

Maxthon 3

We all know the usual browsing suspects: Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, and even Opera. One browser you may have missed is Maxthon 3, named MyIE2 in versions prior to 2004. The decade-old browser hails from China and offers a slew of enticing features.

Our favorite of these is Maxthon's implementation of two display engines you can toggle between. The default engine is based on the open-source WebKit and is substantially faster than the alternative, Internet Explorer's Trident. Maxthon calls these Ultra Mode and Retro Mode, respectively. In our weeks of usage, we found several Web pages, such as some Yahoo! News slide shows, that would not display properly in Ultra Mode. Usually, the problem would vanish in Retro Mode. Dig into the options, and you'll find a checkbox for switching out the IE7 engine for IE9, provided you have IE9 installed.

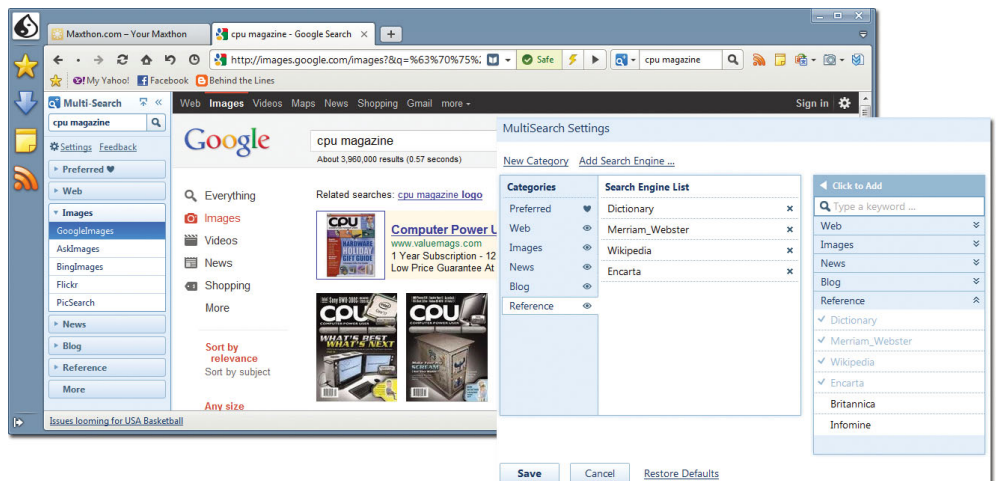
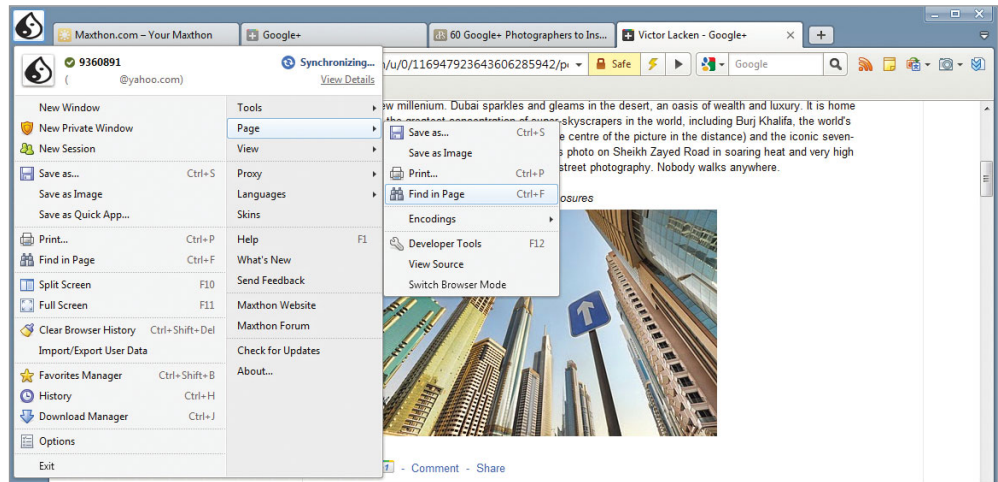
Like most modern browsers, Maxthon 3 uses a tabbed interface; pressing CTRL while clicking a link will open the link in a new tab. Unlike in Chrome, you can't drag off a tab to start a new Maxthon browser window, but Maxthon does offer a nifty feature called Super Drag and Drop. With this, you simply left-click a link or image and drag it for a short distance. Upon releasing the mouse button, the item will open in a new browser tab. Whereas some other browsers allow for mouse gestures via plug-ins, Maxthon 3 supports them natively. For example, just hold down the right mouse button, then drag

down and right to close the current tab. Maxthon also supports screen capturing and manual download of any media element on a page (including YouTube videos) through its "Resource Sniffer."

Maxthon lets you default to searching with Google, Bing, Yahoo!, and several others, as well as Maxthon's own Multi Search. Multi Search sets up a shortcut bar across the top or down the left of your browser window, letting you quickly filter search strings not only by search provider but also search type, such as images, news, and reference.

Another perk here is Maxthon Online Favorites, which syncs your browser favorites to the cloud for duplication onto other machines. Maxthon also provides a Translate tool based on Google's engine, but we had mixed results with this. Sometimes it worked flawlessly, sometimes it didn't.

We benchmarked Maxthon against IE, Firefox, and Chrome and found that it delivers on its boast of being comparatively fast, perhaps thanks in part to Maxthon engineers working on accelerated GPU rendering. We tested with Futuremark's Peacekeeper suite on



two systems. The first is an older office machine based on an AMD Phenom II X4—a fair box, but heavily used and crammed with both applications and numerous open windows. The other system was a clean and freshly patched install onto a Core i7-2600K config running nothing but that one browser window needed for testing.

On the older machine, results were all over the place, but a few key points were apparent. For starters, the IE7 core is death to browser performance—nuff said. More interestingly, Maxthon running in Retro Mode with the IE9 engine was slightly better overall than IE9 itself, although not in every

category. Maxthon/IE9 particularly tumbled in the Rendering test, which involves factors such as animation and physics, but this tends not to be a big deal in everyday surfing. Far more telling is Maxthon's leap in the Social networking test, which is an fps test that leans heavily on JavaScript performance. The data and DOM (Document Object Model) tests also emphasize JavaScript. Where Maxthon Ultra mode blew the doors off was on Data, followed closely by Text parsing.

Switching over to our Intel rig, it was immediately clear what a massive difference system specs and/or software configuration could make to browser

performance. That said, it only changed the relative ranking of the browsers slightly. Chrome instead wins the day, with Maxthon taking home the silver by a nose, edging IE9 (which vaulted over Firefox 6).

Overall, Maxthon is a fair app with a handful of enticing features. Will they be enough to woo you away from your current browser? ■

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Maxthon International

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Benchmark Results						
Test System 1	Chrome 12.0.782.112	Firefox 6.0	IE 9.0.8112.16421	Maxthon 3.1.5.1000 (IE7 mode)	Maxthon 3.1.5.1000 (IE9 mode)	Maxthon 3.1.5.1000 (Ultra)
Futuremark Peacekeeper						
Overall	2295	2046	1685	930	1888	2322
Rendering	1468	2544	1803	992	958	1124
Social networking	1401	2276	734	537	1769	1257
Complex graphics	4776	5765	4460	0	3683	4695
Data	5106	2206	3621	3901	2846	6646
DOM operations	1475	1563	838	237	1366	1817
Text parsing	4111	1796	3390	1418	3646	3960
Test system specs: Processor: AMD Phenom II X4 955; Motherboard: MSI DKA790GX Platinum; RAM: 6GB DDR2; GPU: AMD Radeon HD 4550; Windows 7 Ultimate (64-bit)						
Test System 2	Chrome 13.0.782.112	Firefox 6.0	IE 9.0.8112.16421	Maxthon 3.1.5.1000 (IE7 mode)	Maxthon 3.1.5.1000 (IE9 mode)	Maxthon 3.1.5.1000 (Ultra)
Futuremark Peacekeeper						
Overall	14044	7464	8683	3824	5974	8863
Rendering	8414	4194	8311	2608	3094	2638
Social networking	7201	5838	4244	1873	1874	3323
Complex graphics	23308	17631	16550	0	9736	16584
Data	35161	11296	17830	17719	17473	40189
DOM operations	10603	8082	4672	1237	4758	8687
Text parsing	24191	10369	16802	7646	15789	17872
Test system specs: Processor: Intel Core i7-2600K; Motherboard: MSI Z68A-GD65 (G3); RAM 16GB G.Skill DDR3-1600; GPU: Nvidia GeForce GTX 580; Windows 7 Enterprise (64-bit)						