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speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard

October 2007 brought Apple's new cat leaping into the Mac world. Mac OS X 10.5 (nicknamed *Leopard*) made its debut to stellar pundit reviews. But, a few weeks later, problems began to surface that tarnished those stars. Now, three months have passed. How well is the new big cat doing?

I leaped as well (metaphorically!) and grabbed a copy as soon as it was available, installing it on five of CCC's Macs:

- Power Mac G5 dual 2GHz PPC
- iMac 24" aluminum 2.4GHz Intel
- Mac mini 1.54GHz Intel
- MacBook Pro 2.2GHz Intel
- iMac 15" G4 800MHz PPC



This is a good representation of the Mac models for which 10.5 was designed. Excepting the G4 iMac. This venerable iMac does not meet 10.5's minimum system requirements (it's too slow). *Leopard* refused to install on the G4 iMac and so extraordinary measures were needed to shoehorn it in. After considerable strain, I can report that 10.5 runs fine on the old G4 iMac though sluggishly. I cannot recommend installing 10.5 on non-qualifying Macs if top performance is important.

Mac OS X 10.5 minimum system requirements:

- Mac computer with an Intel, PowerPC G5, or PowerPC G4 (867MHz or faster) processor
- 512MB of memory
- 9GB of available hard drive space

Speaking of performance, it is very good. The Intel Macs picked up a little speed over 10.4 (Tiger) and *Airport*, wireless, performance has been enhanced (though this is not a universal experience, see below). The G5 remains about the same and the non-qualifying G4 lost a bit. This was expected.

Also expected were the new and improved skills of *Leopard*. Automatic back up, Finder enhancements, Spotlight fixes, networking improvements and interface changes.

The Good—

Time Machine is spectacular. This is the new automatic back up tool. *Time Machine* gives the average Mac user no more excuses not to back up regularly and properly. It's all automatic.

Back ups happen hourly and weekly. Restoring a lost or damaged file is a no-brainer. You can even restore an entire Mac if its hard drive fails. Since the vast majority of all computer users (about 90%) never back up, *Time Machine* is a great solution to this perennial problem because it is so darned easy to use.

I like *Time Machine* lots and have four of the five Macs all backing up to one, central, external hard drive. But, my favorite *Leopard* feature is the improved networking. If your household or office has two or more Macs, the easier to use networking makes it a snap to connect the Macs together for file sharing, music sharing, photo sharing and screen sharing. The new screen sharing ability allows one Mac to see the screen image of another Mac and take over its controls. Great when you want to make a change, find a file or help another user. This all works flawlessly and securely within a local network.

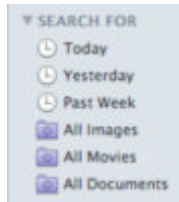
Very cool and useful is a new way to view Finder windows. Finder windows are the windows that you open to organize and launch your files. We have long had the ability to see our files as pretty icons, alphabetized lists and nested columns. Now, you can see them in *Cover Flow* just like *iTunes* shows you albums.

Open a Finder window and choose *Cover Flow* from the *View* menu. You will see the files and folders displayed in large, easy to identify icons. If a file is a PDF, QuickTime movie, picture, Word, Excel or Text file, the file is readable and viewable without needing to open it. This is super handy with a folder full of pictures with titles like DSC12689 and DSC54243. Look for software developers to make more formats work with *Cover Flow* when they upgrade.

Related to *Cover Flow* is *Quick Look*. Want to see the contents of a file in an instant? Just select the file and tap your space bar, if the file is in one of the formats mentioned above, it appears instantly, ready to read or view without launching its application.

The *Spotlight* search feature has been improved and enhanced. It's faster and more reliable now. Plus, *I just love this!*, you can search by name. Just hold down the Shift key when you select *Find* from the *File* menu.

Another favorite new feature is the inclusion of six smart folders in all Finder windows' side-bars. Click these to instantly find all of the



files you created today, yesterday or in the past week. Plus, you can find all of your pictures, all of your documents and all of your movies in just a few seconds.

The Bad—

There had to be a catch. Like any new operating system, Mac OS X 10.5 has its problems. Unless the upgrade is installed properly, disaster is a likely result. 10.5 seems more prone to disastrous installs than previous Mac OS X updates. Please follow the guidelines in the August 2007 issue of CCC News. You can find it here: <http://www.calcompcare.com/news10.html>

Leopard also has serious conflicts with many applications. Remove any fancy system hacks that you may have installed (*if you don't know what that means, you have nothing to worry about*) and be aware that all *Photoshop* versions older than CS3 will not run at all and even CS3 has serious problems. All back up software will be disabled. Some back up applications like *Déjà Vu* and *SuperDuper* have been updated and are now compatible, but many are still unusable. *Filemaker Pro 8* is unreliable and many other applications have serious problems. You can find a listing at the *MacInTouch* site:

<http://www.macintouch.com/leopard/compat.html>

A surprisingly large number of scanners from HP, Epson and Canon have compatibility problems. So do many All-In-One printers/scanner/fax machines. Software updates are almost mandatory here.

There are other issues, but the one that has troubled me most is that the Finder seems to deteriorate several weeks after installation. I have had to re-install *Leopard* on three of the five Macs that I am testing it on and will soon need to do so again on one of them. Very annoying! Oddly, the old iMac G4 is working fine.

The Ugly—

Appearance is an important part of Mac OS X. *Tiger* (10.4) had a great look and many of *Leopard's* new features enhance that. But, *Leopard* also has some very strange cosmetic changes that are ugly and confusing.

The menu bar, at the top of the screen, now has a translucent background, so you see the menus: File, Edit, View, etc. against a ghosted version of your Desktop picture. If you have a busy Desktop picture, the menus become hard to read.

Or, the Dock, which now sits on what appears to be a reflective glass shelf. All of the visual noise make it difficult to concentrate and recognize the icons. Plus, the little black triangle that sits under running applications has been changed to a little blue/white light. Many users have reported that they have trouble seeing this important indicator.

And, then there are *Stacks*. When a folder icon is placed in the Dock, its contents are displayed as a jumbled mess of a stack of icons instead of as an identifiable folder. Very messy, confusing and inefficient to use. This was touted as a big improvement by Apple, but has turned out to be almost universally hated and reviled.

Lastly the re-designed folder icons are unattractive and do not stand out when viewed along with other file icons, as they always have. I had a bit of trouble adjusting to this (Oh! My poor bifocaled eyes!).

So, Leopard has advantages and problems.

"What else is new?," you might ask. And, you'd be right. There are always teething pains with new operating systems. The first update, 10.5.1, has appeared and fixed a few problems. 10.5.2 is due any day now and should fix many more.

My recommendation is—

A bit of a wait. Another bug fix or two should get 10.5 ready for the rest of us. I'm guessing March or April will probably be the time to seriously consider this upgrade. However, if you are going to buy a new Mac soon, *Leopard* will be factory installed with no other options. Since most of the Bad stuff relates to upgrades to 10.3 or 10.4, a nice, clean factory install on hardware that requires it, should mean very few problems. That won't make the ugly parts any prettier, though.

Sorry! No room for a tip this month.

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