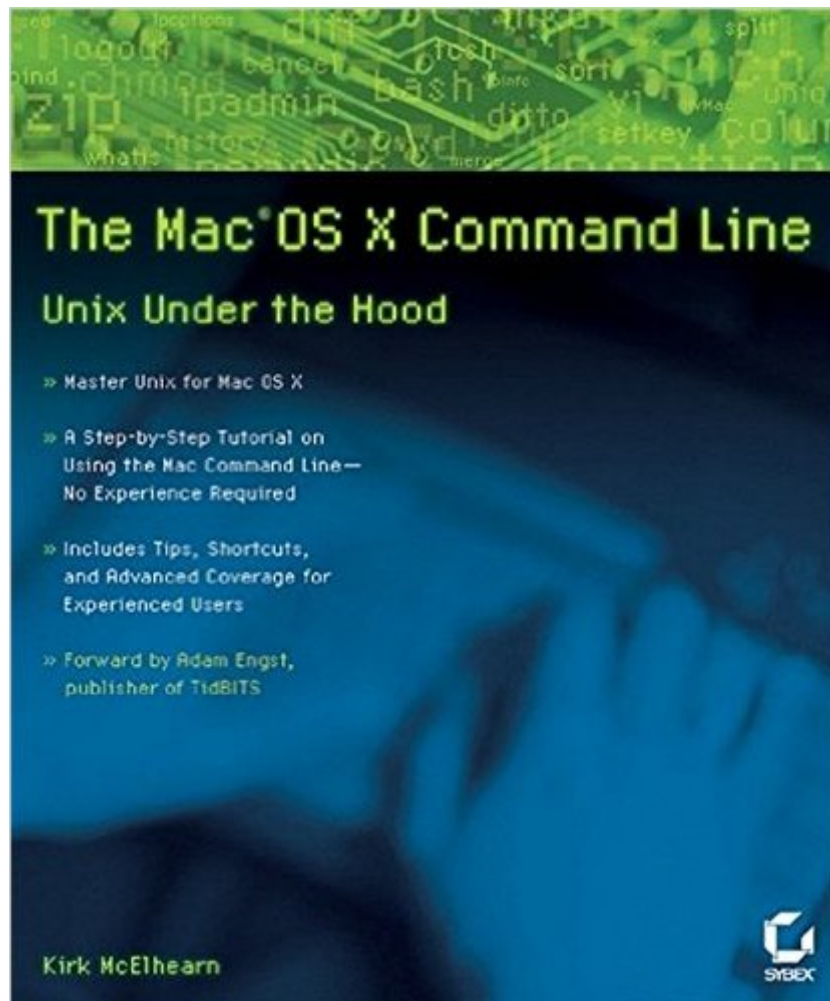


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The Mac OS X Command Line: Unix Under The Hood



Synopsis

The Mac command line offers a faster, easier way to accomplish many tasks. It's also the medium for many commands that aren't accessible using the GUI. The Mac OS X Command Line is a clear, concise, tutorial-style introduction to all the major functionality provided by the command line. It's also packed with information the experienced users need, including little-known shortcuts and several chapters devoted to advanced topics. This is a book to get you started, but also a book you won't soon outgrow.

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Customer Reviews

As anyone who's used one of Kirk McElhearn's other books on the Mac OS will be unsurprised to hear, I found this book very easy to follow -- so easy in fact that I found I could skip the first few chapters. That's probably because I'm not a complete command-line virgin (I remember the days before Windows and the first Mac OS, and as a web designer I've done a bit of tinkering in Unix on some of the web servers I use) but even if you are, from my impression of the first chapters, this book can tell you everything you need to know to start using the command line. The book is designed as a chapter-by-chapter tutorial, teaching you the things you need to know in a methodical order, but it contains enough information, and has a good enough index, to be used as your main reference for the command line once you've mastered the basics. My only criticism would be that while it tells you how to do all sorts of useful things, it doesn't have enough real-world, detailed examples of the kind of uses you could put your new knowledge to -- I was expecting some kind of 'case studies' feature, giving real examples of how to use commands you've just learned to

automate your back-up procedures, for example. The information's all in there, but to some extent you have to work out what you can do with it for yourself. But I guess that's only a minor criticism -- you probably wouldn't read this book in the first place if you didn't have some idea of the kind of thing you can do with the command line. So all in all, it's a great starting point, and I can see that in the future I'm going to find it a valuable reference.

Structured in a distinctive but helpful way, "The Mac OS X Command Line: Unix Under the Hood" is quite a solid introduction to the command line, a mechanism that not only speeds and simplifies many tasks but also lets you do a number of things unavailable under the GUI. Its 400+ pages, arranged fundamentally as a tutorial, are replete with basic steps and shortcuts alike. The book covers everything from Terminal ("gateway" to the command line) to the file system to text editing and printing; in the later chapters, it moves on to such relatively advanced topics as file compression and archiving, groups and permissions, networking, program and process management, system maintenance, and shell configuration. Interleaved between the chapters (and here is where the book's structure is distinctive) are sections devoted to key Unix concepts that recur to the point of transcending multiple chapters; these nine sections, referred to as Interludes, tackle things like command syntax, pathnames, redirection, the "open" command (more powerful than it may sound), wildcards, and ways of automating commands. Besides obviously providing a nice treatment of the basics, the book offers plenty of advanced material for the experienced user. The index is nice to see and easy to use. Other nice touches are a command list, chapter summaries in the introduction, and an appendix with additional readings. Allowing for a variety of problem areas, in large measure evidently outside the author's control, this is a book well worth reading and using. It is true that some of the editing errors are thoroughly confusing (references to subsequent material as supposedly already presented, references to misidentified chapters, related graphics positioned out of logical order, and so on); still, the book is redeemed by the readily understood and applied, comprehensive, and mostly well-organized content. Chuck Brandstater

I picked up this book in order to have a basic reference of OSX's terminal. I wasn't disappointed with the introduction and its reasoning as to "why you should buy this book and read it"; however, I felt disappointed in it as a reference. After working through it, I did have a greater knowledge of the terminal. However, most terminal commands, whether they be file manipulation or OS/application manipulation - are going to be things that a person refers to on a case-by-case basis. In other words, it's almost impossible to have every single command memorized. Thus, I'd resort to trying to

use it as a reference later on... and just found that it's clunky. What would take me a few minutes to find on Google would take me at least ten, if not more, time to find in this book. In short: It's great for an introduction to Unix on OSX, but I'd recommend trying something else if you just want a reference book of commands.

I found 2 chapters to be very useful, Chapter 12 on Working with Users, Groups and Permissions and Ch. 14 on Managing Programs and Processes. The remaining chapters are pretty much standard Unix commands; but, very well written for Unix novices. Overall the book is well written that I would use it as a Unix reference for commands that I am familiar with (example, didn't know ls -F would show me the directories with a slash).

I remember the old days when I had to learn the MS-DOS command line back in the 80s to control my computer. I recently purchased a used MacBook Pro and wanted to regain that type of control over my computer, while learning about the Unix/OS X system. This was the book for me to do that. I will probably go beyond this as I hope to build on this information and move to using Linux. This was the way for me to start the journey and I'm happy with my choice.

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