

RIPPLE

news & reviews

Ripple Report

January 2003 Volume: 2 Issue: 1

[Archives](#)

So here it is - Steve's first annual top ten Macworld picks . By now, many of you probably already know about the big announcements so I don't want to rehash the press releases currently flooding the major Mac news sites. I thought I would present Macworld from a slightly different perspective - the one from the "little guy". I've always felt that some of the most interesting products are not necessarily in the "big boys" corner, but at some small one or two-person company way off in the corner of the show floor near the bathroom. So here's my top 10 picks of the coolest products at Macworld 2003.

1. 12" G4 PowerBook

» www.apple.com



While the 17" PowerBook is impressive because of its large screen and "glow-in-the-dark" keyboard, I think many people after seeing the 12" Powerbook will be equally impressed by its small, light weight frame. Travelers will be especially giddy because they will not have to keep adjusting their screens to make room for the reclining passenger in front of them. As for speed, the 12" PowerBook has a respectable 867 MHz G4 processor that makes it more than adequate to run Final Cut Pro or Express in real time, as well as a offering a 1024 x 768 screen resolution that allows you to comfortably display all of FCP's window layouts.

2. SmartDisk "Rover" MP3 Player & USB Flash Storage

» www.smartdisk.com



I've always liked the idea of having a portable USB storage device on my keychain, so I could quickly store and retrieve my files without having to carry around a hard drive. But this little "Rover" goes one step further by not only allowing me to store data files such as MP3s, it also allows me to play them back! That's right. It's a data storage device that also doubles as an MP3 player. The Rover, when it ships in February will come in both 64 MB and 128 MB capacities, with the larger one being able to play back a whopping 2 hours of MP3 music at 128 kbs. It also weighs less than an ounce, has a continuous play time of up to 12 hours, and comes with a handy clip to add it to your pocket protector. The smaller capacity Rover will sell for \$99.95 and the larger one for \$149.95.

3. HomePod - HomePod Wireless Stereo

» www.gloolabs.com



Here's a cool device that sits on top of your home stereo and wirelessly receives music transmitted from your airport base station, effectively turning your living room stereo system into an MP3 player. A small Java program runs on your PC or Mac and scans your disks for music files, then sends them one at a time to the HomePod station where they are output to your stereo receiver via a couple of RCA cables. The back of the HomePod also reveals a firewire port, where you can connect a hard drive and presumably an

iPod. The HomePod will sell for around 200 bucks when it ships in March.

4. Wiebetech Super Drive Dock

>> www.wiebetech.com

With this stand-alone bus-powered firewire bridge, you can turn any raw drive into a portable firewire drive. This means you can pop your EIDE drives out of your G4 tower, slap on this little dock, then plug in a firewire cable to power it off of any current firewire equipped Macintosh. If you are using an older Mac that does not support bus powering, you may need to purchase an AC adapter. Because it uses the celebrated OXF911 Bridge, Weibetech claims you can get up to 34 MB/Sec transfer speeds. Of course, your "firewire" drive won't look as pretty as your friends, but then again, looks aren't everything. The Super Drive Dock sells for \$159.95 on their site.

5. Sonica Theater - USB 7.1 Surround Sound for Mac

>> www.m-audio.com



If you watch a lot of DVD on your Mac like I do, you will be interested to know that M-Audio makes this cool little box that will turn your Mac into a full-blown surround sound theater. Just connect a USB cable from your Mac to the interface box and Sonica Theater will drive up to seven speakers including a sub woofer!

This little box also supports audio input and output at 24 bit, 96 kHz for a theater quality listening experience from your laptop or desktop. And at \$99.95, the audience will really be listening.

6. CitiDISK - Direct DV recording to disk

>> www.shining.com

As I was walking around Macworld, I stumbled on this small company called Shining Technology that specializes in interfaces for hard drives and other peripherals. What caught my attention was their CitiDISK firewire drives that allow you to capture directly to the drive from any dv camcorder. Designed to be taken on location, it comes with a built-in power supply that will power the drive up to 80 minutes. You can recharge the drive from the firewire bus of you Mac or use an external power adaptor.

The drive comes in various capacities from 20 to 60 GigaBytes. This drive intrigued me because the Firestore from Focus Enhancements (which does essentially the same thing) is several hundreds dollars more and is not nearly as portable. I will be testing one of these drives in the next month and I will report back to you my findings in a future Ripple Report.

7. Mokey

>> www.mokey.com



Michael Horton, president on the L.A. Final Cut Pro User's Group came running up to me at Macworld really excited - and if you know Mike, something has to be really incredible to get him excited. The product he was raving about was this software called "Mokey" The best way I can describe Mokey is an object & wire removal application that runs on pure math. What? Let me see if I can paint a picture of what it does. You have a clip of, let's say, a car driving down the road and you want to remove the car. You didn't however, shoot the background without the car, so you need to painstakingly, frame-by-frame, remove the car. Wrong. With Mokey, you just drag a circle around the car, and the software looks at the surrounding pixels and then reconstructs the missing "car" pixels and then "fills in" the background where the car was. When you watch the finished clip, it's as if the car was never in the shot. The software even accounts for any camera movement. Amazing. You will be hearing a lot more about this in the future.