

PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday November 18, 2002

Print Artist

Karl Julech
PPCUG Member

Karl will demonstrate his use of Print Artist and the neat graphics stuff that can be created easily such as greeting cards, announcements, etc.

At

Lawrence Library

Meeting Rooms 1 & 2

US Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ



Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System in No Way implies endorsement of its programs

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Digital Photo by: Paul Kurivchack

Kiyo Toma of Adobe Systems presenting some of the new key features of Adobe Acrobat and Photoshop Elements 2.0 to the PPCUG members attending the October General Meeting.



About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library.

Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00-7:45 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order

8 PM: Featured Presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG call 908-218-0778 to leave a message.

Board Meetings

For Meeting Location, Date and Time, call 908-218-0778

Board meetings are open to All.

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Web Site

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is \$30 per year.

New Members Only: after February, the rate is \$2.50 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

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Coming Events

December 9, 2002 - Holiday Party & Elections

Yes there will be Elections for 2003!! The party will be great as always plus Microsoft Mindshare sent the group a large box of software and other goodies to raffle off. Current members only.

January 13, 2003 - Buy & Sell on Ebay!

Martin Masho will host the evenings presentation on the ins and out of buying and selling anything on Ebay or any auction site.

February 10, 2003 - to be announced



Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

Time is too valuable a commodity to misuse as I have done this month in not paying enough attention to the due date for getting the newsletter finished. I apologize and hope you will have your copy in hand before you arrive to this months meeting.

I know that I have done some tough talking over the past couple of months about the future of our group, its leadership and member involvement. Well I'm glad to report that the PPCUG will continue holding regular monthly meetings in 2003.

Clarke Walker who has been a PPCUG member for the past year has contacted me and wants to become President next year. Clarke has over twenty years experience in the computer industry from mainframes to PC's. He is currently studying web technologies and is an avid digital still and video photographer. With experience like this and being a Mercer County area resident, I know that the PPCUG can continue to move forward in the coming years.

I was also moved by the ideas offered by our members at the October meeting as to meeting topics and moderating. A number of great meeting topics were written down along with the proposal that a member volunteers to handle the arranging of his or her months speaker. This way no one person is burdened in finding speakers for all twelve months. Special thanks goes to Martin Moshos for agreeing to chair the January meeting on "Buying and Selling on the On-Line Auctions". This is a very special topic as with the economy as it is; many people are becoming on-line auction entrepreneurs to bring in some additional income.

As it stands now, I will not abandon the group and will continue to be the newsletter editor and possibly the treasurer next year. These are jobs that are more back office and not as travel time sensitive.

For all group members, there will be a short board meeting before the general meeting on Monday night at 6:30 pm at the Library. Please attend and add your input.

I look forward to seeing you all on the 18th.



Windows XP Tweaks

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

Any system, either when first installed or when first acquired, has a default setup that usually needs some configuring and tweaking to suit an individual user's needs and preferences. Windows XP is no exception and in this article I am going to begin to give some tweaks that I have found useful in my own system. These are my personal choices. There are thousands of possible tweaks and the ones that I have chosen may not suit everybody. Also there are a myriad of computer configurations and what works for me may not work the same for you. Most important of all, please remember that you should make no changes to your system before first backing up.

System Restore

A very important feature of Windows XP is the ability to return system files to the same state they were in at some previous point in time. Before making any tweaks create a new "Restore Point." Go to **Control Panel-Performance and Maintenance-System Restore** and select "Create a restore point." (Note: this does NOT take the place of a complete backup.)

Now tweak System Restore itself. Left alone, it will consume a good portion of your disk space with unnecessary restore points. By default it will use up to 12% of each of your drives. Go to **My Computer**, right-click, select "Properties" and click the "System Restore" tab. A list of your drives (partitions) will appear. Highlight the drive or volume where your Windows XP system is installed and click "Settings". Use the slide bar to set aside a reasonable amount of space. What is "reasonable"? It depends on your system but on mine, 200 MB (the minimum allowed) will hold 5 or 6 restore points and is all I use. Somewhere between the minimum 200 MB and 1 GB should suffice for most people. If you have a dual-boot system, highlight the drive where the other operating system is installed, click "settings", and put a check by "Turn off System Restore for this drive". Also, if you have partitions for data, turn off System Restore there as well. There is no benefit from monitoring non-system files.

While you are in the Properties sheet for **My Computer** the following configuration changes can be made.

Automatic Updating and Error Reporting

Here are features that some people like and some people hate. By default, XP will automatically contact Microsoft to search for patches and updates every time you go on to the Internet. Personally, I find it annoying to have what I am doing suddenly interrupted by Microsoft wanting to do an update. Also I do not want all of the patches and updates indiscriminately applied to my computer before I check them out. Many do not apply to my particular setup or are of dubious benefit. It is not unusual for the first version of a patch to cause as much trouble as the problem it is attempting to fix. Some people prefer having everything done automatically but my own prejudice is that I like to control when and how updates and patches are applied. . It is

very easy to check for updates manually and I prefer to do it that way. Right-click **My Computer** and click "Properties". In the properties sheet, click the tab "Automatic Updates" and then in "Notification Settings" click the radio button for "Turn off automatic updating"

Microsoft also wants information about any crashes you experience. Although it might seem like a good idea to let them collect data that could in theory help improve the operating system, I would prefer that information about my system, including a memory dump, not be sent out. Click the "Advanced" tab in the **My Computer** properties sheet and then click the "Error Reporting" button. Next check "Disable error reporting," You can leave "But notify me when critical errors occur" checked.

Visual Settings

If your computer is on the low end of having the power to handle all of the XP visual effects, you may find that performance is slowed. Or you may be like me and just prefer a less gaudy appearance. There is a lot of animation, shadowing, rounding and other things that consume computer resources. Also the color depth chosen may be more than you need or want. One route to adjust the system to your liking is to go to **Control Panel-Appearance and Themes** and make various changes there. Another route is to right-click **My Computer**, open the properties sheet and click the "Advanced" tab. (Figure 1)

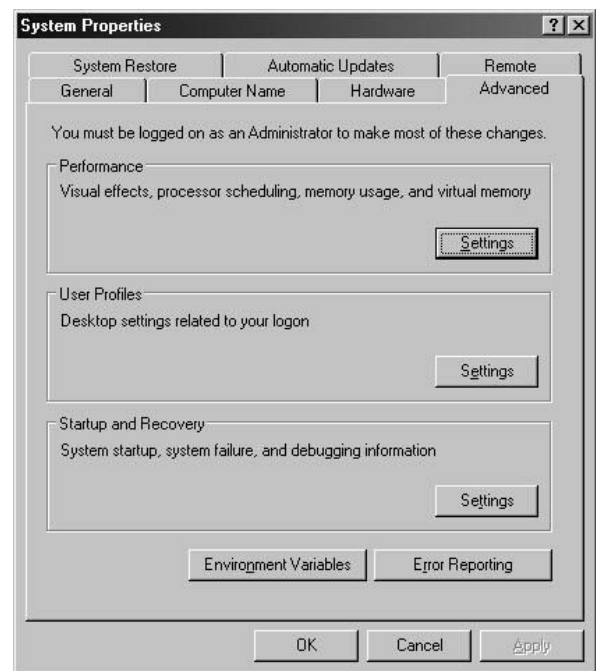


Figure 1. Changing visual settings

MP3's Aren't Just Music Anymore

By: David Navratil - Member 1960 PC Users Group, Houston Texas

Just about everyone with a computer has probably tried their luck with downloading MP3 files. In the past two years I've put together quite a collection of songs from the 1920's through the 1970's, accumulating almost 3,000 songs during that time. I've covered the Big Band era, easy listening, holiday music, country, folk, classical - just about every genre you can imagine. During one of my many afternoons of surfing the net looking for that one elusive MP3 that would fill another CD-R, I came across a genre that was new to me but may be of interest to members of our club.

The name of these new finds is "Old Time Radio Show" or OTR's for short. What could be a better use for the MP3 format than OTR's! Most OTR's length is from 15 minutes to 1 hour. In regular "wav" format the size of one of these files could be from 60 MB to 400 MB but in MP3 format an average show is from 3 MB to 30 MB. Another advantage is that since most of these shows are from the 1920's through the 1950's the sound quality of course are not up to par with newly recorded material. This again saves you room on your hard drive because you don't have to use a bit rate of 128 kbps but can use 24 to 64 bits. (Most OTR's I've downloaded from the net are in 24 to 32 kbps.) This lower bit rate saves much space and when played back kind of gives the performance that "old time radio sound". You can easily record 60 hours of OTR's onto one CD-R, using the lower bit rates, without sacrificing sound quality.

As to the quantity of OTR's available on the net, I have found at least 560 different series and as many as 57,000 different programs. Some of the more popular and easy to find are - Amos & Andy, The Shadow, Fibber McGee & Molly, Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes, Dragnet, Inner Sanctum, I Love a Mystery and the list just goes on. Most of these shows include the original commercials that were aired at that time. The shows started becoming popular in the late 1920's and I have some from as recently as the 1980's. I have many of the "Classic Books" presented in OTR format. These are not audio books where one person just reads to you, but full productions with sound effects, music and such. Most of these last from one hour to three hours. The late Orson Wells was involved with many of "Classics". Some titles are "War of the Worlds", "A Christmas Carol", "Pride and Prejudice", "Time Machine" etc.

Finding these programs on the net is even easier than music. There are thousands of individuals who collect OTR's as a hobby. Most of them have their own websites and offer a few selections to download changing the selection each week or month. Many sites will also send you an email when new offerings are available. You can go to Google or any search engine and key in "OTR" or "Old Time Radio Shows" and you will get thousands of different sites. Also using one of the many music download sites, such as KaZaa, keying in the name of the series will bring up hundreds of results. You can join OTR clubs at any of the major websites like AOL, Yahoo, and MSN. There are OTR trade and share sites where you post a listing of the shows you

have and can trade via CD-R with others for shows you need.

If you are running out of hard disk space or don't have a CD burner you can still enjoy the experience of OTR's. There are many sites on the web that broadcast the shows over the web in different formats. All you need to listen to these is one of the many free media players available on the web. Turn off the TV some night, relax and listen to one of these shows and you to may find that MP3's are not just about music!!

Here are a few sites to get you started:

<http://old-time-radio.com/>

<http://www.starcreations.com/otr/links/MP3links.htm>

<http://www.homestead.com/repsonline/>

[BrowserDownloads.html](#)

<http://users2.ev1.net/~ey/audio.html>

<http://www.otrcat.com/index.html>

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.



BugBear Warning - A Dangerous Computer Worm

By: Ira Wilsker

I started writing this week's column on freeware utilities. I just checked my email again, and so far, I have received over 40 copies of the highly dangerous and recently released BugBear computer worm, also being referred to as the Tanatos worm. According to reports published in recent days in the computer media, BugBear has surpassed the infamous Klez in becoming the fastest spreading computer worm or virus in history. Trend and Panda, two major providers of free online virus scans, each now report that nearly 20% of computers infected with malicious code now have the BugBear worm. The Helsinki based antivirus and computer security firm F-Secure rates the BugBear worm as the worst current computer security outbreak. Symantec, publisher of the popular Norton AntiVirus rates the threat as "severe". McAfee considers the risk as "high".

This new worm, or piece of code, is written in the common and popular C++ language, and combines the worst of the Badtrans virus, the Klez worm, and a backdoor Trojan into one extremely dangerous program. Capable of destroying both antivirus software and firewall protection on an infected computer, this nefarious program can also spread rapidly through a network to all computers connected, and through email utilizing its own integral mail program.

Just like the Klez, which until the recent introduction of the BugBear, had been the most rapidly spread virus or worm, BugBear targets the highly publicized security holes in Microsoft's web browser Internet Explorer versions 5, 5.5, and 6, as well as Microsoft's popular email programs Outlook and Outlook Express. Despite the fact that Microsoft released a heavily promoted patch to close these holes about a year ago, and is included in "Windows Update" integral in all versions of Windows since Windows 95 (click on START - WINDOWS UPDATE while online, and download the customized and free "Critical Update" compiled by Microsoft), millions of Windows users have never installed the patch. Now, in exchange for their complacency, these users are at extreme risk of having their personal information stolen by hackers. There is a real chance of having their identity stolen (referred to in law enforcement as "Identity Theft"), private or confidential information accessed, credit card and banking information compromised, and any files on the hard drive available to a hacker to read, modify, or delete at will.

The BugBear, just like the Klez, Yaha, and similar variants, can be activated by simply opening an email containing the malevolent code, or allowing the infected email to appear in the preview pane of any of the unpatched versions of Outlook or Outlook Express. With email programs other than the Outlook series, opening the attachment containing the worm will infect the users' computer. Once infected, antivirus and firewall utilities will be crippled, with no indication of that fact being noticeable by the user. BugBear will then attempt to replicate itself both by repeatedly emailing itself to addresses in the user's address book (the idea of beginning an email address with "10000" to prevent this is a HOAX), using a variety of subjects,

email content, and attachments, as well as sending itself out over a network to all computers so connected. Using the popular human engineering technique of sending the infected emails to addresses in the victim's address book, the malignant messages will appear to be from a person known to the recipient. Multiple references to the worm are written to the registry and ".INI" files, ensuring that BugBear is loaded each time the computer is booted. There are no clearly visible indications to the user that a computer is infected. Once installed on the victim computer, a utility to capture the user's keystrokes is activated, enabling a hacker to see user names, passwords, credit card numbers, and any other information or data entered. A "backdoor Trojan" is activated allowing access to the infected machine, the downloading of the keystrokes by the hacker, and unrestricted access to all files and documents on the computer. Since BugBear itself is transparent, and not apparently destructive, the user will likely never know his computer is infected, and outsiders can access his computer remotely. Antivirus software will still appear to be loaded and updated, and firewalls will appear to function, but in reality they will be useless.

What is a shame is that this infection is easily preventable. Properly updated Microsoft files have significant immunity to the infection. Frequently updated antivirus software offers excellent protection, but only if updated with the BugBear information prior to the infection. Practicing "safe hex" and deleting suspicious emails and attachments before they can appear in a preview pane can greatly reduce the chance of infection.

The free online scans available at housecall.antivirus.com and www.pandasoftware.com can detect and kill Bugbear. Most major antivirus publishers, including Symantec (Norton), F-Prot, and Panda have free utilities available for download that can detect and kill BugBear.

Since BugBear is written in the common C++ language, it is likely that some wicked programmers may modify the code, and create variants to get around the protections offered by recently updated antivirus software, just as what happened with many variants of the Klez worm.

It is a darn shame that I have to do so many columns on the topic of high-tech vandalism, but BugBear is especially insidious. I hope that next week, I can write my column on the topics I originally planned, rather than warning all of you about some new danger.

Ira belongs to, the Golden Triangle PC Club, has a radio show and writes a column for the examiner, and is on the Board of Advisors for APCUG as well as a faculty member of the Lamar Institute. You can email him ira@apcug.org

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

In the “Performance” section, click the “Settings” button (Figure 2)

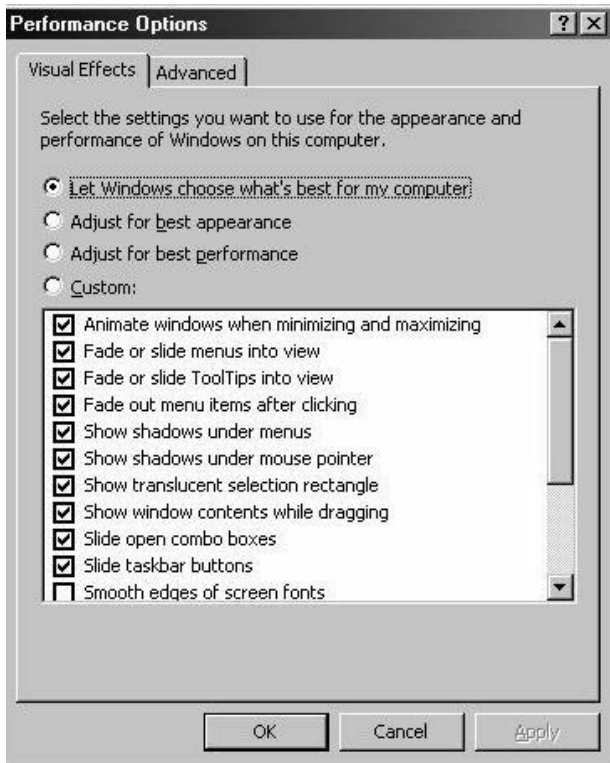


Figure 2. Individual visual effects

Try “Adjust for best performance” to see how that works (Windows will probably change your theme) Or if you wish, you can unselect the various settings individually.

Return to the “Classic” Settings

Rather than fiddle with a lot of individual settings, you may prefer to return the look of your desktop to something resembling Windows 98. Right-click on an empty spot on the desktop and open the Properties sheet from the context menu. Select the **Themes** tab and in the drop-down menu choose “Windows Classic.” Click “Apply” and “OK”. If you prefer not to change the whole theme (including background and sounds) but just want windows and buttons changed, click the **Appearance** tab and in the “Windows and buttons” drop-down menu, select Windows Classic style. Click “Apply” and “OK”.

The new XP look to the Start menu can also be returned to the older style. Right-click on **Start** and open “Properties” from the context menu. Choose the radio button by the entry “Classic Start menu”. Click “Apply” and “OK”.

Next month we will continue with a few more of the many possible tweaks.



*The 2003
Nominations Are!*

- President Clarke Walker**
- Vice President Tom Carman**
- Secretary Don Arrowsmith**
- Treasurer Paul Kurivchack**
- Member-At-Large Jon Abolins**
- Member-At-Large Kim Goldenberg**
- Member-At-Large Vic Laurie**
- Member-At-Large Sol Libes**



PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

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PPCUG Member E-mail Directory

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(Last Update: August 30, 2002)

Send Updates to kurivchp@optonline.net for inclusion in this listing.



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Minutes for the General Meeting

October 21, 2002

By: Don Arrowsmith

Paul called the meeting to order at 7:45. The group discussed options for continuing to meet in 2003 for the next 30 minutes. A pad was circulated and several people listed suggestions for meeting formats. Kiyu Toma from Adobe (www.adobe.com) was then introduced. Kiyu demonstrated Acrobat for 35 minutes. Acrobat is mostly used by business to produce documents that will look the same no matter which computer they are displayed on. Adobe provides the free Acrobat Reader program, which allows users to view and print but not create or edit Acrobat files.

Kiyu then shifted to Photoshop Elements for 35 minutes. Photoshop Elements is a \$99 product that contains those features from full function Photoshop that are most appropriate for the home user who wants to do image editing. Many special effects are available including red eye correction, slide show creation and stitching, a method of combining a series of individual photos of a scene from different angles into a panorama view.

The meeting closed with a drawing for two copies of (September speaker) Doug Dixon's brand new book on DVD authoring. More info on "Desktop DVD Authoring" is available at <http://www.manifest-tech.com/dvd/>. The winners were Tom Carman and Clarke Walker.



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