The meeting on Monday 11th January 2016 will be at Covent Garden's Sun Tavern
66 Long Acre London

Meeting Monday 11 January 2016

7pm
Newsbyte by Paul
Software snapshot: Apple TV - what it can now do
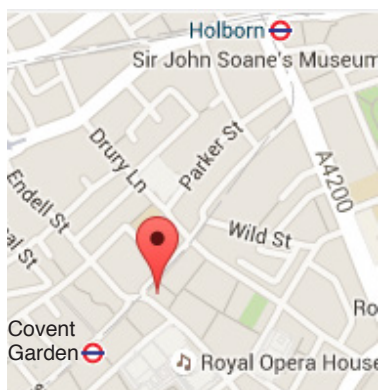Q&A: your questions answered within reasonable bounds.

8pm
An introduction to Typeitforme by Riccardo Ettore
http://www.ettoresoftware.com/

9pm
The bar remains open

Near-by Cycle Stands

Drury Lane 16
Tavistock St 22
High Holborn 16
Wellington St 5
Southampton St 5
William IV St 5

Internet & routers

My internet provider is Orange, they were taken over by EE (Everything Everywhere) a while ago and now BT has them. I have been fairly satisfied with the service EE have provided but I thought I would test them under their new ownership. BT have been claiming all sorts of advantages in recent years so perhaps I could get an improved router with higher speeds. After a good deal of questioning and phoning I finally spoke to a very helpful chap who arranged for me to have a new router, but far more importantly he could arrange for me to have a fibre optic connection. This he told me would not involve the wiring to the house but only to the BT OpenReach junction box in the street. Once the changes were made they would notify me and this they did on 7 January. A speed check revealed that the download speed had jumped from 5.76Mbps to 23.42! *Editor*

iPad Pro Shows the Promise of iOS Productivity

I've long had a love-hate relationship with the iPad as a do-it-all device for work and play. I'm enamoured of the idea of an iPad as a lightweight productivity gadget for hardcore work sessions while on the go, and have consistently used an iPad Air 2 in this capacity. It's the device I am most likely to grab as I head out the door on a newspaper assignment.

When it's time to kick back after work, the iPad is my go-to gizmo for streaming Netflix videos, and for reading ebooks and comic books. I also rely on the iPad for editing pictures before I upload them to Instagram because the tablet offers more space for visual tinkering than my iPhone.

Ah, but I've run into a number of problems with the iPad Air 2. It feels cramped for word processing, and even more so when I try using iOS 9's Split View with a story draft on one side and my notes on the other. And, while I love the concept of using a keyboard case for hardcore typing, I often curse at flaky Bluetooth connections.

On the recreational side, the iPad Air 2 has been fine for watching video and reading novels, but comic books are a bit too small. As for photo editing, I find using my fingers frustrating, but styluses have never worked that well.

It is no wonder I've felt an affinity for Microsoft's Surface tablets, which solve all these problems. They have bigger screens, keyboard covers that attach via a proprietary connector, a matching stylus, and more. Yet they're thin and light enough to serve reasonably well as pure tablets (see "Microsoft Surface: A Tale of Two Computers," 11 March 2014, and "Microsoft's New Hardware Challenges Apple's," 14 October 2015).
You can see where I am going with this…

The Gigantor iPad -- Apple's long-rumored extra-large iPad Pro has finally arrived to address shortcomings in smaller iPads, as well as to (Apple prays) shore up sinking tablet sales. The company, which previously went small with iPad mini models for those seeking increased portability, now is trying the opposite approach with its new jumbo iPad for those craving increased screen real estate.

And the iPad Pro's dimensions are only half the story. Apple has begun a new conversation with the iPad Pro, one that centers on productivity. Certainly, the company previously positioned its iPads as work machines via its iWork suite of apps. But now for the first time it's selling its own accessories to help users get stuff done.

These include the Smart Keyboard, which is a Smart Cover with a built-in keyboard. The Smart Keyboard, like Microsoft's Surface Type Covers, connects to its parent machine via a proprietary connector that dispenses with sometimes-unreliable Bluetooth.

Apple's other marque iPad Pro accessory is the Apple Pencil, a stylus to boost the device's usefulness for drawing, painting, diagramming, note taking, and more. The Apple Pencil, made from scratch as an iPad companion, is intended to work better than third-party styluses.

I've spent the past few weeks putting the iPad Pro and the Smart Keyboard through their paces. I also dabbled with the Apple Pencil to edit photos and such, but for the stylus's real test I turned it over to a couple of artist friends.

The Basics -- An iPad Pro is unmistakably an iPad with styling similar to Apple's other tablets — just much bigger, with a 12.9-inch screen, compared to a 9.7-inch screen on the iPad Air 2. This represents a 78 percent increase in size.

The iPad Pro, like other iPads, is available in silver, gold, and space gray. Apple sells a 32 GB model for $799 and a 128 GB model for $949. Adding cellular connectivity to the 128 GB model raises the price to $1,079 (there's no 32 GB cellular model).

An iPad Pro isn't much thicker than the next-smaller iPad, at 0.27 inches (6.9 mm), compared to the iPad Air 2's 0.24 inches (6.1 mm). An iPad Pro weighs 1.57 pounds (0.71 kg), just a tiny bit more than the original 1.54-pound (0.70 kg) iPad, and considerably lighter than a 13-inch MacBook Air weighing in at 2.96 pounds (1.34 kg).

Apple claims desktop-caliber iPad Pro performance with the new A9X processor, a claim that's difficult to test since there's no way to run the same desktop apps on an iPad Pro.

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Webpage: http://appleusergroupresources.com/special-offers-with-codes/

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USB-C Hubs: Is this the perfect MacBook multi connector?

A couple of days ago I was speculating that we would soon see some impressive hubs to enable me to connect all those peripherals to my star-turn Apple MacBook. On the face of things, with its single USB-C port, the MacBook is decidedly short on expansion. I was looking forward to a small portable hub that would offer power-through capabilities as well as an array of useful ports. And voilà, no sooner thought than done.

This pretty Hyper hub ticks all the boxes. Made especially for the MacBook, it even comes in the three Apple colours, silver, space-grey and gold. It clicks into the side of the computer and provides pretty impressive expansion. In addition to a USB-C socket for power input or peripherals, it offers two USB 3 ports and no fewer than two SD-card slots: SDXC and micro SDXC. My only wish would be a second USB-C socket to power an external drive while powering the computer.

If this hub is robust and well made there is nothing not to like. It could be the perfect expansion device for photographers.

So far it appears to be available only in the USA, but for a very reasonable $50.

Update: Satechi, a long-established brand has introduced what appears to be an identical product for $40 and is already available from Amazon in the USA. USB-C Multihub for Apple MacBook now available in UK for £20.99

NOTE: A reader, Gavin, has pointed out that this item is in fact the older model without a USB-C power-in port. This explains the price. While it will still work bear in mind that you will be restricted to battery power when using peripherals. This is a criticism levelled at all earlier USB-C devices. My apologies for the confusion.

There's a big pent-up demand for such a device, particularly among photographers who want quick access to an SD-card slot. Today I learned that the device is now available under a different branding, that of the well-established accessory company Satechi. The new version, with USB-C port, is available from Amazon in the USA for $39.99.

"There's a big pent-up demand for such a device, particularly among photographers"

The earlier Satechi hub (without the USB-C power-through) is now available in the UK for a reasonable £20.99. But bear in mind there is no power-in USB port so you will be stuck with battery power when using peripherals. No doubt the new model will arrive at Amazon UK soon, so keep your eyes open.

If you buy the old version using this link a miniscule commission will come to MacFilos so thank you in advance for supporting the site.

All the articles on this page come from Michael Evans www.macfilos.com. These and many others are well worth reading.

The iPad Pro has a 2732-by-2048-pixel display, which is a higher resolution than that of any other iOS device, and tops even the 2560-by-1800-pixel resolution of a 13-inch MacBook Pro.

However, the iPad Pro's screen density is 264 pixels per inch, less than the 401 ppi of the iPhone 6s Plus and the 326 ppi of the iPhone 6s. Practically speaking, it's hard to tell the difference.

The iPad Pro is exactly like other iPads in another respect: its Home screen shows only four icons by five icons. This verges on the absurd on such a large screen since there's enough empty room for another row and another column, which would increase the number of icons per screen from 20 to 30.

The iPad Pro has four speakers, compared to two on the other current iPads, with speaker pairs on each of the gadget's long edges. Audio is better and more powerful, as a result, with an automatic rebalancing as the tablet moves from portrait to landscape mode.

Time for Work -- I wasn't sure what to expect when I started using an iPad Pro on loan from Apple. Its dimensions, at least on paper, struck me as ungainly, even as I lusted after its generous screen real estate. Would the iPad Pro be a boon or a burden?

It turns out the iPad Pro is highly portable even though it looks and feels a bit like a cafeteria tray. My loan tablet was nearly effortless to carry, even when sheathed in Apple's Silicone Case, and with a Smart Cover installed. Its minimal thickness makes up for its vast horizontal and vertical dimensions.

I'd compare this to, say, toting around Apple's 12-inch MacBook, which has more modest dimensions, but is a bit heavier than the iPad Pro at 2.03 pounds (0.92 kg). I have no preference here based on roughly comparable portability specs. My wife's MacBook Air, on the other hand, now feels burdensome because of its much greater weight, even though it has similar horizontal and vertical dimensions.

As I expected, the bigger screen on the iPad Pro turned out to be a game changer in a number of respects.

Using it as my main work computer for a time, both at the office and on the go, I felt little of the claustrophobia that smaller iPad screens sometimes triggered.

Split View makes much more sense on an iPad Pro. The left and right panes are each nearly the equivalent of a smaller iPad screen in portrait mode — instead of slivers.

My modus operandi on the iPad, with a word-processing window on the left and my notes in Evernote on the right, mimicked how I work on a Mac or a Windows PC (with similar split-screen arrangements), and I felt comfortable laboring for hours on the tablet screen.

The problem? Many apps haven't yet been updated for Split View, meaning I was forced to make big adjustments in order to get my work done. I write primarily in the Google Docs app, for instance, but the app didn't work with Split View (even after a recent update). So I had to search for an alternative. After trying Apple's Pages, Microsoft Word, and Quip, I settled on Markdown-friendly Byword.

I got a surprise, however, when I tried writing with the iPad Pro in a portrait instead of a landscape orientation. Google Docs functioned better in this position, after I experimented a bit with text size, since I could fit a lot more of a document on the screen than I could in landscape mode. Such an orientation is

To read the whole story, go to: TidBITS