Southern Maryland
Mac User Group

20058-D Point Lookout Road
Great Mills, Maryland 20634
Meetings second
Monday of the month from 7pm to 9pm
at the SMARTCO warehouse.

FRESHLY SQUEEZED REVIEWS: Squeeze Me Some More
by Frank Petrie

Product: SuperGIF
Company: BoxTop Software
<www.boxtopsoft.com/supergif.html.>
Requirements: Macintosh Carbon and Classic; Windows
Price: $ 29.95 USD
Test Rig: PowerMac G4/DP 1.42Ghz/1.5 GB RAM
Review Date: 05 April 2005

PULL QUOTE: "Oh, squeeze me, squeeze me ..."

Web site design involves a lot of decisions. The
majority of these decisions are decided by your
demographic. And your browser's "standards." So, even
with the onslaught of broadband, which has allowed
Flash to flourish like crabgrass, you may still find
yourself in a position where you'll need to keep your
images static.

In light of this, it's still a good idea to keep your
file sizes as small as possible. According to Boxtop
Software, "SuperGIF is an automated GIF image and GIF
animation optimization tool. ... and is the only tool
of its kind to automatically optimize GIF images
losslessly. SuperGIF savings can exceed 70% with just
a Drag and Drop."

I used this app when I first started dabbling in web design in the previous century. Like I said earlier, BoxTop has an array of software to help with compressing images, among other things. Today, we're going to look at one of them that would best suit the creator of any site - SuperGIF.

THE JUICE

"Drag to the Applications folder." We're now in my element: a one trick pony that is great at what it does. The interface will you leave you unimpressed with only its fancy progress bar and simple preferences dialog, but the results will impress you. Remember what they say about small packages.

There's really not much to cover in this review. You can either Drag-n-Drop your files on the app or do it the roundabout way.

And if you're happy with SuperGIF, you can purchase the entire six tool suite in the BoxTop Super Bundle for just $134.95, a savings of well over 50%! (Yeah - it's a plug, but they have earned it!)

THE PITS

BoxTop's apps are getting long in the tooth. But, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And it did run at lightning speed o my dual. But even their site has endorsements from 1995, which begs questions, if not about the product, at very least the site. But, I digress.

THE RIND

Nada.

THE PULP

Hey, like I said, it's long in the tooth, but I'll be danged if it still didn't come shining through. You can download a demo from their site that will let you do everything but batch files.

Now, at $30, if you're only going to do a dozen files, I wouldn't recommend it. Do what you can with compression from within your graphic's application. But if you have a ton of files or maintain multiple sites, this is well worth the dosh.

"Oh, squeeze me, squeeze me ..."

RATING: 10 out of 10

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©2005 Frank Petrie - Freelance writer, Macsimum News contributing
editor, Curmudgeon
Email: phranky@mac.com
Archive: home.comcast.net/~phranky

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The Mac Mini: A review

By Bill Martens

The Bottom Line
Yes, we start here on this one. Why? Well, there is only one way to describe it. Absolute exhilaration. This is the feeling I got when I finally had my machine in hand. While the store had both models, I
went for the swankier $700 model of the machine.

At 1.42 ghz, 256mb of memory, and 80gb HDD, I figured this would be enough to actually replace any PC which was on a person™fs desk.

As I drove home, there I was sitting at the stoplight with the tiny user manual in hand trying to see if there were anything in there that would be new or different from the usual Apple user guide. Of course, it was all in Japanese but that was all right. I could still look at the pictures. I was rearing to get started but alas, no monitor in the car. Yes, this machine was small but definitely better money spent than most of the machines I have bought in the past 10 years.

The beginning
As I ripped open the box (not literally because the box

actually makes a very nice carrying case.), I found that the contents were exactly what the store had on display. A whole lot of nothing much.   Oh, don™ft take this the wrong way. It is impressive when the box can contain nothing and yet contain everything you need. In my case, it was an almost everything.

The Great Plug-in
As I discovered, there was no bus inputs directly to the machine for the keyboard and mouse. No surprise here but it meant that I actually needed to buy a bus mouse / keyboard to USB adapter for my machine. This was as simple as running back to the computer store, plopping down $17 and running back home. Now I had everything. (Of course I caught them 5 minutes before the closed and was left with that ™gThank God™h feeling of having just barely got the goods.)

I plugged the DVI to D-SUB converted into the DVI port on the back of the machine and attached my 21™h Dell monitor.   I then connected the Keyboard, Mouse, and speakers to the machine. Time wise, it was less than 5 minutes and I had everything connected.

Up and Running
When I had finally connected everything, I went for the whole shebang. I turned on the machine and it came up with the familiar twang of the Macintosh computer.   So far, nothing bad and nothing special.   But then I got a great surprise.

I purchased my machine in Japan, which left me with all the Japanese goods, but when I turned on the machine,

there was the nice surprise of being allowed to choose
your primary language. About 12 languages
were displayed and of course, I choose English. Then
the computer asked where I was in the world and being
of course and English user, it thought I was in the US,
Canada and the likes. But there was the option to
choose all countries with which I went ahead and choose
one of the two Japan options.

The Japan options depend upon the type of long distance
service you have. I guess they think people are
actually going to use the modem instead of the Ethernet
when most homes here in Japan now have DSL or Cable or
in many cases, 100mb Fiber

The machine also allowed me to choose my primary
keyboard input language. Although in Japan, I prefer
to use the English input system unless I absolutely
have to have the Japanese input.

Privacy issues?
After getting to this point, the computer then put me
into the registration mode. I didn™ft think much of it
at first but with
all of
the items that the page asked for, I was quite frankly
a bit surprised.   I put in a lot of information, some
of which I did not particularly like anyone else
having, like telephone number and date of birth.   But
when I left this information out, the computer bleeped
me and told me I had to enter it.

So like the bleeped person I was at this point, I went
ahead and entered the information. The computer liked

this very much and rewarded me with the next screen.
(This still did not allay my fears that someone at
Apple computer has access to information that they
could use for purposes other than those specified.)

Network on the Easy
The network connection screen was easy to connect to as
I was already connected to a network. No issues and no
worries. All of the screens were clear and easy to
understand. Within minutes I was up on the network and
the machine took everything there like a champ. The
next thing, I knew, I was setting up a .Mac account and
ready to communicate with the rest of the world.

Updates galore
The machine, one started, automatically went for the
updates. Of these the most significant one was the
update of the OS to 10.3.8.
This all happened automatically once I choose the
updates I actually wanted.   It downloaded them all,
installed them and finally asked for a restart.
What™fs that you say? A Restart? Yes, it wanted to
Be restarted. Of course those of us who have had to
deal with all the Microsoft updates on a daily basis in
our real world jobs would be happy if a machine only
required one restart.

That was it, I restarted the machine, and it came back
up and gave me the familiar OS X desktop.   That was
it. I was off. Installing all those apps that I use
on a daily basis and not missing a beat. Email,
browsing, and yes, even the real world stuff like Word
and Excel were there. But these also required their
own updates so I did them as well.

The future
The future is definitely bright for Apple. For a
machine that is no bigger than the average CD carrying
case, this machine carries a mighty wallop. While the
256mb memory is a bit short, I think the 1gb maximum
that is coming soon should be plenty considering what
the machine could actually do. I was amazed at the
small footprint of the machine and the fact that there
aren™ft too many of the feature tasks that it can™ft
perform.

Another minus, which I saw, was the fact that the
machine only comes with a combo drive standard rather
than a super drive. Since I am all into the DVD thing
now, this was actually a bigger minus for me thanit may
be for someone else.

Overall
I would say that this machine is well worth the money
and the extra dollars it costs to upgrade the little
things. But if Jobs really wanted all those PC users
to come out of the woodwork in droves and buy it, I
would say that he should have priced it about $100-150
less than what he did. As for me, I will use it with
my nice big 21™h monitor and my Japanese keyboard and
mouse.

About the Author
Bill Martens is currently a director for Apple
Pugetsound Program Library Exchange (A.P.P.L.E.) and
does system engineering for the United States Marine
Corps. He has been involved in the Apple
community since the 1980™fs. You can contact him at

billm@callapple.org.

FRESHLY SQUEEZED REVIEWS: The Last Piece of the Label Printing Puzzle
by Frank Petrie

Product: RollCall Directory v1.2
Company: Midnight Mage Software
<www.midnightmage.com/rollcall.html.>
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2, 10.3 or 10.4
Price: $14.99 USD
Test Rig: PowerMac G4/DP 1.42Ghz/1.5 GB RAM
Review Date: 06 April 2005

PULL QUOTE: " Time to juice up X. "

Steroids. They're not just for sports anymore. Time to juice up X. For example, printing phone list and labels from Address Book. Excellent start Apple, but I need to be able to print tags, contact lists with faces,holiday gift labels. etc. from AB for it to completely satisfy my demands! (Is that me or The Clear talking?) And I want to be able to finish off my half used label sheets, too!!

The authors at Midnight Mage Software have created an application so tightly integrated with Address Book, that you'll have difficulty determining where the one begins and the other one ends. Says Midnight Mage: "No longer be limited by Mac OS X Address Book printing capabilities! Specify the appearance of the address book YOU want to have! Set multiple columns, set the fields to display, change the font, size, style, color, and other layout options. Print with the simplicity that RollCall Directory provides combined with the power of OS X."

Hard copies and tags and bears, oh my! Let us gaze, my pretties! [That reference has absolutely nothing to do with this article, if anything. We regret its inclusion. Probably just the steroids again. - Ed.]

THE JUICE

Install. Now print addresses in any way that you have ever wanted to print them before.

This is so customizable, I don't know where to begin. You can create hard copies of your Address Book listings with or without pictures or customized artwork. It automatically puts them in alphabetical order, with a heading for each letter so that they're grouped. You can create name tags with or without pictures or customized artwork. You can create gift tags with or without pictures or customized artwork.

Why? Because RCD is tightly integrated with Address Book, just like Apple's iApps. From within the app you

can pick through your groups and such. Print out exactly the fields that you want. Choose the color and type of font. How many columns you'd like.

You can pick the color and adjust fonts in every kind of way you could wish for. (Have you noticed that it's the labeling capabilities that I'm really excited about?)

The Help File is very good and there is an excellent video on their site that gives you a brief how-to of the program. I highly recommend that you watch this before you even launch the program.

THE PITS

More pre-configured label choices would be nice, but in no way is that a deal breaker!. It has the standard label and envelope sizes ready to pick from, so you're not exactly left out in the cold. The only thing that I consider a slight negative is that there is no way to auto adjust margins for specific labels. For example, for an Avery 8160 label, the default size is for four lines. But if my address is only three, I'm left with a huge gap at the bottom. A bit annoying.

THE RIND

Nada.

THE PULP

Another no-brainer. RollCall Directory v1.2, at this low price, will relieve me of hours of messing about

with AppleWorks to blow through my holiday taggings and mailings.

I hope this is the kind of development that Apple is encouraging from third parties to beef up its existing software. Cause this is fantastic. I can do all my mailings from the database of one existing existing app, already in place. Indispensable.

Think I'll print out a label to BALCO.

RATING: 9 out of 10

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editor, Curmudgeon
Email: phranky@mac.com
Archive: home.comcast.net/~phranky

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