Mac Software Still Doesn't (and Never Did) Suck

Next Month...

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Mac users, are fanatical about the software which we use. We believe that there is no better email client than Emailer, for example, and we believe that MoviePlayer is the best darn multimedia software available. Oftentimes something that can be done on a Mac can't be done as well on a PC — the Wintel equivalent either lacks some power, some ease-of-use, or some all-around coolness. Try to play a movie file in Windows' MediaPlayer and you'll see what I mean.

When someone asks me what my favorite Mac application is (and no, nobody ever does), three applications spring to mind. Two of these are the Mac OS itself (after all, this is my most-often used software) and Emailer (hey, it may be "dead," but it's a great app that I'll use until it no longer functions). The third was recently updated from version 4.5 to 5.0 — BBEdit, made by Bare Bones Software.

Bare Bones' (makers of BBEdit) software philosophy is exemplified in their name: bare bones. Their software goes to prove that good software is not a matter of flashy splash screens, animated menus (ahem, Windows 98), ritzy glitzy sound effects, and other senseless perks. Good software is simple, gets the job done, and does it fast. Good software lets you spend more time with your family. Good software takes advantage of your operating system and extends your abilities. Good software fits the way you work. Bare Bones makes good, nay, great software.

I watched a Windows user demoing his computer's abilities to a friend who was contemplating his first computer purchase. He showed the friend Unreal, he showed the friend some MP3s and WAVs, and he showed the friend some of Office '97. The friend then visited me, and after I told him that "my Mac can do all of those things, and better," I shoved a PC floppy and Zip disk in to show off the compatibility of a Mac. I showed him QuickTime's MoviePlayer. Then I showed him a complex 3D-rendering application. Then I showed him BBEdit. Next, I showed him Claris/AppleWorks. Then I said "if this weren't impressive enough..." and showed him Virtual PC. My friend bought a Mac.

I mention the zoomy menus above because it exemplifies something Windows users seem to have in common — they love flash. They ignore substance or practicality. Truth of the matter is, the zoomy unrolling menus are nifty the first 10 times you see them, then you realize that they cost you time. Browsing the contents of your hard drive(s) as if they were a website may be nifty the first few minutes, but how practical is it? After hours of experimentation, I've come to the common-sense conclusion: not very.

Bare Bones understands this. They make software that works. And works well. They make Mac software, after all. We Mac users wouldn't expect anything less. That in mind, this holiday season, treat yourself to your own gift: a Bare Bones product. Whether you pick up the freeware BBEdit Lite or the commercial Mailsmith, give Bare Bones a try. Their software may be your favorite Mac application. Cheers.

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Next Month...

To be honest, we're not quite sure of everything right now. Transit, a cool FTP tool from Panic Software, will be reviewed. So will a game, and two other things.

Why so bland this month? Well, I want feedback — let me know what you would like to see reviewed. Send me email at erik@applewizards.net .

Regular Columns

All of our columnists are very open to suggestions. If you'd like to see something discussed in any column, just email the author. We've got a Feedback form on our website, and our email addresses are all over the issue. Just drop us a line and we'll see what we can do!

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