

ComputerEdge™ Online — 10/19/12



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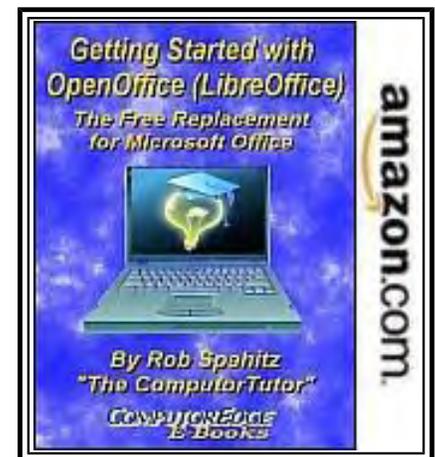
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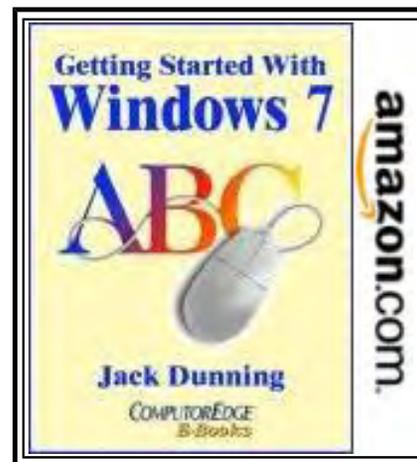
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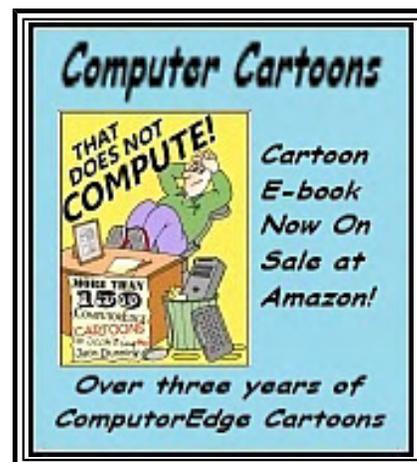
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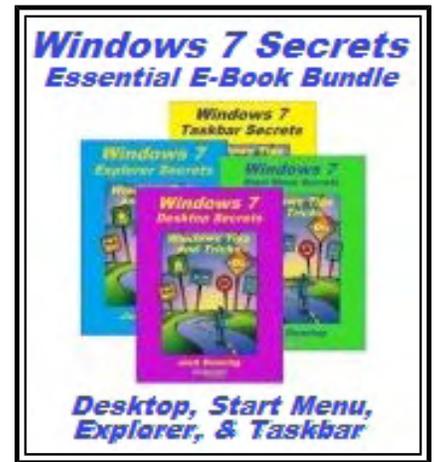
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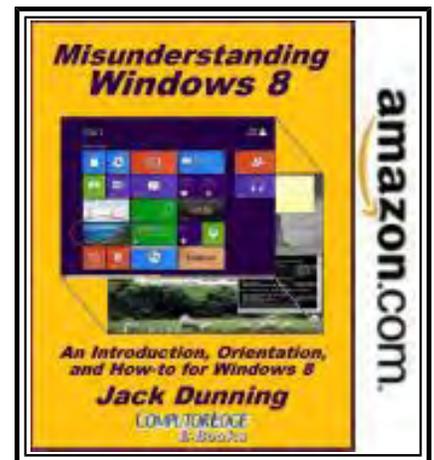
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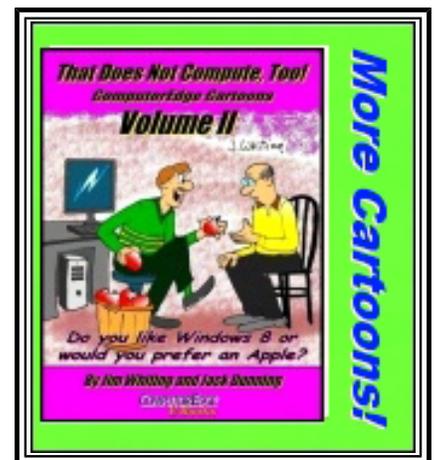
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Digital Dave

“Digital Dave answers your tech questions.” by *Digital Dave*

Audio Drivers for Windows XP Home Edition; Lost Windows Zip/Unzip; Recurring Spam in Name of a Friend.

Dear Digital Dave,

I deleted my audio drivers (Realtek AC'97) by accident. How can I restore this action? Because obviously I can't listen to anything on my computer.

Thanks for your support,

*Noe Villegas
Chula Vista, CA*

Dear Noe,

You can find and download the Realtek AC'97 (download.cnet.com/Realtek-AC-97-Driver-Windows-98-Me-2000-XP-2003/3000-2120_4-10238712.html) drivers at CNET.

(Use the "Direct Download Link" below the green "Download Now!" button to avoid ads and special offers from CNET.)

Once downloaded you should be able to install the drivers by merely double-clicking on the installation file. If you run into problems, you may want to reinstall the drivers through the Device Manager found in Windows XP through Control Panel => System => Hardware tab.

When searching for drivers try to get them from either the manufacturer's site or another known source. There are many sites that use "free" drivers as an enticement to sell other things or get up to mischief.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I installed 7-Zip, but when I uninstalled it I seemed to have lost the zip/unzip that came with Windows 7. I went to the default in Control Panel, but didn't know what to enter for Windows 7.

*Ted
Poway, CA*

Dear Ted,

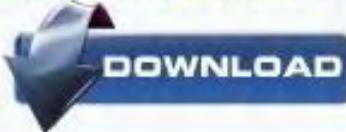
It seems that the zip/unzip capability in Windows 7 may have been disabled when you installed 7-Zip. This is done through the registry. I found a page that addresses enabling and disabling Zip folders (www.sevenforums.com/tutorials/13619-zip-folders-enable-disable-windows-explorer-view.html). The enabling procedure is about one-third of the way down the page (see Figure 1). Download the Reg files which are appropriate for your computer.

1. To Enable ZIP Compressed Folders

A) Click on the Download button below to download the file below.

Restore_Zip_Files.reg

For 32-bit Windows 7 Only



For 64-bit Windows 7 Only



2. To Enable CAB Folders

A) Click on the Download button below to download the file below.

Restore_Cab_Files.reg

For 32-bit Windows 7 Only



For 64-bit Windows 7 Only



Figure 1. Choose the download that's appropriate for your computer.

The instructions are a little involved because Windows 7 has a permissions issue. I hope this works for you.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Earlier this year, a friend complained that he kept on getting junk e-mails with the name of a friend in his Inbox. This is junk mail with many different subjects. Well, after e-mailing him, back and forth, I have acquired this junk-mail, under his name as the sender. Can't get rid of it. I've tried running all my anti-spyware and virus programs, etc., but I keep getting these e-mails, many times a day. The address from these junk mails is my friend's but, of course, he didn't send any. Would you have any suggestions of how I can get rid of all these e-mails?

Thank you,

*Jerry Michael Hughes
San Diego*

Dear Jerry,

Most likely some type of malware obtained access to your friend's address book. The issue is on his computer, although even if he resolves the problem, it may not stop the Spam. The horse may already be out of the barn.

If you want to see if the e-mails are coming from his computer—even if he didn't send them—you will need to do a little detective work.

Generally, holding down the ALT key and hitting Return/Enter (ALT+ENTER) will open the message properties window (see Figure 2). Shown is some Spam I randomly picked from my Junk folder.

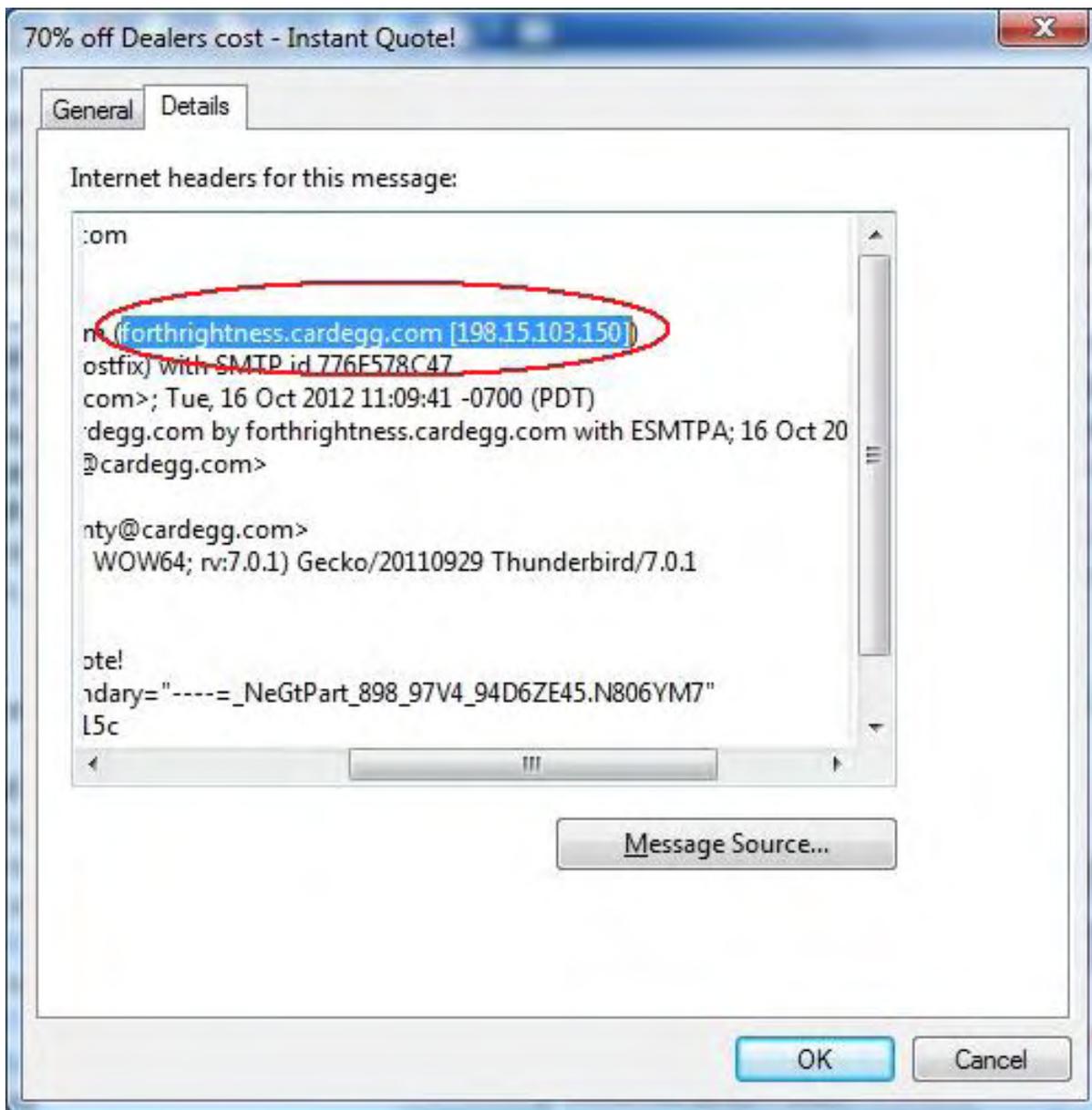


Figure 2. The Details tab of an e-mail properties window.

In the Details tab you will find basic information about that e-mail. On the line "Received:", the server domain and IP address of the sending e-mail server will be displayed. (If the e-mail goes through more than one server then there will be multiple "Received:" lines. If this is the same e-mail server where your friend has an account then most likely he has a malware problem.

Note: If you want even more detail about the e-mail, click the "Message Source..." button.

If your friend's PC is sending the e-mails, then he is owned and his PC is likely a member of a botnet (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botnet*). If he is a member, then a lot of those e-mails he is sending out likely have a virus payload in a link or something to expand the botnet. Spammers then purchase time on these botnets to send out their Spam to a large audience. This is something that should be fixed in a timely fashion.

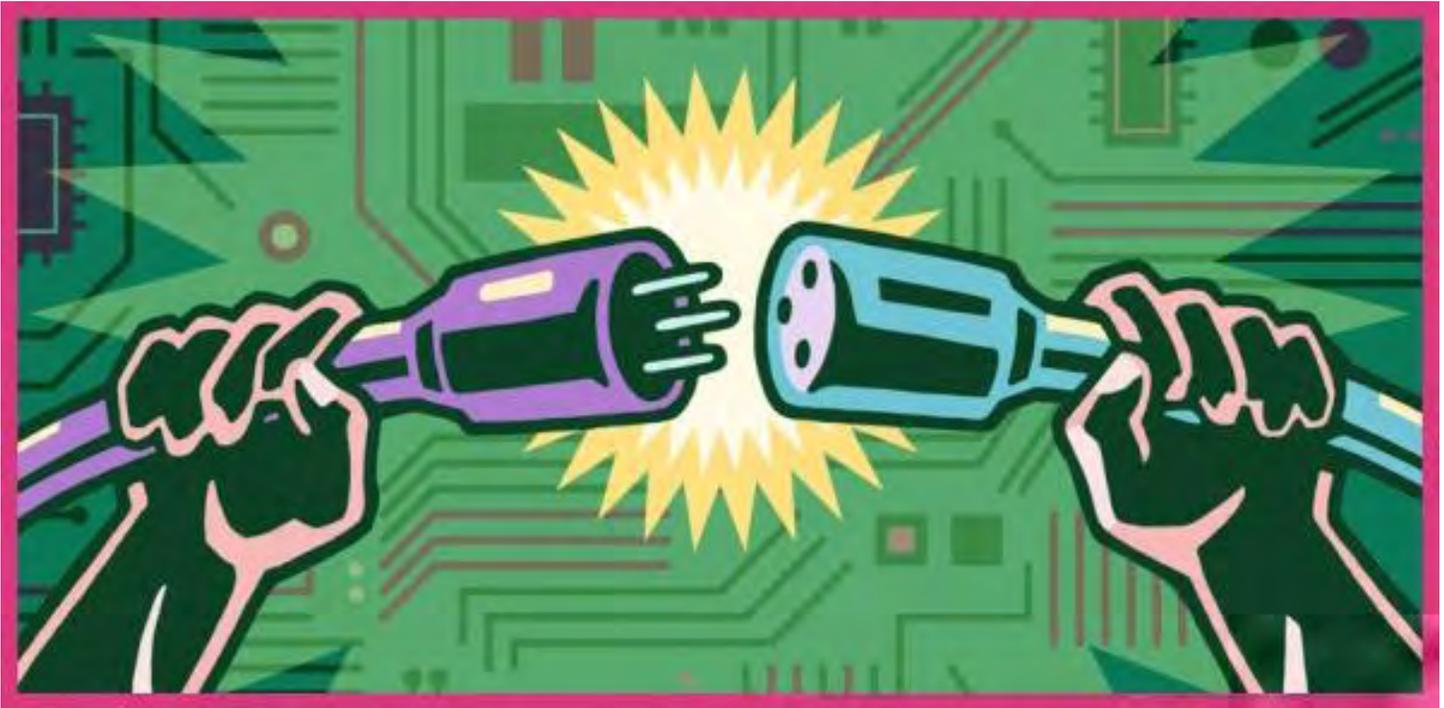
However, as is likely the case, if the e-mail is coming from another Spam server, then your e-mail address is already on some lists in cyberspace. The only way to stop them is to block the "real" addresses—either domains or IP address.

In most e-mail programs, under Tools, there are options for blocking junk mail. Find where you can add domains or IP address from which you don't want to receive. Add those addresses that you have identified in the e-mail properties window. (Don't use the right-click method because that will most likely only block e-mail from your friend.) As you check various junk you receive, you may find that there are a number of servers and/or IPs to block.

An even better method would be to get your friend to change his e-mail address. Then you could go ahead and block everything from the old address. First, he definitely needs to make sure his machine is clean. Otherwise, it could happen all over again.

Digital Dave

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How to Become a Windows Computer Superhero

“The Best Way to Keep Your Job Is Make Yourself More Valuable” by Jack Dunning

Most small offices have one or two people who have made themselves the in-house IT group. Without the job title, they apply their knowledge to keeping the computers running. Now there is another way to add to superhero status by making it easier to use Windows computers.

In this time of economic stress anything people can do to make themselves more valuable to a company will help to secure their position. Companies certainly appreciate people who do *more* than just their job. If a time comes for promotions (or layoffs) those people who do that little bit extra have the edge. That's where computer knowledge is an asset.



“Ralph is really great with computers. I just object to his choice of work clothes.”

In those smaller companies with no IT (Information Technology) department, there always seems to be a go-to person who knows how to solve software problems. The computer help job is not usually an official position, but one that comes about informally. When a computer problem pops up, the computer expert is called. He or she is recognized as the person most likely to get the right result.

Resolving computer problems is great, but if you want to become a true computer superhero, then take your skills to the next level by making computing simpler for everyone. Implement tools and solutions specific to the business and the individual users which will make their job easier

“Ralph is really great with computers. I just object to his choice of work clothes.”

and each worker more productive. Reduce those boring repetitive tasks to simple, quick operations, thus eliminating much of the daily

drudgery. It's not as difficult as you think and you will be quickly recognized as the company's computer superhero.

The Absolutely Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!

Over the past several months, I've been working with AutoHotkey while saying that it is "*possibly* the best free Windows utility software ever." I'm now dropping the "possibly" and stating emphatically that AutoHotkey is *absolutely* the best free Windows utility software ever! If you learn a little scripting (it's not that hard) and work with AutoHotkey, then you will be able implement many little Windows solutions to common problems—making you that company computer superhero.

Many of you may say, "My company won't allow anything to be done with the computers. Nothing can be installed and nothing can be changed." It's true that the fear of viruses and the damage caused by the mistakes of well-meaning people has forced companies to restrict changes or additions to the computers. However, if you can show that you know what you're doing, you can eventually get a special dispensation from those rules. If it were me, I would first develop the essential problem solving AutoHotkey scripts on a laptop at home, then bring the computer in demonstrating the hotkeys for associates. Eventually, when the higher-ups see the possible productivity gains and low risk to the computers, they might just let you go ahead.

Other people may question my continual raving about AutoHotkey and its capabilities. I've written so much about it that many readers may be numb. However, in this article I will show why I think AutoHotkey is so important and how it can turn anyone into a Windows computer superhero. If after reading this article, you find nothing that could help you, you have either given up on improving your computing life or you don't use Windows.

Writing Your First AutoHotkey Script

I feel strongly that writing scripts is not just for nerds. That's right. To take advantage of the power and flexibility of AutoHotkey, you need to do some minor programming. But if you can write a letter or e-mail on a computer, you can write a script. That's almost everyone.

To run AutoHotkey scripts you will need to download the main program. AutoHotkey makes it simple to create and run scripts as outlined in the first article on installing AutoHotkey and writing your first script. In this article, there are some simple examples of scripts, some of which consist of only one line such as:

```
::imho::in my humble opinion
```

When activated, this one-line command will automatically convert "imho" when typed into "in my humble opinion" in any text editing program or Web browser window when followed by a space, comma, period or other terminal punctuation. That's all there is to it.

Suppose the name of your company is National Bank of Really Cool Investments, Inc. It can be annoying to type that long name each time you need it. You could set up macros in some programs or have it added automatically to e-mails, but that will only work in those programs. As an alternative, you can add the following line to an AutoHotkey script:

```
::nb::National Bank of Really Cool Investments, Inc
```

Now, anytime you type "nb" followed by a period, comma, or space, it will be converted to "National Bank of Really Cool Investments, Inc." Plus, it will work in all of your word processors, Web browsers, and e-mail programs. I don't know anyone who can't use this feature for something. If you can add this type of hotkey conversion to your co-workers' computers for the most repetitive tasks, then you will become their hero.

Change the Case of Letters

I now have twenty routines (many of them only one line) running in my primary AutoHotkey script. In editing I often need to convert screaming capital letters to lowercase before publishing. I now do it with a simple key combination. One of my early columns explained how to write scripts for converting the case of text (uppercase to lowercase, lowercase to uppercase, and initial capitalization). This may not be something that you need, but I use it all the time.

Sharing AutoHotkey Scripts

If you had to install AutoHotkey on every computer that used your scripts, then getting approval from the big wigs would certainly be a difficult task. Fortunately, you don't need to do this. AutoHotkey has a built-in compiler which will convert your scripts into independent programs. Adding a running script to someone's computer can be as simple as inserting a USB drive and copying the file to the user's computer. This is so easy to do that you could keep up tailored scripts for everyone in the office (individual hotkeys for e-mail addresses) while only installing the main AutoHotkey interpreter program on your own computer.

Using Loops to Search and Replace

Sometimes there are regular changes which need to be made to all documents—such as, commonly misspelled words or too many spaces. Entire documents can be copied and corrected with AutoHotkey by using search and replace inside a loop. This type of formatting tends to be specific to each business, although repetitive. With AutoHotkey these techniques will work in any Windows program.

Adding Dates to Documents



Many people find that they need to add dates (today's or a future/past date) to their e-mails and documents. Typing in the correct date with the proper format can be tedious—especially if you need to do it a lot. AutoHotkey has special commands for dealing with dates. Reasonably simple routines can be put in scripts for adding dates to anywhere in documents. There is even a pop-up calendar (shown to the left) which can be used to select future or past dates.

In Notepad, you can add the date to any document by hitting the F5 key, thus pasting the current date and time (i. e. "2:57 PM 8/7/2012") into the editing window. Some other programs have similar date/time paste functions, but you need to know the hotkeys for each individual application. With AutoHotkey, you can make one date hotkey combination which will work for every editing field or word processing program in Windows.

Graphic Gadgets to Build More Windows Tools

AutoHotkey is not merely a program for creating text macros that substitute longer text for short hotkeys. It also includes an extensive set of graphic image tools which can be used in conjunction with hotkeys to run programs, manipulate the size and location of windows, copy files, and various other Windows tasks.



The text GUI (Graphic User Interface) (pictured at left) can be used as a pop-up for launching programs. This example is a prototype for building a new start menu in Windows 8—which has none. All that's needed is adding the programs regularly used by your associates to an AutoHotkey script. It will

work in any version of Windows—including Windows 8. Scanning the GUIs will generate many more ideas about how you can become a Windows computer superhero.

Window Manipulation Made Easy and User-Defined Functions

Sometimes you need a program or system window to conform to a specific size or sit at a certain location on the screen. For example, if you are testing a Web page at various screen resolutions, you need to resize your window to see how the page will look in each. AutoHotkey has a number of commands for manipulating windows. You can also write your own simple functions to use over and over—saving time and code writing. The linked article shows you how to do both.

I use this technique to resize windows to a maximum of 600 pixels wide which is our standard for the *ComputerEdge* Web site. Sometimes too much of the window is cut off at that width, but if it fits, it will be a better image than one graphically reduced. This gives me a quick check with a simple hotkey combination.

Also introduced in the same article is the conditional "If" statement. Commonly used in all programming languages, the "If" conditional adds flexibility to AutoHotkey scripts not found in most other Windows utilities.

Make a Window Always-on-Top

Always-on-top is a feature that I think should be built into the Windows calculator. When moving to various documents to collect figures, it's annoying to have to continually click on the calculator task button to bring back into view. With AutoHotkey, you can write a simple script that will toggle always-on-top on and off for any open window.

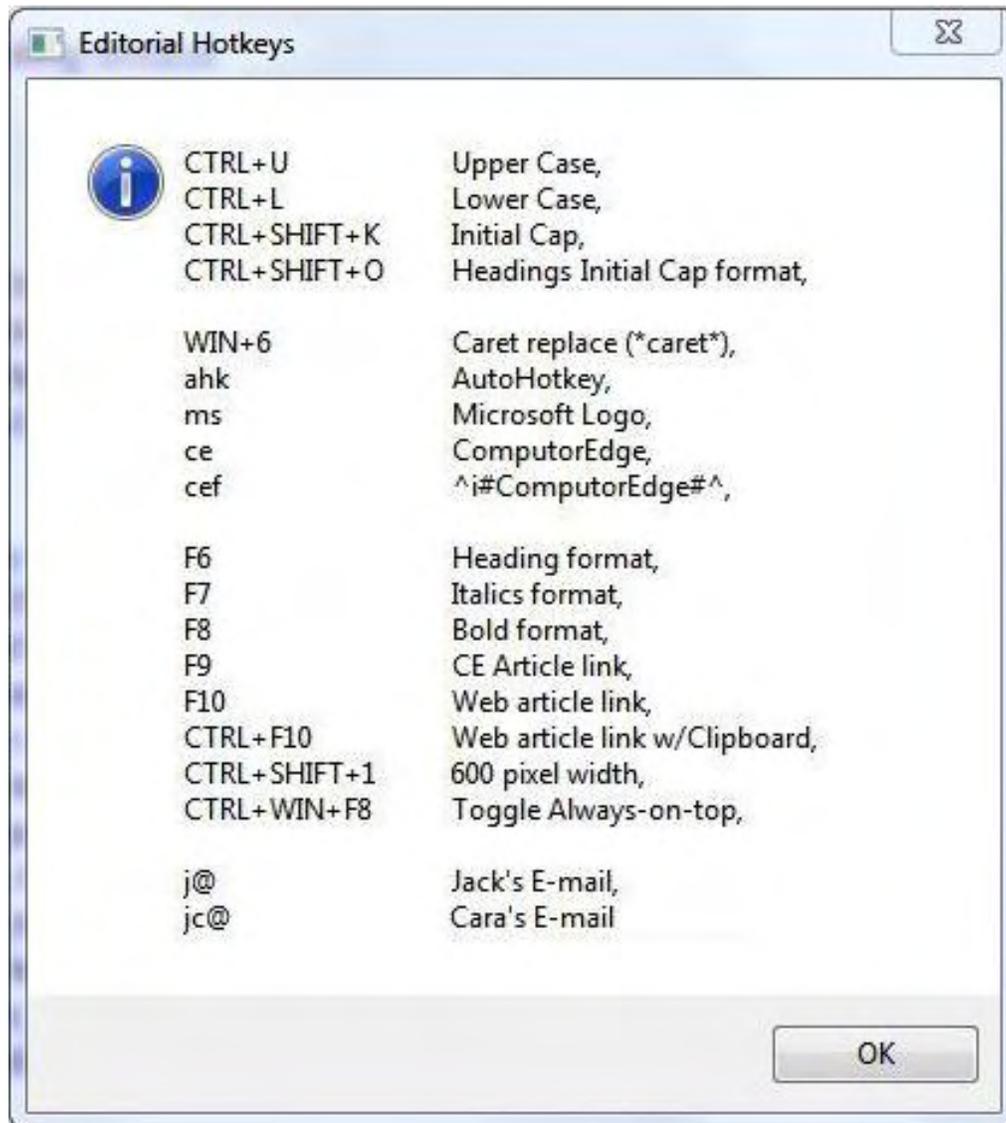
Windows Aero (if set up for it) will make a window stay always-on-top if you grab it by the top bar and shake. But it's not always accurate and a little embarrassing to do in public. I'm surprised at how much I now use the always-on-top toggle from the linked article above. It is especially useful when collecting a number of items or links from a variety of sources. I make the collection window (Notepad, Web edit window, e-mail window) always-on-top, then as I move from source to source dragging items into the always-on-top collection window—which is always available to receive. When done, I toggle the window back to normal mode.

The linked article also adds more AutoHotkey information about centering windows and limiting window size to the actual screen size, plus it has more examples of the "If" conditional.

Opening Key Windows System Folders and Making a Help Pop-up

For automatic loading when booting up or logging on, the compiled AutoHotkey scripts that do all of these good things

for your co-workers need to be in the Startup folder on the Windows computer. The Startup folders (there's more than one) are not always easy to find. There are special commands that will open the hidden systems folders which can be added to AutoHotkey commands for easy access. Then it's merely a matter of dropping the AutoHotkey file into the right folder.



We have now added so many commands to the AutoHotkey script that it's impossible to remember all the commands. That's why we need an AutoHotkey Help pop-up (also discussed in the above linked article). We now have only 20 routines in the *ComputerEdge* AutoHotkey script, but that's still too many to remember. Our Help pop-up (shown above) doesn't list the command to display Help (F12, number twenty). We just have to remember that. (Of course, if we forget the Help hotkey, the Help menu can't remind us of the Help hotkey anyway.) As you can see, some of our commands are special formats that only we use.

In some companies a Help pop-up could get very long. In that case, you may want to make either multiple Help pop-ups or use the "If" conditional to create context sensitive Help pop-ups.

Organizing for AutoHotkey, Better E-mail Hotkeys, and Boilerplate

When I started the series of articles and columns on AutoHotkey, I just created the scripts on the Windows Desktop. I soon realized that this was too confusing and messy. I shifted to a better way to organize for AutoHotkey scripts. I also

found better ways to write the e-mail hotkeys and add boilerplate. What company doesn't need to add boilerplate?

Disabling Annoying Windows Hotkeys

It was pointed out there are hotkeys built into Windows which cause problems for some people. Interestingly, AutoHotkey can be used to disable those offending Windows combinations, even if Windows itself has no way to do it.

Copying and Moving Files

This week's "Windows Tips and Tricks" discusses how to use AutoHotkey to copy files to a regular location. These commands make easy copying and moving tasks which are repetitive and annoying with a mouse.

On Becoming that Windows Computer Superhero

If you do them, there are many simple ideas in this article which can make you look like a computer genius to the average computer user. Most people are too intimidated to even attempt these things. If you are new to programming, then you will want to start at the beginning creating simple scripts that solve repetitive problems. Each article or column builds on the previous one. Make sure that you understand what is happening in each routine and how the logic works. This will build a foundation for understanding the more advanced programming techniques. By the time you go through all the articles, you should have enough knowledge to move to other intermediate commands without too much help.

In most offices, the simple techniques listed here are enough to make you a Windows Computer Superhero. But if you only do it for yourself, making your computing life easier, then you are a successful programmer.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20).

Available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20)! Also available at Barnes and Noble (www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463) and ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com).

[com/Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer](#)).

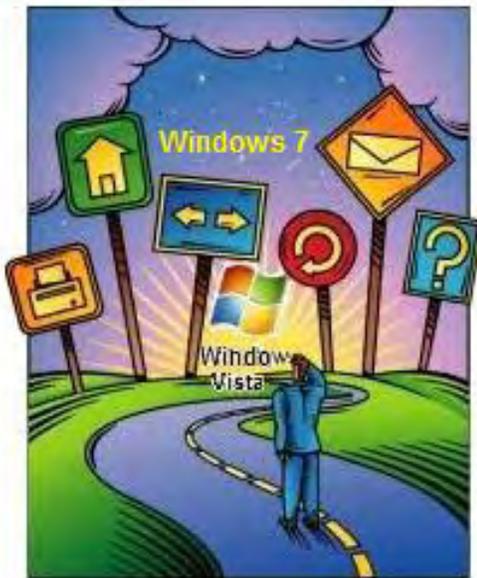
Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20),

Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20),

Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20),

and *That Does Not Compute!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks: AutoHotkey for Copying and Moving Files

“If Copying Files Become Tedious with a Mouse, It May Be Time for AutoHotkey”
by Jack Dunning

For copying and moving files, Windows is a point-and-click operating system. Sometimes it's just easier to write a short AutoHotkey script to manipulate file locations.

Since Windows is a mouse point-and-click oriented operating system, copying and moving files can be tedious at times. First, Windows Explorer must be opened navigating to the folder holding the files. Next, the target folder must be located, possibly opening a second instance of Windows Explorer. Then, to move the target files, they must be highlighted, then dragged to the new location. (To copy, hold down the CTRL key while dragging.) This technique is fine if you only occasionally need to move or copy files to a new location. But if you regularly do the same repetitive procedure, then it may be a candidate for an AutoHotkey script.

You can use the Command Prompt with the old DOS-like copying commands, but then you need to know exactly where you are and where you want to go. When using the Command Prompt, it's not difficult to accidentally overwrite files by copying in the wrong direction.

Moving and Copying Windows Files in AutoHotkey

AutoHotkey has built-in commands for moving files (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FileMove.htm), copying files (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FileCopy.htm), moving folders (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FileMoveDir.htm), and copying folders (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FileCopyDir.htm). AutoHotkey also includes additional file commands for creating files and folders, deleting files and folders, reading files, adding to files, capturing file specifics, and more. (All of these file commands are found in the Command Reference (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands.htm). "File" is the first word in each of these commands.) These command are not unlike those used with the Command Prompt since wildcards, such as "*" and "?" can be used for bulk processing.

Whether you need the file commands or not depends upon how you use your computer. For example, I have a regular **ComputerEdge** procedure where I must copy files received from writers to a Dropbox folder for sharing with editors. When I receive the files, I save them to a local folder, but then I copy them, not move, to the Dropbox folder. To do this I need to create the appropriate Dropbox folder (each is identified by the issue number—3042 for this week), then copy (drag with CTRL key depressed) from the local folder (editorial => 3042) to the Dropbox folder (dropbox => ComputerEdge => 3042). Since I do this as the articles and columns come in, the process requires locating both folders each time.

Note: To start from the beginning with the first AutoHotkey article see "Possibly the Best Free Windows Utility Ever!." Begin there and work your way back up to this point. The follow-up "Windows Tips and Tricks" columns are designed to incrementally teach anyone how to write AutoHotkey scripts, building on each earlier column a teaspoon at a time. It is useful to keep working with each section until you feel comfortable with the demonstration scripts and how they work. However, many of the techniques shown in this series can be immediately implemented without any extra knowledge.

To make this regular copying procedure easier, I wrote an AutoHotkey script that first determines the name of the target Dropbox folder based upon the current editorial Windows Explorer window, then creates the Dropbox folder—if it doesn't already exist—finally, opening a file system dialog box allowing me to select the file I want to copy. After picking the file, it is automatically copied to the appropriate Dropbox folder. The AutoHotkey script is shown in Figure 1. (The portion of the file above the "^+F11" hotkey combination is standard boilerplate added to all newly created AHK files.)

```

;
; AutoHotkey Version: 1.x
; Language:           English
; Platform:           win9x/NT
; Author:             A.N.Other <myemail@nowhere.com>
;
;
; Script Function:
;   Template script (you can customize this template by editing
;   "shellNew\Template.ahk" in your windows folder)
;
#NoEnv ; Recommended for performance and compatibility with future
AutoHotkey releases.
SendMode Input ; Recommended for new scripts due to its superior
speed and reliability.
SetWorkingDir %A_ScriptDir% ; Ensures a consistent starting
directory.

^+F11::
    (A) WinGetTitle, title, A
    (B) StringReplace, newtitle, title, C:\editorial\
    (C) newdir = C:\Users\%A_UserName%\Dropbox\ComputerEdge\%newtitle%
    (D) MsgBox, %newdir%

    (E) IfNotExist, %newdir%
    (F) FileCreateDir, %newdir%

    (G) FileselectFile, oldFile,, %title%

    (H) FileCopy, %oldFile%, C:\Users\%A_UserName%\Dropbox
        \ComputerEdge\%newtitle% , 1
return
    
```

One Continuous Line (wrapped for image only)

Figure 1. An AutoHotkey script for copying a file to a Dropbox folder.

The copying script is as follows:

```

^+F11::
    WinGetTitle, title, A
    StringReplace, newtitle,title, C:*bckslsh*editorial*bckslsh*
    newdir = C:*bckslsh*Users*bckslsh*%A_UserName%
*bckslsh*Dropbox*bckslsh*ComputerEdge*bckslsh*%newtitle%
    MsgBox, %newdir%
    IfNotExist, %newdir%
        FileCreateDir, %newdir%
    FileSelectFile, OldFile,, %title%
    FileCopy, %OldFile%, C:*bckslsh*Users*bckslsh*%A_UserName%
*bckslsh*Dropbox*bckslsh*ComputerEdge*bckslsh*%newtitle% , 1
return

```

After the script is activated, the copy routine is initiated by ^+F11 (CTRL+SHIFT+Function key F11).

The files for each issue are stored in folders with the issue number (C:*bckslsh*editorial*bckslsh*3042). In line (A) the WinGetTitle (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinGetTitle.htm) command returns the full path of the activated Windows Explorer window. This means that for the routine to work, the folder for the current issue must be the active window resulting in "C:*bckslsh*editorial*bckslsh*3042" as the title value in this example.

However, the path for the Dropbox looks nothing like the local path (C:*bckslsh*Users*bckslsh*Jack*bckslsh*Dropbox*bckslsh*ComputerEdge*bckslsh*3042). While the beginning portion of the path is always the same, the issue number changes each week. Since the issue number will always match between the local folder and the Dropbox folder, the issue number needs to be extracted. In line (B), the StringReplace (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/StringReplace.htm) command is used to remove the first portion of the local path (C:*bckslsh*editorial*bckslsh*) and replace it with nothing. This leaves only the issue (folder) number in the variable "newtitle" (3042).

In line (C), the path to the Dropbox is saved in the variable "newdir" using the issue number variable "newtitle" and the system variable "A_UserName (www.autohotkey.com/docs/Variables.htm#BuiltIn)" to automatically add "jack", the user name, to the path. By using the system variable for user name rather than the actual name, the script will work properly on other Windows computers as long as they have the same folder structure.

When writing and debugging scripts, I find it useful to put in MsgBox windows which display the value of variables. This way it is easier to see the errors (syntax or logic) that I'm making. In line (D), the value of the variable "newdir" which is the path to the Dropbox folder is displayed in a pop-up window (see Figure 2). Notice that both the user name and issue number are part of the target path.

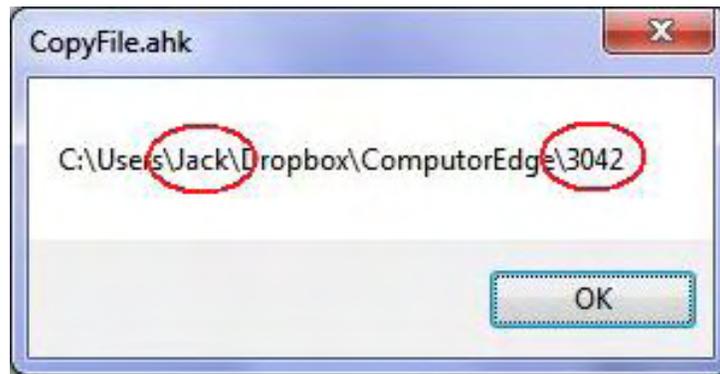


Figure 2. It's a good idea to use the MsgBox command to check values while writing scripts. These commands can be removed once the script is working.

The first time a file is moved to the Dropbox, the folder for the issue will not exist. Line (E) uses the IfNotExist (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/IfExist.htm) command to check for the folder. If the folder is not found, the statement is true and line (F) will be executed creating the folder with the variable "newdir" using the FileCreateDir (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FileCreateDir.htm) command. This will only happen the first time since when later files are copied IfNotExist will come up false.

In line (G) the FileSelectFile (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FileSelectFile.htm) command is used to open a dialog box for selecting the file I want to move. The dialog should open at the same location as the active window (see Figure 3).

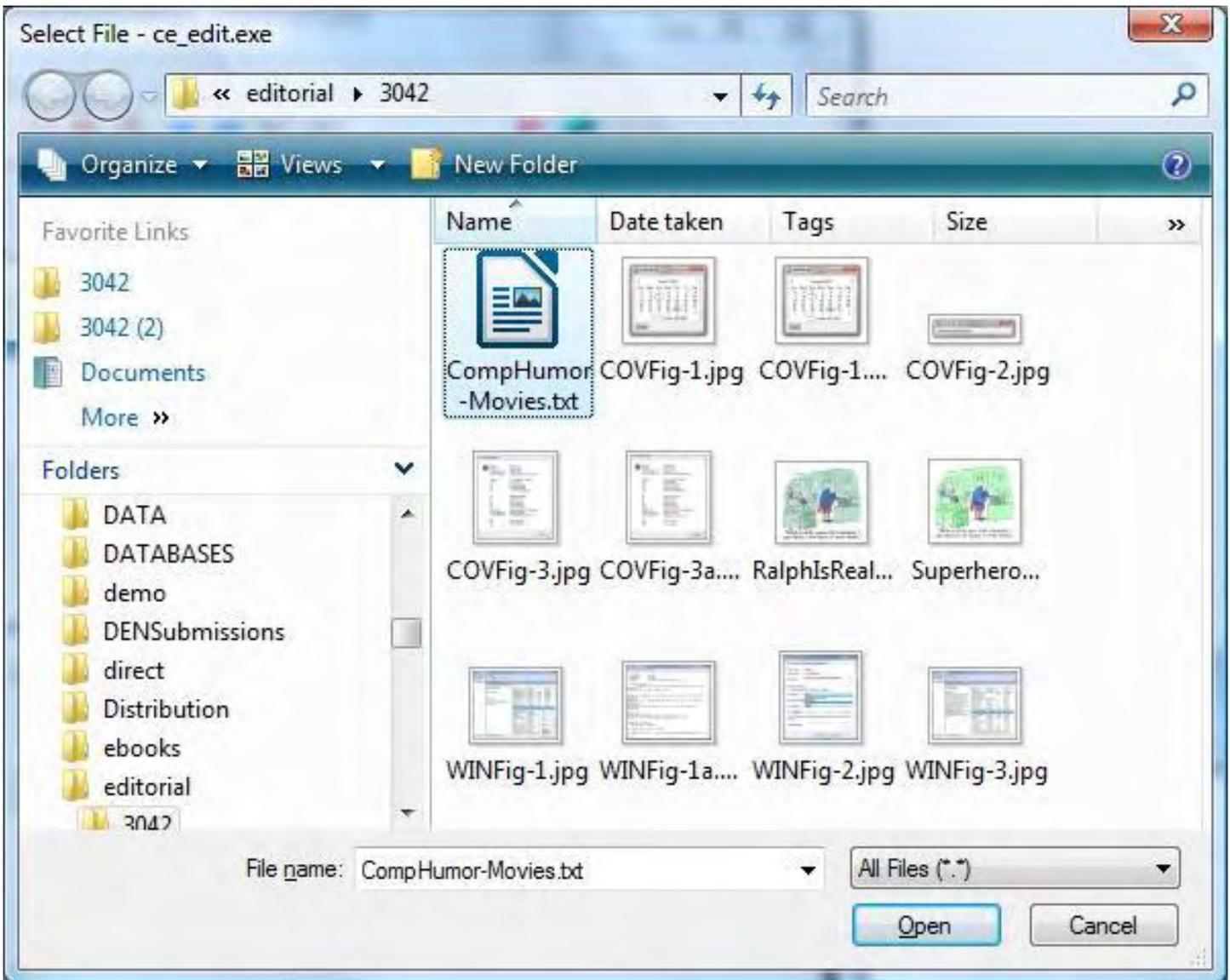


Figure 3. The AutoHotkey FileSelectFile command opens a dialog box for selecting files.

It is possible to set the FileSelectFile command for multiple selections, but copying multiple files at the same time would add complication to the routine which is beyond the scope of this column.

Lastly, in line (H), after the file is selected, the FileCopy command is used to copy the file to the target Dropbox issue folder. This line is unnecessarily long since the target path shown in line (H) is already stored in the variable "newdir" displayed in Figure 2. For a better solution the line should be replaced with:

```
FileCopy, %OldFile%, %newdir% , 1
```

AutoHotkey_L

The version of AutoHotkey that I've been using for these articles has been stable since 2009. However, the current fork that's being supported is AutoHotkey_L ([I.autohotkey.net](http://www.autohotkey.net)). It has quite a few new features, but they are primarily more advanced functions that require a higher level of programming ability than that which I have offered. Anything that has appeared in this series should also work in AutoHotkey_L. In fact, there is no reason that I can see

not to upgrade. You can check the differences (I.autohotkey.net/docs/AHKL_Features.htm) between the two versions for yourself.

What's Next

This column is the last in the series of beginning AutoHotkey tips. There is much more to AutoHotkey, but the scripts start to become more complex. There is a fairly complete set of commands for loops and conditionals. The AutoHotkey Web site has an extensive list of scripts (www.autohotkey.com/docs/scripts/index.htm) for various tasks. Use them. Plus, you can find many more examples on the Web.

If you've worked through these articles and columns then you've already written some pretty useful scripts for yourself. You may be happy with that and for most people it will be all they ever need. However, AutoHotkey is a fairly complete programming language and there is so much more that you can do—if you are so inclined. There are ways to control mouse movement and write application specific scripts, even if you only use a mouse with a program. These are considered a slightly higher level of effort.

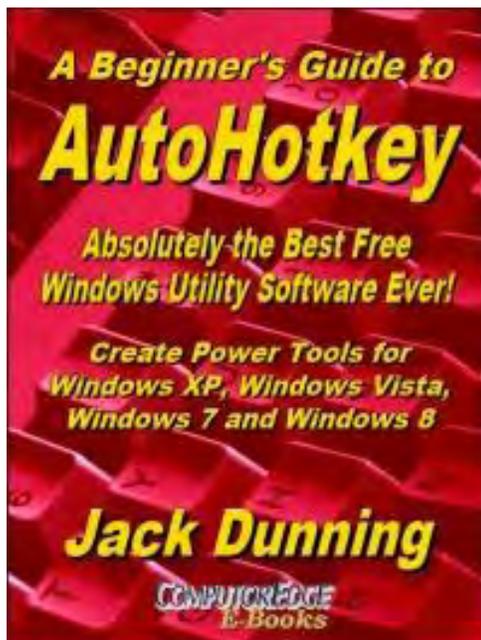
Remember, AutoHotkey is just a tool. It will not solve all of your computer problems and there are probably many things that are not worth the extra programming effort. In making computing easier, it's important to use the right tool for the right job.

I've used AutoHotkey enough to now know that "AutoHotkey is **absolutely** the best free Windows utility software ever!"

* * *

If you have any questions about writing or using AutoHotkey scripts, please use the "Tell us what you think about this article!" comment link at the top or bottom of this column, or send an e-mail to AutoHotkey Questions (ceeditor@computoredge.com). I will continue to write more AutoHotkey columns as I encounter interesting problems or respond to questions from readers.

* * *



Now available in e-book format from Amazon, Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

[ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)).

Building Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8, AutoHotkey is the most powerful, flexible, **free** Windows utility software available. Anyone can instantly add more of the functions that they want in all of their Windows programs, whether installed on their computer or while working on the Web. AutoHotkey has a universality not found in any other Windows utility—free or paid.

Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scrips for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of windows, making any window always-on-top, copying and moving files, and much more. Each chapter builds on the previous chapters.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20).

Available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20)! Also available at Barnes and Noble (www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463) and ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer).

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), *Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20), *Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), and *That Does Not Compute!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Decline of the PCs” by Wally Wang

Decline of the PCs; The Future of E-Books and Amazon; More iPads in Australian Schools; Easy Video Editing with Adobe Premiere Elements 11; Bad Partners; Turning File Sharing Off.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

A company called iHS iSuppli claims that PC sales have dropped (money.cnn.com/2012/10/10/technology/pc-shipments-decline/index.html?source=cnn_bin) for the first time in eleven years. Forrester Research predicts that just 1 million Windows 8 tablets will be sold this year. In contrast, Apple sold more than 15 million iPads during last year's holiday season in the last three months of 2011.

Of course, we have to wait and see how many Windows 8 devices actually sell during the holiday season so we can accurately compare real sales figures of Windows 8 devices to iPad sales figures. What's clear is that the world of PC sales is dropping because PCs are no longer the only way to browse the Internet, send and receive e-mail, or communicate through instant messaging.

Just five years ago, you could only browse the Internet with a PC. Early mobile phones offered Internet browsing, but this feature was often so poorly organized, difficult, and slow that it made Internet browsing virtually useless. Research in Motion skyrocketed when they combined e-mail with their Blackberry phones, so now you didn't need a PC to send and receive e-mail. Mobile phones did offer text messaging to rival instant messaging on PCs, but it took the iPhone to combine Internet browsing, e-mail, and text messaging into the standard smartphone model of today.

The reason PC sales are falling is because we now have a choice for getting on the Internet, sending and receiving e-mail, and sending instant messages. With so many choices between smartphones and tablets, there's often no reason to get another PC when a smartphone or tablet can be cheaper, lighter, and more versatile. Windows isn't just fighting against Apple, but they're also fighting against Android as well.

The days of PC dominance (blogs.wsj.com/digits/2012/10/10/gartner-idc-pc-sales/) is over. Gartner said the worldwide PC shipments shrank 8.3 percent, while IDC reports PC shipments shrank 8.6 percent, in the third quarter this year when compared to the same period a year earlier. In the meantime, Apple sold 17 million iPads in the last quarter, representing an 84 percent increase from the previous year. The trend clearly shows more people buying iPads and fewer people buying PCs.

That doesn't mean PCs still can't be useful, just that PCs no longer represent the only computing option. Windows XP took over the PC market because PCs took over the computer market. No matter how successful Windows 8 might be, it can never rival Windows XP's popularity unless it can also capture a large slice of the smartphone and tablet

markets in addition to the PC market. If Windows 8 just captures the PC market, it will grab a smaller share of a shrinking market.

The real challenge for Windows 8 is to deliver an optimum experience on PCs, smartphones, and tablets. With its radically different user interface, Windows 8 will likely frighten away some PC users. Even Microsoft recognizes this fact by releasing training videos (news.cnet.com/8301-10805_3-57530183-75/microsoft-accepts-the-challenge-to-teach-users-windows-8/) that explain how to use Windows 8.

It's clear that the future is mobile computing involving smartphones and tablets with netbooks pretty much forgotten. What's less clear is how much people will want Windows 8 to play a major role in their smartphones, tablets, and computers.

The Future of E-Books and Amazon

Just a few years ago, few people believed that the PC market would ever drop, but it has and it will continue to do so whether you like it or not. Back then, the Windows PC dominated with no serious competitors to challenge it. What knocked Windows PCs off the top of the hill wasn't another computer but the shift to smartphones and tablets.

With so many smartphones and tablets available, many people read e-books mostly on their smartphones and tablets. Amazon jumped on this first by offering their free Kindle software for a variety of platforms including Windows, Mac OS X, iOS, Windows Phone 7, Blackberry, and Android. If you want to read an e-book bought and downloaded from Amazon, you could do that regardless of the device you use to read e-books.

That strategy might seem smart, but it's not going to last long. The problem with displaying Kindle e-books on so many different platforms is that you can't take advantage of any particular platform. The end result is that Kindle e-books consist of nothing but static text and pictures. Taking the static page of a printed paper book and putting it on a computer screen ignores the advantages that a computer offers.

The real future of e-books involves audio, video, and interactivity. Rather than just read a history e-book, what if you could actually hear speeches from Martin Luther King or John F. Kennedy? Rather than look at a picture of the Apollo moon landing, what if you could see the actual video of the Apollo moon landing the way millions of Americans saw it on TV? Instead of simply staring at a map showing water temperatures in the ocean, what if you could change the temperatures and see the effects of your temperature changes right away to truly understand the dangers of warming ocean currents on the environment?

That's all possible with interactive e-books. That's completely impossible with static e-books that Amazon offers through their Kindle e-reader devices and software. Right now Amazon is the undisputed leader in static e-book sales, but if they don't embrace interactive e-books, their world leader status might soon look as dire as the PC world when faced with the onslaught of mobile computing.

With Apple rumored to be readying a less expensive and smaller iPad mini, it's likely that more people will pick up an iPad in the next few months. With so many people buying and using iPads, it's more profitable for developers to offer iPad apps since that's where the market is, which will further encourage people to buy iPads because of the larger app selection just like people used to buy Windows PCs for the larger Windows software selection.

With iBooks on the iPad offering interactive e-books, it's possible that Apple will slowly grow their interactive e-book library while Amazon sits fat, dumb, and happy with their lead in static e-books. Just as the mobile computing wave caught the sluggish PC world off guard (simply because they were in denial of facts that PCs wouldn't last forever), so it's possible that Apple's growing interactive e-book library will catch Amazon off guard. By the time Amazon realizes

that interactive e-books are the future and static e-books are a sloppy and lazy alternative, it could be too late.

Recently a friend wanted to write a children's book in both English and Spanish. First, we created a typical, static e-book for Amazon's Kindle and threw the plain EPUB file in the Kindle store for people to purchase. The children's book is called *La Casita en la Calle 5* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0092G115E/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0092G115E&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20).

Next, we recorded audio of a narrator reading each page so children can learn to read by themselves for those times when an adult isn't around to help them read. By listening to the audio narration and following along with the text, children (and even adults) can learn to read Spanish.

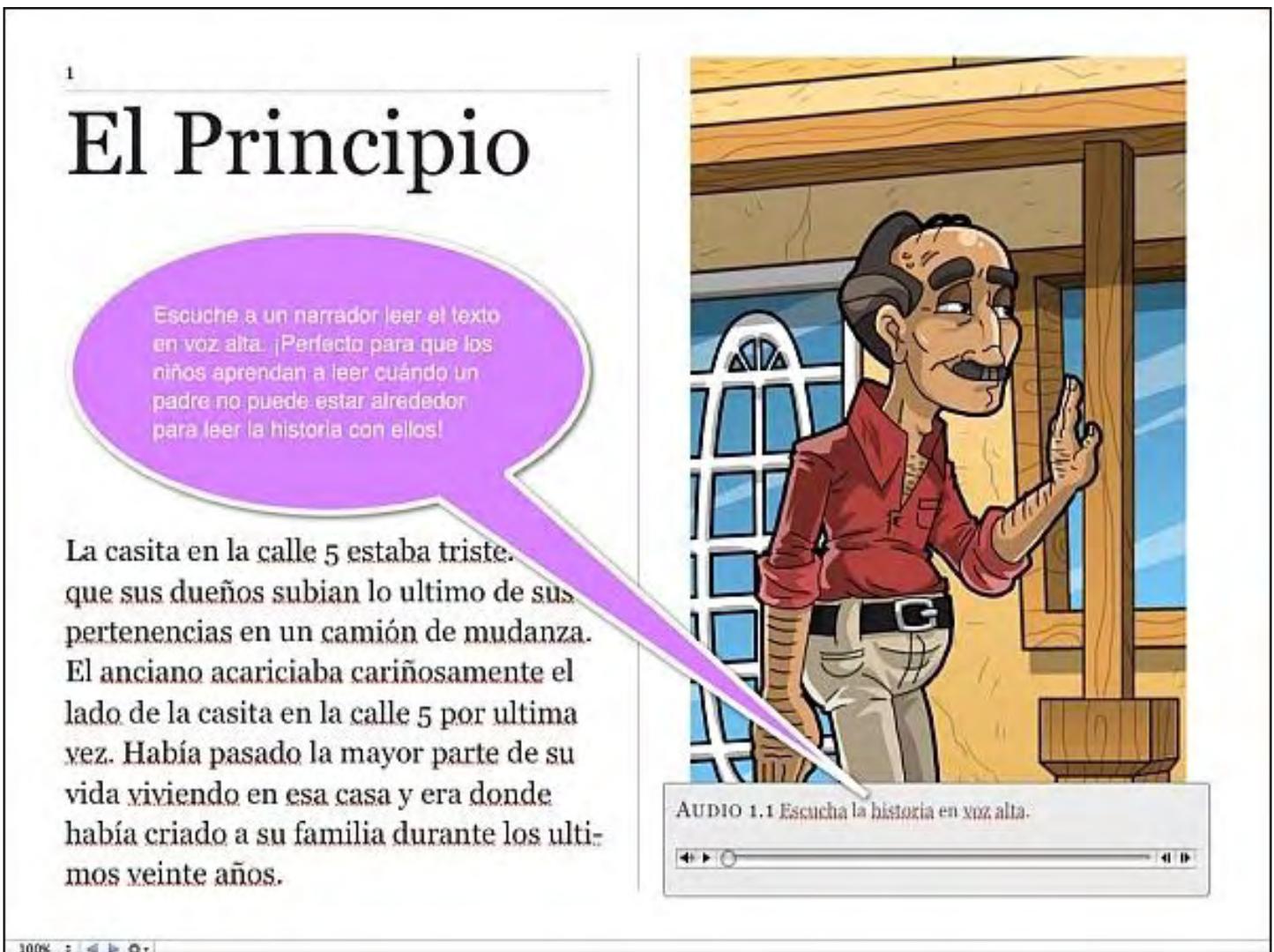


Figure 1. Audio lets a recording read a book to children.

To further help Spanish-speaking children learn both languages, the interactive iBook version also includes pictures labeled in both English and Spanish. Now kids can see the English and Spanish words for common household items like a table or chair. Plus they can hear a narrator correctly pronounce words in both English and Spanish. By replaying this audio narration as often as possible, readers can practice their English and Spanish pronunciation as long as they wish.



Figure 2. The interactive iBook can help children learn both English and Spanish.

Finally, everyone always retains their lessons better when they're having fun, so the interactive iBook version includes a puzzle that kids can put together, making the interactive iBook fun to read and more engaging to play. The more fun kids have, the more likely they'll continue learning from it.



Figure 2. Figure 3. An interactive iBook can offer games that a static Kindle e-book cannot.

If you want to stay in the past, cling to old fashion e-books that can only display static text and pictures, which can be like watching a slide show in a movie theater. If you want to see how future e-books can incorporate audio and interactivity to enhance learning and reading comprehension, then download the iBook version of *La Casita en la Calle 5* (click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat?id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=https%253A%252F%252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fbook%252Fla-casita-en-la-calle-5%252Fid559557781%253Fmt%253D11%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30) for iBooks on the iPad.

Whether Amazon will eventually lose their lead in the e-book market is debatable, but what isn't in doubt is that interactive e-books represent the future and static e-books do not. By comparing the static, Kindle version of *La Casita en la Calle 5* with the interactive iBook version of *La Casita en la Calle 5*, you can clearly see how static e-books can never define the future of e-book publishing no matter how hard you may wish otherwise.

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New opportunities keep appearing everyday, yet too many people stubbornly cling to the past until the opportunities pass them by. By keeping your eyes open, you can already see the future developing around you. By shoving your head in the ground, you can pretend that change isn't occurring just because you don't want it to happen, which is simply a strategy for failure.

More iPads in Australian Schools

St. Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney, Australia will now require that parents buy iPads (www.electronista.com/articles/12/10/12/parents.of.private.school.students.must.bear.expense/) for their seventh-through tenth-grade students. School officials say that as e-book textbooks become more widespread, the savings from not buying the printed books will more than offset the cost of the iPad. Educators believe that tablets (iPads) are also more effective as learning tools than notebooks while also eliminating the need for students to lug around heavy textbooks.

Officials say that when children are sick, they can still use their iPads with FaceTime to video conference into the classroom and not miss any lessons. By attending classes virtually, students can still participate in class and interact with their teacher.

Of course, it's not just the iPad that's useful in education but tablets in general. A girl's school called St. Catherine's in Waverly skipped the iPad in favor of heavier and more expensive Samsung Series 7 Slate PCs for its sixth- through tenth-grade students. St. Catherine officials chose the Series 7 Slate PCs because it offers a stylus for drawing and for some tests that still require students to hand write their essays. The Slates cost more than an iPad (around \$1,500 not including some \$500 in app and e-text costs), but they still prove the benefits of tablets over traditional laptop computers. Now we just have to see if the higher cost of the Series 7 Slate PC is worth the expense over the iPad.

For all those people who insisted that tablets were useless, perhaps they can go back to school and use an iPad to learn how wrong they really were with their illogical arguments. Then again, such people would likely avoid using the iPad in school and wind up failing their class just to prove their point.

Easy Video Editing with Adobe Premiere Elements 11

With so many smartphones and tablets offering a camera to capture video, it's easy for anyone to capture sporting events, parties, and vacations as a short video clip. Of course, people rarely capture perfect video in one take, so there's a good chance you may need to edit your video before presenting it to others.

Although editing video isn't difficult, it's just another skill people need to learn along with nuances of another program, which means most people won't bother doing it. To overcome the twin problems of making video editing easy without forcing people to spend time learning the complexities of yet another program, Adobe offers the \$99 Premiere Elements 11 (www.adobe.com/products/premiere-elements.html). Based on their professional Adobe Premiere video editing program, Premiere Elements 11 just offers you the most common video editing tools you need in an easy-to-use program that can produce surprising results far faster and simpler than you might have thought possible.

One problem with most video editing programs is that they make it easy to do basic tasks like trimming video, but difficult to do anything fancier. To solve this problem, Premiere Elements 11 offers an Instant Movie feature that lets you choose from a library of different video templates. Just pick the template you like best, trim your video as best you can, and Premiere Elements 11 turns it into a polished video.

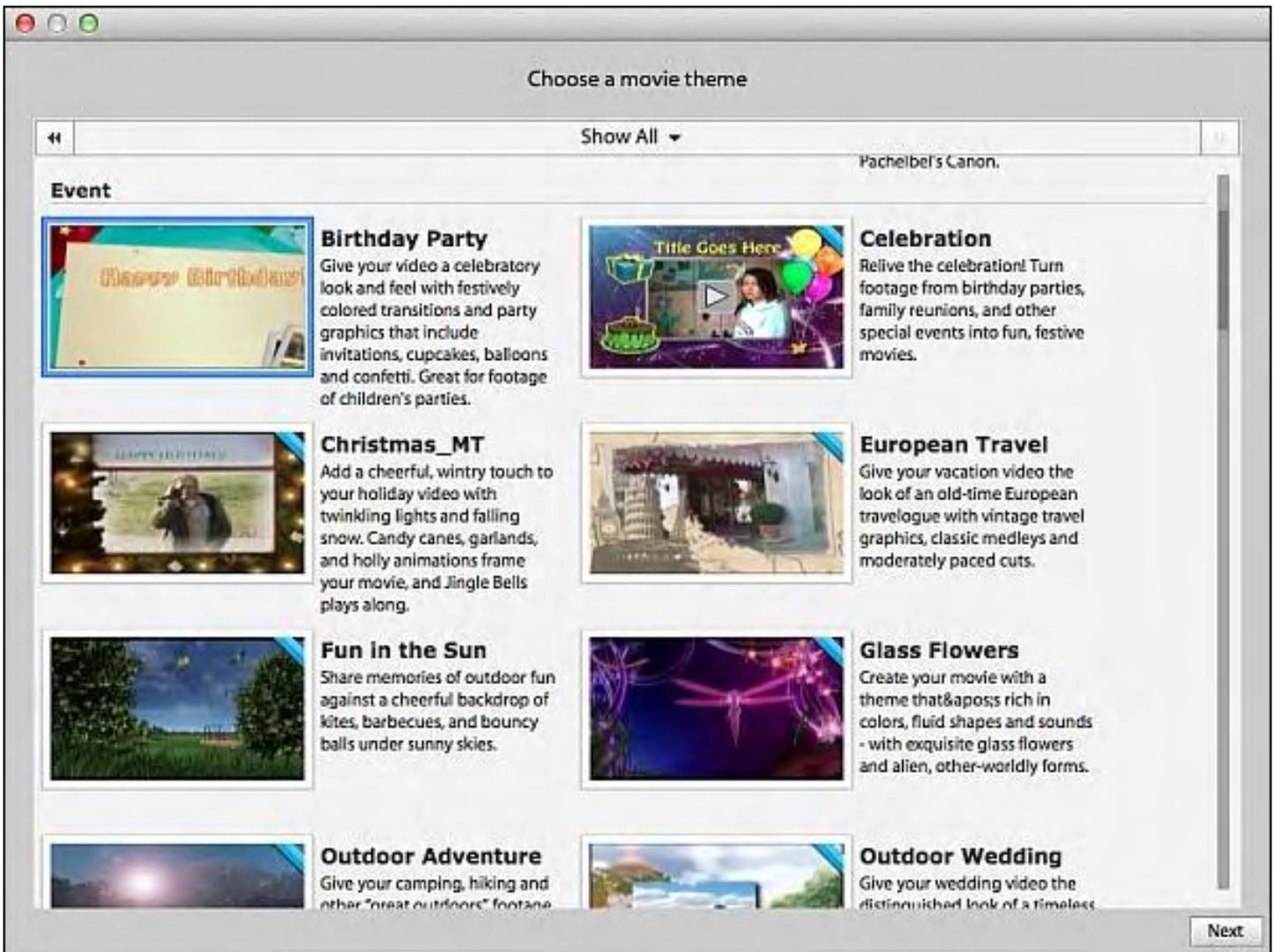


Figure 4. Premiere Elements 11 offers a library of Instant Movie templates.

If you're familiar with programs like Photoshop, you know you can correct flawed photographs by modifying the colors. However, what if you capture the perfect video moment, but the colors appear washed out or faded due to poor lighting? With Premiere Elements 11, you can correct the brightness, contrast, and color of your entire video clip to improve its appearance. Now you don't have to throw away great video moments but can fix them with the click of the mouse.



Figure 5. Premiere Elements 11 can modify color in a video clip.

If you find a particularly interesting clip in your video, Premiere Elements 11 lets you export it as a still image that you can edit in a program like Photoshop Elements or just use as is. With this freeze frame feature, you can stop trying to capture great moments with still images and just capture a video. Then scan your video to find the best frame to save as a still image.



Figure 6. Premiere Elements 11 can export a still image from a video clip.

Premiere Elements 11 may be easy to use, but it will still take time to learn to master. However, its user interface is simple enough that you can start seeing results within a short time. If you're willing to take your time, you can start producing professional editing results far easier and faster than using a professional video editing program like Adobe Premiere.

Of course, once you master the basics of Premiere Elements 11, you can easily transfer your skills to using Adobe Premiere. If you're a fledgling film maker or video editor, start with the much less expensive Premiere Elements 11 and then move up to the professional Adobe Premiere when you're ready.

Premiere Elements 11 is well within the budget of anyone who wants to edit video without any hassle. Whether you just want to create great video quickly or whether you want to take your time producing professional-quality video, you can do both with Premiere Elements 11. With this much power at your fingertips, you just need to start capturing video with a dedicated camera, smartphone, or tablet and see how you can edit and modify it with Premiere Elements 11.

Bad Partners

At one time, Apple relied on Google for their YouTube and Maps app on iOS, and Samsung for manufacturing their components for the iPhone and iPad. You would think any company earning a huge chunk of money from a customer would do their best to keep that customer happy.

Instead, Google deliberately crippled their Maps app so their Maps app for Android would have more advanced features such as turn-by-turn directions. By losing the still growing iOS market, Google must rely entirely on Android,

and Android costs Google money to develop while returning no income back as it's given away for free. Google has to hope Android spreads so they can gather data through Google's apps on Android, but Google has now cut themselves off from gathering data from iOS users, which represent a growing and wealthier market.

Samsung makes millions from helping Apple design and create components for the iPhone and iPad. Why would Samsung turn around and deliberately compete with their own hardware partner? Imagine if you were an insurance agent and regularly ate at McDonald's. What if McDonald's found out that you were an insurance agent and then started selling insurance to compete directly against you, would you still want to do business with McDonald's?

Apple is the fastest growing and most valuable company in the world right now. Why would any company directly compete with one of their best customers and then act surprised when their best customer starts shifting business away to their rivals?

Both Google and Samsung could have remained partners with Apple and earned a hefty and reliable source of income over the years as it seemed unlikely that Apple would shift their business to their rivals without a good reason. Yet both Google and Samsung gave Apple a good reason to never do business with them again. If you thought politicians are short-sighted, corporate executives at Google and Samsung must be even worse.

Park Hyun, a senior analyst at Tongyang Securities, said that "It appears that Samsung is losing its multibillion dollar partnership (www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/tech/2012/10/133_122173.html) as Apple has been its biggest parts client." While losing Apple's business won't bankrupt Samsung or Google, it does hurt their revenue. Since the whole goal of any company is to grow their revenue, wrecking their partnership with Apple seems counter-productive.

If a sales clerk at Walmart deliberately turned customers away, he or she would be fired, yet when Google or Samsung executives deliberately find a way to turn away customers, they still get to keep their lucrative jobs. With Apple shifting to their own solutions (Maps) or sending business to other chip manufacturers who are rivals of their former partners, both Google and Samsung have simply lost business and strengthened their own competition. By studying Google and Samsung, you can see how not to maintain a business partnership.

* * *

Take a Macintosh laptop with you to a public place like a library or coffeehouse and you may be surprised to see the names of unfamiliar computers showing up under the Sharing category in the left pane of the Finder. This occurs when people have file sharing turned on by default on their laptops, which essentially opens their Macintosh up for anyone to access and drop a file into that person's public folder.

While the Macintosh keeps people from accessing your main folders and erasing files or installing and running programs without your permission, you probably don't want to give anyone access to your computer when you're in public. To turn off file sharing, click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences.

Now click the Sharing icon under the Internet & Wireless category and clear the check boxes that appear next to File Sharing and Bluetooth Sharing. (You may want to turn off any type of sharing when using a laptop in public.)

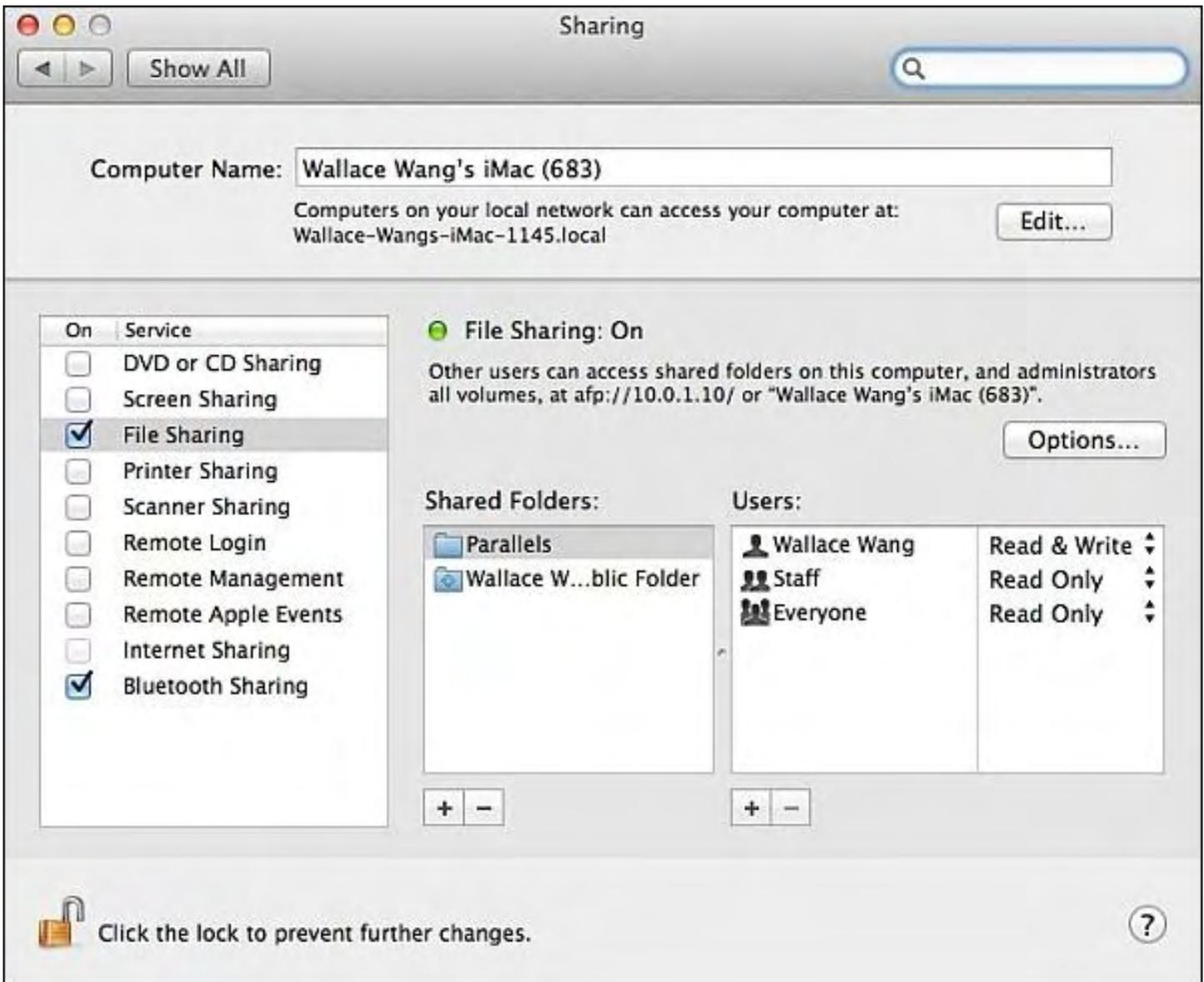


Figure 7. Turning file sharing off.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participle with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

My New Mac, Lion Edition (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)

My New iPad 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)

Steal This Computer Book (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

Microsoft Office 2010 For Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)

Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)

Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)

The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)

Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

99% Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)

The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)

The 15-Minute Movie Method (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method. (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/)" Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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Without Digital Music, Life Would Be an Error

Without Digital Music, Life Would Be an Error

“or, On the Evolution of Online Music Distribution” by Matthew W. Beale

Kickstart the New DIY Revolution?; Kickstarter and the Theatre Is Evil Project; August Ruins; Bandcamp; Can You Step in the Same Stream Twice?; Into the Trees.

Kickstart the new DIY revolution?



"If no one out there understands/ Start your own revolution and cut out the middleman"

Billy Bragg wrote those lyrics to Waiting For The Great Leap Forward—arguably his finest sing-along, regardless of the politics, and one of the greats of 80s college radio—a few years before "the flavor and gust" of Smells Like Teen Spirit was thrust into the mainstream with blunt force, subsequently helping to expose scores of bands whose previous watershed moment had perhaps been an appearance on MTV's 120 Minutes. Bragg himself, as well as r.e.m. and Hüsker Dü, had already signed to a major label, but thriving independent scenes and labels still existed, many of which remained strident disciples of a DIY ethic that could in part be summed up by the SST Records slogan, "corporate rock still sucks."

Black Flag and countless other bands had thrown themselves against the door for so long, that by the time Nirvana came along with Nevermind, it fell off its hinges. Even though music in the popular culture has of course continued to evolve, it's in all probability better off for that moment when a little band from an indie label became something of a monster, their music ubiquitous and infectious. But to state the obvious, no single event since then has shaped and advanced the concepts of DIY and indie music more than the availability of the commercial Internet.

From the early days of Napster that found the music industry in a near somnambulist state with their vapid surprise and subsequent panic, to the current issues of pirating, copyright infringement, and legislative overreaction, digital music retains much of its chaotic charm.

"Here comes the future, and you can't run from it ..."

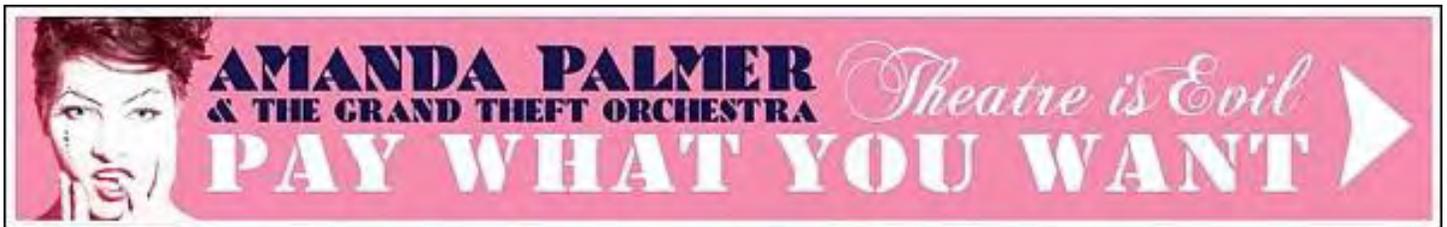
In some ways, the big labels still haven't fully recovered from their well-publicized inability to recognize and use the intrinsic power of digital music—and the amelioration, or significant advancements, originated elsewhere. Engineers at Fraunhofer IIS in Germany created MP3 (depending on the creation story you prefer), and Steve Jobs became a music mogul. The rules in this world were different—necessarily so—from the beginning.

DIY or independent musicians have adapted to and taken advantage of new ways to "cut out the middleman." The era of daydreaming about the sacred record contract is gone for many musicians who are using online resources such as Bandcamp and Kickstarter as a compelling alternative.

The machinery that traditionally has been the recording industry, from dissemination to promotion, is being supplanted by sites and services that allow musicians to interactively market directly, in some cases even going straight to fans in order to fund studio time and offset the other expenses associated with creating and releasing a new album.

Kickstarter and the Theatre Is Evil Project

Much like the e-commerce boom of the 1990s, the field of sites in the broad category of online music distribution is brimming with as much real innovation as it is pomp and pomposity, in some cases displaying the the dim hubris of some of the pre-bubble players, declining "to participate" in interviews, and perhaps believing in their own hype a bit too much. Fortunately for them, Kickstarter included, there's no shortage of creative folks with equally inspired ideas and projects stepping up to use and subsequently publicize some of these services (making them look good).



Amanda Palmer is a wonderful example of an individual who has helped give a service like Kickstarter—which is as simple as it is innovative—a sort of mythical status. Earlier this year, Ms. Palmer broke Kickstarter records by raising \$1.2 million to fund her new album, *Theatre Is Evil*, and a book of commissioned original artwork.

If you're not familiar, Kickstarter offers the means for members of the public to back a creative project, typically in exchange for a tangible piece of merchandise (or something in digital form, such as a downloadable album). An important note is that this isn't an investment that offers financial returns. "Some projects that are funded on Kickstarter may go on to make money, but backers are supporting projects to help them come to life, not financially profit," according to the Kickstarter site.

The reward is determined by the "pledge," or level of a user's financial involvement. Ah, the catch—for the artist, mostly. When a Kickstarter project is initiated, a financial goal is set, along with a deadline. If the goal isn't met by the deadline, the project's creator receives none of the funds/pledges. "All or nothing."

Pledges can range from \$1 to \$10,000. With *Theatre Is Evil*, the lower end would have guaranteed the participant a "digital download of album...with bonus songs & kickstarter-exclusive content." (sic) The upper limit of the spectrum granted the pledgee an "art-sitting" and dinner with Amanda Palmer.

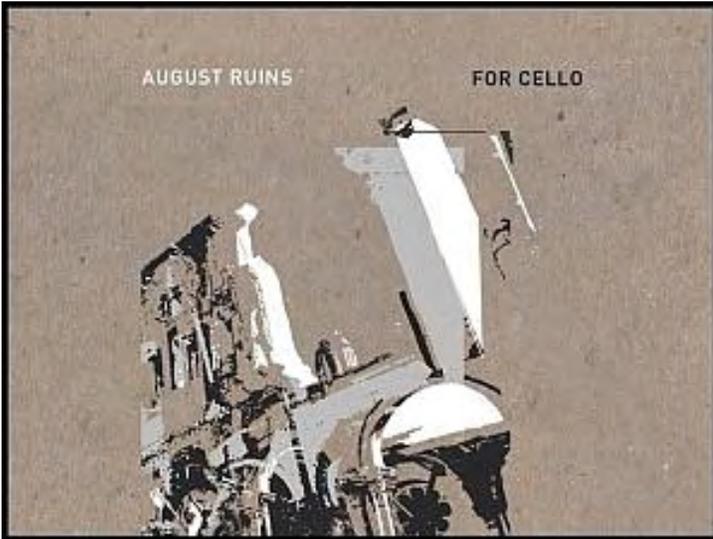
To call Palmer emblematic, epitomic, or even a queen of this DIY era, would be redundant, tedious, obvious, disservice to everyone who built and tested the various technologies involved, and dead right at the same time. At some point, while the pop culture was fixated on perhaps Snooki or the Kardashians, desperately searching for a hint of actual talent, coders and other creative thinkers kickstarted something, Amanda Palmer established a sort of "we are the Media" empire, and there really is, in all probability, no turning back.

The campaign around *Theatre Is Evil* is a virtual playbook in terms of what's available online to promote an album. Palmer used other services such as NoiseTrade, a site that allows users to grab a free download for the price of an e-mail address and zip code, and requests help to "promote this artist by telling your friends" via Twitter, Facebook, or e-mail. Users can additionally support the musician by leaving a tip, between \$1 and \$25. Palmer's live dates are being promoted online by songkick.com, the entire album is being streamed by SoundCloud, ad infinitum. More interestingly, perhaps, she has traditionally given her music away for free online, with fans having the option of whether or not to pay

(and subsequently how much), an experiment that has been successful, according to Palmer.

Palmer's seizure of the moment where she parted ways with Roadrunner, her record label, to sort of become a manifestation of the potential of this exponentially evolving social media-fueled alternative to the traditional record label system, has, if nothing else, given us quite a spectacle, and she has willingly become something of an agent provocateur on behalf of this new DIY movement. From street performer, to punk cabaret, and now this. Internet über alles.

August Ruins



When I first actually checked out Kickstarter, it was rather inspiring, and I found a range of creative endeavor that included a photographer looking to fund a gallery showing and an entrepreneur pushing to establish a gourmet marshmallow company. But I of course stopped by for the music, and found an engaging assortment of projects, including Peter Vukmirovic Stevens and his August Ruins CD project—"six new works for solo cello."

"I really like the fact that there I have a way to give back to people by way of CDs, offering their names as a Production Partner and really any creative way I can think of to give something back," said Stevens, who is the composer.

"It's not just about donations, it's about exchange," added Stevens in an e-mail interview. "People want to be involved. They want their money to go directly to things they believe in."

With regard to any downside to the Kickstarter experience, Stevens cited the payment system, an issue that I've personally noted. A lot of sites rely on either Paypal or Amazon, and that does help address critical security issues and of course is reassuring to patrons with existing accounts. But both payment systems have issues, and not everyone is comfortable with them. I'll pick up that discussion in another column.

According to Stevens' description, August Ruins "reflects both the times we are living in and many of my experiences traveling to remote places around the world and the musical ideas that have developed as a result." The project recently completed a successful Kickstarter campaign, surpassing its goal of \$3,500.

In terms of Kickstarter's uniqueness and ability to endure, Stevens concluded: "As arts funding and education around the western world dries up, the need for grants and funding for artists isn't going away. This exchange between artist and supporters helps pick up the slack."

Where there's a need, there's usually—beyond a catchy phrase or cliché, perhaps—competition. In this case, Indiegogo, and there's no doubt more, which is a very positive development. Let's hope the most intriguing and provocative ideas won't get lost in the rush.

Bandcamp

Bandcamp is another service stepping up to provide an alternative to traditional record labels in terms of assisting musicians to create and maintain a fan base, giving them a platform to sell music, and the purchaser the "choice of MP3 320, FLAC, or just about any other format you could possibly desire," along with physical merchandise (aka

"merch").

music merch

Departure Songs

by Hammock

Ten Thousand Years Won't Save Your Life
00:00 / 06:27

Digital Album
Immediate download of 19-track album in your choice of MP3 320, FLAC, or just about any other format you could possibly desire.
Buy Now \$12 USD or more

Departure Songs Special Edition CD
Hammock's fifth LP and first double album. A beautiful, eco-friendly, eight-panel gatefold digipak featuring a lyric sheet and train ticket. CD orders will be mailed First Class USPS.
Includes immediate download of 19-track album in your choice of MP3 320, FLAC, or just about any other format you could possibly desire.
Buy Now \$16 USD or more
ships within 2 days

Tweet Like <1.7k

According to Bandcamp, "the basic service is free," and "there are no signup costs, and no listing fees." The company works by way of "a revenue share on sales," earning "15% on digital, 10% on merch." (Kickstarter, incidentally, estimates a total 8.5%). For music fans, the phrase "or more" is added to the price, giving them flexibility in terms of payment or support for an artist. In some cases, there's the option to "name your price," imitating Radiohead's now famous (and highly successful) In Rainbows experiment.

"I love how you can actually pay more than the price," said musician Jane Woodman. "I think iTunes could learn a lesson or two from them." Woodman has released an EP, "Poème Électronique," and is completing work on "Teenage Red," a full length album.



In terms of buying music, although the site is enjoyable, Bandcamp does need to clean things up a bit in terms of "discovery." But at the moment, the site is straightforward enough and the simple pleasure of finding some great, independent music is the sort of ROI for spending some time browsing.

For musicians with a presence on Bandcamp, there are limitations. Woodman wishes the site were "more html5 friendly," for instance, and observed that the interface would "be a little more concise and less confusing if it were not based on requiring a track be associated with a page." Woodman added that she would like to "have it more driven to what you're trying to sell: merch, tracks, albums, etc."

Woodman's site lists the tags alternative, ambient, darkwave, industrial noise,

ambient noise, rock, nugaze, punk, and shoegaze. As ludicrous as tags seem to be, they obviously increase visibility, and the musician has a healthy sense of humor about it all. "As far as categories, (I) don't like them. For that reason, I coined the phrase 'apocalyptic romanticism', and use that quite frequently, because I think it's an accurate description without imposing a particular musical genre."

Although I've personally been searching for neo-classical lately, any search, beginning at post-rock, for instance, will probably be revealing in terms of music you may not have heard anywhere else. I recently found Dalot in the ambient or experimental music section, I can't recall. Once you get suckered in, so to speak, it's easy to get lost (which is part of the fun, of course).

Maria Papadomanolaki, aka Dalot, identifies her music as "solitary sonic explorations delicately balancing between muted post-rock, ambient and electronic textures." She offers a balance of digital albums that fit into the Bandcamp pricing structure, and free downloads of singles and remixes.



Bandcamp "is a great place to upload music along with videos, artwork and any other digital media an artist can think of," said Dalot, in an e-mail interview. "I would personally like to see Bancamp incorporating some sort of IM system so artists can communicate with other artists or buyers and vice versa. It would definitely create a new dynamic within the Bandcamp community."

Dalot has also released *Haikus 23*, a free full length album that was created to pay "tribute" to the 23 Kickstarter backers who helped "fund her first ever tour in Europe." This obviously helps to illustrate the ways in which independent artists are tapping the potential of multiple sites to reach fans and maintain independence.

"Next to Bandcamp I would also add Twitter and Soundcloud in terms of importance," added Dalot. But for fans, there's a numbing array of sites available to assist in the enjoyment of digital music, not all of them created equal for fans or artists.

Can You Step in the Same Stream Twice?

Zoë Keating—who has collaborated with Amanda Palmer, having worked on her first solo record—has used Bandcamp to establish a devoted fan base of her own, maintaining a successful career as a solo cellist without a record label. She's also both tech and business-savvy, and has helped others to understand the universe that is streaming music, something that has become monstrous as a business model for some companies.



Spotify is amongst the giants in the streaming media market that have done incredibly well for themselves by identifying and tapping the ubiquity of social media and smartphones, but there's data indicating that the artists don't fare quite as well.

A recent analyst report published online declared Spotfy's business model "unsustainable," making similarly critical assessments of other streaming companies such as Pandora. Such companies have recently seemed to generate as much controversy as they have income.

Keating has been extremely candid with regard to her operations and revenue stream, in August releasing very specific information—the numbers,

percentages, et al. A breakdown of Keating's music-related income revealed that iTunes constituted the bulk, with 56%, but the percentage for Spotify was so miniscule that an actual number didn't even show up in a pie chart provided—but was approximately three tenths of a cent for each time a song was streamed. (Bandcamp, incidentally, represented a respectable 30% of Keating's revenue.)

"Streaming is not yet a replacement for digital sales, and to conflate the two is a mistake," stated Keating in her published report, *Online Sales & Streaming*. "I do not see streaming as a threat to my income, just like I've never regarded file sharing as a threat but as a convenient way to hear music. If people really like my music, I still believe they'll support it somewhere, somehow."

Into the Trees



To discuss Zoe Keating merely from a business perspective seems odd, so I thought it appropriate to mention one of her albums in the brief MP3 review section. Keating is a brilliant, inventive, and virtuosic "Avant-Cellist," who reportedly sells out rock venues.

By choice, it seems, Keating's not a part of the traditional classical world. Billing herself as a "One-Woman Cello Orchestra," she plays over recorded loops of her own performance, creating a uniquely layered sound, and I would imagine her technique opens up quite a few possibilities.

Keating's most recent excursion, *Into The Trees*, is gorgeous, sublime, has a meditative quality, and, very simply, is a treat, if for no other reason than to hear how she has reimagined what Solo Cello can mean. Visit the official

ZoeKeating.com site for more info.

My first published work focused on music, and related obsessions pushed me to become a DJ, Producer, and Music Director in college radio. With this column, I feel as though I'm sort of returning to something I love (although I've never left, really). I've been tracking the evolution of online music distribution since the days of Napster, and obsessively follow music releases across a range of genres. One of my music players (on each of my devices) is going from the time I wake up until the end of the day, lulling me to sleep (or what little I actually grab). "Without music, life would be an error." ~ Fred, the mad German

Significantly, I'm returning to work after a prolonged personal leave, functioning in the capacity as a caregiver. Please feel free to contact me with story ideas or suggestions about digital music releases at withoutmusiclifewouldbeanerror@hushmail.com (@).

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Beyond Personal Computing

*A Look at
the Human
Side of
Computing*

Beyond Personal Computing

“Unlabeled Keys and Indoor Uplinks: Computers as Depicted in Movies” by Marilyn K. Martin

Amusing anecdotes about the portrayal of computers in movies.

In movies, plot movement and character development are of primary concern. So, most of the time computers and gadgets are merely used as plot devices. Meaning they are usually portrayed inaccurately, or hilariously re-purposed, with the computer literate in the audience prone to chuckling and shaking their head in an otherwise dramatically emotional moment.

Government Computers in Movies

- 1) Instructions are in plain English, instead of paragraph long, choppy sentences littered with acronyms and abbreviations.
- 2) They execute commands typed in plain English, and the file opens immediately.
- 3) Actors can simply type in "Access to All Secret Files" on any keyboard, and such a file magically opens.
- 4) Hackers can get into any sensitive system, past layered encryption, and guess the passwords in only three tries.
- 5) Any instance where "Permission Denied" flashes on-screen, there's always a simple "Override" function anyone in the department can execute.
- 6) Hacked government computers always have tons of scrolling text, or large and complicated diagrams of the building that are mysteriously on the server for totally unknown reasons.

Disks on the Silver Screen

- 1) If a disk has encrypted files, the actor is asked for a password before he can access it.
- 2) No matter what kind of disk is seen, it will be readable by any computer or any system.
- 3) Disks with deliberate viruses are put into the disk drive, and the actor then simply types "Upload Virus."

"Very Important" Movie Computers

- 1) Has lots of blinking buttons and keys, most unlabeled and/or never referred to.
- 2) People typing away on such a computer can just turn it Off without Saving their work.
- 3) These computers always emit a power sound, from constant beeps to a deep hum or throbbing.
- 4) These computers never slow down, have a bug or crash amid stressful, highly dramatic moments.
- 5) Actors never make mistakes under stress. And they are never to blame when the computer or entire system blows up: "That's alright, son. I needed a new Big Blue anyway."
- 6) Absolutely any computer (or gaming system) anywhere, can be confiscated for use by the villain or hero. And it always has enough power, is loaded with all the needed software, and never has any bugs or "random features" to slow down the plot.

Movie-Land Computer Programming

- 1) There are always easy to understand graphical interfaces, usually in 3D motion and in multiple colors.
- 2) Complex calculations and loading huge amounts of data takes three seconds, tops.
- 3) All code is written once, and miraculously works anywhere, even outside the solar system.

Screen Views From Other

- 1) Satellite uplinks work perfectly from indoors, even on the ground floor.
- 2) Surveillance cameras have pristine views from multiple angles, like an earlier part of the movie was played back in monochrome.
- 3) A few dozen keystrokes, and the actor can tie into any surveillance camera anywhere in the world, with zoom-in capabilities to recognize faces—even from directly overhead.
- 4) If needed for plot progression, a movie computer can do anything—like find and download software prototypes, or access the Past or Future.
- 5) Any photo or video, regardless of its poor resolution, can be zoomed in on, with the tiniest details then displayed in crystal-clear clarity: "See? That fuzz-ball in the corner is really the murder weapon!"
- 6) Video conferences always look like professional direct feeds, with perfect audio and video.
- 7) All computers, anywhere, can be accessed, even if the villain's Antarctic computer is turned off.

Peripherals and Laptops in Magic-Mode

- 1) Movie modems appear to transmit data at the speed of several gigabytes per second.
- 2) Laptops always have amazing real-time video-phone capabilities, and the performance power of a Supercomputer.

3) Recalled dream or memory images are always shown in third person mode, instead of from a first person view-point.

Tech Support in Movies

1) The Tech starts out bored or bratty, but morphs into a best-buddy savior by the end.

2) Techs reached by phone will agree to perform the most mind-boggling feats—like access a foreign satellite or shut down a key utility—and ask for no password or even be slowed down by any encryption.

3) Phone Techs, when they reach the best-buddy stage, always recognize the in-peril buddy's incoming call—from any phone—and answer in a flash with an emotional "How'd it go?" / "What's going on?" / "Where are you?"

4) Techs on-screen are great for double-takes, since they are always saner and smarter than the public who asks them strange questions. (Exception: Any movie with Jim Carrey.)

5) Absolutely any in-peril actor/actress can operate a Supercomputer—to do anything from land a plane on a carrier to 3D print a weapons arsenal—if a Tech is on the phone to talk them through it.

Movie Special Effects and Computers

1) Screen images are so bright, colorful and clear that they are easily projected onto the actor's face. Or they can be read straightforward in the actor's glasses—and are never projected in reverse, mirror-fashion.

2) All computers indicate a malfunction by bright flashes, a shower of sparks, and then a blast of smoke.

3) Whenever a movie building (power plant or missile site) overheats, the control panels will then explode and destroy the whole building/site.

4) If a villain deletes a file on the hero's computer, there are never any backup files, and no utilities for "undelete." (Cue the Doom music...)

5) Depending on how important the computer is to the story, it is almost never littered with popsicle-art, stuffed animals or photos of children. (Although it's always a macho-moment when the hero takes over such a computer, and sweeps everything off of it with one arm. The audience then knows that this computer has just entered...the Deadly Serious Zone.)

6) Movie computers or smartphones with voice recognition never ask the actor to repeat anything, or display idiotic auto-corrections. ("Did you mean Greek Restaurant on Orly Drive? Or Geek Restraining Order?")

Magical Movie Geeks

On screen they always have backpacks with tons of gadgets. They can pull out a special rolled up keyboard to plug into any computer in a flash. They can also pull out a device to access a satellite for cell phone calls if all Earthly infrastructures are down or destroyed. Their backpacks also contain devices to instantly hijack ATMs when cash is imperative, and gadgets to disguise their voices or add a foreign accent when necessary.

They talk a mile-a-minute in techno-babble which really explains nothing, as a set-up for a mind-boggling feat like turning off enemy missiles in flight, or hijacking all TV channels at once. In under a minute of keystrokes, the Movie Geek can also create an incredibly complex graphics display. Or come up with a complex algorithm to do anything he wants it to do. ("Take that, Mr. Government Hot Shot! I just locked all the Men's Restrooms in that entire building, and turned off their water and electricity!")

Highly encrypted or super-secure sites never stop a Movie Geek: "Just a momentary set-back. Let's check what the CIA's Counter Intel in that country is up to..." Teen Movie Geeks can be playing a video game, and accidentally activate missiles in silos, or turn on super-secret aspects of a satellite.

Movie Geeks are tailor-made to hijack a flying drone. And they are instant experts at interpreting the raw data. ("There's your problem! That guy you trusted is really a deep-cover spy for Russia! See? He's touring our missile plant with an ID that says *Bob-Top Clearance!*")

Movie Miracles—Screens and Keyboards

- 1) Actors can type away rapidly and never use a space bar.
- 2) It takes thirty rapid-fire keystrokes to access any file. But the actor always has a prodigious memory, since none of the keys are labeled, and he never looks at the screen while typing.
- 3) Sometimes you never even see a cursor on-screen, even in word processing programs.
- 4) All monitors display bright, inch-high letters, for the actor-in-charge ten feet away to read.
- 5) No mouse is seen, everything is dramatic keyboard-pounding or touchscreens.
- 6) Really powerful computers *beep* whenever the actor presses a key, or the screen changes.
- 7) The on-screen text never goes faster than the audience can read.
- 8) Screens are always pristine clean. No fingerprints, coffee splashes, hairspray or cologne overshoots.
- 9) Actors always have to have makeup on. And no one is supposed to notice that they are sweating appropriately placed glycerin beads that never drip onto the keyboard or splash onto the screen. (Movie Makeup Law #3: Makeup must always stay On, like lipstick on scuba-divers.)

(Most of these jokes are available at multiple Internet sites. But special thanks to Computerjokes.net (Computerjokes.net), Squarewheels.com (Squarewheels.com), Bootstrike.com (Bootstrike.com), and Digg Community.)

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. A SF Horror story appeared in July 2011 in Deadman's Tome (www.demonictome.com/). And in January 2012 she had a SF Police Procedural appearing in *Cosmic Crime* magazine, and a SF Dystopian Romance appearing in the *Strange Valentines* anthology. She also has almost seventy articles on Helium.com (www.helium.com/users/573405/show_articles), and is writing a humorous Young Adult SF series, *Chronicles of Mathias* (www.amazon.com/Chronicles-Mathias-One-Reptilian-Rebirth/dp/1598249002). Volumes One and Two have received a "Gold Star for Excellence" from TeensReadToo.com (www.teensreadtoo.com/ReptilianRebirth.htm), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

ComputerEdge E-Books has converted many of Marilyn's computer humor columns into four e-books.

* *Computer Confusion in Paradise: Lo! And in the Beginning There Was Total Befuddlement!*, in both EPUB format (www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Confusion-in-Paradise-humor-EPUB-

iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0001-1.htm?sourceCode=writer) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Confusion-in-Paradise-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0001-2.htm?sourceCode=writer) for Amazon Kindle.

* *Computer Hardware: "Parts Is Parts"*, in both EPUB format (www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Hardware-Parts-Is-Parts-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0002-1.htm?sourceCode=writer) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (www.computoredgebooks.com/Computer-Hardware-Parts-Is-Parts-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0002-2.htm?sourceCode=writer) for Amazon Kindle.

* *Computerholics Anonymous: PC Users, Abusers and Confusioners*, in both EPUB format (www.computoredgebooks.com/Computerholics-Anonymous-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0003-1.htm?sourceCode=writer) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (www.computoredgebooks.com/Computerholics-Anonymous-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0003-2.htm?sourceCode=writer) for Amazon Kindle.

* *My Computer, My Nemesis: Bravely into the Smiley-Face Virtual Void!*, in both EPUB format (www.computoredgebooks.com/My-Computer-My-Nemesis-humor-EPUB-iPad-NOOK-COMPHUMOR0004-1.htm?sourceCode=writer) for iPad, NOOK, etc., and MOBI format (www.computoredgebooks.com/My-Computer-My-Nemesis-humor-MOBI-for-Kindle-COMPHUMOR0004-2.htm?sourceCode=writer) for Amazon Kindle.

* All four e-books can be found at our E-Book Store (www.computoredgebooks.com/Humor-Computer-and-Internet-Anecdotes-and-Jokes_c16.htm?sourceCode=writer).



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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

“Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.” by ComputerEdge Staff

"More Tips for Photo Editing," "Paint.NET," "Solar Incentives, Map-vertising, Personal Malware," "Videos Won't Play from Internet"

More Tips for Photo Editing

[Regarding Jack Dunning's October 5 article, "Simple Tips for Improving Digital Photos":]

Excellent article! I would add these suggestions:

1. Before you do anything, rename the picture (I usually add a letter "a" to the filename). This saves the original picture in case you mess up. It also leaves the original in case, at some other time you want to change it in different ways, or just want to compare it with your finished picture. Oh, yes—while you're renaming it, why not rename it to something you'll recognize instead of leaving it with the number assigned by the camera?
2. Most picture editing programs have a button that hides the changes so you can compare it with the original. It's a good way to see how much you've improved the photo, whether you want to reduce or increase your changes or if you should try something else.
3. If you're really new at photo editing, or want to try some drastic changes, save many of the changes (with different letters or even "names" for your changes). Then you can compare your pictures and see what worked and what didn't.

I use GIMP (www.gimp.org), a free picture editing program. It's fairly easy to use, but it also has powerful functions if you need to do more.

-Bob Di Giorgio

Paint.NET

[Regarding Jack Dunning's May 4 article, "My Favorite Free Windows Paint Program":]

I tried (and like very much!) Paint.NET. My hard drive died and in starting over, wanting Paint.NET again, I googled "paint.net" and went to the first listing. After attempting install (x2) I realized it was the *wrong* page. <http://download-paint-net.com/>. I tried downloading "Paint.NET" (note spelling-it was 'Paint-(dash)NET). It's a bunch of add-on toolbars and advertising c**p, but no Paint.NET. I came "home" to *ComputerEdge* and searched (paint.net) the *right* link is from CNET (download.cnet.com/Paint-NET/3000-2192_4-10338146.html?tag=mncol;1).

This is just to warn folks out there, *Be Careful!!*

-Andy, Vista

Solar Incentives, Map-vertising, Personal Malware

[Regarding Marilyn K. Martin's September 28 article, "Solar Incentives, Map-vertising, Personalized Malware, Electronic Dance Music":]

Thank you for the follow-up links and keeping us up with the world of electronics as it is changing. Love your articles and insights.

-Bill, San Marcos, CA

Hi Bill!

Thanks for the compliment. I learn a lot writing these "Little Known High Tech" articles, and am very glad to know other people are reading and enjoying them too.

-Marilyn, Texas

Videos Won't Play from Internet

[Regarding the October 5 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

I had a similar issue that turned out to be due to my router. Once I replaced the router, no more issues playing videos.

-Patrick Long, Junction City, Ohio

ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputerEdge.com (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook). Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section. If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at ceeditor@computoredge.com. If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/).

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