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Password Protection

by Sandy Berger, www.compukiss.com

When technology is good, it is very, very good, but when it is bad it can be truly atrocious. So it is with the hacking of Sarah Palin's Yahoo email account. The bad guys are out there using technology for their own advantage. Whether they are serious hackers who want information for devious purposes, or young students who just want to show their technological prowess, this theft shows that everyone is vulnerable. The recent hijacking of Sarah Palin's email account is also a great example of how a hacker can gain access to an email account and how email accounts need to be better protected against such penetration.

We currently rely on passwords to protect most of our online activity. Professional hackers often use "password crackers" to guess passwords. Anyone can easily find these hacker tools on the Internet. They can even be purchased on CD. There are wordlists for common passwords and dictionary combinations of possible passwords in a variety of different languages. These tools are all aimed at giving a person all the technical tools that they need to guess passwords.

In Sarah Palin's case, however, the perpetrator didn't even have to use tools like this. A hacker identifying himself as "Rubico" claims to have been able to change the password on Sarah Palin's Yahoo Mail account quite easily. All he had to do was use her email name to log into the Yahoo Mail's interface and select the option to reset the password. Yahoo then asked him to provide her birth date and zip code, which have become

public knowledge. He then had to answer her self-chosen security question which was where she met her husband. After several television interviews of Sarah and her husband, the answer to that question also became public knowledge.

Sarah Palin was thrown into the public arena quite quickly, but even those of us who are not public figures may find that our passwords and answers to security questions can be easily guessed. Do you use the name of your spouse, children, pet, favorite sport, birthday, or wedding date as your password? Have you entered security questions like place of birth or favorite color that are easy to guess?

Privacy as we knew it before the Internet is now a thing of the past. With the Internet, more of our lives are online than most of us realize. Many people use blogging as a pastime and post information on MySpace, Facebook, and other social networking websites. Once posted, all of that information is publicly known. And the Internet is archived, so even when you remove current information, previously posted information can still be found in Internet archives. That information can be used to guess passwords and access personal information.

So here are a few ground rules that may help keep your private information a little safer online:

1. Use passwords that are not easy to guess and cannot be easily cracked.
2. Choose a security question that others will not be able to guess the

answer to. Or answer the security question with an answer that you create which is not necessarily the true answer.

3. Use unique passwords, especially for important services and websites like banking sites and email.
4. Keep your passwords private. Don't leave them on a sticky note on your computer screen or keep them in an unencrypted file on your computer.
5. Change your passwords often.
6. Do not change your password by clicking on a link in an email from someone claiming to be a system administrator, bank representative, or other seemingly reputable party. They may not be who they say they are. When you want to change your password, always type in the address yourself so you know you are at the real website rather than a bogus one.
7. Use one credit card for all online purchases. This will limit your financial exposure.
8. Keep your operating system up-to-date.
9. Use good anti-virus and anti-spyware programs.
10. Consider using an encrypted password manager program.

Check the Compu-KISS website at www.compukiss.com for more information on choosing good passwords.

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Mac versus PC

by Sandy Berger, www.compukiss.com

We have all seen the popular Apple television commercials encouraging computer users to switch from Windows to Mac. Not only are the commercials convincing, but Apple has made some moves that make the Mac a viable option for computer users. In years past, the biggest drawback to purchasing a Mac was that Windows software was incompatible with a Mac. You couldn't use Windows software that was not available in a Mac version, so switching from a PC to a Mac meant repurchasing all your software applications.

Then Apple made the move from Motorola processors to Intel processors. This made the Apple hardware compatible with Windows software. Any Mac that you purchase today is able to run both the Windows and the Mac operating system. You can do this by using a free Apple program called *Boot Camp* that is available to all Mac users. Using *Boot Camp*, you have to reboot the computer every time you want to switch between the two operating systems. Another option makes using Windows on a Mac even easier. If you purchase a simple virtualization product like *Parallels*, you can switch on the fly.

Being able to run Windows on a Mac has been a boon to Apple. In 2004 their market share in the operating system segment was a little over 3%. Today it is close to 8% and growing.

There are fewer worries when using a Mac. For the most part, Macs are almost completely virus and spyware free. It's not that Macs are actually more secure, it's just that with the viruses and programs that infiltrate computers to steal information and to send out spam are operating-system-specific. In other words, the hackers

have to create their programs to run on either Windows or Mac. Since the Windows operating system is currently running on over 90% of computers, that operating system is the most likely target for the bad guys. So right now, Macs are ignored by most hackers.

It can also be said that Macs run their software better than PCs. The reason that this is true is that because Apple produces all of the hardware, they can have strict control over every hardware component. So the software producers know exactly what hardware their software will run on. In the PC world, slight differences in the hardware can cause software headaches. As you know, with HP, Dell, Acer, Sony, Gateway, and many others producing the hardware, there is compatibility, but not necessarily full hardware/software compliance.

So why doesn't everyone switch to the Mac? Well, it can be summed up quite easily in one word, "Price." Macs always have been, and are still are, more expensive than PCs. Often Macs can cost several hundreds of dollars more than comparable Windows machines. This week Apple announced their first sub-\$1,000 laptop computer. The MacBook will now be selling at \$999. Their higher-end MacBook Pro will start at \$1,999. In contrast, you can buy many Windows laptops for under \$1,000, and some are now even under \$500.

Another thing that makes the Mac more costly is that when you purchase an Apple computer it comes with the Mac OS X operating system. If you want to run Windows on your Mac as well, you will have to purchase a full version of Windows. As I write this, Amazon is selling the full version of Windows XP Home Edition for \$179.

A full version of Windows Vista Home Premium is currently selling at Amazon for \$222. If you want to add the ability to easily switch between the two operating systems, you will have to dish out about \$80 more for *Parallels* or another good virtualization program. In some cases those added costs can almost double the cost of a cheap PC.

The other reason that some people won't switch to a Mac is that they don't want to have to learn to use a new operating system. But if you are currently using Windows XP and you purchase a new computer now, you will have at least a slight learning curve to make the transition to Windows Vista.

If Apple would lower their prices and create a free program that would let you run Windows without rebooting, I wouldn't mind purchasing the additional Windows software necessary to be able to run both operating systems on a Mac. In fact, I think that those two changes would have people flocking in droves to the Mac. But then, if the Apple operating system gains a bigger market share, hackers will start targeting it as well as Windows. Oh well, I guess life in the computer world really does mirror life in the real world. It seems that nothing will ever be perfect in either world.

Parallels Desktop for Mac is the first solution for Intel-Macs that give you the flexibility of running Windows on a Mac OS X simultaneously without rebooting.

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SnagIt

**Reviewed by John Roy, President,
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So what is SnagIt? It is a screen capture program (Like base level PrintScreen). Every computer user needs the ability to capture information off of the screen. Your basic operating system has always provided the rudimentary capability to print or capture a full screen, but it is woefully inadequate in today's environment. How many times do you need a screen region or maybe an area that scrolls off the display as many web pages do? How about having the ability to extract only the text or capture screen actions? All of these functions and many more are easily addressed with SnagIt.

SnagIt has been around since 1990. I remember my first exposure to this great utility back in those early years when computer expositions were held at the Javitz Convention Center in New York City. While today's functionality greatly supersedes those early days, the neat scroll capture was the cool feature of the times and is still a main-stay tool.

For a screen capture program to be useful it needs flexibility beyond Microsoft's dismal screen and window capture. SnagIt provides every imaginable capture you could ever want with Image Capture, Text Capture, Video Capture, Web Capture and Printer Capture. Each of these modes has additional control options, such as delayed capture, capture the mouse cursor,

set a timer, or capture multiple areas, to name a few. Video capture provides a very useful tool for creating instructional clips. You can play back the video or even save individual frames. The ability to capture editable text from dialog boxes and other screens where it ordinarily can't be copied is extremely useful.

To make life easier, you have the ability to set up profiles to reflect the way you like to work. Profiles coupled with a defined hot key can grab and process a clip all the way to the intended application. You can configure input, output, effects and options. Add-ons are automatically and/or optionally installed into several applications such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Internet Explorer) and other popular products. Wizards and toolbars are available to simplify setting up profiles.

Having many capture options is only the front end of this versatile utility, there is also an overabundance of tools to annotate, mark up, organize, convert, edit and share captured content. The processing tools suite includes a very powerful editor that will bring your clips to life. No longer are you stuck with a blasé clip. With very little effort you can spruce up your clips by adding effects, borders, stamps, and hotspots to name a few. You can operate on one or many images at

the same time. A batch conversion utility allows you to modify and output a collection of clips into a wide selection of formats. This utility allows you to set up your output to selections such as File, FTP, Email, Printer, etc. The output properties are fully customizable. Since SnagIt stores every capture you make, a first reaction would be "how does one find the clip of interest?" Well search capability is automatically built into the software and can be further enhanced by the use of tags. Every capture you make saves the time, date and URL information that will allow you to quickly return to the site of the capture.

To fully appreciate the value of this great program, download the 30-day free trial and/or view some of the extremely informative and clearly illustrated tutorials available on TechSmith's website, www.techsmith.com. SnagIt lists for \$49.95, and runs on all newer Windows operating systems, including 64-bit Vista. A minimum 1 GHz processor and 512 MB RAM is required, but double that for smoother operation. TechSmith has developed and improved on SnagIt over the years and has a product that belongs in every computer user's tool box.

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QuickMonth Calendar

by Ken Peters, Product Review, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, SC, hhicc.org

If you're tired of double clicking the clock to get the calendar up, then this program is for you: tinyurl.com/347akj.

QuickMonth Calendar is a freeware program that displays a small popup calendar on your Windows desktop whenever your mouse hovers over the clock in the system tray. The calendar display may also be toggled on and off by using the Windows+Q keyboard shortcut. The program works with XP and Windows 2000. (Vista already has a popup calendar.) Click the clock once to make it appear.

You can get QuickMonth Calendar by visiting the download page. QuickMonth Calendar is free and does not include any adware or spyware.

NOTE: Some antivirus programs have incorrectly detected QuickMonth Calendar as a Trojan horse. Do not be alarmed—this type of erroneous detection is called a false positive. If you receive a virus warning message regarding QuickMonth Calendar (qmc.exe), please report the false positive to your antivirus software manufacturer so they can update their definitions. Here are a few of QuickMonth Calendar's features:

To quickly jump to today's date, right-click on the calendar or left-click the bottom of the calendar where it says "Today." Use the buttons at the top of the calendar to change the month. You can also left-click on the name of the month to see a popup menu of all the months (see Example 1).

Left-click on the year to quickly change the year (see Example 2).

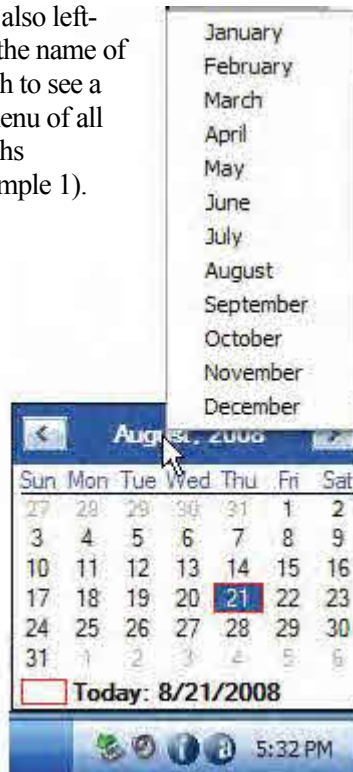
The calendar automatically detects the location of your Windows taskbar, so if you move the taskbar to the top, left, or right side of the screen, the calendar will still display next to your system tray clock (you may have to restart Windows once for the change to take effect).

The look of the calendar changes according to what your system colors are (as determined by your current Windows theme or visual style). The calendar will appear in any program when you put the pointer over the clock. I have found this program very handy when trying to find a date when writing an email or other document. When I need to look up a date, it's very nice to have the calendar pop up just by hovering the pointer over the clock. It's also helpful when on the telephone and trying to settle on a date.

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Vista already has a popup calendar.



Example 1: Month popup menu



Example 2: Quickly change the year

Apple Bytes: Laptop Battery Maintenance Procedures

by Norm Kronenberg, Macintosh Director, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, hhicc.org

Standard Maintenance

For proper maintenance of a lithium-based battery, it's important to keep the electrons

in it moving occasionally. Apple does not recommend leaving your portable plugged in all the time. An ideal use would be a commuter who uses her MacBook Pro on the train, then plugs it in at the office to charge. This keeps the battery juices flowing. If on the other hand, you use a desktop computer at work, and save a notebook for infrequent travel, Apple recommends charging and discharging its battery at least once per month. Need a reminder? Add an event to your desktop's iCal.

Calibrate battery

PowerBook G4 (15-inch Double-Layer SD), MacBook (all models), MacBook Pro (all models), and MacBook Pro (17-inch) (all models).

The battery calibration for the PowerBook G4 (15-inch Double-Layer SD) and any model of MacBook or MacBook Pro has been updated because of a new battery

released with this computer. With these computers, follow these steps to calibrate your battery:

1. Plug in the power adapter and fully charge your PowerBook's battery until the light ring or LED on the power adapter plug changes to green and the onscreen meter in the menu bar indicates that the battery is fully charged.
2. Allow the battery to rest in the fully charged state for at least two hours. You may use your computer during this time as long as the adapter is plugged in.
3. Disconnect the power adapter with the computer still on and start running the computer off battery power. You may use your computer during this time. When your battery gets low, you will see the low battery warning dialog on the screen.
4. Continue to keep your computer on until it goes to sleep. Save all your work and close all applications when the battery gets very low, before the computer goes to sleep.

5. Turn off the computer or allow it to sleep for five hours or more.

6. Connect the power adapter and leave it connected until the battery is fully charged again.

New iPod Touch

A Computer in Your Pocket

The iPhone 3G has gotten all of the attention, but the new iPod Touch is a powerful touchscreen computer, with Wi-Fi access to the Internet, but without the cell phone feature or GPS. It is available in 8-, 16- or 32 MB capacities. Connect to the Internet wherever there's a wireless network. Surf the web and send email from any Wi-Fi hotspot. Get directions, check the weather, follow stocks, watch YouTube, and more.

The 3.5-inch touchscreen display is perfect for surfing the Web, watching movies and playing games.

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This and That

by Elizabeth B. Wright, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City, [ww.ccokc.org](http://www.ccokc.org)

Lost & Gone Forever...or Not

Well, it finally happened. A picture which had taken far too much of my time was finally ready for printing. I sent it online to my favorite photo store. Expecting to see a picture good enough to share with family, it was a great disappointment when I picked up the print to see that parts of it were not up to that standard. A renewed frenzy of "fiddling" with it resulted in losing track of the names used for the changes. When I thought I had everything in order, I chose to eliminate the extra files. And did I do a good job. Not only did I choose the unwanted files, but also included the one version which was half way good. No recycle bin, no delete, but the ultimate "destroy." In other words, probably only the CIA would be able to recover the file from my hard disk.

Starting from scratch with the original image, I tried to retrace my steps to reach the same quality as the lost file. I had the hard copy print, so I knew what I wanted it to look like. But for some reason, nothing worked and my renewed efforts to enhance the picture did not give me the results I had previously attained. But there was real improvement in one area that was so lacking in the lost image.

The newest image was then uploaded to the photo store and while doing so I noticed that the original picture was still online. And as in all things ethernet, the image could be reloaded to my computer via a download. It was a little difficult, but the end result was I got my picture back. Then the problem areas of the picture were corrected and the end result was a very acceptable print. So while a lot of time was spent on a rather

insignificant picture, the knowledge obtained as a result made it well worth the effort.

After a recent study group meeting, my friend Dorothy asked me if I learned anything. My answer was the same as always. I never attend any kind of meeting that I *don't* learn something. Now maybe it isn't something that will change my life forever, but more often than not it is something that enriches my life, if even in a small way. In addition to that, whenever someone asks me for help, usually we both learn something. The most recent request for help reminded me, once again, when helping someone over the phone with a computer problem, it is important to have them start at the very top of their computer screen and describe exactly what they see all the way down. With that information it is often possible to pinpoint a possible area of trouble and generate ideas for solutions. Many times the description of the problem, while usually understandable, does not contain that one little piece of information that will lead to the answer. So by following the procedure of top to bottom on the screen, we solved the problem and I took away at least as much from the experience as did the recipient of my help.

As humans age, time seems to fly ever more swiftly by. But I don't think that is what has been happening in real time when it comes to technology. It looks to me like many things are moving so rapidly that we almost miss them.

Not all that long ago, it was hard to imagine a small 8 GB USB drive that could fit on your keychain. So port-

able, so useful. Of course, they came on the market and were being sold at prices often over the \$100 mark. Now they are practically throwaways, good for birthday presents, stocking stuffers for Christmas, Hanukkah and other celebrations as well as any other gift-giving occasion. Should this be troubling? Perhaps it signals the end of one technology era and the beginning of another. My crystal ball is a bit cloudy on this one, so I will leave it to the more savvy writers to tell you the answer. All I know is that for now, those handy little USB drives are so useful that it's hard to imagine how we did without them. At the present time we are seeing 16 GB USB drives with prices over \$100. How long before they will be things of the past?

Who uses USB drives? There probably isn't anyone out there who travels with a computer who doesn't keep some information on them. They are somewhat safer than storing everything on the hard drive of a laptop. Thieves target laptops in airports, hotel rooms and any other place people might be careless enough to leave one unattended. If all the information a person needs to do his/her job is on the machine, and if it gets stolen or damaged, then the consequences could be disastrous. Even a one or two GB USB drive will hold a lot of information and can be so much more easily protected. In an emergency situation, a new laptop with enough software already installed on it to do business can be purchased, sometimes even in large airports, and keeping essential files on the USB drive will get a person back up and working almost without missing a stride.

(see *This & That* on page 9)

Significant Bits, Nov. 2008

by Sean N. Henderson, Vice President,
Danbury Area Computer Society, CT, www.dacs.org

Coldfusion Is Hot

Many DACS members reading this probably have some experience programming with PHP. Maybe this is a time to remind developers and those making application choices about ColdFusion.

When Allaire first released Cold Fusion (two words then) in 1995, it made some headlines purely because of its name. It was a number of years later when I met a person at my wife's college reunion who was a ColdFusion developer, and she raved about how easy it was to create database-enabled web pages.

As fate would have it, I too, have become a ColdFusion (CF) developer and have to say CF makes Dynamic HTML (DHTML) and database-enabled sites really easy. Much richer than old-school CGI (Perl or otherwise) and even still more feature rich than PHP.

The neat thing about CF's version of HTML, called CFML, is that if you can write HTML, then it's just a couple of tags and commands more to be writing dynamic websites with CFML. Some hosting providers provide a version called ColdFusion 4.5 Express. The current "standard" appears to be based on 6.1 MX. The current version is 8 (no MX) and is published by Adobe, and includes support for AJAX.

Hype About Skype

Skype is a VoIP (Voice-over-IP) telephone service. For PC-to-PC users, there is no charge. Charges incur when wanting to have voicemail, call a landline number, call a mobile number, or have a landline number or cell phone reach a Skype account.

PC Magazine recently listed their survey for various technologies, and Skype was down from last year.

My purpose in trying Skype was to see if it was a viable low-cost replacement for a mobile phone. How would that work? There are various scenarios, none of them simple. The barrier is roaming across Wi-Fi networks. (Actually, this obstacle was addressed in a recent Sybase iAnywhere Mobile presentation at DACS.) My target device is my Palm TX running PalmOS. A recent test of Skype to my brother out west has us talking for over an hour over a very clear connect. I was using a USB LCD phone connected to my laptop, connected to the home router by way of Wi-Fi. My brother similarly connected, except just speaking open air using his laptop mic and/or speakers. The sound quality was clearer than any cell phone call I've had.

Another USB Gizmo

There's an inexpensive USB LCD handset phone available for use with Skype. The UP-730 seems to work as expected and sounds better than expected. The unit was purchased for under \$10 online. It allows scrolling through the USB contacts through the handset. Is it really necessary? No. But, it has a longer cord than most headsets and it made using Skype feel more like regular phone service, especially on longer calls.

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!Danger: Music Download!

by Mike Morris, Editor-in-Charge, Front Range PC Users Group, co. www.frpcug.org

"On September 8, 2003, the recording industry sued 261 American music fans for sharing songs...."

That partial quote is from an Electronic Frontier Foundation article (tinyurl.com/4wxdc5) that provides an in-depth description of RIAA (Recording Industry of America) activities, with many references. Lawsuits filed by the RIAA over the past five years have resulted in severe financial hardship to individuals that were targets of RIAA legal action—and some of those defendants claimed that they were not aware that they had violated the law.

Legal consequences for anyone caught in a violation of copyright infringement laws have now increased.

On October 13th, 2008, a new law, the Prioritizing Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property Act was signed that provides new federal enforcement powers and higher penalties for copyright infringement.

For details, see this CNET news story: tinyurl.com/4tfqrx.

Briefly (from the CNET story—used with permission from CBS Interactive, Inc., copyright 2008, all rights reserved), "...the law consolidates federal efforts to combat copyright infringement under a new White House cabinet position, the intellectual property enforcement coordinator, who will be appointed by the president.... The law also steepens penalties for intellectual-property infringement, and increases resources for the Department of Justice to coordinate for federal and

(see *Music* on page 9)

Pinnacle Studio 12

Reviewed by Beth Pickering, Sonoma Valley Computer Group, CA, www.vom.com/svcg

I would love to compare video editing programs and declare Pinnacle Studio 12 the easiest one to use, but to be honest, this is the only video editing I have ever done. To be precise: I had a borrowed laptop I had never used before, a few unrelated video clips (not mine), a few pictures (not mine), less than 24 hours to make a demo movie for my presentation, and a history of attracting glitches.

Because Studio 12 is supposed to be easy for a beginner to use, I decided to go out of my comfort zone and put this software to the ultimate test: Like many users, I skipped reading the instructions. I have to admit to a

little help. I had seen a live demo at a convention and watched some very short informational clips on www.pinnaclesys.com.

The hardest thing I had to do was choosing the options I wanted to use. The closest I got to a glitch was that the video card in my borrowed computer wouldn't support "Magic Bullet Looks."

Starting with a "Montage," I began my quest. I already knew image editing had to be done on the main timeline (*Figure 1*) and that any type of image could be used. The numbers showed what image went where.

Moving the images around was as easy as drag and drop. "Undo" and "delete" were also handy. Mixing sections from different Montage themes didn't cause any problems. Leaving Montage boxes empty didn't either. The playback only showed an appropriately numbered space. With just a click of a button, you can review your creation full screen. When you are editing, that particular section of the orange bar turns green.

There are hundreds of transitions on hand. Picking a category brings up a screen with thumbnail "A/B" boxes. Clicking on one activates the A to B (see *Pinnacle* on page 9)



(This & That—continued from page 6)

Of course there are other uses for them. My favorite use for the little devices is to transport image files whenever it is necessary. Those occasions usually are to share pictures with family or to use digital images in study groups or classes and also occasionally to get prints from a kiosk in the stores which offer that service. Mostly I do that when I just have a few prints that I need. For large orders I still upload my image files online.

Maybe Santa Claus will put a 16G drive in my stocking this year.

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(Music—continued from page 7)

state efforts against counterfeiting and piracy. The so-called Pro-IP Act passed unanimously in the Senate last month and received strong bipartisan support in the House.”

We often forget that under our legal system, ignorance of the law is no defense. For those readers with family members, friends and acquaintances who are casual computer users, now may be the time for a reminder that, however tempting, free music downloads may result in serious legal problems. And for any member of those same groups who uses the internet as his primary source of music, that reminder may be an absolute necessity.

To paraphrase a different warning, “free music downloads may be injurious to your financial health.” You, your family, friends and acquaintances all need to be informed consumers before downloading “free” music or sharing music files.

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(Pinnacle—continued from page 8)

transition so you can see how it looks. After deciding which one to use, you simply drag and drop it into place on the timeline. The other features use thumbnails of the image you are editing (Graphic 2) to show what the final look will be. All you have to do is select the one you want. As you become more skilled you can alter the feature itself. Some (like “Magic Bullet Looks”) have visible boxes to adjust (see above) while others (see Boris Graffiti below) (Graphic 3) have an advanced mode to select. There are prompts where you can enter text and examples to see what it will look like. Any font that is on your computer can be used. Correcting red eye and removing the black bars so your images fill the movie frame can be done with the click of a button. It is possible to interweave up to 18 video tracks in minutes.

Pinnacle Studio 12 has two dedicated sound tracks - one for special sounds and the other for background music. You can import songs to use as is, or you can add them to “Scorefitter” –

your own original background music composer. It is as easy to use as the image editors. Several choices have been pre-loaded in the software. You simply pick a style, (Graphic 4) pick a song, pick a version and listen to the result. If you don't like it, you just start over. The length can be changed by dragging the beginning or ending points. The “song” can be changed at anytime by using the “accept changes” button. also easy. You select the media, then the drop down box choices, and click the “Create” button.

I didn't do it, but I understand that outputting is also easy. You select the media, then the drop down box choices, and click the “Create” button.

My experience with Pinnacle Studio 12 was effortless and fun. Users with no experience can easily make professional looking movies while knowledgeable editors can tweak their movies to an all time high.

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