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

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Welcome

Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the August issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* Our mid-summer issue provides for an enjoyable, easy read. Whether you are home or away, keep our August issue handy. We provide the best news, views, and reviews to accompany your summertime fun in the sun.

The Mac Is Back!

With all of the attention paid to the iPod over the past few years, few have noticed the resurgence in Macintosh sales that has taken place since the completion of the Intel transition. According to industry reports, for the three-month period ending in June Apple may have returned to the #3 position in US PC sales based on unit volume. For the period, Apple shipped 1,764,000 Macintosh computers worldwide, an increase of 33 percent over the previous-year period. This represents the highest unit sales for Macintosh computers for any calendar quarter in Apple's history. According to statements made by Apple executives, the company is preparing for a robust back-to-school Macintosh sales season.

iPhone Disconnect?

iPhone buyers lined up in droves for the late-June release of the Apple iPhone at Apple retail stores and company-owned AT&T Wireless stores. Enduring long lines, iPhone buyers also experienced long waits in getting their purchases activated by AT&T through Apple's iTunes service. Not only did this cause a bit of frustration for iPhone buyers, but it also created a disconnect between the early sales numbers released by AT&T and Apple for the first hours of iPhone sales. AT&T reported that about 146,000 iPhones were activated, while Apple says about 250,000 were sold. Apple's management says the company is on track to sell one million iPhones by the end of September and about ten million iPhones by the end of 2008.

Roller Coaster Tycoons?

AT&T released its June iPhone activation numbers the day before Apple released its June iPhone sales numbers. AT&T's report caused Apple's share price to drop sharply while Apple's Macintosh sales numbers released the following day ignited the share price as if it were on a mission to the moon. This roller-coaster ride for the company's owners has highlighted the company's recent success, while reminding each of us that consumer sales still rule the market.

As we approach press time Apple's market value as a company has surpassed that of PC leader Hewlett-Packard, telecom giant Verizon, and is roughly twice the value of beleaguered PC maker Dell.

No matter Apple's recent success we are all reminded that continued success requires diligence, planning, and extensive product development efforts. While some expected the

iPhone to sell well into the millions of units in its first few months following release, the reality of the marketplace suggests that hard work is needed to keep sales on track, and no one can take for granted that products will sell just because they carry the Apple logo. As much as Apple's share price has recently reached new all-time highs, sentiment can change in an instant. The roller-coaster ride for shareholders may have been thrilling at the end, but it's not a ride most people would want to take a second time, at least not anytime soon.

No New Nano?

As if the iPhone itself weren't enough, rumors abound that Apple is working on some kind of nano version of the new phone. Some suggest that a less expensive version of the iPhone is needed to build sales volume. The rumored phone would not have Internet and e-mail functionality but would be a cell phone and an iPod in one. Time will tell what comes next, but introducing the iPhone in markets outside the US may be the first move before new products are released. Until recently, iPhone inventory has been in short supply.

No No Nano!

The flip side of the nano iPhone rumor are suggestions that Apple will release not a nano-style iPhone but a full-size iPhone-style iPod. It would be equipped with all of the features of the iPhone except the feature that gives the iPhone its name—the phone. It would rely solely on Wi-Fi for Internet connectivity. It would be an iPhone non-phone versus a nano phone that has a phone without many of the non-phone iPhone features. This is why we enjoy rumors so much. They amuse the mind. Within 90 days from today we should know if there's a non-phone iPhone or nano phone non-iPhone.

Summer Fun For Everyone

August is a peculiar month. In many locals it's the hottest month of the year, yet we often approach it as if summer is coming to a quick end as the new school year looms closer on the calendar, and with it September's back-to-school and back-to-work mindset.

The editors of ATPM celebrate the personal computing experience each month of the year. We urge our readers to make the most of August's summertime fun, and we urge them to bring this issue of ATPM along for the ride.

Our August issue includes:

Bloggable: Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!

The iPhone may be dominating Mac news, tech news, and even newsmagazines, but there's still something else out there for you to care about. Whatever it is, from this year's Worldwide Developers Conference to iCal Day, Wes Meltzer goes on a roll in July and catches up with the division leaders in this month's *Bloggable*.

MacMuser: A Good Site, Ruined

In the midst of widespread criticism that Apple's mac.com service is no longer a good value, Mark Tennent seems to believe at least one of its services is still worth the price.

About This Particular Web Site

ATPW returns after a long hiatus, offering book sales, an illuminated manuscript, and a cartoon encyclopedia. You'll also find subway maps for cities around the world, and some unflattering pictures of cheeseburgers.

Next Actions: Processing Reference Material

Part of getting to the next action in GTD is processing. This month, Ed takes a look at processing reference material, which can play an important role in exactly what action you'll choose.

Photoshop For the Curious: A Tutorial on Resolution

A heavy subject this month, Lee Bennett tackles image resolution in this month's *Photoshop For the Curious*.

Desktop Pictures: Motorcycle Trip

David B. Thompson provides this month's desktop pictures from a motorcycle trip through Texas and Utah.

Cartoon: Cortland

Cortland finds himself in a spot of trouble with the fuzz, while Angie is paid an unexpected visit. Meanwhile, evil plans are afoot to acquire the Cortland OS.

Review: EyeTV Hybrid

The EyeTV Hybrid is a compact and affordable solution for viewing, recording, and editing digital broadcast and analog television.

Review: MagSafe Adapters

As Frank Wu gives the Battery Geek Portable Power Station a test drive, along with the Mikegyver MagSafe Adapter, he describes the problems with creating power accessories for Apple laptops, due to Apple's patent on the MagSafe connector.

Review: Travelogue 360 Paris

Picture-hunting game with gorgeous graphics and unique panoramic mode.



About This Particular Upgrade

Boy, I though I was the only one who agonized over Apple hardware purchases! My last laptop was a 2003 867 15" TiBook, a present from my wife. At \$2,500, it was the most expensive gift ever given to me by anyone.

I told my wife I would have preferred a 12" Aluminum PowerBook, but she insisted I needed this then "top of the line" laptop.

I dutifully used the TiBook for the next four years, taking it with me to Thailand to edit my digital photos and to sample the local Wi-Fi hot spots.

I knew the machine was getting long in the tooth, and I had to do something soon about it. I finally traded it in to PowerMax for a 12" PowerBook that will eventually become my son's computer when I buy that coveted Black MacBook early next year.

As for that iPhone, I'm firmly on the sidelines until I don't have to give AT&T my SSN to activate the device. I trust Apple, but AT&T's rep is a little shaky these days.

—*Grover Watson*

Stuffed, Eleven Years Ago

It's in this kind of situation that virtualization (OK, [emulation](#)) comes in handy. You just have a virtualized environment in an emulator like SheepShaver or Basilisk that takes care of all your backwards compatibility needs. The downside is that you have to have licenses for the emulated software. And you somehow have to legally obtain a ROM for the emulated machine. . .

—*Andrej Gustin*

Some Perspectives on WWDC

One thing I remember about the bygone days is the sentiment that potential software developers eschewed Apple because of the perception that it wasn't "solid" or was going to go away sometime soon. Personally, I'm glad Apple is less mercurial, more dependable, so that the ranks of developers choosing Apple can swell, perhaps even exponentially. (The old saw about building on rock vs. building on sand comes to mind.)

I think you have an outstanding column. It's always the first one I turn to when ATPM comes out. Thanks for your valuable perspectives.

—*John Miller*

Dear Steve: Hurry Up and Slow Down!

You've already answered your own last question: you either need a mobile smartphone now or you don't.

—*Jeffree K Lassitter*



It all depends on what you have now. . .

I had a Nokia N80 until last month. At the time, I needed a smartphone and the N80 was the bells and whistles solution I wanted, however, 11 months later my needs had changed. I didn't want to be available 24/7, and the bulk of the N80 meant I most often left it at home and diverted all calls to my non-smart Nokia 6210 work mobile.

Last month, I dropped the cash and bought myself out of my old contract for £275 so I could upgrade to to Nokia E65, which was a smartphone small enough to carry with me and with the features I needed. Instead of diverting my personal calls to my work mobile, it's now the other way round.

I've not been without a smartphone for the last four years and wouldn't want to go back to a normal phone. I don't have one for the on-the-move editing of office documents and being available at all hours. I have it for media, Web access, and the mobile lifestyle I want.

No more do I have the annoying conversations in the pub about what something was called or what year a single was released. I just look it up on Google via my 3G connection.

I won't be buying the iPhone yet because it doesn't support 3G. I never use Wi-Fi on my mobile because I have a 2 GB per month data allowance on my plan, which I never come close to hitting and it gets speeds of over 350kbps, which is more than adequate when I'm on the road. The line that 3G coverage isn't prevalent enough yet just doesn't wash with me—the last three mobiles I've had have been able to automatically switch between 2G and 3G networks as they are available without dropping calls, and although battery is lower than pure GSM, it's something that is improving all the time.

Hopefully by the time the iPhone hits Europe, it'll be 3G. Otherwise I'm not buying. Besides, I've got another ten months to use up of this contract yet.

—*Kevin Smith*

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



Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!

Seems like, everywhere you turn, the tech news is about the iPhone.

That's all very fine and well—and there's some iPhone news in this edition of *Bloggable*—but I thought I'd do my best to hunt down some important but lost tidbits you might not have seen. Most of it was just lost in the wall-to-wall coverage of the largest technology premiere since the launch of Windows 95.

I've been pretty high on the iPhone since it was announced, from reviews of the gadget to the revelatory minutes I've spent borrowing someone else's phone and waiting out my T-Mobile service contract. But all of the iPhone blitz was enough to make even me get up off the sofa, the evening of July 15 or so, and shout, "MARCIA MARCIA MARCIA!"



OK, that's a lie. I can't fool you, faithful readers. You probably know I don't much like "The Brady Bunch," anyway. But there's still two months' worth of neglected news to cover, and I resolved after last month that I wouldn't let my columns ramble on as endlessly anymore—so let's skip the recriminations and get down to brass tacks.

Keeping Pace in June

The Worldwide Developers Conference this year was a real bust, and I was glad that, after I watched the keynote, I was not the only person who felt this way. Apple announced the iPhone at Macworld Expo San Francisco, and the big unveiling day came in late June, so there really wasn't much left to discuss at WWDC. Or, really, to *do*.

But the centerpiece was the first public demonstration of Leopard's forthcoming features, two of which are pretty cool and worth note. Those two are Stacks, kind of like the old OS 9-style pop-up folders (which I miss terribly, even now); and Cover Flow in the Finder, which is probably the first time I've seen an improvement in file browsing in a very long time. I should probably disclose that I hate the OS X Finder, hate hate hate, and more all the time, because it makes it so hard for me to use it the way I like to—spatially. A lot of the "improvements" to the Finder, or to Windows Explorer for that matter, have been superficial, like the sidebars that I don't use or the useless preview-icons that I can never discern between. (This feature has come into OS X, and I sure hope it can be disabled, or I might start channeling Nikita Khrushchev.)

Cover Flow, though, is a major improvement to file browsing. It's not perfect, and it's not useful for every application, but I've never seen an implementation of file previewing that made sense before. Most of what I use looks alike, in preview mode, and I'd rather just write a better filename than studiously discern the differences between similar files.

Honestly, I think that was all I got out of this year's WWDC. I looked back on my WWDC coverage from [2004](#) and [2006](#), and what a difference a year makes. (In 2005, I lost my hard drive.) Last year, Apple announced the Mac Pro and previewed most of the Leopard features they demonstrated this year, and in 2004, I wrote an entire column about Dashboard widgets. How depressing is this year, in contrast?

My editor here at ATPM, Michael Tsai, gets in the first ding this month. He complains that most of the announced Leopard improvements are either irrelevant or [not improvements at all](#). The offenses vary from mild—Cover Flow is neat but, like me, he doesn't think it'll be useful—to extraordinarily egregious, in the case of the translucent menu bar and reflecting Dock. He wrote, "If you had asked me a couple years ago whether this or the gratuitous Dock reflections were Leopard or Vista features, I would have guessed Vista." Yep.

John Gruber, the ever-present full-time Mac pundit, is a little nicer when he calls this "WWDC 2006 2.0": Same contents, just improved. But that makes it all the more damning when he remembers that at WWDC 2006, Steve Jobs promised us features that they couldn't announce now because Microsoft would copy them. What did we get? Gruber wrote:

Apparently, these secret features consist of the new unified window theme and the Cover Flow view in Finder. This is sort of like saying you're adding a secret new player to your baseball team and then revealing that it's one of the existing players [wearing a new jersey](#).

Both Gruber and Tsai vent at Jobs, too, for insisting that Web apps *are* iPhone apps. Web apps are not local applications at all, and I think they're right to complain: Tsai calls it "insulting" and Gruber wonders why, if they're good software citizens, none of Apple's applications are Web applications. Not even the Google Maps application.

Safari 3 is the last bit of good news out of WWDC, and, if you ask me, it's not all that exciting. The software hasn't changed much since the 1.0 release, and that's OK for a utility piece of software. I use OmniWeb, not Safari, but the basics are the same: improvements to my Web browser have to directly affect the way that I work every day, because otherwise they'll mostly go unnoticed and unappreciated. Mark DeRosa's played every position except catcher and pitcher for the Chicago Cubs this season, and he's kept them in contention with heroics at positions he barely knows, but all you ever hear about are Derrek Lee, Aramis Ramirez, Carlos Zambrano, and Ryan Theriot.

To a user, Safari is the neglected but extremely versatile player on the OS X Team. But I'm not a Web developer. Jon Hicks is, and he notices the improvements and changes that

I don't think I would've noticed if you had literally hit me over the head with them. From draggable tabs to resizable text areas, he's [got it all](#). I won't try to summarize. For one thing, none of these things actually affects my workflow—or would cause me to consider switching back to Safari.

Oh, and one more thing: Safari 3 will run on Windows. Why? I can think of no obvious reason. But Gruber says, in the same post I linked earlier, that apparently Google pays Apple for searches through the search bar. I guess they figured, why not make some easy extra money on search?

This also leads us to some interesting observations on the strangeness of using an Apple application that behaves like an Apple application in Windows. iTunes is weird enough, but Windows is full of multimedia applications that don't look like ordinary Windows applications, and iTunes fits into that niche. But, Joel Spolsky observes, Safari makes the differences between Windows and Mac software much more obvious, because you can perform head-to-head comparisons. The principal difference seems to be in [font anti-aliasing](#). Apple performs its anti-aliasing in a way that is most faithful to the original typeface, even if it requires a certain amount of blurriness; Microsoft prefers to kill any blurriness at the expense of the appearance of the fonts. Spolsky doesn't think there's a "right" way to do it, and there's no significant research I know of on the topic, but he observes that it makes for significant weirdness when windows using different anti-aliasing algorithms are sitting side by side. Reminds me of my Linux days.

Now. Did you really think that that was all I'd be able to say about WWDC 2007? Uh... But that's what I've got, folks. Write Steve Jobs and ask him to do something meaningful at WWDC 2008.

Tinker to Evers to Chance

- *Andy Ihnatko is not Fake Steve!* How many times must the poor man say it? Everyone seems to think that he is [Fake Steve Jobs](#). But he says [he is not](#), and we have no good reason not to believe him. C'mon, guys. Give the poor man a break.
- Did you ever wonder about the origins of Photoshop? It's one of the two products that saved the Mac from software oblivion, long ago (the other is PageMaker), and without its Mac-only presence for many years, even graphics people like me would be using PCs. *SiliconUser* has a great article from Tom Hormby, with the [tale of Photoshop's birth](#).
- *MacJournals* asks if we can look at the comical arrival of iCal Day—July 17, the date iCal's icon is stuck on until you launch it—as a way to complain about the Dock's failings. They call it "[Understand the Dock Day](#)," and I think they're right. The worst part is that third-party developers can't even write a Dock replacement, unlike the Finder, because all of the trickery that makes the Dock tick is very private. What a shame.

- Do you want to use Skype without having to use your built-in mic? I wouldn't mind it; for 2.1 cents a minute anywhere in the US, it's much cheaper than what the local cable and phone companies are offering. To break even, I'd need to use, oh, 1,400-odd minutes on a land-line. So Joe Kissell's round-up on how to buy [Mac-compatible Skype hardware](#) in *TidBITS* was a really good read.

Let's Play Two

I told you there was some iPhone news coming in this *Bloggable*, didn't I? I've tried to select material that wasn't just more Oh-gosh-so-great reviews and wasn't just more gushing about the phone that also toasts your bread, or whatever. Personally, I think it's an interesting selection.

- Buzz Anderson's review of his [three weeks](#) with the iPhone was really terrific. So terrific that I reread it and reread it, just to absorb everything. His observations are well worthwhile—like that once you get the hang of the software keyboard, it's a considerable improvement over hardware keyboards; or that visual voicemail was an idea whose time had come—and give you both reasons to buy one yesterday and to wait.
- Josh at *Business 2.0's* Netly News disagrees that the iPhone is ready for [prime-time use](#) yet. He's right, too, about some things: the iPhone really needs Flash of some kind, and AT&T's network sucks. But at least one of his complaints doesn't jibe from my experience using the device; the WiFi seems terrific to me.
- John C. Welch discovers the Microsoft Exchange team painting IMAP as being a [bad second sibling](#) to Exchange. Now, I'm not entirely sure that I blame them, but it's still idiotic: there are plenty of neat features in Exchange, but its *raison d'être* is mostly that corporate IT people have always seemed to me not to be comfortable with open-source solutions. Welch, catching them in approximately twelve thousand lies, writes, “[T]his is what happens when you really want to rag on the iPhone, but are pretending to rag on IMAP.”
- *Computer World's* Jon Espenschied, in early July, noted that all of the rampant security FUD about the iPhone is a distraction from the real issues. At that time, the articles from the Big-Name IT Professionals were all based on the commercials and speculation—he calls it, “the nonsense put out by analysts declaring, sans experiential data, that the iPhone is unsuitable for business use, essentially because it does not look like what came before it”—and really didn't make much sense. (They don't make vastly more sense now, though.) His remark about the whole thing is spot-on: “I'm not saying there aren't legitimate queries, stemming from experience, about where the iPhone fits into the corporate picture. . . [But if] we've prepared ourselves reasonably well, we can be confident that whatever comes along [will integrate just fine](#) as long as it covers the standards we're using now.”

- In vaguely blog-related news, NewsGator has released NewsGator Mobile for iPhone, which is a **free** HTML-enabled RSS reader. Why might you use this over any service? I know: [Synchronization with NetNewsWire!](#) How awesome is that?

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A Good Site, Ruined

When BMW released their second generation of the Mini, they didn't bolt on more gimmicks, make the car slower, more thirsty, or corner worse than before. Instead they put in a brand new range of more efficient engines, redesigned just about every body panel, and cleaned up some of the annoying weaknesses of the previous iteration of the Mini. Very often it appears Web designers accomplish the exact reverse.

All too often, Web sites that used to work fast and perhaps a little dirty get redesigned to remove the dirt, but in the process their practicality is completely ruined. Form is allowed to intrude into function to the detriment of the inner workings.

Digital Vault

A classic example of a good Web site ruined is [BT's Digital Vault](#). It has been running very successfully since last year, providing free online storage for BT's Internet customers and a smaller free space for "outsiders." We grabbed 2 GB each when it was made available just before last Christmas and have used the space for large file transfers since then. As BT provides our Broadband Max service, albeit wholesale through a third party, our speeds to and from Digital Vault were just about the maximum our line could give. Up to 7 Mbps down, and more importantly 86KBps up, the up-speed being 50% faster than our first ADSL line of a few years ago.

It meant we could happily bung up to a gigabyte at a time onto our Digital Vaults for clients to collect, and the whole process took a couple of hours or so. Then BT redesigned the site.

On a recent Sunday morning at 7, I tried to put 860 MB into my Digital Vault. Where once the upload speed would have jumped straight to maximum and stayed there, the upload started to trickle through the wires at a miserable 40KBps. OK, I thought, it's a slow starter; we'll leave it for 15 minutes and see if it gets better. Not a chance! And typical of the new improved Digital Vault.

Apple's iDisk

Instead of waiting the nine or so hours the upload was estimated to take, I sent it onto my iDisk, across the Atlantic at Apple's mac.com. The speed immediately maxed-out and stayed there for the two-hour upload. Then, later, it was collected by the intended recipients in Montréal and Chicago who downloaded at the unbelievably fast connections their cable companies give them. (Jealous, me? And they've both got iPhones. . .)

In the past, the iDisk service has been a bit iffy, but its latest update has seen it improve immeasurably. So much so, that I bought another gigabyte of space and will use it as my main large-file transfer method from now on.

Throttled Back?

We have a sneaking suspicion that maybe BT has deliberately throttled back the speeds for free-loaders like us, but we were never extensive users, our total need never rising above 4 GB per month. Apple's online tools are far superior to BT's, and the iDisk Public Folder gives our clients a place to leave files for us as well. Much of Apple's online tools are there to make life easy for non-technically minded users, so they have simple point and click interfaces which work well. Making a download page, for example, takes just moments and means the iDisk is available for Windows users, too.

We have tried running FTP servers in-house, but they really need a separate computer running 24/7, especially when taking time-zone differences into account. Cheap FTP space is available from various suppliers, but in our experience their service is patchy, and these firms seem to come and go with a high churn rate, usually taking our files with them.

For the next year, then, iDisk will be our doorway to the world. It's easier to use than our Web space, faster than BT's Digital Vault, and on current experience, more reliable than FTP space providers.

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About This Particular Web Site

by Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com

Sonnets From the Portuguese

Sometimes, rarely, I'll be lucky enough to see an illuminated manuscript on exhibit in an art museum or a library. They are old and beautiful documents, written and drawn and colored by hand; they're protected by thick glass, so I can see only the spread the exhibitor selected. This Web site houses a complete digital facsimile of a beautiful illuminated manuscript. The book is relatively modern, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* by Elizabeth Barret Browning. The pages of the manuscript are displayed beside a transcription of the text, and you can zoom in on the page to see more detail. It's a beautiful piece of artwork.

Subway Maps

Planning a holiday in Kryvyi Rih and need to know how to pronounce it? Sorry, this site won't help you. But if you need to know how to get around once you arrive, there is a subway map available. I know, you could just google for the city subway map you need, but it's convenient to be able to access subway maps for major cities on six different continents (McMurdo Station is sadly lacking in public transit) from one Web site. With a click of a pop-up menu I can jump from city to city, comparing Detroit's lone people-mover to Tokyo's remarkable spiderweb of railroad.

Fast Food: Ads vs. Reality

Anyone who's ever bought fast food has surely noticed how little their purchased meal resembles its picture above the register or its close-up on teevee. Nobody brings their burger back up to the counter with a complaint that it doesn't look like the picture; consumers have learned to expect and to accept less than what was advertised. This Web site shows side-by-side the publicity shot and the actual item. Looking at them that way, it's kind of comical how unappetizing the real thing looks.

Book Sale Finder

This Web site is so horribly advertising-ridden that I hesitate to write about it here; it is quite frankly an eyesore. But the thing is, it actually does contain some useful information for bibliophiles in the US and Canada. Select your state or province, and you'll be shown a list of upcoming book sales in the area, sorted by date. Ongoing sales can be browsed by city. Though some commercial sales are included, most of the listed sales are things like library fund-raisers, which often offer huge selections of very inexpensive books as well as an opportunity to help fund a worthy cause.

The Rudiments of Wisdom Encyclopedia

If you're capable of looking up a piece of information on Wikipedia and then closing your browser window after finding what you needed, you probably won't get much out of this site.

But if you have trouble resisting an opportunity to wander around picking up interesting little snippets of knowledge, this Web site can be a fun place. The Rudiments of Wisdom are offered in the form of hand-drawn cartoons, indexed by category. Scottish bakers of bad bread were sentenced to the dunking stool. In 1903, a fifty-foot-tall pyramid of pianos was set on fire. Margarine tasted insipid until the 1950s. That's enough from me. Go forth and learn something strange.

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Next Actions

by Ed Eubanks, Jr.

Processing Reference Material

[Last time](#) we discussed Processing in broad-stroke principles: what is it, and how does doing it on a computer bring quirks and nuances to the job. This time, I want to focus on one part of the Processing stage: reference materials. Specifically, how do you set up a system that handles reference materials capably?

First Principles

Let's first cover what makes a good reference system. David Allen talks specifically about this in the book—using the filing cabinet as the housing for the system, and the alphabetical file as the contents of it. Allen spells out some first principles, so I will, too.

To begin with, it needs to be easy—even a pleasure—to use. Allen says that filing should be fun. I say that holds on the computer, as well. If you're setting up a digital reference/filing system and it becomes a drudgery to maintain, you simply won't do it. As a consequence, your reference material will remain unfiled and of little or no use to you. (There is an important qualification to this, which I'll discuss in a moment.)

Also, it must be omnipresent, yet nearly invisible. What do I mean? You must be able to access it from pretty much anywhere (think of the concept of putting the file cabinet beside your desk, so that it is always accessible). Otherwise, your hands are tied when it comes to some filing. At the same time, it has to get out of the way when you're not using it. How easy is it to get work done when you can't find the window you're working in?

Finally, it must house, index, and retrieve all of your needed materials seamlessly. I'll talk more on this as I discuss specific directions below, but here's the gist of what I mean: if your system can't, at least to a degree, handle the sort of materials you work with in reference, what good is it?

Digital or Analog?

Naturally, a good filing cabinet may be the hub of your system too; in fact, it may be that your circumstances, preferences, or other limitations keep you in the analog world when it comes to reference archives. Back in the day (he writes with a pseudo-elderly voice), I remember printing hard copies of *everything* I wanted to save, and sticking them into an elaborate filing system. You may do the same thing today, by necessity or by choice.

Over the years, my file system grew, and the last time I moved (a little better than a year ago), I moved three four-drawer filing cabinets and two two-drawer cabinets, all full. The problem wasn't the quantity, however, but the inefficiency. I knew I had a lot of good stuff in my files; I just didn't know exactly what I had.

David Allen addresses this with his usual aplomb: he includes a culling of the reference file with every annual review (no, you're not off the hook on deciding whether to throw it out, just because it made it to reference the first time). He also recommends more frequent culling by weeding through a couple of files at a time during lulls—while waiting for the coffee to brew, for example. These are great methods—but my problem comes when I want to use what I have, but don't remember exactly which file it's in.

For example, I have dozens of journal articles from grad school, and yes, I actually do reference them from time to time. But every time I do, it seems like I come across an article I was looking for *last* time I was referencing these. It's too late to be of help, but a reminder that I want to keep the article. Plowing through these is inefficient and frustrating—hardly GTD zen.

So I've converted my hard-copy files to digital files. If you read my [review](#) of the Fujitsu ScanSnap S500m, you know how—scanning each one with an OCR-compatible scanner. Now my files are accessible and easy to find. My recommendation is that you find a way to do the same; if not with a ScanSnap, then with another (probably similar) method.

Spotlight—a Great Start

Now on to how to work with files once you have them ready for reference. And the first stop on that exploration has to be Finder—the Mac OS's long-time organizer of files. How convenient!

Thanks to Spotlight, the problem of reference material being “unfiled” is reduced, and in some people's minds, eliminated. As Steve Jobs himself quipped at Spotlight's introduction, “A lot of us are never going to use the Finder again. We're just going to go right here [to Spotlight] to find anything.”

I can imagine Steve's (and others') documents folders simply being one big stash of documents of all types—indexed and searchable by Spotlight, of course—and users accessing these files by searching every time they want to open them. Maybe this is enough for some! If so, I recommend that you pick a location (“Documents” makes sense to me) and commit to it, simply dropping everything into that place.

Though it is easy to choose your desktop and the target, you want to be sure to stick them somewhere other than that. For one thing, the desktop will eventually fill up to such a mess that you can't use any of these icons efficiently (speaking from experience!). Also, as Rob Griffiths of *Macworld* [points out](#), keeping items on your desktop uses system resources—slowing your whole computer down eventually. Plus, the very metaphor of a cluttered desktop like that is so contrary to GTD that you should recoil from the thought.

If you go with the “Spotlight is enough” reference system, you might check out some of the handful of utilities designed to add Spotlight-searchable meta-data to your files and folders. [Branding Iron](#), [DropLight](#), [Folders2Tags](#), and [SpotMeta](#) are just a few of these. Think of these as your digital P-Touch labeler. You'll also want to stock up on Spotlight plug-ins, which boost Spotlight's abilities to read the contents of different types of documents.

Beyond Finder

If you need something more—something more akin to a virtual file cabinet—then there are a number of options available. A lot of the decision here is flexibility with document usage.

For example, if you work only with PDFs, then there are applications designed to handle these very nicely. I recently [reviewed](#) Yep! for ATPM, and found it to be a great option for PDF management. Giles Turnbull also recently looked at Yep! as well as a few other options with his O'Reilly article [Smarter Ways to Work with PDFs](#), which you'll find a very helpful read.

If you work with more document types than simply PDFs, there are still a handful of options. ATPM editor Michael Tsai is partial to [EagleFiler](#) for some reason. Others may find Bare Bones' [Yojimbo](#) to be a great option (particularly if they want something like the Web-accessibility that [Webjimbo](#) offers for their reference files). [DocumentWallet](#) is a nice complement to the ScanSnap scanner I mentioned earlier. And [DEVONthink](#) is sort of the big daddy of all of these.

What each of these applications have in common is simply this: they offer a freeform, unstructured database of sorts, housing, indexing, and providing search tools for one or (in most cases) multiple types of documents and information, allowing you to drop everything in one place and search them capably. They also offer multiple ways of getting that information into them, so they are accessible from many places in your Mac.

How It Works

For me, the system is straightforward. I drop information into my database all day long, from multiple applications. Hotkeys, drag-and-drop, Automator actions, and Services menu tools allow me to put clippings from Web sites, e-mails, PDFs, and other documents straight in. I can also scan paper documents in using my ScanSnap. Practically speaking, the work is mostly done by this point—I now have the information I need and want readily accessible in a digital file cabinet.

Be careful, though. To stop here is, in GTD terms, to drop loose papers into your file drawers without a folder or label. Be sure you impose the information on your data that will help your file cabinet help you—in this case, meta tags, a hierarchy of folders and sub-folders, and other organizational tools that make the searches more efficient.

In the same way that Allen recommends that you work over your reference files, I do too—but with this twist: periodically go into your files (whether in Finder with Spotlight, or in one of the applications listed above) and work with their meta data, organize them into folders (*if* that is helpful for your system; for example, DEVONthink “learns” associations by groupings into folders and subfolders, so searches are more efficient when they are well-grouped), and review them. Don't be afraid to delete files you no longer need.

Your reference files may very well be the most important part of the GTD process for you—they are for me, in some ways—but without a good system, they aren't helping you, and

they may be hurting you by fooling you into believing that you have access to information that you really don't have. Take the time to set this up well, and learn how to use it.

New Finds and the List

I'm in the process of completely re-working my lists. I'm building a table for them that I hope will be easier to read and use (and easier to maintain!). I plan to have it completed by the fall column, so look for it then. I apologize for the lack of news otherwise.

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A Tutorial on Resolution

Want Some Wallpaper?

Where was my head last month? I had totally intended to set up the final version of the image used in [last month's tutorial](#) as a full-sized image and offer it as a desktop wallpaper image. My bad. My penance will be to [offer it this month](#) at enough resolution to natively fill a 30" Apple Cinema Display. Bon appétit.

Tiny Little Dots

Time to get on with it. This month, I hope to clear up the confusion many have with the concept of resolution. Even if I had ten hands, I would not have enough fingers to count the number of times I've been sent a low resolution photo that is intended to go in print from a person who claims it is large enough. "It's full size on my screen, so it should be large enough," they might say.

Wrong answer.

As we'll explore this month, the resolution of your monitor is far lower than the resolution generally printed on paper. Even if you're fortunate enough to be using a 30" Cinema Display, an image that fills the entire display is most certainly not suitable for a 30" print. In fact, I'll demonstrate why this size of an image is actually only suitable for something in the neighborhood of a 9"×6" print. Yes, still very large, but not as large as your display. This is confounded further by the fact that most everyone from whom I received some version of the quote above was probably using a 1024×768 monitor—a resolution *barely adequate* for a 4"×3" print! A little bigger than 3"×2" is all I'd really plan on at that resolution.

What Is Resolution?

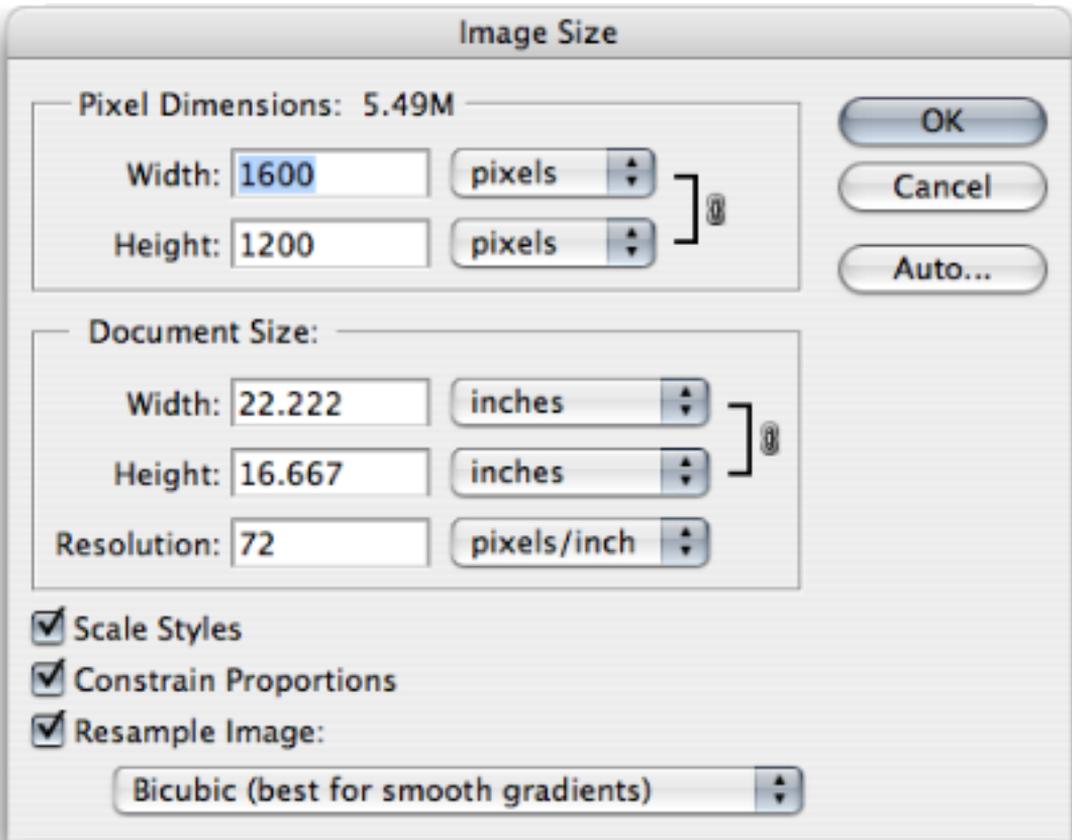
I'll start with an image that is 1,600 pixels wide and 1,200 pixels tall. This is a size setting you might commonly find on a digital camera. Seems like a lot of pixels, doesn't it. Exactly how big would this shot be on paper?

First, what does the 1600×1200 mean? Well, there's a reason why "sixteen hundred by twelve hundred" can be represented as 1600×1200—because the "×" also means you can multiply the numbers. If you do the math, you get 1,920,000. In other words, a 1600×1200 image is a little less than two million total pixels—or a 2 megapixel camera. Suddenly, 1600×1200 doesn't seem so big any more, does it?

Regardless whether you refer to 1600×1200 or 2 megapixel, you’re talking about the total number of pixels in an image. But this, alone, is not enough to definitively say how big the image will print. Note that I said earlier that 1600×1200 “seems like a lot of pixels” and not “seems like a lot of resolution.” The total number of pixels in an image *is not* its resolution.

Here’s the surprise: our image can be *any* resolution and remain 1600×1200! Resolution has nothing to do with the total number of pixels in an image and everything to do with how large or small the pixels are represented. In other words, resolution specifies the amount of linear space a certain number of pixels should occupy.

Now would be a good time for a visual. I have a photo open that is 1600×1200 pixels in size. I’ll head to Photoshop’s Image menu and select Image Size.



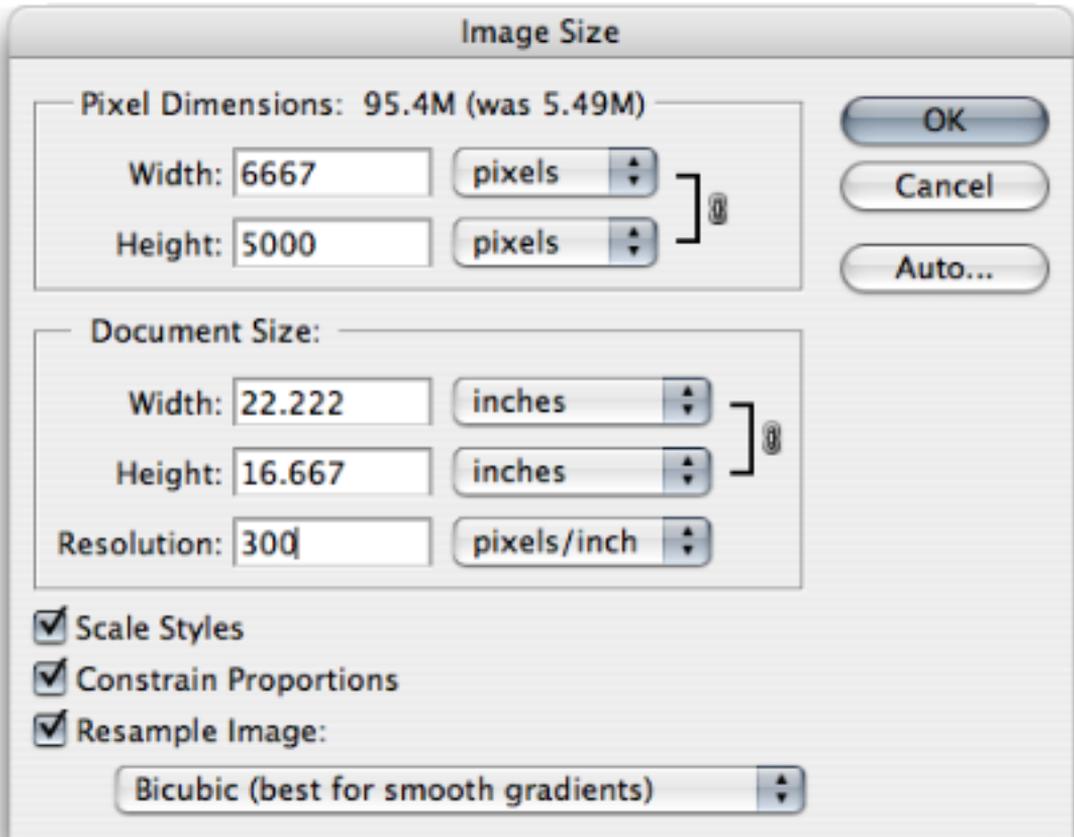
Photoshop’s Image Size menu.

In the Pixel Dimensions section, we see confirmation that my image is 1600×1200 pixels. But what’s that in the Document Size section? More than 22 by 16 inches? Can a 2 megapixel camera really print that big?

Well, yes and no. Look at the third setting in the Document Size section. The Resolution is set for 72 pixels per inch. This number makes all the difference in specifying the size of your image, and setting it correctly depending on the final destination of your image is key.

I said above that an image's resolution defines how many pixels occupy a certain amount of space. Time for some more math. An image's Document Size is calculated simply as the Pixel Dimensions divided by the Resolution. In this case, 1,600 divided by 72 equals 22.222, and 1,200 divided by 72 equals 16.667.

What's happening is, we're specifying that 72 pixels should fit in exactly one inch of space. So let's see what happens if we change the Resolution value.



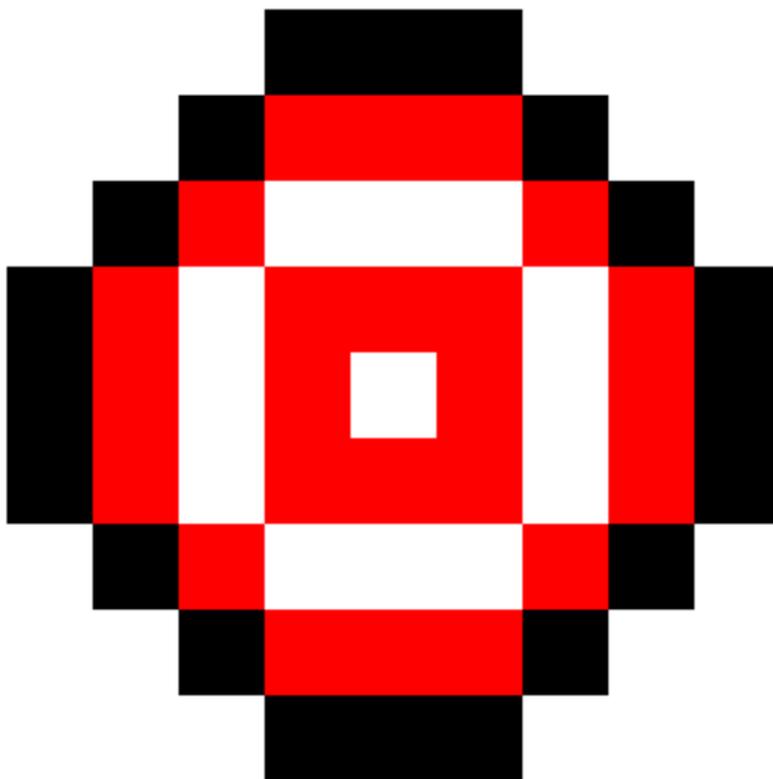
6667×5000 pixels? What happened?

In this screen shot, the Resolution has been changed to 300. The Document Size is still 22.222×16.667 inches, but look at the Pixel Dimensions. That can't be right, can it?

What happened is that the current settings in the Image Size menu locked the Document Size and resized the image (the Pixel Dimensions) to accommodate the changes. In this case, the image has been enlarged by almost 425%. Enlarged? But the Document Size is still the same!

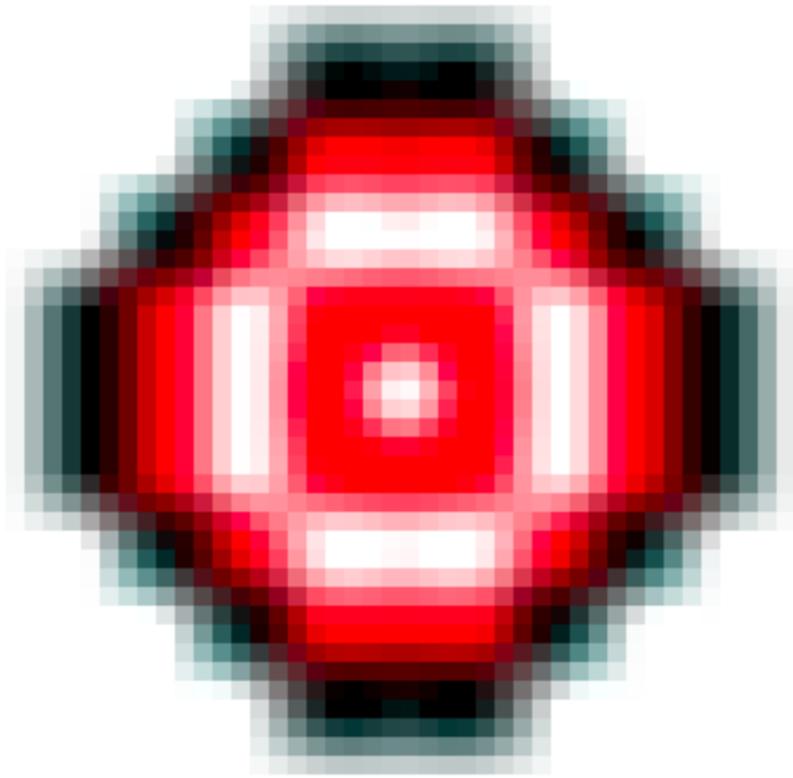
Not exactly. Yes, the width and height are the same, but look at the resolution. We're now at 300 pixels per inch. By increasing the resolution while also keeping the Document Size the same, Photoshop has had to add a lot more pixels to the image to account for the fact that we told it to put 300 pixels in every inch instead of only 72. This is represented by the increase from 1600×1200 to 6667×5000 .

So where do those pixels come from? In simple terms, Photoshop invents them. Seriously. You've been told before, haven't you, that it's bad to enlarge a digital photo? This is the reason why. In order to fill up the extra pixels, Photoshop has looked at all the neighboring pixels and has guessed, based on math, what additional pixels are needed. If you enlarge an image exactly 200%, you now have four pixels for every original one. However, it doesn't mean you've now got four pixels worth of detail that previously only had one. Rather, it means that one pixel has been blown up to the space of four pixels. Time for another visual.



The individual pixels at 72 pixels per inch.

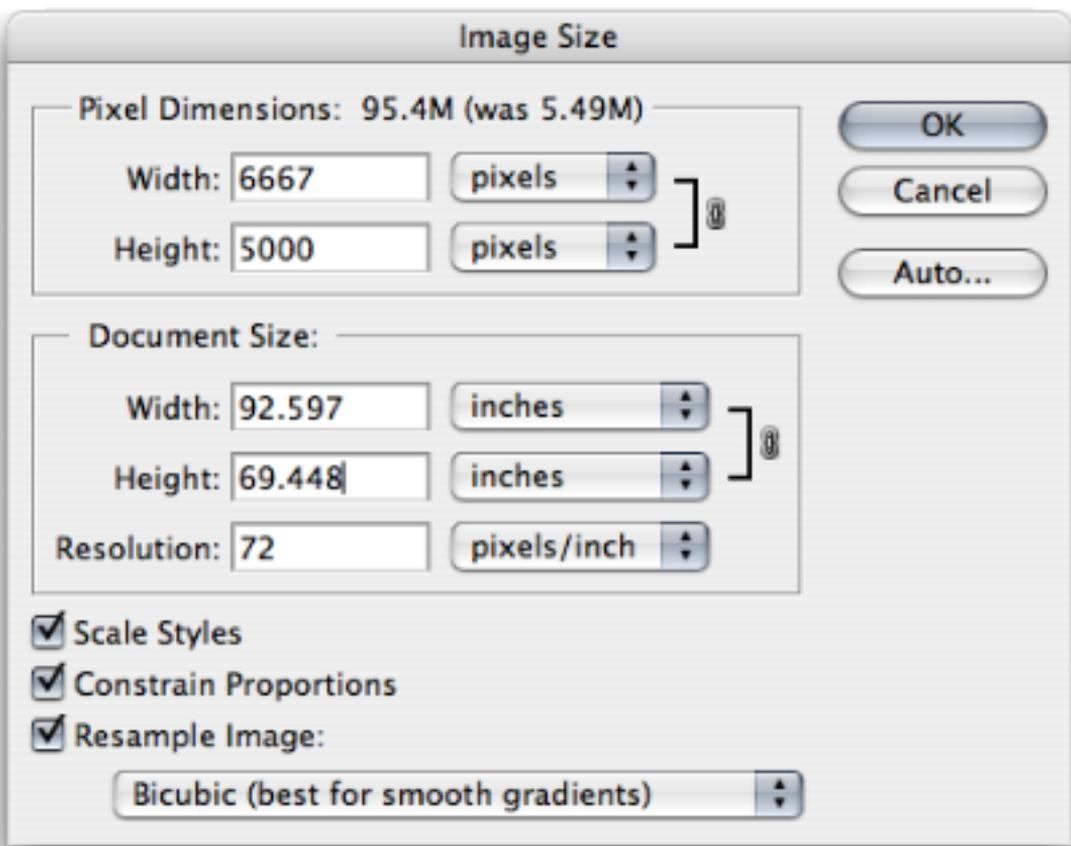
The above screen shot is zoomed in to look at the individual pixels of a sample image. Each square block (such as the white block in the exact center) represents a single pixel. Now let's see what happened when the Resolution was changed to 300 and the Pixel Dimensions increased to 6667×5000 .



The same image, enlarged.

The same basic shape is visible, but Photoshop has attempted to smooth it out by guessing what additional pixels were needed to make up the difference. Instead of just a single pixel for the white spot in the center, that spot is now represented in approximately 20 pixels (four wide and five tall). You can see the smaller squares throughout the image. We've made it higher resolution, but we've also made it very blurry and pixelated.

The same problem would happen if you left the Resolution at 72 pixels per inch, but increased the Document Size values.



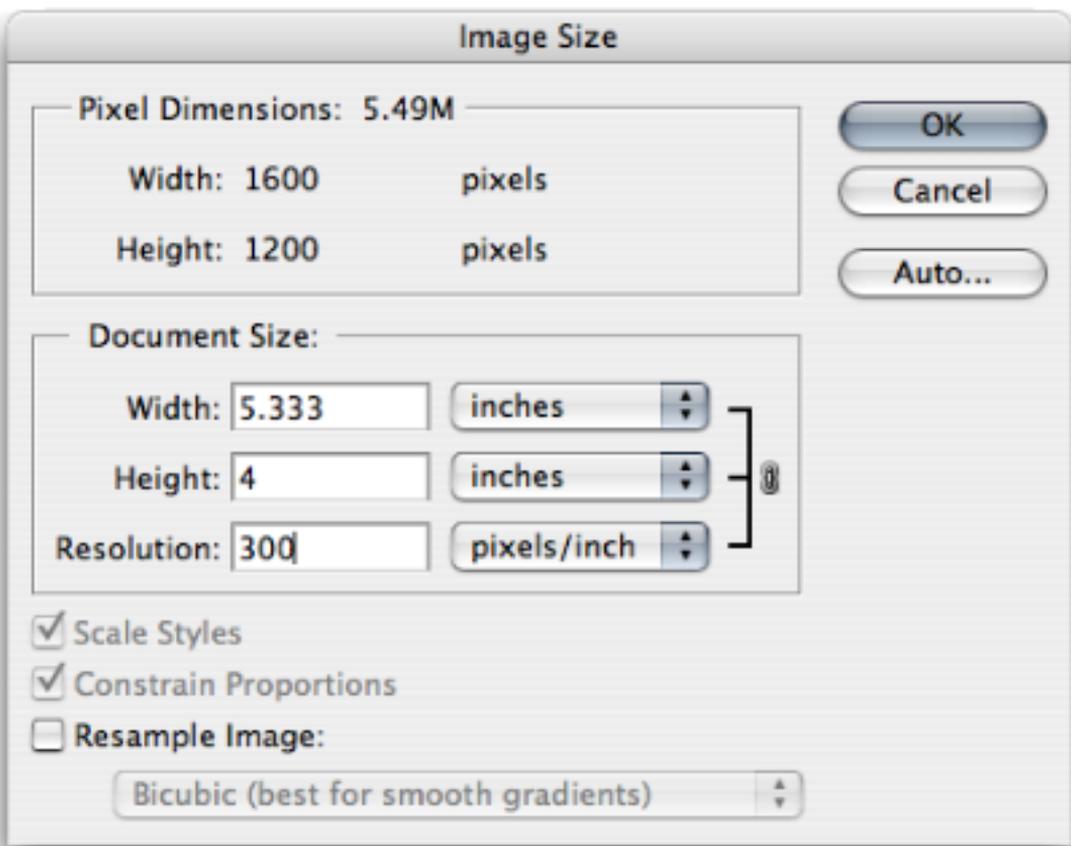
Still 6667×5000, but at 72 pixels per inch, we're up to more than 92 inches wide!

How To Change Resolution With Pleasing Results

It takes just two steps to adjust an image's resolution in a way that doesn't cause these problems, while simultaneously revealing how large you can print your image on paper.

The first step is the really easy part. Simply uncheck the Resample Image checkbox. When you do this, you'll notice that you can no longer adjust the Pixel Dimensions and that the black lines on the right side of the Document Size section have expanded to point to Width, Height, and Resolution (the previously only pointed to Width and Height, assuming the Constrain Proportions checkbox was on). This means those three items are now linked. If you change any value, the others will automatically update to compensate for your change.

Let's see what happens when we change the Resolution to 300 this time.



More realistic for printing.

With the Resample Image checkbox turned off, the Pixel Dimensions remain at 1600×1200. This means we are in no way damaging the available information in the original image. When not resampling, you can adjust the Document Size as much as your whim desires, and nothing will harm the image.

Notice, however, the Width and Height values when the Resolution is changed to 300. They're now showing 5.333 inches wide and 4 inches tall. Using the same math as above, we discover that 1,600 divided by 300 equals 5.333 and 1,200 divided by 300 equals 4.

Alternatively, you can specify that you want the image to be only three inches wide. Entering a Width of 3 automatically changes the Height to follow proportionately at 2.25 inches, and you have a resolution of 533.333 pixels per inch. The smaller the Document Size, the more Resolution when resampling is turned off.

You'll remember, at the beginning of this month's column, I said I would demonstrate that the resolution of a 30" Cinema Display is only suitable for a much smaller print. If the Pixel Dimensions are 2560×1600 (the dimensions of the 30" Cinema Display), the Document Size is 35.556 inches wide and 22.222 inches tall at 72 pixels per inch. But, at 300 pixels per inch, the same Pixel Dimensions only give 8.533 inches of width and 5.333 inches of height.

And this brings us to step two. How do you know what value the Resolution should be, and why have I been talking about 72 and 300 pixels per inch up to this point?

In general, consumer-level digital cameras and most computer displays work at 72 pixels per inch, but this is beginning to change. Many semi-professional and nearly every professional digital SLR camera specifies its images at 300 pixels per inch. Remember, as we've seen above, you can change the resolution of an image without changing the total number of pixels. In other words, 6 megapixel is still 6 megapixel regardless whether you've defined it as 72 or 300 pixels per inch.

In addition, many computer displays are also working at a tighter, more detailed resolution—often 96 or more. You probably heard how Apple boasted about the iPhone being 160 pixels per inch. This makes for a much more crisp display of graphics than most standard computer monitors working at 72 pixels per inch.

There's a very good reason why 72 pixels per inch is something of a baseline, but it would take another long article to fully explain it. Suffice to say that 72 pixels per inch matches perfectly with graphic design measurements set in place long before computers came around—measurements which define 72 points as equal to one inch. Yes, that absolutely does mean that six lines of 12 point type should fit in one inch of height. Well, that doesn't account for something called leading, but let's not bother with that.

The other resolution value I've been using, 300, is slightly arbitrary, but is used because it's a nice, even number to use as a reference point. It turns out that when a digital device prints a photo on paper, your eye shouldn't be able to discern the tiny pixels if 300 of them are squeezed into one inch. In reality, depending on the type of printer or press being used, you can often get away with less resolution. Most people can't see pixelation even at 200 pixels per inch. Not that I want to brag, but in high quality glossy inkjet prints, 200 pixels per inch is about where I'm just able to detect slight pixelation. But, of course, I know what to look for.

So, by doing the math, and assuming you have a 3.1 megapixel camera that produces images that are 2,048 pixels wide and 1,536 pixels tall (3,145,728 total pixels) at 300 pixels per inch, you're good for a print that is 6.8 inches wide and 5.1 inches tall. Of course, a photo lab technician would probably tell you that a 3 megapixel camera is perfectly fine for an 8×10 print. Well, at 200 pixels per inch, they'd be right, and you'd probably be perfectly happy with the quality. But for best results, you're better off assuming 300 pixels per inch.

DPI or PPI?

I suppose 300 pixels per inch is something of a magical number for photo resolution. A lot lower and you begin to see blurry pixelation. Conversely, a lot higher is sort of a waste. You might be thinking that if you have a 6 megapixel camera (10.25 inches by 6.8 inches at 300 pixels per inch), you could ramp up to 600 pixels per inch for a super detailed 5×3 inch photo. In some ways, you'd be right, especially when you consider that inkjet printers these days are running 1200 DPI and higher.

Wait, what's that? What is "DPI"?

Aha, young grasshopper. You've entered the realm of dots per inch!

Let's get a very small, but very important, fact straightened out right now. Dots per inch (DPI) is not the same thing as pixels per inch (PPI). You may only just now realize that I never once in this article prior to this paragraph mentioned DPI. Common misconception will suggest the two as meaning the same. As we've covered above, pixels per inch refers to the individual single spots of color that make up an image. Dots per inch, on the other hand refers to ink on paper. You'll generally find that the available DPI of a printer is far higher than the PPI needed for a pleasing image.

We've already established that 300 PPI is a bit more than sufficient (but an easy number to work with that isn't too much overkill) for printing images, even if the printer is capable of a DPI that is higher. In other words, the PPI of an image *does not* have to match the DPI of your printer. Having the extra DPI resolution on a printer is a benefit for graphic images (not necessarily photos) with extremely fine detail—much finer than needed for a photograph. Even many typefaces with ornate serifs and flourishes look a lot better. Most people can easily see the difference in quality of standard Times New Roman on a 300 DPI printer and a 600 DPI printer.

So, Do I Really Need More Than 3 Megapixels in a Digital Camera?

Knowing now that a 3 or 4 megapixel camera is completely adequate for typically sized photo prints, why would anyone need more megapixels?

The answer for most people is—you don't need more. But when I say "most people," I'm talking about those who don't do anything to their photos other than take them to a photo lab. They're content with a print that, more or less, matches the framing they originally shot with the camera.

However, if you're someone who likes to shoot a little wider just to make sure you don't miss something, and then crop your photo later, this is where having the extra pixels are a benefit.

To illustrate, let's start with a photo of a [USSOCOM paratrooper](#) from last May's desktop photos. Suppose you took this shot with a 3 megapixel camera and you want to make a print cropped close to the paratrooper. Let's see what happens when we crop and enlarge just the paratrooper to a 4×6 inch shot and look at it on the computer screen.



Enlargement from a 3 megapixel camera.

Remember, 300 pixels (one inch in print) is obviously going to display much larger on a 72 PPI computer display. I've also taken the above screen shot with the image showing at 400% actual size so you can see the pixel resolution. It's very blocky.

But now, here's a sample of what the exact same shot would look like if it were cropped the exact same size, but had been taken with a 6 megapixel camera instead.



Enlargement from a 6 megapixel camera.

Once again, I'm looking at this image at 400% size, so you're still going to see pixelation in this sample. But notice now that within the confines of my screenshot, the paratrooper is now larger and more pixels are being used. You can make out more details in this version.

The point of showing this is to say that while you'll probably never see any difference between uncropped images out of a 3 and 6 megapixel camera, you will notice a lot more flexibility if you crop your photos.

It can't be stated more simply than this: cropping a 6 megapixel photo in half will give you a 3 megapixel photo, and cropping a 3 megapixel photo in half will give you a 1.5 megapixel photo. Get it?

Coming Back to Photoshop

I know I've spent a good deal of space talking about digital cameras instead of Photoshop, but hopefully you see the correlation. A key thing you should've noticed in the Image Size window is that as long as the Resample option is turned off, it actually makes absolutely no difference what the Resolution setting is. As a desktop publisher, I regularly redefine 72 PPI photos as 300 PPI. I even have a preset action in Photoshop to do it.

What matters to me is the Pixel Dimensions. Anything bigger than 1600×1200 I know is going to work fine for me. Likewise, anything from a 2 or 3 megapixel camera up to 6 or higher is going to be fine for you.

Much smaller, however, and print reproductions begin suffering.

Web Photos

I'll wrap up by coming full circle on the hypothetical quote at the beginning of this column, "It's full size on my screen, so it should be large enough." Much to the annoyance of graphic designers, clients will frequently ask a designer to use this or that photo from a Web site, mistakenly believing it will print just fine. Again, wrong answer.

Take the earlier example of the USSOCOM paratrooper. I had access to the original, full-size digital image for the above examples, but the [thumbnail page](#) that I first linked shows the image at only 420×279 pixels. No joke, there are clients who'll actually send a shot this size for use in print publication.

Do the math. 420×279 at 300 PPI is roughly one and a third inches wide by not even one inch tall!

Further Discussion

I realize this is a very heavy subject and that I may not have done it justice. If you're still scratching your head over this, I strongly encourage you to [ask questions](#). For me, this is the type of subject that I can do far better at answer questions than at giving a blanket explanation—though I do hope this article has been of some value to you.

Topics For Upcoming Months

- Creating Seamless Tiles
- Mask-erades
- Fun With the Automate Menu
 - Photomerge
- Fun With Filters
- File Format Fever

If you have a topic suggestion, please [share it](#). I'm definitely interested in expanding this list with topics that are of interest to you.

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Desktop Pictures

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures

This month's pictures, by David B. Thompson, were taken on a motorcycle trip in Texas and Utah.



Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

iCab Use the Download command to download “Get all files in same path.”

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

Safari Use [this Automator workflow](#).

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x and 10.4.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.0.x

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



Cortland

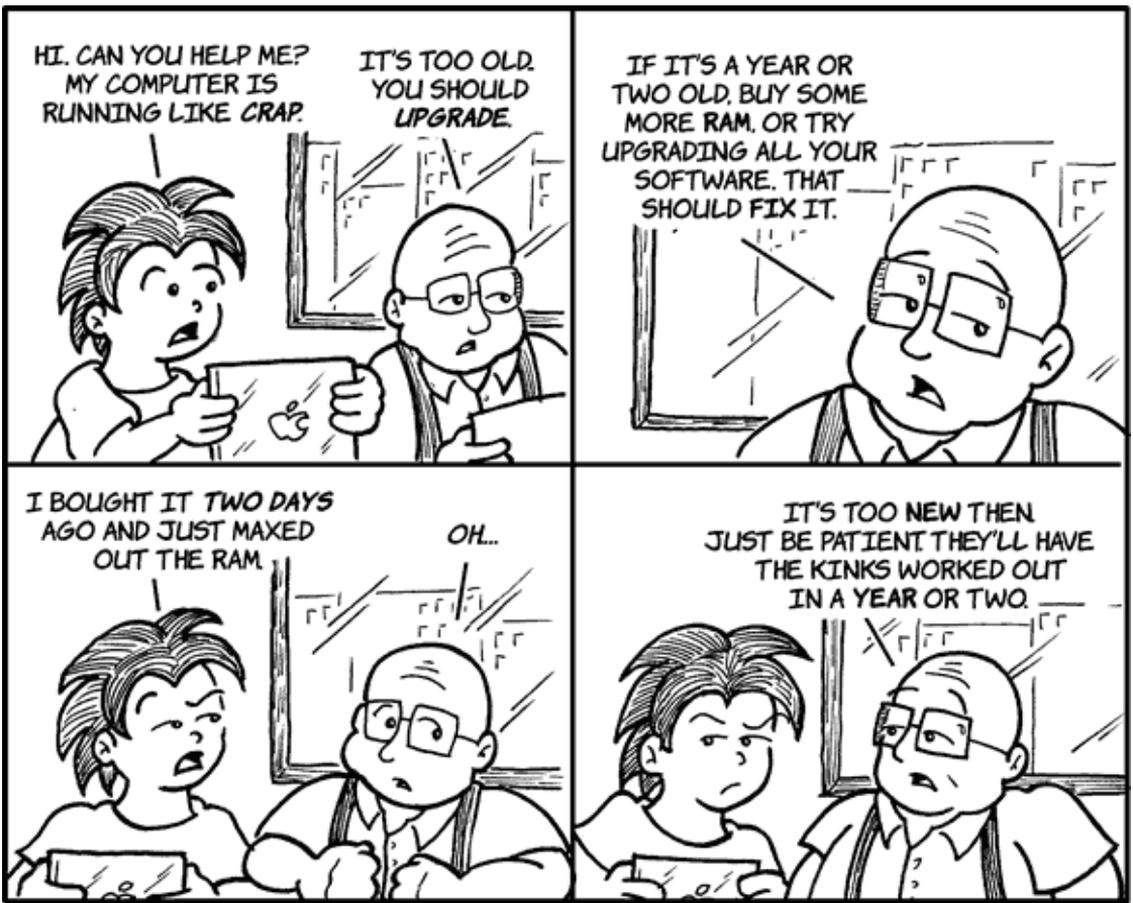
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

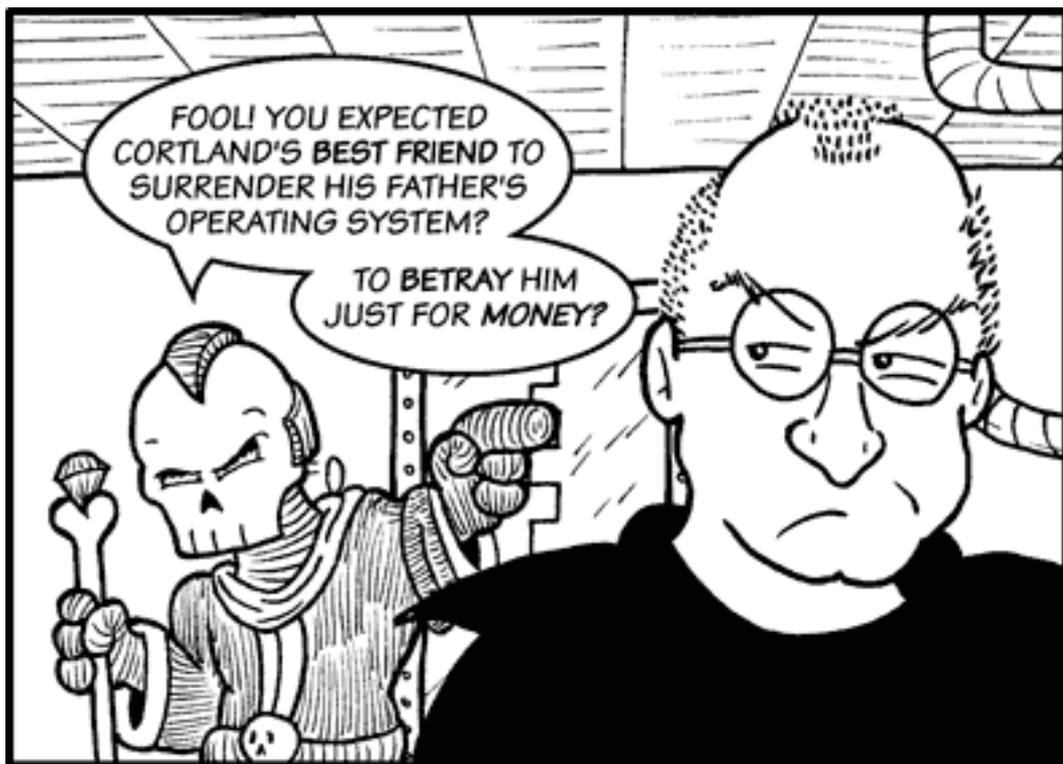


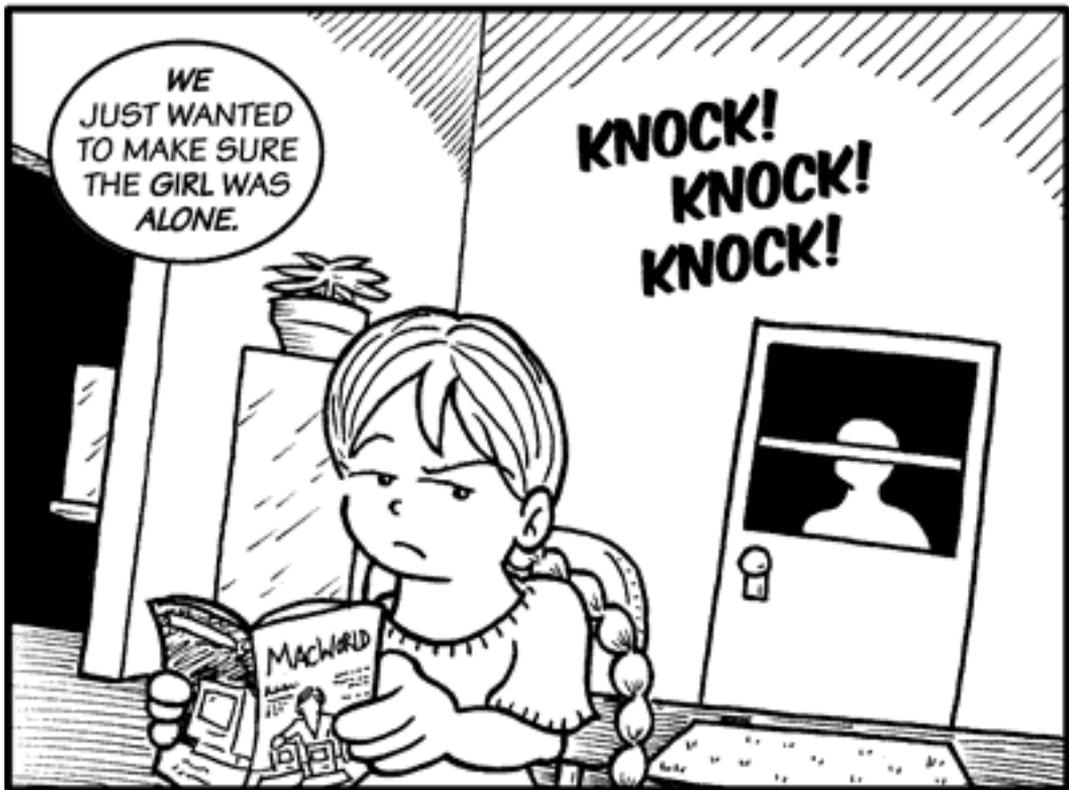
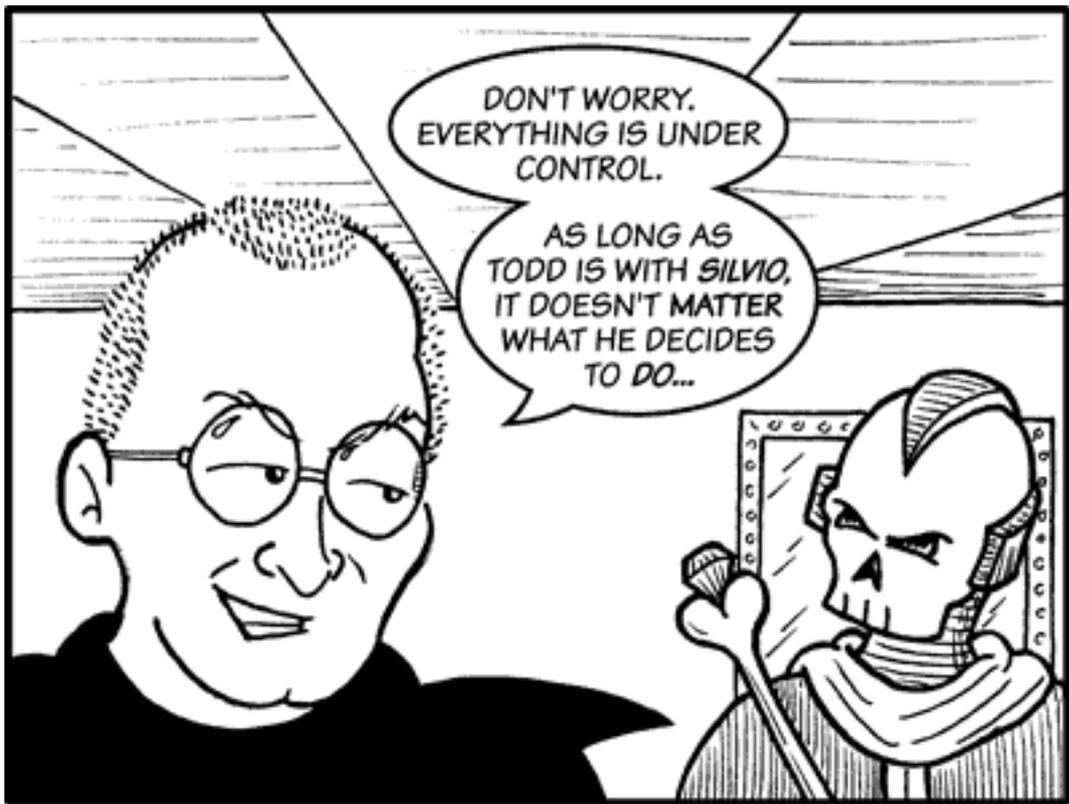




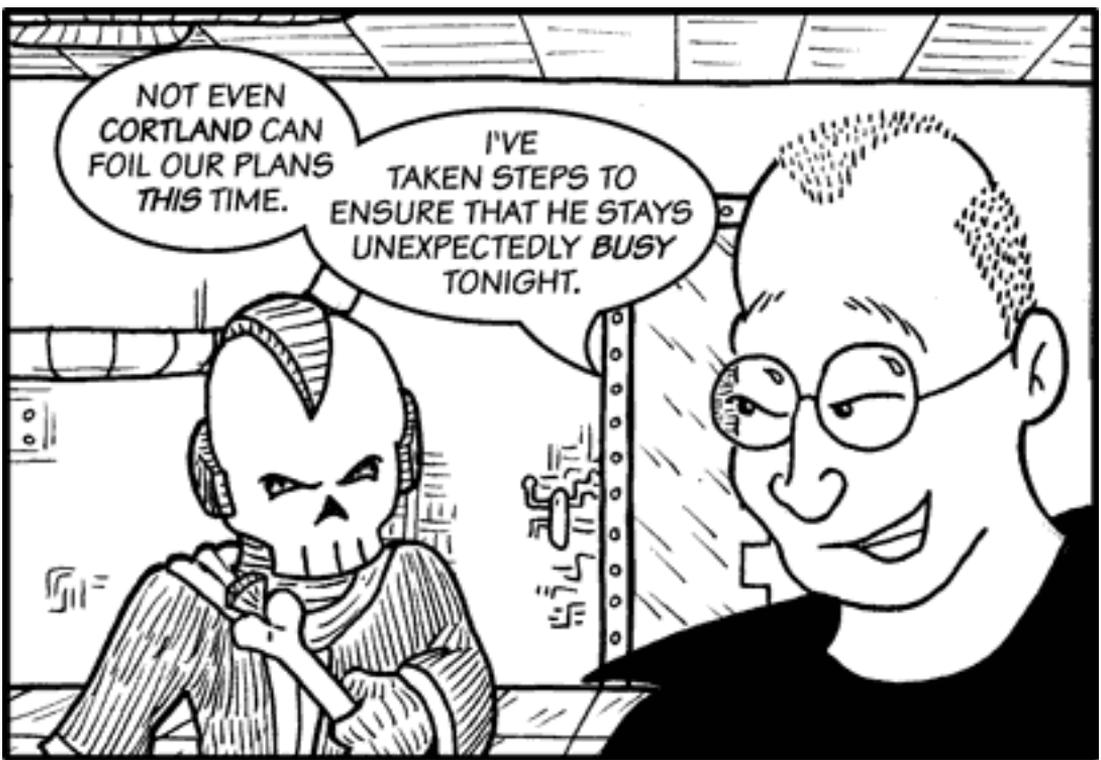


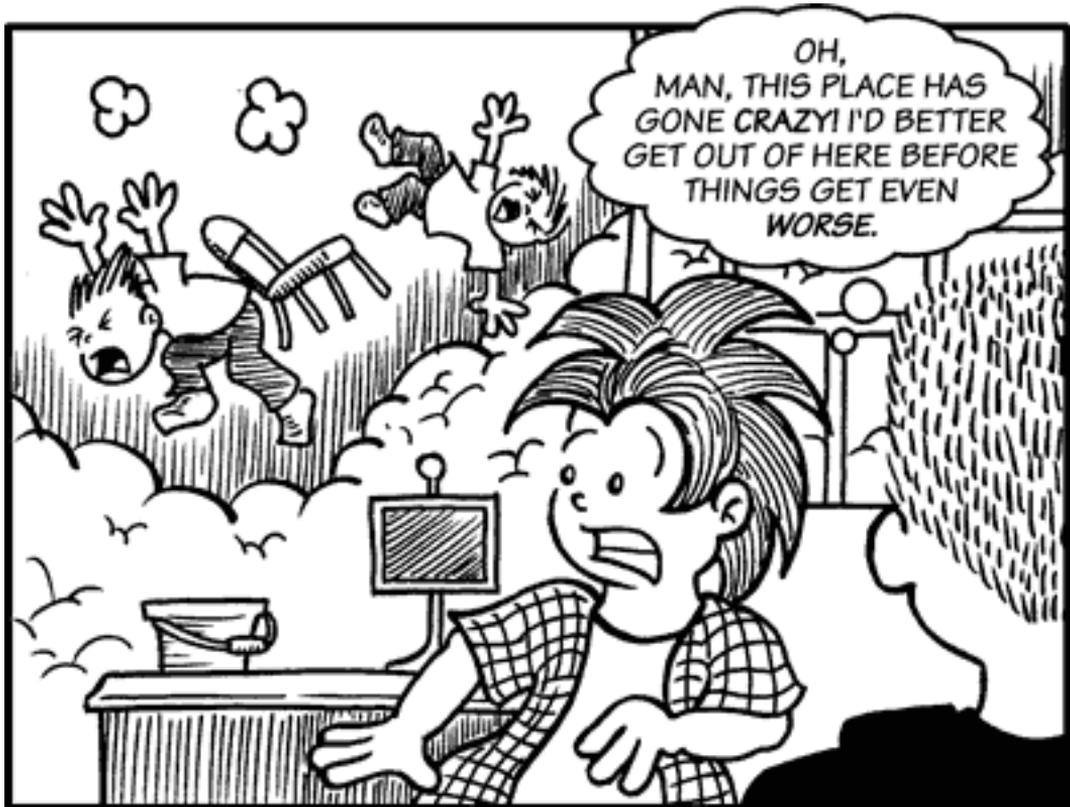


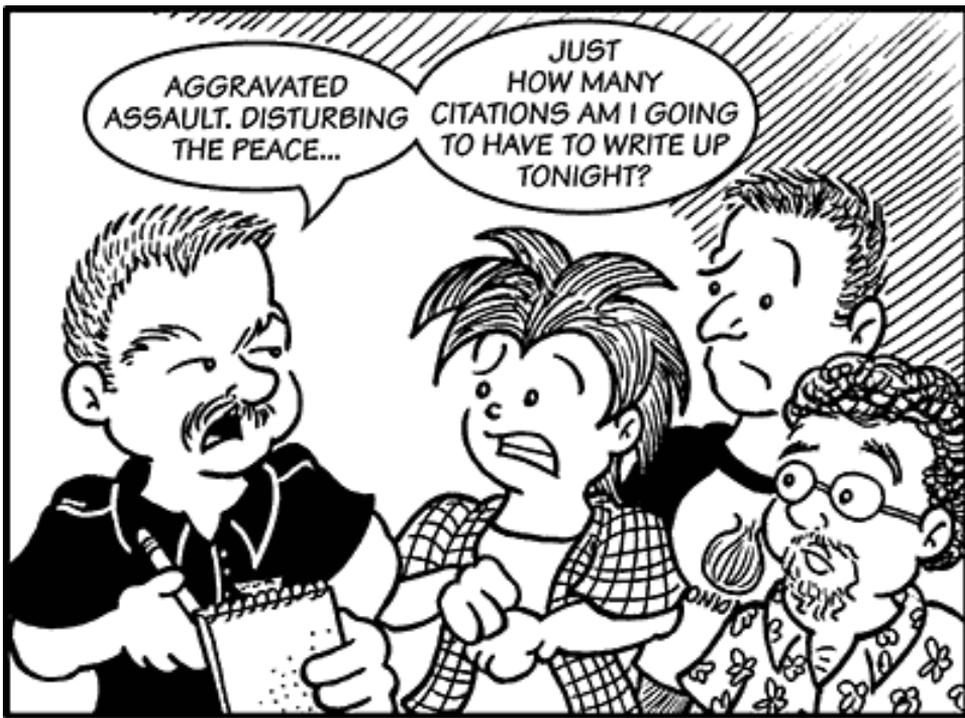












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Hardware Review

by Andrew Kator, akator@atpm.com

EyeTV Hybrid

Developer: [Elgato](#)

Price: \$149

Requirements: G4-based Mac with 256MB of RAM, built-in USB 2.0, Internet connection for program guides. [Universal](#).

Recommended: G5 or Intel processor

Trial: None



The required 2009 shift to digital TV and growing adoption of digital TV (including high definition) still haven't rendered analog obsolete. Many computer peripheral TV tuners can do either analog or digital, but not both. Elgato's EyeTV Hybrid combines both analog and digital TV into one compact unit with options for analog broadcast, digital broadcast, analog cable, analog S-video input, and analog composite (RCA) inputs.



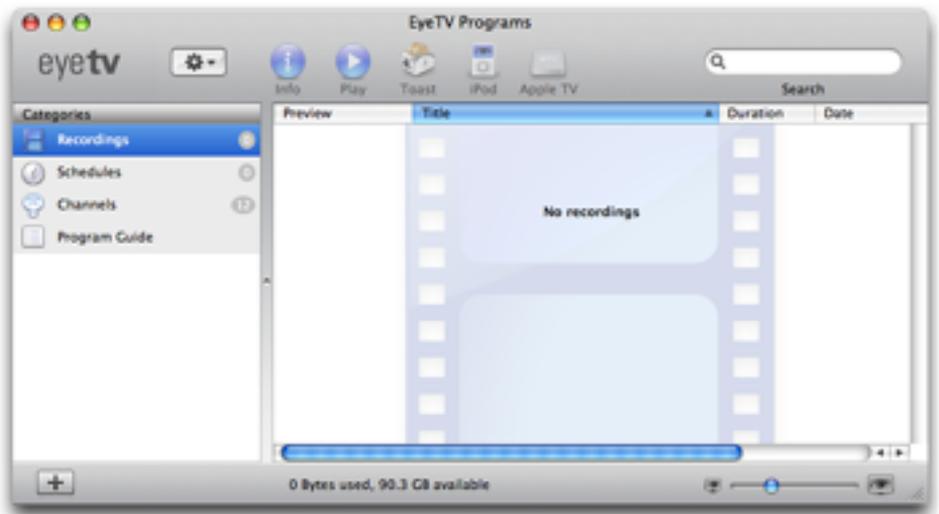
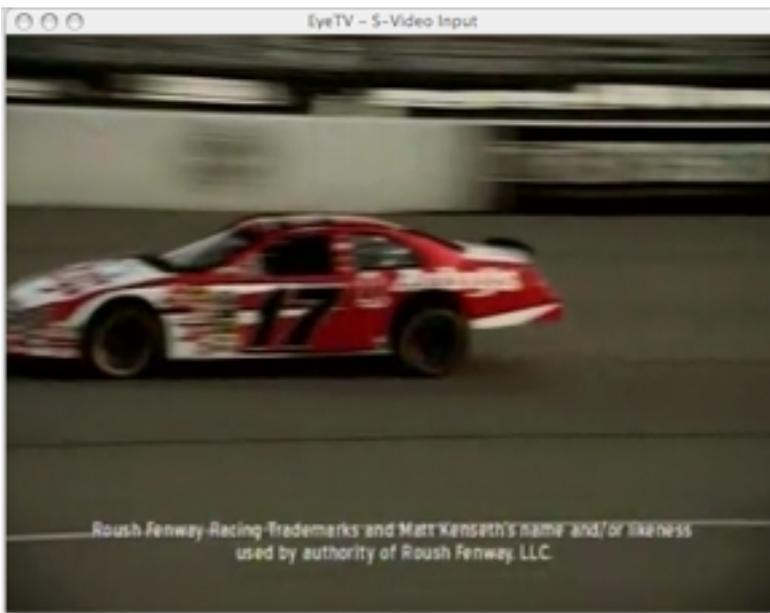
For several years, Elgato has been providing digital video recorder and TV tuner solutions for the Mac. Over that time their software has evolved to offer robust options for TV viewing, recording, editing, and archiving.

The US EyeTV Hybrid package comes with the TV receiver, software and manual on CD-ROM, a video cable for S-video/composite inputs, a 12" USB extender cable, and a remote control.

Installation

The TV receiver should be directly plugged into an available USB 2.0 port on the Mac. Because the device draws power from the USB bus, it does not have a separate power supply. The included USB extender cable can be used if the TV receiver blocks use of the other USB ports. A TV antenna is not included, although one is necessary for viewing either analog or digital broadcast television. Attach the antenna or analog cable input to the coaxial plug on the EyeTV receiver. Use the "breakout" cable to connect set-top boxes, video game consoles, or other playback devices.

The EyeTV software is easily installed by dragging it from the CD-ROM to the Applications folder. Upon software launch, an installation key (included) must be entered; then a wizard guides through the many additional options available. For US users, a [TitanTV](#) account is setup for scheduling. European users get an account with [tvtv](#), and Australians a free trial with [icety](#).



Once the activation and setup are complete, the EyeTV software displays a live video window, a controller palette, and a program window with channels, schedules, and recordings.

If an existing channel lineup or service provider changes, the channel and schedules can be added or reprogrammed without going through the installation wizard. The channel section in the program window conveniently provides options to change or add a service, perfect for those using the EyeTV Hybrid to view and record content while traveling.

With so many other USB devices plugged into our Macs, we couldn't help but test the TV receiver when plugged into powered USB hubs. We tested the EyeTV Hybrid with two different powered USB hubs and on two different Macs to find that, while it worked, there were occasional frame syncing and frame dropout problems. The problems were consistent even when no other USB devices were plugged in, and disappeared when the TV receiver

was attached directly to a USB port on either of the computers. The inability to use powered USB hubs was a disappointment, since having the EyeTV Hybrid dangle off the back or side of a computer is less convenient for permanent usage.

Viewing

While the TV tuner will work with a G4 Mac, a dual G5 or Intel-based Mac is needed for 720p or 1080p HD playback. Digital broadcast signals are sent to the Mac in their original format, whereas analog signals (including composite and S-video inputs) are processed by the computer and the EyeTV software. Different live playback settings are available in the preferences, which can help with playback quality on slower Macs. With a 1.83GHz Intel-based iMac we had no problems with playback on the highest quality setting.

Because the EyeTV Hybrid does not do any hardware encoding, all input and playback is live. This makes the Hybrid perfect for attaching a video game console, since there is no encoding lag between input and what is displayed on the screen.



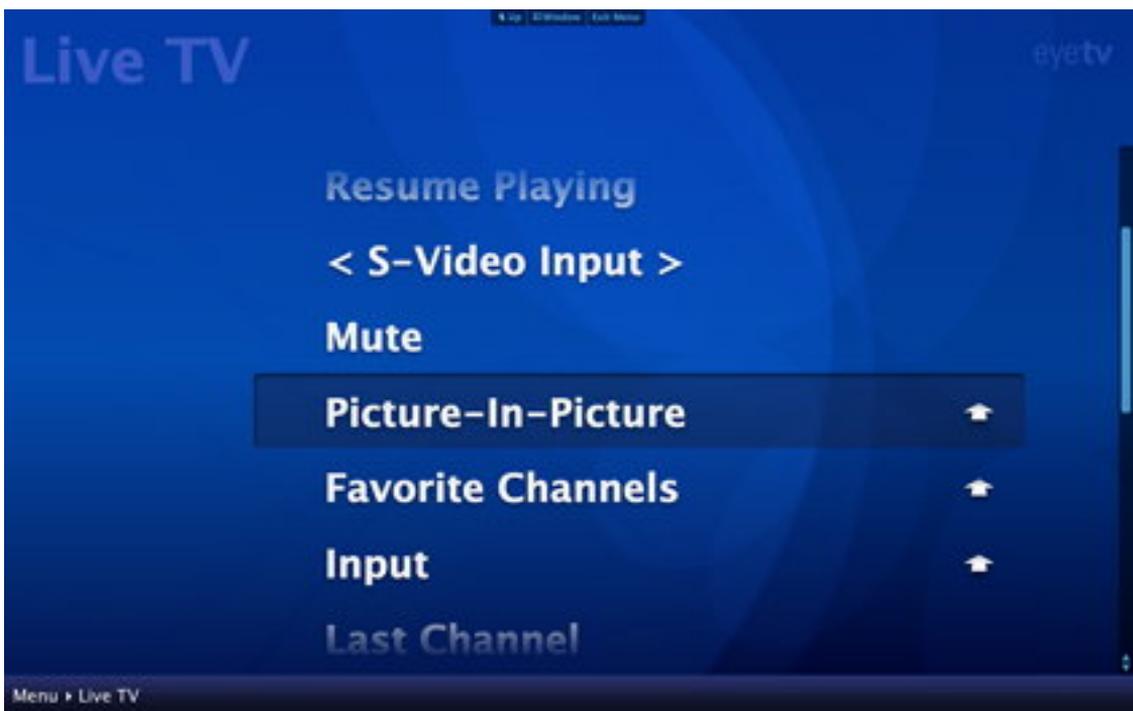
HD video in 1080p is impressive to watch on a Mac screen. ([Click](#) to enlarge.)

There are many useful DVR features, including pausing and replaying the live TV signal. It is also possible to watch multiple live digital programs if they are from the same digital provider. For example, many of the digital broadcast stations in our region offer multi-channel feeds with the primary content, news, weather, or music videos. These additional feeds can be displayed in a picture-in-picture window.



Picture-in-picture can show recorded and live video simultaneously.

For those interested in using their Mac as a comprehensive entertainment solution, the EyeTV software also works with the Apple Remote. By holding the Apple Remote's Menu button down for five seconds, an EyeTV Menu appears instead of Front Row.



While not as elegant as Front Row, the EyeTV Menu provides options for Live TV, Recordings, Program Guide, Schedules, and Settings.

Recording

As with live playback, there are recording preferences based on the desired quality and processor abilities. The MPEG-1 options are better for those using older Macs, but for those with recent machines the MPEG-2 recording is unquestionably higher quality. Of course, the tradeoff with higher quality recording is the additional amount of hard drive space required for the files. We recorded several programs and found that at the higher setting an hour of video used 5–10 GB of disk space. For those interested in frequent recording, it might be a good idea to get an additional hard drive dedicated to video use.

TitanTV provides program scheduling integrated within the EyeTV software or accessed through their Web site. To record, simply click on the program desired and/or the record icon. The show will be automatically added to the EyeTV recording schedule. If there is a scheduling conflict with another program, EyeTV will ask which show to record.

In the preferences and the guide settings, remote scheduling can be activated to check the TitanTV Web site for any recordings scheduled while away. Frequent travelers can then make sure their home computer records anything of interest and that the programs are waiting for them when they return.

Once added to the EyeTV schedule, additional options are available for daily, weekly, or custom repeated recordings. The scheduling window also provides a feature so that record-

ings can be automatically formatted and exported to iTunes for syncing with an iPod or Apple TV.

Editing

One of EyeTV's more appealing features is the ability to edit unwanted content from recordings. A typical one-hour show can be reduced to approximately 43 minutes by removing commercials, making the television experience much more relaxing for viewing and archiving. Edited content also takes up less space on a disk, making it possible to fit more programs onto a hard drive or DVD.



The editing window provides a “live” image of the content with thumbnail frames and a time line below.

Video can be scrubbed from beginning to end by using the thumbnails, time line, or keyboard shortcuts. Unwanted content is easily marked on the time line for deletion, export, or saving as a separate clip.

Exporting and Archiving

Recordings are easily exported with either “preset” formats or using more detailed “expert” settings. The presets provide options for e-mail, Web, iMovie, iDVD, DVD Studio Pro, Toast, PSP, Apple TV, iPod, and iTunes. MPEG program or elementary streams (without re-encoding) are also available. “Expert” choices include DV, HDV, QuickTime, MPEG-4, H.264, 3G, DivX AVI, Windows Media, AAC Audio, and Apple Lossless Audio. QuickTime files can be opened from the EyeTV file menu, viewed as with any other EyeTV recording, and exported to a new format.

Roxio's Toast is fully integrated with EyeTV for archiving to Video CD or DVD. Select the recordings to burn, click on the "Toast" button in EyeTV's program window, and Toast is launched with the selected video already listed in the DVD menu. Any HD files will be re-encoded to standard DVD format with lower resolution.

TitanTV Integration?

During installation, the EyeTV Hybrid and software correctly found all of our local television stations for both analog and digital broadcasts. 13 digital stations were available, and all stations were listed on the TitanTV Web site. Unfortunately, three of those stations were missing from the integrated schedule guide within the EyeTV software. When recordings were scheduled from the missing stations using the TitanTV Web page, the channels were not programmed correctly for recording.

At the time of this review and after two months of requests, TitanTV does not provide information or listings for [Cavalier TV](#), a DSL/IP digital television provider. Interestingly enough, television schedules for this service are available from other Web sites—but those sites are not integrated with EyeTV for scheduling.

A new feature in the EyeTV 2.4 software is configuration for set-top boxes. The EyeTV software can schedule for set-top boxes if TitanTV or tvtv provides information for the television provider. Depending on the provider and set-top box, EyeTV can also change the set-top channel to make recording seamless. Anyone who has tried to record from a box welcomes this feature.

The EyeTV software does not allow manual configuration for set-top boxes. Because TitanTV scheduling and information for our service was unavailable, we were unable to test this new feature.

Results

The only noteworthy complaint regarding the EyeTV Hybrid is with TitanTV's lack of scheduling information for our television provider. That is primarily an issue with TitanTV, and not the Elgato EyeTV hardware or software. One solution would be for the EyeTV software to be integrated with and provide choices for other scheduling providers.

The EyeTV Hybrid is a compact and affordable solution for viewing, recording, and editing digital broadcast and analog television. The software provides excellent features that are far and above most set-top PVR solutions. This product is also suited to anyone with portability and space issues, since it is easily packed away for travel and draws power from the USB bus. With both digital and analog abilities, the Hybrid is a great addition for anyone using a Mac to power their entertainment center.

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Accessory Review

by Frank H. Wu, frankhwu@mac.com

MagSafe Adapters

Portable Power Station

Developer: [Battery Geek](#)

Price: starting at \$250

Requirements: MacBook or MacBook Pro

Trial: None



MagSafe 120w AC/DC Car/Airline Adapter

Developer: [Mikegyver](#)

Price: \$210

Requirements: MacBook or MacBook Pro

Trial: None



I have always had a bit of attention deficit disorder, and with my MacBook Pro around all the time I can indulge the temptation to multitask—to the unceasing annoyance of my wife, among others. Yet even with an EVDO card and everything else that makes a laptop computer so indispensable, it is the mundane need for energy that limits my ability to work constantly. Others must share that desire, because there is a burgeoning market for accessories that provide constant power.

The Battery Geek Portable Power Station has much to recommend it. The lithium ion unit fulfills its *raison d'être*, which is to provide super long-lasting energy as an external battery for a laptop computer or other device. It comes in a sturdy, stylish package. The device is heavy duty and looks well made. Its sole problem is rather severe for this user and other likely readers of this piece: it doesn't work with MacBooks or MacBook Pros. Or more precisely, its knock-off MagSafe adapter is so poorly executed that it cannot be counted on.



Portable Power Station

The Battery Geek product, which the company claims is the “BMW” of battery packs, is straightforward. It comes in three capacities, all with voltage that can be adjusted from 3V to 28V at the most common increments (5V, 6V, 9V, 12V, 16V, 19V, 21V, and 24V). It plugs in with an adapter for overnight charging. It comes inside a nylon carrying case, with a little leather case as a bonus. The nylon is higher quality than the leather, though.



Battery Geek Case

Inside the case are a vast array of adapter tips for every conceivable device, including cell phones and PDAs—it's all there except a MagSafe connector. But the company is offering a special deal with a free MagSafe connector. The cliché “You get what you pay for” applies.



Adapter Tips Inside Battery Geek Case

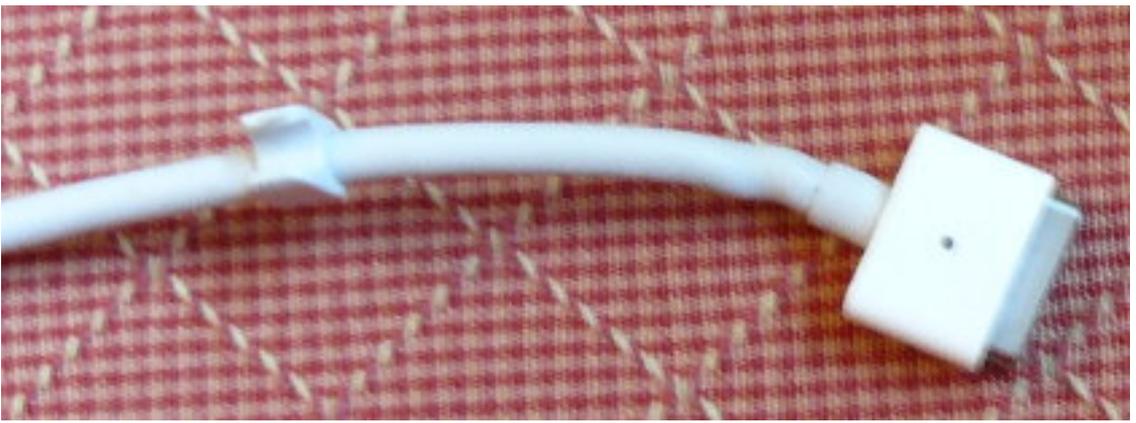
Apple has patented the MagSafe connector, familiar to every user of an Intel-based Apple laptop. The intellectual property protection almost certainly explains why there are few if any third-party vendors providing MagSafe-compatible accessories. The Battery Geek attempt is flimsy enough to raise doubts as soon as the package is opened. Sure enough, the metal component dislodged from the plastic housing on its first use. To their credit, Battery Geek immediately sent out two replacements at no charge, but these fell apart as quickly as the first.



Battery Geek MagSafe Knock Off, Fallen Apart

Electricity doesn't depend on the elegance of its path, though. Despite the shoddy construction, the Battery Geek in fact works to deliver juice to the MacBook. The MagSafe copy can be put back together; the metal part just sticks right back into the plastic part, and it can be unplugged from the machine without falling apart if, instead of pulling it out, one twists it in a plane perpendicular to how one would pull it out. There is no doubt it can be made to work, even if one has to fiddle with it each time. Once functional, the level of consistency isn't clear, but it appears to be better than double—not quite triple—the average run time of a MacBook. With the Portable Power Station 130 at full charge and the battery at full charge, together they delivered more than eight hours worth of power with moderate loads.

What works much better than the Battery Geek MagSafe adapter tip is the Mikegyver Computer & Tech (MCT) cable. This is a hand-made product using the actual Apple part connected to a cable that is compatible with the Kensington system and its adapter tips. The company sells a range of similar products.



Mikegyver Cable, MagSafe End

The basic choice is between the Kensington and iGo systems, which come in their original packaging with the Mikegyver cable attached. Both the Kensington and the iGo are popular adapters that come with appropriate accessories to draw power from cars or in airplanes. And Mikegyver has multiple options: a customer can send in a MagSafe unit to swap for a finished Mikegyver product, or for a modest \$9 even download plans to “do it yourself” (and, at the same price, plans to install a radio on a Suzuki Burgman scooter—whoever is behind this company is sure living up to its name).



Mikegyver Cable Plugged Into Kensington Power Adapter

After two weeks of continuous use, the Mikegyver unit seems to be holding up perfectly. The fit on the joint where the MagSafe cable plugs into the Kensington adapter tip is snug and looks as if it will stand up to a reasonable lifetime of wear and tear. The Mikegyver cord adds a nice bit of extra length. Its only oddity is that the LED on the MagSafe dongle stays on after it has been unplugged.

This set-up happens to be compatible with the Battery Geek system, with insertion of the appropriate Battery Geek adapter tip. It is much more consistent and secure than the Battery Geek original equipment; Mikegyver knows as much, because he promotes this use of that product on his Web site.

My only quibble with the Mikegyver cable is really a quibble with Kensington. The power adapter in its ordinary guise, which comes with a car adapter and airplane adapter as well,

has a cord that is absurdly short. On anything other than a power strip sitting flat on the floor, the power adapter itself will hang from the wall, dangling by the cord. The engineers couldn't help but have noticed this shortcoming if they had tested the device in the real world even once. It is ugly, even if the adapter is light enough and the cord sturdy enough.



Kensington Power Adapter Hanging From Wall Outlet

The combination is thus ideal. A Battery Geek Portable Power Station coupled to a Mikegyver cable will allow a MacBook user to keep running under all circumstances for about a third of a day. Even a die-hard road warrior couldn't need much more, barring a catastrophe.

I bought my Battery Geek Portable Power Station because I was expecting to take a trans-Pacific business trip. I had to cancel due to my wife needing surgery at the same time. I ended up giving the Battery Geek to my brother. He has a Dell. It'll work out fine. The Mikegyver Cable is in daily use, replacing the stock Apple power adapter in my backpack, along with a Kensington adapter. Nothing is a better testimonial for a commodity product than to become forgotten as routine.

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Software Review

by Linus Ly, lly@atpm.com

Travelogue 360 Paris

Developer: [Big Fish Games](#)

Price: \$20

Requirements: 400 MHz G3-based mac, Mac OS X, 128 MB RAM. [Universal](#).

Trial: Fully-featured (60-minute time limit)



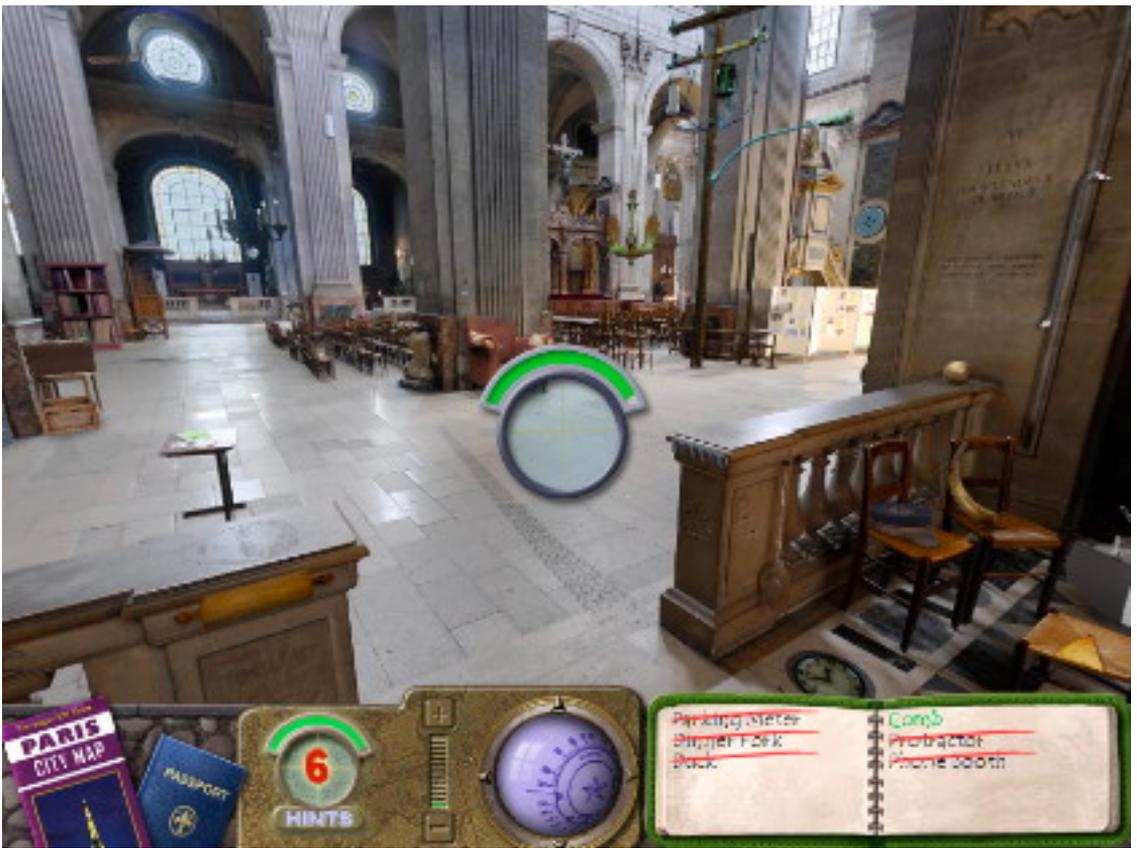
My son loves the I Spy series of books from Scholastic. The books feature pictures accompanied by short poems telling the reader what to look for. There are the original I Spy books with Walter Wick and Jean Marzolo, followed by the rehashed I Spy Challengers! books, the Can You See What I See? spinoffs without Jean Marzolo's poetry, the I Spy Claymation on DVD, and more. My son has them all. Naturally, I also wanted to collect all the I Spy computer games for the Mac. That I succeeded, but the latest I Spy game was a disappointment. Most or maybe all of the pictures were taken from earlier games, only with different items to look for. I wished that there were a new game for the genre and was pleasantly surprised to stumble upon Travelogue 360 Paris.

Developed independently from Scholastic, Travelogue's contrived storyline has the player visiting different tourist traps in the City of Light to collect "souvenirs": things such as a mousetrap, a flashlight, a comb, and straw hats. It is really just a game of the I Spy genre, so you will have to ignore the idiosyncrasy. You are given a list of items to find. Click on the found item, and it disappears from the picture in a flash of sparkles. There are two play modes: Tourist and Explorer. In Explorer mode, your search is limited by time, while with Tourist mode you have all the time in the world to find the objects. As you advance through the levels, you usually end up revisiting previous locales to find more objects.



Police light atop a rose bouquet.

In both modes, should you get stuck, you can turn on the special compass to better locate the objects. As the compass comes into an object's neighborhood, its meter becomes greener and greener, and the object even throbs to help you see it. There is a limit to how many times you can use the compass, so use it sparingly, lest you want to have no help at the higher levels.



Comb see, comb sa? The compass helps me locate the stubborn comb.

To break from the monotony, after each level completion, you get to play a mini game, which can be a jigsaw puzzle, a mahjong tile-matching game, or fitting objects into a suitcase. Soothing music and ambient sounds, such as footsteps and cash register ringing, play in the background, although they can become monotonous after awhile.



Mini games.

What sets Travelogue apart from the other picture puzzle games is the ability to pan 360 degrees in the game environment. You can look left, right, and full circle. You can also look up and down and still have the ability to look 360 degrees around where you are. The game instructions rightly warn that motion sickness can occur. The scrolling is smooth, and the graphics remain beautiful while scrolling, as long as you don't move too fast. At certain angles, some objects don't fit into the perspective, but I am willing to overlook that. Last but not least, you can zoom into the background for a better look at what's there, all the while still able to pan in all directions.



I wouldn't stand to the right of that rhino if I were you.

After the novelty of panoramic gaming and the awe of the gorgeous graphics wear off, I find that the game is too easy to play. Objects are usually wisely placed to blend in with other objects of the same color or shape. However, sometimes the objects are bunched together in the same area. On the higher levels, where the player has to revisit older locales, there are more items to locate, but some items are from the previous search, exactly in the same place they were in the lower levels.

When it comes to the clue words, Travelogue could use a page from the I Spy series. It should make use of words that have multiple meanings. For example, make the user look for *bats*, which could turn out to be flying rodents or baseball sticks. Another idea to

borrow from the I Spy computer game is to make the mini games freely available once the related levels have been solved. Of course, the content of the mini games would have to be altered upon subsequent visits, that is, different items to stuff into the suitcase or different postcards to match. My son has been known to play the mini games in I Spy over and over.

Without a doubt, Travelogue can be used as a learning tool. It should be made more so by having the English clues read aloud. English is a language with many words borrowed from other cultures, so some words are often mispronounced even by native speakers. Having the words read out loud would be especially helpful for the factoids that are rewarded for each level completed. The English-speaking player can certainly benefit from knowing how to properly pronounce the French names of places visited. Even better, if the game could have a switch to go totally French, it would be a boon for students of the French language.

It must be noted that for the review I used the downloadable version from MacGameStore.com. As I was writing the review, it was announced that Mac publisher Aspyr would be releasing a retail version of the game. I am sure that the two games are identical, perhaps with the only difference being the Aspyr logo added to the beginning of the game.

It should also be noted that Travelogue 360 Paris isn't the first hidden object Mac game outside of the Scholastic games. Big Fish Games has a whole series called [Mystery Case Files](#). The big difference with Travelogue is the panoramic experience. Already there is a Travelogue 360 Rome, released near the end of July 2007. It is currently available only as a download from MacGameStore.com.

Given its beautiful graphics and the immersing experience, I enjoyed Travelogue 360 Paris very much. My son enjoyed it, too. For him it is about just right in terms of difficulty, so perhaps for the little ones the game isn't that easy. Still, revisited scenes should have all-new items to find, and the game's factoids should be read out loud as a way for the player to learn the French terms. Overall, Travelogue 360 Paris earns a Very Nice rating.

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