

A Talk With Bob "Dr. Mac" LeVitus

This month we will visit Bob LeVitus at his home via Skype.

Bob LeVitus, often referred to as "Dr. Mac," has been writing about Apple technology for over twenty-five years. He's written or co-written more than 80 popular computer books, with millions of copies sold worldwide in half a dozen languages. His recent titles include: macOS Sierra For Dummies, iPhone For Dummies, and iPad For Dummies all for Wiley Publishing.

For the past 20 years Bob has been the Apple technology columnist for the Houston Chronicle, and he's been a columnist for the Mac Observer for as long as he can remember.

Most recently, Bob is the solopreneur creator and proprietor of http://www.workingsmarterformacusers.com.

At Working Smarter for Mac Users our mission is to show Mac users how to:

- · Use your Mac better, faster, and more elegantly.
- · Banish procrastination forever.
- · Do more work in less time so you have more time for things you love.

In this presentation I'll read selections from my new eBook, Working Smarter for Mac Users, demonstrate a couple of techniques from the book, and answer questions. I'll also provide two copies of Working Smarter for Mac Users for your group to use as door or raffle prizes.

Bob "Dr. Mac" LeVitus is

- Technology columnist for The Houston Chronicle and The Mac Observer
- Author of more than 80 books including iPhone For Dummies and macOS Sierra For Dummies
- Author and publisher of Working Smarter for Mac Users 🗗

Meet us at

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Tuesday, May 16th 2017 6:30 p.m.

Attendance is free and open to all interested persons.

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A Prairie HomeKit Companion: Fine Tuning with the Other "Home" App

If you're this far into "A Prairie HomeKit Companion," your HomeKit setup should be up and running, and you should have a full grasp of how to use Apple's Home app. But Home isn't the only game in town when it comes to HomeKit apps.

Before Home debuted in iOS 10, Apple relied on third-party developers to create graphical front-ends for HomeKit, so there are several in the App Store. **Elgato's free Eve app** is lovely, but my power tool of choice is **Matthias Hochgatterer's Home app**. Yes, Apple stole the name, so you have Apple's Home app and Hochgatterer's Home app, both used to control your home with HomeKit for home automation. Got it? Good. (Couldn't **we call them all Bruce**?)

You might balk at Home's \$14.99 price tag, which makes it by far the most expensive HomeKit app on the App Store. But the power and control it offers make it well worth the cost. If Apple's Home app is a butter knife, Elgato's app is a beautiful Wüsthof paring knife, and Hochgatterer's Home app is a Swiss Army knife.

Hochgatterer's Home app can be used as a full replacement for Apple's Home app, if you wish. It can control individual Accessories, create and activate Scenes, and manage Automations. While you can't access it from within Control Center, it does offer widgets and an Apple Watch app. It can also work remotely if you have a HomeKit hub (see "A **Prairie HomeKit Companion: Automating Your Home**," 10 February 2017). Since it works via HomeKit, any changes you make to your HomeKit setup in Hochgatterer's Home app also appear in Apple's Home app and vice-versa (which gets you Control Center integration). I tend to use Apple's Home app for most HomeKit work, and supplement it with Hochgatterer's Home app for fine tuning. Here are a few ways I use it.

First, Hochgatterer's Home app offers information about your Accessories that you can't find elsewhere. Take my Elgato Eve Room sensor, for instance. Both Apple's and Elgato's apps show just three bits of info from it: temperature, humidity, and air quality. But when I choose it from the Home screen in Hochgatterer's Home app, it gives me another reading: battery level. With Apple's Home app, I'd start receiving error messages when the Room's batteries were low. With Hochgatterer's Home, I can keep an eye on the battery level and know when it's time to change it.



Second, it provides actual data. Apple's Home app will tell you if your air quality is Excellent or Poor, but won't offer any other details. In the Services screen of Hochgatterer's Home app, I can choose the Eve Room's air quality service and see the exact measurement of volatile organic compound particulates in parts per million.

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Those are both nerdy niche uses, at which the app excels. But one use everyone will find handy is fine tuning colors for the Philips Hue bulbs.

Here's a problem you might encounter if you use the Hue or a similar smart bulb system: you walk into a room and something just looks... wrong. If two bulbs have drastically different settings, it's easy to see what the problem is, and it can even sometimes be aesthetically pleasing if intentional. But if your bulbs are just slightly different, it can be maddening. Hochgatterer's Home app can fix that. I hit this recently.

When I went into the Scenes screen and chose my Good Morning scene, I saw that my two living room lamps didn't have identical settings. Both were set to 40 percent brightness, but the saturation and hue numbers were different.

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Thanks to Hochgatterer's Home app, I was able not just to see the numeric discrepancies, but also to change one bulb's settings so it matched the other. Now when I enable that Scene, both lights are identical, eliminating that uncomfortable wrongness. Since Hochgatterer's Home app links with HomeKit, those settings carry over to Apple's Home app, so you don't have to open Hochgatterer's Home to use those Scene settings.

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Here are a few other capabilities of Hochgatterer's Home app that Apple's lacks:

• It can create and work with Zones. As you may remember from "A Prairie HomeKit Companion: Core Concepts" (3 November 2016), Zones are an element of the HomeKit hierarchy not included in Apple's Home app. So with Hochgatterer's Home app, you can make and interact with Zones such as "downstairs" or "outside lights."

• Control Center can show only nine Accessories and nine Scenes at a time, but the widgets included with Hochgatterer's Home app can display many more. It includes different widgets for Groups, Scenes, and Services, so you can better customize what's shown.

These are just a few examples of the power of Hochgatterer's Home app, but those uses alone justified the \$14.99 purchase price for me, particularly in the grand scheme of my overall setup. It will probably end up being the least expensive item in your home automation system. Now that Apple provides its own Home app, Hochgatterer's Home is no longer essential, but it remains compelling if you want the level of control it offers.

by Josh Centers

Verizon to Drop Email Service

If Verizon is your ISP, and you use a verizon.net email address, we have some bad news: Verizon has announced that it's shutting down its email business. This move may affect more than 1100 TidBITS and Take Control readers. (Joe Kissell addressed a number of the issues raised by Verizon's move in "FlippedBITS: Misconceptions about Changing Email Addresses," 4 March 2014.) Verizon hasn't specified exactly when the shutdown will happen, but the good news is that you will be able to keep your verizon.net email address.

Now for some potentially bad news: if you decide to keep your Verizon email address, you'll have to use it with the free AOL Mail service. Verizon purchased AOL in 2015 in what was thought to be strictly a content play, but now it looks as though Verizon had some other ideas in mind as well (see "Verizon to Buy AOL," 12 May 2015). The upside if this approach is that Verizon will transfer your email messages, contacts, and calendars automatically.

If you decide to switch to another email host, you'll have until the shutdown date to migrate your email and other data to your new address. Verizon says that when you log into **webmail.verizon.com**, you should see an "Email service notice" with further information and instructions. Verizon also says that it will post the shutdown date there.

I recommend transferring your existing verizon.net email address to AOL Mail, even if you don't plan to use it. That way, even if you switch providers, you can still have AOL Mail forward any stray messages to your new address. There are a couple of ways to do this: **Techwalla explains** how to set up forwarding from AOL, while the **Houston Chronicle describes** a method that takes advantage of Gmail's POP3 import to download mail directly from AOL. This latter method should also work with most other email providers.

If you're shopping for a new email service, we can offer a few suggestions. Google's Gmail is an obvious choice, and it's TidBITS publisher Adam Engst's preference. Gmail is free and offers innovative features, but it's designed to be used via its Web interface or native iOS apps. Or, you can be like Adam and use Mailplane, which wraps the Gmail Web interface in a native Mac app (see "Zen and the Art of Gmail, Part 4: Mailplane," 16 March 2011). If you want to access Gmail via Apple Mail or another standard IMAP client, you may run into usage quirks, since Google bolted on Gmail's IMAP support afterward.

Apple's iCloud email is another obvious choice, though it's not as feature-rich as Gmail. Plus, if storing your mail in iCloud pushes you over the 5 GB of storage space that you get for free, you'll need to pay Apple for more. However, iCloud email is second to none in terms of integration with Apple devices and can be used on other platforms. Our own Michael Cohen has been using it as his primary email account since the days of iTools.

Several other TidBITS contributors and I use FastMail, which is a paid service, but it works well with Apple Mail, offers excellent customer support, and lets you use your own domain name. FastMail is the only non-Apple email provider I'm aware of that offers IMAP push email on iOS. FastMail's spam filtering isn't as good as Gmail's, but I've found that C-Command Software's SpamSieve does a fantastic job. (TidBITS members receive a 20 percent discount on SpamSieve.)

The painful part of any email migration is moving existing messages from your old account to the new one. **Gmail** and FastMail both offer instructions on how to do this. You can also use Apple Mail to transfer mail between accounts manually by copying messages from a mailbox in one IMAP account to another mailbox in a different IMAP account. We've found that such transfers usually work fine for a relatively small number of messages, but trying to do a complete migration that way may require a lot of babysitting, restarting, and verification work.

Email is a complex topic, so if you have questions that you'd like us to cover more in-depth in future articles, let us know in the comments!

by Adam C. Engst

Colonel Mustard in the Library with the Shift Key

I love a good mystery... as long as it has a solution. The case of the Library's changing modifier key had me stumped for a while, but thankfully, our buddy Rob Griffiths figured it out.

Starting with OS X 10.7 Lion, Apple hid the home folder's Library folder (~/Library) to prevent users from meddling in it and causing trouble (see "Dealing with Lion's Hidden Library," 20 July 2011). We'll ignore for the moment the question of whether this was a good move. To access that folder, you had to hold down the Option key and choose Go > Library in the Finder. If you were sufficiently irritated by having to do this, as many of us were, there was a Terminal command you could run to reveal the ~/Library folder within Finder windows permanently.

(Remember, there are multiple Library folders in macOS; ~/Library is the one in your home folder. Oddly, Apple leaves /Library and /System/Library visible, even though users should never mess around in them.)

In OS X 10.11 El Capitan, Apple pulled back a bit on pretending that we users weren't capable enough to work in ~/Library, adding a Show Library Folder checkbox in the View Options window for the home folder. That checkbox appears only when your home folder is displayed in the frontmost Finder window, and if you're in column view, you might need to select a folder inside the home folder. When that checkbox is selected, ~/Library appears in Finder windows, but Library does not appear in the Go menu unless you hold the Option key down too. In macOS 10.12 Sierra, Apple made it so that checkbox adds Library to the Go menu too, and in 10.12.3, also added a keyboard shortcut — Command-Shift-L.



However, Sierra is also where things started to get funky. For many people, including me, the old Option key trick stopped working in Sierra. That wasn't a problem for me because I had permanently revealed my ~/Library folder long ago and seldom used the Finder's Go menu. But I did notice that Option had stopped showing the Library menu item, and when Kirk McElhearn wrote a blog post about how the key had changed to Shift in one of Sierra's minor updates, I was pleased to discover that, indeed, the Shift key now worked to show the Library folder in the Finder's Go menu.

I didn't explore further because Kirk's solution worked fine for me, and it solved Tonya's confusion over the loss of the Option key trick as well. Thinking I was sharing a neat little trick, I mentioned it briefly in an email message to Take Control readers. Little did I realize the can of worms I was opening.

Several people replied to say that Shift did not work for them, and Option still did. Lauri Reinhardt, who does support for Take Control, tested before passing those messages on to me. She found that, while the Shift key worked initially, after she toggled the Show Library Folder checkbox in the View Options window, Shift stopped adding Library to the Go menu, and Option started working again. Nothing she could do would make the Shift key work anymore. I confirmed that Shift still worked on both my iMac and my MacBook Air, toggled the checkbox on my iMac, and found exactly what Lauri had. A new test account showed that Option really was still the right key, but why had it been Shift for a while? Madness! I was stumped, so I tracked backward from Kirk's post to Michael Tsai's initial Twitter thread and then followed a link to a **post by Rob Griffiths** that explained the situation.

Rob's discovery was that relaunching the Finder (Control-Option-click its Dock icon and choose Relaunch) puts the Finder in a weird state where the Shift key takes over from the Option key. I was able to reproduce that as well. Doubly weird — this state persists across restarts! It's a bug, and Rob reported it, so we hope Apple will fix it in a future macOS update.

My suspicion is that this weird Finder state, which may date back to the Sierra betas, can be triggered in ways other than relaunching the Finder. Quitting or force-quitting the Finder from within Activity Monitor doesn't seem to do it, but I can imagine other scenarios that might leave the Finder in an unusual state — a kernel panic, for instance, or a loss of power to the Mac. Over years of usage, it's easy to see something like this happening to many people.

Regardless, the practical upshot of this minor mystery is as follows:

• Sierra Power Users: If you're running Sierra and you want ~/Library to be visible in Finder windows and in the Go menu, select your home folder, choose View > Show View Options, and select Show Library Folder.

• Regular Sierra Users: If you don't mind getting to ~/ Library via the Go menu in Sierra, open the Go menu and press the Option key to reveal the Library menu item. If the Option key doesn't work, use the instructions in the previous bullet to show and then hide the Library, after which Option should work.

• OS X Users: Those using 10.7 Lion through 10.11 El Capitan should either use Option with the Finder's Go menu or enter this Terminal command to make ~/Library show up in Finder windows permanently. chflags nohidden ~/Library/

Finally, why might you want to work in ~/Library? Lots of reasons, but in 2012, Ted Landau wrote an article for Mac Observer about **the top six reasons to visit the Library folder**. It's old but remains essentially correct. Still, as Ted says, don't mess around with files in ~/Library if you don't know what you're doing — you can cause real problems. Always make sure you have a backup first!

by Jeff Carlson

Photo Editing as One with Luminar

Back when most photographers used Adobe Photoshop to edit their images, many developers created plug-ins or stand-alone apps to focus on specific tasks. For example, Nik Software's Silver Efex **Pro** plug-in specialized in creating black-and-white images,

as did Macphun's **Tonality** application. Whether you wanted more control over removing digital noise or applying lots of pre-made effects, there was usually a separate tool that you could purchase. Recently, though, photo editing is shifting back to allin-one tools. Google purchased Nik Software and has been working its technology into **Snapseed** and **Google Photos** (though the **Nik tools** are still available for free; see "**Google Gives Away Its Nik Collection Photo-editing Apps**," 31 March 2016). And Macphun has released a new application, Luminar, that takes the technologies from its solo applications and combines them into one master tool. (Tonality and the other utilities remain for sale separately or bundled together as Macphun's **Creative Kit**.)

Luminar is a bold bet intended to compete against Photoshop — still the biggest gorilla in the jungle for professionals and enthusiasts — while also beckoning those who haven't yet moved on from Apple's long-discontinued Aperture. Luminar is also trying to appeal to casual photographers who want more image editing capabilities than provided by Apple's Photos. Plus, with its \$69 price, Luminar hopes to appeal to the folks who don't want to pay Adobe's monthly or yearly subscription fee to use Photoshop.

Before we get into the details, though, indulge me in one quick declaration about its core capabilities: Luminar is more than capable as an image editor — it has all the adjustment controls for manipulating tone and color that you'd expect. Trying to cover them all in this article would bore us both. In my testing, none of Luminar's edits were inconsistent with what you'd see when editing in other applications. The tools are all there; it's what you do with them that makes a difference. If you want to compare features with Aperture, Lightroom, and Creative Kit, Macphun has created a handy chart.



What's most interesting about Luminar is its approach to juggling all of those tools. Like other Macphun applications, Luminar prominently features presets for one-click editing. And for the individual tools, Luminar refers to everything as "filters" that exist in "workspaces." Other editing applications also use that terminology, but Luminar's execution sets it apart.

First, a disclaimer: In early 2016 I wrote a short guide for Macphun about its Aurora HDR application, which the company still gives away as part of purchasing bundles. I also contract with Adobe to produce tutorials and other educational materials. **Presets** — I tend to gloss over or outright ignore presets, probably because of how I learned to edit photos in other applications. I prefer digging into the adjustment controls to nudge a photo's appearance so it's closer to what I remember seeing when I captured it, rather than applying a preset that dramatically shifts the look of the image.

Some of Luminar's 60 presets help with the kind of nudging I like. Image Enhancer, for instance, acts as a general makeit-better button, while Sky Enhancer and Detailed address specific goals or fixes (pulling drama out of bland upper areas and sharpening soft images, respectively).



However, it's increasingly common for photographers to want to apply stylized looks to photos. I often see Instagram photographers who have developed a signature look for all of their shots. The idea isn't necessarily to reflect what was captured, but instead to evoke a mood, like adding a tinge of earth tones to every shot. Each of Luminar's preset displays a preview of your image with the effect applied, so you get a sense of how it will affect the photo before you make a choice.



Applying a Luminar preset saves a lot of time adjusting the same settings for each image. The app's six categories of presets — Basic, Street, Outdoor, Portrait, Travel, and Dramatic — are fine starting points, but it's better to create your own based on your editing preferences. It's easy to make new presets, share them with other Luminar users, and install presets others have created.

Editing with Filters – One of the things I like about Luminar is that it's relentlessly non-destructive. When editing photos, you don't want to actually change the pixels in the original image, something older software did and many of Photoshop's legacy controls still do. Non-destructive editing makes it easy both to revert to the original and start over and to change different aspects of what you've edited to that point. For example, if you increase the color temperature and then later increase the saturation, the photo could end up too warm. You can go back and lower the color temperature to balance the warmth while maintaining the saturated colors you want.

Luminar enables this flexibility by making nearly every adjustment a filter, from basic controls such as Tone to specialized ones like Adjustable Gradient, which manipulates several types of edits — exposure, contrast, vibrancy, and warmth — in the top and bottom areas of the frame. To use a particular editing effect, add a filter; the interface even explains what each effect does. You can also read more detail about each filter in Macphun's documentation.



This approach isn't unique; Lightroom has editing panels whose adjustments can be turned on and off, and Photos includes more adjustments than most people realize because they're not initially visible in the Adjustments panel. Luminar takes the concept further by making almost everything a filter.

That leads to some interesting options. You can duplicate each filter, enabling you to stack multiple instances of an effect, or perhaps colorize two instances of the same effect with different hues. Filters can also have their own blend modes, something typically available only to layers. A blend mode applies the filter's effect to a certain range of colors or tones. For example, the Multiply blend mode removes white from the scene, darkening it dramatically without having to adjust the exposure.



One feature I miss is an easy Auto option for calculating the best adjustments to make a photo look good. This isn't due to laziness on my part (though that's sometimes true) but is because I'm curious about how the software thinks an image should look.

In Lightroom, I often click the Auto button in the Basic adjustments panel to establish a starting point for my editing. Sometimes the software overexposes a shot compared to what I'd prefer. I'll then adjust the settings to my liking, or choose Edit > Undo and manually start from scratch.

The closest workaround in Luminar is to choose a preset such as Image Enhancer and work your way up from there. To the app's credit, the Tone filter also includes a Smart Tone slider that performs some of these tasks. Perhaps I just need to retrain myself, but I'd find it helpful to have an Auto button on the Tone filter, or on any filter, for that matter.

Tools and Layers – In addition to the filters, Luminar includes a handful of tools that perform specific actions. The Clone & Stamp tool, the Erase tool (which is like Photoshop's content-aware technology), and the Denoise tool all operate like stand-alone modules, taking over the screen and presenting controls for just those actions.



When you finish making the edit, such as removing an object from a scene using the Erase tool, Luminar adds that edit as a new layer — yet another instance of non-destructive respect for the original image. As with layers in other applications, you can use layers in Luminar to build up effects, isolate edits to specific areas, and more.



When a new layer is created, by a tool or by manually adding one, all of Luminar's filters are available to it. For example, suppose you want to brighten just one area of a photo instead of the entire image. One way to do that would be to create a new adjustment layer (which affects the appearance of the layers below it) and add a filter such as Tone or Exposure. Next, you'd use the Radial Mask tool to drag an oval over the area you wish to highlight and click Invert so the adjustment is applying to the area within the circle. You could then add other filters to change the appearance.



Luminar supports the Touch Bar on the 2016 MacBook Pro. When using the Clone & Stamp tool, for instance, there's a handy brush size slider in the Touch Bar, which is far more convenient than taking a mouse trip to the options bar and changing the size there. (You can also press the bracket keys to make the brush size larger or smaller, a faster method and a standard convention among many similar applications, but that's not obvious to new users.) However, the size slider is not present when using the Brush Mask tool, which would be equally helpful, so it looks as though Touch Bar support isn't yet complete.



Workspaces – The final piece of Luminar's editing experience is its Workspaces feature, which takes advantage

of the modularity of filters to create collections of filters that you use regularly or in specific situations.

Not every photo needs every filter; if you're working on a black-and-white image, why clutter the interface with Hue and Saturation controls? Luminar offers workspaces for four common photo types, each of which includes filters you'd use for such an image: B & W, Landscape, Portrait, and Street. You can also set up Workspaces for convenience, such as by putting your preferred controls at the top of the Filters panel to reduce unnecessary scrolling.



Lightroom Plug-in and Photos Extension – It's worth calling out the fact that Luminar does not attempt to manage your photo library. I normally wouldn't even bring that up, since Luminar is an editing application, but Macphun has said that a future update will add library management, too. If you're accustomed to managing, opening, and editing photos in Lightroom or Photos, it feels almost archaic to edit image files in another app.

In the meantime, Luminar includes a plug-in that lets you use Lightroom's Edit In command to send a copy of an image to the Luminar application. When you finish, the edited version shows up in your Lightroom library.

If you instead use Photos to manage your photo collection, you can take advantage of Luminar's editing tools via a Photos extension. That loads Luminar inside the Photos interface and offers the same controls you'd find in the standalone application. When you save your changes, the extension applies the edits to the image in the Photos library.



Note that when you're using either the Luminar plug-in for Lightroom or the Luminar editing extension in Photos, you can't go back in and adjust your settings later. Both options create a final edited version of the photo. In Lightroom, the copy sits alongside the original in a stack (Lightroom's method of grouping photos). In Photos, you can revert to the original and start over if you don't like the result, or you can edit on top of the edited version.

Compare that to opening photos from the Finder and editing them directly in the Luminar application. In that situation, you can save the results as Luminar files that can optionally retain their edit history. You get more editing flexibility, but if you use Lightroom or Photos to manage your photos, you need to track those Luminar files (with an .lmnr filename extension) separately.

When Macphun delivers the update that adds image management (which so far isn't pegged to a date, but is

just a promise), you will, in theory, be able to go back and access the entire edit history for any photo in your library. That's how Lightroom works now if you use its built-in editing tools.

All in One and One for All — For pure convenience, having all the editing tools you want close at hand is better than reaching into every corner of your workshop to get them. Too often, when companies try to build all-in-one tools, the result is either lackluster or overcrowded.

Luminar strikes that delicate balance of including most everything you want in a photo editor without being overwhelming. It's a powerful app that can also be picked up pretty easily by photographers looking for more than Photos offers without committing to (and paying for) the full capabilities of Photoshop.



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