

## Norton Not Needed - Norton Utilities for the Mac 4.0.1

By Karl-Peter Gottscalk

The legendary Norton Utilities for Mac, once the most essential utility to use in ensuring your Mac's ongoing good health, is no longer so essential anymore.

I hate writing negative reviews, so much so that I carefully filter out the chaff before requesting a review copy of any new program or upgrade because I figure that both your time and mine is in too short a supply to waste it on crap. If you cannot find a review on or mention of a particular product in these buyer's guides, chances are that I have not been able to pry a review copy out of the distributor's death-like grip or the product is simply not worth writing about.

### OBJECT APOLOGIES

But I could not pull that strategy this time, simply because so many of you have already invested in earlier versions of NUM and like me have been waiting so long for Symantec to get its act together and release a version that will work with the HFS+ file format introduced with MacOS 8.1. Version 4.0 finally arrived just before version 8.5 came out, and was promptly followed with a version 4.01 fix.

The biggest upgrade in 4.0 that we were waiting on was an improvement to Speed Disk, the disk defragmenting utility, to enable it to handle HFS+ formatted volumes. Previous NUM versions would simply identify your disk as being HFS+ and tell you it could not proceed any further. So you were stuffed if you wanted to take advantage of HFS+'s more efficient use of disk space. And making use of Alsoft PlusMaximizer's more efficient version of HFS+ would have been equally out of the question.

### RUMOURS, RUMOURS

Rumours abounded that because the bulk of Symantec's business is in the technologically-challenged turgid waters of WindowsWorld, they were becoming less and less interested in developing for the Mac. Their habit has been to buy up independent specialist software developers, absorb aspects of their products into their own main lines, then put their former

competitors to death. Shades of Bill Gates' tactics.

for one had put off converting all my disks to HFS+, also called MacOS Extended, until a disk defragmenting utility had surfaced, somewhere. Meanwhile Micromat was trumpeting the coming of their disk and system repair toolset TechTool Pro 2, and were privately saying that a defragger was also on its way from them.

#### TECHTOOL VS NUM 4

Well, TechTool Pro has proven to be so much better a disk doctor than Norton's Disk Doctor, and their new defragger will handle MacOS Extended and MacOS Optimised (made using Alsoft's PlusMaximizer) formatted disks very nicely. Alsoft themselves are about to release their own defragger, called DiskWarrior, that goes one better than TechTool by using a totally new way of defragmenting disks, reportedly. It uses a method that does its job in a fraction of the time.

So Norton has been left in the dust by a couple of midgets due to its tardiness and apparent lack of commitment to the Mac platform. Now that is not a good thing, because we cannot afford to suffer from a lack of competition in the software marketplace. Symantec itself became fat and bloated and lazy from ruling the roost for too long. I had hoped despite the demonstrated superiority of its competitors' new products that NUM 4 would still prove worthwhile. And it has not.

#### MY MODUS OPERANDI

I installed NUM 4.0 straight out of the box and then checked VersionTracker to see whether any updates had been posted. Version 4.0.1 was already out, so I downloaded that and applied the update. Then I headed over to MacFixit to see if any issues had appeared about NUM 4.0. What I read was not encouraging. Regardless of that because my prime hard drive had not received any attention lately and something was bound to be up, I had the latest version of DiskFirstAid check the drive to see what was wrong with it. It identified a few things, and I made a note of them. Then I had the Disk Doctor component of NUM 4 check my disk and repair it. Then I ran Disk FirstAid again, and it told me that the very same problems were still there.

o I turned to what has become an old friend and staunch ally, TechTool Pro, had it do its stuff, and the disk was back in great shape once more. Not an impressive performance from NUM 4.

#### PROBLEM REPORTS GALORE

In the days since I have read many reports from many users who have had real problems with NUM 4, some of them quite horrifying. Although I always rely on my own observations in the

end, while taking on board the experiences of others, I have to say that the number and nature of these reports has got me worried. As some experts have recommended I have turned off all NUM's functions that run in the background at disk level, and in fact have not used it since my first test. I keep it on my hard drive in the hope that Symantec will address this legion of issues and release a fix soon.

### IFT YOUR GAME

Although TechTool Pro 2.x is without question the best disk maintenance utility now, and its new defragger increases its value, the Mac community cannot afford to have a choice of just one. Lack of choice is not good for anyone. Symantec is going to have to radically lift its game and prove to us that it is serious about the Mac market, especially now that the number of Mac owners is growing so rapidly.

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