



February 2002

Volume 13, Issue 2

## ULEAD for a Photo Finish

by Marlène Gaberel

An interesting and fun time is in store for DACS members at the February 5th 2002 General Meeting. In the company of Richard Katz, we will learn about Ulead's trio of photo editing applications, Photo Explorer 7, PhotoImpact7 and Video Studio5 with DVD!

DACS general meetings start at 7 pm at Danbury Hospital Auditorium with a question and answer session followed by brief club announcements. The formal presentation with Richard Katz will start at 8 pm on February 5th. Meetings are always free and open to the public. Richard Katz will introduce DACS members to Ulead digital photography and video.

Richard promises to tell us about PhotoExplorer 7.0 Pro which he describes as "a spectacularly simple solution for the digital imaging enthusiast that combines easy-to-use tools for acquiring and viewing pictures, doing slide shows, adjusting, printing and sharing digital images and video clips and much

more" and Photo Impact 7, which is "Ulead's full-featured program that is everything needed for digital

photography, creative design and Web graphics." According to Richard, Photo Impact 7 "is an image editor that delivers professional results, easily." In addition, members will find out about VideoStudio 5.0 and VideoStudio 5.0 DVD Edition, which "creates movies with a professional flair, walking you through the process step-by-step."

It will be interesting to see the demonstration of the DVD edition which includes DVD authoring capabilities that can be used to create SVCD or DVD for-

mat movies on CD-R/RW! It is even possible for users to create a DVD readable movie on a burnable CD drive.

Richard Katz has not been a speaker lately at DACS, but I remember that he had some very entertaining presentations several years ago. Don't miss this general meeting because it will be interesting to learn about Ulead products and the speaker is also very engaging. See you on the 5th!



Internet Continued on page 8

## President's File



If last month's staid presentation on the latest from Silicon Valley left you in Napa Valley, wake up! Richard Katz is coming back to town. Remember...the Quicken guy with the rubber chicken? Richard earned

his wings as president of a Bay Area user group, and then hitched a ride with Intuit to sell their user friendly home accounting package to his old buddies in his own unique audience friendly way. He's been a fixture at InterGalactic and other user group gatherings for about a decade, and he knows what both nerds and newbies need to know and want to hear.

But don't come expecting another version of Quicken—he's since been plucked ("down"-sized?), and along with fellow traveler and doppelganger, Matt McCann, has started an independent software marketing group that offers "creative ideas that are so far "out the box," they're close to escape velocity!"

This time around, Richard will be demonstrating ULEAD Software's latest bundle of digital photography applications, PhotoExplorer 7.0 Pro, PhotoImpact 7 and VideoStudio 5.0, DVD Edition. You may think you've heard the last word on video apps, but if Richard lives up to past performance, you'll learn a lot more, and may even walk away with the bundle, still wondering if a chicken really does jump out of the box.

### Say it isn't so, Shirley!

From the time I first met Shirley Fredlund more than ten years ago, she has been "Shirley, Goodness and Mercy." That's because during all those years, Shirley Fredlund has personally helped hundreds of ALS patients in Connecticut and nearby

states to speak and otherwise communicate using computer technology.

Lou Gehrig's disease is the common name for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a degenerative condition of the nerves that leaves victims totally paralyzed. With technical assistance from DACS—but even more with personal energy and determination—Shirley, her husband, Frank Ruiz and countless volunteers, have distributed specialized systems that enable victims of ALS to use simple switches to control a computer and a voice synthesizer, even if they can only move a single finger, twitch, or blink an eye.

In a few weeks, Shirley and Frank will be moving to North Dakota to be with family down on the farm. Shirley plans to keep Voice for Joanie going from her new home, and has been assured support in our area from the Connecticut chapter of the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Foundation. She would love to have some dedicated volunteers from DACS to help. In the last year, Medicaid has come forward to fund equipment and special services needed by ALS patients; so there is no longer a need to travel. Volunteers are needed primarily to maintain equipment and process requests. Look for future announcements in *dacs.doc*.

### Writer's block

The following message arrived in my e-mail:

*"I happened across a DACS web page describing cable modems and just wanted to tell you how much I appreciated it. The article was by Richard Chernock (IBM Research). I loved the piece specifically for covering the subject so thoroughly and yet simply. I decided to see what it would take to join up but found that the geographical distance was rather far for me. I live in Tennessee. Just the same, I wanted to congratulate you on a fine article and hope you will keep up the good work. Thanks."*

Rich Chernock had to suspend his column on video media in *dacs.doc* some time ago, due his incredibly busy schedule at IBM. With a little prompting, he has launched a new series, which starts in this issue. He says sometimes he gets writer's block drafting technical reports, and fills the time doing articles for DACS. Welcome back, Rich!

—ALLAN OSTERGREN  
DACSPREZ@AOL.COM

## Membership Information

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Don Neary  
APCUG Liaison  
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## HelpLine

*Volunteers have offered to field member questions by phone. Please limit calls to the hours indicated below. Days means 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; evening means 6 to 9:30 p.m. Please be considerate of the volunteer you are calling. HelpLine is a free service. If you are asked to pay for help or are solicited for sales, please contact the dacs.doc editor; the person requesting payment will be deleted from the listing. Can we add your name to the volunteer listing?*

d = day e = evening

Program	Name	Phone #	
Alpha Four	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	( e )
AOL	Marc Cohen	(203) 775-1102	(d e)
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Hardware	John Gallichotte	(203) 426-0394	(d e)
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## Directors' Notes

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of DACS was held at the RC on January 7, 2002. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, Greger, Neary, Pearson and Scheef. Also present was William Keane. In the absence of the President, Charles Bovaird was appointed Chairman of the meeting and presided. Secretary Larry Buoy kept the record.

The minutes of the meeting held December 10, 2001 were approved as presented.

Treasurer Bovaird reported total cash and bank accounts of \$22,210.90, less prepaid dues of \$8,243.00, a net of \$13,967.90. He also reported current membership of 475.

Charlie also reported on the status of the computer refurbishment program, stating that currently there were no units on hand and that he is transshipping any donated units of 486s or slow (processor speeds less than 200 MHz) Pentiums to WorldHelp Foundation of Newtown, which reprocesses them for overseas.

Pentium computers with processor speeds of 200 mhz or more received as donations will be reprocessed and donated to local non-profit organizations.

Don Pearson commented that everything seemed ready for the following night's presentation on Linux.

The imminent retirement of President Ostergren and the need to find a replacement was next on the agenda. Various methods of determining who among the membership may be willing to assume the responsibilities of the office were explored, with an email canvas of the membership seeming the most practical. Direct recruitment within the current Directors was put forth as a first step, followed by a canvas of the membership.

Don Neary suggested that e-mail correspondence to all Directors could be made simpler via a "Board" mail box on the server at the RC which would be accessible only to Directors and which would automatically forward messages to all Directors.

Also considered was the prospect of DACS establishing some form of charitable program and a preliminary study of the feasibility of same was suggested. Also, Jim Scheef suggested that a mail server be installed on the server at the RC and that he had preliminarily investigated one supplier for the necessary software at a licensing fee of \$100.00. He was asked to investigate further.

—LARRY BUOY

## Music

# Whole House Audio

## The Network Way

By Rich Chernock

Listening to music of your choice anywhere in the house—this is what whole house audio is all about. This concept goes beyond simply placing radios in each room—rather, there's a notion of having a central repository of music sources that can be accessed from multiple rooms under varying degrees of local control. The conventional methods for implementing this range from the simple (moderately expensive—single stereo with multiple speaker lines running to each room with local attenuators controlling volume) to elaborate (very expensive—multiple amplifiers, speaker lines to each room and a distribution system for infrared remote control signals). Common to all approaches is the need to run multiple wires to each location. A drawback to this approach is that the typical music source (CD carousel) can play only one thing at a time.

Many people today are networking their homes, with some form of network communications in multiple rooms (physical wiring with Cat5/ethernet, wireless with 802.11b, phone line networking or even power line networking). The key factor here is that data can easily be distributed around the house. Why not use this capability for music?

### MP3

A recent *dacs.doc* article discussed connecting a PC to a stereo and provided some basic information about MP3 audio; so I'll be rather brief here. MP3 refers to a method of compressing digital audio that uses lossy perceptual encoding, meaning that the algorithms used for the compression throw away information that human hearing is unlikely to detect (in theory). Decompression will not yield a result identical to the original, but for commonly used amounts of compression, the differences are difficult to hear. Of course, the higher the degree of compression, the less the compressed music resembles the original. With today's encoders, the most commonly used parameters yield MP3 files that play at 128Kbits/second (meaning roughly 1Mbyte per minute of music). Considering that a full audio CD holds about 74 minutes of music (uncompressed—650Mbytes of information) and the same

CD will hold about 650 minutes of MP3 music, the compression ratio is significant.

Being nearly ubiquitous, MP3 is a very convenient form to store music: compact, platform-independent and portable (players are available ranging from MP3 watches to portables with hard disks and even car systems). There is a multitude of software available to encode and play MP3 files for nearly any PC platform at a very reasonable price (often free). I currently have a modest MP3 collection—about 3.5GB (800 songs or approximately 60 hours of music), the majority of which were ripped (encoded) from my CD collection. These music files are located on a server accessible to my entire network. Whenever I get in the mood, I slip some more CDs into my PC drive and rip the contents. Since I've chosen the songs to rip, there's nothing in the repository that I dislike.

Before continuing, there are two soapbox items I'd like to mention: 1) MP3 does NOT refer to MPEG-3, rather MPEG-1 layer 3 audio. There is no such thing as MPEG-3 (a standards activity for high definition video that was dropped when it was realized that MPEG-2 already provided the same capabilities) and 2) think through the practice of downloading all of your music for free from the internet. Regardless of what you might think of the business practices of the recording industry. The fact remains that the musicians rely on sales of their music for a livelihood—no music sales means no income, which will ultimately mean no more music.

### Network Solution to Audio Distribution

If we reexamine the audio distribution problem mentioned above, it becomes clear that the necessary pieces are in place for an alternate method for distributing audio. Communication from the content source (server) via the computer network is available in multiple rooms (for my house, every room of interest). This communication channel is available for any form of control, as well as carrying the music. The only pieces of the puzzle left revolve around how to do the communications and what types of devices to utilize.

There are two main methods of moving any kind of content (in this case mu-

sic) across the network: Push and Pull. For the Push method, a server streams the MP3 data onto the network in either unicast or multicast. Once the music starts streaming, it is pushed continually until the server is told to stop. Typically, a playlist is established for the push stream, controlling the order of play for the songs. A client device listening to the correct port can receive and decode the music. Multiple push streams can be used, allowing the equivalent of multiple network radio stations to be implemented. One example of software for pushing from the server is Shoutcast ([www.shoutcast.com/](http://www.shoutcast.com/)). The load on the server can be significant, since it needs to do some work in getting the music encapsulated correctly and pushed onto the network at the correct rate. Additionally, some pre-planning must be done to create the playlists that will be used by the streaming server. If your intent is to have continuous playing of music, where you can select what to listen to in a manner equivalent to changing the channel on a radio, then the push method might be appropriate for you.

The pull method uses the server as a repository of music, which the client device draws upon. Essentially, the server represents a network accessible hard disk. This configuration is easily implemented via Windows disk sharing or Samba (for the Linux world). Each client behaves as if the music is on a local disk. The load on the server will be minimal in this circumstance. Selection of music on the client depends upon the software used, but typically can be based on playlists or the contents of subdirectories. The key factor here is that each client has complete, local control over the music being played. I've chosen to use the pull method on my network, due to the simplicity that it offers and the amount of local control.

### Devices

The last piece of the puzzle revolves around the client device: what to attach to the network and how to actually play the music. Playing the music is rather simple—any old stereo will do. Other solutions were outlined in a previous article in *dacs.doc*. Even if nothing suitable is lying around the house, suitable bits can be found at yard sales for very little cost.

There are a number of off-the-shelf boxes designed to be clients for this very use: the Rio Receiver ([www.riohome.com/HomeAudio.htm](http://www.riohome.com/HomeAudio.htm)), the Turtle Beach Audiotron ([www.audiotron.net/audiotron/producthome.asp](http://www.audiotron.net/audiotron/producthome.asp)) and the SlimMP3 ([www.slimdevices.com/](http://www.slimdevices.com/)), with



prices ranging from about \$150 to \$300 (there are some other devices with much higher price points, but in my opinion the prices of these other boxes are vastly inflated over the value received). The units listed are meant to be connected to an amplifier (or an existing stereo system) and have form-factors (and visual designs) appropriate for that use.

For those that have the same kind of habits I do—never throwing away a working computer when a new one is brought into the house, there's a cheaper solution. Virtually any obsolete computer (pentium class and above—maybe even a 486) will perform admirably as a network connected MP3 player (again, if one isn't available, yard sales are a good source). At most, a new network card and sound card might be needed (total cost of less than \$50). I'm currently using an old Pentium II class machine that my kids will not use, with an old 12" monochrome VGA monitor that was gathering dust in the closet. This all fits into a small end table next to my bed and is connected to the stereo from my college days (I refuse to admit how long that one's been around). The whole point here is that the cost of entry is very low.

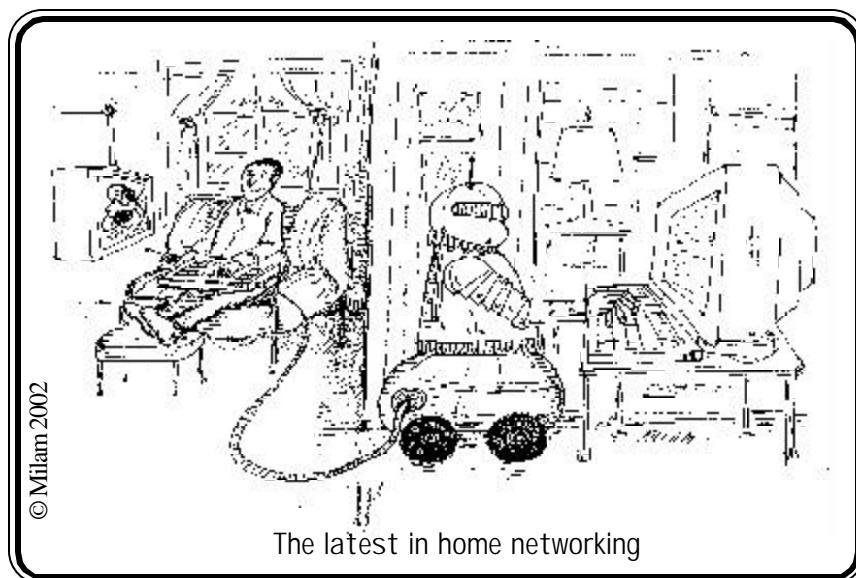
The software for playing is available for free. Examples include Winamp ([www.winamp.com](http://www.winamp.com)) and MusicMatch ([www.musicmatch.com](http://www.musicmatch.com)) for Windows. Equivalent players exist for Apple computers, Linux and even DOS! Examples abound on the internet of people putting together networked MP3 players, including PC parts retrofitted into a case appropriate for inclusion in a stereo rack, ways of getting rid of the keyboard and display (using a keypad and a small serial LCD panel) and so on.

### Conclusion

Using a home network for music distribution is certainly practical today, in fact it's probably one of the easiest thing that can be set up on a network. Compared to the alternate methods for doing whole house audio, using a computer network would probably be considered easier to implement, easier to use and much less expensive. The systems that I've put together in my house are being used constantly.

*RICH CHERNOCK is currently working on digital television and networked multimedia at IBM research. He is still leading many of the ATSC standards activities for broadcast High Definition Television. Earlier this year, he co-authored "Data Broadcasting: Understanding the ATSC Data Broadcast Standard".*

## Scenes From Our Last Meeting



# Special Interest Groups

## SIG NOTES: February 2002

**ACCESS.** Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.

**Contact:** Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (*bpreston@mags.net*). Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

**Next meeting:** Feb 12

**ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS.** Explores and develops OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For meeting notes and notices, follow link to Don's site on *dacs.org*.

**Contact:** Don Pearson, 914 669-9622 (*pearson@attglobal.net*). Meets on Wednesday of the week following the General Meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY.

**Next meeting:** Feb 6

**BACK OFFICE.** Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook. The SIG meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

**Contact:** Jim Scheef (*jscheef@telemarksys.com*)

**Next meeting:** Feb 14

**GRAPHICS.** Create/print high-quality graphics and images.

**Contact:** Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 (*graffic@ntplx.net*). Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo Imaging, Brookfield.

**Next Meeting:** Feb 27

**INTERNET PROGRAMMING.** Programs for Web site/server.

**Contact:** Chuck Fizer (*cfizer@compuserve.com*). Meets on 1st Wednesday, 3-5 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center. Members' suggestions are welcome.

**Next Meeting:** Feb 6

**INVESTMENT STRATEGIES.** Discusses various investment strategies to maximize profits and limit risk.

**Contact:** Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436, (*pgehr4402@aol.com*). Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.

**Next Meeting:** Feb 21

**MACINTOSH.** Discusses Macintosh hardware and software.

**Contact:** Matthew Greger, 203 748-2919, (*matthewg@thebusinesshelper.com*).

Meets on 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Suspended until further notice

**VISUAL BASIC.** Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

**Contact:** Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (*CFizer@compuserve.com*) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (*JScheef@Telemarksys.com*). Meets on 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

**Next Meeting:** Feb 6

**VOICE FOR JOANIE.** Provides and supports people with Lou Gehrig's disease with special PC computer equipment.

**Contact:** Shirley Fredlund, 860 355-2611 ext. 4517 (*voiceforjoanie@juno.com*).

Look for announcements

**Next Meeting:** Suspended until further notice.

**WALL STREET.** Examines Windows stock market software.

**Contact:** Phil Dilloway, 203 367-1202 (*dilloway@ntplx.net*). Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

**Next Meeting:** Feb 25

**WEB SITE DESIGN.** Fundamentals of design for the Internet.

**Contact:** Matthew Greger, 203 748-2919 (*matthewg@thebusinesshelper.com*)

Meets second Wednesday, 7p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

**Next Meeting:** Feb 13

## SIG News & Other Events

**Back Office.** We finally covered DNS - Domain Name Service - in detail. DNS is what makes the Internet easy to use and is the key to Active Directory on Windows 2000.

After discussing how DNS works on the Internet, we ran the DNS Configuration wizard on the server to set up a DNS "zone" for the Resource Center. With DNS working we then used the 'nslookup' utility to verify that we could actually look up names on the Internet. It was fun.

The February meeting will be Thursday, February 14th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. We will install and configure Active Directory plus install and configure an email server for the DACS.ORG domain.

**Internet Programming.** The Group met for the first time on January 2nd at the DACS Resource Center. There were 5 attendees. This initial meeting was essentially a random access discussion focusing on Internet issues that can be addressed by internet programs in addition to web pages. At future meetings, snippets of program code will be demonstrated illustrating programming concepts for the web.

For the next meeting, Chuck Fizer plans to reveal VB 6 code that will address secure logins and session sequencing processes interfaced to a SQL database. All in attendance agreed to change the SIG start time so that the session starts at 4pm and ends at 6pm. This will become the official time frame for the SIG.

**Visual Basic.** The VB SIG meeting started with a random access session. A key question was one of the topics initially raised in the Internet Programming SIG, how can a VB program running on a client machine make an Internet web connection and send and receive information, all without opening the IE browser? The concept here is to provide the client with a VB program sent to the client's machine by CD. This program performs various processing tasks, one of which is to access a server's database and read/write information to it all over the Internet.

The value of the VB program is that it provides a robust windows graphical user interface, something more difficult to perform on a web page. The value of Internet connectivity is the ubiquity of access from almost anywhere. We discussed using the MSHTML.dll object to perform the Internet connectivity function. This .dll is the essence of the IE browser. A VB program can create an object of that type and then use the Methods, Properties and Event of the object. For the aforementioned program, the Document object class provides most of the required functionality.

The meeting then moves to the prepared topic, Variants, Nulls, null strings and the perturbations associated with handling variables receiving or containing those types.

# February 2002

## Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	
3	4	 7:00PM <b>GENERAL MEETING</b> <b>ULEAD</b>	6 3-5PM <b>Internet Programming</b> Chuck Fizer 7:00PM <b>Visual Basic</b> Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996	7	8	9
10	 7:30PM <b>BOARD OF DIRECTORS</b>	 7:00PM <b>ACCESS</b> Bruce Preston 203 431-2920	13 7:00PM <b>DACS RC WEBDESIGN</b> Matthew Greger 203 748-2919 7:30PM <b>ADVANCED OS</b> Don Pearson 914 669-9622	 7:00PM <b>BACKOFFICE</b> Jim Scheef 860 355-0034	15	 <b>NEWSLETTER</b> <b>SIG NEWS DEADLINE</b>
17	18	19	20	 7:30 PM <b>INVESTMENT</b> Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436	22	23
24	 7:00 PM <b>WALL STREET</b> Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202	26	 7:00PM <b>GRAPHICS</b> Ken Graff 203 775-6667	28		



## Windows XP

### My Own E“XP”erience

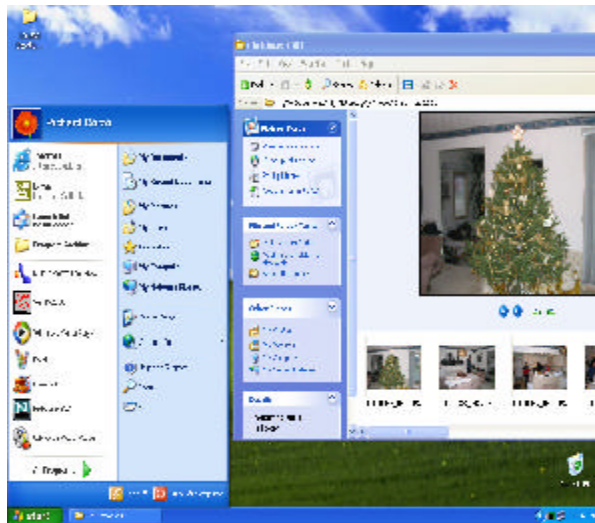
by Richard Corzo

**W**indows XP is the long-awaited merger of Microsoft's consumer and business versions of Windows. The consumer line started with Windows 95, then Windows 98 and last year Windows Me. Though it ran 32-bit applications, for compatibility with older software it still had some 16-bit DOS code underneath. The business line of Windows began with Windows NT followed by Windows 2000. It was fully 32-bit and was more reliable due to its memory protection and preemptive multitasking. In other words, it was better at running multiple programs at once without risk of a system crash, but had to sacrifice some compatibility with older software.

My computer is about three years old, a Pentium II 266 MHz with memory upgraded to 192 MB RAM. It barely meets the absolute minimum requirements of a 233 MHz processor and 64 MB of RAM. Microsoft actually recommends at least 300 MHz and 128 MB of RAM. The computer industry would consider my computer already obsolete, but I find that with proper maintenance (for example, a weekly defrag using Raxco's ([www.raxco.com](http://www.raxco.com)) PerfectDisk 2000) it runs fine for most things I do. Microsoft has also suggested elsewhere that Windows XP will run best on computers manufactured since January 2000. However, since I had tried Windows XP Beta 2 and Release Candidates 1 and 2, I had reason to believe that it would run fine on my machine.

Windows XP comes in Home (\$99 upgrade or \$199 full) and Professional (\$199 upgrade or \$299 full) editions. Both use a common code base. XP Professional is a superset of XP Home, and any program or driver that runs on XP Home is guaranteed to run on XP Professional. This couldn't be said of Windows Me and Windows 2000, or most certainly of Windows 95 or 98 and Windows NT 4.0. XP

Home has all the features a typical home user would need, while XP Professional adds business-oriented features such as the ability to log in to Windows NT/2000 servers, and encrypt files and folders. One feature in Professional that might be of



interest to some home users is the inclusion of Microsoft's Web server called Internet Information Server. A Web server was included in Windows 98, but not in Windows Me, or the new XP Home. Of course, rather than spending the extra \$100 on Professional you could run a free Web server like Apache ([www.apache.org](http://www.apache.org)).

#### Installation

I chose to try Windows XP Professional, since I was already running Windows 2000 at home. You can upgrade an existing Windows 98 or Me, but not 95; installation with either XP Home or Professional. Professional can also upgrade NT 4.0 or Windows 2000 Professional. Most users like the idea of upgrading their existing operating system rather than doing a clean install, because they don't have to reinstall all their programs, or somehow save and restore all their settings and files. However, this is not the way to achieve a system with the highest reliability or fewest problems.

The Windows XP CD comes with an upgrade advisor that will analyze your existing software and hardware for compat-

ibility with XP. There is also a File and Settings Transfer Wizard that can transfer your needed files and settings from an old computer to a new computer, or from your original partition to a new installation. The wizard gathers up everything into a single package folder. You just need a place to put it so that you can transfer the package, perhaps a Zip drive, a CD that you burn, a network drive, or another partition if you will be installing XP on the same machine.

I initially upgraded a partition that was running XP Professional Release Candidate 2 and that seemed to go pretty smoothly. However, I was interested in doing a clean install, so I deleted an extra partition that I no longer needed. I was able to use the File and Settings Transfer Wizard to transfer things like my Internet Explorer Favorites from the original to the new installation.

#### Blue Skies and Green Pastures

Windows XP has a redesigned "task-oriented" user interface. Cosmetically, you'll notice the use of bright primary colors. The initial desktop picture is one of blue skies and green pastures, a metaphor for what Microsoft hopes you will experience. Functionally, you'll notice the new Start menu, which is now divided into two columns. The left column contains icons for your default Web browser and e-mail program, other programs you specifically choose, your most frequently used programs, and an access point called All Programs. If you hover or click on this, you will see a cascading menu with all your program folders like Accessories and Games. The right column of the main Start menu has icons like My Computer and My Documents, and you can customize it to add more like My Network Places.

The Control Panel is accessible from the right Start menu column, and has been redesigned to conform to the new task-oriented interface of Windows XP. You're asked to pick a category such as Appearance and Themes, and then pick a task such as "Change the screen resolution." Alternatively, you can switch to Classic view from the "Pick a category" view and choose one of the traditional Control Panel icons such as Display.

The task-oriented design also becomes evident when you browse certain folders such as My Pictures. In addition to the Thumbnails view seen in recent versions of Windows, there is a new Filmstrip view, where the picture icons are arrayed horizontally at the bottom of the



window like a filmstrip, and a selected picture can be viewed in the preview area above it. Folders under My Pictures are shown with small thumbnails of four representative pictures superimposed on the large folder icon, so you have an idea of what kind of pictures the folder contains before you open it. The left side of the window is the task area with groupings for Picture Tasks, File and Folder Tasks, Other Places, and Details. Pictures Tasks are picture-related tasks such “View as a slide show”, “Print pictures”, or “Order prints online”

A similar strategy is used for the My Music folder, which is designed to hold music files that you have “ripped” from a CD or downloaded from the Internet. You can organize your music in nested folders by artist and by album within artist. If you’ve downloaded the album art to go with the music files in an album folder, this will appear as a small thumbnail on the folder in thumbnail view. Music Tasks that

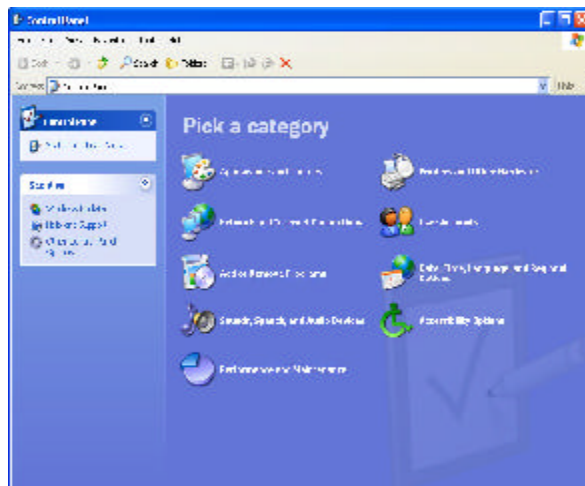
appear in the left column are “Play all” and “Shop for music online”. You can use Windows Media Player to encode music CDs as WMA (Windows Media) format files, but if you want to encode in the more popular MP3 format you will need some other program like MUSICMATCH Jukebox ([www.musicmatch.com](http://www.musicmatch.com)), or you can buy an MP3 Creation Pack ([www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/windowsxp/experience.asp](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/windowsxp/experience.asp)) for \$9.95 from several companies that will enable Windows Media Player to create MP3 files. In order to save licensing fees (and promote their own Windows Media format) Microsoft did not include this capability in Windows XP. Similarly you can buy a DVD Encoder Pack that will enable Windows Media Player to play DVD movies on your DVD-ROM drive.

Support for CD burners is now built into Windows, in that you can use Windows Explorer to copy files from your hard drive to CDR media using a staging area.

Windows XP is broadband-friendly for those who have high-speed Internet connections. It has a built-in PPPOE (Point-to-Point Protocol over Ethernet) client for making DSL connections, and a new firewall capability. Be forewarned that the

Internet Connection Firewall is not enabled by default. You will need to go in to Network Connections, open the Properties for your Internet connection, and enable the firewall from the Advanced tab of the dialog.

I like the new Help and Support component. When I search for keywords, it not only finds relevant information in the local help system, but also finds items from Microsoft’s knowledge base on the Internet. There is a new Remote Assis-



tance feature that lets you invite someone to remotely inspect your computer, but I did not personally try it myself.

Windows XP is customizable almost to a fault. If you don’t like some aspect of it, there is almost always some way to change it, if you can find the control. For example, I was used to having an “X” delete icon on the toolbar of Windows Explorer folders and found myself missing it, but found that I could add it back by going into View > Toolbars > Customize\85.

## Performance and Compatibility

Although my machine is near the minimum requirements for Windows XP, I found performance to be quite good, and boot time significantly faster compared to Windows 2000.

To achieve reliability Microsoft stresses the need for drivers that have been certified for Windows XP. Many drivers are included with Windows XP, but support is not universal. You need to check the Microsoft site, or your vendor’s site for compatibility of your hardware components, printers, scanners, etc., with Windows XP. I have tried to choose components and vendors that provide good

driver support, so I had mostly good luck with driver support. Others I know have not been so lucky. For instance, someone I know bought a scanner within the past year, upgraded to XP recently, and found that the scanner is not supported and that the vendor has no current plans to add support for that model scanner under Windows XP. In my case a certified driver was not available for my modem, but the existing driver from previous versions of Windows seems to work fine. Secondly, my Hauppauge TV tuner card does not yet have a certified driver from the manufacturer, despite the fact that they display a certified for XP logo on their Web page. I’m using an uncertified driver downloaded from their Windows XP support page. Occasionally I have seen an error message when I start my TV viewing program, but it doesn’t seem to prevent the program from working.

During the holidays I tried out my sister’s new computer running XP Home edition. I tried installing one of my brother-in-law’s favorite DOS games, but was unable to get the sound to work. There is a compatibility wizard that may help run some Windows programs that were designed for older versions of Windows. I tried it on IBM’s VisualAge for Java, which isn’t compatible with XP, but I still couldn’t get the program to run. All other Windows programs that I’ve tried are working fine. Note that you will need to buy new Windows XP-compatible versions of low-level utility programs such as antivirus and disk utilities.

## Recommendations

Windows XP is the best operating system that Microsoft has ever produced, but it does raise the bar on hardware requirements. Some people tend to be happy with what came with their computer and shouldn’t feel compelled to upgrade. If you’re unhappy with what you’ve got (particularly if it’s Windows Me), you have a fairly new computer, you’re comfortable with installing things on your computer, and you’re willing to leave behind unsupported hardware or software, then Windows XP may be a good move for you. Certainly if you’re in the market for a new computer, make sure it has Windows XP installed. You’ll thank yourself later.

*Richard Corzo is a computer programmer currently working in Ridgefield, CT. He has contributed past articles on PC operating systems and utilities. You can contact him at [rcorzo@earthlink.net](mailto:rcorzo@earthlink.net).*

# Random Access

January 2002

Bruce Preston Moderator

***Q. I have an IBM Aptiva with Windows 98. The CD ROM drive has failed. I purchased a new CD ROM at a computer show, is there anything special that I have to do to replace the drive?***

A. It is unlikely that there are any special drivers for a plain CD ROM drive (There may be special drivers for a CD R/W). It would be prudent to go into the Windows Device Manager (Start / Settings / Control Panel / System) then Device Manager - then click the "+" next to CDROM drives, select the drive and click REMOVE. This will remove any drivers. Then shutdown the computer. Remove the drive, and make note of which connector on which ribbon cable is being used by the existing drive. After you have removed the drive, make note of the Master/Slave jumper setting. It is usually a small jumper block, and is usually labeled MS for Master, SL for Slave, or (rarely) CS for Cable Select. You need to have the same setting on the CDROM drive. If you have a hard disk on the same ribbon cable, it is probably set as Master and the CD ROM drive would be Slave. If the CDROM was on a completely different cable (which means a different IDE controller) then it probably is set as a Master. For any IDE cable, you must have a Master device before you have a Slave - you may only have one Master and one Slave on a controller. Make sure that the connector is oriented correctly - the edge of the cable that is painted red is the #1 pin edge. There will be an indication (either a '1' or a small molded 'V') near the connector on the drive. The 1 pin is usually adjacent to the power connector. Plug the cables in—power, ribbon data cable, and the audio cable that goes to your sound card. When you boot the machine, Windows should find the drive and you will be back in business.

***Q. I have a Pentium II 400MHz. I am told that I can get an upgrade processor from AMD that would take it to 1GHz. The processor is a "Slot 1" processor—what does that mean? Can I just plug it in?***

A. It depends upon the motherboard. If the board can only handle a processor clock speed of, say 500MHz, then putting in a 1GHz processor isn't going to help. Additionally, there are jumpers on the board that may have to be changed so as to provide the correct voltage for the processor. Newer motherboards can auto-configure, they are marked as being 'jumperless'. You will need to find the manual for the existing motherboard to see what it can handle. If you can't find the manual, the information should be available on the web. As for "Slot 1" this means that the processor is on a board that is mounted perpendicular to the motherboard, using two large 'clips' that lock it and the sandwiched heat-sink/cooling fan in place. Prior to this, most processors were mounted in a socket that was surface mounted on the motherboard. Many in the room felt that you would not really see a lot of difference between a 400MHz P-II and a 1GHz processor unless you also increased the speed of your system bus, video card and hard disk - in other words the other components would essentially sandbag the faster processor. The general advice was to first make sure that you have lots of RAM, and then look into a faster video subsystem. To get the faster bus speed etc., you would need a faster motherboard.

***Q. My PC is running Windows 98 and won't shutdown. It does blank out the screen, but it doesn't ever give me the "It is safe to turn off your machine" message, nor is it turning off the machine. Any suggestions?***

A. Windows 98 has known problems - there is a Knowledge Database article that is about 20 pages long that has all of the things that can be done to get it to shutdown the system. Some of the suggested items have to do with APM - turn off any "Power Management" settings in the control panel, and also go into the BIOS SETUP and see how the power management settings are set. Typical problems are that Windows has settings that imply that you have a notebook

machine that needs battery conservation. Go to [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) and select SUPPORT then KNOWLEDGE BASE, and do a search on the two words SHUTDOWN and POWER. One of the several articles that might be pertinent is "Problems Shutting Down Windows 98 Second Edition (Q238096)"—there are other articles for other releases of Windows.

***Q. Several times a month I get a message from QuickBooks that says that there is an update. How do they know that there is an update?***

A. Several Intuit products run a program 'Qagent' which periodically checks, via the internet, to see if there are updates. If it finds them, it downloads them in the background, and then notifies you that it has updates. It is supposed to be invisible. If you don't want it, there is an option within the configuration for the Intuit product that can be used to tell it to not look for updates. In addition, utilities such as StartStop can be used to block the feature. By the way, similar capabilities are often found in anti-virus software, as well as with newer versions of Microsoft operating systems.

***Q. I have an HP printer (parallel interface) which I share with another machine. If I unplug the printer to use on the other machine, I can not plug it back into the first machine and have it available without booting. Before upgrading my O/S to Windows Me I could do this. Can I fix this?***

A. Parallel printer devices are not supposed to be 'hot swappable'. If you had been able to do it with the previous O/S you were lucky. The newer O/S's are much 'pickier' - they are also more robust because they don't let you do such things. One thing that you should do is see if there is a newer driver available from the printer vendor.

***Q. I upgraded my web browser to Internet Explorer 6 on my Windows 95 machine. Now when I try to get to a site, I get an error message from "Content Advisor" that requests my supervisor password. I don't have a supervisor password. What is all of this?***

A. You have a damaged installation. Re-install. Also, you might need to set the "Security Zone" value to a more permissive setting.

**Q. Is there a way to move recordings on an audio cassette to a CD?**

A. Yes. You can do it with several applications, such as Music Match. The sequence is that you bring the data in via line input into your sound card and create a .WAV file. You can then convert it to CD audio with an audio application such as Music Match, and then copy the audio file to the CD with CD burner software such as EZ CD Creator.

**Q. I replaced the sound card on my HP machine running Windows 2000 Pro. It is still very scratchy. Any suggestions?**

A. Check the compatibility list at the HP site - they have some problems with some devices.

**Q. My Epson 1520 high-res printer prints about 1/2 of a Page Maker image - the page starts to print just fine, and then ejects the page and starts printing garbage. What is happening?**

A. Check that you have the latest driver. You might want to see if you can

change the printer from EMF to RAW mode - this controls which device does much of the work. See if changing the image file type from TIFF to some other format. Did you install some other software that might have hammered a driver? For large images, you need a lot of temporary storage—do you have a lot of space on the C: drive?

**Q. I overheard a sales person ask a customer who was purchasing a new machine with MS Windows XP on it if the customer had a new printer. He said that XP has problems with older printers. Does this make sense?**

A. Yes - Microsoft has been writing its own drivers lately or making it hard for hardware manufacturers to write drivers. As a result, the drivers supplied by Microsoft may not have all of the functionality that had been available in prior releases. (However, the drivers are also less likely to crash the system.) As a result, it is a problem to find drivers for older printer devices.

**Bruce Preston** is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. A DACS director and moderator of the Random Access segment at the monthly general meetings, Bruce also leads the Access SIG.

## New Members

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## Game Review

### Empire Earth by Sierra

by Joshua Gaberel

This new game, Empire Earth, that I just got, is the best of the best games I have ever played. This game has the best variety of views and it has the best campaigns. It is realistic, with different ages that span an impressive 500,000 years.

First, the variety of views of this game are the best that I have seen because it has the normal bird's eye view of the battle field, yet you can change that to an epic view and actually get in the mud and fight the soldier's battle. Graphics are really good in the bird's eye view, but when you get to the close-up view, they are a bit sketchy. That is a major problem, as is the fact that you cannot play the game and have the internet on or any internet security device (such as a firewall). The modem is just turned off when I play Empire Earth.



In this game your conquest starts in the very beginning. You are in the prehistoric age and you lead your people through the following periods: Stone Age,

Copper Age, Bronze Age, Dark Age, Middle Age, Renaissance, Imperial Age, Industrial Age, Atomic Age, Digital Age and the Nano Age.

During the time periods you use the actual weapons and machines that were used/will be used in each period. Like back in the medieval age, you can make grand castles and in the future you can make high tech fortresses with robots and titan atomic bombers that can wipe out entire civilizations.

The four epic campaigns in this game are awesome; they are very realistic and they cover the entire time period of humans on earth.

There is one where you lead the Greeks, another where you lead the English, a third leading the Germans and the last, where you lead the Russians in the future. The one that I have really been working on is the Germans during the First World War. There are thousands of units that you can use in this game. Here are just a couple of my favorite units: Knights, Cyclops, laser infantry, bronze cannon, war raft, halberdier, long swordsmen, German infantry, elite guards and pike men.

This game is rated T for teen by the ESRB, for blood and violence. It is made by Sierra and by Rick Goodman, the lead designer of Age of Empires (Age of Empires is a game kind of like this but just in the medieval ages and not on such an epic scale as is Empire Earth.)

You can find more information About Empire Earth at <http://empireearth.sierra.com/index2.html>. Another place to buy this game is at Costco; the prices there are really good. If you want goodcheats for the game go to [www.avault.com/cheats/getcheat.asp?game=empireearthcc](http://www.avault.com/cheats/getcheat.asp?game=empireearthcc).

This is the best game that I have recently played; it has the best game play, the best choices in history and the best campaigns ever.

**Joshua Gaberel** is the son of DACS Publicity Director Marlene Gaberel, and a regular reviewer of computer games.



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April 2 • Jeff Setro, Computer Viruses Fact vs Fiction

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