

any of you have been reading this column for the year and a bit that I have been writing it. I have received nothing but praise, kind words, and happy encouragement from readers, both for my personal approach to Mac computing, and for the magazine, About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM), as a whole.

In publishing ATPM, I always tried to communicate to the editors, writers, and artists that this was a labor of love. They don't get paid, they don't get much feedback, and they don't get a ton of recognition. The people who work on ATPM do it for love of the subject. The Mac.

[Let me add here that lots of people don't understand this "I love my computer" thing. That's fine; this magazine is about showing people why we love our computers, why our lives are richer for having them, and what we can accomplish with them.]

I have also tried to communicate a sense of priorities to the volunteers who work on ATPM every month. You see, I love my computer, I can hardly imagine life without it, but I love other things more. I love my wife-to-be, Tiffany. I love my family. I love my friends. I love the future I imagine for myself, as an artsy, impressive, creative, fun-kind-of-guy.

I told my friends at ATPM that, if they ever needed to stop working, or if they needed another week, they should take it, because you've got to pay attention to what you love, lest you lose it. If that led to the magazine being a little late every month, or to certain articles missing the date for publication, that was all right. Now, I've decided to take my own advice.

With this issue, I'm giving over the reins to two of my closest friends at ATPM. Robert Paul Leitao you know from his regular column, appearing in this magazine. Michael Tsai will be a little less known to you, he's the Reviews Editor at ATPM, and has done an incredible job since joining the magazine just a few months ago. They will be jointly splitting the editorial and publishing duties here at About This Particular Macintosh.

This issue is their first, and I wish them the best of luck. I know that they have the will, and I hope I have provided a solid enough foundation for them to build on ATPM's initial success. I know they can always use volunteers, so if you're interested, please send them a note to ATPMEditor@aol.com.

Thanks.

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As for me, I'll continue writing about my computer, my life, and my life with my computer. To start us off this month, I've got to tell you about Dogz. This is a program (that you can

buy for about \$25, give or take) that I got to play with using a demonstration copy on last month's copy of the Inside Mac Games CD-ROM. Here's the gist: you adopt a Dogz, a computer animated dog-like creature, and it lives on your desktop. The Dogz is a separate application, but shows up even when it's running in the background. The animal walks around on the desktop, snuffles, barks, scratches, whatever. To actually adopt a Dogz from the demo, you have to call and give a credit card number in exchange for an unlocking code. And even then the program needs a PowerMac to run fluidly.

But here's the darndest thing... these Dogz are really cute.

I'm a dog owner at heart and soul, but allergies (both mine and Tiff's) prevent us from having a real one. I left the demo of Dogz running for about an hour, pathetically luxuriating in the virtual experience of dog ownership.

You can pet Dogz with the cursor (which turns into a hand), and they hum, close their eyes, and eventually roll over on their backs. You can pick unruly Dogz up by the scruff of the neck, and they whimper and look pathetic. You can play fetch with them, train them with a squirt bottle, play tug with them, and they even get bored and go to sleep if you ignore them.

I'm afraid if I go on any longer I'll find Dogz under the Christmas tree. And truth is, while cute as a button, and housebroken right out of the box, I'd rather have a real dog.

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I have a good relationship with the folks at Ambrosia Software, and I don't want any of you to think my next comments are due to that relationship... so they aren't.

Ambrosia's latest shareware game, Escape Velocity, is really cool. And it's only \$20, which should shock everyone into paying the fee. I'd read about the game, so I knew it was going to be a little different than their usual, arcade revamps like Maelstrom (Asteroids), Apeiron (Centipede), Swoop (Space Invaders) and Barrack (Qix). But I wasn't prepared for this.

Escape Velocity is a full-fledged, full-blown, space commerce, war and piracy game, with ships, outfitting, trading, space combat, missions, a rebellion, and a rich plug-in interface for custom ships, accessories, and missions. It's a role-playing game, a conquest game, and an arcade game, all rolled into one.

And it's very well done.

I've been playing Escape Velocity for hours at a time, I'm sorry to admit. I consider it therapy now that I've given up editorial duties at ATPM. All that work time is now being spent playing this new, cool game.

It reminds me a little bit of Elite, back in the old Apple IIe days.

But it's better than I remember that game being.

During the month or so that the game has been released, three plug-in editors have been written, and about twenty plug-ins have arrived. Some of them are mediocre, yes, but some are well-thought out and complete. All in all, this game is worth the cost, and then some.

If Ambrosia ever decides to do a game for profit, and I dearly hope they don't, it'll be a great loss to the Mac community.

In fact, if I were running Apple, or at least a division of it, I'd suggest that Apple bundle Ambrosia's games with their computers, as soon as possible. After all they're shareware, and freely distributable. They're Mac-only, and they are undeniably cool. What better way to show new buyers what owning a Mac is all about? Cool games. Cool people. Cool computers.

I should suggest that to Ambrosia as a new tagline. "Ambrosia Software. Cool games. Cool computers." Hm.

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That's it for this month. It's been a bit of a stressful time, what with all the changes in my life, this magazine being the biggest of them. Next month I'll have my experiences with System 7.5.3 Revision 2, my SyQuest woes, a little about some new software I've been trying out, and more.

Thanks for reading.

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