

Please e-mail your questions or comments to Bill Henry, Editor (henryw@bellsouth.net)



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Holiday Gift Ideas

Sony Clock Radio with iPod/iPhone dock and 7" video display \$149

Adorn your bedroom, living room, or office with contemporary flair. The ICF-CL75iP multi-function clock radio packs an array of innovative features into a space-saving design. View photos and videos on the 7" LCD screen or slide out the retractable docking tray to charge or listen to your iPod® or iPhone® music. There's even a 2-5-7 day alarm for waking to the radio, iPod, iPhone, Nature Sounds, or a pre-recorded personal message. Additionally, this clock radio includes 1GB2 built-in memory, plus inputs for Memory Stick® media, Secure Digital (SD) memory cards and USB. (backordered)

Apples New Magic Mouse \$69

It began with iPhone. Then came iPod touch. Then MacBook Pro. Intuitive, smart, dynamic. Multi-Touch technology introduced a remarkably better way to interact with your portable devices — all using gestures. Now we've reached another milestone by bringing gestures to the desktop with a mouse that's unlike anything ever before. It's called Magic Mouse. It's the world's first Multi-Touch mouse. And while it comes standard with every new iMac, you can also add it to any Bluetooth-enabled Mac for a Multi-Touch makeover.

www.apple.com/magicmouse/

Apple Gift Cards for buying Apple hardware

iTunes Gift Cards for buying tunes, movies



Macworld's buying advice

by James Galbraith

With the new 2.66GHz Core i5 iMac and the 2.8GHz Core i7 iMac, Apple has not only blurred the line between consumer and professional systems, it's darn near erased it. The 2.66GHz Core i5 iMac offers faster performance at most tasks than the 2.66GHz Quad-Core Mac Pro. The Core i5 iMac also has more memory and more storage space than the 2.66GHz Quad-Core Mac Pro, while being \$500 less (plus you get a 27-inch screen with the iMac). Unless you absolutely require additional PCI cards, multiple internal hard drives, or a lot of RAM, the Core i5 iMac makes a strong case for the being the go-to system for most Mac professionals. 🍏 [James Galbraith is Macworld's lab director.]



🍏 BAC December Meeting 🍏

The December meeting of the Birmingham Apple Core will begin at 10:00 am on December 12th. The topic will be "Fun with Photography" presented by Dr. Boris Datnow.

Arrive early and enjoy coffee, doughnuts and enlightening discussions.

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Bill Henry

henryw@bellsouth.net

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jhill@hillhouse.com

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For Sale/Wanted

Do you have computer related items for sale or is there an item that you would like to purchase?

We will list the item in this space free of charge to current members.

Send information by the 25th of each month to the editor at: henryw@bellsouth.net.

Positions of Treasurer and Membership Chair are still desperately needed for BAC Board

Apple Does a Little Holiday Shopping of It's Own

Apple quietly acquired mapping company Placebase back in July.

Placebase is similar to Google Maps in that it is a mapping service and has the world mapped out. You can zoom in and out and it has different layers you can superimpose over your mapping data.

CEA and employees are now part of the Geo Tam at Apple.

Apple is intending to upgrade the Maps application

Apple also purchased Lala

Sources inside Apple have confirmed that Apple has agreed to buy Lala, an online music streaming service based in Palo Alto, California.

Confirming earlier reports, sources inside Apple have confirmed that it has indeed acquired music streaming service Lala. The specific terms of the deal have not been released as of Friday evening.

According to reports by the New York Times, Lala had actively sought out Apple after Lala executives concluded that prospects for turning a profit in the short term were slim.

Lala allows its users to stream any song in its 8 million strong song library once, with the option for unlimited streaming at 10 cents per track and 79 cents for permanent MP3 download.

This acquisition would allow Apple to integrate full-song streaming into iTunes and opens up possibilities for Pandora-like streaming radio on anything that can run iTunes, including the iPhone, iPod Touch, and Mac systems.

In October, Lala, along with iLike, entered a partnership with Google to allow users to quickly discover song previews, artist info, pictures, video and more. Currently, Google searches for artists or songs can return a full, streaming, embedded song at the top of results, courtesy of Lala. 🍏

Spend Some Time in the Lounge

For all things iPod and iPhone check out the iLounge for reviews and lots of ads. 🍏

www.ilounge.com

APPLE UPDATES

Apple today released four software updates, one AirPort client update targeting Snow Leopard users and three firmware updates addressing optical disk drive noise on a number of the company's computers.

- AirPort Client Update 2009-002 (12.95 MB) addresses several issues experienced by users of Mac OS X Snow Leopard related to wireless networking.

This update is recommended for all Macintosh computers running Mac OS X Snow Leopard 10.6.2 and includes fixes for the following:

- Inability to turn AirPort on or off in some cases after upgrading from Mac OS X Leopard
- An occasional loss of network connection when using Wake on Demand
- Inability to create a computer-to-computer network, or share the Internet connection on some MacBook, MacBook Pro, and Mac mini computers

- Individual firmware updates for the MacBook (MacBook EFI Firmware Update 1.4, 3.14 MB) and MacBook Pro (MacBook Pro EFI Firmware Update 1.8, 3.36 MB) work with the separate SuperDrive Firmware Update 3.0 (18.35 MB) to address optical disk drive noises on Apple computers.

This update will eliminate the noise made by the optical disk drive during system startup and wake from sleep on your Mac. This update works with the following EFI updates:

- iMac EFI Firmware Update 1.4
 - Mac mini EFI Firmware Update 1.2
 - MacBook EFI Firmware Update 1.4
 - MacBook Pro EFI Firmware Update 1.8
- cont'd on page 4*

FREE MAC APPLICATIONS

1. Onyx

www.titanium.free.fr/pgs/english.html

This is a multifunction maintenance, optimization, and personalization utility for Mac OS X. It's available for Panther, Tiger, and Leopard. I use it about once a month or so to keep all my Macs running smoothly.

OnyxX allows you to verify your Mac's Startup Disk and the structure of its System files, run miscellaneous tasks of system maintenance, configure some hidden parameters of the Finder, Dock, Dashboard, Expose, Safari, Login window and some of Apple's own applications, it deletes caches, removes a certain number of files and folders that may become cumbersome and more.

2. VLC

www.videolan.org

VLC media player is a highly portable multimedia player for various audio and video formats (MPEG-1, MPEG-2, MPEG-4, DivX, mp3, ogg, more) as well as DVDs, VCDs, and various streaming protocols.

In other words, VLC will play back many file formats that the QuickTime Player, Windows Media Player, etc can't handle. Best of all, VLC doesn't need any external codecs or programs to work.

3. Bean

www.bean-osx.com/Bean.html

Bean is a small, easy-to-use word processor (or more precisely, a rich text editor), designed to make writing convenient and efficient. Bean is Open Source, fully Cocoa, and is available free of charge! MS Word, OpenOffice, etc. try to be all things to all people, and indeed offer many more writing tools, templates, and output options. But sometimes you simply need to write, and that is Bean's niche.

Bean includes many writing essentials including a live word count, a "Get Info" panel for in-depth statistics, a zoom-slider to easily change the view scale, an "Inspector" panel with lots of sliders, date-stamped backups, auto-saving, page layout mode, an alternate colors option (e.g., white text on blue), selection of text by text style, paragraph style, color, etc, a floating windows option (like Stickies has), find panel allows regular expressions (pattern matching), and all of Cocoa's good stuff (dictionary, word completion, etc.).

I combine Bean with Think (www.freeverse.com/apps/app/?id=7013) for efficient, clutter-free writing.

4. NetNewsWire

www.newsgator.com/Individuals/NetNewsWire

This is an easy-to-use RSS and Atom reader for your Mac.

It allows you to browse, subscribe, read, and save hundreds of thousands of website feeds. It is a true desktop Mac application, with integration with Spotlight, Address Book, iCal, iPhoto, Growl, Twitterific and more. Best of all, it effortlessly syncs with NetNewsWire's web-based RSS reader for free, allowing you to manage all your RSS feeds from any Internet-connected computer (Mac or PC).

5. HandBrake

<http://handbrake.fr>

HandBrake is an open-source, multithreaded video transcoder, available for Mac OS X, Linux, and Windows. It will convert just about any video file you can play on your Mac into a variety of other, easier to play, more portable video formats. Most people use HandBrake to back up their DVDs, or convert a DVD into a file that can be played back on their iPod, iPhone, Apple TV, PS3, etc. Use it as you will. HandBrake has been updated substantially over the past several years since its initial release

6. Carbon Copy Cloner 3

www.bombich.com/software/index.html

I admit, since Time Machine debuted with Leopard, I don't use this app as much as I used to. However, for simple, successful backups, Carbon Copy Cloner can't be beat. You can also use CCC3 for backing up across network, backup to disk images, and backup of selected files only. CCC 3 features an interface designed to make the cloning and backup procedure very intuitive. In addition to general backup, CCC can also clone one hard drive to another, copying every single block or file to create an exact replica of your source hard drive.

7. The Unarchiver

<http://wakaba.c3.cx/s/apps/unarchiver.html>

Forget the other commercial unarchiving apps (like the free version of StuffIt) — the Unarchiver is all you need. Uncompress RAR, 7zip, tar, and bz2 files on your Mac. The developer notes "Many new Mac users will be puzzled the first time they download a RAR file. Do them a favor and download UnRarX for them!"

8. Google SketchUp

<http://sketchup.google.com/>

Google SketchUp is used to create, modify, and share 3D models of anything you like. I know a few people who used SketchUp extensively to plan and pre-visualize house renovations. I've used it to create a virtual set for planning camera placement. There are dozens of video tutorials, an extensive Help Center, and a worldwide user community for SketchUp, making it relatively easy to learn.

It's amazing that SketchUp is free!

continued on page 4..

FREE MAC APPS *continued from page 3***9. Tweetie for Mac**

www.atebits.com/tweetie-mac

Tweetie is my desktop Twitter app of choice. I like that I can easily manage multiple Twitter accounts, view entire tweet “conversations” iChat-style, and compose Tweets in a separate draft window (with built-in URL compression). The free version is ad-supported, which so far I don’t mind. I mean, it is free after all.

10. AppCleaner

www.freemacsoft.net/AppCleaner

Want to remove some of the apps you’ve downloaded here, or downloaded in the past? Try AppCleaner. It’s a small application that allows you to thoroughly uninstall unwanted apps. Installing an application distributes many files throughout your System using space of your Hard Drive unnecessarily. AppCleaner finds all these small files and safely deletes them. 🍏

MAC TIPS**Sending web pages via e-mail**

If you run across a web page you want to share with a friend, don’t send her a link to it — send her the page itself.

Just press Command/I and a dialog will appear, asking for the email address of the person you want to send this web page to.

Just enter her email address, along with your text message, and click “Send,” and it will send the contents of that page (complete with graphics, formatting, links, etc.) to your friend. She’ll be able to see that page right within her email application.

One click movable dock

Here’s how: Hold the Shift key, click directly on the Dock’s divider line (on the far right side of the Dock), and drag the Dock to the left or right side of your screen. Bam! It moves over to the side. Then, once you quit Final Cut Pro, just Shift/click on that divider line and slam it back to the bottom (okay, drag it back to the bottom).

A draggable Dock — is that cool or what!

Extend Column View

If you’re working in a window set to Column view, you’re going to run into this all the time — files with long names have the end of their names cut off from view, because the column isn’t wide enough.

That doesn’t sound like that big of a problem, until you start working with more descriptive file names, and you can’t see which file is “European Front End Silver Car” and which is “European Back End Silver Car” because everything from “European” to “Silver Car” is cut off.

Luckily, there’s a quick fix — just double-click on the little tab at the bottom of the vertical column divider bar, and the column will expand just enough so you can see even the longest file name of any file in that column. Option/double-click on the tab, and every column expands to show the longest name in each column. Pretty darn sweet!

~ Scott Kelby’s Mac OS X Tiger Killer Tips, packed with cool inside secrets, slick workarounds, undocumented shortcuts, and sneaky tricks to help you use Mac OS X. 🍏

APPLE UPDATES *continued from page 2*

Full details on the Super Drive firmware update are available in the associated support document. The update was previously offered in association with the August release of Mac mini EFI Firmware Update 1.2, and iMac EFI Firmware Update 1.4 was released in May. 🍏

iPhone Voice Dictation App

Nuance Communications today announced the release of Dragon Dictation [App Store, Free for a limited time], a new voice transcription application for the iPhone. The application, which relies on the Dragon NaturallySpeaking speech recognition engine to transcribe voice input to text, allows users to easily send transcribed text to new e-mail or text messages or save it to the clipboard for pasting into other applications.

With the Dragon Dictation App, spoken words are instantly transcribed using the world-renowned power of Dragon NaturallySpeaking speech recognition, giving anyone the power to simply “say anything” up to five times faster than typing. Dragon Dictation allows users to speak anything from a one-line text message or status update for Facebook, to a multi-paragraph e-mail. For instance, simply say, “We should meet at the restaurant at 7 and then go to the movies. I’ll pick up Scott in Cupertino after he gets off work. See you then.” Users can start and stop as needed or just speak free form to capture a quick brainstorm idea or reminder. It’s completely up to you.

The application works by transmitting spoken input to Nuance’s central servers, where it is processed by the transcription algorithms and returned to the user’s device. Consequently, the application does require a data connection in order to function. 🍏

Remote Access via iPhone

If It's on Your Computer, It's on Your iPhone

LogMeIn Ignition for iPhone and iPod touch provides fast, one-click access to your LogMeIn computers, directly from your Apple device. Simply create a LogMeIn account and add the computers you want to access remotely to your account. Then install LogMeIn Ignition for iPhone and iPod touch on your Apple device and log in to access your entire computer at the touch of your fingertips.

<https://secure.logmein.com/welcome/iphone/>

Remote Control Right from your iPhone or iPod touch



DOD runs on PlayStation 3

Apparently the Department of Defense believes that PS3s are a better value when it comes to supercomputers than IBM products specifically designed for the purpose. Granted recent price drops probably didn't hurt in justifying a 2,200 console order either.

This isn't the first time that the DoD is using PS3 consoles for supercomputing. In fact, these 2,200 units are going to be added to an existing Linux cluster of 336 PS3s used by the United States Air Force. According to Justification Review Documents, the purchase is all about getting the best value out the DoD's budget:

With respect to cell processors, a single 1U server configured with two 3.2GHz cell processors can cost up to \$8K while two Sony PS3s cost approximately \$600. Though a single 3.2 GHz cell processor can deliver over 200 GFLOPS, whereas the Sony PS3 configuration delivers approximately 150 GFLOPS, the approximately tenfold cost difference per GFLOP makes the Sony PS3 the only viable technology for HPC applications.

I'm all for balancing cost and features, but isn't it just a bit curious that someone thought to save on upgrading the supercomputer just after Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 was released? 🍏

Apple Quietly Upgrades Mac Pro with High Priced Option

If you weren't swayed by the fact that the iMac was now, for many people, a more sensible option than the Mac Pro, you'll be glad to know that Apple has added another optional processor configuration in the quad-core line. If you configure a quad-core Mac Pro from the Apple Online Store, you'll find that you can now add a 3.33GHz Intel Xeon processor to it for \$1,200 extra (over the base configuration that comes with a 2.66GHz Intel Xeon).

If that's not expensive enough or fast enough for you, you can always look towards the eight-core side of the lineup, the fastest configuration it sports being two 2.93GHz Quad-Core Intel Xeons. Apple does not, however, offer two 3.33GHz Intel Xeons as an option on this machine. The second new option, and one that is available for both models, is the ability to load each hard drive bay on these machines with a 2TB hard drive spinning at 7200 rpm. Each of these costs \$350 over the base configuration, overall doubling the maximum storage capacity of the Mac Pros to 8TB.

Apple also showed some love to the server side of their lineup, endowing Xserves with the same optional 2TB hard drive upgrade, taking the total potential capacity of these machines up to 6TB. What's more, you can now also outfit all six slots with 4GB RAM modules, which will leave you with 24GB of RAM to work with. Of course, it will also leave your wallet significantly lighter, what with having spent \$2,850 on memory upgrades alone, but hey, it's the holiday season, isn't it?

Rumor Warning

A future Mac Pro, expected in early 2010, will sport dual Intel Xeon Core i9 "Gulftown" CPUs. The website cites a Polish website, PCLab, as showing test results of the CPU at about 50% faster than the corresponding quad-core Xeon processor. Intel's new 6-core CPU features 32 nm engraving, which results in less power consumption in idle (50% less) and fully-loaded (10% less) modes. PCLab had posted a detailed review of the new CPU, but pulled it when asked by Intel to remove the data. Many Mac pundits have been wondering what Apple would do to differentiate the new iMac Core i7. The six-core CPU would give the engineers in Cupertino a growth path that results in a top-of-the-line 12-core Mac Pro that incidentally uses less power. Of course, applications will need to be properly coded to take advantage of the multiple cores, something that many Mac developers are already doing. 🍏



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Chris Perry

Brookwood Mall, Homewood, AL 35209
Phone (205) 870-7044 Fax (205)780-1944

e-mail: chris@perrycomputer.com
www.perrycomputer.com



Bill Henry, Editor
2438 Mahaska Drive
Birmingham, AL 35244

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