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Thursday, June 13, 2002

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## Review: PowerMate USB Controller

Fri, 04 Jan 2002, 00:48

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Griffin Technology's [PowerMate](#) is likely to become one of the hottest USB peripherals for the Mac. "But why would you need, like, a knob for your computer?" friends ask, upon seeing the PowerMate. Within a minute or two hands-on with this device, they want to know where to get one of their own.



The PowerMate is an "assignable controller" for the Mac, in Griffin's terminology. The same label could theoretically apply to the mouse -- another seemingly simple device with endless uses. At its most basic, the PowerMate has three functions: you can turn it left or right, use it as a button, or combine those two functions to turn and twist.

The PowerMate's real power is in its assignability. Using drivers for OS X or OS 9, I was able to assign the PowerMate to whatever I wanted in any application. Under X, I tried scrubbing audio in SparkLE, scrolling in Internet Explorer and Word, adjusting audio in iTunes, scrubbing video in iMovie, and as a game controller for strafing in Oni. You can even use the PowerMate as a power button. The ability to adjust volume with a

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gesture alone is worth the US\$45 list. Add in the ability to scrub video or audio like the pros, and this is a must-buy.

Best of all, Griffin has lavished gorgeous industrial design on this device, with a fantastic brushed aluminum finish and glowing blue LED that must be seen to be appreciated. The glowing blue underbelly even provides feedback, adjusting in brightness with volume and pulsing when the computer is asleep. Computer-based DJs will love this thing -- it'll look great pulsating in a club, and is ideal when assigned to a control in a software synth like Reason. Best of all, it's solid enough to toss in your bag every day without thinking

PowerMate could be the shape of things to come: assignable USB controllers for any purpose imaginable. Its low price makes it irresistible. Let's hope Griffin has more ideas on the way: they may have created an entirely new category of USB devices.




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