

Bits, PCs & Macs — A Newsletter



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Newsletter

Newsletter Layout & Editor:
Chuck Davis

President's Message

By Terri Case
President, SCACC

The monthly general meetings - open to all Sun City Anthem residents - will resume on Thursday, February 5th, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. in Freedom Hall. The February program is **Setting Up Your Own Website – from Concept to Reality**. The March 5th program will be **Having Fun with Digital Photography**.

Don't forget - during tax season we are offering classes on TurboTax and TaxCut. We have also introduced classes on both PowerPoint and Windows Movie Maker 6. In May we will launch a new Quicken class.

If you are interested in teaching a new class or assisting in teaching any of our current classes, please, contact me.

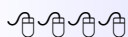


Disclaimer

The contents of this newsletter is intended for use by members of the **Sun City Anthem Computer Club** and their immediate families. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and may not be construed to represent an official position of the Computer Club, nor of the Sun City Anthem Community Association, Inc.

Where prices and sources of computer related products are shown within this newsletter, they represent the author's best knowledge of current retail prices and availability. The information is subject to change, and as such, should be used for comparison only.

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Editor's message

Welcome to this issue of the Sun City Anthem Computer Club's Newsletter. In order for you to be reading this, you have successfully installed Adobe® Acrobat® Reader™ 5.0 or earlier, the Adobe Reader 6.0, 7.0, 8.0 or the new 9.0, or the Foxit Reader on your computer. Note the subtle name change between 5.0 and 7.0. Be careful, Adobe Reader 7.0,

8.0 and 9.0 will not run on some older versions of Windows. Check before you download.

Articles are invited

All computer club members may submit original articles relating to PCs and Macs for consideration for publication.

Those of you with a specific area of expertise, are urged to prepare a monthly column that will further the Club's educational goals. Submissions will be reviewed, and if acceptable may be edited. This editor reserves the right to withhold any material deemed inappropriate for the membership. All articles must be submitted in a Windows based electronic format or via e-mail. Acceptable file types are:

1. MS Word (*.doc or *.docx)
2. MS Publisher (*.pub)
3. MS Note Pad (*.txt)
4. MS Word Pad (*.rtf)
5. OpenOffice.org (*.odt)
6. E-mail: directly entered into the e-mail message or as attachments.

Deadline

The **deadline** for submitting material, or revisions to previously submitted work, is the 25th of each month. All magnetic media submissions are to be delivered to:

Charles W. Davis
 SCACC Newsletter Editor
 1605 Preston Park Drive
 Henderson, NV 89052

Phone: 614-3107



There is no Treasurer's report this month.

Questions and Answers — A Monthly Feature

By Chuck Davis

Editor, Webmaster,
Sun City Anthem
Computer Club



Question: Is there a list of former Officers and board members of this fantastic club?

Answer: Since you have asked, I have placed the names of the former volunteers on this web page. Just scroll down to see them year by year: <http://www.myscacc.org/ClubOfficers.htm>

Question: For several years now, my Windows XP Professional system has had a "Show Desktop" icon in the Quick Launch area of the tool bar. Recently, I have noticed that it is missing. Now that I am aware, I miss it dearly. How can I recover this little gem?

Answer: I have found that it is faster for me to simply press and hold the **Windows logo key** and press the **letter D** on the keyboard. If you still would like to have the icon on the quick launch area, follow the instructions on this page: <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/190355>

If you find that keyboard short cut to your liking,

there are many others that are applicable to Windows XP here (quite frankly, most apply to Windows Vista) <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/301583>

Question: Windows XP Service Pack 3 has been out for some time but I have delayed installing it due to the problems associated with it. Has its quality improved to where I can now install it?

Answer: Service Pack 3 (SP3) is exactly the same today as when it was released. If your computer does not have at least 512MB of RAM memory, contact one of your Computer Club's House Call technicians that indicate they can/will perform RAM upgrades. <http://www.myscacc.org/house.htm> The following two situations seem to be the major roadblocks to installing SP3. Neither point to errors in the Microsoft code.

1. If you have a Compaq or HP desktop computer that also has an AMD processor. Turn off Automatic updates. If this is too late, and your computer has gone bananas, restart in Safe mode by repeatedly pressing F8

key on start up. Go to the Control Panel and double-click Add or Remove Programs. Select Service Pack and Remove. The computer will be restored to the prior condition. Then fix the problem before continuing. A former Microsoft Manager offers a free fix for this problem, see the eighth bullet item here: <http://tinyurl.com/6zs52d>

Please be aware, there is free unlimited installation and compatibility support available for Windows XP, but only for Service Pack 3 (SP3). This support for SP3 is valid until April 14, 2009. <http://tinyurl.com/6cw2xk>

If you haven't installed SP3, I suggest that you do so soon or the support will expire. I have successfully used the Individual chat support several times.

2. Symantec users
"...should switch off the "SymProtect" feature before trying to install XP SP3 <http://tinyurl.com/5kqw5w> Personally, I would replace the Symantec software with either AVG or Avast. Both have free versions. **AVG:** <http://>

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Questions and Answers — A Monthly Feature, cont.

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tinyurl.com/4mw3vt

Scroll down and click on the Download button at the left bottom of the three columns.

Avast: <http://tinyurl.com/8z9h5>

Question: I spend a lot of time on the QuickBooks forums assisting others with problems using the product. When I am using the Firefox browser and type the word QuickBooks, it is always shown as misspelled. How can I add it to the Firefox spell check dictionary?

Answer: If you are certain that the word is spelled correctly, right-click on the

word and choose Add to Dictionary.

Question: I have recently added some new hardware and accompanying software to my Windows Vista computer. Following their install, I occasionally get strange lock-up situations. At first I blamed malware and ran scans with Spybot Search & Destroy and Malware-Bytes Anti Malware. Nothing was reported by either. What could be the problem?

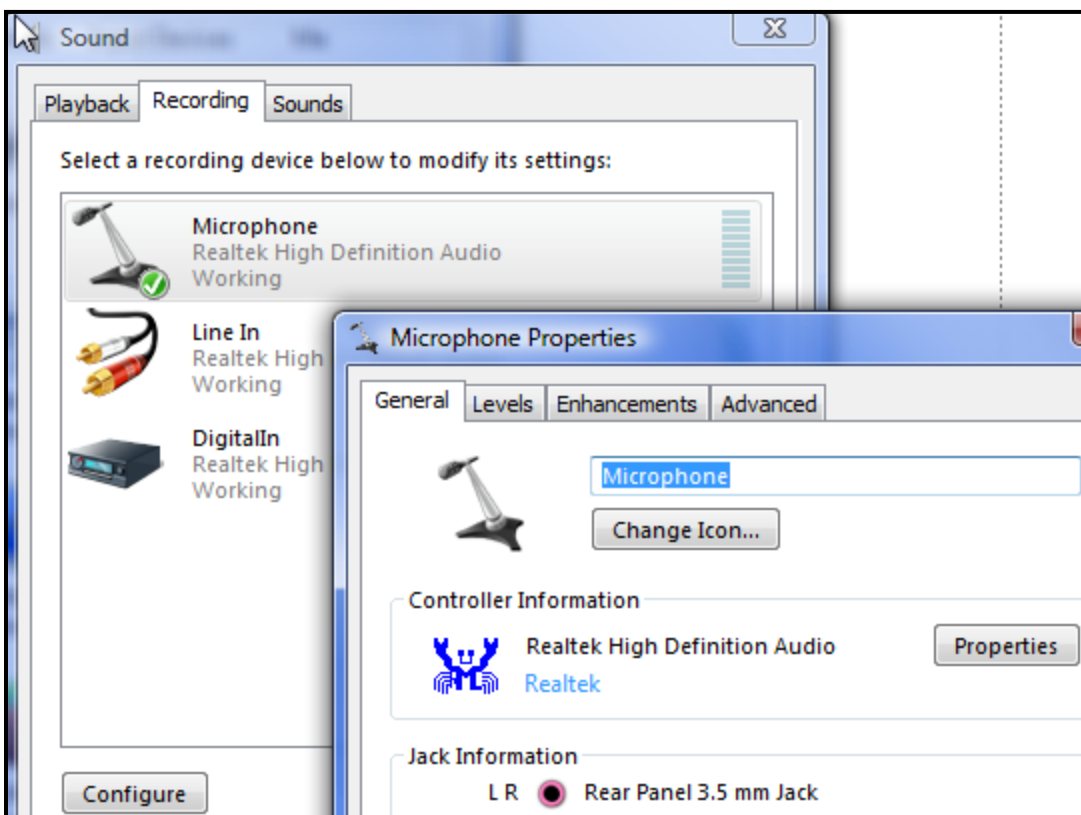
Answer: It could possibly be untested (by Microsoft) drivers causing the problem. You could uninstall the products to see if the problem

goes away, or you could use Microsoft's Driver Verifier Manager that is included in Vista. For a more through description and a detailed set of instructions see this article by Greg Shultz, writing on the TechRepublic blog site: <http://tinyurl.com/7fpjlh>

Question: I have just set up my Windows Vista computer to use Dragon Naturally Speaking. I'm having a problem setting the microphone volume to a level that the computer can recognize my dictation. How can I adjust the setting?

Answer: Go to the **Control Panel**, click on the **Sound**

applet, when the dialog box opens, click on the **Recording** tab. Click on **Microphone** and click on **Properties**. Now in the dialog box that opens, click on the **Levels** tab. Adjust the levels to suit your situation. Click **OK**, **OK**, **OK**. Make sure that your voice is recorded in a manner that is satisfactory. If not, repeat the process. Since I don't use a microphone, I can't sug-



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Questions and Answers — A Monthly Feature, cont.

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gest settings for the levels.

Question: I have a new computer with Windows Vista Home Premium. How can I use TweakUI?

Answer: Bluntly, you can't. It isn't compatible with Vista. Even though I haven't used it you can try the new **TweakVI**. You can download it here: <http://tinyurl.com/3hmz8l>
A Suggestion for you. If you use it, please write a review for publication in this newsletter.

Question: Last week at the Club's Question & Answer session, someone asked about Revo Uninstaller. As I wasn't paying attention, what is it, or was it?

Answer: It is a program that is presumably capable of uninstalling programs that the operating system's Uninstall function cannot. This is usually caused by corrupted installation files. You may experience this when trying to install an updated version and the installation comes to a grinding halt due to the corrupted file. The situation is that you can't install it, so that you can uninstall it. I normally use the Windows Installer CleanUp Utility to address

this problem (don't use it for Microsoft Office 2007).

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/290301>

However, when using the Windows Installer CleanUp Utility be careful only to process the program against the specific program that is causing the problem.

"Be aware that Windows Installer CleanUp Utility will not remove the actual program from your computer. However, it will remove the installation files so that you can start the installation, upgrade, or uninstall over."
- Microsoft KB Article 290301.

With all of that stated, the description of the Revo Uninstaller certainly makes one believe that it may be just the ticket. You may download it here: <http://www.revouninstaller.com/>

I haven't used it, so I can't say how easy it is to use, nor can I attest to its reliability and safety.

Question: I have just begun using Microsoft Office Outlook 2007. I have entered all of my contacts and want to start a group listing my contractor contacts. I can't seem to create a group. Can you answer in "blonde"

language please?

Answer: Lets start by calling the "groups" by their correct name: "**Distribution Lists**". Open **Outlook**, choose **New > Distribution List** from the **File** drop down menu. Then place the name of your distribution list in the **Name:** field. Then click on the **Select Members** icon on the **task bar**. Enter the name of a contractor in the **Search** box. When the contractor that you want appears and is selected, press **Enter** on the keyboard, without doing anything else, start typing the name of the second contractor that you wish to place in the list, when the contractor appears again press **Enter** on the keyboard. Repeat as desired. When finished, click **OK**. Now click on the **Save and Close** icon on the task bar. Outlook will allow hundreds or even thousands (I really don't know the max) of contacts in a single distribution list. However, your ISP (check with your ISP), or the receiving server owners, *i.e.*, AOL and Yahoo, might shut you down for spamming.

Question: Do you recommend a program to optimize PC operations? I saw one yesterday

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Questions and Answers — A Monthly Feature, cont.

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(RegCure) that found a bunch of "so called errors" when I ran step one. Before I pay money and have it auto fix these, I thought I would get an opinion on the program. I presume that you have one, can you let me know?

Answer: The majority of Microsoft MVP (Most Valuable Persons) recommend using no Registry programs. I haven't heard of RegCure, but if it found a slew of errors, and you must buy it to remove them, it is not a valid product in my mind and I would avoid it like a plague. This quote is typical of posts on the various newsgroups and forums:

"...I got Reg Cure and all it did was take my money. No difference in the performance of my machine at all! My wallet is emptier by \$29.00 and getting ahold of the company that makes it is impossible unless you want to snail mail them in Canada...."

Included in the list of don't install are:

- ☺ RegSeeker
- ☺ Registry Mechanic
- ☺ WiseCleaner

I generally will run CCleaner only when **all** other methods of fixing a computer has brought me to the point of reinstalling the Operating System (a basket case), a very long and tedious project. On some computers, CCleaner worked. However, from the computers that I have worked on during the past few months, I would guess that your computer is suffering from lack of adequate RAM memory. With Windows XP and Service Pack 3, the minimum recommended RAM is 512MB. If you have less than that, I suggest installing additional memory sticks. Most computer club House Call technicians can help with that. You can find who to contact at: <http://www.myscacc.org/house.htm>

Question: I have a new computer with Windows Vista Home Premium. I would like to clean up the "crap" that is installed. I wonder if CCleaner is the correct program for this?

Answer: As stated above, the only time I use CCleaner is on a computer that has been **declared a basket case and must have the operating system re-stored to Factory shipped condition**. CCleaner is intended to clean off left over fragments of unused pro-

grams that didn't uninstall correctly, clean up accumulated temporary files, *etc.* It was not intended to clean up a clean, as shipped, computer. A new computer will have none of that.

Some things that I usually do for a new computer setup as a House Call volunteer (I do this at home when the member will allow his/her new toy to be taken away):

1. Uninstall Adobe reader versions **older** than Version 9.
2. Install Adobe Reader Version 9
3. If the user has no intention of paying for the 60 day trial version of Microsoft Office, I recommend that it be uninstalled. I will suggest that OpenOffice.org be installed as it has virtually the same function with no cost.
4. If the user wants to continue using Microsoft Office, I set up Windows Update to include "other Microsoft updates."
5. If the user agrees to the installation of OpenOffice.org, then I also uninstall Microsoft Works, if present.
6. With the user's permission, I uninstall the Internet Security program that is included, whether it is Norton, McAfee, Trend Mi-

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Questions and Answers — A Monthly Feature, cont.

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cro or what, and install:

a. AVG Anti Virus/
Anti Spyware [http://
free.avg.com/](http://free.avg.com/) (there
will be many attempts
to get you to buy the
priced version, but
don't fall for it.)

b. With Windows
Vista and a router/
firewall no other secu-
rity software is needed
in a home environ-
ment (Windows De-
fender is included).

c. **Note:**

i. If Norton has
been uninstalled, I al-
ways run the Norton
Removal Tool: [http://
tinyurl.com/czn3ww](http://tinyurl.com/czn3ww)

ii. If McAfee has
been uninstalled, I al-
ways run the McAfee
Removal Tool:
MCPR.exe [http://
tinyurl.com/mzk9z](http://tinyurl.com/mzk9z)

7. There is a pro-
gram called PC De-
crapifier that will
quickly list items that
could/should be re-
moved and will do so
without further work
on your part; AOL,
Games, Yahoo Tool
bar, Google Tool bar,
etc. [http://
www.pcdecrapifier.co
m/node/159](http://www.pcdecrapifier.com/node/159) You will

want to check the list
to make sure that you
want all of the items
offered to be removed.

8. I also download
and install the latest
iTunes and QuickTime
from Apple. [http://
www.apple.com/
downloads/](http://www.apple.com/downloads/)

Question: A couple of months ago, you suggested that I use Windows Mail for my news reader. Now when I open Window Mail I get my e-mail messages. I would rather that they are downloaded from the server into Microsoft Office Outlook. How can I change this undesirable action?

Answer: Open Window Mail, choose **Accounts** from the **Tools** drop down menu. Click on the e-mail account and choose **Remove**. Click **Close**.

Question: On my Windows XP computer with all updates applied, Outlook Express doesn't work with AOL and Hotmail. What e-mail programs does Outlook Express work with?

Answer: First, AOL and Hotmail are not e-mail programs. They are more appropriately called e-mail services. Outlook Express

works with any e-mail service that supports POP, IMAP and SMTP mail protocols.

Outlook Express supports Microsoft's proprietary HTTP/WebDAV protocol. However, that is being phased out and replaced with Microsoft's Proprietary HTTP/Deltasync mail protocol. Outlook Express Outlook Express has been unsupported as a dead product for the past six years. That is why it is no longer bundled with Internet Explorer 7. .

Question: I use Windows Vista Ultimate. I have never turned off the User Access Control feature. However, I have noticed recently that I have a Yahoo Tool Bar on my Internet Explorer browser. I have never clicked "Continue" to allow its installation. How did that resource hog get installed?

Answer: The human engineering folks have been at it again. You, among hundreds of thousands of others, didn't notice the little check box, that said to install it on installing an update to Java. Even if you don't notice it, the Yahoo Tool Bar is installed with your OK. When making house calls for your Computer Club, most mem-

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Questions and Answers — A Monthly Feature, cont.

(Continued from page 7)

ber's have never used the Yahoo Tool Bar, or the Google Tool Bar for that matter. If you don't use them, their overhead when opening your browser is wasted. To remove them in Windows XP, go to the **Control Panel**, click on the **Add or Remove Programs** applet, scroll down to either program, select it and click on the **Change/Remove** button. On Windows Vista, go to the **Control Panel**, click on **Programs and Features** apple and scroll to the program, click on it and then click on the word **Uninstall**. Follow the dialog box prompts.

Question: I have a friend with Windows Vista Home Premium. She says that she can't find the Disk Defragmenter program. I am still using Windows XP. What can I tell her?

Answer: Windows Vista defragments the disk whenever the system is idle. Your friend doesn't need to do anything regarding disk fragmentation — ever!

Question: I have QuickBooks Pro 2007 on my Windows Vista Home Premium computer. I have started to operate my company in a second country and of course

have to deal with multiple currencies. How can I handle this?

Answer: First order or download QuickBooks Pro 2009. This is the first domestic release to enable multiple currencies. Second, because this feature will be absolutely new to QuickBooks users, there is a QuickBooks Simple Start Wiki. <http://tinyurl.com/b49c2u>

The site begins with a statement: "...This wiki is your area to learn and share your knowledge with others. Think of the wiki as a practical user manual, one that is written by small business owners and people who use QuickBooks every day...."

In other words, write our manual for us. Certainly a big difference from the days when the software manufacturer published large manuals that were shipped with the products, that later found their way into the landfills around the world. Initially, the manuals were replaced by the Help functions included with the various software distribution. In my opinion, the Wiki will eventually find its way into the Help functions, but in the meantime, the Wiki is the way to go. Intuit has had great success with its QuickBooks forums by

dumping its service work on the backs of volunteers that provide thousands of helpful answers to users questions annually.

Question: My computer is beginning to slow down. This happens only when opening Microsoft Office Word 2002. I write about 3,000 words a day. At the present time I have over 1,000 documents which range in size from about 25 KB to over 20,000 KB. 99% are not actively used. Otherwise, my computer is a whiz. My question, is this slowness caused by too many large files?

Answer: No. You didn't state the size of your hard drive and more importantly the amount of unused space on that drive. The reason that I mention that is that I can think of only a few things that might be causing your problem. 1) Installed RAM is less than 1GB, 2) A lack of hard drive space may be limiting your Virtual memory, and 3) you may need to defragment your hard drive. If you haven't backed up your documents to an external hard drive, do it as soon as you possibly can. **Happiness is a recent backup** —when your computer fails.



Music Tagging with ID3

By Mike Moore

Editor, Bowling Green Computer Users Group, KY <http://www.bgamug.org> ml.moore (at) insightbb.com

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M P3 is a compressed music format that can be used to fit a track of music that would normally occupy hundreds of megabytes on a Compact Disc into four or five megabytes. While some of the data is lost in this compression, it is data that cannot normally be heard in the rendering of the music file. In compressing music files this way, we can fit more music onto our music appliances, such as iPods and other MP3 players.

While the process of compressing music files is interesting for techies, it is not something we normally have to concern ourselves with, because often the music files are already in MP3 format when we acquire them. Double-click on the MP3 file and PRESTO, the song plays.

What is interesting and really required of digital music collectors is that we must keep our music organized. Since there are obviously many ways in which one can name a file of music, this is really not a very good way to keep a library organized, unless you have

complete control over how a song is named.

Think of a given song. There are some obvious metrics on which the song could be organized. For starters, we

“...TagScanner has an elegant and orderly interface, and lets you preview filenames before applying changes....”

have the name of the piece, the recording artist and label, the name of the band or orchestra, the genre of music, and so forth. There are dozens of less obvious metrics, such as the length of the song, when it was recorded – even who borrowed it from you and when!

These little pieces of information about a given track

are known as “meta-data” or “meta-information.” This set of information is literally, data about data, because the music file itself is a kind of digital data.



The music industry has adopted a standard, known as ID3 that provides for meta-information to be included with an MP3 file. You might think of ID3 as the wrapper that an MP3 file comes surrounded in.

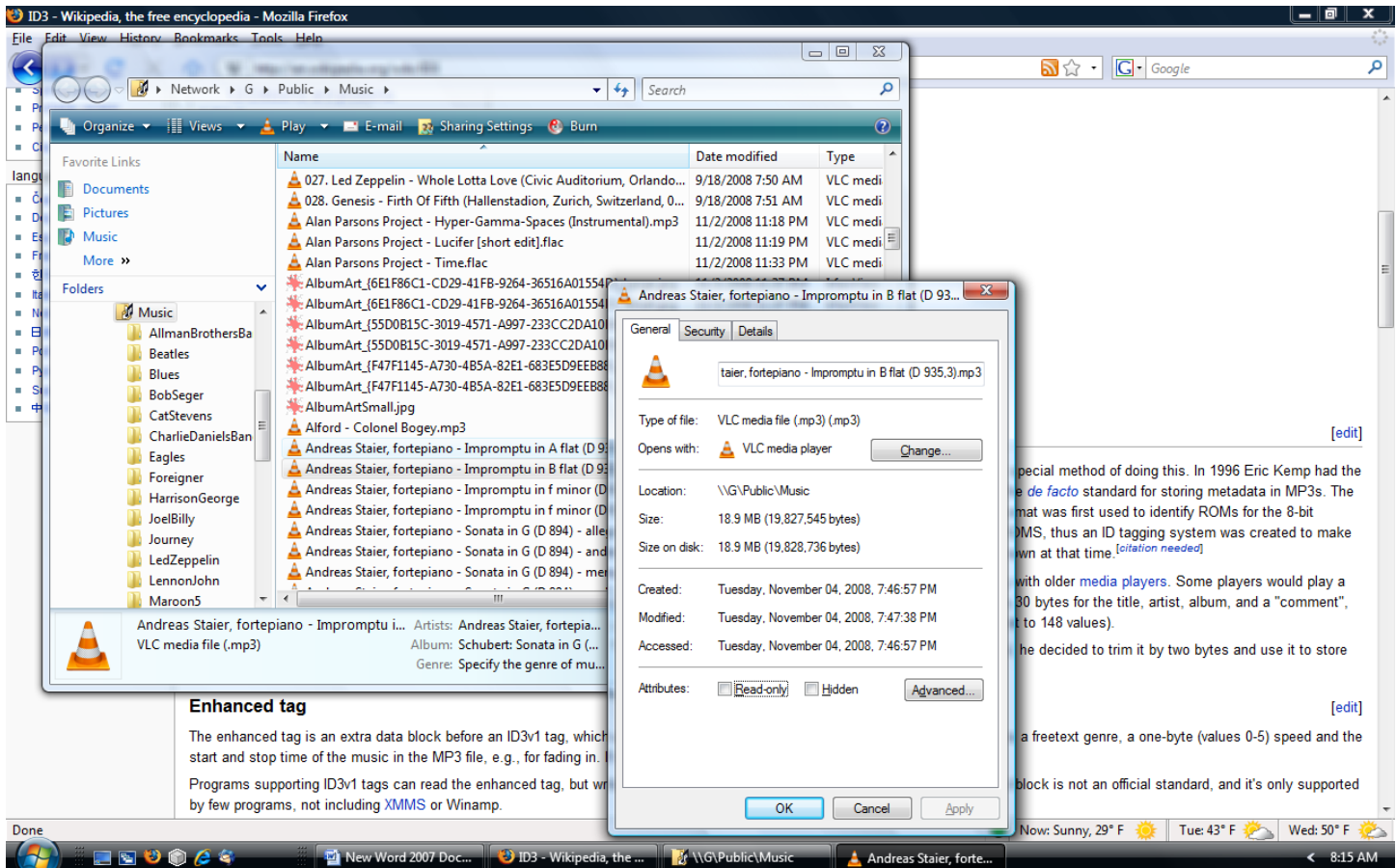
To view and edit this information, Windows supports ID3 by allowing you to right-click on an MP3 file and see & change all of the meta information. You can also see a limited set of the meta-data about a song by simply hovering your mouse over a music file. Here I have right-clicked on a piano piece called *Impromptu in B Flat*, written by Franz Schubert.

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Music Tagging with ID3, cont.

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Remember when you right-click to get a context menu, it's a *single* right-click, not a double click.



That gives me the size in Megabytes of the file, its name and where and when it was stored. If I click on the Details tab, I get all of the rest of the meta-data, including the artist and composer (see image at top of next page):

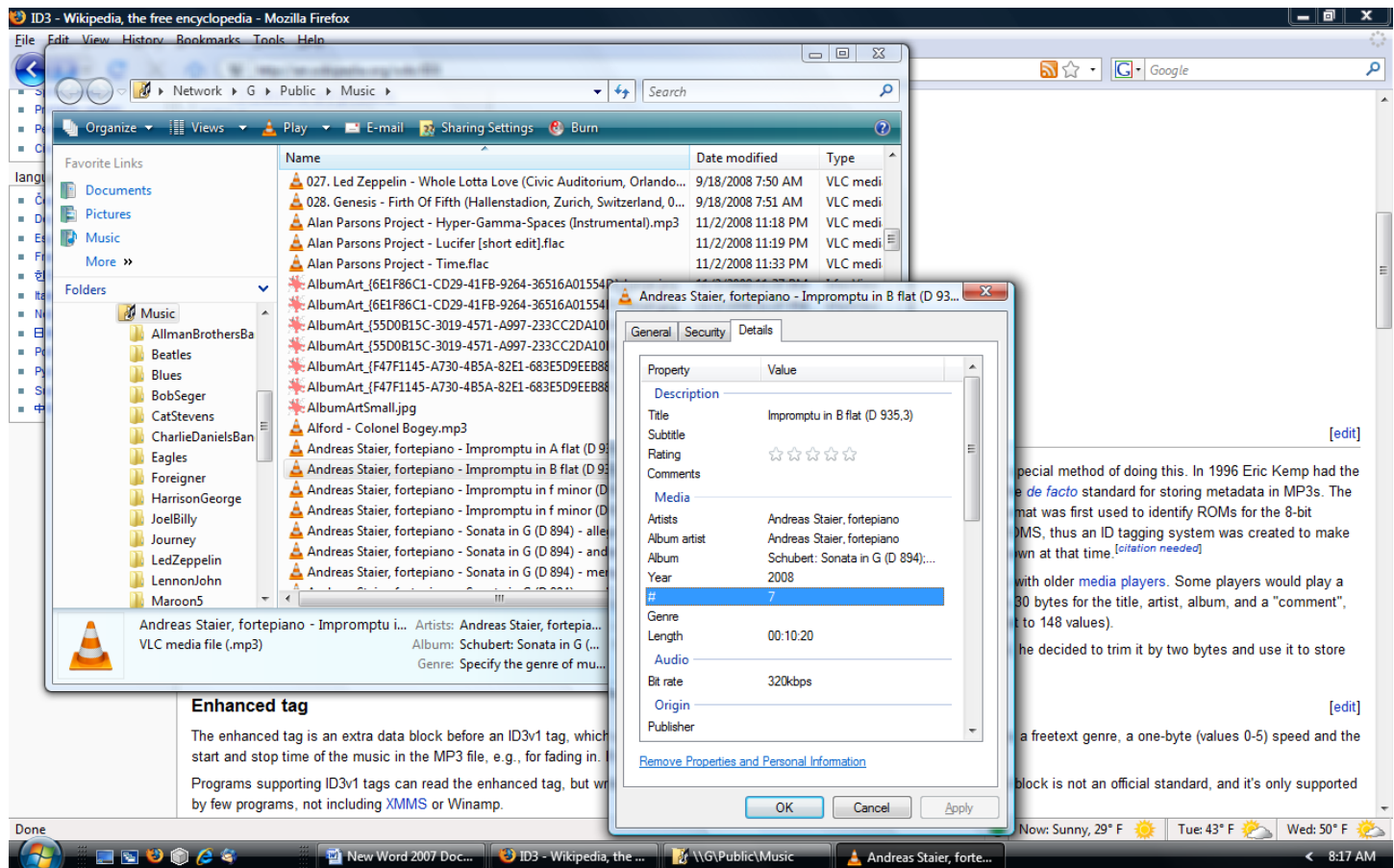
There are various versions of ID3 that have little relationship to each other. For more detailed information about ID3, read this article in Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ID3>.

The good news is that most modern MP3 players, when encountering ID3, simply ignore it when playing back the music. So we have music data inside of an MP3 file that we hear, and ID3 data that we can see when we right-click on the file.

So, here we have a way in which you can see the meta-data about one particular song. But suppose I wanted to organize and manipulate a large number of songs – even to the extent of pulling this information out of the meta-data fields that we see and using it to construct a meaningful file name? After all, file names are the basis for how Win-

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Music Tagging with ID3, cont.



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dows stores files, so it would make sense that we might want our music files named in a very particular way. One of the standards I use is to organize music in folders that are named corresponding to the artist that recorded the song.

It turns out that there are many ID3 capturing and editing utility programs out on the internet (many of which actually cost money), and I'm going to mention just one of them: TagScanner.

In tech circles, the ID3 meta-data information that is imbedded at the end of a music file is known commonly as a "tag."

Who would enjoy sitting at their computer typing in album and artist information for each track? With the free TagScanner, you don't have to. This efficient and powerful tag editor lets you edit and collect meta-data automatically as well as by hand, both for individual files and file batches.

The automatic tagging feature is most impressive. Although it can hook up to online databases such as FreeDB, Gracenote, and Amazon like many other auto-tagging applications, it can also generate tags from file and folder names--something many others

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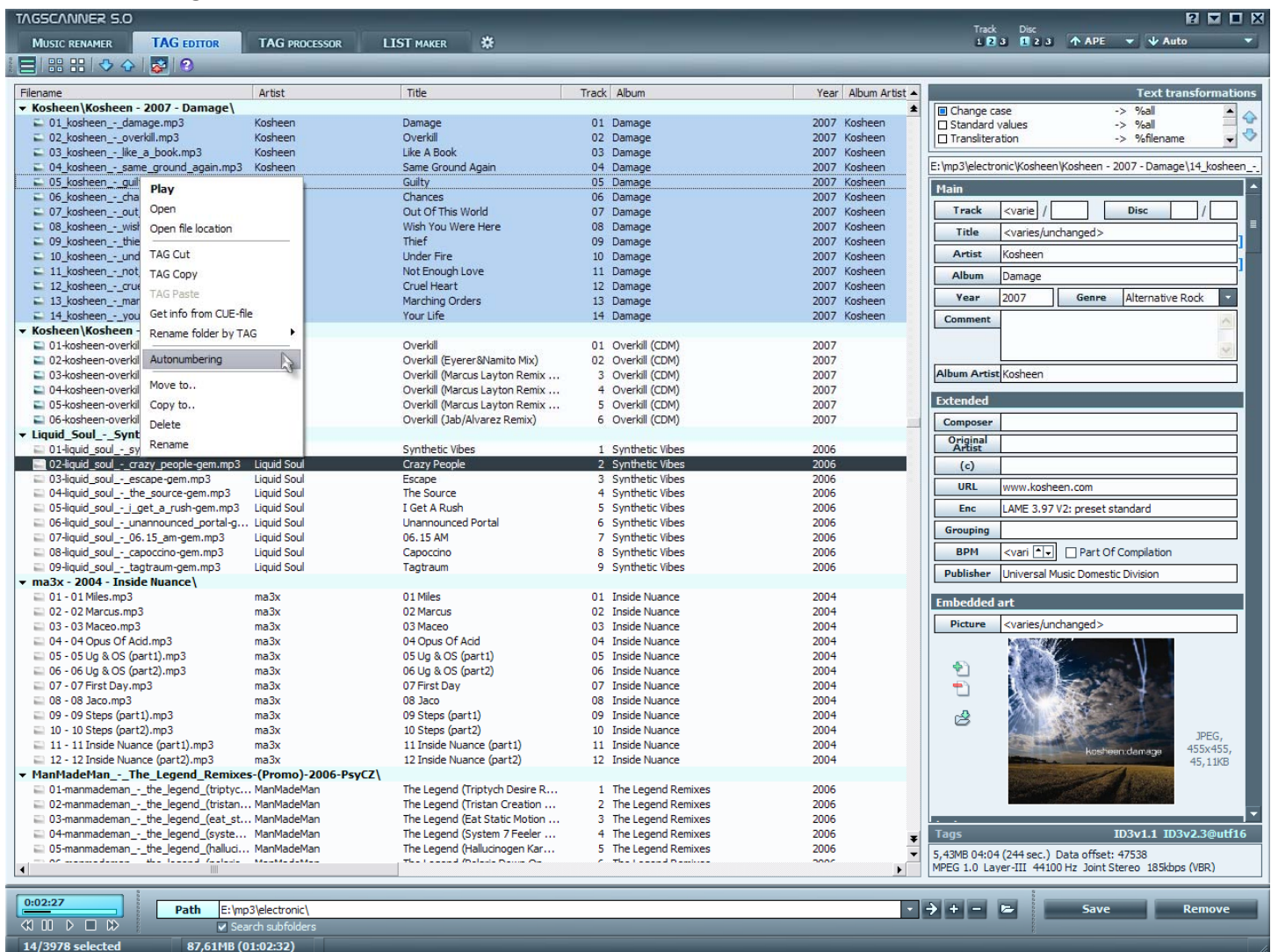
Music Tagging with ID3, cont.

can't. It works in the opposite direction, too, generating filenames from tags. This is very important, because many files come to us virtually unusable from a sorting point of view, because their file names begin with, say, a catalog number that means nothing to our sorting scheme.

TagScanner has an elegant and orderly interface, and lets you preview filenames before applying changes. The only catch is that you'll need to spend some time learning the program's file- and tag-naming language. However, if you have thousands of music tracks crying out for organization, that's a small price to pay.

Get TagScanner (free) at: <http://www.xdlab.ru/en/>

The main TagScanner window:



Review - magicJack

By Constance Brown

President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, Ohio <http://www.camug.org> constance (at) mystepco.com This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Do any of you recall the poem by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benet stating that no place on earth is more than 60 hours away? The authors were awed by the idea that distance was no longer measured in months but in hours. What would they think now that people have circled the world in spaceships and repaired orbiting space stations? On the other hand, my friends who boarded the plane last month found that it can take 60 hours and more to arrive at a destination in our own hemisphere -- if it happens to be Bolivia!

What does travel have to do with computers? Most trips begin with a call to a travel agent or visiting a travel web site to check prices and availability of flights.

Then a flight is booked and paid online either by the purchaser or an agent. An e-ticket is sent to the traveler who then checks in via a computer terminal at the airport. Computerized controls are used to guide the plane.

Computers, computers everywhere. Great when

they work. Annoying when they don't! They are here to stay and will be performing more and more of our communications. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could travel internationally and communicate with folk back home without paying those ridiculous international calling fees! How about staying in touch with friends who do not live in the USA? Guess what! You CAN!!

Several of us in CAMUG have phone service using VOIP (voice over Internet Protocol). Last week I ordered something immediately after hearing about it. I have been eagerly awaiting the opportunity to test it and now I can hardly wait to share it. Perhaps some of you have seen the ads for the magicJack™. What is it?

Well, let me quote from PC Magazine online: "So simple it's almost perfect, the magicJack is the best home voice-over-IP gadget I've seen to date. Excellent call quality, a workable set of calling features, and an amazing price make this little box the VoIP wonder to beat."

Yes, in two minutes a little USB device about 2 inches by 1 inch by 5/8 inches that I plugged into the powered hub that I run through my USB port was giving me the capability of placing my calls via the Internet. I called Canada and Colorado, spending about 1/12 hours on the phone.

It worked well except when I looked up information on the internet at the same time.

I talked to customer service and they said I can connect to the powered hub that runs directly to my router. I will have to restart the modem, most likely. That means that I don't have to have the computer turned on to make calls, just like my current VoIP

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Review - magicJack, cont.

(Continued from page 13)

service. This is great.

What do I like about the magicJack?

- **The price.** The gadget is \$40, and that includes one year of service! The renewal service price is \$20! Not \$200. Just \$20. In fact, we paid \$60 for five years!

- **The price.** Calls are free to US & Canada and reasonable to other parts of the world. Bolivia ranges from 12-14 cents. Guatemala was a little less. I didn't check farther.

- **The price.** Register your magicJack with a US phone number and travel anywhere in the world. Place calls back to the US or Canada and the call is free! Purchase a magicJack and register it with a number in the USA, send it to your friends elsewhere in the world, and they can call to any place in the US or Canada for free -- almost. Remember, you receive one year of service with the device.

- **Convenience.** You can use the magicJack with any computer, not just the one you registered.

- **Convenience.** The

magicJack is so small that it will travel extremely easily.

- **Convenience.** You can use the magicJack to place calls over Wi-Fi, cable, or DSL. Even light high speed is fine as it requires only 80 kbps of bandwidth.

“...Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could travel internationally and communicate with folk back home without paying those ridiculous international calling fees!...”

- **Services.** You get all of them: voicemail delivered to you via email and also available by calling your number and entering your

pass code, conference calling, 3-way calling, caller ID, do not disturb – have I forgotten anything?

- **Quality.** The quality compares with other VoIP services. The calls pass over a private network.

- **Customer Service.** Customer service was good, but busy. The online chat took a little time as the service person moved between customers. But it was good. He didn't have time to tell me about the Outlook add-on, so I am still waiting to discover what that is. Customer service apparently is improving, based on evaluations I read.

The US News and World Report had an interesting article online dated September 27 about the magicJack. Here is a part of it.

“The colorful and wealthy Borislow, who also raises, races, and wagers on racehorses, has launched magicJack fast out of the gate. The startup has sold more than 400,000 devices just six months after its official unveiling. It's selling about 7,000 a day, the company says, adding twice as

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Build a 'Green' PC on a Budget

By Rob Limbaugh

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We're constantly bombarded by the subject of energy conservation—'green' this and 'green' that. I think that much of our problem is our 'disposable society'. On top of that it seems that most people tend to be 'green' only if it fits into their budget and lifestyle. It is a little difficult to rationalize spending \$25,000 on a solar array for a house that will take a decade to 'pay for itself'.

But, if you happen to be looking for another computer and you're willing to spend some spare time and effort, you can rescue good parts from a premature demise and save money at the same time. How? Read on!

Timing Is Everything

Around here we have 'transfer stations' to which local residents take their refuse and recyclables if they don't have curbside pickup or another service. The transfer station is somewhat of a presorting point before



everything goes to a larger dump site.

What amazes me is that people seem to be willing to pay a few bucks to throw away things that could be recycled or disposed of for no cost—just a bit more effort. No matter. That works out well for me—I can shop!

I need more computer equipment like I need another hole in my head. What I always seem to lack are good motherboards to match up with the spare DVD drive here and spare hard drive there. On a recent trip to the dump I hit pay dirt! Someone had dropped off a bunch of computer equipment and I got there early enough in the day to have relatively fresh dibs!

“...I sniff around the motherboard. The power supply, too. Fried components have a burnt smell. All smells good....”

Weeding Out Junk

Knowing that 'garbage' tends to be at dumps, I look for specific traits when considering a rescue of any would-be junk. Last thing I want to do is throw it away when I get home and you can't exactly test things at a transfer station. This is a good exercise in knowing your hardware as you can just take home the good

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Build a 'Green' PC on a Budget, cont.

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stuff and leave everything else there. As luck would have it, I found a gutted case with a motherboard stripped of everything but the CPU and heat sink. Even the BIOS battery was gone! They did leave the power supply, though.

Back to the Bench

So far my out-of-pocket expense is \$0.00 and I'd like to keep it that way! I take the guts home and blow them out with an air-compressor. The minimum needed to successfully power on a motherboard are a power supply, motherboard, CPU, fan, and memory. Unfortunately I didn't have any memory on hand for this motherboard, so now it's time to do some leg work and see if I should consider spending the

money when I don't even know if the board works.

The motherboard, in this case, can be identified by a silkscreen of "PTGD1-LA" between the PCI slots. This cross-references to a board used in HP Pavilion Ax00 systems. This gives me access to motherboard details so I know what the connecting pins are, memory requirements, and other details necessary to do troubleshooting. Yippee, memory for this board is on sale right now—1GB for \$27!

Good, Bad, or Ugly?

In this situation I presume the components are good until proven faulty. Having all the dust blown off, I sniff around the motherboard. That's right... using my nose, I sniff around the motherboard. The power supply, too. Fried components have a burnt smell. All smells good.

Powering on a working system with the memory removed should get yield 'memory error' beep codes from the motherboard. I power everything on and get beep codes indicating bad memory. During this time I listen for fan

noise out of the power supply and the CPU fan. Nothing that sounds like skateboard wheels on pavement. Things are looking good!

Many motherboards take CR2023 batteries for memory, including this one. I picked up a two-pack along with a 1GB stick of PC-3200 memory. So far I'm out about \$30 and still don't know if this will fire up completely—but odds are in my favor. Besides, if I needed PC-3200 and PC batteries today, I'd need them in the future for another find later.

Hot Dog!

With the memory seated and a battery added, I fired up the machine and the screen came up! Woo-Hoo!



Looking really good now! And it's a P4!

I gathered up a spare SATA hard drive and DVD drive

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“...I need more computer equipment like I need another hole in my head....”

Advanced System Care Free V3 – Improve PC Performance

By Ira Wilsker

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One of the most frequently asked questions on my weekly radio show (KLVI 560AM, Mondays, 6-7pm) has to do with improving the performance of a sluggish computer. One of the utilities I most recommended was the free version of IObit's Advanced Windows Care – Personal Edition, version 2. Recently IObit released an upgraded and updated utility renamed Advanced Sys-

tem Care Free V3, which IObit claims has over 10,000 improvements and updates. Being a fan of system improvement utilities, I had to download and install this new version, replacing the older version 2 that I have been happily using for about the past 18 months.

Going to the IObit website at <http://www.iobit.com>, and downloading the new software was an easy experience, as I was given the

choice of multiple download sites. I selected one of the Texas mirrors of Major-Geeks, a major download service, where the download counter of this new version indicates that over 1.5 million copies of this new version 3 have been downloaded from Major-Geeks alone. The download was about 7.6 megs in size, and downloaded remarkable fast for a download that

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Advanced System Care Free V3 – Improve PC Performance

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size, to the credit of the bandwidth available at the Texas MajorGeeks website. Once downloaded, I clicked on the file to install it, and it recognized my older version 2, which it replaced. I was

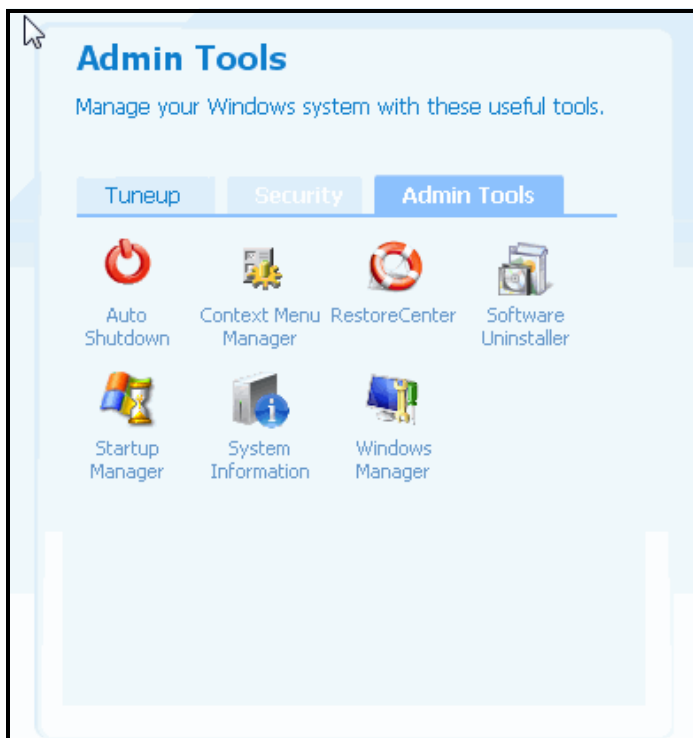
"Utilities", and "Home". Whichever icon is selected opens the right half of the window. For my first test of the software, I chose to Maintain Windows. I was offered a check-box selec-

tion of "Spyware Removal", "Registry Fix", "Privacy Sweep", and "Junk Files Clean". I selected all of them and clicked on

"Scan". In just a few minutes, Advanced System Care Free V3 detected 20 items it labeled as spyware (all were tracking cookies), 66 correctable errors in my registry, 29 privacy issues,

System" icon, I was given the now familiar check boxes for "System Optimization", "Security Defense", "Disk Defragment", and "Security Analyzer". I checked all except Disk Defragment, as I had just recently defragged my hard drive using IObit's free standing and excellent disk defragmentation utility, and wanted to save the time, despite IObit's claim that the integral defragmentation utility is up to 10 times faster than some other competing products. System Optimization detected about two dozen "system bottlenecks" and corrected the system settings to improve performance. The Security Defense feature can immunize the computer against thousands of malicious websites, illicit tracking cookies, browser hijackers, dialers, and other malicious software. Security Analyzer examines running programs to detect and disable any malware that may be currently running on the computer.

The Utilities selection offers 20 distinct utilities to tune-up the computer and its applications; examine the security settings and backup critical system files and settings' and "Admin Tools" which includes an uninstall



given the choice of language, and "skin" (background color scheme), and selected the white (really a soft light blue) as the easiest to read.

Once the install was complete, I chose to run the program. I was displayed a clean fresh graphical interface that on the left of the window gave the choices "Maintain Windows", "Diagnose System",

and 394 megs of junk files that could be deleted. I prefer to not blindly follow what is found, so I clicked on each of the findings to review what was found. After some minor tweaking, I decided to accept what was found, and clicked on the "Repair" icon. In just seconds, all of the corrections and deletions were carried out.

Selecting the "Diagnose

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Advanced System Care Free V3 – Improve PC Performance

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utility, as well as my personal favorite, a startup manager to identify and control what programs startup when the computer is booted. By cleaning up the startup, the computer will run faster, boot quicker, and have fewer conflicts, because fewer programs will be automatically loaded. Under the Tune Up tab, I found that Firefox (my preferred browser) can be optimized for maximum per-

formance.

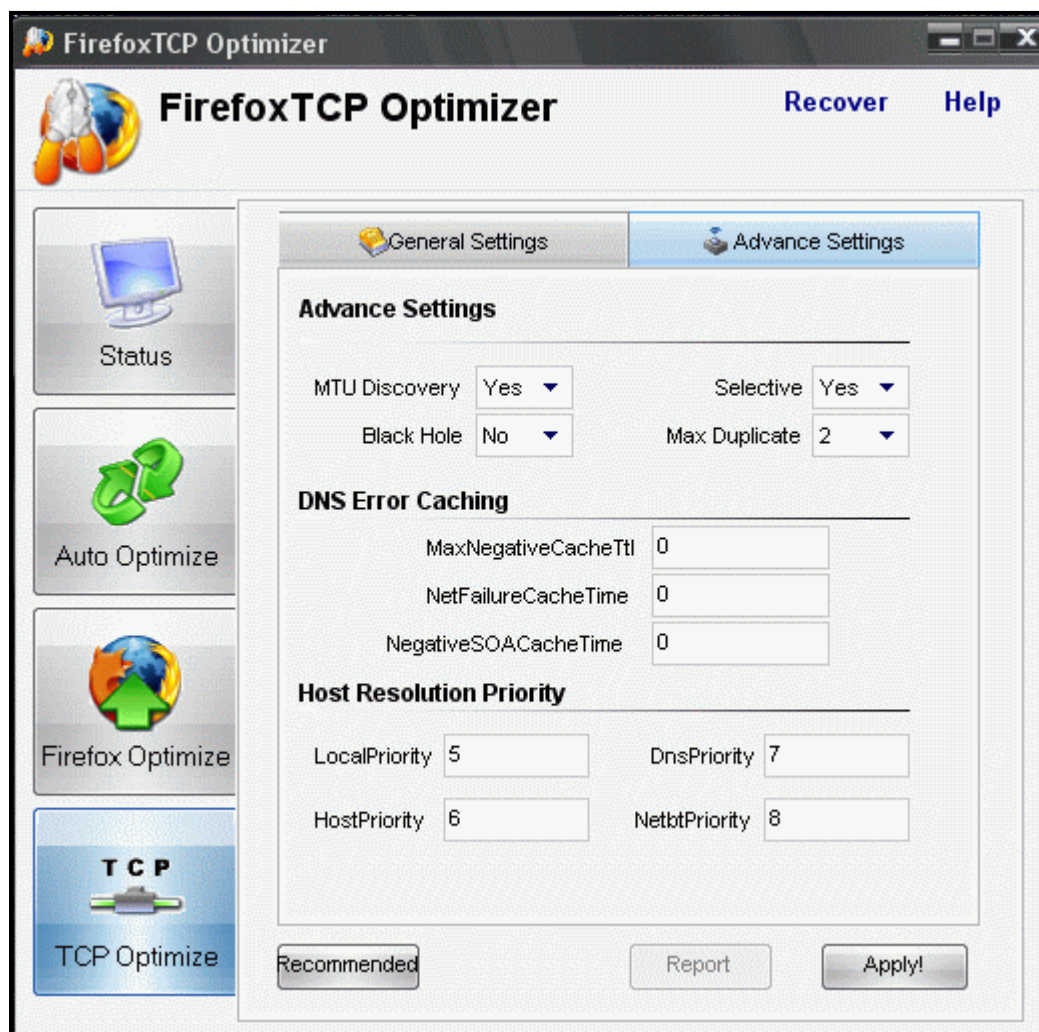
The "Home" icon displays program version, database updates, most recent scan, user account (free or paid "Professional" account), and the cumulative results of the scans that had been performed. The center "Care" icon automatically runs the system optimization utilities, as a one-click performance improvement function.

As is to be expected, IObit has a comparison chart that compares the features of

Advanced System Care Free V3 with its software competitors, both free and commercial. The features listed on the chart are "All-in-one secure, repair, clean, and optimize", "Optimize and speed up PC and Internet", "Complete registry care", "Security features", "1-click solution", and "Price". This software is compared to seven major competitors (1 free and six commercial), and comes out feature rich compared to the competi-

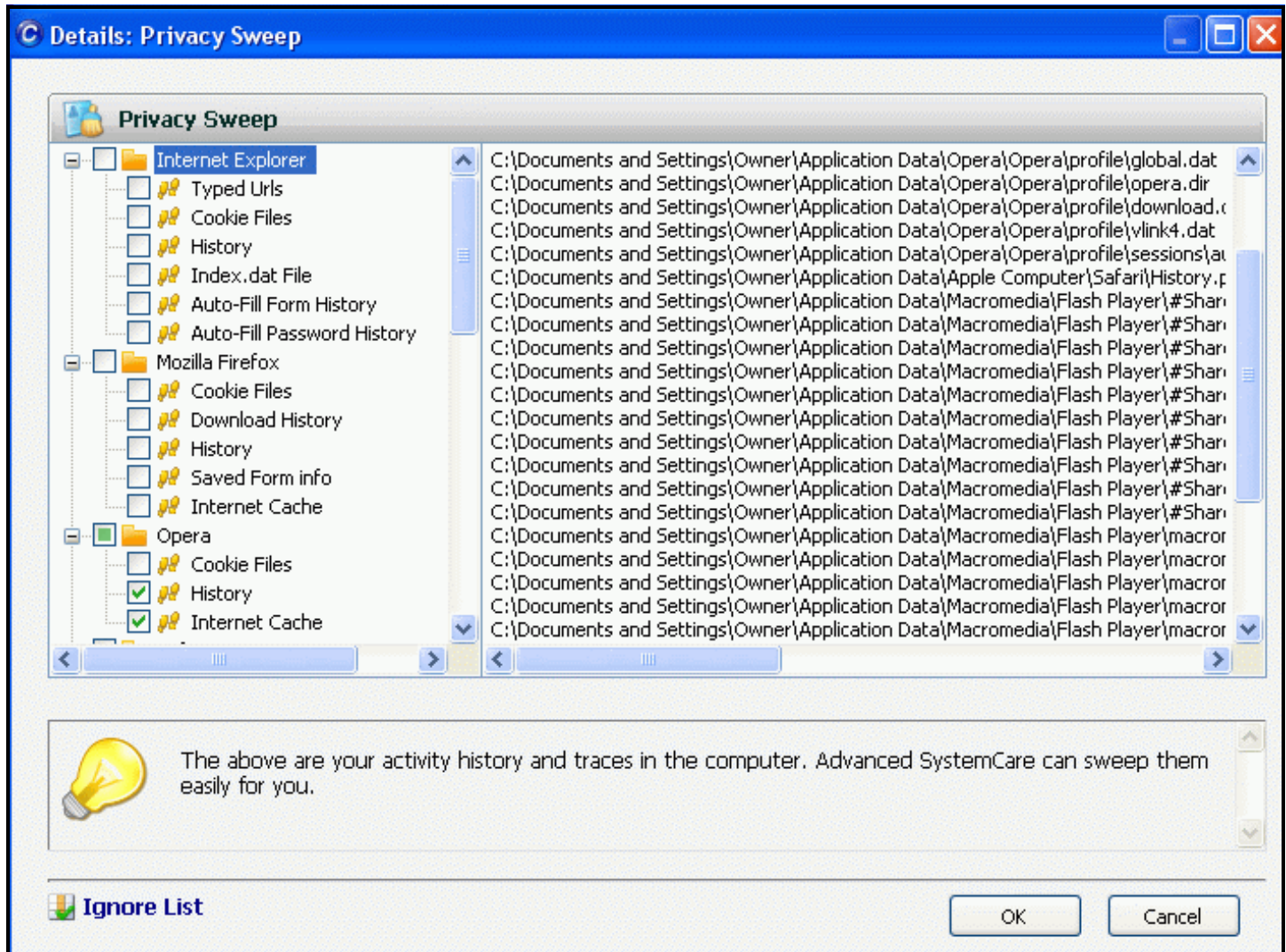
tion. To be fair, some of the products listed have features and capabilities not included with Advanced System Care Free V3, but comparing system utilities and clean up programs, this program compares very well.

It is inevitable that users will ask why IObit would give away software this powerful; the reason is that IObit clearly wants the satisfied user to upgrade to the Pro version, which has more features and capabilities, and is currently on sale online for \$19.95 (regularly \$29.95) directly from IObit. The Pro version has additional perform-



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Advanced System Care Free V3 – Improve PC Performance



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ance improving features, a deep registry scan that roots out many more useless registry entries (the Pro version detected over 3000 useless registry entries on my computer, compared to only 66 in the free version), additional tune-up features to both improve hardware performance and web speed, and free technical support.

The excellence of Advanced

System Care Free V3 has been recognized in the media with several awards, including high ratings from ZDnet, Tucows, Softpedia, Download.com, PC World, PC Magazine, and other publications. Download.com claims that Advanced System Care Free V3 is its number one most downloaded system utility, with about 9.5 million downloads, even though it has only been available for

the past several weeks.

For those wanting a powerful, and feature rich utility to improve computer performance, the free version of Advanced System Care Free V3 would be a very good choice. For those who want additional features and capability, the Pro version, currently on sale for \$19.95, would be a very good choice.

