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

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Thanks for reading ATPM.



²³<http://mjtsai.com>

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About This Particular Macintosh has been free since 1995, and we intend to keep it that way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with *real* jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. Our aim is to produce a fiercely independent magazine, with multiple formats designed for easy reading rather than showing ads. The views expressed in these pages have always been our own, and to help prove it we do not accept direct sponsorships or advertising. We do, however, need to pay for our Web site and other expenses, so we rely on minimal advertising, sold indirectly via Google and Yahoo, as well as the support of ATPM readers who shop at [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)¹ using our link.



¹<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/aboutthisparticu>

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the December issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* The holiday season has arrived, and the editors of ATPM wish all of our readers a splendid time with family and friends during this special time of the year. Please join us this month, and every month, as we celebrate what we call the “personal computing experience” and explore the fast-changing world of personal technology throughout the coming year.

The Magical Mystery Tour

In November, the music of the Fab Four came to iTunes and arrived just in time for holiday season sales. The recordings of the Beatles had been conspicuously absent from iTunes, the world’s largest digital music store. After years of discussions and negotiations, all parties involved reached agreement, and Apple spared no time and no space on the company’s Web sites announcing the news.

While much attention has been paid to the volume of song sales since the debut of the Beatles on iTunes, there’s a lot more to the story. The group’s music reflected the tumultuous cultural and social changes of the 1960s. The music has special meaning to members of the Baby Boom Generation, and bringing the music of the Beatles to iTunes makes for a powerful connection with those who remember the Beatles as an active recording group and the times in which the music was originally written, recorded, and released.

Watch for increased sales not only of the music of the Beatles through iTunes but also of Apple’s digital devices with iPod functionality. The music of the Beatles is a magical mystery tour through a time of extraordinary change in our society and remembered by all of us who experienced the era.

Let It Be?

The release of the iPad has disrupted the PC market. It’s not that the iPad is a PC replacement. Rather, it’s a device that transcends the PC paradigm as we know it today. As large as Apple has become, the spirit of innovation is inherent in the ethos of the company. Over the past decade, no company had done more to transform the ways in which use technology in our daily lives than Apple. Each of the company’s products initially released during the past

ten years, from the iPod to the iPhone to the iPad, has disrupted established industries and reshaped the manner in which technology is used and the ways in which digital content is made available and sold.

The company’s penchant for disrupting markets and industries through innovation suggests that there are more new products to come and that nothing should be let be if there are practical ways to enhance how we communicate with one another and the world around us.

The iPad may herald the end of the PC era as we know it and may usher in a new era of digital content distribution. Watch for iPad-specific news publications and the migration of publications currently in print format to app-style distribution. Reducing the world’s consumption of newsprint and the need for fossil-fuel-based delivery of printed publications will do us all a world of good.

An Analyst’s Life

Moving from the rhythm of music to the flow of numbers, the long Thanksgiving weekend provided an opportunity to look at Apple’s financial reports with a different take on the results. To better understand the ongoing Apple success story, I’ve posted a quarterly comparison of the company’s major cost components over the past two fiscal years. While there’s much talk about Apple’s recent decisions to reduce gross margins (the difference between the amounts received on products sold and the costs of manufacture of the products sold), there’s much more to the story.

Although Apple has become more aggressive on product pricing, other major cost components such as operating expenses and tax expense have been reduced relative to the growth in revenue. In other words, Apple continues to increase profits even as gross margins have been on the decline. You can view the quarterly comparisons [at Posts At Eventide](http://www.postsateventide.com/2010/11/apple-quarterly-comparison-of-costs-and.html)¹.

The Annual ATPM Holiday Shopping Guide

Actually, we don’t have one, nor is a shopping guide from the editors of ATPM needed in our constantly

¹<http://www.postsateventide.com/2010/11/apple-quarterly-comparison-of-costs-and.html>

connected world. There's no shortage of product promotions from Apple, and anyone on Apple's electronic mailing lists isn't left wanting for notifications of new products and holiday gift ideas. We won't add to the recommendations but for one new product that has captured the attention and imagination of Apple product enthusiasts around the world...

The New MacBook Air

For some, the new MacBook Air is appealing due to its entry price of \$999. For others, it's the slim size and weight. And for many, it's the high-resolution LED-backlit screen. The new MacBook Air may be the PC industry's success story of the holiday quarter. The Mac's unit sales performance continues to lead the domestic PC industry. As consumers take an interest in tablet devices, makers of portable PCs will be under pressure. It's innovation or elimination in today's PC market.

ATPM Wants You!

The editorial staff of ATPM is comprised of talented writers who started their relationship with our publication as readers of our monthly issues. When we say that we "celebrate the personal computing experience," we mean it. If you've ever had the urge to share your personal computing experiences with a large and influential readership, please contact us at editor@atpm.com.

Each issue of ATPM, in its variety of formats, is read by tens of thousands of Apple product enthusiasts around the world. Join us today.

Our December issue includes:

[Bloggable](#)²

A monthly summary of Wes Meltzer's blogosphere news, originating from his delicious.com/bloggable feed.

[MacMuser](#)³: Sophisticated Follower of Invasion

Mark Tennent shares a mini-review of Sophos Anti-Virus software.

²<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/bloggable.shtml>

³<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/macmuser-invasion.shtml>

[The iPad Chronicles](#)⁴: The iPad's Versatility

For Robert Paul Leitao, the iPad quickly became his general-use device, relegating an office PC and a home Macintosh to specific-use utensils.

[How To: Updating Multiple Macs](#)⁵: the Combo Update Is Your Friend

Tips for managing multiple Macs in your home, especially in regard to operating system updates.

[How To: Convert Stroke Masks](#)⁶ to Transparency in Adobe Illustrator

A tale of discovery in Adobe Illustrator.

[Desktop Pictures: Flowers of Life](#)⁷

Reader Jay Feuillet shares this month's desktop pictures featuring flowers at a park in South Florida.

[Out at Five](#)⁸

Matt Johnson's new series, *Out at Five*, looks at the workplace and its boundaries from all angles, revolving around many of the same characters from his former series, *Cortland*.

[Review: MAXPower](#)⁹ 802.11n/g/b Wireless USB 2.0 Stick Adapter and Extension Cradle

An elegant-looking, but difficult and pricey, way of improving your computer's wireless reception.

[Review: ShareTool 2.1.2](#)¹⁰

This indispensable tool for staying connected to a computer from a remote location has been updated to make sharing much simpler, but at the expense of relying on the developer's servers for authentication.

⁴<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/ipad-chronicles.shtml>

⁵<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/updating-multiple-macs.shtml>

⁶<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/illustrator-stroke-masks.shtml>

⁷<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/desktop-pictures.shtml>

⁸<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/out-at-five.shtml>

⁹<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/maxpower.shtml>

¹⁰<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/sharetool.shtml>

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¹¹<http://www.postsateventide.com>

¹²<http://www.theipadchronicles.com>

The iPhone as an iPad Companion¹

I'm feeling you on the iPad. Just got back from my yearly visit to Thailand, and my iPad got put through its paces in the "land of smiles." I had pictures I shared with Thai friends from previous visits, I loaded new photos daily, and it was a huge hit when I showed the locals their pictures old and new. It had no problem accessing the local hotspots on WiFi, and I had new and e-mails at my command every morning at breakfast without having to squint at a tiny iPhone screen. I saw a iPad ripoff at the local computer place. I had to look twice to realize it was a knockoff. Imitation being the best form of flattery, Apple would be very flattered just before they filed the lawsuit! Every pad device after this owes it success to Apple.

—*gwats1957*

Holy iPad²: the iPad in the Hands of a Pastor

Thanks for your comments. I am a pastor and teach pastors, as well as a long term Mac user (1990). Currently I use MacBook Pro 15" because I travel so much, and it is my entire office. But I have also watched the iPad development, and am leaning toward getting one. (By the way, Accordance might give you more for your language study, and I don't think the copying/pasting is a problem.)

—*Rich Shields*

Thanks for the comment. I've been very happy with the iPad, and it's been great in ministry. I've heard that about Accordance before. I'm not sure I'm ready to plunk down extra cash for another Bible study software. I've invested quite a bit over the years in Logos. I will take a look at it, though, in the App Store.

—*Kevin Rossen*

Replacing a MacBook Hard Drive

Very [interesting article](#)³. What I would like to know is what degree of difficulty would be involved in replacing an internal hard drive in a black MacBook. I have done this in the older grey Mac and it was

¹<http://www.atpm.com/16.11/ipad-chronicles-iphone.shtml>

²<http://www.atpm.com/16.11/ipad-pastor.shtml>

³<http://www.atpm.com/16.08/owc-express.shtml>

really easy. However, when I look at the black MacBook with the battery removed, I don't see what any simple methods of getting to the innards.

—*Richard Scotte*

Are you kidding about the internal hard drive? Turn the MacBook over and remove the battery. You'll see a metal band with two or three screws. Back the screws off and remove the band. You now have access to the memory and the hard drive. There is a white tab and the end of the battery bay. Pull it out and give it a firm tug. You've now removed the hard drive. Simple!

Swap out the drive in the enclosure and replace it the way it come out, making sure you don't put it back in upside down. Give it a firm push so the drive seats in the SATA connector. Replace the band and re-install the battery. You're done!

—*Grover Watson*

No Smoking Gun⁴: Re-tooling Dodge and Burn

This is a very useful non-destructive dodging and burning technique that I use myself, but don't be so hasty to discard Photoshop's dedicated Dodge/Burn tools. The overlay blend mode technique lightens and darkens in a very blunt, linear way that pays no attention whatsoever to highlights, midtones, or shadows. The Dodge and Burn tools are much more intelligent in this respect because they're working with actual pixel data. They're superior for bringing out detail and deepening shadows without harming midtones or highlights so severely.

—*Tronam*

iSkin Keyboard Protector⁵

I have the same problem. The iSkin is nearly two years old. It didn't do this for the first year. I now work as a nurse practitioner and noticed it after I started using hand sanitizer a lot while using the keyboard at work. Now it's there every time I wash the cover. I think it is degrading. I also cut a tear in the pad over the left Shift key because of the way I hold that finger. I'm ready for a new cover, and I'm not

⁴<http://www.atpm.com/14.05/photoshop.shtml>

⁵<http://www.atpm.com/9.01/iskin.shtml>

sure they are still available in the simple basic colors. I can't find any explanation of what that greasy substance is caused by.

—Ronda

Making Your Word Processor Work⁶

A Mac user since 1984 (and Apple before that), I find ATPM very useful and entertaining. Thank you for that.

I found the article on word processors particularly interesting. I started with The Electric Pencil (Apple II) and tried every new one that came out, finally settling on Word Juggler made by Quark for the Apple III.

—Chris Albertson

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.



⁶<http://www.atpm.com/5.06/paradigm.shtml>

Bloggable

by Wes Meltzer, wmeltzer@atpm.com

[VideoLAN and Apple¹ Are Having a License Dispute Over VLC](#)

VideoLAN allowed its signature video player, VLC, be ported to the iPhone by a third party. Apparently there's a dispute involving the GPL, under which VLC is licensed, and Apple's App Store Terms of Service. I'm actually kind of surprised this sort of thing hasn't come up sooner.

[Study²: Developers Will Split Attention Between More Platforms in 2011](#)

Millennial Media, in conjunction with the *Wall Street Journal*, is forecasting that in 2011, developers will invest more effort on Android and *significantly* more on Windows Mobile. Interestingly, they're forecasting a decrease in developer attention to WebOS, now owned by HP; they're also forecasting a 1% decrease for iOS. For what it's worth, I'm not surprised to see Windows Phone 7 taking up a lot more attention than WinMo 6.5; it's a completely new platform with new UI conventions, and a lot of applications are going to have to be rewritten. (On the other hand, it's possible it will be a flop. Look at WebOS's market share numbers. . .and I'm much more impressed by WebOS than by Windows Phone 7.)

[HP's Slate Isn't an iPad³, It's Just a Touchscreen PC](#)

Computerworld's Mike Elgan opines that the HP Slate 500 isn't anything like the iPad. He makes a solid point: the Slate is a laptop running a standard OS with touchscreen enhancements, with all of the upside (standard applications) and downside (typical installer pains, battery life, OS mismatches) that entails. He uses the analogy—ah, transportation analogies—that the iPad is a bicycle and the Slate is a motorcycle. It's no accident that there are an order of magnitude more bicycles than motorcycles in the world. Elgan says, “When a new motorcycle comes

¹<http://arstechnica.com/apple/news/2010/11/the-vlc-ios-license-dispute-and-how-it-could-spread-to-android.ars>

²<http://arstechnica.com/gadgets/news/2010/11/windows-phone-7-to-rival-ipad-for-developer-attention-in-2011.ars>

³http://www.macworld.com/article/155158/2010/10/ipad_hpslate.html

out, the motorcycle magazines don't ask, “Will this kill the mountain bike?” It would be absurd.”

[Where Does the MacBook Air Fit⁴ in Apple's Product Lineup?](#)

John Gruber ponders where the MacBook Air fits in the product lineup. In the final analysis, he settles on an interesting hypothesis: the MacBook Air is the pro iPad, not the lightest MacBook. I come in at the other end of the spectrum, that eventually the 11" and 13" MacBook Airls will take over the niche occupied by the lowest-end MacBooks now, in the same way that the iPod nano was once a niche product but eventually took over the hard drive-based iPod classic's spot in the lineup. But we agree to disagree. The iPod analogy is a really instructive one, as Apple's notebook lineup is now up to four models from three.

[Google's Android Problem⁵: Go for Control or for Market Share](#)

Ben Hookway notes that Google has a problem: unlike other mobile OS vendors, Google allows a high degree of carrier and handset-maker customization of Android. This is one reason they've achieved their market share: some device makers and carriers put a lot of work into customizing Android. On the other hand, unlike when you pick up a BlackBerry or Windows Phone 7 handset, the Android experience varies dramatically from phone to phone or carrier to carrier, and I think that weakens the Android brand. Microsoft is incredibly particular about Windows Phone 7! And Apple, well, what can you say? They make the phone and OS and sell it on only one carrier. Anyway, it's an interesting question to ponder. Hookway says, “The economic model of handset OEMs necessitates UI differentiation and Google is taking that away. For Google to expect Apple-like control on a fundamentally different business model is just unrealistic.” All Google's mobile money is in search and ads, not the OS.

⁴http://daringfireball.net/2010/10/airs_spot_in_lineup

⁵<http://www.visionmobile.com/blog/2010/10/the-android-ui-dilemma-unify-or-differentiate/>

[Could the Mac App Store⁶ Kill Off Software Bundles?](#)

On the list of things that hadn't occurred to me about the Mac App Store: the possible impact of how Apple wants to handle sales on software bundles. I've written about these before; the company selling the bundle gets developers to discount their software, in exchange for better exposure. Some work out better than others for the developers. But this wouldn't be possible at all in the Mac App Store, and if that becomes the dominant way of buying software, as *Ars* points out, this might be going the way of the dodo.

[The iPad-ification of the Mac OS⁷](#)

Ross Rubin, writing for *Engadget*, speculates about what the long-run changes to Mac OS X might be, in light of the big Back to the Mac event. Sure, there's a certain amount of hardware convergence: Macs are getting more like iOS devices, and iOS devices are getting more like Macs. But Rubin points out that the changes to the Mac OS may actually be more radical, as an interface that is more gesture- than keyboard-and-mouse-driven might someday become the norm for the Mac, or the single-window screen (a paradigm that appeared in the original Mac OS X public beta, believe it or not). It's a fascinating question to ponder.

[Why Netflix Isn't Ready for Android Yet⁸](#)

John Gruber's been on a tear lately pointing out how the lack of centralization and standardization for Android devices leads to some real fragmentation problems. This is a textbook example: Netflix says that they can't roll out Android software, because of the differences between all the devices, all the possible versions of the OS still floating around out there, and the modifications that the OEMs and carriers can make. They have to use DRM—by contract, and probably also because of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act—and there's no platform-level DRM support in Android. They plan to roll out support for specific devices, working on a carrier-by-carrier basis. In Eric S. Raymond's famous "The Cathedral and the Bazaar," he extols the virtues of letting a thousand flowers bloom, so to speak. But CLI hacker-ware

⁶<http://arstechnica.com/apple/news/2010/11/mac-app-store-might-kill-bundles-but-macgraphoto-set-for-one-more-try.ars>

⁷<http://i.engadget.com/2010/11/07/switched-on-the-ipadification-of-mac-os/>

⁸<http://blog.netflix.com/2010/11/netflix-on-android.html>

or server-side projects are totally different from core user experiences like Android... and Google allowing this fragmentation really doesn't benefit anyone.

[Anatomy of How an iPhone App Takes Off⁹](#)

Robert Scoble takes a survey of the landscape of iOS apps and the tech press, and he wonders if the entire ecosystem of iOS and its third-party applications is liberating itself from the tech press. (Maybe that's behind the hostility toward iOS among the techno-rati?) It's also worth note that, whether it's true or not, developers perceive iOS device users as buying software, and, for lack of a better word, Android device users as cheapskates. A colleague of mine is always extolling how great his Android phone is because all the apps are free; that doesn't sound like it's fostering a good developer ecosystem to me. So what if Apache is free? Photoshop isn't; and neither are OmniOutliner or CrossWords, to cite some of my favorite applications for OS X and iOS.

[News Corp Creating iPad-Only Newspaper¹⁰ With Recurring Subscriptions](#)

I've been wondering when this would happen, and who would be the one to create it: News Corp is going to start an iPad-only newspaper (expanding to other devices later), which would be based on a recurring billing system just like regular newspapers. I assume it will also carry ads, because they will only charge 99 cents a week.

I know the economics of the business well enough to tell you that even if News Corp gets to keep 69 cents after Apple's share, and they get a million subscribers, that's still only \$35 million in revenue, or about the line of a 250,000-circulation daily. Murdoch's not in this to create a digital version of the *Columbus Dispatch*...he wants to be the Al Neuharth of the 20th century, to create a tablet analogue to *USA Today*. To do that, he needs ads.

Having said that. If this works, it could completely change the media picture in the post-industrial Western world.

[iOS Is the Future of the Mac OS¹¹](#)

John Siracusa discusses the future of the Mac OS in light of the iOS developments. Will Lion really have

⁹<http://scobleizer.com/2010/11/20/is-the-tech-press-needed-anymore-how-apple-iphone-apps-take-off-now/>

¹⁰<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/nov/21/ipad-newspaper-steve-jobs-rupert-murdoch>

¹¹<http://www.macworld.com/article/155914/2010/11/mac-ofthefutureos.html>

a single-window focus mode, like the much-maligned OS X Developer Preview a decade ago, and an improved window-switching system that goes along with it? What's the likelihood? Hard to say! But it's a really interesting question.

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¹²<http://delicious.com/bloggable>

Sophisticated Follower of Invasion

The question is, do we care if we pass on Windows viruses and Trojans? After all, before we installed the new [Sophos Anti-Virus](#)¹, we didn't know that much of our junk mail arrives with Trojans attached. ClamXav and iAntiVirus had sat like Bhuddists contemplating their digital navels as the Trojans slipped past.

That is the problem for British firm Sophos plc, which offers Mac users a dependable tool at a great price, i.e., free. [iAntiVirus](#)² and [ClamXav](#)³ are also free. ClamXav is the work of another Brit: Mark Allan, who asks for donations. Mark has been making the Mac version of ClamAV for years, based on the open-source anti-virus toolkit for Unix and Windows.

We use Sophos for Windows at work, largely because it has multi-layered access points for users and administrators. Which, in effect, means "them" in IT can keep their jobs by justifying they are needed to make sure the company server is updated with the latest virus definitions.

In reality it means machines bog down as they try to access the servers at the same time as every other computer in the company. Sophos doesn't seem to work 100%, either, or why would a lot of individual computers suddenly announce they have the lurgi or some type of virus infection?

After installing Sophos on a Mac, which has always had an anti-virus installed, Sophos found a handful of Trojans. Admittedly, they were all archived e-mail attachments, which Apple's Mail had correctly identified as junk mail. The previous anti-virus packages had been ClamXav and iAntivirus. ClamXav had never been completely stable, scanned very slowly and had been replaced with iAntiVirus, which didn't like running under 64-bit Mac OS X. The upshot of this is that Sophos will stay on the Mac for long-term testing.

The initial scanning of four internal hard disks, totaling 250 TB, took 36 hours. Since then, Sophos is invisible unless an infected file is downloaded or clicked on. Once a threat has been detected, Sophos

can delete it, move it to a quarantine folder, or attempt to clean it up.

If files are in a Time Machine archive, Sophos cannot touch them. They have to be found and deleted manually. Path names are lengthy (too long to display in Sophos's Quarantine Manager) and have to be searched for in the Sophos log via Console. They can then be navigated to and deleted in Time Machine using its toolbar utility. It would be much easier if clicking on the infected file listed in the Quarantine Manager opened the file's enclosing folder. Once deleted, the filenames automatically clear from the Quarantine Manager list.

There are a few other slightly annoying glitches—for example, windows and sheets open up in awkward and unmovable positions—but in daily use Sophos is easy to use.

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¹<http://www.sophos.com>

²<http://www.iantivirus.com>

³<http://www.clamxav.com>

⁴<http://www.tennent.co.uk>

The iPad Chronicles

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

The iPad's Versatility

The iPad is the most versatile digital device I've ever owned. Lighter and easier to carry than a laptop, the array of comparatively inexpensive application solutions makes the device a winner at both work and at home. Although I purchased the iPad primarily for use at home, its versatility has made the device a work day essential.

iPad and iPhone Integration

One of the delightful aspects of owning and using an iPad is the easy integration of work processes with the iPhone. I use [OmniFocus](#)¹ on both the iPad and the iPhone to manage work projects. Syncing calendars among my iPad, iPhone, and my Mac at home is a feature available through Apple's MobileMe service.

iWork Apps and iCal

I'm now using Numbers, Pages, and Keynote on the iPad, and documents from the Mac and iPad versions of the apps can be transferred easily among devices. Being able to integrate project management, sync calendars, and share documents among devices is creating a decidedly lesser role for my office PC in day-to-day workflow and accomplishments.

The iPad Transcends the PC

I have my iPad with me at all business meetings for taking notes and entering new contact information. Because my iPad, iPhone, and Mac at home all sync through Apple's MobileMe service, I no longer bother to enter business contact information into my work PC. All of my business contact information is readily available on my mobile devices when needed, and stored on my Mac at home.

Ironically, my iPad has become my general-use device, while my work PC has become a limited and specific-use utensil. At home, my Mac is used primarily for content creation, Web site updates, and moderating discussions in the Apple Finance Board. All other tasks, from following Twitter activity, reading news, reading books, and monitoring my e-mail activity, are performed more conveniently on my iPad.

¹<http://www.omnigroup.com/products/omnifocus/>

It's not that the iPad "replaces" a netbook or notebook PC. The iPad represents a product paradigm that transcends the netbook and notebook PC. The iPad's touchscreen and application environment are rendering the netbook obsolete.

The iPad and the Era of the iOS App

I have well over 125 iOS apps installed on my iPad and over 100 apps installed on my iPhone. Including the iWork application suite, iPad and iPhone versions of OmniFocus, and a few assorted and inexpensive apps for home and work, my collective application investment remains under \$125. Matched with pre-installed apps on the Mac, iPhone, and iPad such as iCal, Address Book, and iTunes, additional app purchases provide for specific desired functionality at attractive prices. Integration of information across devices extends and enhances functionality among all of the devices.

I'm intrigued by the concept of a Macintosh App Store and what developers will bring to market for use on the Mac and iOS-based devices. I see opportunities for continued integration and sharing of content among multiple devices.

There's more to the iPad and its versatility than I expected when I first purchased the device. The integrated uses of the iPad and the iPhone are among the pleasant surprises.

Copyright © 2010 Robert Paul Leitao. Robert Paul Leitao is a contributing editor at ATPM and is author of the [Posts At Eventide](#)² and [The iPad Chronicles](#)³ blogs.



²<http://www.postsateventide.com>

³<http://www.theipadchronicles.com>

How To

by Sylvester Roque, sroque@atpm.com

Updating Multiple Macs: the Combo Update Is Your Friend

The holiday season is upon us again. Time to remember the things we have to be thankful for and perhaps do a little gift-giving. If you haven't already become one of the many Apple households with [more than one computer](#)¹, maybe this will be your year.

In modern society, there are many good reasons for being a multi-computer household. I hate to admit it, but there are probably some good reasons why one of those machines would be Windows-based. This month, though, I would like to focus on those of us who have, or support, multiple Macs. There are some things that you can do to make the whole process much more enjoyable and productive.

Setting Up User Accounts

If you've used a Mac for any length of time, you've probably had to set up at least one user account. The process is pretty straightforward, and if it's the initial setup your Mac will walk you through the process. If you are going to be setting up or managing multiple Macs in your home, there are some things you can do to make things easier.

Not Every User Needs to Be an Administrator

Every Mac must have at least one user account designated as an administrator account. Without an "admin" account, such basic tasks as installing software can't be done. That does not mean, though, that every user needs administrator privileges. Do your children, for example, understand the system well enough not to delete or move files that you don't want moved, such as your iTunes library? Users who don't have at least a basic understanding of OS X could wreak havoc on a system if they have an admin account.

Create a Troubleshooting Account

Create a troubleshooting account on each Mac. It doesn't have to be named "troubleshooting," but it does need to be an "admin" account. Don't use this account for daily computing; save it for times when

you are having problems. Let's suppose one of your programs is behaving erratically when launched from your main account. Log into the troubleshooting account and launch the same program. If it runs properly there, the problem may be a corrupt preferences file for that program in your main account.

Create the Same User Account on All Machines

The small number of people with regular access to our Macs have their own user accounts. I've duplicated the accounts across both machines. With this setup, there are fewer passwords to remember. Additionally, there are fewer instances of the operating system complaining that I don't have sufficient privileges when I move a file from one system to another. I usually migrate the user accounts by using Migration Assistant, but you could create the accounts manually. If you go the manual route, it is probably best to create the accounts in the same order on each machine.

Practice Good Account Security

Encourage users to log out of their accounts when they are not being used. Without that measure, anyone with access to the Mac can move or delete files. Although your family wouldn't do that deliberately, accidents happen to the best of us. Leaving the computer logged into a specific user essentially means that anyone with physical access to the computer can see and modify that user's files.

While we are on the subject of account security, make sure the login information for each user is not somewhere where just anyone can find it. It does no good to encourage your family to log out of their accounts when they are not used if the user name and password are written on a sticky note attached to the monitor.

The Root User Is Usually Not Your Friend

One of the concepts that OS X inherits from Unix is that of the "root user." This special user has read/write access to the entire filesystem. Thankfully, Apple has this user turned off by default.

¹<http://mashable.com/2009/10/05/mac-ownership-study/>

Personally, I wouldn't enable it unless absolutely necessary, but before you make that decision, read [Apple's comments](#)² about the root user.

Advantages of the Combo Updater

When I first started using Macs we had one machine, and I think the current OS was some version of System 7. At some point between then and the release of Mac OS X 10.0, I noticed that you could install a version of the OS that was sort of "generic" and would boot most machines. It was a great idea for troubleshooting. I thought we had lost this ability in Mac OS X until someone on the ATPM staff pointed out that the "combo updater" serves that purpose nicely. With Software Update in place to regularly identify updates, what is the "combo update" and why use it?

Apple currently uses two general types of OS updates. Individual updates are those identified by Software Update and may be specific to each type of Mac. For the last several updates, the version identified as appropriate for my desktop Mac Pro has been a different size from the one identified as appropriate for my MacBook Pro. Combo updaters [on the other hand](#)³, "update the base version of a Mac OS X release to the version specified in the Combo Update, including all intermediate updates." Using the current combo updater, one could go from 10.6.0 to 10.6.5 without installing each of the point releases.

While you could use an individual update to perform the same task, there can be problems. Sometimes an individual updater depends upon some other component, such as a security update or installer update, already being installed and current. If the right files aren't found, and current, they generally must be installed first before further installations can proceed. This often means that additional restarts are needed. This is one of the primary advantages of the combo update: it updates most of the critical OS components in one download without worrying about the sequence of installation.

While the file sizes for combo updaters are sometimes quite large, if you are not good about keeping up with updates they are often the same size or smaller than downloading all of the component parts. It seems to me to be so much more Mac-like to download one file than to download several files and worry about the installation sequence and possibility of multiple restarts. Repeat that process over

multiple Macs, and you can see how the combo updater starts to look more efficient.

There is one other advantage of using the combo updater, but it is not specific to multiple-Mac situations. I don't recall ever having an OS update completely fail to apply properly when run through Software Update, but apparently other users have experienced this problem. Many of them have also reported that applying the combo updater resolved whatever was preventing the update from installing properly.

Tips for Using the Combo Updaters

After you have started using the combo updaters, Software Update is still a useful tool. If you've decided that you want to make use of the combo updater, that doesn't mean that Software Update is useless. It can be configured to check for updates automatically, which means you don't have to remember to check manually. Once it alerts you that an update is available, you can always [manually download](#)⁴ the combo updater.

Make sure to grab the appropriate combo updater for your situation. Don't grab the Snow Leopard updater, for example, if you are not running at least Mac OS X 10.6. There seems to be a somewhat common misconception about the updates that Apple has available for download. These downloads *cannot* be used to skip an entire series of the operating system. You must have the base operating system installed in order for its associated update to work. The recent 10.6.5 (Snow Leopard) update will not update a Mac running 10.5 (Leopard), even if the Mac has enough horsepower to run Snow Leopard.

In order to keep from downloading the updater several times, I download it once and move the installer from one machine to another as needed. You could burn the installer file to a CD or pass it from one machine to another via the network, but I usually use a small portable hard drive that I had taking up space. That's often faster than burning a CD or using the network, but use what you have.

Once you have applied the combo updater and restarted if necessary, run Software Update on each Mac just to make sure everything is current. This is a great way to catch minor changes in software that are specific to a system. My desktop Mac, for example, has an older version of iLife, while the laptop has a current version. By running software update regularly on each machine, I don't have to keep track of which version needs to be updated.

²<http://support.apple.com/kb/ht1528>

³<http://www.thexlab.com/faqs/macosxupdates.html>

⁴<http://support.apple.com/downloads/>

Final Thoughts

This process could be applied to other software that is common across all of your Macs, such as iTunes. The time savings may be a bit less, though, since these updates are often smaller. If you have a slower Internet connection, this process can still be a time saver since you don't repeatedly download the same files.

I have focused this month on setup and updating issues associated with multiple macs in the same household. The inspiration for this came about with the recent release of an update that was several hundred megabytes. There were other issues that I haven't addressed, such as keeping data in sync, that might be addressed in the future if there is some interest.

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How To

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Convert Stroke Masks to Transparency in Adobe Illustrator

The following tutorial was born out of a years-long struggle I've endured with my office's current logo. Make no mistake that I'm not fond of that logo; however, I'm setting that fact aside for the purposes of this tutorial.

I'm also giving fair warning that the content of this tutorial is aimed at those with a reasonable working knowledge of Adobe Illustrator. This isn't quite beginner material, and some of what I'll discuss assumes a high level of familiarity with the application.

Since I am required to utilize the logo, I have often struggled to work around an issue left by its designer.



The graphic portion of my employer's logo.

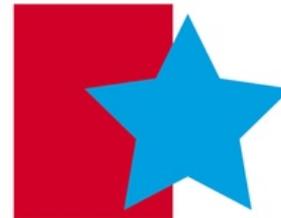
What you see in the image above is what happens when the logo is placed on top of a color other than white. The designer created a thick white stroke around the palm trees in order to have the horizontal lines stop short and not visibly touch the trees. The stroke outline covers over the horizontal lines, hiding them.

This would be fine if the logo were *only* used on top of white. Indeed, when it was designed, administrators had only given thought to printing it on white paper as stationery. Yes, I can make the stroke a different color if I place the logo on top of a solid-color

shape, but that workaround is out the window if the background is multiple colors.

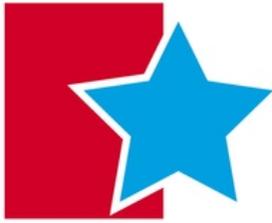
Adobe Illustrator has a command that normally would solve this problem. When one object is on top of another, the command can punch the shape of the upper object out of the lower object. However, this only works for the filled-in portion of an object. Strokes (an object's outline) are ignored. But after more than a decade of battling this scenario, I've at last discovered the solution.

Before demonstrating with my office's logo, I'll share the technique with a much simpler shape.



Starting with simple shapes.

Beginning with two very simple shapes, the blue star overlaps the red rectangle. But similar to my office's logo, I want a gap around the star so that the background shows through and the rectangle doesn't appear to actually touch the star. You might think this is an easy fix—just apply a white stroke around the star at whatever thickness is desired.



The star now has a white outline.

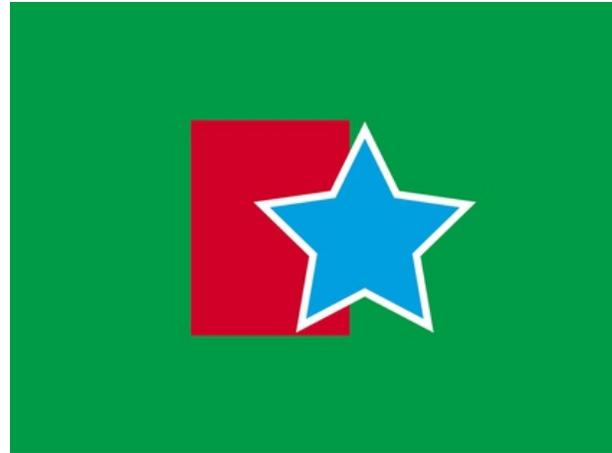
Voilà. The task seems to be complete. But that outline is not transparent and will show up if I use a different color background.

I need to point out here that when a stroke is applied to an object, there is a choice of how that stroke follows the outline of the object:

1. The center of the stroke can follow the edge, which means half of the stroke overlaps the outer edge of the object's fill and half extends beyond the object's fill.
2. The entire stroke follows the inside of the object's boundary, completely overlapping the object's fill at it's outline.
3. The entire stroke follows just outside of the object's boundary.

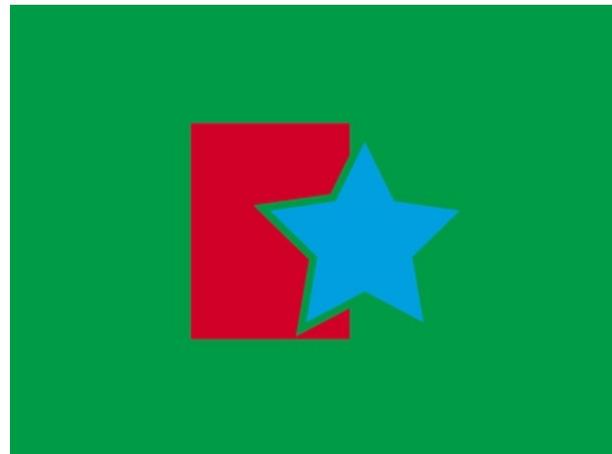
Normally, I'd want the third option. The first two will always make the filled portion of the object appear smaller because the stroke is either partially or completely overlapping the outer edge of the object. For this example, however, I'm going to leave the stroke set to follow center for two reasons. First, since the first option is the default way a stroke is applied, I'm not going to assume that a designer has changed it to follow the outer edge. Second, there may be some instances where overlapping the stroke was intentional, such as a preference for the appearance of an object's fill when a center stroke is applied.

While simply adding a white stroke, as seen above, works perfectly fine for my shapes when they are on a white background, what happens if the background isn't white?



A background color change reveals the stroke mask.

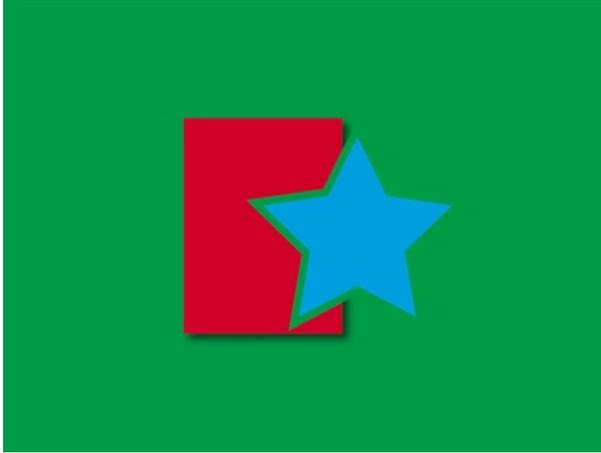
Suddenly, my gap around the star shows up as the white stroke it really is, instead of making the rectangle appear to not touch the star. OK, I can fix this. I'll just change the stroke to the same color as the background.



Matching the stroke color to the background color.

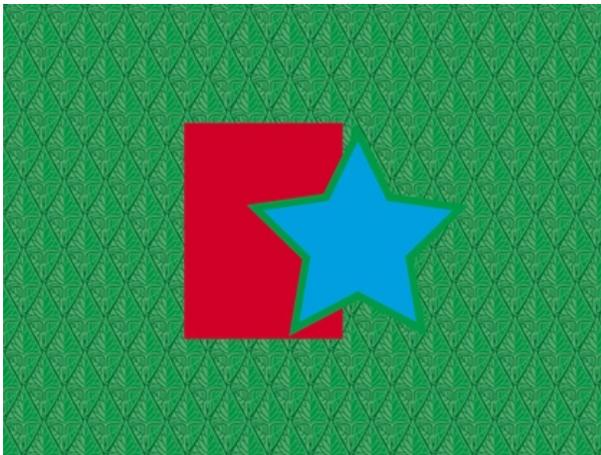
There! I fixed it! (With apologies to the [There, I Fixed It](http://thereifixedit.failblog.org/)¹ Web site.) Or did I? Suppose I just got a call from the client who says he wants a drop shadow on the rectangle.

¹<http://thereifixedit.failblog.org/>



The shadow reveals the stroke mask.

Whups, that doesn't look right. But maybe it will be OK. The client called again to say he doesn't want the shadow after all, but there's a pattern that should be in the background.



Better, but the stroke mask is still visible.

Although it's not as bad as when the shadow was applied, the stroke is still visible.

As I explained at the beginning of this tutorial, Illustrator has a command which could be the solution. It's called *Minus Front*, and its function is simple—it punches the shape of an upper object out of an underlying object. The problem with *Minus Front*, as I've said, is that it only works with an object's filled area, completely ignoring the stroke. This is exactly why my office's logo has given me grief for so many years, because I didn't know of any way to punch the shape of a stroke instead of (or in addition to) the filled object.

It turns out that I was thinking about the problem backwards. Instead of finding a way to use the *Minus Front* command on a stroke, which cannot be done, the solution is to convert the stroke into a filled object with no stroke, which *can* punch out another object.

Yes, it's that simple, and it took me 10+ years to realize it.

Here's the procedure. First, select the blue star which, at this point, has a green stroke around it. (The color of the stroke makes no difference.) Then, use the Object > Path > *Outline Stroke* command. This simple function is what eluded me for so long. After using this command, the object's stroke will become a new filled object in the same shape as the original stroke. If the original object had a filled color, it will remain as-is, minus the original stroke. Neither of these objects will have a stroke of its own any more.



Applying the *Outline Stroke* command.

Enlarge the above image and look closely at the star's green stroke. You'll see a thin blue line that follows the stroke right in the middle of the stroke's width. This line represents the outer boundary of the star's blue fill, and it depicts what I described earlier about a stroke being applied as center, where half overlaps the object's fill and half is outside of the object's fill.

The two objects created by the *Outline Stroke* command (the blue-filled star and the green outline) will be grouped and must be ungrouped to continue. When this grouped object is selected, head to Object > *Ungroup*.

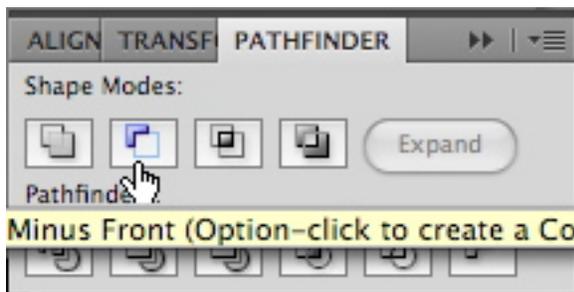
Since the green stroke that was around the star is now an independent object that is filled and contains no stroke, it could now be used to punch the shape out of the rectangle with the *Minus Front* command.

But not so fast. This stroke needs to punch out two objects—the rectangle and a thin outline of the star, which half of the original stroke covered. If the stroke had been set to follow the outer edge, this second punch wouldn't be necessary.

Since the upper object is eliminated after it punches another object with the *Minus Front* command, two copies of the new stroke object that was created with the *Outline Stroke* command are needed. To get the second copy, select that new stroke object, select **Edit** > *Copy*, and then **Edit** > *Paste in Back*. This will make a copy in the exact same location as the original, but it will send it behind the original so it will be waiting for you when you're ready for it.

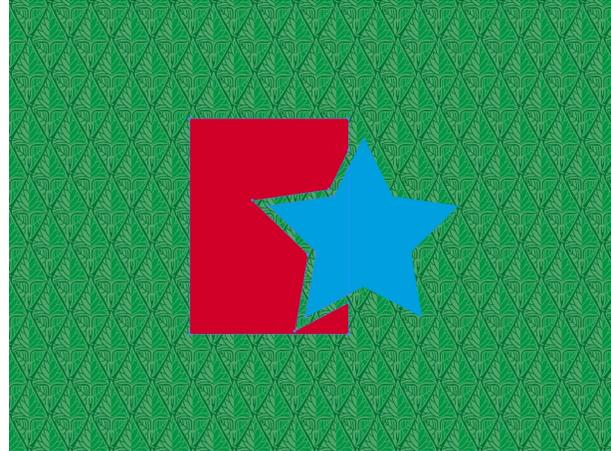
If the stroke object needs to be punched out of even more overlapping objects, just repeat the *Paste in Back* command as many times as necessary. However, if you need to do this more than three or four times, there is an alternative which I'll describe later.

After making sure that only the topmost stroke object and the blue star are selected, head to the Pathfinder palette (accessible in the View menu if it's not already visible), and use the second Shape Mode button, *Minus Front*.



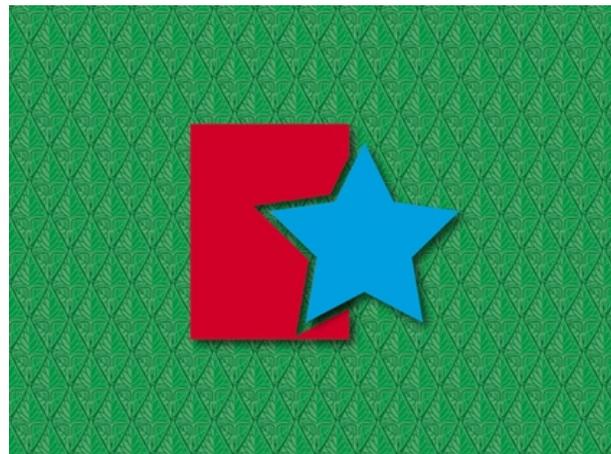
The *Minus Front* command in the Pathfinder palette.

Now, the star has reduced in size a little bit, representing its appearance when the green stroke had partially overlapped. Now, repeat for the rectangle by selecting the copy of the stroke object you made earlier, use the **Object** > **Arrange** > *Bring to Front* command to make sure it is above the rectangle (although it should already be), **Shift**-click the rectangle to select it as well, then use the same *Minus Front* command.



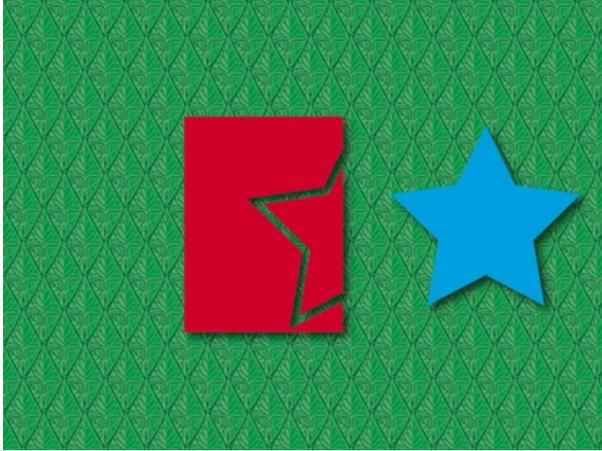
The stroke object has now punched out a shape from the rectangle and the star.

There it is. The background pattern shows through the gap. Click to enlarge the image above and you'll see that the red rectangle is selected, and its control points are visible, which prove the object really was cut out by the stroke object. This procedure means that I can use a multi-color background, a drop shadow, or both.



Applying a drop shadow on top of a multi-color background.

There is one small caveat. If the blue star is moved away, I see that some possibly unwanted portions of the red rectangle are still present.



Remnants of the punched object.

What has happened here is that *only* the stroke object punched through. The filled area of the blue star wasn't part of what punched the rectangle. But this is simple enough to fix. Just click to select the undesired leftover fill area on the right edge of the rectangle and delete it.

In order to put the star back in exactly the same place, I had moved it by using a counted number of arrow/cursor key nudges, but it doesn't have to be moved at all. Alternatively, that leftover object could have been selected by using the *Select > Next Object Below* command.

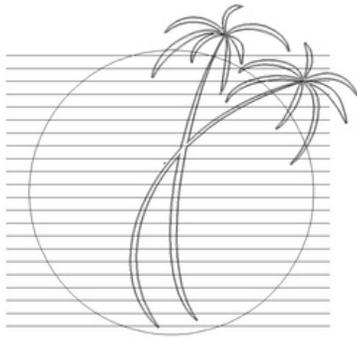
So, that takes care of the problem for a very simple design, but in the case of my office's logo, it was considerably more tricky. Let's look at that logo again:



My office's logo with the stroke mask visible.

The procedure was more difficult for several reasons.

1. The white stroke is actually not part of the visible brown palm trees. Instead, the designer duplicated the palm directly beneath and applied the stroke to the copy. My explanation is that he wanted the appearance of the center stroke mode as opposed to an outer stroke, while avoiding the stroke partially overlapping the fill area of the palms as it did with my blue star example.
2. The palms were made up of numerous objects, all with the thick white stroke applied, but this was probably the easiest part to fix—I selected all the stroked objects that made up the palms and used the *Unite* command in the Pathfinder palette to make them a single object. A big plus to this was that since the stroked palm graphic beneath the actual palms also had a fill applied, the fill could be used to punch the horizontal lines as well as the stroke. As a result, I wasn't left with a remnant to delete as I did above with the red rectangle.
3. The horizontal lines, representing a sunrise, were individual stroked lines with no fill. Inasmuch as strokes cannot be used to punch a shape out of an object beneath, a stroke itself also cannot be the recipient of such a punch. Even worse, as can be seen below, the lines were all inside of a circular mask that is visible when I switch to Outline view mode.



Outline view mode reveals that the horizontal lines are actually all the same width and are being cropped into the form of a circle by a mask.

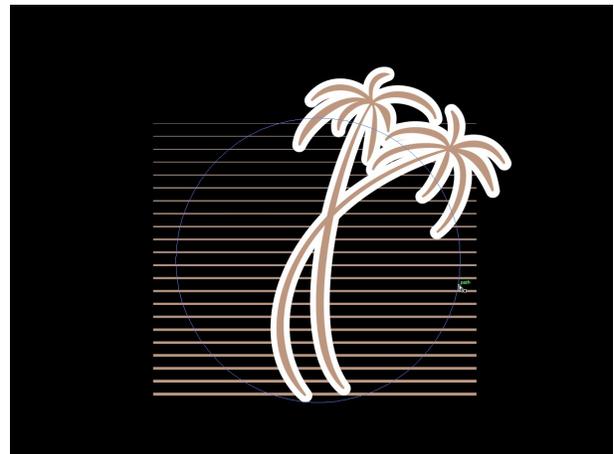
4. Complicating matters even further was an additional layer of stroked objects on top of both the palms and the horizontal lines. This added layer was the words for the name of my office, which I have chosen not to show here. Suffice to say, after punching the stroke around the palms out of the horizontal lines, I then had to repeat the process to punch the stroke around the words out of both the palms and the horizontal lines.

Someone will probably point out that I could have worked with the horizontal lines as is, but I chose to temporarily remove them from the clipping mask to make sure I didn't introduce any unforeseen problems. Easy to do: select any one of the lines, right-click (or Control-click if you have a single-button mouse), and choose *Release Clipping Mask*.



Temporarily eliminating the circular clipping mask.

It is important for me to remember that the object used to mask the horizontal lines into a circle is still there. It just isn't visible because it contains no fill and no stroke. But if I hover the mouse pointer over its boundary, it is temporarily highlighted.



The "invisible" clipping mask circle will be right there waiting for me when I need it.

Because working with the commands to select objects that are beneath other objects is somewhat cumbersome to me, I'm going to move the brown palms out of the way. To make sure they get moved back into exactly the same position, I held down the Shift key and pressed the right arrow key 10 times to nudge the object off to the side a precise amount. (The Shift key multiplies the nudge amount by a value defined in preferences.)



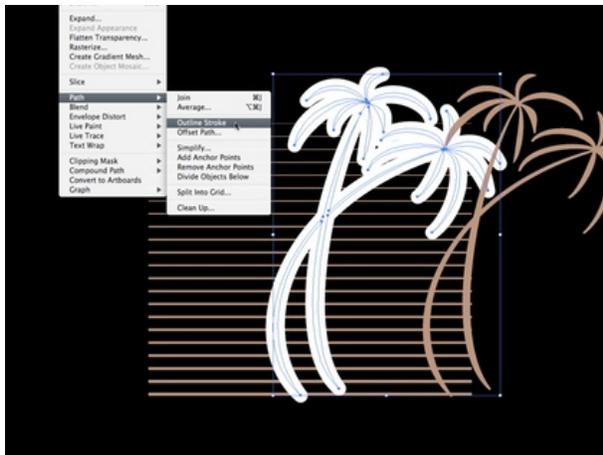
Temporarily moving the palm tree graphic out of the way.

Notice how the horizontal lines touch the palm tree object when there's no white stroke to mask them? Just as before with the blue star, it's time to convert the white stroke into a filled object.



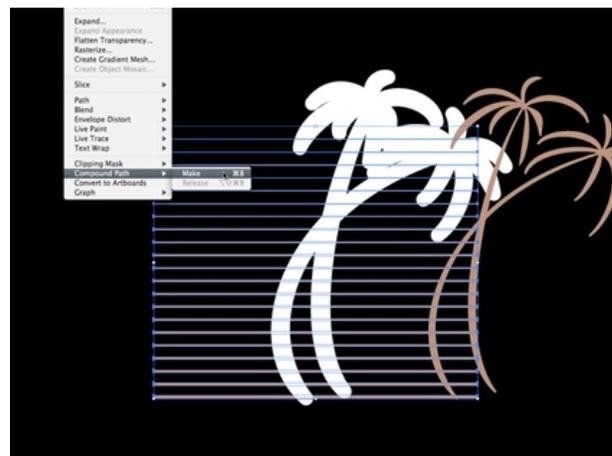
Converting the horizontal lines to non-stroked, filled objects.

The next step took me a little while to figure out. I said earlier that there was an alternative to making multiple copies of the object I wanted to use for punching other objects. Rather than do that for nearly two dozen horizontal lines, I wanted to punch them all at once. The fact they are all the same color made things a little easier. If not, I'd have had to temporarily make them all the same color, then change them back afterward. After a bit of trial and error, I discovered that all the horizontal lines needed to become a compound path.



Using the *Outline Stroke* command on the palm tree's stroke mask.

Same procedure as before: Object > Path > *Outline Stroke*. Then, I can use the same command on the horizontal lines to change them into filled objects which can be punched. In this case, they were grouped together, so I only needed to select one of them and repeat the *Outline Stroke* command.



Converting the horizontal lines into a single, compound path.

There's the secret. I selected Object > Compound Path > *Make* which causes Illustrator to treat all the selected objects as a single object.

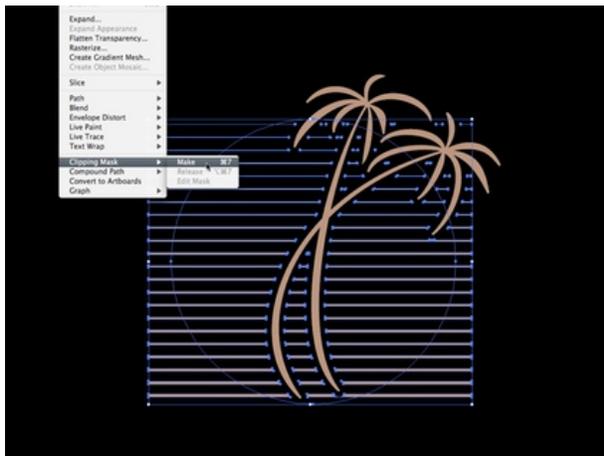
The next step is to punch the palm tree object's stroke mask out of the lines. Just as before, I selected the stroke object that was formerly the white

palm outline, then select the horizontal lines with a single Shift-flick of any line, then head back to the Pathfinder palette to use the *Minus Front* command.



The shape of the palm tree mask has been successfully punched out of the horizontal lines.

Now, all that remains is to put everything back where I found it. After nudging the palm trees back into place with the Shift-Left arrow key, I mouse around to find the circular mask, click to select it, Shift-click one of the horizontal lines to select them as well, and then use the Object > Clipping Mask > *Make* command.



Reapplying the clipping mask.

At last, the task is complete. Please excuse the pathetic, hastily made sample background, but it will suffice. Here's the logo, sans white stroke mask, with a gradient background showing through the gap.



The white stroke mask is now gone, and any background will now show through the gap between the horizontal lines and the palm tree.

Contact me with comments on this page if you have questions. I know the procedure seems rather convoluted, so I'm happy to try to help if you got lost.

I *still* miss FreeHand's simplicity and always will, but I am finally beginning to gain a better appreciation of Illustrator's capabilities, especially since I'm not sure this stroke-to-object procedure was possible at all in FreeHand.

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Desktop Pictures

by Jay Feuillet, <http://JayFeuillet.com>

Flowers of Life

We need new desktop pictures each month. [Write](#)¹ to us!

[This Month's Desktop Pictures](#)²

This month's desktop pictures were submitted by ATPM reader Jay Feuillet. He used a Nikon E2500 to take photos of native flowers in a park in South Florida.



[View Pictures](#)^a

^a<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/flowers-of-life/>

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

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

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures [archives](#)³.

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

Safari Create a workflow in Automator with these three actions:

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

¹<mailto:editor@atpm.com>

²<http://www.atpm.com/16.12/flowers-of-life/>

³<http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml>

iCab Use the Download command to “Download all linked files in same folder” and configure the limits to download only the linked images.

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.6.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.



Out at Five

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Office Drama



Making Introductions



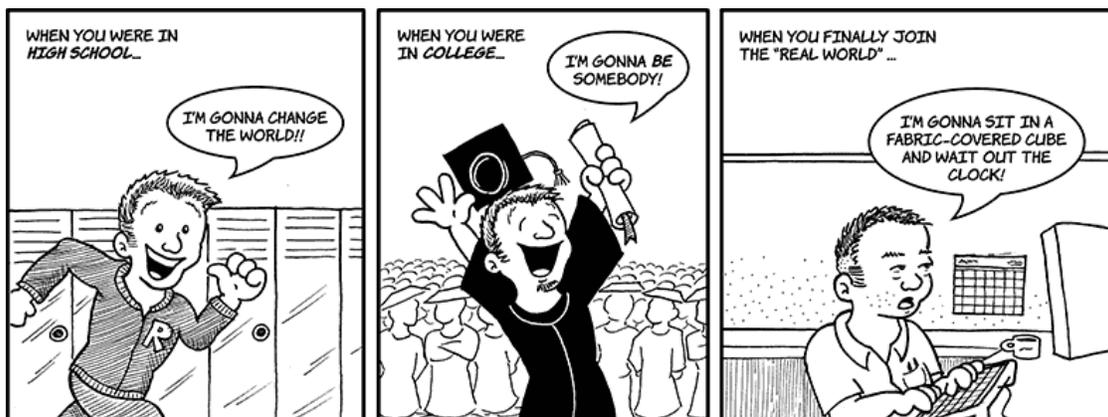
Office Relationships



It Was Serious



Great Expectations



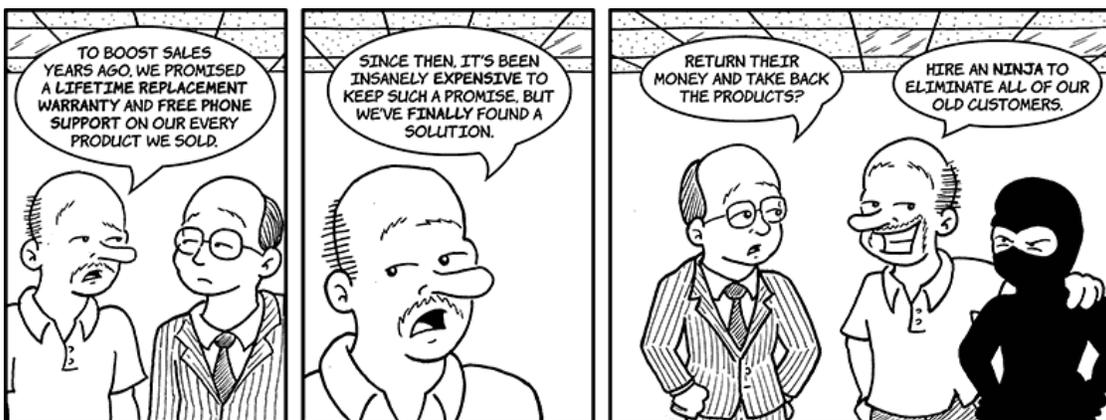
Do It Yourself



Mrs. Noodlemeyer



Legacy Support



Keeping Company



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Hardware Review

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

MAXPower 802.11n/g/b Wireless USB 2.0 Stick Adapter and Extension Cradle

Function: USB 802.11b/g/n network card and range extender.

Developer: [Newer Technology](#)¹

Price: \$50

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3. Universal².

Trial: None



This is the third different USB-based WiFi extender product I've reviewed for ATPM. [The second](#)³ was a vast improvement over [the first](#)⁴, but both had serious drawbacks. Is the third time the charm?

Unfortunately, no.

And for much the same reason the BearExtender only warranted a “Good” rating, the MAXPower extender does too: both devices share a Ralink-built chipset, and the Mac software from Ralink is atrocious. Since I've already addressed most of the shortcomings of the software, I'll simply refer the interested reader back to [the BearExtender review](#)⁵. (The *drivers* have been updated since that review, but the *user interface* has not, and remains fundamentally awful.)



The MAXPower Wi-Fi extender is just a hair bigger than an old-fashioned pack of Wrigley's gum, but size isn't this device's problem.

¹<http://newertech.com/products/usb.php>

²<http://www.apple.com/universal/>

³<http://www.atpm.com/16.07/bearextender.shtml>

⁴<http://www.atpm.com/14.03/wi-fire.shtml>

⁵<http://www.atpm.com/16.07/bearextender.shtml>

Making matters worse is NewerTech's claim of “Fully Mac OS X Supported for Plug and Play Set-Up!” The MAXPower extender comes with a printed manual and a software CD containing drivers. The printed manual says, “You can find the Mac OS X drivers either on the included CD or [download them](#)⁶. Being of the general philosophy that printed materials or CDs are usually out-of-date, I *always* check the Web site for a driver download and assume that's the newest software.

Not in this case.

The driver download on the Web site is some three years old (November 2007), refers only to Mac OS X 10.3 through 10.5, and refers to its newest installer as being for Tiger (Mac OS X 10.4). The included CD actually has a 2009 version of the driver software—two full years newer, but still outdated—that knows about the existence of Snow Leopard.

There's [a still-newer version](#)⁷ from Ralink on their own site (click the “RT2870” link). Unfortunately, NewerTech doesn't refer to this anywhere, so I had to hit Google to find the manufacturer's site and then dig further to find the latest Mac drivers.

Not a great customer experience, guys, especially from a company with a long history and excellent name recognition in the Mac market.

⁶http://www.newertech.com/downloads/maxpower_usb_n.dmg

⁷<http://www.ralinktech.com/support.php?s=3>



The MAXPower device comes with a cap to cover the male USB connector and easily fits into a pocket.

The hardware itself works fine, though the design is so-so. The enclosure around the chipset is just wide enough that plugging the MAXPower device into a USB port on most Macs or USB hubs will block the use of both adjacent ports. To be fair, this seems to be a problem nearly every similar device on the market has.

If you're using it so that you can get wireless reception out in the Back Forty for the afternoon, you probably aren't trying to use another USB device, a FireWire 800 device, or an external monitor (the three ports that could be blocked on my 2009-model MacBook Pro), and you probably don't care about losing the use of those ports. If you're using it on a Mac that's plugged in on your desk or other semi-permanent location, you probably don't mind using the extension cradle. And having the extension cradle certainly beats *not* having it.



The USB extension cradle allows you to regain use of adjacent USB ports by moving the bulky plug away from your Mac or USB hub. Don't try to sleep in the same room if you like it dark, though—that blue LED is amazingly bright.

My other quibble with the design is the clear black plastic used for the enclosure. No, it doesn't look clear, but trust me, it's translucent, so when the blue activity LED is flickering—which happens constantly while you're using it—you see the guts of the device too. It just looks sloppy and makes the blue LED even sillier-looking. (Honestly, isn't this trend played out by now? Blue LEDs are so 2002.)

That brings us to the ultimate question: is it worth the price? If you're paying double the price of a similar device, or nearly so, just for so-called "Mac-friendly" support and service, well, shouldn't the Web site and associated materials actually be useful and up-to-date? More importantly, shouldn't the software actually be Mac-like? If I'm going to be forced to use awful ports of Windows software, I don't see any point in paying Mac premium prices for the privilege.

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Software Review

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

ShareTool 2.1.2

Function: Secure access to Bonjour services on remote networks.

Developer: Yazsoft¹

Price: \$15 (one license); \$25 (two licenses); \$45 (five licenses)—two licenses minimum required for operation.

Requirements: Mac OS 10.5.8. [Universal](#)².

Recommended: Universal Plug-n-Play capability on host network's router.

Trial: Fully-featured (maximum of 15 minutes per session)

Last year, I discovered ShareTool as an inexpensive means to gain access my computer at home from anywhere. Besides file sharing, ShareTool allowed me to perform remote screen sharing, stream my iTunes library as if it were on my local network, and more.

ShareTool 2 provides the same features as its version 1 predecessor, but with a completely overhauled approach to initiating a connection. Since my [ShareTool 1.3.1 review](#)³ still adequately describes the benefits of using ShareTool, this review will focus mostly on the overhauled connection method.

In ShareTool 2, you are no longer required to either know the host computer's IP address or use any means of assigning a static or dynamic domain name. Instead, Yazsoft now maintains an authentication server, which initiates a connection by way of a login e-mail address and password. Once authenticated, the server establishes communication between the local and host machines, at which point the connection is entirely peer-to-peer. In other words, only the authentication takes place on Yazsoft's server. Afterward, your data and activity securely pass only between your computer and the one to which you are connecting.

¹<http://yazsoft.com/products/sharetool/>

²<http://www.apple.com/universal/>

³<http://www.atpm.com/15.11/sharetool.shtml>



Creating a ShareTool account.

Creating a ShareTool authentication account is simple and automatic. As soon as you begin sharing for the first time, you are asked to create an account with an e-mail address and password. Once created, enabling sharing is a one-click process.



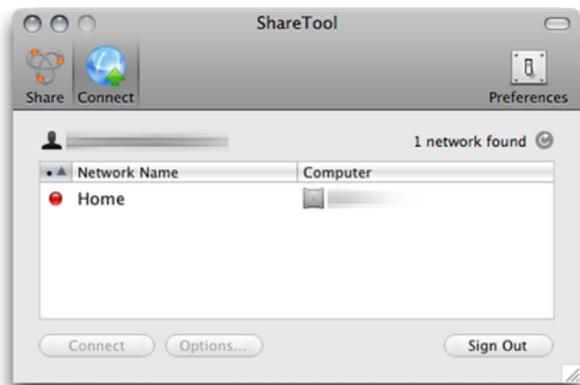
ShareTool automatically configures a router with Universal Plug-n-Play settings. If UPnP is not supported, ports can be manually mapped.

On the other end of the connection, after launching ShareTool, you use the same e-mail address and password to access the host computer.

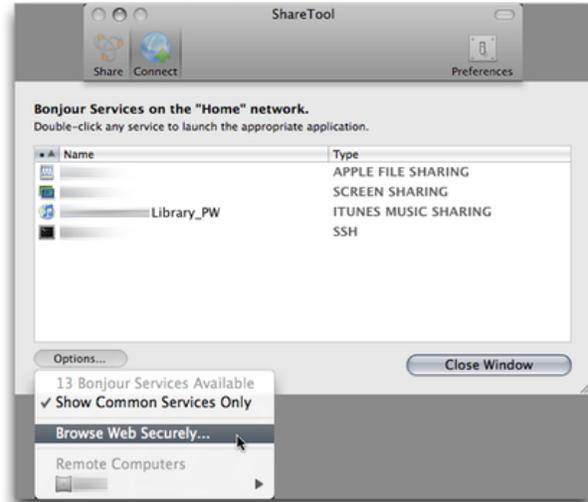


Remembering IP addresses and port numbers are a thing of the past. Connections are now initiated by an e-mail address and password.

Once authenticated, a list of available computers is presented. By purchasing a ShareTool license for each computer in your home, you can access as many machines as desired from a remote location.



A list of available computers appears after authenticating through Yazsoft.



Once a connection to a computer is established, all of its available services are displayed.

Just as with ShareTool 1, after connecting to a host computer, available services can be initiated from a list within the ShareTool application, or via native places such as the Finder sidebar, iTunes, iPhoto, etc. You'll have access to file sharing, screen sharing, printer sharing, iTunes streaming, and more. ShareTool 2 also supports iTunes' new Home Sharing feature. The services window is also where you can initiate a secure Web browsing session using the Firefox browser. When active, Web traffic is encrypted and routed through the host computer—great for keeping your data secure when using public Wi-Fi.

As soon as I learned that ShareTool had switched to using an authentication server to initiate connections, my very first question was, "How would I connect to my home computer if the authentication server was down?" Yazsoft is on record with high confidence about the uptime on its server. I use ShareTool numerous times each week to access my home computer from work. Granted, two months is not a significant sample period; however, the authentication server has never been inaccessible in that time. Just the same, as an advanced feature, the ability to directly log in with a known IP address and port number in the unlikely event of an outage with Yazsoft might make power users happy. This would also allow the ShareTool to retain functionality should Yazsoft ever find itself in the position of having to permanently discontinue the authentication servers.

In ShareTool 1, after a host computer was set up for sharing, it was possible to define specifically

which services were shared. For example, if I only wanted to use ShareTool to access iTunes streaming, I could have only enabled that service. If someone managed to acquire my connection information and log in, file and screen sharing would be inaccessible, and the would-be intruder would only have access to see what was in my iTunes library and not have full access to my computer. I no longer see any means of limiting which services are shared in ShareTool 2.

On the positive side, ShareTool is now significantly easier to set up. Most users will literally not need to know a single thing about networking or their router, and still be able to connect to their home computer's screen, files, iTunes libraries, etc.

Good news for those on a budget or those with several computers to be made accessible is that ShareTool's price is lower, especially when buying a five-user license.

My single-item feature wish list from ShareTool 1 remains the same for version 2: an iPhone application to access my home computer's screen. Obviously, this wish item is now expanded to call for an iPad-compatible application—preferably universal. And although I still don't imagine that Apple would approve such a thing, if ShareTool could stream my iTunes library to my iPhone or iPad just as it does to another computer, capacity on the device would be of little concern. I wouldn't even be distraught if this could only be done over Wi-Fi. Imagine also being able to send a document from the device to a shared printer at home. With the ability to interact with a Mac at home, ShareTool could be the last piece of the puzzle that would allow someone to give up laptops entirely and use only an iPad while traveling.

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FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

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About This Particular Macintosh (*ATPM*) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or “e-zine.” *ATPM* was created to celebrate the personal computing experience. For us this means the most personal of all personal computers—the Apple Macintosh. *About This Particular Macintosh* is intended to be about your Macintosh, our Macintoshes, and the creative, personal ideas and experiences of everyone who uses a Mac. We hope that we will continue to be faithful to our mission.

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¹<mailto:reviews@atpm.com>

²<http://www.atpm.com/subscribe>

jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how strongly we recommend it. Please contact our [reviews editor](mailto:reviews@atpm.com)³, before you begin writing, if you have a piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review.

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What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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



³<mailto:reviews@atpm.com>

⁴<http://www.atpm.com/reviews/>

⁵<http://www.atpm.com/Back/>