

Something Different

TechTool and Norton disk aid tools seem to be the standard other software programmers strive to follow and discredit. TechTool is on the verge of its third major upgrade and Symantec's Norton Disk Doctor is on version 4.

MacMedic is a growing contender but needs the good publicity gained from a large and satisfied user base, which it is still slowly achieving.

In this month's issue you'll find reviews of the most popular and well-known disk aid software but what about the future, and what about the alternatives? One software company in particular put in a strong finish to 1998 - Alsoft www.alsoft.com

Alsoft has a clever and expanding fleet of new and updated software in their fledgling suite but powerful tools it currently has available to the Mac user.

It currently has the following competently priced and user friendly tools available:

DiskWarrior

PlusMaker 1.0.2

PlusOptimiser 1.1

DiskWarrior - \$69.95 - approx. £43.95, available directly from their site.

This programme is VERY effective at repairing and scanning disk directories. Instead of attempting to bridge and patch the gaps in your files. DiskWarrior effectively rebuilds the file content and info similar to rebuilding your desktop. It uses the same routines. This can be far more effective than just patching over a problem, DiskWarrior replaces the problem with a clean file.

alk about stable, the programme ran without a hitch on the following machines: fx, si, LCII, LCIII, Quadra 650, Performa 630 with DOS card, PM7100, 8100, 9500/G3 upgrade, iMac and a PowerBook 190. Running system folders from 7.1 upto 8.5.1 on drives formatted in standard HFS and HFS+.

The first thing that hits you is the speed at which it goes about its tasks, it really is good to see Alsoft putting 110% into their software. It found directory errors that Norton and Disk First Aid had both missed and successfully replaced and repaired the problems. Some of the features that make this utility stand up there with the front runners are:

- Support for processors from 68020 upto Power PC and accelerated for PowerMacs
- Rebuilds disks upto 2,000 gigabytes!
- UBS, IDE and SCSI pose no problems and is fully compatible with HFS and HFS+
- If you enjoy scripting your frequent tasks, DiskWarrior is AppleScriptable
- Verification after rebuild and final integrity checks
- More of a disk recovery than a disk first aid programme
- Faster than conventional and more elaborate programmes on the market

If your present file optimising and recovery software is not performing to your demanding standards as a Mac users then try something new, Alsoft have literally been 'Thinking Different'.

PlusMaker 1.0.2 \$29.95 approx. £18.50 available directly from their site.

You have a HFS formatted drive full of files, data and applications BUT you want to take advantage of the new HFS+ format so you can save storage space. You have two options, reformat the drive by backing up all your files removing them and reinstalling them, VERY time consuming OR you can simply purchase PlusMaker.

was curious about Alsoft's claims and thought I'd give it ago myself. I picked a 2gig drive with HFS and backed up all the files [just in case] then run PlusMaker. The 2gig drive had 1.2gig of information stored on it. After converting to the HFS+ format I only had just over 900mb so by converting to HFS+ I reclaimed nearly 300mb of my drive. The drive has worked seamlessly since the update and just goes to show not everything in life needs to be so complicated. You don't even lose your aliases and it repairs and optimises your directories similar to DiskWarrior. I am now recommending PlusMaker to all.

PlusOptimiser 1.1 \$29.95 approx. £18.50 available directly from their site.

Wow! Have you yearned for a speedy disk optimiser? Have you spent a large portion of your time staring at progress bars? I remember Public Utilities then Disk Essentials and even the present Norton being so S-L-O-W at defragmenting a drive. Try 7 minutes for a 2gig drive and nearly 9 minutes for a 4 gig.

y only problem was I'm still waiting for Alsoft to release the HFS+ update.

Conclusion

If you've been tearing your hair out looking for simply effective tools without the frills then look no further than Alsoft.

Alsoft's suite of utilities can't boast the diagnostic abilities of TechTool but who really needs them? Norton is a well-packaged and efficient programme but it can still get shaky on HFS+ and in certain situations.

So it's up to you, just remember you're playing with fire if you don't have 100% faith in the utilities you use to repair and maintain a healthy Mac. [oh and always keep a back-up].

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