



REVIEW

Product: FontAgent Pro

Company: Insider Software <www.insidersoftware.com>

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later; 3 MB available memory; 5 MB available disk space

Retail Price: (US) \$69.95

Test Rig: Ti4/500; 768MB RAM

Review Date: 26 August 2003

As I said to myself sometime early last week, "Where is that #@*%^ font that I used in the newsletter? After going out side and recovering the pieces of my PowerBook from below my office window, I decided maybe I do need a font manager after all.

"FontAgent Pro is the only Mac OS X font manager you'll ever need. With just a few clicks you can repair, optimize and organize all your fonts - then build font libraries and logical sets that you can act manage, export, print and preview." Sounds good; let's see.

THE GOOD

Installation requires the by now familiar 'drag to the hard drive.' The interface will be immediately familiar to you. It has the same brushed aluminum layout as Apple's apps (i.e., Mail, iTunes, iPhoto, etc.). So you'll feel at home.

It manages fonts in both your X and Classic OSs. To use your computer's resources more effectively you can set FAP to open a Starter set of the fonts that you use daily. This keeps you from loading extraneous fonts and bogging down your system. And should you require some other fonts, FAP will automatically open the fonts of the document that you launch.

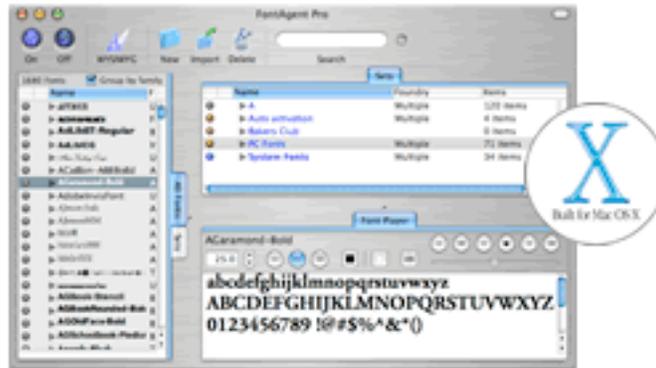
Of course, you can build sets in any number of ways - projects, families, foundry, etc. And FAP comes with a fully functional player that allows you (among other things) to automatically scroll, stop and reload font to a new set. This is a real time saver when you're first building your different sets. From the same player you can print font books in either hard copy or published to .pdf.

Also, when you import or optimize your fonts, FAP roots out duplicate and corrupted fonts. Another positive.

THE BAD

There is very little about using this app that I found intuitive, as compared to other font management apps currently available. Unless you have extensively used font managers, you're in for a serious learning curve. This is most definitely not an app for neophytes.

'OK,' you say, 'then just open up the manual and find out what you need to know.' Well ... that brings to ...



THE UGLY

To the newbie, the manual itself will be your biggest source of frustration. For example, nowhere in the manual is the company's URL. If you really want to help someone along or demonstrate that your company is there to support them, the very least that you can do is not force them to hunt down your site. The system requirements are only listed on the box. And - you guessed it - no URL there, either.

The site is not very supportive. In fact, the one day that I was at the site, I couldn't get it to download update through my browser, so I ended up using my ftp client, instead. However, I did find that their FAQ page was definitely useful.

NUTSHELL

I look back at what I have written here and find that FAP has many useful features. So, why do I find myself sitting on the fence as whether or not to recommend its purchase?

For me, this app was extremely frustrating cause I had a difficult time accessing these very features. I constantly was referring to the manual. Then again, I remind you that I'm an intermediate user and that their "Pro" version is off this app, so to a graphics professional a lot of this may be intuitive. Then again while not a master of font management, I have used other apps of this kind without this much aggravation.

All-in-all, I highly recommend that you first download FAP and take it for a test drive yourself. If it feels good, buy it. If you're ambivalent or frustrated, there are several other font managers out there that you can try, then make your decision. Like FontAgent.



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Frank Petrie, Technologies & Products Specialist
The Mid-Atlantic Macintosh User Groups Team (MaMUGs)
a division of **TAGteam** - *The Apple Groups Team*
<http://www.mamugs.org>
Email: phranky@mamugs.com