

REVIEW | Get more—great software and great support in Stone Studio for OS X.

by RUSS CONTE



- Stone Studio™**
Stone Design
www.stone.com
Suite of design, web & productivity software. Mac OS X cocoa app.
MSRP: \$299 (+\$19 for CD)
Free 30-day demo download available
- INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS:**
- Create®** for Mac OS X \$149
Professional Design and Web Publishing
 - PhotoToWeb®** \$69
Digital photos—manage and publish to web
 - SliceAndDice™** \$49
Turn images into web pages
 - TimeEqualsMoney™** \$49
Time Tracking and Invoicing
 - PStill™** \$69
Convert EPS/PS to PDF
 - PackUp&Go!™** \$15
Instant compressing and uncompressing of files and folders
 - StampInStone™** \$49
PDF Watermarking
 - The Licenser Kit™** \$1995
Licensing solution for OSx, WebObjects and OpenStep

Stone Studio is a collection of seven applications for Mac OS X. First things first, this collection of software does not run on any other operating system, even including OS 9.x. This is a Cocoa set of applications, which means that it only runs on OS X. There is no version for Windows, Linux, Unix, Solaris or any other OS. It's a Mac only treat!

To the complete shock of many Mac observers, Stone Studio beat everyone in the race to have the first Cocoa applications on the market. Yes, you read that correctly, they beat Adobe, Macromedia, Corel, Procreate and anyone else you want to name (even Apple, because Stone Studio was out before OS X was finished!). How was this done? Stone Studio is primarily the work of one programmer, Andrew Stone, and he has been with the Mac for a very long time. He originally wrote Stone Studio for the NeXT system, and when Apple bought the rights, he coasted along for the ride. Converting Stone Studio from NeXT to Mac OS X was not that difficult, and that's how all these huge companies were beat by one man.

At the heart of Stone Studio is Create, which I will be showing at the June Internet SIG. Create is an application that crosses several boundaries. It can be used to make vector images, web pages, output TIFF files, all within the same application. It won't replace the entire Adobe or Macromedia suite of applications, but it's also only a fraction of the cost.

Here is the philosophy behind Stone Studio and everything they do:

- 1 | Software is a process—not a product**
Software is living—it's never finished and, like humans, it's never perfect.
- 2 | Help save the environment by publishing electronically**
By providing online help that can be printed by the end user, you minimize the impact your company has on the environment.

A few comments from their web site, www.stone.com, or in other words, don't believe their marketing or my article, here's what real Mac users have to say:

- “Wow...this is a really really responsive company :-))” [TE]
- “I'm very impressed with the ease of use. I also think your customer service thus far has been outstanding. Thank you.” [MV]
- “Wow. You folks are the epitome of excellent customer service. Other software companies could learn a thing or two from you.” [RS]
- “Dear Stone Design/Andrew Stone, I downloaded the Stone Suite, and I just want to say that it is the best software I have used on Mac OS X. Unbelievably stable, useful and easy, your software is revolutionary for making web content.” [DMP]
- “Create is too cool. I've used Photoshop and GoLive and draw programs since the dawn of the Mac but Create is the most fun I've had in years. I can't wait to incorporate anim GIFs. Beautiful and inspiring interface. Full of surprises. Thanks for the great work.” [KV]
- “Comparing two of my recent “books”...One was done using FrameMaker on OS9 and Adobe Acrobat 4. Looks okay. The other was done using Create and...uh...Create... Wow!” [MP]
- “Still absolutely thrilled with Create...it's amazingly cool. I've successfully used it for making graphical layouts for printing, making my website (www.neaci.com), and producing titles for use in videos I'm editing with Final Cut. It's got serious speed advantages over several other products I own, including the full Adobe and Corel suites! :-)) Thanks for a COOL product.” [SA]

- 3 | Provide free upgrades for all minor versions**
Don't “feed” off of your early adopters, but instead, reward them with freebies.
- 4 | Publish new minor versions when crashers or other anomalies are found...**

It's better if you acknowledge your mistakes than letting the press do it for you!

- 5 | ... But, don't publish new versions so often that users get annoyed**

An often heard complaint is that users don't want to have to upgrade too often.

- 6 | Solicit and incorporate user suggestions**

With OS X, it's easy to build in a suggestion box to get online bug reports and suggestions. See Help>Suggestion...

- 7 | Provide the software as inexpensively as possible**

By offering your wares cheaply, you reduce pirating and open access to more users. Consider educational and non-profit discounts.

- 8 | Rely on software quality, not expensive ad campaigns, to gain new users**

Although entrenched companies can throw the big bucks at advertising, it is not an option for the smaller independent software houses. Instead, guerrilla marketing, word of mouth, and schmoozing are your tools.

- 9 | Hire artists for your icons and ads, hire technical writers for your manuals**

The classic mistake is to let the programmer write the manual. Iconic artwork is what your users see, and even if your software is powerful and correct, cheesy icons will hurt you. Follow the carefully described Apple Human Interface Guidelines.

- 10 | Love what you write: software reveals your attitude**

Perhaps more than anything else, it is the care and craftsmanship that you invest into the design and architecture of your software that will give the user the best experience.

In short, Do As Ye Will—Harm Ye None

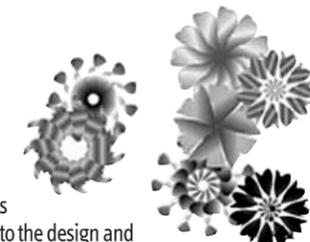
Stone Studio provides printable PDF versions of all of its online help, along with the fully-indexed and searchable Apple Help versions already included inside each application.

Stone Studio, which recently received a “Freakin’ Awesome” rating from MacAddict Magazine, includes applications to do graphic design with page layout and web publishing features, manage digital photos, track time and bill clients, and produce PDF from PostScript files. Stone Studio™ includes the following applications:

Create® 10.5.4 for Mac OS X is a vector illustration, page layout and web authoring application built on the idea that everything is an object. Patterns, blends, effects, art, and pages can be dragged and dropped to create multipage documents. Features include web page authoring, animation, multiple document master pages, patterns, neon, and special graphics and text effects.

PhotoToWeb® 1.4.4 manages digital photographs and produces websites from albums of images. It can produce thumbnails, do slide shows, and annotate, crop, rotate and scale images to produce configurable web sites. Turn CDs of photos into a giant linked website. Users can set the background and navigation bars and can save album styles for future use.

SliceAndDice® v2.5.3 lets the user easily create navigation bars, Javascript rollovers, image maps, and complicated mosaic tilings from any image. It features full control over image production and produces easy to read and modify HTML. By dragging SliceAndDice files into Create, the user can create



complex web pages with image maps and rollovers.

PStill™ 2.2.1 converts EPS/PS and other conforming PostScript to the Portable Document Format (PDF). Its EPS filter allows viewing EPS directly on Mac OS X in any application as antialiased PDF.



PackUpAndGo™ 2.3.1 creates compressed archive files (.tar.gz) from dragged in files and folders and automatically uncompresses dragged in archive files. With many user preferences, this application puts a graphical user interface on Unix archiving and compression commands, making it easy for the user to create compressed backups or prepare folders for mailing.



TimeEqualsMoney™ 1.4.3 tracks time spent for clients, and produces invoices and reports automatically.



GIFfun™ 3.1.8 creates web animations quickly and easily, using drag and drop technology. The source code to GIFfun is also available online.



CEO Stone adds, “The true power of OS X shows when you use the apps together. Use Create to make a navigation bar image. Drag it into SliceAndDice to slice it into pieces, and drag the pieces back into the custom navigation bar controls in Create and PhotoToWeb. Install PStill and then drag EPS files directly in Create. Generate your website in Create or PhotoToWeb and drag the resulting folder into PackUpAndGo to make an archive that can be easily transferred to a web server. It's all seamless.”



So would you like to see this Mac only software? Come to the Internet SIG on June 18 at Micro Center.

If you have any questions about Stone Studio, you can visit their web site at www.stone.com. Enjoy the world of great Mac OS X software!

Guide to levels of Mac OS X software implementations.

- FULL ADVANTAGE**
Cocoa Access Mac OS X features using an object framework. (Cocoa makes best use of OS X operating system.)
Java 2 Develop Mac apps using Sun's cross-platform programming language.
- INTERMEDIATE**
Carbon This framework uses more traditional methods to access Mac OS X features.
- BASIC**
Classic Older programs run in a compatibility layer (OS 9.x) without advanced features.