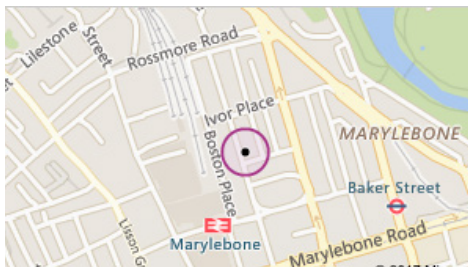


The meeting on Monday 8th January 2018 will be downstairs at the Sir John Balcombe London NW1 6HE



Members Only Special Offers

Current special offers

- Sparkle website builder: 20% Discount
- TechTool Pro 9.5: 20% Discount
- AgileBits 1Password 6: 25% Discount
- Boom 2 Volume Booster (Mac): 50% Discount
- Take Control Books: 30% Discount
- Joe On Tech Guides: 20% Discount on All Books
- Teams ID, a Password Manager for Teams: 33% lifetime Discount
- EverWeb by RAGE Software: 50% Discount
- Eltima Software: Up to 60% Off OS X Apps
- Noteboom Tutorials: 33% Off Annual Memberships
- Prosoft Engineering: 25% Discount
- Que Publishing Products: 35-45% Discount
- SlideShark iPad PowerPoint Viewer: Free App plus Special Offer
- Opus][Complete Collection: 25% Discount

We start at 7pm with Newsbyte. Please contribute with your opinions as the News unfolds

This month's main event is Special Interest Groups

Friendly small groups talking about Macs, iPhones, iPad and Apple problems and successes!

We have a great raffle this month of coffee table Apple design books: "Iconic" and "Keep it simple"

Come along, grab a beer and have an enjoyable social evening with tech.

iPad Pro

Anything you can do, you can do better.



The iPhone Upgrade Program: A Year in Review

I now have an iPhone X and have returned my iPhone 7 Plus, thus completing one full cycle of Apple's iPhone Upgrade Program, and I thought I'd share my impressions and answer any questions you may have.

For those out of the loop on the iPhone Upgrade Program, here's a quick refresher: In the United States, cell phones used to be sold by carriers on a two-year contract. You'd get the phone at a low, subsidized price, usually \$200 or so, and would pay off the rest of the phone's cost as part of the service fee for the next two years.

Carriers tired of this approach, and after T-Mobile successfully implemented an installment plan for buying the iPhone 5 in 2013, the industry began phasing out subsidized phones and contract service.

Some pundits, like Jay Yarrow, formerly of Business Insider, claimed that this would doom Apple. But as we now know, that was far from reality, because Apple adapted to the new environment.

Many people don't want to cough up the \$649 to \$1348 for a new iPhone all at once, so carriers started offering installment plans that let customers pay the phone off over 24 months. Most of these plans let you trade in a phone after a year or so for a new one, assuming the phone is in decent condition. Apart from activation fees, this installment approach costs you nothing extra beyond perpetual device payments. If you pay off a phone instead of trading it in, it's yours to keep.

Apple, seeing a market opportunity, launched its own installment program, the iPhone Upgrade Program, which is essentially the same as the carrier installment plans, except that it includes AppleCare+, which explains why its monthly fee is higher than plans from the carriers.

(I got a chance to use AppleCare+ with my iPhone 7 Plus since I stupidly broke the screen while on vacation just days after acquiring it. Getting it fixed required a typical Apple Store visit with the two-hour drive, two-hour wait in the snooty mall with no food, followed by a two-hour drive home. However, I paid only \$29 plus \$2.68 in sales tax for the repair instead of the usual \$149 fee. You get two screen replacements with AppleCare+ at that price before you have to start paying full price to fix a cracked screen.)

Now, to take some of the mystique out of all of this: the iPhone Upgrade Program is actually an interest-free loan administered by Citizens One. Every year, when you order a new iPhone through the program, Citizens One checks your credit (a "hard pull," which can negatively affect your credit score) and issues you a new loan if you're approved.

Despite being administered by a third party, the iPhone Upgrade Program has some uniquely Apple pros and cons.

iPhone Upgrade Program: Hands-On Experience -- My first impression of the iPhone Upgrade Program in 2016 was not great. It was the middle of the night, and not only was I sleepily fumbling to order an iPhone 7 Plus quickly, I also had to fill out a loan form. It wasn't onerous, but when you're fighting the rush and unstable servers, every second counts. Everything went through, but the extra paperwork prevented me from getting the iPhone 7 Plus on day one — it arrived a week after launch.

I know, that's the very definition of a first-world problem, but because I do this for a living, I'm under pressure to get Apple products as soon as possible so I can tell you about them. Also, it stands to reason that iPhone Upgrade Program customers are Apple's most loyal and want each new iPhone right away.

After you place your order, there's no way to know if Citizens One has approved you until you receive an approval email. That could take hours or even days, so if you're trying to beat a rush, it adds extra stress. And if you entered something incorrectly, which is easy to do in the middle of the night, you're set for an even longer delay. I hope Apple improves this onboarding process in the future.

However, Apple made up for it this year, when it came time to order the iPhone X. Several days before pre-orders began, I was prompted to open the Apple Store app, choose my model, and work through the approval process beforehand. When pre-order madness hit in the middle of the night, it took only a couple of taps on my iPhone to complete my upgrade. Some iPhone Upgrade Program customers didn't receive their iPhones on the first possible day, but it seemed to give us better odds. As it should, since we're giving money directly to Apple instead of a third-party seller.

Once you're in the program, everything is automatic. The credit card you supplied when you

Go to TidBITS#1398/18-Dec-2017 for the full article

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Apple's new iMac Pro: Not the best choice for photographers

I was drawn in by news of the snazzy slate-grey iMac Pro that is now starting delivery to customers. It's a gorgeous beast and no mistake. But is it a sensible choice and, perhaps more to the point, is it going to be essential for the prolific stills photographer? Blistering performance built in. But the expensive iMac Pro cannot be upgraded. You must decide on the specification the day you order. No second thoughts

I've been sitting on my current set up — a late 2014 iMac 5K and early 2015 (the first generation) MacBook for too long. In computing terms, these are both antediluvian relics. Yet they are still plodding on reliably and effectively, so much so that I keep putting off upgrading, hoping that something will turn up (in the words of the ever-optimistic Wilkins Micawber).

The iMac Pro could well be that device, I thought. But after seeing the price list and asking myself whether I need all that computing power, I've grown somewhat lukewarm. Add to that the fact that the machine is totally lacking in upgrade capabilities, and the thick end of £7,000 begins to look extravagant, even for a power user.

Computer for everyone?

I was therefore encouraged to read The Verge's review of the iMac Pro in which they state firmly that this isn't a computer for everyone. Even those of us who imagine we have a professional need for computing excellence probably don't need quite so much excellence. Too much of a good thing. ... The upshot is that unless you are doing really processor-intensive work such as extremes of video editing, the iMac Pro is overkill and could prove to be money unwisely spent.

My ditheriness continued as I read why photographers should not buy the iMac Pro on the Photblogger site. It's overkill, pure and simple, and I am now persuaded to keep the credit card in my wallet for another few months (at least).

A top-specification iMac 27in computer will cost £1,200 less than the base iMac Pro. But could you be buying into old technology that will soon be overtaken? Probably.

Pricing of the iMac Pro is interesting. The

cheapest model, with a 3.2GHz 8-core Intel Xeon W processor, boosted to 4.2GHz, 32GB of RAM (probably too little, it has to be said), 1TB SSD and the Radeon Pro Vega 56 graphics card is listed in the UK (including tax) at £4,899. This would probably be right for me, perhaps with boost to 64GB of RAM to bring the price to £5,619. The mid-spec model, with the 3GHz 10-core boosting to 4.5GHz, 64GB RAM, 1TB SSD and the Pro Vega 64 graphics card, tips the till at £6,879.

The full house model, with the same 10-core processor but with 128GB memory, 2TB storage and the Pro Vega 64 costs no less than £9,039. It's all a big dollop of cash, particularly if you don't need such performance and you know you will never be able to upgrade.

By comparison, buy a current 27in iMac model and spec it to the limit (4.2GHz quad-core i7, turbo 4.5GHz, 64GB RAM, 2TB SSD) and you are looking at £3,689, over a thousand cheaper than the base iMac Pro. It's a different beast, however, and this is important if you are looking for maximum performance. It is also necessary to bear in mind that the iMac Pro is new and therefore state of the art. The current iMac is old hat and due to be replaced sooner, I suspect, rather than later.

My current iMac, as I said, is still performing reasonably well but it is beginning to show its age when it comes to processing speed. It's only natural. Even a base iMac from today is sure to be faster than my top-specced model from 2014. That's the way of the computing world. Unfortunately, though, I can't justify buying more of the same when I don't know what is going to happen next year.

it's hard to resist the beautiful grey iMac Pro

Much as I love the form factor of the iMac, I have always had reservations about needing to change that gorgeous 27in high-resolution screen every time I need more processing power. For instance, in the days of separate computers and monitors I was very happy for five years with Apple's 27in Cinema Display. I would probably be similarly content with one of the latest monitors from LG.

Box of tricks

I can't help feeling that an upgradeable box of tricks under the desk and a fine high-definition monitor above would be just the ticket. And only this week I saw that LG is introducing a new and enticing range of

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Mac-ready Thunderbolt monitors, including an ultra-wide 21:9 version which gives the benefit of two screens in one. Just the job for me with my multitude of windows and reference panels open at one time. But finding a Mac processor to work with such a monitor is not so easy.

If you wish to go down the monitor/computer route as an alternative to the iMac, there isn't much choice at the moment. The elderly Mac Mini isn't up to the job and the old Mac Pro is still too expensive and hangs by a thread to life. We know that it isn't long for this world and buying one now would be a mistake.

The Mac Pro cylinder offers upgradeability and you can start off with a basic model costing £3,900. You still need a monitor and you will undoubtedly soon be adding extra memory. The big downside of this computer is that it was introduced seven years ago in 2010. A replacement is strongly rumoured, so it probably isn't such a good buy after all

The only real alternative, currently, is to buy a MacBook Pro. If I did that, I could replace both the iMac and MacBook with one versatile computer. This is something I've pondered before and written about here on Macfiles. There is a long list of pros and cons.

On the one hand, having just one computer is great when everything is going well. On the other hand, having a backup device has been a lifesaver on at least two occasions when the main computer gave problems. And I am always worried at the thought of losing the portable while on some journey or other — then returning home to an empty desk instead of the mostly faithful old iMac. It also means travelling with a heavier computer

(the MacBook Pro) than a real lightweight (the MacBook).

Above all, using a portable and a monitor as a main desktop device is a compromise with the risk of too many cables and a degree of awkwardness — even if you treat the portable as a computing box and consign it to a nearby shelf. But that, I think, is always a pity because you are wasting that screen.

Two in one

These days, however, keeping two computers in sync is easy enough. Especially since Apple introduced the shared desktop and with the proliferation of backup services such as iCloud and Dropbox, there is no excuse for being out of sync. These very same cloud facilities also mean that in the event of the loss of a computer you can be up and running pretty quickly, just as soon as you've dropped by the Apple Store and crossed their palms with silver from the insurance company.

The upshot of all this agonising is that I am no further forward in my quest for the ideal computing solution. I'd probably be disappointed and downright worried if I were to reply on just one MacBook pro, yet at the same time I see no compelling reason to upgrade at the moment. There's always the worry that you upgrade and then something special crawls out of Apple's design department within a few months. As they used to say in my native Lancashire: "In doubt, do nowt".