

*from MacInstruct*

## ***How to Block Internet Ads***

*by Gareth Jones*

Anyone of my age (mumblety-mumble years) or older knows what it was like to listen to an old record. The sound were there, but obscured by clicks, pops, and hiss. Using the web is often like that, too: the content is there, but obscured by commercials, layers, frames, pop-up windows, cookies, animations, javascripts, and so on. Imagine the relief if you could just view a web page without them.

Some web ads are worse than annoying; they spy on you. Advertisers use images with special scripts, called "web bugs," to extract information about visitors to a web page. In conjunction with small text files called "cookies," some companies compile a list of the pages that you have visited. Imagine the relief if you could visit sites without worrying that you were being watched.

Several utilities can block those web nuisances and threats. Zapada is one worth investigating because it can be used without installing any software; simply visit the Zapada web site and click a couple of buttons to use it for the rest of your on-line session. Steve Falken's Control Panel WebFree is mature and easy to use; I especially like its ability to block an ad with a contextual menu command. A new product for the Macintosh, and the subject of this review, is WebWasher. Its advantages are that it launches

from your own hard drive, unlike Zapada, and is free for personal use, unlike WebFree. It was developed by the giant German firm Siemens, but is now a commercial product with its own company. Here is how it works.

Use WebWasher by selecting "Launch WebWasher..." from its icon in the Control Strip. WebWasher launches your browser, telling it to use WebWasher as its connection to the Internet for this one on-line session; WebWasher makes no permanent changes to the browser's settings. From its location between the browser and the Internet, WebWasher censors the information flowing in either direction.

The "Preferences" window allows the user to control WebWasher. The window is an unusual two-panelled design: every item in the left panel has a check box to turn a filter off or on, but clicking the name of an item changes the right panel to a set of appropriate controls. It is simple to use, but it is not explained well in the on-line help.

Clicking "URL Filter" brings up a personal list of ads to block. Dragging a new ad into the list will block it in future. This excellent feature

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## Con't from page 2, Web Ads

is often unusable on my little iMac monitor because the Preferences window is hiding behind the browser window. I hope that WebWasher adopts WebFree's solution to this problem: a "Block this image" command in the browser's contextual menu.

Surprisingly, web browsing is noticeably faster when WebWasher is installed. Some sites that I visit have over twenty ads per page. That adds up to hundreds in a typical on-line session. The Statistics window (see right) shows a breakdown of how many ads, cookies, and so on it kept from wasting your time. Press releases from the WebWasher site state that it can make some (particularly bad) web pages load 45% faster.

Speed is nice, but privacy is, or should be, a right. Several groups, such as EPIC and Junkbusters, are trying to protect privacy through law. On the other hand, ad-blocking programs, such as WebWasher, protect privacy by disabling web bugs and blocking

cookies. Understandably, web advertisers hope that you will not use them. The CEO of DoubleClick, a web advertising company that is notorious for violating privacy, is quoted saying that "People who want to strip out ads are probably too cheap for [ad-blocking] software." His business is in trouble if he is wrong. We can make him wrong.

Using WebWasher has made me realize that using the Web without an ad blocker is like surfing in the nude: you are exposed to scrutiny and likely to get burned. WebWasher is like both a wetsuit and sunscreen. Being free makes it even better.

About the Author: Gareth Jones is a private tutor (English, Literature, and E.S.L.) in Vancouver, B.C., which is a surprising result of having a degree in archaeology. He's a long-time user of Apple computers and has added an iMac to his collection. Visit his web site (<http://www.intergate.ca/personal/gslj>) and poke around a while! 🍏



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## technology news from HP

# **Bluetooth 101**

*This article came from a HP IT e-Report email and that explains the slant towards HP products. However, it does give some useful information on what Bluetooth is for those of us that hear it mentioned, but are not familiar with this technology.*  
- ed.

If you're familiar with Baltic history, you might know that Bluetooth refers to Harald Blatland, the 10th-century Danish king who unified the Danes and Norwegians. Otherwise, you probably know the term Bluetooth as the moniker for wireless technology that aims at uniting your assorted electronic devices.

The Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG) defines

Bluetooth as the "worldwide specification for small-form-factor, low-cost radio solutions that provide links between mobile computers, mobile phones, other portable devices, and connectivity to the Internet." In other words, it's technology that allows various devices to connect, communicate, synch and share information using short-range radio signals rather than cables or wires.

### **personal area networks**

The key feature of Bluetooth is that it allows devices to fluidly form connections for communicating one-to-one or for creating a wireless personal area network (PAN). A PAN is often described as the 10-meter-radius bubble inside of which all of your Bluetooth-enabled devices can interact and communicate without physical connections.

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## Con't from page 2, Bluetooth 101

In an office, for example, a PAN might consist of a Bluetooth-enabled PC and a printer, a PDA, a mobile phone and a wireless headset—all of which are able to exchange data as long as they remain within range of each other. Also, because radio waves can travel through most solid objects, a direct line of sight is not required. So Bluetooth devices can communicate with each other from inside jacket pockets, briefcases, desk drawers and even through walls.

Don't expect Bluetooth PANs to remain in the office, however. Unlike a LAN or even a wireless LAN, your PAN moves with you and your mobile devices. With its small size, minimal power demands and low cost, Bluetooth has the potential to add new functionality to any number of devices. For example, it may not be long before a Bluetooth transmitter allows a car stereo to play music from a laptop or MP3 player in the trunk, or the cell phone in your pocket to tell the Bluetooth thermostat that you're home.

As of December 2002, there are 834 products certified by the Bluetooth SIG, and the majority of these are computer components. But Bluetooth is gaining momentum, and new consumer products are coming to market at an increasing rate. HP's current Bluetooth offerings include: iPAQ Pocket PCs 3950 and 3970, the HP Deskjet 995c printer, HP Pavilion zt1000 notebook PC and a number of Bluetooth adapters to add wireless functionality to other products.

### **Bluetooth vs. Wi-Fi**

Bluetooth and 802.11b (Wi-Fi) wireless technologies do not directly compete for most uses. Wi-Fi's greater transmission range (about 100 meters indoors) and

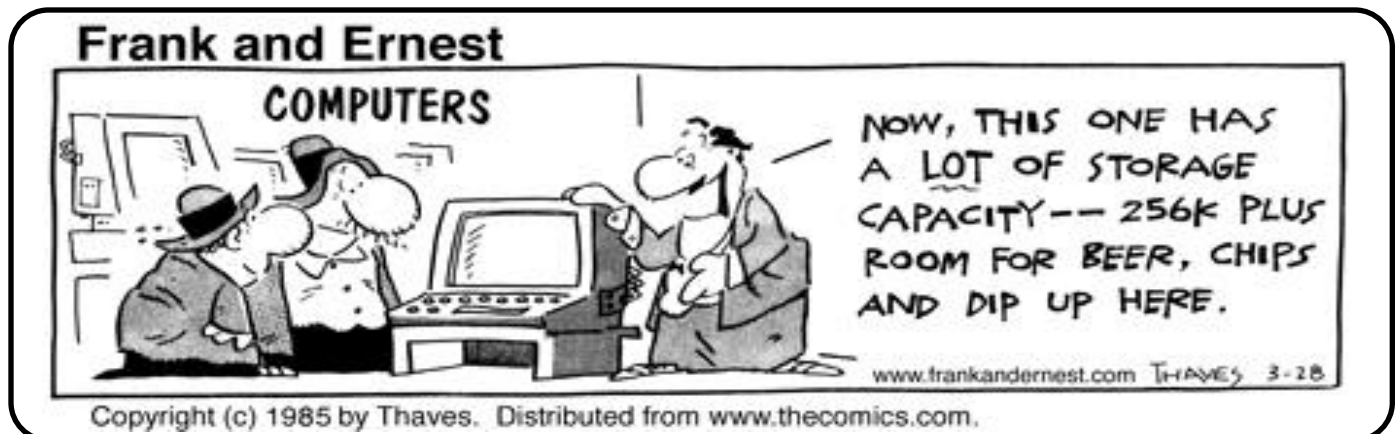
bandwidth (about 11 megabits/second) make 802.11b the superior technology for wireless LANs or for sharing an Internet connection.

Meanwhile, small Bluetooth transmitters, with low power demands, limited range (10 meters) and narrow bandwidth (1Mbps), are better suited for use in mobile devices that exchange small amounts of information while conserving power and space.

Although they may not compete directly for uses, 802.11b and Bluetooth do compete for the airwaves. Because they both operate on the 2.4GHz band of the ISM radio spectrum (along with cordless phones and microwave ovens), these two wireless technologies may interfere with each other. Bluetooth devices minimize the interference to themselves by employing a frequency-hopping scheme that alters the precise frequency used about 1600 times per second. Unfortunately, this also causes Bluetooth transmissions to hop all over the area of the spectrum being used by any nearby 802.11b devices and slows Wi-Fi data transmission rates.

Many offices may simply outgrow this problem as they upgrade to next-generation 802.11a wireless LANs that operate on the 5GHz band. In the meantime, tactics for minimizing Bluetooth interference are outlined in this 802.11-Planet article. Located at: <http://www.80211-planet.com/tutorials/article.php/1379911>

Want to learn more about Bluetooth in general? Go to the article "A Gentle Introduction to Bluetooth" from technology site Kuro5hin.org (<http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2002/7/16/73049/2583>) it provides further information. 🍏



## *Microsoft Talks to Apple About Antitrust Settlement*

Mon Feb 3, 8:18 PM ET

*by Jim Dalrymple*

Microsoft Corp. is currently in talks with Apple Computer Inc. to avoid a challenge to its proposed \$1.1 billion antitrust settlement in California, reports Bloomberg. Apple responded to the proposed settlement on January 13, 2003 saying it didn't go far enough.


Under the terms of the settlement, Microsoft will offer vouchers, ranging in amount from US\$4 to \$29, to California customers who purchased Microsoft software between Feb. 18, 1995, and Dec. 15, 2001. Two-thirds of the amount not claimed by individuals will be donated to 4,700 of California's neediest schools, according to Brad Smith, Microsoft general counsel, and Eugene Crew, lead counsel for Townsend and Townsend and Crew LLP, the San Francisco firm that brought the suit nearly four years ago.

One-third of the value of the unclaimed vouchers reverts to Microsoft, which maintains no admission of fault or any violation of the law in the matter. Microsoft's attorneys pointed out that in many class action cases, all unclaimed damages revert to the defendant.

"Apple strongly believes that Microsoft should make the entire pool of unclaimed voucher funds available to our schools to purchase any technology products that best meet their needs," said Apple's statement. "Microsoft should not be allowed to recoup one third of the unclaimed voucher funds and should not be allowed to dictate which technology our schools choose to buy with these funds. Remember -- this is a settlement imposed against Microsoft for breaking the law, and it should not allow them to unfairly compete in education -- one of the few remaining markets where they don't have monopoly power."

Microsoft and Apple have held meetings to discuss Apple's complaints, according to Microsoft and Eugene Crew, a lawyer who represents plaintiffs in the antitrust suits.

"The school decides what it wants. There's no incentive one way or another" for schools to choose the software or cash. How to "ameliorate any concern Apple has depends on what Apple wants and how flexible Microsoft is," Crew said.

Microsoft says the settlement is "competitively neutral." 

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from the San Francisco Chronicle

### *Mac Q&A*

*by Henry Norr*

#### **Gadget jacks up G4 audio**

Q: I recently traded up from a Power Mac 7100 to a G4 with a Superdrive. I used to be able to edit audio tapes -- I played them through my Sony Walkman into my 7100 sound jack, then used SoundEdit to edit them and finally burned them to a CD. Is there any way I can still do this with my G4? I can't even find a sound input jack on it.

A: Probably the reason you can't find the jack is

that it isn't there. For several years now, Apple has been suffering a severe case of schizophrenia with respect to audio input -- some models have a jack for it, others don't, and some that didn't for a while now do again. CRT-based iMacs and the eMac do, but flat-panel iMacs don't. The iBooks have never had such a jack, and the first PowerBook G4s didn't either, but recent PowerBooks do.

As for the Power Macs, the current "mirrored drive door" models have a line-level audio input jack, but it sounds as if you have one of the previous "QuickSilver" units, where the jack was missing.

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## Con't from Page 4, Mac Q&A

What's this all about? "Audio line-in was . . . removed due to the proliferation of high-quality audio solutions via USB adapters," Apple spokeswoman Nathalie Welch explained. That seems pretty lame to me, considering that Apple has always promoted its machines, both consumer and pro lines, as media workstations. Who wants to buy a new Mac and then discover that it can no longer do things your old one could?

Apparently a lot of customers agreed. Welch said the jacks are coming back because "Apple received feedback from customers that they wanted to have both options" (line-in and USB connectors).

It's good that the company is coming to its senses, but that's not much help to you, me and millions of others who've bought Macs without this useful jack. Even now, it's still missing from Apple's flagship consumer products.

Fortunately, you can solve the problem without spending a lot of money -- \$35 will buy you a little gizmo from Griffin Technology called the iMic. A 2.5-inch-diameter disc that looks a little like Apple's old "hockey puck" mouse, it has two stereo minijacks, one for input (line-level or microphone) and one for output.

Once you plug it into a USB port, you should be able to connect your tape player the same way you did with your old 7100, using a cable with a 1/8-inch male connector at the iMic end and a pair of RCA jacks that go into the "Line Out" or "Tape/Aux Out" jacks on your tape player or receiver.

If you were connecting directly to a turntable, you'd need to add a pre-amp, or a USB device that has one built in, such as Griffin's \$100 PowerWave. Alternatively, you could go with more-expensive professional USB audio adapters from such companies as Edirol, Emagic or Roland.

The bright side of all this: Because you have to use an external device to digitize the audio, it's not subject to as much electrical interference as internal sound

circuitry. In principle, that should translate into cleaner digital recordings.

Aside from new hardware, though, you may need new software. SoundEdit hasn't been updated in years, and even though publisher Macromind says the latest version, SoundEdit 16 v.2.07 (updater can be found at [macromedia.com](http://macromedia.com)), works with Mac OS 9 and with X in Classic mode, I couldn't get my copy to work with the iMic even under Mac OS 9.

If you have the same problem, and you're using Mac OS 9, you can do simple recording with just two pieces of Apple software, SimpleSound and iTunes. But if you want to do any cleanup and editing -- such as eliminating hisses, pops and click and separating songs into individual files -- you'll have to turn to third-party products.

I've used CD Spin Doctor, the audio-recording utility that comes with Toast, Roxio's popular CD-writing software (\$100 retail, \$75 at [roxio.com](http://roxio.com)). It doesn't have real wave-form editing like SoundEdit, but it does have filters for getting rid of unwanted noise, among other features. And it works with both Mac OS 9 and X.

If you don't have Toast, there are lots of other choices. Because I'm no expert in this area, I turned to someone who is, Macworld magazine columnist Chris Breen. For Mac OS 9, he said, Christian Roth's Coaster ([visualclick.de](http://visualclick.de)) is a good choice for digitizing cassettes (or LPs) because it has a feature that creates separate audio files when the volume falls below a specified level for a certain duration -- between cuts on an album, for example. It doesn't offer waveform editing, but you can't beat the price: It's free.

A more traditional sound editor that does offer waveform editing, noise-removal and other "nice goodies," according to Breen, is Martin Hairer's \$25 Amadeus II ([hairersoft.com/Amadeus.html](http://hairersoft.com/Amadeus.html)). Moving up the ladder from there, but still shy of the professional rung, other options include Felt Tip Software's Sound Studio (\$50; info and free 14-day demo version at [feltpip.com/products/soundstudio](http://feltpip.com/products/soundstudio)) and BIAS's Peak LE (\$99; info and demo that records

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## Con't from Page 5, Mac Q&A

only 45 seconds and doesn't save at [xserve1.bias-inc.com: 16080/products/peak\\_le/index.html](http://xserve1.bias-inc.com:16080/products/peak_le/index.html).

And for a taste of professional audio editing, Digidesign recently released a free version of its powerful Pro Tools package, which can be found at [www.digidesign.com](http://www.digidesign.com). It's fully functional and not time-limited, but I found it pretty daunting.

If you are using Mac OS X, Coaster won't work, but there are plenty of alternatives. Among the shareware and commercial programs, CD Spin Doctor, Amadeus II, Sound Studio and Peak LE all work with the new system.

And there are at least two Mac OS X programs that are free. For users of its iMic and PowerWave adapters, Griffin Technology is developing an entry-level utility called Final Vinyl, which is still in beta testing but available now ([griffintechnology.com/pressroom/PR\\_FinalVinyl\\_beta\\_7.htm](http://griffintechnology.com/pressroom/PR_FinalVinyl_beta_7.htm)). For other users, and those who want more control, Breen's recommendation is Spark ME, a free version of TC Work's high-end audio editor, which is available at tcworks.

### **CON PERMISO**

Q: I'm trying to delete a subfolder from my Documents folder, but Mac OS X (v.10.2) won't let me -- it gives me some message saying it can't do it because I don't have permission. What on earth does that mean? Whose permission do I need -- Steve Jobs? And why do I suddenly need it now, after I've been running this same setup for months?

A: Ah, you've run into one of the new wonders Mac OS X has brought us: "permissions" or "privileges" problems.

The new system, as you probably know, is built on Unix underpinnings, and permissions are apparently a feature of all Unix systems -- they're bits of information attached to each file to tell the system what it can do with the file. All too often

under Mac OS X, they somehow get set incorrectly, or start out OK but later get corrupted.

Such problems can produce a wide variety of weird symptoms, depending on what files are involved. The first day I tried to use Mac OS X, I got a message that I didn't have permission to throw a file I'd created into the Trash. Needless to say, that annoyed me to no end.

Simply resetting these privileges is often all that's needed to get your system working properly. There are many ways you can do that in OS X -- through files' Info panels, for example, and through the Terminal application. In your case, the simplest solution is probably the former. Just Control-click on the folder and choose Get Info. Near the bottom of the panel, click the triangle next to "Ownership & Permissions." Make sure the Owner pop-up is set to your user name and the Access field says "Read & Write." Then click the "Apply to enclosed items . . ." button, say OK and close the Info panel.

If that doesn't solve the problem, check out a \$10 shareware file-management utility called Modifier or its new free cousin, Modifier Lite, both of which are available from finikin.com. Among other features, they give you access to additional permissions settings the Info panel does not, but they are much friendlier and, as we used to say, Mac-like than the Terminal.

Although your problem was with a folder you created, operating-system files and Apple applications are also susceptible to permissions problems. In fact, such issues have become so common that Apple developed a special program that automatically resets permissions on all Apple-installed files to their proper settings.

It was originally released as a separate download called Repair Privileges Utility, but as of OS X 10.2, it's been rolled into the system's Disk Utility, which is located in the Utilities folder in your Applications folder. Just launch that program, select your startup drive from the list on the left, click the "First Aid" tab and then the "Repair Disk Permissions" button. 🍏

## *Independent Mac dealers line up to sue Apple*

*by Peter Cohen*

Writing for the San Francisco Chronicle, Henry Norr says that Apple is being sued by some independent dealers who claim that the company is showing its own retail stores preferential treatment.

Chief among the litigants is San Francisco-area reseller Macadam and its owner Tom Santos. Santos' complaints include, among other things, allegations that Apple has violated the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) act. Bend, Ore.-based Mac reseller Mac Tech Systems and Los Angeles-based Computer International have apparently filed similar lawsuits as well. What's more, Cupertino's own Elite Computers & Software isn't far behind, according to Norr.

Macadam's Santos claims that Apple has been "cheating" his company and "screwing" its

customers for years. Santos told the Chronicle that Apple provides its own stores with access to new Mac models, discounts and promotions that aren't available to independent resellers. He also claims to have evidence of more than 1,000 examples of Apple misbilling his dealership for various parts and services. Santos said the problems that have plagued Macadam have been going on for at least seven years.

Santos also claims to have a recording of a telephone conversation in which an Apple direct-sales representative made disparaging comments about Apple Specialists -- a tier of Apple resellers to which his own company belongs. Mac Tech Systems' owner, Jack Kohler, said he's heard similar stories from his own clients.

Apple declined to comment for the Chronicle story. 🍏

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**This month's newsletter editor was Joe Williams**



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