

MacBits

Of Mice and Menus

by Jamie Cox

Apple's OS X has lots of goodies that you may not have explored. One feature that escapes many people's notice is called contextual menus. That's a fancy term for a simple idea: a menu that's especially appropriate for what you are doing right now. You might also hear them called pop-up menus, because they appear right where your cursor is, rather than up in the menu bar.

Apple didn't invent contextual menus, and neither did Microsoft.

Contextual menus have been a feature of the user interface on Unix workstations such as those from Sun or Silicon Graphics for a long time, and both Apple and Microsoft have adopted them in their newer operating systems. Contextual menus seemed natural on workstations partly because these systems have

also use a mouse with multiple buttons (usually three). One of those buttons is frequently assigned as a "menu button." When the user presses it, the appropriate application menu appears at the cursor location.

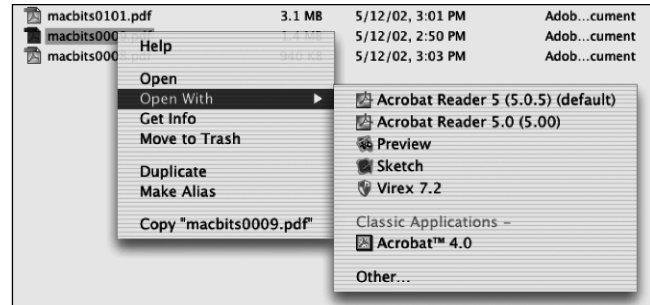
Apple hasn't yet sold a mouse with more than one button. So, what's a Mac user to do? To use contextual menus in Mac OS X, you can hold the control key while pressing the

mouse button. This control-click brings up the contextual menu.

Try control-clicking on a document in the finder. The contextual menu will show useful options such as Open, Make Alias and Move to Trash. Pop-up menus also work in your favorite Mac OS X applications. In a word processor, the pop-up may contain editing commands, spell checking commands and formatting commands, and the menu may be different depending on what you have selected. In TextEdit, for example, if you select a word that the spelling checker has flagged, the pop-up menu will contain spelling suggestions and additional spell-check commands.

The Safari browser and iTunes application use contextual menus very well. Try popping up a menu on the header line of your iTunes library window.

Although the technique of control-clicking works, it takes two hands and its not all that convenient. Because of this I wanted a multiple-button mouse. This is not a problem for any machine with a USB port,



Contextual Menu in Finder shows Options for opening a PDF document

since most USB mice sold for the Windows market will work fine on the Macintosh. There's a big selection, and the prices are right. You can get a corded or cordless mouse, or even a trackball with multiple buttons.

I particularly like my

Logitech* corded optical scroll-wheel mouse. It was only \$19.95, and has a really nice feel. The optical sensor works on just about any surface except glass, and doesn't need cleaning. For my old G3, it replaced

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Multi-button mice are fully functional in OS X

This month's 3rd Tuesday

Tues. Aug. 19 Program 7-9 pm
at Melbourne Public Library
Don't forget dinner after meeting!

Are there any Macs in Russia?

PRESENTED BY

Chris Kridler, Florida Today Columnist

Macs in Russia, and other observations on computing, from Chris' recent trip to Russia.

What's Happening In MacMAD: 2004, Our 20th Anniversary

by Jim Staal, President

A little less than twenty years ago, I was working as a system engineer at Harris Corporation. A customer sent us three new desktop computers to use on their project: two 128K Macs and one Lisa (think of it as Mac's big sister). I got the Lisa, since its software included what was to become MacProject. This was my introduction to the Mac and I was thoroughly sold on it. In the next few years, I fought several office battles to make sure that I could keep on using a Mac, rather than the unspeakable alternative.

About the same time, a little group of Mac enthusiasts first met to organize a "Macintosh interest group". According to the "Macbullets" in the newsletter, this meeting took place on August 29, 1984. Eleven people "showed up," including Jamie Cox. A copy of this first issue of the predecessor to MacBits can be found on our MacMad website (www.macmad.org, under Newsletters). By the November 1984 issue (also on our website), the name MacMad had been adopted and our Macintosh User Group (MUG) was meeting monthly at the Eau Gallie library.

MacMad is entering our twentieth year. We have operated continuously and have enriched the Macintosh experience for hundreds of people in the area. It's time to celebrate! Starting this month, and continuing over the next year, we will look at where we've been, what we've done, and some highlights of our Mac life. We'll add to our publicity efforts, improve our meetings and generally upgrade our operation. We have come through some exciting times, and we can look forward to a lot more in the future.

What is your role in all of this? If you have been a member for a long time and can remember some of those early days, share your memories with us, preferably in print or at a meeting. If you have material from those early days, let us know. Don't forget, we always welcome ideas on what you want the group to do. Let us know

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MacMAD

Macintosh Meeting & Drinking Society Established 1984.

MacMAD does not condone or support software piracy.

On the **WEB** www.macmad.org
<http://bbs.macmad.org>



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If you are experienced with software or hardware, and wouldn't mind a few calls for help, VOLUNTEER: call Cher at 724-8981.

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Of Mice and Menus *continued from front*

an ADB mouse, and the difference felt like getting a new computer. I didn't get a cordless mouse, because they are more expensive, and you have to replace the batteries. The only problem I've had with mine is, I had to buy another one when my wife borrowed it to use with her Windows laptop. She liked it so much, I couldn't get it back.

On a three-button scroll wheel mouse, the left button works as your main mouse button always has. The scroll wheel in the middle will scroll the top window up and down, and the right button is the menu button - this pops up the contextual menus. The scroll wheel is also a middle button in disguise. By pushing down on it, you can click the middle button, which may do something useful in some applications.

Apple is being a bit schizophrenic about their user interface design and their mouse design. On the one hand, their new software fully supports a multiple-button mouse, and is a shining example of how to use it effectively. On the other hand, they are still afraid to ship a multi-button mouse. Apple originally wanted a one-button mouse to avoid confusing the new computer user, saying that if there is only one button, then you can't press the wrong one. I think today's computer customer is way past that point. Back when the Mac was new, I would see users so inexperienced that they would spend time just moving the mouse on the table and watching the pointer move around on the screen. I haven't seen anyone do that in years.

User interface studies showed that a one-button mouse shortens the initial learning curve, but a multi-button mouse improves efficiency for experienced users. Everyone knows how to use the mouse now. Apple, give your customers some credit; they can use a multi-button mouse, and they can't fully appreciate your great software without one.

* www.logitech.com Part Number 930582-0403

In MacMAD... *continued from front*

how you would like to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

Last month I mentioned an idea for a program which compares some of the Personal Information Manager (PIM) applications available. We're working in earnest to present this program in October. What types of applications would you like to see compared next?

Our program for this month, Chris Kridler, Florida Today columnist, speaking on her trip to Russia, is an example of the really interesting and great fun that our meetings can be. We have had a lot of outstanding programs in past months, and with your help, we can continue this trend. We now have the ability to attract great programs to this area. If we can get our membership and attendance up, we can attract outside vendors and speakers. We may want to team up with some of the MUGs in the nearby area to hit the numbers needed to get the attention of larger vendors or "celebrity" speakers. We can do it if we all work together.

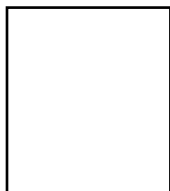
Hope to see you at our meetings this month! Bring a friend (or two, or three...).

THE MINUTES

About Last Meeting, July 15, 2003

by Mark Fosgate, Club Secretary

Jim Staal opened the meeting at 7:10 pm with approximately 20 people present. Jim asked if we had any new members or visitors of which there were two that introduced themselves. One is retired military and came with a friend and the other a professor from FIT that came as an acquaintance of the evening presenter, Spence Guerin. Jim used approximately 15 minutes to discuss general club business concerning club growth. Spence Guerin talked about Macromedia Freehand 9 and how it is used by showing some examples of how he uses it to produce advertisements and flyers. Dinner site voted on was Bennigan's. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.



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