

Starry Night Pro Plus

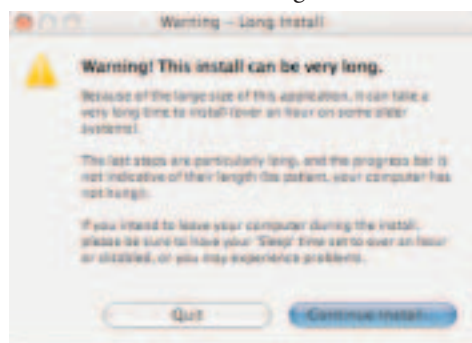
REVIEW

by Jacquelyn Adler

Having always lived in or near Chicago, the night sky has never shown more than the brightest of stars to my naked eye. I remember being taken to the Adler Planetarium as a grade school student, and hearing the lecturer explain as the lights were dimming that we were being taken far from the city's glare. I remember my first feeling of wonder as the sky lit up with stars. Imaginova's Starry Night Pro Plus brings back these same feelings through my home computer.

Inside the box is the application on DVD. Another DVD, SkyTheater, contains a feature length video which takes you on a voyage through our solar system. There is a book, Starry Night Companion, 192 pages long, which is a sort of 'Cliff's Notes' on basic astronomy, and also a 186 page pdf manual accessible through the application, as well as online help through Imaginova's website. A quick start card is included to help with installation, registration, and navigation through the basics. QuickTime is also on the installation DVD and is necessary for many of the Starry Night Pro Plus functions

The application DVD is dual Mac/PC format. I began the installation process and immediately got a warning that the installation can take a very long time, and "If you intend to leave your computer during the install, please be sure to have your 'Sleep' time set to over an hour or disabled, or you may experience problems." I set my sleep time to two hours and left the house. When I returned later that day, the installation had finished. The first thing I had to do



when launching the program for the first time was register it with Imaginova. I was then sent a user ID, a user name and a License Key by eMail and I was ready to explore the skies!

I launched the program and it searched the internet for updates to any asteroid, comet and satellite positions and/or other



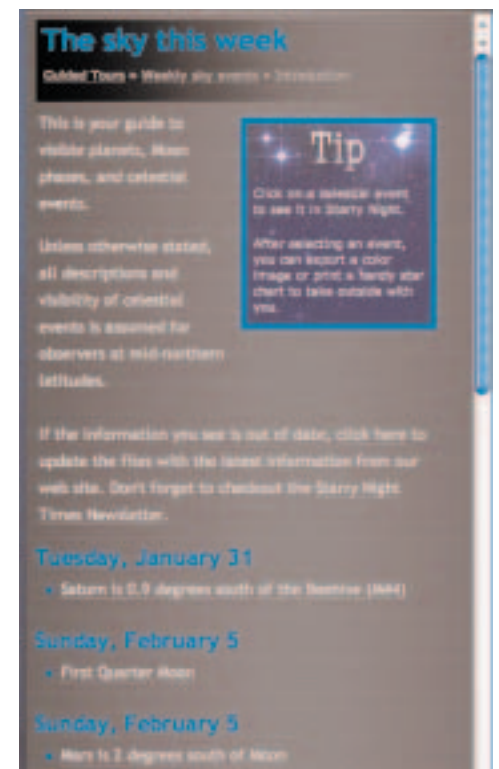
data and updated the program with this information. After launching Starry Night Pro Plus, I set its location to my home location so that I could see the skies from where I live. Starry Night Pro Plus will allow me to see the sky from anywhere on earth, and to move backward and forward in time between 99,999 BC and 99,999 AD. Whenever you exit the program, you can save your file and return to it at any time.

Because there are so many features in Starry Night Pro Plus, I looked at the online help which outlines the ten most important features. Starting with these basics is a good way to find one's way through this application. These are: 1) Using the controls, 2) Changing one's viewing direction, 3) Changing the date and time, 4) Identifying objects in the sky, 5) Labeling objects, 6) Displaying constellation figures, 7) Finding objects, 8) Zooming in on objects, 9) Learning more about any object, and 10) Printing star charts.

Getting familiar with all of the program's controls is the first step. There is a toolbar and also a set of side tabs. These tabs, when clicked on, cause panels to open, each with new sets of controls. There are nine of these tabs and each has an entire help chapter devoted to it. Just a note, if you are running Starry Night in the daytime, there is a button on the toolbar next to the time that lets you choose another time (when the stars are visible).

As you move your cursor through the sky, pausing on an object will bring up information about that object. You can also search for a specific object, such as a planet. One of the side tabs is a FIND tab. You can search for anything by typing its name into the text box, or by clicking on the symbol to the left of an object's name. Once selected, there is a new set of choices. Do I go there? Zoom in? As they say, they sky's they limit!

Starry Night Pro Plus is an application that you need to spend a lot of time learning to use, but the time spent is very worthwhile. This program is like a treasure chest with many hidden compartments. One problem I had originally was that I could not get the SkyGuide information to appear. This is a very important part of Starry Night that just did not work for me. I clicked on it and was left hanging while waiting for the information to download, but it never did. After trying several times, I finally eMailed our NorthWest of Us Starry Night guru, Susan Kayser. She told me to try running the program's updater program, which I did,

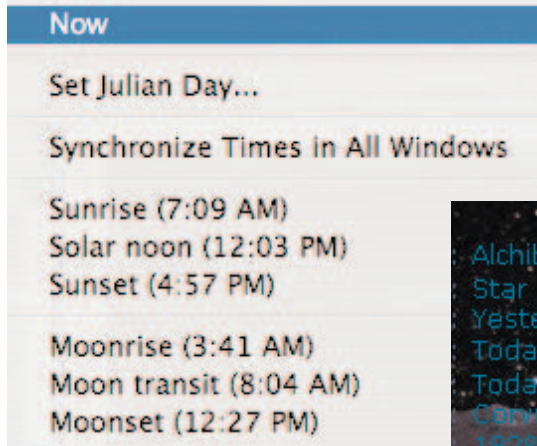


SkyGuide

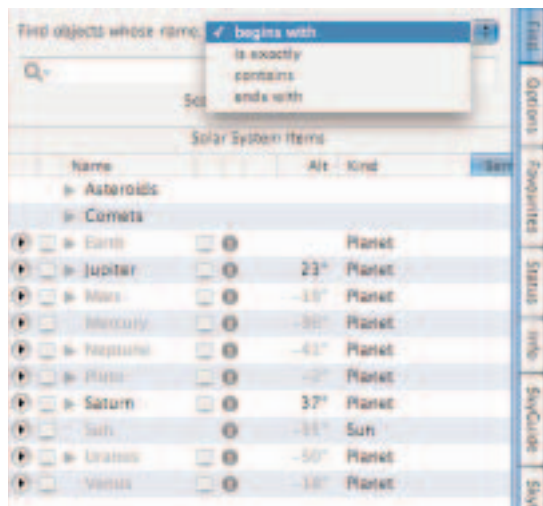
Starry Night Pro Plus **REVIEW** continued

and which solved the problem. I now have access to guided tours and weekly sky events from within Starry Night Pro.

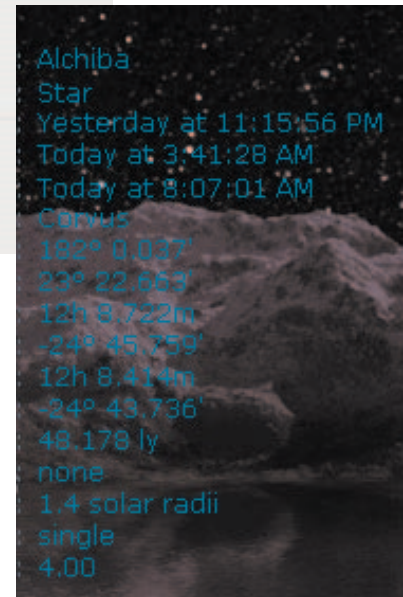
I am a relative novice when it comes to astronomy, but is a field that has always interested me, and with this program I hope to learn much more about our solar system. As they say, the sky's the limit!



Setting the time



Finding a planet



Star information

