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iPhone 3G S Offers Speed Boost, Video Capture

New phone features faster internals, autofocus camera, voice control

Jun 8, 2009
Philip Michaels and Jason Snell, Macworld.com

Apple on Monday unveiled a new version of the iPhone. Dubbed the iPhone 3G S, the latest version of Apple's popular smart-phone promises to launch applications and run software faster than the previous model, as well as take advantage of faster cellular networks. It debuts in the U.S. on June 19, two days after the iPhone 3.0 software update arrives.

The new phone will also be available in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland on June 19. A week later, Apple says, the phone will launch in six more countries, with more launches to come in July and August.

"The 'S' stands for speed," Phil Schiller, Apple's senior vice president of worldwide product marketing, told Worldwide Developers Conference attendees during Monday's conference-opening keynote.

"Overall, it's just a faster better, quicker, snappier experience," Bob Borchers, senior director of worldwide iPhone product marketing, told Macworld. Borchers said that developers of iPhone apps would have "a lot more headroom to play with," and suggested that users would appreciate "the speed of the processor and the overall experience." While Apple is loath to discuss technical specifications of iPhones, the technical message here is clear: the iPhone 3G S is faster at least in part because it's powered by a faster processor, has more available onboard memory, and perhaps features improved display circuitry.

The iPhone 3G S can also take advantage of 7.2 Mbps HSDPA, a faster cellular networking format that's becoming available in some countries, including the U.S.

For new and qualifying AT&T customers, the new iPhone will sell for \$199 for the 16GB version and \$299 for a 32GB model. Apple is also cutting the price on the current iPhone 3G to \$99 for the 8GB phone. However, people who bought the iPhone 3G last year will discover that the cost to upgrade to this new model will be higher. Because AT&T subsidizes the purchase of iPhones and amortizes those costs over a two-year contract commitment period, many existing iPhone users will need to pay higher prices, which can vary based on each person's individual contract standing with AT&T.

Physically, the iPhone 3G S is almost identical to the previous iPhone 3G model. The only exterior differences are painfully subtle: the "fine print" writing on the back of the phone is now color-matched to the silver Apple logo, and the screen is covered with a new oil-resistant coating.

But there are changes on the inside. The new phone offers a brand-new camera that lets you control the focus either by tapping on the screen or using the autofocus feature. In addition, the iPhone's new camera also captures standard-definition video.

The iPhone 3G S also comes with Apple's new standard for headphones, previously found in the second-generation iPod Touch, fourth-generation iPod Nano, and fourth-generation iPod Shuffle. This set of headphones includes a microphone, a clicker, and volume controls.

Holding down the clicker — or, if you're not using headphones, the iPhone 3G S's Home button — activates the phone's new Voice Control feature, which allows users to speak commands for applications on the phone, including dialing contacts and playing music. Accessibility improvements on the iPhone 3G S include VoiceOver support for reading to users and the ability to zoom in on the phone's display for larger icons.

Enterprise users get a requested feature in the form of hardware encryption. For anyone using an Exchange service or the



06.08.09
Rob Griffiths, Macworld.com

After Monday's Worldwide Developers' Conference keynote, we now know that Snow Leopard will cost Leopard users \$29 (\$49 for the family pack) when it ships in September. In my pre-WWDC OS X Snow Leopard piece, I'd guessed either free or \$20—so I was closer to right than wrong, though still wrong. But what do you get for your \$29? Are there more features than the five big ones I covered last week?

If you watched any of the keynote coverage, you know the answer to that question is "yes, there are more features." In addition to Snow Leopard's already-known features, Apple revealed some very interesting things about the next major OS X release.

On its Snow Leopard page, Apple groups these changes into four major topic areas: Better. Faster. Easier. Next-generation technologies. More accessible than ever, and Exchange support. I dug through these pages Monday, trying to get a sense for what we'll get to see when Snow Leopard ships in September (not quite "about a year" from last June's WWDC, but close).

As I loaded page after page, I was thrilled to find this blurb on an additional page of enhancements and refinements: "Adjust view options for Spotlight results just as you can with any Finder window. Modify the default view as well as the size, labeling, and alignment of icons." This was the No. 1 entry on my list of Leopard annoyances, and it looks like (yes!) it's finally fixed in Snow Leopard.

Beyond that personal-interest fix, what else is new? In my prior article, I covered the

Apple's Latest Laptops Offer Noteworthy Speed at Lower Prices

06.12.09

James Galbraith, [Macworld.com](#)

I had been looking forward to this past week for months. I imagined immersing myself in session after session at Apple's annual Worldwide Developer Conference, getting an under-the-hood look at where the Mac platform is headed. Alas, just a few minutes into the WWDC keynote address, the reality became clear that I would instead spend a week in the Macworld Lab testing new Macs. Why? Because early in the WWDC keynote, Apple executive Phil Schiller announced the company's new laptops. After a mad scramble, we got our hands on the six new MacBook Pros and ran them through our benchmark tests. (In this article, I'll look mostly at speed. Full reviews with mouse ratings that also consider the laptops' design and features are in the works.)

In case you forgot about the MacBook Pro announcement as soon as the iPhone 3G S was unveiled, the biggest change to the MacBook Pro line was the addition of two 13-inch models. Essentially, Apple took the unibody MacBook and added a FireWire 800 port to the laptop and the word "Pro" to the name. The new 13-inch models feature a 2.26GHz or 2.53GHz Core 2 Duo Intel processor, a boost over the 2GHz and 2.4GHz Core 2 Duo processors found in the unibody MacBooks. The white plastic 2.13GHz MacBook is currently the only laptop in the MacBook line.

The \$1,199 13-inch 2.26GHz MacBook Pro ships with 2GB of 1,066MHz DDR3 RAM and a 160GB hard drive. The \$1,499 13-inch 2.53GHz MacBook Pro ships with 4GB of 1,066MHz DDR3 RAM and a 250GB hard drive. Both models ship with the Nvidia GeForce 9400M graphics subsystem.

We tested the two new 13-inch MacBook Pros using Macworld's overall system performance test tool, Speedmark 5. The new 13-inch 2.53GHz MacBook Pro was a little more than 12 percent faster overall than the new 13-inch 2.26GHz MacBook Pro. The 2.53GHz laptop was about 21 percent faster at Photoshop CS3 and Cinema 4D.

Of course, some of this performance difference is due to the 2.53GHz system's additional RAM, so we also tested the 2.26GHz model with 4GB of RAM. Most of our tests (which are run one at a time) don't benefit much from additional RAM, and the two-point improvement in the Speedmark score bears that out. The biggest performance difference with the additional RAM was in our Photoshop suite times, which improved the new 2.26GHz MacBook Pro's score by about 10 percent.

Comparing the new 13-inch MacBook Pros to the last unibody 13-inch MacBook, we see that the new 2.26GHz MacBook Pro is about 12 percent faster overall than the 2GHz unibody MacBook.



iPhone OS 3.0 Coming on June 17

06.08.09

Peter Cohen, [Macworld.com](#)

Apple senior vice president of iPhone software Scott Forstall used Monday's WWDC keynote with the news that iPhone users have waited months to hear: The new iPhone 3.0 OS will be released on June 17, 2009.



iPhone 3.0 will be a free release for all iPhone customers — both original iPhone users and iPhone 3G users will be able to download it at no charge once it's released. iPod touch customers can download the new release for \$10, and it will work on first- and second-generation iPod touch models.

And iPhone software developers will be able to download the new release on Monday — it's gone "golden master" today.

Forstall used most of his time to talk about and show off some of the 100 new able to download the new release on Monday — it's gone "golden master" today.

Forstall used most of his time to talk about and show off some of the 100 new features in iPhone OS 3.0, many of which were first discussed at a press event in Cupertino last March. He was aided by a long parade of iPhone developers who showed off their latest wares.

Many of the new features in iPhone 3.0 have been talked about before — Cut, Copy, and Paste, for example. Landscape mode in all key applications, including

Mail, Notes and Messages. Spotlight support across the entire device, and ubiquitous searching. Peer-to-peer Bluetooth-based multiplayer gaming, push notification, in-app store support and other capabilities factored into demonstrations showing off iPhone 3.0's new features, as well.

Forstall also delved deeper into some capabilities in the new operating system, and took a couple of digs at Apple's United States cellular partner, AT&T, in the process.

Multimedia Messaging Support (MMS) has been, since the iPhone's first release, a common request from iPhone users and people considering a switch to an iPhone — it's a capability many cell phone users take for granted.

Unfortunately, it appears that iPhone users in the United States will be waiting longer for MMS than some other areas. Forstall noted that while iPhone OS 3.0 is capable of MMS, it requires carrier support to implement. Twenty-nine carriers in 76 countries will support MMS at the time of iPhone 3.0's launch, according to Forstall. AT&T, Apple's U.S. carrier partner, isn't among them, at least not initially. AT&T will be ready to support MMS "later this summer," according to Forstall. That news elicited boos from the crowd.

Tethering is another feature without AT&T. Tethering describes the ability for a Mac or PC to share the iPhone's Internet connection. This feature is especially handy for mobile travelers who don't want to be tied to the limited range of a Wi-Fi hotspot, and who haven't purchased a 3G data card for their laptop. Especially given the absence of ExpressCard expansion slots on Apple's refreshed 15-inch MacBook Pro line, this will be a bone of contention for some users.

iPhone 3.0's tethering works over USB or Bluetooth, and works on Mac OS X and Windows. But in another slight to AT&T, Apple listed dozens of carriers that will support this feature, and AT&T was notably absent from the list.

"Find My Phone" is a new feature in iPhone 3.0 that helps you locate your iPhone if you've misplaced it. It's specifically for MobileMe customers — you can log in to MobileMe and it will show you where you left your phone. You can send a message to the phone, and it will play

Wolfram Alpha acts as 'computational knowledge engine,' not search engine

.06.18.09

Peter Cohen, [Macworld.com](#)

Wolfram Alpha LLC announced Monday the general availability of Wolfram|Alpha, a "computational knowledge engine" available on the Web that shares code with Mathematica, Wolfram Research's renowned technical computing software.

Alpha lets you input a query that requires data analysis or computation, and it delivers the results for you. It's linked to terabytes of "curated" data — data that's been hand-selected by experts working with Wolfram, who go through steps to make sure the raw data is tagged semantically and is presented unambiguously and precisely enough that it can be used for accurate computation.

Examples of how Alpha can currently be used range from solving difficult math equations to doing genetic analysis, examining the historic earnings of public companies, comparing the gross domestic products of different countries, even measuring the caloric content of a meal you plan to make. You can find out what day of the week it was on your birthday, or show the average temperature in your area going back days, months or years.

Not a search engine

The first thing Wolfram Research co-founder Theodore Grey wants you to know is what Alpha is not: It is no "Google killer," as it's been called by some reports. In fact, Alpha is very, very different from a search engine.

"Search engines are like reference librarians," Grey explained. "Reference librarians are good at finding the book you might need, but they're useless at interpreting the information for you."

Google's strength, Grey said, is in providing you with links to pre-existing data that you may be interested in — news reports, online database entries, and other content that references the phrase or words you're interested in finding.

Alpha, meanwhile, takes reams of raw information and performs computations using those data. It produces pages of new information that have never existed on the Internet.

"Search engines can't find an answer for you that a Web page doesn't have," Grey explained.

"It's been a dream of many people for a long time to have a computer that can answer questions," said Grey. "A lot of people may think of a search engine as that, but if you think about it, what search engines do is an extreme limited subset of that sort of thing."

Mathematica for the masses

Alpha is completely written in Mathematica, except for the Web-specific server-side code. It's more than just a publicly accessible version of Mathematica, however. It employs an advanced heuristics engine that tries to make sense of your query without forcing you to understand how to make equations using Mathematica's programming language-like syntax. Alpha allows you to input queries in natural language, and it does its best to figure out what you're asking and provide you with the data you're looking for.

That was one of the goals behind Wolfram's recent private beta test and last weekend's final shakedown — to make sure that Alpha could interpret many of the queries that it was getting. Grey says that going forward, Wolfram will continuously improve the Alpha engine to better understand what people are asking it. Wolfram plans to add additional data to search, as well. "Many people over the weekend went looking for sports statistics, for example," he said — an area that Wolfram hasn't gotten to yet, but will.

Making data work

To that end, Wolfram works with many contributors — Mathematica users and experts in their fields — who identify usable, publicly available data sets and work to make it digestible to Alpha.

"In order to make data computable, the tricky part is that there's a lot of information — lots of collections of data where you can get a raw dump. But if you want to make a graph of quantities or compare data from another source, there are nagging problems, like the assumptions upon which these data were based," said Grey.

So steps are required to take the raw data, transform it and make it ready to be transformed and compared with other sources. That process isn't totally automated, but Grey says that Wolfram has found ways to "semi-automate" it. "It's incredibly difficult and it's a vast amount of work, but it's not impossible or insane."

Grey says the best way to understand what Alpha does is to use it, and to compare the results by inputting the same

query in your favorite search engine and see what happens. The differences, Grey thinks, will be instantly apparent.

And if you'd like to see how Alpha works in the hands of an expert, there's a screencast narrated by Wolfram Research founder Stephen Wolfram you might find informative, too.

Apple Releases Java Update Addressing Critical Vulnerability

06.15.09

[MacFixIt](#)

Apple has released an update for Java which addresses the vulnerability that has apparently been a long-standing bug in Java for OS X. The bug allowed for code and applications to be run as the current user, which could be dangerous if you were logged in as an administrator. The updates are available via Software Update, and also Apple's downloads page for both Tiger and Leopard users:

Apple's Mac OS X 10.5.8 to Fine Tune Service Technologies

06.16.09

[Sam Oliver AppleInsider](#)

The next, and potentially final, upgrade to Mac OS X 10.5 will address loose ends in the software's underlying service technologies with a particular focus on networking and syncing.

Just two betas of the 10.5.8 Update have made their way into developers' hands thus far, the first of which was labeled build 9L12 and arrived for an extremely limited group of testers early last week. That distribution was quickly followed by the release of build 9L14 to all registered Mac OS X developers this past weekend.

Unlike 10.5.7, which addressed roughly two dozen system components and applications, 10.5.8's focus appears more narrow from the onset. People familiar with the update say Apple has asked developers to concentrate their evaluation efforts on just a dozen key technologies, only two of which represent forward-facing applications: Automator and iCal.

The remainder of the update addresses underlying service technologies that include 802.1x wireless protocols, Apple Filing Protocol, AirPort, Bluetooth, graphics drivers, iDisk syncing, networking, Spotlight indexing, Sync Services, and USB.

Similarly, many of the roughly two-dozen code corrections already baked into the first two pre-release builds also target underlying networking and syncing technologies. For example, Apple has reportedly made note of fixes to AFP and TimeMachine syncing, iCal time and calendar syncing, execution of start-up items on Network home folders, and problems with DHCP client and 802.1x integration.

Formatting a Flash Drive

Christopher Breen,
Macworld.com

Reader Dan Coates believes in recycling (or, at least, reformatting). He writes:

I have a number of commercial flash drives with outdated information. How can I unlock them for reuse?

Increasingly, companies are putting data on cheap USB flash drives and passing them along to customers and colleagues. Like you, I agree that it's a shame to toss them out when you can easily reformat them and put them to use for your own purposes.

The easiest way to reformat one of these things is to launch Disk Utility (Applications/Utilities), select the flash drive from Disk Utility's list of drives, click the Erase tab, choose MS-DOS (FAT) from the Volume Format pop-up menu, and click the Erase button. The drive will be erased with the selected format and will be usable on both Macs and Windows PCs.

I've seen claims on the Internet that formatting these drives in the Mac OS Extended (Journaled) format speeds up transfers. I haven't found that to be the case. In fact, when copying a 2GB folder to a SanDisk U3 Cruzer Micro USB flash drive I found the opposite to be true. It took 7 minutes and 42 seconds to copy the folder to the drive when it was formatted using MS-DOS (FAT) and 8 minutes and 27 seconds when the drive was formatted using OS X Extended (Journaled). When copying that same folder from the flash drive to my hard drive the two were close—1 minute 36 seconds for the OS X Extended format and 1 minute and 40 seconds for the MS-DOS format.

Should you desire to format the drive as Mac OS X Extended (Journaled), you're welcome to. To do so, select the drive in Disk Utility, click the Partition tab, select 1 Partition from the Volume Scheme pop-up menu, click the Options button, choose GUID Partition Table or Apple Partition Map from the resulting sheet (GUID for Intel Macs or any Mac running 10.4 or later or Apple Partition Map for PowerPC Macs running any version of Mac OS X),



and click OK. Choose Mac OS Extended (Journaled) from the Format pop-up menu and click the Apply button. In the sheet that appears click the Partition button and your flash drive will be formatted as a Mac OS X Extended (Journaled) drive.

10.5: Find which items weren't modified by Time Machine

from *Mac OSX Hints*
www.macintoshhints.com

Fri, Jun 12 2009 by idahotallpaul



Getting ready for work this morning, I walked into my office to find my 2.5 year old daughter mashing on my keyboard with the monitors off. Time out! After a quick check, it looked like no damage had been done. Later though, I tried to launch iCal with Quicksilver, and Quicksilver could not find it.

I looked at my apps folder (which was open apparently when she was mashing the keyboard) and saw that there were three folders with a bunch of gibberish for names. They were apps, but I wasn't sure which ones were which. Enter Time machine!

I tried to restore the whole apps folder, which I knew would take a while, but it told me Applications cannot be restored as it is used by the system. I selected all apps, hit copy, pasted the names into a text file and printed the file, meaning to open Time Machine and go down the list marking things off until I figured out what was missing.

With all of those items selected, I opened Time Machine and selected a backup from early this morning. All of the apps that were the same remained selected, but the ones that were missing -- the renamed ones -- were de-selected. I simply chose the de-selected apps and restored them.

This saved me a bunch of time going down the list and manually comparing the folder in Time Machine to my printed list. Now, off to Home Depot to get a lock for the office door!

Capture Output of Certain Unix Commands

06.12.09

Rob Griffiths, Macworld.com

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This will probably only appeal to those of you learning to use the Unix side of OS X. A while back, I was trying to capture the output of the Unix command `httpd -t` (which runs a syntax check on the Apache web server's configuration files) to the clipboard. Typically, you do this in OS X by sending the command's output through the `pbcopy` (pasteboard copy) command: `httpd -t | pbcopy`

That should, in theory, put the output of the command on the clipboard. But in this case, it wasn't working. After much investigation, what I learned is that some Unix commands, `httpd -t` included, don't send their output to the Terminal in the usual way. The usual way in Unix is to send output to something called the "standard output," which for all intents in this discussion, means the Terminal window.

Instead, certain commands send their output to standard error (STDERR, in Unix parlance). Although this text is also displayed in Terminal, you can't do anything with the output as you can if it were sent to standard output. (Unix wizards, please feel free to correct any of my mistakes in the above; it's meant to be a summary view of the situation.)

The solution is to reroute what gets sent to standard error to standard output, using this syntax: `httpd -t 2>&1`

The 2 represents standard error, and the 1 represents standard output. The bit in the middle, `>&` is the usual Unix redirect command (the greater than sign), followed by the ampersand, which changes the redirect's output from a file (which is typical) to a file descriptor (in this case, the standard output).

I know that's a mouthful, and I'll admit that I don't fully understand it—but I know it works, at least in the bash shell that's been the default for a while now. Once the output is in standard output, it can just be fed through `pbcopy` as usual: `httpd -t 2>&1 | pbcopy`

The end result, assuming there's nothing wrong with your Apache configuration files, will be the text Syntax OK on your clipboard. I know that `ssh -v` (verbose mode ssh) also sends its output to standard error, as does time, and I'm sure there are many more.

Use the New MacBook SD Cardslot as a Boot Device and More.



06.11.09
MacFixIt

Apple's replacement of the ExpressCard slot with a SD card reader may seem like a limitation to some people, but given the popularity of SD cards for cameras and video recorders, as well as for other electronics devices the move makes marketing sense, and the slots may just be more useful than they appear at first glance.

There have been many questions about the specifics of the SD card's usage, and Apple has compiled them into a FAQ that they've posted in this knowledgebase article, with troubleshooting advice, ways to manage formats and partitions, and alternate uses for the card besides data storage.

Essentially, SD cards will behave just like an external hard disk drive, and as such and given their ever-increasing capacities, can be used as an alternative way to boot a system, just like using a FireWire or USB external drive. Just format the card to Mac OS Extended and give it a GUID partition map in Disk Utility, and you can install a copy of OS X to it for troubleshooting your main installation (or even as your primary boot device if you so choose).

The card reader should be fully functional in all operating systems that support it, so BootCamp users should still recognize inserted media. At 240Mbit/sec the data transfer rate of the card reader is about half that of USB2 and FireWire connections, but still should be enough to run and use for alternative booting.



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iPhone 3G S



Find Your iPhone feature in the iPhone 3.0 software update, remote wipe is instantaneous and backups are encrypted whenever hardware encryption is enabled.

Apple promises improved battery life with the iPhone 3G S. The new phone offers nine hours of Internet access on Wi-Fi, 10 hours of video, 30 hours of audio playback, and 12 hours of 2G talk time. The five hours of 3G talk time on the new model is consistent with the estimated talk time of the previous iPhone 3G.

In keeping with Apple's ongoing push to tout the environmental friendliness of its products, the company noted that it reduced packaging for the phone by 23 percent. The iPhone 3G S also features arsenic-free glass and a mercury-free LCD; the phone is also free of brominated flame retardant (BFR) and PVC.

Other features announced during Monday's keynote include a built-in digital compass, and support for the Nike+ fitness accessory.



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iPhone OS 3.0

an alert, even if you left the phone in silent mode. What's more, remote wipe isn't a feature just for system administrators anymore — "Find My Phone" can erase all your data, if your iPhone falls into the wrong hands.

The new iPhone OS supports HTTP-based streaming audio and video that will pick the right bit-rate depending on your phone's data connection quality. Autofill has been added for the Mobile Safari software, to save you from having to fill out forms manually.

Another hotly-anticipated capability for the iPhone is turn-by-turn GPS-based directions. To that end, TomTom demonstrated an iPhone 3.0 application that delivers real TomTom navigation on the iPhone. What's more, the software also works with a cradle device that suction-cups to your vehicle's window. It's more than just a holder — it securely docks the iPhone, and can enhance the iPhone's GPS capabilities, and give you hands-free calling capabilities, power and a loud-speaker. TomTom plans to release both this summer, with a range of maps.



Reassessing the 'Apple Tax'



06.10.09
Michael Scalisi, PC World

Macs are often criticized for the high price of their hardware. This so-called Apple tax is the premium that Apple computers usually cost over comparably equipped PCs. But since the company dropped prices on its laptop line Monday, that difference is now smaller than ever.

Of course, Mac enthusiasts might even say the Apple tax never existed, since no MacBook Pro competitor has the aluminum unibody construction or multi-touch track pad that the MacBook Pro does.

In any case, I've been playing with the numbers, and I've noticed something interesting: When the newest 13-inch MacBook Pro is configured with similar features and put head to head with a Dell XPS 1330 (arguably Dell's most similar computer), the two come within spitting distance in price.

The base price for the 13-inch MacBook Pro is \$1199 while the Dell XPS M1330 starts at \$749. Using each company's online configuration tool, I created systems with the following attributes: 13.3-inch LED backlit screen, 4GB RAM, 320GB Hard disk, Nvidia GE Force 9400M Graphics Card, 802.11n networking, integrated webcam, backlit keyboard and Bluetooth. The MacBook comes with a 2.26 GHz Intel processor with a 1066 MHz frontside bus, versus 2.4 GHz and 800 MHz, respectively, for the Dell.

The Dell was configured with a 9-cell battery, which should at least approach the 7 hours Apple advertises for its integrated battery. Dell's computer weighs in at just under 4 pounds with a 6-cell battery and with the 9-cell is likely to be pretty close to the MBP's 4.5 pounds. Both included a one-year warranty. Including Windows Vista Home Premium, the Dell came out to \$1,304 as compared to \$1,399 for the Apple. Apple tax: \$95.

For those willing to put a premium on the featherweight computing experience, the new \$1,499 base price of the MacBook Air should give you a reason to take a fresh look. Also, it should cause Dell to break a sweat as the competing Adamo now starts at a full \$500 more. In its \$1,799 configuration, the Air matches the 128GB solid-stage drive of the Adamo and bests its 1.2GHz processor with one that clocks in at 2.13GHz. Both come with 2GB of RAM and no optical drive. The Air weighs one full pound less than the Adamo at 3 lbs.

If you've been attracted to OS X and the Apple computer experience, but have been put off by high prices, Apple just extended an olive branch to you.



Snow Leopard

Exchange support and next generation technologies, and though Apple provides some more detail on these changes, there's really not a lot more to say about them. There are a lot of very cool new capabilities in OS X's accessibility features, none of which had been disclosed before Monday's keynote.

The 'rotor' gesture eases navigation through text and web pages.

For vision-impaired users, the track pad in Snow Leopard will now be usable as a virtual screen—pressing on the trackpad will speak the name of the window under the user's finger as if he or she were touching the screen. To move to the next or previous window, users need only flick their finger. In addition, there's support for more than 40 braille devices, better keyboard navigation, and a new gesture (the rotor) that eases navigation through text and Web pages.

To me, the most interesting newly-disclosed features are on the "Better. Faster. Easier." page. The thing that really caught my eye is that the Finder has been totally rewritten to take advantage of Snow Leopard's new technologies, such as GrandCentral and 64-bit support. Along the way, Exposé gains some really nice new features, including an organized grid arrangement, and showing all of a program's open windows when you click and hold on its dock icon. Stacks now appear in scrollable windows, and you can drill down into subfolders. Performance should be better, too, with Apple claiming that refreshing a PDF icon is 1.7x faster than Leopard, and 1.4x faster for a JPG icon.

Other speed increases include Time Machine—up to 50 percent faster than Leopard in general use—and much quicker wake from sleep, shut down, and when joining wireless networks. These are the kind of real-world speed improvements that users should notice; they're not esoteric benchmarks, but tangible tasks that many people do many times per day.

Another area that has seen speed and efficiency improvements is the OS X installation process. It's now up to 45 percent faster than Leopard, and uses up to 6GB less drive space (depending on how you configure your installation). The installer will also check applications and disable any known

to be incompatible with Snow Leopard. If the power happens to go out during install, the installer is even smart enough to start again without losing any data.

iChat's video chat support is better as well—more work is done to address common router incompatibilities, and less bandwidth is needed—only a 300Kbps upload speed—for full 640x480 resolution chats. For anyone who's ever cursed at iChat's somewhat lottery-like ability to start a video chat, these are welcome improvements.

Another area that received a lot of attention in Snow Leopard is the Services menu. I've long lamented the poor Services menu. It holds so much potential, but is cursed with perhaps the poorest implementation possible. Every service on your machine appeared in one long menu, with no way to disable those you didn't need. Chinese text conversion, for instance, doesn't get much use in my household.

Services in Snow Leopard are now in the contextual menu, and contextual in nature.

In 10.6, you'll be able to individually disable or enable each service, which is a great improvement in its own right. However, you'll also be able to get to services from more places—they'll be available via the contextual menu. What makes this change even better is that the services items themselves are now contextual too. That is, you'll only see the services that are compatible with the selection you've made.

In prior versions of OS X, non-usable services were grayed out, leaving the menu cluttered and ugly looking. In 10.6, the non-applicable services simply won't show at all. Finally, Automator will let you build your own services, making it easy to turn a repetitive task into a simple mouse-click exercise. I think this may be one of the more exciting areas of change in 10.6, for it really turns the Services menu into something that literally any user can take advantage of.

Two other improvements caught my attention as small changes that many users will welcome. The first is related to selecting text in Preview. If you've ever tried text selection on a multi-column document, you know it's not fun—typically, you wind up selecting text across columns, instead of just down your desired column. In Snow Leopard, artificial intelligence is applied as you make your selection, helping Preview select just that text you're interested in copying. I would love it if this technology could make its

way across every app that supports multi-column documents!

The second small change is to an area many users may not think twice about, but if you work with a lot of removable media, you'll welcome this one. You know that annoying message that lets you know you can't eject a disk because it's in use? It's annoying because it doesn't tell you anything about which file may be keeping the disk busy, just that it's busy. In Snow Leopard, Apple has made changes so that fewer events will cause the disk to report itself as busy. Beyond that, though, if the disk actually is busy, you'll see a message that—hallelujah!—tells you exactly what it is that's keeping the disk busy.

One final new feature is actually a really old feature. Snow Leopard will have a Put Back command that moves a file from the trash back to its originating folder. The long-time Mac users out there will remember this command from OS 9 as Put Away (Command-Y; it's still in my memory banks), and it's very useful for those times when you change your mind about deleting a file. Score one more for the old timers!

As I read through this list of changes, bug fixes, and new features, and compare it to the list of 300 new features in Leopard, it seems to me that Apple could have easily sold Snow Leopard for \$129. At only \$29 for current 10.5 users, this upgrade looks to be a real bargain, and I can't wait to try it out this fall.



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TarMac "Control Panel"

Tom Davis, president
Ray Kallman, vice-president
Jan Cook, treasurer
Brian Fountain, user group ambassador

other panel members

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If you show up you're a member
If you speak up you're an officer
If you stand up you're the president

Eleanor Cavin
Gary Gobel
Cindy Huffman
Lynn McAlpine

website: homepage.mac.com/tidewatermug
e-mail: tidewatermug@mac.com