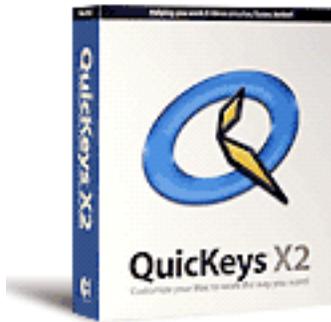


KICKING the TIRES

by Frank Petrie, MaMUGs, Technology Specialist



PRODUCT: QUICKEYS X2 V2.0.1

COMPANY: CE SOFTWARE, INC.

<WWW.QUICKEYS.COM>

REQUIREMENTS: MAC OS X 10.2.3;

128MB OF RAM; CERTAIN FEATURES

REQUIRE AN INTERNET CONNECTION

PRICE: (US) \$ 99.95

TEST RIG: T14/500MHZ; 768MB RAM;

OS 10.2.8

REVIEW DATE: 2003

INTERIOR SCENE: Home office

It's 1:10 am. We find our hero still slaving away at his computer. He's repeatedly writing the same words over and over. All of a sudden he sits up straight. A light bulb appears over his head.

CUT TO INTERIOR SCENE: Home office

It's the next evening. We find the office empty with its lights out. Everyone has apparently gone to bed. All is peaceful.

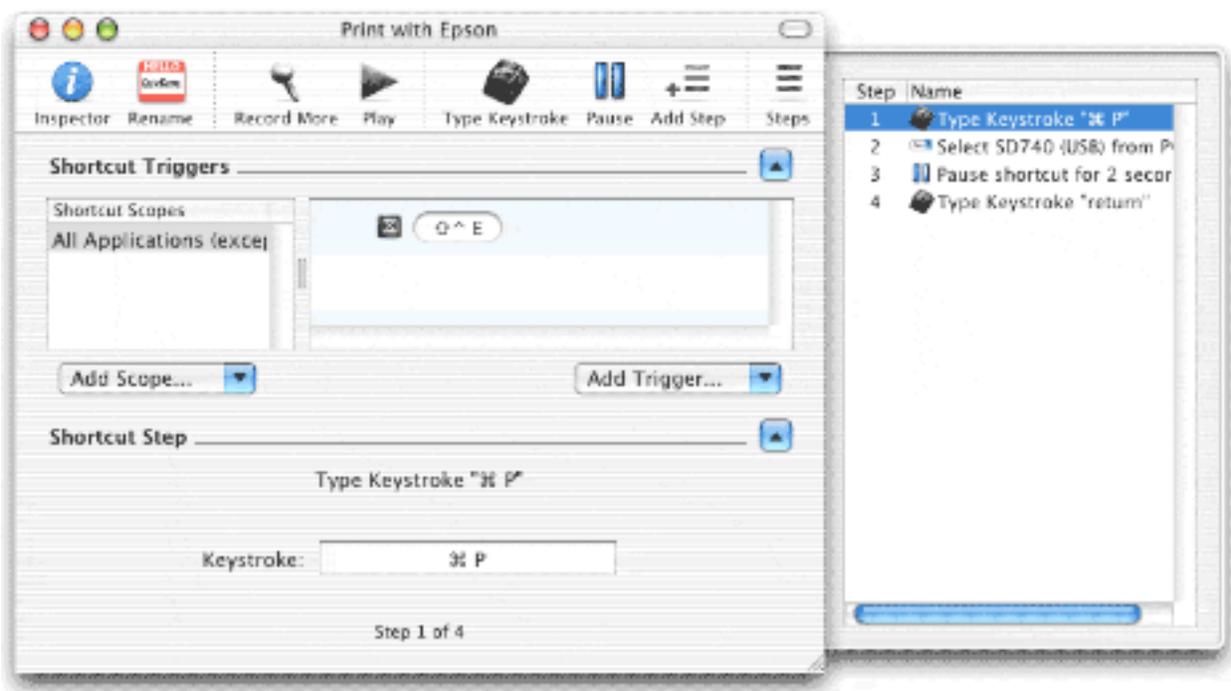
OK, there was something in the light bulb above his head other than lumens. But what? He realized that the situation was backwards: he was working for the computer when the computer should be working for him.

But how did can accomplish this? Automation software. And just as when you mention Kleenex, you mean any tissue, when you mention automation, you first think 'like QuicKeys.'" Well, the old man is still around and with a new version for X. Let's check it out.

THE GOOD

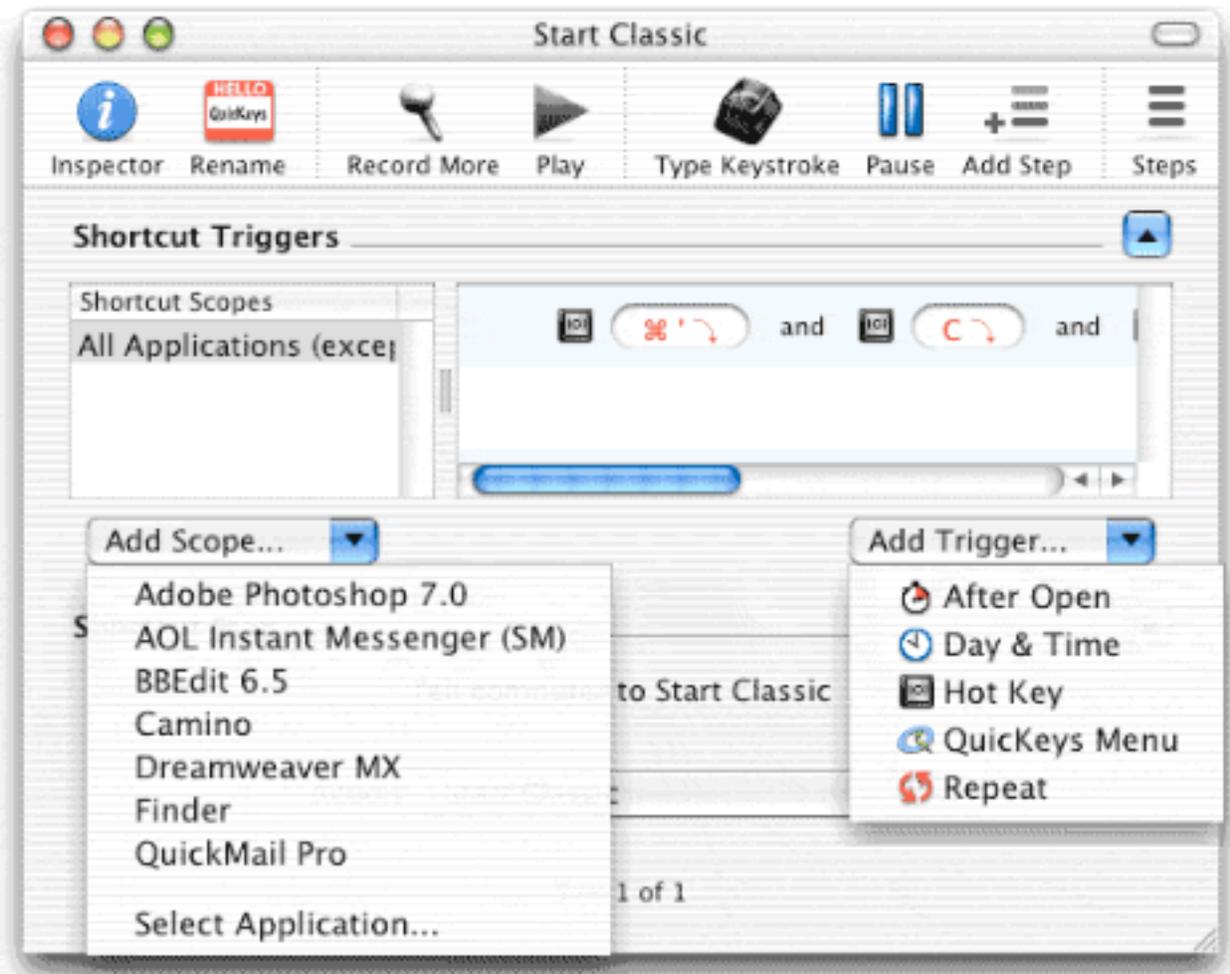
Installation is the standard drag-n-drop that we've become familiar with in the OS X Universe.

The heart of QK2X is its Editor. It's interface is easy to navigate and is laid out like any good Apple program should be. In fact, if you go to customize your toolbar, you can choose from a selection of 32 different actions (this doesn't include the Inspector, Rename, Play and Shortcut Debugging, which are all untouchable).



Actions can be made to work in all applications. You can also make specific actions for specific apps. And if you're a fan of floating palettes, you can create customizable button palettes for each 'Scope.' Basically, they function as the Dock does. But if you prefer having a different set of apps and/or files in a different environment (say like 'web work' and 'iMovie work') then you'll greatly appreciate this feature. It does make for less congestion than the dock, that's to be sure. It also can cling to the edge of your screen like Saran Wrap. Nifty.

You can create 'triggers,' as well, that are shortcuts that you can either set to reside in the Menu Bar's QuicKey icon or as a button in a document window.



Support is good. You get a hard copy manual, as well as a Help File and link to their online community.

THE BAD

This isn't actually a bad issue, but it's an interesting point. I can run Apple's free and powerful AppleScript from my menu bar to run the same scripts that I would run in the US\$100.00 QK2X. AppleScript I can run from my mouse, trackball or trackpad. And in conjunction with the built-in Dock, I can pretty much replicate

these same actions for no cost at all. QK2X I can also run from the keyboard and the mouse, trackball or trackpad.. What works best for you and your workflow, only you can decide.

A request that I would make of the authors, however, is that there should be some way to tell if the app in the toolbar is already open. This way I don't open too many apps and tax my system's performance.

THE UGLY

It found it to be buggy. Most of the time that I quit the app, it lost my toolbars. Result: I had to rebuild them when I relaunched the program.

I feel that takes less time to open the apps from the Dock or the Panther Finder pane. Or, better yet, open them all at once with a simple AppleScript. And it takes up real estate. A toolbar is just a series of aliases, as is your toolbar. So at this price, I can't really see the benefit of the program.

THE CLOSE

What computing was supposed to be about was saving time from dreary repetitive tasks and doing so in a timely manner. And to this end, the latest version of QuicKeys – X2 – is promising but behaves a bit quirky. It's still a very powerful, easily customizable application that would be a pleasure to use if it were a bit more stable.

Could it be that my computer was tainted by 10.2.8? All I can say is that it hasn't caused major failures in any of my other apps. My guess is if you're a QK devotee, you'll love this, so kick the tires and take it for a test drive.. As for me, AppleScript and a piece of shareware will suit me just fine.

RATING: 7 out of 10

PULL QUOTE: "It's every bit as malleable as your imagination."

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