



Southern Maryland  
**Mac User Group**

20058-D Point Lookout Road  
Great Mills, Maryland 20634

Meetings second

Monday of the month from 7pm to 9pm  
at the SMARTCO warehouse.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR !

Hope everyone enjoyed the holidays and got the new toys they wished for ☺

Our good friend Axel Bruijn is here visiting. We put a lot of time into cleaning the SMARTCO warehouse, the Mac room is coming along, but as you see, there is still room for improvement. Hopefully in the near future we'll get things set up to where we want them. I didn't spend as much time on this newsletter as I probably should have, but picked two things I thought you might enjoy reading.

.Mac Review

Product: .Mac

By: Apple Computer

MSRP: \$99.00

Street price: Free trail, MUG LE free, 'Net pricing around 79.00

Review date: December 28, 2003

Review by

Daniel M. East, President

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DESCRIPTION (What's it do? What's it got?): Apple's "in-OS" solution for complete internet lifestyle integration. combine iLife apps, iCal, e-mail addresses and add-on third-party solutions with a nice chunk of storage space and it is all incorporated into OSX in a very simple to use package.

MIN. SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Any OSX capable Macintosh with 128M RAM (with OSX, of course)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Ok, so I was a longtime skeptic about .Mac. After being on the proverbial fence, I decided that it was time to take the plunge once my daughter had her new iBook and was struggling to upload her photos. I decided to practice what I preach and I was pleasantly surprised by what I found. The integration into OSX, itself, is seamless and easy to use offering a really nice suite of software that would easily cost as much individually as the entire .Mac package. It isn't just that the elements are there, it is really that it all just works and works well.

WHAT I FOUND: Well, it was far more than what I'd heard and it wasn't just Virex and the new Backup2 for my 100 bucks. The added bonus items were also some great sound files for my iLife apps from Skywalker Sound, FreePlay Music and a fun little PhotoStudio application. Other nice (time limited) additions were Contribute2 from Macromedia and a full learning center to help me get going with all of this great stuff. I also love the continuation of the terrific iCards and slide shows

that have been a staple for .Mac veterans.

HOW EASY WAS INSTALLATION?: Once I went through the online application, it was just a matter of entering my account info into my OS system preferences. After that, my iDisk appeared on my desktop and it was just a matter of using it like any other drive.

LIKES : You have to talk about ease. Between the software, the iDisk, the "anywhere access" and the simplicity, this is a lot of bang for the buck. I especially like that it works for anyone. Any level of experience can figure anything from photos to backup and it is all right there for you with tons of help if you need it. The improvements in performance are noticeable and, with broadband, the use of all of these tools is fairly quick compared to almost any FTP application. There is also edu pricing. Very well thought out and effective stuff here.

DISLIKES : My only concern with .Mac is in it overcoming what WAS a bad reputation as an empty suite of tools. It isn't. I'd like to see some evidence of secure log ins in the iDisk (although it is) and some sense of what happens on my backups when left on Apple's servers, however, it does just work. The only complaint that I have is regarding those who get a complimentary .Mac account (like User Groups and Apple Consultants Network members) have a limited version. As one who is involved with both, I can say that I was glad to have purchased the full version. The "comp" versions are limited and don't offer the "member exclusives," like some of the software.

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT COMPARE? : How do you compare Apples to nothing else like it? There are a few third party options, but this is complete integration with easy of use that you will be hard pressed to find elsewhere.

RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND?: I didn't before, but I do now. It is just fun playing with this stuff.

TEST SYSTEM: Apple Titanium PowerBook G4 500 - 1Gb RAM - 10.3.2

FINAL THOUGHTS: I'm convinced. I put it off forever and just had to see it in action first. A great deal when you consider all that you get with this massive suite and you don't even need to get a boxed version (in fact, I don't recommend it since you'll have to update most of it anyway via the web). If you were turned off in the beginning, turn on to .Mac now that Apple has "tweaked" their really fun package of goodies for your Mac. If only to upload family photos, iMovies, iCards or slide shows and even protect yourself from that pesky virus; you'll love .Mac for all of that as well as dazzling your PC friends by accessing your public folders, info and images from their systems as well. I really like this for those who have the unfortunate reality of having PCs in their workplace and Macs at home. This is the "everybody item" that you'll enjoy on your Mac.

OVERALL RATING: 4.5 out of 5 stars

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### **The Beginning of the End Dept.**

By John C. Dvorak

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1401520,00.asp>

December 30, 2003

**The Beginning of the End Dept.** : I'm not sure what this means, but Microsoft is **dumping Intel** and **switching processors** in its next-generation Xbox. The company is going with an IBM design along the lines of the PowerPC or **G5 chip** . IBM has been supplying Nintendo and Sony and is working on a superchip with Sony. Apparently, Microsoft wanted to get in on the action, although most think the company is simply picking the PowerPC platform. This means the end of people turning hacked Xboxes into cheap Linux computers—something Microsoft detests. Now we can turn them into **cheap Macs** , I guess! Personally, I don't get this late change in the game plan at all.

**More Microsoft Meanderings Dept.** : Sometime in early 2004, Google is expected to roll out an IPO of its stock, and everyone is **clamoring** for some. In the background there are loose rumors about Microsoft attempting to buy Google while at the same time trying to create a Google-like service on MSN. Evidently when Microsoft sees anyone else beginning to make some money, it has to rush into the same business. With **rare exceptions** , such as Expedia, Microsoft has shown no consistent ability to succeed in such endeavors. WebTV is a perfect example of the company buying or perhaps making something into a **dead end** .

This all boils down to **core competencies** . Microsoft chairman Bill Gates used to give a rather nice speech years ago about what the company did to make money: "We sell code." The mission was **that simple** . And to this day the company makes most of its money selling code—or licensing it. Instead of staying with this strategy, the company has moved into all sorts of things from keyboards to major publishing houses to **plush talking animals** to Web magazines. Its Web efforts—including a series of Web magazines that all failed—have been the most dismal. Then there was Microsoft

Sidewalk, a product the company could not sustain even when Sidewalk was forecast to be a success. One of Microsoft's problems is that it has no clue about how to run these businesses and meddles with people who do know how to run them. It has a **terrible track record** with anything involving advertising. So now it wants to buy Google.

Apparently, the **U.S. government has to step in** if this deal is even proposed. No offense to Microsoft, but the public has become so reliant on Google that a **disaster** would result if Microsoft owned it and began to fiddle with it. We'd have nothing to use when the smoke cleared. Microsoft tends to **muck up** products it buys or else sit on them and use them as cash cows until they deteriorate. FrontPage is an example of the first instance, and PowerPoint exemplifies the second.

The giveaway regarding Microsoft's desire to muck things up is the company's **orientation with search**. It is poised to spend what I'm told is billions of dollars to develop a "**natural-language**" **search engine** (in other words, Ask Jeeves II). This is a typical pie-in-the-sky idea that sounds good on paper but can never be made to work. The roundabout proof of this is found on Google itself under the title Translate this page. You see the title crop up when you hit a foreign Web site. It's apparent when you get the **comical translation** that such systems cannot understand the input in the first place.

Even worse, the problem with natural-language searches is that the Web pages become secondary to the queries. Microsoft doesn't understand this concept very well, and it was the **bane of Ask Jeeves**. People began to use the engine to get mundane questions answered, not to find Web sites. "How far is it from Paris to Denver?" "How many acres in a hectare?" "What causes botulism?" The Jeeves folks actually developed a database of commonly asked questions and threw answers back at users. What does this have to do with searching the Web for relevant Web sites or doing research? Nothing.

**Genuinely Interesting Hardware Dept.** : I haven't seriously **raved** about a laptop for more than a few years and can completely recommend the new 2.4-pound Toshiba Portégé R100 as the **most spectacular** ultralight machine ever built. With the elegance of the most executive of machines, this lightweight notebook includes a full-size keyboard, and if you add a battery extender you get 5 to 7 hours of battery life, maybe more.

Before this machine came along, I was enamored with the amazing 2.1-pound Sharp Actius MM10, which also has a slick design and includes built-in wireless networking. **The kicker** is the fact that the R100 has a real VGA port and doesn't need an add-on dongle, as the MM10 does. I've already lost my add-on for the MM10, and now I can't use the notebook for PowerPoint presentations on the road. Once Sharp adds a VGA port to the MM10, it should be more competitive, since it's a lot cheaper than the R100—a steal at less than \$1,500. You'd have to pay closer to \$2,300 for the R100. But if someone asks me to recommend a computer, I say the R100—if you can afford it. It's the **most glamorous machine** available right now and a serious conversation starter. Get one and show off.