

# Designing TweetMag

IXDA TORONTO | MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2011



I want to touch on the process and the learnings of developing TweetMag so hopefully you can take something practical away at the end of this presentation.



# Before we begin

GEOFF TEEHAN / [GEOFF@TEEHANLAX.COM](mailto:GEOFF@TEEHANLAX.COM) / [@GTEEHAN](https://twitter.com/GTEEHAN) / [TweetMagApp.com](https://www.TweetMagApp.com)

Thanks to the IxDA for having me here to talk. You can get in touch with me here.

# The idea behind it



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A little background:  
We used to use RSS for news – but we rarely discovered content outside the feeds we followed.  
Then Twitter came along and we found ourselves using it to discover content along side our RSS readers. Was a great place to discover new things.



**ericries** Eric Ries  by Scobleizer  
The Lean Startup Bundle <http://goo.gl/fb/wCy1p> (new post)  
1 hour ago

**zeidel** Richard Zidel  by Scobleizer  
If you're at the cutting edge, then you're going to bleed.  
4 minutes ago

**jnack** John Nack   
Lightroom more than 5x as popular as Aperture, says [DPRreview.com](http://dpreview.com/polls) poll: <http://twitpic.com/2uxdep>  
<http://dpreview.com/polls>  
4 minutes ago

**mathewi** Mathew Ingram  
nice -- Mother Jones provides a handy state map of where can you marry your cousin but not your gay partner: <http://is.gd/fMsMF>  
5 minutes ago

**AdamSchwabe** Adam Schwabe  
RT [@hoooy](#): bahaha RT [@thatwhatTLsaid](#): "That's about as wide as it's gonna get" - [@chriserwin](#) (re: building something in HTML) [#twss](#)  
5 minutes ago

**PayPalx** PayPalX  by Scobleizer  
[.@Scobleizer](#) [@obedier](#) just announced \$49 (\$200 off) reg [#xinnovate](#) <http://bit.ly/xInnovate> Use code: TWEET thru 10/7 at 11:59PM PT [#xchat](#)  
12 minutes ago

**katbow** Kate Bowen  
[@virginmobilecan](#) Way to save a rainy day RT [@andyalexanderr](#) Virgin Mobile's Happy Hour... I'm rather impressed with our company.  
7 minutes ago

**Schwabey** Jason Schwabe   
Luke Schenn teaching some kids some shooting skills at Molson's United Way fundraiser <http://yfrog.com/n62nbjj>  
9 minutes ago

**mathewi** Mathew Ingram  
RT [@asymmetricinfo](#): by the year 2018, 99% of economic

With RSS I was required to find sources of interest. I was the editorial team.  
With Twitter I create the editorial team from people I follow.  
The problem is that Twitter is terrible for consuming content...Short URLs and Status updates get in the way.





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There's great content behind those links, it's just a bit of a commitment to use.





# Time to market



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Time to market was a key factor in creating this product. We understood that this was a product and not a project. As a result it required a good deal more focus. I had moved off client work to take this on with a developer.

We resorted to conversations, whiteboard sketches and simultaneous design/build. I have very little to share in terms of documentation...



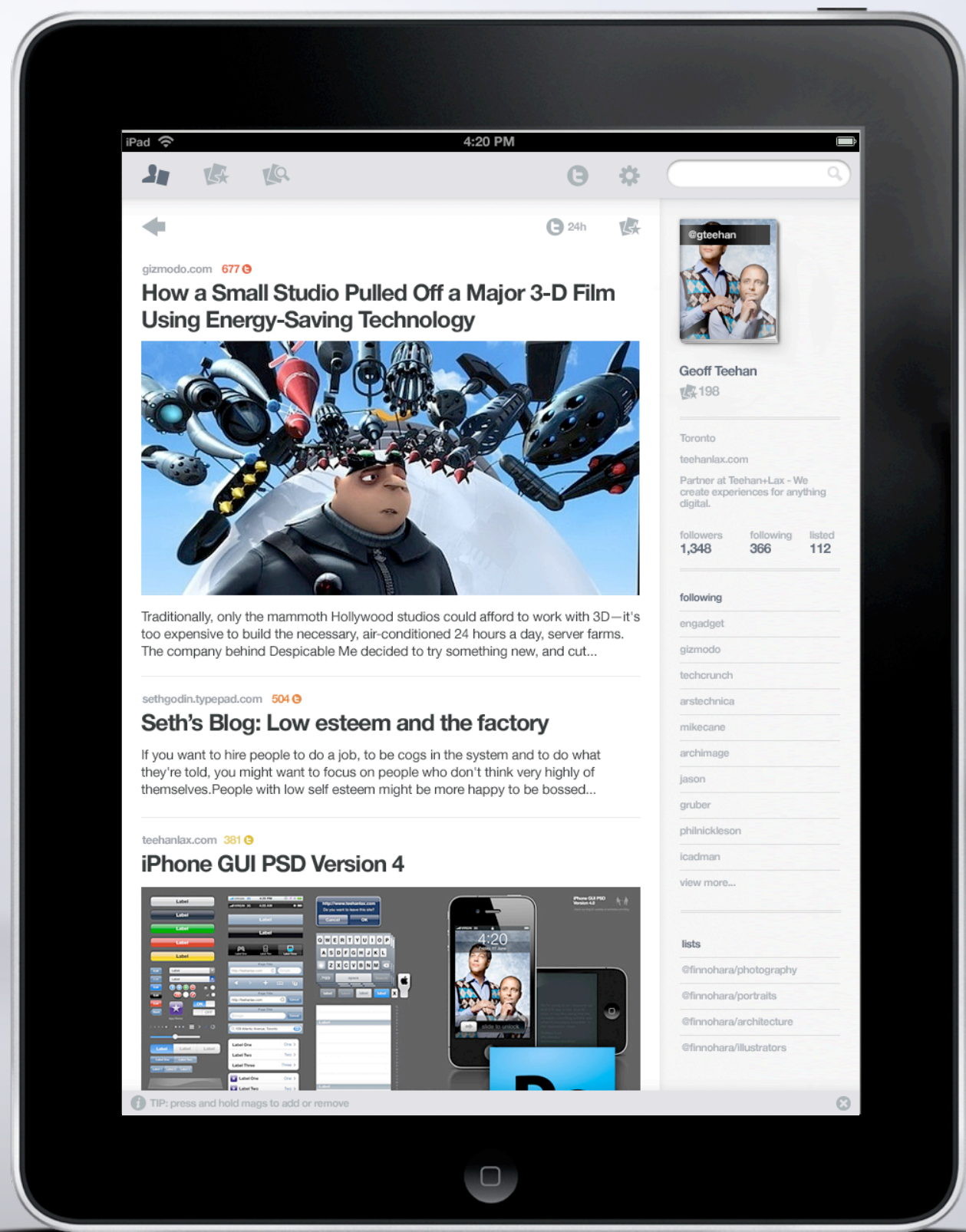
# Version 1



SCOTT TEEHAN | TEEHAN+LAX | IXDA TORONTO

Pretty soon we found ourselves with a version 1 product for internal testing.

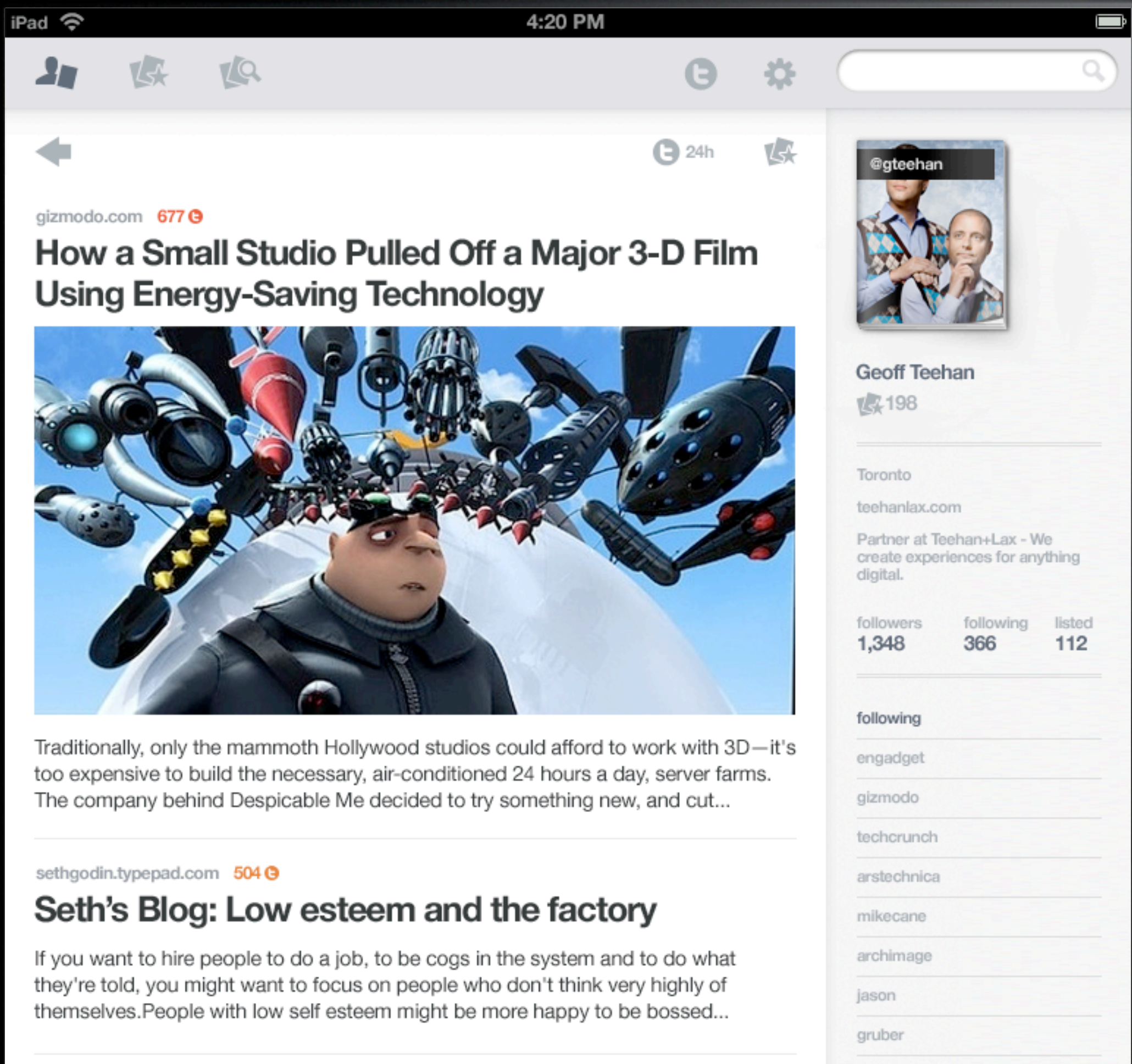
# Version 1.Meh



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We called it 1.meh because most of the people at Teehan+Lax who saw it had that very reaction. Here's why.





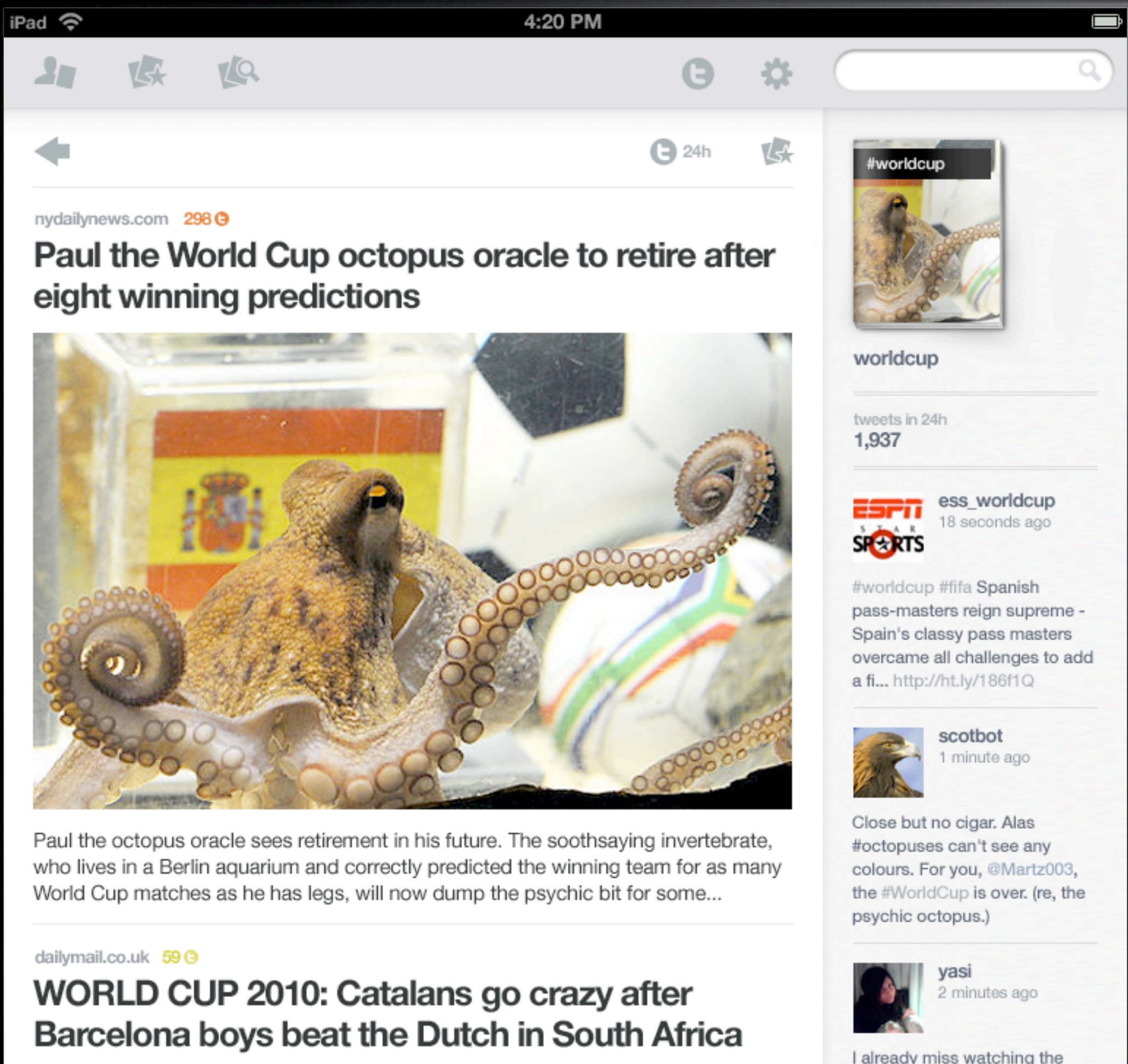
Visually it was simple – There wasn't much to the interface, it used a mixture of standard and custom UI elements. Standard fonts. One column grid. Very little hierarchy.





It was functional. It didn't overwhelm the user with features or extraneous design elements.





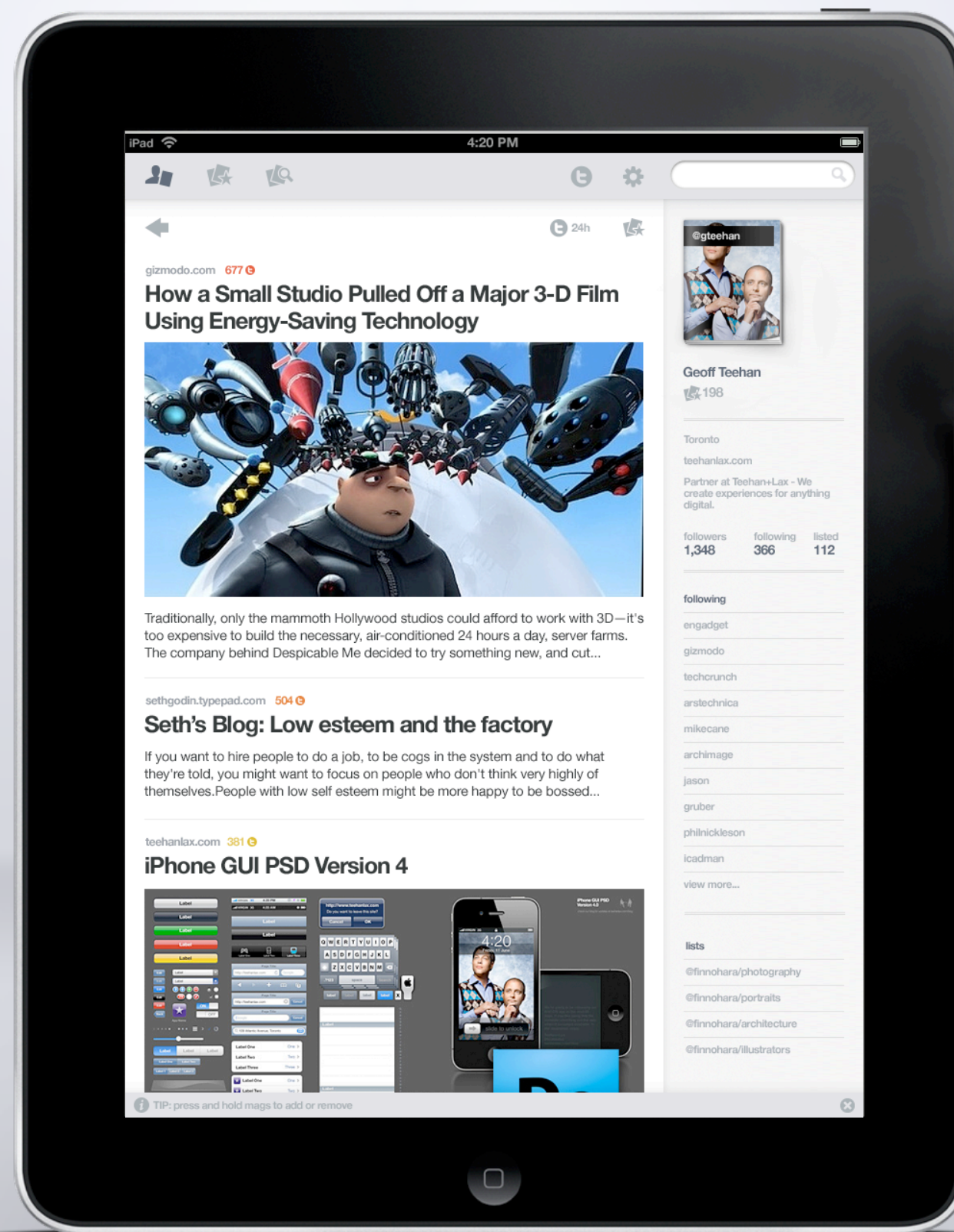
The content was great – it corrected the signal to noise issue that we had with Twitter as a content tool. But... it was bland and blog-like.





It was also pretty slow. We didn't have time for server-side solutions, we needed the device to do all the data crunching. We had to design interactive loading screens to compensate. Overall it was feeling pretty horrible. Time to market meant we made tradeoffs at the expense of the UX.





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We weren't happy with what came out the other side. The UX lacked any sense of style or personality. We justified the striped down design by telling ourselves it put more focus on the content.

In any case, we weren't prepared to release it in it current state. – That's a hard thing to do.



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The question quickly became, do we ditch this altogether, or do we revisit it with a focus put on the UX.

BOOM.

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We decided to reset things and start with a blank slate.






We were still pleased with the idea that tye first build/design captured.  
However, the next time we unveiled this it couldn't be perceived as bland or boring...or as I like to say...

# BEIGE VOLVO



We couldn't release another "beige Volvo".  
Sure, it's functional, but it has no personality.






**ericries** Eric Ries

13

by Scobleizer

The Lean Startup Bundle <http://goo.gl/fb/wCy1p> (new post)

1 hour ago



**zeidel** Richard Zeidel

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## Europe's Troubles Don't Spark Fear

## 4Food, A New High-Tech Custom Burger Restaurant In New York City

## 3-D Glasses Outside The Theater

3-D moviegoers have been trained to treat 3-D glasses as disposable products. When the movie's over you're supposed to chuck the glasses into the bins sitting outside the theaters.

While the glasses are usually cleaned and recycled, would consumers be more likely to want to see a 3-D film if the glasses they needed to wear fit more like their own and less like a pair you'd pick up in a Halloween costume store?

## Mad Catz's Black Ops PrecisionAim gamepads and Stealth mouse hands-on

Mad Catz' Modern Warfare 2 peripherals won't know what hit them when Black Ops debuts this fall -- the quality of the company's gamepads has increased yet again, and, of course, this year the Call of Duty-flavored lineup ships with a genuine R.A.T. mouse. We snuck down the streets of San Francisco for a top secret rendezvous to test these controllers out, and discovered a pair of the most comfortable gamepads we've tried for our trouble. Read our full impressions after the break -- totally declassified.

## Twitter Quietly Setting Traffic Records

While the world has had its eyes stuck on Digg's relaunch, the upcoming Facebook movie, and Apple's every little move, Twitter has been hard at work. That effort seems to be paying off, as according to third-party trackers Twitter is setting traffic record after record. While services like Alexa and Compete are not accurate enough to trust from day to day, for very large websites they can be useful to track general trends. If Alexa and Compete agree that a top 100 website is on the rise, they usually have a point. I learned at least that



## Google's Color-Changing Logo and What the Company Is About to Announce

The Google homepage is sporting a new logo that changes color as you type, and it's likely a big hint as to what the company will announce at its "can't miss" search event on Wednesday. When you arrive on the search giant homepage today, you'll be greeted with a gray Google-doodle. When you start typing a search query though, the color magically returns to Google's iconic logo. This follows yesterday's logo, a collection of animated particles that react to the movement of the cursor.



## The Real 'Stuff White People Like'

What makes a culture unique? How are whites, blacks, Asians, whoever different from everybody else? What tastes, interests, and concepts define an ethnicity? Is there any way to make fun of other races in public and get away with it? These are big questions, and here's how we answered them. We selected 550,000 OKCupid users at random and divided them into groups by their (self-stated) race. We then took all these people's profile essays (280 million words in total) and isolated the words and phrases that made each racial group's essays statistically distinct from the others'.



## Seiko's 'Active Matrix' E Ink Watch Will Be On Sale By End Of 2010

It's always good to see a concept, particularly one as appealing as Seiko's "active matrix" E Ink watch, make it to retail product. The company's had a thing for E Ink timepieces for a while now, but what sets this new one apart is the supposed 180-degree viewing angle it affords -- and, of course, those retro good looks do it no harm either. Then there's also the radio-controlled movement, which receives its time from the nearest atomic clock, and the solar cells framing that electrophoretic display. All very nice and neat, but the best news is that it might (might) be priced within reach of regular Joes and Vidas like us. We'll know soon enough, a retail release is expected by the end of the year.



## Netflix Via The Wii: Improving Its Picture

The television producer and former Playboy Channel head, Michael Brandman, once told me that video rental stores like Blockbuster would endure because the act of driving to a store with the kids and picking a video was the next best thing to an evening at the movies. Of course when he said that 10 years ago, the concept of streaming movies from the Internet to one's TV didn't even exist. And once you experience video streaming, you will understand why the days of video rental stores are limited.

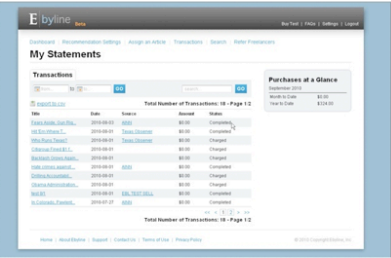
## Nyko Wand+ review

For demanding gamers, initial excitement upon procuring a Nintendo Wii was quickly dampened by disappointment: the durned Wiimote wasn't nearly as precise as we'd all hoped it would be. It took a couple of years for Nintendo to step up and fix the issue, releasing the MotionPlus and finally making the Wiimote work for sword-fighting games and the like. But, that left us all stuck with a dongle hanging off the bottom, causing compatibility issues with many early peripherals. The Nyko Wand+ is the solution, putting the MotionPlus right inside a stock-size controller, as it should have been in the first place. In some ways, it's better than first-party.



## Ebyline Launches As A Market For Freelance Journalists And News Syndication

Can a ragtag group of former newspapermen from the L.A. Times help newspapers fight off the content firms of the Web? The founders and backers of Ebyline, which has been in private beta for a few months and launches today more broadly, think they can streamline the way news organizations manage freelancers and syndicate their own articles. Some publishers testing out the system include Variety.



## Seedcamp Kicks Off Its Biggest Week Yet

Seedcamp Week, the week when the startup programme brings its European travels to a head and lands in London, starts next week and they've released the startups they will be running through their intense mentoring winging during the 13th until the 17th of September. Over 600 teams applied over the year of nine Mini Seedcamps, finally coming up with teams from 10 different countries and 19 different cities. Although Seedcamp pinged to South Africa, Israel and even Asia this year, their hard core remains Europe, and the above data.



## The Best Of Berlin's Enormous Consumer Electronics Show

As IFA, reportedly the "world's largest trade fair for consumer electronics and home appliances", draws to a close in Berlin, we've decided to take a look back at some of the best new tech shown at this year's expo. From slim new tablets that rival Apple's iPad to robotic vacuum cleaners, massive fla



## Amd Names Second Bobcat Apu Zacate, Shows Off Ontario Die Size

AMD might still have no actual Fusion product to sell us, but it's added a fresh new codename to the stable of future CPU/GPU hybrids. The Zacate Accelerated Processing Unit is a Bobcat derivative, much like the Ontario, but it operates at a higher TDP of 18W and is intended for ultrathin and mainstream laptops along with power-sipping desktops and all-in-ones. Both it and the Ontario APUs will offer two Bobcat cores allied to Radeon graphics capable of performing DirectX 11 instructions, though the Ontario dips all the way down to



We reset with a focus on putting some personality into the UX. We started with content from real articles. We needed to better understand what we were dealing with. Real content allowed us to read understand a number of things: how much abstract was appropriate? How short (or long) did headlines get? Will we need to truncate? What image sizes and ratios were we working with?

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**Excepteur occaecat rarely makes sense.**

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I don't know about you but I have no idea what any of this means. It was simple enough to get a reasonable sample of content for our design exploration. Using real content allowed us to better understand our options for design and layout.





Europe's Troubles Don't Spark Fear 0x0	Netflix Via the Wii: Improving its Picture The television producer and former Playboy Channel head, Michael Brandman, once told me that video rental stores like Blockbuster would endure because the act of driving to a store with the kids and picking a video was the next best thing to an evening at the movies. Of course when he said that 20 years ago, the concept of streaming movies from the Internet to one's TV didn't even exist. And once you experience video streaming, you will understand why the days of video rental stores are limited. 0x0	
Food, A New High-Tech Custom Burger Restaurant in New York City 0x0	Nyko Wand+ review For demanding gamers, initial excitement upon procuring a Nintendo Wii was quickly dampened by disappointment: the durned Wiimote wasn't nearly as precise as we'd all hoped it would be. It took a couple of years for Nintendo to step up and fix the issue, releasing the MotionPlus and finally making the Wiimote work for sword-fighting games and the like. But, that left us all stuck with a dongle hanging off the bottom, causing compatibility issues with many early peripherals. The Nyko Wand+ is the solution, putting the MotionPlus right inside a stock-size controller, as it should have been in the first place. In some ways, it's better than first-party. 600x400	Europe's Troubles Don't Spark Fear 0x0
3-D Glasses Outside the Theater 3-D moviegoers have been trained to treat 3-D glasses as disposable products. When the movie's over you're supposed to chuck the glasses into the bins sitting outside the theaters. While the glasses are usually cleaned and recycled, would consumers be more likely to want to see a 3-D film if the glasses they needed to wear fit more like their own and less like a pair you'd pick up in a Halloween costume store? 0x0	Mad Catz's Black Ops PrecisionAim gamepads and Stealth mouse hands-on Mad Catz' Modern Warfare 2 peripherals won't know what hit them when Black Ops debuts this fall -- the quality of the company's gamepads has increased yet again, and of course, this year the Call of Duty-flavored lineup ships with a genuine R.A.T. mouse. We snuck down the streets of San Francisco for a top secret rendezvous to test these controllers out, and discovered a pair of the most comfortable gamepads we've tried for our trouble. Read our full impressions after the break -- totally declassified. 0x0	Twitter Quietly Setting Traffic Records While the world has had its eyes stuck on Digg's relaunch, the upcoming Facebook movie, and Apple's every little move, Twitter has been hard at work. That effort seems to be paying off, as according to third party trackers Twitter is setting traffic record after record. While services like Alexa and Compete are not accurate enough to trust from day to day, for very large websites they can be useful to track general trends. If Alexa and Compete agree that a top 100 website is on the rise, they usually have a point. I learned at least that 300x248
Ebyline Launches as a Market For Freelance Journalists and News Syndication Can a ragtag group of former newspapermen from the L.A. Times help newspapers fight off the content farms of the Web The founders and backers of Ebyline, which has been in private beta for a few months and launches today more broadly, think they can streamline the way news organizations manage freelancers and syndicate their own articles. Some publishers testing out the system include Variety 627x410		

We designing and built a prototype (in JS) to explore things like content awareness: Panels came in 3 sizes. They had an awareness of headline length, abstract availability, abstract length, image/video dimensions and ratios. Additionally, we wanted the panels and rows to be aware of what was around them. We built out a rules based engine that made smart layout decisions to keep things in order, but eliminated a monotonous, repetitive layout. This couldn't have been realized with Lorem ipsum



**We had a viable solution for an appropriate layout but the design still lacked personality.**

With the layout engine well underway we needed to explore visual ways to inject life into this product. Because we're dealing with the written word we leaned heavily on typography to create visual interest rather than over designing an interface.

American Typewriter  
Apple Color Emoji  
AppleGothic  
Arial  
Arial Hebrew  
Arial Rounded MT Bold  
Bangla Sangam MN  
Baskerville  
Bodoni 72  
Bodoni 72 Oldstyle  
Bodoni 72 Smallcaps  
Bodoni Ornaments  
Bradley Hand  
Chalkboard SE  
Chalkduster  
Cochin  
Copperplate  
CourierCourier New  
DB LCD Temp  
देवनागरी संगम एम.एन.

Didot  
Futura  
Geeza Pro  
Georgia  
Gill Sans  
गुजराती संगम एम.एन.

गुरुमुखी MN  
Heiti J  
Heiti K  
Heiti SC  
Heiti TC  
Helvetica  
Helvetica Neue  
Hiragino Kaku Gothic ProN  
Hiragino Min ProN  
Hoefler Text  
KailasaKannada Sangam MN  
Malayalam Sangam MN  
Marker Felt  
Optima  
Oriya Sangam MN  
Palatino  
Papyrus  
Party LET  
Sinhala Sangam MN  
Snell Roundhand  
Tamil Sangam MN  
Telugu Sangam MN  
Thonburi  
Times New Roman  
Trebuchet MS



# 57 font options

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We quickly hit roadblocks.

Fonts are limited: 57 Families on iPad (it's worse on iPhone).

Custom was the only way, but existing solutions for embedding custom fonts lacked control over letter and line spacing – something that experimentation quickly proved we needed. In the end we had to build our own typesetting engine that enabled us to use custom fonts with control – this is a presentation unto itself.



# Sentinel & **TUNGSTEN**

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We experimented a great deal with typography and eventually landing on a couple of faces by H&FJ.

mashable.com

45 mins ago

## 2011 Ipad Sales To Total 28 Million, Iphone 52 Million



laughingsquid.com

2 hrs ago

## Burning Man 2010 GigaPan Photos by Rich Gibson



wsj.com

3 hrs ago

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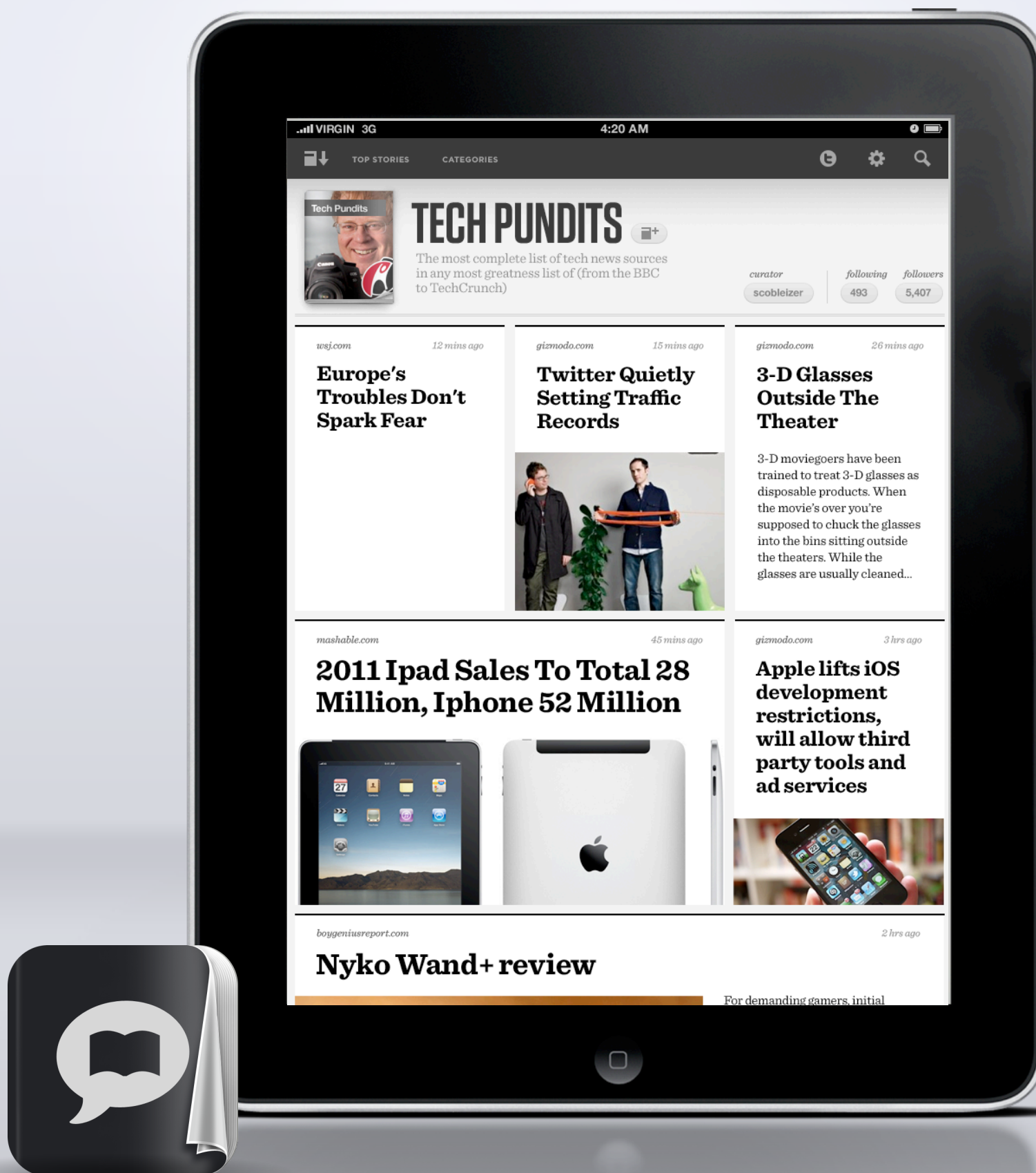
Here are some example panels illustrating the typography.





Skip forward a couple of months and we made it to our next build. Much had been done on the backend at this point too since speed was (and continues to be) an issue – the next release should further address the speed issue.

Here is what came out when the focus turned to the UX.



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We had given the UX life by way of layout and typography.  
We kept visual overhead light. The Interface stayed simple and even became more consistent. We were designing for goals and tasks rather than timelines.



View the video at:  
**tweetmagapp.com**

(SORRY, TOO BIG TO EMBED ON SLIDESHARE)

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Quick video that explains what it is.

# Questions we kept in mind

THESE ARE GOOD FOR ANY PROJECT

**WHAT IS THE GOAL?**

**WHAT IS THE PRIMARY TASK?**

**WHAT IS THE MINIMUM?**

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We were still working working fast, loose and collaboratively but there were a few things we kept asking ourselves.



# Questions we kept in mind

THESE ARE GOOD FOR ANY PROJECT

Reading Articles

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

Create a new way  
to discover and  
consume content

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY TASK?

WHAT IS THE MINIMUM?

Discover feeds,  
read full articles,  
share

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- Create a new way to discover and consume content
- Reading Articles
- Discover Feeds, Read Full Articles, Share

# Managing Complexity

## ARTICLES

HEADLINE

ABSTRACT

IMAGES/VIDEOS

SOURCE

AUTHOR

DATE

RELATED

## TWEETS

TWEET

USER

AVATAR

TIME STAMP

LINKS

HASH TAGS

RTs

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All of those questions were really about managing complexity. From a content perspective alone, we had a lot of elements to deal with. Those three questions really helped keep things balanced, simple and focused.





TOP STORIES

CATEGORIES



Tech Pundits

# TECH PUNDITS



The most complete list of tech news sources in any most greatness list of (from the BBC to TechCrunch)

curator

scobleizer

following

493

followers

5,407

wsj.com

12 mins ago

## Europe's Troubles Don't Spark Fear

gizmodo.com

15 mins ago

## Twitter Quietly Setting Traffic Records



gizmodo.com

26 mins ago

## 3-D Glasses Outside The Theater

3-D moviegoers have been trained to treat 3-D glasses as disposable products. When the movie's over you're supposed to chuck the glasses into the bins sitting outside the theaters. While the glasses are usually cleaned...

mashable.com

45 mins ago

## 2011 Ipad Sales To Total 28 Million, Iphone 52 Million



gizmodo.com

3 hrs ago

## Apple lifts iOS development restrictions, will allow third

Managing complexity in the design meant designing ways to access content and utility without using things like buttons.



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**CONTENT AS CONTROL**

Content as control





Back

gizmodo.com

2 hrs ago

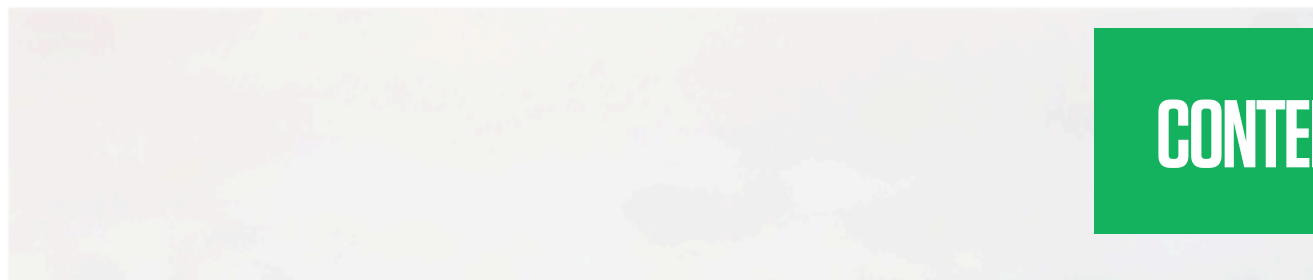


# A Week With The New Ipods



After spending seven days living with our new iPods, we're gonna let them stay. As far as media-slinging sidekicks go, they're pretty good. But it's not all sunshine and rainbows.

## iPod Touch: Multimedia Life-Partner

**CONTENT AS CONTROL**

153



1 hour ago by

mingram

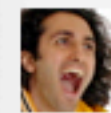
Seiko's 'active matrix' E Ink watch will be on sale by end of 2010 <http://bit.ly/cpmXTL>



1 hour ago by

petermcKay

RT @mathewi Seiko's 'active matrix' E Ink watch will be on sale by end of 2010 <http://bit.ly/cpmXTL>



2 hours ago by

nivi

RT @mathewi Seiko's 'active matrix' E Ink watch will be on sale by end of 2010 <http://bit.ly/cpmXTL>



1 hour ago by

flick





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## Apple lifts iOS development restrictions, will allow third party tools and ad services



boygeniusreport.com

2 hrs ago

## Nyko Wand+ review



For demanding gamers, initial excitement upon procuring a Nintendo Wii was quickly dampened

**GESTURES**

couple of years for Nintendo to step up and fix the issue, releasing the

Gestures also allowed for simple access to secondary information without the use explicit interface elements.

We often think of gestures as keyboard shortcuts.



3-D moviegoers have been trained to treat 3-D glasses as disposable products. When the movie's over you're supposed to chuck the glasses into the bins sitting outside the theaters. While the glasses are usually cleaned...

21



tweeted 1 hour ago by

mathewi



*Great thanks to my colleague Ron Baker for his post and review of my new book, "Positioning for Professionals" <http://ht.ly/2EMTQ>*

*gizmodo.com*

*3 hrs ago*

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*2 hrs ago*

## Nyko Wand+ review



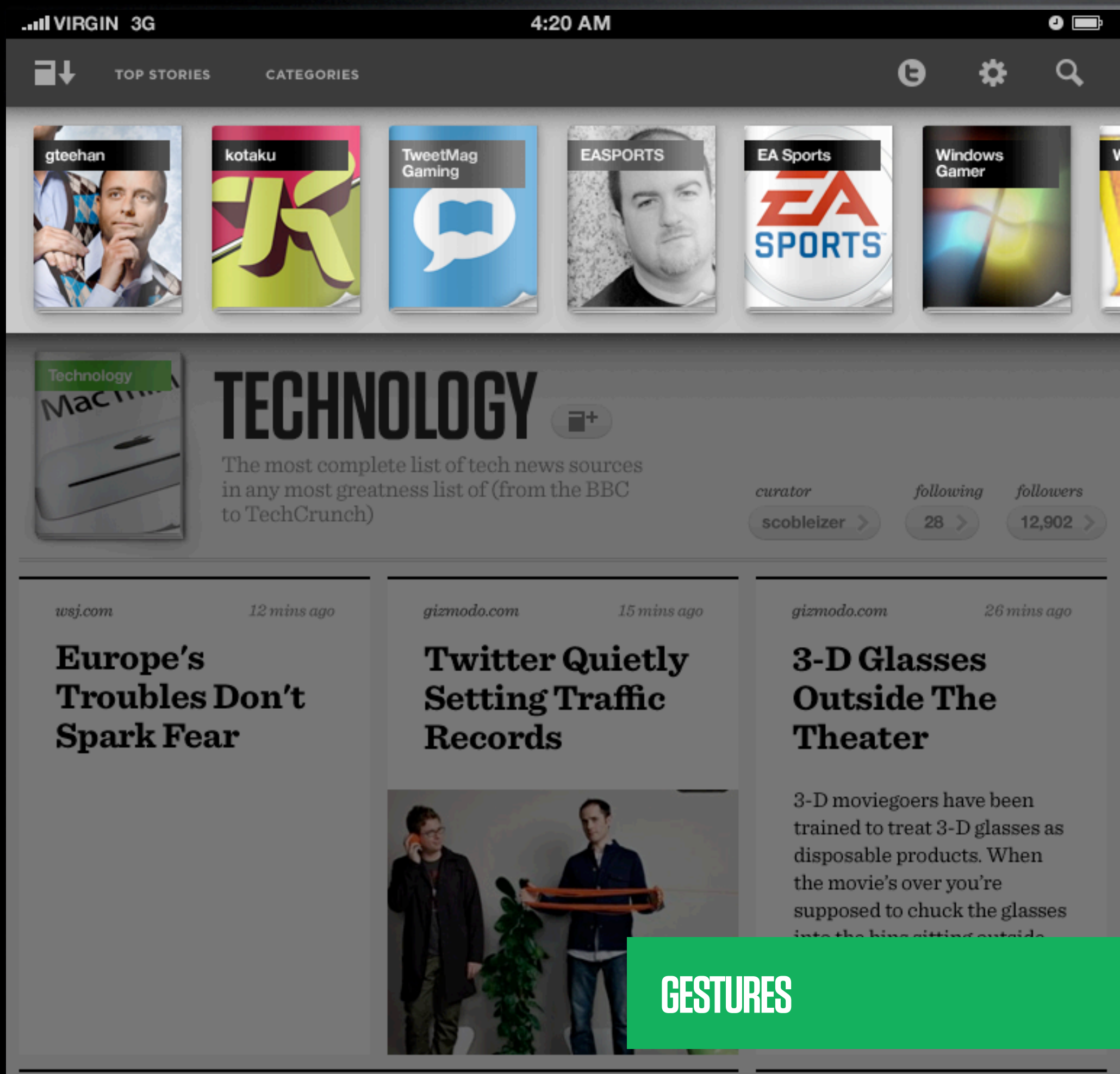
For demanding gamers, initial excitement upon procuring a Nintendo Wii was quickly dampened

couple of years for Nintendo to step in and fix the issue, releasing the

**GESTURES**

To ease the learning curve we built multiple gestures into the same action. For example, to flip the panel you can swipe left, swipe right or double-tap.





We used another gesture to invoke the rack. Some of these are learned through hints. Pulling down from any screen reveals this. You'll occasionally see the rack begin to reveal itself when scrolling to the top. After 1 or 2 times you've learned the shortcut without much effort.





Tech Pundits

# TECH PUNDITS



The most complete list of tech news sources in any most greatness list of (from the BBC to TechCrunch)

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scobleizer

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followers

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wsj.com

12 mins ago

## Europe's Troubles Don't Spark Fear

gizmodo.com

## Twitter Setting Record



mashable.com

## 2011 iPad Sales To Top

# OPTIMIZING ONSCREEN ELEMENTS

### scobleizer



scobleizer

**ROBERT SCOBLE** ✓

Half Moon Bay, California, USA

<http://brendanlynch.com>

Technology news, videos, opinions, from an enthusiastic Rackspace employee who grew up in Silicon Valley and has interviewed more than 3,200 geeks.

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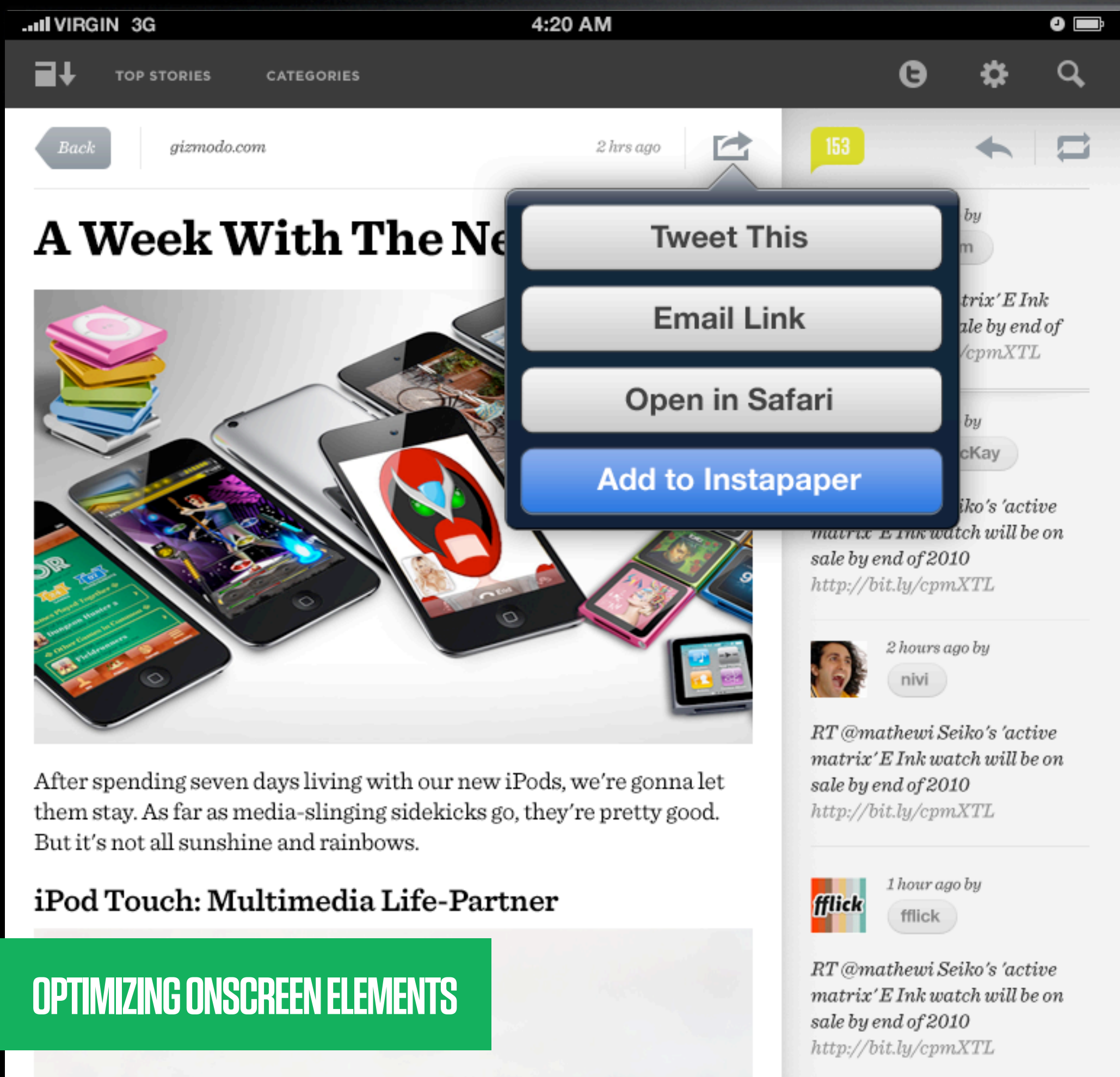
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#204kgeek

Putting all of these options on this screen would have been overwhelming...All grey "pills" reveal exploratory content. The popover element was a consistent, pre-built element that made perfect sense to use.



## OPTIMIZING ONSCREEN ELEMENTS

Combining like tasks using popovers eliminated the need to jam multiple actions into the UI by default. The iPad has a good deal of real-estate – it's often tempting to fill it – resist!

# Custom vs Standard

[bit.ly/appleHIG](https://bit.ly/appleHIG)

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Every app needs some level of customization. Apps that don't push aesthetics or interactions are less likely to gain traction.  
Just need to be careful that you're not needlessly designing custom elements that needn't be custom.

iOS Human Interface Guidelines are full of great info:

- Ideal hit areas"
- understanding gestures and interactions
- common interface components





DESIGNING TWEETMAG | GEOFF TEEHAN | TEEHAN+LAX | IxDA TORONTO

## iPhone vs iPad

Designing for iPad (or tablets) is not the same as designing for iPhone (or mobile)

It's tempting to fill the space. Another way to think of it is this:

The iPad requires designers to show restraint. The iPhone forces restraint.

# Tools that can help you

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GET THIS: [bit.ly/LiveViewTool](http://bit.ly/LiveViewTool)

DESIGNING TWEETMAG | GEOFF TEEHAN | TEEHAN+LAX | LISA TORONTO

Retina...Designing for high density screens.  
You can't just design at 100% on your computer and expect everything to be right.  
You need to design it on the actual device...  
Liveview Screencast is the best tool for this.





ipad/iphone gui templates.

On August 17 I search for something similar but nothing existed so we created them.

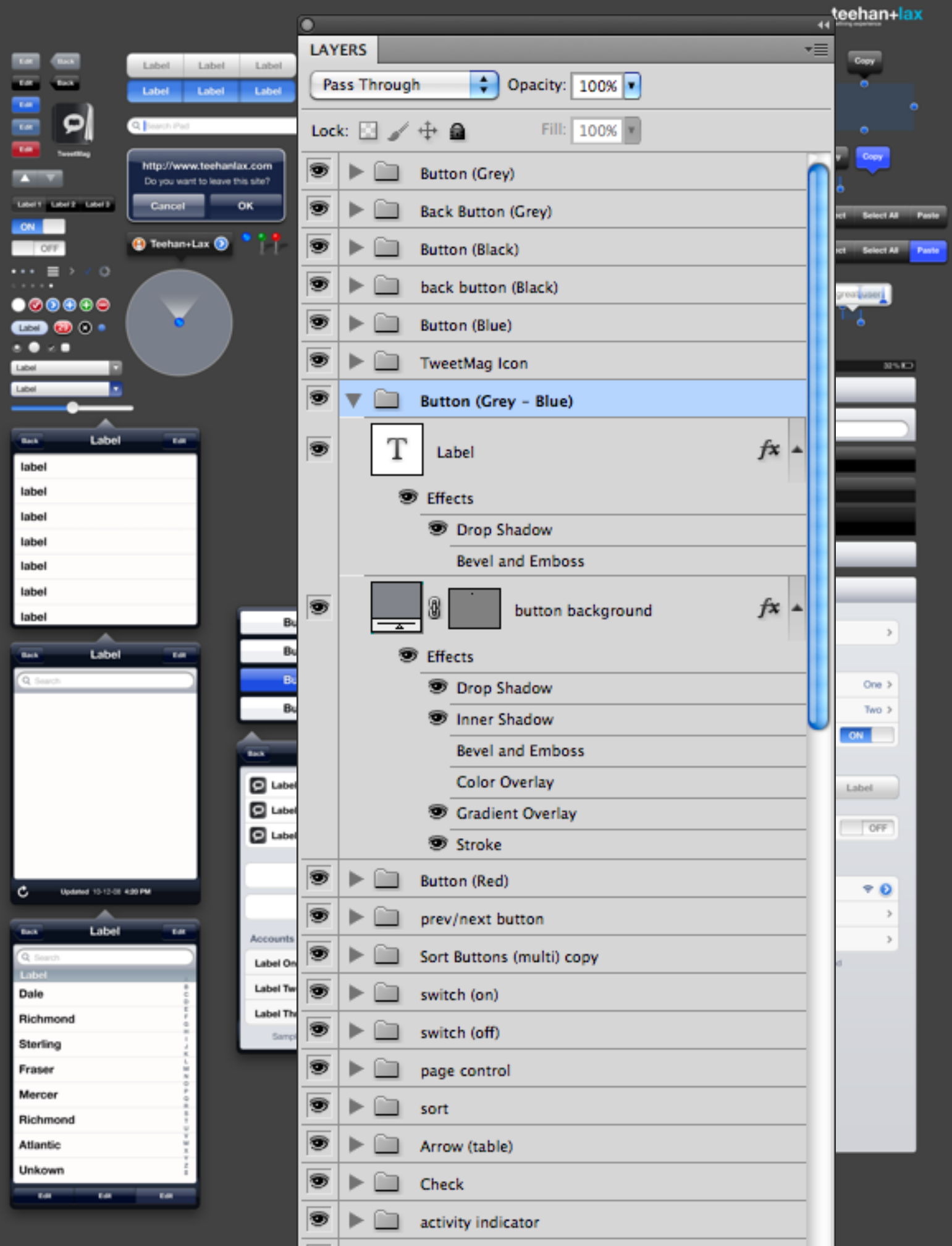
Aug 19, 2008 we uploaded our first PSD.

Since then those pages have been visited about 5.3 million times. Traffic to our blog has increased: 2350%

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