printout

eBay Tricks of the Trade

by Linda Cober

Unless you have been living in a cave, you have certainly heard of eBay. Maybe you have even bought something from the site. I have done so and had a good experience each time. I have not, however, ever sold anything on eBay although I, like most other people, have items that I could sell if I knew how to get started. On March 17 we will all have the chance to learn from some experts. Our presenters are Mary Lou and Jerry Evans, who not only sell on eBay but who also run courses teaching others how to do so. This dynamic husband and wife team will show us the steps necessary for a successful start to our selling careers, whether we want to sell one item or start an internet business and clear out the garage and cellar at the same time. They will show us some tricks of the trade also, so we can become better sellers and smarter consumers as well. After the Evans' presentation on March 17, you too can be a successful eBayer! ✿

Meet us at
Gannett Fleming
Gannett West Building
209 Senate Ave ❖ Camp Hill

Tuesday, March 17, 2009, 6:30 p.m.

Attendance is free and open to all interested persons.

Contents

Keystone MacCentral is a not-for-profit group of Macintosh enthusiasts who generally meet the third Tuesday of every month to exchange information, participate in question-and-answer sessions, view product demonstrations, and obtain resource materials that will help them get the most out of their computer systems. Meetings are free and open to the public. The *Keystone MacCentral Printout* is the official newsletter of Keystone MacCentral and an independent publication not affiliated or otherwise associated with or sponsored or sanctioned by any for-profit organization, including Apple Computer, Inc. Copyright © 2009, Keystone MacCentral, 305 Somerset Drive, Shiresmanstown, PA 17011.

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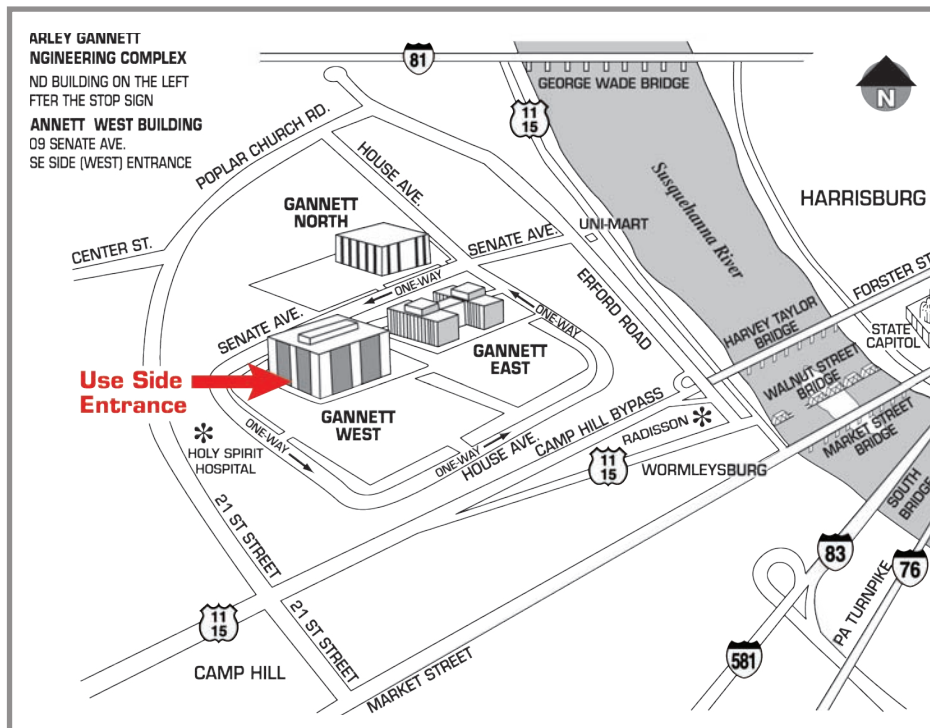
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by Linda J. Cober

President's Corner

This Saint Patrick's Day, come to KeyMac wearing the green or not, and learn how to make some green selling on eBay. Our presenters Mary Lou and Jerry Evans are successful eBay entrepreneurs who graciously agreed to share with us some of their hard-won tips for success. This evening with us will be a condensed version of an eBay sales course they teach, so we can benefit from their expertise and attend our March 17 KeyMac meeting as well.

If you cannot attend our March meeting and still want to learn how to sell on eBay, all is not lost. Que Publishers recently brought out the 5th edition of Michael Miller's book *Absolute Beginner's Guide to eBay* for $21.99. I decided to report on this book since it ties in nicely with our up-coming presentation. I found it to be quite helpful and well written, as its 5th edition status would indicate.

Part I introduces the reader to the eBay marketplace and covers how to protect oneself on eBay, a good way to start. Part II covers buying on eBay, starting with browsing and searching for merchandise, bidding, sniping to win, using bid assistant and other bidding tools, buying fixed price items, paying for the purchase, buying safely, and secrets of successful bidders. I found sniping to win to be very interesting and learned how some items that I thought I would win had been won by others who sniped, or bid in the last 10 seconds after showing no interest or bidding in the days before the end of the auction. At the end of each chapter is a section entitled Absolute Minimum which summarizes the main points of the chapter and allows a reader who wants to learn something as quickly as possible to do just that. I read fast, so I prefer to read the whole chapter and absorb more of the fine points, but the Absolute Minimum does do a good job for the slower or time-pressed reader. Part III talks about selling on eBay, discussing what to do beforehand, how to sell items at a fixed price, how to create more effective item listings, how to use pictures in one's listings, how to accept PayPal and other payment methods, how to pack and ship items cheaply and safely, and how to deal with non-paying buyers. This third section seems to cover much of what Mary Lou and Jerry will be teaching us at our meeting, so you can use it to reinforce what you learn March 17 or as a substitute if you are unable to attend the meeting. Part IV covers becoming an eBay power seller if you are so inclined, while Part V discusses managing your eBay activity with My eBay, creating your own eBay identity, and communicating with others in groups, boards and blogs. I found the Index to be very helpful as well, testing it by trying to find quick answers to several questions. According to his bio, Michael Miller is a top eBay seller who has written more than 75 non-fiction books over the last twenty years, many of them about eBay. He obviously knows his topic and writes in an easy to understand, clear style that offers practical advice to those who want to get started using eBay.

I hope to see you this March 17 for Mary Lou and Jerry's program, but if you can't attend yet are interested in learning how to use eBay, buy Michael Miller's book *Absolute Beginner's Guide to eBay* from Que Publishers. Either way, you won't be disappointed! ♻

by Gary Brandt, Recorder

Keystone MacCentral
Minutes
February 17, 2009

Business Meeting

President Linda Cober welcomed everyone to the February meeting and asked board members for their reports. Eric Adams told us he would be sending out requests to vendors for donations for our auction in April. Eric asked if anyone had additional vendors that they wanted him to contact and he got a couple of suggestions. Tim Sullivan asked if anyone was having trouble opening the newsletter since he had made a slight change. If you are having trouble, you might need to update your copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader. Linda Smith chose Google Earth 5.0 as our download pick of the month. She later demonstrated it during the program.

Q&A & Comments

Tom Owad asked if anyone had a Mac II monitor that they could lend him. The monitor needed to be pre-MultiSync. Linda Cober said she might be able to help. A question was posed asking how many items could be plugged into a UPS. Non-essential items like printers need not be plugged in to the UPS, but the computer, monitor, and external hard drives should be. If power does go out, you should attempt to shut down as soon as possible. Someone mentioned APC as a trusted brand name. Their PowerChute software can be set up to automatically shut down a Mac. We got a comment from someone mentioning problems with a number of La Cie hard drives.

Tim Sullivan asked about entering 256 bit passwords. There are three different ways to enter WEP passwords for wireless networks so Tim might have to use a different method than he was trying.

Tom Bank is planning to buy a new Mac and he asked if there was a way to buy an individual service pack along with his Mac so he could get Snow Leopard for no additional charge when it is released. We all have probably bought an item soon before something better was released. That's just the breaks, Tom. Don Fortnum said there are some web sites that give a buy or don't buy recommendation based on their guesses as to when new Macs would be released. MacRumors is one such site.

Eric Adams reported a problem with startup on his Mac. The startup process would begin and some startup items would be displayed but the process would stop and start over again. One troubleshooting idea proposed was starting in safe mode and checking the login items on the misbehaving account.

Program Notes

We watched Macworld Vodcast 91 in which Chris Breen demonstrated some new features of iPhoto '09. The new version works with GPS data. If you have a camera without GPS capability built in, you might be able to add GPS to the camera with an attachment. To use geo-tagging in iPhoto, you check info on an event. You can move a pin on the map to the correct location to assign a location to all photos in that event. If you want to tag all of your photos with location data, Chris suggested creating a Smart Album of photos without location data and working on those until all are tagged. Chris also demonstrated the new Faces feature in iPhoto '09 and how to confirm faces so iPhoto will begin to recognize them.

Our webmaster Linda Smith presented the February program on all things Google. She began with Google Earth 5.0 which now includes a section in which you can view undersea areas of the world's oceans. Our tour took us to the Forbidden City in Beijing. Users have uploaded photos of some of the interesting areas. We looked at Washington, DC and Captain Don's Habitat in Bonaire. Linda Cober, a frequent visitor down there, pointed out points of interest. Google Earth works with the iPhone and iPod Touch. You can choose to display weather data with real-time radar. Linda showed us street view which has been added for many areas. There are web sites that can lead you to interesting street views. Tom Bank II mentioned the Space Navigator 3D mouse that can make using Google Earth easier. Cost is around 59 dollars.

Linda next showed us how she uses Google Alerts to monitor her chosen search terms whenever they are mentioned on a web site. Google has a blog search feature

that narrows searches only to blog articles. With Google's Book Search, you can read articles from the magazines and books it displays. Selections go way back in time. More current titles may have a page limit on what you can read online.

One of Linda's favorite areas of Google is iGoogle where a user's Google page can be customized. You can choose what features you want to display, such as weather data and headlines. You can register with Google to save this information. (In my experience, leaving your browser's cookies for Google intact will retain the iGoogle settings without registration.)

The Google Calendar can import data from iCal calendars. Calendars can be accessed anywhere from any browser and they can be shared with other users if desired. Online collaboration can also be accomplished using Google Docs. Options include spreadsheets, forms, and presentations. Orkut is Google's attempt at social networking.

The Knol section of Google is the place where users submit their articles to share their knowledge on areas of expertise.

Picasa is in beta for Macs. It is a place to edit, organize and share photos. Google SketchUp allows you to create attractive 3D models using the online application. Tom Bank II pointed us to a web page where some of his professional SketchUp work was displayed.

Google's Translate service lets you view web pages in many different languages. Google now owns YouTube where countless videos of all kinds have been posted by users. Google Labs is the area where Google is trying out new features. Another interesting feature from Google is Goog-411. Dial 1-800-GOOG-411 from any phone and give your location to get information on whatever local business you are searching for and Google will give you its choices and then connect you by calling that business for you.

Google has a multitude of other areas that can be helpful to you. Linda only showed us what time allowed. Take the time to explore the other areas and you may discover something that is invaluable to you. If so, let us know about it. Thanks, Linda, for starting us down that path. ♲

by Oliver Habicht

Photo Safe II Offers
Worry Free Travel Backups

Recently my family took a three-week vacation overseas, and having left my computer at home (hey, it was a family vacation!), I needed a convenient way to store all the photos and videos that we were taking. Adam had written about this topic a few months ago (see "Backing up Photos While Traveling", 2008-08-11 and "More Photo Backup Options While Traveling", 2008-08-12) and since he had received a Digital Foci Photo Safe II for review after those articles appeared, he asked me to give it a real-world test.

The Photo Safe II is a lightweight (0.6 lb / 272 g) portable photo storage device and memory card reader, and it proved a welcome traveling companion. With it, I was able to back up all our photos and videos as the trip progressed, copying them from our camera's memory card every few days. I even had enough storage space to back up all the photos taken by the relatives who were traveling with us. And, although I didn't use it to add data in this way, it can also work as a normal USB external hard disk (that's how you move data from it to your Mac).

The Photo Safe II offers nearly foolproof backups. This is due to a variety of features, and assisted by the excellent Quick Start Guide which provides well written instructions, useful diagrams, and anticipates many user questions. Perhaps the most important of its features is that you can only delete photos from the device when it's connected to a computer, effectively eliminating the risk of accidentally wiping out your entire trip's pictures with the push of a button.

Further lessening that risk is the fact the Photo Safe II has only two buttons. One turns it on or off when held down, or, when pressed and released, toggles between pre-selecting the copy and delete functions. The second button then

Photo Safe II Offers
Worry Free Travel Backups

executes either copying (all) files from memory card to the device, or deleting (all) files from the memory card. The latter action is somewhat safeguarded by requiring you to hold down the button for three seconds. And again, once photos are loaded onto the Photo Safe II, there's no way to delete them using only the device's controls.

Complicating things just a bit is the fact that the two buttons offer a few other context-dependent functions. These include recalculating the available space and displaying information (the number of files copying and the target folder number) following a copy. The former is clearly displayed, making it easy to know just how much room you have left. That said, depending on how you're using the Photo Safe II, you may find you don't need to check it often. With the (now-discontinued) 80 GB model, even after I copied several thousand photos and short videos to it, it still had over 56 GB available at the end of my trip. Of course, if you're also using the device as an external hard disk, a more capacious model might be required.

It's important to realize that each time you ask the Photo Safe II to copy a memory card, it does a complete copy of the card and puts the data in a completely new, top-level, sequentially numbered directory, prefaced with the card type. Also important to realize is that the copy action copies everything, not just photos and videos, but all directory structures as well.

If you have one memory card, and you choose to make backups during your trip without deleting files from the card, the last file copy will contain the entire contents of your card. You can then ignore all the previous copies.

However, if you're copying more than one memory card of the same type, you need to compare the contents of the device's sequentially numbered folders to make sure you get the correct data (since they'll all have similar folder names). Apparently it's possible to pre-create partitions on the device's hard drive, thus permitting you to separate the data coming from different cards of the same type, though I didn't try this.

However, I did successfully use the Photo Safe II with a wide variety of point-and-shoot and SLR cameras that utilized the following memory cards: SD (normal and HC), Sony Memory Stick Pro MagicGate (High-speed), xD, and Compact Flash. The Photo Safe II also has slots for many other types, such as CF Type I (including Sandisk Extreme III, IV), MMC, SD/HC, miniSD, MS, MS PRO, MS Duo, MS PRO Duo, and xD.

During the trip, I connected the Photo Safe II to a PC running Windows Vista (someone else's, of course) and it performed admirably as an external hard drive. In fact, I even took the opportunity to make a full copy of all our card copies to create yet one more backup of everyone's photos and videos!

The Photo Safe II can also copy data from MS/SD/MMC/xD memory cards to a Compact Flash card. This would allow the risk-averse to create yet another level of backup. One could perhaps then mail full Compact Flash cards back home, or simply have enough peace of mind to delete the photos on the camera's primary memory card.

The Photo Safe II can be powered with its included re-chargeable battery, via the included AC adapter (sporting a small and lightweight wall plug that's compatible with 100 to 250 volt power mains), or via USB. Additionally, both the AC adapter and USB can be used to recharge the battery within the unit, something that's lacking in most cameras (sorry, just a pet peeve there). Included in the package is an unusual forked USB cable. One end has a mini-USB connector for connecting to the Photo Safe II, and the other end has a both normal USB connector for transferring data to a computer, and a second USB connector for delivery of even more power to the device, presumably to speed charging. Ingenious!

After a lengthy opportunity to explore the Photo Safe II, I'm left with only a handful of quibbles: When the device was connected to my Mac, I couldn't see the data within the inserted memory cards, only the data on the device's hard drive itself. However, according to the documentation, it's supposed to function as a memory card reader.

Also, when powered by AC, I couldn't get it to recognize the memory card. I had to pull the AC, turn it on with battery power, insert the memory card which would be recognized, and only then could I plug the AC in again and be fine thereafter.

Finally, and perhaps this was just an anomaly, at one point the device's power indicator showed a single flashing bar when I was using just the battery, indicating a low battery. When I turned it off, and then back on, it indicated a full charge for quite some time.

Despite these minor quirks or aberrations, I highly recommend the Photo Safe II as the worry free means of backing up on the go. The Photo Safe II is currently available in 160 GB ($149), and 250 GB ($199) models, and can be purchased from Digital Foci's Web site.

[Oliver B. Habicht is an IT director in the Cornell University Library. He's still looking for a tiny and quick point-and-shoot digital camera that can charge via USB.]

by Jeff Carlson

10 Secrets of iMovie '09

I'm one of those people who thought iMovie '08 was pretty much okay. It advanced consumer video editing on the Mac in several ways, such as having live transitions and effects that don't require re-rendering clips and putting your entire video library at your fingers without opening old projects.

But iMovie '08, having been written from scratch as a new application, was sparse in many areas, especially compared to its predecessor, iMovie HD 6. The good news is that iMovie '09 restores most of iMovie HD's features. (Read my Macworld review of iMovie '09 for more.) The better news is that iMovie '09 boasts a lot of other new features and hidden secrets that aren't immediately apparent.

I'm hard at work on my book iMovie '09 and iDVD for Mac OS X: Visual QuickStart Guide (click this link to pre-order it now and help support TidBITS), and am enjoying discovering many of iMovie's hidden tips and features. Here are 10 things I've discovered that aren't entirely obvious.

Double-click Clip to View Inspector — iMovie '09 now collects its adjustment controls in a new Inspector heads-up-display, instead of providing separate floating panels for video and audio adjustments. You can select a clip and click the "i" icon in the toolbar, or choose an option from the new Action menu that appears on every clip, but it's easier to double-click the clip to bring up the Inspector. (If you prefer iMovie '08's behavior of double-clicking a clip to play it, you can change the action in iMovie's preferences.)


iMovie's adjustment controls can also be invoked from the keyboard by pressing the following letters (with no modifier key): I for Clip adjustments; V for Video adjustments; A for Audio adjustments; and C for Cropping, Ken Burns and Rotation adjustments.

View Your Movie on a Secondary Display — iMovie's monitor occupies the top-right corner of the program's interface, and it can be resized by choosing one of the following sizes from the Window > Viewer submenu: Small (Command-8), Medium (Command-9), or Large (Command-0). That feature isn't new, although the keystrokes have changed from iMovie '08.

What's cool about iMovie '09 is that if you work with multiple displays, iMovie can use one of them as the monitor to play back your movie. Choose Window > Viewer on Secondary Display. (If you don't see the menu item, make sure Show Advanced Tools is enabled in iMovie's preferences.) This feature not only gives you a larger preview - it scales to fit the screen - but it removes the monitor from the iMovie interface, giving you more horizontal room for editing your project.

Copy and Paste Adjustments — One of iMovie '09's new features is the return of video effects. With a clip selected, bring up the Inspector and click the Video Effect button to view the effects iMovie offers. Now, let's suppose that you also apply some other edits to the clip: increasing the exposure, muting the audio, applying image stabilization, changing its speed, etc. Quite a lot can happen to one clip, as you can see. If the following clip (or other clips) come from the same scene, you'd have to reapply all of those adjustments to make them match up.
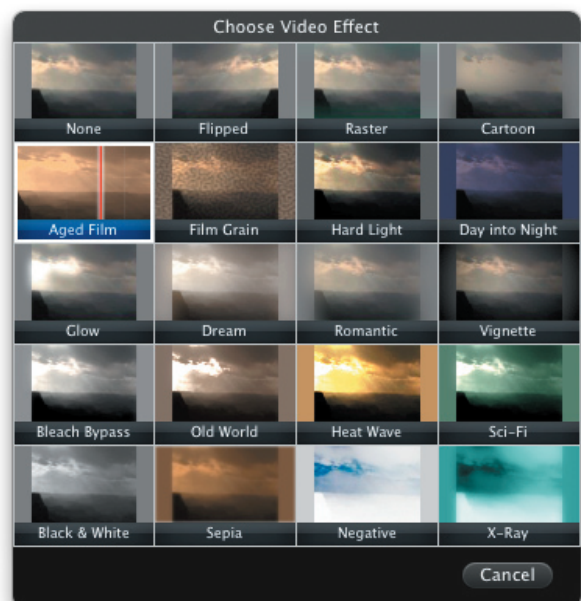
10 Secrets of iMovie '09

Instead, Apple expanded on a powerful feature that deserves attention. With the adjusted clip selected, choose Edit > Copy or press Command-C; all of the adjustments are copied. Then, choose one or more clips and choose which edits to apply from the Edit > Paste Adjustments submenu, either all at once or piecemeal. iMovie '08 could paste only video, audio, or crop adjustments. This version also adds cutaway edits, video effects, stabilization, speed, and map style adjustments.
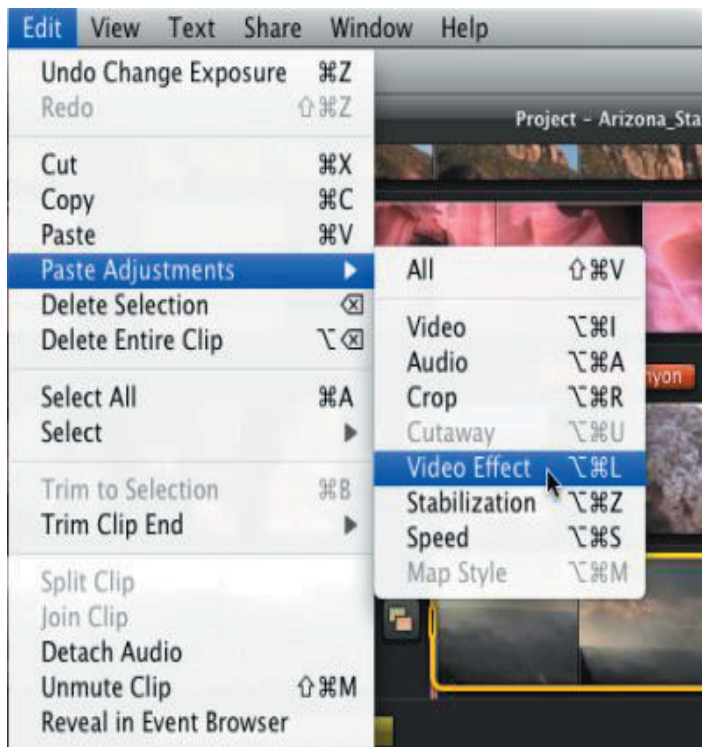

Move Projects and Events to Other Drives — In iMovie '08, events (the folders in which raw footage was stored on the hard disk) could be kept on your computer's startup disk or on external disks, but your movie projects had to be located on the startup disk. iMovie '09 lets you choose where projects are stored, too.

You can also move projects from drive to drive, such as you might want to do if your startup disk runs low on space. Relocating event files in iMovie '08 required that you move the applicable projects in the Finder. Now, drag a project or event to another drive's icon in either the Project Library or the Event Library to copy the content. In the case of relocating project files, you're given the option of copying just the project file or the file and its associated event footage, too. (Here's a video example.) To move the files instead of copy them, hold the Command key while you drag.

Choose Which Clips Appear in Theme Transitions — iMovie '09 offers new themes that add motion graphics

to your clips, specifically to your movie's opening and closing scenes and some transitions. Some themes transition between two clips by, for example, focusing on one clip "mounted" to a bulletin board, zooming out, and then zooming in on the next clip. Other transitions have several clips on the bulletin board.

You can choose which clips appear in which frames. Click one of the theme transitions to view a zoomed-out image that displays all of the available drop zones. A set of numbered yellow pins appears on your footage, each representing one of the drop zones. Drag the pins to the areas of your movie you want to appear in the other photos. (Here's a video example.)
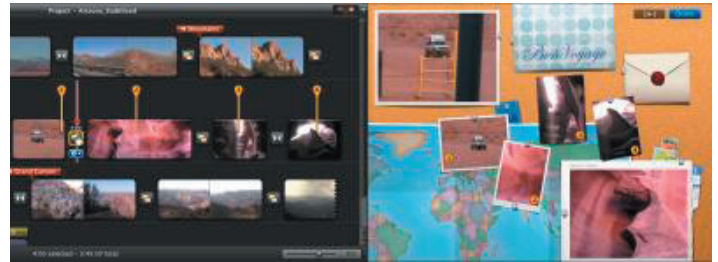
Consistent Map Styles in Themes — Speaking of themes, the Bulletin Board theme includes a map tacked onto the background of the board. If you already have a map in your project, or you add a new map, the map style on the board automatically assumes the same style from the project for consistency.

Add Locations to Travel Maps — iMovie includes an internal database of 4,000 cities, airports, and other locations for use when adding markers to its interactive maps. That's a good start, but what if you want a location that isn't included? With a little work, you can add it to iMovie's database. (Credit for this tip goes to user markstew on Apple's iMovie discussion forums.)

First, find the latitude and longitude coordinates of your destination using a service such as iTouchMap.com. Next, make sure iMovie is not running and open the application's package: Control-click on the iMovie application icon and choose Show Package Contents from the contextual menu. (iMovie, like many applications, is a Mac OS X "package," a folder that appears normally as a single file.)

Go to Contents/Resources/ and open the file WorldLocations.txt using a text editor. Copy an existing entry similar to the one you're about to add; for example, find a city in your state or country. Paste that at the end of the list, and change the city name. Then, copy the coordinates you looked up on the Web and paste them in place of the coordinates in your custom line.

Save the file, close the folders, and launch iMovie. When you add a map and perform a search, your new location appears in the list.

The Date/Time Title — When you add this title style to a clip, the clip's actual date and title appear. Only the start

time is displayed - it won't keep a running clock on your footage - and you can't edit the text style. But if you need a quick notation of when the clip was shot, this title can save you some work.
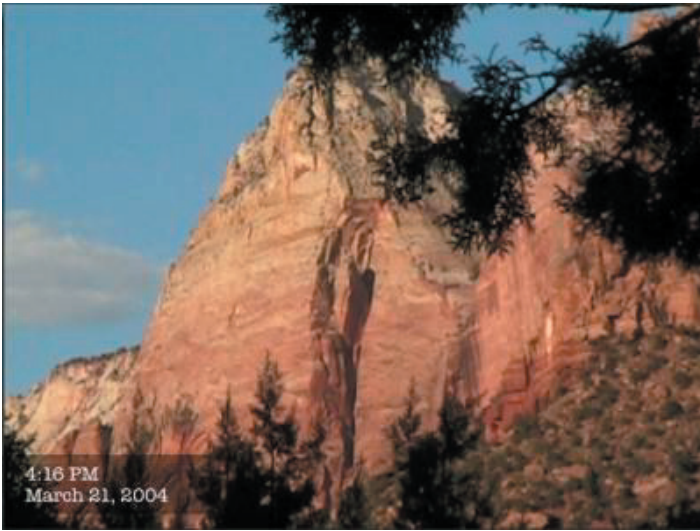
View Photos from Same Time Period — If you're like me, you capture not only video during a trip or other occasion, but also a lot of still photos. iMovie '09 makes it easier to find the photos you shot at the same time.

Select an event in the Event Library and then click the Photos button on the toolbar. At the bottom of the Photos pane is a new Show Photos pop-up menu; click its checkbox and then choose a time frame (Within Event Date Range, or Within 1 Day/Week/Month of Event).
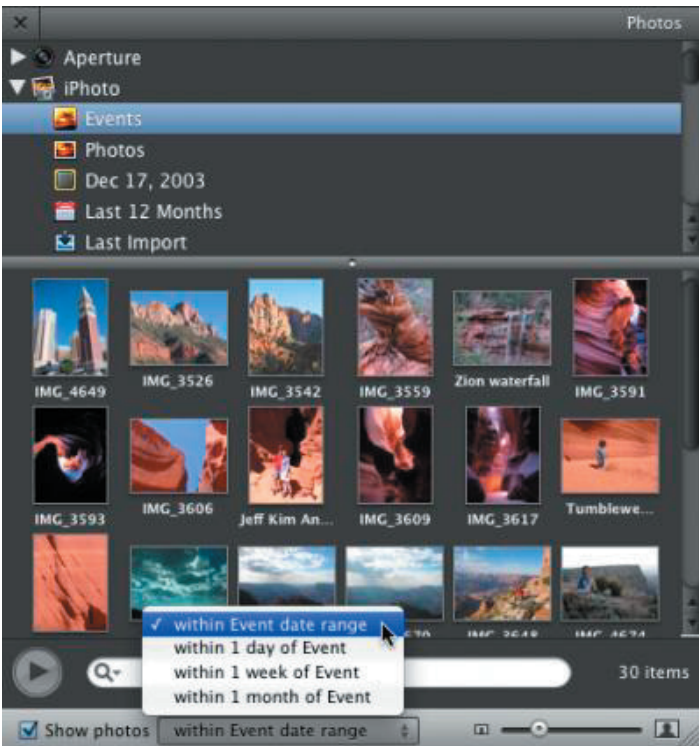
Adjust the Opacity of a Cutaway — With the advanced tools enabled (an option in iMovie's preferences that unlocks a lot of features), you can drag one clip on top of another and create a cutaway - the new clip is superimposed on top of the existing one. When you bring up the Inspector on the cutaway clip, a new Opacity slider lets you adjust how transparent the clip appears.

by Tim Sullivan

March
Software Review

Funtastic Photos 1.0.3

http://ohanaware.com/

Requires OS X 10.4 or greater. Universal Binary. $34.99

Funtastic Photos offers over 40 different 1-click effects that can be applied to your photos, turning them into works of art. If that's not enough, go to the VIEW menu and pick ADVANCE OPTIONS. They will appear in a panel on the right side of the window. Check the various boxes to tweak your masterpiece.

There is available a range of inspiring layout designs, including amazing picture collages (or photo mosaics to some), photo cubes, mini Fun Books and simple greetings cards.

The built-in Photo Sharing makes it easy to quickly edit a photo and share it online using e-mail, Fun Cards (like the old Apple iCards), and upload directly to the most popular photo sharing sites such as Facebook, Picasa Web Albums, MobileMe & Flickr. Sharing photos is as simple as clicking a button on the toolbar!

The original image with Advanced Options opened.
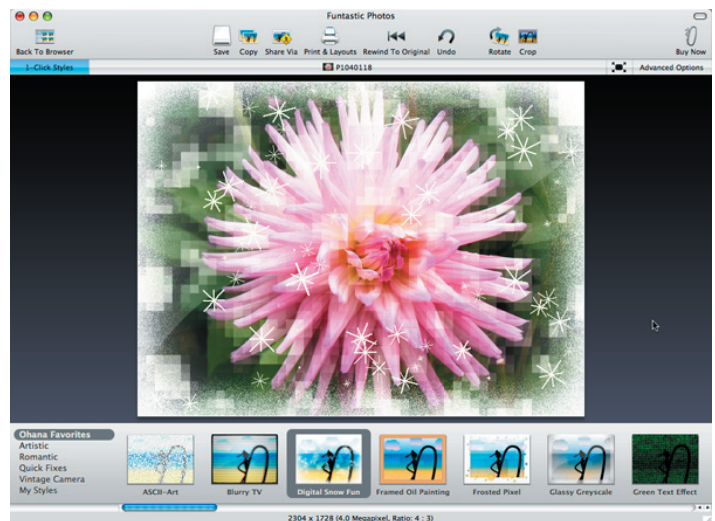
Ohana Favorites / Digital Snow Fun
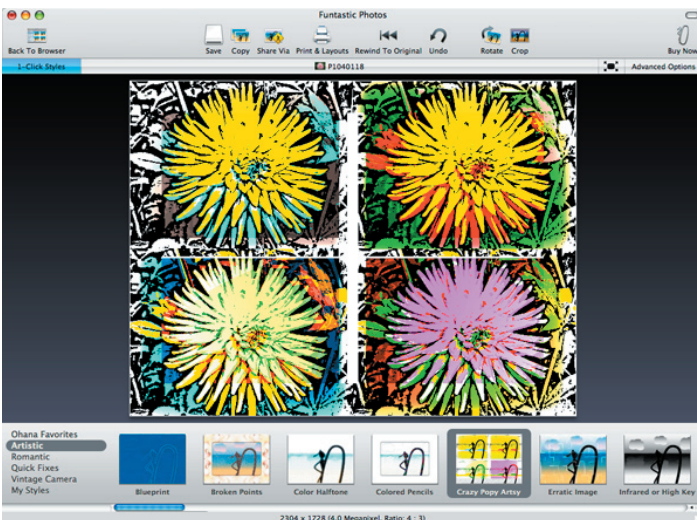
Artistic / Crazy Popy Arts

Romantic / Ink on Plastic

Quick Fixes / Attempt It All

Vintage Camera / 1880s Sepia

Apple Updates

MacBook SMC Update 1.3
February 17, 2009 - 557KB

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.5.6

This SMC Firmware Update improves overall system stability and performance on MacBook computers.

Java for Mac OS X 10.5 Update 3
February 12, 2009

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.5.6

This release updates the Java Web Start and Java Applet components to address security and compatibility issues.

This release supports all Intel-based and PowerPC-based Macs and requires that Java for Mac OS X 10.5 Update 2 be already installed.

Java for Mac OS X 10.4, Release 8
February 12, 2009

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.5.6

This release updates the Java Web Start and Java Applet components to address security and compatibility issues.

This release supports all Intel-based and PowerPC-based Macs and requires that Java for Mac OS X 10.5 Update 2 be already installed.

Security Update 2009-001 (Leopard).
February 12, 2009

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.5.6 for Leopard

Security Update 2009-001 is recommended for all users and improves the security of Mac OS X.

Previous security updates have been incorporated into this security update.

Security Update 2009-001 (Tiger PPC)
February 12, 2009

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.4.11 Tiger

Security Update 2009-001 is recommended for all users and improves the security of Mac OS X.

Previous security updates have been incorporated into this security update.

Security Update 2009-001 (Tiger Intel)
February 12, 2009

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.4.11 for Tiger

Security Update 2009-001 is recommended for all users and improves the security of Mac OS X.

Previous security updates have been incorporated into this security update.

GarageBand Update
February 4, 2009

System Requirements
 – OS X 10.5.6

This update improves overall stability and addresses specific issues with downloading lessons from the Learn to Play Lesson Store. It is recommended for all GarageBand 09 users.

Pages Update 3.0.3
February 2, 2009

March Software Review

System Requirements
– OS X 10.4.10 or later
– OS X 10.5 or later

This update addresses general compatibility issues

Keynote Update 4.0.4
February 2, 2009
System Requirements
– OS X 10.4.10 or later

– OS X 10.5 or later

This update addresses compatibility issues with Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 and Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2008 as well as general compatibility issues.

Numbers Update 1.0.3
February 2, 2009
System Requirements
– OS X 10.4.10 or later
– OX X 10.5 or later

This update addresses general compatibility issues. ♻

by Tim Sullivan

Rumors and Reality

Around Apple

• The consensus seems to be that iLife '09 is a worthwhile improvement over the '08 version. One of the most touted features is Learn to Play in GarageBand.

Major recording artists like Sting and Fall Out Boy teach how to play their hit songs. Additional lessons can be purchased for $4.99 apiece from a Lesson Store built into GarageBand.

Unfortunately while most of iLife '09 will run on a PPC, Learn to Play is one feature that absolutely requires an Intel.

•June 8 is popping up in the rumor mill as a date to watch. The WWDC (World Wide Developers Conference) hasn't been scheduled yet. However the second week of June has been blocked out at the Moscone Center in San Francisco for a "Corporate meeting."

It also happens that Snow Leopard books are available for pre-order at Amazon.com and are scheduled for release in mid-June.

Those bits of information together with a lot of speculation has Steve Jobs returning (a little early) to introduce Snow Leopard and possibly some serious upgrades to the iPhone hardware and/or software.

As Sgt Schultz would say, "Verrry interesting."

• While we are on the subject of Snow Leopard, some probable features (most of which can be toggled on or off):

– The automatic spell check will actually correct misspelling on the fly — "teh" will be replaced by "the.)

– Snow Leopard will incorporate "TypeIt4Me" functionality. Users create a list of character strings that are to be replaced with a substitution. For instance " tm " would be replaced by ™; "OS 6" could be replaced by "Snow Leopard."

– Another feature will be Data Detectors. For instance, when the system detects some text that appears to be a phone number or an address, it will offer to update the Address Book.

Turn-about: The music industry is beginning to seriously consider the possibilities of free downloads. Actually there would be a cost to the consumer, either by purchasing a new cell phone or in the Internet access contract. It is assumed that the consumers, by paying upfront, will be more willing to download music from legitimate sites.

The shift to this new way of thinking is taking hold overseas. As an example Nokia has introduced Comes With Music, a plan the comes with specific Nokia phones. Subscribers can download as much music as they want from a five million track catalog.

The Isle of Man is planning to require broadband users to pay a monthly fee that would allow users to legally download music from any source, even peer-to-peer services that are outlawed currently.

This is not to say that piracy is being endorsed. Countries such as France and Britain are considering legislation to curb piracy.

Internet traffic is increasing. Since there is a finite amount of bandwidth, transmission speeds suffer.

Last year Comcast assigned file sharing a low priority in transferring data. They abandoned that procedure by the end of the year, especially after being sanctioned by the FCC. While they have given up that system, they are now using one that doesn't discriminate between different types of traffic.

This year, Cox Communications is testing their own version of network protocols in Kansas and Arkansas. Higher

priority will be assigned to Internet traffic it judges to be time-sensitive, like Web pages, streaming video and online games. File downloads, software updates and other non-time sensitive data will be given low priority if there is congestion on the local network.

If you think keeping records for the annual IRS bare-your-financial-records fete is a pain, just wait until you see bills .436 in the Senate and H.R.1076 in the House. Each of the companion bills is titled "Internet Stopping Adults Facilitating the Exploitation of Today's Youth Act," or Internet Safety Act.

If passed the law would require providers to keep records for two years to aid police investigations. The law would apply to all Internet providers and operators of millions of Wi-Fi spots.

Both bills state that "A provider of an electronic communication service or remote computing service shall retain for a period of at least two years all records or other information pertaining to the identity of a user of a temporarily assigned network address the service assigns to that user."

Translated, the Internet Safety Act applies not only to major providers such as Comcast, but also to all homes with Wi-Fi access points or wired routers that use the standard method of dynamically assigning temporary addresses. (That method is called Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol, or DHCP.) The other method is PPPoE (Point-to-Point Protocol over Ethernet.)

Airwaves are not free. The U.S. government charges many telephone and wireless companies for use of the airwaves targeting mobile phone (read iPhone) and device users. This year that charge amounts to $50 million. The Office of Management and Budget wants $200 million f;or 2010, with further escalation over the next decade. Much, if not all, of the cost will be passed on to the end user. ♻

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