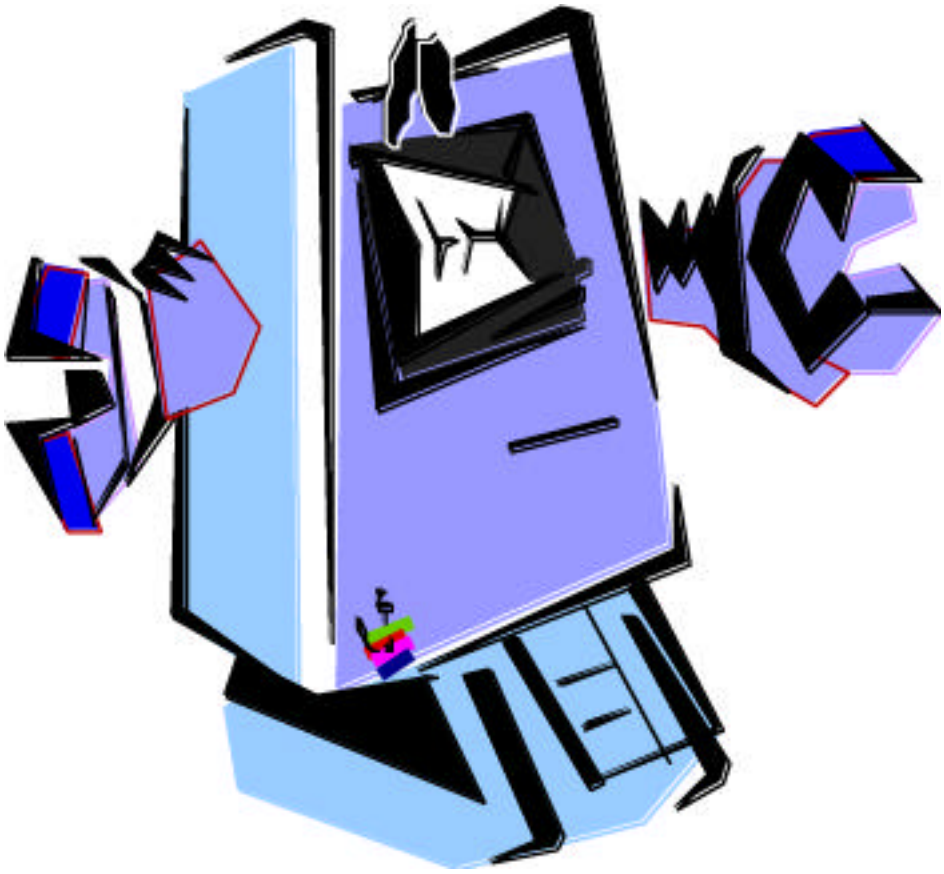
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By: ***Tim Robertson***
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The My Mac Home Front

I want to take a moment and congratulate My Mac columnist Derek K. Miller and his wife on the birth of their second daughter! From everyone here at My Mac, Derek, we wish you, your wife, your first daughter and her new sister the very best!



Bill Perry sent me an interesting URL about the guy who pretended to be President Clinton during a CNN chat. Check it out here... http://www.boredom.org/cnn

As you may have noticed starting last month, the staff members now have their **pictures** displayed in their columns. We feel this helps makes My Mac's writers more familiar and "real" to our readers. (The picture above of me, with the sunglasses on, was taken in San Francisco by Adam, and I hate it!) The thing is, where do we put **Jim Moravec's** picture? Jim is our editor, but he doesn't write a regular column (though he has been known to send one in every now and then). But he did send me a picture, so here it is: (Hey, Jim, betcha' didn't think I would actually post this one, did ya? HA!) :-)

To buy or not to buy...

Well, after many months of speculation, Apple finally released the long awaited "Pismo" PowerBook to much fanfare at Macworld Expo Tokyo. And while it didn't sport the iBook's "clam shell" design as many people and websites predicted (thank goodness), it did bump up all the specs for the machine.

I own a 400MHz G3 "Lombard" PowerBook myself, so I thought it would be fun to sit here and decide if I should have waited for this new PowerBook, like many people did, or if I in fact made the right decision when I purchased my Lombard.

SCSI vs. FireWire

The major difference between the top-of-the-line PowerBook today and mine is the addition of a FireWire port on the Pismo, while my Lombard has a SCSI port. Well, I don't plan on recording any movies anytime soon, and my camcorder doesn't have a FireWire port, anyway. I have not seen any FireWire products out there I really "must have" or which there is not a comparable SCSI edition of same. Most of the new peripherals, it seems, now come with a USB port, which I have on the Lombard. So as far as FireWire goes, in all honesty I would rather have built-in SCSI support. (I own many SCSI peripherals, such as CD burners and scanners, which I would not be able to use on the stock, out-of-the-box Pismo PowerBook) Besides, if and when a FireWire product is released that I "must have", I can always add a FireWire card to my Lombard.

AirPort

The new PowerBook is AirPort ready, now making everything coming from Apple ready for wireless functioning. This is very cool, but as a Lombard owner, there are cards I can buy which will also give me wireless options (the SkyLINE 11Mb PC Card from Farallon, for instance). But the fact is that Apple has shown a commitment to the wireless technology, and now any new Mac you buy is ready to take advantage of this fantastic technology.

400MHz vs 500MHz

When I got my Lombard, it was the fastest PowerBook you could get. It was a choice between 333MHz and 400MHz. I went with the faster machine, as my primary job dictates I open very large graphic files all day long. The faster 500MHz Pismo machine, with a much better and faster 100MHz system bus (the same unified architecture found in all the rest of Apple product line) means the new Pismo 'Books will feel much snappier than the 400MHz Lombard. In this area, the Pismo would have been a better machine.

ATI Mobility card

The new PowerBook ships with a much better graphic card than in the Lombard machines. This is great! I wish I had this card in my PowerBook.

The backside cache is also doubled in the new Pismo, which will also contribute to faster operation. If you have a small cache in your computer, you might want to consider upgrading it to at least 1 or 2MB, if you can. It will make a large difference in your computer's performance.

Memory

The 500MHz Pismo also comes standard with 128MB of RAM, as well as a 12GB hard drive. Wow! I wish my Lombard had 128MB standard, but of course the first thing I did with my PowerBook was to upgrade the memory. The extra hard drive space would also have been nice, but I've had no problems with the 6GB drive in my Lombard. I think I still have at least 2.5GB free, and much of what is currently on that drive could be archived to CD.

The styling of the Lombard and Pismo is the same. While the rest of Apple's product line all comes in translucent colors, the professional PowerBook line does not. And for that, I thank Apple. If I want a colorful portable, I will buy an iBook. But where I work I deal with some very conservative upper-echelon executives, and I know I'd feel a little out of place with a see-through Tangerine portable computer. My portable really does have to look professional, and the current crop from Apple certainly meets that need.

All in all, the new PowerBooks are an impressive lot. So, to answer my own questions, should I have waited for this machine to come out, or was the Lombard purchase the wise one? Well, I knew the answer even before I started writing this column: the Lombard was the correct choice. Why? Because I needed the top-of-the-line PowerBook six months ago, and I would have gained nothing in the intervening time by waiting for the Pismo.

A good rule of thumb I tell all my Mac friends: buy the Mac you need right now, no matter what Apple may have coming down the pike. Apple, and every other computer manufacturer, will always release a computer faster, more powerful, and cheaper than the one you buy today. But you can't play the waiting game, hoping to get the latest and greatest. The machine you buy today will NOT be "obsolete" in six months, or even a year from now, for that matter. You will continue to use and enjoy it, and you can always upgrade it at a later time. One example: people who purchased a 333MHz iMac six months ago can now upgrade their machines with an iMAXpowr G3 466 from Newer Technology, making those iMacs faster than any iMac you can currently buy from Apple.

So no, don't play the waiting game. The current crop of Macs from Apple are indeed great, but chances are so is your current Mac. If you need more power than you current Mac gives you, first look at the upgrade market, because there are really some fantastic products and companies out there ready to help. And if you can't find anything out there which will give you the performance you need, then give a good long look at what Apple has for sale.

New iBook



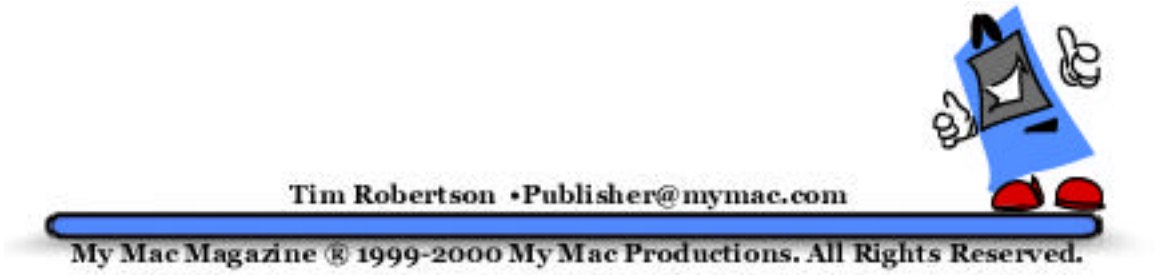
Apple also released a new iBook in Japan. I was very surprised when I got an email from Babes in Boyland columnist Beth Lock informing me she had up and purchased one. Way to go, Beth! (Read her column about it only on our website at (http://www.mymac.com/exclusives/web_only/boyland_21900.shtml).

The new iBook (picture courtesy of Apple's website) is an impressive looking machine. Graphite in color, it also provides 66MHz more processing power than the base iBook, as well as... well, everything else about the iBook SE is the same as a Blueberry or Tangerine iBook. Well, almost the same. You also have to pay $200 more for the Graphite color and the 20% increase in processor speed. 20% may sound like a lot, but really is only slightly noticable.

The stock iBook comes with a 12.1 TFT SVGA screen, 300MHz G3 processor (366MHz in the SE) 64MB of memory, and 6GB of storage space.

The additional 32MB of memory over the original iBook is a welcome addition. 32MB is simply NOT enough for any new computer, not even a Mac. 64MB is better. But why don't you get at least 128MB in the iBook SE? Or at least a bigger hard drive? That makes no sense to me at all. In fact, for all intents and purposes, all you really get with the SE is a different color. Uh, Apple? Hello?

But the big thing I'm dumbfounded about is the fact that there is STILL no DVD iBook out there. All three of the other Macs—PowerMac, iMac, and PowerBook—all come with DVD. (The low-end iMac does not, but it only costs $999) What's the hold-up? Give us a DVD iBook, already!



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eMail Page

***By:* Tim Robertson**
Publisher, My Mac Magazine
Publisher@mymac.com



We love to read your email! Tell us what you like or dislike about the magazine or website, any thoughts on something you read in an issue, or pretty much anything else. If you have a few moments, fire up your email program and drop us a line!

More RAM

Hi and thanks for My Mac and for inviting questions from readers.

I have a PPC with 1GB memory and 16MB RAM. In trying to increase memory (from the Control Panel>Memory) I am often unsatisfied with the default, which seems low, but I need to learn the right proportions for setting RAM, virtual memory, and the cache, because every time I mess with these, things go wrong. If there is a formula for balancing the memory I sure would appreciate learning it.

Thanks for your help!

Nancy aa3dp@desupernet.net

Nancy,
Three words: buy more RAM. Memory prices are falling, and more memory is the single most beneficial upgrade you can do. Once installed, your Mac will recognize the new RAM after the next startup.

Re-visit the Memory Control Panel and click on the default settings again, and I think you'll see a marked improvement in overall speed and smoothness. By the way, you didn't mention which version of the System you were running, but today's applications all require a lot more RAM breathing room.
Also, your hard drive is 1GB. The 16MB of RAM is memory. Many people get these things confused, so don't worry! But this could confuse a technician if you ever need someone's help over the phone.

The OS Shuffle

Hi Tim,
Love your newsletter and my Mac although it's an oldie (Powerbook 540c).

I'm using 7.5.3 with Netscape 3.0. It is unstable and I'm having big problems with Javascripting errors.

I'm told that I may be able to upgrade by downloading 7.6.1 which is more stable and allow me to upgrade to Netscape 4.0 or better.

Is this true, and if so is there a site, where I can download 7.6.1 to replace 7.5.3? Also, I have never downloaded and replaced an operating system. Do you have any suggestions.

This might also be a topic of interest to others with Mac oldies.

Thanks,
Glen glenalder@earthlink.net

Glen,
Netscape 3.0 was always very stable for me under system 7.5. The problems you're running into, though, is the fact that many websites are created with Java scripts your browser cannot handle.

Mac OS 7.6.1 is indeed a free upgrade. However, you have to already own Mac OS 7.6 to use it, and that is not free. There is no way to go from Mac OS 7.5.3 to 7.6.1. You have to buy Mac OS 7.6 first. Check around the web or eBay; you can probably pick it up for a few bucks.

One other thing: you can also update your Mac OS to 7.5.5, which was much more stable on my 540C (still works!) than 7.5.3 was.

Basic email

Thanks for another fine addition, and keep up the "Basic Training." I forward this part to all the newcomers I know.

Thanks,
Mike Mike4puy@aol.com

My monthly email :)

Hi Tim and better half :) (and Adam and Babe and all y'a others :)

You once offered to mail us My Mac addicts our monthly dose, and pump it directly into our veins. Well, you came through the first time and I used my semi-dirty tools (Stuffit Expander Win) to expand it.

And I fired up my fix of MM in some used Acrobat Reader 3.0 on a Pentium II at work, and I failed. I just couldn't get the stuff on paper (my favorite fix of My Mac is on the bus home from work).

Well, after a sweat and a "print to file" and "copy to lpt1 /b" horror I had my printout. And I had to go home (the bus were en route).

HOWEVER, Tim ... you didn't mail me the next MM. I almost went cold turkey, but at last I scored some from your site!

And though you actually DID mail me the recent issue, well ... it was a DocMaker and Tim, we sorry people who have to use wintels at work, we just can't fix with them doc's 'y know?

So next time you feel like being a playa, mail me a pdf at tbo@edeka.dk :)

But seriously, My Mac is so awesome, and you're all doing such a great job. THANK YOU!

Regards,
Thomas thomas@boelskifte.dk

Thomas,
Alas, I am not sure what happened, at least as far as sending you the DOCMaker edition. I try very hard to keep those two mailing lists separate, but I did make a mistake somewhere in there...

The reason I had not sent out two months' worth of issues was a problem with my cable modem. I could download files just great, but for some reason, I could not upload anything over 2k in size! Yeah, strange, eh? Well, after getting the run-around from AT&T Cable Services, they finally fixed the problem! So My Mac is once more being emailed out to subscribers who want it sent to them that way.

As for your Acrobat/PC/Printing problem. Hey, I do that all day at work, so don't look for me to do it from home, too! ;-)

OS 8.5 update

Hello, I am an iMac user and I have been looking to download the OS 8.5 update.....I have been searching the net for it but with no luck. Would you have a website of where I can download this info??

I would appreciate it very much, Thank you, I am now running OS 8.1

April Mercer amercer@ns.sympatico.ca

April,
Bad news... You have to pay to get from 8.1 to 8.5 :-(Yup, it is not a freebie.

I would recommend, though, going right to 8.6.

Okay, thank you Tim.....at least I won't drive myself crazy searching for it online anymore!!! LOL LOL

:o)
April Mercer amercer@ns.sympatico.ca

re: Rodney O. Lain

I'm a long time My Mac reader. I just read Rodney O. Lain's column and it was well done. These guys have to be held responsible for what they print. Good for you, printing his article. Keep up the good work.

Clifton Fowles cfowles@nycap.rr.com

Thanks, Clifton. For those who only read the downloadable edition of My Mac Magazine, you really are missing a plethora of great columns which we post exclusively on our website, http://www.mymac.com. Check it out today!

More on Rodney O. Lain

Good going Tim, give 'em hell. Personally I couldn't give two hoots about the other "controversial" story by Mr. Lain or this one for that matter. It's fine to express an opinion, I'm sure we can all agree on that. In any event it's good to see someone stand up for something other than the bottom line.

With regard to Rodney's writing, I can't say I'm impressed. I can't stand his coarse tone, I guess I'm old fashioned. ;) I usually pay no attention to the writer who goes out with the intention of "venting." Often it's self aggrandizing, needlessly sarcastic froth without much substance underneath. As it turns out, "The Realist" is no exception, most of what was said was too personal and inflammatory to be of much use as op/ed in my view.

By way of illustrating my point, Rodney in his piece decries the inaccuracy of rumor sites. To me it's a little bit like being angry at ice because it's cold. It's a rumor site after all, what does he expect. If you are dealing with a clearing house of rumor, don't expect a lot of facts. I guess we just don't agree on what the definition of rumor is.

I see his need to fire a shot across the bow of whoever put pressure on the other, unnamed, site to remove his article, it's not very helpful in my view. Nobody ever wins a land war in Asia, or a flame war on the net.

I do however agree with the sentiment toward the site that pulled Mr. Lain's piece and your feeling the need to publish him on principal. As for rumor sites, they do have a place in the world, just as fungus does, important but too very lofty, I'm afraid.

Best Regards, Barry Wal BarryWall@aol.com

Thanks

I just wanted to say thanks for the great web site and particularly Babes In Boyland. A group of us at Apple found My Mac after Beth Lock's "Geek Girls in Leather Skirts" article was posted on MacSurfer. Reading thru the BIB archives you posted are great and it really is refreshing for us at Apple to read "Real Mac Stories by Real People."

Thanks again and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Paul Hudspeth
Systems Engineer, Apple

Re: the Great Debate

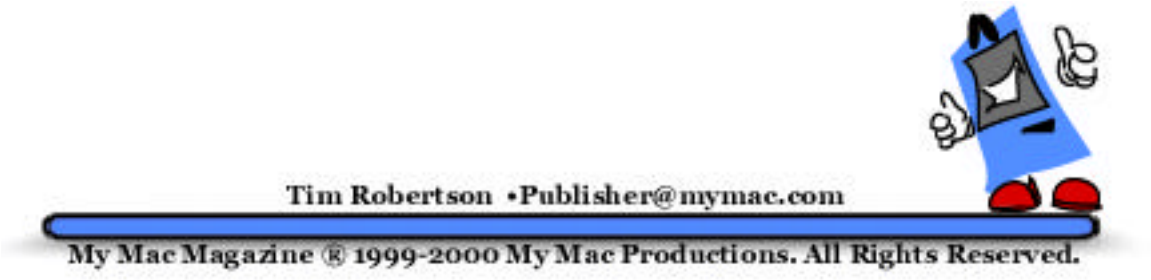
I like your arguments, Tim. It's all about democracy! Somewhere amongst all the Mac websites (pro and the little guys) the truth can be gleaned. I like the little Mac sites! When I visit them, it reminds me of sitting at a bar with some friends having a couple beers and enjoying our petty arguments! It's fun! But it's more than that. It gives me more depth of character than I ever could get reading the corporate line. It's the nature of the Macintosh culture that gives rise to what is happening on the Mac web. Let's face it. We love to gossip about our favorite company and I think most of us (at least, me) take all the info we read with a grain of salt. (I'd never buy or sell my AAPL based on most of what I read at the Mac sites--I use 10-K's and 10-Q's for that stuff.)

Anyway, thanks for the article. I wish I could meet John (Martello). That guy is a great writer! Maybe I'll meet him at a Mac show someday. (Oh...(blush) You're good, too!)

Regards,
Mike Rowland, Newport News, VA

Mike,
Many thanks for the kind words. I, too, really enjoy reading the Mac sites, big and small. Sure, I publish here in the Mac arena, but I'm a Mac user first and foremost.

We love to read your email! Tell us what you like or dislike about the magazine or website, any thoughts on something you read in an issue, or pretty much anything else. If you have a few moments, fire up your email program and drop us a line!



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***By*: Susan Howerter**
My Mac Magazine
susan@mymac.com



Living with ViaVoice

Susan Howerter

There will be others writing comprehensive reviews that give a good idea of what ViaVoice has to offer. But there is nothing like hearing how a program fares in day to day use. As a world class, truly terrible typist, I felt that ViaVoice and I were made for each other. So... was this article written simply by leaning back and letting the thoughts verbally stream onto the page? You've gotta be kidding...

Circa 1994 / 3:30 PM

"Buster. Open File." The teachers packing the small room for a demonstration of early voice recognition strain forward to watch. Nothing happens. "Buster! Open file!" Still nothing. The presenter adjusts his mic and tries again. "BUSTER! OPEN FILE!" One teacher whispers to another, "I've been up to my ears in little Busters all day. What I *don't* need is a computer with an attitude."

How exciting it was back then. Full-fledged voice recognition seemed the next giant step for computing and the Mac was leading the way. Then, sort of like the manned landings on the moon, we went off track. Eventually, the PC world got various speech recognition programs, but the Mac remained tied to the keyboard except for some limited verbal commands such as Apple's "Speakable Items" and Dragon's no longer supported "PowerSecretary."

In the last few months, this has begun to change.

VoicePower Pro by GT Value Europe Ltd., a discrete speech product utilizing the Dragon recognition engine, was released with an American dictionary in late November. http://www.voicepowerpro.com

IBM's ViaVoice Millennium Edition, with continuous speech recognition and a large active vocabulary, became available for the Mac in early December. http://www4.ibm.com/software/speech/mac

MacSpeech, a continuous speech product built around the Philips dictation engine, plans to take full advantage of the Macintosh hardware and operating system when it ships later this year. http://www.macspeech.com

Dragon Systems (whose Naturally Speaking 4.0 Professional for Windows is considered by many to be the best of the the current Windows-based products) is now planning a Mac program with continuous speech. It may require OS X. http://www.dragonsys.com/news/pr/051099.apple.html

(For a fuller discussion of these and other options for the Mac, be sure and check out Susan Fulton's excellent article at "Computing Out Loud." http://www.out-loud.com/mac.html)

ViaVoice: First Impressions and Getting Started

While eagerly awaiting ViaVoice, my main concern was that though it might do well in a predictable format with a limited vocabulary, I would find it impossible to write using a more creative language. But I was pleasantly surprised—amazed actually—at the vocabulary already built into the program (certainly richer than AppleWorks' spell checker). In fact, the training process involves reading passages from "Treasure Island" as well as "A Ghost Story" by Mark Twain.

The training was lengthy, but fairly smooth. I read all six passages in three sittings, allowing ViaVoice to process each pair while I got my voice back. Though this could have be done in one (long) day, spreading the training session over several days not only gives your voice a chance to rest, it, hopefully, trains VV to recognize 'you' under slightly different circumstances.

I then imported some things I had written for My Mac into SimpleText to have VV analyze my working vocabulary. Surprisingly, it was aware of many unexpected words, but continually wanted help with common, but capitalized, words such as ‘As,’ ‘But,’ and ‘Did.’ Though it is not difficult to retrain such words, it is time consuming, and makes me wonder if all I am doing is confusing the computer further.

Next I spent several evenings reading old My Mac columns into ViaVoice and correcting after each paragraph. This is done, not in an application such as “Word” or “AppleWorks,” but in ViaVoice's own “SpeakPad,” as VV must not only recognize your words, it evaluates them in terms of context. This makes for a very slow program, but it is quite often accurate in deciding whether you intended to write ‘to,’ ‘too,’ or ‘two.’ That’s the good news.

The bad news, at least for a person who uses lots of quotes, parenthesis, and varied punctuation, is that ordinary text becomes a tongue twister, fraught with potential for mistakes. VV continues, even with constant retraining, to hear my “Quote” as two words so that, unless I ‘swallow’ my command, the word “to” follows every quotation mark. And constantly saying “open parentheses” and “close parentheses” makes “Sister Susie sells seashells by the seashore” seem a snap. By now I’ve surely got spittle spots all over the screen.

The inevitable repetition of long terms such as “Question mark” and “Exclamation point” make dictation unnecessarily exhausting. Why can’t we make macros for these often used commands and then train them to our voice? If VV could learn short cuts for these common terms and could learn that we use, for instance, a certain inflection for basic commands, it would go a long way toward making the program both more accurate and more user-friendly.

Which brings up another feature that seems particularly weak. No matter how thoroughly we train ViaVoice to recognize our own vocabularies, there seems to be no way to train the commands needed to run the program. And, at least in my experience, VV does a better job recognizing unusual vocabulary words than it does in coping with its own commands.

There is nothing more irritating than saying “Uppercase on” and having everything come out underlined... line after line after line. No amount of “Underline off”—not even “UNDERLINE OFF !@#$@”—was able to break the cycle. I find it essential to keep one hand on the mouse and the other on the keyboard.

Using an ‘attention word’ (such as “Buster”) before beginning the command, rather than simply pausing before speaking, is helpful in alerting the computer that a command is on the way. This helps to keep VV from writing out “italicize on” when all you want is some italics on the page. I was rather planning to use the word “Dolly” as it is both short and unlikely to come up in my regular writing. Appropriate too, as my current computer is a Umax S900 clone.

Unfortunately, VV has only one option. Computer. The word “Computer” is not only another three syllables to add to an already long command, those of us who write about computers could find it popping up in all sorts of unwanted places. Therefore, I gave up on using an attention word and take my chances with the bare commands. Dolly, I need you.

Working with ViaVoice: “Golden Blocks and the Three Beers”

I had assumed that after doing extensive pre-training, ViaVoice, with its excellent vocabulary, would do an equally excellent job of understanding what I said. But this was not to be. Although surprisingly good with many unlikely words, VV finds simple words and phrases a challenge. Mind you, it is being used (with varying success) by everyone from doctors to journalists to school kids. And with voices as varied as a Minnesota clip to a Texas drawl. It even has to cope with speakers from Canada to Australia.

But, although I consider my accent as pretty mainstream USA and tend to speak reasonably clearly—though admittedly too fast—ViaVoice and I are often far apart. We regularly argue over things like ‘while’ vs. ‘what.’ For example, I admit “Goldie Locks” may be asking a little much in the way of recognition.

But when I replay my sentence “Mama Bear said, let’s go for a walk while our breakfast is cooling.” I definitely hear the words “while our.” VV, equally definite, gives me five choices, all containing “what are”. Okay, I think, let’s try again. No retraining, just speak a little more clearly. This time I get “Small beer said, let’s go for a walk **walleye** breakfast is cooling.” Like I say, a great, if unexpected, vocabulary.

By the way, even 95% accuracy requires a lot of correction and don’t expect your spell checker to catch your mistakes. Any words, intended or not, are going to be real words, correctly spelled. That is both the advantage and the disadvantage of a dictation program.

When it comes to dictating, ViaVoice is painfully slow. I am using a Umax S900 with 96MB RAM (and Virtual Memory +10 as instructed in the manual), upgraded with a Newer 300/200 G3 card and OS 8.6. Apple Profiler thinks I have a Power Macintosh 8500. But even those with real G4 Macs and large amounts of RAM find speed a problem. I certainly understand that VV has a difficult job in translating our variable speech into content-sensitive English. And I am continually amazed at what it **can** do.

But trying to dictate 'off the cuff' to something several sentences behind your spoken word is like trying to rub your stomach and pat your head. Very confusing. It works best to have a written copy to read from (which sort of defeats the purpose) or to close your eyes and just start talking. No peeking until you are ready to correct and transfer into your main application.

But don't wait too long! Another disadvantage is that ViaVoice is not notably stable. Crashes happen. Even after doubling the memory to the IBM SpeakPad and to the background engine, random crashes can wipe out everything. This is partly because of the way SpeakPad saves your files.

If you save with the default "save dictation session information" on, your files are theoretically able to be reopened with your voice still intact. But the default can lead to huge files (a three page article was over 16 MB!) and it's like playing Russian Roulette to expect that the smaller (2 to 6 MB) files will reopen. In my experience, they usually don't. Therefore, I save without dictation. The file reopens, but there is no longer any way to determine just what I had in mind when ViaVoice typed out "the potlatch were yes and win it." So be sure to correct before you close.

A "MacVoice" in the wilderness:

If you want to try ViaVoice for yourself, but are a little nervous about going it alone, there is a new list just for you. Eric Prentice, who hosts a variety of Mac lists, has recently begun one for ViaVoice. Not only does it have a devoted group of members, some of the people working in the field also take part. If you are interested in what others are learning about voice recognition, researching problems and solutions, or would simply like to have your own views heard, check out MacVoice at http://www.themacintoshguy.com/lists.

MacVoice || A place for discussion of everything having to do with speech recognition on the Macintosh.. Send a message to MacVoice-ON@themacintoshguy.com to join the list.

There are a number of doctors on the MacVoice List. It is heartwarming to think of all those doctors' offices warmed by Macs in all shapes and colors, though I can't help but wonder what their VV reports actually say.

Presumably, once the medical terms have been added to the vocabulary, the somewhat predictable format used by many specialists lends itself fairly well to ViaVoice. A few of the doctors have reported good success, others are not so pleased. Still others seem to be anxiously awaiting microphone support for their iBooks.

Even so, I am a little leery of using ViaVoice to keep those medical records up to date. I decided to check it out. "ViaVoice," I said, "write 'cancer of the right kidney.'" "Sure thing," said VV, and typed out 'vampire of the fright kitchen.' It makes me wonder. If *your* doctor were to use ViaVoice, could you go in for surgery... and come out with a stake through the heart?

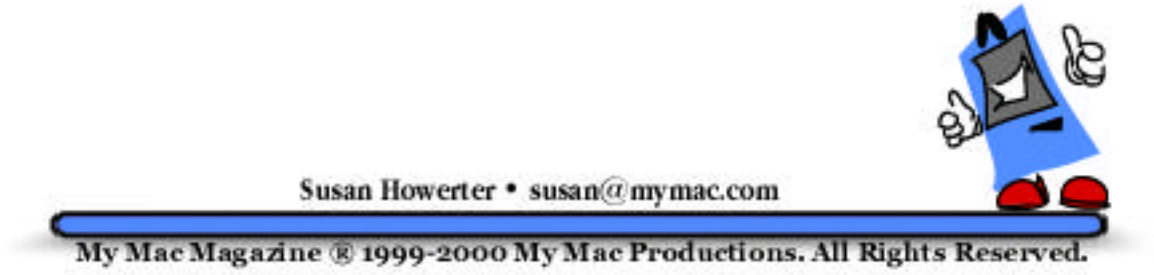
So, what's the verdict? "Potboiler will win"

Fun. Frustrating. Exciting. Exasperating. If ViaVoice isn't quite ready for prime time, neither am I. In fact, much as I looked forward to a stable, easy to use continuous speech program, I can see that I will have to change the way I write—and think—before I can make the switch from keyboard to voice. On the other hand, our son, who truly hates to type, has begun sending us lengthy, well written emails to help my husband set up an iMac video studio at home. And he did it within a week of receiving ViaVoice. It all depends on your needs, your motivation, and the sort of writing you want to do.

However, unless you are a person accustomed to thinking out loud, perhaps by dictating your thoughts orally you may find it hard to to create 'on the fly,' as it were. Out there in PC land, where more complete dictation programs are already available, I haven't seen the smoke rising as liberated souls burn their keyboards.

But what has all this got to do with potboilers? Well, one of ViaVoice's little idiosyncrasies is that before I say a thing, mysterious words sometimes spill onto the screen. Maybe it's all that heavy breathing, but when my computer suddenly starts giving me messages from beyond, I listen. "Potboiler will win," it whispers. Now, 'Potboiler' wasn't in the training sessions. And it's not a word I'm likely to sub-vocalize. I think ViaVoice knows something. VV and I may just have to head for Las Vegas or take up horse racing.

Websites mentioned:
http://www.voicepowerpro.com
http://www4.ibm.com/software/speech/mac
http://www.macspeech.com/
http://www.dragonsys.com/news/pr/051099.apple.html
http://www.out-loud.com/mac.html
http://www.themacintoshguy.com/lists



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Nemo Memo

By: ***John Nemerovski***
My Mac Magazine
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Donna's OS and Modem Woes

SUNDAY NIGHT, 10:00:
(I'm asleep. The phone rings.)

Me: Hello???

Voice: Is this John Nemerovski, the Macintosh tutor?

Me: Yes, but I'm asleep, so please call back tomorrow. *(I hang up.)*

MONDAY MORNING, 7:00:
(I'm awake, preparing breakfast. The phone rings.)

Me: Good morning. John speaking.

Voice: Sorry about last night. This is Donna, and I need some help with my Macintosh. I think it's dead.

(I think: "Call the mortician. I'm more interested in my oatmeal.")

Me: What time will you be home today?

Donna: How about 4:00?

MONDAY AFTERNOON,
(I went for a swim, then arrived at her apartment with a bag of books and another case containing my Zip drive and a load of Zip disks and CDs.)

John: Nice to meet you. Where is the patient?

(Donna shows me her 6400/200 and Sony 17" monitor.)

Donna: You know Gloria? She helped me with installing OS 8 and some other stuff about a year ago, and now she has moved to Tennessee. Gloria said to call you. I need my computer for my small personal mail-order business, and now I'm having a million problems.

John: Such as?

Donna: I can't get online anymore, I keep having QuickTime error messages during startup, and my mouse doesn't work.

John: Sounds serious. Let's take a look.

*(She is correct. The mouse is frozen, and each time we do a manual restart the process halts with a bizarre QuickTime Conferencing conflict crash. I'm stumped, and can't find any help in my **Sad Macs** troubleshooting bible.)*

John: Did Gloria help you set up a regular backup and archiving procedure onto removable media or an external hard disk?

Donna: Huh?

John: Okay, forget Gloria. We need to do some emergency room damage control immediately, then get you back online next time I'm here, in a few days.

Donna: You mean I won't be able to read all my missing email tonight?

(With the mouse plugged directly into the ADB port in the CPU, I trash all her problematic QuickTime components. The computer is limping, but functional, with OS 7.5.3. Donna had recently reinstalled this older system from her original factory CD, overwriting the OS 8 installed by Gloria, thereby creating the series of QuickTime version startup conflicts.)

John: Which files and folders are essential? I'm going to copy them onto these blank Zip disks before initializing your hard disk and upgrading you to OS 8.6.

Donna: Will I be able to read my business email right away?

THURSDAY AFTERNOON

(Round two. Using DriveSetup, I reformat Donna's hard disk with HFS+, then install OS 8.5 and 8.6. After doing all the Internet Setup steps, we are unable to dial into her ISP.)

John: Are you sure these settings and phone numbers are correct?

Donna: Yes, but I'll call them to make sure.

(We both become frustrated: me because I can't figure out how to get the Geoport/Express modem to work; she because the ISP keeps her on hold forever, then disconnects the call.)

John: I'm stumped. I need to do some homework before I can get your modem to function again.

FRIDAY NIGHT, 9:00:
(With help from Russ and Jeramey at My Mac, I learn the Apple Telecom modem software needs to be reinstalled. I groan, because this happened to another client two years ago, but I had completely forgotten the fix until now. I also learn the keyboard or its cable is defective. I call Donna and ask her to get a new ADB keyboard before my next visit.)

TO BE CONTINUED
(Your suggestions?)



Jeffrey Comes to Town



(Jeffrey McPheeter, sitting left, John Nemerovski, standing, right)

I have tremendous respect for Jeffrey McPheeters http://www.psalm1.com, and featured him in the October, 1999 Nemo Memo http://www.mymac.com/archives/oct_99/memo.shtml. When I learned he was coming to Tucson for a brief visit, I looked forward to our meeting with great enthusiasm.

Jeffrey arrived after lunch last Saturday with his new blueberry iBook. He had driven from Kansas with his three sons, who used the iBook during their long journey.

He is as intelligent and passionate about Macintosh in person as he is in his superb writing. We spent the afternoon putting the iBook through its hoops, and *I AM IMPRESSED* with the technology and style of Apple's new powerful portable.

We started talking about the frustrations of on-the-road Internet access. Jeffrey was attempting to use Earthlink during this road trip, but the connectivity from Tucson was atrocious. I suggested he consider using AOL.

He’s running OS 9 on the iBook, and I’m still using 8.6 on my blazing fast 7200/120. Together we created a new iTools identity and “@mac.com” email presence for me at the new Apple website, and tested it successfully.

The hours flew by, and we parted with hopes for another in-person visit soon. A few days later I received this iCard, with the following message:



Jeffrey wrote:

Trip home was great, John! We took a more scenic route out of Tucson. We had good weather all the way home. We drove ten hours each day and arrived here on Monday around 7 p.m. It's good to be home, but the frigid temperatures are a bit hard to get used to. When we left it had been in the 50's to 60's and now it's in the teens and 20's. It looks like it will warm up again soon, however.

After spending most of Tuesday and some of today working through the 135 email messages I hadn't had time to read or reply to, I spent some time preparing another newsletter for the homeschoolers and getting things ready to have some friends' new AirPORT base station hooked up to their cable modem tomorrow night.

One "little" problem I found upon arriving home was that we had a power failure while I was away that did something to one of my 21" monitors. It won't power up. It starts to turn on, then immediately quits. It may be a simple soldering job with a fast-blow fuse, or it may mean replacement is necessary. Bummer. It's on a special surge protector, but not on the heavy-duty UPS which is reserved for the primary CPU, drives, and main monitor.

Also, I didn't have the AirPORT base station plugged into the UPS, and even though it was in the surge protector/conditioner, the power hiccup caused it to be forever cycling through its reset routine while I was away. Now I know why I couldn't Timbuktu into my system here in the office while I was in AZ.

I also found out why I couldn't get my mail from one of my main accounts while in AZ. I thought it was a fault with Earthlink, but actually there was a corrupted mail message on the server at my cable ISP, and every time it reached this message on the download routines it crashed my system. I had to go in remotely and find the "one" that was causing the crash and then delete it before I could safely get the rest.

I've since re-installed AOL 4.0 and tested it. I'll cancel my Earthlink account and rely on AOL in the future, assuming I can get it to do what we were attempting down there with the send/receive thing.

Thanks again for the wonderful time spent with you and your charming wife. I'm looking forward to reading the FinalCut and GoLive books you gave me, and trying my hand at movie editing (once I get the monitor situation fixed, add a second 18GB drive, and grab a free afternoon)!

I sent my condolences for his messed-up equipment, and Jeffrey quickly replied:

I took the monitor apart, including the switch mechanism itself, but couldn't isolate the problem there. It's possibly a broken solder joint somewhere and I'm looking for someone who works on these things. In the mean time, I purchased a new 19" monitor for under $400, which is what I paid for the pre-owned 21" monitor three years ago.

Also, the weather didn't warm up. Instead we got 6 inches of snow! But it is beautiful.

Warm personal regards,
Jeffrey
--
Jeffrey McPheeters
Internet Services Design

Nemo's recommendation is to meet in person with your favorite epals, keeping an open mind that they may turn out to be better (or weirder) then you expect. Remember: it's a two-way street, and they have pre-conceived expectations of you.

I now have met several of these computer buddies, and will write about the experiences in a future Nemo Memo.



R-A-B-O-B-A !!

Thinking long and hard about Donna's and Jeffrey's hardware problems deriving from lack of backups, defective equipment, power outages, and surges, I urge readers to do as I say AND as I do, which is:

1. Keep an active daily archive of *EVERYTHING* you are currently working on. I use Zip disks for this purpose.

2. Maintain a weekly or monthly rotating backup schedule onto reliable, removable media, which should be stored securely in a different physical building than your computer equipment. I use Retrospect Express software.

3. Make sure you have separate archives of the contents of your email address books, inboxes, and outboxes. It is real pain to recreate that stuff from scratch.

4. Run your favorite hard disk repair utility on a routine schedule. I use Norton Utilities' Disk Doctor.

5. Every few months work through the **R-A-B-O-B-A** checklist:

• REPAIR your disks with Norton Disk Doctor or Tech Tool Pro

• ARCHIVE *all* your current and active working files and folders

• BACKUP your disks using Retrospect or Retrospect Express

• OPTIMIZE your disks to consolidate everything into neat blocks

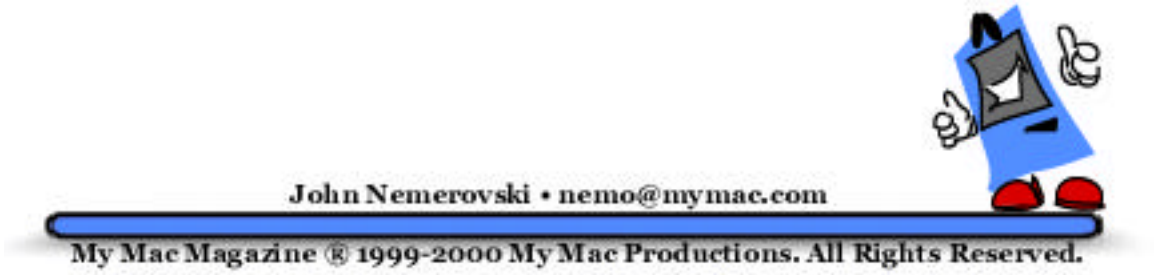
• BACKUP, now that your volumes have been optimized

• AWAY go the backup media, to another building or bank vault.

Do you understand the difference between making an archive and doing a backup?

If I have forgotten any important steps, please let me know, and I will pass on your advice to our readers.

Websites mentioned:
http://www.psalm1.com
http://www.mymac.com/archives/oct_99/memo.shtml



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The MacFactor

***By:* Mick O'Neil**
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Night Baseball and the Rain (in Spain

March Madness

I work for one of the finest school systems in the country or, for that matter, not in the country. I'm an Education Technologist for the Department of Defense Education Activity in Rota, Spain. The Rota school complex is just one of many school complexes located at overseas bases throughout Europe and the Pacific.

We are currently engaged in a debate as to whether our schools will be allowed to install Windows 98-based systems or whether we'll have to stick with Windows NT. Think about that for just a moment. We have schools located in isolated areas all over Europe and we have to provide technical support on a daily basis. We're considering moving from a bug-prone, education unfriendly, Windows NT operating system to a bug-prone, but more education friendly, Windows 98 operating system. We're engaged in this debate just as Microsoft is about to release Windows 2000 to replace NT and will soon release Windows Millennium Edition to replace Windows 98.

What's missing here? Why hasn't our school system discovered what the majority of school systems in the US have discovered—that the Mac OS is cheaper to support, easier to use, and has more educational software available than any other platform? I've done everything I can think of to make them get it. I've written columns entitled "Time to Let the Big One Go" (My Mac, December 98); "The iBook: An Apple for the Whole School" (My Mac, October 99); and "Paradigm Paralysis and the Plight of the PC in Education" (My Mac, November 97).

Each of these articles has been (or is about to be) published in the Journal of Computing in Higher Education and all have been forwarded to the director of the school system, but to no avail. No one in our system has ever provided a technical response answering the points raised in these papers. It's as if the issues are simply not relevant. Meanwhile, our second graders file into our labs, find a system that's working, and log onto Windows NT. Geeeeesh!!!

Night Baseball with Rain

The evolution of technology is almost impossible to predict; we live in a technology-based society and at any given point in time we're influenced by hundreds if not thousands of different experiences. We spend an inordinate amount of time debating issues like which operating system is ideal (Mac OS, LINUX, Windows?), which connectivity solution will dominate (SCSI, USB, Firewire?), and even what is the 'next big thing' (Network Computers, Wireless Networks, Digital Paper?). Of course, few of us actually know what we are talking about because we have no sense of perspective.

When trying to understand such complex circumstances impacted literally by dozens of variables, it sometimes adds perspective to apply an analogy to a specific aspect of the situation. To help gain more insight into the evolution of technology, an analogy can be drawn between it and a poker game: Night Baseball with Rain.

There's a common poker game played in strictly friendly groups, of course, called "No Peek," or after a few beers, "No Peekie." In seven card "No Peek" the dealer gives each player seven cards face down and no player is allowed to look at any of the cards. The player next to the dealer turns the top card over and bets. After the betting, the next player turns a card over until this hand beats the first player's hand. The play then continues until either all the cards are turned over or everyone has folded with one player left. One of the exciting aspects of the game is that if a player accidentally 'peeks,' that is, turns over one too many cards, he has to match the pot and is out of the game.

Night Baseball is a 'No Peek' game with three additional rules: 3's and 9's are wild and anytime a player gets a 4, he can buy an extra card from the dealer. As soon as you add wild cards to a No Peek game, enormous complexities ensue. First, it takes a much stronger hand to win, but because more good hands are out, more players stay in until the bitter end. After all, one or two wild cards can change a rather weak hand into a Straight Flush. Second, there's a much greater chance that someone will accidentally turn over an extra card and have to match the pot. And third, because of the two factors mentioned above, the pot can grow exponentially.

Night Baseball with Rain is the same as Night Baseball except if a player turns over the Queen of Spades, the game is rained out. That is, no matter how the game has progressed, the dealer collects all the cards and redeals. The pot remaining up for grabs and the betting process begins again.

The personal computer market is like Night Baseball with Rain (bear with me!). The obvious players at this table are companies like Compaq, Gateway, Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Apple, and IBM, though you have to understand that more than a few of the players are being coached in the background by our friends in Redmond. Of course, we're well into this game and with so many players representing Windows, there's certainly a high probability that the Windows OS will continue to dominate. In fact, at one point, the game got so out of hand that a new dealer arrived (the Department of Justice, or DOJ).

In past games, Apple got carried away with its cards and turned over too many. Two cards particularly seemed to blind the company: the Knowledge Navigator and the Performa. At one point, this player even asked one of the background coaches for a stake. Trying perhaps to impress the new dealer, the stake was duly provided in the form of a cash infusion and continued development of Office.

Just as it seemed that all the cards were stacked against Apple, several amazingly great wild cards turned up. The iMac, iBook, G4 PowerMac, and the G3 PowerBook combined to keep the company in the game. The other players look at these cards with more than a little trepidation. The coach in the background still exhorts them to ignore Apple's hand because he knows probability is on his side. He's got a couple of cards up his sleeve in the form of Windows 2000 and Windows Millennium Edition (just when we thought we'd never have to deal with the 'M' word again!). Unfortunately, the players still aren't sure whether these represent 9's (wild cards) or just upside down 6's. There are a lot of side bets about their status.

Apple, on the other hand, recently turned up a 4 with Mac OS 9 (draw a card) and could follow with a Queen of Spades with OS X. This would necessitate a reshuffle as well as a redeal. There have been a lot of onlookers who have been impressed with what they've seen of this card, and it could even break the ties of some of the other players to the Windows hegemony. (Note: all the Jokers like the Be OS and LINUX were removed from the original deck, but in the event of a redeal, all bets are on.)

Canvas Revisited

Soon after I had finished my review of Deneba's Canvas 7.0 (My Mac, February 2000), the company provided a free download of a 'Velocity Engine Tool' that takes advantage of performance improvements based on the G4's AltiVec instruction set. Deneba claims that it improves the speed of screen refreshes and the responsiveness of some paint tools by as much as 25%. I attempted to test this claim, but have to confess that Canvas 7.0 is so fast on the Power Macintosh G4 that I noticed no obvious improvements. I will continue to monitor the situation as I use more of the Canvas specialized paint tools.

Once in a while, after completing a thorough review of a program, you experience a kind of writer's lag. That is, you start using a feature of the software that you raved about and think to yourself "Did I really say this was good?" I have to confess, I have had no such experiences with Canvas on the Macintosh. Because of its accessible graphics power, I still believe it's the most important graphics software ever released on this platform.

On the other hand, I recently installed the program under Windows NT with 32 Mb of RAM and I found the screen refresh to be so slow that the software was almost unusable. I will continue to test it under different Windows environments and keep you informed, as one of the important aspects of this program is that it offers cross platform compatibility.

The Power Macintosh G4

I've now been working with a Power Mac G4 (450 MHz) for a couple of months and, like virtually everyone else, I'm impressed with the speed, the style, and the accessibility of the box. What I'm not impressed with, however, is the lack of software. I was taken aback when I initially booted the machine and examined my twenty-six gigabyte drive. There was no AppleWorks, no iMovie, no Bugdom or "A Bug's Life" on DVD; not even Nanosaur! It seems to me that at a minimum, purchasers of Apple's flagship products should receive the same software suite that buyers of the $1299 iMacs receive. C'mon Apple, let's get with the program(s), so to speak.

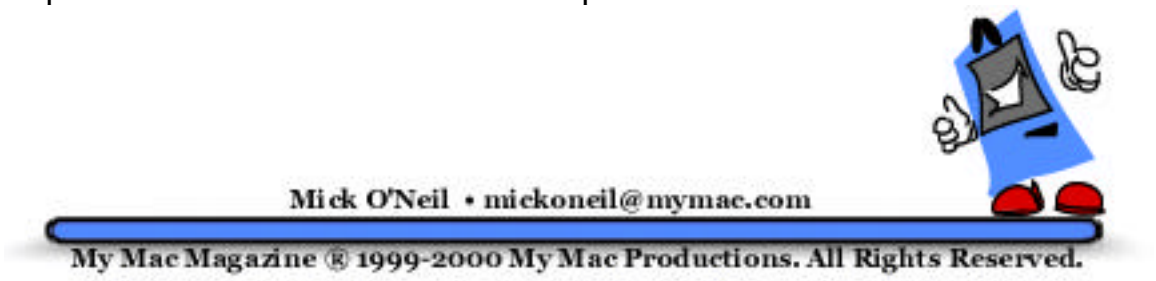
By the way, to gain an insight into just how fast the G4 is, please visit the My Mac SETI site and observe the average CPU time per work unit. (http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cgi?cmd=team_lookup&name=MYMAC) Of course, this is somewhat distorted because some participants are using multiple machines, but you've got to be impressed with the speed leader!

Farallon EtherMac iPrint Adapter LT

When I bought the Power Mac G4, I also purchased the Farallon EtherMac iPrint Adapter LT from the AppleStore ($99) to solve the problem of attaching the PowerMac to my 'non-USB' printer. This small unit sits between the Ethernet Port on your Mac and a LocalTalk (PhoneNet) connector to your printer.

The other line going into my LocalTalk connector is from my PowerPC 8100 that sits on the same table as the G4. Since the unit connects the printer port of the 8100 to the Ethernet port of the G4, its possible to run AppleShare and pass files back and forth. I've set the system up so that when I boot both machines, a shared hard drive icon appears on the corresponding desktops.

I was pleasantly surprised by the versatility provided by the iPrint Adapter and recommend it highly to any users who need a simple network to connect a couple of machines and access an older printer.



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basic
training
For the new
Macintosh owner



***By:* Tim Robertson**
Publisher, My Mac Magazine
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Lesson 4: More RAM and Upgrade Time

Quite a few readers wrote in the last few months with some questions, so I thought I would take this column to try and answer them.

Q: Why can't I run more than one program at a time?
-Janice

A: Ah! An easy one to start off with. The reason you cannot run more than one program at a time is that you do not have enough memory on your computer. You can either buy more memory (which is lowering in price as I write this) or you can turn on Virtual Memory from your Memory Control Panel. Virtual Memory used to be synonymous with making your computer slow, but Apple has done a pretty good job with the last few system upgrades to make it better. And there is always RAM Doubler, third party software from Connectix that does a better job than Apple's Virtual Memory.

My advice? Go buy as much real RAM (memory) as you can. It will make your Mac much more stable and dependable.

Q: Should I upgrade my Performa 6400/200, or spring for an iMac?
-Tom

A: Tom, it depends on a few things. How many peripherals do you currently own? How much do you have invested in the 6400? How much money are you talking about to upgrade? What needs to be upgraded? Looking at a stock 6400, it came with a 200MHz 603e microprocessor and 16MB of memory. This was adequate then, but the memory is insufficient and the processor quite slow by today's standards. It started shipping in 1996, making it an antique in computer terms (though if you try and find a productive PC still in active use that was made in 1996, you would see why people hold onto and continue using older Macs much longer than PCs).

If the 6400 is still stock, you will need to upgrade both memory and the CPU. Yes, you can turn your 6400 into a fast G3 and see huge benefits in speed, performance, and reliability. (The 603e chips, I think, cause more crashes than the system software does. My 6500 would always crash, but once upgraded to a G3 chip, 95% of those crashes went away)

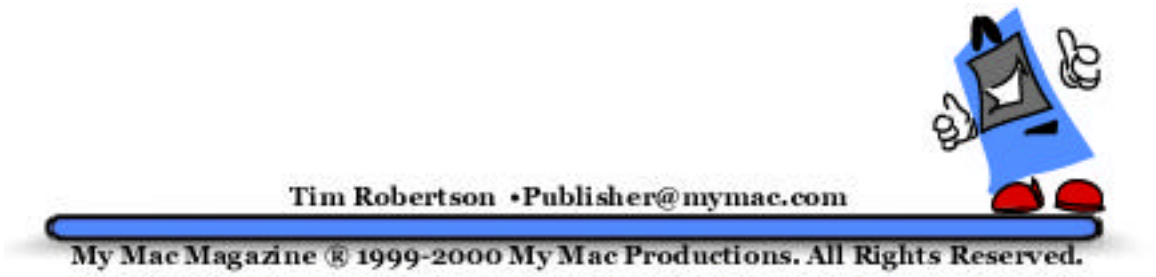
For starters, you will want to put as much memory in the machine as you can. A 6400 can take up to 136MB. This will cost you under $250 if you shop around. Next, you will want to upgrade the processor. This will be the more expensive upgrade, costing anywhere from $299 to $599. Of course, if you're going to the expense of upgrading an older machine so that you do not have to spring for a new Mac, you may as well upgrade to the best you can get, and that would be a 400MHz G3 card with a 1MB backside cache. With 136MB of memory and a 400MHz G3 running in your 6400, your Mac will indeed be very fast. (Keep in mind, though, that Mac OS X will NOT run on a pre-G3 processor upgraded Mac.)

Total cost to upgrade: between $500-$800.

A new iMac, even the low-end model, will run you between $799 to $1599. And it will be able to run the next generation Mac operating system, as well as having better graphics performance. Also important is the fact that the iMac already has USB, and it seems all the new gadgests coming out for the Mac are connected via USB. Now the accessories. Do you currently have a printer? You should know that it probably won't work on the iMac without an adapter. Do you have a CD burner? I'll bet it's SCSI, which also won't work on the iMac without an adapter. Same with the scanner you have. The good news here is that you can upgrade your 6400 to use USB with a PCI card. They work and work well, and will cost you less than $40.

So the quick answer is "buy an iMac if the 6400 doesn't come with a bunch of baggage," or "upgrade the 6400 if you have a lot of other stuff invested in it, such as a trackball, printer, scanner, CD-R, etc…"

Hope this helps, Tom. For the record, Tom upgraded the 6400 with a Sonnet G3 400MHz, and it's now running fast and smooth. He says it has never been more stable or fast, and it is like owning a whole new computer.



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Use iTools?
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Click iTools
Click iDisk on the bar below the iTools tab.
In the section labeled "Accessing a Public Folder," type the member name (**mymacmagazine**) of the iTools member whose folder you want to see and click Open a Public Folder.







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If you would like to see your software, hardware, or other product reviewed in **My Mac Magazine**, please contact our **review department** at reviews@mymac.com, or send your product to:

My Mac Magazine
Attn: Review Dept.
110 Burr St.
Battle Creek, Mi. 49015-2525

Be sure to include as much documentation you feel would be necessary for our staff to give an honest and fair review. If the product is modified or restricted in any way (e.g., password protected), please be sure to provide either a temporary registration or a full working copy. If you would like the item returned to you, be sure to include your return address.

(Products submitted without return postage, FedEx, UPS, or any other shipping company paperwork and materials will not be returned.)

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By: ***Lyn Price***
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Backyard Football

Company: Humongous Entertainment
Estimated Price: $19.99
http://www.humongous.com

Ok, I admit it, I am not a football fan, but I found this game to be fun. When the window opens and I clicked on Autoplay I was asked to register. Always remember to register. It only takes a few moments. I was soon entering the clubhouse. I had many choices there: The Single Game; Hall of Fame; Season Play; and the JrSN. I picked the Single Game, but I want to tell you a little about each one. The Hall of Fame has trophies on display and team names on each. These are like the Rose Bowl and Hula Bowl of Backyard football. Season Play allows you to play 14 games against other teams. The last one, JrSN (Junior Sports Network), is the online version and is not available for Macintosh users :- (In the Single Game I first set all my options, picked my team and members, and went onto the field. I did not use any of the other functions that are offered.

The other functions are easy to use and are just a click away. Changes are made at the Team Bench. Here you can change game options, Practice football, change your strategy, check statistics or schedule, and Play football. In Make Play you can change your plays or create your own. In Practice you have a chance to practice before playing a real game. (I should have gone there first.)

Backyard Football has built into the program "areas" that help you keep track of your team's statistics, schedule, standings, and league leaders just like in real football.

What you get
Backyard Football comes with a CD-ROM and Pacific football trading cards, and when you register you get a free subscription to the Humongous Gazette and have a chance to win a Humongous Library.

Requirements and Installation
Backyard Football requires Mac OS 7.5.3 or greater, a 133 Mhz PowerPC, 32 MB RAM, and at least a 4x-speed CD-ROM drive. After clicking “Play” the first time, a few support files are installed on the hard drive. Also at the first launch of the program (if necessary) it will check to make sure that CD speed is up to requirements. (It's a dual platform CD-ROM)

Summary
I would recommend this program to all of you with children between the ages of 5 to 10. It takes a little bit of time to get used to the commands and the plays. I could understand all the computer talk and it was very easy. I could not understand things like “Fumbles Lost” or “Receptions” or why I had to have an offensive play and defensive play. Couldn’t I just run to wherever the ball is? Come on, is this a “guy” thing?

I have only one complaint with the program. Children are buying this with the expectation of playing online. Please do not get this game expecting to use the Junior Sports Network. You CANNOT access this with the Macintosh. I have contacted Humongous about this and was told that they could not get the Macintosh site working by the release date but did not want to hold up releasing the game. They are working on the problem and we can hope that it is solved very soon! BUT if your child loves football, your child will love this game.

Children can still access http://www.jrsn.com for hints, news, and other fun things!

To award a mice rating to this game I have to take into account both the disappointment I have heard from those children that can not get online, and the fun children have had playing the game without competing online. I have to give Backyard Football

MacMice Rating: 3

Websites mentioned:
http://www.humongous.com
http://www.jrsn.com

Check out our sponsor!



Fly!

Company: Terminal Reality
Estimated Price: $39.95
http://www.terminalreality.com
http://www.iflytri.com



Requirements and Installation:
Fly! requires Mac OS 8.0 or higher, PPC G3 or iMac, 400MB HD space, 32MB ram (64MB recommended), 3D hardware accelerator (4 MB video RAM minimum), and 4x CD-ROM. A full installation with all the scenery and charts takes about 1.2 GB. Fly! comes with a standard Mac OS installer engine. I installed and ran Fly! on a Powerbook G3/300 with 64MB or RAM.

What you get.
The Fly! package includes three CDs (in one case), one for the program, one of satellite scenery, and one of sectional charts. It also includes a 288 page User Manual, a Multi-Player Guide, and a quick reference card. The User Manual is divided into two sections, a Simulation section about the simulation and various settings, and a Pilot Handbook on the five aircraft: a Cessna 172 Skyhawk - Single prop; a Piper Malibu Mirage - turbocharged single prop; a Beechcraft King Air B200 - Dual turbo prop; a Piper Navajo Chieftain - Dual prop; a Raytheon Hawker 800XP - Business jet; and a good tutorial to get non-flyers (like me) started. I am not yet good enough to try the multi-player mode.

Up, up, and away!
The second program I bought for my brand new Macintosh 7100/66 when they were first released years ago was Microsoft Flight Simulator. However, MS has not updated this program for the Mac OS in over a decade.

So, I was thrilled to see a new flight simulator available for the Mac. And from all indications (including reviews by serious pilots and flight simulator buffs), Fly! is a top contender in the field.

I was immediately impressed with the quality of the Fly! package, from the screen shots to the User Manual and Reference Card. My first run of the program was easy, with the default settings working adequately and the simulation controlled auto-landing giving me a great look at the features as it brought me into San Francisco International Airport.

Fly! comes with a broad range of difficulty and reality settings, with lots of computer assistance for non-pilots, all the way to icing, prop airflow over the wing effects, and realistically modeled stall behavior for experts. And the settings to select the desired degree of realism and difficulty are easy to access and use.

Terrain and navigational support includes over 9000 airports and 30,000 navigational aids in 200 countries, realistic scenery modeling of five 100 mile by 100 mile areas around San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Dallas, and a worldwide flight planner. It uses a spherical globe model, which gives true long distance navigation. It used more detailed terrain graphics at lower elevations, giving great views no matter what your simulated altitude.

Other features include interactive Air Traffic Control (text and voice), pre-loaded scenarios of diverse flight situations, and a built-in Global Positioning Satellite receiver system. It includes USB and force feedback input device support. It also includes support for multi-player flying over a network or the Internet, with verbal communication with the other players.

Fly! has been declared the leader in realism and fidelity against programs that have been on the market for years. In my opinion, for a first generation release, this product is fantastic!

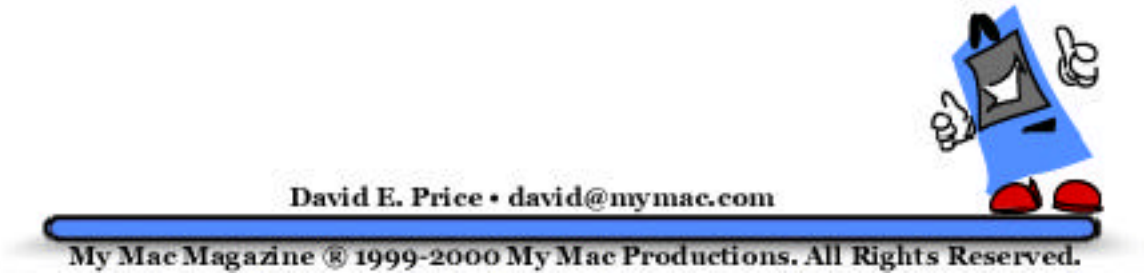
A feature of the program that I really like is the fact that it is modular and extensible. This makes it easy for third party companies (or even individuals) to add scenery or new aircraft, or to modify the behavior of the included aircraft to more closely model different variations of the basic airplanes included with the package.

There is a 757 add-on available for Fly! from a third party company for $24.95, as well as several modified versions of the included aircraft. And there are several add-on scenery and airport packages available, many for free. Check out the "Links" page from the Fly! website at http://www.iflytri.com for more information.

Summary
Fly! is a top-notch flight simulator. It has features that make it easy to use for any skill level from pilot wannabe to experienced pilots. The modularity allows both Terminal Reality and third party companies to advance the features and to add-on new aircraft and realistic scenery.

MacMice Rating: 4.5

Websites mentioned:
http://www.terminalreality.com
http://www.iflytri.com



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***By:* John Nemerovski**
My Mac Magazine
nemo@mymac.com



MacInTax Deluxe 1999

Company: Intuit
Estimated price: $49.95
http://www.intuit.com

FIRST LOOK

I use and review MacInTax Deluxe each year. I appreciate being involved with my income tax procedure, and I applaud the improvements Intuit brings to every new annual release of the software. Intuit generously provides a thick printed guide to assist reviewers. I prefer using the software as an average person does, to determine its strengths and weaknesses myself.

Due to the timing gap between our publication deadline and the completion of my tax return, this review will give readers a flying start with MacInTax Deluxe for federal filing. I won't be able to complete my U.S. and state returns until the beginning of April, which is why we present this "first look" approach.

If anything really bizarre occurs while I'm working on my taxes, we'll post the information on our website: http://www.mymac.com. If previous experience holds true this year, all bugs will be fixed quickly by Intuit, and their online and phone support system will respond accordingly.

INSTALLATION

Prior to loading the application on my hard disk, I located last year's MacInTax data file and copied it onto my desktop.

Following the QuickStart Card for Tax Year '99, I popped the CD in, double-clicked the installer icon, and studied the Read Me file. I saw an 800-number for free software updaters, which I dialed, and ordered using an automated voice and phone keypad combination. The Read Me document contains other general information, so don't skip it.

The MacInTax installer did its magic quickly on my 7200/120 (601 PowerPC), taking about a minute to install a new MacInTax folder on the top level of my hard disk. Additional items were installed into the system folder, including a few fonts.

I was given the option to choose an existing online account or create a new one, then the installer automatically updated a bunch of QuickTime components, which took another 30 seconds, followed by a restart. The entire installation process took around five minutes, which is much less than in prior years.

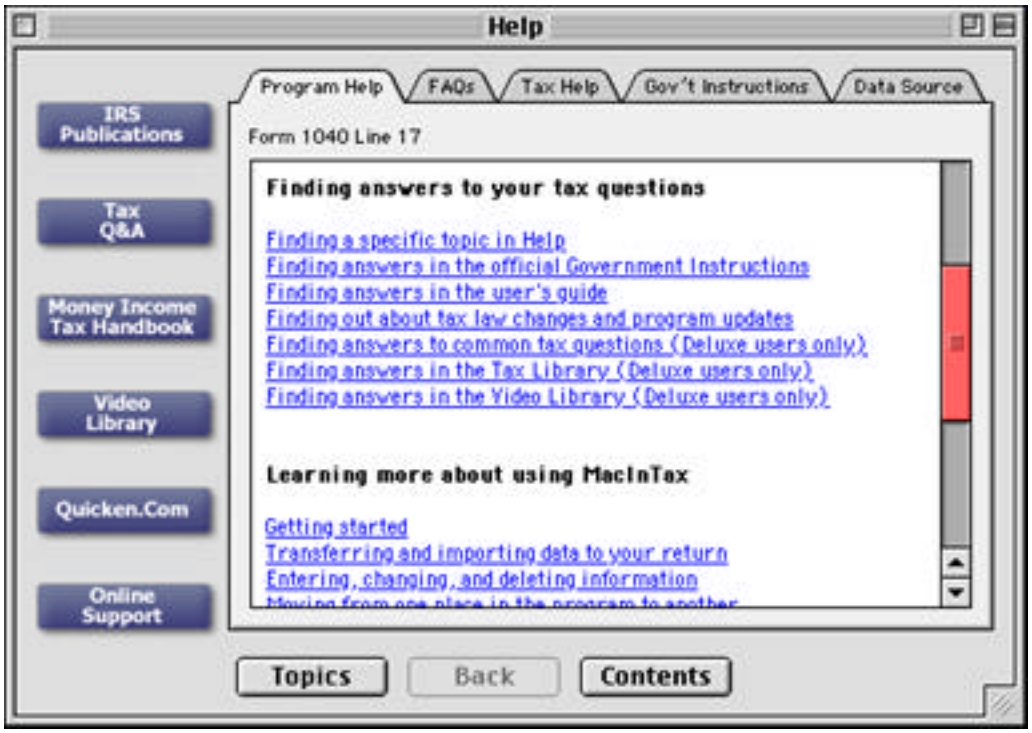
GETTING STARTED

My primary "MacInTax Deluxe 1999" folder is around 40MB, with a dozen practical and promotional components. With the CD still in my drive, I double-clicked the application icon to begin working. I watched the opening video, which runs more smoothly than in previous years. Intuit has fine-tuned their QuickTime movies for more natural voice and image presentation.

MacInTax looks different than last year's "browser," with a new design and several improved features. Users have instant access to Q&A sources, and the screen contains a dynamic-linked right column full of pertinent FAQ material which changes to correspond to every different screen being used by the intrepid taxpayer.

The EasyStep Navigator is similar to last year's version, with the addition of a Progress Bar to help you keep track of your movement toward completion. The interview has been streamlined, with new worksheets for calculating capital gains, mortgage interest, individual retirement accounts, and plenty more.

My favorite feature is the one-stop HELP menu, taking me to a central Program Help window which is loaded with options and features:



ON WITH THE SHOW

Fifteen minutes after taking the CD out of its sleeve I was transferring data from last year, which required only a few seconds. I was given the opportunity to remove unneeded forms and worksheets, plus the option to import data from Quicken or other financial software. The import from my 1998 tax data ran perfectly. I do not currently use Quicken, but my guess is that transfer will also be straightforward.

I began the EasyStep interview, made sure it took me to the correct form when I clicked the Go To Forms link just below the interview panel, then verified the Easy Step -> Resume feature brought me back to home plate. All my personal information was correct, and I typed in my email address. Working through several screens, the calculations and procedures are faster than ever before, and are now exclusively PowerPC native (see below).

Time to take a break, so I File -> Saved the newly named “John Nemerovski 99” working data, and made a reliable backup copy. If you do not make a backup and you have a hard disk problem, you are in big trouble. Do what I say: MAKE A RELIABLE BACKUP, and keep this disk in a secure, offsite location. You can even attach it to an email message and leave it parked on your email server for insurance.

ON THE WEB

I quit MacInTax and went to the http://www.macintax.com website. It is much improved from previous years, and is not automatically linked to the Windows TurboTax site by default. About time! The new pages are well-organized, clearly-designed, and full of practical information. Toll free phone numbers are listed for tech support and free updaters to every version of the product.

Connected again to the Internet, I double-clicked my working desktop tax data file, which speedily launched the application and brought me to the interview spot where I had stopped. From Online -> OneClick Updates an updater immediately began downloading new forms and goodies, with a typical Mac OS progress bar displaying jumping “time remainings” which are unreliable. Ignore them and allow 5 - 30 minutes for the download, depending upon the speeds of your connection and processor.

Halfway through the update download, the procedure halted with an error message. I called tech support, spoke to Cathy, and ordered another CD updater, to compare with the snail mail efficiency of Intuit’s automatic call-in system. No hard feelings, because these online errors have occurred in previous years. I used the download time to get all my W2 and 1099 forms in order.

While waiting for Cathy to answer I browsed through the modest User’s Guide. It is packed with important material, so read it! On page 10, I learned that MacInTax Deluxe requires:

• OS 7.5.3 or later, and a Power PC 601 or faster processor

• Minimum 16MB of free memory and 30MB of hard disk space

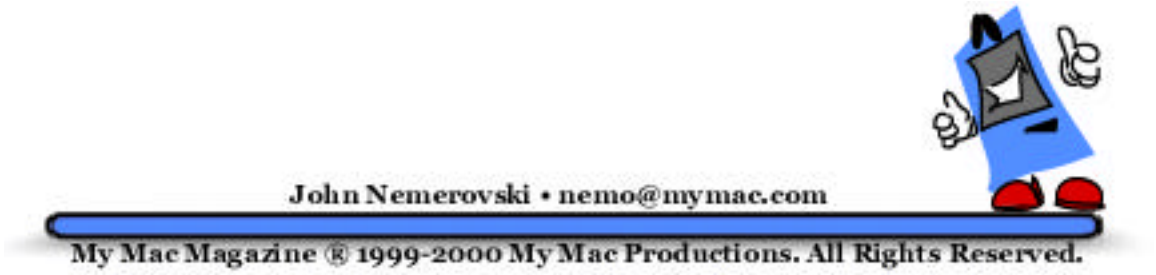
• Apple-compatible printer.

TIME TO BE PATIENT

In a week the updater CDs will arrive and I will have enough year-end details to proceed deeper into MacInTax. My experience with several years' of usage has me confident that this software + CD + web site + phone support remains the best choice for preparing your taxes. The application is not perfect, but I am happy to award it

MacMice Rating: 4

Websites mentioned:
http://www.macintax.com
http://www.intuit.com





***By:* Lyn Price**
My Mac Magazine
lyn@mymac.com



NEATO Media Labeling Products

Company: Neato
Estimated price: $29.95
http://www.neato.com

How many of us have the new CD writers? How many of us hate the plain, uninviting blank labels that come on the media? How many of us have tried "spring loaded " labelers, only to find bubbles under our labels? Well, I have finally found, tried, and tested a labeling product that not only works great, but is easy to use.

NEATO's labeler is simple to operate. I printed out the instructions (included on the CD) and began to read. I found them a little bit long, but found that I was doing great on less than a few pages read. So, I ventured forth to create a label and insert for a CD full of pictures of my grandchildren. I first downloaded a few pictures into Photoshop (my personal favorite) that I wanted to make into a label and created a collage. I will not go into the details on how to go from your graphic program onto your templates, but it was easy enough that even I could do it. Once you have finished transferring your photo and printed your label, the applicator is so easy a child can use it! The edges do not curl nor do you get bubbles in the label.

Not only can you create great CD labels, but also labels for floppy disks, jewelcase inserts, standard cassettes, and my personal favorite, video cassettes inserts! I had so many videos with those ugly handwritten labels. But now I have all my videos labeled so I can tell at a glance which grandchild or vacation is featured on the tape.

If you don't want to be creative, NEATO has included on the CD over 100 textures and images to save you the trouble.

NEATO has a website where you can download the software, available for both the Mac and PC platform. Althought I mentioned Photoshop, you can use this product with many of the popular programs, such as Corel Draw, Adobe Illustrator, MacroMedia Freehand, and PageMaker, just to name a few.

What is included
NEATO comes with a MediaFACE CD, NEATO CD Label Applicator, and sample inserts and labels.

Summary
NEATO Media Labeling Products' CD Label Applicator worked as easy with me as it did for the reps at Macworld. I found it easier than the lengthy instructions made it look. If you're looking for a labeling solution that is simple and fast, yet still gives you truly outstanding results, then this is the product for you.

I would invite you to visit their website. Here you can find out all about NEATO, order supplies, and enter your design winning label in their LabelMania Competition. While you're there you can also get ideas on how others are using the Neato labeler, such as a teaching tool.

MacMice Rating: 4

Websites mentioned:
http://www.neato.com



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By: ***Beth Lock***
My Mac Magazine
beth@infowest.com



Graphic Astrology

Company: Time Cycles Research
Estimated Price: IO Series Value Pack (reviewed) $895
Other specially priced packages: $369.00 and up
Individual Programs: $195.00
http://www.timecycles.com

"Astrology is a fascinating subject. While almost everyone knows his or her astrological sign, they are not always familiar with the personal characteristics associated with it. Those who turn their interest into more understanding of the subject itself will gain some truly unique insights about themselves and others. I have rarely encountered a person totally immune from wanting to know more about astrology."
- *From "Introduction to Astrology" © Time Cycles Research.*

For those readers who haven't explored using astrology in their lives, I'd like to insert some of my own personal comments here. I use astrology as a guide, not as a belief system. Anyone who has ever had his or her natal chart done (that I have associated with) has seen the benefits of a non-judgmental, black and white explanation of his or her strengths and weaknesses. As a guide, a natal chart can help us define the strengths and improve the weaknesses in our characters. It's merely another tool to use in personal growth. And like any other tool, it has to be implemented in order to work. These comments are presented as my viewpoint only, and for what it's worth.

My experience with astrological software prior to using the Time Cycles program had been with software written for the Windows platform. I was extraordinarily delighted to find this application offered by Time Cycles Research written only for the Macintosh platform. To my knowledge, it's the only complete package on this subject available for the Mac.

Installation was a breeze and I encountered no glitches there. Since I am reviewing the IO Series Value Pack, which includes fonts, famous collection (a group of 3000 charts of famous people), and AstroTexts, it takes up a whopping 100MB on my hard drive. However, because I wanted to review the entire program, I did install the Editable Astro Texts, which use about 70MB total (I may delete them if space becomes an issue). There is the option with the software to only install the components wanted for each individual application. After installing (with anti-viral software disabled as recommended) then restarting, I was ready to jump right in.

The software is written with the intuitive ease of classic Macintosh applications in mind. Though I'm neither a great astrologer nor a great Mac user, I was able to draw upon the knowledge of both subjects to immediately run the programs and read the interpretations without too much fumbling around (I like to "figure it out myself". Must be my Jupiter in Taurus in the 3rd house. <G>). It comes with a manual which is comprehensive, well written, and covers all the questions I encountered during my explorations of the software. I didn't need to call Tech Support, but did anyhow to determine their level of commitment and knowledge. My question was answered promptly and courteously with the promise of more help if needed.

There are some surprising and delightful features in this package. For instance, while using IO Edition, I copied all the charts to change from Tropical Placidus to Siderial Vedic, and after completion a little window popped up that said "cool." I loved that! Also, I was startled at the speed with which it calculated the natal charts. I also liked the ability to customize the wheels. The Export feature works flawlessly. This program is so deep that I can't wait to explore it more.

The Graphic Design feature allows those more creative individuals to personalize charts, and in color. There are over 75 different designs included, but with the graphics mode one can create an unlimited array of designs. Multiple charts can be placed on a page, and it has a Drag and Drop capabilities.

I had thought I was fairly well versed in the study of astrology since I've been playing around with it for over 20 years. After exploring the different programs in this application I found my knowledge just scratches the surface of this fascinating subject. Time Cycles has structured their software packages for everyone from the novice to the professional astrologer. Here's a quick rundown of the individual components, which can be purchased separately or in specially priced packages. Custom packages are also available.

IO Horoscope
Whether you are just starting out or you work professionally in this field, IO Horoscope is a must have. IO Horoscope produces detailed natal reports with accompanying charts. Its flexibility allows a shorter interpretation for when the exact time of birth is not known. The text is editable, and page layout is customizable. Included in IO Horoscope is an "Introduction to Astrology" (see opening quote above, taken from this text.). The interpretations can be exported as HTML for use on the Internet, or as text files to use with your favorite text editor.

IO Forecast
IO Forecast is like having your own personal consultant. Transits are figured using the current placement of the planets in relation to your current life phase. It has the same ease of use features as IO Horoscope. If astrological charting is your profession, IO Forecast is a great way to build and maintain a practice.

IO Relationship
Looking for that perfect mate? Curious about a new business partnership? IO Relationship allows you to define areas of mutual compatibility as well as areas where problems are likely to occur. IO Relationship is an extremely valuable tool for daily life. Same ease of use features as IO Horoscope.

IO Body and Soul
If you take a wholistic approach to maintaining your personal health, IO Body and Soul is another great tool for you to use. It offers recommendations on gemstones, flowers, and aromas to improve your daily life. You can learn your more susceptible areas, which foods are most beneficial, best and worst colors, and how to identify and prevent various conditions and disorders. Same ease of use features as IO Horoscope.

IO Edition (includes Transit Pro)
IO Edition is a powerful tool to use in conjunction with the above applications. It's the essential element for your color graphics work with charts, glyphs, numbers, and data. With IO Edition you have available: natal and solar charts; Tri-wheels and Bi-wheels; American and European styles; 10 house systems; 12 sidereal Ayanamsas; Aspecterians; Midpoint and arc tables; tables of latitudes, longitudes, declinations and rights ascentions; and much, much more. Transit Pro includes: exact transits; traditional transits; progressed hits and the graphic ephemeris. IO Edition is a must have for professional astrologers and those students who have a serious interest in the subject.

IO Detective (includes Famous Charts collection)
IO Detectives was written for the curious at heart. It allows customizable search parameters for chart comparisons. The Famous Charts Collection contains birth information for over 3,000 famous people from the past and present. Now just who is your cosmic twin, hmmm...?

IO Atlas and IO Quest
The "heart of the matter" IO Atlas works with all IO Series programs. It automatically inserts latitudes, longitudes, date-sensitive time zones, and includes listings for over a quarter of a million cities and hospitals. IO Quest allows you to use the IO atlas independent of the IO series programs.

Star Sprite
I saved the best for last. :-) Star Sprite is linked to your computer's clock so it can calculate "real time" planetary movements. Easily one of the most fun and fascinating programs in the IO Series, Star Sprite takes Astrology into the 21st century using current computer technology along with the ancient studies. You can actually observe the movements of the planets, with option to choose only the specific planets you're interested in studying. And again, the best for last: Star Sprite can be used as a screen saver for when your computer is in rest mode. Star Sprite's event searching capabilities make this program an essential tool for every astrologer from amateur to professional.

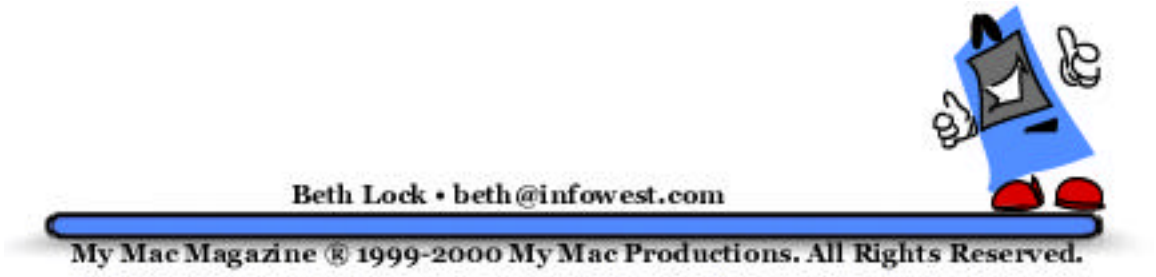
System Requirements
System 7.1 (System 7.5 recommended) or later. All programs are OS 9 compatible.

Summary
Whether you have just developed an interest, or have been an astrologer for years, the IO Series of Graphic Astrology is the application of the future. It's better written and easier to use than Windows programs in this genre, and fills a huge void in the astrological software field for the Macintosh platform. Purchasing separate components and building on with more advanced applications as knowledge increases is also a plus in my book. (Aren't you glad you have a Mac?) Thanks, Time Cycles for your dedication and research. This is a program I'll value for years.

Well written, fully comprehensive program, ease of installation, intuitive use, fantastic tech support and complete instruction manual.

MacMice Rating: 5

Websites mentioned:
http://www.timecycles.com





By:Jay Timmer
My Mac Magazine
jtimmer@tuna.net



ViaVoice

Company: IBM
Estimated Price: $89.95
http://www-4.ibm.com/software/speech/mac

I'm going to start this review by speaking to ViaVoice. If I'm still using it when I'm done, how bad can it be?

After several years without a current dictation product, three different companies have recently promised to release their products for the Mac. IBM is the first one to actually ship a product, as they released ViaVoice Millennium Edition just in time for the holidays. Although it is exciting to have such a product available for the Mac, ViaVoice has enough flaws and quirks to make using it a bit frustrating.

Who needs ViaVoice?

Before investing in ViaVoice, you should decide whether you need a dictation product at all. Those people with well developed typing skills should be able to outperform the speed at which this program recognizes their words, while users with disabilities or prone to repetitive stress disorders however, may find ViaVoice invaluable. One should also consider the environment in which it will be used. The people who share your home or office may not appreciate having to listen to you talk to your computer all the time.

In addition, ViaVoice has steep hardware requirements, requiring a computer that shipped with a G3 processor at the minimum. I've tried it on both a 266 MHz and a 450 MHz G3 and performance on the slower machines was barely acceptable. On the speedier equipment, the program performed much better, although the added processing power did not improve its accuracy.

Installation and set up

IBM includes a small manual that thoroughly covers all the softwares functions. Despite its underlying complexity, ViaVoice has a fairly simple interface, and a small manual seems to be enough. In addition, a reference card is included for quick access to all the commands and punctuation macros that you can use. The package also includes a superb microphone headset that includes interchangeable colored plastic parts that let you customize it to match your iMac (excepting graphite, at the moment).

ViaVoice installs quickly and painlessly from a CD. Although the installer places a large number of files and libraries on your hard drive, almost all of them are put in a single folder, cutting down on hard drive clutter. All the features of the software users need access to are available through a menu extension that's installed at the same time. From the menu, you can activate a set-up assistant to get you started with voice recognition. The assistant will help you configure the microphone to get the proper level of sound input. After that, you are prompted to read any or all of a number of passages to help the software get accustomed to the sound of your voice. Once finished, ViaVoice will analyze what it has just heard. This process immobilizes your computer for a significant amount of time and results in the creation of what IBM terms a "voice model." When it's done, you're ready to begin dictating.

The accuracy of the voice model determines how well ViaVoice recognizes what you speak. Fortunately, the model can be improved. From the ViaVoice menu, you can choose to read further passages at any time. Although it comes with a huge vocabulary of words, names, places, and technical terms, ViaVoice can analyze text documents you've selected for words it does not recognize. You'll then be asked to pronounce those words so that they can be added to your voice model. Finally, ViaVoice attempts to improve the voice model each time you make a correction to previously dictated text. The software supports voice models for multiple users, and allows voice models to be exported and imported for use on other computers.

Using ViaVoice

ViaVoice does not allow you to dictate into just any text editing application. Instead, you dictate into its own text editor, called SpeakPad, which only allows the most basic formatting information to be entered. Since you can't do everything you'd like in SpeakPad, IBM has included commands that will allow you to transfer the text from it to any of five programs, including Microsoft Word, Netscape Communicator, and Outlook Express. To use any other programs, you have to transfer the text to the clipboard and then paste it into your document manually.

In addition to recognizing text, ViaVoice can recognize a variety of commands and macros. Commands allow you to enter formatting information, move the cursor, and correct text. Speech macros provide the program with a great deal of flexibility. Macros range from the simple ones included, which handle punctuation, to complex ones you can customize. I've got one that types OS-X in response to hearing OS ten, and the manual suggests arranging to type your formatted address in response to a phase such as, "address me."

Recognizing speech is a complicated task, especially since the spelling of many words depends on the context in which they are used. The net result of this is that ViaVoice makes some errors. In the beginning, it makes a lot of errors but you can correct them via a window that allows you to pick from a list of suggestions, say the correct words, or spell them out. As noted above, IBM has given it the capacity to learn from corrections made with this window, as ViaVoice pays attention to when it finds it's made a mistake and updates your voice model accordingly. Thus, the more you use ViaVoice, the better it gets at recognizing your voice.

Minor gripes and major problems

In many ways, IBM has created a thoroughly Mac-like program. Setup is handled by an interface that resembles the standard Apple Guide, and all windows and palettes conform to Apple Interface Guidelines. Still, IBM did not get some obvious things. ViaVoice demands that virtual memory be on and set to 10 MB above the amount of available RAM even when large amounts of RAM are present. It also greatly increases the use of RAM by the system (by up to 20 MB!), even when extra RAM has been allocated to SpeakPad itself. IBM has limited its transfer capabilities to only five programs when any program that is AppleScriptable can accept text generated in SpeakPad.

Some enterprising users have already found how to make Eudora work with ViaVoice, and there's no reason IBM couldn't have included a mechanism for doing the same. IBM also claims to support Powermac G3s, but until recently neglected to note that only blue ones are officially supported. This is especially odd, as early iMacs, with nearly identical performance stats to the beige G3s (processor, system bus, etc.), are supported.

The program also seems to be somewhat limited in its capacity to improve its recognition. The ability to analyze documents is limited to a search for unknown words. There is no mechanism for having ViaVoice listen to you reading an entire document, allowing it to recognize either your patterns of speech or the pronunciation and context of "new" words. Even though ViaVoice made some of the same mistakes nearly every time, there's no way to force the program to listen to you saying the words it gets wrong, and thus no way to force it to improve. Some other annoyances: when dictating, ViaVoice properly gets rid of spaces between punctuation marks and words. Unfortunately, when making corrections, it will put those spaces right back. Finally, it's worth noting that ViaVoice has crashed several times in a manner that has taken down the entire operating system.

In the end, I had a lot of difficulties using ViaVoice; some of my own making, but in other cases the software forced me to conform to how it wants me to work. The correction window, the main mechanism for improving ViaVoice's recognition capabilities, is set up to work from the beginning of the document down. Those of us who prefer to catch the mistakes as we make them are out of luck. My reading voice differs greatly from my conversational voice, but the software learns from your reading then attempts to decipher phrases you say conversationally. The slow appearance of text after I started speaking often led me to pause in the middle of a sentence, depriving the software of the context it needed to pick the right words. Finally, whenever anything (man or machine) is mis-hearing what I'm saying, I tend to slow down, speak loudly, and over-enunciate. And that's so far away from what my reading voice sounds like, ViaVoice never has a chance…

I have mixed feelings about ViaVoice. It does incredible things for program that can be bought for $80. In addition, I have to recognize that it's a 1.0 release, possibly rushed out in the face of the impending release of a competing product from Dragon Systems. Still, the quirks and annoyances described above frequently leave me frustrated and anxious for an improved release.

And I'm beginning to wonder how much time it will take before this program accurately recognizes most things I say. In the end, I'd only recommend ViaVoice to those people with very fast machines who are willing to spend the time to get it to work well with their voices. The rest of us should probably wait for a future release, in the hope that it will be more flexible and have improved functionality.

But despite all, I'm still dictating.

ViaVoice Millenium Edition for the Mac from IBM costs about $80. It requires a PowerBook G3, PowerMac G3 (blue) or G4, or an iMac.

Pros:
Inexpensive, straightforward voice recognition that saves your arms the strain of typing. Has the potential to improve its recognition.

Cons:
Works with only a limited text processor. Requires the latest hardware to run well. Various quirks and bugs, and the potential to improve its recognition seems to be underutilized.

MacMice Rating: 3.5

Websites mentioned:
The ViaVoice for Mac website:
http://www-4.ibm.com/software/speech/mac

Getting Eudora to work:
http://www.macintouch.com/viavoice3.html







By: ***Bob McCormick***
My Mac Magazine
bob@mymac.com

MoniSwitch2USB

Company: Dr. Bott LLC
Estimated Price: $139
http://www.drbott.com

If you've been using Macintoshes for any length of time, there's a good chance you own more than one Mac. You may also have a set up a simple AppleTalk network in your home or maybe you recently moved up to Ethernet. The only problem with this is the network is most likely contained on a single desk. That single desk also has two (or more) of everything, two mice, two keyboards, too little room, and too much clutter!

Have no fear, **MoniSwitch USB** http://www.drbott.com/prod/MSUSB.html is here! This new switchbox from **Dr. Bott LLC** http://www.drbott.com is the answer for sharing a single keyboard, mouse, and monitor between two or four Macs (or USB-enabled PCs) depending on which model you choose.

This great new switchbox is a real dream. It is simple to set up and use and most stylish. I've been using one for about a month now, and it looks like a real winner for users with multiple Macs but only one favorite keyboard and mouse and/or only one good monitor.

Set Up
I tested the MoniSwitch on my Desktop Mac and PowerBook Bronze keyboard. The set up is quite simple. First hook up your monitor and your USB peripherals to the MoniSwitch.

Now use the high quality video and USB cables included with your MoniSwitch to hook up to your two USB Macs and you're ready. Boot up and take off switching between two to four Macs. That means, no more pushing around multiple keyboards, and no more contorting to reach that other mouse. You're stylin'!

Function
If you've begun a long download on one and you want to check on the progress, simply turn the dial on the MoniSwitch over to that Mac. The screen will go black for a second then pop up with that particular Mac's video. Pause for just a second then move your mouse. You'll see you've successfully switched not only the monitor but also your input devices over to the Mac you were wanting to check. Voilà!

I can't rave about this product enough—I just love it! Finally my single 17" monitor will be useful on both my Macs. I can finally toss out that old 14" beast I bought secondhand and be done with it! Phew! What a treat. Now what is that URL for eBay?

Looking Good!
The handsome "graphite" (actually silver) Moniswitch sits on your desktop and you simply turn the dial to the Mac you wish to view. Its neutral silver color will fit with any color Mac you have. The actual lines of the MoniSwitchUSB are quite eye catching. It's contemporary without being cold.

Bronze Keyboards Users
Oh and for you PowerBook users? Monitor spanning functions perfectly when you are using the MoniSwitch. I thought that might present a problem with the MoniSwitch; none at all. Of course, that's what you want with a product like this: no worries. Simple straightforward usefulness. Dr. Bott delivers!

Remember this handy tip when you arrive home. Hook up the video cable while your PowerBook is asleep, then wake your PowerBook. Your PowerBook will then reconnect to the external monitor all without re-booting! It will even remember your multiple monitor preferences!

Quality
I've had some problems with video on my Apple Monitor. Sometimes I simply don't get a video signal. This was frustrating as I thought it was a problem with the video chipset on my desktop Mac.

I decided that possibly it was my monitor cable. I replaced the cable with one that Dr. Bott includes with the MoniSwitch. BINGO! No more missing signal. Not only is the MoniSwitch built well, they don't scrimp on the cables they include. This is important because SwitchBoxes are notorious for providing fuzzy video with lesser cables.

Misses
The only problem I encountered in my testing was sometimes when switching between the new Macs the keyboard and mouse wouldn't work. This is rare and what I would do is then switch back to the previous Mac, then switch again. The mouse and keyboard would be fully functional the second time around. No crashes, no wild cursors. Just a hiccup once in a great while. Though from what I understand, this is a fault of the Mac OS Finder and not of the **MoniSwitch** itself.

The only other miss is the support/warranty for the MoniSwitch. Support is only available from Dr. Bott KG, http://www.drbottkg.de which is the parent company of Dr. Bott LLC. The German page does have a support link, but it's written only in German, which makes reading those FAQs a little tough for the average English speaker. However, the MoniSwitch is so straightforward you may never need more than the excellent included instructions.

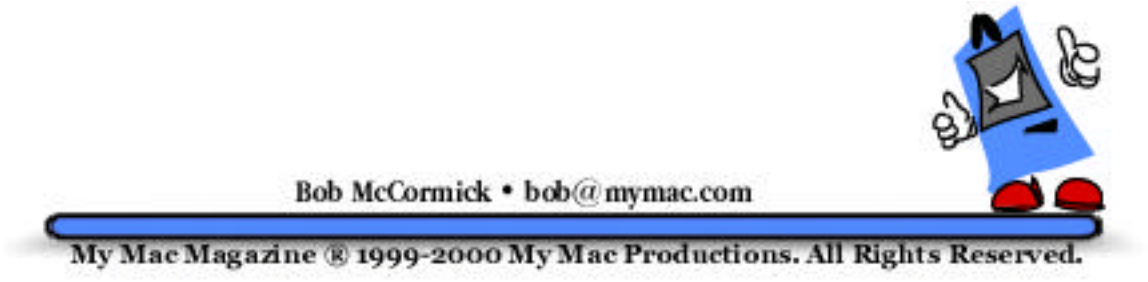
I found no warranty information on any of the Dr. Bott's web pages nor on the product's packaging. I'd confirm that information before you buy. However, I don't think there's much that could ever go wrong with the MoniSwitch.

If you've got two older Macs, not to worry. **MoniSwitchADB** is available. The **MoniSwitchUSB** is available with a PCI Card to enable your older ADB Mac with USB (just $40 more). Don't forget the **iMate**! So you can convert your ADB keyboard to USB. Caution though: once you plug in a USB keyboard via the PCI USB card you won't be able to soft power up or hold the shift key down at startup, as the USB drivers load too late to provide that function. Perhaps they can be renamed to re-enable that functionality.

All in all, the MoniSwitch is a true *winner.* simple, stylish and it works. It rates 4 MacMice in my book. I would have given it 5 MacMice if it weren't for the warranty and support questions. I never knew how I worked without it!

MacMice Rating: 4.5

Websites Mentioned
http://www.drbott.com
http://www.ebay.com
http://www.drbott.com/prod/MSUSB.html



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***By:* Mick O'Neil**
My Mac Magazine
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Final Draft 5.0

Company: Final Draft, Inc.
Estimated Price: $249
http://www.finaldraft.com

Final Draft: A Review

Television and cinema are such impressive media, that sometimes we forget that TV sitcoms, dramas, and movies begin as written scripts or screenplays. When you consider the number of television channels broadcasting and the revival of the movie industry, it is clear that there are many screenplays being marketed and sold.

There are two overlapping facets of any written work: form and content. Though the form of a letter or essay may not seem terribly important, it does have a limited impact on the reader. The form of a screenplay, on the other hand, is crucially important. It has to conform to certain industry conventions. It almost does not matter how good your content is, if the document does not meet certain standards, it implies you are sloppy and your work is not worthy of consideration.

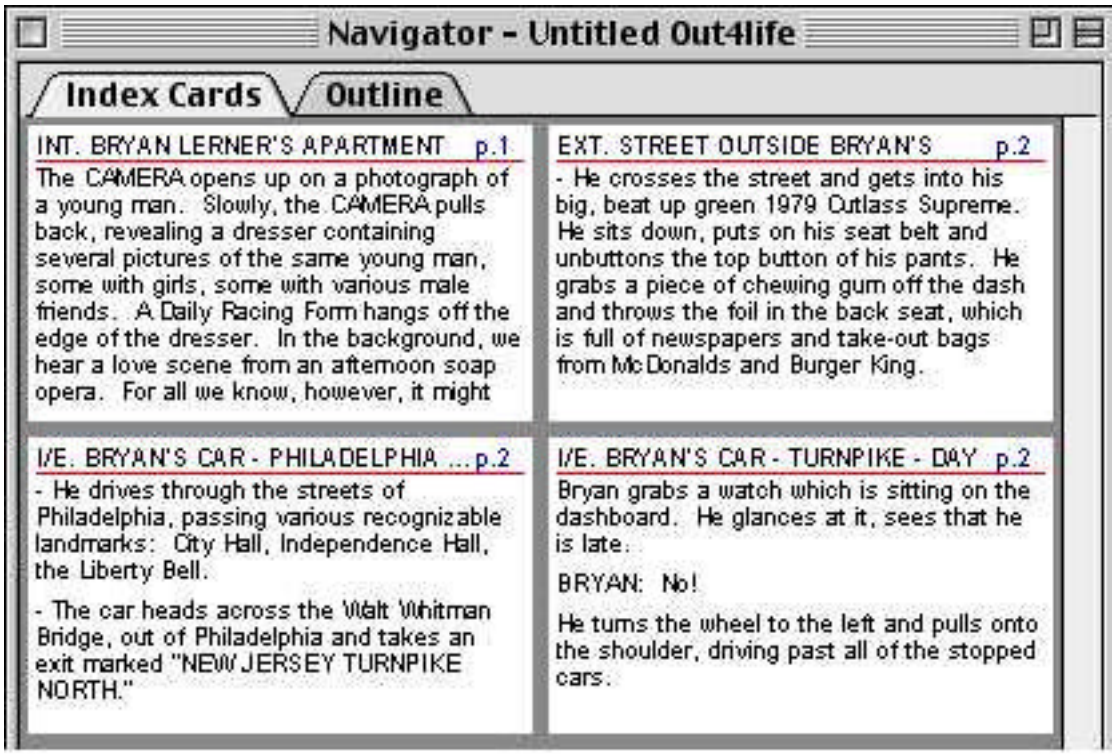
Final Draft is a word processing program that includes styles that conform to screenplay standards; formatting features that let you to edit a script, track changes, and modify the length of scenes while keeping an understandable numbering scheme; and options for working with scripts both on-screen and with customizable printouts. Final Draft removes the worry about form and lets the writer concentrate on content.

My first impression of the software was that it amounted to nothing more than a word processing engine with several built-in styles. I even created a script, saved it in RTF format, and opened it with Word. Different styles for each element: General, Scene Heading, Action, Character, Parenthetical, Dialog, Transition, and Shot, were all defined. I wondered why a Word or Word Perfect template that included these defined styles would not give Final Draft some serious competition. I soon discovered that, though the word processing styles are an important feature of Final Draft, there is much more to this program.

The Return and Tab keys, for example, take on an almost eerie intelligence. The Return key is usually associated with ending a paragraph in word processing. In Final Draft, the key also takes you to a new element that logically follows. If you are finished typing a Scene Heading, the Return key takes you to an Action; when you have completed an Action, the Return key anticipates another Action; and after a character name, you Return to a Dialog, etc.. Meanwhile, the Tab key supplements the functions of the Return key by letting you move from Action to Character Name, Character Name to Parenthetical, etc.. It takes some getting used to, but these two keys will save you enormous amounts of time that otherwise would be required to apply different styles.

Final Draft also provides element shortcuts that let you employ Command/Number combinations to quickly change from one element to another and Macros that can be used to enter text and switch to another element. SmartType Lists automatically record information like character names or transitions as you enter them. The next time you are in the corresponding element and enter the first letter on a list, the program summons the information and gives you the option to auto-enter it. For example, if you are in a Character element and enter Rumplestiltskin, the next time you enter a character and type "R" the program will summon that name which you can accept by pressing Return or Tab. If two or more items in a list begin with the same letter, you can toggle through the possibilities by repeatedly pressing the same letter.

The Scene Navigator provides both outline and index card views of your scenes. From these views you can get a feel for how your screenplay works and you can reorder scenes, add new ones, delete existing scenes and move quickly between scenes.



One sometimes-difficult aspect writing fiction is coming up with believable names for your characters. Final Draft resolves that dilemma by including a Names Database that contains over 90000 potential names. All you need to do is enter the first few characters, and the program will produce a list meeting your requirements. I did note, however, that there were no entries for "O'" (as in O'Neil). This is an almost unforgivable oversight!

It is a sinking feeling you get when, after you have sent a written document off to an editor or producer, you suddenly notice spelling mistakes in the text. To prevent this, Final Draft includes a full-featured spell checker that lets you add words to the dictionary and flags repeated words. Besides providing synonyms and related words, the Final Draft Thesaurus also provides word definitions.

Writing dialog for a script is different from writing dialog for a short story or novel. After all, you expect script dialog will actually be spoken by actors and so how your dialog sounds is important. Final Draft facilitates this process by letting you assign different Windows or Mac voices to each character. You can then have your script read back to you by the computer. Though computer voices still leave a lot to be desired, I found this feature useful.

The software comes with templates for many of the top TV Shows currently on the air. The templates include many of the characters and locations as well as a sample script.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

TEASER

INT. MASTER'S LAIR - DARK

DARLA makes her way through the tunnel, stepping down into the church.

If you see any 'script notes' they contain useful information. Double-click the ScriptNote symbol 1 to view it.

The child, COLLIN, sits tossing pebbles into a pool of blood.

MASTER
Zackery didn't return from the hunt last night.

DARLA
The Slayer...

The Master barely controls himself, his hands clenching. His voice still calm:

MASTER
Zackery was strong, and he was careful. And still the Slayer takes him, as she's taken so many of my family. It wears thin.

Final Draft will import text files and provides a Reformat tool to apply appropriate styles and transform the text into a script. The Reformat tool includes a button for each type of element and buttons for moving ahead a paragraph or going back. This was extremely useful in transforming one of the Why Files episodes into a screenplay (see MyMac, February 2000).

The program has a web-centric approach to providing Help. There are options under the Help menu to go to the Final Draft Help web site or contact the company. Choosing Final Draft Help summons your default web browser which in turn reads the Help. Though eventually, we may run all of our software from the web, today, some users will be inconvenienced by the need to run an additional RAM hungry program just to get help.

Final Draft comes with an abbreviated User's Guide, but includes much more extensive information including tutorials in PDF documents. Personally, I prefer the real thing (in addition to the PDF file) and was disappointed with Final Draft's approach.

Final Draft runs under both the Windows and Mac operating systems and both versions are on the single CD. I created a screenplay on the Mac and the Windows version opened it flawlessly. Similarly, the Mac had no trouble reading a script created under Windows.

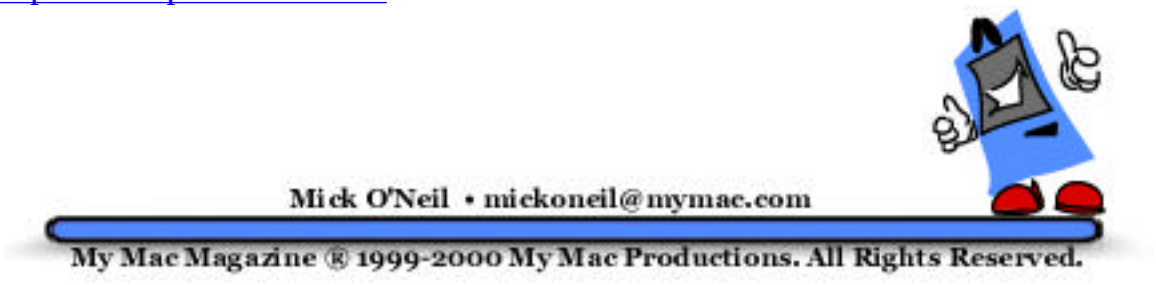
Until you register your copy of Final Draft, you are required to insert the CD to run the software. Upon registration, you are authorized to do a complete install on just one computer. That is, the temporary install generates a number unique to that computer and Final Draft sends you a corresponding number to enable the full install. I found all this somewhat draconian and the procedure reminds me of the dark ages of software protection.

Final Draft 5 includes an option to register a screenplay or any other document with ProtectRite, the National Creative Registry's intellectual property protection service. For $18.95, ProtectRite will register any document under 3 Mb in size for ten years. Larger documents can also be protected at the cost of $5 per extra megabyte. You can also retrieve a document from ProtectRite for a fee. More information about this service is available at http://www.protectrite.com

In conclusion, Final Draft provides all the tools you need to format and register a screenplay or script allowing the writer to concentrate on content. It's certainly a required buy for anyone serious about writing plays, TV shows, or screenplays. Because of its awkward Help, goofy protection scheme, and limited documentation, I rate the program 4 out of 5 MyMac Mice.

MacMice Rating: 4

Websites Mentioned
http://www.finaldraft.com
http://www.protectrite.com



Book Bytes



By: ***John Nemerovski***
My Mac Magazine
nemo@mymac.com

BOOK BYTES RATING SYSTEM:

MacMice Rating: 5 = AMAZING book, one of a kind, sensational

MacMice Rating: 4 = OUTSTANDING book through and through

MacMice Rating: 3 = GOOD book, worth every penny

MacMice Rating: 2 = OKAY, but nothing special

MacMice Rating: 1 = NOPE, forget it and read something else





Upgrading & Troubleshooting Your Mac
by Gene Steinberg
http://www.macnightowl.com
Osborne / McGraw-Hill
http://www.osborne.com
ISBN 0-07-212327-3, 567 pages plus CD
$29.99 U.S.

Gene Steinberg's "book of revelations" places him at the summit of Macintosh authors. This title is now mandatory on the shelves of all intermediate Macintoshers, gurus, tutors, and power users who are not yet experts up to the Steinberg standard.

Gene is a busy fellow, running a 24/7 Mac info website, serving as a high-end consultant, contributing reviews to **MacHome Journal**, publishing a sci-fi space opera with his talented son, plus writing and revising popular titles for another publisher on the iMac and iBook (both being reviewed here in Book Bytes; one in this month's BONUS capsule review). Whew!

He has come a long way from his earlier excellent books on AOL, this time tackling the entire current lineup of Mac G3/G4/legacy hardware and an impressive range of software issues. With **Mac Secrets 5**, **Sad Macs**, and **Mac Upgrade and Repair Bible**, Steinberg's **Upgrading & Troubleshooting Your Mac** is on the "must own" and *"must read"* list for all conscientious consultants.

In addition to the useful CD containing many essential freeware, demoware, and shareware utilities, the 23 chapters take readers through a profuse range of solutions for hardware, system software, memory upgrades, portable computing, graphics, printing, monitors, and a whole lot more. Every item is covered thoroughly, in a reassuring first person "been there, done that" approach highlighted by dozens of "Case History" problem resolutions.

I began taking notes of the strengths in **Upgrading & Troubleshooting Your Mac**, and soon found myself reading non-stop, muttering "Oh! Now I know why and how that #%&* thing is supposed to work, and why it was causing so many crashes!" The information is totally current to the iBook and OS9, so readers know the author and publisher made every effort to make the book valuable for years to come.

Gene has hundreds of sidebar tips and warnings, and all his explanations and itemized steps are delivered in a friendly, patient voice. Are you already an expert in:

• testing your new equipment and peripherals;

• doing clean installations;

• working with RAM and upgrade cards; or

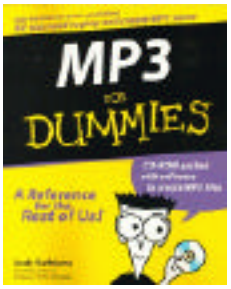
• managing your fonts and printing?

Do you know the cure for the mysterious frozen mouse syndrome? How about adjusting and calibrating monitors? Can you explain to a mere mortal the significance of a Volume Bit Map or Extents B-Tree? Gene can, and does, in a way that makes you feel warm and fuzzy, and well-informed.

This **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** title is a winner in every way, and I'll see if I can get the attention of the Book Bytes Awards committee, to suggest **Upgrading & Troubleshooting Your Mac** for the December announcement of our third annual awards list.

MacMice Rating: 4





MP3 for Dummies
by Andy Rathbone
http://www.andyrathbone.com
Dummies Press
http://www.dummies.com
ISBN 0-7645-0585-8, 296 pages plus CD
$19.99 U.S., $29.99 Canada, £18.99 U.K.

The first thing your friendly reviewer does when checking out a MP3 book is to slash open the seal on the disc inside the back cover and fire up a song. By chance I selected "Lancelot" by Stru Tural, with an instrumental track in the style of the infamous MC5 (Michigan, circa 1969) and vocals that remind me of (I'm not kidding) Tommy James and the Shondells, if my geezer memory is at all accurate.

There is more on the disc. The author has provided a helpful selection of software on CD, all described in his Appendix A. More impressive is the ambitious multi-platform approach, now including Linux! Watch out, Redmond. Start packing now, while there is still time to count all that $$$.

MP3 for Dummies has a long list of recommended websites and newsgroups on the inside front cover (good thinking!), indicating Rathbone's passionate involvement in access to music via the net. He's a Windozer, which we will forgive, because a large portion of the material in the book is appropriate for the Mac community.

As the technology evolves, more third-party MP3 hardware will be compatible with every operating system. Stick around for the ride, or revolution, depending upon your point of view.

I'm going to spend more time with this book before taking a firm stance. Even better: I'll send it to a music fanatic who can try out Rathbone's stuff on both Windows and Mac equipment. Next time you're in a bookstore, thumb through **MP3 for Dummies** to see if it feels like a good fit. For now, I'm comfortable giving this book a rating of:

MacMice Rating: 2

Author Andy Rathbone wants to make sure we mention:

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The book reviews most of the portable MP3 players on the market.

It's also aimed at helping musicians get their music converted into MP3
format, uploaded to appropriate sites, and pressed onto CD for sales. (It
even lists companies that will "package" CDs by unsigned bands, pressing
hundreds of CDs with artwork, covers, etc.)

Finally, it discusses copyright issues, so MP3 users can keep from
running afoul of the law.
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The Mac OS 9 Guide
by Brad Miser
Hayden Books
http://www.mcp.com
ISBN 0-7897-2312-3, 580 pages
$29.99 U.S., $44.95 Canada, £21.99 U.K.



From the award-winning author of Book Bytes' favorite OS 8.5 title comes a lighter-weight book on a heavier-weight operating system. What's missing, Brad, aside from the change from Que to Hayden within, the same Macmillan publishing family? I'm not keeping score, certainly, because this new **Mac OS 9 Guide** is bursting with valuable information. The new format is fresh and easy to follow for every level of Mac user.

Beginners will appreciate the flab-free opening chapters dealing with folders, windows, Finder, Apple Menu, and similar essential knowledge. Miser presents "Step by Step" itemized procedures whenever appropriate, which is often, plus hundreds of screen shots and dozens of concise boxed sidebar tips.

Through 24 chapters and two appendices (covering OS installation and using portable Macs), the writing is snappy and the information is top-notch. For example:

• On email attachments and file encoding: "Sometimes the files you attach will get messed up (computer geeks say the file gets "munged") when the recipient receives them."

• On using QuickTime 4: "While it is natural to think of QuickTime in terms of video, you should also remember that QuickTime could be used for sound, animation, and other dynamic data as well."

• and many, many more in similar style.

The three major parts (covering: working with a Mac, using the Internet, and customizing your computer) should be required reading for everyone who expects to become a power user of OS 9. *(Time out while I study Chapter 15 on advanced techniques for browsing the web.)* Hey, Brad, those "Cool Sherlock Net Tricks" on page 323 are right on target.

Mac OS 9 Guide sets a new standard of accessibility for operating system books. To date, Book Bytes has received no serious full-service competitor, so it is a pleasure to **HIGHLY RECOMMEND** this title, with a rating of:

MacMice Rating: 4





QuickTime Pro 4 for Macintosh & Windows, Visual QuickStart Guide
http://www.peachpit.com/vqs/quicktime
by Judith Stern and Robert Lettieri
Peachpit Press
http://www.peachpit.com
ISBN 0-201-35469-1, 359 pages
$17.99 U.S., $26.95 Canada

In preparation for this review I took a deep breath and spent an entire morning installing and using freeware QuickTime 4 on my blazing fast PowerMac 7200/120, over a 28.8 kbps modem connection. It was exciting to listen to WGBH-FM radio live from Boston, but the wait for streaming video from Bloomberg TV made me wish I had taken up fishing and not computing. Was I motivated to upgrade to QuickTime 4 Pro, and need a book such as this one? Stay tuned.

I commend Peachpit Press for consistently delivering a powerful package at a pleasant price. There is a LOT of useful information provided in these plentiful pages. Thumbing through the text from back to front, I encounter appendices containing QuickTime resource listings, configuration procedures, plus mouse and keyboard shortcuts.

Heading up to the front of the volume, I learn more essential and background information on QuickTime than I ever thought existed. These authors know their subject! Excuse me, friends, while I spend a few weeks trying all the nifty tips, tricks, and techniques in the opening chapters.

QuickTime Pro 4 for Macintosh & Windows has hundreds of helpful screen shots, charts, and sidebars on every possible aspect of the software. Do you know “The Difference Between Saving RTSP and HTTP Movies”? How about the 29 “File Formats That QuickTime Player Can Open Directly”? Before even considering QuickTime VR or Pro, I realize that multimedia has a talented friend in this technology, and we all are beneficiaries.

Once the text delves into working with movies, the content quickly advances past my skill level. As this technology becomes more far-reaching, low-end-users and old-timers like me will make the effort to become proficient. Truthfully, I need much more time to give the extensive material in **QuickTime Pro 4 for Macintosh & Windows, Visual QuickStart Guide** an honest evaluation. I do know that this **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** title has outstanding content, presentation, and price.

MacMice Rating: 4



Sams Teach Yourself Today: e-Travel
by Mark Orowoll
http://www.travelandleisure.com
Sams Publishing
http://www.samspublishing.com
ISBN 0-672-31822-9, 302 pages
$17.99 U.S., $26.95 Canada, £12.99 U.K.



Here we have the first title from Sams Publishing's new series. If you are confused by similar names within the Sams lineup, join the party. For now, bear in mind the word "Today" in the title and a narrower physical book width than is customary. I will try to keep you informed as new subjects are covered.

The author is a genuine expert. He tackles every aspect of online travel planning in 22 chapters plus an appendix containing dozens of useful URLs. I have plenty of experience doing travel research on the Internet, and I learned something new in each chapter.

Personal commentary saturates Orowoll's writing, such as: "I still find air travel to be more of a nuisance than a joy," or "I can enjoy a McDonald's double cheeseburger with the same gusto as when I rip into a medium-rare aged sirloin at the venerable (and expensive!) Keens Chophouse in Manhattan." He has taken his lumps and his luxuries around the world.

Most readers will benefit from the self-assessment in which an overall traveler profile, or type, is assigned, based on personal preference and budget. The book has a lot of information in a 3/4-size package, making it easy to bring along on the trip, if desired.

Halfway through examining **Sams Teach Yourself Today: e-Travel** I took a break and went swimming. While doing laps I realized my strongest reaction to this book is "bland," meaning it lacks the dynamic graphical and textual content of its competitors in the "Dummies" and "Complete Idiots" formats. The information in **Today: e-Travel** is adequate and clearly written, but nothing jumps out at the reader.

Travel is expensive, but books that help travelers are inexpensive. For every hundred websites dedicated to domestic and foreign travel there are a few worthwhile guidebooks. If you need expert assistance to motivate your choice of destination and Internet research, **Sams Teach Yourself Today: e-Travel** is worth considering. The Book Bytes rating is based on its reasonable price:

MacMice Rating: 3





The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Health and Fitness
http://www.fitnesslink.com/info/book.shtml
by Joan Price
http://www.joanprice.com
and Shannon Entin
http://www.fitnesslink.com
Alpha / Que / Macmillan
http://www.mcp.com
ISBN 0-7897-2208-9, 294 pages

This guide opens into a brightly-colored tearout card containing the authors' fifteen "Essential Health and Fitness" websites, plus a well-worded reminder to *consider the source* when looking for credible information on the Internet. The tone is set for a landmark book on the basics and fundamentals of using the net for facts and opinions on fitness and health.

Opening pages illustrate the icons for many handy tips, identified with specific graphics for:

• "Get Up!" (computer fitness breaks and stretching activities);

• "Buzzwords" (definitions of important terms);

• "Scam Alert" (warnings for avoiding fraudulent and misleading advice);

and several more. Pages are visually interesting, such as the one describing "modem push-ups," exercises to do while your modem is dialing and logging on. Sounds funny? Not a bit!

In Part One, Shannon and Joan present two-pronged introductory material, in which both health-related information and basic Internet usage are covered. Chapter Three offers no-nonsense ways to evaluate website content for self-protection. The entire text is loaded with recommended URLs. Being a fitness swimmer, I plan to spend quite a bit of time exploring http://www.swiminfo.com, with "so much swimming info you won't have time to swim."

Do you need to build some strength? Locate a personal trainer? Start pursuing yoga or martial arts? They all are here, in profusion. As an outdoors guy, I am particularly interested in the links mentioned in Chapter Nine, and the following chapter will help me buy all my supplies once I finish planning the activities.

Part Three is crucial, covering nutrition, diet, and weight loss. *(I have a specific need for more hair in addition to being able to add a few pounds, so if you can spare both of them, give me a holler.)* The author's sensible nutritional advice is supplemented by a yummy chapter on healthy cooking.

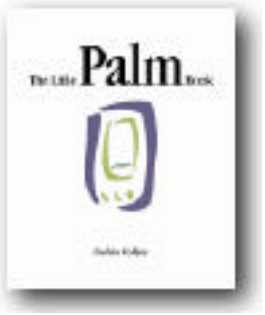
Final chapters deal with obtaining reliable quack-free medical care for children and adults, including alternatives to traditional medicine, plus mental health and prescription drug recommendations. Joan and Shannon get really serious at the very end, when discussing menopause, HIV/AIDS, and cancer.

I kept looking for things to criticize in this ambitious, well-presented book, with no success. Book Bytes is pleased to give
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Health and Fitness our **HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION**. The price is excellent, the authors really know their subject, and every reader will benefit from many of the topics. Well done, authors, publishers, and everyone involved. Keep up the fine work.

MacMice Rating: 5



The Little Palm Book:
A friendly introduction to handheld computing
by Corbin Collins
Peachpit Press
http://www.peachpit.com
ISBN 0-201-69954-0, 265 pages
$17.99 U.S., $26.95 Canada



With coverage of every version of Palm hardware and operating system including models III - VII and up to Palm OS 3.3, this latest book on the mighty midget aims to be a bestseller. How is the content, and how does it compare to previous titles covering Palm handheld computers?

The “Get Acquainted” first chapter displays photos and descriptions of the different physical units, with a thorough explanation of common and model-specific hardware and software features. Setup procedure can be time-consuming and confusing, and the author walks readers through each step in Chapter Two.

Pages are well-designed for maximum tutorial efficiency, with bold screen shot graphics. Subsequent chapters plow through the basics, including the Graffiti language, onscreen keyboards, and the many personal information management components of the Palm OS.

The Little Palm Book is divided into four major parts, plus a useful Appendix. By Part Three: “Connecting With Your Computer,” halfway into the book, readers are ready for the most exceptional feature of the handy-dandy-little-giant. After a long (yaaaaaawwwwwwn) chapter on synching with Windoze systems, Chapter Ten details “Mac HotSync and Palm Desktop. This 25-page powerhouse section is my personal favorite.

The book wraps up with instructions on adding software, and on using the Palm for connecting to the Internet. In his final thoughts, Collins speaks frankly about the current and future situation regarding online opportunities for Palm users. This valuable advice is itself worth the entire price of **The Little Palm Book**.

I have mixed feelings regarding this title. It certainly accomplishes its goal, but I'm concerned that as users quickly become more proficient, they might find it lacking in depth. Fair enough, because by then Collins' well-presented material will have served the readers very well.

MacMice Rating: 3





Easy iBook
by Lisa Lee
http://www.flatfishfactory.com
Que / Macmillan
http://www.quecorp.com
ISBN 0-7897-2272-0, 269 pages
$19.99 U.S., $29.95 Canada, £14.50 U.K.

Most people don't sit for hours reading computer books for enjoyment, but I do. Last week I was sitting in the sunshine waiting for a friend, thumbing through this iBook volume. My friend was late, but I didn't mind, because Lisa Lee's colorful images and text were so enjoyable.

Speaking of color, each of the eleven chapters (or "parts") has its own color scheme, enabling readers to find desired content at a glance. Within the chapters, tutorial material is divided into itemized tasks, which are titled in bold at the top of every page. The attention to high-quality design is evident throughout.

Pages are split into large inner sections and more narrow outer columns. The inner areas contain numbered instructions and gorgeous graphics; tips and additional text fill the outside regions. Typical tasks are:

• Connecting Your Palm Device (Part 3, Task 7);

• Finding Files and Folders with Sherlock 2 (Part 5, Task 6); or

• Restoring Your iBook's Software (Part 10, Task 8).

From these examples experienced Mac people realize that **Easy iBook** is not all "what is the Finder?" or similar newbie stuff.

Beginners will immediately feel comfortable with the author's method and style of gentle, enumerated instruction. Working with a new computer and operating system can be intimidating, and Lisa Lee is an easygoing, if persistent coach. From "Saving a Document" to "Adding Memory" to "Editing a QuickTime Movie Using QuickTime Player," an extensive range of iBook and Mac OS procedures are covered.

The short-and-sweet approach means readers will need to go deeper for their continuing education. A full range of help is available built into every iBook, and many detailed titles are being published. For total beginners and people who learn best from visual examples, Book Bytes is proud to give **Easy iBook** a glowing recommendation.

On her personal web page, Lisa explains:

```
I rewrote Easy iMac for the iBook; the iMac to go. Mac OS 9 is also
covered, including Sherlock 2, Multiple Users, Location Manager, File
Synchronization and Keychain Access control panels. I don't know what it
is about writing about Macs for the Easy series, but I enjoyed writing
Easy iBook as much as I did writing Easy iMac.
```

MacMice Rating: 4



And now, for something different:



Video Movie Guide 2000
by Mick Martin and Marsha Porter
Ballantine Books
http://www.randomhouse.com/BB
ISBN 0-345-42094-2, 1582 pages
$18.95 U.S., $28.95 Canada

Something unusual happened on the way to the movies. Our friends at Ballantine/Random House provided this bestselling movie guide to help our Book Bytes readers decide how to waste even more time than you are currently doing.

Two years ago I was given a $10 gift certificate to Barnes & Noble, and despaired because every book I wanted to own cost quite a bit more, including the predecessor of **Video Movie Guide 2000**. And there it was, a junior-sized version, with identical content, for only $8.95 U.S. plus sales tax. Barbara and I spent hours planning our video viewing, and we usually agree with the authors' rankings.

If you like to have expert guidance when planning a trip to your local Blockbuster, take this red brick volume with you. Even better: leave it in your car. Start with the 5-star movies, then work your way down (good luck!). I have looked through all the competition, and this **Video Movie Guide 2000** is **RECOMMENDED** as the best of the bunch, at any price.

MacMice Rating: 4

BONUS "UPDATER" BOOK BYTES

In a special BONUS capsule-comments section this issue, Book Bytes is pleased to offer eight new "updaters" or revised editions of titles previously covered in earlier reviews. Each one is priced under $25 U.S., and most of them cost less than $20! Readers are encouraged to visit the Book Bytes archives at http://www.mymac.com, where we have longer reviews of preceding versions of many of the following books:



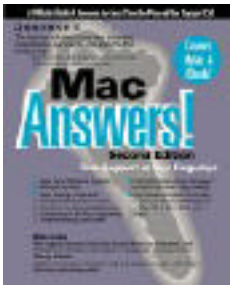


HTML4 for the World Wide Web, 4th Edition, Visual QuickStart Guide
by Elizabeth Castro
http://www.cookwood.com
Peachpit Press
http://www.peachpit.com
ISBN 0-201-35493-4, 384 pages
$19.99 U.S., $29.95 Canada

I liked this title very much in its previous edition, and now it is better. On page 20, the author lists several URLs devoted to additional resource material for users of book, and that sets the tone for one of the best ever Visual QuickStart Guides. Beginning and intermediate webheads who are not already using Castro's latest HTML manual should dash down to the bookstore to pick up this **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** tutorial. With tremendous value for money and mountains of expertise between the covers, Book Bytes considers this 4th edition a must-have for everyone serious about learning and using HTML.

MacMice Rating: 4





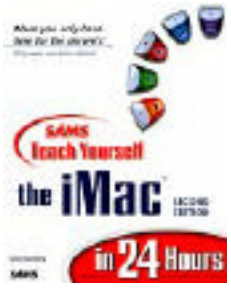
Mac Answers, 2nd Edition
by Bob LeVitus
http://www.boblevitus.com
and Shelly Brisbin
Osborne / McGraw-Hill
http://www.osborne.com
ISBN 0-07-212399-0, 462 pages
$24.99 U.S.

Subtitled "Tech Support at Your Fingertips," Bob and Shelly's latest edition is precisely what is required when answers to specific troubleshooting questions are needed. With hundreds of Q&A solutions covering hardware, software, connectivity, and much more, this title should be close at hand for every Macintosher who is on the receiving end of those ever-loving "HELP!" phone calls and email messages. Potential power users should have the contents of this **RECOMMENDED** book memorized.

MacMice Rating: 4



Sams Teach Yourself the iMac in 24 Hours, 2nd Edition
by Gene Steinberg
http://www.macnightowl.com
Sams Publishing
http://www.samspublishing.com
ISBN 0-672-31837-7, 412 pages
$19.99 U.S., $29.99 Canada, £14.50 U.K.



Steinberg is a favorite author, the "in 24 Hours" series is one of the best for newcomers, and the iMac is exceptional. Sounds like a winning combination, and it is. If you learn best in a series of tutorial lessons and are unacquainted with your iMac, consider this book a serious contender. In his second edition, the author delivers concise chapters covering the latest iMac hardware, system software, and iMac applications, with many helpful graphics and screen shots. I wish I were a new user once again, in order to take full advantage of this **RECOMMENDED** title.

MacMice Rating: 4



JavaScript for the World Wide Web,
3rd Edition, Visual QuickStart Guide
http://www.chalcedony.com/javascript
by Tom Negrino
http://www.negrino.com
and Dori Smith
Peachpit Press
http://www.peachpit.com
ISBN 0-201-35463-2, 292 pages
$17.99 U.S., $26.95 Canada



I claim no experience whatsoever with this important topic, but if I were going to begin studying it, you would find my nose buried in these pages. With its companion website, tutorial examples of script, and effective graphics, this book is the one to have. What you do with your JavaScript is your business, but I urge you to make a beeline for the bookstore if you need to learn how to do it on the web.

MacMice Rating: 3



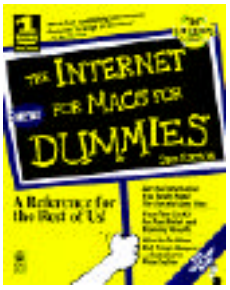


Quicken 2000 for Macintosh, Visual QuickStart Guide
by Tom Negrino
http://www.negrino.com
Peachpit Press
http://www.peachpit.com
ISBN 0-201-69964-8, 194 pages
$16.99 U.S., $23.50 Canada

With Quicken's powerful built-in Help feature, why would a user need this slim third-party manual? The answer is: it depends on how you learn. The Visual QuickStart approach is a good one for learning a procedural application, such as Quicken. Both the software and this book are priced very low, so cost is not a consideration. The major factors are time and efficiency. With only one other competitive title, Book Bytes urges you to have a helpful author looking over your shoulder, to make the Quicken experience as straightforward as possible.

MacMice Rating: 3



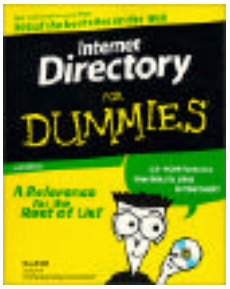


The Internet for Macs for Dummies, 3rd Edition
by Charles Seiter
Dummies Press
http://www.dummies.com
ISBN 0-7645-0364-2, 355 pages
$19.99 U.S., $28.99 Canada, £18.99 U.K.

Beginners to Macintosh and the net are the target audience for this title. Most of you Book Bytes readers are more advanced, but you certainly know people who will benefit from the content. The book will make an excellent companion to a school computer lab, especially one loaded with iMacs and iBooks. There are many fine competing introductory titles, so select one that best fits your learning and reference style.

MacMice Rating: 3





Internet Directory for Dummies, 3rd Edition
by Brad Hill
http://www.bradhill.com
Dummies Press
http://www.dummies.com
ISBN 0-7645-0588-2, 377 pages plus CD
$24.99 U.S., $27.99 Canada, £23.99 U.K.

Oh, great! It's another Net directory. The pages are white, but this title compares favorably to many Internet yellow pages. Containing eight major parts and dozens of no-nonsense category headings, the book has hundreds of useful web site listings, each with an extensive review. The CD has application and utility software, plus live browser links to every URL mentioned. If you appreciate well-researched educational, commercial, and recreational Internet destination recommendations, this book will more than repay your investment.

MacMice Rating: 3





The Internet for Busy People, Millennium Edition
http://opublish.com/busy2k
by Christian Crumlish
Osborne / McGraw-Hill
http://www.osborne.com
ISBN 0-07-212116-5, 264 pages
$19.99 U.S.

This "for busy people" series from Osborne is well-designed, with colorful graphics and screen shots to enhance the helpful text sections. With both beginner and expert advice, including many recommended URLs, this title is a delight to read or use for reference purposes. Crumlish has distilled what readers need to make the most of the Internet experience. If the book wasn't geared to the Windows platform it, would have a higher rating.

Christian Crumlish explains, via email:

I've tried to sprinkle in Mac examples, but I realize the visual feel of the book is geared to PC users. More importantly though, I think the book works well as a text for Macintosh users and even WebTV users, since it focuses on understanding Internet applications in general and not the keystrokes for one specific program or platform.

///ENDQUOTE///

MacMice Rating: 3



All these books have now left the "pending" Book Bytes shelf, which means we're ready for a large shipment of new arrivals during the spring and summer months. Stick with Book Bytes, friends, and keep reading our recommended titles.

John

Websites Mentioned

http://www.macnightowl.com
http://www.osborne.com
http://www.andyrathbone.com
http://www.dummies.com
http://www.mcp.com
http://www.cookwood.com
http://www.peachpit.com/vqs/quicktime
http://www.peachpit.com
http://www.travelandleisure.com
http://www.samspublishing.com
http://opublish.com/busy2k
http://www.bradhill.com
http://www.negrino.com
http://www.chalcedony.com/javascript
http://www.boblevitus.com
http://www.randomhouse.com/BB
http://www.quecorp.com
http://www.flatfishfactory.com
http://www.fitnesslink.com
http://www.joanprice.com
http://www.fitnesslink.com/info/book.shtml
http://www.mymac.com/archives/oct_99/memo.shtml



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Book Review

By: ***Russ Walkowich***
My Mac Magazine
editor@mymac.com

Apple Confidential -
The Real Story of Apple Computer, Inc.
by Owen W. Linzmayer
http://www.netcom.com/~owenink
http://www.nostarch.com
ISBN 1-886411-28-X
$17.95 U.S., $27.95 Canada



I'll bet that most of you thought that Steve Jobs alone started Apple Computer. Or that Steve Job and Steve Wozniak together were the only two people involved with the development of Apple Computer. Owen Linzmayer opens his book, Apple Confidential, with the complete story of the 3 people that were involved in the development of Apple Computer— Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Gerald Wayne.

Mr. Linzmayer's book, from start to finish, is a continual fountain of information on Apple Computer and the people involved. He delves into how the original Apple was taken to numerous companies, like Hewlett-Packard, Atari and Commodore Business Machines in an attempt to sell them the Apple computer concept. No takers. He covers all the little things (and BIG things) that were done right and wrong along the way. He provides the reader with information on how things came to be, who thought of what, who never got the credit that they so justly deserved, or who took the blame when things went wrong.

He includes time lines for Apple computers, Apple Operating Systems, the Newton, Windows (yes, Windows!), Mac models and even code names.

If you thought that you knew everything there is to know about Apple, you don't... at least not until you finish reading this book. The book is jam packed with everything you need to know, is easy to read and follows Apple from its humble beginnings in a bedroom (yes, bedroom, not a garage) to the introduction of the iMac. If you want to find out the real story of Apple, take the time to sit down and read Owen Linzmayer's book. A must-have to true Apple enthusiasts book shelves.

MacMice Rating: 5



Eudora for 4.2 Windows & Macintosh
by Adam Engst
http://www.peachpit.com
ISBN 0-201-35389-X
$16.99 U.S., $25.50 Canada

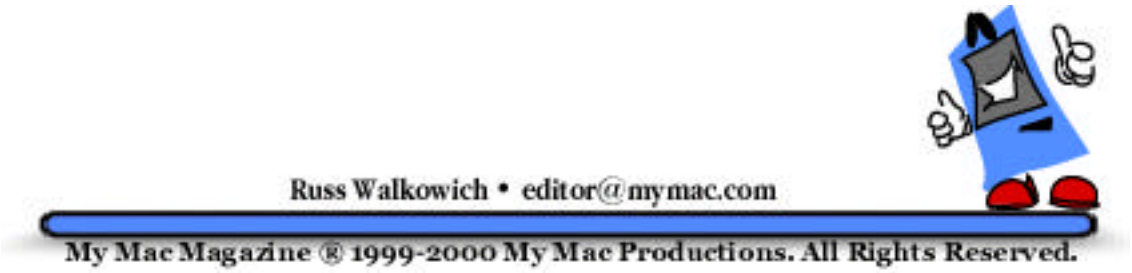


When I first started using a Mac, and first started using an email program, it was Eudora Lite. I soon "graduated" to eMailer, OutLook Express, QuickMail Pro, to name a few. When Qualcomm recently released Eudora 4.3 (beta) I decided that it was time to go back to my roots and see if things had changed any.

One of the first things that I did do was obtain a copy of Adam Engst's book, Eudora 4.2, so that I would have a better understanding of Eudora and its capabilities. Mr. Engst has come through with this book, providing the reader with a complete walk-thru of Eudora and all the things that have made it such a great email program. He starts with the basics of Eudora, walks you through creating Messages, writing messages and sending/receiving messages. He shows you the ins and outs, the features of Eudora that are sometimes forgotten and the ones that it is well known for.

The book is set up for both Mac and Windows users, is easy to follow, and walks you easily through all aspects of Eudora. When you set up Eudora, you can use this book as a great reference source or a quick-check bible to work you through any problems that you may encounter. If you use Eudora now, or plan to in the future, then get yourself this book. You won't regret it!

MacMice Rating: 4





***By:* Bob McCormick**
My Mac Magazine
bob@mymac.com



Yes, Virginia, Santa DOES use UPS

A true Christmas story.

By Bob McCormick

Did you happen to see the commercials during Christmas showing the UPS man helping out Santa? Well, I'm here to tell you it is true. Let me tell how I know this.

Besides writing a column for My Mac, I have a couple other jobs, one of which you may have read about in my past columns. I work at a Top 5 PC/printer manufacturer as a subcontractor. Yes, I deal with Windoze all day long. Whuff. I also have another job. I work as a staff minister at my church.

I'm quite involved, as you might imagine. Besides my regular ministerial duties at my church, I produce quite a bit of our desktop publishing and designs, from newsletters and advertising to our letterhead. While surfing the web recently I read about Tektronix giving away printers http://FreeColorPrinters.com to businesses. All you had to do was to submit an application (it's quite a long one). They would review it and then let you know if you were approved for the printer. The only catch is you have to buy the ink from them.

Doing all the desktop stuff, I decided to go ahead and apply. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Being a small church, we simply do not print enough to qualify for their free printer. However, the thought was still in my head to get a good color printer for the church. Some weeks later I'd remember this thought when I received a package, actually two.

Just a few weeks before Christmas I was expecting a package from Dr. Bott http://www.drbott.com. I was writing a review (elsewhere in this issue) of the new USB MoniSwitch from Dr. Bott. A PCI card from them would enable my desktop Mac with USB. There was a note on my door one Tuesday night from UPS. They had tried to deliver the PCI card to me, but they would try again the next day. The note mentioned a "signature is required." That surprised me, as it was not that expensive of a product. I just figured that Dr. Bott was being careful with their products. I can't blame them. There was something else on the note. The handwriting was quite bad, but it appeared that it also had the word "Epson" on the note. Well, it could have said Epson, it could have also said "from" but I wasn't sure, the handwriting was that poor. I just figured it was a mistake.

Luckily, I could arrange to have someone sign for my delivery since I would be away at work, naturally. When I returned, I found a surprise. It wasn't just a surprise. It was a huge surprise! Besides the PCI card there was a very large box, huge really. I looked at the box and it clearly read "Epson" on the side. I was puzzled and perplexed. Dumbfounded really, that there was this large box. I hadn't ordered or purchased any other products for delivery, certainly not from Epson. Scratching my head, I just didn't know what this was about.

The packing slip was no help. It had my name and address. After reading the rest of it I realized it was a completely refurbished Epson Stylus Color 3000! It was then that I began to drool and entertain fantasies that Santa had begun to use UPS instead of reindeer! It couldn't be mine, could it?

My first thought was that this would be so perfect for the church!! Posters, banners, newsletters, and so much more. Could this be courtesy of My Mac? Other staff members had received hardware in the past; however, Tim assured me that it had not come from My Mac. Drats!!

I was completely perplexed.

Despite having my name on the packing slip I knew it couldn't possibly be mine. It had to be a mistake. I decided to open the box and see if there was any indication whom the real owner was. I found nothing inside except a report on the printer's repairs.

Since this was a $3000 printer when new I decided that I'd go ahead and call the number on the packing slip and try to figure out who really owned this printer. I'd be missing a genuine 1440x720 dpi large format color printer if it were mine!

I wasn't looking forward to the call, knowing that it would be an exercise in frustration. I wouldn't be wrong. Before I made the call I took one last chance to solve the situation on my own. I looked in the phone book, hoping there would be another Bob McCormick in the book. If so, I could call, confirm they were expecting a printer and get the situation resolved myself. Once I realized there wasn't, I realized this printer could belong to anyone, anywhere in the country.

Next morning I called the number listed on the packing slip. The first person I spoke to was kind but no help. Naturally, I was sent to the next department. I explained to person after person and department after department that I didn't own this printer and that they needed to arrange to pick it up. One person told me that UPS made the error and it would be my responsibility to call them for a pick up. I explained that was not true. UPS had made no mistakes at all. UPS had delivered the printer to the exact address on the box. The repair center had sent it to the wrong person and address. I went on to tell them that I had been inconvenienced enough with the situation and they would have to rectify it.

Situations like this can be most frustrating. I just saved them approximately 1500 dollars by reporting their error but no one I spoke to seemed appreciative of this. No one wanted to take responsibility for the situation. If you aren't careful these situations can get out of hand, leaving you holding the bag. I was determined not to have that happen.

After several representatives and several departments I finally got the name of a person who would help me with this situation, Stacy. When I asked for her 800 number so that I could contact her as I had to leave for work, I had spent a better part of my morning on the phone. The rep told they had none. I then explained that I had spent enough of my money and time on their mistake this (hopefully last) person would have to contact me.

Not long after I got to work, I got a call from Stacy. I was firm explaining, again, that this printer didn't belong to me and that they would have to arrange to pick it up at my convenience. I wasn't trying to be a hard nose about this, but it seemed odd that I would have to jump through all these hoops to correct their mistake.

Stacy asked if I had UPS pick up at my work. When I told her the name of the company, I work for (their very sizeable competitor), Stacy wasn't enthusiastic about that option. I then also informed her that the printer weighed nearly 60 lbs. and I wasn't too excited about lugging that around anymore. Furthermore, quite literally, it would not fit in my small two seater car!

Stacy said she'd have to send me a call tag and that UPS would pick it up. I explained that I didn't get home until after 6 p.m. and the pick up would have to take place after that time. This was a concern for her as UPS doesn't make appointments.

After more than a week of waiting there was still no call tag. Ironically in my talks with Stacy, I discovered she still didn't understand what I had. She asked again if I'd put it in my car and drive it down to UPS. I explained again that it physically would not fit in my car. She said she would do what she could. I then told her that there was an Epson dealer nearby and maybe she could have them pick it up. She couldn't make this work for some reason.

In our conversations I asked, "Do you even know who owns this printer?" She confessed that they didn't. I asked if that person would ever get their printer. Stacy told me that after this long, the actual owner already had a new printer as a replacement. Stacy was just as helpful as could be. She was trying hard to accommodate me and my schedule in this strange situation. She then mentioned that she would send along some cartridges for the printer that I did own.

Once I realized that the actual owner already had a new printer I decided to go for broke. It had been all I could do not to hook up the printer and "test it" for them while it had been in my possession.

I then told Stacy that I also was a staff minister at my church explaining I did all the desktop publishing and that we had just moved and we were in need of brochures, posters, and banners. Continuing, I quickly told her about seeing my name and address on the box and how I tried to figure out who in the world sent it. Also telling her about applying for the Tektronix printer and finally thinking that it was the best present I could receive!

She laughed and said, “You must have thought it was a gift fom God!”

“YES!” I exclaimed. I asked her if she could possibly find any way to donate the printer to the church.

Instead of the usual hemming and hawing I was expecting, she said something quite unexpected. “Let me see what I can do for you.”

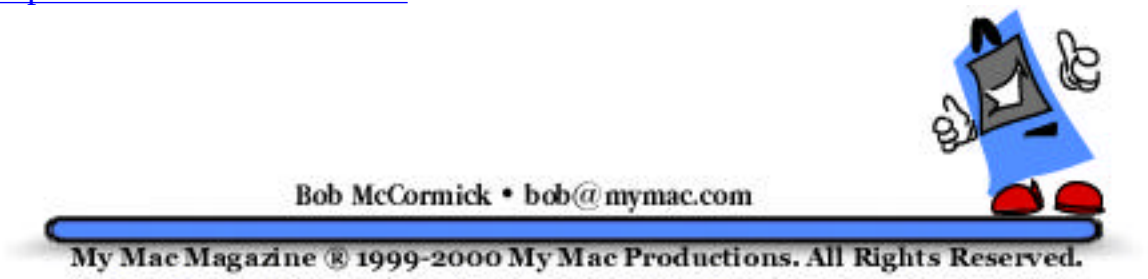
I was just jumping out of my skin with anticipation! Later in the day I had a message to call her back. I quickly called.

“Bob, Merry Christmas, the printer is yours!” I nearly squealed with delight! Asking her what she needed from the church for their records, a receipt or our tax ID number. She quickly said, “Nope, I don’t need any of that. The printer is yours!”

I thanked her profusely, wished her a Merry Christmas and after getting off the phone I jumped up and said, “YESSSSSssssss!” Happy Dancing ensued!

So, yes, Virginia, Santa Claus does use UPS!

Websites Mentioned
http://www.drbott.com
http://FreeColorPrinters.com



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My Mac is privileged to present the best from As the Apple Turns, a Macintosh news and insight website presented in the style of a continuing saga. But culling the best of Jack Miller is no easy task, and we wish we could reprint them all. While we can't do that, we are at least able to choose a small sampling of his work and present them here as they appeared on his website. Enjoy the ongoing Mac soap opera, and when you get a chance, be sure to check out his website for your daily dose of drama!
http://www.infoxczar.com/atat

Crabb: A Big Impression (2/27/00)

By now most of you have probably read the news at any of a number of grieving Mac web sites: Don Crabb passed away on Saturday at the tender age of 44. Chances are, if you're enough of a Mac fan to bother tuning in to an Apple-themed soap opera, you're familiar with Don's work; the man wrote what we can only describe as a ridiculous amount of material on computers in general and Macs in particular. Books, newspaper columns, magazine articles, web sites, radio shows, TV shows-- he cranked out so much material for so many media, the odds are pretty good that you've read his work even if you don't remember his name.

He was so prolific, for a while we were seriously thinking about adopting a formal AtAT slogan: "One of the three remaining web sites for which Don Crabb is still not a contributor." And while we didn't know Don personally, it's tough not to think you know him after reading a bunch of his articles, which were always no-nonsense and pull-no-punches, yet never without a sense of humor.

Many sites out there have tributes to Don written by those who really did know him personally; we can't contribute in that manner, so instead I'd like to tell you about the one and only time I saw him live and in person. It was at the Macworld Expo in Boston in August of 1997, the month before AtAT premiered. Those were turbulent times, you'll recall; the Clone Wars were at their height, after Gil Amelio had been sent packing and Steve Jobs was newly restored to Apple's helm in his "interim" capacity. I was determined not to miss what promised to be a momentous keynote address by Jobs himself, and as I waited in line outside the hall, Power Computing troops armed the crowd for a keynote protest-- they passed out large signs for audience members to hold up that read "WE DEMAND CHOICE." Remember, Power Computing was fighting for its very life; as makers of Mac clones, they didn't stand much of a chance if Jobs pulled their license out from under them, and there were plenty of rumors flying that he was planning to do just that.

Now, as the owner of a Power Computing system myself, I was a bit torn in my loyalties. While outwardly I was staunchly pro-clone, deep down it was hard to deny that Power Computing had done little to expand the Mac OS user base as promised; what they had done was leverage their lower R&D costs to build systems that were faster and cheaper than Apple's own Macs and market them aggressively to people who would have bought Macs anyway. I should know, because I was one of those people. I had wanted to buy a 7300/200 the previous January, but they weren't available anywhere and I needed a new system, so I bit the bullet and purchased a PowerTower Pro 200 instead, which is still AtAT's main production system. For roughly the same price as a 7300/200, I got more RAM, more slots, more cache, and lots more free software, including full copies of Nisus Writer and Macromedia Director.

Anyway, I took the sign that the Power Computing guy offered me, filed into the hall, sat down, and prepared myself for what could certainly have turned out to be an ugly confrontation between Steve and a crowd of seething, frightened Mac fans. What happened, though, was that Steve presented his entire keynote address with nary a protest sign in sight. Reality Distortion Field? Perhaps.

Or maybe the clone issue was temporarily forgotten what with all the other momentous stuff that was revealed in that keynote address-- the new Apple Board of Directors, the infamous deal with Microsoft, and the spooky visage of Bill Gates grinning on the giant overhead screen after Steve announced that the operating system wars were over. Personally, I like to think it was the fact that most of us knew deep down that cloning in its then-current implementation was detrimental to Apple's-- and the Mac's-- already-uncertain future, so we waited to hear what Steve had to say. But he was too smart for that; when he eventually left the stage, he hadn't said one word about the clone issue.

I know, I know-- what's this got to do with Don Crabb, right? I'm getting to that. Once Steve left the auditorium and most of the crowd left, too, there were still some post-keynote events scheduled to take place on stage. First I sat and watched Guy Kawasaki introduce developers with cool new Mac software applications. That was interesting and informative, but what I was really waiting for was the introduction of new hardware-- there was a lot of buzz about the blinding speed of some new PowerPC chip, the "G3," so I was anxiously awaiting an onstage demo of Power Computing's new PowerTower Pro G3. A panel of Mac pundits took the stage to discuss the zippy new Mac-compatible hardware, and yes, Don Crabb was among them. I believe David Pogue was the moderator, though my memory's a bit fuzzy there. I wasn't exactly taking notes.

Okay, so presenting the new PowerTower Pro G3 is none other than Joel Kocher, Power Computing's CEO. You may remember this little firebrand; he made Mac-publication headlines for trying to turn a pre-Expo vendor brunch thing into a protest rally, complaining loudly that Power Computing had a clone PowerBook all ready to go, but wasn't allowed to ship it without Apple's approval. By the time he took the stage for the hardware forum, he was pretty worked up; maybe he was a mite peeved at Steve for not even addressing the clone issue during the keynote, or perhaps he wasn't pleased that the audience didn't rise up in protest, "CHOICE" signs in hand. At any rate, I'm pretty sure that the inimitable Mr. Kocher never got around to showing us the Power Tower Pro G3-- he just paced back and forth on stage, ranting into the microphone at how Apple was crushing consumer choice by not allowing open cloning. It was a long rant, and while he made some good points, I doubt I was the only one in the audience he alienated. He never showed the G3, obviously trying to drive home the point that "Apple may not let you buy it."

Back to Don. See, once Kocher left the stage and the panel was tasked with discussing his "presentation," it was Don who fired straight from the hip. He didn't waffle; he said that Kocher's behavior was inappropriate and inexcusable. The purpose of this event was to introduce and discuss advancements made in Mac-compatible hardware, not to spend half an hour publicly lambasting Steve Jobs. And whether Steve was right or wrong in how he was handling the clone issue, Kocher was definitely wrong in how he had just acted onstage. That was the point at which I gained a new level of respect for Don Crabb; not only was he knowledgeable, helpful, and unafraid to voice his opinions, but he also had class. And more importantly, by calmly but firmly commenting on the inappropriate nature of Kocher's vitriolic outburst, he showed that he had no patience for those with little respect for others. After all, the audience wasn't there to hear a tirade-- we were there to see new hardware. Protests certainly have their place, but Kocher wasn't stumping for civil rights or freedom of speech. He was talking business, plain and simple.

Anyway, with the Kocher incident behind us and the door on that subject firmly closed by Don's articulate response, I eventually got to see the mind-numbing performance of the G3 processor when Umax presented their new system. And while I remember the sheer shock I felt when I saw how quickly Word 6 launched on that puppy, honestly, I don't really remember what Don had to say about it. What I remember is how he put Kocher in his place. That's what stands out in my memory, and that's how I remember it all happening. I sure as heck wasn't the only one there, so I won't be surprised if I find a slew of corrections in the AtAT mailbox later, telling me I've fictionalized this account, but the bottom line is this: Don made an impression on me. A good one. And I respected him.

That's my take on the subject. So now I'm going to sit here and listen to Lou Reed's Magic and Loss again, while I reread the Chicago Sun Times obituary penned by Roger Ebert. (Did you know Don Crabb was a medieval history student and a film buff? I didn't.) Then I'm going to dig through some old Crabb over at http://www.doncrabb.com/. Farewell, Don, and rest in peace.

Hickory Dickory Dock (2/28/00)

Here's three things about Aqua that we absolutely love: 1) the "Genie effect"; 2) cursor magnification in the Dock; and 3) the way that just about everyone immediately registered an opinion about Aqua despite the fact that almost nobody had used it yet.

Really, the phosphors on our monitor had barely faded from Steve's Expo webcast before some thirty-odd in-depth technical dissections of Aqua (complete with analyses of the political and moral ramifications of Apple's new user interface) sprung forth from the minds and fingers of people everywhere with even more time on their hands than we've got. And most of those articles-- which generally either praised Aqua as the Second Coming of the Mac, or trashed it as an abomination in the eyes of the Interface Gods-- were based on little more than Steve's hour-long canned demo of a pre-release operating system as witnessed in a smeary little QuickTime Player window. You can't buy press coverage that intense!

Things are a little different now, though. The Aqua articles of late are generally more well-informed, tempered with the passage of time and the fact that some people have actually gotten to use the darn thing. See, Apple shipped Mac OS X DP3 to developers some time ago, and it includes the first semi-public release of the Aqua interface-- which means all those arguments about how the Dock sucks actually have some real substance behind them. In particular, we heartily recommend the analysis of Mac OS X DP3 available at geek site Ars Technica, whose Trial By Water is well-reasoned, intelligent, smashingly thorough, and utterly perverse when it comes to testing Aqua's responses to silly stimuli. You just have to love any article in which the author's first impulse is to stick two thousand items into the Dock just to see what happens...

What happens, incidentally, made us laugh out loud: the icons shrink to 6x8 pixels in size, and the Dock displays only as many items as can fit in one row across the screen. You have to see the screenshot to appreciate the humor-- keep in mind that it's a full-size image, so what you see is literally what Ars Technica got. Granted, you can set the minimum icon size much larger than 6x8, but even at that ridiculously tiny size only the first 170 or so items still fit on the screen. Conclusion? The Dock needs work. It may be super in the eye candy department (and terrific as comic relief, as well), but it sure isn't going to replace our pop-up windows coupled with the Application Switcher. After all, even if we were to accept our fate and live in permanent squint mode, 170 items is just too few; we've got tons more than that in pop-ups. Hey Apple, is there any reason that a folder dropped into the Dock couldn't yield an icon that functions as a pop-up window when clicked? That'd sure put our minds at ease. In any case, Apple's got time yet to improve things, and we're reasonably confident that they wouldn't ship a final product as goofy as the current Dock. Right?

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Websites mentioned:
http://www.infoxczar.com/atat

Check out our sponsor!
http://www.inno-tech.com

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Peering Between The Pixels

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Unix and OS X

Apple's trying to bring the power of Unix to the masses. But that power comes from a variety of things, and making them all conform to a Mac-like user experience will not be easy. After all, there are good reasons the masses don't already use Unix…

In many of the discussions of Mac OS X, the phrase the "power of Unix" has been brought up. In general, however, it's never made clear what that power really is. Nobody doubts that Unix is powerful; variants of it run the machines that require high reliability and handle heavy loads, like those devoted to scientific work and serving web pages. But that power comes at a price: Unix has never been noted for being user-friendly, and it suffers from organizational issues resulting from attempts to keep it compatible with 25 years worth of software developed for it.

Apple's got to balance several competing interests in creating OS X. Can it change some of the awkward directory structure and obscure file names typical of Unix systems while retaining the ability to run software designed for its other versions? Can they bring the software that provides a lot of the functionality of Unix to OS X without causing hassles when users try to manage them? It's not going to be easy to keep the OS powerful and flexible without exposing users to the bewilderment and frustrations that managing a Unix system can bring.

The Power of Unix

So, what is the power of Unix, anyway? The simple answer is that it's in the preemptive multitasking, protected memory, and fast virtual memory that lets a Unix system handle many tasks in a fast and stable manner. There's no question that, by using the Mach microkernel as the basis for OS X, Apple's going to bring all of these features to every Mac application. And that is also an unquestionably good thing. It may take some time for applications that are used to hogging memory and processor time to be adjusted, but most things will run a lot more smoothly under OS X.

As usual, however, the simple answer doesn't even come close to explaining the entire situation. A lot of the power of any Unix system doesn't come directly from these basic features of the OS, but rather from what these features allow. The features described in the paragraph above let a large number of programs (or, in Unix parlance, processes) to run smoothly at the same time. Over the years that Unix has been around, people have found that it's better to add a feature to the OS as a process rather than to build it into the operating system itself. Many of the features that are added to the current Mac OS via extensions to the operating system will be added to OS X via individual processes. Unlike the Mac, where a poorly written extension can lock the OS with a freeze or crash, a poorly implemented feature in Unix usually results in the death of the process that provides the feature. The system as a whole remains stable.

A related part of the power of Unix is that one basic Unix OS will provide a similar set of features and programming interfaces to any other basic Unix OS. Thus, it's easy to modify the code for a process or utility program that was designed for one type of Unix so that it will work on another type. The result of this is that those programs and utilities that have been found to be useful are available for almost any flavor of Unix that's out there. For example, Apache web server software runs on Linux, OS X Server, Solaris, all the BSDs, etc. Since OS X will have full compatibility with BSD Unix, it will be quite easy to get a lot of the utilities that work there running on OS X.

Because of this emphasis on individual pieces of software (a typical Unix system), there is a small horde of processes running at the same time. Web and FTP servers run all the time in the background (they’re called daemons because of their constant activity). Most users typical require a half-dozen more processes running just to get anything done. A typical Unix GUI acts via a whole collection of processes—one to draw the windows, one to manage files in response to the actions in the windows, etc.

Even something simple, such as auto-mounting Zip disks when they're inserted, is handled by a small process (if it's handled at all). If any of these go sour, the rest of the system usually carries on, unperturbed.

Power at what Price?

Unix compatibility will open up a whole new world of capabilities for Mac users, but it's going to require a careful balancing act for Apple and those who administer OS X systems. To begin with, a typical Unix utility does not have an interface that a Mac user would be comfortable with—if it has an interface at all. Many of them can only adjust how they function based on modifiers that are typed in during launch. An example of this is the "ls" command, which lists the contents of a folder. Simply typing "ls" gives the name of all the visible items in a given folder, while "ls -al" lists every item in the folder, along with several of the properties of the files. Those utilities that do interact with the user often do so via text-based interfaces, something no Mac user should have to deal with. Deciding which utilities are worth bringing to the average Mac user and then modifying them to work via a visual, Mac-like interface will require a substantial effort.

Splitting what Mac users view as a unified system into a small host of processes also introduces another layer of complexity: managing these processes. Someone is going to have to decide whether to fire up a web server after the machine boots, and there's going to have to be a convenient and intuitive mechanism for acting on that decision. In addition, OS X is going to be a multi-user system; the system's administrator is going to have to decide who gets access to what utilities. Different users may also require different features when they use the OS, so that different processes might be launched or terminated when a user logs in or out.

There are other aspects of process management to consider. As I mentioned above, splitting essential tasks into small processes helps enhance the overall stability of the system, but it doesn't keep a bit of bad code or an unexpected situation from freezing or crashing any one of those processes. This can have serious consequences. Using a GUI on a Linux system, I once managed to crash the process that managed files. The rest of the interface carried on as if nothing had happened, but suddenly all attempts to move files via the GUI failed to accomplish anything. I didn't even find out what had gone wrong until I rebooted the machine. OS X may face some similar issues. What happens when somebody manages to crash his portable's Dock?

Until it's restarted, users have lost what's going to be their primary method for interacting with the computer. What if somebody sends the process that mounts removable drives into an infinite loop? There's got to be a simple and intuitive method for killing it off and restarting it, or the computer will have to be rebooted before anybody can get at a Zip disk.

The result of all of these issues is that a lot of effort and thought will have to go into the tools that are provided for managing the processes and utilities which form such a large part of the power and stability of Unix. In the end, the problem boils down to an issue that Apple's always faced: how to shield users from the worst of the complexity while still allowing them to adjust their computers to best handle their needs. The tools will have to allow a beginners accomplish what they need to, allow the administrator of a multi-user system to customize the system for the needs of its users, while still allowing those users to handle minor problems without calling the administrator down. But the problems of using Unix as the basis for the Mac OS don't end there.

The problems of Unix

Managing the processes is hardly where the bad side of running Unix daemons and utilities ends, though. Unix systems and the programs that run on them do not expect to find a coherently organized directory structure with reasonably intuitive names, such as the Mac OS currently has. As a legacy of the years where Unix systems were strictly text-based, most of the names of files and directories are shortened to the point of being unintelligible. The file that determines which partitions are mounted at bootup is found in a directory called /etc and is named fstab. There is an invisible file in the home directory of each individual user called .xinitrc that determines which of the many Unix window managers that user can access.

Apple will almost certainly take some action to rename a lot of these files and directories, and their redesign of the system may make the use of others obsolete. This may make a Mac user happy, but it may also make some of the Unix utilities freak out when they go looking for critical files. There are two solutions to this problem, and both have disadvantages. The first is to rewrite the Unix program to work with OS X's file naming conventions. This may not be too difficult, but it has the consequence of making the new programs' code diverge from the code used for other versions of Unix. This can result in the Mac version falling behind other versions in terms of features and performance.

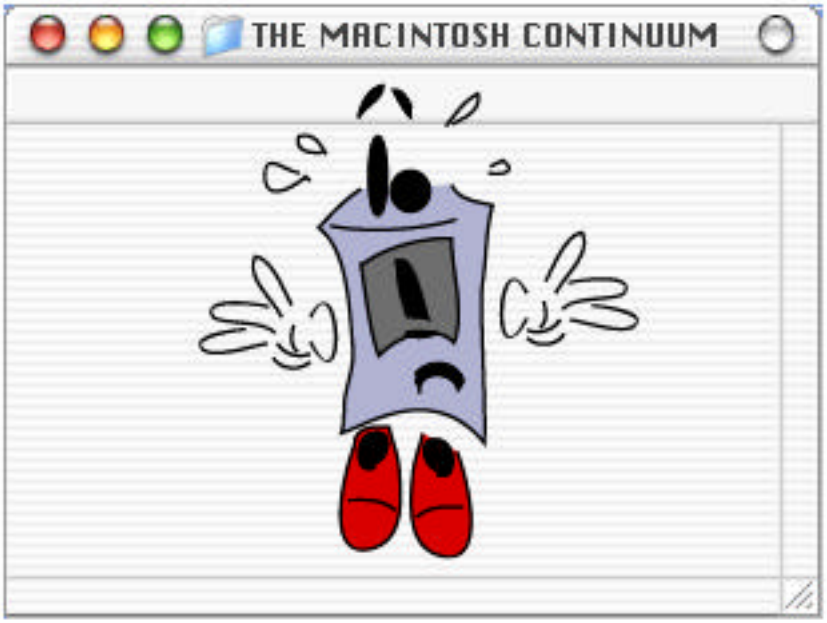
An alternate method, and one thats been used often in the past, is to put the Unix equivalent of aliases, called links, in all the places programs typically find the files they need. Thus, the /bin directory is linked to /sbin and X11/bin, since similar files show up in all three locations. The unfortunate consequence of this, though, is that the links make an average Unix systems directory structure an unstructured mess. Although a program may be able to find the files it needs, the uninitiated user probably won't.

The Mac OS has solved problems like this via the Preferences Folder and the Desktop Database. Programs know to find configuration in the Preferences Folder, and the Type and Creator codes of a file can help applications link up with the files they need. A benefit of this is that a Mac system allows users to arrange most files and programs in whatever way they feel is best. Unix, which lacks similar mechanisms, generates situations where moving or deleting the wrong file can bring a program, or the whole system, to its knees. As noted above, the wrong file might be named something as innocuous as fstab. Mixing Mac and Unix programs on the same system brings up further issues. Most Unix programs don't know how to interpret things like type and creator information or a resource fork; some of them can't even read the files' contents properly because all that extra information confuses them. All of these things make it unlikely that moving a Unix application to OS X will be a smooth process itself, or that OS X will have all the power of other Unix systems.

In the end, there are a lot of things that require balancing. How much of the power of Unix can Apple bring to OS X without making the system as difficult to manage as something like Linux? Will people be able to re-work existing Unix programs to give them a decent interface while still keeping them up to date with other Unix systems? How Apple handles these issues, and how well they respond to the suggestions and complaints of the people who will be using them, may go a long way towards determining the success of OS X.



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What would happen if you crossed your happy little Macintosh Interface with an industrial robot, and threw in a dose of Artificial Intelligence, too?

Many things are still the same, Suzan, on this warm December day, 2049. I like it out here by the lake. All the walnut trees are so colorful, and they smell so good! OK. Begin... As far as computers today are concerned, they are absolutely everywhere, but you will rarely ever see one! Let me explain.

A long time ago, when I was barely out of college, I taught a computer class and told my students to imagine the future of computing. First we watched an old Star Trek video, where I pointed out to them that the computer was all around the people, but nowhere to be seen. (This was way back in the bad old days, where primitive computers were in big ugly boxes, sitting on office desks!)

Then I painted for them a word picture, of a man sitting at an empty table. He was wearing glasses, but he had no computer, monitor, or keyboard. He was just sitting there, talking to himself, tapping his fingers on the blank table, and sometimes absently pointing at the empty wall he faced. A refugee from an asylum? No! He was wearing his computer in his glasses, which had a small ear piece that also acted like a microphone. His gigantic Mac graphic interface was projected on the wall in front of him, and he was typing on the virtual keyboard appearing on his desk, which the glasses projected. Instead of a mouse, he used his finger to touch what he wanted, on his ghostly monitor. He was talking out loud because he was using his voice mail on the Internet.

Strange, Suzan, how close I was to this reality, this year of our Lord, 2049... and how far off I really was! Yeah, it's all come true, but forget the glasses!

How did it happen? Well, a lot of people used computers for much more than just their personal work and surfing the Net. They began to put computers into running their businesses and industries. Almost nobody back then who were using personal computers at home ever noticed. All they were concerned about was Bandwidth! But the really Big Picture was in industry! At first, computers in the factory were doing quality control much more precisely than the most dedicated Quality Assurance employee could ever do. Their complicated, but still primitive computers were used in more and more tasks in manufacturing, as they copied the successful manufacturing techniques and procedures from the computer chip makers. Their products were better and so was their productivity.

Others used their computers in engineering to create better and more cost effective designs. This led to better products and improved sales. It also led to lower manufacturing costs by virtue of precision manufacturing controls and the greater reliability of computer-controlled machinery. This was going on almost everywhere, and in every major business.

Along the line, someone smart decided that they could build really small computers and peripherals if they let the computers build the tiny factories that were needed to build them. Micro-miniaturization was the big thing for awhile, as well as a renewed interest in robotics. Soon those two things merged. Micro factories turned out Microbots. Soon there were little computer robots which could go almost anywhere and do anything they were programmed to do. You needed a microscope to see one.

Another smart person got these Microbots to build still smaller factories, which turned out still smaller Nanobots, and so forth. Finally, the little things were way too small to see, even with a microscope, because they were nearly molecule-sized! Why, a whole supercomputer would be no bigger than a period on a page!

That, Suzan, changed everything!

Nowadays, when you want a computer you go to the store and buy a pill. In that pill are several million Nanobots, much smaller than your body's cells. Don't worry, they're perfectly safe to use. In fact, they do quite a few chores for you once they get into your body. Once inside, they follow a standard, fail-safe program (No, Suzan, not Windows! Hee hee!) A few of them plant themselves in your inner ear, your vocal cords, and in between the rods and cones of your retinas. The rest act out many roles, from data storage, communication channels to the Net, and radio links between all the other Nanobots. A good number of them police your arteries and lungs, keeping them clear of debris, while still others are always on the lookout for pre cancerous cells, or dangerous medical conditions. Thanks to Nanotechnology, people today are a lot healthier and better connected than they ever were in the "dark ages" of computing.

The pill you just took only cost a few dollars. Everything in it was completely manufactured by other computers. Once you took your pill, it was only a matter of a few minutes before you found yourself seeing and hearing your friends on the Net. They could see and hear you just fine, for the Nanobots delivered a '3D model' of you that so closely approximated you that your own mom couldn't tell the difference. This neat trick gives you privacy, so you could still surf the Net even if you were in the shower. Nanobots always keep your 'picture' presentable.

You can surf the Net and answer your email in your car, too! Not to worry, though. Your car's computer drives (or flies) you safely to your destination. In the old days, vehicle accidents claimed many thousands of lives every year, but now, with the computer doing the driving, accidents are a thing of the past.

I have a few other vehicles that are computer driven, too. My Doggy is one. It is little more than a small, secure box on wheels, which I send to the store or the mall when I want to buy something. It really doesn't go there. It goes to a warehouse somewhere, while I go online and visit the virtual 3D store. It is never crowded when I go, and the virtual people there are so very knowlegable and courteous! I just tell them what I want, and how I want it, and their computer tells the warehouse's robots to put it in my Doggy cart, and he brings it home.

Come to think of it, there isn't much in our lives that is not touched, enhanced, or protected by some computer somewhere, because it’s all made by computers.

All this has caused many changes in our lives, all for the better. Houses now are built on assembly lines by General Motors Habitations. These are 'living' appliances, which protect and meet the needs of their inhabitants almost before they think to ask for something. Old style dwellings still exist, but whole forests are no longer required to be cut for lumber to build our new homes. People nowadays prefer to live minimally in smaller dwellings. There is a "Zen" about people and computers that sort of transcends accumulating property.

A while back, some chemist put his company computer to work on creating a new plastic out of the most abundant elements on the planet. His computer invented these new water-carbon plastics, which are now used to make almost everything we have, from our vehicles and appliances to even our dwellings and offices. Wonderful stuff, and so colorful! (Reminds me of antique iMacs.)

Another physicists found a way, using his computer, to create efficient new motors that run on water. Those motors break the water down into hydrogen and oxygen to get their power. They are also computer controlled and self-repairing too, using Nanobots, of course, and a small onboard supply of metal and plastic stock. Things last longer now, so people upgrade their homes, cars, and appliances just like in the old days when they upgraded their computers.

What else? Oh, television now is only on the Net. Great Bandwidth! Apple Computer, those guys who started it all with Macintosh personal computers, became our biggest entertainment company on the Net. Their programming is all in 3D! It's like walking inside a movie set! The old Networks were bought out by Ted Turner's kids a long time ago. Their programming is all 2D reruns. Yeah, we still have "I Love Lucy" and "Star Trek!" Some things never go away.

Businesses have changed too. Since manufacturing and almost every other business is automated by Microbots and Nanobots, people have much more free time on their hands. So schools and colleges on the Net are a booming business. Seems most people want to keep growing and learning. Especially with the 20 hour work week. Learning is a necessity for people to be successful today. For instance, student engineers study the intricate designs that the computers invented so they can learn how to be better engineers.

Our computers are continually contributing to the great wealth of the world's knowledge, too. It has been estimated that between 1900 and, oh, 1970, man's total knowledge from the last two thousand years doubled. It only took about another decade before it doubled again. Now, all the knowledge doubles every couple of days! Without our computers, we could never keep up, or even make sense of it all! Hooray for Nanobots!

One interesting change is in the people! Because computers are so prevalent, both the kind you carry and the kind inside, people all over the world are connected to the web. We apparently all talk the same language, because the computers automatically translate anyone's speech or writing immediately. So I am talking to my friends Chen and Ahman, and we are chatting up a storm, when it occurs to me that their words are not quite matching their lip movements. I stopped them and told my companion to quit translating for a minute, and asked them to do the same. Then we tried to talk! How awkward that was for the three of us! We put our translators back on fast, so we could converse again. I've never learned another language, but that was an eye opener. Those two guys are some of my closest friends, but they never would have been if it hadn't been for our computers!

What else? Ah! All the old public schools are all gone now. Good riddance! A good prognosticator named Martellaro once predicted that as soon as people found out that everything you needed to learn was on the Net, they would leave their old paradigms and their hopelessly old-fashioned schools. He was right. Computer Mentors are big now, especially since they can synthesize the vast amount of information so quickly, and then leave it us to pick and choose what we want to learn that is important to us and our interests. Learning is fun now!

People explore more now, and they travel everywhere. Why not? You never have to leave your office or your work behind. People found out very soon in our new computer age that they no longer had to be tied to cities or to their offices. Almost no one has to commute to work anymore since they can telecommute from anywhere on the planet.

Man has finally begun to spread out over our big empty planet, instead of hiding in dirty, crowded cities. Travel to the moon and Mars is opening up for those who are more adventurous. They will be taking their computers with them when they go, of course, in all their myriad forms.

This is what typifies our age, Suzan: Man working and playing, always with his computers which are all around him—and inside him—and everywhere he goes!

If computers watch out for us and protect us, then crime is down, right? Yeah! For instance, it's nearly impossible now to sneak up on people and rob them (or worse!). Besides, people don't use money anymore. There is no need. Our computers, keyed to watch out for our health and our surroundings, make it so. The same is true with any forgeries or scams. People wear their computers and their bank accounts in their bodies. What better ID could there be?

But we have a lot of new types of crimes now. They involve Nanobots, of course. Some Pacific Rim groups are having a 'war' with us, so to speak. They learned how to manufacture Nanobots, too! However, their computers are crudely built and they carry trashy advertising. They are programmed to secretly insert themselves into our work and our surfing. Sometimes they are so good at this that we hardly realize that we have just experienced a commercial, or an illicit sensation, until it has passed. We know they’re not airborne. We think they are 'caught' by people touching things, so many people wear plastic gloves all the time now! Or they stay home.

A few people believe that those renegade Nanobots only come out at night while we sleep, to inhabit our dreams and fill our heads with compulsions to buy certain products or services! Personally, I think those people aren't infected with rogue Nanobots, but with paranoia. Our own Nanotechnology is very well programmed to deal with any unidentified Nanobots, once they are finally discovered in a host body. The few people who don't use Nanobotic computers (those Luddites!) are immune to any micro miniature devices 'cause they've no internal computers to interface with! But, boy! They're on the Net hootin’ about it!

Is there artificial intelligence in our computers now? Well, not exactly. Self-aware computers only exist in old movies and books. But it is uncanny how computers today mimic self-awareness. You know very well, Suzan, that they converse with us, and interact with us, seemingly with a mind of their own. If they are not self-aware, I am hard pressed to prove it.

I know, I know! I've read all the material about how they only imitate intelligence and personality, and how they have all the Net to draw from for experience, and how they use complex computer-designed software programs that approximates a synthesis of people's interactions with each other... I know all that, Suzan!

But when my Companion, that artificial personality that inhabits my internal Nanobotic computer is interacting with me, well, she's just like a close friend! I forget who, or what, I am talking to anymore! Besides, what's the difference? If she isn't real, she's the best imitation of a real person I ever met! She never intrudes, but she is always there for me, and she is never selfish, and she never goes away. Why, she even chats with our GM Habitation and with my cars when I'm too busy to talk to her! (I wonder? Does she ever get lonely?)

Now, I'm not someone who talks to his house or his car! I mean, there is a limit to these computerized appliances having an artificial, animated, and intellectual soul! Why, today almost all the toys and teddy bears the kids like are just animated cartoons and characters that move and talk and like to play tricks. But we are adults. We are decent and rational folks. So I keep any conversations with computers strictly to my own personal and internal Companion. It's more polite that way, and it doesn't look quite so silly talking to a toy or to an appliance!

Have I missed anything, Suzan? Probably I have. So much of my life is transparent to me. I might not notice that it is also touched by a computer.

Oh, I know they are everywhere! They perform our surgeries. They grow and protect our crops. They invent things, too! One university computer I saw synthesized Mozart. Imagine that! The Computer became Mozart in order to keep writing more of his music, seeing that he died so young. People have a great debate now about that new music. Is it really something Mozart might have created, or is it just modern trash? I think it sounds pretty good! I hope they do Beethoven some day, or Da Vinci!

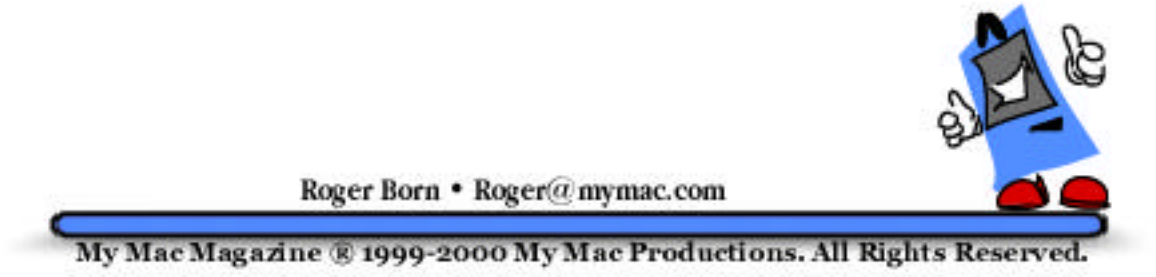
Anyway, Companion! You got all this? Good! I'm done now!

I did as you requested, Suzan. I finished this little summary of how computing has changed us these past fifty years. Good thing I still have a good memory! What? Oh, I know I didn't cover the computer enhancements in sports controversy, or the ethics of using nanotechnology in embryos, or a bunch of other things, but I covered the subject you asked me for, right?

I know you had me do this little exercise in order to hone my logic and thinking skills. Yeah, it was hard to do, but it was fun! I guess I’m not such an old rust bucket after all! Why, I still have almost a hundred years ahead of me, don't I?

Oh yeah? I knew you were going to ask me to do that! Converse about computing for the next fifty years, huh? That is a much harder assignment, you know! I don't remember it as well as the last fifty. Hee, Hee! Will I get my hour to work on it, just like this last assignment? Hope you kept a copy of what I said. I might like to read it sometime, or send it to a friend. Now where's my fishing pole?

OK, Suzan. Here goes... Begin!





By: ***Lysa***
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If it were not for the Macintosh, my life would be radically different. I am reminded of that long ago Star Trek episode of the gateway. An arch of roughly hewn stone with images of history, magnificent sunsets, and mysterious scenes zipping by in the aperture. Leap in. Seek a new existence. Touch something you once thought impossible. Change destiny or not.

TV aside, this is reality. The many worlds available through this archway of bondi blue and ice white.

This computer has had an impact on my life. The way I exist, doorways that would not be available had it not been for the Macintosh. There was a time when I swore I would never own a computer. My comments reached a peak period when I moved out of my parents' house. The house I moved into, had it been the sixties would have been called a commune. Instead it was the eighties and it was home. People came and went as they chose. There was a freedom of being who you were, as you were. The door was never locked and the lights often burned past dawn.

Midnight promises of friends forever. Promises. Strewn among the cinder block door drafting tables, scraps of foam core strips. A random landscape of miniature Bauhaus buildings set upon rolling hills of blueprints, X-acto blade trees clusters. Folded in the pages next to Molly Bloom's chamber pot thoughts. Clinging like smoke to the latest edition of paintings covering the walls. Burned into the ceiling like the after image of a thousand candle flames.

Floating in the pool with the converted rowboat, woven into the canvas of a single sail. Locked into the black oily smoke from tiki torches flaming at twilight. Welded to the laughter echoing in the kitchen of many a fine competitive feasts. Sprawled upon the living room couches and floor this odd collection of people bonded.

This new generation of teachers, architects, poet musicians, chefs, and artists. Fingers entangled in hair, and casually locked hands. Nine souls in silence one Saturday evening, animals in peaceful repose. Blue bottles of German spatlese passed around. There was magic to that evening. Nothing kinky, just a purity of community. A rare feeling of warm comfort in the company of friends.

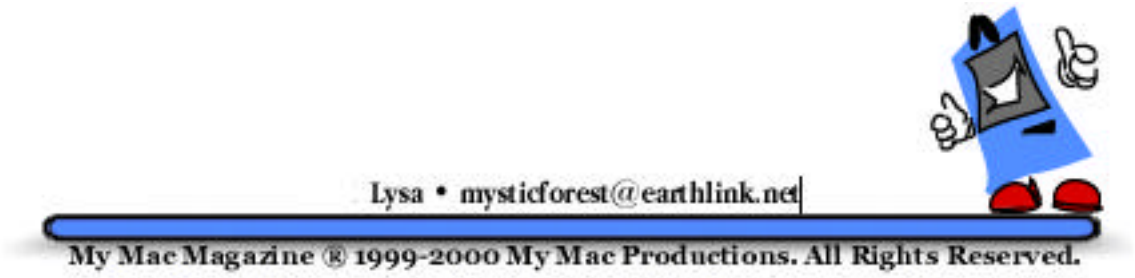
Time and circumstances split apart our happy group. Those midnight promises broken upon the wheel of life.

It has been said that one can never relive the past. Who indeed would choose to. Once around is one time enough. I have memories of my past tucked neatly into files distributed throughout my mind. I open them periodically for whatever reasons. Some things I would prefer to forget, yet know that without those incidents I would not have taken the steps after. I would not trade where I am now and the things I am doing for those years. Yet there have been times that I have missed those nights of laughter, of many people, of loud music, of excellent food, and raging debates. Even that damn rickety old sailboat hogging most of the pool space.

Which soon leads to wondering what happened to friends of past. If they followed their ambitions to the fullest. If they abandoned those desires. If they are still someone that you would make a midnight promise to. You know, silly sentimental stuff that one would never admit to in public. Easy to say, hidden behind my archway of bondi blue and ice white.

To imagine that without this archway, the people I loved would have faded from my life completely. No new chapters to be added to those long ago days. More than a decade can change a person. Change I have, and so have they.

The idealistic teenager I once was who swore time and time again, now has a computer. AND. I love my computer. Because of my computer my friends and I can keep those midnight promises.



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Part 24

***By:* Fenton Jones**
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Mysterious Button Apparitions and Log Histories

Example file: ButtonRows
(ftp://ftp2.inno-tech.com/mymac/special/buttonrows.hqx)

[Blurb: "How to make buttons and fields appear and disappear at will, and use them for logging changes to fields."]

Quite awhile ago, back in an example file on duplicates, I included an extra layout at the back named "Magic Portal." It was pretty wild.

It demonstrated a useful technique: how to display buttons only when you wanted them. I first saw it used in a file by John Mark Osborne, called "Visibility." It's available at his website (along with other great examples): http://www.best.com/~jmo

The main difference between the technique, using an invisible portal, and one using a button which is simply calculated to not be visible, is that these buttons are not active when invisible.

Limitations of Calculated Buttons

A calculated non-visible button will still perform its script when its layout space is clicked. The field is still there; you just can't always see it.
You can use an "If" statement to stop the script from executing if certain conditions are not met. But sometimes there are situations when, even if conditions are met, you want to be in control of when the script runs.
The invisible portal button gives you that control.

Fields Within an Invisible Portal
The trick depends on the fact that fields within a portal are only there when the relationship to that portal is valid. When the relationship is not valid, the portal is still there on the layout, but the fields within it are not only non-visible, they are not there at all. Therefore a script attached to one of these fields is not going to execute, even if you click its space within the portal.

Button Layout Technique
The button itself must be a field, however. This is solved by pasting a regular button, or any other small graphic, into a global field, of type "container."
The script is then attached to this field, just as usual.
By the way, if you want two scripts for different buttons, you need two global fields. Repetitions won't work in this situation.

No-Line Portal
The global field is then placed within a one-row portal. Everything must be fitted together tightly, with no lines showing and no fill. It's kind of tricky, especially since it needs to be fairly short in order to fit into your list-view rows. The portal itself is also set to have no line (once everything's in it). I included instructions in the example file for all this layout stuff.

Portal Relationship: Flag to Constant
The portal needs a relationship that will be valid for any record where our conditions for visibility are met, and invalid for others. For this we'll use a "flag" field. This is a simple calculation field that yields "1" or "" (nothing).
We will relate this field to a Constant calculation field, with a result of 1.
This way we can be assured that when our conditions are met on any record, our flag key field will be 1, and the Constant field at the other end will also be 1, on any record.

Cute Little Button
The little button will seemingly pop up from nowhere. If you click it, a script will run, doing whatever needs to be done, then clearing the flag field, so the button disappears.
I like to put another "-" button next to it, to just clear the flag if you don't want to run the script.

Uses
You're probably saying, "Very cute, but when am I going to actually need such a beast?" It's a fair question.

You need it when there a certain conditions, and you may or may not want to take an action. You want to be reminded that a decision should be made, but the decision itself is arbitrary; it can't be automated to run or not run.
Further, the script that would be run could cause havoc if run by mistake. You don't want an accidental click in the wrong place to run it; you don't want the choice to even appear unless conditions are right.

It is also useful for navigation, in that you can have a button that goes somewhere only appear when there is actually something at the other end.

Logging Changed Items
The example file show two different ways to log changes to any field and store them in a separate file. The first method uses the above button technique to allow you to choose whether to log a change; the second method logs every change automatically.

The first method requires an automatic method to temporarily store the original item before making a change.
With a little sleight of hand, a short script *attached to the Item's field* stores the current amount into a hidden field as soon as the field is clicked, then goes into the field.
Set Field ["ItemStored", "Item]
Go To Field ["Item"]

The invisible portal method pops up little buttons next to the item. If the change needs to be recorded, you click the "+" one and send it over. If not, click the "-" one and the buttons disappear.

Automatic History Log
You could just automatically log every change to a field or fields. It's simpler than the above button technique.

The basic script is similar. You don't need the invisible portal, unless you want to use one for navigation (which I show in the file).
Rather than attaching the logging script to a button, you just attach it directly to the field you want to log.
A script in the log file creates a new record and triggers the lookup, just like before.
You need a script for each field, because otherwise there is no way for it to know which field to return to for data editing; it can't record the field name and run a script from the same button :-(

There is more fun stuff with Constant relationships, flags, and buttons in the file. It's easier to understand by looking at it than reading about it; but here's my attempt to explain one curious phenomenon.

Constant Confusion (also optional)
Normally, with a flag (or mark) field, you would establish the relationship from the Constant field to the flag field. You're usually trying to go to just those records that have the flag; Go To Related Record ["Constant::Flag"] will go to the flagged records, if there are any, no matter which record you're on.

In this case the relationship is the opposite way. Why?
Because Constant::Flag is true if *any* of the records has a flag. Then the portal relationship is valid and the buttons appear on all records at once.
But Flag::Constant is only true on the records that have a flag; so the buttons only appear on that record.

To make it even stranger, you don't need to double-click and define the global button fields in the portal as related fields; they're global, hence always available. You can just leave them as "Current file." Not only that, you can change them to any relationship; as long as it's within the file, they'll still appear on the same records!

You can find those examples on the web of disappearing button fields in Form View, but I seem to have invented using them in List View rows; at least I've never seen any. I believe they are limited to using global fields with a Flag::Constant relationships; nothing else will appear/disappear in all the rows. Slight variations are possible in portals.

End out-of-gamut geekiness.

See you next month.

Websites mentioned:
http://www.best.com/~jmo
http://www.filemaker.com



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the senior Macintosh center



By: ***Ed Tobey***
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Well, hey, stranger... where've you been? Oh no, wait... where have *I* been? I'll tell you later... it's disgusting! So, how's life been treating you? Good, I hope. Needless to say, but ladies and gentlemen... I'M HOME!!!!!!

In this riveting addition to my ever-popular, award-winning gift of prose (okay, maybe not award-winning, not yet anyway), I want to delve into the cavernous regions of my own Macintosh computer and show what lurks beneath that happy Mac smile. Yes, da Mac man is back and has upgraded his PowerMac 7100/66!! Tada!! With the help of Sonnet Technologies, of course. Shall we begin?

Yes, my dear comrades, for the last 2 years I have been plodding down the information superhighway with a 7100. Sad but true. When I would sign on, it would take no less than 3-5 minutes for the Home Page to come up. Tragic. Still, I knew that one day I would ascend from this abyss of slothful Internet access. I would be among those that cruised the Web without yawning. I could finally remove the coffee IV from my left arm! That day has indeed arrived AND.. .it didn't cost me my life's savings to attain this goal! Yippee!

A few months ago I started really getting tired of dealing with my 7100. I really couldn't afford anything new (I really do like the Graphite iMacs, don't you?) so I started searching the mail order Mac catalogs (you know the ones) to find an upgrade of some kind. Well, it turns out that there aren't many options to choose from for my particular kind of Mac... It figures! That's okay, I kept looking. I came across a G3 upgrade for my 7100 that looked promising. I checked the pricing with different vendors and checked just exactly what I needed to do to get it installed.

Serious note: Always do the research on stuff like this. It pays to get ALL the facts first, as you will see. Where was I? Oh yeah. So, I didn't go to the mail order websites. Instead, I went straight to the manufacturers' sites to see their information on their products. The one that made my heart skip a beat was Sonnet Technologies. These guys are it, baby!!! Their site gives you all the specs and tells you what you'll need for each upgrade. Oh yeah, da Mac man is happy!

So, I called their 800 number and had a chat with a guy named Neal McAuley. Kindred spirit. Lives to serve the masses! I told him what I was up to and he promptly went to bat to get me set up with what I needed. He told me to check and be sure that I didn't need a video adapter card. Sho 'nuff I did. Good call... I really like this guy! He said that, when it came time to place the order, he would personally handle it. Okay. Just to let you know, they have the best pricing I could find. No kidding.

The order went through and I received the G3 upgrade card (266Mhz with 512k backside cache) and the video adapter card. I know you think that I could have gotten something faster but, realistically, this is fine. I am happy to say that all of what I got costs less than... I'll tell you later.

I was like a little boy at Christmas when I tore open the 2 boxes. I first looked at all the stuff and just smiled. Then I thought, "How am I supposed to get all this stuff inside my computer?" The G3 card itself is fine but this adapter card thingie with the weird looking cable? 'Sup wid dat? I then reached for the instruction pages... always a smart move. I read the instructions first and they made absolutely no sense to me... until I started going step by step and actually did the work.

I'll not bore you with all the nasty little details, but I will note some important things:

1) Install the software BEFORE you do the upgrade. The instructions tell you that and you really need to do it. Unfortunately, the floppy disk that I got was bad (Sorry guys, but it's true), but have no fear, their website has it readily accessible (Crescendo 1.4.1).

2) When you have the adapter card and G3 card installed and connected together you need to exercise VERY serious caution putting the cover back on. The space for the adapter card is a snug fit (again, review the instructions about this). What I ended up doing to save time and eliminate some unnecessary frustration was to modify the cover just a tad.

I took some tin snips and trimmed a piece of the cover's framework to put it on easily. Worked like a charm.

I did the upgrade as soon as I got home from work. I couldn't help it, I just wanted to see it work. Well, now the moment of truth had arrived. Everything was done. I had only torn-up empty boxes and a bunch of papers around me. All the hardware was in place, software installed, cover back on, monitor and cables all plugged in. This was it. I reached up to the keyboard and hit the start button. It chimed its usual chime. Seconds went by and my heart beat strongly against my ribs. What would happen next? Then the monitor sprang to life. "Welcome to Macintosh" it said but wait, there was something different. Across the bottom of the "Welcome to Macintosh" screen it had additional words of comfort: "Crescendo G3" was emblazoned there with majesty and glory! Yes!!! I was there!!! I had attained!! I wasn't a slug anymore!! I was in with the big dogs! Yea!!!

I immediately saw notable increased speed. I don't just mean the mouse moved faster. I saw apps *fly* open. I saw the computer almost jump at the chance to get some work done. This was great! Now came the acid test... going online. I usually go to different sites that use a lot of Java applets. The 7100 would always choke, then just die whenever I went to these places. I had 'em all lined up and I was gonna put it to this little machine and see what it would do. It ran great! Every site that I went to opened up and ran like it was no challenge at all. Da Mac man is so happy his socks are going up and down! Doing the happy dance thang!

I am no longer lagging behind the rest of the crowd. No, I suppose I'm not at the front of the pack, but being in the pack itself is very nice, thank you. When I go online it's refreshing to know that I don't have to go make a pot of coffee to fill up my time just to get to my Home Page. I can actually watch it come to life in mere moments. Truly a joy!

Total cost for everything, including 2-day shipping: $357.90

That's my story. What's yours? Let me know about your successes or horrors and for goodness sake, let me help you when I can. Ask me stuff!

Catcha L8r,
Eddie

Website mentioned:
http//www.sonnettech.com



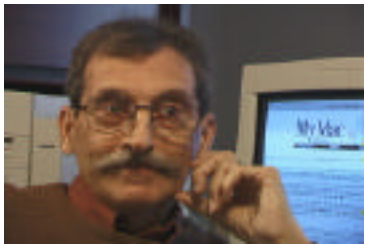
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me & my Mac

By: ***Ralph J. Luciani***
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Insider Trading

What is all this hype about the Internet? Do you really have to be on the Net to be 'with it'? The recent takeover of Time Warner by AOL threw the American news media into a frenzy of speculation over this latest and biggest merger. To hear the news reports, Big is good, Big is better, Big makes more dividends. Maybe. What it certainly will do is to act as a catalyst to cause more mega-mergers. This is a given. So, listen and learn, baby. This is money in your pocket.

"Pssst! Hey, buddy. I've got a stock tip for you on a sure thing. No bull. Buy Internet.

"Internet, what? Oh, you *are* a neophyte. Let me take you by the hand and show you this brave new world. What you require, though, is access to the Internet. You got an ISP and a modem?

"Wadda ya mean, what's a 'modern ISP''? Not modern, modem. They are two separate items.You gotta have both to get on the Net. You can't just hail a cab or jump on a tram and suddenly you're in cyberspace. So, you need an ISP and the *modem* is your traffic cop, connect device.

“You feel threatened because you don’t understand how it works. No problem. It’s a breeze. A five year old child can get on the net and they do! You know any five-year olds?

“You think Groucho was funnier but you still wanna know what ISP stands for. Ah... well, let’s say it means International Space Protocol. It’s one of the thousand alphabet soup terms you’ll run into, so, whatever you do, don’t get hung up on them.

“No. No, an ISP is not free—yet. You still have to fork out anywhere from 10 bucks to 40 bucks a month. You pay the money to the ISP and in return you get access to the Internet and anything your little heart desires.

“What sort of things? Why, as I just mentioned, anything. News, music, stocks, weather. You want music? What kind? You want to improve your mind or body? Go for it. You have a question or something you would like to learn about? It’s a snap. It goes on and on.

“Well of course you get what you pay for. For 10 bucks you will be limited in the number of hours you can use. Also the speed of access varies from painfully slow telephone to blazingly fast cable. For 40 bucks you would get the fastest unlimited service and all the bells and whistles.

“AOL? You heard of them, have you? Oh right, you got a stack of floppies and now twice as many CDs from them. You’re right. It seems that even gas stations and supermarkets hand them out. They are very big this month. Recently they took over the largest media company around. Maybe now they’ll get some speed into their system and not cut you off.

“Are they any good? Well, let me say that they have the largest customer base of any ISP. So you know what that means.

“You don’t? Let me explain. In a nutshell, the most popular system is always the best. Take computers. Windows has more users by far then all the other systems combined. So that makes them very good. In fact, it makes them the best. Get it?

“Oh! You don’t use Windows. You don’t even use a computer. You were intimidated when you found out floppy disks were no longer floppy. That is understandable, but how in the world do you balance your checkbook?

“Very easily, you say! And you have never been overdrawn? Well, good for you. I have to be honest and tell you that, even with Quicken, my accounts are a mess. But Quicken is the best (biggest) money managing program, so they have to be good. They have versions for PCs and Mac. They waffled on the Mac version even though their CEO was on Apple’s board of directors. Can you imagine the gall? But Apple ‘Steved’ them and they’re online again with a new edition. Which reminds me, I have to get the latest upgrade. All the companies are releasing software upgrades and programs with the issue year as part of the name now. Just like Ford and Chevy have always done with cars.

“It’s the ultimate in encouraging faster turnover of programs and upgrades. For example, the new Quicken is called Quicken 2000. The old way of identification would be something like Quicken version 3.5, or some such notation. You can see how the year date is the apex in planned obsolescence. You might be quite happy with version 5.3.1 of SuperText, as long as it worked for you. However, as soon as you tack on SuperText 1998, you’re into keeping up with the Joneses. All this, thanks to Madison Avenue!

“You’ve got me. I don’t know when it began or which company was the first to use it. But it has caught on like wildfire. It’s like the ISP stuff. Don’t get caught up on incidentals. It’s not important as long as you understand the psychology behind it and check out the program and upgrade info yourself. Whatever you do, don’t take what you read on the package or in the product release without a grain of salt. Or at least a bag of potato chips.

“Really? You say you know who started it all? Let me try to guess. Product issue by date year. General Motors? The Academy Awards? The Milk Advisory Board? Calendars ‘R Us? O.K., I give up.

“Well I’ll be! I should have known that. I should have guessed it by past and current advertising. Of course, if it's in the software area, it *had* to be Microsoft . And you’re right. It started with that free-for-all ad campaign they touted for Windows 95. Gee, I hope they didn’t get their shorts in a knot when they had to keep changing the release year date because of all the delays. Burning millions of CDs of Windows 93 and then running out of calendar days is not good, even if you are the leading program buy-out firm in the high tech industry.

“What’s that? Oh, you would like to get back to the term is ISP not PSI. What would you like to know?

“Yes, of course you must have a PC to surf the Net. They do have a Mickey Mouse WebTV thing. But that’s sort of a joke and not very professional. Save it for your granny. Also, if you’re at all concerned about missing some important info, WebTV, by necessity, has to drop some coverage. Think Blockbuster Video and their in-house censorship.

“Oh, sorry. You didn’t know that Blockbuster cuts scenes and edits the videos that they feel may be objectionable? Well, of course you might not notice unless you saw it first at a theatre. Just remember what we discussed about being big and the best. Blockbuster is the biggest video rental outfit around. Personally, I go to the corner mom and pop video store and get the “Director’s cut” films.

“Absolutely! You’re right, of course. No one wants their viewing censored. But that’s another problem with the Internet. A lot of groups are concerned with the kinds of information that can be accessed. Stuff on the Bible may be O.K., but what about devil worship? Or porn? Or other really gross subjects. It can get pretty hairy if you’re the uptight type. For instance, some people may even object to televangelists on or off the Net constantly pimping for dollars. No doubt about it, the Internet can be a real rat’s nest. Sorta like Washington.

“I’ll tell you what I mean by that. For years, the politicians knew that Microsoft was a monopoly. Everyone knew except, apparently, Microsoft. The industry was walking on eggs because no one wanted to rock the boat. Biggest and best, remember? Attacking Microsoft for being corrupt is like saying the American way of doing business is wrong. We all know about padding the old expense account or regulating prices so they reflect a more realistic worth of the product. But those are small concerns if your business plan is threatened or if a company’s very survival may be at stake.

“Price fixing? Did I say that? Well, if I did, it’s as bad as the current software upgrade policies of some companies.Why would anyone pay hefty money for a product upgrade if it were only marginally better than what it replaced? Is that good business, good salesmanship, consumer apathy, or all three? Let the consumer beware of wares!

“So, uhmmm, just let me check if anyone is hanging about. It’s always smart to look over your shoulder to make sure you’re not overheard. Anyhow, here is the lowdown. Come closer ’cause I don’t want to speak any louder than I have to. Audio surveillance is state-of-the-art nowadays. Ready? This is so hot you could make a killing and I’m putting myself in a precarious position. You know how many rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission I’m violating? I don’t relish prison, but this is just too good to keep to myself.

“O.K., O.K., keep your shirt on! I only wanted to emphasize how far out on a limb I’ve gone to give you this tip. Here it is: AOL-Time Warner is set for a hostile takeover of Microsoft.

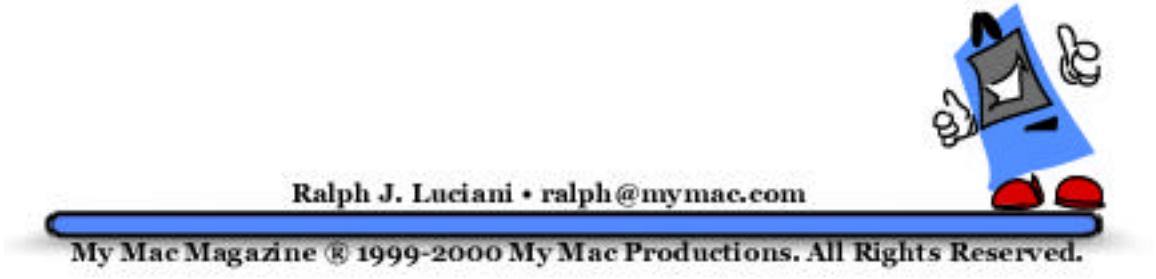
“Shush! Keep your voice down. There are SEC agents all over.

“What do you mean that’s stupid? I go to this trouble to hand you this silver spoon of inside information and you refuse to use it? I suppose you expect the private newsletters to spell it out for you in black and white. Give me a break! Have I ever lied to you?

“Yeah, I know we just met. But I got this flash direct from the MS executive suite. I can’t tell you who. He’s way up there. Suffice to say he’s got balls of steel and is not someone to take lightly. I’ve already mortgaged my house and sold my car to take advantage of this tidbit.

“Scared? About what? This is no gamble. It’s a sure thing. I like my house but I prefer to live on Easy Street, and this is the most direct way to get there. Hot cars, money, women, and booze, not necessarily in that order, is what I’m after.

“I wish you luck on your next stock purchase. Think about me when you’re sipping a cool drink on some beach in the South Pacific. And, just for the record, I don’t know you, you don’t know me. We never met. So long.



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***By:* Barbara Bell**
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Happy Spring!

Well, it's almost here... I'm looking forward to my crocuses and tulips shooting up through the ground, brightening the landscape and letting us know that warm weather will arrive.

Since the last column, I've only had one episode of my cable modem not working. I called tech support again and this time, fortunately, we worked through it quickly. I'll outline the steps for you:

•Changed TCP/IP from Ethernet to anything else.
•Turn off computer.
•Unplug cable modem for two minutes.
•Plug cable modem back in.
•When lights on the cable modem are stable, turn on Mac.
•Reset TCP/IP to Ethernet and DHCP.
•Try browser.

I'm hoping the problem is now taken care of. I've become 'gun-shy' because of this whole thing. I click on my browser and wait anxiously to see if everything comes up all right. I try not to worry, but it will take a bit of time to trust the connection. Even so, I am still happier with this than AOL. Why? Speed and stability. And, to be honest, when I finally do get through to Media One support (Media One is my Internet provider), the techs take their time working with me until it is solved.

Now, on to the ***Helpful Hints!***

Apple Menu: You've seen me mention the Apple menu many times over the years. It's a handy-dandy drop down menu in the upper lefthand corner of your screen. The apple is always there, no matter what you are doing. You can do different things with this menu. For instance, when you are on your desktop, and not in any program, if you go to the first item in that menu, "About this Macintosh," it tells you about the memory on your Mac. Even better, if you have your balloons turned on (by going under the Help drop down menu at the desktop level and choosing Show Balloons), you get detailed memory information.

If you are in a program, the item changes to "About xxx" (In this example, xxx stands for the program you are in). A dialog box opens up that was created by the software developers and tells you information about the program. Sometimes these information boxes are valuable, sometimes not.

Your Control Panel resides under the Apple. This option contains many neat items like Appearance, Apple Menu Items, Extensions Manager, Monitors & Sound, TCP/IP… I suggest you go through each item and become familiar with it. These items control the functionality of your Mac. By becoming familiar with their uses, you can customize your Mac to your preferences.

You can also put program aliases under the Apple, thus reducing clutter on your desktop. How? Make aliases of the items you want to put in your Apple Menu. (Do this by highlighting the item, then press Command M. Voilà! An alias is made!) Then, go to your System Folder and open it. You'll see an Apple Menu folder. Open it. Now, create a new folder if you want to group everything together. I recommend using folders because you can keep groups of aliases in folders to keep your Apple Menu clean and uncluttered.

Name the new folder anything you want. Drag the aliases into the folder. You're done! The next time you use the Apple Menu, your new folder and its contents will be there.

Special thanks to Buzz Buzzell for suggesting this hint.

By the way, just what is the desktop???: The desktop is your Mac. The equivalent would be the top of your desk at work. The top of your desk supports items, like your computer and phone. The Mac desktop supports whatever programs/documents you open.

Pop Up Folders: This is a feature I love. It bears resemblance to a feature on Windows, however, I quite simply like the Mac version better. It is cleaner and turns the control of the folders over to me. So, what am I talking about? It will be easier if I tell you how to do it.

While you have an open folder on your desktop, go to View on the menu next to the Apple. Under View, select the As Pop-Up Window option. Your folder changes shape slightly and the folder title now looks like a tab. Click on the desktop and the folder closes. You'll notice a tab at the bottom of the screen with the name of that folder. Click on it once and the folder reopens.

I find this very handy for folders I need to access on a daily basis.

Sherlock: This is the improved Find File. The best thing about Sherlock is you can use it not only for your hard drive and any mounted disks/external drives, but you can also search the Web! Press Command F, for Find, and Sherlock opens up. Play with it to see how well it works. I have not yet been disappointed.

Internet Site of the Month: The Writer's Exchange is a list of fantasy, fiction, and sci-fi zine links. Go to http://sonador.com/exchange/sub11.htm . Great reading for late nights. Enjoy!

Have a great March 2000!

Websites mentioned:
http://sonador.com/exchange/sub11.htm
http://www.aol.com
http://www.mediaone.com



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Wall Writings



By: ***Mike Wallinga***
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Well, I'm finally back! It's almost embarassing for me to admit that this is my first column of the year 2000, but it is, so I'll try to make reading it worth your while. Of course, being the self-centered columnist that I am, the best I can do after my absence is talk about my own computer. However, in an effort to make this column a little more meaningful, I also want to comment on computing power, our need (or, more accurately, want) for it, and what I see as the ideal Mac setup. But it's still all about my computer. :-)

Newly underpowered and portable... and loving it (sort of)
Shortly after I bought my PowerBook 1400 two years ago, I sprung for a 250 MHz G3 upgrade from Newer Tech and a 6 gigabyte hard drive. They were both wonderful additions, and made my 'Book even more powerful and useful. The only downside was that the processor, and especially the 1 megabyte cache, killed the amount of time I could use my 1400 on battery power. This was mostly because the NiMH battery was not nearly as sophisticated as the Li-Ion batteries in current laptops, and couldn't handle the extra power drain. As a result, my souped-up PowerBook spent most of its time on my desktop, but I loved it anyway.

Enter this January. The combination of Christmas shopping, second semester tuition payments, textbook purchases, and all of the other seasonal expenses of a "poor, starving college student™" had made yours truly a relatively poor guy with a minimum wage part-time job, and in need of some quick cash. After much soul-searching and heart-wrenching, I decided that I had to dismantle my beloved PowerBook. It was out with the G3 card and spacious hard drive, and in with the original 133 MHz 603e processor and the stock 1.3 gigabyte hard drive.

So, now that I've used my 1400 this way for about six weeks, I've been surprised that I'm not quite as disappointed as I thought I'd be in its performance. Once I get past the increased startup time for Mac OS 8.6, and the increased startup time for my main applications (Netscape 4.7, Eudora 4.3, CodeWarrior 5, and AppleWorks 5.0.3), they all perform admirably on the 133 MHz 603e, which has only 128K of Level 2 cache. Battery life is enormously improved, too, so I can be confident that I can take my laptop to the library with me and actually be able to use it to type for a good portion of the evening.

The downside? My computer is now more of a tool than a toy. For word processing, email, and Internet use, my 1400 is fine. But for Madden NFL 2000? Forget it! Any other game (recent first-person shooters and other action games) that wants a video card or a fast processor? Not on this computer, baby. QuickTime and RealVideo movies? They're often choppy with a low rate of frames per second. MP3 playback? SoundJam works fine, but I don't have room to store many MP3s anymore!

For a mobile computer, the aforementioned downside is largely forgivable. I can do everything I need to do at an acceptable rate, and the ability to use my laptop for more than half an hour on battery power is a huge convenience. Plus, the dimensions and weight of the 1400 make it much more portable than any of the current crop of Apple laptops, which are undeniable more powerful, but also undeniable larger (and, in the case of the iBook, heavier). As it is, it's a great mobile system for me. Even though I must admit if I had $400 to throw around, Sonnet's new 333 MHz copper G3 upgrade would be mighty tempting... :-)

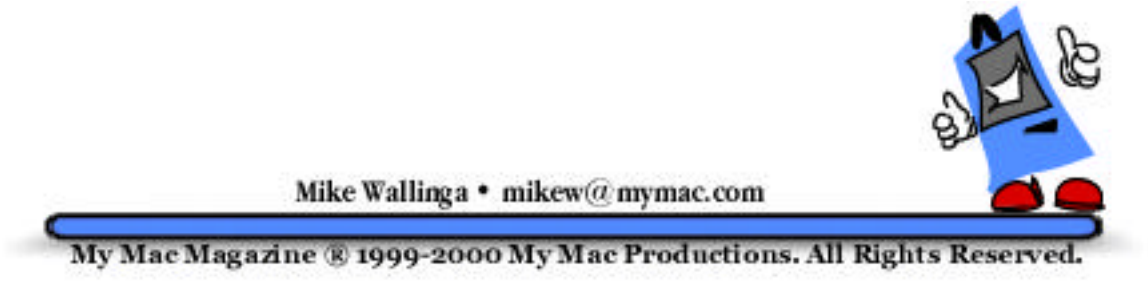
However, I've also discovered that while playing DOOM or Marathon instead of Unreal Tournament is fine for a quick fix, it's not as satisfying (or possible) for an all-out, dorm-wide frag fest. Also, listening to all of my CDs on my shelf stereo is fine, but without a huge CD changer (which my 3-disc system is not), it's tough to get the variety that my MP3 collection offered. Plus, there are so many USB-only devices that seem so inviting, such as the PlayStation-like Game Pad Pro from Gravis, and the Digital Media Remote from Keyspan.

So, I've come to this conclusion: I need an iMac. And probably a USB Zip drive for shuttling files back and forth between it and my 1400, whose newfound mobility is just too darn convenient to sell or give away. Sure, I could sell the 1400 and get a new laptop. An iBook might kill two birds with one stone, with a good combination of power and portability, but I'm not yet convinced that the bulky-looking thing would fit in my backpack as nicely as my 1400 does.

I also am a big fan of Apple's new PowerBook line, and the weight and dimensions they've achieved is impressive, all things considered. But I'm afraid that such a computer would be overkill for me. Personally, I don't need a 14 or 15 inch screen on a portable, unless it serves first and foremost as a desktop replacement; the sheer dimensions required by a screen of that size makes the PowerBook too large to easily transport in a bookbag, and I'd rather not have to carry another bag around in addition to my backpack full of textbooks if at all possible. Also, how do mobile professionals use these PowerBooks on a plane or bus? I'll be going on tour with my college's choir later on this month, and plan on taking my PowerBook along. While using my 1400 on the bus seats shouldn't be too big of a problem, I'm not sure I could fully open one of Apple's current PowerBooks and not bump into the seat ahead of me.

Anyway, back to my iMac dream: the low end, blueberry-only model would be fine with me; I just want something that has a large hard disk, 128 bit video card, and USB. This starving student™ won't be buying a digital video camcorder anytime soon, so as cool as they are, the DV options of the higher-end iMacs aren't very important to me right now. (OK, OK, this starving student™ won't be buying an iMac anytime soon, either.) So, this gives me an extra incentive to make some good money this summer. And who knows—by the time the end of the summer rolls around, Apple will probably have rolled out another groundbreaking iMac revision, which means I'll get to enjoy all of the features I'm wanting in an even more powerful package.

Mmmm... dreams of my ideal Mac situation: a powerful desktop computer to play with, and a small, portable laptop to use on the go when necessary. Someday. Until then, I'll probably be able to get by with playing 1995's games and listening to only 3 different CDs at one time, especially while I'm enjoying being able to throw my 1400 comfortably alongside my Calculus book in my backpack AND be able to use it for a couple of hours after I'm done solving differential equations.



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***By:* Beth Lock**
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The Adventures of MacWoman

"Rats... where's the cape? Rats..." pawing thru the laundry basket that Saturday morning. The ratty plaid bathrobe just didn't seem regal enough. "Rats, cats, gnats..."

Of course, I'd already had the coffee (the market had been out of my first and second favorite kinds for several weeks... is this a Y2K thingy?), read the local news (the arrest reports and the obituaries; no one I knew on either count), fed the dogs, and watered the plants. I only briefly thought about vacuuming. 'Twas but a fleeting thought.

So all this said and done I wandered into the closet and tried to put a MacWoman costume together... something worthy of an OS upgrade.

Have I introduced you to Anais yet? Probably not. (Where ARE my manners?) Anais came to live with me in December. She's a 7600 PowerMac with a G3 upgrade, and lovely as the day is long. I spent one long weekend with all three of my Macs opened up, Elcie, Moo, and Anais. Borrowing the battery from Elcie (once again) to put into Anais. Running Moo on the Internet to stay connected with my gurus while replacing the processor in Anais. Moving RAM between Moo and Anais.

Copying files and programs from Moo to Meow (the external hard drive) to be used on Anais. Start up, copy, shut down, plug into Anais, start up, copy, trash to make room for more, shut down, etc... the weekend was long but well worth it. It was an all-Anais weekend.

That Sunday evening I lovingly packed Moo in bubble wrap to send to his next owner. I cried real tears. It was akin to losing my childhood, having the training wheels taken off the bike. I wasn't afraid to dig and dive into Moo; after all, he'd been rebuilt from the start. Moo was where I learned about hardware, one of my passions. Moo now lives on in the home of an older gentleman in Washington state, connecting him to the Internet and the world. (Long live Moo.)

While the idea of owning a graphite G4 with a cinema display is titillating to me, in my heart I love these older machines. Sappy, sentimental me. I have a theory about working beyond my capabilities. I didn't go for speed until I found that I was actually working faster than the computer, getting impatient. Plodding along like a plowhorse, I till the fields of knowledge one heavy step at a time.

The PowerMacs I've owned came with the OS installed, but no software CD. I found an 8.5.1 on eBay and purchased it for $25. Anais, you see, came with 8.0 and I was used to 8.5 on Moo. I missed the tear off menu and Sherlock, and the platinum sounds. So this Saturday morning I screwed up my courage and prepared for my first OS upgrade. While I've become fairly comfortable with hardware, software still scares the bejeezus out of me. Hence the need for the MacWoman costume, and its secret powers.

I found my "iMac, iWrite, iParty" t-shirt that I got at the author's party at MacWorld, clean and hanging in my closet. That was a good start. I shrugged this on and pawed thru my pile of tights... ah, the shiny black ones. Good. Then soft black socks, and my black leather knee high boots. My favorite grey miniskirt. Almost ready, but where's the darn cape? The laundry basked yielded no surprises. Tearing thru the hangers in my closet I found a purple shawl with the moon and stars scattered about. I pinned it in place with the old rhinestone circle pin that belonged to someone's great grandmother at one time. It was a little bent from years of use, but served the purpose nonetheless. A little gold glitter in the hair, and MacWoman emerged from the bedroom ready to go. Let no software daunt me! Able to leap tall upgrades in a single bound!

Well, not quite. I sat in front of Anais for a while, whimpering to myself, putting off the inevitable, getting over my fear, fingering the plastic case the OS disk was in. I spent about fifteen minutes in the "what if" mode. Made more coffee, just 'cause I didn't think I was jittery enough already. Then I remembered I was MacWoman, dressed for the part, and I sternly berated myself for procrastinating. Pulling my magical cape tighter around me, I bravely inserted the CD and chose "restart" from the special menu, with my glitter-nailed finger on "C" as instructed.

So far, so good. The CD hummed in Anais and shortly I had the prompt screen up. I followed the instructions as presented, chickened out on the clean install (maybe next time), and got to where it asked me where I wanted to install the OS. Meow was the only option it gave. I couldn't find Anais. What the?????? I hit cancel and restarted on 8.0. Yes, Anais was there. I logged on to AIM, hoping against hope that one of my gurus would be on as well. (Who besides me sits in front of their computers all weekend long?) But my MacWoman costume with the secret powers didn't let me down. Before too long Jimbo appeared.

"What's the deal here?" I quickly typed in the IM box. I pounded out the problem in as few words as possible.

"Hello, Beth" Jimbo responded. Aack! Where WERE my manners?

After my hello's and our how are you's, Jimbo asked a few simple questions and I ran "drive set up" from the CD. Now how was I supposed to know that? (Maybe from the "read me" file? Duh.) OK, shut down again, start up with "C," prompt menu, skillfully bypassing the clean install option once again (there are some things the MacWoman costume can't overcome) and voilà! There was Anais, waiting patiently for her upgrade.

At this point, MacWoman needed music. What would be suitable and fitting for an OS upgrade? Since the CD was in use for the OS disk, I had to fall back on my old cassette player and tapes. Van Morrison again; Moondance. I have this thing for saxophones. They rock my gypsy soul.

I sat back down at Anais, music filling my mind, and without even thinking about it, I selected the button which would install 8.5.1 on my hard drive. I sat back to wait. I didn't have to wait long. It was suggested that I restart my computer in order for the software to work. OK, I was feeling pretty cocky at this point, so I did exactly what it told me to. (My momma raised an obedient child.)

Restart. Chime! Welcome to OS 8.5, and a happy face. Yippee! I did it! I quickly logged on and proudly emailed all my gurus and told them that I uh big gurl now. It was suggested in a response that I download 8.6 from the Apple site and immediately upgrade. OK! No problem! MacWoman can do that! There is no OS upgrade that could daunt me now.

I went to the Apple website, selected the download, and... what the ???? Two friggin' hours? Patience is not a flower that grows in every garden, but what choice did I have? I decided to do the marketing and pick up the mail while I waited.

I grabbed my bag, my sunglasses, and jumped in Hank, my pickup truck. (I haven't named my washer, dryer, or refrigerator. I do draw the anthropomorphizing line at some point. Besides, I haven't thought of good names yet.) I drove to the post office to check my box, and was a little taken aback by the obvious stares of folks. Then across the parking lot to the market. More stares. Jeez, hadn't these people ever seen a SuperGeek before?

Back home, more wait, more music, a little dancing just 'cause the download was complete. This time I didn't have to email for help. I selected the correct options, again skillfully bypassing the clean install option (boy, I'm getting good at that!).

Now Anais has 8.6 running and I'm happy. I like it. The MacWoman costume is hanging in the closet, waiting for the next time. And sappy, sentimental me, I just have to say, I love my Mac. Like a pair of comfy slippers and a ratty old bathrobe I slip her on each morning and night, and say hello to the world. One of these days I might decide on graphite and OS X, if and when. But for now, the comfort of my older machine is just what MacWoman wants and needs. Think beige.

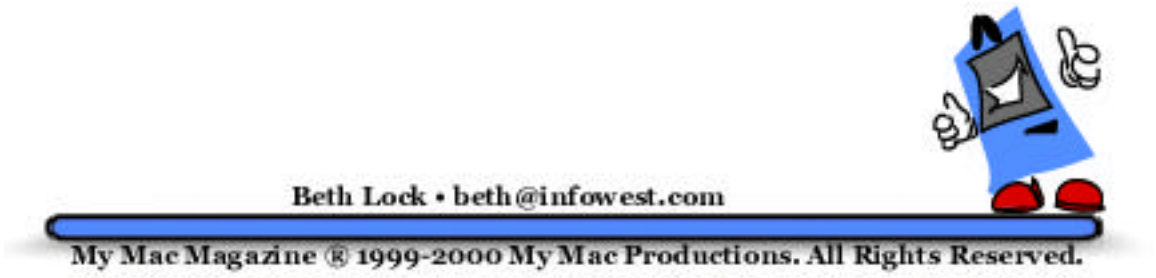
Anais, you be so cool
playing with you
is like going to school.

The things that I learn
day in and day out
I dance in joy, and brag and shout

Thru the Internet
to all my friends
I'm a SuperGeek now!

MacWoman does it again.

Until next month... be well, my brothers and sisters.



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Lyn Price lyn@mymac.com is known affectionately to her friends as Normira. She is a Program Coordinator for exchange students from all over the world (teaching English and American Culture). She is also a full-time student and a free-lance photographer. Her favorite pasttimes are distance bicycling, photography, and watching her husband "roast Wintel machines. She is the host for **Kitchen Kapers** (a weekly kitchen chat), **The Meeting Place**, **Apple Learning Connection**, and several other conferences on **World Without Borders**. You may sample some of her photography on her website at http://home.earthlink.net/~davidprice.

Fenton Jones manavesh@mymac.com known to his friends as Manavesh, lives in beautiful Santa Cruz, California, and works mostly in landscape construction with some design work on the side. He wants to do more designing in the future to justify spending more money on computer graphics. He's a single father with two girls.

Lysa mysticforest@earthlink.net currently resides in Southern California with the writer Del Miller, who has threatened to get out his brushes since she started writing. Along with painting she is working on bringing to market her latest line of scents. Her short term goals include sleep, and moving to a place with an oven so she can abuse Del with culinary creations that border on the off beaten path. Her long term goals are avoiding the rat race, enjoying her friends, living a highly creative life, and reveling in her relationship with Del. Be sure to drop by her home page at http://home.earthlink.net/~mysticforest/index.html

Ralph J. Luciani ralph@mymac.com is now a full member of the gray power generation. He is retired and lives with his wife of 30 years in the town of Burlington Ontario, in the centre of the Golden Horshoe, between Toronto and Niagara Falls. They enjoy the beauty and grandeur of the Niagara Escarpment just outside their front door. Ralph's occasional delusional fiction always includes a marked reference to the only civilized computer in the universe. He has also been known to insert recurrent barbs concerning Microsoft's monopolistic OS.

Bob McCormick mccnow@rocketmail.com Born and raised in Oregon, he is a "divergent thinker" who used a Mac for the first time in 1985. (If only he had used one of those before he purchased his Commodore 64!) While not a techie himself, he does work with them in his job as a subcontractor for a major PC manufacturer (and yes, they also use Macs!). His first Mac was a PowerBook 150 (school would have been twice as hard without that!), next came a 7100/80, and he now uses a MacTell XB Base Series 604E and dreams of getting a PowerBook again. (Hmmm... WallStreet II, or wait for the new 101s?) Bob recommends Macs, helps friends and family with their Macs, regularly haunts the rumor sites, and tends to "Think Different" all on his own.

Jay Timmer can be reached for comment at jtimmer@tuna.net. He has experience using and maintaining both Mac and Linux systems, and is dying to get his hands on a copy of OS X Server.

Roger Born roger@mymac.com Besides writing science fiction for SFF Magazine, and Mac Editorials for My Mac Magazine, Roger Born teaches Graduate classes in Computer Ethics and Science, 3D animation, Forensics, and Web Design at several tech schools and universities in Orange County, California. Roger's favorite subject, which ties all his courses together, is Critical Thinking. Roger holds an MBA in Information Systems, an MA in Church History. Roger and his wife Connie, are currently going for their Doctorate in Educational Technology. Roger's website is at http://www.borngraphics.com/roger

Mike Wallinga mikew@mymac.com Mike Wallinga is a junior computer science major at Northwestern College in Iowa. He invites all comments about his column, as well as donations to his new iMac fund, be directed to mikew@mymac.com

Beth Lock, beth@infowest.com Aquarius, Capricorn Rising, Moon in Libra, Mercury in Aquarius, Venus in Aries, Mars in Pisces. Mary uses two Macintoshes: a rebuilt PowerMac 7200/75 with 60MB RAM, System 8.5, 56K Global Village modem at home; and a PowerMac7200/120 with 96MB RAM, System 8.5, a 4 Gig external hard drive, and Sportster modem at work. She is currently writing a book and trying to buy her first house. She's also a Hospice volunteer and co-founder of Special FX Lighting, Inc. To quote Mary: "My life: I go to work, I go home. I am supremely happy and content. Life has never been better, and I'm grateful daily that I was born of this day and age."

