 8.5 or later.

Recommended: Additional RAM and hard disk space.



Overview

QuicKeys can best be described as a global macro program. You can use QuicKeys to create simple one-step macros such as key commands for menu items, or for typing canned text. You can also use QuicKeys to record a series of steps and play them back. Finally, you can write macro programs with QuicKeys alone or in conjunction with AppleScript (Apple Computer, Inc.), Frontier (UserLand Software, Inc.), and applications with their own scripting language such as FileMaker Pro (FileMaker, Inc.) and Panorama (ProVUE Development, Inc.).

Installation

Launching the QuicKeys Installer displays the following modal windows: 1. Splash screen; 2. QuicKeys read me file in a small window; 3. License agreement; and 4. Request for name, company, 15-character activation key, and option to install a 30-day demo version. If you click the “OK” button in the last Installer window, installation starts immediately and cannot be aborted. If you’re upgrading, QuicKeys retains all your previous macros and settings (you should backup your QuicKeys files before upgrading). The major QuicKeys files include the QuicKeys control panel, QuicKeys Backgrounder application (in the Application Support folder), default keyset and toolbars, a plethora of plug-ins, QuicKeys CM (contextual menu) Plug-in, QuicKeys Multi-User Prep extension, and QuicKeys Setup Assistant and QK Plug-in Manager applications. You can also copy online manuals and examples from the CD or the QuicKeys Web site.

Using QuicKeys

You access most functions from a global menu at the right of the menu bar. The first three items activate the QuicKeys Editor (which supports the creation and organization of macros), QuicKeys Setup Assistant (which walks you through the creation of simple macros), and QuickReference Card (which displays a screen summarizing QuicKeys own and your universal Shortcuts and their

triggers).

The next two menu items allow you to open or edit QuicKeys Toolbars (Figure 1). The third QuicKeys menu section is for recording macros (Shortcuts and Sequences, in QuicKeys jargon). The fourth menu section lists QuicKeys menu item macro triggers for the active application. The last menu section lists macro triggers for all applications.

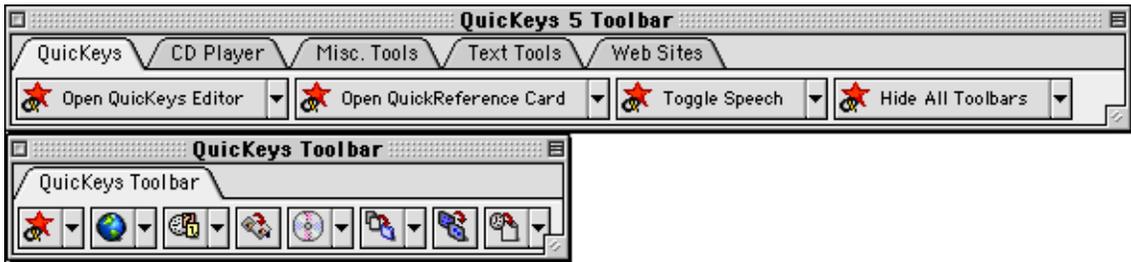


Figure 1

Shortcuts

The simplest task you can perform in QuicKeys is the creation of a one-step macro. One-step macros can activate a menu, select a button, launch one or more files, type text, or click a specific location (or click and drag to another location, if desired). You start the process by selecting “Record One Shortcut” from the QuicKeys menu. You then perform the action you want. For every action except typing text, QuicKeys opens its Editor and then opens a properties window for the Shortcut you just recorded. (If you typed text, you need to choose “Stop Recording...” from the QuicKeys menu, then the editor and the Shortcut properties window will open.)

In the Shortcut Properties dialog window you name the Shortcut and optionally perform any of the following tasks: assign a keystroke combination to trigger the Shortcut, set a timer to trigger the Shortcut (based on an elapsed interval or a specific date and time), choose speech recognition options for the Shortcut, choose whether the Shortcut will appear in the QuicKeys menu, and edit the Shortcut. When you close the Shortcut Properties window, your new Shortcut will be listed in the QuicKeys Editor window (Figure 2). Shortcuts can be active within a single application or can be universal. By default, a Shortcut is assigned to the application that was active when the Shortcut was recorded. You can copy or cut the Shortcut from one application list in the Editor window and paste it into another.

An alternative method for creating Shortcuts is to use the Setup Assistant. Setup Assistant works

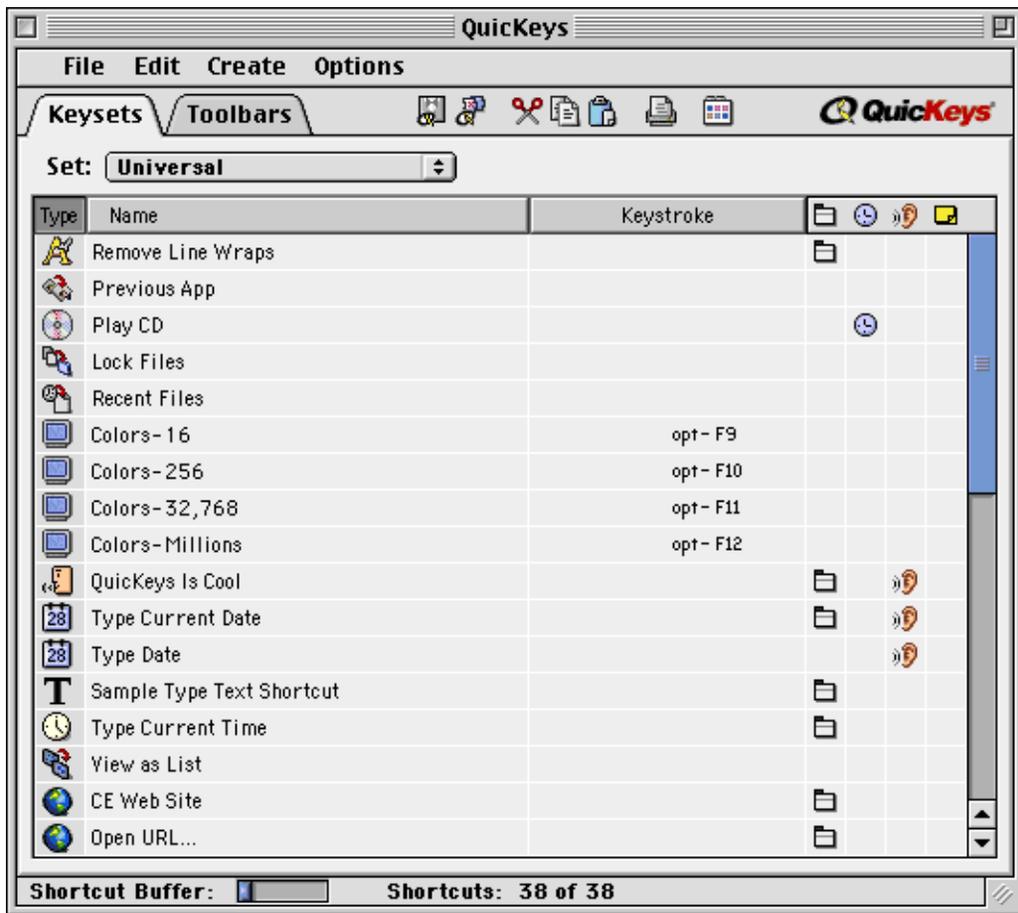


Figure 2

like Apple's Internet Setup and Mac OS Setup Assistants. Each step is described in a window, and you progress through a series of windows to create, name, edit, and save a Shortcut.

Sequences

The ability to create simple one-step macros makes QuicKeys a useful utility, but its real power arises from the creation of complex macros (Sequences). Sequences allow you to automate nearly any series of Macintosh tasks, because QuicKeys works with most applications and control panels. You can create a Sequence by using Record Sequence from the QuicKeys menu. QuicKeys will record all your actions until you select "Stop Recording..." from the QuicKeys menu. QuicKeys then opens the Sequence Editor window (Figure 3).

All recorded Sequence steps are listed in the main window. You can edit the properties of any step

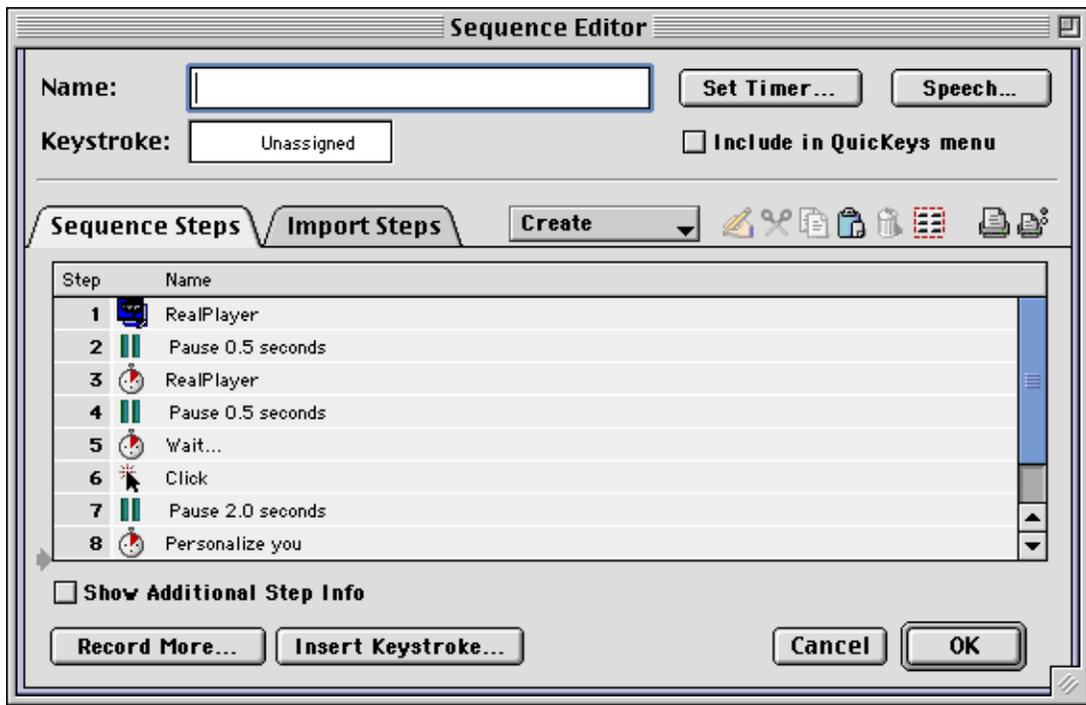


Figure 3

by double-clicking it. You can insert additional steps by positioning the dark red arrow between two steps. You can then press the “Record More...” button to record more steps, or you can use the “Create” pull-down menu to add steps manually. The icons to the right of the “Create” menu allow you to modify, cut, copy, paste, delete, select all, print the contents of the Sequence Editor window, and access your printer’s “Page Setup...” dialog box. The “Show Additional Step Info” checkbox at the bottom changes the display to show details about each step in the Sequence (Figure 4).

Recording Sequences is easy, but the results may not be what you wanted. You must delve into the QuicKeys manual to learn about each Sequence tool and how to edit it. QuicKeys contains many tools for creating and modifying Sequences. QuicKeys divides its tools into the following categories: Text Tools, File Tools, System Tools, Multimedia Tools, Network Tools, Internet Tools, Scripting Tools, Sequence Tools, and Other Tools. Table 1 lists all the Sequence tools and summarizes their functions.

Creating complex Sequences manually is equivalent to writing a computer program using visual, object-oriented functions. Programmers familiar with AppleScript or other languages using Apple events will readily adapt to QuicKeys’ Sequence creation method. Less experienced users

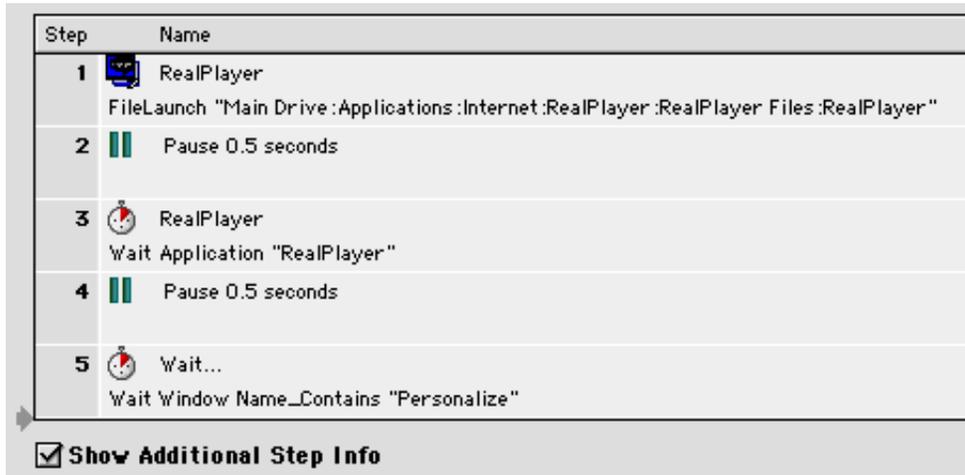


Figure 4

Table 1: Sequence Tools and Their Functions

Tool Category	Tool Name	Function
Text Tools	Advanced Text Tools	Clean and format text from e and Web sites
	Password Vault	Store passwords in unreadable format
	Type Date	Enter one of many date formats
	Type Time	Enter one of many time formats
File Tools	File Launch	Open an application or document
	Batch Processor	Edit multiple files as a group
	File Handler	Copy, move, rename, lock/unlock, set file type and creator
	File Recall	Work with recently used files
	Folders	Access frequently used folders
System Tools	Project Saver	Open multiple applications and documents with one trigger
	Alias Keystroke	Remap any key or key combination
	Button	Activate or deactivate any button
	Click	Click (or click and drag) the mouse with any modifier key
	FKeys	Activate a built-in FKey function

Table 1: Sequence Tools and Their Functions

Tool Category	Tool Name	Function
	Menu	Choose a menu selection, even from cascading menus
	Mousies	Substitute other triggers for mouse actions that affect windows (close, zoom, collapse, scroll or page [up, down, left, right], home or end)
	Specials	Toggle a wide variety of QuickKeys options; Restart or Shut Down Mac
	App Switcher	Switch to any active application or one in a special list
	Lock Screen	Blacken and lock screen instantly
	Mac OS Specials	Change Balloon Help and File Sharing settings; go to next or previous application
	PowerBook Specials	Numerous options related to energy saving PowerBook features
	Scrap Ease	Replaces Clipboard and can hold and manipulate multiple cut or copied items
	Screen Ease	Change monitor resolution, depth, and color mode
	View Switcher	Change Finder view settings
Multimedia Tools	Audio CD Player	Use triggers to control CD play
	QT Movie	Launch multimedia files for QT plug-in play
	Sound	Play any System sound
	Speak Ease	Use Speech to generate spoken text
	SpeakerChange r	Adjust sound volume or turn off
Network Tools	Choosy	Select a printer and its options
	Mounty	Mount or unmount a network volume
	Network Switcher	Adjust AppleTalk, OT/PPP, TCP/IP, and Modem settings and options
Internet Tools	Instant Email	Instantly e-mail any recently modified file as text or attachment
	Web Launcher	Open any URL or bookmarked URLs from Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator/Communicator

Table 1: Sequence Tools and Their Functions

Tool Category	Tool Name	Function
Scripting Tools	Apple Events	Send an event to any running application that supports the Apple Events protocol
	AppleScript	Execute an existing AppleScript or typed AppleScript code
	DoScript	Send commands to an application that supports DoScript
Sequence Tools	Decision	Create conditional branch choices
	GoSub	Execute a QuicKeys Shortcut
	Jump	Jump to another part of the Sequence
	Message	Display a message box or input box
	Pop-up Menu	Select a pop-up menu item
	Repeat	Create repeat loops in a Sequence
	Wait	Pause for a specified amount of time or until a specific time; wait for a user response; wait until specific conditions are met
Other Tools	Phone Dialer	Dial via speaker or a serial port

face a steep learning curve, and the QuicKeys manuals prove inadequate for this task. Trial and error play a large role in Sequence editing, and the modal editing window and lack of debugging tools increase the time required to create a complex Sequence.

Flexible Access

QuicKeys always provides more than one way to access Shortcuts, Sequences, and its own features. For example, the QuicKeys Editor can be accessed from the QuicKeys menu, a QuicKeys Toolbar, a button on the QuicKeys control panel, or by speaking the phrase “Open QuicKeys Editor” when QuicKeys speech recognition is active. Shortcuts and Sequences can be activated by keystroke combinations, the QuicKeys menu, a Toolbar button, a Speech trigger, an applet (Icon in QuicKeys jargon), another Sequence, an AppleScript, or by a timer setting. This versatility increases the power of QuicKeys, but also increases its complexity.

Toolbars

QuicKeys Toolbars allow you to create groups of Shortcuts and Sequences related to a specific application or task. QuicKeys offers four types of Toolbars: Docked, Floating, Click-N-Go, and Pop Out. Docked Toolbars always stay attached to an edge of the monitor screen. Floating Toolbars can be positioned anywhere. Click-N-Go Toolbars disappear immediately after triggering one of the buttons. Pop Out Toolbars are Docked Toolbars that show only a thin edge. Moving the cursor onto the Toolbar edge pops out the entire Toolbar. It minimizes itself after you click a button or move your cursor away.

All Toolbar types except Click-N-Go have tabs to organize buttons. You therefore can create and easily access dozens of Shortcuts and Sequences per Toolbar. A useful feature of all Toolbars is that you can quickly change their properties using contextual menu (CM) commands. You activate Toolbar CMs by pressing the control key when the cursor points to an empty area of the Toolbar or a tab. You can switch among Toolbar types, add Toolbar tabs, or open the Toolbar Editor or Settings windows. Activating CMs while over a Toolbar button shows a variety of editing choices.

Icons (Applets)

QuicKeys can create applets (Icons) that will trigger any Shortcut or Sequence. The Icons can then be treated like an application and placed on your desktop, in a Launcher folder, or in the Startup Items or Shutdown Items folders. I like using this for launching applications that require you to adjust monitor settings. I create a Sequence that uses Screen Ease to alter monitor settings and then File Launch to open the application (Figure 5). I save the Sequence as an Icon, move it to an appropriate location, and replace the generic QuicKeys Icon with the one used by the application by using “Get Info” in the Finder, copying the application’s icon and pasting it over the QuicKeys Icon.

Technical Support

QuicKeys has better technical support than nearly any other Macintosh utility. Free telephone support is available weekdays from 8 AM 5 PM Central Time (515-221-1803). You can also request technical support via fax (515-221-1806). The [QuicKeys support Web site](http://www.cesoft.com/support/resources/quickeys/index.html)¹ allows you to download manuals, special instructions, and frequently asked questions files. The Web site also features “Info Base,” a searchable database of questions and answers. I found that most entries related to version 3.5. You may also e-mail questions about QuicKeys via a [Web site form](http://www.cesoft.com/support/contact/mailform.html)² or

1. <http://www.cesoft.com/support/resources/quickeys/index.html>

2. <http://www.cesoft.com/support/contact/mailform.html>

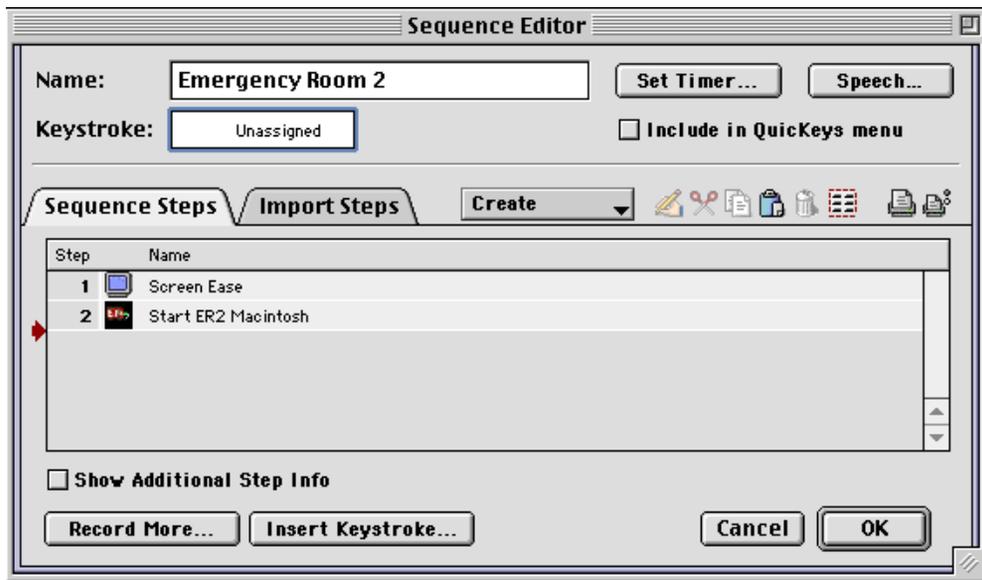


Figure 5

directly (ceonline@cesoft.com).

Positives

Overall, QuicKeys can immensely improve your productivity by providing alternative methods of doing simple tasks and automated methods of completing repetitive tasks. Users can customize nearly all applications with QuicKeys instead of learning each application's customization protocols (if any). For applications with multiple toolbars, you can deactivate most of them and substitute personalized QuicKeys Toolbars and keystroke triggers. QuicKeys can make many Mac OS functions simpler: changing printers, changing networking and communication protocols, adjusting monitor and speaker settings, etc.

QuicKeys works with nearly every application, making it more versatile than (or a useful adjunct to) AppleScript or Frontier. I often combine AppleScript and QuicKeys when I work with applications that are not Open Scripting Architecture-compliant (or that only support the minimal required set of scripting commands).

QuicKeys has good Technical Support by telephone and Internet.

Negatives

QuicKeys costs too much money for people who would use only a fraction of its capabilities. CE Software offered “Instant QuicKeys” for \$30 in 1998. That product is no longer available and has not been updated in two years.

The lack of an integrated manual is inappropriate for a complex utility like QuicKeys. In my opinion QuicKeys 5 is really QuicKeys 4.1. Only a few important features were added to version 4 (see below), and the use of a version 5 manual addendum proves that CE Software was more interested in profits than in providing customer value. The electronic version of the QuicKeys 4 manual could have been updated for version 5 in just a few hours. The significant new features in version 5 are:

- Compatibility with Mac OS 9’s Multi-Users features.
- Use of Apple’s Speech capability to trigger Shortcuts.
- Toolbars contain tabs and other improvements.
- Text Shortcuts can be as long as 2000 characters.
- File Handler now allows file copying.
- Setup Assistant supports more types of Shortcuts.

QuicKeys Sequence recording does not intelligently handle events such as button clicks and use of keystrokes in dialog windows. Every button click is recorded as a Click event instead of a Button event. Using return or enter or a keystroke combination to activate a button or open a selected file is recorded as a Type Text event instead of a Button or File Launch event.

Creating complex Sequences (especially if interacting with AppleScript or other scripting languages) is greatly hindered by the modal editing window, lack of debugging tools, and inadequate manual. I save time and effort by automating complicated tasks with AppleScript and call QuicKeys Sequences when appropriate.

QuicKeys has no active help functions. You must refer to the manual. Therefore, I highly recommend avoiding the downloadable versions with no printed manuals. When QuicKeys is active, you cannot view the electronic manuals (another downside to the use of modal windows).

Should You Purchase QuicKeys 5?

People who use Macintosh computers for a wide variety of tasks (especially long, repetitive ones) and who do not own QuicKeys should buy it immediately. Owners of earlier versions of QuicKeys

need to decide if upgrading is cost-effective. I recommend that users of [QuicKeys 3.5](#)¹ or earlier upgrade to version 5 if they use Mac OS 8.1 or later. The new features and better compatibility make the upgrade worthwhile. QuicKeys 4 owners have a tougher decision. I recommend upgrading if you want to use QuicKeys in a Multi-User environment, if you have numerous large Toolbars (tabbed Toolbars save screen space), or if you want to use Speech to trigger QuicKeys Shortcuts.

Copyright © 2000 Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



1. <http://www.atpm.com/3.06/page16.shtml>

Review: Random Eye Image Grabber 1.1

by Brooke Smith, bsmith@atpm.com

Developer: Random Eye Technologies

Web: <http://www.randomeye.com/home.html>

Price: \$249

Requirements: Power Mac with 64 MB of RAM.



True, a picture is worth a thousand words, but it can also be worth a thousand minutes. For businesses large or small that use stock photos in their advertising, Random Eye Image Grabber will make the photo search process a little less tedious. A plug-in that works in conjunction with Adobe Photoshop (or simply as a stand-alone program), Image Grabber searches a number of stock agencies' online photo libraries simultaneously, saving you from having to do individual searches of agency Web sites.

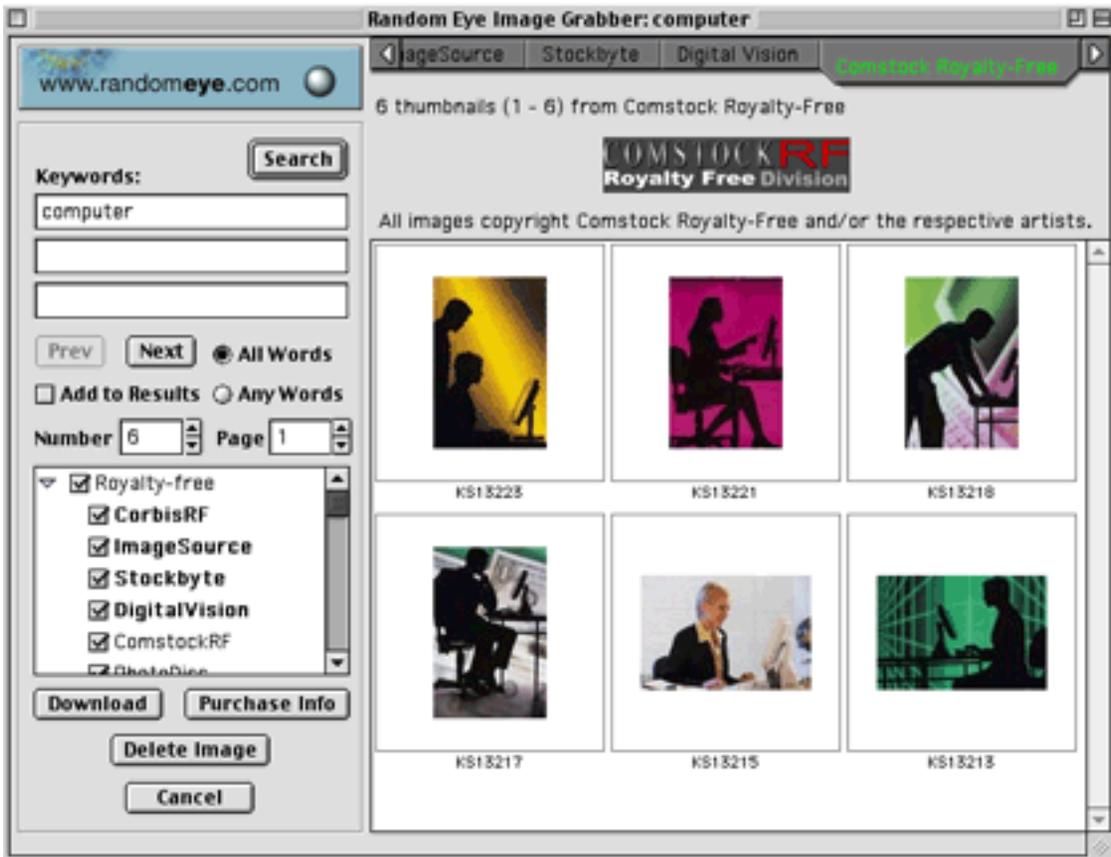
Here's how Image Grabber works. Type in up to three separate keywords for a picture you're looking for into three search boxes; you can choose as many as three keywords at a time. Next, select the type of stock agency you'd like Image Grabber to search. You have four categories of agencies to choose from: Royalty-free, where you pay once to use the image as many times as you want; Rights-protected (pay each time you use the image); a Specialty category; and a Consumer category.

Third, select the number of images you'd like to view at one time from each stock agency site, any number between 1 and 999. Use the arrow keys to go up or down, or highlight the number in the box and type in the desired number of images. Click Search. Image Grabber then scans through the various stock agency Web sites to retrieve the images that match your search criteria.

In the example below, I typed "computer" into the first keyword box and set the number of images I wanted to view at one time to six.

The results show six thumbnails from each of the six Royalty-free stock agency sites.

At the top of the window there's a message keeping track of the number of thumbnails and the agency you're viewing: "6 thumbnails (1-6) from Comstock Royalty-Free." In order to see the next six thumbnails (7-12) from Comstock, change the page to 2 and then press the Search button. Image Grabber then retrieves Page 2s for all the agencies, not just the one that's currently



displayed. Again, another message appears along the top of the window: “6 thumbnails (7–12) from Comstock Royalty-Free.”

Once you’ve found the image or images you want, select them and click Download. To highlight more than one image hold down the shift key as you click. If, there are a number of images you’re not interested in, highlight them and press the Delete Image button. The image(s) will disappear from the screen allowing you to look at the other thumbnails without being distracted by the ones you know don’t satisfy your needs.

The image(s) you’ve selected, meanwhile, will download automatically and open in Adobe Photoshop, all ready for you to modify and perfect. Image Grabber creates a folder with the name of the stock agency (e.g. “Comstock Royalty-Free”) right on your desktop containing the image or images you downloaded. If you want to purchase an image or images, click on Purchase Info and Image Grabber connects you to that stock agency’s home site. On the site you’ll find details of size and cost.

The best thing about this program is the amount of time Image Grabber saves art directors and advertising guys, who can scan many stock agency Web sites simultaneously instead of wading through endless images one site at a time. The program was obviously designed with busy people in mind.

There is also a good range of stock agencies available to the program. There are six royalty-free agencies (CorbisRF, ImageSource, Stockbyte, Digital Vision, ComstockRF and PhotoDisc) and four rights-protected agencies (Corbis, StockMarket, SpeedPix, and Masterfile). There's also Map Resources for budding cartographers, and Ditto for the consumer-oriented photo junkies.

Although Image Grabber may save time on surfing individual sites, the search and keywords sections need a bit of work. One keyword in the search box works fine, but when I typed two keywords into the box, "Eiffel Tower", an error message appeared ("Exception caught. Error code: 400"), though some pictures did begin to load before it stopped. For some reason, one keyword in each box is all the program can handle.

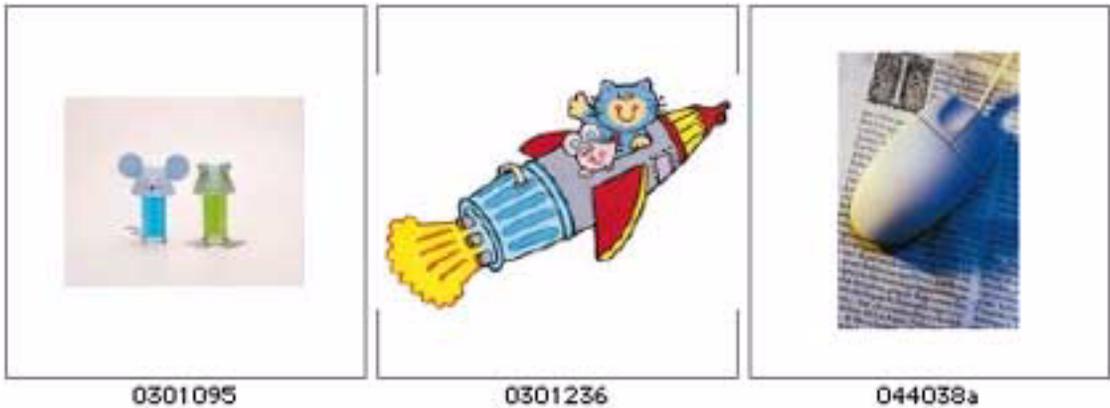
Similarly, if you try putting quotes around the words, as in "Eiffel Tower," a box appears again with the message: "Search found no images." There was no information about using two words or quotes around words in the Help menu. I just tried it myself simply because I'm used to Internet searches.

I also spent painstaking hours trying to figure out how searches for three keywords were done. Clicking on Any Words seems to give an OR configuration and results in images of a computer or a Mac or a laptop (when I entered those terms in the three search boxes).

Selecting All Words seems to suggest an AND configuration resulting in images of Mac laptop computers. I don't think this happened though, as several non-laptops showed up in the results as well as a mouse and CDs.

Whatever the case, the search process was unclear to me and I found it frustrating that I had to work it out. To me it should have been much more obvious or explained in the help section. However, it was pointed out to me that the odd choice of images could have been a result of the way the images were labelled by the stock agencies. Perhaps, but frustrating nonetheless.

There's no way to tell the search engine to differentiate between words with double meanings. For example, when I typed in mouse, I got the following:



There's no way to tell Image Grabber to leave out rodent or cartoon rodent pictures. You just have to ignore the pictures or delete them.

Another issue with this program is its lack of help. In order to access it, under the Help menu select "Get Image Grabber help on the Web." This takes you right to Random Eye's Web site where you have to e-mail Random Eye to submit a question or request support. E-mailing for information (although it says your e-mail will be answered within 24 hours) is not the kind of quick help that a sticky program like this deserves. And although there is a manual which you can download, it is very limited, essentially a one-page pictorial document indicating what each button does.

Despite a sticky search and keywords section (what do you want for version 1.1) and a rather poorly thought out Help section, or lack of it, Image Grabber is a good time-saving program that's fun and easy to use. It will keep impatient surfers happy and photo scouts loaded with eye-grabbing images.

Copyright © 2000 Brooke Smith, bsmith@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



Review: Razer Boomslang 2000 USB Mouse

by Daniel Chvatik, dchvatik@atpm.com

Developer: Kärna

Web: <http://www.razerzone.com/>

Price: \$99 for 2000dpi model (\$69.99 for older 1000dpi model)

Requirements: Mac with USB. Some form of mouse driver, such as USB Overdrive.



Apple's new (and long-rumored) optical mouse sent shockwaves through the Mac mousing community. Yet as nice as it is and looks, its single button will hardly satisfy die-hard gamers who want a mouse specifically designed with their needs in mind, such as:

- high resolution for accurate movement
- multiple buttons for all the functions a modern gamer needs
- *big* buttons that you can find in the heat of the battle
- cutting-edge design
- long cord

The Razer Boomslang mouse by kärna is intended to conquer this very market.

First, a word of caution: the Razer Boomslang is a PC mouse. Due to its USB interface and the magic of [USB Overdrive](#)¹, however, it can be used equally well on the Macintosh. Unfortunately, the lack of Macintosh drivers makes the mouse even more expensive, unless you happen to own a copy of USB Overdrive anyway. Fortunately, the company Web site promises native Macintosh drivers later this year.

Installation

The installation is very easy. Assuming you have USB Overdrive already running on your machine, all you need to do is take the mouse from its beautiful package (it would make a great gift just because of that) and plug it in. Two things you will notice immediately:

The mouse has a long cord. At 7', it is way beyond the usual 5' average mouse cord. Compared to the 1.5' of Apple's puck mouse, it promises freedom of movement. This comes in very handy for those high-adrenaline battles where you can't afford to be limited in your motions by a short

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.07/usb-overdrive.shtml>

mouse cord.

The second thing you will notice immediately is that the mouse “flies.” Due to its extremely high resolution, it is very sensitive to mouse movements on the standard Macintosh sensitivity settings. Just barely touching it will make the cursor fly across the screen. Mastering the new mouse will take a lot of practice, and you can best get used to it by decreasing the sensitivity settings for the mouse until you learn how to control its power.

The high resolution has one goal: to allow you to perform mousing maneuvers at high speed, with as little movement as necessary, while maintaining high accuracy. After some training, the mouse does excel at this, although the difference is not quite as dramatic as its manufacturer makes you hope or expect. Precision is more important for some games than others. With proper training, it will likely give you an edge in first-person shooters. Some compare the improvement to the difference between a kitchen knife and a surgeon’s scalpel. Maybe. But don’t expect to start operating overnight.

The Outside

The mouse is pretty, in a high-tech kind of way. It lacks the elegance of the new Apple optical mouse, but it is one of the prettiest mice I have seen.



Besides the translucent panels on the top and bottom, the biggest visual marks are the two very large buttons on the front. These two primary buttons have been exaggerated to provide easy access to the most important function: firing. Between them is the mandatory scroll wheel, which

is also more sensitive than standard wheels. The wheel itself can act as fifth button.

Fifth? Where are the other two, you will ask. They are hidden on the sides, about where I would hold the mouse. This is my biggest complaint about the mouse. For my large hands, the mouse is very difficult and uncomfortable to hold. To hold it steadily, I do need to exert some pressure where I hold it, right about where the two side-buttons are. However, to use those buttons, I have to increase or decrease the pressure on them for a while, making it very hard to move the mouse at the same time. In effect, this made it impossible for me to use those two buttons, pressing them when I didn't want to and not pressing them when I moved the mouse rapidly. This effectively turned the mouse into a two-button mouse, which significantly reduced its playing value for me. I found myself going back to the four equal buttons of my Kensington MouseWorks. Although not as spiffy a mouse, it does a better job of allowing me to use the extra buttons while maintaining enough contact with the mouse to move it.

That was my personal experience. People with smaller hands may find the mouse easier to use. What is shared by all, however, is a complaint about the too-easy triggers on the side buttons; also, most find the wheel to be too stiff. The ball on this mouse was moved towards the back of the mouse, forcing a different grip that tends to tire your hands when combined with the larger weight of the mouse.

The Final Verdict

Many PC gamers swear by the improved accuracy of this mouse. While I found it noticeable, it wasn't as great as I had hoped. I wanted to love the mouse, but I just couldn't. I mostly blame my hands. Maybe the lack of proper Mac drivers also didn't allow the mouse to reach its true potential. I will try to retest it once the Mac drivers are out.

In the meantime, the lack of Mac support and the high price don't necessarily make it an ideal buy for every Mac user. Then again, hard-core gamers are not your average Mac users. If you are tempted to get the mouse, give it a try—but make sure to have a 30-day money back guarantee.

Copyright © 2000 Daniel Chvatik, dchvatik@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



Review: Poor Man's Solitaire & Borderline Solitaire

by Brooke Smith, bsmith@atpm.com

Poor Man's Solitaire

Developer: Allgood Software

Web: <http://www.actrix.co.nz/users/trick/allgoodsw.html>

Price: \$13 (shareware)

Requirements: Mac with 68020, System 7.5, 256 colors.



Poor Man's Solitaire, designed by Mike Perry for Allgood Software, has 30 solitaire games to choose from including Canfield, Free Cell, and Golf. It's a good selection of games for the solitaire junkie. Each game is listed under the Games menu and has its keyboard shortcut beside it—to play Canfield, press Command-4. You can even select Random, which chooses one of the 30 games for you.

As usual in the world of computer card games, drag and drop is in effect here, and in Poor Man's Solitaire it's good and snappy. There's also an Options menu from which you can choose the following:

- Show Pile Types (indicates what kind of card pile it is, e.g., foundation, tableau, stock)
- Next Card? (indicates what card should be played next, e.g., a red king, a two)
- Where are the Aces? (indicates where the aces are)
- Pile Shortcuts... (gives you three shortcuts for piles of cards)

The Pile Shortcuts are very helpful. Choose from the following:

- Option-Control Click to play as many cards to foundations as possible (click on a card and watch the game go into auto-play as the card(s) go to the correct piles)
- Shift-Click to view a pile's contents (cheat a little by viewing the facedown cards)
- Control-Click to play the top card to a foundation

But despite the array of games, the snappy drag and drop, and the various shortcuts, Poor Man's Solitaire is called "poor" for a reason—its design. Poor Man's Solitaire is just the bare bones. There's nothing fancy here: a deck of patternless, dark blue cards on a plain, bottle-green background. There's no option to change backgrounds or decks. Okay, I admit it's fun to change up the decks and fiddle with the backgrounds, but when you're a serious solitaire player, do you



An example of the solitaire game Calculation with Show Pile Types turned on.

really care what the backs of the cards or the background looks like? In this sense, perhaps the lack of design is really not a big deal.

However, if the lack of design is not a big deal, the lack of a game title is. One thing that bothered me was the omission of the name of the solitaire game, which you'd expect to be located in the window's silver title bar. But no matter what game you're playing—Calculation, Free Cell, Golf, Spiderette—the name in the title bar is always "Poor Man's Solitaire" (see below). In order to know which game you're playing, you have to pull down the Games menu to see which game name is checkmarked. It's just a little thing, but perhaps it could be fixed for a later version.

As for instructions, if some of these games are new to you, you'll have to click on the HTML document in the Poor Man's Solitaire folder in order to view the instructions in your browser. This is a little frustrating, because I have seen other solitaire games (Burning Monkey Solitaire II comes to mind) where the instructions are built into the games themselves. Again, perhaps this will be fixed for a later version.

Poor Man's Solitaire is fun, and if you're into solitaire games, you'll spend many hours (as I did) in front of your screen trying to win. Incidentally, if you do win, you get the following message in a rectangle: Congratulations! You Won! (Now get back to work!)

Just make sure you click on the rectangle itself; this will take you back to the game, so you can play a new one or choose a different game entirely. I clicked everywhere except in the winner's rectangle and found that I couldn't get back to the game—it was as if the screen or game had frozen.

If you aren't fussy about design and just want to play a variety of solitaire games, Poor Man's Solitaire is good and worth the \$13 shareware fee. (By the way, pay the fee or else you'll continually get an annoying reminder in the middle of your game!)

Borderline Solitaire 1.0

Developer: Borderline Software

Web: <http://www.borderlinesoft.com/solitaire.html>

Price: \$12 (shareware)

Requirements: Mac with 68040 processor, Mac OS 8, 256 colors.



Borderline Solitaire may have some cool-looking decks and backgrounds, but that's about as far as it goes. Borderline Solitaire Version 1.0, designed by Rick Thompson, has only one game to play here—the original Solitaire. That's it.

Now, there's nothing wrong with regular Solitaire, but for a computer card game, especially a computer card game with only one game, it has to play well and it has to play sharp. I found that the drag and drop was sticky and sluggish—it's not as snappy as I've seen in other solitaire games (or even Poor Man's Solitaire, for that matter). And the three-card draw only allowed a view of the top card; it did not fan the cards. (This is just a personal thing—I like to see what the other cards are.)

Despite the stickiness and the non-fanning three-card draw, Borderline does have one advantage over Poor Man's Solitaire—its design. The decks can be changed. And what funky Aqua-looking decks they are. OS X anyone? To change a deck, choose Preferences under the Edit menu. There are eight designs with an Aqua-like B in the center of the card, two classic (more traditional) designs, plus a Random selection that chooses a new deck of cards each time you play a game.

There are also four backgrounds to choose from: Default Background, Backyard, Brushed Metal, and Woodgrain (see below). (There's also a Random selection, which chooses the background for you.) If you don't want a specific look for the background, choose from eight different colors or create your own background color with the color picker.



Borderline Solitaire in motion with the Backyard background.

You can also change the Settings of the game (also found under Preferences). In Game Play, choose between Flip Three (three-card draw) and/or Vegas Scoring. Under Graphics & Sound, you can choose among the following: Draw Shadows, Transparent Dragging, Show Animations, Faster Drawing, and Enable Sounds.

But these settings, along with the Aqua-like decks and the funky backgrounds, were not enough to sell me on the game. In my opinion, it's not worth the \$12. I'd rather pay \$13 for minimal design and a broad selection of solitaire games.

Copyright © 2000 Brooke Smith, bsmith@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



Review: Stealth Serial Port

by Evan Trent, etrent@atpm.com

Developer: GeeThree.com

Web: <http://www.geethree.com>

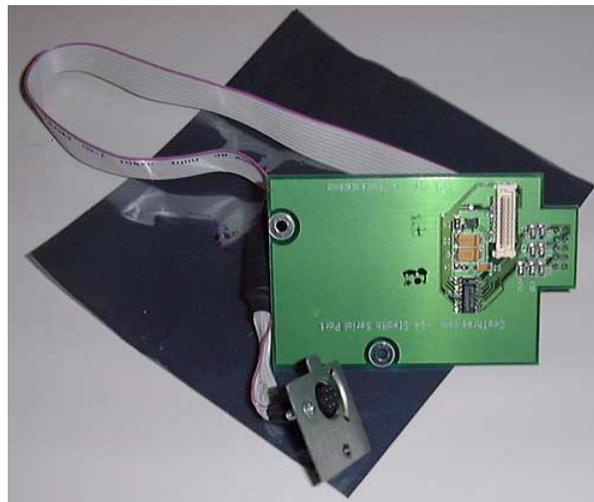
Price: \$49.95

Requirements: iMac, Blue and White Power Mac G3, or Power Mac G4.



The migration to USB has been an interesting experience for many Mac users. Indeed a plethora of USB devices has sprouted up, and several Mac Serial to USB converters are now available. Yet many users are faced with legacy devices, many of which do not function properly when interfaced with a Serial to USB converter.

Apple MIDI is one such example—Apple has not updated their drivers in ages, and hence they do not work with USB MIDI adapters. Many applications require Apple MIDI and do not work with other third party MIDI drivers such as Free MIDI or OMS (Open MIDI System). What should a user who depends on Apple MIDI do if he wants to use a new USB-only Macintosh? What should users in similar situations do? The new Macs are irresistible, but legacy devices always complicate the decision to purchase a new machine. Stealth Serial Port to the rescue.

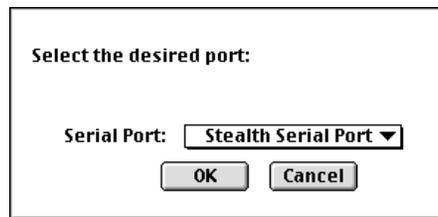


The Stealth Serial Port is a \$50 card that plugs into the comm slot found on the iMac, Blue and White G3, and G4 computers. It provides a standard Mini DIN-8 Serial port (note—the Stealth

Serial port does *not* support GeoPort devices, which require a 9th pin). The only bad news is that because the Stealth card uses the comm slot in your box, you will lose the internal modem. That's not such a bad thing in my opinion. I never liked internal modems to begin with (don't get me started). When I had my G4 built at the Apple Store I knew that I would be purchasing a Stealth Serial Port so I purchased it without the modem. If you need a modem, there are numerous external USB models from which to choose, and in the end you won't be spending much more, if any, for an external modem.

Installing the card is absurdly simple. If you have a B&W G3 or G4 the procedure requires about two minutes. For iMacs it's a bit more involved but still quite manageable.

That the Stealth Serial Port uses the comm slot is of critical importance with respect to its superlative compatibility. The driver included with the Stealth card simply hooks into the Comm Toolbox, providing another port selection in the port popup menu of any Comm Toolbox savvy application. For older applications, simply choosing the Modem port will work. Apple has cleverly patched the Modem port to the comm slot so that older applications will work with the internal modem (this has been common practice since the days of the first internal modems in Apple's laptops).



Does it work? Yes! It works superbly. I have used it with both Comm Toolbox–savvy and older applications; both find the Stealth port and use it without fail. The port supports the faster speed of 230.4K transmission, which is good news if you are forced to use the serial port for digital camera transfers, for example. Also supported is Ethernet to LocalTalk bridging, so you can network an old LocalTalk printer on an Ethernet network. Even that Godforsaken Apple MIDI works now! I have yet to find a program, no matter how old, which does not work perfectly with the Stealth Serial Port.

I have followed discussions regarding competing cards, and it has become evident to me that the GeeThree product is by far the best choice. Other cards are apparently not as compatible—and I

have yet to hear any complaints regarding the Stealth board. When compared to Serial to USB converters the GeeThree card always comes out ahead. And often it is cheaper.

Any complaints? In terms of functionality, no. The card does what it says it will, and it does it perfectly. The manual is appropriately short but easy to follow, and it will allow even the novice to install the board. The driver is a tiny little extension with next to no memory overhead. I cannot find any problems with the card.



Stealth Serial Port

The only way to improve upon the product would be to somehow design a similar board with both an internal modem and serial port. Such a card would then provide an accompanying driver that would allow Comm Toolbox applications to choose between Internal Modem and Stealth Port, and there would be a control panel allowing the user to choose which port to map old style modem port requests. This would be perfection...but I cannot penalize the folks at GeeThree for not providing a product I just thought up off the top of my head.

I can summarize this review quickly for you: the Stealth Serial Port is about as perfect a product as I've encountered, at least from a hardware standpoint. Its perfection is a result of its simplicity, but it is nevertheless flawlessly executed and the price is tough to beat. Thankfully, we are leaving the days of the serial port behind us, but many Mac users will nevertheless encounter the need for one. Should that need arise, rest assured that the GeeThree will come to the rescue in fine style.

Copyright © 2000 Evan Trent, etrent@atpm.com. Reviewing in ATPM is open to anyone. If you're interested, write to us at reviews@atpm.com.



FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is ATPM?

About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or “e-zine.” 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.

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

We currently need several **Contributing Editors**, an **Interviews Manager**, a **Copy Editor**, and a **Publicity Manager**. Please [contact us](#)¹ if you’re interested.

How Can I Subscribe to ATPM?

Visit the [subscriptions page](#)² or send an e-mail to subscriptions@atpm.com with the word help in the subject line. Instructions for subscribing and unsubscribing will be returned, shortly.

Which Format Is Best for Me?



The **Online Webzine** edition is for people who want to view ATPM in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to ATPM back issues and other Web pages. You can use Sherlock to [search](#)³ all of the online issues at once.



The **Offline Webzine** is a HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a StuffIt archive to reduce file size. The graphics, content, and navigation elements are the same as with the Online Webzine, but you can view it without being connected to the Internet. It requires a Web browser.

-
1. editor@atpm.com
 2. <http://www.atpm.com/subscribe>
 3. <http://www.atpm.com/search>



The **Print PDF** edition is saved in Adobe Acrobat format. It has a two-column layout with smaller text and higher-resolution graphics that are optimized for printing. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Adobe's free Acrobat Reader on Macintosh or Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.



The **Screen PDF** edition is also saved in Adobe Acrobat format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Adobe's free Acrobat Reader on Macintosh or Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

What Are Some Tips for Viewing PDFs?

- You can [download](#)¹ Adobe Acrobat Reader for free. If you have a Power Macintosh, Acrobat Reader 4 has better quality and performance. AT^{PM} is also compatible with Acrobat Reader 3, for those with 680x0 Macs.
- You can zoom the PDF to full window width and scroll through articles simply by single-clicking anywhere in the article text (except underlined links).
- You can quickly navigate between articles using the bookmarks pane at the left of the main viewing window.
- For best results on small screens, be sure to hide the bookmarks pane; that way you'll be able to see the entire page width at 100%.
- Try turning Font Smoothing on and off in Acrobat Reader's preferences to see which setting you prefer.
- All blue-underlined links are clickable. Links to external Web sites are reproduced in footnotes at the bottoms of pages, in case you are reading from a printed copy.
- You can hold down option while hovering over a link to see where it will lead.
- For best results, turn off Acrobat's "Fit to Page" option before printing.

Why Are Some Links Double-Underlined?

In the PDF editions of AT^{PM}, links that are double-underlined lead to other pages in the same PDF. Links that are single-underlined will open in your Web browser.

What If I Get Errors Decoding ATPM?

AT^{PM} and MacFixIt readers have reported problems decoding MacBinary files using early

1. <http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>

versions of StuffIt Expander 5.x. If you encounter problems decoding ATPM, we recommend upgrading to [StuffIt Expander 5.1.4 or later](#)¹.

How Can I Submit 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.

How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

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.

Do You Answer Technical Support Questions?

Of course. Email our Help Department at help@atpm.com.

How Can I Contribute to ATPM?

There are several sections of ATPM to which readers frequently contribute:

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.

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique

1. <http://www.aladdinsys.com/expander/index.html>

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 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.

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.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our [reviews index](#)¹ for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

ATPM uses the following ratings (in order from best to worst): Excellent, Very Nice, Good, Okay, Rotten.

Will You Review My Product?

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. Contact reviews@atpm.com for shipping information.

Can I Sponsor ATPM?

About This Particular Macintosh is free, and we intend to keep it this way. Our editors and staff

1. <http://www.atpm.com/reviews>

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 advertise@atpm.com for more information.

Where Can I Find Back Issues of ATPM?

[Back issues](#)¹ of ATPM, dating since April 1995, are available in DOCMaker stand-alone format. In addition, all issues since ATPM 2.05 (May 1996) are available in HTML format. You can [search](#)² all of our back issues.

What If My Question Isn’t Answered Above?

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.



1. <http://www.atpm.com/Back/>
2. <http://www.atpm.com/search>

Trivia Challenge

by Edward Goss, egoss@atpm.com

Sibling Search

This is the latest in ATPM's series of *Trivia Challenges*. Answers to this month's *Trivia Challenge* will be found in the next issue of ATPM. If you have any suggestions for future Trivia Challenges, or would like to contribute a *Trivia Challenge*, please e-mail me at egoss@atpm.com.

I'm afraid there were no winners in last month's *Trivia Challenge*, [Sports Shorts](#)¹. Try again! This month's prize of a dynamite ATPM T-shirt goes to the first two correct entries I receive at egoss@atpm.com. Individual readers are eligible to win only once every twelve months.

This month's *Trivia Challenge* is a match the brothers game. On the left is the name of a famous person, and on the right is his (maybe) not so famous brother. So call up your lifelines and come up with your final answers as you take part in:

Trivia Challenge 6.08—Sibling Search

1. James Taylor	A. Ralf.
2. Duane Allman	B. Beau
3. Wilbur Wright	C. Carl
4. Don Everly	D. Livingston
5. Johnny Winter	E. Orville
6. Rusty Wallace	F. Paul
7. Jimmy Carter	G. Dom
8. Michael Schumacher	H. Billy
9. Branford Marsalis	I. Phil
10. Brian Wilson	J. Kenny
11. Jeff Bridges	K. Darren
12. Satchell Page	L. Greg

1. <http://www.atpm.com/6.07/trivia.shtml>

Trivia Challenge 6.08—Sibling Search

13. Joe Dimaggio	M. Virgil
14. Doug Flutie	N. Edgar
15. Dizzy Dean	O. Wynton

Last Month's Answers—TC 6.07—Sports Shorts

1. Who was the last Major League baseball player to hit .400?	B. Ted Williams
2. In his career, how many no-hitters did Nolan Ryan pitch?	C. 7
3. In 1964 Sandy Koufax, Elston Howard, Jim Brown, Oscar Robertson, and Cookie Gilchrist all were voted Most Valuable Players in their respective leagues. Amazingly, they all wore the same uniform number! What was that number?	D. 32
4. Who is the only NBA player to average a triple-double for an entire NBA season?	A. Oscar Robertson
5. Which of these sports requires the largest playing field?	B. Polo
6. What major pro sports team holds the modern day record of going 35 games without a loss?	D. Philadelphia Flyers
7. Who is the oldest Major League pitcher to win the Cy Young Award?	A. Gaylord Perry
8. What player's silhouette is on the official Major League Baseball logo?	C. Harmon Killebrew
9. What player's silhouette is on the official NBA logo?	A. Jerry West
10. What Major League pitcher won the most games (26) in one season without winning the Cy Young Award?	B. Juan Marichal
11. The score in a forfeited baseball game is recorded as 9–0. What score is recorded in a forfeited football game?	D. 2–0
12. Who was the first NHL player to score 50 goals in a season?	A. Bobby Hull

The Rules

Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are stored in a hermetically sealed envelope guarded by a playful Siamese cat named “Bonnet” who lives in our house.

This Month’s CD Recommendation

“[Two Against Nature](#)¹” reunites Walter Becker and Donald Fagen of Steely Dan. Impeccably played and flawless to a fault, the nine catch ditties almost succeed. Although the disturbing “Cousin Dupree” and the pleasant enough “What A Shame About Me” get most of the publicity, the whole album is Steely Dan at its studio best—not a beat out of place, with stellar sidemen playing carefully crafted tunes. My favorite track is “Negative Girl,” where at least Vinnie Colaiuta (Sting) gets the drums right. It’s not “Katy Lied” or “AJA,” but it’s Steely Dan all the way. A must for fans, “Two Against Nature” will require repeated listening for skeptics before they get it, if they ever do.

Copyright © 2000 Edward Goss, egoss@atpm.com.



1. <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00004GOXS/aboutthisparticu>