

review by Erik J. Barzeski

.0 Stars — 1 Star Poor, 5 Stars Excellent

Title: Transit

Version: 1.1.1

Developer: Panic LLC

Price: \$24.95 shareware

Contact Info: <http://www.panic.com/transit/>

Genre: File Transfer (FTP) tool

Requirements: System 7.5 or later, Open Transport recommended

'm So Excited

And I just can't hide it! Pathetic musical jokes notwithstanding, it's difficult to get excited about something as mundane as file transfer protocol (FTP) software. After having used Fetch for more years than I wish to count, FTP tools to me were a necessary evil — software that performed a task without flair, but performed it well. I shied away from Anarchie, in fact, because I considered Fetch's interface to be modestly "better."

Well, how the times have changed! Transit, from Panic LLC, has burst onto the scene, quickly garnering many followers. Why? There are many reasons. Is Transit your next FTP tool? If you're smart, it probably will be.

Whole NUI Look

Bad puns aside, Transit makes a bold leap in the realms of the FTP software UI. Previously, Fetch and Anarchie defined FTP on the Mac with black-and-white interfaces that conveyed the necessary information in as dull a fashion as possible.

In this age of "buzzword compliancy" — a buzzword itself — Transit positions itself as a strong contender for the FTP buzzword compliance award of the year. It's packed with nifty little features that will make your life easier. In fact, Transit's got something for everybody.

Something for the UI Fan

a.k.a. The People that Hate Black and White FTP Tools

As you can see below, Transit employs a unique two-pane system. One pane (your stuff, on the left) can be turned off, but I prefer to leave it on for quick access to my hard disk's files. To transfer files, you can simply double-click a file or drag it from pane to pane. Alternatively, you can upload files directly from your hard drive (just drag them into the "their stuff" pane) or download files (for instance, to your desktop) by dragging from the right-hand pane.

Transit's got a nifty trash can — deleting items is as simple as dragging them to that trash can. Panes can be sorted by name or size, in ascending or descending order. A progress bar and stop button at the bottom quickly convey information. All told, Transit's interface is the best I've seen on an FTP tool on any platform.

Something for the Shareware Freak

Shareware freaks, and I mean that in a tender way, are constantly downloading things. Updates, new versions, new games, and cool utilities are their lifeblood. Sometimes they encounter a slow FTP site (or their wife picks up the other phone line) and their transfer is cut. Ah, but Transit has resumable uploads and downloads, so if the server is compliant Transit can pick up right where it left off.

Furthermore, Transit has nifty Finder progress icons. See the graphic at right? Those icons are what you'd see as your download progresses. They come in handy the next time you're grabbing that 15 MB Myth II demo.

Something for the Webmaster

Folder/File Synchronization — it may not sound like a buzzword to you, but to webmasters it is perhaps the most important. After updating oodles of HTML files, webmasters do not want to scour their local copy of the website to figure out what files need to be uploaded. Instead, this feature eases the burden by smartly replacing any older files with the updated versions.

Not enough, you say? How about fully multithreaded functionality? You can easily upload files in one window while downloading in another, though you can't do this in the same window for obvious reasons. However, you can peruse the contents of your hard drive within Transit while uploading changes to your website.

Something for the Mac OS Fan

Contextual menus are widely supported and oftentimes useful. Clicking on a local file presents you with the opportunity to use the same contextual menu you'd see in the Finder (complete with any third-party plugins), and control-clicking on a remote file allows you the option to delete, download, or rename it.

Wanna talk speed? Transit is faster than both Fetch and Anarchie as well as

the FTP tools built into both Navigator and IE. Granted, Fetch and others can decode binhex as they download, but I'm the type that prefers to let StuffIt Expander do this itself. Earlier versions of Transit were plagued by slow upload speed, as Transit queried the server after each file was sent, but this problem has been fixed to yield blazing speed.

omething for Everybody Else

It's in there, and you'll probably find it. Suppose you are the type that names your files "kl35x.gif." Before uploading that image and discovering that it is the wrong one, give Transit's Graphic Preview, seen at right, a try to determine whether or not that graphic is indeed the one you want to upload.

hucking in the Extras

As readers of my reviews have come to understand, the ability to set

a vast number of preferences to act exactly the way I wish is very

important to me. What good would an FTP tool be if I couldn't set the default download location? Transit allows you to set preferences for just about everything, including file mappings, default actions (i.e. what to do with identical file names), registration of Transit as Navigator's or IE's FTP tool, exact file size toggling, and much more. Transit even offers the ability to redial busy servers!

Transit is a diverse little package. When you download (and you will!) the software, you'll find that not only is Transit itself included, but a great many "Goodies" are hanging around as well. What are they?

Freebie Icons — I prefer the default Transit icon, but if your tastes vary there are five additional icons for you to choose from.

ADD Plugin — Those of you who use Apple's Data Detectors will appreciate the "Download FTP with Transit" ADD plugin.

A Cool Desktop Picture — It's a subtle desktop picture that will have your friends asking just what in the world "p" stands for.

Favorites Editor — Transit allows you to save your bookmarks, called "favorites," within Transit itself. However, this Editor makes editing them a whole lot easier.

A Nifty Folder Action — "add - upload files" is a nifty folder action for Mac OS 8.5 users. I often use it to immediately upload files when they're

dropped into my "FTP for Friends" folder.

ot All is Well in Who-ville

Transit's not perfect. Almost nothing is. What beefs have I got with Transit? Well, there are a few.

Selecting Files

In a typical Finder list view, clicking and dragging over a few files selects those files. In Transit, however, only the first file will be selected, and subsequent attempts to "drag" to create a box (to select other files) will merely drag the original file. Furthermore, shift-clicking results in continuous selections, which is contradictory to how the Finder itself operates (but at the same time synonymous with how other applications act, such as EMailer). Personally, I believe that if an application is going to mimic a Finder's view mode, it should act like it as well.

Dragging Files to Desktop

It seems the Transit folks would rather you drag a file to the left-hand pane than drag it directly to your desktop. Oftentimes when I drag a simple HTML file to my desktop, the icon is assigned Transit's 0% status and remains that way. Sure, the entire file has been downloaded, but Transit hasn't updated the file type or creator code to reflect that. The Panic folks blame a Finder bug, which is very likely, and promise a fix in version 1.2.

Reordering Favorites

It's impossible. It can't be done — whatever order you create your Favorites in had better be the way you like them, because even the Favorites Editor won't let you change their order.

ut All Is Well That Ends Well

Transit's a great tool. I gave it four stars, which itself is praise enough. On the same scale, FTP veterans Fetch and Anarchie would rate about 3.0 and 2.5 stars, respectively. A demo is available, so I encourage everyone out there to give it a try. Even if you don't need an FTP tool, it's good to have one around. Besides, where else are you going to get a cool desktop picture with a "p" on it?

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