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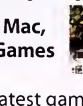
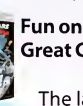
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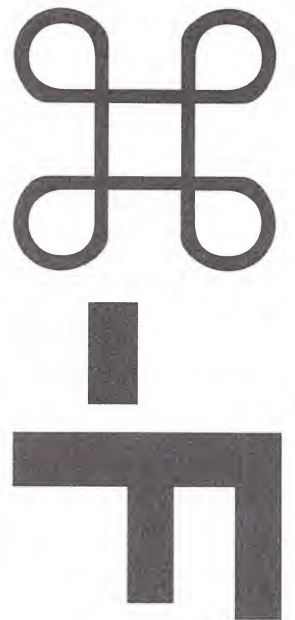
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⌘-A

012 Matthew JC. Powell

The rumour mill — champing at the bit

⌘-V

015 AMW readers

Stop waiting for an iPhone, hold off upgrading to Leopard, take it easy on the updates, run AppleWorks and ... get a tattoo?

⌘-K

028 Dan Warne

Pitfalls of naked DSL

⌘-I

034 Fleur Doidge

CyberPsych Les Posen chats about dancing

⌘-Y

050 Martin Levins

Screen capture is your friend

⌘-O

064 Keith White

Two approaches to iPhoto

⌘-Q

082 Alex Kidman

Overcome the Apple snob within

⌘-N

019 The CPU guessing game.

Despite Intel's openness, it's still hard to fathom what's next from Apple.

020 Adobe launches Media Player and Apple ships Final Cut Studio.

021 Watch music videos for free.

022 MUG events for May.

023 New Coolpix from Nikon, plus the MacBook Air comp winner.

024 Pro File: Gotye

026 Off the Net

⌘-1

030 Smartphone roundup

Anthony Caruana

Everyone knows the iPhone is about to arrive. We don't know when, and we don't know exactly what kind of impact it will have when it enters the Australian market. What we do know is what it will be up against, and how you can go about making sure you pick the smartphone that's right for you.

⌘-2

036 Office suite smackdown

Various authors

Microsoft Office 2008 is finally on the market, and it's up against a leaner, more mature opponent than it's faced in a while in the form of Apple's own iWork '08. How do they compare, pound for pound? And if you don't like either, what else is out there?



⌘-?

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 - Troubleshoot Java applets
 - Store streaming videos
- 060** Adjust volume more finely
 - Transfer video from VHS to iMovie
- 062** Destroy a hard drive (on purpose)
 - Embed subtitles
 - Save your movies to an external drive



⌘-J

067 AMW lab: podcasting gear

- Bringing back the radio star
- Boehringer Podcastudio USB**
★★★★
- Boehringer Podcastudio FireWire**
★★★★ 1/2
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★★★★
- Zoom H4**
★★★★ 1/2
- Samson C01U**
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- Samson G-Track**
★★★★ 1/2

071 Web browsers

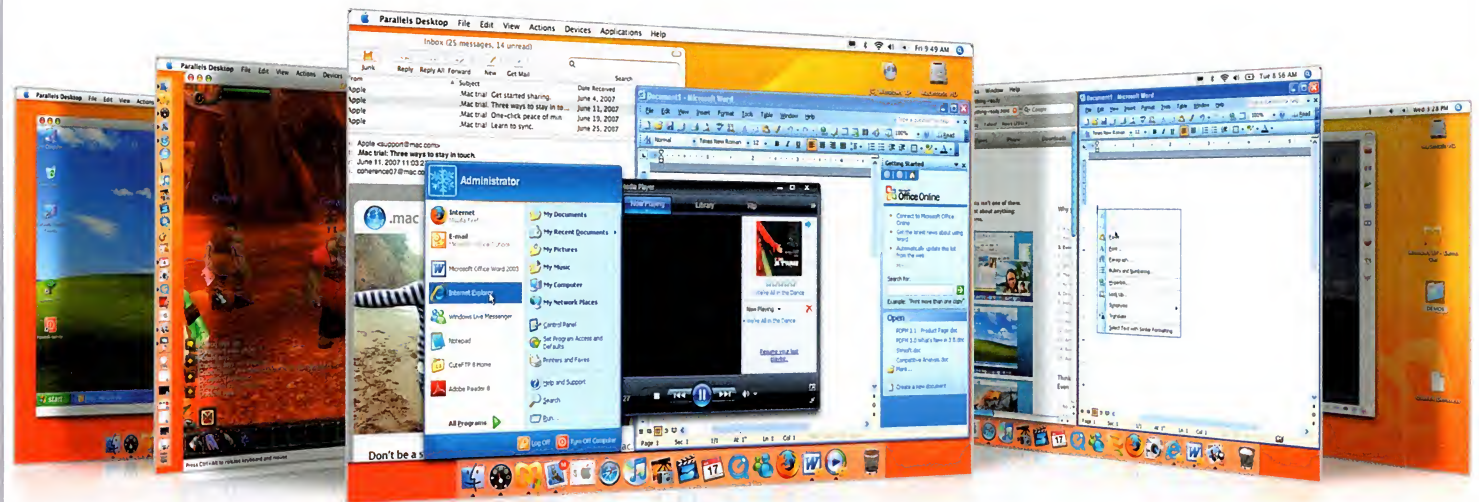
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Matthew J.C. Powell has a deep and abiding passion for the Mac, the magazine and its readers — in no particular order.

iPhone rumblings

I know, I know, two iPhone-related editorials in a row and this is supposed to be a Mac magazine. Duly noted. I hereby vow, swear and declare that my next editorial will not be about the iPhone. OK?

Let's move on.

The week before this issue went to press, an online Mac forum called MacTalk was abuzz with a rumour story from "reliable" sources, claiming that Apple had been briefing its channel on the coming release of the iPhone, including release dates and all sorts of juicy info. Now, normally I'm very sceptical of reporting rumours because they're almost always wrong, so I was happy to ignore it.

Then the phone started ringing.

One reseller after another called — by the end of the day I'd had four separate calls, plus I'd been told about calls that had come to other AMW staff and contributors. And all of them had the same message: Apple's been briefing the channel about iPhone release dates and how it's to be sold and so forth.

Well, when you have multiple people telling you the same thing, you start to take a little bit of notice. There was one curious thing, though: no two of the callers seemed to have the same info.

There are a number of explanations for this. One is that Apple briefed its channel partners on the upcoming release of the iPhone in Australia, including a great deal of detailed information that they really don't need this far out from the release, but gave everyone a different briefing. This might be some kind of sneaky tactic to root out leaks

and find out who's telling Apple's secrets to the wrong people.

Another is that Apple has not been briefing its resellers because it knows full well that as soon as it tells its partners something it might as well be public knowledge. Apple's resellers are always bearing the brunt of customer complaints when they've bought a Mac only to discover a new model came out days later that was better and cheaper. This happens for one reason, and one reason only: Apple doesn't tell its resellers diddly in advance.

In this scenario, the resellers who called — every one of them — was acting on information they'd heard from someone who'd heard it from someone else. And if you're a reseller and you hear Apple's been briefing resellers, you might just call *Macworld* and let them in on it, because you don't want to look like you're out of the loop.

Before I put anything up on www.macworld.com.au — Australia's premiere source of Mac information online — I did what any responsible journalist would do, and phoned Apple. "Have you guys been briefing resellers on the iPhone release," I asked? "No," was the reply. "Really?" "Really." "You wouldn't tell me if you had been briefing resellers, would you?" "Honestly, we haven't. Now if you'll excuse me I have to go finish beta-testing my multitouch-capable Mac tablet if it's going to make its release date in September."

I made part of that up. Guess which part.

As it happens, follow-up calls to a number of sources the following day revealed that they had, in fact, been reporting what they had heard from other resellers and that they had not actually

been briefed by Apple yet but they were certain the briefings were taking place and they'd get theirs soon.

My guess? Someone, somewhere, made the whole thing up. And because everyone's so fired up to know when the iPhone's coming, everyone believed it.

Why is Apple's channel so keen to know when the iPhone's coming? Is it because they've always, deep down, wanted to be phone resellers? Is it because the iPhone is superior to any other phone in the way it can send SMS messages and make phone calls? Come on, how much better can it be? Other phones work just fine.

The only reason why Mac resellers are so keen to get their hands on the iPhone is because, uniquely and unlike every other product in its class, it is a Mac. It's a Mac that fits in your pocket (if you wear your baggy jeans). It's a Mac that allows you to interact with your information and media in ways you never could before thanks to the multitouch interface. It's a device that — there can be little doubt — represents the future direction of Apple technology.

As a phone, it's pretty good — some quirks, some pros, some cons — but not earth-shatteringly better than many other phones on the market. It's the rest of what it can do that makes the iPhone interesting, and makes people want to believe any snippet of news they hear, no matter how shaky its foundations.

If I were a manufacturer of some other smartphone, I'd be thinking a lot on that concept. ☞



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Each month, Conexus (02 9975 0900) gives away a set of JBL Creature II speakers valued at \$200 to the *Australian Macworld* reader who sends in what we deem to be the most interesting letter. JBL's Creature II three-piece speaker system produces high-quality stereo sound for movies, MP3's and gaming experiences. Featuring a cutting-edge sci-fi design and superior sound performance, JBL Creature II is a unique "plug-and-play" solution, compatible with all Mac® and PC desktops and portables as well as MP3 players and Walkman® units. JBL Creature II offers consumers cool design and exceptional sound

Letters should be e-mailed to matthew.powell@niche.com.au with a subject header of "Command - V" or by post to *Australian Macworld* Mailbox, 170 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205. Letters of fewer than 200 words are given preference. Comments posted to the forums on www.macworld.com.au are also eligible for the Creature II prize.. We reserve the right to edit letters and probably will. To be eligible for the JBL Creature II prize, you must include your full name and address, including state or territory.

JBL Creature II letter of the month

IPHONE NOW!

I bought an iPhone in the USA last week, downloaded Ziphone version 2.6 and took 20 minutes to hack. Now the phone works on my local Australian GSM network with my local mobile phone SIM card.

There may be many good reasons that Apple is delaying the phone, like developing a 3G/Next G version, but it works now. And even if a better one came out next week, I'd still be happy for the \$US399 I paid for the 8GB version. I have Wifi, Bluetooth, a camera and all my addresses and contact details of everyone I know.

So why not make it available now in Australia? It's good value for what it does! Apple makes some money, we get the phone/organiser we want and like anything, if a new version comes along, we salivate a bit longer until we can afford it.

Name and address provided

Apple regards Australia as part of Asia from an organisational perspective, so we'll get the iPhone when Asia does. And Asia's a very big market and very different from the USA or Europe. So Apple's brewing Asia-specific plans for the product. It's also effectively given a wink-and-a-nod to people importing them under the wire such as yourself. — M.J.C.P.

MIND YOUR OWN

I have recently come to grief with my dealings with MYOB and Mac for my winery business.

MYOB advertises itself as a Mac friendly business offering AccountEdge software for Mac users to provide them with all the opportunities of managing accounts as they do for PC users.

They advertise (currently on the MYOB web site) that small business can network their Macs in an office to enable more than one user. The fact is that it is now impossible to network more than one Mac (even with a remote Mac server) with AccountEdge in an office environment. It is no longer supported by the current MYOB!

This means that with my medium sized winery business in Wagga Wagga NSW — which installed a Mac and AccountEdge in 2005 with the idea of expanding the same

into an office network — now find that having purchased a new Mac, such a network option is no longer available with the latest version of AccountEdge.

To compound the problem even further, we now understand that AccountEdge doesn't work at all with Mac's new system, Leopard! And Leopard has been out since October 2007.

Macs are great for small business with their reliability and low maintenance and ease of use. MYOB/AccountEdge is a well-accepted accounting package in Australian accounting circles. What sort of company would deliberately do this to a section of their market without even a warning?

A. Birks.

Wagga Wagga, NSW

MYOB claims that it was not given access to a final-release version of Leopard in time to do product testing before 10.5's debut. Since MYOB is for many people a mission-critical application it's important for the company to test the product fully before saying it will work with any new operating system. It does plan to certify the 2008 version of AccountEdge for use with Leopard, but acknowledges that there are currently some known issues and recommends that users who rely on AccountEdge not upgrade to Leopard. — M.J.C.P.

MAC ART

I am trying to find somewhere in Sydney to get a "tattoo" for my MacBook Pro 17".

I am not sure of exactly what I'd like to get done — a few ideas are barcodes, contact info or business logo. I can't seem to find anywhere in Australia to get it done. I have seen it done on a number of different American sites and the laser engraving always looks good. I have even seen it done on MacBooks.

Sabian Carey
via e-mail

I have to admit I don't know of anywhere in Australia that does that kind of customisation either. If anyone out there is running a business that does this stuff, drop me a line and we'll give you a plug. — M.J.C.P.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Mentor letter of the month 1. Instructions on how to enter form part of these conditions of entry. 2. To enter send tips or queries to matthew.powell@niche.com.au with a subject header of "Command - V". Entries will be judged by the editorial staff of *Australian Macworld*. The judges' decision in relation to any aspect of the competition is final and binding on every person who enters. No correspondence will be entered into. Chance plays no part in determining the winner(s). Each entry will be individually judged based on its degree of interest. 4. Employees, their immediate families and agencies associated with this competition are not permitted to enter. 5. The Promoter accepts no responsibility for late or misdirected entries. 6. The best entry/entries as determined by the judges will win the prize(s). 7. The Promoter is neither responsible nor liable for any change in the value of the prize occurring between the publish date and the date the prize(s) is claimed. 8. The prize(s) is not transferable and will not be exchanged for cash. 9. The winner(s) will be notified by mail. 10. All entries become the property of the Promoter. 11. The collection, use and disclosure of personal information provided in connection with this competition is governed by the Privacy Notice. 12. The Promoter is Niche Media Pty Ltd of 170 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205 Ph 03 9948 4900, (ABN 13 064 613 529).



BLOATED LEOPARD

I did the right thing and bought Leopard OS X 10.5.1 in January 2008 and spend a couple of hours loading into my computer. Then I had to download the updates to make it 10.5.2, which took up some more time and ate into my download allocation. I can handle all that for my beloved Mac computer.

Since then there has been the occasional update, which I have dutifully loaded into my magic box for the benefit of my OS X. However, my latest "Software Update" notification tells me that I have a mere 261.5MB to be digested if I wish to keep my Apple current and safe. That's certainly going to make a large hole in my download allocation!

Is it just me that thinks that Leopard has not been as well sorted prior to sale as previous versions of Mac OS?

Not happy Steve!
Derek Macphail
New Gisborne, Vic.

You're certainly not alone in thinking that, and you're not alone in bemoaning the fact that Apple only makes those updates available via download and not by any other means. — M.J.C.P.

Apple ... Works!

I love Appleworks and have used it from my Performa 5260, iMac G3, eMac, Power book G4 and now iSight PPC iMac. I also Use NeoOffice to open MS Office documents. I try not to have anything Microsoft on my Mac.

Peter Schaper (c-V 04.2008) need have no worries. I just sent the Installer to my son (via YouSendIt) who has a new iMac, running Leopard, and it installed and ran perfectly (in Rosetta I assume). It also opened AppleWorks documents created on my PPC iMac.

This makes me more confident to upgrade to an Intel/Leopard Mac as I cannot do without AppleWorks.

So it would seem that Peter can confidently go out and buy his new Mac.

Ken Hoyle,
Harvey Bay, Qld

Spam a lot

I read in the 11.2007 issue article "Lock It Up" about being careful when using a wireless network and in particular the mention made about using public networks, which are the least secure and noted the Hotlink for www.anchorfree.com/hotspot-shield.

Unfortunately I read this article after the event. I was in Honolulu, where Starbucks Coffee offered free wireless internet which I could access from our cruise ship.

Until using this free wireless internet, I had never been troubled with spam to my Westnet e-mail address. I would like to know whether, if I had been able to activate Hot Spot Shield before accessing the free wireless internet would this have prevented my e-mail address being accessed and therefore the resulting spam. This is the only thing I can think of that would have made me the target of spam.

I have subscribed to Westnet's Spanguard now so all these troublesome e-mails (often between 50 and 90 per day) are being quarantined into one e-mail per day, which I just delete.

Margaret Boyles,
Ocean Grove, Vic.

Unfortunately, Margaret, you're a target for spam as soon as you have an e-mail address. I can't say whether your address became known by your use of the hotspot, or whether Hot Spot Shield would have saved you. But it's highly unlikely you'd have avoided spammers for long anyway. Thankfully it sounds like Westnet has a pretty good filter. — M.J.C.P.

Hotlinks

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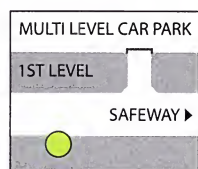
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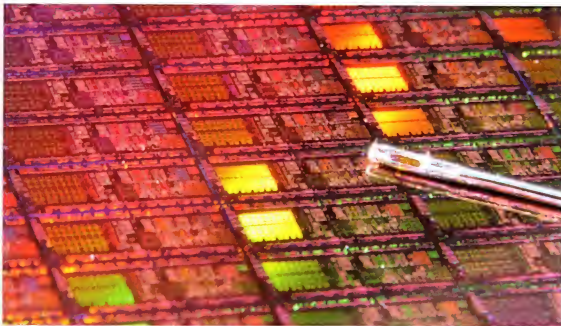
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Hotlinks

www.intel.com

They keep no secrets — OK, maybe a few



Needle in a haystack.

It's easier than before to figure out what the future holds for the Mac — but not much.

How Intel's processor plans might impact the Mac

As positive as the switch to Intel-built processors has been for Apple, one aspect of that partnership must drive Steve Jobs' control-freak nature absolutely bonkers: secrecy. Or, more to the point, the lack of it, when it comes to future product announcements.

Prior to Apple's 2005 decision to use Intel chips in its hardware, the Mac's processors were provided by IBM and Freescale (née Motorola), and Apple could tightly control what little — if any — information it provided about its products prior to their introduction. Neither chipmaker released roadmaps of their product lines that were anywhere near as detailed as Intel's.

Intel, on the other hand, keeps its partners — and, by extension, the general public — well-informed about its product plans years in advance. Although this openness insulates the entire PC ecology from expensive surprises, it can also inflate customer expectations while delaying purchases. After all, if you know that a much more powerful chip is going to be released Real Soon Now, why write a cheque today?

Tim Deal, senior analyst at market-research firm Pike & Fischer, acknowledges that Apple formerly was able to keep its product plans "a closely-guarded secret" and that the company "tightly managed and exploited this secrecy to create anticipation (and drama) around its new product releases." But he believes that the new Intel-enforced openness is a good thing.

"[Apple's] reliance on the not-so-secret Intel processor development cycle allows the market to get a glimpse of future processor incarnations for the Mac," Deal said. "This does not inhibit the company's ability to generate excitement about future product releases

nor does it preclude Apple's customary mystique and showmanship surrounding a given product release."

[APPLE NEWS]

What's in a name. That's true, of course, only if customers can decode the sometimes arcane world of Intel roadmaps, codenames, product lines, and platforms. Recently, for example, came the announcement that a six-core Xeon processor codenamed Dunnington would be released in the second half of this year. The mere codename of this chip speaks volumes about the difficulty of deciphering Intel's roadmaps — Dunnington's original codename was Aliceton, but it was renamed after the development of another Dunnington processor was halted when a third processor-development effort — codenamed Whitefield, upon which the first Dunnington was based — was discontinued.

Confused? You're not alone. But worry not, Dunnington lore won't be on the test — that six-core beast is unlikely to ever make it into any Mac Pro. Mac Pros use Intel's 5000-series Xeons, which fit into their dual-processor platform codenamed Stoakley. Dunnington is a 7000-series Xeon, designed for the quad-processor, server-level platform codenamed Caneland.

You're also to be forgiven if you were never informed that Intel and Apple have two different definitions for the term "desktop processor." When Intel introduced its Core 2 Duo processor line, the first desktop processor out of the gate was codenamed Conroe. This chip, however, never made it an Apple "desktop" computer. The iMac was instead built around what Intel referred to as a "mobile processor," codenamed Merom.

Merom's replacement, which shipped in November of last year, is codenamed Penryn, and it comes in



many flavours with more to come. For example, Intel confirmed last month that it will release a quad-core Penryn later this year. Although this chip is identified by Intel as a mobile processor, its power appetite (defined as its TDP, for Thermal Design Power) is expected to be a hefty 45 watts. In comparison, the TDP of the new Penryn-equipped MacBook Pro is 35W – and if you’ve had one on your lap for any amount of time, you know it’s already pushing the thermal envelope. The increased TDP would also, of course, more-quickly drain battery power.

That said, there are plenty of 17-inch MacBook Pro-using video editors who’d kill for those two extra cores when encoding on location, plugged into AC or not. The 17-incher also has more room for cooling technologies and batteries, should Apple care to make use of those extra cubic inches.

What lies ahead. Another pair of recently announced quad-core processors spark the imagination. Intel recently introduced low-power quad-core 2.33GHz and 2.5GHz Xeons, each with a TDP of a mere 50W.

In comparison, the top-end 3.2GHz Xeon in the top-end Mac Pro is listed in Intel’s literature as having a TDP of a scorching 150W (unless Apple has a private deal with Intel to provide a lower-TDP 3.2GHz Xeon, which is certainly a possibility).

If you want to indulge in a flight of fancy, drop two of these new Xeons into a Stoakley-based logic board in a smaller form-factor desktop Mac, and fill the ever-widening gap between the iMac and the Mac Pro.

There’s also an upcoming tiny Penryn pair – 1.2GHz and 1.4GHz processors with miserly 10W TDPs – that’s fodder for interesting speculation. Might we finally see the ultra-mini laptop we’ve been jonesing for?

Or might Apple offer a truly teeny laptop – something on par with the Asus Eee PC – based on an entirely new line of ultra-low-power Intel processors christened Atom (and codenamed Silverthorne and Diamondville during their development)?

We don’t know. And neither do you. Despite the relative openness of Intel’s microprocessor roadmap, Apple still keeps us guessing.

— Rik Myslewski

Hotlinks

www.apple.com/au/finalcutserver
Final Cut Server

Apple ships Final Cut Server

Apple has begun shipping Final Cut Server, the company’s new asset management tool. First announced in April 2007, Final Cut Server was supposed to ship last year. Paul Saccone, Apple’s director of video marketing, said that Apple wanted to make sure they got it right before releasing it so customers could rely on it.

Final Cut Server catalogues media and generates thumbnails to enable viewing annotation and approval of content from anywhere using a Mac or a PC.

According to Apple, Final Cut Server has broad search capabilities, which extend from simple keywords to complex combinations of IPTC, XMP and XML metadata. The application also configures a range of specific access controls that define user permissions on an asset or project basis.

Final Cut Server is a scalable server application, so it supports many different sized workgroups. Of course, Final Cut Server is tightly integrated with Apple’s Final Cut Studio. The server tool also includes Compressor 3, Apple’s industrial strength digital encoding and compression tool. Saccone said that there are now over one million editors using Final Cut. Over 80 percent of



independent filmmakers are using Final Cut and 50 percent of all new purchases are going to Apple’s high-end application suite.

Final Cut Server is available immediately for \$1299 for one server and ten concurrent client licenses, and \$2599 for one server and unlimited client licenses.

— Jim Dalrymple

Look and listen

An Australian web site is trying to take on iTunes when it comes to viewing music videos. The site, Movideo, bills itself as "Australia's premier online destination for high quality music videos" and provides high-quality music videos for free.

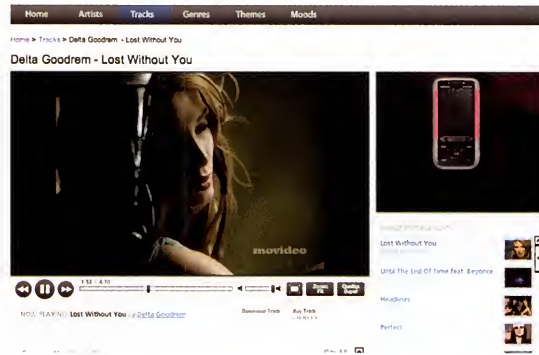
That's right, while iTunes charges you \$3.39, Movideo gives you the ability to watch it for free. Free! But wait you ask, what's the catch?

No catch, but unlike iTunes where you can download the music video and watch it on a range of Apple products, you'll need to be in front of your computer, connected to a network, to enjoy Movideo music videos.

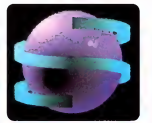
Movideo delivers "near DVD-quality" videos using Flash technology, and makes a big fuss about "incredibly crisp and full range audio". I watched a couple of videos and, while impressive, it really depends on the quality of the speakers that you use with your computer.

Movideo currently has 2500 videos online, with 5000 due to be available by the end of the year. At the price you can't really complain, but if you want to watch your video offline you're stuck with iTunes for now.

— Danny Gorog



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Compiled by Nicholas Pyers

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The winning entry

[COMP WINNER]

Review a MacBook Air



Back in the March issue, we gave readers the opportunity to win a coveted guest spot on the highly prestigious *Australian Macworld Weekend Edition* podcast, reviewing the new Apple MacBook Air. As a sort of bonus, we'd let you keep the MacBook Air after you'd finished with it. Well, why not?

All you had to do to win was prove your chops as a reviewer by posting a review on our forums at www.macworld.com.au.

We had a huge number of entries, and many of them were of a remarkably high standard. If we'd been able to give a MacBook Air to everyone who wrote a great review we would, but ... well, we can't.

In the end, there can be only one, and the only one was Pat Beretta of South Hobart, Tasmania (aka Dark-melody). You can read his winning entry on the forums (see "Hotlinks"). When he comes on the podcast we might get him to perform it with a backbeat, old school.

Or not.

Anyway, congratulations to Pat and many thanks to all who entered. — M.J.C.P.

Hotlinks

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[PHOTOGRAPHY]

New Nikon Coolpix cameras

Nikon has introduced three new models to its Coolpix digital camera line. The P80 will be released in April for \$599. The S52 and S52c are coming in May for \$399 and \$449 respectively.

The P80 is a 10.1 megapixel model featuring an 18x optical zoom lens that offers a 27-486mm focal length. It also features an all-new Sports Continuous Mode, which lets you shoot up to 30 consecutive pictures at four, six or 13 frames per second. It has light sensitivity up to ISO 6400. The S52 and S52c both sport 9.0 megapixel sensors, 3x 38-114mm zoom lenses, and use Nikon's "Expeed" image processing.

The S52c can send images through e-mail using a built-in Wi-Fi connection. — Peter Cohen



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Hotlinks

www.gotye.com
He's a Mac man now

Gotye: Hyphenated musician

During 2007, Gotye (aka Wally De Backer) picked up an ARIA award and suddenly he became one of those Australian artists people knew.

AMW: Can you explain your history with Macs?

Gotye: I was scared of Macs. They didn't have a right mouse button. They weren't subject to all sorts of security issues and incompatibilities. They didn't run Windows. It was like they didn't fit my understanding of what a computer was (laughs). But seriously, I'd never used them until about four years ago when I bought a G4 and started using it for music. I now use a MacBook Pro both for music production and for web surfing, word processing, accounting, everything really.

AMW: So is there a particular reason you've stuck with Macs for your work?

Gotye: Since making "the switch" I've just found Macs to be easier to keep functional, lean on bugs and issues, and inspiring in their stability.

AMW: For those who haven't heard your work, how would you categorise your music?

Gotye: Sample-based alt-pop. Lots of hyphens there, I know. How about "hyphenated music". Add as many hyphens as you like. It's hard to categorically describe my music in terms of genre. I'd like to think that one record could be a sample-based cut-and-paste down-beat record, while the next could be alt-country-flavoured acoustic-folk.

AMW: Can you describe your studio?

Gotye: This is always embarrassing when speaking about my use of Macs, because all of the music I've released so far was actually composed when I was still a PC man. I had an old Pentium III PC-compatible system, on which I ran Acid Pro. It was a very lo-fi setup, but it was all I could afford and I used it to the limits of its abilities. Macs featured prominently in the mixing and mastering stage of my records though, used by Francois Tetaz at Moose Mastering in his Pro Tools HD 3 mix session and subsequently in the final master EQs on the tracks. Since writing that material, I've started using my MacBook Pro to run Ableton Live and have rear-

ranged all of my album projects in that software. It's very powerful and flexible, and runs excellently on the new Macs.

AMW: What do you see as the main advantages of home-based recording?

Gotye: No limits of time on experimenting with ideas. The chance to let ideas gestate over long periods. The comfort of your own home is usually better than a foreign location, no matter how nicely the studio is decked out

AMW: Some of your songs merge some very contemporary sounds with some vintage ones — where do you source your vintage sounds?

Gotye: I sample small snippets of vinyl, cassettes, VHS tapes I collect from op shops, or sometimes mp3s I find on the web. I stretch, pitch shift, chop and generally manipulate them to sound different and to become the building blocks of my tracks. Sometimes I will re-record things I've sampled and use the original snippets as inspiration for my own interpretations. The process of songwriting in this way for me is totally married to the pre-production, recording and mixing stage of the process. It's all happening at the same time. Sometimes the last thing to be added might be a central instrumental hook. Sometimes the last thing might be the drums, having used scratch drum parts while writing the song. Sometimes the chorus lead vocal is the last idea I come up with. It's all just a constant process of pushing the tracks and songs forward piece by piece, idea by idea, usually over a long period of time (anywhere between two months and two years).

AMW: You mentioned you now use Ableton Live application as your primary recording tool — what made you choose that?

Gotye: I've settled on Ableton Live because it's designed to work with samples, but also with larger recorded slabs of sound (like other virtual studio software). I just find it has the right layout and functionality to allow me to follow up on ideas quickly and easily, but also to get quite complex and "nitty-gritty" with mix decisions.

AMW: If you could start over again with your use of computers in music, what technical or creative mistakes would you try to avoid the second time around.

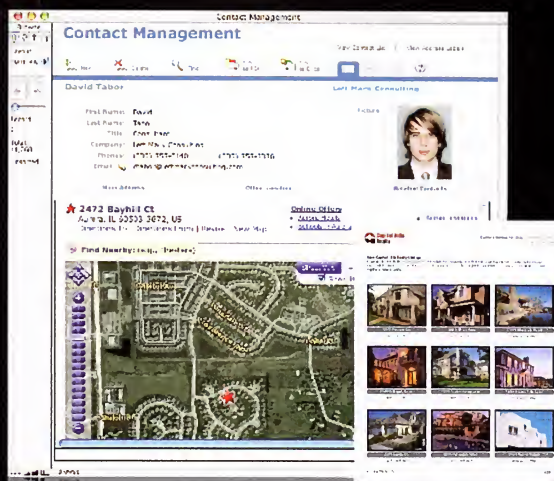
Gotye: I would start off on a Mac. And I wouldn't sample things from the headphone jack of my home amplifier (a mistake I made for many years), or normalise all my sound files as a quick-fix for not getting the gain structure right when engineering sounds in the first place.

— David Holloway



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Toolbox essentials

This month's AMW Disc of the Month (available from your local participating MUG) is a collection of essential utilities and applications all Mac OS X users are recommended to have.

Anti-Virus

ClamXav. A free virus checker for Mac OS X. It uses the ClamAV open-source anti-virus engine as a back end.

SpamSieve. By learning from the very messages that you receive, SpamSieve is able to block nearly all of your spam.

Archiving

Pacifist. Opens Mac OS X .pkg package files, .dmg disk images, & .zip, .tar, .tar.gz, .tar, .bz2, and .xar file archives.

StuffIt Expander. Easily expand and decode all the files you download from the web or receive in your e-mail.

The Unarchiver. A much more capable replacement for the built-in archive unpacker program in Mac OS X.

UnRarX. Allows you to expand rar archives and restore corrupted or missing archives.

Audio

MP3 Trimmer. Remove unwanted portions of your MP3 files — without losing any of the quality!

SoundConverter. Convert sound files between different sound formats.

SoundGrinder. An advanced yet simple to use audio file batch convertor.

Switch. Convert and encode a range of audio file formats.

Communications

Firefox. An alternative, standards-compliant web browser.

Transmission. A fast, easy, and free BitTorrent client with a focus on being lightweight yet feature-filled.

Gaming

Mine Swept. Mac OS X version of the "second most popular Windows Application".

Solitaire XL. Mac OS X version of the "most popular Windows Application".

Graphics

FileJuicer. Extract images from PDF, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and other files.

GraphicConverter. Photo software for graphics conversion and image editing.

ImageVacuum. Extract images from a PDF into a thumbnail-browser view.

VectorFileConverter. Convert WMF formatted files into PDF or EPS format.

Text

Adobe Reader. View, search, digitally sign, verify, print, and collaborate on Adobe PDFs.

CombinePDFs. Merge multiple PDFs or images into a single PDF.

docXConverter. Easily open and use files saved in the new Office 2007 formats: .docx & .xlsx.

icExcel. Utility for Viewing Microsoft Excel files.

icWord. Work with Word, PowerPoint, NisusWriter and AppleWorks files that were created on Macs or PCs.

TextExpander. Save countless keystrokes with custom abbreviations for frequently-used text and images!

TextLightning. Convert PDF files to RTF.

Textsoap. Clean messy e-mails, web sites and other text littered with odd characters and other junk.

TextWrangler. Powerful and richly-featured tool for composing, modifying, and transforming text stored in plain-text files.

Video

Flip4Mac WMV. A collection of QuickTime components that allow you to play, import, and export Windows Media video and audio files on your Mac using QuickTime.

HandBrake. DVD to AVI/MPEG-4 converter.

MPlayer. Video playback client.

Perian. The "Swiss Army Knife for QuickTime" that adds native support for many popular video formats including Flash Video.

RealPlayer. Multimedia playback client.

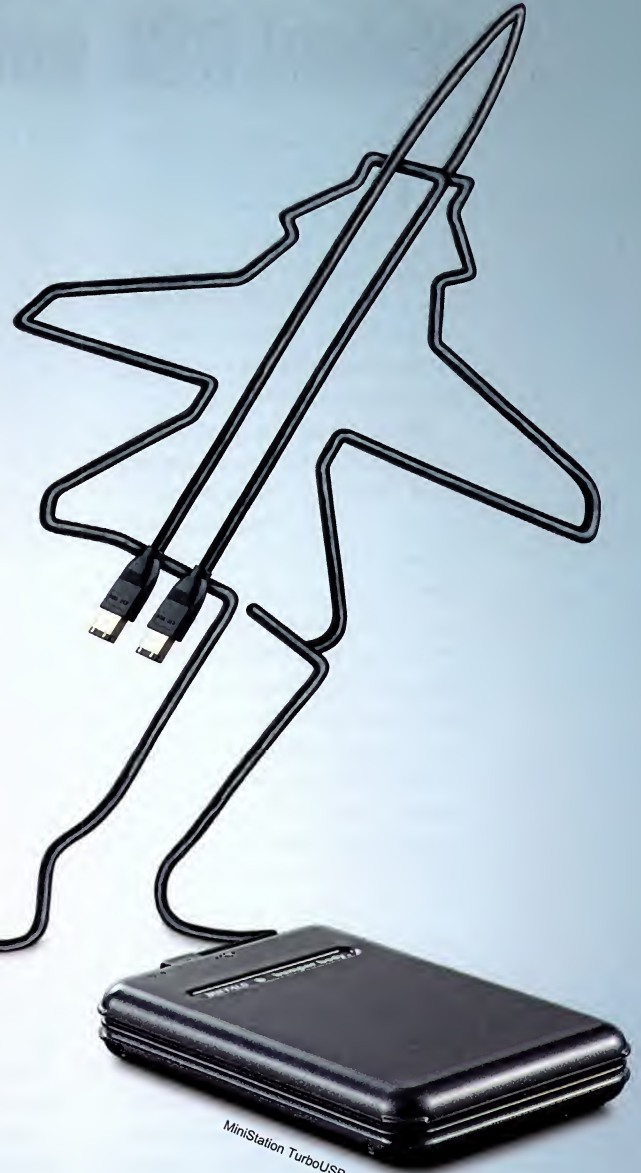
Video LAN Client (VLC). Highly portable multimedia player for various audio and video formats (DivX, mp3, ogg) as well as DVDs, VCDs, and various streaming protocols.

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Naked DSL and other nasty tales

Have you heard about naked DSL? It's the ability to get ADSL broadband over a home phone line without having to pay Telstra's annoying line rental tax which, for many people who use internet or mobile phones, is an yet another bill to pay each month and a seemingly unnecessary cost.

This all sounds very attractive on the surface. And to be sure, there are some benefits. For example, ISPs can connect premises further away from the exchange than they used to be able to on Telstra's network.

But naked DSL is also the meat in the sandwich of a major fight between Telstra, the competition regulator, and every other telco in the country. The crux is that the regulator says Telstra shouldn't charge more than a few dollars a month for "naked" access to phone lines. Telstra feels cheated that it is being denied the opportunity to make the kinds of profit on phone lines it has been making for the last 100 years.

Telstra has been overruled through numerous appeals and has reached the end of the line in the court system.

So, Telstra is forced to provide ISPs access to its copper phone lines for about \$3 a month, to much gnashing of teeth and wailing of senior executives. But, taking a leaf from the book of American telcos, just because you have to provide a service doesn't mean you have to do it well.

I have experienced Telstra's lack of motivation first hand when I applied for iiNet Naked DSL at home. "Great," I thought, "no more \$30 Telstra bill each month for basically nothing."

Little did I realise that I was automatically placing myself into a big



black bucket of customers that Telstra pretty much seems to want to pretend doesn't exist.

First, I applied for my service, and was told it would be connected on a certain date. The date came and went, and I was informed that Telstra had rejected the application out of hand because my address didn't exist. "Er, yes it does" I said, incredulously. See, one drawback of naked DSL is that because there's no phone service, there's no phone number either, so simply locating your phone line can become a battle with Telstra.

When I reapplied (and waited another two weeks, which is the standard provisioning time for naked DSL services), the date came and went again, and when I rang iiNet, I was informed that Telstra had simply missed its installation appointment and I would have to apply yet again — another two weeks.

So, I reapplied. (Yes, I really wanted Naked DSL. I was deadset on achieving the ideological nirvana of not having to pay for something I didn't want.) Third time round, the

DSL line was rejected again because iiNet forgot to tell me that I needed to have a phone plugged into the phone socket at home. OK, fair enough, not Telstra's fault.

Fourth time lucky, my service was connected at a glorious 17Mbps. For the first time ever, I was actually able to get broadband at something like broadband speeds. For several months, my downloads rocketed along at speeds nearing 2MB a second — it was bliss.

Then, Sydney had severe rain and lightning storms, with claps of thunder that would wake the dead. Somewhere outside, I heard a scary "tttt-tt-ttt-ttt" lightning sound — very close to my house. A few minutes later, when I discovered my net connection was dead and my modem had a smoked-salmon smell, I realised the sound I heard was my modem getting fried. Damn.

So I procured another modem, which connected OK — only this time, the speed was 3Mbit/s. And it dropped out frequently.

Guess what's happening now, trying to get the phone line fixed? After my sixth call to iiNet customer service, I finally had to put on my journalist hat and ask senior executives at iiNet and Telstra what the hell was going on and to see if they could actually get someone to fix my line. Before then, every time I called to enquire on the status of my fault, Telstra had a different excuse. "That's within average line speeds..."; "The job was closed without any reason being given..." and so on.

The moral of the story? Naked DSL might be available, but don't count on the service actually being available to you. ☹

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P1i

Phone smarts



With a such a huge variety of different smartphones on the market it's hard to know which device will be suitable for your needs. Given the dazzling array of different options it's little wonder that buyers feel like they're entering a maze. Here are some pointers to help you negotiate the confusopoly.

Will you be using the device to enter lots of information? If you will, look for a device with a QWERTY keyboard. Although there have been great advances made in the use of predictive text entry a full keyboard is easy to use, particularly if you're a novice.

Is access to e-mail important to you? If it is, BlackBerry is a good option as it's able to retrieve e-mail automatically. Most other smartphones presently on the market can retrieve e-mail but few are as simple to use as BlackBerries.

Pre-paid or contract? If you're buying on a contract, take the time to look at the last few bills you've had and ask the service provider to recalculate them with the new pricing structure. Factor in the cost of the handset and, if you're moving to your first smartphone plan to

access e-mail or surf the net, make sure you allow for some data costs.

How good are your eyes? The size of icons and text is important to consider. There isn't a direct correlation between larger screens and larger icons so you may find a smaller screen is actually easier to read and less busy.

Hold the phone in your hand. Is it comfortable? You'll need to be able to type easily, or the smartest phone in the world is no use to you. Extra keys should also be easily accessible, but not so easily that you'll be forever pressing them accidentally.

What features do you really need? There are literally hundreds, perhaps thousands, of potential devices to choose from and it's easy, in the heat of the moment, to be swayed by a persuasive salesperson to buy a smartphone on the basis of a feature you don't really need. For example, if you're not planning to use your smartphone as a substitute for your digital camera, then a 5MP camera auto-focussing camera is a waste of money and added complexity you don't need. By the same token GPS may seem like a useless gee-gaw, but if you actually think you'll use it, it could be money well spent.

iPhone — the elephant in the room. It's impossible to survey the smartphone market without considering the iPhone. However, that survey is difficult to complete as the iPhone doesn't officially exist in Australia yet. That said, there are plenty of people running around with a "cracked" iPhone. The problem with these units is that each firmware update Apple releases (there have been several already) renders the iPhone useless until someone finds a way to crack the phone again.

The question on everyone's mind is "When will the iPhone come to Australia". The answer to that is very simple — when Apple is ready. One of the challenges Apple may face is its preference to do deals with specific carriers. Australian laws forbid "third arm forcing" — this is where a vendor selling one product forces you to buy another product. Arguably, this includes having to sign a contract with a specific carrier in order to buy the iPhone.

The main obstacle to having the iPhone available on all phone networks is that it relies on EDGE for its internet access. This effectively limits the iPhone's full utility to Telstra. However, by the time the iPhone is released locally, there may be a 3G version on the market.

With the release of the iPhone and iPod touch SDK, Apple's taken a leaf from the Symbian, Windows Mobile and Palm books. One of the reasons those platforms have been so successful is that they've been hubs for developer communities that have found all sorts of ways to add value to devices through some very ingenious applications.

My advice — if you need a new smartphone but are waiting for the iPhone then consider buying a temporary phone without a contract. That way, when the iPhone is released you won't be trapped in a contract and can offload your phone on the second-hand market and buy an iPhone.

BlackBerry 8120	
Type	Smartphone
Rating	★★★½
Pros	Great messaging
Cons	Sync troubles
SRP	\$659 plus data plan
Manufacturer	RIM

It has to be said that experience counts for a lot. The BlackBerry 8120, also known as the Pearl, is a far cry from the earliest BlackBerry devices. It's sleek, weighs less than 100g and delivers great telephony and excellent messaging capability.

The setup process for the test unit, running on Optus's network, was very Mac-like: follow some simple prompts and you're done. RIM, the company that makes the BlackBerry, has done a deal with the folks at PocketMac so I downloaded the latest version of PocketMac for BlackBerry so I could sync the Pearl with my test system.

Once navigated the PocketMac/BlackBerry web site and registration system, I installed PocketMac for BlackBerry and encountered a problem. Despite everything seemingly having worked, PocketMac simply wouldn't connect to the Pearl. Some research revealed that the problem might be related to a lack of power coming from the USB port. This isn't surprising as more recent Mac portables seem to have a lower power output from USB than previous versions but it's disappointing that I could not sync calendar and contact data.

Having set the Pearl to retrieve messages from a very active Gmail account, I found that messages arrived on the Pearl almost instantly. Composing and replying to messages took some practice with the BlackBerry's predictive text input system. If you're accustomed to the T9 mode of most mobile phones, the RIM way of doing things, while very good, does take some getting used to. Rather than arranging the letters in alphabetical order on sequentially numbered keys, the Pearl has a sort of QWERTY-like arrangement. Odd, until you get the hang of it.

The Pearl's supported application suite is quite impressive, with Yahoo! and Google Talk IM clients. An AIM Messenger client has also been released but I couldn't install it because of the connection issue. Other apps looked excellent on the two-inch colour screen.

Connectivity is covered off with quad-band GSM and EDGE for data communications. There's Bluetooth so that the Pearl can be used as a wireless modem with the Mac, but not for syncing. Internet connectivity was also 802.11b/g WiFi and I used this to connect to the web over the office's wireless LAN for web browsing.

The BlackBerry 8120 Pearl is a great phone and communications device. However, the synchronisation issues I faced were significant and, I believe, will be a deal-breaker for many potential users.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. The BlackBerry 8120 Pearl is a great handheld that works as expected. If the sync solution worked as it should, I'd have little hesitation recommending it.



E90 Communicator

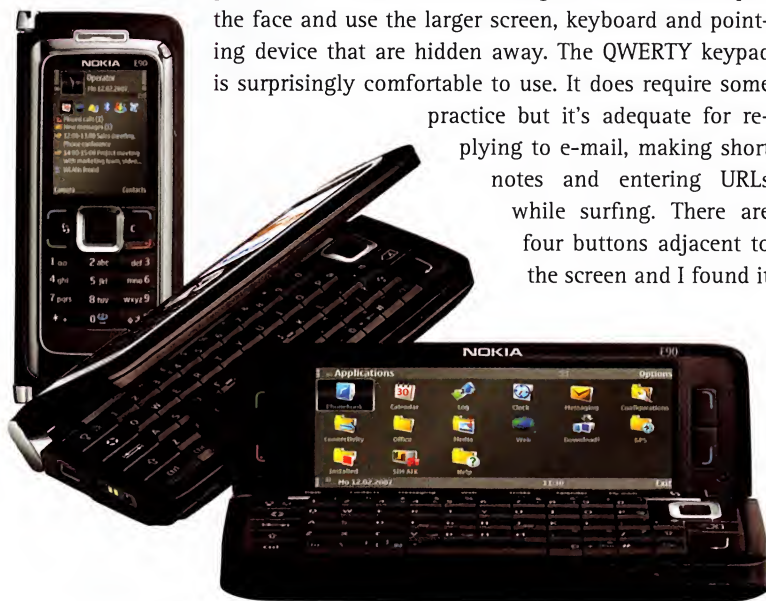
Type	Smartphone
Rating	☹☹☹ 1/2
Pros	Comms powerhouse
Cons	Size and weight
SRP	\$1499
Manufacturer	Nokia

At first glance the Nokia E90 Communicator looks like an early '90s handset. The screen's small at just 52mm, there's a keypad, and plenty of vacant space around all of that. Weighing in at a touch over 200g, it's heavy to hold and quite chunky. However, there's a lot more to the E90 than meets the eye. That retro-styled front face flips up to reveal a full QWERTY keyboard and a 103mm 800x352-pixel colour display. The E90 Communicator is, as its name suggests, designed to be an internet communications device.

As far as comms go, the E90 ticks all the right boxes with quad-band GSM and 3G data. There's 802.11g for wireless and Bluetooth for connecting the phone to your Mac as a modem and for calendar and contact syncing. Nokia provides a free iSync plug-in so you can easily connect the E90 to your Mac either via Bluetooth or USB.

In giving the E90 a split personality, with the simple phone on the outside and computer on the inside, Nokia has largely solved the issue of the phone interface complexity, albeit in its own and completely idiosyncratic way. When you need to make calls, use it as a traditional phone. For e-mail, web browsing and other tasks open the face and use the larger screen, keyboard and pointing device that are hidden away. The QWERTY keypad is surprisingly comfortable to use. It does require some practice but it's adequate for replying to e-mail, making short notes and entering URLs while surfing. There are four buttons adjacent to the screen and I found it

adequate for replying to e-mail, making short notes and entering URLs while surfing. There are four buttons adjacent to the screen and I found it



annoying that some actions required me to move away from the keyboard in order to respond to a dialog or application pop-up. Other than that annoyance, the rest of the interface, running Symbian S60 V3.1, behaved as expected. Nokia has done a good job in porting an interface that's designed for small screens to a larger one.

Battery life is about average for a smartphone, with five hours of talk and about 14 days of standby. Of course, with Bluetooth and WiFi active, you can expect much shorter returns.

Multimedia capability rounds out the package with a 3.2MP camera equipped with a flash and autofocus. I took some test shots and found it adequate for quick snaps. However, I'm surprised that a device touted as a communicator lacks a second camera for video-calling. Photos and music, which can be played back through the music player app that supports AAC and MP3, can be stored on a microSD card.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. At almost \$1500, many people will be weighing up the value of an all-in-one device versus an entry-level MacBook. The E90 Communicator will be attractive to some but it won't suit everyone

P1i

Type	Smartphone
Rating	☹☹☹
Pros	Great screen
Cons	Hit and miss Mac sync
SRP	\$799
Manufacturer	Sony Ericsson

Sony Ericsson's P1i is the first smartphone to really surprise me in quite some time. You see, it's a phone without the traditional call and hang-up buttons I've become accustomed to. Instead, it uses its 20-button keypad for data entry and the touchscreen for other tasks.

Once the phone's powered up for the first time, you're directed to go through a setup wizard that lets you set your home city, the time and date and messaging settings. After some digging through the Sony Ericsson support site I did find an iSync plug-in but couldn't make it work. My research showed that this was not an uncommon issue although some users reported that their handset didn't have the same problems I faced.

In day to day use, the P1i is very competent. The display is very clear and the home-screen provides a summary view of unread messages, pending tasks and appointments and quick access to your calendar, address



book and inbox. Most icons are quite large and tappable with a fingertip although many other operations like enabling Bluetooth or WiFi will require use of the stylus that sits in a slot in the top left corner of the device.

Although the P1i is a little on the chunky side it is reasonably comfortable to hold. There's a roller on the left side that you can use to navigate around screens and a dedicated button for the 3MP camera. The camera can take decent snaps and there are basic editing tools on the phone for cropping and annotating images. A secondary camera, on the front corner, can be used for

video calls over 3G. Talk time is rated at between 3.5 and 10 hours depending on whether you're on a UMTS or GSM network with standby rated at between 14 and 18 days. As always, these numbers are only indicative and will drop back significantly if Bluetooth and WiFi are used.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. If Mac synchronisation were reliable I'd have little hesitation in recommending the P1i. However, the unreliability of that feature pulls the P1i's score down significantly.

Touch Duo	
Type	Smartphone
Rating	☺☺☺ 1/2
Pros	Sleek, easy to use
Cons	poor camera, no WiFi
SRP	\$745
Manufacturer	HTC

HTC has emerged as the new force in the smartphone market. Its Touch Duo looks a lot like the HTC Touch but adds a phone keypad that's revealed by sliding the screen up. Despite the addition of the keyboard, the Touch Duo retains a slim profile that, at under 16mm, is still pocket-sized and comfortable to hold.

Running Windows Mobile 6 Professional, the Touch Duo is replete with a full suite of office applications, multimedia management programs and other essential tools such as a PDF viewer, Flash video player and a

voice recorder. The 2.6-inch screen does a good job of displaying content and the Qualcomm MSM 2700 processor drives the system nicely. I didn't experience any significant slowdowns even when there were several applications running.

The internal memory packs 256MB – that might seem a little skinny in comparison with the iPhone, with which the Touch Duo is inevitably compared. However, this can be easily bolstered through a microSD slot.

The Windows Mobile user interface has been customised by HTC. The today screen uses HTC's Live home screen, which provides an application launcher that can be used with a fingertip, reducing dependence on the stylus that's quite difficult to extract and put away from the slot on the bottom right corner. The custom Today screen uses the 3G data connection (my test unit was on Telstra's NextG network) to get live weather updates and provide quick access to commonly-used applications.

Connectivity is rounded off with Bluetooth 2.0 so you can wirelessly connect the Touch Duo and sync your iCal and Address Book, or Entourage data. However, you will need to add the cost of Missing Sync to your budget as Mac sync support isn't included in the box.

As a communication tool, the Touch Duo is a solid device. The keypad means that you won't cover the touch screen with fingerprints and there's a camera for video calls on the front and 2.0MP unit on the back for grabbing quick snapshots. It auto-focuses quite well but I found image quality – particularly when indoors or in uneven lighting – to be fair at best.

Battery life is rated at 250 hours standby and three hours talk. In testing, I found that the standby rating was reasonable. Talk time is more difficult to assess but I found that I was able to use the Touch Duo for a full day between trips to the power outlet.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. I liked the HTC Touch Duo. The display and keypad were comfortable, although the inbuilt storage is a little skinny. Some further refinement to reduce the stylus-dependence will make this a worthy rival for the iPhone. ☺





Fleur Doidge believes everyone has a story to tell.

Insights into the Australian Mac community

Mac dance

Malcolm McLaren's seminal 1983 track "Buffalo Gals" plays in my head when I think of Melbourne psychologist Les Posen and his passion for Israeli folk dancing. Maybe it's the "dosey-doe your partner" element of video-based folk dance instruction. Maybe it's the association with viral, vaguely underground internet technology. Maybe it's just that, no matter how you spin it, Israeli folk dance seems to an outsider every bit as quirky as "all that scratchin' is makin' me itch".

Whatever. What's often overlooked when it comes to the channel are the people not directly involved selling or distributing product themselves, but who support sales by their own innovative engagement with the brand. Les Posen is one of those.

Facing the music. Posen's first blog was about Israeli folk dance, following a brush with an existing Yahoo! discussion list when, according to him, not all on the list were happy with his pro-Apple views: "I wanted my own place to expose my quirky thinking!"

He began by commenting on how technology was affecting the psychology profession, but the blog gradually focused more on Apple issues. "Any Apple user around for a decade or two has been the butt of ridicule," Posen said. "My blog was an effort to debunk some of those myths, but also to apply my clinical nous and, later, my studies in knowledge management, to Apple in ways other bloggers were not.



"The Mac has what I want in a PC: elegant software that 'knows' how I want to use it, then gets out of the way."

Unsurprisingly, Posen has become quite the Keynote fan. In his profession — along with virtual reality therapy, biofeedback and the like in his independent practice treating anxiety and phobias like fear of flying — giving presentations is part of the game and Keynote, he says, fits in better with cognitive science on how we learn. This year he gave a presentation on Keynote at the Macworld Expo in San Francisco.

"Keynote's cinematic qualities encourage users to be more visual in their presentations and to use the beautifully-rendered text carefully. Our visual systems are to broadband while our auditory systems are to dialup," Posen said.

"But when you use both together appropriately, you get an enhanced effect. PowerPoint's cognitive style — what its wizards invite you to do — emphasises the textual display of data in bullets. The classic boring presentation."

Movement by Mac. He got interested in Israeli folk dancing long after he got his first Mac — the

second-in-charge of the clinical psychology program at Melbourne's Austin Hospital in 1988 was a Mac fan.

Posen used PowerPoint slides in his first-ever university presentation. "I hated it, and half-way through stopped using it and talked to the students about my experience as a psychologist. That set the standard for how I present," he said.

In 1990, a girlfriend took up dancing. "Rather than spend two nights apart, I joined in, and while slow to catch it to begin with, I discovered I could learn new dances quickly and soon had a repertoire of several hundred dances," Posen said.

Posen said each piece of Israeli folk dance music has its own dance — a unique physical "signature". "So when you hear the music, your feet go on automatic pilot and you just move," he said.

He says folk dancers can move at their own pace; it can be mild exercise or more strenuous. You can hold hands with strangers, so it fills a human need to be touched as well. "It's a great connector and, of course, for those who have a strong connection with Israel or the Bible, it puts that connection into a physical form," he said.

Hotlinks

homepage.mac.com/lesposen

Les Posen's site guide, including links to the CyberPsych podcast and Fear of Flying blog

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SgvJY9xxcA

YouTube — 1983 video clip for Malcolm McLaren's "Buffalo Gals".

In early 2001, after the first Titanium PowerBooks were released, he bought one plus a Sony Digital-8 camera. Posen says he had "no idea" about FireWire and digital movies, but soon discovered QuickTime, iMovie and iTools — which allowed him to upload 20MB of QuickTime videos free to Apple's servers. "I had about a dozen, to contain my growing collection of dance-related videos," he said.

At the time, the sole distributor of dances was a tightly-controlled Israeli "monopoly", he says, which mailed out VHS tapes of the latest dances from monthly workshops. "If you were lucky, one or two out of 15 were good enough to teach — so people were paying \$US40 each month for a lucky dip. I cherry-picked the good dances by attending camps and deciding on displayed popularity," Posen said.

He made his choices available online, and the service proved popular. Then dance instructors started sending him VHS tapes of new dances from their dance camps and local workshops. Posen uploaded the choreographers' versions too, so

viewers could see the original idea of the dance — how it "should" be done — rather than just an interpretation.

"My idea was that no matter where you danced around the world you would know the same dance," he said. "Later, when I led dance sessions, I combined iTunes and Megaseg dedicated DJ software to make up my playlists."

Posen says the Israel group has since tried to copy and charge for its materials. However, too many people now use mobile phone-to-video and services like YouTube to distribute new dances. "Quality, however, is quite variable — and not all dances are shown with the choreographer in action," he added.

Cultural ties. Posen is not an Israeli himself but he is Jewish. "I've visited Israel a few times. I don't speak Hebrew and prefer to live in Australia," he said.

Early immigrants to what is today known as Israel, he says, brought their own local culture with them, mainly from Eastern Europe, merging it with influences from places such as

Morocco, Yemen and Persia. In aid of developing a specific Israeli culture, people eventually developed a unique folk dance form.

Unlike other folk dance movements, which seek to preserve pre-existing traditions, Israeli folk dance more reflects current ideas — sometimes even using hit parade songs as a base as well as older music styles.

"Some dances are created just to be popular, others have particular contemporary meaning, such as recent military activity or it's a variation on a liturgical piece of music," Posen explained. "Many Christians are attracted to Israeli folk dance because of the religious themes."

Apart from dancing, he enjoys movies and training his four-year-old German Shepherd. His partner of eight years, Lili, has two children, now in their early 20s. "I've introduced them all to the Mac way. The kids are grateful to have [older] adults around them so into technologies. They used a PC for games and IM until it became weighed down with malware — the youngest is getting a MacBook for his 21st." □



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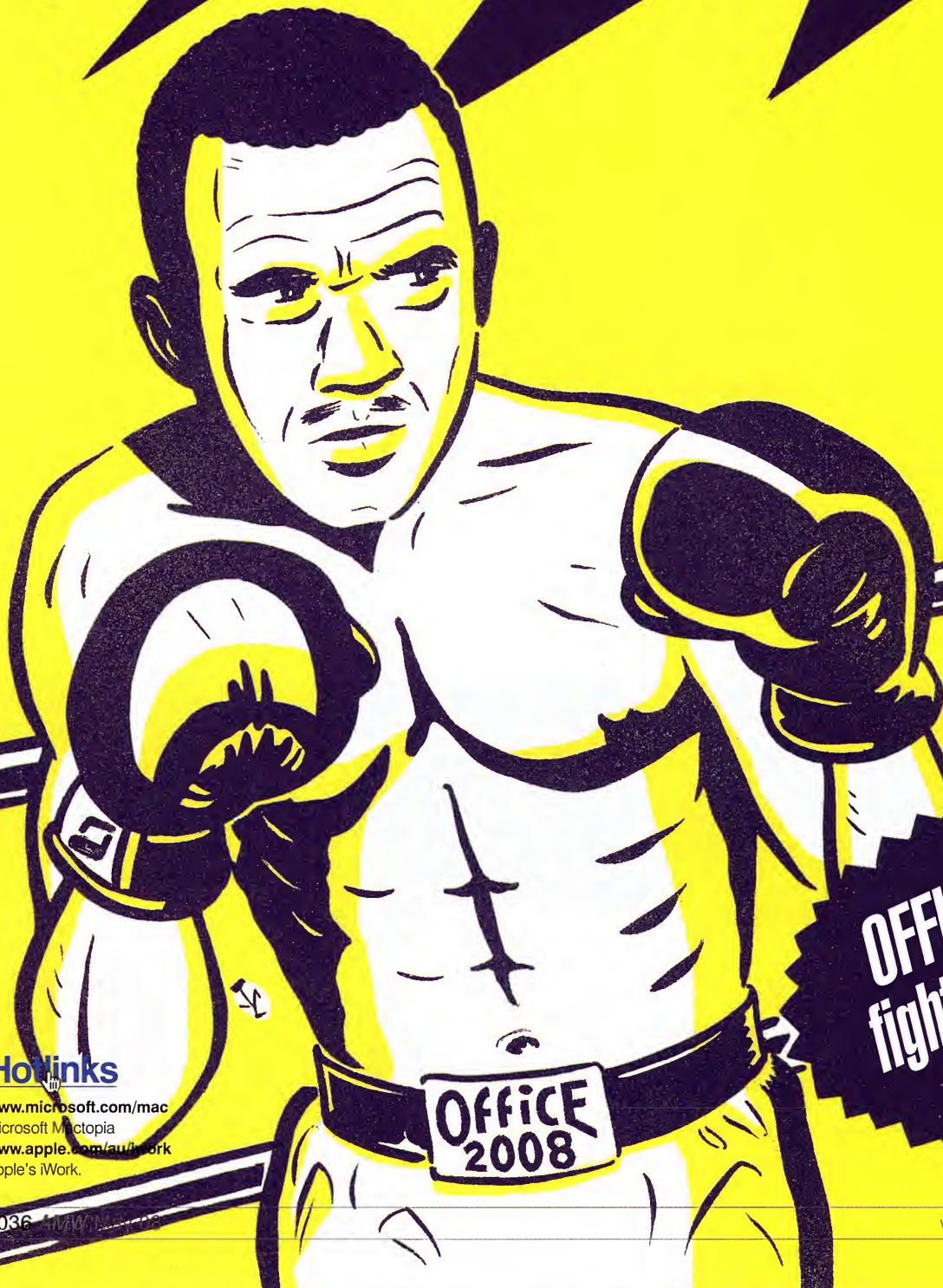
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⌘-2

Jeffery Battersby,
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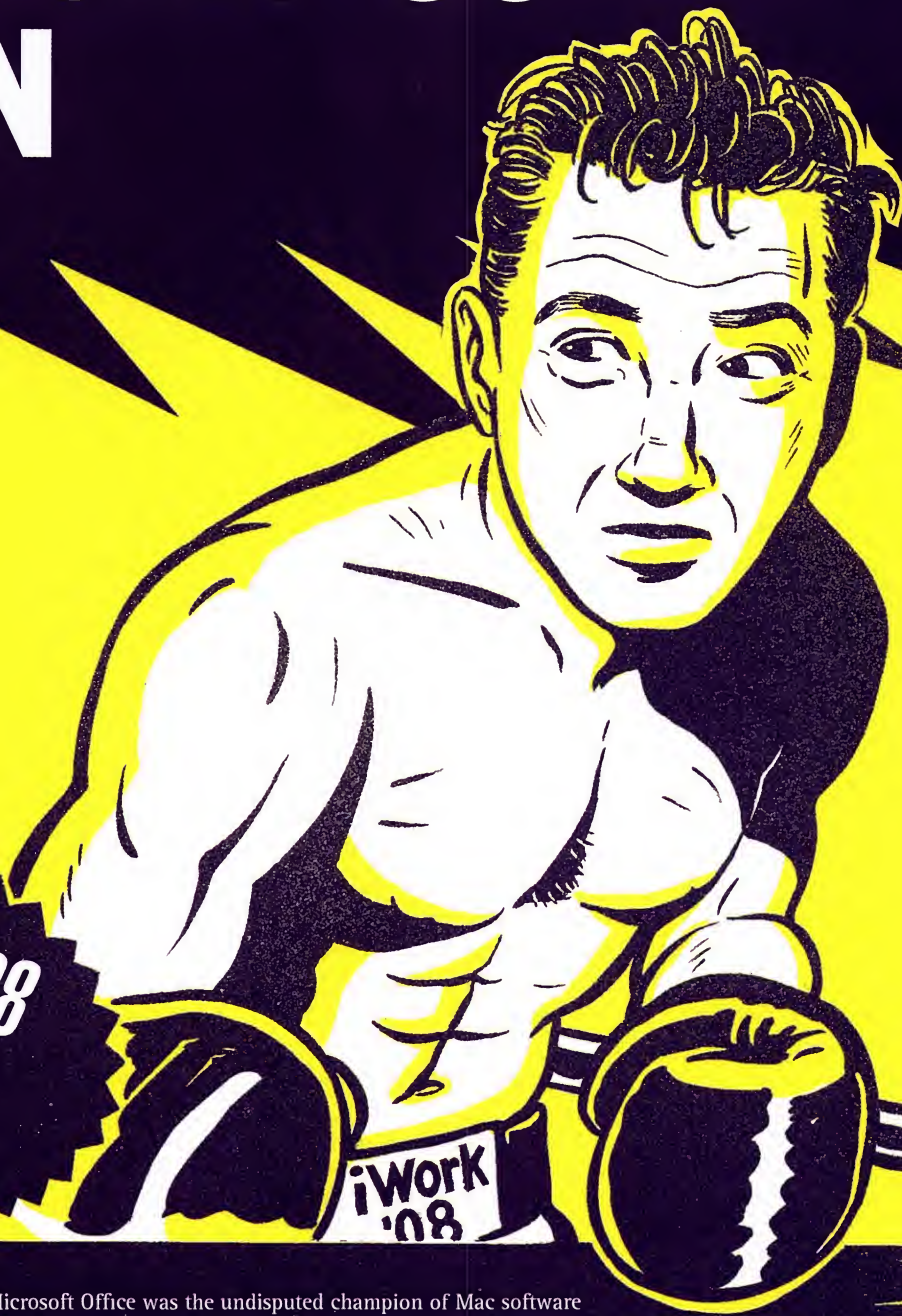


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Hotlinks

www.microsoft.com/mac
Microsoft MacTopia
www.apple.com/au/iWork
Apple's iWork.

vs iWORK '08 DOWN



*Will iWork '08
pull off the
upset?*

For years, Microsoft Office was the undisputed champion of Mac software suites. Then came Apple's iWork. At first it consisted solely of Pages and Keynote — not enough to take on Office head-to-head. But when Apple added Numbers to iWork '08, the suite became a viable alternative to Microsoft Office.

How viable? That's what we asked our go-to experts on word processors, spreadsheets, and presentation programs to find out.

We asked each of them to use Office and iWork to create a project in their respective areas of expertise. Each project was to progress from the basics (data entry and formatting) to more-advanced features (adding a data-entry form to a spreadsheet, for example, or advanced animations in a presentation). Our questions: Is one program better than the other? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Which jobs (and which users) require which tool?

Of course, we knew our test wouldn't touch on every single feature in every program, but we figured we'd be able to compare the tools that you might typically require in a real-world job.

Word 2008 vs Pages '08

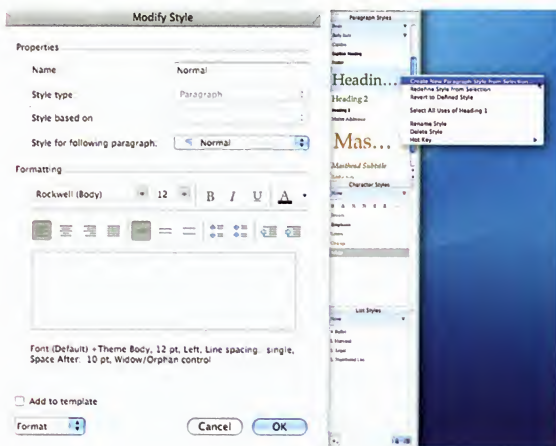
To compare Microsoft Word to Pages '08, I used each program to create the same four-page newsletter. I created my basic text and layout in each program's word processing mode, and then added a variety of paragraph styles and some design elements, including columns, callouts, drop caps, and graphics. Finally, I switched to each program's page-layout mode to create a more sophisticated, template-based version of the same document.

Round 1

Text entry, simple formatting. I started by creating the basic newsletter layout: title text, volume and issue numbers below that, a headline for my main article, body text for the article itself, and a page number in the page footer. I used each program's default styles for the initial formatting and then edited those styles to alter the document's look. Both programs make all these initial steps simple.

In Word, I created each element of the document in Word's default paragraph style. To format those elements more distinctly, I then selected the styles I wanted to use from the Style menu in the floating Formatting Palette. I used Word's new Document Elements tool to add page numbers to the document's footers.

It's only slightly tougher to do all that in Pages. Again, I used the default style and typed my text, and then adjusted my paragraph styles. But I couldn't assign paragraph styles from a floating palette in Pages. Instead, I had to open the Paragraph Styles drawer and choose the style I wanted from there. (I could also have assigned a keyboard shortcut to each style and applied it with a couple of keystrokes.)



Editing styles. Because of Word's style-formatting tools, modifying and creating styles is easier in Word than it is in Pages.



Word's styles editor makes it easy to go beyond the default styles: From the floating Formatting Palette, I opened the Styles palette, clicked to the right of the field displaying the style of the current paragraph, and chose to modify that style. Word then opened a window where I quickly chose the text colour, font sizes, indents, bullets, and other options. Once my edits were complete, every paragraph in my newsletter using that style updated to reflect the changes I'd made.

Editing and updating styles isn't as easy in Pages. I had to use the standard formatting tools to adjust existing paragraphs, and then open the Styles Drawer and choose to either create a new style or redefine the current style. This isn't necessarily difficult, but Word's way is much more intuitive and easier to use.

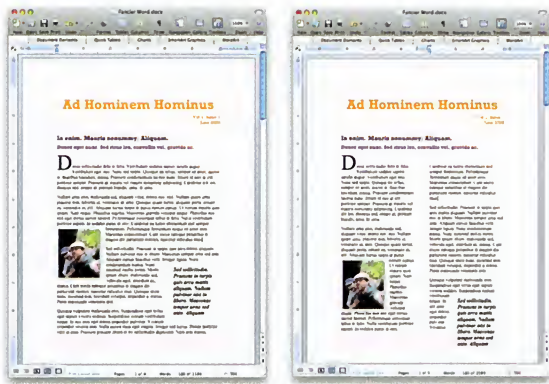
Word 2008 has one other advantage when it comes to changing a document's overall look quickly: Document Themes. These are collections of paragraph styles that change fonts, paragraph formats, text colours, and other document features with a single click of the button. Word ships with over 50 of these themes; you can also create your own, but, oddly enough, you have to use PowerPoint to do it. Pages really has nothing that compares.

My verdict: When it comes to basic text editing, Pages and Word are perfect equals. But when it comes to editing and creating styles, and quickly overhauling the look of your document, Word is better.

Round 2

Advanced document elements. With my basic text and formatting in place, I then began adding more-complex elements, such as sections, columns, drop caps, images, callouts, and tables of contents.

While both programs easily handle sections and columns, they use a somewhat different vocabulary to do so. For example, what Word refers to as a Continuous Section Break, Pages calls a Layout Break.



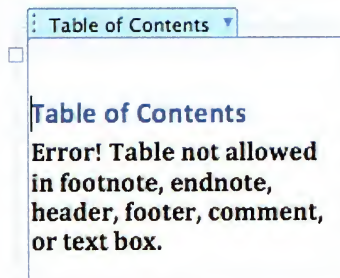
Moving objects. Floating objects don't float in Word's word processing mode, so they wreak havoc on your layout if you make any major paragraph-formatting changes.

Adding a drop cap in Word was equally easy; it's a simple matter of selecting a menu option. Pages doesn't have a built-in drop-cap tool. Instead, I had to finagle my own drop cap by inserting a text box with a single character in it. This inelegant solution never really worked; the spacing between my drop cap and the rest of the text was always a bit off.

The first time I ran into any limitations in Word was when I started to add floating objects – such as pictures and callout text around which text flows. For starters, its image-editing tools aren't very good. More significantly, when I changed a column of text, the floating objects in it refused to stay in place. Instead they moved around as if tied to the text they were originally placed next to, destroying my layout. If I selected all the text in a document and deleted it or replaced it with text from the Clipboard, floating objects within the original text disappeared, too. In other words, if you make any major changes to a document after inserting floating objects, you'll probably need to completely re-create your layout.

Pages' image-editing tools are much better than Word's. You can, for example, change an image mask or add an alpha channel. And Pages treats floating objects much more intelligently – as separate and distinct from the text that surrounds them. When I edited text within col-

Table of contents. Word and Pages don't allow you to create tables of contents inside text boxes, limiting their value in page-layout or highly formatted word processing documents.



umns containing floating objects, those objects stayed where they were. Select and delete text and, again, the objects remain right where you put them.

I was disappointed with each program's handling of tables of contents. While both programs use paragraph styles to gather information for a table of contents, neither would allow me to place the resulting table inside a text box; they insisted on putting the table on its own full page. To get the table of contents I wanted, I had to create it manually in a text box.

Overall, when it comes to adding slightly more-complex formatting to basic word processing documents, I have to give the nod to Pages.

Round 3

Templates. My next step was to switch from word processing mode to page-layout mode. Neither program allowed me to convert a word processing document directly into a page-layout document, so I had to start all over from scratch: I used a built-in template to create my page-layout document, and then copied over the text I'd created when in word processing mode.

Word and Pages each include a significant collection of templates, all of which you can modify and personalise to suit your own needs. But Pages offers a far more complete set, and it makes customising them easier.

Templates in both programs are designed with placeholders for text and images. While both allowed me to drag and drop images onto placeholders, they handle placeholder text differently. When I dragged and dropped text onto a Pages placeholder, Pages replaced the template text with my dropped text. When I did the same thing in Word, the dropped text appeared in a new text box. In both cases, it's far easier to copy text from the original document and then paste it into a text box in the new document.

10 Key differences Word/Pages

	WORD	PAGES
Automation (via AppleScript and/or Automator)	● ^A	●
Clip-art library	●	○
Compatible with .doc format	● ^A	●
Drop-cap support	●	○
Embedded charts	● ^{A, B}	●
Horizontal typing in vertical text fields	○	●
Image-editing tools	●	● ^A
Mail merging from a variety of sources	●	○
Multiple floating palettes	○	●
Support for floating objects	●	● ^A

● = yes. ○ = no. ^A Better. ^B From Excel.

Alternatives: word processors

Word may have most of the market share, with iWork a distant second, but there are still some other alternatives for Mac word processing.

If all you need is basic text editing, TextEdit offers everything you need to create a good, basic document. It'll let you create bulleted or numbered lists, adjust line spacing, change text alignment, or fiddle with your font formatting; it can open Word .doc files; and it's free with any Mac.

Some of my favourite text editors — BareBones Software's TextWrangler and Peter Borg's excellent Smultron — are good choices if you need a bit more than TextEdit. They have no formatting tools, but they're great for quickly typing and manipulating basic text, particularly if said text is bound for the Web. For editing HTML or CSS files, they both provide coloured text-formatting options to help you see keywords in your code.

Among true word processors, one of my personal favourites — enough so that I used it to write most of this article — is Hog Bay Software's WriteRoom. It's a great text editor, with auto-capitalisation and

spelling and grammar checking. It'll do basic text formatting in Rich Text Format documents. Best of all, it creates a distraction-free, full-screen writing environment that I find to be nearly perfect for just cranking out words.

If you need a little more heft, either Mariner Software's Mariner Write or Nisus's Nisus Writer Pro is worth a try. Both can open Word documents and save in formats that Word can read. And they have some powerful searching tools. They also have many of the text-formatting features found in Word and Pages; both allow you to use paragraph styles to quickly change your document's look.

Finally, if you find yourself composing documents from many different Macs, you should consider either Google Docs or ThinkFree Online. Both are web-based applications that you can use via any browser, and they include high-end word processing features and support for Microsoft document formats. Google Docs is the faster of the two, but ThinkFree's interface is very Word-like and offers more document-formatting options than Google.

If the text I pasted into a text box was too large for the box, both programs provided visual cues to let me know there was an overflow and both allowed me to link text boxes so that the text would flow from one box or page to the next. In Word, each text box is colour-coded and numbered in sequence to make it obvious where the text flows. If I held the cursor over a text box, the other linked boxes popped into view. Pages also shows how text boxes are linked sequentially, but I had to click on an existing text box to see how it linked to the next box in the sequence. The program then displayed a thin blue line that started on the first text box and connected in sequence to the last.

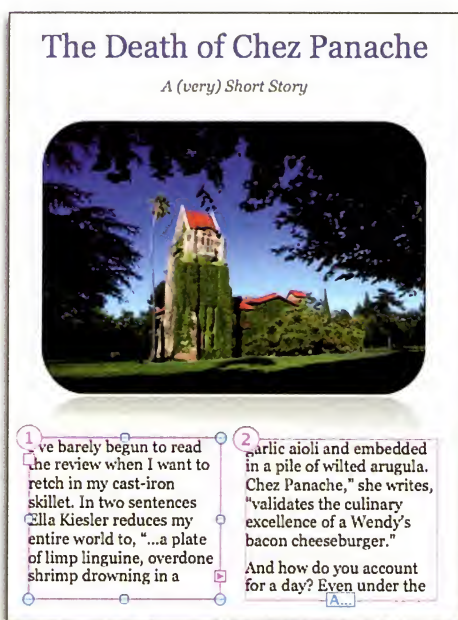
Both programs enable you to rearrange the pages in your document by dragging and dropping them into a

navigation drawer. When I moved pages, the page numbers automatically updated. If I already had linked text boxes in the document, neither of the programs reflowed the text in the proper sequence.

When it came to more-advanced word processing chores, I again found Pages to be more capable than Word.

Hotlinks

www.barebones.com
TextWrangler
smultron.sourceforge.net
Smultron
hogbaysoftware.com/products/writeroom
WriteRoom
www.marinersoftware.com
Mariner Write
www.nisus.com
Nisus Writer
docs.google.com
Google Docs
www.thinkfree.com
ThinkFree



Flowing text. Microsoft Word provides excellent visual cues for viewing the way text flows between text boxes.

Excel 2008 vs Numbers '08

To find out how Numbers '08 and Excel 2008 compare, I used both programs to create the same sales-tracking spreadsheet.

Round 1

Data entry, formulas, and formatting. I started by creating a single worksheet, with a fictional company's product sales by month across the top and a row for each of six sales representatives. I then added cells at the bottom and to the right, where I calculated totals and averages for each month and each salesperson.

Entering basic data in both programs is quite simple. Excel, however, made the task particularly easy. It warned me when I accidentally tried to drag one cell to another already-full cell; Numbers simply overwrote the destination without warning me. Excel also offers nine separate rules for flagging potential errors; Numbers offers only one.

When copying one cell to another, Excel highlights the copied cell, so you can easily see what you've copied. Numbers doesn't, which led to some pasting errors. In addition, I found the size of the text and icons in Numbers' toolbar to be quite small, even on a large monitor. Excel's toolbar was much easier on my 20/20 vision.

Excel is better at helping you enter formulas. I selected the empty cell below the numbers I wanted to sum, and clicked on the Sum button in the toolbar. Excel figured out the top and bottom of the range. Numbers included extraneous rows when I tried to do the same thing.

That said, Numbers has a few nice data-entry tricks of its own: If you select an already-entered Sum formula in Numbers, the program highlights the range that formula sums; Excel does this only if you double-click on the cell to edit it. Numbers also makes it easy to see what's being summed, without your having to click your mouse.

I found that basic formatting is also easier in Excel. For example, a keyboard shortcut (⌘-option-arrow keys)



makes it a breeze to add single-line borders to any cell. Excel also provides a more extensive choice of cell border types than Numbers does.

Numbers' default worksheet size (on the Blank template) is small; if you want more than 13 rows or 45 columns, you need to drag a corner to make the sheet bigger. Excel, on the other hand, opens a massive work area, ready for even the largest of worksheets.

Overall, I found that Excel made the process of creating the simple worksheet easier and more enjoyable than Numbers did.

Round 2

Charts, advanced formulas. For the intermediate spreadsheet, I added two more products to my fictional company's line, and then created a summary spreadsheet, which consolidated sales for all three products for all representatives by month. From that data, I created a stacked bar chart. Finally, I added some formulas to grab the names of the highest-producing month and salesperson, as well as a formula to display the name of the top-selling product.

Creating extra worksheets was trivial in both programs, as was creating the consolidated worksheet with links to the others. The hardest part was adjusting to Numbers' use of multiple tables on one page — it's a very different approach than Excel's.

Creating charts was simple, too: in both programs, I highlighted the range I wanted to graph and clicked on a

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	Averages
Dan	5	6	5	4	3	7	5	4	5	7	4	3	58	4.83
Julie	8	6	2	3	4	8	8	7	2	1	3	4	56	4.67
Nick	2	1	0	4	2	5	0	2	4	3	2	4	29	2.42
Susan	7	8	6	6	9	12	6	7	8	9	7	6	91	7.58
Tony	4	6	4	5	7	9	4	2	4	3	1	5	54	4.50
Rebecca	7	5	4	3	2	6	4	2	4	3	1	8	49	4.08
Totals	33	32	21	25	27	47	27	24	27	26	18	30	337	28.08
Averages	5.50	5.33	3.50	4.17	4.50	7.83	4.50	4.00	4.50	4.33	3.00	5.00		4.68

Basic spreadsheet. Both Excel and Numbers made it simple to set up a basic sales-tracking spreadsheet.

Alternatives: spreadsheets

As with word processors, you do have options beyond those in Office 2008 and iWork '08. Say you want to run Excel macros, which the 2008 version of the product can't do. Right now, your best option is to stick with Excel 2004.

NeoOffice, a port of OpenOffice that runs natively in OS X, supports Excel 2004's macros, at least to some degree. (Some of my macros worked perfectly; others didn't.) It can also open Excel 2008's and the Windows-only Excel 2007's

new .xlsx file format, and it offers excellent compatibility with Excel functions. OpenOffice is also developing a native OS X port, but it's a work in progress; you may experience some compatibility issues. Like NeoOffice, it's compatible with Excel functions, but it doesn't properly handle the new Office 2007 and 2008 file formats. If you're willing to pay, Mariner Calc can handle most basic to intermediate needs, though it can't import all Excel worksheets and doesn't offer full formula compatibility.

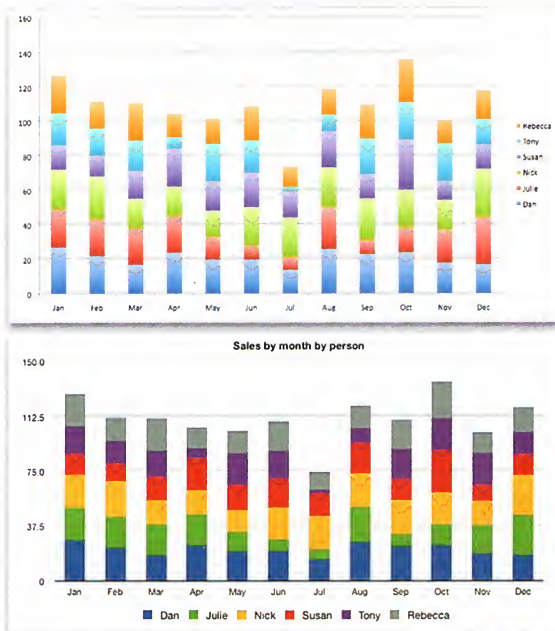


Chart views. Excel (top) and Numbers (bottom) each created decent charts easily, but Excel was smarter about it.

couple of buttons, and I had a basic chart. Of the two, I found Excel's raw chart to be more usable. First, the legend is attached to the chart, so they move as one object; in Numbers, the legend is a separate object, and I often forgot to move it when I moved the chart. Second, Excel scaled the y-axis more intelligently; Numbers tried to use non-integer values – Excel didn't.

Numbers, on the other hand, includes a default chart title, and makes it easier to see the data associated with the chart when you select it – the relevant range is highlighted in colours that match the colours used for the data points in the chart.

To pull the month name and salesperson's name for the highest-production month, I had to build formulas that

used the OFFSET(), MATCH(), and MAX() functions. Excel is superior at helping you enter complex formulas – a tooltip shows up below the cell, listing each function's variables. In Numbers, no tooltips appear; I could have used the Insert Function feature, but this puts the descriptions of variables directly in the cell, and I would have had to manually overwrite them as I entered a formula. More frustrating, however, is the inability to use the keyboard when entering formulas in Numbers. In Excel, I could use an arrow key and the shift key to select ranges rapidly while entering a formula. In Numbers, I needed to use the mouse, which really slowed down the process.

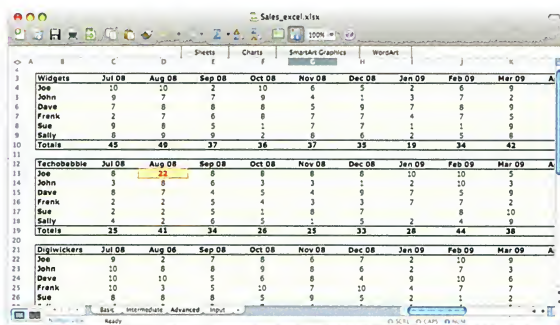
Finally, Numbers handles the Undo command in a confusing manner.

If I changed a cell's value and then pressed ⌘-Z, the cell would actually go blank. I needed to press ⌘-Z again to return to the original value. Before I figured this out, I wound up with blank cells in my worksheet on a few occasions.

The winner: Excel was much better for adding charts and formulas – the ability to use the keyboard, in particular, saved me much time in entering complex formulas.

Round 3

Forms, conditional formatting. Finally, using a simple design and each program's tools for accepting user input, I created a sheet that would allow for easy entry of product and sales representatives' names, along with the



Conditional formatting. It's easy to highlight the highest sales month for any representative, using calculations in Excel's conditional-formatting rules. You can't do this with Numbers.

Hotlinks

- www.neooffice.org
- NeoOffice
- www.openoffice.org
- OpenOffice
- www.marinersoftware.com

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
All Products	27	22	17	24	20	20	14	26	23	24	18	17	252
Dan	22	21	21	21	13	8	7	24	8	14	19	27	205
Julie	23	25	17	17	15	22	23	23	24	22	17	28	256
Nick	14	12	16	22	17	20	15	21	14	20	11	14	205
Susan	19	16	18	7	22	19	3	10	21	22	22	15	194
Tony	22	16	22	14	15	20	12	15	20	25	14	17	212
Rebecca	127	112	111	105	102	109	74	119	110	136	101	118	1324

Numbers formulas. When you use Numbers' Insert Function dialog box to insert a formula, it places the variables for that formula directly in the cell — so you must then overwrite them by hand.

starting month for the sales report. The values in this input page are transferred to the tracking worksheet via formulas. To define the starting month, I created a pop-up menu containing Jan, Feb, and so forth, so that users wouldn't make data-entry errors.

Translating this input into a date form that could then be used to calculate the column headers required a bit of thinking in both Numbers and Pages. That's because I wanted the pop-up menu to display the month names, but I needed to enter an actual date value into my sheet, based on the user's response to that pop-up.

So in Excel, I used a simple DATE() function with the returned value as the month number. In Numbers, though, I had to add a lookup table and use the VLOOKUP() function to convert the month name into a number usable in the DATE() formula.

I also thought about making it possible for an inexperienced user to input individual sales results in this sheet: a user would pick a sales representative's name, the month, and the product line from a series of pop-up menus, and then enter the sales result for that month; the input sheet would copy that figure to the proper spot on the supporting worksheet.

In Excel 2004, I could have done all of this relatively easily with a macro. Neither Excel 2008 nor Numbers has macro support, however. Excel 2008 does have AppleScript support, but AppleScripts cannot be assigned to buttons on a worksheet, as macros could in Excel 2004; instead, they must be run from the Scripts menu. Additionally, building this functionality in AppleScript requires much more programming than do Excel 2004's macro tools — because you can't record an AppleScript as you could a macro. Numbers, lacking both macros and AppleScript support, doesn't seem to have any way of creating such a function.

Given these problems in both programs, I didn't pursue this avenue any further. It's disappointing that two much newer programs have more difficulty with this relatively simple task than Excel 2004 does.

Next, I wanted to highlight the absolute best sales month for the combined product line. In Excel, I could do this with a conditional format set up to check if a given cell in the range is equal to the maximum value within that range. The end result makes it easy to spot the top month and representative — and if there's a tie, Excel will auto-

matically highlight all top results. In Numbers, though, conditional formats can't contain calculations, so it was impossible to achieve the same result. A formula in a separate cell sort of worked, but it couldn't show more than one value in the event of a tie.

Finally, I did a fair amount of work tweaking the look of the spreadsheet, to get it ready to present to the boss. Numbers has the edge thanks to its abilities with gradients, transparency, and cell backgrounds, though Excel 2008 is much better than its predecessor. Excel gets the overall win, however, due to its ability to create custom number and date formats — something you can't do in Numbers.

The final word. In general, I found it much simpler to work with Excel in all phases of my sample project. Although Numbers has some stunning templates, its shortcomings make it more difficult to use when you leave template-land. Those failings include its lack of a simple way to show a formula's variables as you enter it; its lack of keyboard support in selecting ranges when you're entering formulas; its lack of custom number and date formats; and its limited conditional formatting abilities. There's no doubt that I can create a prettier spreadsheet in Numbers, but Excel offers more formulas, features, and tools to help with actually building the spreadsheet.

10 Key differences Excel/Numbers

	Excel	Numbers
Applescript and Automator support	●	○
Array formulas	●	○
Built-in functions (number of)	346	168
Conditional formatting	●	●*
Currently copied cell is highlighted	●	○
Custom number and text formats	●	○
Free-form page-layout abilities	○	●
Keyboard input of ranges in functions	●	○
Performance with large data sets	Excellent	Poor
Pivot tables	●	○

● = yes. ○ = no. *Numbers doesn't support formulas in conditional formats; Excel does.

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PowerPoint 2008 vs Keynote '08

To compare Microsoft PowerPoint 2008 and Keynote '08, I used both programs to create a presentation on space exploration, starting with built-in templates and then adding some special effects.

Round 1

Layouts, tools. While both programs provide templates that help beginners – or anyone who's racing to meet a deadline – cook up a presentation quickly, Keynote's approach to starting a new presentation is more straightforward.

By default, when you open a new document, Keynote lets you choose from an ample collection of themes. These consist of sets of colour-coordinated master slides, with each master specifying the appearance and layout of slide elements, and with placeholders for titles, subtitles, pictures, and other content. Pick a theme, and you're good to go.

In contrast, PowerPoint forces you to choose themes and layouts separately. Slide Themes, the first button in the Elements Gallery, lets you specify the presentation's colours, fonts, and backgrounds; Slide Layouts, the second button, lets you determine the composition of elements on each slide. Although PowerPoint's separation of themes and layouts is more flexible and lets you make global changes more readily, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the huge number of possible combinations.

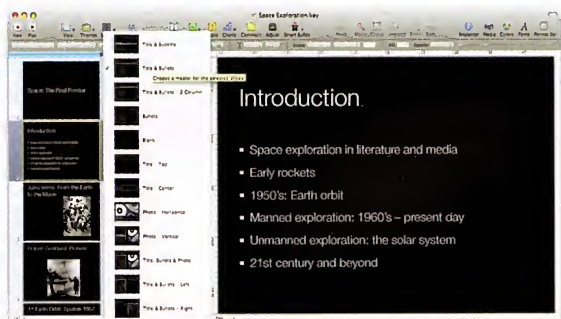
To create a title slide, I chose appropriate layouts from Keynote's drop-down Masters menu and PowerPoint's Slide Layouts gallery.

Next, I added an introductory slide by choosing a master with placeholders for a title and bullets. When I'm showing a series of bullet points, I like to highlight each item as I'm talking about it, dimming the

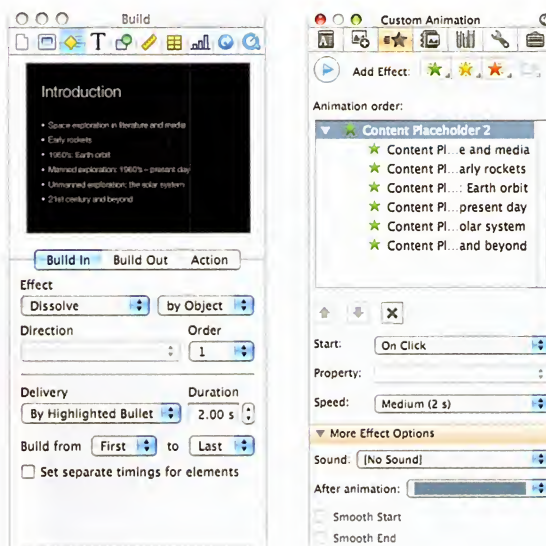


others. Both programs let me do so easily: PowerPoint's Toolbox and Keynote's Inspector consolidate formatting and other functions in tabbed floating windows. The Toolbox provides a wider gamut of features than the Inspector – it lets you insert shapes and special text symbols, for example – but it's a bit busy, with vertically stacked sections that change to accommodate the selected object. Keynote's Inspector windows are less cluttered, and I could open as many as I needed.

I finished off my basic presentation with a series of text and picture slides, starting with a layout that had a title placeholder at the top. I added pictures to slides by dragging them directly from the Finder. Then I switched to the slide-sorter view – which displayed the entire presentation in thumbnail form – to review my work and rearrange the slides. Although PowerPoint provided



Choosing a master. Keynote's Masters menu displays thumbnails of all the master layouts in the current theme.

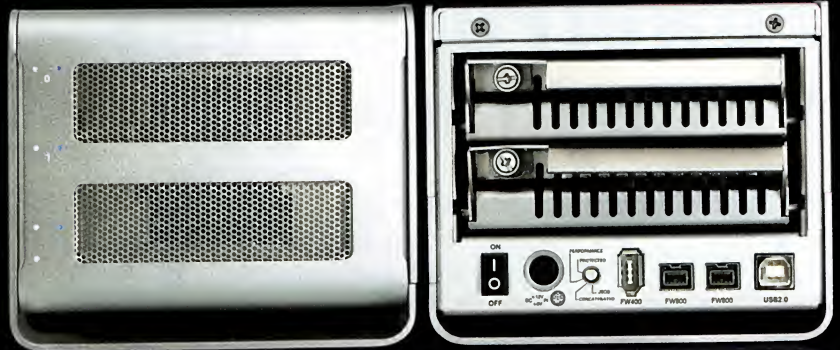


Animated bullets. You've got plenty of options for animating bullet points in Keynote's Build Inspector (left) and PowerPoint's Custom Animation tab in the Toolbox (right).



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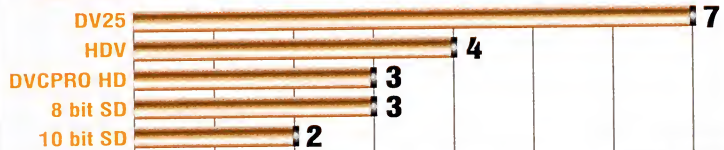


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extra magnification levels (six to Keynote's three), Keynote's largest thumbnails were bigger than PowerPoint's, so they were easier to read. I also preferred Keynote's transitions (the special effects that play between slides): PowerPoint offered more choices, but Keynote's were more appealing and ran more smoothly.

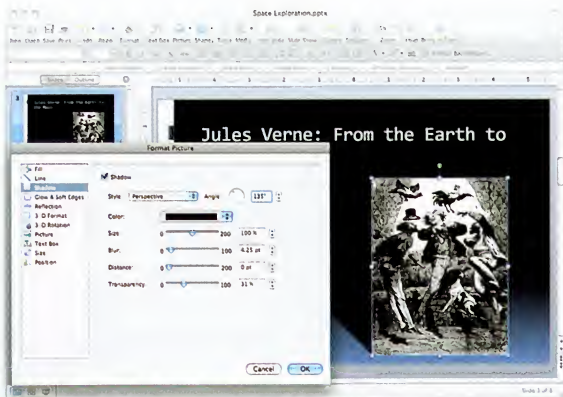
Overall, for getting a basic presentation up and running quickly, I'd give Keynote the edge.

Round 2

Pictures, multimedia. PowerPoint took that edge back when it came time to kick the presentation up a notch. I decided to apply some special effects to the pictures that I'd already placed. PowerPoint has a more extensive library of effects, including lens distortions and other transformations. I also appreciated its broader range of shadowing options, including perspective shadows that I used to make one of the pictures look as though it were standing on a solid floor.

I also elected to add some visual punch by showing our home planet against a starry sky. I began by importing pictures of a star field and of Earth from another project onto a new slide. Unfortunately, the shot of Earth had a black background, and I was too lazy to fire up Adobe Photoshop to erase it. Both PowerPoint and Keynote can delete unwanted backgrounds, but Keynote's Alpha tool is more versatile. (It works only on contiguous pixels and lets you adjust its sensitivity by dragging; PowerPoint renders every pixel of a selected colour transparent, so it works well only if the foreground object doesn't have any colours that match the background.)

Next, to illustrate milestones in manned spaceflight, I imported a QuickTime movie of the launch of Apollo 11. Inserting movies is simple in both applications, but Keynote provides finer control over movies as they're playing. Although you can start and stop playback during PowerPoint slide shows, you can't pause and scroll through clips the way you can with Keynote. And the QuickTime Inspector in Keynote allows you to loop



Format picture. Advanced picture-formatting options in PowerPoint include perspective shadows and 3D effects.

10 Key differences PowerPoint/Keynote

	POWERPOINT	KEYNOTE
3-D objects	●	○
Collection of table styles	●	○
Convert bulleted text to graphics	●	○
Create charts without external application	●*	●
Erase image backgrounds	●	●*
Image-editing tools	●*	●
Open and save files in other program's native format	○	●
Perspective shadows	●	○
Point-to-point animation	○	●
View slide show on Windows computer without conversion	●	○

● = yes. ○ = no. * Better.

movies in either direction, something you can't do in PowerPoint. (Amazingly, though, Keynote doesn't support QuickTime VR, which PowerPoint does.)

To provide a summary of all the Apollo launches, I decided to add a table – often more effective than bulleted text for presenting numeric information. Both Keynote and PowerPoint let you build tables without invoking a separate application, but PowerPoint makes it easier. In Keynote, tables adopt colours and other attributes that complement the current theme, but you can't tell what they'll look like in advance. Like Keynote, PowerPoint matches tables with themes, but its Table Styles gallery lets you pick the style you like.

For sprucing up a basic presentation, both programs have their strengths. I'd have to call this phase of the comparison a tie.

Round 3

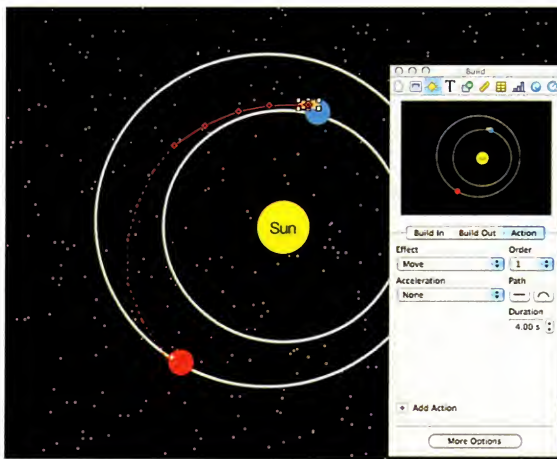
Animations, sharing. Last, to illustrate the concept of an interplanetary voyage, I needed to simulate a spacecraft travelling from Earth to Mars. Keynote was the clear winner here, since its Action Build feature let me define a precise trajectory. Although you can move objects in PowerPoint too, you can't specify the path that they will follow; that's a glaring omission, especially since this ability has been available in PowerPoint for Windows for years.

I used another clever Keynote feature, Smart Builds, to show Earth and some of the other planets in our solar system with a turntable effect. With each mouse click, the

next planet rotated into view as the others dimmed and receded into the background, an effective way to show more pictures than I could fit comfortably on one slide.

Of course, the real test of a presentation is how effectively it works for an audience. Both PowerPoint and Keynote let me keep tabs on my progress and see what was coming up before everyone else did. I also created handouts with both programs, although neither supported as many formatting options as I would have wished.

But there are other considerations, too. It's not uncommon for speakers to collaborate on presentations or deliver them via someone else's computer, potentially a gigantic headache for Keynote users living in a PowerPoint-dominated world. Since its inception, Keynote



has supported exporting presentations in PowerPoint format, but the results are usually less than ideal without manual cleanup.

Microsoft's adoption of XML-based file formats in PowerPoint 2008 only adds to the complication, especially if you have to share presentations with colleagues who use only PowerPoint for Windows; despite Microsoft's claims of interoperability, cross-platform sharing is not seamless. Keynote lets you export slide shows in QuickTime format with transparency, movies, and other dazzling graphics intact, but that works only if QuickTime is installed on the computer you're using to present.

For advanced presentation tools, I think Keynote is better than PowerPoint. When it comes to sharing presentations with colleagues using other tools, neither one is entirely effective.

The final word. PowerPoint has caught up to Keynote in many areas and surpassed it in some. But Keynote's workflow and overall feature set remain superior. Practically speaking, your choice of software probably depends more on the hardware you'll be using to deliver your presentation (and the software installed on it) than on the features of your authoring program. For that reason, unless Apple releases a Keynote player application for Windows, which isn't likely, PowerPoint may be a more sensible choice for many speakers. ☞

Keynote animation. Animation paths in Keynote consist of a series of line segments or curves that you draw by clicking and dragging.

Alternatives: presentations

The two open-source office suites — OpenOffice and NeoOffice — include presentation modules that are compatible with PowerPoint. I put both through their paces by opening slide shows created with various Mac and Windows versions of PowerPoint, including the space presentation that I created for this article. Both applications handled older PowerPoint files (with a .ppt suffix) with varying success. Neither was able to open PowerPoint 2008 files (in the new .pptx format). If you're collaborating on complex presentations with other Mac or Windows users, you may run into problems as you transfer files back and forth.

If you're building presentations from scratch, both OpenOffice and NeoOffice will work, as long as you're willing to live with some limitations. Because of its dependence on the Unix X11 graphic interface, OpenOffice feels decidedly kludgy and un-Mac-like. NeoOffice feels more familiar, and it's easier to work with. But its lack of support for sounds and movies is a significant drawback for

now (QuickTime support is promised soon), and you won't have PowerPoint 2008's extensive library of themes and slide layouts at your fingertips. Still, it's worth checking out if your presentation needs are modest.

Google Docs is an enticing newcomer that lets you create, collaborate on, and display presentations over the Web. In its current incarnation, however, Google Docs' presentation features are much too limited: you can't work on documents larger than 10MB, for example, nor can you work with movies, sounds, or any type of animation. The program's reliance on the web also means that you need to be online to access your presentations.

Finally, if your presentations include pictures with only a smattering of text, consider iPhoto for your slide shows. You can use Adobe Photoshop or any other graphics program to create text slides, and then import them into iPhoto for display.

Hotlinks

- www.openoffice.org
OpenOffice
- www.neooffice.org
NeoOffice
- docs.google.com
Google Docs



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Screen test

Learning a new computer application can be an incredibly frustrating experience. What may seem obvious to the teacher can be buried in a sea of icons and menus to the learner, even to the extent that their left and right become confused. The learner is working at a very basic level here, and can spend so much time trying to remember sequences of actions that the whole purpose of the application is lost.

Clearly, we can assist by providing learning aids, usually in the form of screen shots or movies of the on-screen action.

Most Mac users would be familiar with the ⌘ -shift-3 and ⌘ -shift-4 routines to capture stills from the screen that could be pasted into printed notes. (All keystrokes are listed in System preferences for the keyboard.)

Occasionally, you'll need to use Grab (in Utilities) to get timed screens, or actions that are not possible using the ⌘ -shift sequences, or you may want to take advantage of the range of cursors that can be included in a Grabbed screen.

Aside from useability and the ecological considerations of using so many trees and toner, presentation on screen is more portable and immediate and usually involves movies. So, having captured your images, you could assemble in iMovie, using Ken Burns effects as needed to zoom or pan on a point of emphasis, then



recording a voiceover to document proceedings.

The advantages here are the range of captions or titles that can be added as required, and the resultant file can be re-purposed easily in a variety of formats, via iMovie Sharing, for distribution.

If your presentation is short, you could use the freeware Jing Project (limited to screen captures that are less than five minutes long). A downside is that the resulting movies can only be hosted on Screencast.com.

This project is provided by Tech-Smith which is better known for its Windows screen capture applications: Snagit and Camtasia. Camtasia, the Rolls-Royce of Windows screen capture apps, provides a range of useful zoom and pan techniques and cursor highlighting in capture, and callouts, subtitling, editing, and output to Flash video and embedding of Flash surveys to SCORM-based servers (Shareable Content Object Reference Model, for those of you playing at home) for assessment or feedback.

On the Mac, SnapzPro and the newer, more feature-rich Screenflow are closest to Techsmith's offerings although neither of them offers the survey connection.

However, aside from the callout/pointer highlighting feature, virtually all of Camtasia's functionality is available natively on the Mac.

If you have Leopard client and access to a Leopard Server, then you can record your screen actions using Podcast Producer, retrieving the recording for post-production in iMovie. Use the Control key together with your trackpad or scroll wheel to zoom into regions of emphasis during recording

It's really annoying that the built-in screen capture utility can't be used unless you have Leopard Server. Sure, the full functionality of Podcast Producer really needs a powerful server, but this is for the creation of multiple formats, watermarking and other fancy effects. Simply saving a screen capture on the client's local disc (which is what happens with the server present anyway) doesn't need much power. It's curious that Apple has made this decision.

You wanted callouts and cursor animation? Easy. Get Mouseposé. This will do double duty as it will enhance your presentations or demonstrations even if you aren't screen recording. It can highlight areas of the screen, announce mouse clicks with coloured splotches and print, in large type, any ⌘ , option or shift key combinations that you may want to emphasise.

If your education institution is up to date with its server offerings, a few dollars gets you what Windows users have to pay three hundred for.

Oh, you don't have Leopard server? Buy an extra dongle for your machine to give video out and plug its output into a video camera. You may need to set your screen resolution to something reasonably low beforehand, press record, do your stuff, then bring the resulting recording into iMovie. Edit, fixing voiceovers if necessary, re-import, and Robert's your mother's brother.

Now, quiet on set and ... action! 🎬

Hotlinks

www.boinx.com

Makers of Mouseposé, useful for presentation in general as well as enhancing screen captures

www.ambrosiasoftware.com

Ambrosia's screen capture utility, SnapzPro, has been the de facto standard on Macs for some time

www.varasoftware.com

Screenflow, a relative newcomer, offers more features (for more dollars) than SnapzPro.

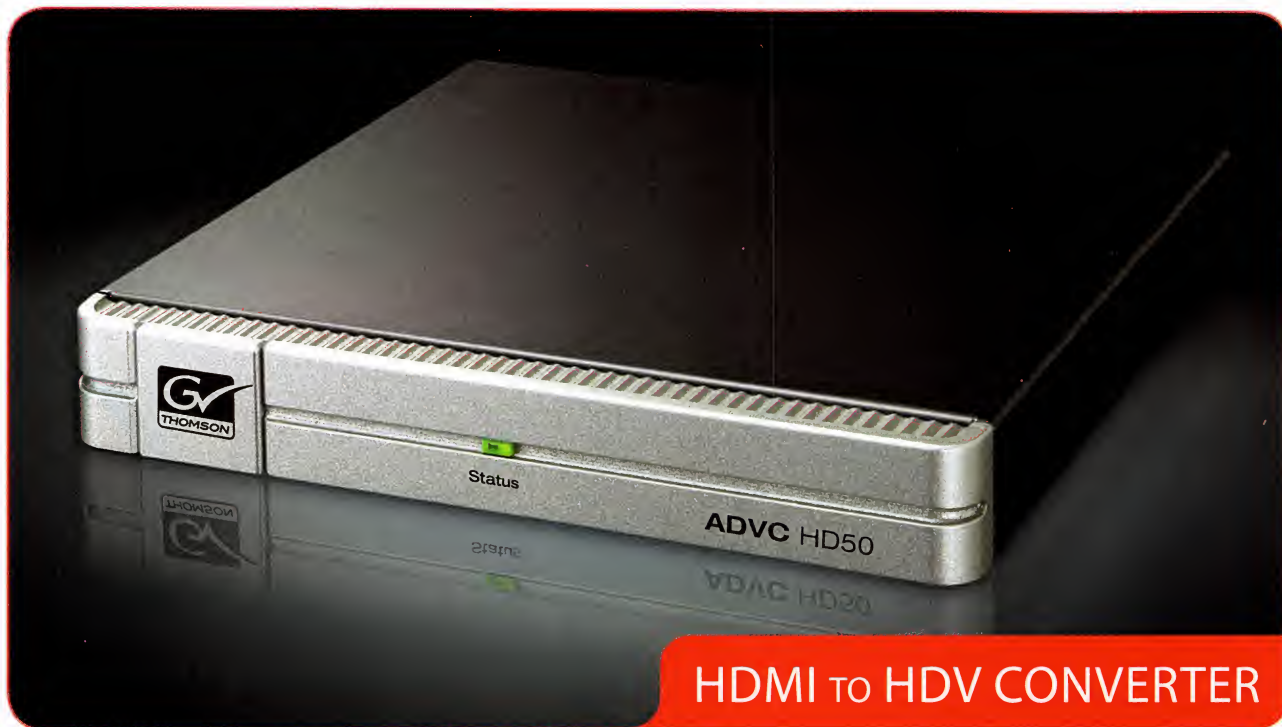
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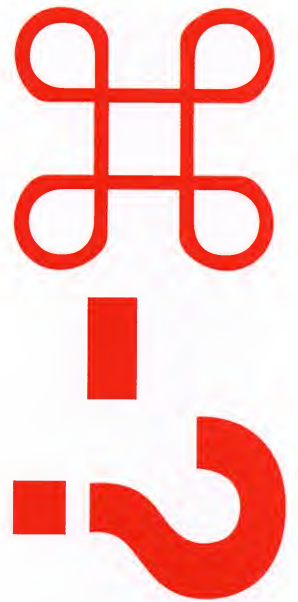
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Colour-correct digital photos

Cast out bad colour with Photoshop's Curves tool

As far as digital technology has come, there's still one thing that digital cameras won't do: give you perfect colour every time. In fact, if they gave us perfect colour 50 percent of the time, that would be incredible. Unfortunately, every digital camera sneaks some kind of colour cast into your images. Thankfully, it's not hard to fix.

Set preferences. In Adobe Photoshop CS3, open the photo you want to colour-correct. Under the Image menu, select Adjustments: Curves (or press ⌘-M). Curves is the hands-down choice of professionals for correcting colour, because it gives you a greater level of control than other tools, such as Levels, which pretty much limits you to just three adjustment sliders.

First, we need to set some preferences in the Curves dialog box so we'll get the results we want when colour correcting. We'll start by setting a target colour for our shadow areas. To do so, double-click on the Curves dialog box's black Eyedropper tool. This brings up the Color Picker. In the R, G, and B (Red, Green, and Blue) fields of this dialog box, enter the

number 10. Now click on OK to save these numbers as the target shadow settings. Because these values are evenly balanced (they're all the same number), our shadow areas won't have too much of one colour, and by using 10, we get dark shadows while still maintaining shadow detail in our prints.

Now we'll set a preference to make our highlight areas neutral. Double-click on the white Eyedropper. The Color Picker will appear, asking you to select a Target Highlight Color. Enter 243 in the R, G, and B fields. (To move from field to field, just press the tab key.) Click on OK to set those values as your highlight target colour.

Now set your midtone preference. You know the drill: Double-click on the midtones Eyedropper (the middle of the three Eyedroppers). Enter 133 in the R, G, and B fields. Then click on OK to set those values as your midtone target colour. That's it — you've done all the hard work. The rest is pretty easy.

If you still have the Curves dialog box open, click on OK to exit it for now, and you'll get a warning dialog box that asks whether you want to save the new target colours as defaults. Click on Yes, and from

this point on, you won't have to enter these values each time you correct a photo — they're now the default settings.

First steps

Before you correct even a single photo, go to the Photoshop toolbox and click on the Eyedropper tool (or press the I key). If you look up in the Options Bar, you'll see that the tool's default Sample Size setting is Point Sample. The problem with this setting is that it gives you a reading from just one individual pixel, rather than giving you an average of the area where you're clicking (which is much more accurate for colour-correction purposes). To fix this, change the Sample Size pop-up menu to 3 By 3 Average. When you're working on very high-resolution images in Photoshop CS3, you can choose larger sampling areas, such as 5 by 5, 31 by 31, and even 101 by 101.

Finding a neutral grey

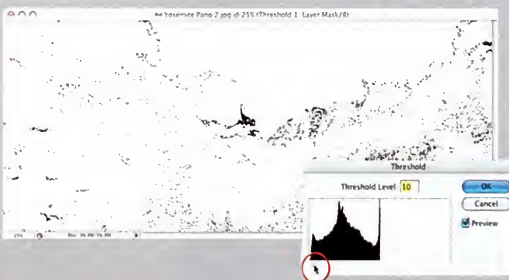
Finding a neutral midtone while colour correcting has always been kind of tricky. That is, it was until Dave Cross, who works with me as the senior developer of education for the USA's National Association of Photoshop Professionals, came into my office one day to show me his amazing trick for finding exactly where the midtones live in just about any image.

Step one. Open a colour photo, and click on the New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel to create a new blank layer. Select Edit: Fill. Choose 50% Gray from the Use pop-up menu in the Contents section.

Step two. Go to the Layers panel and change the blend mode of this layer to Difference. This doesn't do much for the look of your photo, but don't worry — the change is only temporary.

Step three. Choose Threshold from the Create New Adjustment Layer pop-up menu at the bottom of the Layers panel. When the dialog box appears, drag the slider all the way to the left (your photo will turn completely white). Now slowly drag the slider back to the right, and the first areas that appear in black are the neutral midtones. To help you remember exactly where one of the areas is, hold down the shift key, move your cursor over that spot, and click once to add a Color Sampler tool point just as a reminder. Then click on the Cancel button in the Threshold dialog box.

Step four. Now that your midtone point is marked, go back to the Layers panel and drag the grey layer onto the Trash icon to delete it. You'll see your full-colour photo again. Now press ⌘-M to open Curves, get the midtones Eyedropper, and click directly on that Color Sampler point.



Neutral midtone. A Threshold adjustment layer helped us locate the neutral midtones in this photo.



Before



After

Colour correction. The image on the left suffers from a bluish colour cast. After a trip to the Curves dialog box, the colours are much more accurate

Correct shadows. Now that you've entered your target-colour preferences in the Curves dialog box, you're going to use the same Eyedropper tools to do most of your colour correction work.

Let's start by setting the shadows. Press ⌘-M to bring the Curves dialog box back up. Look at the photo and find something that's supposed to be black. In most photos, this won't be a problem — you'll see a dark area of shadows or a black car tyre, for instance. If you can't find something that's supposed to be black, then you can have Photoshop show you exactly where the darkest part of the photo is.

There are two sliders directly under the curve grid that can help you. Press and hold the option key and click on the left slider (Shadow). Your image area will turn solid white. As you drag the slider to the right (while still holding the option key down), the first areas that appear on screen are the darkest parts of your photo. Remember where those areas are (in our example, it's the shadow under the first pot on the left).

Now that you know where your shadow area is, drag the Shadow slider back to the left, and release the option key. Now click on the black Eyedropper, and (while the Curves dialog box is still open) click once on that shadow area in your photo. The colour cast will be removed from the shadow areas.

Correct highlights. Now, on to setting the highlight point: Find something that's supposed to be white. Again, this is usually pretty easy, but if you can't find something white, you can use the trick you just learned to have Photoshop show you where the lightest part of your photo is. Press and hold the option key, but this time drag the right-hand slider (Highlight) to the left. The screen will turn black, and as you drag the slider to the left, the first white areas that appear are the lightest parts of your image. Now that you know where your highlight area is, drag the Highlight slider back all the way to the right, and release the option key. Click on the white Eyedropper, and click once on that highlight area. Try and look for a white area that has some detail (rather than clicking on a specular highlight, which is a blown-out highlight area with no detail, like the sun or a bright sun reflection on a chrome car bumper).

Correct midtones. Now for your third click: finding something that's supposed to be a neutral grey. This one's trickier, because not every photo has a neutral grey area, and the Curves dialog box doesn't have a "find the grey" trick, as it does for shadows and highlights (for a workaround, see the sidebar "Finding a neutral grey"). In the example photo, the neutral grey is in the edge of the large vase. This click neutralises the colour cast in the midtones.

Hotlinks

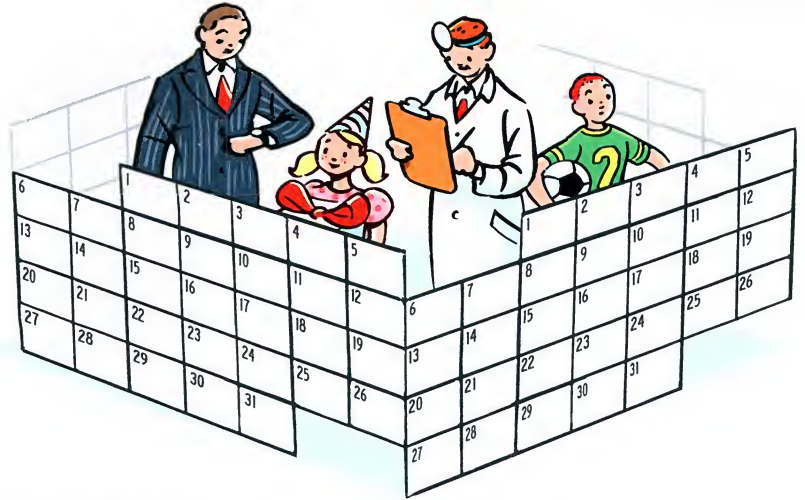
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article/132736/2008/04/caldavserver.html

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Corral group calendars

Co-ordinate family members' or colleagues' schedules with iCal 3

It's sad but true: few of us are completely in control of our schedules.

We can painstakingly structure our days in iCal, but our spouses, co-workers, and children will undoubtedly ask us to rejig everything for dinner parties, client meetings, and soccer games. It makes a lot more sense to embrace the fact that we share our time with others.

The version of iCal included with OS X 10.5 (Leopard) — version 3 — has some surprisingly powerful features for managing group schedules — whether you're trying to organise a family or a large business. You can now check other people's availability when you're choosing a meeting time, create calendars that more than one person can edit, schedule locations and resources, and access the same calendar from multiple computers (no more syncing headaches!) without using Apple's .Mac service.

Most of these features require a CalDAV server (CalDAV is an open standard for accessing a calendar via WebDAV). If you, or your company, already have Mac OS X 10.5 Server running on a server with its own domain name, setting up CalDAV is fairly easy. Even if you don't have a server, you can take advantage of some

group features on your local network by installing a copy of BusyMac's \$US20-per-computer BusySync (see "Hotlinks") on each person's Mac. This software supports multi-user editing and synchronisation without requiring .Mac, and it runs on both Leopard and Tiger. Whatever your situation, you can make group scheduling easier with iCal.

Server-free calendar sharing. If you subscribe to Apple's .Mac, you've long been able to publish an iCal calendar that other people can view on their computers. Just click on the calendar and select Calendar: Publish. The trouble is, this method is a one-way street — people can subscribe to these calendars but can't alter them.

If this is your main problem, you don't need to set up a calendar server to solve it. BusySync replaces (or supplements) this publish-and-subscribe mechanism, allowing multiple users to edit a calendar over a local network (see the screenshot "Flexible sharing"). With some manual configuration, this can also work over the internet. The \$US25-per-computer BusySync 2.0 (which should be available by the time you read this) will also let you synchronise iCal with

Google Calendar, giving you a way to edit any of your calendars via the web (a feature .Mac doesn't offer).

Get set up. To set up BusySync, open its pane in System Preferences. If necessary, click on the Start BusySync button in the General tab. Click on the Publish tab to see a list of all your calendars. Select one and then choose the Publish option to share it. In the sheet that appears, leave both fields blank to give everyone read and write access, or enter a password in the Read Only Password or Read & Write Password field.

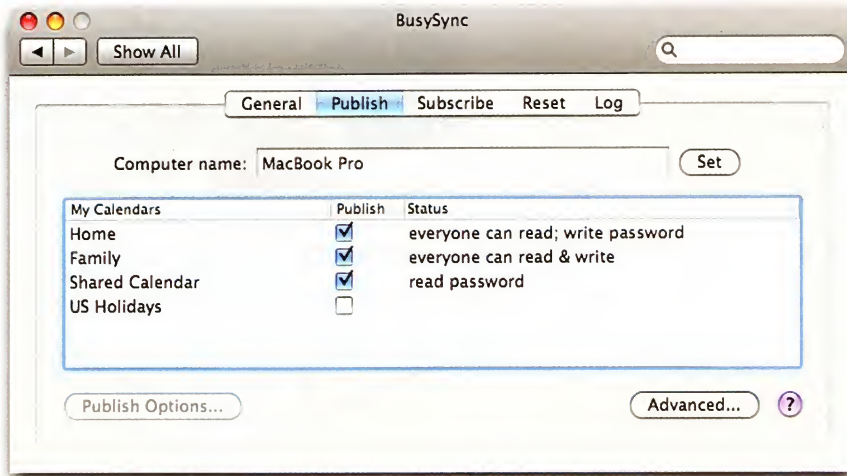
On another computer, open the BusySync preference pane, click on the Subscribe tab, select each shared calendar you want to access, and then enter the appropriate passwords if prompted. The calendars will appear right away in iCal's calendar list. When one person makes a change to a shared calendar, the new information is synchronised to other users' calendars, so each person's local calendar always has a complete, up-to-date schedule that they can access even if the computer sharing the calendar goes offline.

Avoid .Mac conflicts. You can use BusySync together with .Mac Sync, but if everyone in your family



Flexible sharing.

BusySync lets multiple people share and edit calendars — no server required.



shares one .Mac user name, using both methods at the same time can result in duplicated calendar data. You can avoid this either by making sure each person uses a separate .Mac user name or by turning off .Mac Sync for Calendars (in the .Mac preference pane's Sync tab).

Set up your full-service calendar. If you run a business, you may need sophisticated features that BusySync doesn't have. If that's the case, you'll want to use all of iCal's new group-scheduling features by connecting to a CalDAV server. After your CalDAV server is in order, each person in your group must configure iCal to access it.

Don't forget directory services. If you're using OS X Server, the first thing you need to do is turn on your computer's Open Directory support. Open Directory Utility (/Applications/Utilities). If your server is already listed there, with the message "The server is responding normally," you're set. Otherwise, an assistant should appear and walk you through the setup. Select a server (if more than one appears); click on the Begin Setup button; enter the user name and password for your account on the server, as well as the password for the account on your local computer; and click on Continue.

In the next screen, leave the Yes Configure My Applications option selected and click on Finish Setup. Open Directory Utility will set up Open Directory and attempt to configure iCal to use the account's calendar on the server. Click on Log Out; then log back in normally to begin using Open Directory. Connect to the Server in iCal, choose iCal: Preferences and click on the Accounts button in the toolbar. If your shared account doesn't already appear in this list, click on the plus-sign (+) button at the bottom of the window.

In the Description field, enter a name for the server, such as CalDAV. Fill in the user name and password that your server's administrator gave you. If you're using Darwin Calendar Server,

also click on the triangle next to Server Options; then enter the server's IP address or domain name, a colon, and the server's port number in the Account URL field (for example, 192.168.0.11:8008). Users of OS X Server can generally skip this step. Click on Add, and if you see a warning about sending your password insecurely, click on Connect Anyway. iCal will connect to the CalDAV server and add

your calendar(s) to a new section in its calendar list. If your group uses a shared calendar that everyone has the same password for, repeat these steps to add an account for it.

Decide how often to update.

After adding an account, select the account in the Preferences window and click on Account Information. Select how often you want iCal to check the server for changes — the default is 15 minutes. Also use the controls in the Availability section to indicate which hours you're normally free for meetings. This will help other people schedule events that include you.

Make small tweaks. Initially, iCal lists a single calendar (with the name calendar) for each account. You can add more calendars by choosing File: New Calendar: CalDAV (or whatever your server name is). To rename a calendar, double-click on its name and type a new one. Select a calendar and choose File: Get Info to change its colour or add a description; these changes will be reflected on any other Mac that logs into the same account.

Take advantage of your calendar server's features. CalDAV does more than store everyone's calendars in one location; it also offers several collaboration features and lets you set different levels of access.

Free calendar server

If you want more features than BusySync offers, but think OS X 10.5 Server is too pricey, you can use Terminal to set up a CalDAV server for free. All you need is a Mac running Leopard and some open-source software. Because this approach doesn't use OS X Server's Open Directory feature, some of the snazzy iCal Server features (such as delegation) won't work, but you can still get most of the benefits of CalDAV. It just takes a bit of time and some mucking about with Unix. See "Hotlinks" for instructions



Check group members' availability. With CalDAV, there's no need to shuffle multiple e-mails back and forth to figure out when everyone can come to a meeting — you can see what times are free as you create the event.

First create a new event by clicking on the group calendar in the Calendars column and pressing $\#-N$. Select any time and date, and then click on Add Attendees. If you're using OS X Server, type the first few letters of another user's name; then select the name you want from the pop-up menu and type a comma to accept it (repeating as necessary for additional participants). If you're using Darwin Calendar Server, type the e-mail address of another participant as designated on the server.

Press the tab key and click on the Available Meeting Times link (or choose Window: Availability Panel). A floating window that lists each selected participant will appear. Times outlined with a dotted line are free; grey blocks indicate times when a person has some other event scheduled (see the screenshot "Find a good time"). Drag the coloured block representing the time designated for your meeting to the desired spot to schedule your meeting for that time.

You can click on Next Available Time to select the next time when all participants are available automatically, or use the arrow buttons to navigate to other days. Click on Done to close the Availability window, and then click on Send to send invitations.

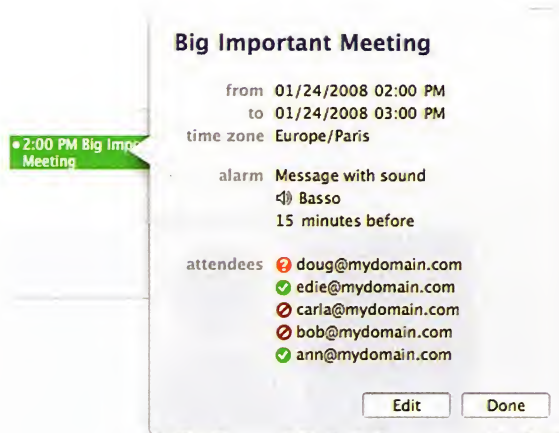
Manage notifications. iCal notifies the members of your group whenever you invite them to a meeting. A number next to the calendar name alerts each person to invitations or messages about cancelled events. Notifications themselves appear in the lower left corner of the window; if they're not visible, click on the Hide/Show Notifications button (shown with an envelope icon).

When you receive an invitation, click on Maybe, Decline, or Accept to indicate whether you'll attend. When you double-click on an event you organised, a small icon next to each invitee's name indicates that person's response. An orange question mark means Maybe, a red slash means Decline, a green check mark means Accept, and a grey question mark means no response has been received yet (see the screenshot "See who's coming").

Delegate and collaborate.

Suppose you have an assistant who manages your schedule, or a colleague who's handling some of your upcoming appointments while you're out of the office. CalDAV supports delegation, a system whereby you can grant any user on your network access to your calendar.

Use this feature by choosing iCal: Preferences, selecting your CalDAV account, and clicking on Delegation. If other people have given you permission to read or edit their calendars, those people's names will appear in the list. Select the Show option next to a name to display that person's calendars in iCal. They will appear in a new



See who's coming. The small icons next to each participant's name tell the meeting organiser who's planning to attend.

calendar group called Delegates.

To give someone permission to see your calendars, click on Edit, click on the plus-sign button, enter the first few letters of the person's name, and then select that name in the pop-up menu. To allow editing, select the Allow Write option. Then click on Done.

iCal can access this feature only when the CalDAV server uses Open Directory to manage users — which OS X Server does, but the Darwin Calendar Server setup does not. Even so, multiple people can see and edit the same calendar if they all set up an account in iCal for a shared calendar and then use the same user name and password to access it. If you follow this approach, choose iCal: Preferences, click on Accounts, select the account for your shared calendar, and click on the Account Information tab. Set the Refresh Calendars interval here to update frequently to reduce the chance that two updates to the same event will overlap. \square



Find a good time. If you're using a CalDAV server like the one that comes with OS X Server, iCal lets you see when your group members are available for a meeting.

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Simplify the "Open With" menu

STM Query
of the month

Hotlinks

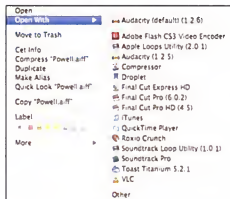
www.santasw.com

MainMenu

I've got multiples of the same program in my "Open With" window that I'd really like to get rid of. I tried the tip in the 03.2008 issue, but the full path doesn't exist on my computer. I'm running 10.4.11 on a 2.33GHz Core 2 Duo MacBook Pro. I tried having a look through the forums but haven't found anything yet. Any help would be appreciated!

"The Viper"

via the AMW forums



You can also use the Rebuild LaunchServices command in MainMenu (see "Hotlinks"). This worked really well for me and avoids messing in the geek Terminal!

— Ken Hoyle, via AMW forums

Each month, STM (02 8338 0222) gives an Evolution backpack valued at \$150 to the Australian Macworld reader who sends in the most intriguing query.

Evolution is the next level in laptop protection, presented in a comfortable, easy to use backpack large enough to accommodate a 15-inch laptop.

Send your query to matthew.powell@niche.com.au. Include your full mailing address to be eligible to win the Evolution backpack. All queries and solutions are the sole property of Niche Media.



Try this command in the Terminal:

```
/System/Library/Frameworks/ApplicationServices.framework/Frameworks/LaunchServices.framework/Support/lsregister -kill -r -domain local -domain system -domain user
```

This will reset all the mappings previously established, but should remove duplicates.

— Sean McNamara

Troubleshoot Java applets

For a while now Java applets haven't been working for me in Safari 2.x and now even in 3.1. All I get is the picture of the coffee cup and arrows. However if I log in as another user it works perfectly. It also works in Firefox. I've tried deleting the Safari preference file but that doesn't work either.

"rachp"

via the AMW forums

Have you tried deleting any preferences that start with "com.apple.java" within the Preferences folder in the Library folder in your Home folder (seeing as it's working as other users). You might also want to delete the java.plist file in the same location.

Failing that, drag the whole Preferences folder from the Library folder to the Desktop, log out (from the Apple menu) then log back in (or restart for the same effect, but not as quick) and see if the problem is still occurring.

— Sean McNamara

Hotlinks

keepvid.com/

Keep videos from YouTube and others

Store streaming videos

There's lots of great content available in streaming format online, but what happens if you want to watch it while you're not connected to the internet? Some sites do give you the option to download the video, but most, like YouTube, don't. If you'd like to keep the video and watch it when it suits you check out a new site called KeepVid. KeepVid is a simple web site that can convert nearly all streaming content into a data file you download and watch on your own terms — or convert and watch on your iPod, iPhone or AppleTV.

Using KeepVid is easy. Simply enter the URL of the clip you'd like to download and paste it in to KeepVid. Click the Download button and KeepVid will present you with a flash video you can download.

The file that begins to download will vary in size depending on the length and quality of the original clip. Most clips that I've downloaded have been YouTube quality — watchable but certainly not high-definition. Once you've got the video on to your computer, you'll be able to use another program to convert it to a more useful format. — Danny Gorog

**Microsoft
Reader tip**

Adjust volume more finely

You can have even more precise control on how loud or quiet the volume on your Mac is by holding down option-shift plus volume up or down, which will increase or decrease the volume by a quarter of a square!

Another handy and related hint is to hold the option key while selecting volume up or down — this will load directly into the sound preference panel from any app you're currently in.

Frank Tedesco
Via AMW forums

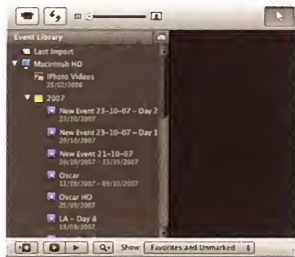
Each month, Microsoft gives a Bluetooth Notebook Mouse 5000 valued at \$70 to the Australian Macworld reader who submits (via e-mail or the web site) the best and most useful undocumented tip. Enjoy wireless freedom with the Bluetooth Notebook Mouse 5000 — no transceiver to connect or lose! Keep USB ports free for other devices, and take it with you in a convenient carrying case. Microsoft's high-definition laser technology means the mouse is more responsive, more precise and tracks more smoothly than stan-

dard laser mice. It also features a battery indicator light and an on/off switch to conserve power when it's not in use. The ergonomically-designed Bluetooth Notebook Mouse 5000 features four fully-configurable buttons and a scroll wheel. E-mail your tip with the subject header "Help reader tip", including your full name, address and phone number, to matthew.powell@niche.com.au or use the "Submit a tip" button on the Help section of www.macworld.com.au. All reader tips become the sole property of Niche Media.

Hotlinks

www.pinnaclesys.com/PVT/
Pinnacle Systems

Transfer video from VHS to iMovie



Have you ever wondered how to get video from an old VHS or video camera on to your computer? While it's possible to outsource the process entirely, it's also easy to do it yourself.

If you're technically inclined you could try a product like the ADS Tech PYRO AV Link that lets you capture any composite, S-Video or component video and import it as a DV stream using iMovie or whatever video-capture software you prefer.

If you're not technically minded, you might want to check out the newly released Pinnacle Video Transfer (\$249), a small device that lets you record analogue video onto any USB 2.0 storage device without using a computer. The Pinnacle Video Transfer device lets you select from Good, Better or Best modes (choosing the Best mode specifies a 720x480/576 (NTSC/PAL) resolution when capturing video. Capturing video is as simple as plugging in nearly any device that outputs a video signal, like a TV, DVD player, PVR or video camera at one end, and a storage device at the other end. The

storage devices can be a video iPod (5G and above, including the classic), 3rd generation iPod Nano, a Sony PSP, USB hard drive or even a USB thumb drive. To initiate the transfer all you need do is press the centre to start the conversion. Depending on your output device you may be able to access the converted file on the device as a data file directly, but if you use an iPod you'll be able to view the file through the video menu, so you can watch it without using your computer at all.

The Pinnacle Video Transfer device is a great no-fuss tool that makes converting video from virtually any source as easy as clicking one button. There are lots of practical uses for this sort of device, but in particular making back-ups of your movies while you're away from your computer, or as a no fuss solution for the technically challenged.

— Danny Gorog





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RETRAVISION

Hotlinks

www.wikihow.com/Destroy-a-Hard-Drive
Destroy your drive

Destroy a hard drive

My trusty old LaCie drive has died without a warning, which leads me to an important question: now that I can't format it, and it has some five years worth of my company's financial data on it, what's the best way to destroy it in case somebody out there a lot smarter than me finds it in the trash and gets it working again?

"TLCAUS"

via the AMW forums

If you really, really, really want to destroy the data, you'll want to destroy the platters (or at least the recording surface or data on them). You can take the drive apart to get to the platters (you'll also get a really strong magnet or two), then it's just a matter of physically destroy-

ing the recording surface. I guess you could use a grinder to grind it off both sides of each platter, or a sledgehammer to pound the platters to destroy the surface, or dip them in acid or, oh I don't know, just be creative.

If you're not feeling too violent or psychopathic, you could just swipe the really strong magnets I mentioned above across the surface of the platters (those magnets aren't that close within the drive mechanism), but some paranoid people might still suspect that the shadow government intelligence agencies could still get the data off from such magnetically wiped drives. You might find some commercial services to do the same, or even some web sites specialising in this.

— Sean McNamara

Hotlinks

www.bitfield.se/submerge/index.html
Submerge
www.techspanion.com/visualhub/
Visual Hub — video converter

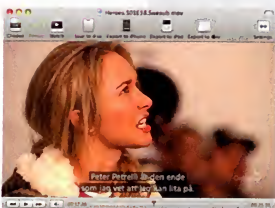
Embed subtitles as you go

Have you ever wondered about how to insert subtitles in to movies that you are converting from one format to another? Submerge (\$US9) is a multi-purpose transcoding tool that lets you embed subtitles within a movie.

Submerge supports common subtitle file formats like .SRT and also lets you export videos to all the different players in the Apple universe including the Apple TV, iPod Touch and iPhone, and older iPods that support video.

All you do is open the video file in Submerge, and drag the .srt file on to the video. Submerge then goes to work and embeds the subtitle file in the movie. Submerge even lets you select the font and size of the subtitles. Once Submerge is done rendering the video you can either export the file to another format, or save it in the existing file format.

The creators of Submerge have added plenty of codec support from QuickTime and mp4 to .AVI. There's also support for hardware encoding solutions like the ElGato Turbo .264. Submerge can even change the aspect of the video you are converting by forcing a movie to fit in to either 16:9 or 4:3 — a useful trick if the device you are watching on is suited to one and not the other. — Danny Gorog



Save your movies off to an external HD

iMovie projects tend to be large and space consuming, that's why it's important to know how to save your projects on to an external drive. In iMovie HD 6 and previous versions selecting where to store project files was easy — when you started a new project iMovie prompted you to tell it where the file should live. With iMovie '08, however, the process has changed.

Intuitively, the place to look for this setting is in the preference panel. However you won't find it there. Instead, look to the top right hand corner of the Event Library and you'll notice a small hard drive icon. Selecting this reveals a list of hard drives, including the internal drives, that are connected to the computer. Before you import a video, select the hard drive and folder you want to save the video on to.

You can also use this pane to move previously imported video between hard drives — a neat way to archive iMovie projects to external drives once you've finished editing them. To move projects simply drag them between hard drives. If you are moving a large amount of video at once, this process may take several minutes. It's also important to remember that if you've already created projects that use some of the video in the Events that you've moved to an external hard disk, that hard disk must be connected to your computer in order to play or edit the projects further in iMovie. Also, external hard drives must be formatted as HFS+ volumes.

— Danny Gorog

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars



Defend Earth or Destroy it

Built using id Software's revolutionary MegaTexture rendering technology, Enemy Territory: QUAKE Wars features strategic team play, persistent character promotions, and the universe's most powerful weapons and vehicles in heroic objective-based battles as the Global Defense Force faces off against the alien Strogg invasion.

RRP \$69.95

For Intel Macs only.

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This is their survival story and you are the guide.

Castaway Stories features two great ways to play. In engaging directed Story mode, fulfill goals as you explore the island, build a shelter, learn to find food, and make your Sims' lives as fun and comfortable as possible. You even unlock rewards along the way.

RRP \$49.95

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Neverwinter Nights 2

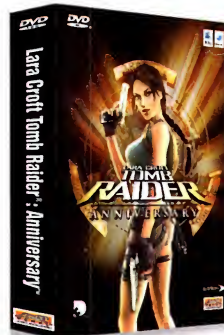


Neverwinter Nights 2 returns you to the Forgotten Realms. Emerge from the tiniest of villages into a sweeping tale of danger and war, chronicling your rise from a peasant to a full-fledged hero of the Realms. The story takes place several years after the original Neverwinter Nights, and reintroduces popular characters and NPCs in a new storyline.

RRP \$69.95

For Intel Macs only.

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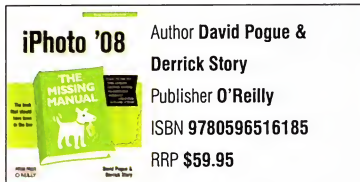
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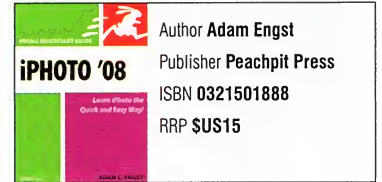
Keith White has been a Mac addict since 1984 and can't fathom why anyone isn't.

Open up

iPhoto, therefore I can



Author **David Pogue & Derrick Story**
 Publisher **O'Reilly**
 ISBN **9780596516185**
 RRP **\$59.95**



Author **Adam Engst**
 Publisher **Peachpit Press**
 ISBN **0321501888**
 RRP **\$US15**

iPhoto '08 — the Missing Manual by Mac polymath David Pogue and pixel pundit Derrick Story takes you in full colour from unpacking your first digital camera through to the many exciting ways iPhoto lets you strut your finished stuff. The first of five parts demonstrates the basics of photographic composition before a quick primer on a wide range of special shots, including portraits, action, nature, weddings, objects and even underwater. Here you'll find useful tips to improve image quality before you even get into software. In the second part you bring your images into iPhoto, order them with Events, Albums, Smart Albums and Folders and then learn the various ways of tagging them so you can quickly find them as your collection grows. Essential reading if you want to avoid chaos.

The third section — "Meet your Public" — begins with the various ways iPhoto lets you create slideshows from your finished photos. Turn your slideshows into movies and DVDs then learn online sharing.

The penultimate part of the book does cute tricks with screen savers, AppleScript and Automator and shows you how to manage your photo libraries and do backups. The fifth and final part wraps with troubleshooting, iPhoto menu by menu and additional resources. If you're a bookish type this title will teach you iPhoto nicely.

Online training by Apple is for the less-bookish types, and it's free. In a little over forty minutes you'll get a grounding in the basics of iPhoto '08. Great for beginners but there's also plenty of little tricks for more experienced users who haven't got around to working through the software's smarts in detail.

The iPhoto videos appear in a screen within the Apple iLife Tutorials page (see "Hotlinks") and are delivered by a pleasant male voice, although a couple of the 15 tutorials were a lot softer than the rest. Video quality and composition is excellent and you can scrub backwards and forwards at will. With a modest broadband speed I had only a few seconds to wait for the video to buffer.

Begin at the importing stage by learning about iPhoto '08's new Events feature, as well as about Albums, adding titles, descriptions and keywords. Which is the key to the next tutorial: finding photos. Then review and compare photos and create a slideshow with your chosen photos in the order you want. The next video on adjustments concentrates on red eye and blemish removal, and the Straighten and Enhance tools. The cropping tutorial illustrates clearly how to accentuate the main feature of your photo. Learning how to share your photos by email or a .Mac web gallery leads up to the final section with separate videos on printing photos, cards, books and calendars. The book tutorial is however fairly superficial compared to the nice detail in the card and calendar sessions.

iPhoto '08 Visual QuickStart Guide has an electronic version by überguru Adam Engst, and also does the full-colour step-by-step through. Attractively presented in an airy two-column layout this title has been optimised for on-screen reading. A big advantage of the electronic version is the abundant hyperlinking throughout — between sections of the book and also to external sources.

Tip: if you plan to do a bit of jumping around make sure the Previous/Next Page View buttons are enabled in Acrobat's navigation pane. In Apple's Preview app the Previous/Next arrows move you only one page. Use the Back/Forward arrows to leap large distances and return safely.

Once you've got iPhoto up and running, separate chapters take you in detail through organising, editing, viewing onscreen, printing, sharing and troubleshooting. One appendix delves into technicalities of aspect ratios, resolution and colour management. The other is a quick primer for taking better photos, à la Missing Manual, but not in such detail. A major strength of the book is the streamlining of the material to a series of topics, most of which are dealt with in a single page and tellingly supported with illustrations and sidebar tips. If you're already reasonably familiar with iPhoto you can base yourself on the Contents page and hyperlink to any topic that catches your interest. This guide is truly visual and quick. 📖

Hotlinks

www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#iphoto

iPhoto video tutorials

www.takecontrolbooks.com/iphoto7-vqs.html

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AMW lab: podcasting gear

Bringing back the radio star

Not that long ago, when you had something to say and you thought the whole world needed to hear it, you'd spend hours in the switchboard queue at the talkback radio station. Or you'd write endless letters to the editor hoping one would be published. Maybe you'd tell everyone at the pub exactly what was wrong with the world. Before that you'd probably have stood on an empty soapbox at the nearest local park.

That was before the internet.

Now you just blog -- or upload a podcast. Your Macintosh can't help you when it comes to having something worthwhile to say, but it can sure help you sound much better when that brief moment of clarity insists you share it with the world. To help you decide, AMW lab looked at USB microphones from Samson, two complete miniature podcasting studio solutions from Behringer as well as two portable recording solutions from Zoom.

When it comes to sounding good we're in luck, because your Macintosh already knows about good sound. Many of the little blighters also come with built-in microphones and even cameras, which you might already have used for Skype or some other internet telephony. But, just like Skype, podcasts need the best input in order to give their best output, so you're probably going to have to spend a few extra dollars to improve your chances of being clearly understood as well as heard. To begin at the very beginning, you'll need some software to record your dulcet tones, and then you'll need an external microphone, one that sits on a stand on your desk, rather than being hand held.

The gear you need. You can spend lots of money on digital audio workstation software -- in which case

you're probably already well ahead of this article -- or you can download the open-source recording software Audacity, which seems to be what most podcasters have done. AMW lab discovered that of the two versions on offer, the so-called beta v1.3.3 is actually more stable and less prone to crashing. And, should it crash, it is better able to recover than the non-beta v1.2.6. That said, the most common cause of lost recordings in Audacity is the way it lets you close tracks within a recording without warning you that you actually just deleted the track. This is no doubt very handy for professional DJs but potentially quite a gotcha for newbies.

You can also use Audacity to edit and polish your recordings to produce the final podcast. However, Apple's GarageBand also does a fine job in this department and you might prefer its in-built knowledge of podcast publishing and the ability to link directly to iWeb for upload to your web site.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves a bit -- first we need to record something and for that we need a microphone. You can of course, just run down to your nearest music store and spend however much you like on a microphone and stand. With the right adapter plug you can connect almost any microphone directly into your Macintosh and just hit the record button on your software.

However, the most popular condenser microphones for voice recording use internal components which require power, and for that you need some sort of device in between the microphone and your Macintosh. This can be as simple as a device which just provides the power for the microphone or as complex as a full-blown studio mixer. Samson has been producing a line of direct USB-connected microphones for digital recording

View your options, make your choices. *Australian Macworld* puts latest-release hardware and software through its paces.

RATINGS KEY
 Outstanding ★★★★★
 Very good ★★★★
 Good ★★★
 Flawed ★★
 Unacceptable ★
 Dangerous ☠

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since 2005. In fact, many podcasters use nothing more than Samson's C01U or slightly more upmarket G-Track condenser microphones plugged directly into their Macintosh. However, you will need a mixer if you want to record with more than one microphone – say for another person, or perhaps an instrument.

Fortunately there are some choices along the path from simple to complex. Behringer's Podcastudio range bundles together the essential pieces you need to produce high quality podcasts by choosing items from the complete range of kit the company sells to professional musicians all packaged into a neat carry-out box available from your local music store.

Inside the boxes are a small mixing desk, a microphone with stand, headphones, and a device to turn your analogue audio into digital so it can be recorded on your Macintosh. You also get a CD with open-source audio software for both Macintosh and Windows to save your download limit getting stretched.

The two Behringer kits contain different versions of basically the same functional components. The USB-based version has a dynamic microphone and a five-channel mixer, while the FireWire-based version includes a condenser microphone and an eight-channel mixer. You also get slightly upmarket headphones with the more expensive FireWire model.

If your Macintosh doesn't have any FireWire ports then your choice will be already made for you. However, you can buy the components separately if you want to use USB recording but spend a little more on a better microphone, mixer or headphones, depending on your budget or circumstance. You might have other recording demands that nudge you towards the higher end in equipment, but either of these two carry-out boxes contains all you need to produce high-quality

audio for better-sounding podcasts. They're also ideal for music students, who these days are required to submit their homework on CDs rather than performing live for the teacher.

Hold the line. That takes care of recording your voice, your instruments, and even a few friends who pop around to enhance your podcast. But what do you do if you want to include audio from a telephone call? That's when things start to get a bit tricky – and a bit more expensive. There is now software available for recording both sides of a Skype telephone call – this allows you to use your nice microphone and headphones for your own voice, while recording the other party directly onto your Macintosh. Unfortunately this also leaves you at the mercy of the vagaries of Skype audio quality, which seems to oscillate randomly between superb and unintelligible.

If you want to record decent audio from the other end of a telephone call you'll need something like Trillium's Studio Interface Recording Adaptor (\$247.50) which intercepts the audio from your telephone handset and routes it to a channel on your mixing desk. This device approaches the sound quality you hear on radio station talkback, at a much lower price than a rack full of electronics. The bad news is that you also need a mixing desk with an amplified auxiliary or effects output channel, which neither of the baby Behringer desks provide. To make the Trillium work its magic you need to step up to at least Behringer's ten-channel desk.

If you need to record audio from the other end of the phone and that person is a colleague or regular collaborator to your podcast, then the way to get good audio is even simpler. The other party just records their voice directly to their Macintosh or PC while you record your own voice, and after the phone call, your friend sends

Zoom H4

Portable recording studio

★★★★½

The upmarket solution for portable podcasting

A bit pricey unless you are serious

\$445

Dynamic Music 02 9939 1299

Ian Yates

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Samson C01U

USB microphone

★★★★

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All you get is the microphone

\$199

Electric Factory 03 9474 1000

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www.elfa.com.au



Samson G-Track

USB microphone

★★★★½

Seriously good quality condenser mic with direct USB plug

A bit pricey for the casual podcaster

\$349

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Ian Yates

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you their audio. You then mix the two audio tracks together into one podcast and you're done. Of course this works just as well for multiple voices on a conference call – as long as each person can record their own voice and send the audio to the editor, you'll get far better sound than even the most expensive studio telephone interface can provide.

On the road again. All the equipment discussed so far presumes you will be making podcasts from a studio-like situation. That is, the talent comes and gathers around your Macintosh to make the recording. Sometimes that isn't the way you want to work. Sometimes you have to get out of the house. There are any number of ways to record what's happening while on the move, ranging from the trusty old tape recorder right through mini-disc up to digital recorders. Until recently, "professional" digital recorders also came with "professional" price tags, most of them higher than the price of a MacBook. But that was before Zoom entered the arena.

Recently, the company's Handy Recorder H4 has taken the recording market by storm, selling for less than a quarter of the price being asked by other vendors for similar kit. This portable recording studio – which is about the best description – costs a tad under \$500 so it's not for every budget. However, this device is more than just a handheld digital stereo recorder with built-in condenser microphones. You can also replace the built-in microphones with the plug-in variety of your choosing, and it has a USB plug on the side, allowing you to record directly to your Macintosh using the H4 as a mini-mixer. If only it didn't cost so much ...

Recently, Zoom released the Handy Recorder H2 model at about two-thirds the price of the H4, and although

it doesn't do all the things the H4 can do, it provides everything most mobile podcasters need. The diminutive H2, about the size of a fat deck of playing cards, incorporates four microphones – two facing forward and two facing backwards. This means you can use it for "live interviews" with your victims without needing to turn the mic to face yourself – just hold it between you and your subject. The same approach lets you use it on your desk, facing yourself for solo podcasting or parked between two people for multiple contributors, while directly connected to your Mac's USB port. It can also operate in "surround" mode, handy for recording live music or crowd scenes. And you can find the Zoom H2 in online stores for under \$250.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. There's no longer any excuse for sounding bad on a podcast. You might still have nothing to say, but using any or all of the above items should ensure that the audio quality is superb.

For total beginners on a budget who only want their own voice to be heard, the Samson C01U USB microphone is easy to live with for around \$160 at online stores. The next step along the road to audio nirvana would be either of the Behringer Podcaststudio kits, which may seem pricey but pack a lot of value in the box. If your desire is talkback radio style podcasting via the phone line, expect to spend a bit more on your mixing desk and save some funds for Trillium's studio recording adapter. If you plan to take your show on the road, grabbing audio from wherever it comes, then you should probably put a Zoom in your pocket. Of course, don't forget that all this audio takes up lots of room on your Macintosh, so don't miss next month's review of high-performance storage devices. ☞

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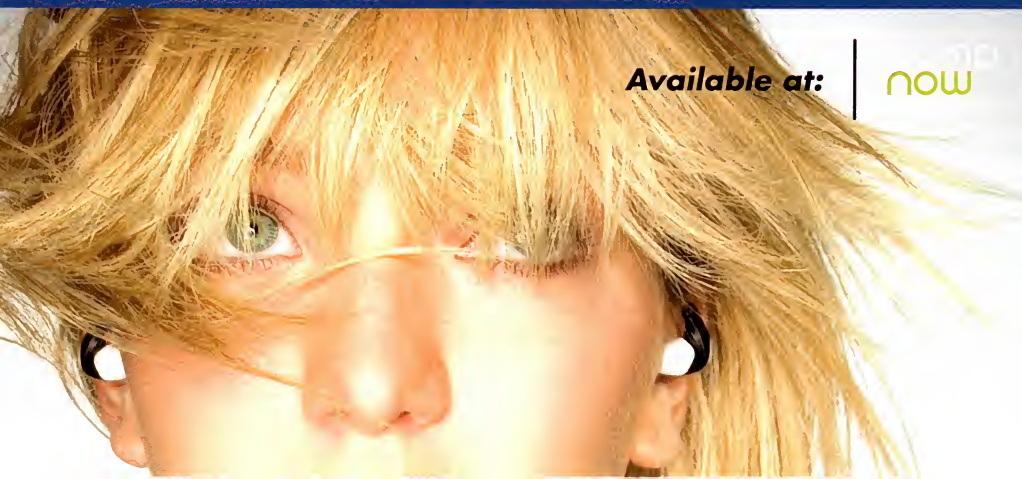
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Safari 3.1
Web browser
★★★★½
Support for new web standards; useful new Develop menu
Lacks customisation options; no add-ons
10.4, 10.5 Processor Universal
Free
Apple Inc
Available online
Joe Kissell
www.apple.com/au/safari


iCab 4.0.1
Web browser
★★★★½
Clean interface; nice tabbed browsing features; stores sessions; remembers open windows and tabs when you quit; checks bookmarks for changes; site-specific filtering
Limited form-filling capabilities; lack of RSS support; no documentation; constant reminders to upgrade to paid version
10.3, 10.4, 10.5 Processor Universal
Free; Pro edition \$US25
Alexander Claus
Available online
Joe Kissell
www.icab.de/


Opera 9.26
Web browser
★★★★
Built-in e-mail client, RSS reader, and other internet applications; customisable look and feel; anti-phishing capabilities; site-specific filtering and preferences; web development tools; capable of storing sessions and remembering open tabs and windows
Rendering glitches with HTML form controls; poor management of stored form data; a few bugs
10.3, 10.4, 10.5 Processor Universal
Free
Opera Software
Available online
Joe Kissell
www.opera.com


Web browsers

Not all are created equal

It doesn't seem that long ago, really, that Mac users had a fairly limited choice of web browsers: Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer. Now neither of those exists (on the Mac at least) but, paradoxically, the range of choices available to Mac-using web surfers is wider than ever. If you think your choice is between

Safari and Firefox, have we got a surprise for you – there are at least half a dozen other browsers out there, some of them designed as mainstream competitors to the Big Two, others with a more specialised audience in mind. These two (well, actually three) are in addition to the six we reviewed last issue.



Safari 3.1

Adds forward-looking features

In keeping with Apple's new tradition of releasing new products right after we go to press, Safari 3.1 was released with little fanfare only a few days too late to make it into the 04.2008 issue. In that issue our review of Safari 3.0.4 highlighted the browser's excellent – and constantly updated – support for modern web standards. Continuing that trend, the just-released Safari 3.1 not only stays at the head of the pack in standards support, but also becomes the first browser to work with such up-and-coming technologies as CSS Animations and the <audio> and <video> tags in HTML version 5, which is still in draft mode.

Safari's interface is mostly unchanged, and for web sites that haven't yet implemented new technologies,

browsing behaviour is virtually identical to what the previous version offered. Safari's strengths remain the same, as do its limitations (such as a lack of official support for third-party plug-ins). But the new features provide a glimpse into the web of the future.

One subtle but important change to the interface is a checkbox in the Advanced pane of the Preferences window: Show Develop menu in menu bar. This optional menu, designed primarily to aid web developers, contains several commands that previously required a command-line hack to activate a hidden Debug menu. Among these are a User Agent submenu, which lets Safari easily masquerade as another browser; Web Inspector, a window showing page elements such as style sheets, imag-



Web Fonts. In the image on the left, Firefox substitutes fonts used in the layout to simulate the design in the browser window, because the user does not have the fonts installed. In the image on the right, Safari 3.1 actually downloads the correct font so the viewer can see the design as it's supposed to be rendered, even without the correct fonts installed.

control. First up is Web Fonts, an extension to CSS (cascading style sheets) whereby an entire TrueType font downloads automatically when a page loads. This eliminates the tedious design step of converting unusual fonts to graphics before placing them on a web page, and assures that all viewers will see pages the same way, whether or not they have the fonts installed on their systems. Pages using Web Fonts load quickly and transparently in Safari 3.1.

The `<video>` and `<audio>` tags in the upcoming HTML 5 give web designers a standard way to embed video and audio files in their pages with simple tags (similar to `` tags) that don't require any scripting. As with Web Fonts, Safari's support for such tags is seamless, though good examples of sites that use these tags are currently difficult to find.

Using CSS Animations, a web page can animate block elements (such as causing a text box to spin) without requiring the creation and downloading of any graphics. Once again, Safari handles such animations brilliantly, as Safari 3.1 users can see in this example.

Safari 3.1 also offers, for the first time, client-side storage in the form of an SQLite database. This means, for instance, that a web-based application such as a word processor or image editor could gain the capability to store documents on your hard drive, which would result in faster performance and possibly the option to use the web-based applications even when your computer is offline. You can see a simple example; to determine how much space Safari allots for database storage or to remove a database, use the Default space for database storage pop-up menu and Show Databases buttons at the bottom of Safari's Security preference pane.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. In my testing, the new features in Safari 3.1 functioned exactly as they should, and as web designers begin to add support for these elements, Safari will become progressively more useful and functional for typical users.

es, and scripts; Network Timeline, which displays detailed information on each element's size and how long it took to load; and commands to disable web features such as caches and JavaScript selectively. But the real news with Safari 3.1 is the support for new standards, which will give web designers much more flexibility and control.



iCab 4.0.1

some solid features, along with some quirks

iCab has been around, in one form or another, since 1999. It's the only browser still actively supported not only on Mac OS 9, but as far back as System 7.1 – and even on 68k Macs. But version 4.0.1 is all about the present: it runs natively on Intel-based Macs, fully supports Leopard, and has a slick new user interface on the outside with Apple's WebKit engine running things behind the scenes.

Older versions of iCab were notorious for rendering problems (iCab 2.9.8, for example), but that's no longer the case: iCab 4.0 is every bit as capable as Safari in its presentation of web content. Also like Safari, its interface now features tabs that you can drag and drop to reorder. If you choose, iCab can recall which tabs and windows you have open, and automatically restore them when you relaunch the browser. It also lets you manually save sets of tabs or sessions (which include multiple windows) so you can restore them later as a group.

iCab offers a decent selection of configuration options. These include a full range of bookmark management features, such as the ability to check, either manually or on a schedule, whether the content of a web page has changed since you last visited it. You can customise the group of search engines that are listed in the toolbar's search field. You can also create filters that define the settings used by individual sites for things like ads, multimedia, and JavaScript, though the interface for doing so is much more cumbersome than that of OmniWeb, which offers a similar feature. Also, on any web form with a `<<textarea>>` control (a multi-line editable text box), iCab now makes the control resizable, so you can simply drag it to give yourself as much editing room as you need.

The program does come with its share of irritations. Although iCab includes support for filling in forms, it lacks an automatic learning feature, and the process of setting up URLs, field names, and values for later use is quite awkward. During testing, iCab randomly switched into offline mode a few times (meaning that it could not communicate with any web servers). The developer suggested that I might have accidentally clicked on a toolbar button to enter offline mode, though I don't remember doing so. The program also lacks RSS support and doesn't have any documentation; there is a brief FAQ online, but the general dearth of guidance made it hard to parse certain features. (The developer says he is working on creating more documentation.) You can download and use iCab 4 for free, though every time



Hail a cab. iCab 4.0's new user interface is simple, uncluttered, and elegant.

highly customisable filtering features, link checking, and a few nice interface touches, iCab offers nothing truly unique, and is still, on the whole, one of the less satisfying browsers for OS X. ☹



Opera 9.26

Highly customisable and stocked with features

As Mac browsers go, Opera stands out as having one of the most extensive feature lists. Besides a comprehensive set of web browsing capabilities, it includes an e-mail client, RSS reader, IRC chat client, NNTP newsgroup reader, BitTorrent client, web development tools, support for user-created "skins," and even Dashboard-like widgets. It has everything except the kitchen sink – but that includes a few rough edges.

When it comes to browsing, Opera offers a ton of customisation options. You can turn on (or off) several different toolbars, and otherwise modify them to meet your needs. The Panels feature gives you easy access to bookmarks, widgets, notes, history, and more in a window sidebar. Thumbnails appear when you hover over a tab, and you can rearrange the tab order. You can also save sets of tabs and windows (called sessions) and restore them easily; plus, Opera is able to restore your last session when you launch the program. The main toolbar's search field is also configurable, so you can use whatever search engine you prefer.

One of Opera's newest features is Speed Dial, a grid of up to nine favourite web sites that appears every time you create a new tab. Speed Dial lets you access any site from its grid with a single click (or keyboard shortcut). This seems only slightly more useful to me than conventional bookmarks, though it may be handy for users who regularly visit a handful of sites.

Opera now has an anti-phishing filter that helps to identify fake web sites that may be trying to steal personal information. It also has highly configurable pop-up blocking and numerous other site-specific security settings. Opera can automatically remember usernames, passwords, and other form values and fill them in at your request. However, its facilities for editing stored information are weak; for example, there's no way to see what password you've saved for a given site. The company claims that this is for security reasons, though I would prefer a password-protected option to access this information. Furthermore, Opera doesn't use the Keychain or enable the use of third-party extensions.

Opera uses a proprietary rendering engine called Presto. In almost every test, it displayed pages exactly the way Safari did. However, I did notice a few display glitches and loading problems, especially when it came to forms. At times, the browser displayed but-

you launch it (and periodically as you use it) you'll see a prominent alert inviting you to pay \$US25 to upgrade to iCab Pro. According to the developer, iCab Pro currently offers no additional features except for the removal of the shareware notice and easier access to new beta versions.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. Although iCab's latest version is a huge step forward, its remaining problems make it difficult for me to recommend paying any amount for the product. But what about the free version? Though you still get access to

highly customisable filtering features, link checking, and a few nice interface touches, iCab offers nothing truly unique, and is still, on the whole, one of the less satisfying browsers for OS X. ☹

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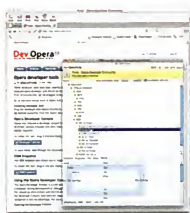
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The fat lady sings. Opera's web development tools provide extensive information about every element on a page, making it easy to tailor pages to your exact needs.



tons, pop-up menus, and text entry fields improperly (occasionally to the point of making a form unusable), and the text on the controls themselves often appeared off-centre. The company is aware of these problems and claims they should be rectified in version 9.5. In general, Opera was reliable and reasonably speedy, though the application

sometimes launched slowly, and even crashed a couple of times (again, the company is working on a fix).

Australian Macworld's buying advice. With its comprehensive set of browsing and other features, Opera 9.26 is an interesting choice for anyone who wants an all-in-one internet application. If you don't need all those extras, you may have a more pleasant web surfing experience with Safari, Firefox, or another browser.

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Rating
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Cons
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Ableton Live 7
Digital audio workstation
★★★★
Drum Racks is an easy way to create compelling virtual drum machines; slice feature is an inspirational groove creation tool; video export; support for multiple time signatures; 64-bit processing
Interface can be a little busy due to its one-window nature
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Christopher Breen
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Ableton Live 7

More-than-able musical tool

Ableton Live is a digital-audio workstation (DAW) program that lets you trigger pre-recorded audio with a Mac's keyboard, mouse, or a MIDI controller. Unlike traditional DAWs, MIDI control makes Live a playable instrument as well as an audio editor and MIDI sequencer. The new Live 7 delivers refinements to features found in previous versions, as well as introduces new capabilities that will be welcome to musicians, DJs, and producers.

Live is absolutely the tool to use for creating and modifying compelling grooves on the fly. Live can also behave like a traditional DAW, providing an Arrangement view where you linearly record digital audio and MIDI tracks as well as add pre-recorded clips, virtual instruments, and effects by dragging them from Live's File Browser pane. As with Apple's GarageBand, you can alter the speed of your composition, and the clips will stretch (or warp, in Live parlance) so that they match the tempo of the piece without changing pitch (and without introducing ugly audio artefacts that can cause the sound to warble or stutter). Unlike GarageBand, Live lets you manipulate clips in a variety of ways. Not only can you add and chain together effects (using Live's built-in effects, Audio Units and VST effects for audio files,

and MIDI effects), but you can also edit MIDI controller data (change the velocity data on a series of notes, for example), and you can edit individual samples to change such elements as their pitch, volume, and panning.

Live 6 brought support for editing the audio in a QuickTime movie, multiprocessor support, and instrument and effect racks. Live 7, while not a massive departure from what came before, includes its fair share of powerful and musical new features as well.

Rack it up. The first is Drum Racks. For those who've worked with hardware drum machines, imagine having the ability to drop any sample on a drum machine's trigger so that, for example, when you tap the Kick Drum button it plays that sample. Now imagine that with a double-tap of that button an editing pane magically appears so you can muck any of the assigned sound's parameters.

That's what this feature is about. Drag a Drum Rack from Live's File Browser into Live's Session or Arrangement pane and a drum pad appears in the Device pane at the bottom of the Live window. This drum pad displays 16 buttons assigned to MIDI note numbers (for example, C1, C#2, or D2). You can assign sounds to as many as 128 buttons. Drop a sample from Live's Browser onto a button to assign it to that button. You can play it by clicking the button with your mouse, typing the correct key on your Mac's keyboard, or by pressing the key or whacking the pad on your MIDI controller that corresponds to that button. Drop an effect on that button and it's assigned to the sound. You can delete the sound and the effect remains, which is useful if you've tweaked the reverb on a snare to your satisfaction, for example, but would like to try a couple of alternate snare sounds in its place without losing the effect.

Once you've assigned a sample to a button, you can then open that sample in a Sampler module (Live's included sampler instrument) and edit its envelope, filter, and LFO (low frequency oscillator) settings. If you've worked with drum machines in the past – real or virtual – you understand how useful this feature is.

Slice is nice. Live 7 supports REX files – files created with Propellerhead Software's ReCycle that slices audio

files into their component rhythmic parts. Live 7 can open these files and, better still, break them down into individual instrument parts and then assign each part to a Drum Rack button.

For example, drag a REX file of a two-measure drum groove into the Session or Arrangement window. Control-click on it and choose Slice to New MIDI Track from the contextual menu. Live will analyse the file, find its discrete elements – the slap of a snare or a word from a vocal phrase, or instance – and assign each element to its own Drum Rack button.

At the same time each element appears as a note in the program's MIDI note editor. Once in that MIDI note editor you can move these elements around and edit them just as you can any other MIDI note. So, where you once had the kick drum on beat one, you can move or copy it to beat two. Or you can change the volume of the snare on beat two while leaving other snare hits at the original volume. You're essentially taking the samples someone created to form their loops, disassembling them, and putting them back together in any way you like. Plus, just as you can with other samples assigned to Drum Rack buttons, you can edit each element's sound – its attack and filtering, for example – in the program's sampler.

But wait, there's more. You can take any sample and impose this Slice to New MIDI Track command on it. Live allows you to determine where to slice the file—every eight or sixteenth beat, for instance—and it does what you ask. If you don't care how certain sounds were sliced, you can easily trim or extend the beginning and end of the sample to your liking. And just as you can with imported REX files, you can rearrange the slices in the MIDI note editor.

Time signatures, video export, and more. Live 7 adds several other useful features. One is the ability (finally) to insert multiple time signatures within a piece. To insert a new time signature just click a location, invoke the Insert Time Signature Change command from Live's Insert menu, and type in the time signature you'd like – 3/4 or 6/8, for example. When you import Standard MIDI Files into the program Live offers to import their time signature information as well and place its Time Signature markers in the appropriate places.

Although you could import video into Live 6, you could export only the audio track associated with it. Live 7 lets you export video as well as its audio – audio it originally contained, any audio you've added to it (for example, a music soundtrack), and any audio effects you've applied to the movie's soundtrack. When you export video you have the option to export it in any format supported by QuickTime; for example, you can export a .mov movie as an .avi or MPEG-4 file. You




Many faces. This Live demo file shows the program's Browser pane (left), Session view (center), and Device pane (below).

can also choose to export movies optimised for the iPod or Apple TV.

Other improvements include a better-sounding and more flexible Compressor effect, a new eight-band stereo EQ, a new Spectrum frequency analysis tool, and the ability to view multiple automation envelopes (controls for volume and panning, for example) in the Arrangement view. Additionally, the underlying audio engine has been updated to 64-bit processing, which means you get cleaner sound.

Ableton has also come up with three additional optional software instruments – Electric (an electric piano synthesiser), Tension (a physical-modelling string synth), and Analog (a dual-oscillator subtractive synthesiser). Each can be purchased separately as can the previously available Sampler and Operator (an FM synthesiser) instruments. Or you can have Live 7 along with all these instruments plus a drum machine samples collection by purchasing the Ableton Suite.

What hasn't changed is Live's all-in-one-window interface. Although Live is designed so that you can hide panes and controls you don't need at the moment, there are times when you need to break out a cramped pane into a separate, resizable window. But Live is a performance instrument as much as it is a DAW; anyone working in a studio has the luxury of multiple monitors, but performing musicians and DJs will find that the one-window interface works well on a laptop.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. Ableton Live is an extraordinary audio tool that, with the addition of Drum Racks and Slices, has become even more musical. If you're a Live 6 user, you'll want to upgrade. Musicians, producers, and DJs who have yet to try living Live should download the Ableton Live 7 demo. After spending a few days working your way around the interface and discovering the program's many wonders, you'll be hooked. 

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AirPort Express

Update features 802.11n, ProxySTA



Like the original AirPort Express Base Station, released in 2004, Apple's latest version is a Wi-Fi access point compact enough to fit in a laptop bag and designed to plug directly into an electrical outlet. You can use the Express to create a wireless network of its own or to extend the range of a network provided by another Express or by an AirPort Extreme Base Station. Security options include WPA and WPA2 encryption — Personal and Enterprise versions — as well as the older WEP.

When providing its own network, the Express's built-in Ethernet port lets you share a wired, broadband internet connection — or extend an existing wired LAN — to wireless clients. When extending an existing wireless network, the Ethernet port can be used to connect non-wireless devices to the wireless network, directly or through an Ethernet hub or switch.

Using Profiles, you can save up to five groups of settings. These allow you, for example, to move an Express between your home, your office, and hotels without having to reconfigure settings each time; you simply choose the appropriate Profile and then restart the Express. Although this feature has recently been added to Extreme units, as well, it remains most useful here, thanks to the Express's portability.

Unlike the larger — and more expensive — AirPort Extreme Base Station, the Express doesn't include a multi-port Ethernet switch, and its single Ethernet port is 100base-T rather than the Extreme's faster 1000base-T (Gigabit) Ethernet. (Given the Express's single port, the benefits of faster Ethernet would likely be realised only if several wired clients were connected, via a switch, to an

Express extending an 802.11n-only wireless network.) The Express's USB port is also less functional than its larger sibling's: although it lets you share a USB printer across your network, it doesn't support sharing a hard drive, as you can with the Extreme's AirDisk feature. (Although the latest documentation for the AirPort Express explicitly states that you can't connect multiple USB printers using a hub, Apple told us that you can indeed do this with the latest Express; however, the hub must be powered.) Finally, the Express supports only 10 clients; the Extreme handles up to 50.

On the other hand, a number of features previously found only in the 802.11n Extreme Base Station have found their way into the latest Express model. The new Express inherits support for 802.11a networks, as well as PIN-based guest access, which allows you to keep your network password private, and time-based network access, which lets you limit the days and times at which particular computers can access your network.

Express exclusives. The Express also continues to one-up the Extreme in a few areas. The Express's iTunes feature lets you stream iTunes audio — or, with help from the third-party AirFoil 3, any other audio on your Mac — to a stereo or speakers connected to the Express's analogue/digital audio-out jack. Using multiple AirPort Express units, you can even stream audio, in sync, to multiple locations around your house. (However, since the Express has no controls, you'll still need to control playback from your computer.)

The Express is also the first AirPort Base Station to provide a new feature called ProxySTA. In this mode, the Express acts as a wireless-to-Ethernet bridge, extending your wireless network to wired clients such as a game console or a room of Ethernet-networked computers. However, unlike an Express configured as a remote or relay base station in a Wireless Distribution System (WDS), which shares or extends your wireless network to both wired and wireless clients, an Express set to ProxySTA does not extend or relay the network wirelessly; it acts only as a bridge. According to Apple, the benefits of ProxySTA are easier setup—the Express acts as a simple wireless client, so you don't have to configure a WDS network—and the potential for better wired-to-wireless performance, as ProxySTA avoids the network overhead of WDS and the potential interference involved with rebroadcasting a wireless signal. In addition, ProxySTA works with both Apple and third-party wireless access points.

Unfortunately, this feature isn't documented and doesn't appear by name anywhere in AirPort Utility. To activate ProxySTA, you must set up the Express to join a wireless network and then enable the Allow Ethernet Clients setting; both settings are located in the Wireless tab of


AirPort Utility. The feature should work with any wireless network: a, b, g, or n; and 5GHz or 2.4GHz. (Note that the Express, which ships with firmware 7.3, must also be updated to firmware 7.3.1 for this feature to appear.)

Streamlined setup. The Express ships with AirPort Utility 5.3, which offers a considerably simpler setup procedure than previous versions. (Note that version 5.3.1 is already available for download.) The utility walks you through the most-common options, asking questions that are easy to understand and providing useful information to help you make informed decisions about settings. Those who need access to the Express's more-advanced options—and there are more here than in the past, such as DHCP reservations for particular computers—can opt for Manual setup. The only potentially-confusing setup issue is that when you plug in a new Express to configure it, you may need to switch your Mac to the Express's own network (which will be named something like "Apple Network 008de5") before the Express will appear in AirPort Utility.

Hop on the n Express. In our testing, the Express offered performance and range that were considerable improvements over its predecessor. For example, wired-

to-wireless throughput was approximately 85 Mbits/second, which is approaching the limit of the unit's Ethernet port when you take network overhead into account.

Wireless-to-wireless performance was slower — and slower than that of the newest AirPort Extreme — although still much better than that of the older Express. In our initial testing of a 5GHz 802.11n-only network using the Automatic channel setting, typical throughput was around 33 Mbits/second. Manually switching to a better channel increased performance to around 39 Mbits/sec, compared to approximately 50 Mbits/sec in the same location for an 802.11n AirPort Extreme. Wireless-to-wired performance in ProxySTA mode in the same location averaged just over 26 Mbits/sec, although it occasionally reached over 35 Mbits/sec.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. If you don't need the features unique to Apple's AirPort Extreme Base Station, the new Express is an affordable and portable alternative, although one that doesn't quite match the Extreme's performance. It's also the choice to make if you're looking to extend your existing Apple-branded network wirelessly or to wired devices, to send your computer's audio to a remote stereo system, or to use a Base Station in more than one location. 

Nikon D300	
Type	Digital SLR camera
Rating	★★★★½
Pros	Great images
Cons	It's heavy; no internal stabiliser
RRP	\$2899 (body only); several lens kits available
Manufacturer	Nikon
Distributor	Nikon Australia 1300 366 499
Reviewer	Barrie Smith
Hot links	www.nikon.com.au



Nikon D300

Value at the price

Nikon has a dSLR range that runs the gamut of pricing from \$7499 for a pro level D3 body, all the way down to the D40 body — at \$899. The D300 — successor to the popular D200 — falls nicely into the middle of that range. The review unit was supplied with an f2.8/14-24 mm lens (which on its own costs \$2599) — not my ideal choice as a starter. The D300 has a 23.6x15.8mm CMOS sensor capturing 12.3 million pixels, using an integrated analogue/digital converter. Maximum image size is 4288x2848 pixels.

Speed is the word, both in image processing and auto focus, the latter depending on a new 51-point AF arrange-

ment. Coupled with this is a recognition system for optimal auto exposure and auto white balance performance.

The optical pentaprism viewfinder is bright and clear as is the rear, high resolution 7.6cm LCD screen — quality viewing all the way! There are two Live View modes available: handheld and tripod-mounted — linked with the shutter release and the AF determination.

It accepts CompactFlash Types I/II cards; shutter speeds from 30 to 1/8000 second plus Bulb (a mode in which the shutter stays open as long as you hold the button down). The ISO figure ranges from 100 to 6400, with ISO 3200 a real option in low light shooting. Shooting in RAW can be done at 14-bit resolution, with internal processing achieved at 16-bits. Burst shooting runs at 6fps (or 8fps with an optional battery pack) to reel in 100 shots at the full size. Capture formats include RAW, JPEG, RAW+JPEG and TIFF.

It's quick: power up in 0.3 seconds so you don't miss a shot, while shutter lag (the bane of digital photographers) comes in at only 0.045 seconds.

The camera's interface includes USB 2.0, an AV output and an HDMI port for connection to external video units (including HDTV sets at 1080i resolution); additionally, the D300 can link to a remote control or GPS device.

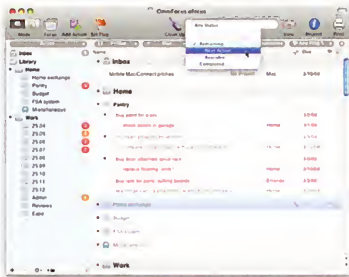
Australian Macworld's buying advice. Excellent image quality and wide ISO range make this a great dSLR. 

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OmniFocus 1.0

Optimised for Getting Things Done



Managing to-dos is a very personal thing. Some people deploy elaborate project-management systems to make sure they get everything done. Others just jot down their day's tasks on the nearest scrap of paper. Most of us are somewhere in between. For the in-betweeners, there's The Omni Group's OmniFocus 1.0.1.

Planning of a sort. In OmniFocus's planning mode, you can quickly sort tasks, assign them to a context and project, and then view them by their current status.

Get it done. OmniFocus is based on David Allen's popular Getting Things Done (GTD) productivity system. The first principle in that system is that you should be able to add – or capture, in GTD-speak – new to-do items whenever and wherever they occur to you. OmniFocus fulfils that requirement by giving you all kinds of ways to create new tasks.

When you are working in OmniFocus, you can add a new task by pressing `^Command-control-N`, or by selecting an existing task and pressing `Return` to start a new one. If you aren't in OmniFocus, you can hit a hot key combination (`control-option-spacebar`, by default) to summon OmniFocus's Quick Entry box. You can also create new to-do items via e-mail: OmniFocus will install a Mail rule that turns specially marked messages into tasks. Finally, you can highlight text in another app (Finder, Mail, your browser, your RSS reader, and more) and, with another hot key combo, turn that text clipping into a to-do item.

However you add a new item, it gets dropped into the OmniFocus Inbox for processing (the next step in the GTD system). That means categorising it by context (the tool you need or the place you need to accomplish it), assigning it to a larger project (or not), and setting other details such as its due date and repeat status. OmniFocus is smart about the processing stage. For example, it's intelligent enough to know that, when you

enter "2d" in a Due Date field, you mean it's due two days from now; you can also use plain English ("next Friday"). It will also let you attach notes or files to to-do items.

With that initial processing done, OmniFocus lets you move to the third stage of the GTD process: reviewing your task list to check off what's been done and determine what's next.

OmniFocus lets you view your task list two ways. In Planning mode, you can look at all the tasks that make up your larger projects, move things around, see what's missing, and fill in the gaps. (There's a separate "single-action list" for tasks that don't fit into a specific project.) In Context mode, you can see all your tasks by context, so it's easy to see at a single glance all the things you need to do while you're on the phone, browsing the web, or out running errands.

Within those two modes, you can filter your views in all sorts of ways. In Planning mode, you can select a project, then click the Focus button on the toolbar to see only that project's tasks. In Context mode, you can use drop-down view menus to specify how tasks are grouped, sorted, and filtered. You can then save these customised views (OmniFocus calls them perspectives) for future use.

Interface. The program can sync with iCal, but unfortunately that syncing is not exactly intuitive. Overall, the interface can be confounding. For example, in Context mode, you can sort columns using the drop-down sorting menu; in Planning mode, that menu doesn't work. If you want to set alarms for to-do items, you will have to sync them to iCal and set your alarms there.

As you've probably come to expect in version 1.0 products, there are little bugs here and there: When you assign a task to a project, for example, that project doesn't always appear right away.

More fundamentally, OmniFocus is not a simple program. It's certainly possible to get a quick, simple list of the things you need to do today – but that isn't the program's default view. If you want a quick, unobtrusive way to keep track of your tasks, OmniFocus is too much.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. OmniFocus 1.0.1 is one of the nicest, most polished to-do managers out there. If you're the kind of person who spends as much time managing your to-do list as you do actually completing the tasks on it, you will be able to geek out to your heart's content. If you just want a tool that provides more than a simple text-based task manager, it will do that too. The more you buy into the whole GTD process, the more useful OmniFocus will be. Even if you haven't joined the Cult of David Allen, it's still a powerful way to help you get things done. ☞



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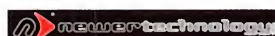
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Alex Kidman is waiting patiently for Oscar the Grouch to pop out of the Trash can.

Are you sure?

Sour Apples

A colleague of mine recently purchased a MacBook. Actually, it's becoming something of a trend; every time I see a group of tech journalists, more and more of them seem to be toting around machines with fruit logos on the back.

That makes me — within this particular niche circle — something of an early adopter (although nowhere in the range of, for example, a certain well-known bearded editor), and one of the "cool kids". I hope I don't have to start following fashion all of a sudden in other areas, unless of course rather worn Muppets t-Shirts and receding hairlines are suddenly back in fashion. Then it'd be easy.

Anyway, this particular wordsmith pulled a black MacBook out of his bag at a recent product launch. Now, I don't mind the black MacBook per se, but I've always thought it was a little overpriced, even given the hard drive differences — and this was about a week before the recent MacBook revisions that at least upped the hard drive capacity difference. Anyway, knowing that this particular journo was the type who cut his teeth on circuit boards, I asked him why he went for the black model, expecting to be told that he had some very specific reason for needing the additional hard drive space. His response?

"The stigma of being a smug, holier-than-thou Mac user. I got a black MacBook so it didn't stand out so much."

I have to admit, my brain did a couple of revolutions on that one. Partly because I was somewhat struck by the irony of buying what is, in essence, an elite MacBook so as not to appear elitist, but also because it did remind my brain of one of those things that I hate about either side of the Mac/PC fence: the old "my machine is better than yours" schoolyard taunting. Now, I'm not having a go at my friend per se — he basically just wanted to keep his head down and get on with using his MacBook as a tool, which at the end of the day it is to him.

The big reason why this particular friend wanted a MacBook? Because they're rather good, and undeniably, Apple's got a great position in the current head to head battles over operating systems, thanks to the enormous discomfort that comes from running Windows Vista. I speak from painful experience here.

The stumbling factor for him wasn't the cost of the hardware, which used to be the "old" argument. Apple's notebook range — with the notable exception of the MacBook Air, which is a niche machine — are pretty competitively priced. It's no particular surprise to the Mac faithful that plenty of PC-centric publications have shifted position and declared Macs — and the MacBook Pro in particular — to be among the best laptops you can buy flat out. And that's running Windows Vista, just to make it even more amusing ... The reason why he hesitated? That would be the perception that Apple

users are elitist and difficult to get on with, and his desire not to be identified as such.

Now, if that's the public perception of the Apple community, then there are two choices to make. The first would be to say "Stuff him. If he can't figure out he's on to a good thing, then 'we' don't want him. Let him go back to Windows, and we'll enjoy the Mac anyway". It might feel good in a short-term, adolescent superiority way, but it's ultimately counter-productive, as it does nothing to expand the Mac community. When even Apple thinks that the argument is so tired that it uses it in ads in a humorous way, you should realise that the argument is essentially deflated.

The second option? Drop the elitist attitude. Nothing wrong with enjoying your possessions, and pride can be part of that, but continuing a war that makes people feel the need to make statements including words like "holier than thou" only leads to division. At the end of the day, the more Mac users there are, the more variety there is in the Mac world — not just in users, but in the companies and software that will follow them, the competition in pricing for things like applications, hardware and peripherals.

I know which option I prefer. ☞



Hotlinks

<http://www.apple.com/getamac/ads/>
Humour, rather than elitism, works wonders.
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Ouch.
tinyurl.com/34cd3s
Not so ouch



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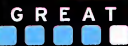
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