



Southern Maryland
Mac User Group

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

September 2005

FRESHLY SQUEEZED REVIEWS: Mighty Mouse revisited

by Frank Petrie

Product: Mighty Mouse

Company: Apple Computer, Inc. <www.apple.com/mightymouse>

Requirements: Mac OS X (programmability requires Mac OS X v10.4.2 Tiger or later), or Windows 2000 or Windows XP

Price: \$49.00 USD

Test Rig: PowerMac G4/DP 1.42Ghz/1.5 GB RAM/OS 10.4.2

Review Date: 22 August 2005

On the day Mighty Mouse was released, I drove up the street (yes, I'm fortunate/unfortunate enough to live a mile and a half from an Apple Store) and purchased the last one in stock. I was looking for a replacement for my Kensington Pocket Mouse, which will now permanently travels with my PowerBook.

I've had an on-again/off again love affair with my old four-button Kensington trackball for years. But I have very oily skin, so I have to clean the trackball every two to three days to keep in functioning. Otherwise, I love it.

But over the few weeks that I have had the Mighty Mouse, I have found some things that have grown on me and some aspects that are really starting to annoy me. So, I thought that we'd revisit my initial review and see how my impressions have changed or held up.

THE JUICE

"There's a scroll button in the middle that can scroll in any direction or, if using 10.4.2, can be used to summon or discharge Dashboard with a click. It's every bit as nifty as the iPods click wheel. And it feels a lot nicer than the average scroll wheel."

I find that after using MM for awhile, that the trackball-inspired scroll button is indispensable to my daily routine. I rely upon it more and more everyday. It helps ease the longing for my trackball and probably is the main thing that keeps me using this mouse. I will never go back to a scroll wheel.

And I use the Dashboard function constantly. Particularly to check the weather (NOTE TO SELF: occasionally leave the house), my stocks and to use the Dictionary/Thesaurus.

OK. And for poker, too.

"Leave it to Apple's design brain trust to make two buttons look like one button. Users get what they want; Steve gets what he wants. There are two side buttons that can be programmed to work simultaneously, as well. But here again is where the details come in. The degree of programmability depends on whether or not you're running 10.4.2."

I'm still a sucker for the look and it's simplicity. I have found through past experience that there are only so many programmable buttons that I really need. So no qualms there. I have no need for buttons to specific web sites, specific apps and so on. I can easily pre-configure all of that with software. And it's just as accessible.

THE PITS

"... There's a scroll button in the middle that can scroll in any direction ..."

Therein lies the rub. The diagonal scrolling needs a lot more work. When it does function, the cursor moves along in choppy movements. I don't have much need for diagonal scrolling, but if I did, this isn't the answer. Yet.

"There are two side buttons that can be programmed to work simultaneously, as well." These buttons are set in the wrong place. Ergonomically, they're very awkward to access. As to where they should be otherwise placed, I really can't say.

The really puzzling thing (and I've heard several others mention this) is that to click the left button, you have to really extend your index finger to the left. Otherwise, you keep accidentally hitting the scroll button and bringing up the Dashboard.

The easiest way around this, I've found, is to shift your hand position on the mouse by just a few degrees. But you shouldn't have to do that with a mouse. It's counter intuitive.

THE RIND

Nada.

THE PULP

It's Mighty Mouse. Or is it an Apple mouse? Or just another mouse? I'm afraid this Trojan Horse isn't going to pull in any Windows users. But if they go back to the drawing board, rethink the details and make it more ergonomically, then Apple will have hit the nail on the head.

I'll still keep using it but I will still grumble from time to time. And I'll always keep my Kensington trackball nearby.

ORIGINAL RATING: 8 out of 10

CURRENT RATING: 5.5 out of 10

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FRESHLY SQUEEZED REVIEWS: Getting Beta All The Time

by Frank Petrie

Product: Firefox 1.5 beta

Company: Mozilla <www.mozilla.org/projects/firefox/>

Requirements: OS X 10.2 or greater

Price: Freeware

Test Rig: PowerMac G4/DP 1.42Ghz/1.5 GB RAM/OS 10.4.2

Review Date: 09 September 2005

Just as the browser wars were starting to heat up again, they have cooled down very rapidly. Yes, iCab is still making a run at it, as is Opera. And OmniWeb seems like it will always be around. But this latest beta from the Mozilla Firefox Project, code named 'Deer Park,' renders Camino pointless and blows the doors off of Safari.

"Firefox 1.5 Beta 1 is now available for download. This is the first Beta release of our next generation Firefox browser, to be released later this year, and it is being made available to our developer and testing community for compatibility testing and to solicit feedback."

Now, I know that I'm arriving late to the party. But I always felt like Firefox still had two too many toes in the Windows world for me. Granted, that's what themes are for, but I didn't find enough difference to part with my beloved 'snapback' button. But now ...

THE JUICE

Drag and drop installation. Import Safari bookmarks? A snap. Even though the coders I'm sure will find bugs, from an end user's standpoint, I found the beta to be incredible! I can only dream of what the release candidate will be like! With only several hours of kicking the tires, I was amazed at its rendering speed. All the preferences that you should expect from a browser are there.

Once, I reviewed my prefs, I just went about my business as if it was Safari. Didn't skip a beat. Here is some of their list of improvements:

- Automated update to streamline product upgrades ... and updates to Firefox may now be half a megabyte or smaller. Updating extensions has also improved.
- Faster browser navigation with improvements to back and forward button performance.
- Drag and drop reordering for browser tabs.
- Improvements to popup blocking.
- Clear Private Data feature provides an easy way to quickly remove personal data through a menu item or keyboard shortcut.
- Answers.com is added to the search engine list.
- Improvements to product usability including descriptive error pages, redesigned options menu, RSS discovery, and "Safe Mode" experience.
- Better accessibility including support for DHTML accessibility and assistive technologies ...[s]creen readers read aloud all available

information in applications and documents or show the information on a Braille display, enabling blind and visually impaired users to use equivalent software functionality as their sighted peers.

- Report a broken Web site wizard to report Web sites that are not working in Firefox.
- Better support for Mac OS X (10.2 and greater) including profile migration from Safari and Mac Internet Explorer.
- New support for Web Standards including SVG, CSS 2 and CSS 3, and JavaScript 1.6.

Maybe I'm just getting used to sidebars because of Mail, iTunes, etc., but this is the first time that I've ever used a browser where I felt compelled to leave the sidebar open. And that's no small feat. I value my desktop real estate more than Park Place in Monopoly.

The Help is easy to navigate and actually gives you thorough answers to your questions.

THE PITS

Nada.

THE RIND

Nada.

THE PULP

This project has become so logical that it's frightening. Simultaneous releases for OS X, Linux and Windows. Isn't there some sort of law against that?

Firefox is more than just THE browser. It is the greatest advertisement for open-source coding. To that end, they are always looking for some 'heavy lifting' coders. If you can pitch in, do it.

The release of Firefox 1.5 is expected to be at the end of this year. Nice Christmas present, eh?

RATING: 9 out of 10

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Apple Releases iPod nano

Apple has released an all-new iPod design to replace its popular iPod mini device. The new nano replaces the mini's hard drive with smaller and more energy efficient flash memory. Also a new design element is the LED-backlit color display, which also doubles as a digital photo viewer much like the current iPod color. The new model retains the popular click-wheel design originally introduced with the mini and incorporated into the standard-sized iPods.

The new iPod nano is available in 2 and 4 GB models (priced \$199 and \$249, respectively), in either black or white colors, and offers up to 14 hours battery life. Please visit <http://www.apple.com/ipodnano> for more information.

Apple and Motorola Introduce Phone With iTunes

Apple and Motorola have introduced the first mobile phone with built-in support for iTunes. The new phone, dubbed ROKR, can hold up to 100 songs, and syncs with iTunes on the Mac or PC. Cingular is currently the only carrier to offer the new iTunes-enabled phone. Please visit <http://www.apple.com/itunes/mobile/> for more information.

